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SİYASET BİLİMİ VE ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER ANABİLİM DALI**



**UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITY'S  
POLICIES AND I/NGOS IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE  
LIVELIHOODS IN NORTHWEST SYRIA: THE GREATER IDLEB  
CASE**

**Omar SAMMAK**

**YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ**

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## LİSANSÜSTÜ EĞİTİM ENSTİTÜSÜ YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ KABUL VE ONAY FORMU

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**KUZEYBATI SURIYE'DE SÜRDÜRÜLEBİLİR GEÇİM**  
**KAYNAKLARININ TEŞVİK EDİLMESİNDE YEREL OTORİTE**  
**TÜRLERİNİN POLİTİKALARININ VE I/STK'LARININ ROLÜNÜ**  
**ANLAMAK: BÜYÜK IDLEB VAKA**

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**ÖZET**

Çatışmalardan etkilenen bölgelerde yerel otoriteler ile STK'lar arasındaki etkileşim ve sürdürülebilir geçim kaynaklarını teşvik etmesi karmaşık ve çeşitlidir. İdlib'de, STK'lar hizmet sağlama ve kapasite oluşturma yoluyla ekonomik sektörü yönlendirirken, yerel yönetim sürdürülebilirliği ve girişimlerin kamu kalkınmasına entegrasyonunu sağlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, bu iki aktörün sürdürülebilir geçim kaynaklarını başarılı bir şekilde nasıl elde edebileceğini anlamayı amaçlamıştır, aynı zamanda topluluğun geçim kaynaklarının teşvikine ve sürdürülebilirliğine katkıda bulunabilecek diğer faktörleri de araştırmaktadır.

Çalışma, kapsamlı öngörüler elde etmek için irdeleyici bir yaklaşım benimseyerek topluluk üyeleri, yerel otoriteler ve insani yardım çalışanlarından farklı bakış açıları toplamaya yönelik nitel araştırma ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeleri kullanmıştır. Tanımlayıcı araştırma yaklaşımını kullanırken, durum çalışması çatışmadan etkilenen bir bölgede yönetim dinamikleri, sürdürülebilir geçim uygulamaları ve koordinasyonu hakkında öngörüler sunmaktadır.

Devlet ve yönetim yapıları içindeki ana paydaşlarla yapılan yoğun saha çalışması ve görüşmeler, bu girişimler hakkındaki devlet perspektifini anlamaya ve STK'lar ile yerel otoriteler arasındaki iş birliği için nasıl kullanılabilirliğini anlamaya yardımcı olmaktadır. Çalışma aynı zamanda, iyi tasarlanmış bir yasal çerçevenin, yasaların sürekli değerlendirilmesinin ve yerel otoritelerin ekonomik büyüme, istikrar ve sosyal uyumu teşvik etmek için analitik, operasyonel ve siyasi kapasitelerini artırma ihtiyacının önemine eğilmektedir. Öte yandan, çalışma yasama süreçlerinde daha fazla katılım ve şeffaflığın gerekliliğini vurgulamakta, gençlerin ve işçilerin işgücü piyasası ihtiyaçlarıyla başa çıkabilmeleri ve iş becerilerini geliştirmeleri için eğitimin ve öğrenmenin teşvik edilmesini savunmaktadır. Özellikle, toplum katılımını güçlendirmenin ve toplumun ihtiyaçlarını karşılama stratejileriyle ve politikalarıyla dengelemenin acil bir ihtiyaç olduğunu ileri sürmektedir.

Sürdürülebilir geçim kaynaklarını teşvik etmede yerel otoritelerin rolünü geliştirmek için, toplum katılımını ve karar verme süreçlerini kolaylaştıran kapsayıcı yönetim yapıları ve şeffaf mekanizmaların benimsenmesi büyük öneme sahiptir. Koordinasyon mekanizmalarının güçlendirilmesi, şeffaflığın teşvik edilmesi ve başarılı deneyimlere dayanması, yerel otoritelerin toplum için sürdürülebilir geçim kaynaklarını etkili bir şekilde destekleyebilmelerini sağlamak için önemli adımlardır.

Sonu olarak, analiz İdlib'de srdrlebilir geim kaynaklarını elde etmek ve yařam kořullarını iyileřtirmek iin STK'lar, yerel otoriteler ve eřitli paydařlar arasında etkin iř birliklerinin kurulmasının nemini vurgulamaktadır. Analiz yerel otoritelerin, uluslararası STK'ları ve toplumun katılımı olmadan, blge sakinlerinin geim kaynaklarını rahatlatamayacađını belirtmektedir. STK'ları ve toplumun katılımı olmadan, bu hedeflere ulařılamayabilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Srdrlebilir Geim Kaynakları, Yerel Otorite, Politika, Koordinasyon, Topluluk Katılımı.



**HASAN KALYONCU UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE EDUCATION INSTITUTE  
DEPARTMENT of POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

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LIVELIHOODS IN NORTHWEST SYRIA: THE GREATER IDLEB  
CASE**

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**MASTER THESIS**

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**ABSTRACT**

The interplay between local authorities and NGOs in conflict-affected areas and how they promote sustainable livelihoods is complex and varied. In Greater Idleb, NGOs drive the economic sector through service provision and capacity building, while local governance ensures sustainability and the integration of initiatives within public development frameworks. This study aimed to understand how these two actors can work together to achieve sustainable livelihoods while also exploring any other factors that can contribute to the promotion of the livelihoods of the community and ensure its sustainability.

The study uses qualitative research and semi-structured interviews to gather diverse perspectives from community residents, local authorities, and humanitarian workers, adopting an exploratory approach in order to gain comprehensive insights into the study topic. While using the descriptive research approach, the case study gives unique insights into the dynamics of governance, sustainable livelihood practices, and coordination in a conflict-affected region.

An intensive fieldwork phase of interviews with key stakeholders within the state and governance structures helped understand the state perspective on these initiatives and how they can be used as entry points for cooperation between NGOs and LAs. It emphasizes the importance of a well-designed legal framework, continuous evaluation of laws, and the need for local authorities to enhance their analytical, operational, and political capacities to foster economic growth, stability, and social cohesion. On the other hand, the study highlights the need for greater inclusivity and transparency in legislative processes, promoting education and learning to enable young people and workers to cope with labor market needs and improve labor skills. Specifically, there is an urgent need to strengthen community participation and balance the needs of society with development strategies and policies.

To enhance the role of local authorities in fostering sustainable livelihoods, it is essential to adopt inclusive governance structures and transparent mechanisms that facilitate community participation and decision-making. Strengthening coordination mechanisms, promoting transparency, and building on successful experiences are crucial steps in ensuring that local authorities are able to effectively support sustainable livelihoods for the community.

In conclusion, the analysis highlights the significance of establishing efficient collaborations among NGOs, local authorities, and various stakeholders to achieve sustainable livelihoods and enhance living conditions in Greater Idlib. The analysis highlights that local authorities are not capable of easing the livelihood of the residents without the involvement of INGOs and the community. Without the involvement of NGOs and the community, these goals may remain out of reach.


**Keywords:** Sustainable Livelihood, Local Authority, Policy, Coordination, Community Engagement.



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## ABBREVIATIONS

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| NGO   | : Non-governmental Organization                       |
| LNGO  | : Local Non-governmental Organization                 |
| INGO  | : International Non-governmental Organization         |
| SSG   | : Syria Salvation Government                          |
| IDPs  | : Internally Displaced Persons                        |
| NSAGs | : Non-state Armed Groups                              |
| ESCWA | : The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia |
| SL    | : Sustainable Livelihoods                             |
| SLF   | : Sustainable Livelihoods Framework                   |
| SLA   | : Sustainable Livelihoods Approach                    |
| SMEs  | : Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises                  |
| PPP   | : Public Private Partnership                          |

# 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the research topic on the role of local authorities' policies and I/NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods in areas affected by armed conflicts as well as political crises, with the case study of the Greater Idleb in Syria. This section starts by giving the background of the research and the Syrian context, discussing the increasing importance of policy aspects concerning sustainable livelihoods and the fact that the policies and laws on livelihoods and livelihood-related issues have been formulated on assumptions that were never tested and research results that are not consistent.

Local authorities and NGOs play a crucial role in shaping livelihood opportunities and conditions in the region, formulating policies that create an enabling environment for sustainable livelihoods. However, promoting sustainable livelihoods in conflict-affected areas is challenging due to factors such as institutional capacity, resource availability, political instability, coordination issues, and security concerns. Given that regions such as Greater Idleb have served as a space for a variety of development policies, implemented by both local authorities and international agencies, a significant portion of this widely accepted belief has been called into doubt (Hall, 2022).

This research aims to provide insights into the effectiveness, gaps, and potential areas for improvement in local authority policies and NGO interventions, empowering policymakers, and practitioners to build strategies and programs that foster economic stability, facilitate long-term recovery, and identify areas for improvement.

## 1.1. Background

The long war in Syria has had a significant impact on the country's political, social, and economic landscape. This conflict has lasted for over a decade, resulting in widespread destruction, and leaving people without work and living below the poverty line. Many areas now require restoration and conservation efforts due to the destruction the war caused. In addition, as a part of the Syrian revolutionary war, many people have been forced to leave their homes and relocate to other parts of the country, especially

the northwest of Syria, which hosts around 4.5 million people (OHCA, 2023). Hence, access to income-generating and livelihood services became increasingly important for residents who were struggling to make ends meet. As such, scrutinizing this theme is essential in order to develop effective solutions that will promote equity, accessibility, and sustainability in the region. By identifying key problem statements and developing targeted interventions, we can work towards building a more just and resilient society that meets the needs of all its residents.

In conflict-affected areas, such as northwest Syria, specifically the Greater Idlib region, the promotion of sustainable livelihoods is crucial for the recovery and resilience of communities to cope with the consequences of violence, displacement, and socio-economic disruptions. Given the nature of sustainable livelihoods, one should refer to situations in which individuals and communities are able to meet their fundamental requirements, expand their scope of economic opportunity, and fortify themselves against the effects of unforeseen stresses. Accordingly, understanding the role of local authority policies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) -local and international- in promoting sustainable livelihoods in this conflict-affected area is crucial for effective interventions and the long-term well-being of populations.

Conflict-affected areas are characterized by complex socio-political dynamics, disrupted infrastructure, and limited access to basic services. These challenges further increase the vulnerability and instability of livelihoods among the affected populations (ABD, 2012). Due to the long conflict in northwest Syria, it has experienced significant disturbances. The inflow of internally displaced persons (IDPs) seeking refuge from violence in other regions of the country has strained resources, increased competition for fundamental necessities, and heavily stressed the already fragile socioeconomic fabric. In these kinds of situations, ensuring the promotion of sustainable livelihoods for both displaced and host communities are essential for their economic recovery, resilience, and long-term well-being as a whole.

In the face of these challenges, the role of local authorities and international and non-governmental organizations in promoting sustainable livelihoods has become a critical area of inquiry. Local authorities play a pivotal role in shaping livelihood opportunities and conditions in the Greater Idlib region and hold the responsibility of formulating and implementing policies that create an enabling environment for

sustainable livelihoods. These policies encompass a wide range of areas, including but not limited to economic development, agriculture, infrastructure, education, and social welfare. Moreover, local authorities are responsible for coordinating and involving community-based organizations and stakeholders to ensure transparency, accountability and empower conflict-affected communities to voice their needs. This fosters ownership, inclusivity, and social cohesion, contributing to sustainable development and livelihood improvement.

Simultaneously, NGOs play a significant role in addressing the complex challenges faced by communities in northwest Syria. NGOs operate independently of government structures and often have the flexibility to respond quickly to the evolving needs of the population. Provide humanitarian assistance, including food, water, shelter, and health care, to meet immediate needs and lay the foundation for long-term livelihood interventions. These organizations bring valuable expertise, resources, and networks to implement livelihood interventions, support the recovery process, and provide assistance in various areas such as livelihood training, income-generation projects, vocational skills development, microfinance, and market linkages. Their interventions aim to enhance livelihood opportunities, build resilience, and contribute to sustainable development in the face of ongoing conflict and displacement. Moreover, NGOs often play a critical role in advocating for policy changes, promoting good governance, and facilitating the inclusion of marginalized groups in decision-making processes. They work to create an enabling environment for sustainable livelihoods by supporting the development of local institutions, promoting social cohesion, and fostering community empowerment. NGOs also contribute to knowledge-sharing, research, and capacity-building initiatives that strengthen the resilience and self-reliance of conflict-affected communities.

However, promoting sustainable livelihoods in conflict-affected areas is difficult because of a number of factors that can hinder effective intervention. These factors include, but are not limited to, institutional capacity, availability of resources, political instability, coordination issues, and security concerns that can occur in conflict-affected areas. Therefore, fostering coordination and partnerships that combine efforts from local authorities, NGOs, and the international community, to promote good governance practices, provide technical support, and facilitate collaboration among stakeholders is

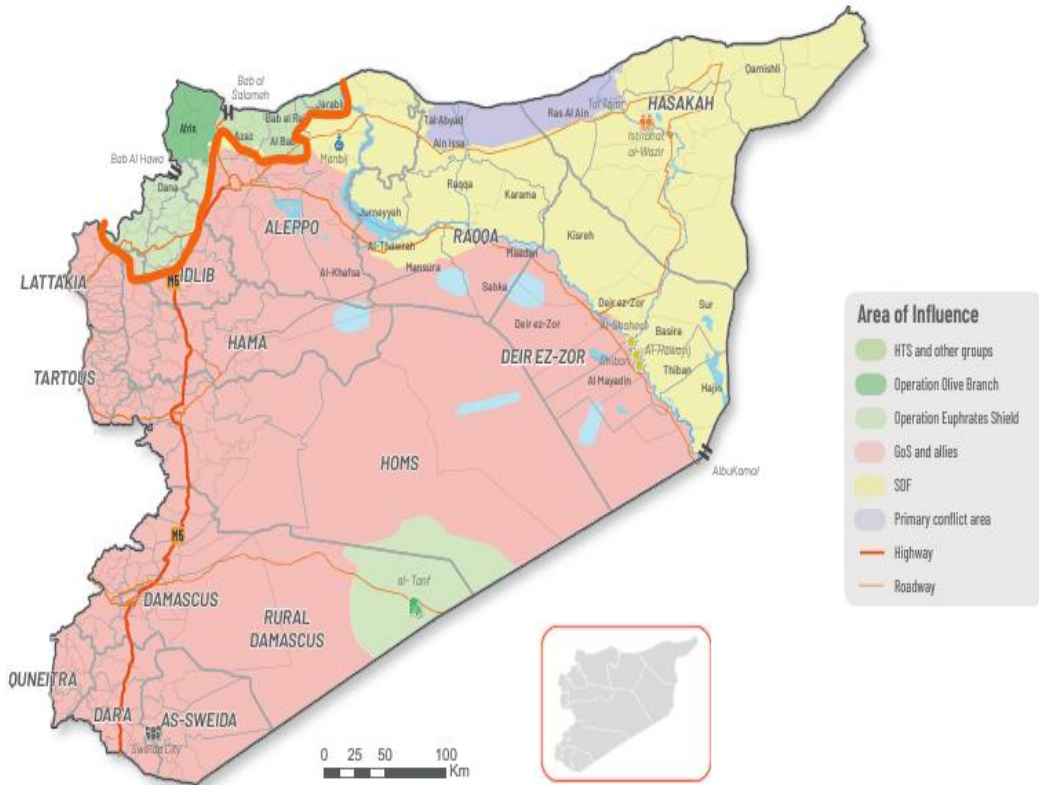
essential for maximizing impact and promoting sustainable development while taking into consideration the particular socioeconomic dynamics, requirements, and cultural sensitivity of the community in Northwest Syria for interventions to be contextually appropriate and durable.

The Greater Idlib case presents a unique opportunity to examine the role of local authority policies and NGOs and the deep coordination between them and other actors in promoting sustainable livelihoods in a context deeply affected by the Syrian conflict. The specific socio-economic dynamics, displacement challenges, and ongoing humanitarian response efforts in the Greater Idlib region demand a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing sustainable livelihood outcomes.

This research aims to provide insights into the effectiveness, gaps, and potential areas for improvement in local authority policies and NGO interventions, with the goal of informing evidence-based programming, policy formulation, and interventions to support the livelihoods of conflict-affected communities in northwest Syria. Moreover, by filling the knowledge gap that currently exists, this research will empower policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders to build strategies and programs that are contextually appropriate, foster economic stability, facilitate the long-term recovery and resilience of conflict-affected regions, and spot the light on areas that may have potential for improvement.

## **1.2. Syria Context**

The conflict in Syria has been the most complex conflict to emerge from the 2011 Arab uprisings, where it has persisted for almost ten years between the Syrian government and various non-state armed groups (NSAGs). The protracted conflict in northwest Syria has had a significant impact on the region and its inhabitants. Since the conflict's inception in 2011, northwest Syria, including the governorates of Idlib, Aleppo, and portions of Hama and Latakia, has been the conflict's epicenter.



**Figure 1.** Syria Map and Area of Influence (as of September 2023)

Source: IMMAP Context report September, 2023

The conflict in northwest Syria arose from the 2011 Syrian civil war, which sparked a complex network of political, social, and economic factors, including grievances regarding governance, human rights, and economic disparities. As the conflict escalated, opposition groups and armed factions converged to challenge the authority of the government. Over time, factions such as the Free Syrian Army and Islamist-affiliated armed groups seized control of various regions of the region. The conflict's complex dynamics involve not only the Syrian government and opposition groups but also international actors, resulting in a conflict with shifting alliances and shifting power dynamics.

The conflict in Syria has caused widespread violence, displacement, and the destruction of infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and basic service facilities. The civilian population has been severely impacted, with limited access to food, clean water, healthcare, and education, among other obstacles. The destruction of critical

infrastructure has severely impacted the provision of essential services, leaving the population vulnerable to disease outbreaks, and preventing the region's potential for long-term development. The IDP population in northwest Syria faces significant challenges, such as overcrowded living conditions, limited access to basic services, and restricted means of livelihood (HNO, 2023). Numerous IDPs reside in temporary camps, informal settlements, or densely populated urban areas, where access to clean water, sanitation facilities, and medical care is frequently limited. The precarious living conditions increase the likelihood of disease outbreaks, malnutrition, and mental health problems.

The host communities in northwest Syria also bear the burden of the conflict, with the local population demonstrating resilience and solidarity in accommodating and aiding the influx of displaced individuals and families. However, the load on resources, infrastructure, and public services has significantly impacted the livelihoods and well-being of the host communities.

The economic situation in Northwest Syria is severely impacted by conflict, leading to high unemployment rates, poverty, and limited livelihood opportunities. As per the humanitarian needs overview for 2023 in northwest Syria, 47 percent of households report livelihoods as a need, while only 21 percent of households have more than one member working (HNO, 2023). The collapse of public services, the depreciation of the Syrian currency, and instability further exacerbate these challenges. Northwest Syria, once an agricultural hub, has experienced a decline in food production, loss of livelihoods, and increased food insecurity as a result of the destruction of farmland, irrigation systems, and agricultural infrastructure. This has led to food shortages, increased prices, and increased food insecurity, affecting the region's agricultural sector. According to a study by the WFP, the cost of food has increased by 68 percent from the previous year and has increased by more than three times in the past two years (WFP, 2023). In accordance, many individuals and households struggle to meet their basic needs and lack access to essential services like healthcare, education, and clean water (OHCA, 2023).

In northwest Syria, the humanitarian situation is catastrophic, with millions needing assistance. Various humanitarian organizations, including UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local civil society groups, are working consistently to

deliver life-saving aid such as food, clean water, healthcare, shelter, education, livelihood support, and economic recovery efforts. However, the scale of the devastation and complexity of the situation require sustained and coordinated efforts to rebuild infrastructure, revive the economy, and create sustainable livelihood opportunities. Initiatives like vocational training programs, entrepreneurship support, and livelihood projects aim to equip individuals with the skills and resources to secure sustainable livelihoods needed to rebuild the employment sector, create job opportunities, and provide support to individuals seeking employment.

Despite the ongoing challenges, there have been some recent developments that have provided a spark of hope for stability and the potential for recovery and development activities in Idlib. One key development has been the establishment of a ceasefire agreement brokered by Russia and Türkiye in March 2020. This ceasefire has helped reduce the intensity of the fighting and provided a relatively stable environment for humanitarian actors to deliver aid and support to affected populations (Aghaie Joobani, 2022).

In addition to the ceasefire, efforts have been made to address the immediate humanitarian needs and promote sustainable livelihoods in the region. These efforts have been crucial in reducing the suffering of the people in Idlib and creating a foundation for recovery. Furthermore, international donors and organizations have pledged financial support for early recovery and development initiatives in the region. These initiatives aim to support the rehabilitation of basic infrastructure, promote livelihood opportunities, and strengthen local governance structures.

While the situation in the Idlib Governorate since 2019 has been characterized by conflict and instability, recent developments, such as the ceasefire agreement and ongoing humanitarian efforts, have provided a basis for stability and the possibility of recovery and development activities. However, sustained efforts, political will, and continued support from the international community are crucial to ensuring a sustainable and inclusive recovery process in the region. Understanding the context and economic situation in northwest Syria is crucial for analyzing the multi-dimensional challenges faced by the population, promoting resilience and sustainable livelihoods, and designing interventions required to support their well-being and long-term economic development. Collaboration between humanitarian actors, local governance,

and international organizations is essential for economic recovery and long-term development.

One of the major challenges in northwest Syria is unemployment and job search, which demanded collaboration among humanitarian actors, local governance structures, and international organizations to address economic needs, strengthen vocational training programs, and facilitate access to employment services, all of which are critical to rebuilding lives, ensuring their well-being, and contributing to the region's long-term development (Bolton, 2020).

### **1.3. Problem Statement**

The problem of livelihoods in northwest Syria is a complex issue that requires a comprehensive approach to understand and address. The policies and practices of local authorities play a significant role in shaping the economic and social conditions of the region, but there is a lack of research on the effectiveness of these policies and the challenges faced in implementing them in northwest Syria. Furthermore, the role of NGOs in supporting sustainable livelihoods in the region is not well understood; despite the foreign aid assistance provided by NGOs, many residents of northwestern Syria struggle to find employment and earn a living wage, which highlights the need to examine the ways in which these organizations are contributing to positive change. The lack of research on sustainable livelihoods in northwest Syria has hindered the ability of local authorities to effectively implement policies and work with NGOs to improve the well-being of their citizens. This study aims to fill these gaps in knowledge and provide a valuable contribution to better understanding and identifying effective strategies for improving sustainable livelihoods in northwest Syria that can be implemented by local authorities and NGOs, enabling them to determine the most efficient means of implementing these policies.

### **1.4. Objectives of the Study**

This study intends to examine the multiple variables that lead to inequity, inaccessibility, and unsustainability in the region. By doing a thorough examination of the current situation, we identify critical issues that require attention. These difficulties may encompass inadequate infrastructure, limited access to education or funding, and

other relevant considerations. Once these problems have been identified, we can propose targeted interventions that will help promote equity, accessibility, and sustainability in the region. This may involve implementing policies that prioritize the needs of marginalized communities, investing in sustainable infrastructure projects, or promoting education and awareness campaigns. While also examining the role NGOs are playing to support and enhance those policies. The goal of this study is to examine the state of sustainable livelihoods in northwest Syria and to determine the reasons behind and consequences of local authorities' policies and any other factors on the local population.

### **1.5. Research Hypotheses**

Local authorities and I/NGOs resonate with each other, either constructively or impedingly, to promote the sustainable livelihood of civilians in Greater Idleb.

### **1.6. Research Questions**

The main research questions are the following.

Are the local authorities capable of easing the livelihood of the residents with or without the I/NGOs?

This research is also trying to answer the following sub-question:

1. Can the current procedure of civilian livelihood be covered up by literature? By what parameters can the situation in NW Syria be evaluated objectively?
2. To what extent do local authorities' policies have a positive or/and negative impact on sustainable livelihoods in the NWS?
3. In what ways do the policies of local authorities contribute to the enhancement of sustainable livelihoods, and what challenges need to be addressed in this endeavor?
4. To what extent do I/NGOs assist local governments in implementing sustainable livelihoods-related policies?

### **1.7. Study Variables**

This study will focus on the impact of local authority policies and NGOs on sustainable livelihood implementation while also delving into the underlying factors that may influence the effectiveness of sustainable livelihood. The independent

variables include the capacity of local authorities and NGOs to enhance sustainable livelihoods, the level of coordination between them, and the extent to which they align with the goals of promoting sustainable livelihoods. The dependent variable is the impact on sustainable livelihoods, which will be measured through various factors, including but not limited to policy priorities, engagement with the community, and coordination mechanisms. Other potential factors that will be examined include the socio-economic context, political stability, and external shocks such as conflict or natural disasters. By analyzing these variables, this study aims to provide valuable insights into how local authorities and NGOs can work together effectively to improve the livelihoods of civilians in Greater Idlib.

### **1.8. Significance of the Study**

The study provides opportunities for local authorities to work with international and non-governmental organizations to promote sustainable livelihoods and improve the well-being of people in the Northwest. Little research has been conducted on this topic, and what research does exist is frequently inconclusive or does not compare similar cases. By ensuring inclusive and equitable economic growth, local authorities can help reduce poverty and expand opportunities for all residents. In addition, the research will also investigate the obstacles faced by local authorities in implementing these policies.

One other purpose of this study is to serve the community of practice that the humanitarian agencies to advocate for a better recovery and development intervention. Moreover, humanitarian agencies could use this research fundraising and designing market-based intervention projects based on the best practice and outcome desires.

## **2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The present section of the research aims to offer an analysis of the extent to which prior studies have been conducted within a similar context. The primary aim of this study is to assess the condition of sustainable livelihoods in the northwestern region of Syria and to determine the underlying causes and outcomes of policies implemented by local authorities in promoting sustainable livelihoods, as well as any other relevant factors that may impact the success of these initiatives.

By reviewing existing literature, this research seeks to build upon previous knowledge, identify gaps in knowledge, and contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods in conflict-affected areas like northwestern Syria. The ultimate goal is to inform policy and practice in order to improve the well-being of individuals living in these areas.

### **2.1. Definition and Conceptualization of Sustainable Livelihood**

There are several definitions for the SL term depending on the organization's purpose and orientation; however, the most close definition is the one shared by The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) as a standardized meaning: "A livelihood is socially sustainable, which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and provide for future generations.; a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base" (Chambers & Conway, 1992).

Approaches to sustainable livelihoods (SL) are a new way of thinking about poverty reduction that takes into account how poor people actually live their lives. These approaches have evolved over decades and emphasize the importance of social connections and assets in determining well-being. The approach also recognizes that policies and governance structures can have a big impact on development outcomes, which is why community involvement is so crucial. In sustainable livelihood approaches, the community plays a central role in natural resource management. But it's not just about working at the community level; these approaches also stress the importance of understanding and facilitating connections between different levels of

society (Baumann, 2000). By doing so, we can help create a more sustainable and just world for everyone. Approaches to sustainable livelihoods (SL) have developed as a result of shifting perceptions of poverty and the process of reducing it, taking into account structural and institutional issues. These methods are based on the idea that poverty is more than just a lack of resources or income; it also includes the ways people make a living and work toward their goals, and it emphasizes the need for holistic and inclusive strategies that address social, economic, and environmental factors to promote long-term well-being and resilience in communities. The variety of goals that people strive for and the significance of social capital and other assets in determining well-being have been highlighted by participatory development approaches. Approaches in SL place people at the center of development efforts and focus on them (Carney & Ashley, 1999). The unsustainability of many activities, the limited value of isolated sectoral initiatives, and the need to comprehend the household economy and the policy context are some of the concerns that SL approaches address regarding the effectiveness of sustainable activity.

In the United Kingdom, the government's White Paper on International Development reaffirmed its commitment to the International Development Goals, which include the goal of halving the number of people living in poverty by 2015. Sustainable livelihoods (SL) approaches have proven to be quite useful during the initial stages of program and project design. These approaches challenge traditional assumptions and highlight important issues that may have been overlooked, such as micro-macro links and non-physical assets. They also provide a framework for bringing together different viewpoints and lessons learned. For example, In India and Zambia, SL analysis was utilized to assess a prior concept which contributed to identifying supplementary activities that enhance the current approach and more effectively address the specific requirements of poorer communities. This resulted in the development of new projects such as the 'watersheds plugs' initiative in India, which had a more comprehensive range of activities, a greater emphasis on policy influence, and a strong focus on community engagement (Baumann, 2000). In Zambia, the program for improving rural infrastructure was completely redesigned, resulting in the Livelihood Enhancement through Empowerment and Participation (LEEP) initiative, which combines infrastructure improvements with empowerment and micro-finance (Olson, 2007). In Pakistan and Kenya, they conducted SL scoping studies to figure out new activities for

their sustainable livelihood programs. These studies found a lot of different ways to get started, but there were some worries that SL approaches can be too complex and not give a clear starting point. It can be said that SL approaches have been effective in improving development programs and project design (Carney & Ashley, 1999). An operational tool for eradicating poverty that is supported by an analytical framework is the sustainable livelihoods approach. It utilizes an "asset-vulnerability approach" to comprehend poverty and joins best practices being developed with core values to examine issues and target mediations (Brocklesby & Fisher, 2003).

Although each organization has its own framework and techniques, they all follow the same guiding principles. The sustainable livelihoods approach examines all of the reasons why people are poor, rather than focusing solely on income or a lack of resources. It is a way of thinking about how to achieve progress in reducing poverty by connecting economic and ecological factors in a way that policymakers can perceive and act upon.

## **2.2. Theoretical Frameworks of Sustainable Livelihood**

Although the concept of sustainable livelihood has been around for some time, the approach that has been taken to achieve it has undergone significant evolution and modification as a result of in-depth research conducted by a variety of academic and development institutions and centers. This has led to the emergence and development of sustainable livelihoods as a whole, beginning with the idea in 1987 and culminating in the method's operationalization in 2003 (Morse & McNamara, 2009).

Nevertheless, the scope of this study will not extend to the sustainable livelihood route and critique; rather, it will mainly concentrate on the sustainable livelihoods framework that was created in 1999 by the Department of Foreign Aid (DFID). While a livelihoods framework and objectives have been created to facilitate implementation, the approach goes further than that; at its core, it is a means of increasing the efficiency of development assistance by placing people at the center of the process. Adopting the sustainable livelihoods approach provides a means to improve the identification, appraisal, implementation, and evaluation of development programs so that they address the needs of poor people more effectively, both directly and indirectly at the policy level (DFID, 1999).

Figure 1. Sustainable livelihoods framework

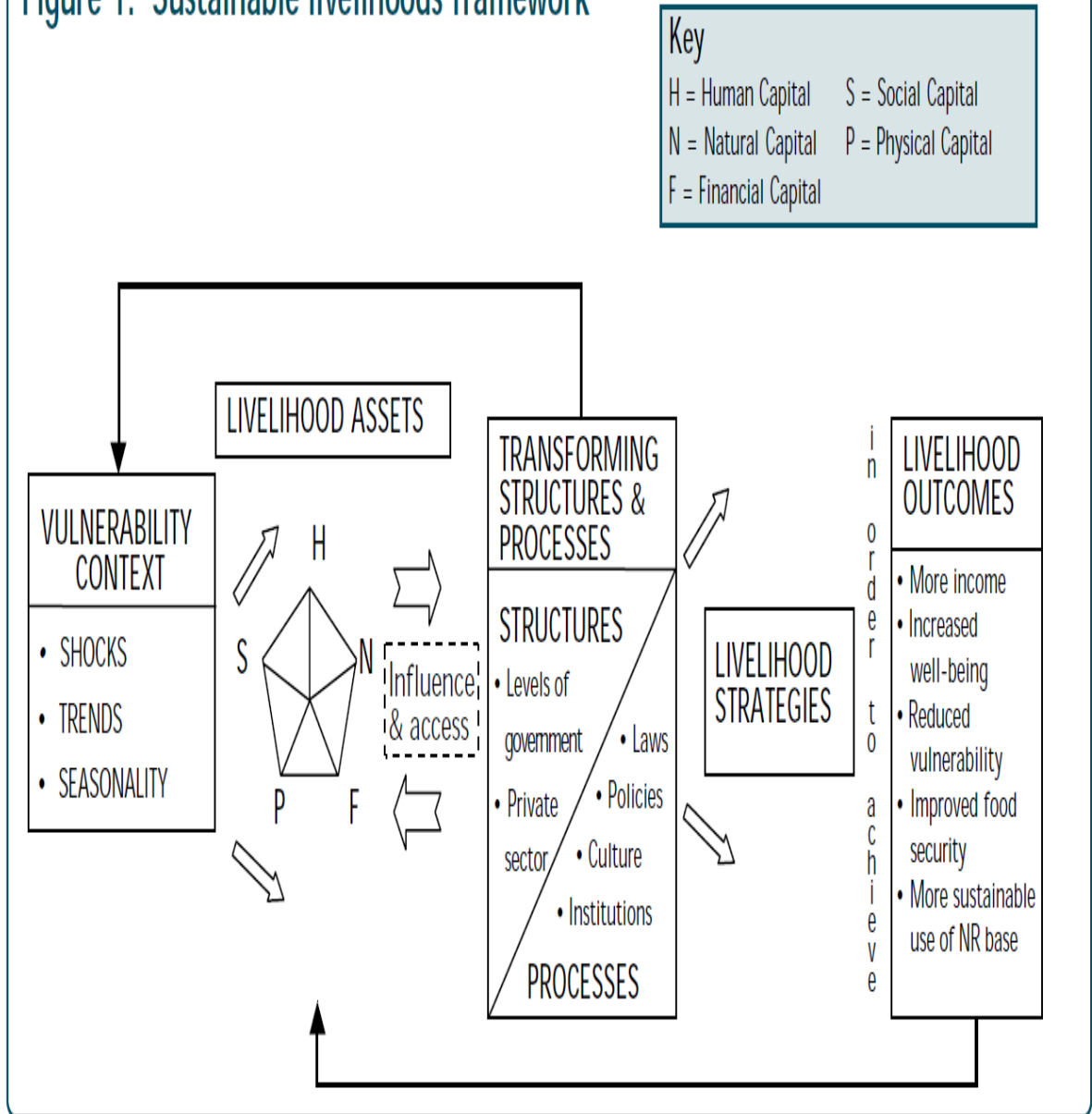
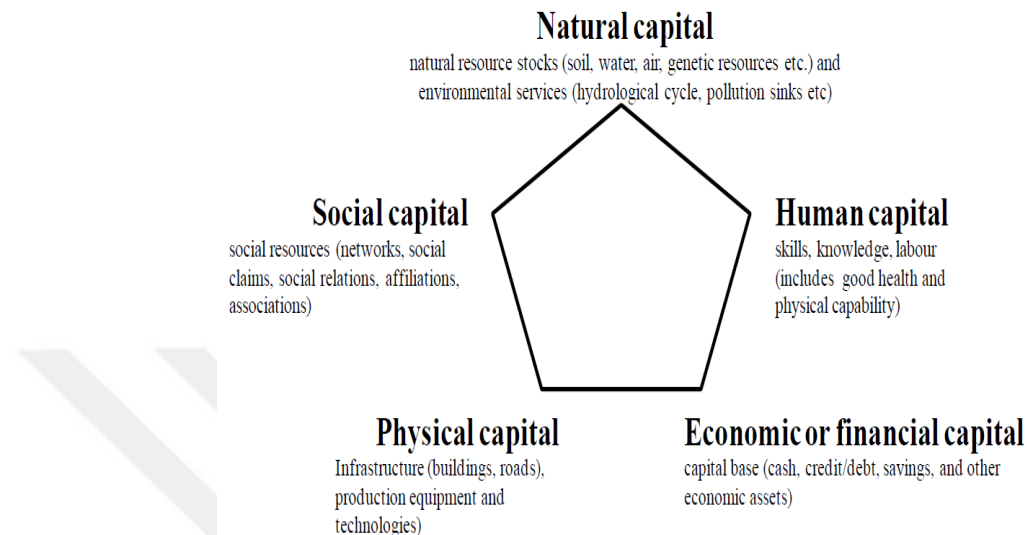


Figure 2. DFID Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF)

Source: DFID. (1999).

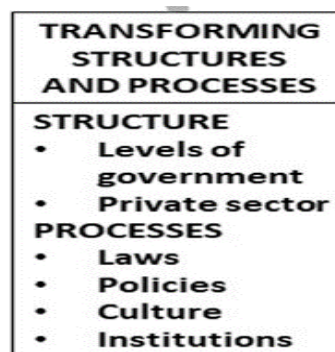
To illustrate the "multiple capital" approach to sustainability, SLA uses a pentagon to depict the five main assets (or capitals) that are suggested as important to livelihood (natural, human, social, physical, and financial) (Morse & McNamara, 2009).



**Figure 3.** Main Livelihood Assets

Source: Morse & McNamara, (2009)

On the other hand, the SLA is meant to represent the transforming structures and processes (TS&P), which include the public sector and the private sector, as well as laws, policies, culture, and institutions, respectively (DFID, 1999).



**Figure 4.** The transforming structures and processes (TS&P)

Source: DFID. (1999).

The transforming structures and processes aspect of the SLF acknowledges that socioeconomic and political contexts have an impact on sustainable livelihoods. It recognizes that the structures, institutions, and policies of a society influence individuals' access to and utilization of the various capitals. This involves analyzing the power relations, governance systems, policies, and institutions that can either support or limit the livelihood strategies and outcomes of individuals. Consequently, the connection between multiple capital pentagons and transforming structures and processes lies in the realization that individuals' livelihood outcomes are influenced by their access to and interaction with various types of capital. Likewise, transformative changes in structures and processes are required to foster an environment that is more inclusive and conducive to the development of sustainable livelihoods.

Accordingly, the framework was selected because one of the goals of the DFID's sustainable livelihoods program is to foster a more positive and cohesive social climate and social environment. This will be accomplished through direct support to improve the internal functioning of groups and indirect support to the development of a more open and reliable policy environment (also known as "good governance"). Additionally, feedback from the achievement of livelihood outcomes will be incorporated into the framework.

### **2.3. Sustainable Livelihoods in Conflict-Affected Areas**

While sustainable livelihoods refer to the ability of individuals and communities to secure their basic needs, achieve economic stability, and enhance their well-being, The idea of sustainable livelihoods becomes even more important in conflict-affected areas, where the effects of violence and instability are pervasive and long-lasting. In such contexts, the ability of individuals and communities to secure their basic needs and improve their well-being is severely compromised.

The sustainable livelihoods approach is a way of thinking about the objectives, scope, and priorities for development activities, based on evolving thinking about the way the poor and vulnerable live their lives. It helps formulate development activities that are people-centered, responsive and participatory, multilevel, conducted in

partnership with the public and private sectors, dynamic, and sustainable. It facilitates the identification of practical priorities for actions based on the views and interests of those concerned.

In conflict-affected areas, sustainable livelihood approaches provide a framework to address the multidimensional challenges the affected population faces. The relevance of sustainable livelihoods lies in their ability to empower individuals and communities by providing them with the means to rebuild their lives, reduce dependency on external assistance, and contribute to long-term stability and well-being (Norton & Foster, 2001). Sustainable livelihood interventions in regions that have been damaged by violence can help with economic recovery, the creation of new jobs, and the decrease of poverty by providing opportunities for income generation through activities such as agriculture, microenterprises, and vocational training (Krantz, 2001). By promoting economic opportunities and building skills, sustainable livelihood approaches enable individuals to generate income and support their families.

On the other hand, Sustainable livelihood approaches seek to reduce vulnerability and enhance adaptive capacities by promoting sustainable agricultural practices and improved access to markets to enhance food security and reduce dependence on external aid (Scoones, 2015). These interventions help to mitigate the negative impacts of conflict and enable affected communities to become more self-reliant.

Sustainable livelihood approaches also have a significant role to play in peacebuilding and fostering social cohesion in conflict-affected areas. By addressing underlying socio-economic grievances and inequalities, these interventions contribute to the overall stability and reconciliation processes (IEO, 2020). For example, inclusive economic development programs that engage diverse segments of society can promote social cohesion and reduce the potential for further conflict (Ohiorhenuan & Stewart, 2008). Furthermore, programs that promote sustainable livelihoods and work to empower women and members of marginalized groups can increase the participation of these individuals in decision-making processes, thereby advancing social justice and gender equality. Furthermore, these approaches promote community engagement and collective decision-making in the process of rebuilding, which contributes to the advancement of social cohesion and resilience (Kabeer, 2008).

## **2.4. Sustainable Livelihood Policy Formation**

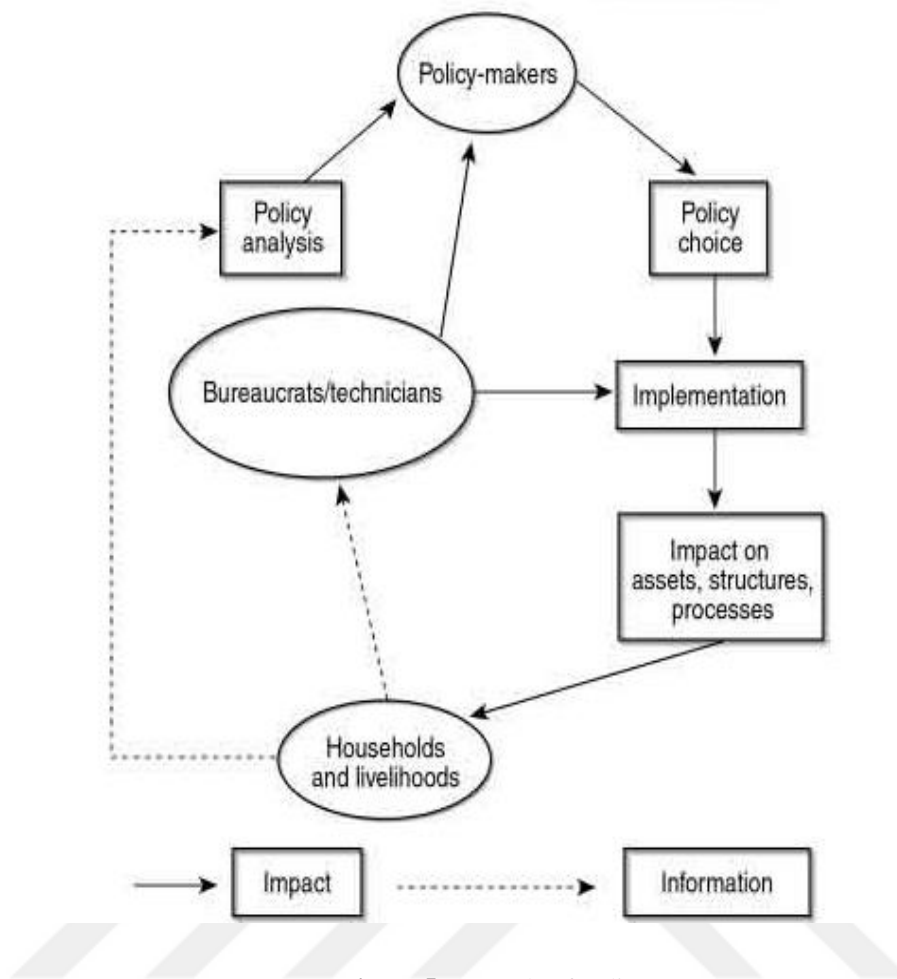
Sustainable livelihood formation stands out for its comprehensive approach to addressing poverty and environmental concerns, going beyond traditional income-based strategies. This approach recognizes the significance of access to resources and entitlements for marginalized individuals, aiming to reduce risk and vulnerability while empowering them to control their assets and livelihood options (Krantz, 2001). In policy formation, sustainable livelihood (SL) policies emphasize the pivotal role of institutions and policies in governing access to livelihood assets. These policies advocate for interventions that are people-centered, participatory, and sustainable, reflecting a holistic understanding of livelihood dynamics (Karl, 2002).

In formulating sustainable livelihood policies, it is essential to grasp the complex nature of policy processes and the interplay between various sectors impacting people's livelihoods. Effective strategies for influencing policy frameworks require a deep understanding of governance contexts and the narratives shaping policy agendas. Moreover, leveraging research insights is crucial for navigating policy landscapes effectively.

Central to this discourse is the recognition of policies' role in shaping livelihood outcomes, emphasizing the need for adaptive, cross-sectoral, and people-centered approaches. Policy-making processes are seen as contested arenas, necessitating more flexible and responsive frameworks (Shankland, 2000).

The distinction between the political and technical spheres highlights the importance of challenging boundaries and reframing issues to foster effective policy processes. Strategies for shaping policy processes include understanding governance contexts, recognizing policy narratives, mapping actor networks, and identifying policy spaces for advocacy and reform. (Keeley, 2001).

Understanding the implications of the SL approach for policy involves recognizing its people-centered nature and holistic analysis of societal dynamics. Policy formulation encompasses various levels, from national to international, with implications for project implementation and resource allocation.



**Figure 5.** Example of Policy process

Source: (Keeley, 2001).

Adopting an SL approach can reshape policy analysis, choices, and implementation methods, fostering broader stakeholder engagement and responsiveness. Multilateral and bilateral agencies, alongside international NGOs, play crucial roles in policy support and capacity-building. While policy content varies based on contextual factors, SL advocates for inclusive decision-making processes and cross-sectoral perspectives (Thomson, 2000).

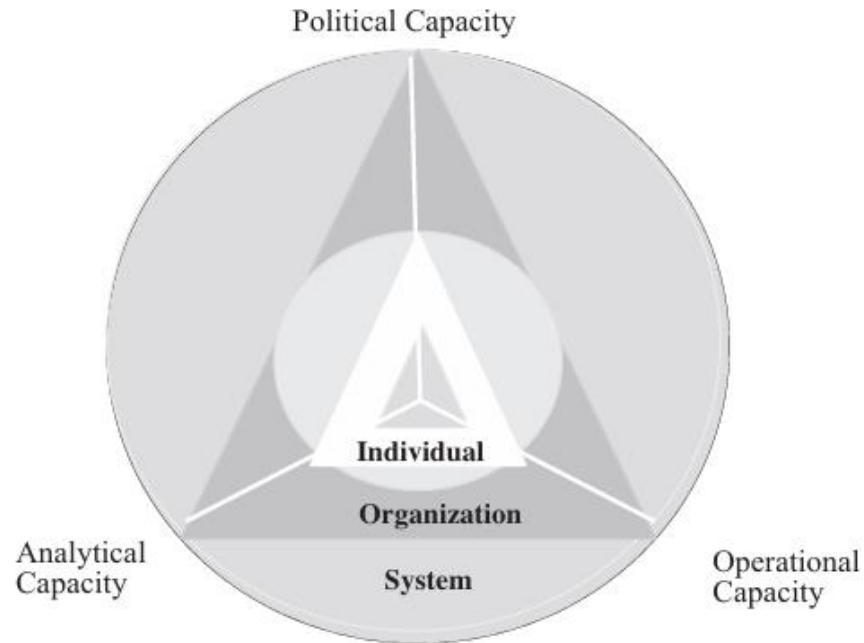
At the end, implementing the sustainable livelihoods approach requires a holistic analysis of societal dynamics, reshaping policy analysis, choices, and implementation methods. Multilateral and bilateral agencies, alongside international NGOs, play pivotal roles in supporting policy formulation and capacity-building efforts (Graves et al., 2008). Overall, the adoption of a sustainable livelihoods approach advocates for

inclusive decision-making processes and cross-sectoral perspectives, ensuring that policies effectively promote sustainable livelihoods in post-disaster contexts.

## **2.5. Role of Local Authorities' Policies in Promoting Sustainable Livelihood**

Within their power, local authorities have the ability to promote jobs and enhance living circumstances. Investing in training and skills development programs can help build a qualified and adaptable workforce that meets the requirements of emerging industries. In addition, they can assist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by implementing specialized policies that facilitate business registration, provide access to financing, and provide incentives for entrepreneurship. These efforts have the potential to enhance the community's general well-being, produce employment opportunities, and stimulate economic growth. These endeavors can boost monetary development, set out work-related opportunities, and upgrade the general prosperity of people and families within the region (Majale, 2002).

Through transparency, community engagement, and accountable practices, they can build trust between citizens and authorities, strengthening the social fabric of the community and fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility. Combining insights from organizational management and public policy analysis, the local authority has three essential capabilities: analytical, operational, and political capacity (Wu, Ramesh, & Howlett, 2015).



**Figure 6.** Policy Capacity Model  
 Source: Wu, Ramesh, & Howlett, 2015.

At this stage, having strong analytical capacity is crucial for making well-informed decisions by the local authorities, particularly in conflict-affected regions, as it depends on their capability to collect and utilize information effectively. Accordingly, establishing guidelines and standards for the management and utilization of data within an institution is a crucial component of data governance, which is also an important component of analytical capacity. The local authority needs to be able to access data and information from external sources in order to develop strong analytical capabilities. Collaboration and a willingness to share data and information are key to building organizational and management innovation, both within institutes and outside organizations (Krantz, 2001).

On the other hand, in order to encourage community involvement and participative decision-making, local authorities must demonstrate transparent and inclusive governance practices. Local authorities can guarantee that the concerns and aspirations of members of the community are taken into consideration when formulating policies. By organizing workshops, public consultations, and town hall meetings for the

general public, especially with the participation of marginalized groups like women, youth, and people with special needs, local authorities can promote inclusive governance. Local authorities have the unique opportunity to foster collaboration and partnerships among various stakeholders, including businesses, civil society organizations, and academic institutions. By creating a collaborative environment, local authorities can maximize their impact and achieve holistic and comprehensive outcomes (Wu, Ramesh, & Howlett, 2017).

Collaborative capacity is another key capacity, involving the LA's ability to engage multiple stakeholders, such as private sector and civil society groups, in sustainable livelihood activities. This requires creating and sharing information, coordinating activities, and involving stakeholders in decision-making. Transparency and accountability systems are also important (Salvador & Sancho, 2021).

## **2.6. NGOs Role in Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods**

Promoting sustainable livelihoods worldwide is a top priority for many international and non-governmental organizations (I/NGOs). I/NGOs use their expertise, resources, and networks to develop and implement sustainable living initiatives that address economic, social, and environmental factors. They work with governments and communities to empower individuals to take ownership of their lives and recover from shocks (Krantz, 2001).

Individuals and communities receive aid in the form of capacity development and technical assistance from I/NGOs, which enables them to acquire the abilities, information, and resources necessary to maintain sustainable livelihoods. Its support includes a variety of initiatives, such as those for vocational training, the development of entrepreneurship, and financial literacy, as well as those that promote sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, and adaptation methods for climate change. Communities are given the ability to pursue livelihood activities that are environmentally friendly, economically viable, and socially inclusive when international and local nongovernmental organizations enhance local capabilities. At the national, regional, and global levels, I/NGOs play a vital role in lobbying for policies and frameworks that support sustainable livelihoods (Jacobsen, 2002).

NGOs promote awareness through research, policy analysis, and advocacy campaigns in order to influence decision-making processes and design policies that address issues of poverty and inequality, as well as environmental challenges. I/NGOs contribute to the creation of an environment that is supportive of the growth of sustainable livelihoods by advocating for policies that are pro-poor and sustainable (Carney & Ashley, 1999). International and nongovernmental organizations play an important role in the process of gathering resources and supporting sustainable livelihood projects. They have access to money from a variety of sources, including governments, foreign donors, firms in the commercial sector, and charitable foundations. After that, these resources are put to use to promote livelihood initiatives, provide seed money for microenterprises, develop revolving funds, and provide microfinance services to populations that are considered to be economically disadvantaged. With the collection of monetary resources, international and non-governmental organizations improve access to financial resources, bolster assets that support livelihoods, and encourage economic empowerment (Abiddin et al., 2022).

Moreover, the attitude of people toward the employment-creating and development activities of nongovernmental organizations is another outcome; these activities lead to positive attitudes among people toward employment-creating and development activities (Ahmed & Hassan, 2013). Research, training programs, and exchange platforms provided by I/NGOs all help to encourage the sharing of knowledge and the acquisition of new information. They capture the most effective methods, lessons learned, and new approaches in the field of sustainable livelihoods and make this knowledge available to practitioners, policymakers, and communities. Through the dissemination of information and facilitation of learning, international and non-governmental organizations contribute to evidence-based decision-making, increase the efficacy of programs, and support the replication and scaling up of successful livelihood models (Solesbury, 2003).

In order to promote sustainable livelihoods, international and non-governmental organizations create partnerships and collaborate with governments, local communities, academic institutions, and other stakeholders. They do this by participating in initiatives involving many stakeholders, collaborating on projects with other organizations, and forming partnerships with the goal of achieving sustainable growth, through

encouraging collaboration, international and non-governmental organizations are able to increase the effectiveness and durability of their initiatives, ensure local ownership, and encourage the incorporation of livelihoods into overall national objectives (Yan, Lin, & Clarke, 2018).

Providing capacity building, advocating for policies, mobilizing resources, sharing information, and developing partnerships are all important aspects of promoting sustainable livelihoods, and international and non-governmental organizations play an important role in doing so. INGOs provide a contribution to the fight against poverty, the social inclusion of marginalized groups, the economic empowerment of individuals, and the environmental sustainability of their projects. The work that they do supplements the efforts of the government, builds up the capabilities of local communities, and helps communities realize their hopes for more sustainable and resilient ways of making a living.

### **3. MATERIALS AND RESEARCH METHOD**

This research will examine how local authorities have implemented policies that support sustainable livelihoods in northwest Syria and how local authority policies can foster sustainable livelihoods, as well as the role of international and non-governmental organizations in supporting the implementation of local policies and the role of international organizations in promoting sustainable livelihoods. On the other hand, this research will explore the challenges faced by local authorities in implementing these policies and the coordination mechanisms used to ensure a high level of collaboration with NGOs and the local community. At the same time, the study will extract more information from the participants and their opinions about the current situation and how to enhance sustainable livelihoods in the area of study.

This study is designed by a qualitative research. It involves analyzing literature on sustainable livelihood approaches in conflict and post-conflict areas, specifically focusing on the impact of local authority policies in promoting and enhancing sustainable livelihoods, either independently or in collaboration with NGOs. In this respect, this study uses the descriptive research methodology, which aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing sustainable livelihoods in conflict and post-conflict areas. Additionally, the study seeks to identify potential gaps in current policies and practices that may hinder the promotion of sustainable livelihoods in the area of study.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the later part of the study, and the results were qualitatively analyzed. This involves conducting thorough interviews with participants to collect comprehensive and diverse information about their experiences and perspectives. Individuals having direct experience in the field, including community residents, local authority members, and humanitarian workers, whose collectives offer fundamental viewpoints and understandings.

### **3.1. Scope of the Study**

This research will examine how local authorities have implemented policies that support sustainable livelihoods in northwest Syria and how local authority policies can foster sustainable livelihoods, as well as explore the challenges faced by local authorities in implementing these policies. In addition, it will examine the role of international and non-governmental organizations in supporting the implementation of local policies to promote sustainable livelihoods.

As the study will mainly focus on local authority policies and I/NGOs impact on sustainable livelihood, therefore, it will include the local authority representatives in the target areas where the humanitarian agencies are implementing livelihood projects. On the other hand, this study would include a number of representatives from humanitarian agencies I/NGOs who are participating in implementing livelihood projects. Moreover, to enhance the study, an interview with key informant stakeholders who are involved with sustainable livelihoods will be conducted to explore a different perspective on sustainable livelihood effectiveness using the snowball method.

### **3.2. Study Limitations**

This study examines the challenges and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods in northwest Syria, a region that has been under the control of opposition groups for the last ten years. The study aims to capture the diversity and complexity of the livelihood situation in different locations across the region using a mixed-methods approach. However, the study has some limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the study focuses only on sustainable livelihoods, and does not address other aspects of sustainable development, such as environmental, social, and cultural pillars. Further research is needed to explore how sustainable development action can be implemented and coordinated in the region. Second, the study does not take into account the impact of the latest natural crisis - earthquake - that occurred in the region, which may have affected the livelihoods of the population. The study reflects the situation before the crisis and does not capture the changes and challenges that may have emerged after the crisis. The third limitation of the study is the inability to be more inclusive and gain insights based on gender dynamics by including women leaders during the interview phase unwillingness due to unknown reasons. This could have provided a more holistic

understanding of the effectiveness of livelihood interventions in different demographic groups.

One of the potential research limitations is the fact of despite the significant advantage of qualitative studies is that they can provide more detailed information than other research methods, but a limitation of this type of study is that they lack the breadth of information that is available in other methods. Another limitation of qualitative studies like this one is the fact that the responses and answers provided by the study participants can be very wordy or verbose (Anderson, 2017). The open-ended questions used to interview the participants can help generate a large and varied amount of data that can be difficult to analyze and process. There are also interview limitations related to the research study. Environment, stress, bias, or anxiety are just a few examples of the factors that could bias the participants' responses. On the other hand, one potential drawback of this study is the utilization of a small sample size, which could present challenges for the researcher in terms of generalizing the findings. This was due to the actual security conditions during the data collection period, as well as the restrictions caused by limited resources and time, which hindered the feasibility of conducting a study on a larger scale.

Despite the limitations of this research study, the findings can still help researchers gain valuable insights into the participants' perspectives and experiences, ultimately contributing to a richer understanding of the topic being studied. On the other hand, future research could also consider the role of local communities and their participation in sustainable livelihood initiatives to ensure long-term success and impact.

### **3.3. Research Design**

This research's methodology attempts to produce a comprehensive thesis that is well-researched and offers fresh perspectives to the academic community, local communities, and non-governmental organizations. The recommendations and conclusions drawn from these reflections are meant to improve the sustainability of livelihoods in local communities.

In order to answer the research question and test those hypotheses, interviews with local authority representatives in northwest Syria and other stakeholders involved with sustainable livelihood efforts, including representatives from NGOs and the local community, were conducted using a questionnaire consisting of quantitative questions. The sampling in this research is based on the accessibility and approval of the target stakeholder while using the snowball method to reach the active actors.

This research will rely on qualitative approaches using semi-structured interviews that are aimed at identifying the role of both LA and I/NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods. The interview includes questions related to pre-identified variables extracted from the literature review. The qualitative approach aimed to explore, gain an in-depth understanding of, and explore other findings. The interviewing phase of the research study consisted of asking open-ended questions where the questions were developed based on the different aspects, focusing on extracting the most feedback and information that would enhance the study based on their experiences. As the qualitative research is adaptable and cyclical, it provides the flexibility to adjust and improve the interview methods and question guides in response to new insights and participant feedback, by the end of the interview, all the questions had transcripts in a spreadsheet in Excel, and the analysis had been conducted manually.

The analysis includes descriptive and themetical analytics by identifying recurring themes, patterns, and categories within the data to gain insight. Once the data has been analyzed, the thesis writing process can begin. This involves organizing the findings into a coherent argument that answers the research question and provides a recommendation for future research. Additionally, the thesis writing process also includes a discussion of the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research in the field.

#### **3.4. Sampling Methodology**

This research is characterized by a voluntary approach for participants who agreed to join and answer the questionnaire willingly, and a consistent form used in this regard to ensure the anonymity of the participant, which includes all information regarding the purpose of this research.

The sampling was based on the accessibility and approval of the target stakeholder while using the snowball method to reach the active actor. This approach allows a more thorough comprehension of the subject matter by engaging individuals who may not be easily reachable through traditional sampling techniques. Key components of the target population include key informants from business owners within the community, local authority members, and non-governmental organization workers. This component from the interviewee is designed to capture a different perspective and point of view, While the LA provides a unique insight into the regulatory framework and policies that impact the SL, NGO workers can offer valuable information on SL projects and community needs, as well as the coordination mechanisms with the local authorities and challenges in implementing the project. On the other hand, local community representatives from business owners might offer a perspective that other stakeholders might not be able to see. This approach and component allowed access to individuals with the desired knowledge or experiences, ensuring the depth and relevance of the qualitative data collected through one-to-one interviews.

Regarding the sample size for qualitative research, it is important to note that the emphasis is on the depth and extensiveness of the data rather than the number of participants. In the case of the role of local authority policies, the sample size for one-to-one interviews involves a relatively small number of participants aligned with the research question, the topic's complexity, the participants' diversity, and the available resources. Hence, the sample size is determined by data overload rather than statistical methods. As a result, a total of thirteen key informants had been interviewed: three from the local authority, five from NGOs, and five from the business owner.

### **3.5. Data Collection and Analysis**

The study aims to provide insights into how local authorities can improve their policies for sustainable livelihoods in northwest Syria, and the role of NGOs and INGOs in supporting these efforts by providing actionable recommendations for local authorities and NGOs to work together towards creating more sustainable livelihoods for their communities. To achieve this, the research started with a literature review on sustainable livelihoods, policy frameworks, and the roles of local authorities, I/NGOs in promoting the SL. Following this, interviews had been conducted with local authority

representatives in northwest Syria (Greater Idleb) and other stakeholders involved with sustainable livelihoods efforts, as well as representatives from I/NGOs, to gain a better understanding of how local authorities can implement policies that support sustainable livelihoods and what support they are receiving or needing from NGOs. In this study, thirteen informants were interviewed one-on-one at their office, with an average interview duration ranging from 60 to 120 minutes.

The analysis consists of combining the gathered data and drawing conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of descriptive and predictive analytics by identifying recurring themes, patterns, and categories within the data to gain insight.

### **3.6. Ethical Assurances**

Before the interviews took place, an introduction brief will provide the participants about the study's purpose with a consistent section to acknowledge their voluntary willingness to participate in this study with an option to not answer any question or to withdraw from the interview at any time, additionally, no personal information such as ID was collected.

#### 4. FINDINGS

The findings chapter of the research shows the analysis of in-depth interviews with thirteen key informants, including those who have knowledge and experience related to governance and sustainable livelihood activity, as well as individuals who are directly or indirectly affected by the implemented policies. The finding aims to give readers a thorough understanding of the situation on the ground on governance and sustainable livelihood practices in northwest Syria and collaboration between different stakeholders through in-depth interviews with individuals from the community on the ground.

The thirteen participants in the study worked at different institutions and agencies and were chosen based on their expertise in the field. Table 1 displays the demographic data that the participants provided.

**Table 1.** list of respondents

| Respondent ID | Governorate | Occupation             |
|---------------|-------------|------------------------|
| N1            | Idleb       | NGO Worker             |
| N2            | Idleb       | NGO Worker             |
| N3            | Idleb       | NGO Worker             |
| N4            | Idleb       | NGO Worker             |
| N5            | Idleb       | NGO Worker             |
| G1            | Idleb       | Government Representer |
| G2            | Idleb       | Government Representer |
| G3            | Idleb       | Government Representer |
| T1            | Idleb       | Trader                 |
| T2            | Idleb       | Trader                 |
| T3            | Idleb       | Trader                 |
| T4            | Idleb       | Trader                 |
| T5            | Idleb       | Trader                 |

Each participant was interviewed one-on-one, and on average, the interviews lasted between 40 to 60 minutes. Except for the traders who had been asked fewer questions, the interview lasted between 30 to 40 minutes. All participants answered all 13 questions and contributed a lot of data to the study. Following the completion of the interview phase, the data cleaning procedure was initiated in order to accelerate the preparation of the data for analysis. This involved a thorough examination, organization, and subsequent translation of the data from Arabic to English. The researcher transcribed the interview responses and compiled them into Microsoft Word documents.

The pre-identified themes and variables from the literature review, as well as the research questions, serve to organize the findings presented in this chapter. The research sub-questions that drove the study methodology were:

1. Can the current procedure for civilian livelihood be covered by literature? By what parameters can the situation in NW Syria be evaluated objectively?
2. To what extent do local authorities' policies have a positive or/and negative impact on sustainable livelihoods in the NWS?
3. In what ways do the policies of local authorities contribute to the enhancement of sustainable livelihoods, and what challenges need to be addressed in this endeavor?
4. To what extent do I/NGOs assist local governments in implementing sustainable livelihood-related policies?

At the end, with the available resources, the data had been analyzed manually using the Microsoft Excel worksheet to identify patterns and trends, which were later used to evaluate the findings, make recommendations, and draw conclusions. This process helped ensure that the study's objectives were met and that the results were accurately interpreted for further research or practical applications.

#### **4.1. Examination of NWS Livelihood Situations:**

To gain insight into the current state of livelihood in the NWS, participants from both government and non-governmental organizations were asked a set of questions to

provide their perspectives on the challenges and opportunities faced by communities in the region. The information gathered from these interviews was then cross-referenced with existing data to create a comprehensive understanding of the livelihood situations in the NWS.

The Greater Idleb area in the northwest of Syria is experiencing significant challenges in providing sustainable livelihoods, especially for vulnerable groups and displaced people who have lost their primary sources of income due to conflict and crisis. Yet, local government institutions and non-governmental organizations are working to promote sustainable livelihoods through a variety of initiatives and activities. These efforts are aimed at empowering individuals, improving their living standards, and achieving economic and social development in the region.

In terms of government-related activities, the government creates opportunities for employment for young people and teachers by filling vacancies in government institutions, leading to sustainable employment and improved living standards. Also, the government offers assistance to specific cases, such as the spouses of martyrs and injured individuals, by giving them the necessary material and technical support to help them establish a stable future.

*“The Government provides employment opportunities for many young people, whether with experience through employment or without experience to work as workers. In addition, the Zakat Authority offers some small projects for very special cases.”*

On the other hand, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) offer different activities to support livelihoods in the region. One of them is small and medium enterprise support (SMEs), which helps beneficiaries start their own businesses and earn a stable income. NGOs provide them with materials and technical assistance for various sectors, such as commerce, agriculture, and animal husbandry. These projects are aligned with local market demand, job creation, and economic development. Another activity is training and courses, which teach skills and techniques that can improve the performance and profitability of small businesses. Beneficiaries can learn skills such as sewing, hairdressing, and food processing, as well as business management. This training can help them achieve financial autonomy. A third activity is the promotion of women’s enterprises, which aims to empower women economically and socially. NGOs support and train women to start and run their own businesses.

*“Widowed women were trained in the sewing profession, increased their expertise and secured a family's material income sufficient for living.”*

However, implementing sustainable livelihood projects in Greater Idleb has not been without challenges, as the respondents agreed. Various obstacles and challenges hinder the attainment of intended objectives, and the desired societal influence can be summarized below:

1. Lack of funding and resources: NGOs and government actors face significant challenges in attracting funding and resources for full and effective project implementation. This may narrow the scope of intervention and the impact of projects.

2. Security situation and instability: poor security conditions and volatility in the security situation are a major challenge, as frequent displacement and shelling can disrupt or delay the implementation of projects and disrupt the daily lives of the population. *“beneficiary's instability in the region weakens small enterprises and threatens them with closure”*

3. Lack of awareness and commitment among individuals: many organizations face challenges in raising awareness and encouraging beneficiaries to understand the importance of sustainable economic projects rather than relying on humanitarian assistance. Some beneficiaries may not be sufficiently aware of the long-term benefits of such projects, which can reduce the effectiveness of programs.

*“People's lack of awareness of the importance of sustainable livelihoods projects and their focusing towards the demand for relief projects as baskets”*

4. Lack of successful ideas and great competition: Organizations may face challenges in developing new and successful enterprise ideas in the face of large market competition.

5. Lack of trust and confidence: Some beneficiaries may suffer from mistrust of organizations or the government, which can discourage them from participating in projects submitted. This requires intensified awareness-raising and confidence-building efforts to ensure wider and more effective participation.

**Table 2.** challenges implementing sustainable livelihood projects in Greater Idleb

| Theme  | Number of Repeated Words | Number of Respondents |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Lack of funding and resources                      | 4                        | 2                     |
| Security situation and instability                 | 2                        | 2                     |
| Lack of awareness and commitment among individuals | 5                        | 2                     |
| Lack of successful ideas and great competition     | 3                        | 1                     |
| Lack of trust and confidence                       | 3                        | 1                     |

As for the priorities, the government sets a variety of priorities in the region, one of these priorities is to provide appropriate employment opportunities in accordance with competencies and expertise by organizing professions and imposing criteria for obtaining licenses in different fields, thereby ensuring the quality and sustainability of work. In addition, considerable attention is paid to improving the infrastructure of the region, especially the main roads linking the regions, to facilitate the transport of agricultural goods and products and ensure availability at appropriate prices.

*“One of the most important priorities of the Salvation Government is to improve infrastructure, especially the main roads linking the areas together.”*

On the other hand, as for the NGOs, prioritization is based on ongoing consultations with the community and analysis of its needs and challenges, as well as interaction with professional associations and local bodies to ensure that policies and programs are in line with the needs and aspirations of the local population.

*“We implement the projects according to available information and support.”*

#### **4.2. LA’s Policy Concerning the SL: Existence and Efficiency**

The first question of the interview asked about the policy was: "Give me an overview of the policies and governance established in Greater Idleb to address the

livelihood challenges of individuals and society, especially displaced persons? How do these policies comply with the principles of sustainable livelihood development?". This question aimed to understand the government's approach to addressing the challenges faced by the local population, particularly those who have been displaced. It also sought to assess the effectiveness of policies in promoting sustainable livelihood development and meeting the needs of the community.

The response from the government, local traders, and non-governmental organizations concerned varies, showing some common points and differences in action related to the policies and governance put in place in Greater Idleb to address the challenges of livelihoods.

The government in Idleb is undertaking several actions, all aimed at creating jobs and improving the quality of services provided to the community, based on the responses from the government, where those actions are part of the sustainable development strategy of the government in Idleb. Additionally, the government regulates recruitment and salary scales based on competence, academic degree, and expertise. It has also issued policies on the investment of common agricultural land and the employment of experienced farmers. It has also passed laws on the licensing of factories and professions at all levels to regulate these occupations and establish the quality of services. *“Construction of the industrial city, establishment of several laboratories and employment of young people to benefit from their energy”*. There were acknowledgements of the government's swift policy implementation. One respondent highlighted that the pace of government passed policies might vary between institutions, being either slow or rapid depending on the circumstances, but it is continuously developing. According to the respondent, the lack of resources compared to the high requirements is worsened by the region's war-damaged infrastructure during the decade and the cut in NGOs direct support for the government. Also, this government is relatively new compared to the more established ones.

*“These laws are constantly being developed that can be slow in some institutions or fast in others depending on the situation. Unemployment and its associated challenges present a significant issue for big countries, and it is posing a formidable obstacle for newly formed governments operating within the context of armed conflict.”*

On the other hand, NGO respondents provided diverse responses. Some individuals noted the absence of established laws and frameworks to address livelihood issues, while others highlighted the ongoing development of laws and frameworks to address livelihood challenges, particularly emphasizing infrastructure development. In summary, the answers were grouped as follows:

1. Lack of a uniform legal framework: The responses show that there are no specific laws or a uniform legal framework governing livelihood challenge in Idleb. This absence reflects the weak possibilities and challenges faced by local authorities in developing appropriate legislation.

2. The limited role of local authorities: The role of local authorities appears to be limited in determining livelihood policies and laws, where their role is limited to approving or not approving livelihood projects without a specific legal framework.

3. Development orientation: Some responses indicate that there is a trend towards better law development and regulation, with increased attention from local authorities to the organization of work and the identification of weak and specific points.

4. Employment challenges: Some answers show difficulty in regulating employment processes, as there is no direct intervention through laws to regulate them, which may adversely affect employment opportunities and the stability of the labor market.

5. Towards sustainable development: The overall situation shows that there is an interest in directing policies and laws towards the principles of sustainable livelihoods through the development of industrial zones, the creation of jobs, and the achievement of sustainable livelihoods.

**Table 3.** Challenges with the SL Policies

| Theme                                 | Number of Respondents | Number of Repeated Words |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Lack of a uniform legal framework     | 5                     | 8                        |
| The limited role of local authorities | 4                     | 6                        |
| Development orientation               | 5                     | 9                        |
| Employment challenges                 | 3                     | 5                        |
| Towards sustainable development       | 3                     | 6                        |

In general, the answers vary with regard to laws and governance designed to meet the challenges of livelihoods, but the growing interest of local authorities in streamlining and better regulating matters for sustainable development in the region is evident. Despite challenges and weak points, there appears to be a gradual improvement in the focus on the promotion of sustainable livelihoods in Greater Idleb.

*“In general, these Policy are still being developed, with the authorities organizing and it is matters of time to start”*

In contrast, the answers from the traders show a diversity of views among traders in Idleb, indicating an urgent need for strong laws and a legal framework that support livelihoods and protect the rights of workers and employers from economic and political challenges.

The perspectives shared by traders in Idleb shed light on the critical role of livelihood support laws and government policies in shaping the economic landscape. One viewpoint underscores the negative impact of the absence of such laws, citing restrictive taxes and licenses that hinder businesses from expanding, increasing wages, or hiring more workers. This highlights the immediate challenges faced by businesses due to regulatory constraints. Conversely, others acknowledge some regulatory efforts by the government to regulate commercial and agricultural activities and support livelihoods. However, the continued absence of comprehensive laws that contribute to economic stability indicates ongoing gaps in the legal framework. This reflects a

complex understanding of the regulatory environment and the need for more robust policies to promote economic resilience. Meanwhile, concerns have been raised about the absence of wage and labor laws, warning against potential worker exploitation and worsening working conditions.

*“There are policies that increase unemployment such as taxes and licenses that limit capital owners' ability to raise wages or employ workers as much as needed”.*

Together, these perspectives underscore the urgent need for a strengthened legal framework that not only supports livelihoods but also safeguards the rights of workers and employers amidst economic and political. One of the noticeable notes raised by the trader pointed to decisions that impede employment in certain sectors, leading to job losses.

#### **4.3. Participation of The Community in Policy Formation:**

Regarding community involvement in policy development, the NGOs worker and government representative were asked the following questions: " To what extent do communities engage in sustainable livelihood decision-making processes? How do they ensure their active participation and representation? How do you address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and internally displaced persons, in your sustainable livelihood initiatives?" Those questions aim to examine community participation and ensure that marginalized groups are included in the decision-making process and that their specific needs are addressed in sustainable livelihood initiatives. On the other hand, the trader who represents the community was asked the related question in a different form: “Did you or any other senior community figures participate in the development or design of such policies that are appropriate to support livelihood frameworks? Have you heard of any delegates from this community who participated in such an activity?” The questions aim to gather information on the level of involvement and representation of community members in policy development related to sustainable livelihood initiatives.

The responses provided by government officials, organization workers, and traders reveal a variety of perspectives on community participation in decision-making processes regarding livelihood and employment laws.

Government officials demonstrate varying approaches to community involvement, emphasizing continuous engagement with societal specialists to ensure informed decision-making, along with the appointment of experienced individuals to governmental positions. Moreover, the government has established community committees aimed at gaining community input in decisions related to sustainable livelihoods and employment sectors, indicating a commitment to grassroots engagement in policy formulation. *“There is constant communication with the competent authorities in each field through trade unions, gatherings and local councils and to ensure that proper decisions are made.”*

On the other hand, among NGO workers, there is a common sense among respondents about the critical importance of involving communities at all stages of projects, emphasizing design, implementation, and evaluation. Meanwhile, NGOs take proactive steps by assessing community needs and offering training programs before project initiation, highlighting efforts to empower communities for effective participation. *“Many organizations involve the local community only with two items: needs assessment and the collection of community responses after implementation.”*

However, traders' responses show that problems still exist. They express frustration over their limited involvement in law drafting processes and highlight instances of unfair law enforcement negatively affecting their operations. Also, the fact that people aren't involved in making decisions about jobs and income highlights bigger problems with how stakeholders are represented. This shows how important it is to close these gaps in community involvement to make sure that measures are effective and legal, which requires greater inclusivity and transparency in legislative processes.

*“There is no kind of policy-making consultation and I have not heard of any delegate being consulted. Most Policy regulate taxation and the taking of money from traders.”*

Overall, the extent of community participation in decision-making and policy design varies from one organization to another and from sector to sector, and there remains an urgent need to strengthen such participation and balance the needs of society with development strategies and policies.

#### **4.4. Possible Supporting Factors for the SL Intervention:**

The question asked on this matter to the NGOs workers and government representatives was: "In your experience, what are the key factors contributing to the successful implementation of sustainability and the long-term impact of sustainable livelihood interventions?" while the question for the traders was "What are the key factors that can contribute to the long-term operationalization of sustainable livelihood projects' laws?". The question aims to gather insights on best practices for implementing sustainable livelihood interventions, ultimately informing future strategies and policies for promoting sustainable development.

The answers provided by NGO workers, governments, and traders on the key factors contributing to the efficacy and long-term impact of interventions in sustainable livelihoods prove to be diverse and comprehensive among all respondents, as shown in the group below:

1. **Empowering Communities through Tailored Project Design and Implementation:** Respondents emphasized the importance of projects tailored to address genuine community needs, particularly those focusing on sustainable food production and local demand. Furthermore, aligning projects with beneficiaries' skills and experiences, coupled with adequate training and ongoing support, was highlighted as critical for success.

2. **Training and capacity-building:** The implementation of tailored training programs aimed at addressing the unique requirements of individuals and communities, as well as enhancing their proficiency in particular domains, is recognized as a crucial element in fostering sustainability. This approach encompasses the promotion of learning, vocational education, and capacity-building activities. Strategies for strengthening livelihood interventions include the reinforcement of vocational education and the establishment of relationships with both local and international organizations.

3. **Outreach and follow-up:** effective follow-up of projects and the offering of continuous support to beneficiaries while ensuring lasting communication with the community, listening to their needs, and providing support based on their observations.

4. Diversity and innovation: encouraging innovative ideas by beneficiaries and implementing projects that meet their actual needs. This includes developing various projects, including an integrated series of activities, to ensure their sustainability and positive impact on society.

5. Security and legal stability: ensuring security stability in targeted areas to promote investment and economic growth; reducing legal barriers and excessive enterprise and business taxation to enhance financial sustainability.

6. Policy and Regulatory Environment: Issues related to the policy and regulatory environment, including licensing costs, taxes, and monopolies, are mentioned by respondents. Reducing barriers such as high taxes and fees on businesses and promoting a favorable regulatory environment are seen as crucial for project continuity and job creation.

7. Promoting education and learning: promoting vocational education and capacity-building to enable young people and workers to cope with labor market needs. providing opportunities for continuous learning and improving labor skills to ensure long-term sustainability and positive impact.

**Table 4.** Possible Supporting Factors for the SL Intervention

| Theme   | Sub-theme                               | Number of Respondents |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| Empowering Communities through Tailored Project Design and Implementation | Community Needs Assessment              | 3                     |
|   | Beneficiary Selection and Training      | 3                     |
| Training and Capacity-building  | Skill Development and Training Programs | 3                     |
|   | Continuous Support and Follow-up        | 1                     |
| Outreach and Follow-up  | Beneficiary Follow-up and Support       | 2                     |
|   | Needs Evaluation and Targeting          | 1                     |

|                                   |  |   |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Diversity and Innovation          | Focus on Innovation and Adaptation               | 1 |
|                                   | Diversification of Project Ideas and Approaches  | 1 |
| Security and Legal Stability      | Security Measures and Stability Consideration    | 3 |
|                                   | Legal Support and Compliance                     | 1 |
| Policy and Regulatory Environment | Policy Development and Implementation            | 2 |
|                                   | Regulatory Compliance and Adaptation             | 1 |
| Promoting Education and Learning  | Vocational Education and Training Promotion      | 2 |
|                                   | Educational Institution Regulation and Oversight | 1 |

For proven strategies, the responses from NGOs emphasized attention to training and capacity-building, ensuring continuous communication with the community, promoting diversity and innovation, providing security and legal stability, and promoting education and learning, which appear to be key strategies that ensure sustainable livelihood interventions and their long-term positive impact.

*“Selecting the right categories, evaluating the need well, conducting the right training courses for the local community and selecting the occupations needed by the market.”*

#### **4.5. Evaluation of the SL Policy Effectiveness**

This question "How do you assess the effectiveness and impact of policies and programs on improving livelihood opportunities? Are there specific indicators or monitoring mechanisms?" was asked to the government representative and NGOs workers. The question aims to determine the success of implemented policies in creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for individuals.

The respondent emphasizes the importance of evaluations of the effectiveness of policies and programs for improving livelihood opportunities in society, which require attention in several respects and the use of a variety of mechanisms and indicators, that need to be carried out periodically and regularly to ensure that programs and policies are continuously improved and to maximize the benefits to beneficiaries.

At the government level, the government relies on the monitoring of statistics and reports from NGOs and organizations to assess the effectiveness of programs and policies. These data are analyzed to understand the results and impacts of program implementation at the community and individual levels, with particular emphasis on the sustainability of projects and their effective impact on beneficiaries. while also monitoring statistics on increased employment ratios and the opening of new projects to assess the effectiveness of programs and policies. This analysis is important to understand the actual impact of policies on the labor market and the growth of the local economy. At the end, the evaluation relies on the accuracy of the data provided by the NGOs to ensure that decisions are based on reliable information and to make adjustments as needed to improve the outcomes of programs.

*“The evaluation is done through statistics on increasing employment ratios and opening new projects, such as agricultural and other projects.”*

On the other hand, among the NGOs workers, respondents noted a medium effect, primarily focused on project-level measurements. However, there is a lack of impact measurement at higher levels, such as at the governmental or authority level, hindering comprehensive assessment. However, a considerable attention is being paid to the pursuit of continuity and profitability for projects and programs implemented. This is done first through follow-up contracts with beneficiaries to assess the impact of projects on their lives and their long-term sustainability. Second, assessing the satisfaction of beneficiaries with the programs and services provided is an essential part of the evaluation process through the use of satisfaction questionnaires to measure the satisfaction of beneficiaries and identify aspects that need to be developed and improved. Third, assessing the effectiveness of programs and policies requires analyzing changes in the living conditions of beneficiaries after the implementation of programs through interviews with beneficiaries and case studies that understand their personal experiences and the actual impact of programs on their lives and livelihood

opportunities. This helps to analyze successes and challenges in program implementation and determine their impact on the community.

*Most programs that provided livelihood projects measured the impact at the project level and there was no impact measurement at the level of classes, government or authorities.”*

**Table 5.** Level of Measurement of SL policy and Assessment Methods

| Level of Measurement | Impact Assessment Methods                                    |
|----------------------|--|
| Household-level      | Follow-up, changes in the living conditions of beneficiaries |
| Project-levels       | Evaluation, Satisfaction questionnaires                      |
| Area-level           | Continuity and Profitability, long-term sustainability       |

In short, the evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of policies and programs depends on a variety of mechanisms and indicators, as well as the accuracy of the data sharing to measure success and identify areas for improvement, which contribute to program development and improve the quality of livelihood services for target groups.

#### **4.6. Coordination Between the Local Authorities and NGOs:**

The last fourth question, addressed to NGO workers and government representatives, aimed to measure the level of coordination between local authorities and NGOs in implementing programs and policies. This aspect is crucial for ensuring efficient delivery of services and maximizing resources to benefit the community as a whole. Effective coordination can lead to synergies between different stakeholders, ultimately enhancing the overall impact of initiatives on the target population.

The question begins with “How do you describe the level of coordination and cooperation between the local authority and NGOs in Greater Idleb with regard to promoting sustainable livelihoods? What mechanisms or platforms exist to facilitate such coordination?” To capture a comprehensive understanding of the level of coordination and cooperation between the local authority and NGOs. Additionally, exploring the presence of formal partnerships or agreements that outline roles,

responsibilities, and shared goals, which provides insights into the effectiveness of collaboration in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Greater Idlib.

Coordination and cooperation mechanisms are based on a variety of methods, including periodic meetings between local authorities and organizations operating in the region, which contribute to the exchange of experiences and information and the identification of common priorities. In addition, some organizations and governments use modern electronic and technical means to facilitate rapid and effective communication and the exchange of information. In addition, coordination is carried out through the participation of interested parties in decision-making processes through meetings, workshops, and periodic meetings aimed at achieving consensus and the exchange of views.

The governmental representative's insights shed light on the robust coordination mechanisms in place between local authorities and NGOs operating in Greater Idlib. Emphasizing a high level of coordination, the representative highlights that all organizations working in the region are mandated to coordinate with the Ministry of Development. This coordination is facilitated through the ministry's widespread branches across all regions, streamlining the submission of intervention projects for development. Furthermore, the representative underscores the necessity for NGOs to obtain authorization from the Ministry of Development and maintain constant coordination, ensuring alignment with governmental priorities and regulations. Specifically, for educational projects, NGOs are directed to coordinate with the Ministry of Development before liaising with the Ministry of Education to ensure the equitable targeting of schools and effective implementation of educational initiatives.

*“We work at a very high level of coordination, since all organizations working in Idlib are required to coordinate with the Ministry of Development and have branches in all regions to facilitate this coordination.”*

The role of the local authority and its guidance play a vital role in guiding and supervising NGOs to ensure that their activities are carried out in a manner consistent with local priorities and laws. Therefore, the LA sets a high priority for coordination, communication, and support. This includes providing the necessary regulations and providing assistance in their application, thus contributing to strengthening the

partnership between local authorities and NGOs and balancing local objectives with humanitarian action. One of the key roles of the local authority is to provide advice and guidance in setting standards for targeting and continuous monitoring of activities, including developing criteria and indicators for evaluating project performance and ensuring that expected results are effectively achieved. On the other hand, the local authority holds periodic meetings with non-governmental organizations to follow up on project progress and resolve potential problems in the course of work by discussing challenges and responding to immediate, urgent needs. The role of the local authority is also to provide prior approvals, data, and lists for the implementation of projects, thus facilitating coordination and cooperation among the various parties and contributing to the acceleration of the start-up of new projects.

*“Organizations need prior approval before starting any activity which means that the organization enters a region without prior coordination and obtaining the approval of the Ministry of Development. The Ministry then provides statistics and lists. The criteria and priorities are discussed in a consensual form.”*

The answers provided by NGOs workers show NGOs accord great importance to the process of coordination and cooperation with local authorities and stakeholders in the region. According to respondents, the level of coordination and cooperation between local authorities and NGOs in Greater Idleb regarding the promotion of sustainable livelihoods exhibits a moderate to good standard. This coordination includes a number of steps and actions required during project implementation processes, such as obtaining the necessary approvals and lists from stakeholders. In addition, organize meetings with local committees and other associations to exchange experiences and direct efforts towards the basic priorities of the community. In parallel, coordination with other organizations and associations in the region is carried out through the sharing of information and the exchange of experiences to support different groups of society, thereby promoting cooperation based on mutual interest and enhancing the positive impact of the projects implemented. In addition, the organizations set up coordination meetings and explained project principles for all, during which details are reviewed, expected objectives and outputs are clarified, and the necessary approvals are obtained from all parties concerned, thus contributing to the strengthening of the partnership and the achievement of measurable and monitored positive results. *“High-level*

*coordination, in terms of target groups, their information and project approvals, for correct geographical division and no multiplier conflicts or benefits.”*

#### **4.6.1. Coordination Challenges:**

The subsequent segment of the coordination question set endeavors to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the coordination challenge as the following question: "What challenges or obstacles have you faced in establishing and maintaining effective coordination between local authorities and NGOs? How did you deal with these challenges or overcome them?"

The answers show that even with the high level of coordination does not mean an easing of the challenges related to the coordination aspects. Based on the responses provided, the difficulties faced by LA members and NGOs when dealing with sustainable livelihood programs are as follows:

1. Challenges in the selection of beneficiaries and target areas: NGOs tend to choose areas with large populations and cities, neglecting some regions, especially border areas. Overcoming this challenge involves ensuring equal quality of projects across all regions and addressing the neglect of certain areas. on the other hand, Challenges in choosing beneficiaries are encountered occasionally, but they are considered errors within the framework and addressed accordingly.

2. Challenges in the equitable distribution of projects: The equitable distribution of organizations' projects poses a significant challenge, as some organizations prefer targeting specific areas despite the necessity to prioritize vulnerable and needy regions. Regular meetings and presentations of facts and statistics aid in agreeing on the most appropriate project targets.

3. Disparities in education sector salaries: Disparities between non-formal education salaries and those offered by organizations compared to teachers' salaries in public schools pose challenges. Solutions are sought through ongoing coordination and meetings to explore resolutions, including securing competent teaching staff in remote areas.

4. Infrastructure and communication challenges: as an example, some schools in remote areas may face difficulties in providing adequate infrastructure and efficient communication, requiring constant coordination between the government and organizations to provide the necessary support and appropriate solutions to these problems.

5. Project Quality: Challenges include the lack of interest from local committees in project quality, often focusing solely on individuals. These are addressed through increased meetings and explanations of project objectives and selection criteria, which include training courses and beneficiaries' ability to manage small projects.

*“The biggest challenge is the equitable distribution of organizations' projects, as some organizations want to target specific areas despite being targeted by these types of projects.”*

**Table 6.** Coordination Challenges

| Theme   | Number of Repeated Words | Number of Respondents |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Challenges in the selection of beneficiaries and target areas | 5                        | 2                     |
| Challenges in the equitable distribution of projects          | 3                        | 2                     |
| Disparities in Education Salaries                             | 1                        | 3                     |
| Infrastructure and communication challenges                   | 2                        | 3                     |
| Project Quality   | 2                        | 4                     |

These challenges highlight the complexity of coordination efforts and the need for continuous dialogue and collaboration to overcome obstacles and ensure effective implementation of sustainable livelihood projects in Greater Idleb.

#### **4.6.2. Coordination Success Factors:**

By the end of the interview, the participant had been asked, "Based on your experience, what are the key factors contributing to successful coordination and cooperation between the local authority and non-governmental organizations in promoting sustainable livelihoods?" aim to explore the best practices and strategies that have been successful in fostering partnerships between local authorities and NGOs. This information will be crucial in developing a comprehensive framework for future collaboration efforts in sustainable livelihood projects in conflict-affected areas like Greater Idleb.

Based on the responses provided, the main factors contributing to successful coordination and cooperation between local authorities and non-governmental organizations in promoting sustainable livelihoods can be analyzed as follows:

1. **Involvement of Local Authorities:** Respondents emphasize the importance of involving local authorities from the outset in assessing resources, needs, project selection, and sustainability methods. They stress that local authorities are essential stakeholders in project implementation, contributing positively to project functioning and addressing challenges effectively:

2. **Prior communication and coordination:** Effective communication and prior coordination between local authorities and non-governmental organizations are essential to ensuring the achievement of common goals and avoiding conflicting efforts and duplication of processes. Through such communication, priorities are identified, and efforts are effectively directed towards sustainable development.

3. **Early and inclusive participation:** The planning and coordination process must involve the involvement of local authorities from the outset in assessing available resources and identifying the actual needs of each region and society, thus contributing to better targeting efforts and resources according to real needs.

4. **Specialization and competence in leadership:** the presence of competent people in decision-making positions and focal points is essential to ensuring proper and effective direction of efforts. Efficient leadership plays a vital role in directing efforts

towards the achievement of common goals for improving livelihoods in local communities.

5. Training and rehabilitation: The presence of qualified and trained staff in focal points and outreach contributes to enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of joint programs and projects. Continuing training enables staff to better deliver services and to meet the needs of society more effectively.

6. Uniting visions and ensuring sustainability: It is important to consolidate visions and orientations between local authorities and non-governmental organizations towards sustainable livelihoods, contributing to the identification of plans and strategies for the effective and sustainable achievement of sustainable development goals.

*“Involve local authorities from the outset in assessing the resources available to each village or area of actual need, involve them in assessing the needs of each phase and region, and then involve them in evaluating the selection of the best projects and involve them in the methods of sustainability and closure.”*

**Table 7.** Coordination Success Factors

| Theme                                       | Number of Repeated Words | Number of Respondents |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Involvement of Local Authorities            | 3                        | 1                     |
| Prior communication and coordination        | 2                        | 1                     |
| Early and inclusive participation           | 2                        | 1                     |
| Specialization and competence in leadership | 1                        | 1                     |
| Training and rehabilitation                 | 3                        | 2                     |
| Uniting visions and ensuring sustainability | 1                        | 1                     |

Overall, the responses emphasize the importance of involving local authorities, effective communication, and collaboration between stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of livelihood projects in the Idleb region.



## **5. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION**

In this chapter, the focus will be on evaluating the analyzed data to understand the role of Greater Idleb local authority policies and I/NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods in northwest Syria and identifying key areas for improvement in order to enhance the overall impact of sustainable livelihood initiatives. Additionally, potential strategies for overcoming challenges and maximizing opportunities will be explored to further advance progress towards achieving sustainable development goals. We will also explore potential partnerships and collaborations with other organizations and stakeholders to leverage resources and expertise in order to further advance sustainable livelihood initiatives.

Given the limited availability of relevant studies within the Syrian context, this study adopted an exploratory approach in order to gain comprehensive insights into the subject matter. The present study examined the circumstances, policies, and challenges related to the implementation of sustainable livelihoods, as perceived and articulated by the people who participated in the research. While investigating additional factors that influence livelihoods in the study area.

Adopting the descriptive research approach, the case study gives unique insights into the dynamics of governance, sustainable livelihood practices, and coordination in a conflict-affected region.

The first part presents a comprehensive analysis of the study findings and existing literature, organized according to the research question and sub-questions. The recommendations are presented in the last part of this chapter.

### **5.1. Evaluation of Findings:**

The goal of this study is to examine the situation of sustainable livelihoods in the northwestern region of Syria and identify the underlying causes and outcomes of policies implemented by local authorities, as well as any other relevant factors, on the community at large. This is achieved by examining the perspectives of those who have direct and indirect involvement in the process of policy formation.

The case study presented in this research delves into the various perspectives and insights shared by the key informants, shedding light on the complexities and uniqueness of governance and sustainable livelihood practices in the context of northwest Syria, in addition to the challenges and opportunities in regards to the implemented policies. Moreover, the study underscores the effectiveness of the coordination mechanism between the three entities: local entities, NGOs, and the community. Through these interviews, a comprehensive understanding of the challenges, successes, and potential areas for improvement in policy implementation is revealed.

The evaluation of the findings will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of current programs and initiatives in achieving sustainable livelihood goals. Based on these findings, recommendations can be made to improve collaboration and ensure long-term sustainability for future projects by enhancing the existing policy and creating a new policy that aims to promote SL and address any gaps identified during the evaluation process in a more holistic manner.

#### **5.1.1. Sub-RQ1. Evaluation of Livelihood Challenges in Greater Idleb**

In Greater Idleb, the local authorities and humanitarian organizations face significant livelihood challenges, particularly for individuals and communities, especially those displaced by ongoing conflict and displacement. Livelihood initiatives and activities face challenges such as lack of funding and security instability, which disrupt implementation processes and limit the scope of their potential impact. To address these challenges, NGOs and local authorities in Greater Idleb are collaboratively implementing a series of coordinated and integrated measures to tackle livelihood challenges, emphasizing collaborative efforts and shared responsibilities. Hence, concerted efforts are underway to enhance coordination and collaboration among NGOs, local authorities, and the community in Greater Idleb, aiming to optimize resource utilization and minimize discrepancies in collective endeavors.

Analysis indicates that significant obstacles to the successful implementation of sustainable livelihood projects in Greater Idleb include funding constraints and security instability, both greatly hindering progress and sustainability. The ongoing conflict and displacement in the area, which disrupt regular economic activities and restrict access to

essential resources, exacerbate these problems. Moreover, the lack of adequate funding restricts the scope and scale of interventions, hindering the ability to address the diverse needs of communities effectively. While existing literature addresses these aspects to some extent, further research is imperative to delve into case studies, policy documents, and empirical research to gain a deeper understanding of the efficacy of livelihood interventions and the determinants of their outcomes.

To conduct an objective evaluation of the situation in Greater Idlib, it's crucial to consider various parameters such as resource availability, specific challenges and priorities identified through needs assessments, and the selection and implementation processes of projects. These may include assessing the availability of resources in each village or area, conducting needs assessments to identify specific challenges and priorities, and evaluating the selection and implementation of projects. Objective evaluations should also take into account the sustainability and long-term impact of interventions, considering factors such as employment generation, income generation, and improvements in overall well-being.

All discussants stress the critical need to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of policies and programs in enhancing livelihood opportunities, specifically for marginalized groups, and ensuring inclusive and equitable development. Evaluation plays a pivotal role in sustainable livelihood by facilitating the recognition of achievements and obstacles, offering insights for future enhancements, and guiding continuous improvement efforts.

One of the most important mechanisms used in this context is the evaluation form, which provides an opportunity for both beneficiaries and officials to provide feedback and performance evaluations. In addition, the evaluation relies on user satisfaction questionnaires and ongoing observations that provide a comprehensive view of how programs are implemented and how they affect the lives of beneficiaries. Nevertheless, certain obstacles, like inadequate project management and limited beneficiary experience, can impede evaluations, potentially resulting in outcomes that fall short of expectations. It is worth mentioning that there are other key signs of success involved in evaluating the sustainability of the livelihood project, such as higher employment rates, the number of launched new projects, and ensuring project

continuity, all of which demonstrate the influence of programs and policies on the economic and social aspects of the communities in focus.

Ultimately, continuous and thorough evaluation of policies and programs designed to improve livelihood opportunities is essential to ensuring successful outcomes, identifying areas for enhancement, and sustaining improvement over time.

### **5.1.2. Sub-RQ2. Policy Implementation and Impact**

Despite efforts to implement sustainable livelihood policies by local councils and organizations, there are notable gaps and inconsistencies in policy frameworks and governance structures. The absence of a clear regulatory structure and legal framework limits the effectiveness of interventions and hampers efforts to achieve sustainable development. This lack of coherence in governance may stem from a variety of factors, including institutional capacity constraints, political instability, and resource limitations.

To address these pressing challenges, there is an urgent need to develop reliable policies and legal frameworks that provide clear guidance for sustainable livelihood initiatives. These frameworks should be inclusive, participatory, and responsive to the needs of local communities. Additionally, efforts should be made to strengthen institutional capacity, enhance coordination among relevant stakeholders, and promote transparency and accountability in policy implementation processes.

Rather than having a strict legal framework, it depends mainly on local authorities' approvals for livelihood projects and the provision of assistance and support to vulnerable groups that have full statistical information about them. This is demonstrated by the lack of an appropriate regulatory structure that streamlines processes and provides guidance for sustainable development. Positively, these efforts include the development of policies, the regulation of educational and industrial institutions, the establishment of an industrial city to provide employment, and the development of the industrial zone. These initiatives directly contribute to improving economic and educational conditions in the region, aligning with sustainable development goals. Overall, efforts are aimed at developing and improving infrastructure and employment, which is in line with the principles of sustainable livelihood. However, there is an urgent need to develop strong policies and legal

frameworks that meet growing challenges and provide guidance and protection for sustainable livelihoods in Greater Idleb.

On the other hand, the local government is working intensively on new policies and frameworks to ensure that the resources available are fully utilized, in addition to the concept of sustainable livelihoods. Also, local authorities pursue sustainable livelihoods through the regulation of local laws and policies and the development of infrastructure, with a view to improving the social and economic lives of the population. These efforts also include social and educational support for affected families, education, and training opportunities to upgrade skills and improve employment opportunities.

Nevertheless, the policies and governance put in place in Greater Idleb to address the challenges of livelihood seem unclear and not sufficiently coherent, as evidenced by the lack of measurable outcomes and impact assessments. The response from the government, local authorities, and the organizations concerned varies, showing some common points and differences in action.

At the end, the policies implemented by local councils to address sustainable livelihood aspects have both positive and negative impacts. A positive impact is achieved by addressing key challenges and fostering socio-economic development, which includes expanding funding sources through partnerships, enhancing coordination mechanisms with NGOs, improving communication channels, and strengthening governance frameworks. On the other hand, negative impacts arise from challenges such as a lack of clear policies, governance inefficiencies, and limited community engagement. The impact of these policies on sustainable livelihoods is intricately tied to the effectiveness of policy implementation, the allocation of resources, and the ability to effectively address systemic challenges within the region.

### **5.1.3. Sub-RQ3. Role of Local Authorities in Fostering Sustainable Livelihoods**

Local authorities play a critical role in promoting sustainable livelihoods by regulating local laws and policies, developing infrastructure, and providing social and educational support. However, the analysis suggests that current policies and governance mechanisms may lack clarity and coherence, posing challenges to effective

implementation. This lack of coherence may hinder efforts to address the diverse needs of communities, such as the demand for solid labor laws, access to resources, and economic opportunities. It may also contribute to inefficiencies and inconsistencies in decision-making processes.

Regarding the participation of civil society and stakeholders in policy-making, there are diverse challenges in ensuring community participation in decision-making and the design of livelihood and employment policies in Idleb. This situation necessitates improved communication and intensified efforts to ensure a comprehensive and equitable representation of all groups in the decision-making and policy-making processes.

To enhance the role of local authorities in fostering sustainable livelihoods, it's essential to adopt inclusive governance structures and transparent mechanisms that facilitate community participation and decision-making, which are crucial for promoting sustainability and resilience. This may involve actively engaging local communities in policy formulation processes to ensure their needs are met, establishing feedback mechanisms for accountability and transparency, and fostering collaboration with civil society organizations and other stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of governance.

Policies can prioritize awareness-raising campaigns to enhance community understanding of sustainable livelihood concepts and their importance, as they play a crucial role in educating and engaging the community. They can also expand funding sources by cultivating partnerships with various stakeholders and diversifying funding streams.

For example, by forming partnerships with private sector entities as public-private partnerships (PPP), governments can leverage additional funding and expertise to implement initiatives even in a conflict area (OCHA, 2016). A local government might partner with a private company to establish vocational training programs, with the company providing funding and resources while the government offers infrastructure and oversight. This collaboration not only increases the project's financial resources but also enhances its sustainability by tapping into the private sector's knowledge and networks. Another example of expanding funding sources is engagement with

community-based organizations, cooperatives, and grassroots movements, which can mobilize resources from within the community, including financial contributions, in-kind support, and volunteer labor (Makhetha , 2020) For example, a community-led initiative in Greater Idlib might establish a microfinance program to provide small loans to aspiring entrepreneurs, with community members contributing to a revolving fund to sustain the initiative over time.

Additionally, policies can strengthen coordination mechanisms with NGOs. They can also develop tailored training programs to build beneficiary capacities and address governance challenges through clear regulatory frameworks. Furthermore, promoting inclusive decision-making is essential to ensuring equitable resource distribution.

#### **5.1.4. Sub-RQ4 Assistance from NGOs in Policy Implementation**

NGOs play a crucial role in supporting local governments in implementing sustainable livelihood-related policies and initiatives. Despite challenges in coordination and cooperation, such as the lack of standardized communication protocols and differing approaches to decision-making, there are ongoing efforts to strengthen partnerships and enhance communication channels. However, the analysis highlights the need for inclusive governance structures and transparent mechanisms that facilitate stakeholder participation and promote accountability.

The level of coordination and cooperation between local authorities and NGOs in Greater Idleb reflects a variation in the methods and platforms used. While some organizations have a high level of coordination and cooperation through the development directorates and their affiliates in Idleb, which provide an opportunity for effective consultation and exchange of information, in some other cases coordination is weak, resulting in inadequate facilities for sustaining support. The main challenge is to prioritize and ensure that projects are targeted at the area's most in need, which requires effective platforms for collective and joint information exchange and decision-making.

To ensure the success of sustainability efforts, it's essential to strengthen coordination mechanisms, promote transparency, and build on successful experiences. This may involve establishing clear guidelines for partnership and collaboration,

providing capacity-building support to local governments and NGOs, and fostering an enabling environment for civil society engagement in policy formulation and implementation processes.

It is necessary to strengthen the level of coordination and cooperation between local authorities and non-governmental organizations through the development of mechanisms and platforms used to achieve the objectives of promoting sustainable livelihoods. These mechanisms should prioritize transparency, accountability, and clear prioritization while offering essential technical and financial support to guarantee the continuity of development programs and projects. It was also crucial to prioritize continuous communication and build on successful experiences to ensure mutual learning and progress towards sustainable development in Greater Idlib. Coordination between local authorities and non-governmental organizations in promoting sustainable livelihoods faces a range of key challenges that must be addressed effectively to ensure the success of development efforts.

One of the actionable tools that NGOs can use to expand funding is donor consortiums, which bring together multiple donor agencies to collectively fund and support sustainable livelihood projects (OECD, 2018). In conflict contexts, where the needs are often extensive and resources are limited, donor consortiums can provide substantial funding and technical assistance. For example, a consortium of international donors may collaborate to finance agricultural rehabilitation programs in conflict-affected areas, contributing to food security and economic stability.

At the end, NGOs play a significant role in assisting local governments in implementing sustainable livelihood-related policies by complementing their efforts with technical expertise, resources, and strategic guidance. NGOs contribute to expanding funding sources by mobilizing resources from donors, facilitating partnerships with governmental bodies, private sector entities, and international organizations, and diversifying funding streams. Furthermore, they enhance coordination mechanisms by establishing dialogue platforms, facilitating information sharing, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and streamlining communication channels. Moreover, NGOs conduct feasibility studies to assess project viability, advocate for clear governance frameworks, promote inclusive decision-making

processes, and implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of projects.

The success of coordination and cooperation between local authorities and non-governmental organizations in promoting sustainable livelihoods relies on factors such as effective communication, inclusive participation, and leadership efficiency. These include effective communication, early and inclusive participation, leadership efficiency, training and rehabilitation, standardization of visions, and ensuring sustainability in joint efforts, as evident from the responses.

#### **5.1.5. RQ: Are the local authorities capable of easing the livelihood of the residents with or without the NGOs?**

Based on the analysis above and the challenges presented and explored through the perspective of the respondent, with all of those efforts to overcome these challenges, it is clear that the NGOs and government are working solely in this aspect to ensure that the necessary resources are made available and facilitate implementation, which requires a bigger role for coordination and community engagement, especially in the private sector.

While efforts are being made to involve local communities in decision-making processes, the results reveal significant gaps in stakeholder participation, particularly between traders and local authorities, such as limited engagement from traders in policy discussions. Limited participation in policy-making and enforcement processes emphasizes the need for inclusive governance structures and transparent mechanisms to obtain community input. Strengthening stakeholder participation, promoting greater accountability, and ensuring transparency in policy formulation are essential to ensuring that interventions are context-related and responsive to the needs of local populations.

Local authorities play a vital role in policy formulation, infrastructure development, and social support programs. However, their effectiveness is hampered by factors such as funding limitations, security instability, and unclear governance structures that hinder their progress. NGOs complement these efforts by expanding funding sources, enhancing coordination, and providing technical expertise to support the initiatives. Despite their collaborative efforts, achieving sustainable livelihoods

requires addressing governance challenges, promoting inclusive decision-making, and strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for effective implementation. Therefore, while local authorities and NGOs play essential roles, their capabilities are dependent upon addressing systemic challenges and fostering robust partnerships to ensure the well-being of residents in Greater Idlib.

In conclusion, the analysis highlights the significance of establishing efficient collaborations among non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local authorities, and various stakeholders in order to reach sustainable livelihoods and enhance the living conditions of local communities.

Thus, local authorities are not capable of easing the livelihood of the residents without the NGOs support as well as the community engagement.

## **5.2. Recommendation:**

Throughout the analysis and evaluation of the findings, several recommendations have been identified and distributed in two categories: general recommendations and policy recommendations.

### **5.2.1. General Recommendation:**

These proposed actions represent a comprehensive strategy to overcome the challenges faced in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Greater Idlib, organizations and the government can take several actions, including:

**Increase Awareness and Communication:** To promote sustainable livelihood in Greater Idlib, it is crucial to increase community awareness about their importance. This can be achieved through targeted campaigns and improved communication channels between stakeholders. These campaigns can be conducted through various channels like community meetings and social media. Engaging with key stakeholders, such as community leaders and authorities, ensures the message reaches a wider audience. Continuous communication channels community feedback sessions, foster open communication and participation. By prioritizing these efforts, local communities can better understand the significance of sustainable livelihood projects.

**Expand Funding Base and Partnerships:** To support sustainable livelihood initiatives, organizations and governments should diversify funding sources and

establish partnerships with various stakeholders. This involves actively seeking new funding opportunities, fostering collaborations with governmental bodies, NGOs, private sector entities, and international organizations, while leveraging their combined resources and expertise to maximize impact. Joint funding proposals, consortiums, and fundraising events can facilitate collective resource mobilization.

**Enhance Coordination and Collaboration:** To promote sustainable livelihoods, organizations, government agencies, and community representatives need to strengthen coordination and collaboration. Regular meetings, working groups, and joint task forces can facilitate information sharing, resource allocation, and joint decision-making. Utilizing digital platforms and communication technologies can enhance real-time collaboration. Participatory approaches like community-based planning workshops and focus group discussions promote inclusivity, ownership, and local empowerment in decision-making processes.

**Develop Tailored Training Programs:** Customized training programs are essential for building the skills and capacities of project beneficiaries for successful project implementation. These programs should address specific needs and challenges identified through thorough assessments, providing technical assistance and advisory support. The process involves conducting comprehensive needs assessments, skills gap analyses, and beneficiary consultations to identify training needs and preferences. Training curricula, modules, and materials are tailored to these needs, ensuring relevance, effectiveness, and engagement among beneficiaries. Different modalities such as workshops, seminars, on-the-job training, and e-learning platforms are used to accommodate different learning styles. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of training programs enable adaptation to evolving needs and contexts.

**Conduct Rigorous Feasibility Studies:** Prior to project implementation, it is crucial to conduct rigorous feasibility studies to evaluate the viability and compatibility of proposed initiatives with local market dynamics, socio-economic conditions, and environmental factors. This data-driven approach allows for informed decision-making, risk mitigation, and optimization of project outcomes, ensuring maximum socio-economic impact. The study involves gathering comprehensive data on socio-economic, environmental, and market conditions, analyzing market trends, consumer preferences, and competitor landscapes, assessing resource availability and accessibility, and

evaluating potential social and environmental impacts. Engaging stakeholders in the feasibility study process fosters ownership, transparency, and accountability in decision-making and project planning.

**Address Governance and Policy Challenges:** Advocating for clear governance frameworks and policies that support sustainable livelihood initiatives is crucial. Collaborating with government agencies and legislative bodies to develop laws and regulations for sustainable livelihood, such as tax incentives for small enterprises and environmental protection measures, fosters long-term socio-economic growth. Also, Policy analyses, impact assessments, and stakeholder consultations help identify gaps and opportunities for reform. Drafting legislation promoting entrepreneurship, innovation, and social inclusion in livelihood development promotes economic growth and poverty reduction. Strengthening institutional capacity through training and knowledge sharing enhances policy implementation, enforcement, and monitoring.

**Promote Inclusive Decision-Making:** Inclusive decision-making is crucial for promoting inclusive development. It involves involving all community groups in decision-making processes, promoting transparency, accountability, and equitable resource distribution. Engaging diverse stakeholders, including marginalized groups, women, youth, and persons with disabilities, in consultations and meetings ensures their meaningful participation. Creating platforms for deliberative democracy empowers local communities to voice their priorities and influence policy decisions. Fostering a culture of openness, transparency, and responsiveness in governance builds trust, legitimacy, and social cohesion, laying the foundation for inclusive and sustainable development.

**Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms:** Robust monitoring and evaluation systems are crucial for assessing the effectiveness and impact of livelihood interventions. Regular evaluations, feedback, and performance reviews enable continuous learning and adaptation. Establishing clear objectives, indicators, and targets ensures consistency and reliability of data across projects. Regular field visits, spot checks, and interviews enable real-time monitoring of project implementation, progress, and challenges. Analyzing M&E data informs evidence-based decision-making, programmatic adjustments, and policy recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of livelihood interventions.

**Invest in Infrastructure Development:** Infrastructure development is crucial for enhancing local communities' resilience and adaptive capacity. It improves access to basic services, stimulates economic growth, and fosters sustainable livelihood activities. Prioritizing infrastructure development involves consulting with local communities, government agencies, and development partners. Infrastructure assessments, feasibility studies, and cost-benefit analyses help allocate resources effectively. Implementing infrastructure projects like road construction, water supply systems, electricity grids, and telecommunications networks improves connectivity and service delivery in rural and urban areas. Leveraging public-private partnerships, community-based initiatives, and innovative financing mechanisms maximizes the impact and sustainability of investments in essential infrastructure.

**Foster Cross-Sectoral Partnerships:** The integration of environmental, social, and economic considerations in multi-stakeholder partnerships is crucial for fostering innovation and adopting holistic approaches to sustainable development in Greater Idleb. Establishing platforms, forums, and working groups can promote collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and joint action on sustainable development goals. Engaging various stakeholders in collaborative initiatives can spur innovation and achieve collective impact. Formalizing partnerships can enhance resource mobilization, capacity building, and advocacy efforts. Promoting interdisciplinary research, training programs, and knowledge exchange platforms can facilitate cross-sectoral learning, collaboration, and innovation, ultimately driving inclusive and sustainable development outcomes.

### **5.2.2. Policy Recommendations**

Required policy to achieve the goal of sustainability in livelihood projects:

**The Law on Non-taxation of Small Enterprises:** The government can introduce incentives to reduce the tax burden on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), encouraging growth and employment opportunities. These laws can provide tax exemptions or reductions for SMEs operating in designated sectors or meeting specific criteria. This incentivizes entrepreneurship, stimulates economic growth, and fosters job creation, especially in rural and marginalized communities.

**Wage Fixing and Guaranteeing Health Care Act:** The government can establish laws ensuring minimum wages and health insurance for workers, promoting social equity, labor rights, and human dignity. This ensures fair wages, reduces income inequality, and enhances social cohesion. Additionally, providing healthcare benefits improves workers' well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction, contributing to a healthier workforce and sustainable economic development.

**Laws regulating labor and market control:** The government can establish laws regulating labor and market control to prevent monopolization and ensure fair distribution of resources. These laws promote fair competition, prevent market distortions, and safeguard workers' rights and interests. Labor practices, such as working conditions and collective bargaining rights, protect workers' rights. Market control measures, like antitrust laws and price regulations, promote efficiency and fair trade. These laws ensure transparency, accountability, and compliance, creating a level playing field for businesses, protecting consumers from exploitation, and contributing to economic stability and sustainable development.

**Laws to protect the environment and natural resources:** The government can create laws to safeguard the environment and natural resources, promoting sustainable practices in production and manufacturing. These laws are crucial for conserving resources, preserving biodiversity, and mitigating climate change impacts. They regulate pollution, waste management, deforestation, and land use, ensuring sustainable resource management and ecosystem conservation. Promoting sustainable practices like energy efficiency, waste reduction, and renewable energy adoption minimizes environmental degradation and ecological footprint, supporting long-term ecological sustainability, public health, and community well-being.

**Laws to encourage investment and private sector development:** The government can encourage investment and private sector development through tax facilities and legislation supporting small and medium-sized enterprises. These laws create an environment for entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic growth. Tax incentives, investment guarantees, and regulatory reforms attract investment, stimulate business expansion, and create employment opportunities. Supporting SMEs, startups, and micro-enterprises through access to finance, technical assistance, and market linkages fosters enterprise development and economic diversification. These laws drive

innovation, productivity, competitiveness, sustainable economic development, and poverty reduction.



## 6. CONCLUSION

The research presented in this thesis has provided a comprehensive analysis of the various ways in which local authority policies can impact sustainable livelihoods, focusing on the Greater Idleb case in northeast Syria. Using descriptive research methodologies, we have gained valuable insights into the it is clear that a well-designed legal framework is essential for fostering economic growth and stability. Additionally, the findings highlight the need for governments to continuously evaluate and update their laws to adapt to changing economic conditions and global trends.

Sustainable livelihoods are crucial for individuals and communities in conflict-affected areas, where violence and instability significantly impact their ability to secure basic needs, achieve economic stability, and enhance well-being. These approaches empower individuals and communities by providing them with the means to rebuild their lives, reduce dependency on external assistance, and contribute to long-term stability and well-being. In regions damaged by violence, sustainable livelihood interventions can help with economic recovery, job creation, and poverty reduction through activities such as agriculture, microenterprises, and vocational training. These approaches also aim to reduce vulnerability and enhance adaptive capacities by promoting sustainable agricultural practices and improved market access, enhancing food security, and reducing dependence on external aid.

Sustainable livelihood approaches also play a significant role in peacebuilding and fostering social cohesion in conflict-affected areas. By addressing socio-economic grievances and inequalities, these interventions contribute to overall stability and reconciliation processes. Programs that promote sustainable livelihoods and empower women and marginalized groups can increase participation in decision-making processes, advancing social justice and gender equality.

Local authorities have three essential capabilities: analytical, operational, and political capacity. Strong analytical capacity is crucial for making well-informed decisions, particularly in conflict-affected regions. Establishing guidelines and standards for data management and utilization within institutions is essential for data governance. Collaboration and willingness to share data and information are key to building organizational and management innovation.

Transparent and inclusive governance practices are essential for encouraging community involvement and participative decision-making. Local authorities can guarantee that the concerns and aspirations of members of the community are taken into consideration when formulating policies. By organizing workshops, public consultations, and town hall meetings, local authorities can foster collaboration and partnerships among various stakeholders, maximizing their impact and achieving holistic and comprehensive outcomes.

International and Local Non-Governmental Organizations (I/NGOs) play a crucial role in promoting sustainable livelihoods worldwide. They use their expertise, resources, and networks to develop and implement sustainable living initiatives that address economic, social, and environmental factors. I/NGOs work with governments and communities to empower individuals to take ownership of their lives and recover from shocks. They provide aid in the form of capacity development and technical assistance, enabling them to acquire the abilities, information, and resources necessary for maintaining sustainable livelihoods. I/NGOs also lobby for policies and frameworks that support sustainable livelihoods at national, regional, and global levels. They promote awareness through research, policy analysis, and advocacy campaigns, influencing decision-making processes and designing policies that address poverty, inequality, and environmental challenges. They also contribute to creating an environment supportive of sustainable livelihood growth by advocating for pro-poor and sustainable policies. I/NGOs gather resources and support sustainable livelihood projects from various sources, such as governments, foreign donors, commercial firms, and charitable foundations. These resources are used to promote livelihood initiatives, provide seed money for microenterprises, develop revolving funds, and provide microfinance services to economically disadvantaged populations. Through research, training programs, and exchange platforms, I/NGOs encourage the sharing of knowledge and acquisition of new information, contributing to evidence-based decision-making and supporting successful livelihood models.

In order to promote sustainable livelihoods, I/NGOs create partnerships and collaborate with governments, local communities, academic institutions, and other stakeholders. Their work supplements government efforts, builds local community capabilities, and helps communities realize their hopes for more sustainable and

resilient ways of making a living. However, existing policy and governance are unclear and insufficient to meet these challenges. Some efforts include developing policies, regulating educational and industrial institutions, establishing an industrial city, and developing an industrial zone. There is an urgent need to develop strong policies and legal frameworks that meet growing challenges and provide guidance and protection for sustainable livelihoods in Greater Idleb. Additionally, there are challenges in ensuring community participation in decision-making and designing livelihood and employment policies, particularly between traders and local authorities. Strengthening stakeholder participation and promoting greater accountability in policy formulation are necessary to ensure interventions are context-related and responsive to local populations' needs.

Assessing the effectiveness of policies and programs in improving livelihood opportunities for marginalized groups is crucial for sustainable development. Evaluation forms, user satisfaction questionnaires, and ongoing observations are essential for providing feedback and performance evaluation. Challenges include weak project management and lack of beneficiary experience. Key signs of success include higher employment rates, new projects, and project continuity. Actionable measures include supporting marginalized groups, providing employment, education, vocational training, and housing. Regular evaluation is essential to ensure successful outcomes and identify areas for improvement.

Coordination between local authorities and NGOs in Greater Idleb varies, with some organizations having high levels of coordination and cooperation. The main challenge is prioritizing projects to areas most in need, requiring effective platforms for information exchange and decision-making. Strengthening coordination and cooperation between local authorities and NGOs is necessary, promoting transparency, accountability, and clear prioritization. Continuous communication and building on successful experiences are also essential for sustainable development in Greater Idleb.

Successful coordination between local authorities and NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods faces several challenges, including identifying beneficiaries and prioritizing projects based on community needs. These challenges require continuous communication and consultation with all parties involved. Effective partnerships between NGOs, local authorities, and other stakeholders are crucial for achieving sustainable development and improving living conditions.

Recommendations include increasing awareness and communication, expanding funding bases, strengthening coordination, developing tailored training programs, conducting rigorous feasibility studies, addressing governance and policy challenges, promoting inclusive decision-making, strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, investing in infrastructure development, and fostering cross-sectoral partnerships.

To achieve sustainability in livelihood projects, the government can introduce incentives for small and medium-sized enterprises, establish wage fixing and guaranteeing healthcare acts, regulate labor and market control, protect the environment and natural resources, and encourage investment and private sector development. Furthermore, the government can establish laws regulating labor and market control, protect the environment and natural resources, and encourage investment and private sector development. These measures will help ensure the success of development efforts and promote sustainable development in local communities. By addressing these challenges, the government can ensure the sustainability of livelihood projects and improve the living conditions of local communities. Moreover, the emphasis placed on continuous communication and effective coordination with local authorities and other organizations highlights the recognition of the importance of collaborative efforts in ensuring the success and sustainability of development initiatives.

However, despite these efforts, significant challenges persist, posing obstacles to the full realization of sustainable livelihood objectives. Chief among these challenges are funding shortages and security instability, which not only hinder the implementation of projects but also undermine the overall stability and resilience of the region. Addressing these challenges necessitates a multifaceted approach, including sustained financial, technical, and administrative support, as well as enhanced collaboration and coordination at both domestic and international levels.

In conclusion, effective partnerships between NGOs, local authorities, and other stakeholders are crucial for advancing sustainable development goals and improving the livelihoods of communities in conflict-affected areas like Greater Idlib. By implementing the recommended actions and legislative measures outlined above, tangible progress can be made towards building more resilient and inclusive communities and promoting sustainable livelihoods amidst challenging circumstances.

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## APPENDIX

### ANNEX A: Interview Questions with Local Authority

| #  | Question Objective          | The Question  |
|----|-----------------------------|---|
| 1  | Is there a policy.          | Give me an overview of the policies and governance established in Greater Idleb to address livelihood challenges?<br>How are these policies aligned with the principles of sustainable livelihood development?                                    |
| 2  | Policy prioritizes          | What are the key priorities to promote sustainable livelihoods in the region?<br>How do you identify gaps and priorities that reflect the particular needs of the local community?  |
| 3  | Engage with community       | To what extent do you involve local communities in decision-making processes related to sustainable livelihood?<br>How do you ensure their active participation and representation?   |
| 4  | Prioritize the margin group | How do you address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), in your sustainable livelihood initiatives?  |
| 5  | Any direct activity         | Is there any SL activity that you implementing?<br>If yes, what challenges or limitations have you encountered in implementing sustainable livelihood programs?<br>How have you addressed or overcome these challenges?                           |
| 6  | Key success factor          | In your experience, what are the key factors that contribute to successfully implement sustainability and long-term impact of sustainable livelihood interventions?   |
| 7  | evaluated                   | How do you assess the effectiveness and impact of the implemented policies and programs on improving livelihood opportunities? Are there any specific indicators or monitoring mechanisms in place?   |
| 8  | suggestion                  | Are there any lessons learned or best practices that can be shared with other similar contexts?   |
| 9  | Future plan                 | What are the future plans and strategies of the Local Authority in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Greater Idleb?  |
| 10 | Coordination with the NGOs  | How would you describe the level of coordination and collaboration between the Local Authority and I/NGOs in Greater Idleb regarding sustainable livelihood promotion? What mechanisms or platforms are in place to facilitate this coordination? |

|    |                             |   |
|----|-----------------------------|---|
| 11 | Coordination challenge      | What challenges or limitations have you encountered in coordination with the NGOs in implementing sustainable livelihood programs? How have you addressed or overcome these challenges?   |
| 12 | Coordination Role           | What role does the Local Authority play in guiding and supervising the activities of I/NGOs to ensure they are in line with local priorities and policies? How does the Local Authority provide feedback or guidance to I/NGOs during project implementation? |
| 13 | Coordination success factor | what are the key factors that contribute to successful coordination and collaboration between the Local Authority and I/NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods?  |



## ANNEX B: Interview Questions with NGOs Workers

| # | Question Objective          | The Question   |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| 1 | Is there a policy.          | Can you provide an overview of the policies and governance frameworks established by the Local Authority in Greater Idleb to address livelihood challenges?<br>How are these policies aligned with the principles of sustainable livelihood development?   |
| 2 | Engage with community       | How do you engage and involve the local community in the design, implementation, and evaluation of your projects? How do you ensure their active participation and ownership of the initiatives?   |
| 3 | Prioritize the margin group | What are the primary target groups of your sustainable livelihood interventions? How do you identify their needs and design programs that are responsive to their specific contexts and aspirations?<br><br>How do you address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), in your sustainable livelihood initiatives? |
| 4 | Any direct activity         | Can you provide an overview of the initiatives and projects implemented by your organization in Greater Idleb to promote sustainable livelihoods? How do these initiatives align with the local authority's policies and priorities?   |
| 5 | Key success factor          | In your experience, what are the key factors that contribute to the sustainability and long-term impact of sustainable livelihood interventions? Are there any specific strategies or approaches that have proven successful?  |
| 6 | What challenge              | What are the key challenges or obstacles you have encountered in implementing sustainable livelihood projects in Greater Idleb? How have you addressed or mitigated these challenges?  |
| 7 | evaluated                   | How do you assess the effectiveness and impact of the implemented policies and programs on improving livelihood opportunities? Are there any specific indicators or monitoring mechanisms in place?  |
| 8 | suggestion                  | Based on your experience in Greater Idleb, what are some lessons learned or best practices that can be shared with other I/NGOs working on sustainable livelihood promotion in conflict-affected regions?  |
| 9 | Future plan                 | What are the future plans and strategies of your organization in promoting sustainable livelihoods in Greater Idleb?   |

|    |                             |   |
|----|-----------------------------|---|
| 10 | Coordination with the NGOs  | How would you describe the level of coordination and collaboration between the Local Authority and I/NGOs in Greater Idleb regarding sustainable livelihood promotion? What mechanisms or platforms are in place to facilitate this coordination? |
| 11 | Coordination challenge      | What challenges or barriers have you encountered in establishing and maintaining effective coordination between the Local Authority and I/NGOs? How have you addressed or overcome these challenges?  |
| 12 | Coordination Role           | How do you collaborate and coordinate with the Local Authority and other stakeholders in implementing your projects? Could you provide examples of successful partnerships and their impact on the local community?                               |
| 13 | Coordination success factor | Based on your experience, what are the key factors that contribute to successful coordination and collaboration between the Local Authority and I/NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods?  |

### ANNEX C: Interview Questions with Traders

| # | Question Objective          | The Question  |
|---|-----------------------------|---|
| 1 | Is there a policy.          | Can you provide an overview of the policies and governance frameworks established by the Local Authority in Greater Idleb to address livelihood challenges?<br>How does those policies effect your work/support job placement |
| 2 | Prioritize the margin group | Have you or any of from community VIP engaged in the design SL policy or activity?<br><br>Have you heard of any community member had engaged in such activity?  |
| 3 | What challenge              | key factors that contribute to the sustainability and long-term impact of sustainable livelihood policies?  |
| 4 | Future plan                 | What could be your suggestion for developing a SL policy of design intervention   |
| 5 | Coordination success factor | What kind of information or guidance you can provide to the LA and NGOs for such cases?   |