vela
Foundation
Poland

annual report



Vela Foundation

FUNDACJA VELA, ORGANIZACJA HUMANITARNA NA RZECZ OCHRONY I EDUKACJI

2024



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Message from the President of the Council

2024 was a landmark year for the Vela Foundation, one that redefined the scale, scope and spirit of our humanitarian mission.

From our beginnings in Poland two years ago, Vela has grown into a recognised and trusted actor in child protection and refugee support and integration actor across multiple regions.This year, we not only expanded our operations across new territories, and deepened our impact at the community level, but we also achieved major milestones. Initiating our cooperation with UNICEF as child protection partner operating across Poland.

This partnership represents a profound vote of confidence in our team's integrity, professionalism and unwavering commitment to the most vulnerable - especially children navigating the trauma of displacement.

Our cooperation with UNICEF and the continued support of our private donors allowed us to reach thousand of individuals living in precarious conditions in reception sites, shelters and underserved community hubs. We provided critical psychosocial support, child protection services and education interventions, particularly for the most vulnerable communities such as children with disabilities, Roma families from Ukraine and survivors of conflict-related trauma.

The expansio of our partnerships this year was another cornerstone of progress. We work hand-in-hand with national and local authorities, civil society organisations and technology partners to co-design services that are both scalable and deeply rooted in community participation. With the support of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, we launched our "Nook" Kitchen initiative in Krakow, empowering families to access nutritious meals while creating a space for dignity, community and resilience.

Message from the President of the Council

At the same time, we invested in the future. Vela's engagement with EU funded projects targeting child trafficking underpins our commitment to child protection, focusing on AI-driven child trafficking prevention. This initiative underscores our belief that innovation and technology must be at the heart of humanitarian response. We believe that the fight for child protection extends beyond borders and requires new tools, bold thinking and cross-sector collaboration.

None of these achievements would have been possible without our dedicated staff, our inspiring community partners, and the incredible generosity and trust of our donors. You make our missions real. You help us go where others can't. And together, we build pathways for hope, dignity and opportunity. We help people reclaim their lives.

As we look to 2025, our mission remains clear: to protect, to empower, and uplift those in need.

Thank you for believing in the journey - and walking it with us.



2024 - A year of impact and partnership

2024 marked a year of growth, consolidation and impact for VELA Poland.

Building on its initial pilot interventions, VELA expanded its partnerships with its donors, UNICEF, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Choose Love and other donors, implementing three major humanitarian and community-based programs across the country.

Through an integrated approach, combining protection, psychosocial support and community empowerment, VELA ensured that children, youth and families affected by displacement had access to safety, learning and inclusion.

our reach





Supporting and Operating Community Centres

AURORA was launched in 2023 as a multi-donor initiative designed to strengthen community centers across Poland and to ensure that displaced populations and host communities had access to psychosocial support, integration activities, and skills development. AURORA continued strong and transformed the lives of hundreds of vulnerable people in Krakow.

Objectives

- **Strengthen the institutional and operational capacity of community centers and shelters in Poland.**
- **Provide mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) to children, youth and caregivers.**
- **Deliver integration activities, including Polish language classes and cooking workshops, fostering skills and community cohesion.**
- **Support livelihoods and employability pathways, including training opportunities for adults and youth.**
- **Contribute to dignified living conditions.**

Our work at HOPE Shelter by Hope Foundation (Przemyśl):

Contributed financially to the the operation

Supported the daily provision of meals and non-food items.

Coordinated volunteers and offered training for staff.

Established rules and safeguarding guidelines to ensure safe, child-friendly environments.

AURORA Community Center

Multi-service community center offering psychosocial support, Info Point, Polish language lessons and group workshops.

Established and managed the NOOK kitchen, providing integration activities through cooking and cultural exchange.

Implemented regular community events and psychosocial sessions for children, youth and families.



Our work at the Community Center by Foundation LWF (Lutheran World Federation) in Poland (Wrocław):

Conducted MHPSS and social support activities for refugees and host community members.

Integration workshops, including language lessons, art-based sessions and youth-focused psychosocial activities.

Co-running of Świetlica Community Center with Fundacja Kocham Dębniki (Kraków):

Organized creative, educational and integration activities for children and parents.

Promoted community building and inclusion through neighborhood events and workshops.

Łąki by Stowarzyszenie Edukacji Krytycznej (Wrocław):

Offered psychosocial and cultural activities fostering inclusion and cooperation between Polish and Ukrainian residents.

Hosted art and language workshops that supported children's and adults' social participation.

Our work at Fundacja Fine (Kraków):

Provided targeted psychosocial support, counselling and community activities for refugees and migrants.

Strengthened local integration initiatives through collaboration with municipal and NGO partners.





AURORA directly supported more than 1,000 beneficiaries in 2024, providing a combination of psychosocial care, education and community-based integration support in partnership with local NGOs and international donors.

- **Strengthened the operational capacity of HOPE Foundation in Przemyśl, enabling sustainable services for children and families.**
- **Established regular Polish language and cooking classes in Kraków, contributing to integration and skills development.**
- **Enhanced the service package of the Wrocław Community Center, with MHPSS and senior/youth group activities.**
- **Improved community trust and participation through structured psychosocial and cultural activities.**
- **Leveraged multi-donor support to cover salaries, rent, equipment, and activity costs, ensuring continuous service delivery.**



Mobile psychosocial support

In late 2023, VELA Poland launched its large-scale partnership with UNICEF to provide integrated services for children and caregivers in collective shelters across Poland. The UNICEF program was made possible through strong partnerships and significant financial investment.

The Social Behavioral Component (SBC) of the intervention involved the shift in the attitude of target communities towards their livelihoods and their role in shaping their future in Poland. This component was a multidisciplinary effort of our outreach teams, social workers, psychologists, animators, activity leaders to engage with our beneficiaries in a way that is merely out of the “server-served” relationship but in a way that they are treated as equals in the conversation. This required meticulous design of the engagement and the outreach, refined service offering to tackle sensitive issues in complex situations, and most importantly engage the whole family not just the parent or the child.



Objectives

- To ensure access to quality mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services for children and caregivers.
- To provide individual case management and referrals for children at risk and survivors of GBV.
- To facilitate access to education for children and training or employment opportunities for caregivers.
- To build the capacity of staff through training, clinical supervision and alignment with UNICEF's global MHPSS standards



Communities served

more than 1,000 children and caregivers accessing MHPSS services

around 40 children supported through child protection case management

around 10 survivors of gender-based violence supported

around 2,500 individuals reached with social and behaviour change messaging

more than 900 beneficiaries provided with WASH supplies

more than 50 children referred to education services



By the end of 2024, the intervention had established itself as a cornerstone of psychosocial and protection support for refugee and host communities in Poland.

The program not only reached thousands of children and caregivers but also built trust with local communities and strengthened institutional collaboration.

Key outcomes:

- **4,847 children and caregivers accessed mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services**
- **469 children received individual case management and follow-up**
- **2,047 beneficiaries accessed gender-based violence (GBV) mitigation, prevention and response services.**
- **10,568 individuals had access to safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)**



- 16,064 people were reached through social and behavior change (SBC) messaging and awareness campaigns.
- 2,786 people participated in community-based SBC actions and engagement activities
- 718 individuals provided feedback, questions, or concerns through established community mechanisms
- 1,551 people received WASH supplies and hygiene materials, improving living conditions in collective shelters
- 790 children were referred to education opportunities and 698 received school or learning materials
- 1,727 caregivers and youth were referred to training or employment opportunities
- 25 staff members were trained on child protection, safeguarding, and MHPSS standards.



Organization of individual and group psychosocial support sessions.

Distribution of hygiene kits and WASH supplies to improve shelter living conditions.

Deployment of mobile MHPSS teams to shelters, providing regular presence and accessible services.

Referrals of children to schools and education programs, and of caregivers to training and employability opportunities.

Child protection case management

Training and clinical supervision for staff, ensuring professional standards, safeguarding, and compliance with UNICEF and IASC global guidance.

Provision of gender-based violence risk mitigation and response services

Starlight reached a diverse and growing group of beneficiaries across three regions: Podkarpackie (Przemyśl), Małopolskie (Kraków) and Lower Silesia (Wrocław):

In Przemyśl, over 40 individual MHPSS sessions were delivered to displaced women and families



More than 100 adults attended Polish language courses throughout the year

Around 120 individuals participated in cooking and self-development workshops

where food builds community

Our Nook Kitchen, located in the Aurora Community Center in Kraków has been established as a powerful tool for both skill-building and social connection. With the generous support of our donors, we established a professional-grade kitchen to support livelihoods and food security for our communities. The Nook is available daily for anyone wishing to prepare healthy, quality meals for themselves and their loved ones—ensuring that daily nutrition is not a barrier to dignity or stability.

In 2024, culinary workshops came to be the core activity of the Nook Kitchen, combining practical cooking skills with opportunities for social interaction, teamwork, and informal learning. Participants were actively involved in all stages of food preparation, fostering a sense of ownership, cooperation, and collective responsibility. Culinary workshops and community building events combined practical cooking skills with opportunities for social interaction, teamwork and informal learning. Participants were actively involved in food preparation processes, contributing to a sense of ownership and collective responsibility. The workshops also functioned as a community engagement mechanism, encouraging regular attendance and peer support – with overall reach of 143 participants.



emergency response

In November 2024, severe flooding struck parts of southern Poland, particularly in the Dolnośląskie region around Kłodzko. Entire neighborhoods were submerged, households lost basic possessions and vulnerable families were left without safe shelter or essential supplies.

Recognizing the urgent needs, VELA Poland mobilized quickly with the support of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The flood response was designed as a targeted, emergency intervention to stabilize affected families, provide material relief and contribute to safe and dignified living conditions in the aftermath of the disaster.

Municipal authorities in Dolnośląskie and community volunteers facilitated identification of households and distributions





emergency response

Objectives

* Provide rapid emergency relief to families affected by flooding in Dolnośląskie.

* Ensure households regained access to basic non-food items (NFIs), furniture and equipment.

* Support the most vulnerable families through targeted home equipment and renovation assistance.

* Restore safety and dignity to affected communities, preventing further deterioration as winter approached.



emergency response

Activities

Conducted rapid needs assessments in affected neighborhoods of Kłodzko.

Procured and distributed essential non-food items (NFIs), including household goods, bedding, hygiene kits and furniture.

Supported 35 households with direct provision of equipment and small-scale renovations to restore habitability.

Worked with local authorities and community leaders to identify the most vulnerable beneficiaries and ensure transparent distribution processes.

Coordinated logistics and delivery despite difficult access conditions caused by damaged roads and infrastructure.

emergency response

Beneficiaries

Over 100 families received direct material support between September 2024 and February 2025. Among them:









emergency response

Outcomes

- Stabilized conditions for over 100 households through the distribution of NFIs and equipment.
- Improved safety, dignity and hygiene for 35 families whose homes were directly rehabilitated or equipped.
- Strengthened community resilience by demonstrating fast, reliable and accountable emergency response.
- Enhanced VELA's reputation as a trusted humanitarian partner able to react quickly to sudden-onset crises in Poland.
- Leveraged multi-donor support to cover salaries, rent, equipment, and activity costs, ensuring continuous service delivery.

our donors

Donor:
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Funded kitchen renovation and Polish language classes at our Community Center.

Donor:
High net work individuals and families

Contributed to leveraging Vela's operations across the board.

Donor:
UNICEF

Supported Starlight mobile psychosocial support, MHPSS activities, training and SBC components.

Donor:
Choose Love

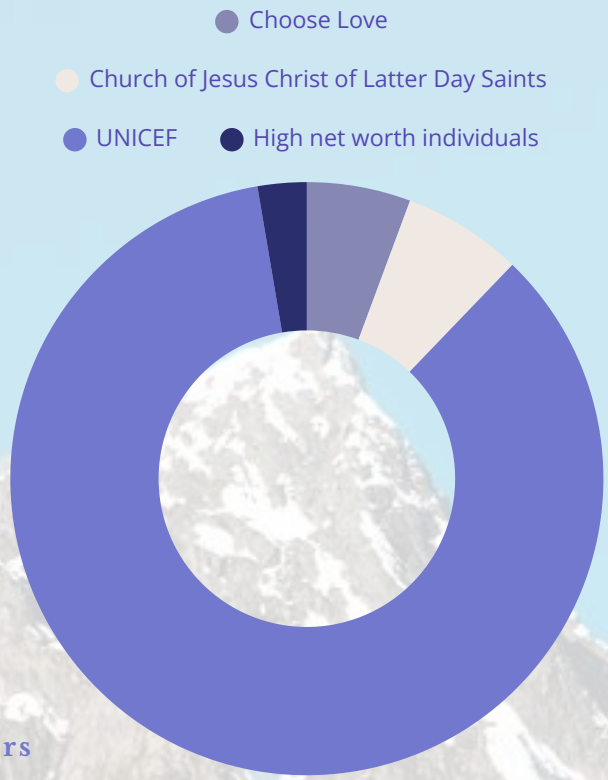
Co-funded integration activities and direct community services.

our donors

UNICEF served as the primary donor, covering our Starlight mobile child protection monitoring across Polish regions with a budget of PLN 2.69 million. Vela's partnership with UNICEF as child protection partner in Poland enabled the outreach to underserved areas in the four regions of operations reaching vulnerable children at risk of violence, trafficking and exploitation.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints kindly supported the establishment of our NOOK Kitchen and the continuation of Polish language certification courses with a total of EUR 48900.

Choose Love, continuing their support since the beginning, contributed with USD 50,000 for the operation of the AURORA Community Center and the efforts to integrate refugees in Polish society.



Outlook for 2025

As we enter 2025, the humanitarian landscape remains deeply complex. Crises continue to evolve, and the needs of displaces and vulnerable populations persist at an unprecedented scale.

Against this backdrop, Vela Foundation stands strong guided by our mission to serve with integrity, compassion and innovation.

2025 began with a significant challenge: the UN funding freeze, which disrupted multiple aid operations globally. While this sudden shift in institutional financing impacted many of our planned programs, it did not deter our resolve.

Drawing upon the strength and agility of our team, the trust and flexibility of our donors and the commitment of our community partners, we were able to restructure operations swiftly and maintain critical services.

Our partnerships remained our greatest asset. We continued close cooperation with key stakeholders, including local authorities, civil society actors and the UN. Together we adapted to the funding climate by co-designing community - driven solutions that preserved the integrity of our programming ,especially in psychosocial support, protection and education.

Moreover, we stepped up where others stepped back. As partner organizations began to scale down or exit the field, our Aurora community center not only remained open but expanded its services—specifically by scaling up food distributions and the provision of Non-Food Items (NFIs). This rapid response filled urgent gaps for hundreds of families who suddenly lost access to essential aid.

Our role as a UNICEF child protection partner was reaffirmed in early 2025, allowing us to continue delivering vital services in shelters, reception centers, and underserved areas across Poland. Simultaneously, our work under the EU SAFE BORDERS initiative on combating child trafficking through AI-powered intelligence moved into its implementation phase, placing Vela at the forefront of digital innovation in humanitarian protection.

This year also marks our deepened investment in local capacity building. We launched a new round of trainings for frontline responders, expanded our partnerships with grassroots organizations, and piloted peer-led initiatives to amplify refugee voices.

Despite the financial headwinds, Vela's foundation remains solid—both in mission and in momentum. We will continue to adapt, evolve, and lead with purpose. For us, resilience is not just surviving uncertainty, but turning it into opportunity.

We remain grateful to our team, partners, and supporters for walking this path with us. Together, we will continue building safe, inclusive, and empowered communities—one life at a time.