

## **Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on Komerling Irrigation Project (2)**

Dr. Syafruddin Karimi  
Director, Center for Economic Research and Institutional Development  
CERID

### **Relevance, Impact**

Rice remains the main source of food for Indonesia that is populated by 200 million inhabitants. A persisting growth of population requires a sustained growth of rice production. In a situation of production failure, Indonesia has to import a substantial amount of rice from the world market. Importing rice demands foreign exchange that leads to burden international balance of payments. The goal for increasing rice production is a dominant strategy to save foreign exchange, maintain food security, and reduce rural poverty. However, the strategy to increase rice production requires a stable supply of water that cannot depend upon rainy season. The presence of irrigation infrastructure becomes a necessary condition to stabilize required water supply. Therefore, the construction of Komerling Irrigation Project II plays a strategic role to increase rice production.

A beneficiary survey was conducted to observe the impact of the project completion on local community. The survey results show that the completion of Komerling Irrigation Project II has improved the socioeconomic condition of rice farmers in the region. The survey has interviewed 99 farmers from Jaya Mulya village, Chempaka county, Ogan-Komerling-Ulu (OKU) District and Pahang Asri village, Buay Pemuka county, OKU district. In Jaya Mulya village, rainwater was formerly used in paddy fields. Now local residents are able to draw water systematically. They have entered the first harvest season after the completion of irrigation facilities. Although, the volume of rice production is still unclear exactly, the village Headman certainly confirm for the increased rice production, particularly compared with the volume of rice production before the project completion. While in Pahang Asri village, the project completion has supplied water through pump station and accessory canals. The project completion has enabled the village farmers to materialize double-cropping.

It is important to note that the project completion has also increased the participation of local farmers. Almost 80% of local farmers interviewed have witnessed a higher farming participation. As a result, almost 73% of respondents have experienced an improved household welfare. Furthermore, the improved household welfare stimulated rural economic activities as well as raised secondary school participation. More than 40% of sampled farmers have noticed a positive stimulus created by the project completion on the rural economy. At the same time, more than 37% respondents have sent their children to secondary school after the project completion.

In addition to economic impact, the Komerling Irrigation Project II has also brought up a positive social impact. Local community has benefited from water running through the project region not just for irrigation but also for domestic use. Almost 70% of respondents have become easier to secure domestic water. Now almost 54% of respondents are able to get clean water. They no longer depend upon water from wells and rivers.

Although rice production has not reached a stable level yet, the Komerling Irrigation Project II has created some positive socio-economic effects on local community. A stable supply of water running from Komerling Irrigation will certainly contribute toward a stable rice production level. Therefore, Indonesia may expect to significantly reduce rice import dependence and rural poverty. At last, it may expect to save limited foreign exchange to pay back public debt and achieve food security simultaneously.