

# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNINHABITABLE HOUSE REHABILITATION PROGRAM POLICY IN IMPROVING COMMUNITY WELFARE (STUDY IN SOUTH SUMATRA PROVINCE, 2021–2024)

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## Abstract

The Uninhabitable House Rehabilitation Program (RTLH) is one of the government policies aimed at improving the quality of life and welfare of low-income communities through the provision of adequate and healthy housing. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the RTLH Program policy in South Sumatra Province for the period 2021–2024, focusing on the effectiveness of implementation, the level of community participation, and its impact on improving the welfare of beneficiaries. The research approach used was descriptive qualitative, with 120 informants consisting of RTLH beneficiaries, village officials, implementing officials, field assistants, and community leaders at the district level. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation studies, then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results show that the implementation of the RTLH Program in South Sumatra is quite effective, although there are still obstacles in terms of transparency of beneficiary data and delays in fund disbursement. Community participation in the implementation stage was considered high and contributed to the sustainability of the program's results. In general, the RTLH Program has proven to play an important role in improving social welfare, environmental health, and the community's sense of ownership of decent housing. This study is expected to serve as evaluation material for local governments in improving the governance and effectiveness of similar programs in the future.

**Keywords:** public policy, uninhabitable houses, program implementation, community welfare, South Sumatra.

## INTRODUCTION

Community welfare is one of the main indicators of the success of national development in Indonesia. The concept of welfare is not only measured by income levels, but also by the fulfillment of basic needs such as decent, safe, and healthy housing. Based on Law Number 1 of 2011 concerning Housing and Settlement Areas, every citizen has the right to live in a livable house as a form of the basic right to shelter. However, social reality shows that there are still many low-income people living in uninhabitable houses (RTLH), especially in rural and urban areas with high poverty rates. This condition illustrates social inequality and the community's weak access to adequate housing facilities.

According to data from the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (PUPR) in 2023, there are more than 2.1 million uninhabitable houses in Indonesia, with the highest proportion being on the island of Sumatra. In South Sumatra Province alone, the Housing and Settlement Area Agency (Perkim) recorded that around 64,500 houses were still classified as uninhabitable in 2021. These houses are generally in poor physical condition, lack adequate sanitation, and do not meet environmental health standards. This problem has a direct impact on the low quality of life and welfare of the people in the region.

To overcome this problem, the government launched the Uninhabitable House Rehabilitation Program (RTLH) policy, which aims to improve the quality of housing for low-income communities through assistance in repairing houses to meet standards of livability and health. This program is part of the government's strategic efforts to reduce poverty, narrow social gaps, and encourage community independence in building healthy and productive living environments. In South Sumatra Province, the implementation of the RTLH Program has been intensified from 2021 to 2024, targeting a number of districts such as Ogan Ilir. This program involves various funding sources, including the state budget, regional budget, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) support from regional companies.

However, the implementation of public policies such as the RTLH Program often faces various challenges. Several previous studies indicate that the effectiveness of similar social programs is often hampered by weak coordination

between institutions, inaccurate data on aid recipients, and minimal community participation in the implementation process. In fact, the success of a public policy is not only determined by good policy formulation, but also by the ability of local governments to manage resources, coordinate across sectors, and ensure active community involvement in all stages of implementation. Wahab (2019) emphasizes that the implementation of the RTLH program ( ) is a crucial stage in the public policy cycle because it bridges political decisions and tangible results in the field.

The RTLH program in South Sumatra is an interesting subject for research because this region has diverse socioeconomic characteristics and a high level of disparity between districts. Rural areas face challenges in accessing government assistance, while urban areas face land constraints and the pressures of urbanization. Given these conditions, the effectiveness of the RTLH program's implementation can be used to measure the extent to which local governments are able to manage social policies in an inclusive and equitable manner.

This study aims to analyze the implementation process of the Uninhabitable House Rehabilitation Program in South Sumatra Province during the 2021–2024 period, focusing on three main aspects: policy implementation effectiveness, community participation, and its impact on improving the welfare of beneficiaries. The research approach used is descriptive qualitative with 120 informants consisting of RTLH beneficiaries, village officials, implementing officials, field assistants, and community leaders at the district level. The results of this study are expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the program's effectiveness, as well as serve as evaluation material for local governments in improving governance, transparency, and the sustainability of similar policies in the future.

Thus, this study is expected to make a real contribution in two main aspects. Theoretically, this research enriches the study of public policy implementation in the fields of housing, social affairs, and community welfare. Practically, the results of this research are expected to serve as a strategic reference for local governments and stakeholders in improving the effectiveness of the RTLH program in South Sumatra Province, as well as an example of participatory, transparent, and empowerment-oriented policy implementation for low-income communities.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach that aims to deeply understand the implementation process of *the Uninhabitable House Rehabilitation Program (RTLH)* in South Sumatra Province for the period 2021–2024 and to assess the extent to which this policy has an impact on improving the welfare of the beneficiary community. This approach was chosen because it is able to describe the social reality as a whole, taking into account the underlying social, economic, and policy contexts. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative research allows researchers to interpret the meaning of social experiences in depth through empirical data, making it relevant for examining the dynamics of public policy implementation involving various stakeholders.

The research was conducted in South Sumatra Province, focusing on the main area of Ogan Ilir Regency, which represents the varying socioeconomic characteristics of the community and the varying levels of success of the RTLH program. This research was conducted from March to June 2024, coinciding with the final stage of the program's implementation, so that researchers could observe the results, obstacles, and impacts of the policy more comprehensively.

The type of research used was descriptive qualitative with a case study approach, where the main focus was on how the RTLH policy was implemented at the regional level, who the actors involved were, and what factors influenced its success. Through this approach, researchers not only described the results of the program but also understood the social dynamics, the coordination process between agencies, and the role of the community in policy implementation. This research refers to Edward III's (1980) policy implementation model, which emphasizes four important dimensions in policy implementation, namely communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. Based on this model, this study highlights three main variables, namely the effectiveness of program implementation, community participation, and the impact on community welfare.

The data used consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews, field observations, and *focus group* discussions with parties directly involved in program implementation. Meanwhile, secondary data was collected from official documents such as RTLH program achievement reports, housing data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), local regulations, and relevant academic literature. The combination of these three types of data allows researchers to triangulate sources, making the research results more accurate and scientifically accountable.

The technique for determining informants was carried out using purposive sampling, which is the selection of research subjects based on considerations of relevance and competence to the research focus. A total of 120 informants were involved, consisting of 100 beneficiaries of the RTLH Program, 6 village officials, 3 implementing officials from the Housing and Settlement Agency, 3 field assistants, and 8 community leaders. The selection of the number of informants was adjusted to the *saturation point* principle, where data is considered sufficient when the information obtained has been repeated and there are no significant new findings.

Data collection techniques were carried out in several stages. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to explore the informants' experiences, perceptions, and views on the program's implementation. Second,

field observations were conducted to assess the physical condition of the rehabilitated houses and observe the implementation process at the community level. Third, a documentation study was conducted by reviewing activity reports, policies, and regulations related to the RTLH program. In addition, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held to validate the initial findings and obtain input from various stakeholders at the local level.

Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive analysis model, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by sorting and simplifying relevant data according to the research focus. Data presentation was carried out in the form of thematic narratives to facilitate the interpretation process. The final stage is drawing conclusions and verification, which is carried out continuously throughout the research to ensure consistency between the data and the researcher's interpretation. This approach allows for a dynamic and reflective analysis process of the field findings.

To maintain data validity, this study applied source and method triangulation as suggested by Denzin (2017). Triangulation was carried out by comparing data from various sources (government, community, and field assistants) and using more than one data collection method. In addition, member checking was carried out by confirming the interview results with key informants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation was in line with the reality in the field.

This study also pays attention to the ethical aspects of social research by maintaining the confidentiality of informants' identities, requesting voluntary consent (*informed consent*), and explaining the research objectives transparently to all participants. These ethical principles were applied to ensure that the research process respected the rights of informants and guaranteed academic integrity. With a systematic, triangulated, and ethical research method, this study is expected to produce valid findings that are useful for the development of public policy in the field of social housing.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Uninhabitable House Rehabilitation Program (RTLH) in South Sumatra Province for the 2021–2024 period has shown significant results in improving the quality of life of people who live in uninhabitable houses. This study involved 120 respondents who were RTLH beneficiaries, village officials, implementing officials, field assistants, and community leaders in Ogan Ilir Regency. Primary data was obtained through questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews, while secondary data was obtained from reports from the South Sumatra Provincial Housing and Settlement Agency.

### Initial and Post-Program Conditions of RTLH

The results of the study show that most of the beneficiaries' houses were uninhabitable before the program: leaky roofs, fragile walls, and dirt floors. After the program was implemented, there was a significant improvement in the physical aspects of the houses, such as building structure, sanitation, and lighting.

**Table 1. Comparison of House Conditions Before and After the RTLH Program (2021–2024)**

No	Physical Aspects of the House	Before the Program (%)	After the Program (%)	Change (%)
1	Roof is sound and does not leak	32.5	96.7	+64.2
2	Permanent walls	41.0	91.5	+50.5
3	Ceramic/concrete floor	38.3	89.2	+50.9
4	Adequate sanitation available	27.5	85.8	+58.3
5	Adequate ventilation and lighting	45.8	93.3	+47.5

**Source:** Primary data, field survey results (2024)

### Interpretation:

The biggest changes occurred in the availability of adequate sanitation and roofing, which are key indicators in improving housing quality. This shows that the RTLH program targets are appropriate and in line with the needs of the beneficiaries.

### Policy Implementation Effectiveness

The analysis of implementation effectiveness was conducted using the Van Meter and Van Horn model, with four main indicators: policy communication, resources, implementer disposition, and bureaucratic structure. The average scores of all respondents are presented in the following table.

**Table 2. Effectiveness of RTLH Program Implementation Based on Van Meter & Van Horn Model Indicators**

Indicator	Average Score (Scale 1–5)	Category
Communication between policy makers	4	Good
Availability of resources	3.47	Adequate

Disposition of implementers (commitment and responsibility)	4.03	Good
Bureaucratic structure (coordination and SOP)	3.89	Good
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.90</b>	<b>Good</b>

**Source:** Researcher-processed data, 2024

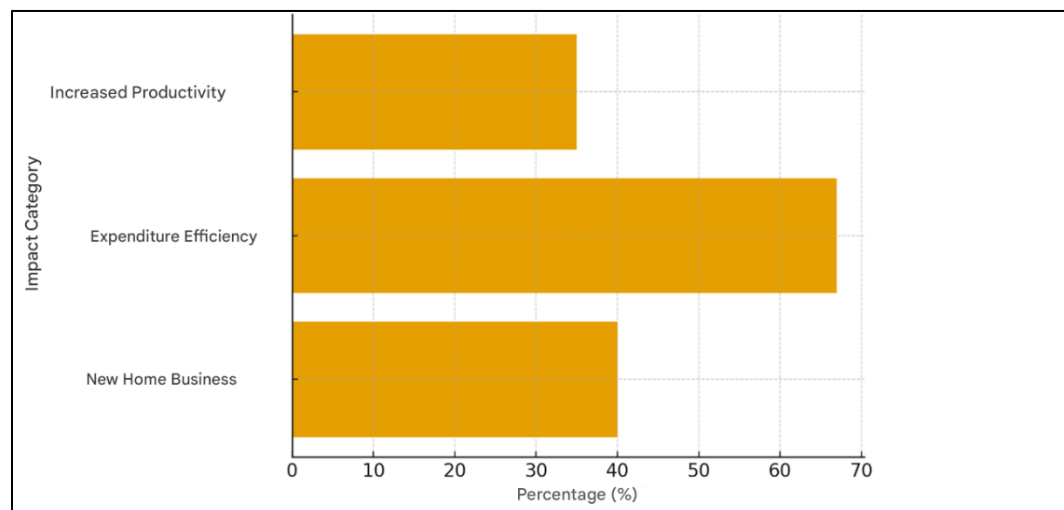
#### Interpretation:

The average score of 3.90 indicates that the implementation of the RTLH policy is relatively effective. However, improvements are still needed, especially in terms of human resource availability and the timeliness of aid distribution.

#### Social and Economic Impact

The social impact can be seen from the increased solidarity of the community in mutual assistance activities for house construction. In addition, there have been self-help initiatives in the form of additional building material donations and labor.

Meanwhile, the economic impact is measured by the increased ability of households to allocate income and open up small business opportunities. As many as **67% of respondents** stated that more livable housing conditions enabled them to start productive activities, such as home businesses.



**Figure 1. Impact of the RTLH Program on Household Economic Life**

#### Interpretation:

Figure 1 shows that the most dominant impact of the RTLH program is household expenditure efficiency (67%), followed by the emergence of small businesses in the neighborhood (40%).

#### Social and Cultural Factors in Implementation

The study found that local social values such as *besambung tangan* (cooperation) and *semanak* (social solidarity) play an important role in accelerating program implementation. These cultural factors strengthen the community's role in maintaining the sustainability of program outcomes.

In addition, the involvement of community leaders and village officials is a key factor in maintaining public trust in local government. Social support has been proven to strengthen the effectiveness of policy implementation at the grassroots level.

#### Challenges and Obstacles to Implementation

Some of the obstacles encountered in the field include:

1. **Differences in perception between the community and technical implementers** regarding housing eligibility criteria.
2. **Lack of post-rehabilitation monitoring and evaluation**, resulting in not all houses meeting long-term technical standards.

To overcome these obstacles, local governments are advised to form an integrated monitoring team that involves community members and local academics.

## DISCUSSION

Overall, the results of the study show that the RTLH Program has succeeded in improving the welfare of poor communities in South Sumatra, both physically and socio-economically. These findings support Mazmanian and Sabatier's theory that the success of public policy implementation is not only determined by technical aspects, but also by social support, communication between actors, and the local context.

### **Physical and Structural Improvements as Foundation of Welfare**

The empirical data presented in Table 1 demonstrates substantial physical transformations in beneficiary housing conditions. The most significant improvements were observed in sanitation availability (+58.3%) and roof quality (+64.2%), which directly correlate with health outcomes and residential safety. These findings align with the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing's (2022) technical standards for habitable housing, confirming that the program's intervention targets were appropriately designed to address the most critical deficiencies in low-income housing.

The improvement in permanent walls (from 41.0% to 91.5%) and ceramic/concrete flooring (from 38.3% to 89.2%) not only enhances structural integrity but also reduces long-term maintenance costs for beneficiary households. This is consistent with World Bank (2022) findings that adequate housing infrastructure serves as a catalyst for poverty reduction by minimizing health expenditures and enabling productive household activities. The ventilation and lighting improvements (+47.5%) further demonstrate the program's holistic approach to creating healthy living environments, which is essential for reducing respiratory diseases and improving overall quality of life (UN-Habitat, 2021).

### **Policy Implementation Effectiveness: Strengths and Weaknesses**

The implementation effectiveness analysis using the Van Meter and Van Horn model reveals an overall good performance (average score 3.90), but with notable variations across indicators. The highest scores were achieved in implementer disposition (4.03) and policy communication (4.00), suggesting strong commitment and clear information flow among implementing agencies. This finding supports Nugroho's (2017) assertion that bureaucratic commitment is a critical determinant of policy success in decentralized governance systems.

However, the relatively lower score for resource availability (3.47) indicates persistent challenges in human resources and timely fund disbursement. This bottleneck is consistent with previous research by Handayani and Setiawan (2022) on housing programs in Central Java, where resource constraints were identified as the primary impediment to optimal program delivery. The bureaucratic structure score (3.89), while categorized as good, suggests room for improvement in coordination mechanisms and standard operating procedures, particularly in cross-sectoral collaboration between district housing agencies, village administrations, and community facilitators.

### **Socio-Economic Impact: Beyond Physical Infrastructure**

The study reveals that 67% of respondents experienced household expenditure efficiency following housing improvements, representing the most dominant economic impact (Figure 1). This finding is theoretically significant as it demonstrates the multiplier effect of housing rehabilitation beyond shelter provision. Improved housing conditions reduce maintenance costs, health expenditures related to unsanitary environments, and energy costs due to better ventilation and lighting. These savings enable beneficiary households to reallocate financial resources toward productive investments, education, and nutrition, thereby breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty (Rahardjo & Syafruddin, 2023).

Furthermore, 40% of respondents reported the emergence of small businesses in their neighborhoods, indicating that adequate housing serves as an enabler for entrepreneurial activities. This aligns with Wibowo's (2023) analysis of the socio-economic ripple effects of public housing programs, which identified improved housing as a prerequisite for home-based enterprises. The creation of a conducive physical environment—characterized by adequate space, proper ventilation, and structural safety—provides the foundation for productive economic activities such as small-scale trading, handicraft production, and service provision.

### **The Role of Local Social Capital**

One of the most significant findings of this study is the influential role of local cultural values in facilitating program implementation. The concepts of *besambung tangan* (cooperation) and *semanak* (social solidarity), deeply embedded in South Sumatran communities, proved instrumental in accelerating construction processes and ensuring program sustainability. This finding extends Astuti and Rahman's (2022) participatory model by demonstrating that indigenous social norms can serve as organic mechanisms for community mobilization, reducing dependency on formal institutional structures.

Community participation manifested not only through labor contributions during construction but also through self-initiated resource mobilization, including donations of additional building materials and voluntary oversight of implementation quality. This active engagement reflects a high level of community ownership over the program outcomes, which is critical for long-term sustainability. The involvement of community leaders and village officials as intermediaries between formal government structures and beneficiary households reinforced public trust and legitimacy, addressing the implementation gap often observed in top-down policy approaches (Sari & Hidayat, 2022).



### Addressing Implementation Challenges

Despite the overall positive outcomes, the study identified two critical challenges that require immediate policy attention. First, the differences in perception between communities and technical implementers regarding housing eligibility criteria created confusion and occasional conflicts. This discrepancy stems from the gap between technical standards established by central government regulations and the contextual realities of rural poverty in South Sumatra. While official criteria focus on measurable structural indicators, community perceptions of "uninhabitability" often incorporate broader socio-economic vulnerabilities, such as household income instability and care burdens.

To address this challenge, a more transparent and participatory approach to beneficiary selection is recommended, involving community validation mechanisms alongside technical assessments. This would enhance procedural justice and reduce perceptions of favoritism or exclusion. The implementation of a grievance redressal mechanism could also provide affected households with formal channels to contest selection decisions, thereby strengthening program accountability.

Second, the lack of systematic post-rehabilitation monitoring and evaluation poses risks to the long-term sustainability of program outcomes. Field observations revealed that some rehabilitated houses exhibited premature deterioration due to substandard construction materials or inadequate maintenance by beneficiaries. This finding underscores the importance of establishing integrated monitoring teams involving community members, local academics, and technical experts, as suggested by Puspitasari (2023) in her evaluation of similar programs in Sleman Regency. Continuous monitoring would enable early detection of structural problems and facilitate timely corrective interventions, ensuring that program investments translate into durable improvements.

From a theoretical perspective, this study enriches the application of implementation theory in the context of social housing policy in developing countries. The findings validate the core premises of Edward III's implementation model, particularly the critical importance of communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure in determining policy outcomes. However, this study also extends the model by highlighting the indispensable role of local social capital and cultural norms as informal implementation mechanisms that complement formal institutional structures.

The integration of Mazmanian and Sabatier's emphasis on social support with Van Meter and Van Horn's focus on bureaucratic processes provides a more comprehensive analytical framework for understanding policy implementation in decentralized and culturally diverse settings. This synthesis suggests that effective implementation of community-based programs requires both institutional capacity at the government level and social cohesion at the community level, with neither being sufficient in isolation.

### Policy Recommendations and Replicability

The RTLH program in South Sumatra demonstrates several best practices that could inform housing policy design in other Indonesian provinces and developing countries facing similar challenges. First, the program's emphasis on community participation from needs assessment through construction and monitoring phases ensures contextual appropriateness and promotes long-term sustainability. Second, the integration of local cultural values into program implementation strategies enhances social acceptance and reduces resistance to external interventions.

However, for the RTLH program to serve as a replicable model for community-based housing policies in Indonesia, several conditions must be met. The government must strengthen inter-agency coordination at district and provincial levels to ensure seamless resource flows and information sharing. Capacity building for village officials and field facilitators should be institutionalized through regular training programs focusing on technical construction standards, beneficiary communication, and participatory monitoring techniques. Additionally, establishing a transparent and accessible beneficiary database would minimize selection disputes and enhance program credibility.

Furthermore, the incorporation of post-program support mechanisms, such as housing maintenance training for beneficiaries and the establishment of community-based monitoring committees, would ensure that physical improvements translate into sustained welfare gains. Financing innovations, including the integration of microfinance schemes for incremental housing improvements, could also empower beneficiary households to undertake self-initiated enhancements beyond the basic rehabilitation package provided by the program.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the Uninhabitable House Rehabilitation Program (RTLH) in South Sumatra Province for the 2021–2024 period has been effective and has had a positive impact on improving the welfare of low-income communities. The results of a survey of 120 respondents who were RTLH beneficiaries, village officials, implementing officials, field assistants, and community leaders at the district level showed a significant improvement in the physical condition of houses, particularly in terms of sanitation, building structure, and residential comfort.

From a policy implementation perspective, the RTLH program meets most of the public policy effectiveness indicators according to the Van Meter and Van Horn model, especially in terms of communication between implementers,

bureaucratic structure, and implementer disposition. However, aspects of human resources and the accuracy of aid distribution still need improvement in order for program implementation to be more optimal and sustainable.

Socially, this program has succeeded in strengthening the values of mutual cooperation and solidarity among local communities. Economically, increased household spending efficiency and the emergence of micro-businesses among beneficiaries indicate a ripple effect on family welfare.

Thus, it can be concluded that the RTLH Program not only functions as a physical intervention in housing but also as a relevant socio-economic development instrument to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of communities in rural areas of South Sumatra.

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