

Media Information
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Clean water for everyone

**Interview with Jon Rose, winner of the
ECKART 2014 for Creative Responsibility and Enjoyment**

In June 2015, Theresa Geisel and Lejla Beganovic travelled to the Philippine island of Bohol on behalf of the Witzigmann Academy to visit surfing legend Jon Rose. Here, Rose and his Waves4Water (W4W) organisation are helping provide locals affected by earthquake and typhoons with clean drinking water. Jon Rose talks about his mission, how the prize money is being used and how the project works.

Jon, how long have you been involved here?

We launched our clean-water project here in the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan struck about a year and a half ago. We have worked on over twelve different islands – some of them especially hard hit. From that point on, we have just been carrying on our projects as best we can, with development aid, long-term infrastructure projects and so on. We're back here periodically – depending on the partner we're working with – trying to check different islands off the list.

You won the ECKART 2014 for Creative Responsibility and Enjoyment – does that help?

JR: Definitely. Winning the ECKART was really special. Not just the award ceremony, which was a really fun experience for me, but mainly because of how the grant money has helped our work here in the Philippines. Shortly after the ceremony, a second big typhoon struck the Philippines, Typhoon Ruby. And because Typhoon Haiyan had hit just a year before, it was a sort of in its shadow and nobody really did anything

EINE KOOPERATION DER WITZIGMANN ACADEMY UND DER BMW GROUP.

How have you invested the prize money?

JR: We already had local networks here for infrastructure building, so I was able to use almost the entire funds directly for potable-water filtration systems. Most people here had no access to clean water. So, I was able to take those funds and buy a ton of water-filtration systems.

Classic aid organisations have a lot of staff. Your approach is different. Why?

W4W is different and my personal attitude is different – because I don't come from the traditional structure. I don't come from the aid world. I didn't do the Peace Corps. I never worked at the UN. I didn't go through the normal channels – although there is nothing wrong with that. Our approach is outside the box. We are about connecting concrete solutions to a problem-set in a long-term, sustainable way, without getting caught in a bureaucratic gridlock. The established aid organisations often operate on a more abstract level.

Where did your vision come from?

It was quite selfishly motivated at the beginning...in a good way, of course. I loved to travel around the world and surf. I just thought it would be great to have this organisation and generally help people living in those places – and also have an excuse to go back.

Good ideas can change the game. They often start quite innocently, where you are not trying to be anything you are not. You are just doing what your heart tells you and in this case, once I started peeling away the layers of the onion I saw this topic for what it really is: Clean water for everyone is a solvable problem. It became a sort of obsession, because I wanted to solve the problem. So it became this amazing platform to be able to solve one of the biggest global problems – and it proves that it really is solvable.

In which areas is your help needed and how do you find and define your projects?

In reality, there are probably only six or seven countries in the world that are truly developed. I believe everybody should have their basic fundamental needs met: water, food, shelter. In our eyes, those fundamental things are lacking pretty much everywhere.

Who are your supporters?

W4W is actually more of a partnership model than a fund-based model. We provide a programme and somebody pays for it. So, that could be cooperations. That could be other organisations, such as the UN, or even a small organisation with a programme in Africa that supports schools and wants to introduce a clean water programme – but we are always the implementing party.

How do locals respond to strangers coming in to tell them how to clean their water?

I've had to develop an approach and a strategy to maximise the impact we can have with the resources available. If I come into a community and try to implement something they've never seen before, how well is it going to be received? What I realised is that for my job I really need to enlist local players. I need to build a local network. I need to find these sorts of organisers, these great people that are probably helping their community already and empower them to do even more.

What does that mean exactly?

Basically, it means giving them the knowledge and the tools to be able to help even more – and then it's very well received. The final recipient is being taught and educated by somebody they know. If I've done my job right, the recipient has no idea whether I've done my job right or who I am. This has got to be about empowering people within the local community to change their situation.

Looking ahead, any long-term plans?

Yes, because clean water for everyone is solvable. It's not a question of technology; it's a question of access. You hear people say that water is the new

oil – in the sense that major wars will be fought over water and access to water. That's already happening in some cases. I hate to dramatise or sensationalise things, but if you think what bottled water costs compared to the same amount of oil, it's four times as expensive – so it is already happening and there are big issues with water all around the world.

So, what we really do, we build a platform to provide that access. People who created the solutions out there did an amazing job. But they don't necessarily know who needs their solutions and how to deliver them. And the people who need them, don't even know they exist. So, there is a missing link in a chain. And I think we've created that link.

What's the mission of W4W in one sentence?

Clean water for everyone!

The interview was conducted by Lejla Beganovic for the Witzigmann Academy