Indonesian Journal of Agrarian Law
Vol. 2 Issue 2 (2025) 153-168
DOI: https://doi.org/10.15294/jal.v2i2.31120
Available online since: July 31, 2025

Indonesian Journal of Agrarian Law
https://journal.unnes.ac.id/journals/jal/index

Broken Promises in Public Housing: Analyzing Functional Failure of Juwana Rusunawa, Pati

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Abstract

Rusunawa Juwana is a vertical housing project built in 2016 with a total budget of Rp28.9 billion, which came from the allocation of central government funds through the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (PUPR). The project was designed to be a housing solution for low-income communities, especially those affected by regular flooding in the Pati region of Central Java, with the hope of improving the quality of life of residents through safe, decent and affordable housing. However, within six years of its operation, the condition of the building suffered from various serious and significant damages, especially leaks on the roof and walls that caused mould and mildew, which not only disturbed the comfort of the residents but also had an impact on their health. This situation has led to low public interest in occupying the residential units, despite the low rent. This article aims to analyse in depth the causes of the malfunction of Rusunawa Juwana, using a descriptive qualitative approach sourced from secondary data, including media reports and relevant public documents. The analysis revealed that these failures were caused by a number of crucial factors, including poor technical planning and supervision in the development

process, weak post-development monitoring systems that should ensure building quality and safety, and the lack of maintenance budgets allocated by local governments after management responsibilities were handed over from the central government.

Keywords

Rusunawa, building leakage, public housing, asset management, Pati

A. Introduction

The construction of subsidized vertical housing, such as Rumah Susun Sederhana Sewa (*Rusunawa*), has become a key strategy for the Indonesian government to address land scarcity and fulfill housing needs for low-income communities (LICs). This concept aims to provide decent, affordable, and sustainable housing, especially in densely populated urban areas. However, field implementation often faces various challenges, ranging from inadequate planning to suboptimal post-construction management. As a result, many Rusunawa projects fail to function as intended, with some even becoming uninhabitable.

A clear example of this issue is the Juwana Rusunawa located in Bumirejo Village, Juwana District, Pati Regency, Central Java. Built in 2016 with a budget of Rp28.9 billion from the central government through the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (PUPR), the project was designed to house residents affected by flooding in Juwana and surrounding areas. However, six years after construction, the building has suffered severe damage, such as roof and wall leaks causing mold and moss growth, reducing residents' comfort and health. Consequently, out of the total 196 units available, only 105 are occupied, while the rest remain vacant as residents are reluctant to move in.

The problems faced by Juwana Rusunawa reflect broader issues in the management of subsidized vertical housing in Indonesia. Many Rusunawa face challenges in post-construction management, including lack of maintenance funds, minimal tenant participation in management, and weak coordination between central and local

governments. This results in declining building and environmental quality, ultimately leading to low occupancy rates.

Another relevant case study is the West Jatinegara Rusunawa in Jakarta, where research by Sutar and Maiyora (2019) found that tenant dissatisfaction with facilities and services was the main factor behind low occupancy. Inadequate facilities, such as poor drainage systems and lack of green open spaces, made residents feel uncomfortable and prompted them to move elsewhere. This shows that the physical quality of buildings and supporting facilities plays a crucial role in the success of Rusunawa projects.

Furthermore, research by Rosadi et al.[1] on the effectiveness of Rusunawa development in Yogyakarta showed that while the project successfully improved the physical environment, it failed to enhance residents' economic and social well-being. This was due to the lack of integration between physical planning and community empowerment programs, leaving residents feeling disconnected and not actively involved in housing management. A similar condition can be observed in Juwana Rusunawa, where tenants feel neglected and lack control over their living environment.

In this context, Juwana Rusunawa becomes an important case to re-evaluate the government's approach to subsidized vertical housing development. A more holistic and participatory strategy is needed—one that focuses not only on physical construction but also on social, economic, and institutional aspects. This includes improving design quality, providing adequate facilities, involving tenants in management, and enhancing coordination between central and local governments. Thus, Rusunawa projects can truly become effective solutions in providing decent housing for low-income communities.

This analysis uses a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at providing a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomena occurring in the *Rumah Susun Sederhana Sewa* (Rusunawa) Juwana project in Pati Regency, Central Java. This approach is

[1] Rosadi, M. G. M. (2010). *Efektivitas pembangunan rumah susun sewa (Rusunawa) dalam penanganan lingkungan permukiman kumuh Studi kasus Rusunawa Gemawang, Rusunawa Jogoyudan dan Rusunawa Cokrodirjan.* Magister Perencanaan Kota dan Daerah UGM, Yogyakarta.

considered most relevant for understanding the social context, policies, and impacts arising from a public development program that failed to meet expectations. Rather than focusing on quantitative measurements or statistics, this method emphasizes the interpretation of data obtained from various publicly available documentation sources.

Data collection was conducted through documentary studies, gathering information from various secondary sources. These sources include online news articles, media reports, government regulations and policy documents, and findings from studies available in academic journals and official institutional websites. The primary data analyzed in this study comes from an article titled "Rusunawa Juwana Telan Anggaran 28,9 Miliar, Jalan Enam Tahun Sudah 'Bocor' Bikin Kurangnya Penyewa" published by cakranusantara.net on November 3, 2022. The article provides key information on building conditions, occupancy rates, and community complaints about Juwana Rusunawa.

Additionally, the researcher conducted a literature review using academic journals, particularly those discussing failures in public housing projects, the quality of vertical housing, and challenges in Rusunawa management in Indonesia. This literature was used to strengthen the analysis and provide comparisons with field findings from Juwana Rusunawa. The analysis was conducted thematically by identifying key issues emerging from the documents, such as project planning problems, construction quality, post-construction supervision, asset management responsibilities, and users' perceptions and responses.

To maintain objectivity in the analysis process, source triangulation was also conducted—comparing information from various media and reports to ensure data consistency and prevent bias. This technique is crucial in qualitative research to enhance the validity of findings. Furthermore, theoretical frameworks on public asset management and community participation in development were used as references to assess whether the functional failure of Juwana Rusunawa is an isolated case or part of a structural failure pattern in national subsidized housing projects.

With this method, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the root problems of the Juwana Rusunawa project and offer data- and literature-based

recommendations to improve future public housing planning and management practices.

B. Building Condition: Severe Roof Leaks Cause Damp and Mossy Walls

The physical condition of Juwana Rusunawa shows serious damage, particularly in the roof, which suffers from severe leaks. These leaks have caused walls to become damp and covered in moss, creating an unhealthy environment for residents. This phenomenon aligns with findings at IAIN Ambon Rusunawa, where roof and wall damage was caused by lack of regular maintenance. Such damage not only disturbs residents' comfort but also poses serious health risks.

Additionally, a study at Palangka Raya University Rusunawa identified similar damage, including moldy and leaking ceilings, caused by insufficient building maintenance. This indicates that without adequate care, Rusunawa buildings are vulnerable to damage that reduces residents' quality of life.

Damage to structural elements such as roofs and walls can also accelerate overall building degradation. According to Ministerial Regulation of Public Works No. 24/PRT/M/2008, building maintenance must be carried out regularly to prevent more severe damage. However, in the case of Juwana Rusunawa, the lack of regular evaluation and maintenance has led to significant deterioration.

The impact of this damage is not only physical but also psychological for residents. Damp and moldy environments can cause stress and discomfort, ultimately affecting mental health. Studies show that housing environment quality directly correlates with individual psychological well-being.

Untreated damage can also increase future repair costs. The estimated rehabilitation cost for Palangka Raya University Rusunawa reached Rp1.7 billion, indicating that delayed maintenance leads to greater financial burdens. This underscores the importance of preventive maintenance to avoid higher costs later. Overall, the severely leaking roof and moss-covered walls of Juwana Rusunawa reflect a lack of attention to building maintenance. Without proper intervention, this

damage will continue to worsen, threatening residents' safety and well-being.

Suboptimal Occupancy: Only 105 of 196 Unit are Occupied

Occupancy rates at Juwana Rusunawa are low, with only 105 of 196 units occupied. This low occupancy indicates that many people are reluctant to live there, despite the low rental cost. The main factor influencing this decision is the building's uninhabitable condition, such as leaks and mossy walls.

Research at Jember University Rusunawa shows that damage to facilities and poorly maintained environments reduce public interest in living in Rusunawa. This highlights the importance of building and environmental quality in attracting tenants. Additionally, social and economic factors affect occupancy rates. A study at Kemayoran Rusunawa identified that tenant satisfaction is influenced by facility quality, management services, and social environment. Dissatisfaction with these aspects can lead tenants to move or avoid occupying available units.

Lack of community participation in Rusunawa planning and management also contributes to low occupancy. Without resident involvement, implemented policies and programs may not align with their needs and preferences, reducing interest in living in the building.

Moreover, the Rusunawa's non-strategic location and limited accessibility can be inhibiting factors. Studies show that locations far from economic and social activity centers reduce the appeal of Rusunawa to the public. This emphasizes the importance of thorough site planning in Rusunawa development. Overall, the low occupancy rate at Juwana Rusunawa is caused by a combination of physical, social, and economic factors. To improve occupancy, building conditions must be repaired, service quality improved, and community involvement in Rusunawa management enhanced.

C. Additional Costs: Despite Low Rent, Electricity and Water Costs are Borne by Tenants

Although rental rates at Juwana Rusunawa are relatively affordable—Rp125,000 per month for ground floor units and cheaper

for upper floors—this fee only covers room rental. Tenants must independently bear additional costs for electricity and water. This can become an extra burden for low-income communities, the primary target of the Rusunawa program.

These additional costs are often not transparent and not clearly regulated in regional regulations. For example, in Bantul Rusunawa, electricity and water tariffs charged to tenants were deemed legally unfounded by the Audit Board of Indonesia (BPK), as there was no clear legal basis for setting these rates. A similar situation may occur in Juwana Rusunawa if there are no specific regulations governing these additional costs.

Lack of transparency in setting additional costs can cause tenant dissatisfaction. Residents may feel burdened by costs that do not match their financial capacity, especially if the provided facilities are inadequate or do not justify the expenses.

Rusunawa operational costs, including electricity and water, should be efficiently managed by the operator. Data indicates that managing a Rusunawa with around 100 units requires operational costs of approximately Rp15–18 million per month, or an average of Rp180,000 per room. If the operator manages these costs well, the additional burden on tenants can be minimized.

Local governments need to establish clear regulations regarding additional costs charged to Rusunawa tenants. These regulations should include cost details, legal basis for tariff setting, and mechanisms for fund management and usage. This way, tenants can understand and accept the charges. Transparency and accountability in managing additional costs are crucial to maintaining tenant trust in Rusunawa management. If tenants believe their payments are effectively used for facility maintenance and repairs, they will be more satisfied and likely to stay.

D. Limited Management: After Handover to Local Government, Insufficient Maintenance Funding Available for Repairs

After the construction of Juwana Rusunawa was completed and handed over from the central to the local government, management and

maintenance responsibilities became the duty of Pati Regency. However, the allocated budget for building maintenance is minimal, leaving many damages unrepaired. Mutadi, Head of the Juwana Rusunawa UPT, stated that the annual budget allocation is only sufficient for painting needs, and in 2021, no maintenance budget was allocated at all.

Insufficient maintenance funding results in unaddressed building damage. Ceiling damage in rooms, bathroom leaks, and water seepage from upper to lower floors are recurring problems. Without adequate repairs, building conditions continue to deteriorate, reducing residents' comfort and safety.

Rusunawa management issues are not unique to Juwana. In Surakarta, for instance, maintenance is carried out by the UPTD Rumah Sewa with funding from the Regional Budget (APBD). However, for severe damage, the UPTD must request additional funds from the central government. This shows that Rusunawa management requires good coordination between local and central governments, as well as adequate budget allocation.

Lack of maintenance funding also affects occupancy rates. If building conditions are uninhabitable, people are unwilling to occupy the units, even if rents are affordable. This leads to many vacant Rusunawa units that are not optimally utilized, preventing the project's original goals from being achieved. Local governments need to prioritize budget allocation for Rusunawa maintenance. Routine maintenance and damage repairs should be included in annual budget planning. Additionally, local governments can seek alternative funding sources, such as partnerships with the private sector or CSR programs, to support Rusunawa maintenance.

Effective Rusunawa management requires a structured system, including budget planning, maintenance implementation, and periodic evaluation. With a good system, damage can be addressed quickly and efficiently, ensuring buildings remain habitable and residents feel comfortable.

E. Absence of Post-Construction Evaluation: No Comprehensive Evaluation Conducted Since Completion Until Present

Post-construction evaluation is a crucial stage in the life cycle of public infrastructure projects. This evaluation aims to measure the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of completed projects, including identifying potential damage or functional deficiencies. In the case of Juwana Rusunawa, the absence of a comprehensive evaluation since its completion in 2016 is a critical issue. The lack of regular technical or social audits has caused various damages—such as leaks and mossy walls—not to be detected and addressed early.

Evaluation is not only about technical assessment of buildings but also social aspects such as tenant comfort, policy effectiveness, and management system feasibility. In the context of Juwana Rusunawa, no tenant satisfaction surveys or re-evaluation studies have been conducted to align services with actual community needs. This reveals weak feedback mechanisms in community-based social project management.

Limited evaluation also leads to failure in formulating long-term improvement policies. Over time, various damages that could have been prevented through preventive measures become major issues requiring higher repair costs. Post-project activities such as infrastructure audits can save rehabilitation costs if conducted regularly within the first five years. The absence of evaluation at Juwana Rusunawa means this cost-saving opportunity has been missed.

Post-construction evaluation is also important for public accountability. A project worth Rp28.9 billion must be accountable not only during planning and construction but also post-operation. Unfortunately, there are no evaluation reports from the local government or relevant agencies on whether the building still meets habitability standards or whether the management has performed its duties properly.

The downstream impact of the lack of evaluation is declining public trust in similar future programs. Communities seeing Juwana Rusunawa damaged and abandoned will doubt the effectiveness of other subsidized vertical housing programs. This contradicts the national agenda of providing decent housing for low-income communities.

Therefore, it is crucial for Pati Regency government to immediately develop a comprehensive evaluation program for Juwana Rusunawa. The evaluation should cover building technical aspects, management systems, tenant perceptions, and cost effectiveness. The results can serve as a basis for improving asset management and as a reference for implementing similar projects in the future. Additionally, evaluative recommendations can be used to request maintenance funding from the central government. Evaluation is not merely a reflection but an investment in a more decent and sustainable housing future.

The case of the Rumah Susun Sederhana Sewa (Rusunawa) Juwana in Pati Regency, Central Java—costing Rp28.9 billion yet suffering leaks within six years—reflects fundamental weaknesses in the governance of public housing projects in Indonesia. Although the project aimed to provide decent housing for flood-affected communities in Juwana and surrounding areas, the reality shows implementation failure due to weak long-term planning. The local government's unpreparedness to manage the building post-construction demonstrates that project success is not solely determined by physical construction but also by the ability to sustainably maintain building function and quality. When maintenance aspects are neglected, the impact is not only on declining building quality but also on low public interest in utilizing the facility.

Poor construction quality is one of the main factors behind this project's failure. Leaks occurring shortly after completion indicate that construction standards were not met, either in materials or technical supervision. This reflects weak supervision during construction, which should be the responsibility of both central and local governments. According to Abdullah[2], sustainable management of apartment buildings requires cross-stakeholder collaboration to ensure project quality and sustainability.

In addition to technical issues, administrative factors also contributed to the project's failure. After construction, Rusunawa management was handed over to Pati Regency Government, which

[2] Abdullah, A. M. (2024). Keberlanjutan pengelolaan Rumah Susun Indal melalui kolaborasi lintas stakeholders. *Jurnal Perencanaan Wilayah dan Kota,* 19(1).

claims to lack sufficient funds for building maintenance. The absence of maintenance funding means damages are not promptly repaired, worsening building conditions and reducing public interest in renting. Similar problems occur in other housing projects, where budget allocation does not match targets and community empowerment remains suboptimal.

Lack of community participation in project planning is also a problem. Local communities were not actively involved in planning and implementation, so their needs and preferences were not met. This results in a mismatch between provided facilities and real community needs. Fitriana[3] emphasize the importance of implementing participatory principles in village financial management to achieve outcomes aligned with community needs.

Minimal supervision during construction also opens opportunities for deviations and corruption. Without strict oversight mechanisms, projects like Juwana Rusunawa are vulnerable to opaque practices that harm the public and the state. This highlights the need for more effective and accountable supervision systems at every project stage.

The problems at Juwana Rusunawa reflect systemic issues in the governance of public housing projects in Indonesia. Many similar projects face the same challenges: weak community participation, minimal supervision, and indications of implementation deviations. To address this, more integrated and accountable policies are needed, along with improved local government capacity in managing and maintaining public facilities.

The application of a collaborative governance model can be a solution to improve housing project management effectiveness. By involving various stakeholders—including communities, government, and the private sector—in planning and implementation, projects are expected to better meet needs and be sustainable. Prasetyo shows this model is effective in the housing rehabilitation program for uninhabitable homes in Tangerang Regency.

[3] Fitriana, M., Hermawan, D., & Caturiani, S. I. (2021). Evaluasi Formulasi Kebijakan Smart Village Provinsi Lampung. *Wacana Publik*, 15(2), 65–74.

To prevent recurrence of cases like Juwana Rusunawa, reforms in public housing project governance are needed. Steps include improving planning and construction quality, strengthening supervision and accountability, and actively involving communities at every project stage. This way, housing projects can truly fulfill their primary goal: providing decent and affordable housing for the community.

F. Conclusion

Juwana Rusunawa exemplifies structural problems in the implementation of public housing projects in Indonesia. Although initially intended to provide housing solutions for disaster-affected residents, the reality on the ground shows implementation failure due to weak long-term planning. The local government's unpreparedness to manage the building post-construction proves that project success is not determined solely by physical construction but also by the ability to sustainably maintain building function and quality. When maintenance aspects are ignored, the impact is not only on deteriorating building quality but also on low public interest in using the facility. The success of a public housing project must be measured holistically—not only quantitatively by the number of units built, but also by the quality of life offered to residents. Affordability, building safety, facility comfort, and easy access to basic services are key indicators in assessing project effectiveness. Unfortunately, in the case of Juwana Rusunawa, minimal maintenance and poor building quality have reduced the building's appeal, leaving most units unoccupied. This highlights the importance of aligning technical planning, budget readiness, and active community involvement in assessing actual field needs.

Therefore, reforms in the governance of social infrastructure projects like Rusunawa are needed. Comprehensive evaluations of completed projects should be conducted to identify root problems and prevent similar mistakes in the future. Local governments must be given adequate capacity and financial support to manage assets built by the central government. More importantly, active community involvement in decision-making will ensure that projects truly meet citizens' needs. With a more participatory and integrated approach, the sustainability

and effectiveness of future public housing projects can be better guaranteed.

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Acknowledgment
None

Funding Information
None

Conflicting Interest Statement
The authors state that there is no conflict of interest in the publication of this article.

Publishing Ethical and Originality Statement
All authors declared that this work is original and has never been published in any form and in any media, nor is it under consideration for publication in any journal, and all sources cited in this work refer to the basic standards of scientific citation.

Generative AI Statement
N/A