

MAN OF CHIVALRY IN ASSOCIATION WITH CHIVAS

# HUGH EVANS

Meet the Australian humanitarian committed to ending global poverty.

**H**ugh Evans is trying to put himself out of a job as fast as he can. As the CEO of Global Poverty Project – which aims to end extreme poverty by 2030 – he says he’s building a sustainable movement, not an institution.

“We’re trying to create influence on public policy for the best interests of lifting people out of extreme poverty and enabling them to lift themselves out of extreme poverty,” he explains, citing movements such as ending apartheid in South Africa and slavery in America as examples of what can be achieved.

We’re sitting in the conference room of Global Poverty Project’s downtown Manhattan headquarters. Leaning against the wall is a map of Central Park’s Great Lawn covered with specs for the third Global Citizens Festival, held in September. The concert was the most successful yet, attended by 60,000 people, headlined by Jay Z and culminating in a surprise duet with Beyoncé. Dignitaries including India’s Prime Minister Modi, the president of the World Bank, Jim Yong Kim, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations and Hugh Jackman addressed the crowd and pledged their support. Prime Minister Modi, for example, reaffirmed his commitment to provide a toilet in every Indian household by 2019.

Meeting the 31-year-old Evans, it’s easy to see how celebrities, world leaders and the general public are being steadily recruited to his cause. In conversation he laughs easily and is warm, energetic and articulate. But how did a nice boy from the leafy Melbourne suburb of Kew end up here? It started in his first year of high school at Carey Baptist Grammar, he says, when he did the World Vision ‘40 Hour Famine’. While most of us were busy eating too many barley sugars, lucky to amass \$40 and a stomach-ache, Evans was one of the country’s leading fundraisers – an achievement that led to a trip to the Philippines with World Vision.

“The first tipping-point moment came then, but the real pledge to do this my whole life came the following year,” recalls Evans.

“I got home and said to my parents, ‘I want to go and live in India for a year.’ They weren’t excited about the idea at all, but through school I applied for a scholarship to go and study at Woodstock School in India’s Himalayan mountains. I thought it was a great idea until I jumped on the plane and all of a sudden it dawned on me that I was by myself,” he laughs.

“We landed in Singapore, on the way to Delhi, and I was crying my eyes out. I was so scared. I was so soft. In many ways that year was massively confronting.”

As a 15-year-old, Evans went from feeling invincible in the “safe bubble” of his life in Melbourne to a year of spider-infested beds, communal showers, bouts of food poisoning and volunteering in the slums of Delhi.

“It struck me continually, how fragile life is,” he says. “It changed my perspective and set me on this trajectory.”

And what an impressive one it’s been so far. In 2003, Evans, who holds a law and science degree and a master’s in international relations from the University of Cambridge, co-founded the Oaktree Foundation – a youth-driven organisation designed to empower young people in developing countries. In 2004, he was named Young Australian of the Year for his work as an anti-poverty campaigner. With the Oaktree Foundation he helped set up Melbourne’s 2006 Make Poverty History concert, held to coincide with the G20 summit. Then, having witnessed the power of grassroots advocacy, he and Simon Moss (the pair were friends and colleagues on the Oaktree Foundation) co-founded Global Poverty Project in 2008.

Despite all this, Evans doesn’t seem terribly interested in reflecting on his achievements. Ask him, for example, what the schoolboy Evans would have thought about what he and his team pulled together at the most recent Global Citizens Festival, and he gives you this: “I’ve never thought of that to be honest. We’re still so far off what we need to achieve, so I can’t let the excitement of the now, and all that’s happening, distract us from where we need to go.”

He explains that in order to create a sustainable movement, he needs to keep, “disrupting – I’m not interested in big flashy events for their own sake.”

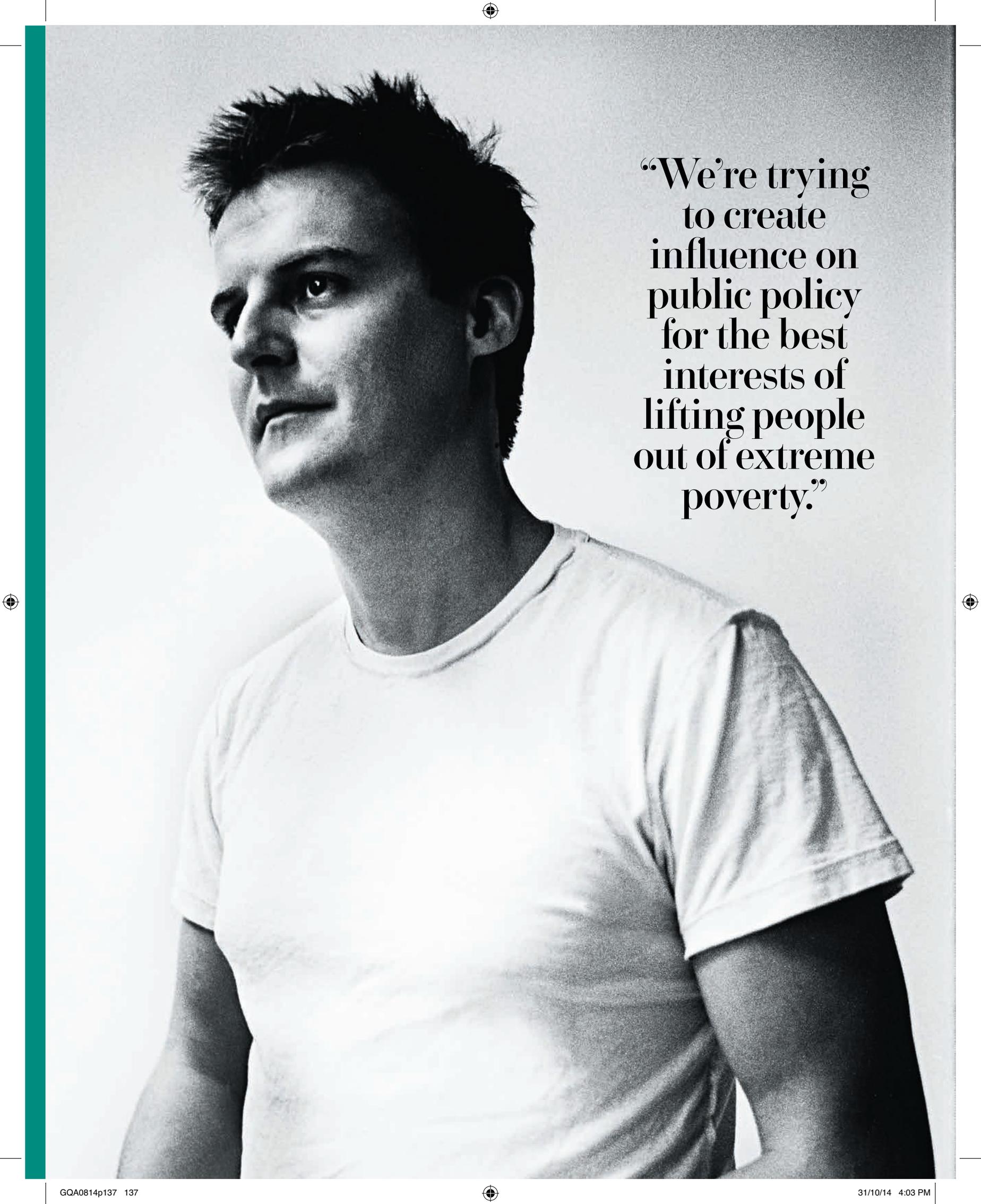
Of course, it must be easy to forget how great your achievements are when you’re not the only one in your household saving the world. Evans’s Scottish wife, Tanyella, is at it too.

“We have an amazing life together,” says Evans. “She runs her own charity called Library for All – building the world’s first digital library for the developing world. We get to bounce ideas off each other and explore ways to grow social enterprises.”

However, not everyone’s impressed with their work ethic.

“We had our first weekend off after the festival,” he explains. “I hadn’t taken a break in six months or longer. We went up to Scotland, where Tanyella’s family are, and I posted something on Instagram. Someone I don’t know commented: ‘You guys seem to always be taking breaks. I don’t know if you’re actually doing any work.’ I was like, ‘Oh my goodness. Haters are gonna hate!’ And my wife says, ‘Hugh, you can definitely ignore that comment.’” ■

WORDS ALICE WASLEY PHOTOGRAPHY JOSEPH MICHAEL LOPEZ



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