novi

2025

ANNUAL REPORT

Moving Closer

When the World Pulled Back, We Moved Closer



IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT

Children should not have to wonder if a war is their fault.

Last summer, I walked through schools destroyed by bombs and drones in Druzhkivka, Eastern Ukraine, or what was left of them. At one school, the man walking with me said, “My wife and I graduated from this school.” He added, “It’s the first thing Russia did. They bombed all our schools and colleges.” I remember standing there, listening to him and thinking about all the children who should have been sitting in those classrooms. We visited eight schools that day. Every one of them had been bombed.

I have worked around war for over thirty years, but I don’t get used to seeing what it does to children. That day in Druzhkivka stayed with me because a school is such an ordinary part of a child’s life. These children had already lived through years of war, and now even the places where they learned had been destroyed.

Around that same time, I read something written by a ten-year-old boy who entered a Novi writing competition in Ukraine. He wrote a letter to God asking when the war would end. Then he asked: “If this is our punishment, then is it the children’s fault?” He wondered if it was because he had not listened to his mother or learned his lessons properly. “Once, I broke a table lamp. Is this the reason for our troubles?” Later in the letter, he promised, “I will repair the broken lamp, or buy a new one!” And then he asked God to stop the war.

He was trying to make sense of something no ten-year-old should have to explain. Somehow, in his mind, the war might have something to do with him. That is part of what war does to a child, and it is why Novi exists. We cannot stop the war, but we can be there for children who are living through it.

In 2025, we worked alongside local people to help children and families living through war. We provided food to families near the front lines, supported education when schools could no longer function, and helped adults understand how prolonged war and trauma affect children. Our team and partners equipped those adults to better support their children. The numbers in the pages ahead matter because they tell us something about the scale of the work. But I hope you also remember the ten-year-old boy who thought fixing a broken lamp might help stop a war.

What happened in 2025 was possible because local partners, our team, volunteers, donors, and parents kept doing the work when it was difficult and dangerous. Families welcomed us into their communities and allowed us to be part of their children’s lives during an incredibly difficult time. I am grateful for that trust and for what we were able to do together. But I keep coming back to that ten-year-old boy and the question he asked God. Children should not have to wonder if a war is their fault. They deserve adults who will help them understand what is happening, care for them through it, and give them room to be children. That is the work in front of us.

Steve Gumaer

Steve Gumaer

CEO The Novi Community



WE CAN'T CHANGE THE WORLD. WE CAN CHANGE A LIFE.

For millions of children, 2025 was the year they lost their homes. Their mothers. Their fathers. Their brothers and sisters. Their schools. The hospitals they depended on. For millions of children, this was a year marked by fear, grief and unimaginable loss.

I met some of these children.

I think about them almost every day. I have cried for them. I have prayed for them. I have felt anger toward leaders who could have stopped so much of this suffering but instead prolonged it through power, indifference or greed. And, if I am honest, there have been moments when I have felt hopeless. But hopelessness is a dangerous trap. It convinces us that the future cannot change, that our efforts do not matter, and that evil is too powerful. Once we believe that, we stop trying. And that is exactly what evil needs to triumph.

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing,” said a wise man (often attributed to Edmund Burke). I have stopped thinking that I will change the world. Instead, I tell myself I can change lives.

That is what Novi exists to do.

We cannot end every war. We cannot erase every injustice. But together, we can ensure that one more child is safe, one more child is heard, and one more child discovers they have not been forgotten.

This annual report tells the story of what you made possible in 2025. It includes numbers because numbers matter. But behind every number is a child with a name, a family, and a future worth fighting for.

Thank you for refusing to believe compassion is powerless. Thank you for choosing hope over despair and action over indifference.

Oddny Gumaer

Co-founder, The Novi Community





WHERE CHILDHOOD IS DISRUPTED BY WAR

War leaves deep and lasting scars, especially on children and families. Novi works in places where conflict has become part of everyday life, helping people rebuild hope, resilience, and community.

In Ukraine, millions have been displaced by Russia's full-scale invasion. Children continue to live under the constant threat of missile and drone attacks, while families struggle with trauma, loss, disrupted education, and damaged infrastructure.

In Myanmar, years of military rule escalated into civil war following the 2021 coup. Airstrikes, armed conflict, and mass displacement have forced millions from their homes, while access to food, healthcare, and education remains severely limited.

In Kurdistan, Iraq, many Yazidi families are still living with the consequences of the ISIS genocide. Thousands remain displaced nearly a decade later, and many survivors continue to face profound psychological trauma, poverty, and uncertainty about the future. Women and children who survived captivity often require long-term support to rebuild their lives.

Across these contexts, Novi partners with local communities to provide psychosocial support, child protection, emergency relief, and practical assistance, helping children and families move from surviving toward healing and hope.

HOW WE RESPOND



Equipping
We provide specialized training and tools to volunteers, social workers, teachers, therapists, and others who work with children in war torn communities and high-stress environments.



Education
We help children affected by conflict continue their education. We support education centers where schools have been destroyed, provide school supplies to families on the front lines, and support teachers in underserved communities in Ukraine, Myanmar, and Iraq.



Belonging
We organize events, sports, theater, and meetings to promote community and family cohesiveness and use trauma-sensitive approaches to promote understanding, care, and interdependence.



Relief
In conflict-affected areas, children and families often lack the basic necessities. We provide relief, including food, water, clothing, heaters, and medicine, to protect children from the effects of war, displacement, hunger, and extreme conditions.

Novi works alongside children and families whose lives have been disrupted by war and displacement. With trusted local partners, we provide trauma-informed mental health and psychosocial support, child protection, emergency relief, education, safe play, and practical assistance tailored to each community's needs.

We believe recovery is about more than meeting immediate needs. It is about restoring hope, dignity, and childhood. Whether supporting a child in Ukraine, a displaced family in Myanmar, or a Yazidi mother rebuilding her life, our goal is the same: to help people heal, recover, and build a more hopeful future together.



COUNTRY OF WIDOWS AND ORPHANS

By Ira Riabyi

This phrase appeared in a recent BBC article. It hurts to read, but even more to realize it is not just a headline. It is someone's life. Behind these words is a child who no longer waits for their father to come home. A mother trying to stay strong when she barely has the strength herself. A classroom where someone has grown quieter, where an empty chair seems to speak.

There are birthdays that will never feel the same again. Ordinary days now carry a quiet heaviness. Children ask questions no one knows how to answer.

For a child who has lost a parent, what matters most is not statistics. It is having an adult who notices their pain, stays present, and says, "You don't have to carry this alone." Because grief in children is not always loud. Sometimes it is silence. Sometimes anger. Sometimes it looks like growing up too fast.

At Novi, this is where we work—after the headlines fade. We help schools and communities create safe spaces where children can process loss, fear, and anger.

We equip adults with the confidence to have difficult conversations and remain present through them.
We cannot change the statistics. But we can help shape how Ukraine's children are supported as they learn to live with all they have lost.

Ira Riabyi works for Novi, Ukraine. She is married to Sasha, and the mother of Mark and Jordan.

THESE NUMBERS ARE PEOPLE

EACH NUMBER--A LIFE

Behind the number 664.736 is a child who gets to go to summer camp, a mother who can feed her family, a father who can take his child to a learning center, and a community that gets water or a playground. These are not just numbers. They are people.



664.736

people impacted

360.625

are children

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

All Novi interventions are based on regional needs and are initiated with local professionals and caregivers. We cooperate with community organizations and institutions. We obligate ourselves to the highest ethical standards.

54.25%

of the people impacted are children

85%

of our income spent on projects

IMPACT SNAPSHOT



MYANMAR/ THAILAND

In 2025, Novi invested $79,392 helping children and families in Myanmar, representing 9.5% of our total spending.

* When funding cuts stopped the pumps supplying water to nearly 40,000 refugees, Novi and The Kind Human Foundation installed solar power for the camp's water system. Clean water is flowing again, protecting children's health, education, and dignity.



IRAQ

In 2025, Novi invested $31,105 helping children and families in Iraq. That's 3.7% of our total spending.

* Novi and Panaga support Yazidi children and families still living with the consequences of ISIS violence. Through pop-up schools, home visits, trauma-informed care, and community activities, children and women are finding safety, connection, and a renewed sense of belonging.



UKRAINE

In 2025, Novi invested $723,605 helping children and families in Iraq. That's 86.8% of our total spending.

* Missile and drone attacks have made fear part of daily life for millions of Ukrainian children. Novi provides food, essential supplies, education, and trauma-informed care while training adults to help children recover. This support meets urgent needs while protecting each child's ability to learn, trust, and build a future beyond war.

A HOUSE BUILT ON HOPE

By Steve Gumaer

Few things in 2025 affected me as deeply as four days at a resilience camp in Ukraine with young adults living with Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy, and other intellectual disabilities.

Our Novi team went to support psychologist Valeria Martinyk and her organization, Love That Heals, and to learn from her. We wanted to better understand what these young people were experiencing and how best to work with them. The war continued around us. Inside the camp, there was laughter, friendship, and a strong sense of connection.

I went there thinking about what we could give them. I left realizing how much they had given me.

They knew when I was present and when I wasn't. They didn't care much about appearances. If I listened, they let me in. If I laughed, they laughed with me. Their honesty and the way they welcomed us humbled me. I am still processing it.

One evening, after everyone went to bed, our team sat with Valeria. She helped us understand how these young people were processing fear, loss, and the war around them. We all cried. By then, they were no longer young people at a camp. They had become our friends.

Valeria told us about a young man whose parents had died and who was sent to an institution. He called her, begging for help, convinced he had been sent to prison. She wanted to bring him back, but without a residential home, she had no legal way to care for him. A good friend of Novi's in Chicago heard the story and raised the money to buy a house.

Last month, I returned to Ukraine, and Valeria walked us through that house. It means she can provide residential care, keep loving these young people, and give them a place to belong. Four volunteer teams have already come to Ukraine to help renovate it.

It isn't finished. Wires hang from the ceilings and construction materials are everywhere. Soon these young adults will have a place to learn life skills, receive therapy, build friendships, and take steps toward greater independence. Their families will have help carrying a load the war has made even heavier.

Walking through the unfinished rooms, I kept seeing the faces from camp. The war has made lives that were already difficult even harder. I thought about Jesus saying that whatever we do for the least of these, we do for him. I don't have a clear conclusion. I just know these young people matter. In a war they didn't choose, they deserve to be known, to have friends, to grow, and to have a place where they belong.

Our friend in Chicago raised the money for the house. Volunteers came to rebuild it. Novi donors have kept us there with Valeria and these young people. None of us did this alone. s, and because of your generosity, its story is just beginning.



* * *

ACTIVITIES & TOOLS

Our tools have been created by psychologists, social workers, and team members to help children and adolescents heal and grow after war and trauma by developing self-regulation skills. Structured adult-led interventions in small, age-appropriate groups foster cooperation and mutual support. Below are two of our tools that we have used in 2025.



NOVISETS

NoviSets are trauma-informed activity sets developed by The Novi Community to help children in war zones manage stress and find calm through play. Children draw cards that match how they feel—red, blue, or green—with each card offering a simple activity to guide them toward a balanced, calm state. NoviSets work with or without adult support and are effective even in bomb shelters. As part of distribution, Novi trains caregivers and professionals to use them confidently, making each set a tool for healing and resilience.



NOVI CLUBS

We establish NoviClubs to help war-affected adolescents aged 12-16 regain their sense of empowerment by teaching them practical skills such as budgeting, problem-solving, and leadership. These student-led groups promote peace in their lives and communities, and empower them to create a more peaceful future by starting now with service projects and initiatives aimed at building harmony between communities instead of division.

BEHIND THE SCENES

TEAM



OUR TEAM

Our team includes three Ukrainians, three Americans and two Norwegians. We are fairly ordinary people—or perhaps not. We have chosen a path that offers little fame or fortune, but immense meaning. We work across three countries, so most of our meetings happen online. When we are together, we laugh often and spend our time asking how we can do more for the people we serve. Yet our staff is only part of the story. The real heroes are the local people in villages, schools, churches, clinics and homes who care for children every day. They are the heart of Novi's work.



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FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



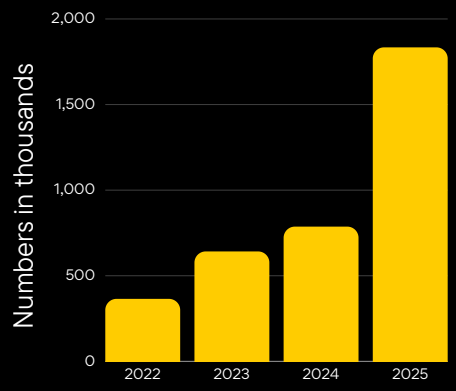
WHAT WE RAISED IN 2025

$1,881,016

This number represents hundreds of people in the USA, Norway, and other places who have believed in Novi's work and mission. This work is done in community and is based on trust.

HOW WE HAVE GROWN

Since Novi was founded in 2022, our work has grown steadily, along with the community of people who make it possible.

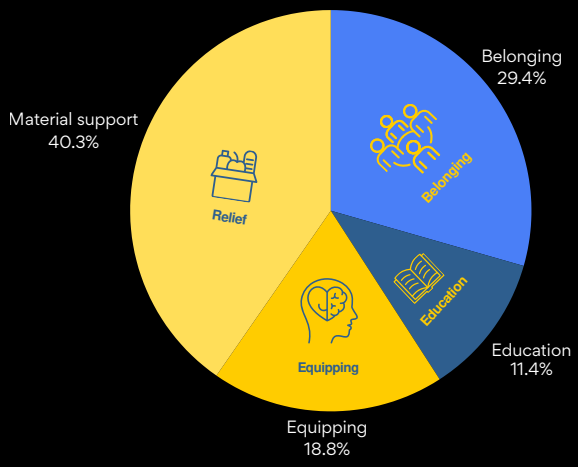


THIS IS HOW WE SPENT THE MONEY

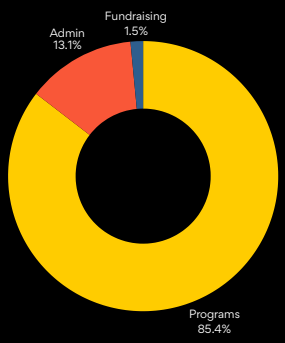
In all the work we do, we seek to be transparent.
In 2025, we spent 84,5% of our income on programs. We spent 13% on administration and 1.5% on raising funds.

Program	**$712,630**
Administration	**$108,949**
Fundraising	**$12,523**

OUR PROGRAMS AND DISTRIBUTION



HOW WE SPENT THE FUNDS



Board of Directors

The Novi Community is governed by a dedicated Board of Directors that provides oversight, accountability, and strategic guidance to the organization. The Board brings experience, perspective, and a shared commitment to keeping Novi focused on its mission and responsible in its stewardship.

Board of Directors During 2025

Tammy Lowry, Ph.D.
Chairperson | Voting, Independent
Julie Edwards
Board Member | Voting, Independent
Stephen Bowlin, M.A.
Board Member | Voting, Independent
Mary Beth Anton, M.Div.
Treasurer | Voting, Independent
Spencer Kerrigan, M.A.
Board Member | Voting, Independent
Steve Gumaer, M.A.
Board Member | Voting | Chief Executive Officer
Link Grimes
Board Member | Voting, Independent
Oddny Gumaer, M.A.
Ex Officio | Co-Founder & Chief Communications Officer



The financial information presented in this annual report has been independently reviewed and audited by Darin Guthrie, CPA, PLLC and is accurate to the best of the organization's knowledge. Additional information is available in Novi's public form 990 for the fiscal year ended 12/31/2025

THE NOVI CHILDREN'S FUND

A generous investment in restoring childhoods disrupted by war, now and for generations to come.



- **A $1 million founding gift established the Novi Children's Fund in 2025.**
- **The endowment will provide dependable annual funding to help restore childhoods disrupted by war.**
- **A dedicated committee, accountable to Novi's Board, oversees the fund's careful, long-term management.**
- **Learn more at novi.ngo/the-novi-childrens-fund.**

One of Novi's most significant developments in 2025 was the establishment of the Novi Children's Fund. Douglas Scharbauer, a longtime supporter of our work, made the endowment possible with a $1 million gift. His generosity has given us a more secure financial foundation for the years ahead.

A committee led by Board Treasurer Mary Beth Anton provides oversight, with Jamison McIlvain and Susan Boyd also serving. The committee reports to Novi's Board of Directors and ensures the fund is managed and used according to its purpose.

For a small charity, setting aside resources for the future gives us more room to plan beyond the next fundraising cycle and greater confidence in the commitments we make to children surviving war and the local teams caring for them.



Douglas Scharbauer, whose generosity established the Novi Children's Fund.

CONTACT US



CONTACT US:

Email/
info@novi.ngo

Website/
novi.ngo

Address/
The Novi Community
PO Box 3673
Midland, TX 79702

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