



CEO's Monthly Message

January 2026

Dear AIRD Team,
Happy New Year!

As we start this new year, I want to sincerely thank each of you for your dedication, resilience, and commitment to our mission. Last year was not without its challenges, shrinking funding, complex operating environments, and increasing needs. Still, because of your hard work and sacrifice, AIRD continued to stand with refugees and host communities, ensuring safety, dignity, and hope.

The humanitarian funding crisis is severe and brutal. This is driven by major cuts from key donors like the US, leading to drastic UN/UNHCR budget reductions, staff layoffs, country, regional offices and project closures, and significant shortfalls in life-saving aid for millions in hotspots like Africa, Yemen, and Gaza.

There are serious and real concerns that 2026 will worsen as needs surge and traditional funding mechanisms falter, despite new US pledges under different frameworks. The humanitarian sector is at a breaking point expected to have devastating consequences.

AIRD, while doing all its best to skilfully navigate the crisis, including managing with the minimum essential staff, is also taking this opportunity to aggressively explore, prioritize and pursue alternative financing and private sector engagement, including private corporates, individual philanthropists, and foundations as well. AIRD is also seriously exploring means and ways to secure seed money to initiate social enterprise income-generating projects, including logistics value chain and construction similar to the Mbarara Social Enterprise Income Generation Project. I hope this will create a sustainable funding model and reduce dependence in the long term. We will provide you with a regular financial update as additional information becomes available.

Despite the funding crisis that has hit the humanitarian sector hard, the AIRD Board and management are entering this year with renewed focus and determination. We continue to build on existing experiences, diversifying thematic programs, intentionally moving beyond immediate emergency response to explore self-reliance and longer-term solutions within host communities, and working tirelessly to strengthen financial stability across all our programming. This also includes looking outward, actively attracting new partners and donors, strengthening existing relationships, and positioning AIRD to play an increased regional role, including locally led development for sustainable growth. This year, we are kicking off with the full implementation of our Business Operational Model (BOM), alongside the AIRD Corporate Strategy and respective country-level strategic plans that many of you worked so diligently to develop. These strategies are not just documents; they are a clear roadmap for where we are going together.

I encourage all of us to start strong, remain hopeful, and stay resilient because the work we do truly matters. Together, we continue to transform lives: from Florence, a mother of four in Cameroon, whose children enjoyed a decent meal after a long time through our TPM-supported nutrition and school feeding initiatives; to thousands benefiting from clean water provided to a health center in Ethiopia; to the establishment of the first-ever greenhouse at Doro Refugee Camp in South Sudan, strengthening agricultural skills, improving seed multiplication, and increasing crop production. We are also equipping youth with practical mechanical skills in Uganda and Tanzania, alongside many other impactful interventions across our country programs. I invite you to visit our website to read these and many more stories of impact.

I would also like to engage with you more intentionally. Please take a moment to reflect and respond to the following two questions:

1. What is one thing slowing down your work that leadership should know about?
2. What made you proud to work at AIRD last year?

Your responses will be compiled and shared with management, and where action is required, we are committed to taking it.

I want to reaffirm who we are as an organization. AIRD is a team that works around the clock across cultures, borders, and difficult contexts to serve refugees and host communities with compassion and professionalism. I deeply appreciate the cultural inclusivity, unity, and mutual respect that define us, despite our diverse political, geographical, and cultural backgrounds.

As we move forward, I encourage each of you to continue working with empathy, integrity, and a can-do attitude. This year, together, we have the opportunity to make a turning point in the fight for refugee rights and dignity. Thank you for believing in the mission. Thank you for standing firm. The journey continues, and we move forward together.

Yours Sincerely,

Fikru Abebe Abebe
CEO

