

*"My work has never been a bed of roses... the one thing that has kept me going was my community."*

*Leymah Gbowee, Aurora Prize Selection Committee Member, Liberian peace activist  
Human Rights and Humanitarian Forum, May 7, 2025, Los Angeles*

## Friends of Aurora,

As the end of the year draws near, I find myself coming back to a moment from the 2025 Aurora Forum in Los Angeles. Our closing panel cut through niceties and got straight to what this moment demands: community-orientation, unlikely partnerships, and long-term commitments. It was a thing of beauty, a perfect dose of [holiday inspiration](#).

The exchange stuck with me because it surfaced a stark truth: the current moment is enraging and discouraging for those of us who stand with humanitarians. And yet, we don't have the luxury of pessimism or the comfort of blind optimism. We can be angry, but never apathetic. We can be discouraged but never dejected. We must remember that as humanitarians, we have been here before—if not literally, then indirectly, through our broader community of practice.

In an increasingly *inhumanitarian* environment, **those best positioned to alleviate human suffering remain local humanitarians**. Not only because of their deep experience and unique access, but because many have prevailed against these pressures before, and for a long time at that. **Humanitarians have a decisive advantage** in the struggle, well-versed in acting without guarantees, building without applause, and turning toward when it would be easier and safer to turn away. For as long as inhumanity has existed, humanitarians have risen to meet it. It chafes, to be sure, but we must embrace the discomfort and act anyway.

Aurora's founding principle, **Gratitude in Action**, was made for times like these. Humanitarians and humanitarian-hyphenates alike—this is our moment. Already, **Aurora humanitarians have reached more than 3,570,000 people** through 527 projects across 63 countries and territories. In the face of colossal challenges, the Aurora community grew and brought forth record-breaking generosity to fortify our next phase. You made our 10th anniversary a major milestone as well as a jumping-off point for greater impact ahead—thank you.

As we look ahead, let **2026 be the year of our shared humanity**. Let us practice it, protect it, and proliferate it. We've been here before. We will rebuild again.



With gratitude,

**Armine Afeyan**  
CEO, Aurora Humanitarian Initiative

Join us in supporting humanitarians by donating to Aurora and submitting a Prize nomination

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## 2025 Humanitarian Highlights



### 1. 400 Humanitarians and Supporters Gather on Ellis Island for the 2025 Aurora Prize Ceremony and 10th Anniversary

On November 6, 2025, the [10th Anniversary Aurora Prize Ceremony](#) honored Aurora Prize Laureate [Dr. Jamal Eltaeb](#) and philanthropists [David Rubenstein](#), [Graça Machel](#), [Henrietta H. Fore](#), and [Michael Milken](#). Performances from Rufus Wainwright and [Aloe Blacc](#) rounded out a profound and celebratory evening.

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### 2. 80 Grassroots Leaders Convene for Inaugural Aurora Humanitarian Summit

On May 6, nearly [40 Aurora Luminaries](#) from 27 countries across five continents came together at UCLA with their LA counterparts for a day of strategy, solidarity, and shared problem-solving amid an escalating global funding crisis.

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### 3. Dr. Denis Mukwege's Prize Grants Uplift Over 54,000 People Globally

2024 Aurora Laureate [Dr. Denis Mukwege](#) directed his first round of Prize grants to support grassroots humanitarians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Iraq, and Burkina Faso, strengthening access to education, clean water, and healthcare in their communities.

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### 4. CNN Spotlights 2025 Aurora Humanitarians during UNGA 80

On September 22, Aurora [introduced its 2025 Humanitarians: Sally Becker, Dr. Jamal Eltaeb, Dr. Zouhair Lahna, and Dr. Jill Seaman. In a follow-up interview on CNN's Jim Sciutto](#), Aurora Co-Founder [Noubar Afeyan](#) called these grassroots leaders part of a growing "global army for good" at a time when inhumanity too often fills the news.

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### 5. Human Rights and Humanitarian Forum Inspires Connected Action

Under the theme "[At the Crossroads: Driving Integrated Action for a Resilient Future](#)," the May 7 Forum featured influential voices such as [Nicholas Kristof](#), Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and opinion columnist at *The New York Times*; [Noubar Afeyan](#), Aurora Co-Founder and Chair of the Board; [Eric Esrailian](#), Aurora Board Member and Co-Founder of the next chapter; [Gayle Smith](#), former USAID Administrator and Skoll Foundation Board Member; [Comfort Ero](#), President and CEO of the International Crisis Group; [Unni Karunakara](#), Senior Fellow, Global Health Justice Partnership at Yale Law School and former International President of MSF; Aurora Prize Laureates [Marguerite Barankitse](#), [Mirza Dinnayi](#), and [Julienne Lusenge](#); Aurora Prize Selection Committee members [Chelsea Clinton](#), [Leymah Gbowee](#), [John Prendergast](#), and [Dele Olojede](#), and Aurora Luminaries [Sima Samar](#), [Hadiqa Bashir](#), and [Ana Giménez Pozzoli](#), among others.

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### 6. 2025 Aurora Prize Receives Record 868 Nominations from 120 Countries and Territories

Aurora's 2025 nomination cycle reflected rising global need and the courage of those who respond. Nominees represented key areas of humanitarian assistance, including [healthcare \(~60%\)](#), [human rights \(36%\)](#), [economic empowerment \(20%\)](#), and [psychosocial support \(20%\)](#).

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### 7. Aurora Community Speaks Out

This year, Aurora voices helped shape the global conversation on how the world [supports people on the frontline](#) and responds to crisis, from [Armine Afeyan](#) and [Julienne Lusenge](#) in [Diplomatic Courier](#) urging stronger investment in grassroots humanitarians, to [Tom Catena](#) writing in [America](#) about what effective aid looks like on the ground, to [Noubar Afeyan's Los Angeles Times commentary](#) on how new actors can step up when traditional assistance falls short.

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### 8. A New Generation of Humanitarians Rises Through Young Aurora

[UWC Mahindra College](#) topped 19 youth-led projects from UWC schools and the African Leadership Academy to win the 2024–2025 Young Aurora competition. With Aurora's \$10,000 grant, their [Chulha Project](#) will bring cleaner cookstoves to 50 households in Maharashtra's Mulshi Valley, cutting indoor smoke by up to 86% and halving firewood use for the women and children most exposed to toxic air.

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## Thank You for Being Part of Aurora's Journey

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