



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Developing a sustainable livelihood framework for internally displaced persons (IDPS) in Kurmi, Takum and USSA local government areas of Taraba state, Nigeria

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Abstract

The persistent rise in internal displacement across Nigeria, particularly in conflict-prone regions such as Kurmi, Takum and Ussa Local Government Areas of Taraba State, has resulted in significant socio-economic dislocation and long-term livelihood insecurity for affected populations. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in these areas often face chronic poverty, limited access to productive resources and inadequate support systems, making it difficult for them to rebuild their lives and achieve self-reliance. This study proposes the development of a sustainable livelihood framework tailored to the specific needs, challenges and opportunities of IDPs in the study areas. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews and focus group discussions to gather data from IDPs, host communities, government officials and humanitarian actors. It aims to assess existing livelihood strategies, identify critical constraints to sustainability and explore locally adaptable interventions that can foster resilience and socio-economic integration. The expected outcome is a comprehensive, community-driven framework that promotes economic empowerment, social inclusion and institutional support for displaced populations. The study will contribute to policy development and strategic planning for durable solutions to internal displacement in Taraba State and similar conflict-affected regions in Nigeria.

Keyword: Sustainable; Livelihood; Livelihood framework; Internally displaced persons; Local government area

1. Introduction

In Nigeria, humanitarian issues that have characterized the modern times include the forced migration of individuals out of their homes. Millions of people have been displaced as a result of conflict, communal violence and reoccurring calamities, creating a crisis which is both huge on a large scale and intensely personal in terms of effect. Towards the end of 2023, there were an estimated 3.3 million Nigerians in internal displacement due to conflict and violence alone and the country has always been ranked in the top ten countries with the highest number of internally displaced populations worldwide (IDMC-Nigeria, 2024). Although a lot of analysis and academic scholarship devoted to this crisis has been centered on the north-eastern region of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, displacement in Nigeria is not regionally homogeneous nor analytically liable to such situations. A rise in internal displacement caused by ethno-religious tensions, herder-farmer disputes, communal conflicts and banditry in Taraba State has resulted in circumstances of acute vulnerability that have received relatively little attention by research, despite being acute and persistent.

Kurmi, Takum and Ussa have become some of the most severely impacted local governments within Taraba State as the circumstances of violence and insecurity have displaced thousands of people and families, forcing them to leave their homes, farmlands and livelihoods (IDMC, 2023; NEMA, 2022). The short-term effects of displacement are quite obvious to the displaced: a lack of food, shelter, healthcare and education, which is aggravated by the fact that almost all sources of work and income have collapsed (UNHCR, 2023). However, what renders this crisis exceptionally sticky is not only

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the humanitarian aspect that it entails but also the structural trap that it would set. Displacement deprives individuals of assets, relationships and access to institutions on which livelihoods rely and in the absence of intentional and active action, recovery is not only challenging but also systematically hindered.

Humanitarian response within these community settings has not been missing but rather has not been adequate enough in the aspects that are most fundamental to long term recovery. Interventions have been essentially emergency-based, oriented towards provision of the short-term relief but not the regeneration of productive capacity or environmental conditions to self-reliance (IOM, 2023). These effects of this orientation are recorded and enduring: most IDPs in Kurmi, Takum and Ussa are left to languish in dependency, having restricted access to land, capital, or markets, not part of the economic life of their host communities and lacking skills or the institutions to recover sustainable livelihoods (Aliyu, 2023; Ishaku et al., 2020).

It is against this background that the current study gets its impetus as well as its cause. This is because the lack of a well-organized, context-specific and sustainable livelihood framework entrenched in the realities of the displacement in rural Taraba is as practically consequential as it is academically important. The body of previous studies has been dominated by emphasizing the dynamics of north-eastern displacement to the detriment of middle-belt experiences of communities such as those found in Kurmi, Takum and Ussa. This paper thus seeks to directly fill this gap, by understanding the livelihood options as currently practiced by IDPs in these local government locations, the structural and contextual conditions that limit them and the framework of a sustainable livelihood based on local realities and influenced by community involvement. The end project goal is to build policy and programme opportunities that go beyond the emergency relief to economic stability, social integration and sustainable recovery of the displaced communities in Taraba State.

1.1. Statement of Problem

Internal displacement remains one of the most disturbing humanitarian disasters in Nigeria whose issues have long since ceased to be emergency situations; rather, they have been structural issues that affect the lives of millions of people throughout the nation. Although there has been a lot of concern on displacement in the north-eastern states, the Taraba state crisis, which has been fueled by long time intercommunal violence and herder-farmer conflicts, has received relatively less attention as regards scholarly or programmatic interests. In Kurmi, Takum and Ussa rural areas of local governments, large numbers of people are left without access to the land, markets and social networks that previously supported them and trapped in a state of dependency that humanitarian aid has not been able to resolve (Aliyu, 2023; Ishaku et al., 2020). The pertinent question that this reality raises is not the number of those displaced of course, but the reason why after years of action, so many cannot recover to live sustainable lives.

The IDPs of Taraba State are characterized by limited access to land and financial resources, limited marketable skills and proactive exclusion by the economic life of the host communities, whereas the latter are forced to endure the added burden of large displaced populations on already scarce resources such as food, water and homes (UNHCR, 2023; Zamani, Yusuf and Samuel, 2025). This individual deprivation coupled with strain at the community level generates a loop of dependencies that cannot be overcome by external help by its very nature (Ishaku et al., 2020).

It is in this background that the lack of a context based livelihood framework is most effective. Current frameworks and interventions have, to date, been developed and tested in cases of north-eastern displacement but analytically and programmatically omit the unique socioeconomic and cultural realities of middle-belt communities, such as those in Taraba. The idea of sustainable livelihood recovery in these localities will always be idealized and not real without a framework that recognizes local conditions, relies on the community resources and reflects the voices of displaced people themselves. The current study will thus be informed by the dire necessity to establish a viable livelihood model that is deeply grounded in the lived experiences of Taraba State-based IDPs and that can potentially create a plausible, evidence-based roadmap towards long-term sustainability and self-sufficiency.

1.2. Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to develop a sustainable livelihood framework tailored to the needs of IDPs in Taraba State. The specific objectives are to:

- Investigate the livelihood activities currently pursued by IDPs, including agriculture, small-scale trade and informal work;
- Identify the barriers and challenges faced by IDPs in achieving sustainable livelihoods, including access to land, capital, skills and markets;

- Develop a comprehensive framework that incorporates economic, social and environmental factors, aimed at promoting long-term self-reliance; and
- Offer actionable policy recommendations to relevant stakeholders, including government bodies, NGOs and international organizations.

1.3. Research Questions

- What livelihood activities are currently being pursued by IDPs in Kurmi, Takum and Ussa LGAs, including agriculture, small-scale trade and informal work?
- What are the major barriers and challenges faced by IDPs in achieving sustainable livelihoods, particularly regarding access to land, capital, skills and markets?
- How can a comprehensive livelihood framework be developed that incorporates economic, social and environmental factors to promote long-term self-reliance among IDPs?
- What actionable policy recommendations can be made to government bodies, NGOs and international organizations to support sustainable livelihoods for IDPs in the study areas?

1.4. Literature Review

1.4.1. Concept of Internal Displacement and IDPs in Nigeria

Internal displacement is an idea that has come to hold an important space in the discourse of humanitarian and human rights today. The United Nations defines internally displaced persons (IDPs) as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border” (Mooney, 2005). Akume (2015) further mentions armed conflict as the most common cause of displacement in developing societies, followed by natural disasters, human rights abuse and displacement inflicted by the government either as a result of development politics or through implementation of repressive government. The after-effects are always dire and they include loss of means of livelihood, deprivation and compelled reliance on external humanitarian help.

Nigeria is one of the most compelling instances of internal displacement around the world. The crisis in the country is a result of numerous drivers that interact. The insurgency of the Boko Haram and non-state armed group (NSAGs) has caused both prolonged displacement in the north-eastern states of Adamawa, Borno as well as Yobe since 2009. At the same time, the displacement in the larger north has been exacerbated by historical strains between the Fulani pastoralist and farming communities in the north-western states, coupled with rural banditry and criminal violence that have further escalated due to competition on land and water resources induced by climate (IDMC-Nigeria, 2024).

1.4.2. Livelihoods and Vulnerability among IDPs

Displacement is not just the destruction of a physical base of people; it is an organized destruction of economic and social basis, on which their lives were based. To internally displaced people, losing a home also means losing farmlands, jobs, social systems and the accumulated wealth that one relied on as the foundation of daily living. This is not an incidental fact about displacement, but one of its core components and knowing the livelihood aspects of forced translocation is the critical means to understanding the complete human burden of internal displacement. This is what Ishaku et al. (2020) illustrate in detail, establishing that, long-term displacement depletes sources of income, weakens social networks and constrains the growth of human capital, essentially putting displaced communities in a state of dependency that increases as time passes. What initially starts off as an emergency soon hardens into a structural state, a state where the longer the displacement the more challenging it makes to recover.

The susceptibility which comes with displacement is neither homogenous nor fixed. It changes in nature and degree based on the length of displacement, the presence of humanitarian aid and the extent to which the displaced individuals can have meaningful relationships with productive activity. Scoones (2015) believes that wellbeing needs to be conceptualized in terms of economic, social and relational dimensions going far beyond income, a stand that is especially empowering in the realities of displacement where the loss of social capital is at times as crippling as the loss of material wealth. When the farmer loses his land, he has lost a source of income and identity, a number of relationships and a knowledge base that are hard to recreate in a camp environment. This stratification of poverty, a material, relational and psychological one, determines lived experience of displacement among millions of Nigerians.

On a national scale, according to UNHCR (2023), approximately 3.5 to 3.6 million of internally displaced individuals reside in Nigeria and the protection, livelihoods and reintegration remain perpetually problematic which have been unable to be adequately handled by humanitarian programming. The magnitude of this number is a reflection of both the strength of the displacement drivers and the little that has been achieved to reestablish the circumstances within which the displaced persons will be able to establish productive lifestyles. The IDMC (2025) recognizes that 83.4 million individuals are internally displaced around the world, of whom 73.5 million are displaced by conflict and violence alone.

1.4.3. Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF)

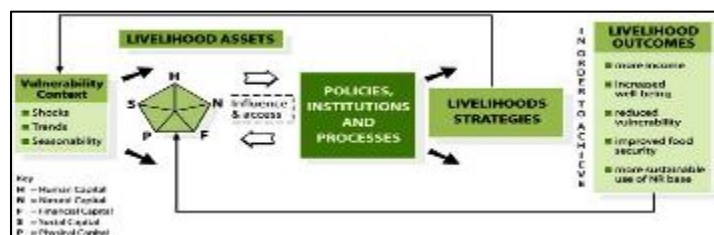
It takes more than a list of hardships to understand how people manage to sustain themselves in conditions of poverty, conflict, violence and displacement. It entails a systematic manner of thinking concerning the resources they have, the settings that they operate in and the approaches they take towards seeking a decent life. This is exactly what the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) by the Department of International Development (DFID, 1999) offers. The framework was originally intended to enhance poverty reduction programming and it has since remained one of the most extensively applied analytical instruments in development and humanitarian literature and provides a coherent and people-focused analysis of livelihood dynamics in vulnerable groups, such as internally displaced people.

In its essence, the SLF is based on a simple yet a potent assumption that individuals are no passive recipients of their situation or problem(s) but rather participatory agents who mobilize resources at their disposal and act within institutional context to produce relevant livelihoods. The framework sees people as acting in a condition of vulnerability, according to DFID (1999), within which they get hold of some assets and where the dominant social, institutional and organisational environment determines the value that the assets hold, as well as what strategies people can possibly follow. An important conceptual foundation of this stance was developed by Chambers and Conway (1992) who contended that sustainable livelihoods are based on the capability, equity and environmental sustainability, which is captured by the SLF as an interwoven network of analytical units.

The framework, as depicted in Figure 1, is structured around five, interrelated concepts, i.e., vulnerability context, livelihood assets, transforming structures and processes, livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes. One of the approaches to getting into the framework is by reading the diagram in a left-right order, but DFID (1999) is keen to warn that the framework is not a linear process. Instead, it is driven by various feedback loops and interactions which exemplify the reality of real lives.

The middle of the framework are transformation structures and processes that mediate between assets and strategies. These are government institutions, laws, policies, cultural norms and market structures, which dictate on what kind of terms people can access and utilize their assets. These structures tend to be absent, maladaptive or directly exclusionary in the case of IDPs. Aliyu (2023) discovers that institutional failures of IDPs in north-east Nigeria are manifested in the form of shelter, health and educational provision which reflect a transforming structure that is not well reconfigured to support displaced populations.

The framework is completed by livelihood strategies and outcomes. Strategies are described as a mix of activities that individuals follow to pursue their livelihood objectives, be it agricultural, wage-earning, entrepreneurial and reliant on transfers and help. Outcomes are what individuals end up accomplishing; higher income, improved wellbeing, diminished vulnerability, enhanced food security and more sustainable consumption of natural resources (DFID, 1999). As Scoones (2015) argues, one should not reduce these outcomes to the level of income but consider them based on the economic, social and relational aspects.



Source: DFID, 1999

Figure 1 Sustainable Livelihood Framework

1.4.4. Challenges to Sustainable Livelihoods among IDPs

The path to recovery in the wake of displacement is never easy and the history of such an endeavor reveals a consistent pattern of being influenced by structural obstacles, which always lie beyond the jurisdiction of the traditional humanitarian agenda. According to Aliyu (2023), in north-east Nigeria, IDPs experience poor shelter, lack of healthcare services, low-quality educational services and lack of quality living conditions in camps. These deprivations are not marginal inconveniences; they are the material circumstances in which the process of livelihood recovery must take place at all and without them the possibilities of the displaced individuals to accomplish anything economically is inherently limited. No individual can meaningfully participate in income generating activity unless they have stable place to live in, reliable food and healthcare irrespective of the capability or interventions offered to them.

These material difficulties are much exacerbated by the social setting of displacement. As it is shown by Zamani, Yusuf and Samuel (2025), displacement intensifies the host community tensions between IDP and their communities, undermining trust and boosting inequality in a manner that economically reintegrating them becomes an active challenge. Such inter-community relations are usually ignored in livelihood programming which typically pays attention to the individual capacity instead of the relational conditions that either have power to foster or hinder economic participation. In instances where host populations feel that IDPs are competing with them over limited resources, land, or work, even the livelihood interventions that have been planned well may fail before they can take root as a result of friction caused by social factors.

The literature is actually split regarding the areas where intervention should be effective. Ishaku et al. (2020) maintain that skills development and financial inclusion provide the most feasible avenues to livelihood restoration, which places a focus on the development of human and financial capital that is destroyed by displacement. Vichitrananda (2010) however adds a timely element of caution, discovering that even income generating projects even though they are welcome by the displaced communities, they often face the problems of sustainability and market access which inhibit the scope and scale of their long-term effects. The implication is great: offering skills or seed capital without creating changes to the economic environment into which the IDPs should reintegrate creates interventions that are appreciated and not transformative. Neither of these two stands can be reconciled, but they strongly reflect an ongoing disjunction between the formulation of livelihood programmes and the circumstances under which such programmes should be successful.

1.4.5. Knowledge Gap

Historically the bulk of this scholarship has centered on internal displacement and emergency humanitarian response in Nigeria, although much of the available literature has been geographically centered in the north-eastern states, where the Boko Haram insurgency has traditionally garnered the most research interest. This focus has provided an analytic underservice to other war-torn areas especially the middle-belt in Nigeria. The mechanisms by which displacement unfolds in states such as Taraba, based on a protracted conflict between two distinct communities and herder-farmer groups, act structurally different to those through which the north-eastern crisis occurs and cannot be sufficiently analyzed through frameworks tailored to a different environment. The rural local government unit of Kurmi, Takum and Ussa are particularly underrepresented in the literature and their livelihood choices in Kurmi have been recorded as unofficial and the experiences of their displacement remain purely theoretical.

This is where this research comes in. Instead of duplicating the emergency-centric model, used in small towns of camp-centric orientation that prevails in the literature, it turns its eyes to the more long-term livelihood situation of the displaced in rural Taraba, where the distribution of the IDP population is between communities with low institutional density and low levels of outside humanitarian assistance. It is hoped that this will create a system of livelihood that is based on local realities and formed by community involvement, which provides not only analytically sound knowledge but one which has an actual impact on the people it is about

2. Methodology

This study adopts mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the livelihood challenges and opportunities among Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the study areas. The quantitative component provides measurable data on socio-economic conditions and livelihood activities, while the qualitative component will offer deeper insights into experiences, perceptions, and institutional dynamics influencing sustainable livelihoods.

2.1. Study Area

The research was conducted in Kurmi, Takum, and Ussa Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Taraba State, Nigeria. These LGAs have experienced significant displacement due to communal conflicts, farmer-herder crises, and banditry, making them appropriate for studying IDP livelihoods.

2.2. Study Population

The target population consists of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) residing in official camps, informal settlements, and host communities within the three LGAs. Other participants will include community leaders, local government officials, NGO representatives, and development practitioners working with displaced populations.

2.3. Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling technique will be employed:

- Stage 1: Purposive selection of the three LGAs (Kurmi, Takum, and Ussa) based on displacement prevalence.
- Stage 2: Random selection of 1 IDP or communities from each LGA.
- Stage 3: Systematic random sampling of IDP households within each selected community.

Using Yamane’s formula (1967) for determining sample size from a known population, and assuming a population of approximately 4,000 IDPs across the three LGAs:

$$n = \frac{1+N}{1+N(e)^2} \qquad n = \frac{4000}{1+4000(0.0025)} = 364$$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = population size (4,000)
- e = margin of error (0.05)

Thus, a sample of 364 IDPs will be selected for the quantitative survey. Additionally, 20 key informant interviews (KIIs) and 6 focus group discussions (FGDs) (2 per LGA) will be conducted for qualitative insights.

2.4. Livelihood activities

Table 1 Livelihood activities of Respondents (%)

Activity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Farming	112	30.8
Petty Trading	96	26.4
Artisan Work	58	15.9
Casual Labour	72	19.8
Aid/Dependence	26	7.1
Total	364	100

Source: Author’s Computation (2026)

The distribution of number of respondents according to principle livelihood activity depicts clear preference in informal and survival economic activity. The highest percentage of the respondents is 112 (30.8) in farming meaning that agriculture is still the most common livelihood method among the IDPs. This is then followed by petty trading (26.4%), indicating that they are highly dependent on small-scale trade that requires little startup capital. The figure of casual labour is 19.8 percent of the respondents, and it appears that a significant portion of the population relies on a non-uniform and frequently temporary source of wages. Likewise, artisan work (15.9) shows that there is a degree of skill-based work, but it is not as common as farming and trading. A lower percentage, 7.1, is mainly dependent on aid or external assistance, which means that it is partially dependent on humanitarian aid.

2.5. Multiple Livelihood Engagement

Table 2 Respondents Multiple Livelihood Engagement (%)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	238	65.4
No	126	34.6

Source: Author's Computation (2026)

The data show that most of the respondents, 238 (65.4%), are involved in various livelihoods and 126 (34.6) depend on one source of livelihood. The fact that more than one-third of respondents (34.6%) rely on one source of livelihood implies that there is a group that can be more susceptible to shocks particularly when such source of livelihood is inconsistent or seasonal.

2.6. Livelihood Activities (Mean Scores)

Table 3 Livelihood Activities (Mean Scores)

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	interpretation
Engagement in income activities	3.84	0.91	High
Agriculture as income source	3.62	1.02	Moderate
Trading contribution	3.71	0.95	High
Informal work stability	3.28	1.10	Moderate
Income meets needs	2.94	1.08	Low

Source: Author's Computation (2026)

The mean score analysis gives a more in-depth understanding of the intensity, contribution, and effectiveness of livelihoods activities among IDPs. The respondents stated that the level of engagement with income-generating activities was high (Mean = 3.84, SD = 0.91) which means that the majority of IDPs are engaged in some kind of economic activity. Equally, the role of trading as a livelihood is also ranked as high (Mean = 3.71, SD = 0.95) which strengthens the previous result that petty trading is an important economic activity. The level of agriculture is moderate (Mean = 3.62, SD = 1.02) which is why even though many IDPs use agriculture as an activity it may be limited due to land access, input and/or environmental factors. Stability of informal work is moderate (Mean = 3.28, SD = 1.10) which means that these jobs are not always there but they are reliable. Nevertheless, the income adequacy is low (Mean = 2.94, SD = 1.08) and this indicates that despite being involved in different livelihood activities, majority of the respondents cannot afford their basic needs.

2.7. Section c: barriers to livelihoods

2.7.1. Major Challenges (Multiple Response)

Table 4 Major Challenges of Respondents (%)

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage%
Lack of capital	278	76.4
Lack of land	244	67
Limited skills	216	59.3
Poor market access	198	54.4
Insecurity	186	51.1
Lack of govt support	230	63.2

Source: Author's Computation (2026)

The evidence on predicaments indicates that there is a concentration of structural as well as resource-based limitations to the livelihoods of IDPs. The most noticeable one is the absence of capital, which was mentioned by 278 respondents (76.4%), so it is the most essential obstacle to livelihood development. This is topped by the absence of land (67%) and the absence of government support (63.2) which greatly restrict productive activity, especially in the agricultural sector. As well, less than half of the respondents noticed lack of skills (59.3%), and lack of market access (54.4%), which suggested some lack of human capital and economic integration. Lastly, insecurity (51.1) is another critical issue as a greater portion of the respondents (more than a half) is vulnerable to the livelihood instability and sustainability.

2.8. Barriers (Mean Scores)

Table 5 Barriers (Mean Scores)

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
Access to land	2.41	1.12	Low
Access to finance	2.18	1.05	Very Low
Skills adequacy	2.67	1.01	Low
Market access	2.74	1.08	Low
Security constraints	3.56	0.97	High
Institutional support	2.39	1.08	Low

Source: Author's Computation (2026)

Mean score analysis gives a more detailed idea of the level and degree of certain livelihood obstacles experienced by IDPs. The findings reveal that the access to finance has the least mean score (Mean = 2.18, SD = 1.05) meaning that the level of access to finance is very low and proves that the access to finance is the most critical constraint. On the same note, land accessibility (Mean = 2.41, SD = 1.12) and institutional support (Mean = 2.39, SD = 1.08) are low and this indicates that there is low availability of productive resources and lack of strong systems of support. Moreover, skills adequacy (Mean = 2.67, SD = 1.01) and market access (Mean = 2.74, SD = 1.08) are in the low range that implies that respondents do not have the required capabilities and market connections to enhance their livelihoods. Security constraints are on the other hand rated high (Mean = 3.56, SD = 0.97), which indicates that insecurity is a major and a major persistent issue affecting livelihood activities.

2.9. Economic Factors

Table 6 Economic Factors

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
Income stability	2.88	1.06	Low
Access to financial services	2.36	1.02	Low

Source: Author's Computation (2026)

2.10. Social Factors

Table 7 Social Factors

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
Community support	3.42	0.94	Moderate
Social inclusion	3.25	0.98	Moderate

2.11. Environmental Factors

Table 8 Environmental Factors

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
Access to natural resources	2.73	1.05	Low
Environmental constraints	3.48	0.99	Moderate

Source: Author's Computation (2026)

The findings show that there is low income stability (Mean = 2.88, SD = 1.06), which implies that respondents have unstable and unreliable earnings. Equally, there is low access to financial services (Mean = 2.36, SD = 1.02), which implies that they are not sufficiently incorporated into formal or informal financial systems. Analysis indicates that there is moderate support in the community (Mean = 3.42, SD=0.94) and moderate social inclusion (Mean = 3.25, SD=0.98). The results indicate low access to the natural resources (Mean = 2.73, SD = 1.05), and moderate environmental constraints (Mean = 3.48, SD = 0.99).

2.12. Policy Effectiveness

Table 9 Perception of Respondents on Policy Effectiveness (%)

Intervention	Frequency	Percentage %
Access to credit	292	80.2
Skills training	268	73.6
Land provision	244	67
Market access	226	62.1
Infrastructure	210	57.7
Security improvement	238	65.4

Source: Author's Computation (2026)

The responses on policy interventions in the distribution are illuminating of which areas should be prioritized to enhance the livelihoods of the IDPs. The most desirable intervention is access to credit, and 292 participants (80.2%), showed that there is a high need to use financial support strategies. Skills training (73.6) comes next implying that capacity building and human capital development is required. Additional interventions that have been found to be important are Land provision (67%), which is the significance of access to productive means. Improvement in security (65.4%), which highlights the importance of stability in the sustainability of livelihoods. Market access (62.1%), indicating the need for better economic integration. Infrastructure development (57.7%), which enables the general livelihood activities.

2.13. Policy Effectiveness

Table 10 Policy Effectiveness

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
Government support	2.52	1.04	Low
NGO effectiveness	3.21	0.96	Moderate
International support	3.08	0.98	Moderate
Need for long-term programs	4.12	0.81	Very High

Source: Author's Computation (2026)

The mean score analysis assesses the perceptions of respondents about the effectiveness of institutional support, and the necessity of long-term interventions. The findings indicate that government support is low (Mean = 2.52, SD = 1.04), which means that the respondents do not see government interventions as effective or adequate. On the contrary, the

effectiveness of NGOs (Mean = 3.21, SD = 0.96) and international support (Mean = 3.08, SD = 0.98) are considered at an average level indicating a more positive, although rather limited, effect. It is worth mentioning that the necessity of long-term programs is evaluated as very high (Mean = 4.12, SD = 0.81), which means that there is a high level of agreement among the respondents regarding the necessity of long-term and long-lasting programs.

3. Discussion of findings

This paper looked at the livelihood activities, livelihood barriers, sustainability, and policy effectiveness of internally displaced persons (IDP). The discussion incorporates the empirical results with available academic literature, especially in the context of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)

3.1. Economic Engagement and Livelihood Activities

It emerged that IDPs are currently participating in livelihoods, especially farming and petty trading, and most of them are involved in more than one livelihood strategy. It means that the participation in the economy and flexibility are high. Nevertheless, even with this activity, income sufficiency was reported to be low implying that the activities are mostly subsistence based and inadequate to support sustainable living. This is consistent with the research on displacement economies, which suggests that the majority of displaced people resort to informal, poorly-paid, and unsustainable employment opportunities as survival strategies instead of stepping stones to economic growth (Brown, et al., 2024)

Likewise, a study examining the IDPs in Somalia discovered that the displaced populations are involved in various income-producing activities yet end up in poverty because of poor productivity and non-sustainable opportunities (Abdiladif, 2025). This helps to argue that livelihood diversification among IDPs is more of necessity based as a sign of vulnerability not economic empowerment.

3.2. Obstacles to Sustainable Livelihoods

The research highlighted significant obstacles such as capital, land, skills, market access, insecurity and poor support by the government. Financial exclusion was the most important constraint of these. This observation has a close relationship with the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, which points out that financial, natural, and human capital access are crucial to sustainable livelihoods (Piggott-McKellar, et al., 2020). These assets are missing and this puts IDPs in a situation of being deprived of assets, which restricts them in enhancing their economic status.

Nigeria has also empirically confirmed that IDPs have to deal with systemic issues, including insufficient funding, insecurity, and poor institutional coordination, which are all barriers to livelihood sustainability (Akanni, et al., 2025).. Moreover, the significant effect of insecurity as witnessed in this research supports the earlier studies that estimate conflict and instability to be significant destabilizers of livelihood systems, which hamper long-term investment and economic stability.

3.3. Livelihoods (Economic, Social, Environmental Dimensions) Sustainability

The results revealed that the economic sustainability is poor (low income stability and financial access) The social support is average Environmental access (e.g. land and resources) is poor. This trend is an imbalanced livelihood system in which there is a certain amount of social capital; however it is not enough to offset the economic and environmental shortcomings. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework defines sustainable livelihoods to be the interplay of five key assets human, financial, social, natural, and physical capital (Zhao, 2025). This study suffers weaknesses in terms of financial and natural capital which considerably erodes livelihood results.

The academic literature also indicates that displacement tends to cause decapitalization in which people are deprived of productive resources, and thus become more vulnerable and less resilient (Mandishekwa, 2022). The medium degree of social support in this study is in agreement with the literature that suggests social networks can help to create resilience, yet is not sufficient without economic empowerment.

3.4. Policy Effectiveness and Institutional Support

The research results revealed that governmental support is viewed as low, whereas the support of NGO and international are moderate. Notably, the need to have long term livelihood programs is very high. This observation is in line with studies in Nigeria, which note that IDP policies are poorly executed, underfunded and mainly targeted at short-term humanitarian aid instead of long-term development (Akanni, et al., 2025).

Likewise, the research is keen to point out that humanitarian interventions often are ineffective in solving the underlying causes of poverty and livelihood insecurity, leading to further reliance on aid, as opposed to self-dependency (Abdiladif, 2025). The emphasis on long-term programs, at this study, is an indicator of a general change in the literature towards development-based programs, which emphasize, economic empowerment, skills development as well as sustainable income generation.

4. Conclusion

This research paper has investigated livelihood activities, barriers, sustainability issues and policy effectiveness on internally displaced persons (IDPs). The results indicate that despite the active engagement of the IDPs in income-generating activities like farming and petty trading, their lives are very informal, low-income, and unsuitable to support their basic needs. The study showed that there is an evident disparity between economic participation and livelihood reality as most respondents are involved in multi-activity mainly as a survival mechanism and not as a means to sustainability. Many barriers have been found to affect the ability of these people to succeed in business and these include lack of capital, access to land, skills, market access, insecurity and poor institutional support but the most critical of all is the financial constraints.

Regarding sustainability, although there is moderate social support, economic and environmental indicators are low, hampering long-term self-sufficiency. Also, the government support is seen as insufficient and long-term and development-oriented interventions are in high demand. Generally, it is concluded that the implementation of sustainable livelihoods among IDPs needs a transition towards long-term plans and strategies rather than temporary ones that facilitate economic empowerment, access to resources and effective institutions.

Recommendations

According to the results of this research, there are a number of policy and programmatic measures that need to be undertaken to alleviate the livelihood status of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and improve their chances of living a sustainable and independent life. To start with, there is urgent need to enhance financial inclusion of the IDPs. Government agencies, development partners and financial institutions ought to create special microfinance programs that are aimed at displaced populations since lack of capital and access to financial services turned out as the greatest limitation. This should be accompanied by low-interest loans or interest-free loans, revolving credit facilities and small business grants so that the IDPs may be able to increase existing livelihood activities or create new ones. Moreover, financial literacy programs ought to be implemented to enhance savings culture, investment capacity and proper utilization of credit facilities.

Second, there should be a focus on development of skills as a major avenue to sustainable livelihoods. This paper reveals that lack of skills is a major limiting factor to income-generating opportunities. Hence, systematic vocational education and capacity-building programmes are to be adopted by paying attention to market-relevant skills, including tailoring, agro-processing, carpentry, mechanics, and digital entrepreneurship. There must also be the inclusion of entrepreneurship training to boost self-employment and sustainability of businesses among the IDPs in these programmes.

Third, there should be enhanced access to land and natural resources especially to those that are involved in agricultural production. Secure and fair access to land should be promoted by government authorities and host communities by allotting, leasing, or community-based agreements. This must be accompanied with availability of agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizers, irrigation facilities and extension services to boost productivity and food security among the displaced populations.

Fourth, there should be an attempt to enhance market access and supporting infrastructure. The paper found out that a large number of the IDPs have problems trying to market their products and services at a profitable price. To counter this, local markets need to be established near the settlements of IDP and the transportation system and road network enhanced to ease movement of goods. Enhancing value chains will also be useful in the integration of the IDPs into the wider economic systems and increase their income levels.

Fifth, the governmental support of the institution is still weak and needs to be strengthened. The government agencies focusing on IDP welfare ought to enhance implementation of policies, monitoring, and liaison with non-governmental and international agencies. There is a need to be more integrated in the way the efforts are delivered so that there is no duplication of efforts and the livelihood interventions are delivered and maintained.

Sixth, the issue of security is one of the crucial determinants of livelihood sustainability and it has to be addressed. Government must also increase its activities to provide security to the IDPs in the settlements as well as in regions where they conduct economic activities. The security systems and protection mechanisms applied in the community must be enhanced to minimize risks and promote meaningful interactions.

Lastly, the research highly advises transitioning to long-term and developmental livelihood programmes, as opposed to short-term, humanitarian aid. Sustainable livelihood support must take the form of multi-year interventions, which integrate economic empowerment, skills development, infrastructure enhancement, and social protection. This kind of a holistic strategy is critical in ensuring that the IDPs cease relying on aid and become self-reliant and resilient in the long run.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the Publication of this paper.

Statement of ethical approval

The study involved human participants through the administration of questionnaires in IDP households from Kurmi, Takum and USSA LGAs, Taraba State. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the appropriate research authority/Committee of Taraba State Polytechnic, Suntai. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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