Stepping into the first quarter of 2021 was probably done with a little more caution for many than in previous years. In coming up with a roadmap for the year it is common to have a plan A and B, but the uncertainty of 2020 made it so that plans were developed with a few more ‘ifs’ than usual. At AIRD we fully understand that the needs of the displaced people we serve remain great, and perhaps even greater now as a result of the continuing effects of the pandemic. We therefore have not shied away from making bold plans to continue serving them and doing even more than we ever have before. The launch of our 2021-2025 strategy is testament to this.

This year has already begun with several changes for us. You will read in more detail about some of these later in this issue but they include particulars of our strategy for the year as well as news of the phasing out of our Republic of Congo program.

As the year progresses, like many globally, our hopes are high that the newly released coronavirus vaccine will have a significant impact in drastically slowing the spread of the disease. As debate continues around how the vaccine will reach the most vulnerable in all parts of the world, we certainly have to remember that the displaced people we serve are some of the most disadvantaged. Last year brought about much critical discourse among many international and local non-governmental organisations about how to meet the needs and gaps in displaced communities. We hope that we can continue to have dialogue and work together with our donors and partners to ensure we will play whatever role we can in making sure displaced people have as much information and access to treatment as possible. In this new decade, we must do all we can to ensure that no one gets left behind.

As we look to the near and medium term, we hope the lessons learnt from the past decade will guide us in making the best decisions possible. The one constant we know at AIRD is that we will remain committed to empowering the communities of displaced people and host populations that we serve. We might have to occasionally review our game plan for achieving this, but the goal remains the same.

We invite you to read about a few activities that have been going on within our organisation and we are also excited to announce that you can view more of these by visiting our NEW WEBSITE at www.airdinternational.org!

**In this issue:**
- Looking to our 2021-2025 strategy
- Phasing out of the Republic of Congo
Looking to our 2021-2025 strategy

In the 15 years since AIRD was first established, there has been an incredible amount of work done to improve the lives of displaced people in the 10 countries we have been able to set up in. The goals we had have evolved over this period to better meet the gaps in the needs of the people we serve. We have been privileged to work with wonderful donors and partners who have made the work we do possible. What remains clear is that as we grow and develop, the services we offer must do the same.

The previous strategy period (2014-2019) served the organisation well, and we saw quite a bit of growth during this period in terms of the services we were able to provide and in the number of countries we opened offices in. It is unfortunate that the number of conflicts that have resulted in a need for the services we offer remain. Thousands of people in countries globally are still being forced from their homes and need to be compassionately moved and provided with the basics they require to begin their lives afresh. We will continue to work with our donors and partners in these emergency situations. More and more through the years, however, we have recognised the importance of becoming more involved in developmental work- the kind that sees displaced people capable of having a greater say in their futures through having the opportunities available to enable them to provide for themselves. This has been reflected more clearly in our new strategy. Given the unprecedented events of 2020, it was deemed necessary to postpone the official launch of the strategy to 2021 to ensure that greater focus could be aimed at the goals defined. We are pleased to share with you our plans for the next five years.

What will we do and how will we do it...

AIRD has been intrinsically connected to humanitarian response work that has shaped the programmes since its inception. As many countries are moving to “Stabilisation and Maintenance” or “Nexus” programming, AIRD is also interested in bringing their skills into this area, with a long term focus on Development. Being responsive to changing social, political and environmental circumstances is essential in all of our work, and will continue to be evidenced through responsiveness and adaptability, along with innovative approaches to responding.

AIRD’s key focus areas for the next 5 years will be on implementing logistics, construction and infrastructure projects, whilst also incorporating environmental sustainability, sustainable livelihoods and WASH into existing and future programmes. They will also be building a platform across the programmes of transforming their current logistics work into an income generating programme. We will also be building a platform across the programmes to involve activities with a view to generate income for use in development programmes.
Specifically, AIRD’s work will be achieved through:

**Operations**
- continuing to provide the best humanitarian logistics, construction and infrastructure work in Africa and beyond, adapting and adjusting programmes to suit the working environment.

**Expansion**
AIRD looks to broaden support to other countries with the same logistical, construction and infrastructure services, prioritising those that are proximate to existing countries of operation but also horizon scanning to see whether AIRD’s experience can be of assistance in other continents.

**Development**
Seeking to enable community members to become more involved in decision-making and finding local solutions to their issues. AIRD will focus on the long term support of host communities and displaced people from the initial point of contact by implementing projects in WASH, Livelihoods, and Environmental sustainability.

**Business Development**
- this approach will be considered to evaluate the merits of establishing AIRD’s logistics, vehicle maintenance etc. as a business.

Through all this, we are committed to working to the best of our abilities to meet our obligations to current donors and partners, even as we look to partnering with new donors to do much more.
Even as our 2021-2025 strategy within the organisation is to expand into new geographical locations that require the services we offer, we find ourselves in the position this year of having to sunset our presence in one of our program countries- the Republic of Congo.

AIRD was established in the Republic of Congo in 2012 to respond to the influx of Congolese refugees who fled the political instability in the Democratic Republic of Congo that persists to date, and to provide for Rwandan refugees who fled the 1994 genocide. The Program has been dedicated in service delivery to refugees and asylum seekers through shelter management, construction of infrastructure, fuel management, transport management, warehousing and in its response to Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV). The needs of the displaced people in the Congo remain, and at the end of 2019, the Congo was host to some 25,700 refugees and 134,430 Internally Displaced People and 14,416 asylum-seekers (UNHCR 2020).

In spite of the persistent and ever growing needs, the reality of working in the humanitarian space is that funding is key. It would be ideal for donors to have unlimited resources to give to all the organisations that are doing the important work of serving disadvantaged people but sadly this is not the case. We appreciate and recognise that there are limited funds to do all that needs to be done, and as result there will come times when difficult decisions must be made about what to prioritise. Our donors in the Congo had to make this tough decision to close out our relationship at the end of 2020, even as the great work AIRD has done over the years is undisputed. As a result, we have begun the process of phasing out of the country and have already bid farewell to most of the over 40 colleagues there. We are incredibly grateful to our wonderful staff for the hard work and efforts they made towards the success of the many projects carried out. They were our greatest resource and we wish them bright futures wherever they may go. We will maintain our excellent ties with our donors and remain ready to serve again should the resources allow. We will continue to explore areas to serve displaced people and the communities that host them as per our strategic goals over the next five years.

See below just a few of the activities carried out by the RoC team recently.

Above: A celebration and tour following the official reopening of the Bouemba Primary School in RoC

Left: Chlorination of wells in Impfondo. Centre: Distribution of soap to victims of flooding Right: Sanitation activities were carried out by AIRD in many offices and institutions throughout 2020 to prevent COVID spread
Construction by AIRD in Bouemba to accommodate the needs of asylum seekers from the DRC

Disinfection and distribution of sanitation items at the Post Office school located in downtown Brazzaville

Repatriation activities commence in Betou

The busy AIRD workshop in Brazzaville

Josiane, a Central African refugee, with her children ready for repatriation at the Maya Maya airport, Brazzaville

Below: Some of the wonderful staff at the RoC office

Silvane Miguel PEMBELET
Ass. Admin Finance AIRD Gamboma

AMADOU SIDIBE
Country Program Director, Republic of Congo

Joslin Christ MALONGA
Driver, AIRD BZV

Francine Fernande M. KABADIO
Accounting, AIRD BZV

Gelvy Gasmonid M. MASSENGO
Ass. Logistics, Reporting Manager

Ulcte Perdian LEME
Admin. Finance Manager

Grace Laura Regina PEMBELLE
Cashier, AIRD Gamboma
We thank our AIRD family for delivering remarkably in all our areas of operation. We give very special thanks to our donors and partners for enabling us to do the work we do that changes the lives of displaced people and their host communities. We look forward to carrying on with the important work we undertake with our donors in the communities we serve.

We will continue to share highlights of our activities through the various newsletters as well as through our recently revamped website at www.airdinternational.org

Meet Aristide Blaise Bountsana Koubemba, a Mechanic Inspector in Brazaville in the Republic of Congo. He is a 54 year old married father of 4 (3 girls and 1 boy).

Aristide was with AIRD since 2012 when he started off as a driver. Two years later he was promoted to mechanical driver, and it was in 2019 when he was promoted to Mechanical Inspector. His very important role was to analyze, repair and verify the work of the mechanics as they respond to repair requests for vehicle breakdowns within the UNHCR Program.

Aristide was with AIRD for as long as he was because he loves the organisation. He says AIRD has given him a new family. He is grateful for the opportunities to grow his skills and specifically mentions training in the mastery of computers. He was also happy to work a job that gives him the chance to make a contribution towards helping refugees. Being among the first staff to join the organisation when it was first set up in 2012 in the Congo, and seeing how it grew since then filled him with pride.

Thank you for your time and service Aristide!

For feedback/comments/queries on any of the articles in this issue, please send an email to communications@airdinternational.org

We would love to share your stories! If you would like to contribute an article or photos etc. to the next issue, send an email to communications@airdinternational.org