

# Beauty on a mission

Former Miss Switzerland Amanda Ammann wants to save the world — by ensuring that everyone has access to safe, clean water, writes **Intan Maizura Ahmad Kamal**

**W**ORLD peace. Isn't that what all Miss World and Miss Universe contestants are supposed to aspire to? It's a stereotypical response that slides out of their pretty mouths when posed the question: "And if you win Miss World, what's the one thing you wish to achieve?"

For Swiss Miss, Amanda Ammann, crowned Miss Switzerland at age 20 in 2007, her aspirations are not so far off the world through water. Clean water. As the spokesperson and project manager for Trunz Water Systems, she and the company are in the business of providing electricity and safe drinking water to rural areas and decentralised areas where there's no infrastructure and independent operation is required.

"What's important for me is that people have access to safe drinking water and to water in general," says the striking 27-year-old brunette, emphatically. "I've travelled to India, Nepal and I've seen how serious their water problem is. Though they have access to water, their water is contaminated and most of them are not aware that they're drinking bad water. We want to provide solutions."

"The biggest challenge on our planet," says Amanda, is providing people access to clean drinking water. Lots of fresh water deposits contain disease-inducing substances such as viruses, bacteria or chemicals.

Trunz has converted the vision of a simple self-sufficient water treatment system into practice. "The compact, mobile water treatment and desalination systems are powered using integrated photovoltaics and wind generators. This essentially means that there are really no boundaries to using this system anywhere in the world," says Amanda.

"We have different technologies: one is for fresh water treatment, the other is for brackish water and desalination. Our water treatment system is special because it's the only one that has the integrated approach, which means it provides not only the water treatment but also the energy to run the machine. We also have smaller units and all you need to do is just put the pump into any water source."

#### BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

While in rural areas access to safe drinking water is the bane, in urban places, it's the issue of water wastage, Amanda points out. "Both issues need to be addressed seriously. And everyone should be interested. In Europe, for example, we have excess



*"When there's water rationing exercise, it will be a rude awakening for everyone."*  
Amanda Ammann

water so a lot of people are unaware of the severity of the water crisis. But it's very important because we might one day find that we are turning on empty taps. What will happen in the future when the population grows, the climate changes, more industrialisation? When there's water rationing exercise, it will be a rude awakening for everyone."

"In Switzerland, we are in a good position because we are considered a water country. We have mountains, glaciers, snow. But with climate change, these glaciers are disappearing. Although we don't have water scarcity right now, we never know what will happen in the future."

Striving to reduce our water footprint is tantamount to future survival, Amanda believes. And the first step would be at the personal level — from the home. "I try to practice water conservation in my daily life, even though we are not short of water in Switzerland. For example, I try not to use so much water for showering, or washing. Treat water as if it's gold."

#### DEEP PASSION

Water, or the subject of it, has always been an area of great interest for Amanda. In fact, she even did her Masters thesis on the subject of safe drinking water. She shares: "I've always been interested in human rights and so naturally, ensuring that everyone has access to basic necessities is important to me. Every human being should have the right to safe drinking water, food, and housing. We can't change everyone's fortunes overnight but we can at least try to help provide some basic necessities to those who are in

need of it around the world." Many people, says Amanda with a small chuckle, had asked her why she didn't just become an actress or product ambassador after her success on the beauty queen platform. So why didn't she? She smiles before replying: "Before I became Miss Switzerland, I studied international relations in Geneva. Although I enjoyed my involvement in Miss Universe that same year, I was keen to continue studying. So I did - for four years. Then I interned in several companies in Asia and ended up falling in love with this region and subsequently became very passionate about the numerous issues that plagued this part of the world, one

#### WATER TRIVIA

- More than 3.4 million people die each year from water, sanitation, and hygiene-related causes. Nearly all deaths, 99 per cent, occur in the developing world.
- Lack of access to clean water and sanitation kills children at a rate equivalent of a jumbo jet crashing every four hours.
- 780 million people lack access to an improved water source; approximately one in nine people.
- Water and sanitation crisis claims more lives through disease than any war claims through guns.
- An American taking a five-minute shower uses more water than the average person in a developing country sump uses in an entire day.
- 780 million people lack access to an improved water source; approximately one in nine people.
- Of the 60 million people added to the world's towns and cities every year, most move to informal settlements (i.e. slums) with no sanitation facilities.

Source: www.water.org

3.4 MILLION PEOPLE

**DIE EACH YEAR FROM A WATER RELATED DISEASE.**

LOS ANGELES

THAT IS ALMOST THE ENTIRE CITY OF LOS ANGELES.

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780 MILLION PEOPLE LACK ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER.

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THAT'S MORE THAN 2½ TIMES THE UNITED STATES POPULATION

Source: www.water.org



Providing clean water supply at Orinoco Delta, Venezuela in 2007.



Water relief in Jakababad, Pakistan in 2006.



Desalination of sea water at a military training camp near Santiago, Chile.

ally very environmentally-conscious. "We are world champions in recycling! Parents teach their kids to be aware of the environment as too our schools. We promote green practices always." Taking a long sip of her water, Amanda concludes: "There are so many good things in this world. Look-

ing back, I've been fortunate to have had so many good experiences. Even though I'm only 27, I feel like I've gone through several lives. I love to travel and delight in seeing beautiful landscapes. Our world is a huge treasure and we need to look after it."

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