

Welcome to the end-of-year edition of the **GRATITUDE IN ACTION** newsletter, which recaps the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative's developments quarterly. For more regular updates, please follow us on [X](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

As we look back at 2023 in this last installment of the year, we feel grateful to modern-day heroes helping others and saving lives amidst ongoing conflicts, genocides, human rights violations, and other atrocities that have affected millions, with the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide at its highest point in recent history. So much has changed recently – sadly, much of it for the worse, so today, more than ever, we have to follow the spirit of our common humanity and provide humanitarian aid, comfort, and support to the vulnerable.

For Aurora, the last year was marred by personal tragedies as well. Together with the rest of the world, we mourned the death of Benjamin Ferencz, global peace and human rights activist who joined the Aurora Prize Selection Committee as its Honorary Co-Chair in 2019. Along with our global community, we were shocked by the unjust arrest by the government of Azerbaijan of Aurora Co-Founder Ruben Vardanyan. Many international humanitarians and human rights defenders **have called for his release**, and we thank them for this unanimous show of solidarity. We urge you to **take action** too, demanding that Ruben and other unlawfully detained Armenian prisoners are freed immediately.



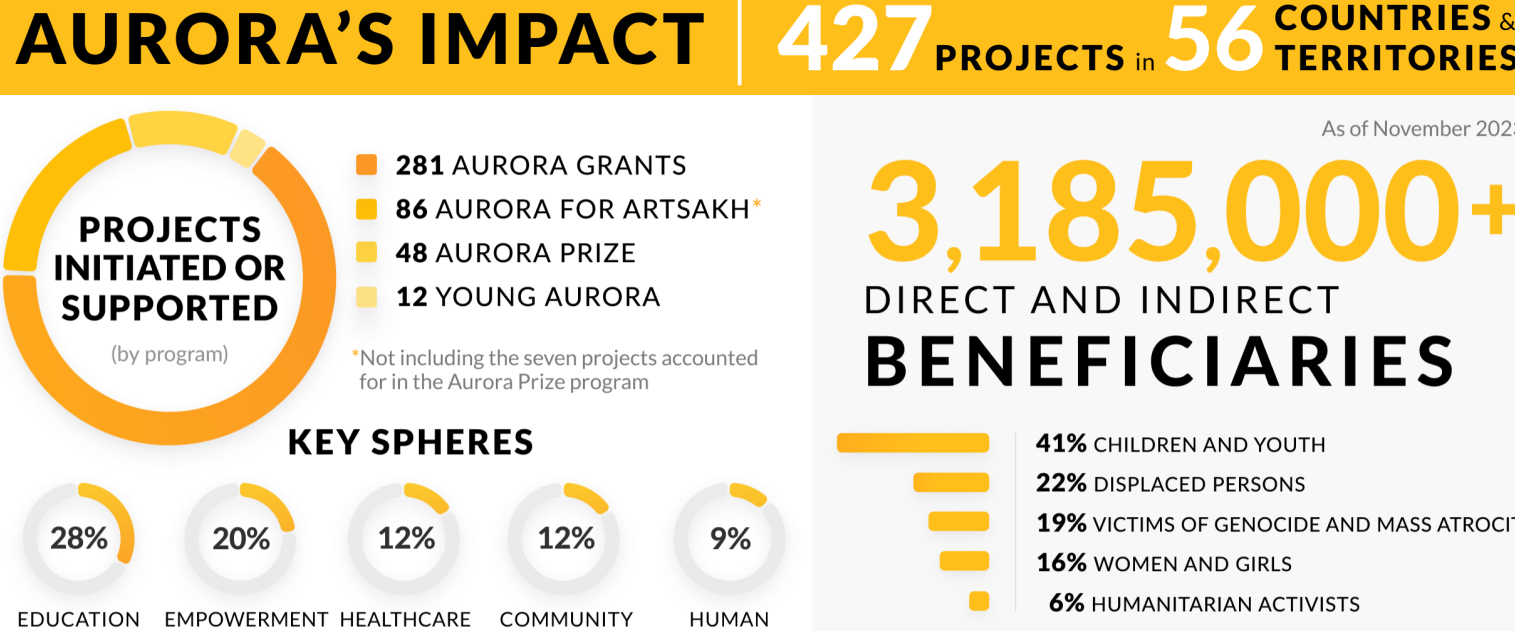
Even in the face of these challenges, Aurora has remained steadfast in our efforts to bring tangible positive change to the communities that need it the most. The launch of the Vartan Gregorian Humanitarian Fund will ensure that Aurora will be a self-sustaining entity for years to come. Most recently, the programs funded by the Initiative have been providing vulnerable groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with safe drinking water, giving girls in Somalia access to education, supporting women and girls in Afghanistan with economic empowerment opportunities and psychosocial wellbeing sessions, helping survivors of sexualized violence in India, and aiding Artsakh refugees.

Our work would not be possible without the support and contributions of our community. Thank you for your #GratitudeInAction! Please enjoy this brief recap of our activities and achievements as you prepare to celebrate the winter holidays. We wish you a very happy new year as we approach 2024 and hope you will continue to generously support Aurora's global movement to awaken humanity, especially in this time of great need.

Share Gratitude in Action This Season

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Dedicated to supporting the world's unsung humanitarian heroes while addressing on-the-ground humanitarian challenges, Aurora has already made a significant impact on the lives of those in greatest need.



2024 Aurora Humanitarians

On September 18, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative **announced the 2024 Aurora Humanitarians** at the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) annual meeting in New York City. One of these Humanitarians will be selected as the next Aurora Prize Laureate at a ceremony to take place in Los Angeles, California in May 2024.

Meet the 2024 Aurora Humanitarians:



Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja
Bahrain / Denmark

A human rights advocate who has been fearlessly defending the most vulnerable communities in Bahrain.



Nasrin Sotoudeh
Iran

A human rights defender representing Iranian opposition activists, young prisoners, and women's rights activists.



Denis Mukwege
Democratic Republic of the Congo

A gynecologist helping survivors of sexual violence and advocating for the elimination of rape as a weapon of war.

Expanding International Partnerships

In 2023, the Initiative continued to strengthen existing partnerships and enhance its global standing while helping the most destitute and raising awareness of humanitarian challenges around the world. Representatives of Aurora have taken part in numerous humanitarian symposiums, panel discussions, and similar events, using those opportunities to speak of the #GratitudeInAction movement and its impact.

In late February, Aurora **welcomed Dame Louise Richardson**, President of Carnegie Corporation of New York, to the Selection Committee of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity. A political scientist by training, Richardson is recognized internationally as an expert on terrorism and counterterrorism.



On September 7-8, 2023, 2022 Aurora Prize Laureate Jamila Afghani, Aurora Humanitarian Initiative Executive Director Armine Afeyan, and 2020 Aurora Prize Laureate Ilwad Elman took part in the **2023 Innovations in International Philanthropy Symposium** in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Later that month, the Canadian Friends of Aurora Fund organized an exclusive dinner in Montreal where the Initiative's supporters had a unique opportunity to learn more about Aurora's impact directly from Jamila Afghani and Aurora Co-Founder Noubar Afeyan.

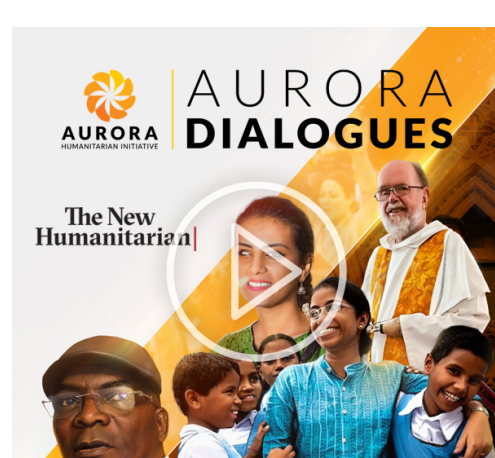


Dr. Tom Catena, Aurora Chair and 2017 Aurora Prize Laureate, and **Jamila Afghani** were also invited to speak at the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) annual meeting organized in September 2023 in New York City.

On September 20, 2023, during the United Nations General Assembly High-level Week, RefugePoint and the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative joined forces to hold insightful conversations aimed at reshaping humanitarian and refugee response. The event featured Aurora Co-Founder Noubar Afeyan, Dr. Tom Catena, and Armine Afeyan.

2023 Aurora Dialogues Online

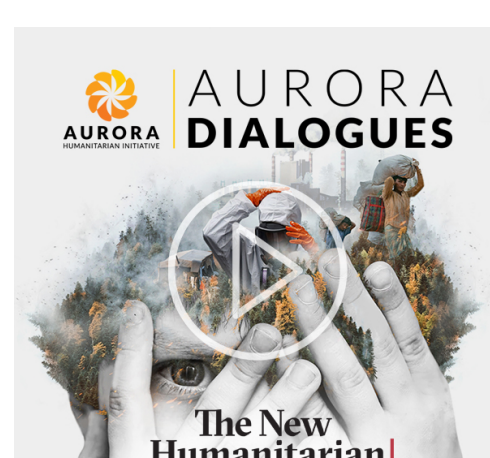
In 2023, the Aurora Dialogues attracted significant attention as a stimulant for positive action across some of the world's most pressing challenges. We convened experts for collaborative talks tackling issues ranging from **women's leadership** and **finding inspiration for humanitarian activism** to the **democratization of humanitarianism** and **using religion as a uniting force for good**. Aurora has also joined forces with **The New Humanitarian** and its CEO, Heba Aly, who acted as a moderator during several discussions.



Fighting for Change: Life Stories of Aurora Modern-Day Heroes



Faith in Humanity: Religion as a Uniting Force for Good



The Way Out: Rethinking the World's Approach to Skyrocketing Humanitarian Needs

Aurora for Artsakh

On June 30, 2023, the Initiative concluded the Aurora for Artsakh program, launched in 2020 and focused on humanitarian aid, healthcare, social development, infrastructure restoration, education, culture, and sport. Overall, Aurora has allocated \$2.2 million to support 93 projects implemented by 70 local and international partners. In total, this program has helped provide sustainable solutions and support for over 150,000 people.



Even with the program concluded, the efforts to help the people of Artsakh continue. In October 2023, Noubar Afeyan, Co-Founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, and Anna Afeyan, Co-Chair of the Afeyan Foundation, announced a commitment of **\$2 million to serve over 100,000 displaced people from Artsakh** (Nagorno-Karabakh) who were uprooted from their homes following the deadly attacks by Azerbaijan in September. The donation is to be provided by the Afeyan Foundation, which previously teamed up with Aurora to help the people of Artsakh in the aftermath of the 2020 war.

Youth Engagement

For the 2022-2023 cycle, the Young Aurora competition project entries covered a broad scope of issues, with some focused on addressing health concerns, like an enterprise raising awareness of the dangers of endocrine-disrupting chemicals in beauty products, and another intent on tackling domestic violence through the provision of an app offering educational resources and community support. On March 23, 2023, after a closely contested presentation, the Cambill project developed by the UWC Dilijan team **was announced as the winner** of the latest cycle of Young Aurora. This project addresses mounting levels of air pollution by suggesting more effective ways to manage biowaste.



The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative launched the Young Aurora competition in 2017. It is currently presented in partnership with the United World Colleges (UWC) and with the participation of Teach for All and the African Leadership Academy (ALA). The program encourages students from across all UWC schools and colleges to set up or further develop service projects addressing a humanitarian issue either in the proximity of or with specific relevance to their UWC school or college.

The 2024 Aurora Prize Laureate

will be announced in **May 2024** in Los Angeles, California

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