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Since this study aim is to analyze the role of community resilience in response to crisis and uncertainty, two cases of community responses to an unprecedented refugee and humanitarian crisis caused by Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022 made by two Polish border communities from two corners of Poland, one in northeast, in a borderland area referred to as Suwałki Gap and second in southeast, in Biecz, referred to as “Little Cracow” have been studied. The main objective of this study is to gain knowledge of one of core dimensions of community resilience, namely agency which enhances adaptability on both individual and collective level, often referred to as the locus of control [Inglehart, Welzel 2009] as well as a pillar of community resilience and crucial element in the proactive phase of crisis cycle management, civil preparedness defined as the ability to sustain functions vital to society, ensuring basic supply and the State’s capacity to act in a crisis situation [Zekulic et al. 2017 in: Civil-Military Cooperation Center of Excellence Info Sheet 2024] to see if they have enhanced community resilience in this response. For this purpose, on site and in person qualitative interviews have been conducted with research participants, from two interview groups of volunteers and community members who were privately and professionally involved in this response, namely in helping Ukrainian refugees arriving to Poland.

The results demonstrate that refugee and humanitarian crisis caused by the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine triggered communities’ agency to act and kept them united by the same aim – to respond to this unprecedented crisis by helping Ukrainian refugees. Those practical and hands-on experiences of both communities in response to crisis by helping another human being in need, very often and especially in the first weeks of the invasion, bottom-up and individually, with the use of all kinds of, often ad hoc, means, methods and various solutions, provide a solid civil preparedness ground on which community resilience could be built and strengthened.

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