

Rural Housing Programs as a Panacea for Rural Exodus in Algeria, Case of El Khroub's Municipality

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Abstract

A growing divide between rural and urban populations in Algerian cities has pushed the government to investigate strategies to stabilize and enhance the rural population's status. To strike a balance between the two and alleviate the city's suffocating housing crisis, Algeria has implemented rural housing programs that include financial support for new constructions that promote a decent life and subsidies for the poorest rural families with middle income to self-build decent housing. The rural housing initiative has been funded and implemented by the state in a number of Algerian municipalities, including El Khroub. Since 1984, this municipality has pushed rural construction to further the national policy's objectives. This study will examine the current situation and make judgements on the scope and breadth of proposed actions. Additionally, it will analyze if these programs have enhanced the quality of life for rural populations. The study is based on local field diagnosis and analytic techniques, which include gathering as much descriptive information on rural building as possible in order to identify problems and recommend solutions. This was accomplished through field trips and research with the committee charged with monitoring the housing assistance program's development in El Khroub's rural districts. Additionally, we employed a questionnaire to collect data on the socioeconomic characteristics of rural recipients, as well as their worries and potential solutions for stabilization.

Key words: rural housing programs, El Khroub, stabilization, local field diagnosis, questionnaire.

INTRODUCTION

Algeria's housing sector, which is an organized sector that the government has sought to develop and promote through the implementation of various housing policies, has undergone a number of reforms resulting in a variety of housing patterns (Ouadah Rebrab, 2012; Côte, 1994), including contributory, promotional, government-subsidized and privately owned, rent-sale, and public rental in urban areas, among others (Bukhari, 2015; MUCH, 1979). This is because "housing" is commonly acknowledged as a requirement when it comes to a person's basic needs in life, since it reflects the broad framework of economic and social life, as well as the cultural qualities that express a society's identity (Bukhari, 2015). Housing is, in fact, an examination of people's housing units, a study of the housing production market, and an examination of people's desires and requirements for their homes, the difficulties they face in obtaining adequate housing, and the psychological, social, and cultural impact their homes have on them. Thus, a "home" refers to a structure that should satisfy a person's essential demands for physical, mental as well as social well-being, such as the capacity to pursue hobbies in peace while conserving cultural traditions and core components, language, customs, and community slang are all examples of what this means (Al Hadry and Anbar, 2020). To finance housing, a family's ability is fundamentally influenced by its resources and choices, as well as several external factors such as location and surroundings (Al Hadry and Anbar, op.cit.). Indeed, cities and metropolitan areas in general are extremely appealing since they provide the sine qua non conditions for a significantly easier and better existence than rural areas do (Arcalean et al, 2012; de Haas, 2007; Carling, 2002). Rural migration has continued to grow around the world as a result of this (Horzsa, 2021; Bell et al, 2015; Bakewell, 2008).

Rural Development in Algeria as a Strategy to Limit Rural Exodus

Being devoted to permanently resolving rural exodus like the vast majority of countries worldwide (Dustmann and Okatenko, 2014; Côte, 1994; Nelson & Tweeten, 1975), Algeria has upgraded rural areas as natural mediums through the National Agricultural Development Plan in order to stabilize rural populations (Souidi and Bessaoud, 2011; Guillermou,

1983; Benachenhoun, 1979) and reintegrate those who have fled isolated compounds or been harmed by security conditions, as well as to reduce regional inequity and rebuild agricultural and rural spaces (Joint Ministerial Instruction No. 06-2002). Algerian policies have prioritized rural development (Chaib and Baroudi, 2014; Bessaoud, 2006) as seen by a number of projects aimed at improving the standard of living for rural residents (Bencheikh le Hocine, 2015; Chaib & Baroudi, 2014). Due to the rural population's essential housing requirement, particularly in terms of state subsidies, the rural housing project has been accorded a high priority within the context of comprehensive rural development (Chenoune et al, 2017), obtaining considerable budget allocations and the full backing of the public treasury (Hechan, 2016). This makes sense when we consider the definition of rural development, which is a combination of economically effective policies aiming at raising the standard of living of rural people (Horzsa, 2021). Given that half of the Arab world's population resides in rural areas, rural development is a priority for the governments of the states involved in the Arab world (Qashou, 2009). The Algerian state has sought to promote the Algerian countryside through the implementation of the government's rural development policy (Chenoune et al, 2017; Bessaoud, 2006). Additionally, it stressed the critical nature of resolving the legitimate concerns of rural populations as a critical and strategic axis for unifying and completing the national agricultural development plan (instruction No. 06-2002 of the Joint Ministerial Instruction).

It is self-evident that housing is a necessary component of rural life, as it is an integral part of the rural region which can be defined according to the Algerian legislation as *"rural space that is part of the territory, less developed, and contains agricultural activity as a primary economic activity, as well as natural regions, woods, and villages"* (Article 03 of the law 16/08-2008). Whereas rural housing can be defined as *"any housing finished by those eligible to state assistance under the title of rural housing, and rural housing must be completed within the framework of self-construction"* (Article 02 of Executive Decree No 10/87 - 2010). Ali Salem Al Shawara defined it as *"home provided inside an agricultural context, as it is the soil upon which diverse rural activities are conducted."* (Al Shawara, 2012, p35). Rather than that, it is a stabilizing, exploitative, and productive unit for rural dwellers. It is divided into two distinct components, temporary housing and permanent housing (Al Shawara, 2012). The temporary dwelling might be used by a group of hunters, shepherds, or even a primitive farmer. A notable example of this are the Bushmen tribes in Botswana and the Bedouin tribes in Arab countries, who live in temporary tents made of wool and goat hair. However, as a result of agricultural activity and the production of plant and animal crops, an individual is compelled to remain and settle in a particular location alongside other community members (Rhoda, 1983); this constitutes permanent habitation in that location (Schewel, 2019). Rural communities, on the other hand, may be defined as areas where people live continuously in surrounding dwellings with strong social ties (Masqueray, 1886).

Rural Development in the Municipality of El Khroub as a Case Study

As indicated previously, rural development is a priority for Algeria, with the state attempting to progress the Algerian countryside in order to create a balance of rural and urban growth (Bessaoud, 2006; Côte, 1994). As a result of this understanding, the state has initiated a variety of development programs aimed at assisting rural residents in getting housing and thereby promoting their stability in their native communities (Chenoune et al, 2017; Souidi and Bessaoud, 2011). The state is seeking to prevent rural exodus by providing them with new housing that are more fitted than their old traditional homes and abolishing the phenomenon of tin huts and slums (Souidi and Bessaoud, 2011). The state has implemented rural housing through a range of formulae derived from the country's social and economic development, ranging from material support to direct monetary help (Hechan, 2016). Following the national policy's rationale, the municipality of El Khroub has undertaken a variety of initiatives to stimulate rural construction since 1984 for the same objectives. As we build this through the present study and through the case of El khroub, we aim to address the following questions: **were these programs successful in achieving their stated objectives? Have they contributed to an increase in rural inhabitants' quality of life in El Khroub's municipality?**

The purpose of this research is to ascertain the extent and breadth of these actions by analyzing the current situation and formulating conclusions. We chose this issue in particular because to its historical significance and recent impact on Algeria's rural development, as well as its contemporary aspect. Whereas we chose El khroub's municipality as a case study because of its history where its origins, according to many sources and historical studies, date all the way back to the start of history (Chettah, 2021). Numerous excavations have been discovered in the area, the most significant of which is the Masinissa mausoleum, which is located in the Hermitage and dates all the way back to the Numidian dynasty, whose capital was Cirta (Bouchareb, 2006). Indeed, various civilizations have flourished at El Khroub, including

the Roman, Phoenician, and Berber civilizations, as evidenced by the tomb of Masinissa, King of Numidia (Milat, 2001). The city's people were dispersed throughout the region's countryside in villages and various winter camps, whether on the high plains or on the rims of valleys, such as the Bani Ya'qub, Al Hambli, and Al-Draid tribes. On August 06, 1859, El Khroub center was founded by royal decree and became the seat of a fully constituted municipality on March 28, 1863. (Official collection of acts of the prefecture of Constantine, 1962).

El Khroub now serves as the headquarters for both a department and a municipality (URBACO, 2015). It is administratively connected to Constantine's city and is considered to be part of Constantine's high plains (Larouk and Filali, 1984). This strategic location attracted centenarians because it was a place *"where all expansion possibilities converge, where natural modes of exchange converge, and where fertile lands meet, where a valley meets Rhumel and the Boumerzouk Valley, and where the economic elements of a large market congregate"* (Larouk and Filali, 1984, p. 29). Nowadays, El Khroub is one of Constantine's twelve municipalities, located 16 kilometers to the south of Constantine metropolis. It has a strategic location on the axis of National Road N03, with a total area of 22465 Hectares (Hamza and Dib, 2002) and a population of 381 948 residents in 2020 (general census of housing and population 2008). It is comprised of a municipal center and nine satellite communities: Kattar Al Aish, Saleh Derradji, The Brahmia Brothers, El Meridj, Alouk Abdullah, Oued Hmimim, Issani Ammar, Cité 05, Ain Nahas, and Kadri Brahim (see figure 1) (Constantine master plan of development and urbanism, 2015).

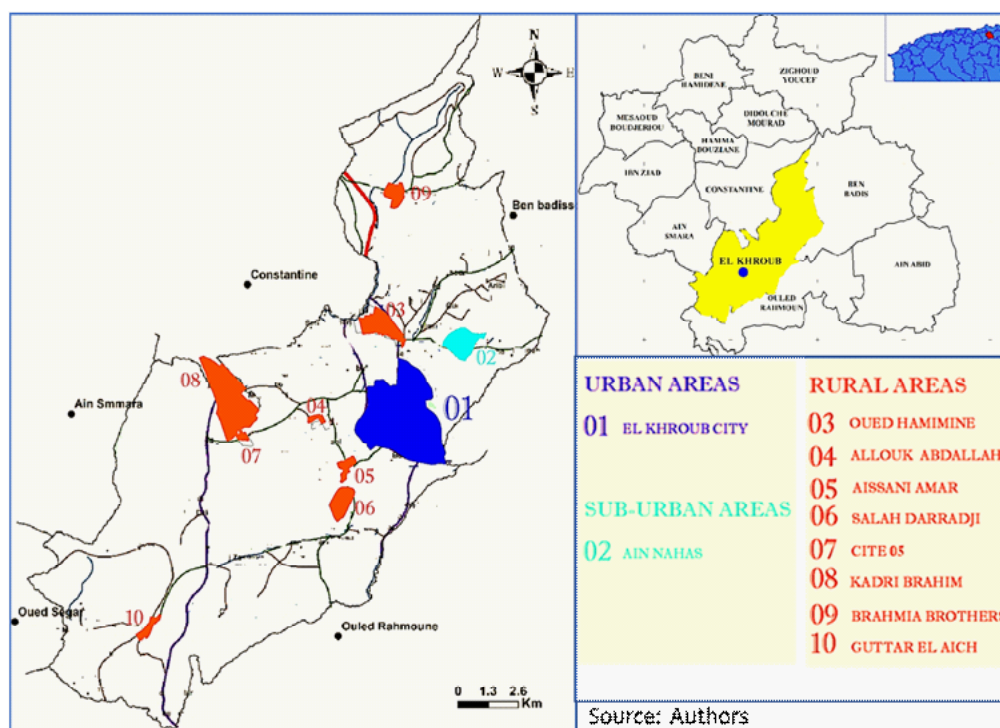


Figure 1. Urban and rural areas of El khroub's municipality.

While Al Hadry and Anbar (2020) classified rural housing into three types: scattered housing, clustered housing, and housing organized along the sides of roadways, Algerian law, through the Article 04 of Executive Decree No. 13/325-2013, categorizes rural housing in two types:

- **Separated Rural Housing:** Self-built rural dwelling developed in a rural region by individuals eligible for state assistance under the subject of Rural Housing.
- **Clustered Rural housing:** created by a licensed developer in a rural community with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants for residents who qualify for state subsidies as rural housing.

These two types of rural housing initiatives are the most prevalent in the municipality of El khroub, and we shall discuss them in greater detail below.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Our study was founded on the diagnosis and analysis techniques used at the field's local level, which included the descriptive approach; by amassing as much information as possible on rural building with a descriptive bent in order to identify the issue and attempt to propose solutions. As well as the quantitative approach, by adding quantitative and statistical facts and data relevant to the topic, and so arriving at results and conclusions on rural housing promotion programs implemented in the field of research during time periods spanning several decades.

Despite its limitations, fieldwork is critical to the study's success since it provides not just confirmation of the data collected, but also clarification and understanding of a wide variety of its properties. We conducted this activity through field trips and investigations in collaboration with the committee charged with evaluating the current assistance program's progress in the program's numerous rural areas. Additionally to our frequent and extensive visits to the technical bodies and departments charged with overseeing and managing the program, which were primarily represented by the Office of Rural Construction in the Urbanism Department, Technical Directorate of El Khroub Municipality, and the Office of Rural Construction in the Directorate of Housing of the wilaya of Constantine.

Furthermore, a questionnaire was developed to gather diverse data on the subject and to assess the impact of these efforts on the rural population. We interviewed 200 recipients from the two programs across the municipality to get information on the following topics:

- The beneficiary of El Khroub's rural housing program, including the type of program he received, his previous and current residences, his age, his place of employment and the mode of transportation he uses, the number of family members in his household, the location of his children's school and the mode of transportation they use on a daily basis.
- The House: its type, ownership, acquisition procedure, intended usage, and connection to multiple networks
- The beneficiary's complaints and recommended solutions.

As a result, we've decided to divide our article into two min sections. The first section is a summary of the different housing programs produced in the rural areas of the municipality of El Khroub since the program's inception in 1984 and up to the most recent date of these programs in 2019. The second section is based on the answers of our questionnaires sent to the 200 people who have benefited from these programs in the municipality of El Khroub. It aims to shed light on the respondents' varied demographic and socioeconomic aspects, as well as their numerous difficulties, level of satisfaction, and different ideas for a better quality of life in rural areas.

RURAL CONSTRUCTION SUPPORT PROGRAMS IN EL KHROUB

A positive dynamic has developed in the sector of rural construction in El khroub municipality during the last few years, characterised by success and engagement. Between 1984 and 2019, the Rural Development Office at Constantine's Directorate of Housing reported that 1899 rural development projects in the municipality of El Khroub were completed by rural residents who received not only financial incentives but also construction materials from the state, as shown in Table 1.

Table1. The different rural construction support programs assigned to El khroub municipality between 1984 and 2019.

Execution Authority	Directorate of Agriculture	Municipality's Directorate of Urbanization	Municipality's Directorate of Urbanization	Municipality's Directorate of Urbanization	Municipality's Directorate of Urbanization	Municipality's Directorate of Urbanization	Municipality's Directorate of Urbanization
Type of construction	new construction of clustered housing	New self-constructed "individual"	New self-constructed (individual)	New self-constructed (individual)	Self-Build new orFor renovateto (Separated and clustered housing)	Self-Build new orFor renovateto (Separated and clustered housing)	Self-Build new orFor renovateto

Periode	Number of beneficiaries	Benefit type	Type of expendable land
1984-1985	54	This program impacted two remote settlements; the first (on Ain Al-Bey Road) saw the completion of 24 ground-floor housing units with ternet roofs. The second village (Saleh Darraj) was aware of the completion of 30 ground-floor dwellings.	farmland
1987	65	named the Rural Self-Building Program, which provided rural residents with building materials (200 bags of cement, 400 Bricks units, 04 windows, 04 doors, 04wooden pillars). The municipality is responsible for the earthworks. One of the program's requirements is that the beneficiary reside in a tin hut in the countryside and that the property on which the structure is to be built belongs to the municipality. Although 110 beneficiaries were identified, 65 individuals benefited from this initiative due to a scarcity of land. Beneficiaries were distributed in two areas: Allotment of Ain Nahhas and Isani Ammar	municipal lands
1994	50	The land must be owned by the municipality or the beneficiaries, but the owners must be unable to build. They were compensated with 15 million centimes at regular intervals based on the progress of the works. The 50 beneficiaries came from El Meridj, Al-Qashqash, Al-Qatar, as well as several people of the municipality's scattered areas.	Lands held by municipalities or individuals that are unable to build
1996	40	The same requirements as the previous program, but with a cap of 40 beneficiaries. This initiative benefited residents of the municipality's dispersed areas.	Lands held by municipalities or individuals that are unable to build
1998	73	It was provided following an examination of beneficiaries' files at the municipality level, with the assistance of the neighborhood committee, which determined each person's financial position. Each beneficiary received 20 million millimeters for new construction and 12 million centimeters for restoring or completing existing structures. Numerous places (Bou Raqaba Ain Nahhas, Oued Hmimim, Al-Qatar, Ain Al-Bey road, Bastarzi district, and Al-Baarawiya region) benefited from the project.	Lands held by municipalities or individuals that are unable to build
1999	50	The same restrictions as the previous program applied, and it was designed for landowners who are unable to build dwellings, with 50 beneficiaries hailing from numerous rural areas (El Meridj, Saleh Darraj, Al-Qatar, Oued Hmimim, Bir Duqish, Dahabieh, Ain Al-Kahla). Between 12 and 20 million centimeters were awarded to each beneficiary, depending on their financial circumstances. The beneficiary receives an advance payment of 8 million centimes to complete the floor and columns, and the remainder of the funds are used to complete the remainder of the house's construction.	Lands held by municipalities or individuals that are unable to build
2000-2004	50	The recipients received 25 million centimes for new construction or rehabilitation.	Lands held by municipalities or individuals that are unable to build

RURAL BENEFICIARIES BETWEEN SATISFACTION AND DAILY PROBLEMS

Our questionnaires revealed that 72% of our sample of 200 different dwellings benefited from the collective rural housing program, while only 28% benefited from the individual rural housing program. Before discussing their level of pleasure and the numerous issues they face while living in rural areas, we first describe their features, such as their geographical origins, their age group, the composition of the different households, and so on.

Socio-economic characteristics of beneficiaries

Beneficiaries' geographical origins: as illustrated in figure 2, the findings indicate that the vast majority of beneficiaries come from secondary communities and their surrounding territories, as well as from the region's scattered locations in the municipality of El khroub.

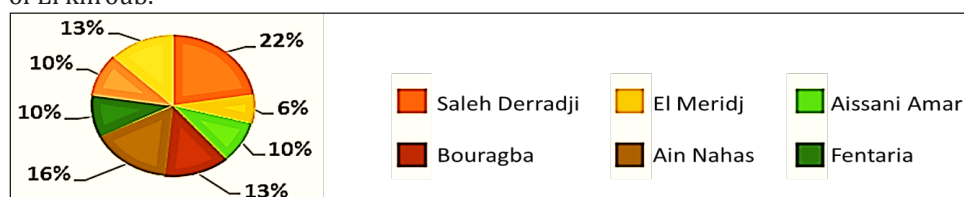


Figure 2. Beneficiaries' previous residency (Source: authors, Field investigation 2022)

Beneficiaries according to age group: Beneficiaries of the program range in age from their forties to eighties (see figure 3). Individuals in their seventies have the highest age of beneficiaries (30%), followed by those in their sixties (21%), those in their fifties and eighties (18%), and finally those in their forties with the lowest rate (9%). According to priority, rural aid programs served individuals of all ages.

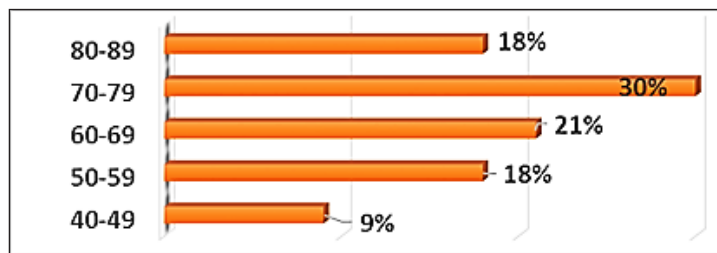


Figure 3. age range of the beneficiaries (Source: authors, Field investigation 2022)

Rural households' composition: The proportion of families with five people is the greatest at 29%, followed by households with four to six members at 23% as shown in table 2.

Table 2. The average number of occupants in a rural dwelling

Number of household members	03	04	05	06	07	09
%	19%	23%	29%	23%	3%	3%

Source: authors, Field investigation 2022

Beneficiaries' sectors of activities: According to the study's findings, 7% of the beneficiaries from these programs are unemployed. More than half work in administration and public services (49%) because they have a guaranteed income and health insurance. Agriculture came in second place with a rate of 36%, were those who live in houses that were given away on agricultural land are the main workers in this field. Followed by the trade sector with 12% due to increasing revenue and the industrial sector with a 3% due to El khroub's various industrial districts (see. Figure 4).

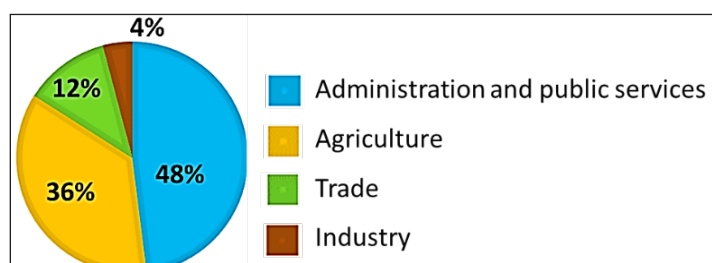


Figure 4. Beneficiaries' sectors of activities (Source: authors, Field investigation 2022)

Beneficiaries' place of employment: According to the beneficiaries' place of employment, El Khroub city (urban area) has the largest rate, accounting for 50 % of the overall sample, owing to the availability of jobs and the existence of several governmental institutions and equipment. Only 28% of the total sample is employed in Saleh Derradji's secondary agglomeration, with the rest dispersed among the rural areas as shown in figure 5.

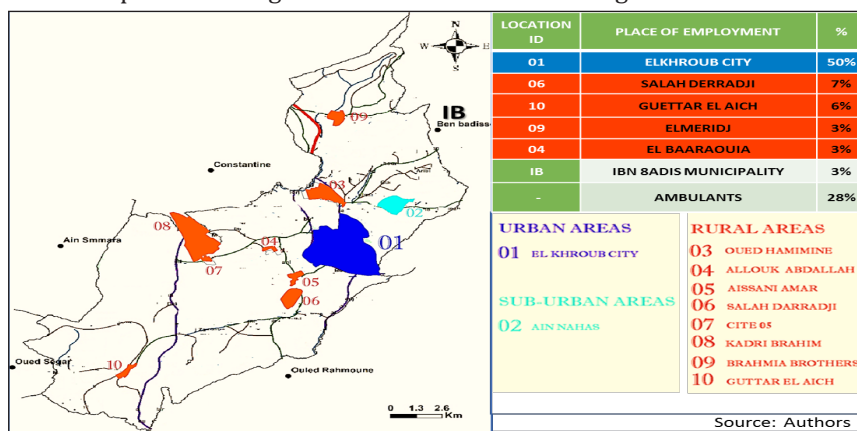


Figure 5. Workplace of the beneficiaries

Housing ownership and condition: Residents are compelled to either remain in their current housing or seek other accommodation due to their ownership of the housing and its condition. It becomes clear that 61% of the study sample are heirs to their previous residences and not the original owners, while 21% are tenants with privates seeking housing and 18% are those who own private housing acquired from the state as part of a program policy as shown in figure 4. Additionally, the statistics reveal that 79% of individual rural housing is based on contracts, whereas 21% of communal rural housing is based on certificates (see table 3). The majority of them stated that their past dwellings consisted of 79% older constructions and 19% huts (see table 3 and figure 6).

Table 3. characteristics of housing ownership and condition

Previous residence ownership		Type of previous housing		Current housing ownership	
Heirs	61%	old structures	73%	Certificate-based	21%
Tenants	21%	Huts	18%	Contract-based	79%
Owners	18%	Residential building	9%		

(Source: authors, Field investigation 2022)



Figure 6. examples of previous housing in rural areas in El khroub (Source: authors, Field investigation between 2017 and 2022)

Rural Residents' Daily Commutes

Mode of transportation used to get to work: Workplace location and family income have a considerable impact on how people commute to work, with 70% driving their own cars, 15% taking the bus, and 15% taking a truck, depending on the sort of work and commute distance (see Figure 7).

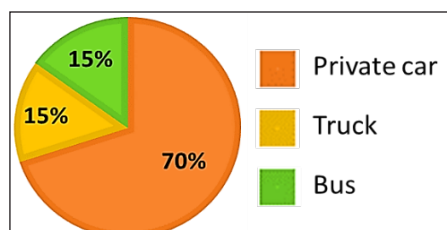


Figure 7. means of commuting to work (Source: authors, Field investigation 2022)

Mode of transportation used to get to school: As we inquired in the questionnaire about how children get to educational institutions, the results reveal that the majority (46 %) ride the bus because their schools (complementary and secondary) are located in a different region than their homes. Those who are transported by automobile by one of their parents account for the second greatest number (30%), while those who walk account for 24 % due to the residence's proximity to the school (see Figure 8). As a result of their proximity to their homes, elementary school students walk to school (Chettah & Messaci, 2014), while another class rides the bus. Fortunately, the municipality provides school transportation for pupils attending elementary school who reside in remote locations outside of primary school. On the other hand, university students rely on public transportation for long-distance trips (Chettah, 2021).

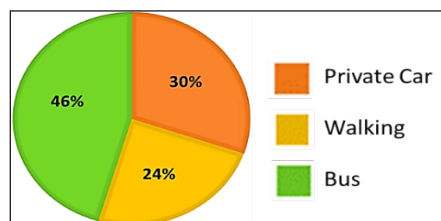


Figure 8. means of commuting to school (Source: authors, Field investigation 2022)

Mobility for shopping and supply: Shopping trips differ depending on the importance of the necessities. 82% of the sample purchases their items in El Khroub city, primarily from the market covering the neighborhood of 1600 houses and the weekly Souk (Chettah, 2021). Indeed, the rural population makes frequent visits to the numerous stores and huge marketplaces located in the city of El Khroub, which serves as the municipality's hub (Chettah, 2021). Whereas 18% of the shopping trips are made in the secondary agglomeration of Saleh Derradji (see figure 9).

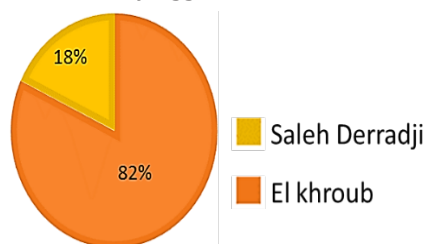


Figure 9. Rural residents' sources of supply and purchases (Source: authors, Field investigation 2022)

Residential Welfare Index

Provision of various networks (drinking water, natural gas, sewage, etc.) is a significant indicator of a beneficiary's willingness to remain in his or her home and not leave. However, 73% of rural residents indicated that their residence is completely networked, whereas 21% of households are not connected to the electricity grid at all (see Table 4). If 3% of houses have access to electricity and sewage, an equal amount of residences has access to power, gas, and sanitation (see Figure 10).

Table 4. Connected dwellings to network infrastructure

Connected dwellings	fully networked	Just electricity	Electricity and sewage	Electricity, gas and sanitation
%	73	21	3	3

Source: authors, Field investigation 2022



Figure 10. examples of rural housing connected to network infrastructure in the rural areas of El khroub municipality (Source: authors, Field investigation 2022).

Beneficiaries' Main Problems and Degree of Satisfaction

Despite the rural housing assistance programs, users acknowledged a desire for stability and sought out the easiest solutions to get peace of mind. The majority of difficulties revolve around the absence of sufficient public facilities and recreational locations for adolescents and children. As well as the problem of insecurity, as the majority of inhabitants use their homes exclusively for residential purposes, converting them to shrines (see. Figure 11).



Figure 11. the basic life in rural areas of kadri Brahim, a secondary agglomeration in the municipality of El khroub (Source: authors, Field investigation 2022).

None of these concerns, however, detracted from the residents' contentment with their surroundings and way of life, 94 % of them report that their lives have improved and that they are continuously seeking to adapt to their circumstances and those of their children (see figure 12). According to the subject, the appropriate way would be to complete a barracks for the national gendarmerie in order to prevent crime and thereby ensure citizens' protection (souls and property). Additionally, the development of public facilities for children's entertainment, as well as the establishment of a market for the purchase of necessities, without neglecting the development of roads connecting their area to secondary communities and the municipality center as a necessary component of meeting their needs and requirements.

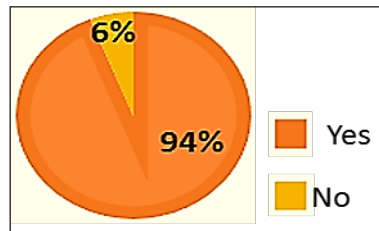


Figure 12. satisfaction of rural housing beneficiaries (Source: authors, Field investigation 2022)

CONCLUSION

Through this article we showed that rural housing in Algeria is a component of rural development policy and aims to stabilize the rural population and develop agricultural and rural areas by encouraging families to self-build adequate housing in their rural surroundings, as well as by encouraging the displaced population to return to the countryside, through the creation or expansion of existing housing or the construction of new housing. These initiatives are related to the income level of the average Algerian citizen who lives in the rural, allowing him to exercise one of his rights by obtaining adequate accommodation for himself and his family that fits the requirements of a healthy existence. It is distributed by the state to those who meet certain legal requirements. As a result, the Algerian legislator has created financial institutions concerned with financing rural housing, namely the National Fund for Housing (CNL) and the National Fund for the Equivalency of Social Services (FNPOS). The Joint Ministerial Instruction No. 06 of July 31, 2002 sets the conditions for eligibility to benefit from the National Housing Fund subsidies and determines the modalities of granting and using them and related to the preparation or expansion of existing housing or the construction of new housing since every natural person resides in the municipality, or carries out an activity in the rural environment , can benefit from state support for rural housing. whereas, the ministerial decision dated 06/19/2013 amended and supplemented in Article 03 specifies the modalities for obtaining direct assistance granted by the state for the construction of rural housing.

As for El khroub, the programs supporting rural housing in this municipality have been somewhat successful because they have accomplished the objectives for which they were developed. It covers numerous areas and portions of rural areas without discrimination or exclusion. Rural housing in El Khroub municipality has seen significant growth, as seen by the adoption of contemporary building materials such as reinforced concrete and French bricks. Otherwise, this attempt to adapt to new construction styles resulted in a gradual transformation of the traditional building design, which was characterized by mud and stone walls, a clay floor, and a tiled roof. Despite this transition, the old conventional pattern persists, particularly for individual residences, where dwellings are mixed with contemporary ones, with the older ones kept for storage or animal rearing. The houses completed as part of the aforementioned consolidation initiatives are single-family ground residences, and the majority of beneficiaries are repeat residents of the same area from the same family and having the same title.

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