

## **Third Party Evaluator's Opinion on Rural Areas Infrastructure Development Project (2)**

Dr. Bambang Permadi Soemantri Brodjonegoro  
Associate Professor  
University of Indonesia, Graduate Program of Economics

### **Relevance**

As the project was implemented to alleviate the poverty and isolation of rural people and to fill the economic lag for the non-Java region, two important objectives of regional development program during REPELITA VI, the Evaluator agrees that the project granted a high degree of relevance to the government policy as well as to the people's expectation. The Indonesia's economic crisis since 1997 made this project gained its relevance even more. Not only did it provide service, growth and job opportunity to the concerned villages at the time when they needed it most, but also help government to quickly respond to people's need at the time when the government's budget was unable to allow them to do so. The Evaluator also agrees to the report that the current PROPENAS put the rural development program as one of its highly prioritized goals, so that the project remained relevant until the recent time. The Evaluator considers that the coverage of the project, 7,580 of 28,000 under-developed villages all over the country (excluding Java and Bali islands), provided significant benefits to more poor people in Indonesia than any other development projects.

As for the project's scope, since it was expanded to double number of designated under-developed villages than original plan, and employed the budget within its original budget thanked to Rupiah's depreciation during crisis, the Evaluator considered that the project was very successful. This expansion contributed to make the project very efficient as well as to provide more benefits to more people. Another credit should also be given to BAPPENAS and district governments for their planning and coordination role that made the project run efficiently, as well as to local residents for their participation in both implementation and maintenance activities.

Taking into account survey results that indicated the resident's satisfactory level, in general, Evaluator considers that the project was fairly effective in achieving its intended goals, to the extent that for the major type of infrastructures-sub-projects (access roads), the satisfactory level was relatively high. The fact that the satisfactory level was decreasing within one year for some type of infrastructure showed that the project required very serious attention on maintenance activities to prolong its sustainability to the level as it was planned.

### **Impact**

The Evaluator concludes that, in general, the overall goal of the project has been achieved to the extent that the project successfully provided better connectivity for rural community and enabled any other rural developments in the future. It connected many rural villages to the regional centers, expedited regional governmental and political activities, as well as facilitated local economic development. Another positive side-benefit was that the project educated the local governments to respond to the role of decentralization of authority prior to the enacting of the Decentralization Law in 2001. Evaluator also agrees that the project brought about positive impacts on women betterment, sanitation, education, community activities, as well as other positive socio-economic improvements. Lastly, the project also gave positive benefit to Indonesia in general, as it increased national strength capacity and decreased the latent threat of political unrest in remote areas of Indonesia. According to the report, there were no environmental impacts identified, as the scale of the sub-project was small and no resettlement activity was required. On the contrary, some sanitation sub-projects improved environmental quality by eliminating waste dumps to the river.

Just as any other rural projects, there exists problem in project's sustainability, as there is gap between appropriate level of skill and expense required for proper OM activities, and the local residents' capacities to perform such duties. Considering that the scope of this project was so widely dispersed, such gap was inevitable, so that participation from local residents as well as support from local and higher administration were the only necessary solutions to maintain the sustainability. Evaluator may suggest that in order to increase the likelihood of project success and long-term sustainability, the level of involvement and readiness of local residents, from planning to execute to maintenance, should be included as important criteria in evaluating a rural project in the future.