

Australian entrepreneurs want to eradicate diseases amongst the indigenous population. They also helped to fight Ebola and restore healthcare in Mosul

- The Australian company Aspen Medical provides humanitarian aid in crisis and remote areas.
- They provide various governments and private companies with teams of doctors, medical equipment and complete medical infrastructure.
- The company's founders donate part of their profits to a corporate foundation that aims to improve healthcare availability for Australian indigenous communities.

Australians Glenn Keys and Andrew Walker have known each other since childhood. They went to school together, were together in the army and went to each other's wedding as witnesses. A friendship of over 40 years led them to start a business together. Their company Aspen Medical provides medical care primarily in remote or crisis areas. It helped for instance to fight Ebola in Africa or to rebuild the health system in the Iraqi city of Mosul, affected by the war against ISIS.

Aspen Medical works for the governments of various countries as well as for private companies. It can provide from one doctor up to an entire hospital. "Although we do a lot of philanthropic work, it's a business, not a charity. But we are often more effective than non-profit organisations. We have a very lean organisation and our running costs are low. For many charities, they amount to about 25 percent of revenue, for us it's just around 10 percent", Glenn Keys told HN (*Czech business newspaper – translator's note*) at the EY World Entrepreneur of the Year in Monaco, where he represented his country together with his partner.

The two Australian entrepreneurs are proud of their efforts to minimise the risks that could put their employees in danger. "For example, when we helped fighting Ebola in Liberia and Sierra Leone, none of our 1,000 staff got infected. Meanwhile, one out of five medical practitioners in that area caught Ebola. Forty percent of the infected subsequently died. But we managed to train our doctors and nurses so perfectly that none of them got the infection", Andrew Walker says.

As a result, the company is building a good reputation as an employer, which enables it to recruit enough people to take on new missions and to start helping wherever needed as quickly as possible. For example, Aspen Medical was recently selected by the World Health Organisation for a project to rebuild medical infrastructure in Mosul, Iraq, which was completely destroyed during the war against ISIS.

Beside humanitarian aid, Aspen Medical is also involved in various government health programs, operates an air ambulance service and provides healthcare to people employed in industries such as mining or petroleum. The company also has its own Aspen Foundation,

which focuses, among other things, on medical assistance to the Australian indigenous population.

"Many Australians in remote communities have no access to basic health care. That's one reason why many of them suffer from diseases that could easily be prevented. For instance, a major problem is an eye disease known as trachoma, which can lead to blindness. We succeeded in reducing the proportion of indigenous Australians infected by this disease by 15 percent and, at the same time, we extended the average life expectancy in these communities by three years", Walker explains.

Alongside trachoma, Aspen Medical tries to eradicate scabies and rheumatic fever amongst the indigenous population. Keys and Walker donate one percent of their profits to this goal each year. "We also work with other organisations and with the government. By directly participating in the projects, we know exactly where our money ends and we can make sure that it will be used effectively", Keys concludes.