

HOMES of HOPE

For nearly nine months, the village of Novohryhorivka in Mykolaiv Oblast (Province) was situated on the frontline between Russian and Ukrainian forces. Today, it resembles a field of ruins.

The narrow road leading into the village hints at the battles fought here—it is shattered, much like the village itself, which comes into view on the horizon.

Upon reaching the village center, the devastation becomes even more evident—nearly every house is destroyed or burned. The remnants of these homes stand frozen in time, stripped of warmth and life. The few remaining windows stare blankly at empty, desolate yards, reflecting the silence of a community left in ruins.

The locals who have returned to this village are struggling to survive, painstakingly piecing together what remains of their homes. Conversations with them reveal a harsh reality: the only support for those who have come back comes from international sponsors and organizations that genuinely care about their suffering.



In front of the Kaninets family's house, on both sides of the road, lies a massive crater over three meters deep. This was not created by an excavator—it was the devastating result of a missile strike.

Anatoly and Kateryna have not yet decided what to do with this crater, which is a real testament to the horrors of war. Their main concern now is to restore the house. It was severely damaged in April 2022. As soon as the first fighting started, in early March 2022, the family left.

"We stayed here for a week or two at the start of the invasion, but we decided to leave to protect the children," Anatoly recalls. "We came back in November 2022, after the liberation, only to find ruins."

"There was nothing left," his wife, Kateryna, adds. "No fence, no shed, no house—just devastation everywhere."



For a year following the fall of 2022, the family stayed away from the house—there was nothing left to return to. Anatoly began the slow process of clearing the yard and removing the debris.



By the summer of 2024, they made the decision to return permanently. The four of them took shelter beneath the remaining portion of the roof in their war-damaged home.

The HART mission became a lifeline for the family. "Thanks to this home, we can live and sleep at night in decent conditions," Anatoly shares, his gratitude evident.



The HART mission, together with the Chornobaivka Church of Jesus Is the Bread of Life, visited Novohryhorivka in the summer of 2024. Six families from this village have temporary homes that they say were **"sent by God."**

After saying goodbye to the Kanivets family, we moved on. Novohryhorivka is a small village, where we saw a familiar HART home on the next street.



Standing next to this home, was Kateryna Tymofeieva who was holding a fresh loaf of bread in her hands. "I was just coming from the store. Here, I bought some fresh bread. I'm so glad to see you!" she greets us in a friendly manner.

We ask her how is her life going? How is she doing? "Oh, we're doing well. We have already tried to heat our home. We have a nice stove in it, and it works well."

In the small village of Novohryhorivka in eastern Ukraine, Mrs. Kateryna embodies the spirit of a traditional rural elder. Known for her candid conversations about daily life and current events, she maintains a composed demeanour in her assessments, yet shows unfiltered reactions when it comes to her son Ihor.

Ihor's life story is remarkable, despite his seemingly ordinary occupation as a Novohryhorivka farmer. He dedicates himself to caring for his mother while tending to his land and livestock. However, his commitment to farming goes beyond the typical challenges faced by rural communities.

In the heart of rural Ukraine, Kateryna's son Ihor embodies the quiet heroism of Ukrainian farmers during wartime. "Oh, that Ihor!" Kateryna sighs, her voice tinged with a mixture of pride and concern. Ihor, ever-dedicated to his work, is once again absent from home, tending to the fields as he always does, pushing himself to the limit.

Ihor's commitment extends beyond his own farm. He not only cares for his cattle but also cultivates his brother's land. Kateryna regards her son as the linchpin of their household, his devotion to the farm unwavering.

When Russia's full-scale invasion began, Ihor made the courageous decision to remain in his village. He couldn't bear to abandon his yard, his cows, his dogs, and the life he had built over years of hard work. Despite the constant artillery explosions and the ominous sounds of tanks and aircraft, Ihor stood his ground.

However, as the shelling intensified, Ihor faced an extraordinary challenge. In a remarkable act of bravery and compassion, he chose to save not only himself but also his cows, his neighbors' livestock, and even the local dogs. Ihor embarked on a perilous 48-kilometer journey on foot through an active war zone.

As he guided his unusual convoy to safety, explosions echoed dangerously close. Passing soldiers looked on in astonishment at the sight of this determined farmer leading a herd of animals through the chaos of war. Ihor's actions exemplify the resilience and selflessness of Ukrainian farmers, who have become unexpected heroes in this conflict.

When Ukrainian forces liberated Ihor's village in November 2022, he returned home immediately, only to find devastation. His cherished house was nearly destroyed - walls crumbled and the roof severely damaged.

Faced with this harsh reality, Ihor made a difficult but determined choice. With no other options, he took up residence in his barn, surrounded by his livestock. These animals became both a source of comfort and a constant reminder of the life he needed to rebuild.



In time, Ihor's mother, Kateryna, returned to the village. The HART home, installed in the summer of 2024, proved to be a life-saver for the family. Thankfully, her grandchildren can now visit and stay with her in this modest home from time to time.



The road winds on, among the ruins. Destroyed houses, empty windows, yards gaping with craters, and in some places, remnants of cluster shells – all this reminds us of the cruelty of the war that passed here. The landscape hardly changes, the desolation has engulfed this village, where life shines with small lights.

We stop at the yard of Iryna and Anatolii Zhaivoronko. This place brings to life the story of a family united and tested by war. They live here with their two teenage daughters and Iryna's brother, Anatoly Sereda.

Anatoly is a Ukrainian soldier who was seriously injured in early 2024, losing his leg and now has a disability.

His home was completely destroyed, and he was forced to seek shelter with his sister. Iryna, her family, and her brother huddled together in a small summer kitchen and a temporary "plastic container" that became their "extra home."

In the summer of 2024, the family received a new home from HART, which they decided to give to Anatoly by mutual decision. It was a tribute to his feat and the sacrifice he made for his country and his family. The new home became a symbol of gratitude and a new beginning for Anatoly.



Anatoly wasn't home when we first arrived. "He went to the city for rehabilitation," Iryna explained to us. She took us around the yard, showed us the house and shared her feedback on the stove that we had recently installed for her.

"It is warm, you know, very warm. Just a couple of pieces of wood, and everything is fine. It's very economical," she said.

In the summer of 2022, Iryna's house was destroyed, as well as her brother's house. There are 18 shell craters on the ground around them, indicating the intensity of the shelling.

It took a long time to clear the rubble from the yard, and the memories of destruction and fear still live in every corner. The family has survived this loss and is trying to determine how to move on.



As we reach the outskirts of the village, we encounter Iryna Sydor's destroyed home, where she, along with her daughter-in-law and three young grandchildren had been living. Their daily existence was a delicate balance of survival amid so much uncertainty.

Iryna's husband and son are serving in Ukraine's military.

The family's living situation became very stark: only one room in the house remained habitable, so they took shifts sleeping and resting, adapting to their limited space.

The Sydor family's story reflects the harsh realities faced by countless thousands of Ukrainians since Russia's full-scale invasion began. The widespread destruction in civilian homes is common to villages in this war.

Iryna's account of the invasion's onset mirrors the experiences of many who initially disbelieved the possibility of war. Her role as a school canteen worker underscores how ordinary lives were abruptly disrupted. On February 28, 2022, Russian troops surrounded the village, and then the fighting began to rage on all around them.

The family's adaptation to life under occupation, including their efforts to assist Ukrainian forces by monitoring enemy movements, highlights the resilience and resistance of Ukrainian civilians.

As Ukrainian forces approached Iryna's village while driving out the Russians, residents gathered near her house to greet their soldiers. Suddenly, a Russian tank fired at the crowd, damaging Iryna's home for the first time. Everyone quickly sought shelter in the cellar, where they waited out the attack alongside Ukrainian soldiers. Her home endured multiple attacks including shelling and fire damage.

As the conflict intensified, Iryna's family made the difficult decision to evacuate temporarily. They returned only after Ukrainian forces liberated the village, but the memory of that harrowing day when their home nearly became a deadly trap remains etched in their minds.



HART's provision of a temporary home for Iryna and her family exemplifies the crucial role HART is playing to support those affected by the war. It's become their main residence while they slowly repair their damaged house.

Despite the challenges, Iryna perseveres, working tirelessly to rebuild a home for herself and her family. Her efforts reflect the resilience of many Ukrainians who, even after nearly three years of full-scale war, continue to strive for normalcy and reconstruction.

Today, while their husbands serve in the military, Iryna and other women in the community are slowly rebuilding

their lives and homes. With support from local churches and HART providing mobile homes, food, water & supplies, they work towards restoring their homes, where warmth and happiness will reign again.

Across from Iryna's house, in Nadiya Andreieva's yard, the impact of war is equally evident. HART provided Nadiya with a temporary home, offering crucial shelter during these challenging times. However, her once-thriving farm now lies in ruins.



Nadiya gestures towards the area of her yard where stalls once housed a dozen cows and pigs. Her voice tinged with regret, she recounts, "In the first days of the war, we simply released them into the field because we didn't know how to save them. We couldn't manage to save any of them."



Nadiya Andreieva's once-thriving 15-hectare farm now exists only in memory. The war's devastation left their agricultural equipment destroyed, and the couple are in no hurry to rebuild their farming operations, fearing that the war could return and destroy all their rebuilding efforts.

Amidst this hardship, a small ray of hope emerged when volunteers gifted them a cow, which will help the family support themselves in these difficult times.

Nadiya painfully points to the place where the granary once stood. "A missile struck it here," she explains, gesturing towards the hole in the twisted, charred metal remnants. The destroyed granary, frozen in its post-explosion state, serves as a silent witness to what this village has endured.

Near the other HART-provided mobile homes, another temporary residence belongs to Lida Sydor, a young woman in her early 20s with a charming smile. Despite the challenges of war, Lida has chosen to return to her native village after completing her university education, embodying the resilience and commitment of Ukraine's younger generation.

Her decision to come back and contribute to rebuilding her community reflects a broader trend among young Ukrainians who, instead of fleeing the conflict, are actively working to restore and revitalize their hometowns. The HART mobile home provides her and her family with a stable base from which to pursue their reconstruction efforts.

"My house was completely destroyed," Lida explains matter-of-factly. "There was absolutely nothing left here." Despite the overwhelming devastation, thanks to HART - she and her family have begun the challenging process of rebuilding.



Lida's family represents the resilience of Ukrainian families rebuilding after war. Her father, a farmer, and her mother, a primary school teacher, and herself are working together to reconstruct their home with remarkable determination.

Currently, their house is in the early stages of reconstruction - with just walls and a roof where their previous home once was. Despite the long journey ahead to transform this bare structure into a fully functional home, their enthusiasm remains undiminished.



The Sydor family exemplifies the resilience and determination of Ukrainian families affected by the war. Hard work, a deep love for their land, and strong family unity help them persevere and overcome their current difficulties.

Their commitment goes beyond rebuilding just their home, but their livelihood as well; as they continue to cultivate the land they've tended for years. Tomatoes and peppers are ripening in their fields and future crop sales will help to fund their reconstruction efforts.

The 'foundation' for this family's recovery dreams, is the temporary home provided by HART, offering them shelter and stability during this challenging period.



Novohryhorivka's story echoes across Ukraine, where countless communities are rebuilding in the wake of war's devastation. Each of these villages bears deep scars but demonstrates remarkable resilience and hope for the future.

In Novohryhorivka, only one shop remains operational. Their school and kindergarten were reduced to rubble, but children continue their studies online. The residents are determined to return to their daily routines. They are working to reopen the village club, a place for gathering and connection.

The people here live, work, stay united, and keep dreaming; they are more than just survivors, they embody the spirit of rebuilding seen across Ukraine.

Our partner churches in this part of Ukraine express their deep gratitude to HART for its invaluable contribution to serving their communities in the Kherson region. They are grateful to HART for working for the Glory of God and helping to spread His Kingdom in Ukraine through their local churches.

A heartfelt "thank-you" to all HART supporters who, through the Mobile Home Project, are bringing help and hope to people in Ukraine.

May God richly bless you,
HART Team in Ukraine

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