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An Analysis of the Implementation of the Uninhabitable Housing Assistance Program (RTLH) for Low-Income Residents in Tanete Riaja District, Barru Regency.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Uninhabitable Housing Assistance Program (RTLH) for low-income communities in Tanete Riaja District, Barru Regency. The program is part of the government's efforts to improve the quality of life by providing decent, healthy, and safe housing. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, utilizing interviews, observations, and documentation involving program implementers, aid recipients, and related stakeholders. The findings indicate that the implementation of the RTLH program in Tanete Riaja has been fairly effective, although several challenges persist, including limited funding, delayed aid distribution, and insufficient community participation in the implementation process. The study recommends enhancing inter-agency coordination and improving the beneficiary verification mechanism to ensure the program is better targeted and sustainable.

Keywords: RTLH, housing assistance, low-income, communities, implementation.



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A.INTRODUCTION

Housing remains one of the fundamental human needs, and ensuring decent housing is a major concern for governments worldwide. In Indonesia, many low-income families still reside in uninhabitable homes lacking basic facilities. The government launched the *Uninhabitable Housing Rehabilitation (RTLH)* program to address these deficiencies. According to Nagayoso et al. (2025), the program “significantly improves housing quality, health, and well-being” among vulnerable households. Despite good intentions, gaps

persist between planning and execution. Housing policy implementation depends not only on regulation but also on coordination, resource availability, and community involvement. This study explores how RTLH functions at the village level where practical barriers are most visible.

The RTLH program is regulated under the Ministry of Social Affairs Regulation No. 20 of 2017, outlining guidelines for planning, execution, and monitoring. The primary objective is to improve the quality of life for poor communities through structurally safe and healthy housing. However, multiple studies have indicated inconsistencies in how this policy is implemented across regions. Saputra et al. (2024) noted that “program implementation at the district level suffers from weak administrative coordination and lack of supervision.” These challenges often undermine the effectiveness of the program in reaching its targets. Therefore, localized evaluations are essential for capturing these variations and proposing actionable solutions.

Regional implementation reveals divergent outcomes influenced by local government capacity, community participation, and geographical challenges. In Kasemen District, the RTLH program encountered delays and disputes related to beneficiary selection. Similarly, in West Java, Dewi et al. (2024) reported that “trimester budget disbursement delays and staff shortages hampered progress.” Problems such as these reduce public trust in social assistance programs. Moreover, when the community is not involved in planning, resistance or apathy may arise. Therefore, effective implementation must consider socio-cultural factors and involve stakeholders at every stage, especially in rural or underserved areas where issues are more complex.

In Cirebon, community involvement was minimal due to a lack of awareness and socialization from officials. Research by Murtaglo (2023) found that “villagers were not properly informed, leading to confusion and low program participation.” Transparency, communication, and accountability are crucial to ensure that aid reaches the right beneficiaries. Without these elements, even well-funded programs fail to make a meaningful impact. While top-down policies provide structure, their success depends heavily on local-level translation and execution. Understanding local dynamics is thus essential to identify where and why bottlenecks occur, and how these can be resolved through adaptive governance.

Another crucial aspect is the targeting mechanism. Studies show that inaccuracies in identifying eligible households often result in misallocated resources. Rofah et al. (2023) emphasized that “only 3.9% of households received support, despite more than half of the population living in poor housing conditions.” This reflects a systemic issue in the identification and verification process. The use of outdated or incomplete data contributes to exclusion errors. For the RTLH program to be effective, it must rely on comprehensive and current data that reflects the actual needs of households. Periodic data updates and verification by local institutions are vital.

The role of local governments is instrumental in ensuring proper implementation. Their capacity to conduct accurate surveys, manage logistics, and coordinate with relevant institutions significantly influences program outcomes. In Majalengka, digital innovations such as e-RTLH were introduced, yet faced multiple challenges. Hardian and Ilhami (2023) concluded that “despite digitization, inaccurate data input and limited user skills remain obstacles.” This highlights the need to pair technological adoption with adequate training and infrastructure. Simply deploying digital systems without addressing foundational administrative issues may not yield the expected benefits. Hence, technological tools should complement, not substitute, field-based verification.

Inter-sectoral coordination is equally vital. The program requires collaboration between village officials, housing departments, and community organizations. According to Dewi et al. (2024), “the lack of synergy among departments often results in overlapping roles and miscommunication.” In some areas, delays in material procurement and budget approval slow down construction. Moreover, weak communication channels further widen the implementation gap. Creating clear operational frameworks with defined roles for each actor can improve efficiency. Local task forces with representatives from all stakeholders can enhance responsiveness and problem-solving capacity on the ground. This model has shown success in areas with high implementation quality.

Community participation is not merely desirable but essential for sustainability. Sari et al. (2020) found that “when communities contribute labor, materials, or ideas, housing improvements are more sustainable and culturally appropriate.” Engaging residents builds ownership and ensures that housing meets the actual needs of beneficiaries. Conversely, top-down interventions may ignore local preferences, leading to dissatisfaction. Participatory approaches also facilitate knowledge transfer, as residents learn basic construction and maintenance skills. These benefits extend beyond the program’s immediate goals and contribute to broader community development. Therefore, participatory planning should be institutionalized within RTLH implementation guidelines.

Equity in beneficiary selection remains contentious. In some regions, favoritism or political influence affects the selection process. Murtadlo (2023) stated that “some eligible families were overlooked due to personal affiliations or lack of visibility in community networks.” This undermines the legitimacy of the program and erodes social cohesion. Implementing transparent selection criteria and grievance mechanisms can address such concerns. Publicly available beneficiary lists and open forums for community feedback increase accountability. These measures not only promote fairness but also build public confidence in government programs. Equity must be central to RTLH's operational philosophy.

Budget constraints further complicate matters. While national allocations are often sufficient in aggregate, local disbursement is frequently delayed or insufficient. Windriyana et al. (2023) found that “fiscal bottlenecks at the village level often cause half-completed projects.” Delays in fund transfers leave households living in unsafe conditions

for extended periods. In some cases, construction halts entirely, forcing families to seek alternative housing. To mitigate this, budget forecasting and early disbursement mechanisms should be institutionalized. Moreover, emergency funds could be allocated for urgent cases to prevent health and safety risks. These reforms require political will and inter-agency alignment.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms are integral to program success but are often weak or underutilized. In their study, Prasetyo and Lestari (2024) observed that “only 38% of RTLH projects in their sample had undergone formal evaluation.” Without structured M&E, inefficiencies and deviations from standards go undetected. Furthermore, lessons learned are not adequately documented or used to improve future implementations. Establishing regular audits, beneficiary satisfaction surveys, and real-time monitoring platforms could help identify problems early. Effective M&E also ensures that the program evolves with changing needs. Institutionalizing these practices would transform RTLH into a more responsive and adaptive program.

Cultural sensitivity is also a vital factor. In some areas, government-designed housing does not align with local architectural traditions or spatial needs. For example, research by Yuliani et al. (2023) revealed that “beneficiaries modified RTLH-provided homes because layouts did not accommodate extended families.” Ignoring cultural and social norms can reduce usability and satisfaction. Participatory design, which involves families in planning their homes, can prevent these issues. It also reinforces the idea of housing as a lived space, not just a structure. Therefore, design flexibility and cultural adaptation should be considered in RTLH guidelines and training.

Environmental considerations are increasingly important in housing programs. Climate resilience and sustainability must be embedded in RTLH implementation, especially in flood-prone or disaster-affected regions. According to Ramadhani and Kusuma (2024), “RTLH units in coastal areas are vulnerable due to poor drainage and lack of elevation.” Building codes should incorporate local climate risks and promote sustainable materials. Partnerships with environmental experts and local builders can enhance resilience while optimizing costs. Incorporating green infrastructure and water-saving systems adds long-term value. RTLH should not only improve current housing conditions but also prepare communities for future environmental challenges.

Digital technology has been proposed as a tool for efficiency, yet implementation remains uneven. In the province of Central Java, the e-RTLH system helped accelerate proposal approvals and beneficiary verification. However, in rural areas, lack of internet access and digital skills hinder adoption. As pointed out by Setiawan and Rahman (2023), “digital platforms improve transparency but require capacity building among local officials.” Therefore, any tech-driven initiative must be accompanied by training and infrastructure support. The digital divide should not create new inequalities in access to housing benefits. Digital inclusion is critical for future-proofing public service delivery.

Local political dynamics can either support or obstruct program success. In some regions, village heads or council members use RTLH allocations as political tools. Nasution et al. (2023) highlighted that “in election years, program distribution is often biased toward politically affiliated households.” This undermines program integrity and widens inequality. To avoid this, program governance must be shielded from political manipulation. Independent oversight bodies and community-based committees can offer checks and balances. Ensuring non-partisan administration is vital for fairness and for upholding the credibility of RTLH as a poverty-alleviation measure.

Public perception plays a crucial role in acceptance and participation. A study by Wahyuni and Kurniawan (2024) found that “when residents see positive outcomes in neighboring villages, their support and engagement increase.” Visibility of success stories can motivate others to contribute or apply for the program. Communication strategies, such as community forums, village radio broadcasts, and social media, can help spread awareness. Testimonials from beneficiaries can also humanize the program and counter misinformation. Building a narrative of shared progress fosters solidarity and collective responsibility. This reinforces the social foundations of housing improvement.

Gender sensitivity remains underexplored in RTLH implementation. Housing affects women differently, particularly in relation to caregiving, domestic work, and safety. Yet, most planning processes do not explicitly involve women’s voices. Putri et al. (2023) argued that “including women in housing design and decision-making leads to more functional and safe spaces.” Policies must mandate gender-inclusive consultation and monitoring. Additionally, female-headed households should be prioritized in targeting due to their vulnerability. Addressing gender dimensions can enhance the impact of RTLH and align it with inclusive development goals, particularly SDG 5 on gender equality.

There is also a need to link RTLH with broader poverty alleviation programs. Isolated interventions often fail to deliver long-term change. Integrated approaches that combine housing with livelihood support, education access, and health services can maximize benefits. According to Hidayat and Suryani (2024), “multi-sectoral models lead to better outcomes in both housing quality and family income.” Policy coherence across ministries and alignment with regional development plans are essential. The RTLH program should be seen not merely as an infrastructure project but as a catalyst for social transformation. This requires cross-sectoral synergy and holistic planning.

In conclusion, the RTLH program holds significant promise for reducing housing inequality and improving the quality of life for Indonesia’s poorest citizens. However, implementation challenges related to data accuracy, political interference, resource limitations, and community engagement must be addressed. This study aims to provide a grounded understanding of RTLH policy implementation in a specific village context. By identifying practical barriers and enablers, the research offers recommendations for enhancing effectiveness, equity, and sustainability. Future improvements must be

evidence-based and locally informed. Only then can RTLH fulfill its role in building not just houses, but stronger, healthier communities.

B.RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method to explore the implementation of the Uninhabitable House Program (RTLH) at the village level. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of social realities, policy interpretation, and the contextual nuances of implementation. Descriptive analysis is used to uncover patterns, dynamics, and challenges faced by stakeholders during program execution. This method is deemed suitable to capture the lived experiences of beneficiaries and local implementers in real-world settings. The research emphasizes naturalistic inquiry, seeking to understand meaning from the participants' perspectives without experimental manipulation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research location was selected purposively, focusing on a village in Barru Regency, South Sulawesi Province, that has actively implemented the RTLH program over the past three years. The village was chosen based on criteria including active involvement in RTLH implementation, the availability of documented program data, and accessibility for data collection. The setting provides a rich context to observe the interaction between government agencies, village authorities, and beneficiary households. The local government's cooperation and transparency in providing data also played a role in the selection. This ensures that the study site is information-rich and relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015).

Data collection techniques consisted of three primary methods: (1) in-depth interviews, (2) observation, and (3) document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants, including the village head, local program implementers, and selected beneficiary households. A semi-structured interview guide was used to maintain consistency while allowing flexibility for emerging themes. Observation was carried out during field visits to RTLH sites to document physical conditions and interactions. Document analysis involved reviewing RTLH reports, implementation guidelines, beneficiary lists, and progress evaluations. The triangulation of data sources enhances the credibility and validity of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, aiming to gather insights from individuals directly involved in or affected by the RTLH program. A total of **10** informants were interviewed, comprising village government officials (3), community leaders (2), and program beneficiaries (5). The selection criteria were based on relevance to the research question, availability, and willingness to provide information. Sampling continued until data saturation was achieved, meaning no new significant themes emerged from additional interviews. This ensured that the findings reflected a comprehensive understanding of the implementation process from various stakeholder perspectives.

Data analysis was carried out using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which involves three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data were transcribed and coded using thematic analysis to identify patterns and emerging issues related to program implementation. NVivo software was utilized to support the coding process and enhance analytical rigor. Validity was ensured through member checking, where respondents reviewed summaries of their statements, and peer debriefing, involving academic colleagues to evaluate interpretations. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and respectful interaction, were upheld throughout the research process.

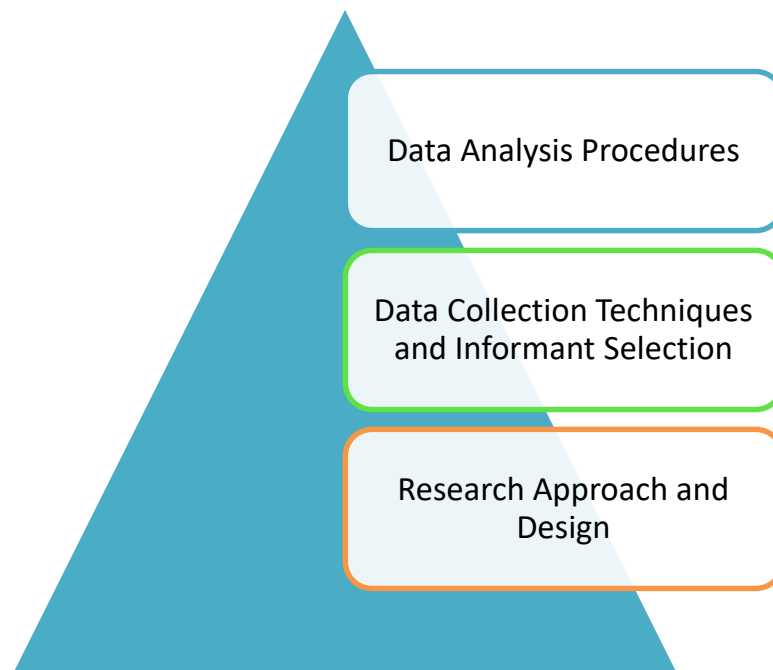


Figure 1 Thinking Framework Diagram

C. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

➤ Research Results

The implementation of the Uninhabitable Housing Assistance Program (Rumah Tidak Layak Huni/RTLH) in Tanete Riaja District, Barru Regency, presents a multifaceted depiction of policy execution at the local level. Based on field interviews and empirical observation, the communication mechanism surrounding the RTLH program is limited and indirect. Information dissemination is primarily conducted through village apparatus, who are responsible for identifying and collecting data on potential recipients. This approach results in a lack of program visibility and awareness among broader community members, many of whom only become aware of the program during the data collection phase initiated by external facilitators or volunteers.

The data collected by village officials are submitted to relevant institutions at the central level for verification and eligibility assessment. This top-down coordination process

is operational but lacks transparency from the perspective of beneficiaries. Interviews with community members revealed that knowledge of the program often emerged only when surveyors conducted home visits and requested documentation. This reactive communication model has led to uneven awareness, potentially excluding vulnerable households unfamiliar with the procedures or lacking access to village officials.

Despite these limitations, the communication aspect of the program is viewed positively by several beneficiaries who eventually received assistance. The acceptance of information appears to stem more from the perceived benefits of the program rather than the clarity of communication mechanisms. The role of political networks and self-help housing assistance schemes (BSPS) further complicates the implementation landscape, as many interventions originate outside the formal district budget framework, thereby limiting the involvement and capacity of local government actors.

Another critical determinant of program success lies in the availability of resources, both human and financial. The RTLH program implementation in Tanete Riaja relies heavily on limited human resources, often with a single facilitator responsible for coordination across the district. Nonetheless, these facilitators, in conjunction with village leaders, execute their roles diligently by visiting homes, photographing uninhabitable structures, and guiding beneficiaries through the documentation process. The program's implementation structure shows a reasonable division of labor and coordination, albeit constrained by personnel shortages and logistical challenges.

Institutionally, the bureaucratic architecture supporting RTLH implementation functions with moderate efficiency. Clear lines of responsibility among the district housing department, village officials, and technical verifiers are observed. However, limited funding from the regional government restricts independent program planning, forcing reliance on central government allocations or politically motivated channels. This dependency undermines program sustainability and responsiveness to local housing needs.

Financial constraints also manifest in the program's limited outreach and coverage. Although demand for housing assistance is high, the annual quota of beneficiaries remains low due to insufficient budgetary support. This shortfall not only delays construction but also affects the selection process, wherein only a small fraction of those in need can be accommodated. Moreover, the requirement for clear land ownership documentation poses an additional barrier, particularly for marginalized populations whose legal tenure is often undocumented or disputed.

From a structural standpoint, the organizational framework of RTLH implementation reflects a top-down governance model, with local actors assuming roles of data collection and preliminary screening. While this approach ensures administrative order, it also centralizes decision-making power, potentially sidelining local contextual knowledge in favor of standardized criteria. Nevertheless, the collaboration between village-level institutions and central authorities remains essential in ensuring program continuity.

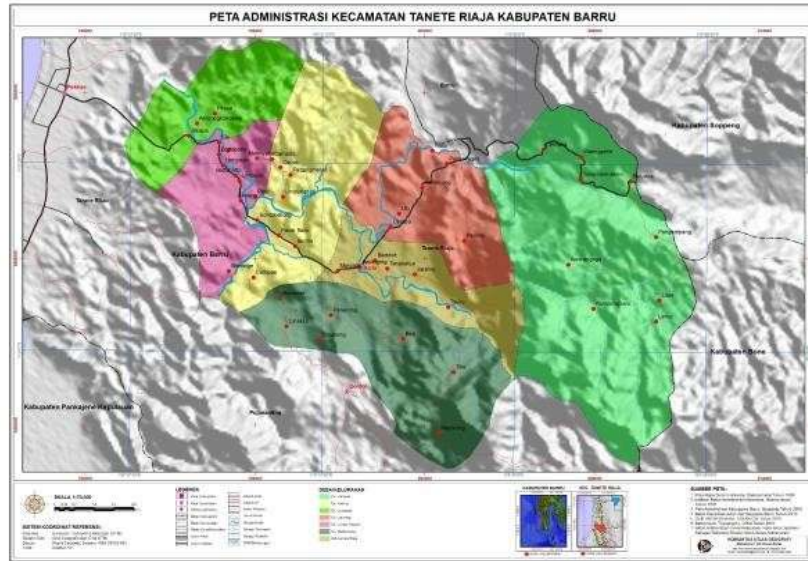


Figure 3 Topography of Tanete Riaja District

➤ Discussion

The implementation of the Uninhabitable Housing Assistance Program (RTLH) in Tanete Riaja District, Barru Regency, reflects both the achievements and the challenges inherent in local-level execution of national social welfare policies. The findings demonstrate that while the program is aligned with national objectives to improve basic living standards, its implementation reveals critical shortcomings in communication, coordination, and resource mobilization that hinder optimal outcomes.

The limited dissemination of information is a key issue, with communication largely conducted through informal village networks. This condition is consistent with prior research emphasizing the importance of strategic communication in policy implementation (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). When beneficiaries are unaware of the program until facilitators directly engage them, it indicates a reactive, rather than proactive, communication model that may undermine the program's equity and inclusiveness. Similar patterns have been observed in other decentralized welfare programs, where the absence of robust outreach strategies often excludes the most marginalized groups (Grindle, 1980).

Moreover, the reliance on village officials for data collection—while practical—raises concerns about objectivity and accuracy in identifying target households. The effectiveness of the policy is thus contingent not only on administrative guidelines but also on the discretion and commitment of frontline implementers. This resonates with Lipsky's (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy, which posits that the behavior of local actors significantly influences policy outcomes.

Institutional and resource limitations further complicate the implementation. With only a few facilitators responsible for a broad geographic area, program coverage remains insufficient. The capacity gap among local actors restricts both planning and responsiveness to local housing needs. This reflects broader challenges in regional development policies in Indonesia, where subnational governments often lack sufficient fiscal autonomy and technical capacity (Smoke, 2013).

In terms of financing, the program's dependence on central government allocations or politically motivated sources such as BPS indicates a structural weakness in local public finance. Without a stable and predictable funding mechanism from local budgets (APBD), the program's long-term sustainability is at risk. Furthermore, the requirement for legal land ownership as a prerequisite for aid eligibility, while administratively rational, may inadvertently exclude informal or customary landholders—those most in need of support (Durand-Lasserre & Royston, 2002).

Structurally, the implementation model follows a centralized governance approach, limiting the role of local discretion in adapting the program to context-specific realities. This rigidity may explain the perceived disconnect between program goals and community expectations. Studies on participatory governance advocate for decentralization of authority and enhanced community involvement to foster ownership and accountability (Fung & Wright, 2003). However, in the case of RTLH, participation is minimal and generally limited to the data collection phase.

Despite these limitations, some enabling factors contribute positively to program outcomes. The dedication of village officials and facilitators, though constrained by resources, remains a cornerstone of the program's implementation. Their role in identifying, documenting, and advocating for eligible households ensures that the program reaches at least a subset of intended beneficiaries. This underscores the potential for capacity-building initiatives aimed at empowering local actors to play more active roles in social service delivery.

The findings also suggest a need to integrate the RTLH program with broader rural development and poverty alleviation strategies. A more holistic approach—linking housing assistance with livelihood support, infrastructure development, and social protection—could enhance the program's impact and sustainability. Furthermore, establishing a transparent and community-based monitoring mechanism would strengthen accountability and build public trust.

In summary, while the RTLH program in Tanete Riaja has contributed to improving housing conditions for low-income households, its effectiveness is limited by weak communication strategies, constrained resources, and insufficient local autonomy. Addressing these issues through improved policy design, intergovernmental coordination, and stakeholder engagement is essential to ensure that the program achieves its intended objectives in a more equitable and sustainable manner.

D. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Uninhabitable Housing Assistance Program (Program Bantuan Rumah Tidak Layak Huni or RTLH) in Tanete Riaja Subdistrict, Barru Regency, has generally proceeded in an acceptable manner. The bureaucratic disposition and organizational structure supporting the program have functioned effectively, ensuring that the assistance reaches its targeted beneficiaries. However, several implementation gaps persist, particularly in the dimensions of communication and funding. The dissemination of program information has not been carried out comprehensively or uniformly, often resulting in uneven levels of public awareness. Furthermore, the limited availability of financial resources has constrained the reach and timeliness of housing improvements for low-income households. Despite these constraints, coordination among stakeholders, including local government units, program facilitators, and community members, has remained relatively strong.

➤ Recommendations

To enhance the effectiveness and equity of the RTLH program implementation, several strategic recommendations are proposed. First, a more structured and widespread communication strategy should be adopted to ensure that all eligible citizens are fully informed about the program, its procedures, and eligibility criteria. This could include public meetings, printed materials, digital platforms, and community engagement through local leaders. Second, it is imperative for the regional government to allocate or advocate for increased budgetary support to supplement central government assistance. Third, institutionalizing a monitoring and evaluation system that includes feedback from beneficiaries could improve transparency and accountability. Finally, capacity-building efforts targeting human resources involved in program delivery—particularly village and subdistrict-level personnel—should be prioritized to support more efficient and responsive service delivery.

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