

Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on Twelve Provinces Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Project

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Criteria-1 Relevance

Road construction and maintenance is still a high priority in Indonesia's national development plan. Roads are considered to be the primary transportation mode that renders the greatest contribution to facilitate people's mobility and goods transport for manufacturing and commercial industries. But roads without bridges in a land crisscrossed by rivers is like a car without transmission, a vital link is missing.

Defective bridges in various stages of disrepair caused significant problems of bottlenecks, disruptive to the smooth flow of traffic. Clogging and choking of road arteries, hampered and hindered recovery of the regional economy.

The Twelve Provinces Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Project indeed resolved many if not most of these problems. It also is crucial in enhancing more equal distribution of development results throughout the country by bridging regional economic disparities.

The implementation took much longer than originally planned because Indonesia passed through a wrenching upheaval through an economic crisis with downturn from 7% growth to -14%, and political transition from semi authoritarian military dominated government towards democracy during the Project phase.

Criteria-2 Impact

Repair and construction of the bridges and subsequent smoothening of traffic flows according to post implementation surveys showed significant reduction of access time to key living spots like markets, work place, medical clinics and schools. It showed overall betterment of living conditions.

Improvement of the local economies may not have been as robust as presumed, but it partly contributed to boost local growth. Though the benefits may take some time to reap. Also an important building block of future growth, the groundwork for an economic infrastructure to attract investments has been laid.

The process of implementation brought to light many discrepancies in the transition towards more decentralization in a democratic context, especially the different roles, responsibilities and authority between central government institutions (national planning council, department of public works) and the local government institutions at provincial and district levels.

The important question is how to create a better synergy and how to manage the transformation towards new demands of transparency, participation (how to involve stakeholders such as civil society and private local entrepreneurs) in policymaking, as well as new institutional systems development within the changed legal framework. Initiatives in this field by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation with Indonesian agencies could be a key success factor in future partnership cooperation projects.

Unintended, but perhaps not less important, building bridges also seem to have a symbolic value signifying connectivity or inter-connectivity, inspiring the freedom of coming and going. Raising aspirations and expectations, and hope. One villager in Aceh admiring a new bridge saying, I wish many more feeder roads and bridges will also come in the future.