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Agrarian Reform as Housing Justice: Transforming Land for Equitable Flat Access in Cirebon

Aisha Al-Mahrouqi
Sultan Qaboos University
al-mahrouqi@gmail.com

Ridha Rinduni
Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia
ridharinduni@gmail.com

Noah Williams
University of New South Wales
williams@gmail.com

✉ Corresponding email: ridharinduni@gmail.com

Abstract

Land transformation through agrarian reform as an effort to ensure equitable access to adequate housing, particularly vertical housing (flats) in Cirebon. Agrarian reform is positioned not merely as land redistribution but also as a strategic instrument in providing housing for low-income communities. This approach aims to address land ownership inequality and enhance housing affordability through collaboration between the government and the public. The

study demonstrates that agrarian reform can serve as an innovative solution to the housing crisis and social inequality in urban areas.

Keywords

Agrarian Reform, Land Transformation, Housing Equity, Vertical Housing, Cirebon

A. Introduction

Agrarian reform is one of the strategic policies continuously pursued by the Indonesian government to address structural inequality in land ownership and utilization, which has long been the root cause of various agrarian issues, poverty, and development disparities. Land access inequality impacts not only the agricultural and rural sectors but also extends into urban areas, where the demand for residential space continues to rise due to rapid urbanization. Over the past two decades, urbanization has driven massive growth in urban and peri-urban areas. This phenomenon has placed significant pressure on land availability, especially productive land increasingly converted into industrial zones, commercial housing, and infrastructure. This imbalance creates a paradox in development: while economic growth is encouraged, environmental sustainability and social justice—particularly in access to adequate housing—are increasingly threatened.

Legally, the foundation of agrarian reform in Indonesia is enshrined in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, particularly Article 33 paragraph (3), which states: "The land, water, and natural resources contained therein shall be controlled by the state and used for the greatest prosperity of the people." This principle is further elaborated in Law No. 5 of 1960 concerning the Basic Agrarian Law (UUPA), which serves as the primary legal basis for implementing agrarian reform in Indonesia. The UUPA explains that one of the objectives of agrarian regulation is to achieve social justice through the management of land control, ownership, use, and utilization. Furthermore, Presidential Regulation No. 86 of 2018 on Agrarian Reform provides a specific national policy framework for the implementation of agrarian reform, including land

redistribution mechanisms, asset legalization, and integration with national development programs. Regarding land transformation for housing, this policy can also synergize with Law No. 1 of 2011 on Housing and Settlement Areas, which mandates the provision of decent housing for low-income communities through various models, including the construction of vertical housing (flats).

The issue of land scarcity means that agrarian reform should not be viewed merely as a process of land redistribution, but needs to be developed as a transformative approach to inclusive spatial planning. This includes integrating land ownership, spatial allocation, and housing models that align with the socio-economic conditions of the community. Vertical development, such as flats, has become a strategic alternative to address space limitations in densely populated areas. Flats are not only efficient in land use but can also be designed as humane and affordable living spaces for low-income groups. Thus, agrarian reform and vertical development are not isolated approaches but can complement each other in creating a more just, sustainable, and responsive spatial order that meets the basic needs of the people. Appropriate land use, supported by a clear legal framework and people-centered policies, is key to achieving equitable development and overcoming long-standing structural poverty.

Land transformation through agrarian reform in Cirebon is a strategic step to address land ownership inequality and provide decent housing for the community. Cirebon City, experiencing rapid growth, faces serious challenges in housing provision due to high urbanization rates. Agrarian reform focuses not only on redistributing unproductive land but also on sustainable resource management to create social and economic justice. Through the redistribution of unproductive land, the government can provide access for low-income communities to own land and build flats. Additionally, developing infrastructure such as roads and public facilities in housing areas is crucial to improving quality of life. Partnerships with the private sector

can accelerate development and ensure better housing quality. However, the implementation of agrarian reform often faces challenges such as land ownership conflicts. Therefore, a transparent and participatory approach is essential, involving the community at every stage. Education and socialization regarding land rights and the benefits of agrarian reform must also be enhanced so that communities can actively participate. With access to decent housing, people are more motivated to engage in economic activities, thereby increasing their income and quality of life. Thus, agrarian reform in Cirebon is not merely about land redistribution but is also an effort to create social justice and welfare for all layers of society. Continuous efforts in implementing agrarian reform will yield long-term benefits, helping to create a more inclusive and competitive environment.

Based on the above explanation, it is evident that agrarian reform plays a strategic role in addressing various issues of land access inequality, particularly in the context of urbanization and rising housing needs. Land transformation through an agrarian reform approach touches not only land redistribution but also opens space for innovation in urban spatial governance, such as the development of flats as an alternative housing solution in densely populated areas. One such example is in Cirebon, which is currently experiencing regional growth and increasing pressure on land availability. Therefore, this article will discuss: “How can the implementation of agrarian reform in land transformation support equitable access to flats in Cirebon, especially for low-income communities?” and “What is the condition of Dukuh Semar Flats in Cirebon in 2025?”

This study employs a normative-empirical method, combining legal norm analysis with social reality. The normative approach is used to examine regulations related to agrarian reform, such as the Basic Agrarian Law (UUPA) and Presidential Regulation No. 86 of 2018 on Agrarian Reform. The empirical approach aims to observe the implementation of these policies on the ground, particularly in Cirebon. Data

sources include legislation, scientific literature, media reports, and official government reports.

Legal materials are analyzed qualitatively by linking legal norms with social conditions in the field. This research identifies the extent to which agrarian reform can promote equitable access to decent housing and the obstacles faced in its implementation in Cirebon. Through this approach, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of agrarian reform policies as instruments for fair and equitable housing development.

B. Implementation of Agrarian Reform in Land Transformation for Dukuh Semar Flats, Cirebon

Agrarian reform in Indonesia is part of the government's effort to create social justice, particularly in land control, ownership, and utilization. To address urbanization challenges, transforming land use into vertical housing such as flats is an appropriate solution to land scarcity in urban areas. A clear example of this effort can be seen in Dukuh Semar, Cirebon, where land previously occupied by dense settlements and some agricultural areas has been transformed into a more organized and efficient flat complex. This transformation is not only a response to community housing needs but also a concrete manifestation of agrarian reform aligned with national regulations and policies.

Presidential Regulation No. 86 of 2018 on Agrarian Reform strengthens the comprehensive policy framework for agrarian reform. This regulation clarifies that agrarian reform is not limited to land redistribution in rural areas but also includes access restructuring and asset management in urban areas. In other words, agrarian reform can be implemented through land use transformation for public facilities and housing, such as urban flats, provided that principles of justice and prioritization of vulnerable groups are observed. Flat development also has a clear legal basis: Law No. 20 of 2011 on Flats, later updated by Law No. 11 of 2020

on Job Creation and its derivative regulations. The Flats Law stipulates that both central and local governments are obligated to provide flats for low-income communities as part of fulfilling the right to housing. Article 3 of this law states that flats are built to provide decent, healthy, and affordable housing amid land scarcity.

The flat project in Dukuh Semar reflects the real implementation of these regulations. The local government, through collaboration with relevant ministries and developers, has utilized previously underutilized land to create a more organized and planned vertical housing area. In Dukuh Semar, Cirebon, we can observe how agrarian reform is applied by changing the function of land formerly used for agriculture or dense settlements into efficient and affordable flats. Dukuh Semar, an area with dense settlements and mostly agricultural land, has undergone significant transformation. As part of the government's effort to address urban land scarcity, this area has been converted into a vertical housing zone. The flats built here not only provide a solution for housing low-income communities but also help reduce the spread of informal settlements that often emerge on unregulated land. With this flat development, the government optimizes the use of limited land. Previously, land in Dukuh Semar was used for limited purposes such as agriculture or poorly planned dense settlements. However, with the increasing need for urban housing, especially for those unable to afford conventional homes, flats have become a more efficient alternative. Vertical housing offers more adequate and affordable facilities for people who have long struggled to access decent housing.

In addition to clear benefits in providing more organized housing, this flat project also contributes to creating a healthier and more livable environment. With well-planned design and more efficient space use, the vertical housing in Dukuh Semar offers better quality of life for its residents compared to informal settlements, which are often vulnerable to health and environmental issues. This project is also an important step in reducing slum settlements that

often develop on unplanned land. However, despite the many benefits of the Dukuh Semar flat project, the implementation of agrarian reform in this context is not without challenges. One major issue is how residents who previously lived in the area can adapt to life in vertical housing. Transitioning from spacious traditional homes to high-density vertical housing requires social and psychological adjustment. Residents must adapt to a more structured environment with limited open space and more controlled social interaction. This can be challenging for those accustomed to a freer lifestyle in older settlements. Moreover, although flats are intended to provide more affordable housing, many low-income people still find it difficult to access them. Flat projects often benefit middle- to upper-income groups who are more capable of covering construction or rental costs. Therefore, more inclusive policies are needed to ensure that the most vulnerable groups can benefit. One possible solution is providing subsidies or affordable rental assistance programs tailored to the economic capacity of low-income communities.

To ensure that the benefits of agrarian reform in the form of flats reach all societal layers, especially the most vulnerable, more inclusive policies are essential. The government should prioritize access for those most in need of decent housing, such as offering low-interest housing loans (KPR) or affordable rental programs to reduce inequality in housing distribution. Overall, the implementation of agrarian reform through land transformation into flats in Dukuh Semar, Cirebon, is a positive step toward addressing housing issues amid ongoing urbanization. However, challenges related to social adaptation and equitable benefit distribution require serious attention. For agrarian reform to succeed optimally, policies that are more favorable to low-income communities are crucial to ensure that everyone, without exception, can access decent and comfortable housing. Thus, agrarian reform can create more equitable welfare for all.

C. Condition of Dukuh Semar Flats in Cirebon in 2025

Dukuh Semar Flats, located in Kecapi Village, Harjamukti Subdistrict, Cirebon City, has become an integral part of vertical housing in the region. However, by 2025, this housing complex faces various challenges requiring serious attention from the government and the community. One major issue is the land and building status, which has remained vacant for nearly a decade. At the end of September 2024, Cirebon City Development Company (PDP) conducted a clearance of assets from the former Cirebon Maritime Academy and the Dukuh Semar flats. PDP Director Pandji Amiarsa stated that the 1.4-hectare asset is being prepared for business partnerships to enhance land productivity. Several options under consideration include developing a sports center or hotel, with further studies to be submitted to the Mayor of Cirebon to optimize regional revenue. Additionally, in late November 2024, PDP evaluated contracts with asset tenants and Dukuh Semar flats, aiming to revitalize facilities and infrastructure and optimize company revenue. Pandji emphasized that the land and building status, based on local regulations, has been delegated to PDP.

On the other hand, the physical and social conditions of the community around Dukuh Semar Flats also affect the sustainability of this vertical housing. In January 2025, a flash flood hit Dukuh Semar Village, submerging hundreds of homes and a mosque. The flood was caused by the overflow of Saba River due to heavy rainfall in the mountainous areas of Kuningan Regency. Dukuh Semar RW 03 Secretary Sugeng reported that approximately 360 households were affected, with RT 01, 03, 08, and 09 being the hardest hit. This incident highlights the area's vulnerability to natural disasters, which can affect the comfort and safety of flat residents. The physical condition of the flats has also drawn attention. Several reports indicate declining facilities, such as damaged water and electricity installations and inadequate environmental cleanliness. Furthermore, suboptimal management systems have led to insufficient attention to regular maintenance.

Socially, Dukuh Semar Flats are inhabited by people from

diverse ethnic, religious, and professional backgrounds. This diversity creates unique social dynamics that can enrich interactions but also requires an integrative approach to building a harmonious community. Some residents work as traders, laborers, and informal sector workers, who are vulnerable to economic fluctuations.

D. Conclusion

Agrarian reform in Indonesia has shown significant results through land transformation into vertical housing, with the flat project in Dukuh Semar, Cirebon, serving as a concrete example. An area previously dense and used for agriculture now hosts flats that not only meet housing needs but also optimize limited land use. Although this project offers many benefits, challenges in social adaptation for communities transitioning from traditional homes to vertical housing persist, especially regarding social interaction and accessibility for low-income groups. Therefore, it is crucial for the government to develop more inclusive policies, such as providing subsidized KPR or affordable rental programs for vulnerable groups. Social support programs are also needed to help communities adapt to life in vertical housing. Through regular monitoring and evaluation, the government can ensure that flat projects not only meet housing needs but also deliver evenly distributed positive impacts across all societal layers, enabling agrarian reform to create fairer and more equitable welfare.

The condition of Dukuh Semar Flats in Cirebon in 2025 reflects complex challenges that require comprehensive handling. Unoptimized land status, poorly maintained buildings, and the impact of natural disasters such as flash floods indicate that this situation demands serious attention from both government and community. Revitalization efforts by the Regional Development Company show good intentions to improve land quality and function, but must be balanced with attention to building conditions and resident welfare. The diverse backgrounds of residents can be an asset but also require inclusive community management approaches. To address these challenges, it is recommended that the

government and relevant parties conduct a comprehensive evaluation of building conditions and management systems. Facility revitalization should be carried out regularly with active resident participation. Additionally, developing social programs to support community involvement in maintaining cleanliness and security will help create a harmonious community. Cooperation among government, private sector, and the community is essential to ensure the sustainable management of flats and improve residents' quality of life in the future.

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