






MULTI-LEVEL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES OF THE STATE FIRE SERVICE AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY OF WARSAW AS A HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE PROCESS, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF VOLUNTEERS: A CASE STUDY FROM POLAND

WIELOPOZIOMOWE DZIAŁANIA POMOCOWE PSP
ORAZ WARSZAWSKIEJ SPOŁECZNOŚCI LOKALNEJ – POLSKA
POMOC DLA UKRAINY W CZASIE AGRESJI MILITARNEJ ROSJI
Z UWZGLĘDNIENIEM ZDROWIA PSYCHICZNEGO WOLONTARIUSZY.
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— ABSTRACT —

The research goal of the article was to show the process of providing aid by indicating the multi-level activities of the State Fire Service and Polish society during the military aggression of Russia in Ukraine. The paper analyzes the descriptions of selected aid events carried out by the local community and the officers of the State Fire Service. The analysis covered the period of February to August 2022. Theoretical methods that have been used are analysis – obtaining research material contained in the literature on the subject; syn-

— ABSTRAKT —

Celem badawczym artykułu było ukazanie procesu niesienia pomocy poprzez wskazanie wielopłaszczyznowych działań Państwowej Straży Pożarnej i społeczeństwa polskiego podczas agresji militarnej Rosji na Ukrainę. Analizie poddano opisy wybranych zdarzeń pomocowych realizowanych przez społeczność lokalną oraz funkcjonariuszy Państwowej Straży Pożarnej. Analiza objęła okres od lutego do sierpnia 2022 roku. Metody teoretyczne, które zostały wykorzystane to: analiza – pozyskanie materiału badawczego zawartego

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thesis – appropriate matching and integration of research material; comparison – constructing conclusions and final conclusions, generalizing, drawing conclusions. Empirical methods are the case study method and observation, and are selected in the work as a research method that allows for a broad description of a given phenomenon (providing assistance to refugees), its in-depth analysis and evaluation.

Keywords: local community; fire service; humanitarian assistance; phases of response to the disaster; Russia's military aggression in Ukraine

w literaturze przedmiotu; synteza – odpowiednie dopasowanie i integracja materiału badawczego; porównanie – konstruowanie wniosków i konkluzji końcowych, uogólnianie, wyciąganie wniosków. Metody empiryczne to metoda studium przypadku oraz obserwacja, które zostały wybrane w pracy jako metody badawcze pozwalające na szeroki opis danego zjawiska (udzielania pomocy uchodźcom), jego pogłębioną analizę i ocenę.

Słowa kluczowe: społeczność lokalna; Straż Pożarna; pomoc humanitarna; fazy reakcji na katastrofę; rosyjska agresja na Ukrainę

INTRODUCTION

To be effective, all activities, regardless of the region where they are carried out, require good planning, organisation, and management involving multifaceted cooperation, sometimes requiring prolonged physical activity and mental endurance during the implementation process. This involves following relevant procedures, the use of existing structures and systems as well as all financial, technical, human, and social resources. It is only when one has such potential that one can speak of efficient and effective operation. However, there are situations when a sudden, unexpected event occurs in which there is no time to prepare and implement elements of the managerial process on an ongoing basis and often resources at hand need to be relied upon.

Similarly as September 11, 2001, the date of February 24, 2022, will go down in history as a day that changes perceptions of the world around us. At the end of February, Russia invaded Ukraine. The world was awash with news of explosions and the howling of sirens on the territory of our eastern neighbour. News strips on TV stations were unanimous in their alarm about Russian military aggression against a European country. The billions of hearts frozen in horror. So far, the war has been going on for more than 100 days. No one seems to have expected such resistance or struggle, or such a social and systemic upsurge to help both those who have taken up arms on Ukrainian territory as well as the refugees fleeing the war. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there has been a massive social mobilisation in Poland to help the refugees (Wojdat & Cywiński, 2022).

Aid and support was demonstrated in various ways, including by displaying Ukrainian flags, using social media overlays, organising and participating

in demonstrations against the war, but above all by organising real aid that consisted of collecting the most necessary items, transporting people and equipment, signing up as volunteers, announcing collections, opening houses, canteens, schools, halls, adapting public spaces, mainly at local government level, to accommodate terrified people fleeing from war-stricken Ukraine. Almost 3.2 million Ukrainians currently live in Poland (Wojdat & Cywiński, 2022).

Collections have been and are being organised across the country by, among others, the Polish Humanitarian Action, the Polish Red Cross, foundations, NGOs, cultural and scientific institutions and companies employing Ukrainians. The services also rose to the challenge and not only donated and delivered the necessary equipment, but became a kind of logistical hub for national and international aid. The conducted research (*Research Commissioned by the Santander Consumer Bank and Carried Out by IBRiS, 2022*) has shown that most of us have become involved in helping. 90% of the Poles say they are in favour of accepting refugees from Ukraine (CBOS, 2022). More than two-thirds of the respondents (68%) say they help Ukrainians in some way, such as in kind or financially. With Russia's attack on Ukraine, there has been a massive social mobilisation in Poland to help refugees (Wojdat & Cywiński, 2022). For the purposes of this study, the focus is on observing the relief activities carried out by the fire service and the Warsaw local community in the wake of the crisis in Ukraine.

An important issue raised by experts is to know the behaviours and identify the emotions that arise during any action in a situation of a sudden event that causes chaos, anxiety, and uncertainty. This is important, especially during a prolonged situation requiring constant preparedness, because in its various phases changes occur in, among other things, perception of the environment, usable resources, mental and physical endurance, interest, etc.

Based on a thorough data analysis, the research problem took the following form: Do the undertaking of multi-level aid activities by the local community and the State Fire Service contribute to the effectiveness of aid actions during Russia's military aggression against Ukraine?

The research goal was to show the process of providing aid by indicating the multi-level activities of the State Fire Service and Polish society during the military aggression of Russia in Ukraine.

Referring to the goal, the main research hypothesis was formulated: Undertaking multi-level aid activities by the local community and selected uniformed formations significantly contribute to the effectiveness of aid activities. The

activities undertaken by the State Fire Service guarantee the effectiveness of helping Ukrainians during Russia's military aggression.

The activities of the State Fire Service and the community of Warsaw were analyzed due to the participation of the authors of the study in the described assistance processes. The possibility of close observation of these activities allowed for a detailed analysis.

PROVIDING SUPPORT, KEEPING IN MIND THE PHASES OF DISASTER AND THE MENTAL RESPONSE TO IT

All destructive, massive, sudden events have the hallmarks of disasters. A military attack can undoubtedly be compared to a disaster, a man-made aggression, a sudden and tragic anthropogenic cataclysm. It is not only an emergency, but also a situation that is difficult to define in terms of the duration of both war and relief operations. Disaster experts have identified a general pattern of phases that a community goes through from the moment it is hit to the beginnings of reconstruction and attempts to return or rebound after a disaster. For further consideration, the description of phases assigns to them features pertaining to their response to military aggression.

Lazarus and Cohen have defined a catastrophe as a stressor of enormous force, extensive scope and suddenness that places excessive demands on individual coping with it (Lazarus & Cohen, 1978). The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined a disaster as “a severe disruption, ecological and psychosocial, which greatly exceeds the coping capacity of the affected community” (World Health Organization, 1992).

In the multitude of definitions of the concept of disaster, certain common recurring features emerge, such as sudden onset, unpredictability, uncontrollability, the immense magnitude of destruction, human loss and suffering and a substantial exceeding of the coping capacity of the affected community. A distinction can be made between types of disasters according to their impact on mental health. Thus, natural disasters are of a relatively benign nature, human error and technological accidents are characterised by a moderate nature, and deliberate acts such as terrorism are of the most severe character (Baum & Fleming, 1993). Literature dedicated to the subject (Math et al., 2015; Weston, 2021) offers a variety of defined phases of response to a disaster that affect the entire affected community, whether directly or indirectly.

Table 1. Phases of Disaster Response

Phase	Time	Phase-specific behaviour, emotions, mental reaction	Relevant factors with a potential impact on the granting of support
Phase 1	prior to the occurrence of a disaster, prior to an attack – may last several hours or several months	fear, uncertainty, feelings of helplessness and insecurity; fear of future unpredictable events; feeling of loss of control over the situation or of protecting oneself and one's family; confusion and disbelief	the media*; historical experience; individual and social resilience; decision-makers, local leaders; level of trust; relationships
Phase 2	impact/attack/catastrophe; it is usually the shortest of the six phases of a disaster	a range of intense emotional reactions, from shock to outright panic, depending on the type and severity of the incident; the greater the extent and strength of destruction to the community, the greater the psychosocial impact; usually focus is on protecting self and family; anxiety	
Phase 3	this phase usually lasts from one day to several weeks, depending on the severity of the situation, the duration of the exposure and the availability of sources of assistance from different agencies	spontaneous actions, without plan; intense grief and loss; shaken community needs food, shelter; common social movement, altruism; offering needed supplies; much energy put into saving lives and property; survivors are moved to safer places such as relief camps	the community, the services, organisations; emergence of a sense of heroism, people react with what is the best, most noble part of themselves; the most important source of help: family, neighbours and teams turning up on the spot or undertaking relief operations, e.g., in safe areas
Phase 4	from a few days after the disaster to approximately four weeks, and/or three to six months afterwards (depending on the type of disaster)	a sense of relief at having survived, a so-called emotional 'high'; people open their wallets with relative generosity as they feel moved by intense media reports of widespread suffering and moving stories of rescue and survival; the ease of getting volunteers; people look for ways to help physically rather than just donating material goods or money	media attention; free medical aid, free food and shelter; VIP visits to the camps, empathy from the administration; compensation package; promises of rehabilitation; organising crisis communication, helping to manage the expectations of all those in need, the community and the public; information about the assistance that will be available/provided; how to provide assistance; at this stage, the social groups that existed before the disaster (and were not destroyed by the disaster) are crucial, as well as new groups that are emerging to meet specific needs arising directly from the disaster

Phase	Time	Phase-specific behaviour, emotions, mental reaction	Relevant factors with a potential impact on the granting of support
Phase 5	reality inevitably arrives/this phase can last from several months to several years	intense anger, resentment, bitterness and profound disappointment when delays, failures and/or unfulfilled hopes or promises of help are experienced; people are exhausted, worn out by the immense stress of ongoing efforts; questioning of governmental, organisational assistance; tiredness with helping; belief that their own needs cannot be met by, for example, the presence of refugees; the sense of “common community” disappears	government, media, organisations, community leaders – all have a role to play in disseminating correct information and countering misinformation; many organisations that were active in previous phases are now withdrawing; media coverage is declining; administration, aid agencies and NGO involvement are beginning to fade
Phase 6	a few years after the disaster, it is a long-term recovery phase	having more resources means less stress; if recovery efforts are visible, the community – and by implication also its members – gains a sense of becoming stronger, which promotes recovery; if not, there is a risk of PTSD and other serious mental and physical disorders; self-responsibility, taking control of one’s own recovery; if activities are poorly led and/or there are few resources for recovery, behaviours will be more dysfunctional: instead of a concentrated movement towards restoring ‘normality’, there may be the apathy characteristic of depression	in the final phase of reconstruction, the most important elements are the residents of the community and the groups that invest in it for the long-term horizon

* Reports on talks, negotiations and diplomatic attempts at discourse.

Source: Authors’ own study on the basis of Math et al. (2006, 2011, 2013).

The table above summarises the most important components of the various phases, characteristics, behaviours and emotions accompanying the successive stages of disaster response. It is more of a guide for volunteers and civilian people on how to prepare and what we can expect from the people around us. According to this guide, discussions were held with both cadets and civilians who expressed the need for briefing. A deep awareness of these phases is the key not only to effective support, but also to finding oneself, defining oneself in an emergency situation.

AID ORGANISED BY THE STATE FIRE SERVICE: A CASE STUDY

Case study was selected in the work as a research method that allows for a broad description of a given phenomenon, which is providing assistance to refugees. This method is aimed at in-depth analysis and evaluation. This is a qualitative study that can cover many scientific disciplines, including security science. Through the use of many techniques of data collection and analysis, it allows to solve scientific and practical problems. The chosen method allowed for the observation and the possibility of collecting data. As a result, the authors had the opportunity to learn about the situation under study and to examine the problem in a broader perspective. The selected empirical method made it possible to present the subject of research, analyze the results and present conclusions that combine all stages of the research.

In parallel to the aid organised by the aforementioned institutions such as the Polish Red Cross or the Polish Humanitarian Action and the extraordinary help from the general population, undoubtedly one of the most important aid activities was organised by the State Fire Service. This professional, uniformed formation, equipped with specialised equipment, is assigned by law to fight fires, natural disasters, and other local threats. The military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and the migration triggered by this aggression provoked the need of using the human and logistic resources of the formation to support the Ukrainian population. At the height of each day, 1,200 officers of the State Fire Service were involved in diverse relief operations. It is worth mentioning that the tasks performed by the SFS were carried out without any loss of operational capacity or reduction in rescue potential. According to data made available by the National Headquarters of the State Fire Service, only in the period from February 24 to March 31, 2022, a total of 80,885 firefighters and 36,681 vehicles of fire protection units were involved in operations for Ukraine.

The actions of the SFS in the context of the military aggression against Ukraine can be divided into two areas, i.e., the area of assistance to the Ukrainian population arriving in Poland and the area of support to firefighters from Ukraine in terms of material supplies. The most important tasks performed by SFS officers in the context of the migration included the following:

1. coordinating transport of persons from border crossings to reception points and to designated places of stay in the country;
2. transport of materials and supplies to reception points and places of stay;
3. setting up of tents owned by the SFS, which served as temporary shelter and waiting areas for further transport;
4. supporting the activities of reception points and other services and volunteers at public transport stations;
5. preparing accommodation for, among others, the families of firefighters from Ukraine using available accommodation facilities of the organisational units of the State Fire Service and Voluntary Fire Brigades.

The second main area in which the SFS carried out aid activities was the collection of firefighting accessories, which were donated to firefighters in Ukraine. A total of 2,703 pallets of equipment and personal protective equipment have been donated. In addition, the State Fire Service is coordinating the delivery of donations and firefighting equipment for Ukrainian firefighters coming from the Netherlands, Italy, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Estonia, the UK, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Latvia, Sweden, France, Canada, and the USA. These countries handed over 1,697 pallets of equipment. In addition, 152 vehicles have been delivered to the Ukrainian side.

The actions taken by the SFS in connection with the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine are characterised by high organisational efficiency and diversity, ranging from tasks related, for example, to providing support in moving around public transport stations to the transfer of specialist firefighting equipment. Undoubtedly, this efficiency is due to the commitment of the officers and logistical resources of the SFS.

SUPPORT ORGANISED BY THE ORGANISATIONAL UNITS OF THE SFS ON THE EXAMPLE OF ACTIVITIES OF THE MAIN SCHOOL OF FIRE SERVICE

The Main School of Fire Service, which is an organisational unit of the State Fire Service and a higher education institution in Poland, apart from its participation in activities organised by the State Fire Service, undertook also additional activities in agreement with its Ukrainian partners.

The first initiative was a collection that was commenced on February 27, 2022, which was organised following an appeal by the Rector of the Lviv State University for Life Safety. This collection was implemented according to a list of equipment and materials that had been agreed with the Ukrainian side. This list included, among others, folding field beds, mattresses, blankets, pillows, sleeping bags, bedding, sleeping pads, individual hygiene products, disposable crockery, and food for children. Thanks to such organisation, the donated assortment corresponded fully to the needs of the University and the current situation in Lviv. The collection was joined by officers of the Main School of Fire Service, civilian employees, cadets and students, the public of the city of Warsaw. Already on March 2, a column of vehicles set off from the Main School of Fire Service, on which a total of 25 pallets with collected items and two 80kVa generators were packed. In addition, as part of this collection, MSFS donated a heavy chemical-ecological rescue vehicle to the Lviv State University for Life Safety.

Another collection organised at the Main School of Fire Service was for the Cherkassy Fire Safety Institute named after the Heroes of Chernobyl. The needs



Photos 1–2. Photos from the collection for Lviv State University for Life Safety, collection of the Main School of Fire Service (<https://www.sgsp.edu.pl>)

reported by the institute included firefighting equipment and uniforms, power generators, tents, sleeping bags, dry rations, and medical supplies. Thirty-eight pallets of firefighting and medical equipment were collected and were dispatched to Ukraine on March 22. The collection organised at the Main School of Fire Service was supported by Kadimex, the Scientific and Research Centre for Fire Protection PIB in Józefów, and the Volunteer Fire Brigades of Józefów, Wiązowna, and Lubice.



Photo 3. Photo from the collection for Cherkassy Fire Safety Institute named after the Heroes of Chernobyl, collection of the Main School of Fire Service (<https://www.sgsp.edu.pl>)

In addition to the above collections, the activities of the Main School of Fire Service also included providing assistance to refugees in navigating the train stations, directing them to exits and buses, as well as information support, support for activities in the Podkarpackie [Subcarpathian] Province, support in activities undertaken by the Żoliborz District Office, assistance in setting up temporary accommodation and reception points in Warsaw, and many other activities. The resources of the Main School of Fire Service were each time disposed on the basis of instructions received from the Operational Planning Office of the Main Headquarters of the State Fire Service.

In March and April 2022, 70 cadets were dispatched to border crossings and reception points in the Podkarpackie province as part of the activities of the training company of the Central Operational Detachment of the National Rescue and Firefighting System. At the same time, 60 cadets and their command were dispatched to railroad stations in Warsaw. More than 160 cadets were deployed to humanitarian relief tasks other than those mentioned.



Photos 4–5. Photos from Warsaw railway stations and Subcarpathian Voivodeship (<https://www.sgsp.edu.pl>)

A psychological counseling center is located on the university's premises to support cadets and university staff in maintaining their mental health on a daily basis. During the relief effort, meetings were held between the psychologist and cadets who were sent to the border. They received support and guidance for action. The other cadets knew where possible help could be sought. In addition, all commanders received guidelines on what to look out for and in what situations to ask for professional support. They had given information about the most important components of the various phases, characteristics, behaviours and emotions accompanying the support successive stages of disaster response. To have a deep knowledge of the phases is the key not only to effective and actually support, but also to minimizing stress and professional burnout. It should be remembered that all cadets at the time were performing normal duty on the rescue and firefighting unit, studying and passing exams. At the moment, despite the cost of providing assistance, only 16 percent would not choose to provide humanitarian assistance again.

WARSAW AND ITS INHABITANTS AND THE REFUGEE CRISIS

At the beginning of March, the number of daily border crossings reached 130,000. Every day, every week meant thousands more people who needed to be helped. The needs concerned not only the provision of information, but also medical assistance, hospital care, and accommodation. The assessment of the assistance

provided mainly to women and children is extremely positive. As many as 74% of Warsaw residents were involved in helping refugees (survey commissioned by the Warsaw City Hall).

How did the people of Warsaw most frequently get involved? The primary form of support was participation in material and financial collections. The city authorities promptly decided to admit Ukrainian children to schools and kindergartens, and to provide them with the possibility of free transport within the city.

The Warsaw City Hall organised and coordinated aid activities through its employees and several thousand volunteers, without whom activities on such a huge scale would not have been possible. It should be emphasised that most of the initiatives were of a bottom-up nature. Aid was offered by residents, universities, schools, private companies, institutions, and NGOs. Relief points were organised at railway stations, car parks, and cultural centres. In the first three months of the war alone, the Public Transport Authority made almost 3,800 trips between reception and accommodation points. In doing so, it transported 94,000 people on behalf of the city council and 66,000 people on behalf of the Mazovian governor. The prepared accommodation points provided 160,000 person-nights.

There is no doubt that Poles have revolutionised humanitarian aid. Warsaw residents submitted 5,301 offers of housing for refugees. Thirteen thousand applications were submitted to cover the costs of residence for citizens and nationals of Ukraine, amounting to over PLN 27 million. Four thousand people were assisted at medical assistance points organised by the city. More than a thousand people were hospitalised in the Warsaw area. During this period, 146 babies were born. It was also important to provide assistance to people who had not left Ukraine. Collections were organised and 4 thousand pallets of food, hygiene items, etc., were taken away.

The total number of refugees registered in Warsaw is 111,000. This represents 10% of the registrations in entire Poland. The fact of registration is considered as an intention to stay in the city for a certain period of time. Important information is that 35% of people in this group have found employment.

In summary, it only took a few weeks for the residents and authorities of Warsaw to provide assistance to all those in need. The city received support not only from residents, but also from private companies, international organisations such as the UNHCR, UNICEF, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), or the Norwegian Refugee Council, Warsaw NGOs, and those working internationally: PAH, PCPM, or WOŚP.

The international media have pointed in their reports to the openness, commitment and friendliness of the Poles. However, it is important to prepare a plan for the integration of the Ukrainian community and adaptation to the new reality. This relates to many levels of life, education, security, and applies to both short-term and long-term actions. New legal regulations are necessary to enable, for example, the employment of physicians with a Ukrainian diploma, also tax changes are necessary.

The data quoted refers to only one city in Poland. The same situation applies to all other cities, towns and regions where the authorities and citizens have taken similar actions. The scale of undertakings, commitment and goodwill throughout the country is still enormous (Bureau of Strategy and Analysis of the Office for the Capital City of Warsaw, 2022).

CONCLUSIONS

Poland still remains the primary and most important country of refuge for Ukrainian citizens. Geographical and cultural proximity is important here. Ukrainians have no problems with communication or adaptation to Polish living conditions. Another important factor is that they are positively perceived by the Poles. These factors have a measurable influence on decisions to stay in Poland (Brunarska, Grotte, & Lesińska, 2012, pp. 4–5). The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and the need to provide aid to those affected triggered such a massive mobilisation of the Poles that it has been compared to the groundbreaking Solidarity movement of 1980–1981. It should be emphasised that the “people’s movement” of the Polish society made this aid available right from the outbreak of war and is extremely effective. The organisation of aid at the border, the reception of refugees and the effectiveness of cooperation between local government, non-governmental and public institutions have had an amazing effect. These actions indicate that the essence of humanitarian aid lies both in multi-level organisation and coordination, but with the full involvement of the society. The important role of the people of Poland has been repeatedly voiced by many foreign politicians.

The success of the assistance provided to those in need was founded on the openness of Poles, the cooperation and coordination of undertaken actions as well as the immediate integration of refugees into Polish society. The scale of migration to Poland will clearly determine the priorities of social policy in the

near future, including the need to establish rules for meeting social, educational and health needs (Firlit-Fesnak et al., 2022).

The tremendous scope of assistance provided to Ukrainians should serve as a base of experience in the ability of citizens, uniformed services (the State Fire Service), public institutions, non-governmental organisations, local governments, and the private sector to organise humanitarian aid. It is undeniably an excellent example of a multi-level and effectively coordinated emergency relief system, all elements of which were found to be effective. It should serve as an example that could be used for future planning of formal and informal initiatives in the aid process. What is important is that, despite the successive phases of the response to the disaster, despite the information battle, the fake news, the aid is being continued.

At each stage of the assistance, the mental and physical condition of all those who took part in the organised actions was taken care of. It is very important that firefighters and all the volunteers have the opportunity to de-stress and strengthen themselves not only through rest, but also through professional psychological and crisis assistance. Recalling the phases of response to a disaster, we can confidently say that we are in phase 5 where we are dealing with a reality that is ongoing and feels like it will never end. We are accompanied by anger, bitterness and deep disappointment when we are powerless. Disappointed and/or unfulfilled hopes or promises of help are insufficient. People are exhausted, worn out by the immense stress of ongoing efforts. Tiredness of helping appears and possibly the sense of “common community” disappears. The media, especially social media, organizations, community leaders – all have an important role to play in sustaining the dichotomy of helping while raising awareness about the natural phases of disaster response, not being surprised by any reactions because they are completely natural in an unnatural war situation.

The State Fire Service also provided psychological support to firefighters of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine. After a series of online meetings between psychologists of both services, during which experiences and areas of broader cooperation were exchanged, psychologists of the State Fire Service, based on their own experiences and knowledge, prepared and handed over to colleagues from Ukraine scripts and materials of their own. Their topics included providing psychological support to children, interviewing in the context of death/loss of a loved one, and helping in crisis situations (Komenda Główna Państwowej Straży Pożarnej, n.d.).

During research, the main research hypothesis was confirmed: Undertaking multi-level aid activities by the local community and selected uniformed forma-

tions significantly contribute to the effectiveness of aid activities. The activities undertaken by the State Fire Service guarantee the effectiveness of helping Ukrainians during Russia's military aggression.

The knowledge gained through case analysis of aid activities can be used to better understand similar phenomena and, on the basis of this, to improve real actions.

The essence of the method used was: looking at real examples of aid projects; drawing conclusions relevant to their next, similar undertakings; showing concepts worth implementing; an indication of potential errors to be avoided; avoiding mistakes in the future or even applying proven solutions.

From the practical point of view, by analysing various studies on relief attitudes, forms of aid and readiness to help, a kind of multifaceted aid model has been developed in the operational mode, taking into account local levels of action. There is also a need to highlight the importance of preventive work and various campaigns in mental health area. Given the theoretical framework of disaster response and the accompanying emotions, behaviours and attitudes, patterns of relief activities should be tailored to minimise psychosocial damage to participants (including fatigue, volunteer burnout and disillusionment with everyday life among not only victims but also those involved in the relief effort) and the failure of activities. In conditions of compassion and aid fatigue, the image of the refugee becomes distorted, and is portrayed differently now than at the beginning or according to one's own expectations. This leads to perceiving reality through the perspective of certain stereotypes, cognitive errors and individual cases to which collective behaviour is attributed. It is important not to limit ourselves to what we want to see (Bukowska, 2022). For multi-faceted aid actions to be effective, one needs to know how to help (Gutowska, 2022). Looking at the activities of Poles, both grassroots and systemic ones, among others organised by the State Fire Service, one should emphasise their quality and uniqueness on a global scale and, despite rushing, perhaps a little blindly, to help, the Polish society can serve as a model in this respect.

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