



## Evolution of Rural Housing Policies in Iran (From Pre-Revolution to Post-Islamic Revolution)

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### Abstract

**Background and Objective:** Rural housing in Iran, despite its central role in sustainable development and national security, has always been marginalized in development policies. This study aims to explain the evolution of rural housing policies in Iran during two periods, pre- and post-Islamic Revolution (1956-2011), and to evaluate the success of these policies in achieving safe, high-quality housing appropriate for the rural way of life.

**Methodology:** This is an applied study with a descriptive-analytical approach based on secondary quantitative analysis. Data were collected from population and housing censuses, reports of the Housing Foundation of the Islamic Revolution, and development plan documents. The research instrument included four main indicators (number of residential units, access to basic infrastructure, ownership rate, and household density). Data analysis was conducted using historical trend analysis.

**Results and Findings:** Results show that before the Revolution, over 52% of rural housing units were built with low-durability materials, and less than 9% had access to piped water. After the Revolution, the establishment of the Housing Foundation, implementation of rural guide plans (covering 70% of villages), retrofitting programs (60% achievement in the Fourth Development Plan), and granting of banking facilities (renovation of 260,000 units by 2011) led to quantitative and qualitative transformation. However, the elimination of livelihood spaces, reduction of floor area (55-65 m<sup>2</sup>), and imitation of urban housing patterns remain key challenges. Overall, Iran's rural housing policies have achieved relative but incomplete success. The future path requires attention to qualitative, cultural, and livelihood dimensions and movement toward a participatory and people-centered approach. The innovation of this research lies in the simultaneous analysis of four key indicators over a long-term period (more than five decades).

**Keywords:** Rural Development, Rural Housing, Institutional Changes, Rural Housing Policy-making, Rural Guide Plan.

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## **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

### **Introduction**

Rural housing is a key component of human welfare and an important indicator of social development, yet in many development agendas it has been treated as a secondary issue. In Iran, rural housing has historically been closely linked with the economic and social life of rural households, especially in relation to agriculture and animal husbandry. Therefore, any housing policy in rural areas must be understood as part of a broader rural development framework rather than as a purely physical or architectural intervention.

This study investigates the historical transformation of rural housing policies in Iran, with particular attention to the shift from the pre-revolutionary period to the post-Islamic Revolution era. The main concern is not only how many units were constructed or renovated, but also whether these policies were able to create housing that is safe, durable, and appropriate for rural lifestyles and livelihood patterns.

The study is grounded in the perspective of rural development and housing as a social good. Housing in rural areas is not simply a shelter; it is a structural element of livelihood, dignity, welfare, and social stability. From this viewpoint, effective rural housing policy should support household productivity, environmental compatibility, and social inclusion.

A central assumption of the study is that rural development should follow a participatory and empowerment-oriented logic. In this approach, the role of the state is not limited to direct construction, but should include facilitation, support, planning, and enabling local communities to take part in decision-making. The study also draws on the principles of sustainable rural development, which emphasize that housing policies must be culturally appropriate, economically feasible, and responsive to the specific spatial and social characteristics of rural communities.

### **Methodology**

This research is an applied study using a descriptive-analytical design and secondary quantitative analysis. The study period extends from 1956 to 2011, allowing the comparison of rural housing conditions across the pre- and post-Islamic Revolution periods.

The data were collected from official sources, including population and housing censuses, reports published by the Housing Foundation of the Islamic Revolution, and documents related to national development plans. To assess policy changes and housing outcomes, the study examined several indicators, including the number of housing units, ownership rates, access to infrastructure such as water and electricity, and household density. The analysis was based on long-term trends in order to identify the main policy shifts and their effects on rural housing conditions.

### **Results and Findings**

The findings indicate a clear difference between the two periods under study. Before the Islamic Revolution, rural housing was generally characterized by poor quality and weak infrastructure. More than 52 percent of rural housing units were built with low-durability materials, and less

than 9 percent of households had access to piped water. These conditions reflect the limited attention given to rural housing in national development policies during that period.

After the Revolution, rural housing entered a new policy phase. The creation of the Housing Foundation of the Islamic Revolution and the introduction of rural reconstruction and retrofitting programs marked a significant institutional shift. Rural Guide Plans were implemented in a large number of villages and covered about 70 percent of villages by the end of the study period. In addition, bank facilities and targeted support programs helped increase the pace of housing renovation. By 2011, around 260,000 units had been renovated, and the retrofitting target of the Fourth Development Plan had been achieved at approximately 60 percent.

Despite these achievements, the analysis also reveals several persistent problems. In many cases, the new housing models have eliminated livelihood spaces that were previously integrated into rural homes. The average floor area has declined to around 55–65 square meters, and housing designs have increasingly imitated urban patterns rather than reflecting rural realities. As a result, while the quantitative situation of rural housing has improved, its qualitative adaptation to rural life remains incomplete.

## **Conclusion**

The evolution of rural housing policies in Iran shows that significant progress has been made after the Islamic Revolution, particularly in terms of institutional support, infrastructure development, and housing renovation. However, these advances have not fully resolved the deeper qualitative issues of rural housing.

The findings suggest that future policy-making should move beyond numerical targets and adopt a more comprehensive approach that is participatory, livelihood-oriented, culturally sensitive, and people-centered. Rural housing should be designed in a way that supports the social and economic life of rural households and aligns with the specific characteristics of rural space. Only under such an approach can housing genuinely contribute to sustainable rural development.

## **Declarations**

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### **Authors' Contribution**

Authors contributed equally to the conceptualization and writing of the article. All of the authors approved the content of the manuscript and agreed on all aspects of the work declaration of competing interest none.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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