



## CEO's End of Year Message

### December 2025

Greetings to you all, Colleagues

As we come to the end of 2025, I want to reflect on our journey this year and the resilience that has shaped us as an organization.

This year began with a clear vision to expand our partnerships, reach where others cannot, and continue offering 24/7 support to ensure that no one is left behind. Despite numerous challenges, we have stayed true to that mission.

We conquered difficult terrains, operated in insecure regions, and continued to deliver vital services to those who depend on us. However, 2025 has also been a year of immense trials. The funding crisis that affected the humanitarian sector hit AIRD hard, leading to the loss of projects such as the USAID project in DRC and the WFP-funded TPM project in Ethiopia, among others, as well as the termination of staff, leading to disruption to our operations.

Yet, in true AIRD spirit, we pressed on. Despite the challenging funding environment, we continued to expand our footprint and demonstrate our value as a reliable partner. We have successfully secured legal registration to operate in Sudan. In addition, there are promising funding opportunities in the pipeline, including a prospective UNHCR grant to support the warehousing of core relief, medical, and pharmaceutical supplies, subject to funding availability. We are also engaging in a proposed Islamic Development Bank-funded STEP programme in Sudan and Chad, contingent upon the issuance of a recommendation letter from the Government of Sudan. AIRD is also in the final steps of co-creation with the Mastercard Foundation with regards to the SELF Project in Chad.

In Burundi, we signed a tripartite agreement with UNHCR and the First Lady of the DRC's foundation to distribute food to Congolese refugees. Our DRC team forged a new partnership with UNICEF and a tripartite arrangement with WFP and UNHCR for food and cash distribution. Tanzania successfully implemented the SMART Fleet project funded by UNHCR, while Burkina Faso received support from the West and Central Africa Regional Humanitarian Fund.

We also expanded our partnerships in Cameroon through a new WFP collaboration and secured three separate donor engagements in CAR with WFP, MINUSCA, and USAID.

These achievements secured in one of the toughest funding years reflect AIRD's unwavering determination, growing credibility, and long-standing reputation as a trusted humanitarian partner.

Our Multi-Skilling Centers continue to transform the lives of young people in Uganda and Tanzania. This year in Uganda, 34 youth completed training in automotive mechanics, auto electrical repair, and motorcycle and small engine maintenance. In Tanzania, a further 15 young people were equipped and graduated in practical, hands-on mechanical skills through structured training delivered by qualified instructors, supported by quality tools and a conducive learning environment.

The programme exposes participants to real-world technological advancements, equipping them with employable skills and providing a clear pathway to self-reliance, dignity, and sustainable livelihoods.

Another key milestone this year is the finalization of our 2026–2030 AIRD Corporate Strategy, built upon lessons learned as evidenced through the evaluation of our 2021–2025 AIRD Corporate Strategy. This strategy will guide AIRD's next phase of growth, innovation, and impact. Many thanks to all the teams who dedicated their time and expertise to this. Let me also take this opportunity to thank country programs for cascading the corporate strategy into 5-year country strategic plans, 2026–2030, to be followed by a detailed business plan for 2026 with clear goals and measurable targets to track performance and progress. I look forward to the success of its implementation.

Sadly, we also mourn the loss of our dedicated colleagues, from Headquarters and some Country Program Offices. On behalf of the entire AIRD family, I continue to extend heartfelt condolences to their families and colleagues. Their commitment and service will never be forgotten.

Even amid hardship, our commitment to excellence and visibility has not waned. We participated in the Urban Refugee Marathon, which strengthened our presence and connections within the humanitarian community in Uganda and beyond. We also launched the AIRD Intranet site, an important step toward fostering internal communication and information sharing across the organization.

Across our country programs, remarkable progress continues. The DRC team secured two new shelter projects with UNHCR and UNICEF, while AIRD South Sudan also obtained new funding from the African Development Bank through UNHCR, further expanding our reach and impact. As we look ahead to 2026, one of our key priorities will be diversifying our programming beyond logistics, considering the end-to-end developmental cycle. We must continue to be innovative and strategic to attract a broader range of partners and donors and aggressively pursue diversification of funding and donors. The funding landscape remains under significant pressure, but together, with creativity, unity, and persistence, we will continue to adapt and thrive. Currently, I am at the AIRD USA Liaison and Fundraising office, where I am actively pursuing new funding streams and strategic partnerships, specifically foundations, private corporations, and individual philanthropists. Soon, we will be sending a letter of interest with clear messaging and AIRD profile to over 10 prioritized big-time prospect foundations.

Thank you for your dedication, resilience, and unwavering commitment to AIRD's mission. Each one of you plays a vital role in enabling us to serve communities in need, no matter the challenges.

Let us carry this spirit forward into 2026 with renewed strength, purpose, and hope. I wish you and your families all a Happy Holiday Season and a Prosperous 2026.

**Fikru Abebe Abebe**

CEO

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