

Research Article

Livelihood Insecurity and Social Sustainability in Forced Migration: Why Women and Children Matter

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Abstract: Forced migration is increasingly recognised as a protracted condition rather than a short-term humanitarian crisis, thereby prompting urgent concerns regarding social sustainability within host communities. This conceptual, literature-driven study investigates the ways in which livelihood insecurity, reflected in precarious employment, fluctuating income, legal restrictions, insecure housing, and inadequate access to essential services, influences social sustainability outcomes across forced migration settings. To address this issue, the paper proposes an integrated four-dimensional analytical framework encompassing economic, institutional, spatial, and social dimensions, through which the relationship between livelihood insecurity, social cohesion, intergenerational well-being, and human capital development is systematically examined. Particular emphasis is placed on women and children, who, although frequently categorised as vulnerable populations, remain fundamental to long-term integration processes and the strengthening of intergenerational resilience. By drawing upon interdisciplinary scholarship in forced migration, livelihoods, and human security, the analysis demonstrates how structural forms of insecurity erode social sustainability and disrupt durable integration pathways over time. The study contends that policy measures aimed at enhancing women's livelihood opportunities and improving children's access to education and social services should be understood not merely as humanitarian imperatives, but as strategic investments in achieving socially sustainable integration. Overall, the findings advance ongoing debates in human security and social sustainability by framing livelihood insecurity as a structural limitation that significantly shapes long-term social resilience in contexts of forced displacement.

Keywords: Children's Well-Being; Forced Migration; Livelihood Insecurity; Refugee Integration; Social Cohesion; Social Sustainability; Sustainable Development; Women and Children.

1. Introduction

Forced migration has increasingly transformed into a prolonged and complex global phenomenon, although it is still frequently interpreted primarily through the framework of immediate humanitarian crises. Nevertheless, existing evidence indicates that a substantial share of displaced populations now live in urban and peri-urban environments, where their capacity to secure sustainable livelihoods plays a decisive role in shaping integration processes and social cohesion within host communities [1; 2]. Conventionally, scholarly attention has concentrated on legal status, labour market participation, welfare arrangements, and humanitarian support mechanisms. However, the broader and multidimensional nature of livelihood insecurity, particularly as it affects refugee populations, women, and children, has not yet received sufficient analytical attention [3; 4].

In contemporary scholarship, there is growing recognition that forced migration must be conceptualised not solely as an emergency humanitarian issue, but as a long-term socio-economic process. Although humanitarian interventions generally prioritise immediate protection and short-term relief, the enduring sustainability of displacement settings is strongly dependent upon refugees' ability to build secure and stable livelihoods. In this context, access to employment opportunities, housing stability, and public services substantially determines the prospects for both social and economic integration within host societies. An expanding body of literature further demonstrates that the absence of secure livelihood opportunities generates enduring patterns of vulnerability among displaced groups. Where refugees encounter barriers to formal labour market entry, weak legal safeguards, and precarious housing conditions, their economic participation is frequently restricted to informal sectors marked by low remuneration and heightened instability. Such structural limitations not only diminish personal well-being, but also exert wider effects on social cohesion, economic inclusion, and trust in institutional structures across host communities.

Accordingly, the analysis of livelihood insecurity necessitates a multidimensional framework. Rather than restricting the discussion to

employment outcomes alone, it is essential to explore the interaction between economic opportunities, institutional structures, spatial settings, and social relationships in shaping the everyday experiences of refugees. This broader lens becomes especially critical in protracted displacement contexts where refugees remain in host countries for extended durations. Under such circumstances, the sustainability of integration increasingly relies on the adaptive capacity of both displaced populations and host institutions in response to long-term social and economic change. Viewed through the lens of human security, livelihood insecurity represents an ongoing threat to economic, social, and personal security within forced migration settings. From this perspective, it should be understood not merely as an economic limitation, but as a multidimensional human security challenge. Unstable access to income, legal protection, housing, and essential services compromises not only short-term survival but also long-term security by constraining capabilities and weakening social protection systems, with disproportionately severe implications for women and children.

This paper therefore advances a conceptual shift by recognising women and children not simply as passive victims, but as key actors whose livelihood conditions are integral to the social sustainability of both refugee and host communities. Addressing the social dimensions of sustainability within forced migration scholarship is thus essential for developing a stronger conceptual understanding of how livelihood insecurity shapes long-term integration pathways and intergenerational resilience. The present study contributes to ongoing scholarly and policy discussions by constructing an integrated four-dimensional analytical framework of livelihood insecurity, encompassing economic, institutional, spatial, and social dimensions, and systematically linking these dimensions to social sustainability outcomes in forced migration contexts. While existing integration models largely prioritise legal access and social cohesion, the proposed framework extends these approaches by demonstrating how livelihood insecurity functions as a structural constraint affecting intergenerational well-being, human capital development, and long-term social sustainability. By placing women and children at the centre of this framework, the study further advances current discourse through explicit attention to gendered and intergenerational mechanisms underpinning

social sustainability in displacement settings.

At the same time, livelihood opportunities available to displaced populations are frequently restricted by structural barriers rooted in labour market dynamics, migration governance, and welfare regimes. These constraints often channel refugees into informal economic sectors characterised by low wages, precarious employment, and limited social protection. Such conditions influence not only immediate well-being, but also long-term trajectories of social cohesion, human capital accumulation, and intergenerational mobility. For this reason, livelihood insecurity must be examined not solely as an economic issue, but as a broader structural determinant shaping social sustainability in forced migration contexts.

2. Material and Methods

2.1 Literature Review: Forced Migration and Livelihood Insecurity

2.1.1 Defining Livelihood Insecurity

Livelihood insecurity encompasses far more than the simple absence of income, extending to the instability and unpredictability that characterise multiple survival strategies. In this regard, it should be conceptualised as a dynamic and evolving condition rather than a fixed economic status. It signifies the extent to which individuals and households can maintain consistent access to essential resources over time. Such resources include not only financial earnings, but also access to employment opportunities, secure housing, social support networks, and institutional protection mechanisms. When these components remain fragile or uncertain, households may continue to experience persistent vulnerability, even in situations where temporary income generation is possible. This condition includes dimensions such as precarious employment, fluctuations in income, housing instability, legal uncertainty, and restricted access to essential social services. Together, these factors intensify the challenges encountered by refugees, with women and children often carrying a disproportionate share of the burden [3; 4]. For instance, displaced women frequently encounter significant barriers to labour market participation, which often compels them to engage in informal work arrangements that typically lack security, legal safeguards, and employment benefits. Similarly, children are particularly affected through disruptions in access to education and healthcare services, which can have lasting consequences for their development and long-term well-being [1].

2.1.2 Structural Sources of Insecurity in Forced Migration

The vulnerabilities associated with forced migration are fundamentally embedded in structural conditions that intensify refugees' exposure to livelihood insecurity. Factors such as uncertain legal status, restricted access to formal employment, discrimination, spatial segregation, and dependence on informal labour markets collectively contribute to this fragility [2; 4]. Spatial segregation, in particular, often deepens these vulnerabilities by concentrating displaced populations within neighbourhoods characterised by weak infrastructure and limited economic prospects. Such localities frequently suffer from inadequate public services, poor transportation connectivity, and scarce employment opportunities, all of which further constrain refugees' ability to establish stable livelihoods. Over time, these settlement patterns may generate localised poverty traps in which upward economic mobility becomes progressively more difficult. Consequently, livelihood strategies adopted by refugees should be understood as adaptive responses to systemic constraints rather than as indicators of individual failure [3]. Recognising these structural limitations underscores the urgent need to address the systemic barriers that hinder access to sustainable livelihoods.

Existing empirical research commonly relies on qualitative fieldwork, household surveys, and mixed-method approaches conducted in major host-country contexts such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. These studies consistently show that restricted labour market access, precarious housing conditions, and institutional obstacles systematically weaken refugees' livelihood strategies, particularly for women and children. Recent scholarship has moved beyond a narrow focus on individual coping mechanisms and increasingly highlights the structural nature of livelihood insecurity in displacement settings. Refugee livelihoods are shaped not merely by personal capabilities or motivation, but by institutional frameworks that regulate labour market participation, residence status, and welfare eligibility. In many host countries, restrictive work permit systems and complex bureaucratic procedures prevent refugees from entering formal labour markets, thereby reinforcing dependence on informal employment. Although informal economic activities may offer short-term income opportunities, they frequently reproduce precarious working conditions and sustained economic vulnerability.

Empirical evidence across different host-country settings further

demonstrates that refugee households often depend on diversified livelihood strategies that combine wage labour, informal entrepreneurship, and support derived from social networks. These strategies represent rational adaptations to structural constraints rather than purely individual economic decisions. Nevertheless, such mechanisms rarely ensure long-term stability. Instead, they often perpetuate income volatility, insecure housing, and limited access to social protection systems. Moreover, livelihood insecurity intersects strongly with gender- and age-based inequalities. Refugee women frequently face barriers including inadequate access to childcare, social norms that restrict economic participation, and concentration in poorly paid sectors such as domestic work and informal services. At the same time, children living in displacement contexts are often exposed to disrupted education, psychosocial stress, and reduced access to healthcare services. These overlapping forms of vulnerability demonstrate that livelihood insecurity is a multidimensional condition shaped by institutional structures, labour market dynamics, and social inequalities within host societies.

Livelihood insecurity in forced migration settings is also closely linked to the structure of host-country labour markets. Refugees commonly encounter legal and institutional constraints that restrict access to formal employment. Work permit limitations, bureaucratic procedures, and discriminatory hiring practices frequently exclude them from regulated labour markets. As a result, many displaced individuals depend on informal economic activities that provide limited stability and minimal access to social protection. While informal employment may offer immediate income opportunities, it often exposes refugees to precarious working conditions, low wages, and restricted labour rights. These conditions are especially severe in urban displacement contexts where living costs are high and economic opportunities are unevenly distributed. In such environments, refugees may continue to experience persistent livelihood instability despite being economically active. This further reinforces the need to understand livelihood insecurity as a structural condition produced by institutional arrangements rather than merely as an individual economic difficulty.

Spatial factors similarly play a central role in shaping livelihood opportunities for displaced populations. Refugees frequently reside in neighbourhoods marked by overcrowded housing, poor infrastructure, and restricted access to public services. These settlement patterns can reinforce socio-economic vulnerability by limiting access to employment networks, transportation systems, and educational institutions. Over time, spatial segregation may create concentrated zones of economic disadvantage in which displaced communities remain structurally excluded from broader urban development processes. Gender and age further influence the experience of livelihood insecurity within displacement contexts. Women refugees often encounter multiple barriers to labour market participation, including limited childcare support, cultural norms restricting employment, and concentration in low-paid sectors such as domestic services and informal work. Simultaneously, children growing up in displacement settings often face educational disruption and reduced access to healthcare. These intersecting vulnerabilities illustrate how livelihood insecurity operates across generations and shapes both immediate and future social outcomes.

Taken together, these dynamics demonstrate that livelihood insecurity should not be viewed solely as an economic issue, but rather as a complex social phenomenon shaped by institutional structures, labour market conditions, spatial environments, and entrenched inequalities. Addressing these interconnected dimensions is therefore essential for fostering long-term social sustainability in forced migration settings. In addition to labour market barriers, livelihood insecurity is deeply connected to the institutional arrangements governing refugee protection in host countries. Legal status often determines whether displaced individuals can access employment, public services, and social protection systems. In many contexts, temporary protection regimes provide only limited legal certainty and restrict access to formal labour markets. Consequently, many refugees remain dependent on informal economic activities that offer minimal stability and weak legal safeguards.

These institutional constraints frequently compel refugee households to adopt diversified livelihood strategies involving multiple income streams. Such approaches may include informal wage employment, small-scale entrepreneurship, and reliance on kinship or community-based support networks. Although diversification may reduce short-term economic risks, it seldom removes structural vulnerability. Instead, households remain exposed to income volatility and limited social protection, thereby reinforcing long-term livelihood insecurity. Spatial dynamics further remain critical in shaping livelihood opportunities for displaced populations. Refugees often settle in areas characterised by overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to essential public services. These spatial patterns intensify economic vulnerability by restricting access to transport systems, employment opportunities, and educational facilities. Over time, such spatial marginalisation may create concentrated zones of disadvantage where displaced communities remain structurally detached from wider urban development.

Furthermore, livelihood insecurity intersects profoundly with gender- and age-related inequalities. Refugee women often face multiple barriers to economic participation, including inadequate childcare, restrictive gender norms, and concentration in low-paid sectors such as domestic work and informal services. Likewise, children living in displacement contexts may experience interrupted schooling, psychosocial distress, and limited healthcare access. These overlapping vulnerabilities clearly demonstrate that livelihood insecurity operates across generations and influences both present and future social outcomes.

2.2 Methodology and Conceptual Approach

This study employs a conceptual, literature-based research design with the objective of developing an analytical framework that connects livelihood insecurity to social sustainability outcomes within forced migration contexts. Rather than relying on original empirical evidence, the study draws upon and synthesises insights from interdisciplinary scholarship on forced migration, refugee livelihoods, social sustainability, and human security. Conceptual research designs hold significant value within social science scholarship, particularly in areas characterised by complex and multidimensional social processes. In the field of forced migration studies, empirical findings often originate from diverse disciplinary traditions, including sociology, development studies, economics, and political science. Consequently, a conceptual synthesis becomes essential for integrating these fragmented streams of knowledge into a coherent and systematic analytical framework.

The literature reviewed in this study was selected through a thematic reading strategy centred on research addressing refugee livelihoods, institutional barriers, and long-term integration outcomes. Academic journal articles, policy reports, and interdisciplinary studies were examined to identify recurring patterns associated with economic insecurity, institutional exclusion, spatial marginalisation, and social vulnerability affecting displaced populations. Through this interpretive synthesis, four closely interconnected dimensions of livelihood insecurity emerged as dominant themes across the literature: economic, institutional, spatial, and social insecurity. These dimensions were subsequently incorporated into a conceptual framework designed to link livelihood insecurity with broader social sustainability outcomes, including social cohesion, human capital development, and intergenerational mobility.

The purpose of this methodological approach is not to establish or test causal relationships, but rather to clarify conceptual connections and provide a structured analytical lens capable of guiding future empirical investigations. By systematically organising existing knowledge within an integrated framework, the study contributes to theoretical debates surrounding refugee livelihoods and demonstrates how structural forms of insecurity influence long-term social sustainability in forced migration settings. Conceptual frameworks are particularly valuable in fields such as forced migration studies, where complex social processes cannot be adequately captured through a single empirical method. By synthesising insights from multiple disciplinary perspectives, conceptual analysis helps to clarify key relationships and identify the underlying mechanisms that shape long-term social outcomes.

3. Results

3.1 Social Sustainability and Forced Migration

3.1.1 The Social Dimension of Sustainability

Sustainability is generally understood as comprising three interrelated pillars: environmental, economic, and social. Although the environmental and economic dimensions have received substantial scholarly attention, the social dimension remains comparatively underdeveloped and less clearly conceptualised within both empirical research and policy discourse. Social sustainability places emphasis on long-term social cohesion, intergenerational equity, and inclusive access to essential services, which makes it particularly relevant in forced migration contexts where social trust and interconnectedness are frequently under pressure [5; 6].

From this perspective, social sustainability is closely associated with the capacity of societies to preserve stable, inclusive, and enduring social relations over time. It extends beyond the reduction of poverty and inequality to include the development of institutional structures that allow individuals and communities to participate meaningfully in both economic and social life. Within forced migration settings, these principles acquire heightened significance because displaced populations often face structural barriers that restrict access to key social institutions and opportunities. In the present study, social sustainability is conceptualised not merely in terms of social cohesion or short-term integration outcomes, but as the long-term capacity of societies to sustain social inclusion,

intergenerational mobility, and institutional trust under conditions shaped by structural inequality and displacement. This definition positions social sustainability as analytically distinct from immediate integration processes or short-term social cohesion, while remaining closely connected to broader debates surrounding human security and resilience.

3.1.2 Why Forced Migration is a Social Sustainability Issue

Protracted displacement fundamentally transforms urban labour markets, housing systems, and welfare regimes, often resulting in persistent poverty and social exclusion [7; 8]. In the absence of secure livelihood opportunities, refugees face an elevated risk of social marginalisation and intergroup tensions, conditions that may reinforce enduring cycles of inequality [6; 9]. Consequently, approaching refugee integration as a social sustainability challenge is essential for designing policies and interventions capable of supporting both displaced populations and host communities in achieving shared prosperity and social cohesion [6; 7].

In many host societies, the long-term presence of displaced populations significantly reshapes local economic and social structures. Labour markets, housing systems, and welfare institutions frequently come under additional pressure as governments attempt to respond to the needs of both refugees and host communities. Where such pressures are not addressed through inclusive and well-coordinated policy frameworks, existing social inequalities may deepen and tensions between communities may intensify. For this reason, forced migration should not be understood solely as a humanitarian concern, but also as a broader challenge for socially sustainable development.

Forced migration also carries profound long-term implications for urban development and social governance within host societies. Large refugee populations can substantially alter local labour market dynamics, increase housing demand, and place additional strain on public service provision. When host institutions lack the capacity to respond effectively to these demands, social inequalities may become more pronounced and economically marginalised groups may face intensified competition for limited resources and opportunities. At the same time, inclusive policies that facilitate access to employment, education, and social services have the potential to transform displacement into opportunities for meaningful social and economic participation. In this respect, the relationship between forced migration and social sustainability is closely linked to the capacity of host societies to manage diversity, strengthen institutional inclusion, and support long-term socio-economic integration.

3.2 Why Women and Children Matter

3.2.1 Gendered and Age Specific Vulnerabilities

Women and children experience distinct and often heightened vulnerabilities within forced migration contexts. Women frequently carry a disproportionate share of caregiving responsibilities and encounter barriers such as lower labour market participation, restricted employment opportunities, and concentration in low-paid occupations, all of which increase their exposure to gender-based discrimination [6; 10]. These gendered dynamics commonly result in refugee women being concentrated in precarious forms of employment, including informal services, domestic work, and small-scale home-based economic activities. Although such forms of work may generate limited income, they rarely provide long-term economic stability or access to formal social protection mechanisms. Consequently, women's economic participation often remains structurally constrained by inequalities embedded both within labour markets and within household responsibilities. At the same time, children in displacement settings frequently face disrupted education, involvement in child labour, and limited access to healthcare services, factors that can substantially undermine their long-term development and future life opportunities [11; 12].

3.2.2 Intergenerational Transmission of Insecurity

The consequences of livelihood insecurity frequently extend across generations. Economic hardship experienced by women in the present can translate into educational disadvantages and health-related challenges for their children in the future, thereby creating self-reinforcing cycles of poverty and social exclusion [13; 14]. For example, low and unstable maternal income can directly influence children's access to education, nutritional well-being, and overall health outcomes [12; 15]. Recognising the interconnected nature of these factors is therefore essential for promoting long-term social sustainability.

The intergenerational transmission of insecurity becomes particularly pronounced in situations of protracted displacement. When households face persistent livelihood instability, children often experience reduced

access to educational opportunities and supportive learning environments. Such limitations can negatively affect cognitive development, skill acquisition, and future labour market participation. Over time, these disadvantages may reproduce enduring patterns of poverty and exclusion across successive generations. Consequently, policies aimed at strengthening household livelihood security should also be understood as long-term investments in human capital development and social sustainability. Addressing the needs of children in displacement contexts is therefore essential not only for safeguarding individual well-being, but also for preventing the continued reproduction of structural inequalities within host societies.

3.2.3 Women and Children as Pillars of Social Sustainability

Strengthening the livelihoods of women and promoting the well-being of children are critical for enhancing household resilience, improving educational outcomes, and fostering social cohesion [6; 10]. Interventions targeting these groups represent not only immediate humanitarian imperatives but also strategic measures for cultivating sustainable and socially integrated communities [14; 16]. Empowering women and ensuring that children have consistent access to education and healthcare can substantially reduce long-term welfare dependency while supporting broader social stability [10; 15].

3.3 Conceptual Framework: Linking Livelihood Insecurity and Social Sustainability

3.3.1 Core Dimensions of Livelihood Insecurity

A structured understanding of the relationship between livelihood insecurity and social sustainability can be achieved by considering four interrelated dimensions: economic insecurity (including income volatility and unemployment), institutional insecurity (legal status and access to public services), spatial insecurity (housing conditions and segregation), and social insecurity (quality of social networks and experiences of discrimination) [3; 17]. This multidimensional perspective emphasises that these forms of vulnerability rarely operate in isolation; instead, they often interact and reinforce one another in forced migration contexts. For instance, limited access to formal employment may compel refugees to rely on unstable informal labour markets, which subsequently constrains their capacity to secure stable housing or access essential public services.

Recognising the interconnections between these dimensions is critical for understanding how livelihood insecurity develops over time and differentially affects groups within refugee populations, particularly women and children. These four dimensions should therefore be seen not as discrete categories but as mutually reinforcing processes shaping refugees' daily experiences of displacement. Economic insecurity frequently intersects with institutional barriers, spatial marginalisation, and social exclusion, producing layered and cumulative forms of disadvantage. For example, refugees excluded from formal labour markets often rely on low-wage informal employment, limiting their ability to maintain secure housing or invest in their children's education. Such cumulative disadvantages can persist across time, contributing to the intergenerational reproduction of inequality.

When households remain caught in unstable economic conditions, their capacity to accumulate resources, pursue educational opportunities, and engage with formal economic institutions is severely restricted. Consequently, livelihood insecurity may become a structural condition with long-term implications for social sustainability. Understanding these interactions is essential for designing policy interventions that target the root causes of refugee vulnerability. Rather than addressing economic, institutional, spatial, and social challenges in isolation, integrated approaches are required to respond effectively to the interconnected nature of livelihood insecurity.

3.3.2 Disproportionate Impacts on Women and Children

The framework illustrates how women and children face elevated risks arising from caregiving responsibilities, restricted participation in the labour market, and interruptions in education [10; 14]. These challenges increase reliance on fragile social networks and limited resources, thereby intensifying the cycle of livelihood insecurity [13]. By highlighting these specific vulnerabilities, policymakers are better equipped to design targeted interventions that address the interconnected challenges confronting these groups.

3.3.3 Pathways to Social Sustainability Outcomes

Persistent livelihood insecurity can give rise to enduring patterns of poverty, marginalisation, and social exclusion within host societies. When

displaced populations are confined to unstable employment and insecure housing, opportunities for upward social and economic mobility are limited. Over time, these conditions generate cumulative disadvantages that affect both refugees and host communities. The impacts of livelihood insecurity are particularly pronounced for women and children, who often experience the most severe consequences of economic and institutional constraints. Limited access to stable employment reinforces women's economic dependency and reduces their influence within households and community networks. In many displacement contexts, women also carry primary responsibility for unpaid care work, further restricting their ability to participate in formal labour markets.

Children living in households affected by livelihood insecurity frequently encounter interruptions in schooling, reduced educational attainment, and limited access to healthcare and other social services. These disruptions have long-term implications for human capital formation and social mobility, as educational inequality in childhood is a key driver of intergenerational poverty. The interplay among economic, institutional, spatial, and social forms of insecurity underscores the cumulative nature of vulnerability in forced migration settings. Exclusion from formal labour markets may lead refugees to reside in low-cost neighbourhoods with inadequate infrastructure and limited public services. Such spatial conditions further constrain access to employment networks, transportation, and educational opportunities.

Accordingly, livelihood insecurity should be viewed not merely as a short-term humanitarian concern, but as a structural factor shaping long-term social sustainability outcomes. Reducing livelihood insecurity can enhance integration by facilitating economic participation, supporting human capital development, and strengthening social cohesion between refugees and host populations. The conceptual framework developed in this study demonstrates how the various dimensions of livelihood insecurity—economic exclusion, institutional barriers, spatial marginalisation, and social discrimination—interact to produce cumulative vulnerabilities. Addressing these interconnected challenges requires integrated policy approaches that extend beyond isolated interventions, promoting access to employment, education, and social protection. Such comprehensive strategies can reinforce both refugee resilience and the capacity of host societies to manage the long-term dynamics of displacement.

4. Discussion

4.1 Livelihood Centered Refugee Policies

Policies supporting refugees should prioritise facilitating access to formal employment, skills recognition, and vocational training, with particular attention to women who face systemic barriers [6; 10]. Initiatives that promote women's entrepreneurship can empower displaced individuals while generating positive effects for local economies [10]. Expanding access to regulated employment is essential for reducing long-term livelihood insecurity among displaced populations. Participation in formal labour markets enables refugees to secure stable income, social protection, and pathways for upward mobility. Beyond improving individual well-being, such access also enhances overall economic productivity within host societies. Policies that streamline work permit procedures, recognise existing skills, and provide targeted vocational training are therefore critical for transforming refugee livelihoods from temporary coping mechanisms into sustainable, long-term economic engagement.

4.2 Child Centered Social Policies

Policies centred on children are essential to guarantee universal access to education, healthcare, and robust protection mechanisms against child labour. Such measures support immediate well-being while simultaneously fostering long-term community resilience and social integration [14; 15]. Maintaining continuous educational access for refugee children is one of the most effective approaches to breaking cycles of intergenerational poverty. Education not only facilitates cognitive development but also promotes social integration and enhances prospects for future economic participation. When children remain in school and benefit from supportive learning environments, they are better able to acquire the skills required for labour market engagement. Accordingly, education policies targeting refugee children constitute a long-term investment in human capital development, yielding benefits for both displaced populations and host societies.

4.3 Gender and Age Sensitive Policy Design

A uniform "one-size-fits-all" policy approach often fails to address the specific needs of diverse groups within refugee populations. Effective

policies must explicitly consider gender and age differences to promote meaningful social sustainability [6; 10]. Tailoring interventions in this way can generate substantial benefits at both individual and community levels. Recent scholarship on refugee integration highlights that sustainable livelihood opportunities are central to long-term integration outcomes in host societies. Evidence indicates that when displaced populations gain stable access to labour markets, educational systems, and institutional support, both refugees and host communities experience enhanced social cohesion and economic participation. Conversely, prolonged restrictions on employment and limited access to social services tend to exacerbate socio-economic marginalisation and intergenerational disadvantage among refugee populations [18; 19; 20].

Consequently, policies addressing livelihood insecurity should adopt an integrated approach that simultaneously considers economic, institutional, and social dimensions. Isolated measures focused solely on employment or humanitarian assistance are unlikely to achieve sustainable outcomes. Instead, comprehensive policy frameworks combining labour market access, education opportunities, childcare provision, and social protection mechanisms are more effective in enhancing long-term integration prospects. Local governance institutions also play a critical role in shaping refugees' day-to-day integration experiences. Municipal authorities are often responsible for delivering key public services, including housing regulation, education, healthcare, and local employment initiatives. When local institutions are adequately resourced and guided by inclusive policy mandates, they can substantially reduce barriers to refugees' full participation in urban economic and social life.

Sustainable integration requires a shift from short-term humanitarian responses to development-oriented policy frameworks. While emergency aid remains essential during the initial stages of displacement, long-term integration depends on institutional arrangements that support economic inclusion, educational access, and participation in formal labour markets. Policies that strengthen these institutional pathways enhance refugees' capacity to establish stable livelihoods while contributing to the social and economic development of host communities. Adopting an intergenerational perspective is also critical in refugee policy design. Investments in women's economic participation and children's educational opportunities yield long-term social returns by building human capital and reducing the likelihood of persistent poverty across generations. In this context, supporting women's livelihoods and safeguarding children's development should be considered not only as humanitarian imperatives but also as strategic components of socially sustainable migration governance.

5. Conclusion

In summary, forced migration poses significant social sustainability challenges, with livelihood insecurity acting as a key mediating factor. Recognising women and children as active participants rather than passive victims allows policies to more effectively support integration. Securing their livelihoods is both a humanitarian priority and a strategic approach to long-term social sustainability in host societies. The conceptual framework developed in this study highlights the need for policies that address economic, institutional, spatial, and social dimensions of insecurity. Future research could explore how these dimensions interact across different host country contexts and how institutional arrangements shape refugees' long-term socio-economic outcomes. Comparative studies may further clarify how policy environments influence the relationship between livelihood opportunities and social sustainability. Overall, livelihood insecurity should be viewed as central to sustainable migration governance. As displacement becomes increasingly protracted, host societies must move beyond short-term humanitarian responses, adopting integrated strategies that combine economic inclusion, social protection, and access to education and services. Expanding formal labour market participation, enhancing educational opportunities, and strengthening social protection systems not only improve refugee well-being but also foster social cohesion and institutional stability. Treating livelihood security as a foundation of social sustainability enables policymakers to address the structural drivers of vulnerability and support resilient, inclusive host communities.

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