



# A SIMPLE SOLUTION

FORMER PRO SURFER JON ROSE IS SIDESTEPPING THE BUREAUCRACY OF AID ORGANISATIONS AND PROVIDING CLEAN WATER FOR THE PEOPLE WHO NEED IT MOST.

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Jon Rose looks like a regular surf dude: tan skin, pale blue eyes, and a friendly smile on his face. But for over a decade this former WCT top surfer mingled with the 'Irons' and 'Slaters' of the professional surf circus in search of great waves, trophies, girls and cash. Even though he never made it to the very top, young Jon travelled the world looking for action in the remotest places. His passport is a collection of exotic stamps: Indonesia, Hawaii, South Africa, Brazil, Peru, Tahiti. But knowing he would never make the big-time, Jon retired at the age of thirty-one.

A bit lost after the dreamy lifestyle of the surf circuit, Jon took inspiration from his father, Jack Rose – who had worked in Africa helping people catch and filter rainwater – and travelled to Sumatra Island, Indonesia, with some simple filters in his backpack. It was during this surf trip, in 2009, that Jon felt a slight shake on his boat – an echo of the 7.6 magnitude earthquake that caused a tsunami killing over 1,000 people, and leaving 100,000 homeless. Surviving without a scratch, Jon decided to go inland to deliver the filters where they were needed. He didn't know it yet, but this was the birth of Waves 4 Water.

"After helping people in Sumatra, delivering filters and teaching people how to use them, I knew that this is what I wanted to do with my life," says Jon, comfortably seated in the open garden of Loducca, a fancy advertising agency in São Paulo, Brazil. "We're the black sheep of NGOs, because we don't operate like them, buying cars and trucks, spending a lot on infrastructure and personnel, hiring foreigners to do the job. That's an old model, a ridiculous model, if you ask me. They hire a guy from Ireland to do the transportation in Haiti, and an Australian to do the security in Uganda. Why not the locals?"

Waves 4 Water is an NGO that delivers water filters to people who need them. Whenever there's a natural disaster, such as the earthquakes in Haiti and Japan, Jon and his two employees go to action. Getting funds from brands like Hurley, a Nike surf

subsidiary, or humanitarian organisations such as Red Cross, Jon and his staff buy the filters in the US and fly to the ground-zero areas where they hire local people to help distribute them. "I've learned everything from surf," Jon acknowledges. "Like, how to be able to adapt; to be out of your comfort zone and yet manage to deal with it."

After dropping a couple dozen filters to people during the flood in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, last January, Jon and photographer Vavá Ribeiro joined forces with a few other surfers such as Guga Ketzer, a creative director from Loducca ad agency, and set up an expedition this summer to the Amazon River. Their mission? To check the quality of drinking water for the people living around the largest water reserve on the globe. "What the Amazon people don't realise is that the water from the river is not clean," says Jon. "At least not clean enough to drink it. So we got there, filtered a few glasses and showed them the results. They were astonished."

Jon and his small team have delivered over 100,000 filters so far to places like Kenya, Uganda, Pakistan, Indonesia, Japan, Brazil and Haiti. "The idea is to get in, act, and get out as soon as we can, so the local authorities don't even have the time to tell us what we can and what we cannot do," says Jon about their guerrilla approach. "Sometimes we have sixty people working with us and it blows me away!"

Each filter delivered by Waves 4 Water costs fifty US dollars and provides clean water to 100 people per day for up to five years. The device can be used with any plastic bucket by making a whole in the bottom and the filters are easy to transport. Jon may have already worked side by side with the Red Cross and the UN this year, but he plans to grow his outreach significantly in the future. "One in six people still don't have access to clean water," says Jon, "and that's ridiculous."

[wavesforwater.org](http://wavesforwater.org)

