vela Foundation Poland

bi-annual report



Vela Foundation

FUNDACJA VELA, ORGANIZACJA HUMANITARNA NA RZECZ OCHRONY I EDUKACJI

2022-2023



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message from the president

This Vela Foundation's first report, and presents our inaugural activities in Poland in supporting people in need. It covers our work, from the beginning of our operation in the country in May 2022, and the opening of Vela Foundation in September 2022, until the end of 2023.

It is of special significance for us, as it demonstrates our trajectory through our start-up phase, and showcases, the hard work and dedication of our people in improving lives and offering hope.

When the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine began, our founding team, a group of experienced humanitarian professionals, decided to act. Following a thorough needs assessment, our initial intervention in Poland started in June 2022. We provided psychosocial support to refugees from Ukraine, in reception sites and accommodation centers, initially in Warsaw. We soon realised a full presence was necessary to work effectively and provide transparency to our donors and job security to our staff. Vela Foundation was born in September 2022.

Having seen the immense needs, we rapidly expanded the operation in Krakow. Soon we co-developed and managed a community center in Krakow with a local partner. We expanded to more community centers in 2023 and piloted an innovative AI voice technology to capture the stories of refugees in collaboration with a US AI partner. This breakthrough technology proved its potential in a joint dual event in Krakow and London in October 2023 where we showcased the immense potential to humanitarian actors, innovators and donors.

In late 2023 we initiated a protection monitoring and social behavioral change project in Krakow in partnership with UNICEF across Poland. This cooperation allows us to access refugees in underserved locations where the needs are more acute and pressing.

None of this would have been possible without the dedication and commitment of our staff, the generosity of our donors, and the collaboration of our partners on the ground.

where we work

The constellation of Vela organisations expands beyond borders. Vela Foundation in Poland works in three voivodeships with ad hoc activities in other regions. Our sister organisation Vela Greece that was established in February 2024 works with vulnerable populations currently in the mainland with vision for expansion within the year. Vela Cyprus was established in October 2023 with aim to respond to the needs of vulnerable people on the island with a focus on children.





how we work

At Vela, putting people first is our top priority. We are dedicated to serving our target communities to the best of our abilities, and constantly enhancing the skills of our team. By implementing effective systems, we support our staff to achieve their best performance, and excel in challenging scenarios. Our focus is on nurturing professionals who can thrive in intricate situations, providing them with opportunities to demonstrate their potential as we progress. Clinical supervision, staff care, training, and support are embedded in our programming cycle, and our daily routine.

We constantly measure the impact of our work on our target communities, striving to engage them in constructive dialogue. Feedback and accountability is essential to our work, as we leverage community input, to push for change in how we work alongside them and for them.

We constantly challenge our operation modalities to ensure we are at the top of our game, and we make efficient and effective use of our resources, while maintaining our flexibility to respond to emergencies and changing situations swiftly.

We work side by side with our donors, striving to maintain a “partner-on-the-ground’ role in our cooperation, providing expertise, and insight into the evolving challenges of target communities, that helps shaping strategy, and focus on what is important to fund. We analyse the general environment where we work, and make valid predictions on government, and other institutional policy makers, that will shape the operational context where we work.

Vela mission

we empower the journey



leadership and culture

At Vela, we address the most acute problems of people in need, while maintaining professional standards, robust policies, and efficient procedures. We strive to maintain quality standards, to inspire trust and confidence for our partners, donors, staff, and contractors.

We are known for creating opportunities to expose our people to new experiences and develop them in new fields, learn new skills, and advance their knowledge. We have circular staff progression modalities including expert training, on-going support and supervision that enable our people to diffuse their mental workload and build close-knit teams that address issues and challenges as a whole.

We focus on flexibility to respond to crises and emergencies swiftly, while maintaining our operational standards. Our aim is, to be a professional, agile and responsive organisation, that addresses the challenges of our target communities at the core, and provides durable solutions, that can be scaled, and replicated for maximum impact.

For our donors, we focus on being a long-term, valuable partner, by providing current, evidence-based analysis, and insight into unfolding situations, as well as leveraging our knowledge and expertise in updating their funding strategies. We value our relationship with our donors, both public and private, and strive for continuously exploring other forms of cooperation with them other than funding.

For our partners on the ground we aim to be a trusted and reliable partner who can leverage our shared potential for maximum impact for our target communities. In the process we strive to share our knowledge, insight and expertise and create sustainable synergies that have meaningful impact on the lives of the people we serve.



aurora
community centers

strengthening communities

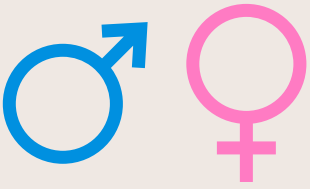
Picture a safety net during tough times, and a powerhouse of resilience and teamwork, that's our community building approach! We roll up our sleeves, and team up with local organisations, creating a win-win bond. Our game plan? Weaving a web of social connections, that spark unity and positive vibes.

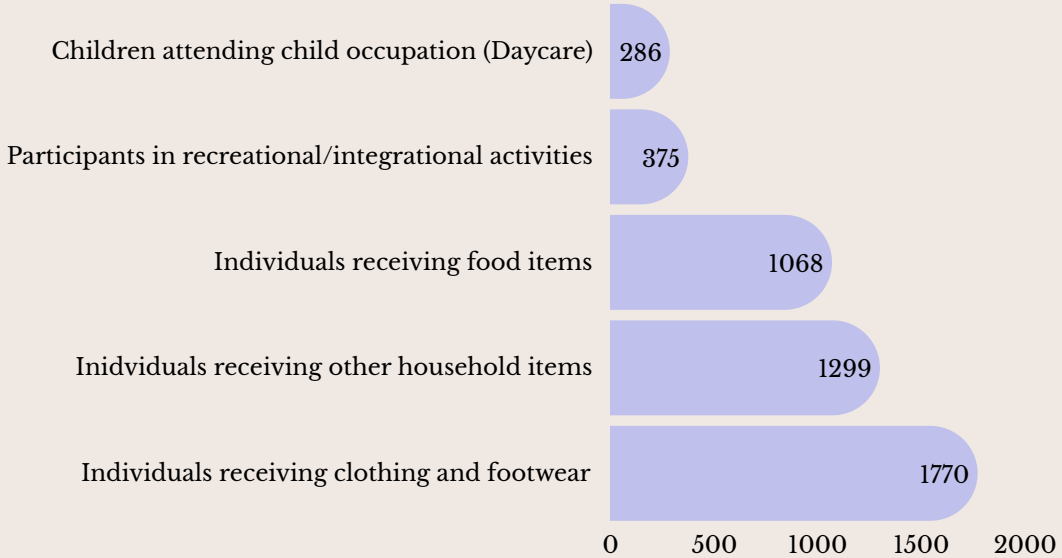
By teaming up with local organisations to co-operate community hubs, we share wisdom, boost sustainability, and cater to the unique needs of each community.

In our community centers we provide a bundle of services, tailored and addressing, local living circumstances and needs. Each center has its own operational model, based on a central core of processes and policies, and provides a unique mix of services, relevant to the local populations.

Our service mix includes psychosocial support, referrals, support with registration to public benefits and school enrolment, group sessions, language learning including Polish and English, legal support, arts and crafts, sports and wellness, discussion groups, child occupation, community kitchen etc.



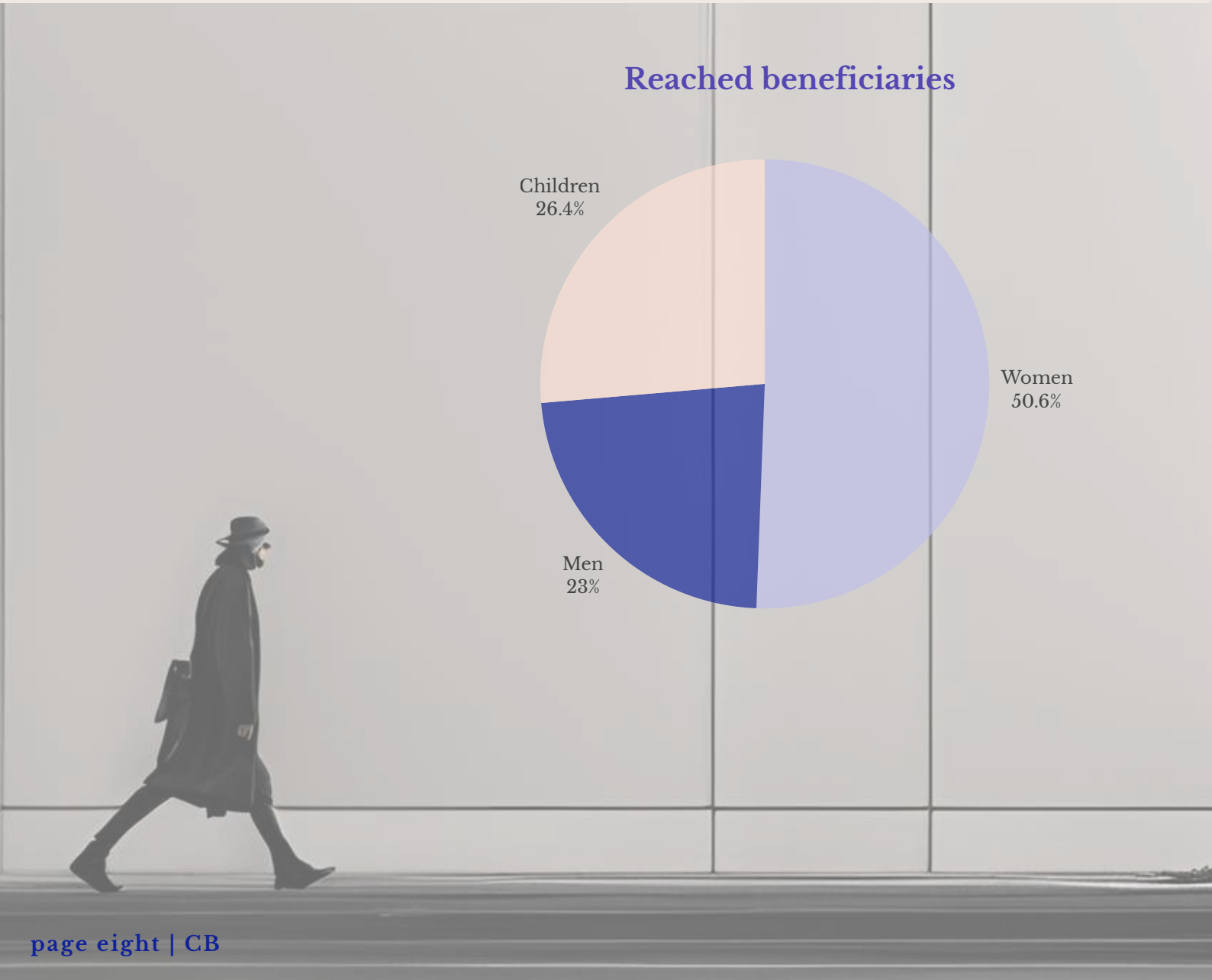




building the capacity of civil society

Sharing of know-how

Our humanitarian journey has always been closely tied to building the capacity of civil society, to better attain their mission, and realise their objectives. This comes hand in hand, with the challenges faced by large numbers of target communities, combined with the difficulties faced by national and regional response systems to such challenges, that they are often called to address. Through joining forces with other organisations, we transfer our know-how on setting up policies and procedures, we mix Vela teams with theirs, we provide training and support, and co-develop impactful interventions. This mix has proved to enhance organisations' potential beyond their current trajectory.



starlight
mobile psychosocial support

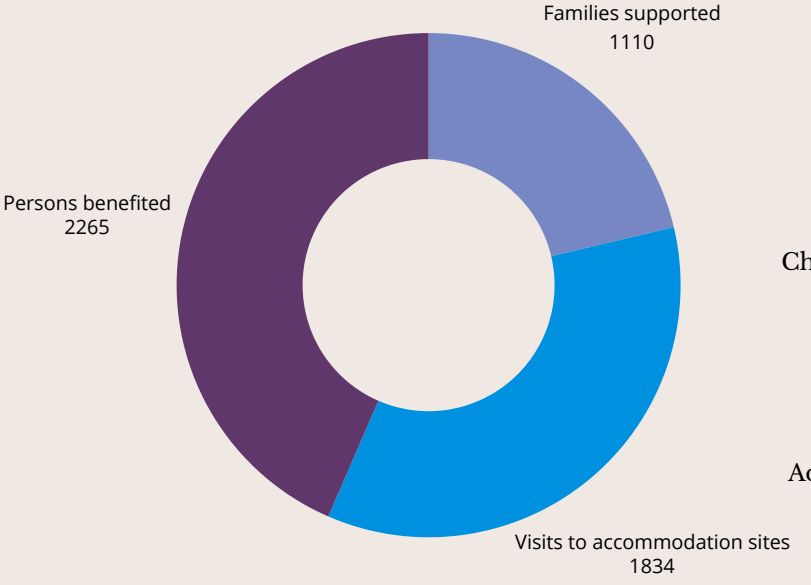
uplifting spirits during challenging times

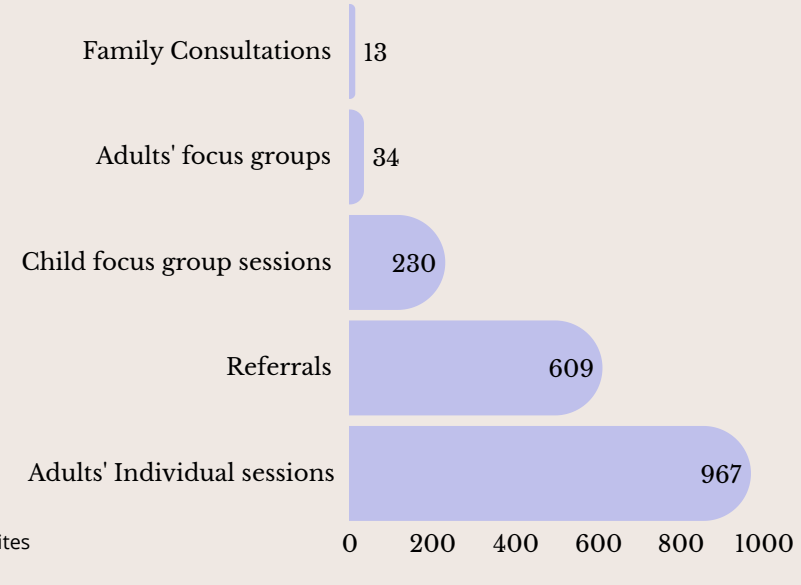
Our initial on-the-ground initiative, Starlight mobile MHPSS teams, hold a special place in our hearts for its positive impact during tough times. This endeavor holds significant value in supporting individuals during challenging circumstances.

Originating as an immediate response to individuals facing distress, whether in transit or situated in emergency facilities like reception sites and shelters, Starlight mitigates the impact of trauma and distress resulting from displacement, loss of familial ties, and disruptions to one's accustomed way of life.

Through Starlight, we strive ease the emotional burden of losing one's home, family, or way of life. Our team of mobile psychologists and social workers has visited numerous shelters, accommodation centers, reception sites, and other locations to offer psychological aid, facilitate access to necessary services, coordinate with public entities, assist in securing long-term housing , assist with school enrollment, and more.

Our impact





livelihoods and integration

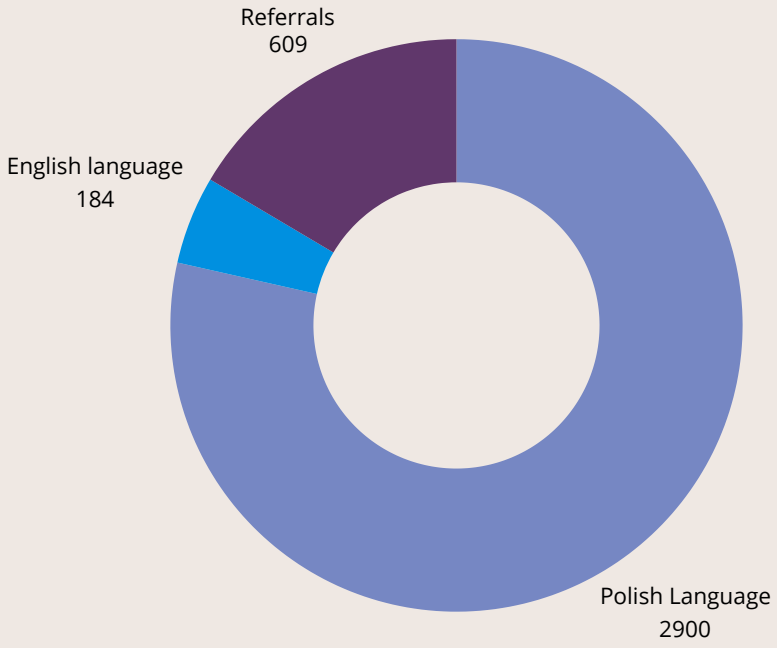
assisting individuals in finding their path

Our integration efforts are grounded in a comprehensive strategy, to empower individuals to take charge of their lives. This includes addressing fundamental needs, ensuring psychosocial stability, and reinforcing their social connections, all part of our Aurora program. Integration occurs when individuals are empowered to pursue employment, enhance their living standards, and care for their loved ones.

Vela guides vulnerable individuals through this process, by offering training and retraining opportunities, language instruction, referrals to services, job opportunities, and access to benefits. We also approach integration through a multiplicity of community events, involving the local communities and organised groups. This process supports the establishment of social bonds among vulnerable groups, as well as with local communities.

Livelihoods support also means our target communities, do not have to worry about daily nutrition and quality food for their families. With the help of our donors, we set up a professional range kitchen in our Aurora Community Center in Krakow. Nook, our kitchen operation is available daily to anyone who wishes to prepare quality food for their loved ones. Our community kitchen, the "Nook" is a a hub for social gathering, cooking events such as cooking classes and soup kitchen that render sustainable livelihoods to our target communities.

Supported individuals



Our impact

We implemented

- 67 english classes
- 257 polish classes
- referred 609 people to third party services.

looking ahead - strategy 2024 - 2027

Vela is currently at a turning point. Its rapid expansion in 2023 spread our impact on people's lives and will continue to do so in the future. With the expansion come additional opportunities to be harnessed to continue on our path of helping people where needed. Our strategy is laid out in three fundamental objectives.

Objective 1: Further develop our people
Vela continuously expanded in 2023, with an exponential rate in the third quarter of 2023. We strive to bring out the best in our people, and find the hidden qualities that make each one of us excel in our work. Our goal is to create more exposure for our staff, expand our line of work and give them more space to express their views and bring in their experiences.

Objective 2: Expand our collaborations in Poland
We aim to expand our network of partners to include additional accommodation sites and shelters, community centers and service organisations. We aim to develop complementary activities with other service providers for the benefit of our target communities. At the same time we aim to strengthen our collaboration with public institutions such as municipalities and other institutional authorities. These partnerships will leverage Vela's potential of becoming a trusted partner for institutional actors in their efforts to alleviate the challenges of refugees and other vulnerable people in Poland.

Objective 4: Expand operations in other EU countries
We want to expand the operation of Vela in Greece and Cyprus to accommodate the needs of vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied children, refugees, ethnic minorities and people on the verge of poverty

Objective 5: Develop rapid response teams
Europe will continue to be a destination for refugees fleeing wars and conflict, climatic catastrophes and migrants seeking a better future. Reception points are often overburdened with high numbers, struggling or unable to provide adequate first assistance to people arriving on European soil. Vela will create a rapid response team, that can be deployed within hours at emergency reception points across Europe. We aim to work closely together with local and national authorities as well as international players on the ground to ensure our presence supports and complements the existing work carried out on the ground.

our donors

We take pride in building strong and lasting relationships with our donors, by involving them in our work, and enabling their participation in our activities. This approach allows them to witness the challenges they help people to overcome, and the quality of the work we do on the ground with their valuable support.

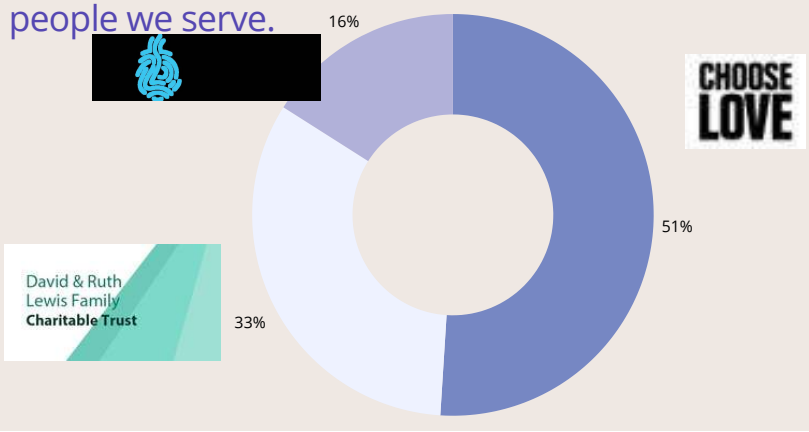
We also are very grateful, for their swift response, to our calls to support emergency response operations where needed. We are confident this swift approach stems from our mutual mission to support people when and where necessary.

In 2022 we began operations in Poland through initial funding from Choose Love for the Starlight mobile psychosocial support teams. We initiated operation in Warsaw and expanded to Krakow in the midst of the increased influx of Ukrainian refugees in Poland where refugees we in dire need for psychosocial support. We are grateful to Choose Love for trusting us with our initial operation in Poland and they remain a valuable partner to us until now.

The David & Ruth Lewis Family Charitable Trust joined us and supported the set-up of our Aurora community centers in Krakow, and capacity buidling efforts for local organisations

LOTIC AI a US based AI company trusted us the use of their technology to pioneer a AI technology in the humanitarian sector by capturing refugees' stories through our psychosocial support work and also funded our psychosocial support operation in the Krakow community Center. The AI tool generated real time needs and trends based on the captured stories. The exciting results of this pilot testing were showcased during a series of showcasing events in Krakow and London to stakeholders of the humanitarian sector.

We thank you all for your generous support and we promise to continue to be diligent in the work we do, to ensure your contributions make the greatest possible impact for the people we serve.



financial statements

Position	Amount as at end 2023 PLN
Current Assets	809 999 . 24
Short-Term Investments	424 811 . 26
Short Term Accruals	4 013 . 41
Payments due to the Statutory Fund	100 000 . 00
Total Liabilities	809 999 . 24
Liabilities and provisions for liabilities	74 545 . 28
Current Liabilities	29 332 . 94
Revenues from statutory Activities	2 041 821 . 55
Costs of statutory activities	1 140 458 . 81
Profit from statutory activities	901 362 . 74
Tax exempt revenues	2 042 143 . 61
Zysk(strata) brutto/ net	635 453 . 96

Note on 2024-2025

In 2024, global conflicts including those in Ukraine, Gaza, Yemen, and Sudan, along with continuous environmental emergencies such as floods in Europe (Poland and Spain), China, and Southeast Asia, as well as wildfires in California and Canada, created increased needs for humanitarian aid. At the same time, the global funding gap continued to widen. Children were prominently affected by these humanitarian needs. Vela expanded its activities in Poland, with an estimated turnover for 2024 reaching 3 million PLN (approximately 720,000 EUR), indicating a significant increase from 2023.

Supported by our esteemed donor and partner, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, we aided families in Lower Silesia to rebuild their homes following flood damage and provided essential psychosocial support. The Church also generously funded the establishment of “Nook,” a professional kitchen at Vela’s community center in Krakow, enabling at-risk families to prepare free meals and sustain themselves.

In December 2023, Vela was recognized as a trusted partner by the United Nations, commencing cooperation as a UNICEF protection partner across three voivodeships in Poland throughout 2024. Our efforts focused on residents in reception sites, accommodation centers, and community centers, delivering crucial psychosocial and educational support services.

Particular attention was given to vulnerable refugees, including disabled children, Roma refugees from Ukraine, and others facing severe psychological challenges. Services included psychosocial support for both adults and children, referrals for specialized assistance (medical, legal, parenting support), educational activities for children and teenagers, Polish language lessons, informative workshops for adults on social benefits, and raising awareness about Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA).

The Social Behavioral Change Component (SBC) aimed to shift the attitudes of target communities towards their livelihoods and roles in shaping their future in Poland. This multidisciplinary effort involved outreach teams, social workers, psychologists, animators, and activity leaders engaging beneficiaries as equals in conversations. This approach required meticulous engagement design, refined service offerings to address sensitive issues, and comprehensive family involvement.

Our long-standing donor, Choose Love, continued to support the Aurora community centers in Krakow and Wroclaw, empowering refugee families and enhancing their lives.

National authorities and the UN recognize Vela's expertise, positioning us as a respected partner for sharing knowledge. In 2024, Vela Poland organized training workshops across our own teams as well as colleagues from civil society organizations, local authorities, international organizations and other and stakeholders. In October 2024, in collaboration with the General Secretariat for Vulnerable Persons and Institutional Protection of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum of Greece, we successfully conducted a training session in Warsaw on EU Law Relating to Vulnerable Groups of Refugees, focusing on victims of gender-based violence and human trafficking.

Looking ahead to 2025, we continue our partnership with our donors in supporting the most refugee vulnerable children and caregivers in Poland. We are focusing on Polish education support, GBV and PSEA training for shelter and community center operators and managers, and capacity building for local NGOs on establishing humanitarian policies and procedures.

Vela is committed to leveraging technology for humanitarian purposes. Vela Poland is launching a substantial EU-Internal Security Fund project titled "Strengthening Judicial Expertise and Frontline Support to Combat Child Trafficking - SAFE BORDERS," with a total budget of EUR 1,743,974 and Vela's portion amounting to EUR 271,506. Vela will play a pivotal role in developing an AI platform to enhance cross-border cooperation among judicial and border authorities by collecting data from court decisions and police records to identify patterns, high-risk targets, and criminal networks involved in child trafficking.

empowerment

We strive not just to provide aid, but to equip individuals with the tools and knowledge they need to create sustainable change in their lives.

Vela values



unity

We recognize the importance of collective action and collaboration. Like a constellation, we are at our most potent when we work together towards a common goal.

Vela values



aspiration

We encourage individuals to dream big and strive for a better future.

Vela values



guidance

We provide direction and support to those who need it, helping them navigate their journey towards their dreams.

Vela values

