THE EVALUATION OF RURAL EMPOWERMENT AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT SCALLING UP INITIATIVE (READ-SI) PROGRAM IN NORTH LUWU DISTRICT, SOUTH SULAWESI PROVINCE

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Abstract. *This study evaluates the Rural Empowerment and Agricultural Development Scaling-Up Initiative (READSI) Program in the District of North Luwu. The evaluation uses the descriptive qualitative approach and data from interview as well as documentation study while also consider various criteria of evaluation including effectiveness, efficiency, adequacy, alignment, responsiveness, and accuracy. The READSI program showed effectiveness in achieving most ofthe main goals, particularly in increasing the income of farmers and agricultural development. Thepositive impacts were presented through increasing of income and production and access to thefinancial institution. However, the program experienced inefficiency in its implementation, with anaverage of financing realization only reached 82%. This program has yet to be fully met the expectation to improve the income of farmers and had to address the issues of inequality regarding the distribution of assistance to farmer's households. The READSI program also showed positive responses in regard to the training program received by the family farmer though it has yet to meet the accuracy of expectation level on the assistance to the farmers. Overall, theREADSI program showed a significant potential in increasing the well-being of farmers in the North Luwu district North, especially in development agriculture and income improvement. However, some improvements are needed in term of efficiency, adequacy, alignment, and accuracy. We recommend further improvement and evaluation to be conducted to ensure that objectives of the program can be efficient and equitably achieved for greater impact to the farmer's group.*

Keywords: *Evaluation; Program; READSI; Farmers*

1. INTRODUCTION

The farmer's well-being is highly related with poverty issue in Indonesia. The farmers in Indonesia are categorized as the large group of socio-economic where mostof their livelihood are highly depended to agricultural sector. However, most farmers are fighting with poverty and limitation to access the resources and economy opportunities. The poverty and condition of farmers in Indonesia are affected by the following issues:

1. **The low Income**: In Indonesia, many farmers live with low income. They often havea cramped agriculture land and limited access to modern agricultural technology. Itis difficult to increase their income because most of the harvests are used to fulfill their daily needs and less remains to be sold.

2. **Climate uncertainty**. Farmers in Indonesia need to deal with the climate change issue. Most of the time, the irregular rainy season, flood, and drought can disrupt their crop yield and then affected to their income.

3. **Access to resources.** The access of farmers to resources such as fertile land, irrigation and fertilizer can be diverse. Some farmers have the ability to untie the poverty cycle because they own a fertile land and has access to those resources.

4. **Infrastructure and transportation**. Limited infrastructure and transportation system in the area rural will create difficulty for farmers to access the market and earn favorable price for their product.
5. **Social well-being**. In addition to economic problems, most farmers also deal with issues on education, health, and access to basic services. These can intensify the poverty condition in which they are live.

The constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (UUD 1945) guarantees the socialwell-being through various provisions particularly in the Articles of 27 to 34. Some ofarticles in the Constitution has mandated the citizens well-being, among others: Article 27 Paragraph 2: " Every citizen shall have the right to work and to earn a humanelivelihood". This article emphasizes the rights of citizens to have a decent living,including farmers. In the Article 28 H: " *Setiap orang berhak hidup sejahtera lahir dan batin, bertempat tinggal, dan mendapatkan lingkungan hidup yang baik dan sehat sertaberhak memperoleh pendidikan*." [Every person shall have the right to live in physicaland spiritual prosperity, to have a home and to enjoy a good and healthy environment,and shall have the right to obtain medical care". This article emphasizes the rights ofcitizens country for physical and spiritual prosperity as well as rights to healthyenvironment and education.

Moreover, in the Article 31 Paragraph 1: "Every citizen has the right to receive education". This means government own obligation to provide an equal access to education for all citizens, including farmers. Then Article 33 Paragraph 3 stated that " the land, the waters and the natural resources within shall be under the powers of the State and shall be used to the greatest benefit of the people". This article emphasizes that Indonesia natural resources including agriculture must be used for well-being of Indonesian people.

Therefore, the Constitution provides the legal framework for government to implement policies to support the well-being of farmers and reduce poverty among them. This includes effort to increase the access for armer to fertile land, agricultural technology, education, health, and supportive infrastructure agriculture. Furthermore, in difficult situation the government also plays important role in addressing the issues of climate uncertainty and provide social protection to farmer.

South Sulawesi highly depend on the agricultural sector as the backbone of itseconomy, whilst in general the farmer's condition has yet to be considered as prosperous. Farmers Exchange Value (NTP) in South Sulawesi is lower than the national average which shows greater attention and efforts are needed to increase thewell-being of farmers.

READSI program was launched in 2018 as extension of the READ Program whichwas implemented in 2008-2014. The aims of the program are to reducing poverty and empowering in six provinces and 18 districts, including North Luwu District. The program includes four main components namely: agriculture development, counseling, provision of production facilities (saprodi) and marketing.

North Luwu District is one of the districts that implementing the READSI Program. This district was given a maximum amount of IDR. 20,930,000,000 of grant by the Central Government as stated in the Law of the Indonesia Ministry of Finance regarding the Regional Grant Agreement between the Central Government and the North Luwu District Government. The policy taken by the North Luwu District Government is alignedwith the 2021 - 2026 Regional Medium Term Development Plan, namely strengtheningthe people's economy through downstream the management of natural resource-basedcommodities with the support of facilities and infrastructure in production, processing and marketing processes that are oriented towards food and energy security as well asimproving people's income.

The implementation of the READSI program in the District North Luwu addressedon four main components namely: (1) Development agriculture and livelihoods in ruralareas, (2) Improvement service counseling, provision Saprodi, and marketing,

(3) Availability of support on development policy and strategy (4) Program management support. The READSI program has started since 2018 and will end in 2025 and this program is being implemented by government to support in increasing the well-being of farmers and reducing the poverty level in the North Luwu District.

However, the facts on the ground show that poverty data in North Luwu District tends to vary from year to year. A significant increase in the number of poor people can be seen in 2021, followed by a significant decrease in 2022 as shown in the below table:

Table 1. Poverty Levels in North Luwu District

Year	Number (people)	Development (person)	Development (%)
2018	42,480	-	-
2019	42,430	-50	-0.001
2020	42,200	-230	-0.005
2021	43,150	950	0.022
2022	42,290	-860	-0.019

Source: BPS (2022)

Table 1 shows that the development of the number of poor people from 2018 to 2022 tends to fluctuate. In 2021 the number of poor people increased significantly to 950 people (0.022%) compared to 2020. However, in 2021 the number of poor peoplewas decreasing compared to 2021 to 860 people (0.019%).

The objective of this research is to evaluate the implementation of the Rural Empowerment and Agricultural Development Scaling-up Initiative (READSI) Program in North Luwu District, South Sulawesi Province.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Evaluation is a comprehensive research that carried out at a certain time toward a program or results achieved by an organization (Sardjo, 2017). Evaluation is aninherent and ongoing part of the government program process (Pratiwi et al., 2016). Furthermore, program evaluation is related to efforts to determine the effectiveness of program components in supporting goal achievement (Arikunto & Cepi, 2014, Tayibnapis, 2008, Nonci, 2017.

The program evaluation is also related to information gathering activities which areused to see the extent of the effectiveness of a program and as reference material in decision making (Nonci, 2017). Evaluation is carried out with the aim of determining thesuitability of the effectiveness of activities between planning and implementation as wellas the success of the program (Pantouw et al., 2017). Meanwhile, evaluation is usefulfor presenting information as input for decision makers (Yuriani & Sampurno, 2012). Evaluation can help decision makers to determine the follow-up to a program that has been implemented. In other words, evaluation plays a very important role because theresults of the evaluation determine the extent to which the program objectives have been achieved and can assist in decision making regarding the program (Tayibnapis, 2008).

This research uses William Dunn's theory which says that evaluation of a programcan be effective if it meets the evaluation criteria. Evaluation criteria according to (Dunn,2018) consist of effectiveness, efficiency, adequacy, alignment, responsiveness, and accuracy.

Theoretically, this research contributes to:

1. **Evaluation Theory**: READSI Program Evaluation can significantly contribute to the development of program evaluation theory, especially in the context of poverty alleviation and agricultural development in rural areas. The results of this evaluationcan inform theories about the factors that influence the success of development programs.

2. **Validation of Theoretical Models**: Evaluation results can help validate or redesign theoretical models about farmer welfare and poverty. This can help researchers understand the complex dynamics between development programs, farmers' socio-economic conditions, and program outcomes.
3. **Development of a Welfare Concept**: This evaluation can contribute to the development of a welfare concept, including what elements should be presented in understanding farmer welfare. This can help researchers to understand the important role of farmers in the economy and society.
4. **Development of Understanding of Program Implementation**: Evaluation resultscan also help researchers better understand how agricultural development programs should be implemented to achieve optimal results.

In practical, the benefit of evaluating the READSI program in North Luwu Regencyis an informed decision making. This evaluation will provide policy makers, including local governments, with valuable information about the effectiveness of the READSI Program. This can help in making decisions about the program sustainability, budget allocation, and improvement of related programs. The other benefit of this research is Program Improvements. The evaluation results can be a reference to redesigning a more effective and efficient development programs. This includes improvements in program planning, implementation, and management, as well as an increased collaboration with relevant parties. At last, this evaluation must contribute to empowering and improving the welfare of farmers in North Luwu District. This includesincreasing farmers' incomes, increasing their access to basic services such as education and health, and increasing their resilience to climate change and disasters. Thus, the evaluation of the READSI Program in North Luwu District has significant theoretical benefits for developing the evaluation theory and understanding farmer welfare, as well as significant practical benefits in improving farmer welfare, making aninformed decisions, and improving development programs.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted in North Luwu District, South Sulawesi Province fora period of six months from April to September 2023. This research consisted of stages including such colloquium, research permit process, data collection, exploration, data analysis, and report writing.

The research used a qualitative approach and the type of research applied was phenomenology which aims to provide a systematic, factual and actual description of the object under study.

The research data consisted of primary data and secondary data. The primary datawas collected from direct interviews with respondents who are the research subjects. The secondary data was obtained from various sources such as books, journals, newspapers and documents related to the READSI program.

The source of information consisted of various groups, including program beneficiary communities, policy makers at the district level, and representatives from various related institutions. The sampling technique was carried out using a purposiverandom sampling.

To evaluate the READSI program in North Luwu district, this research used six indicators as the research focus, namely effectiveness, efficiency, adequacy, alignment, responsiveness, and accuracy. Furthermore, research instruments also included questionnaires, in-depth interviews, Focused Group Discussions (FGD), and observations.

To validate the data, research focused on the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The data analysis process covered data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

The results of this research provided an in-depth illustration of the effectiveness and impact of the READSI program in North Luwu district as well as provide recommendations for program improvement.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Referring to criteria evaluation from Dunn's (2018), the result evaluation of theREADSI Program in the North Luwu District are as follow:

1. Effectiveness

Assessment of effectiveness criteria is related to whether a program or activity achieves the expected results/goals. To be specific, effectiveness is an assessment ofwhether the results achieved are in accordance with the stated objectives. Effectiveness is closely related to technical rationality, always measured in terms of product or service units or their monetary value. READSI has a long-term goal of improving the welfare of poor farming families in Indonesia and a short-term goal of empowering rural households, particularly those in Sulawesi, West Kalimantan and East Nusa Tenggara by improving the farmer's skills both individually and in groups. Therefore, they can build self-confidence and utilize resources in increasing income and living standards in a sustainable manner both in the agricultural and non- agricultural sectors. Thus, the READSI Program that focused to empower farmers by strengthening farmer institutions (farmer groups, GAPoktan, etc.) in order to increase their role as economic business units is very important. This related to the efforts to solve the problems effectively and efficiently in order to increase production and incomeof farmer households (farmer welfare).

Based on the research results and available data, some findings from the field areas follow:

a. Development of Agricultural and Livelihoods in Rural Areas.
   1) Increase in Production. The results of interviews with the informants reported that there was an increase in production due to the READSI Program, which shows the positive impact of the program.
   2) Increase in Income. The results of interviews with informants showed that there was an increase in income as the result of this program which can be seen as the achievement toward the objective to improve the welfare of farming families.
   3) Access to Financial Institutions. All informants stated that the program hadprovided access to financial institutions such as banks, microfinance institutions and informal financial institutions. This showed the achievement towards the goals of this program.
b. Improvement of Extension Services, Provision of Production Facilities (Saprodi),and Marketing:
   1) Business Improvement Program. Some informants reported various effectivenessof achievement towards activities such as training, provision of production facilities (saprodi) and business assistance, nevertheless the program still contribute positively to improving farmers' businesses.
   2) Effectiveness of Training Materials. The training material was rated as very goodby informants, with a high level of satisfaction regarding the suitability of the training material to needs, understanding of the material, and application of training results.
   3) Training Impact. In general, the training has positive impact to various aspects including increasing production, product quality, income, and post-harvest

capabilities. Regardless some informant stated that the training has less impact to them.
   4) Accuracy of Assistance. During the interview, most of the informants during said that the saprodi they received was appropriate.
c.   Support to Policy and Development Strategy:
   1) Infrastructure Development. Most informants experienced the positive impact of infrastructure development facilitated by the READSI Program, including farming roads, irrigation/drainage channels, posluhdes, and drying floors.
   2) Program Assistance. The majority of farmers received assistance from the READSI Program and the frequency was quite often, with a minimum of once a week.
d.   Program Management Support. Support from Local Government. All READSIprograms received full support from the local government, which the reflected good cooperation between the program and the government.

From the interviews result with the informants, it can be concluded that the READSI program in North Luwu Regency shows signs of effectiveness in achieving most of its goals, especially in terms of agricultural development and increasing farmers' income.However, there is still room for improvement, especially in achieving higher targets in terms of increasing production and income. In this case, this program has the potentialto continue to improve and provide a greater positive impact on the farming communityin the future.

2.   Efficiency
This criteria mostly assessed by linking the amount of effort expended to producea certain level of effectiveness. Efficiency is usually determined through calculating thecost per unit of a product or service. Policies that achieve the highest effectiveness withthe smallest costs are called efficiency.

In the context of efficiency, the implementation of READSI Program in North Luwu District showed several signs of inefficiency as below:
a.   Realization of Financing: The average realization of program financing in 2023 willonly reach 82%. This means that this program cannot carry out all allocated costs at 100%. This inefficiency can indicate an inefficient use of resources in program implementation.
b.   Rate of Change in Income: Although there was an 11.3% increase in income for farming households, this rate may be considered low in the context of efficiency. This may indicate that the costs incurred to achieve the increase in income may betoo high or not commensurate with the results achieved.

Therefore, the READSI program in North Luwu District requires further evaluation and improvements in terms of efficiency to ensure that the resources expended can produce more optimal results in accordance with the program's goals and objectives. Remedial measures and more efficient management of resources may be necessary to increase overall program effectiveness.

3.   Adequacy
This criteria assessment is based on how far a level of effectiveness satisfies the needs, values or opportunities that emerge the problem. Adequacy criteria emphasizethe impact and benefits of the program carried out.

Based on the adequacy criteria, the READSI Program in North Luwu Regency showed several inadequacies in achieving the stated goals. From the research results, only lessthan 50% of farming households reported an increase in income because of the program, while initial expectations were 80%.

In conclusion, this program has not fully met expectations in terms of increasing farmer income. There is a significant gap between the results achieved and the targets set. Therefore, further evaluation and improvements are needed in aspects related to

increasing income so that this program can be more adequate and effective in achieving these goals. Strategic steps may be needed to address these inadequacies and move closer to established expectations.

4. Equity

Equity refers to whether costs and benefits can be distributed to different groups of society equally. Policies based on equality are policies whose efforts can be perceived. A particular program may be effective, efficient, and sufficient if the costs and benefits are evenly distributed. The key to equity is justice or fairness.

Based on the equity criteria, the READSI Program in North Luwu Regency showed inequality in providing assistance to farming households. Only around 87.05% of farming households received assistance from this program, while the other 12.95% did not receive assistance. This indicates that aid is not distributed evenly to different community groups.

In the context of equity, there is an opportunity to improve aspects of providing assistance to make it more equitable and fairer, so that all farming households that meet certain criteria can benefit from this program. It is necessary to determine concrete steps that ensure equality in providing assistance so the goals of program can be achieved more fairly and effectively.

5. Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to the extent that a policy/program satisfies the needs, preferences, or interests of a particular group. This measurement is carried out through a survey to a targeted group. This criterion of responsiveness is important because an analyst can satisfy all other criteria (effectiveness, efficiency, adequacy, equity) – yet still fail to respond to the actual needs of the group that is supposed to benefit from a policy.

In the context of the READSI program in North Luwu Regency, farmer responsiveness can be assessed from various aspects. However, based on the data that previously presented, several points that can be used to evaluate the program's responsiveness to farmers' needs are as follow:

1. Training participation: the data shows that around 83.58% of respondents participated in training organized by READSI. This number shows a good response from farming families to the training offered by the program. Farmers who actively participated in training show their willingness to improve their knowledge and skills.

2. Improvement in various aspects: referring to the analyzed data, most respondents reported improvements in various aspects such as production, product quality, income and post-harvest capabilities. This shows that the program is responsive to the diverse needs of farmers, as many of them experienced improvements in these areas.

However, the data also shows that there are some farmers (7.66%) who participated in the training but did not experience improvement in any aspect. This may indicate that programs need to be more responsive to the specific needs and conditions of this group of farmers.

6. Appropriateness

This criterion is highly related to substantive rationality for assessing whether a policy or program provides benefit or useful results. Feasibility is a criterion used to select several alternatives to be used as recommendations by assessing whether the results of the recommended alternative are appropriate options.

Based on the collected data, it can be concluded that the READSI program has yet to reach the expected level of accuracy in providing assistance to farmers in North Luwu District. This can be seen from the fact that not all farmers experience improvements in all aspects targeted at by the program. Data showed that only a small percentage of

farmers experienced improvements in all aspects trained by the program, while the majority only experienced improvements in several aspects or did not experience any positive impact at all.

In the context of appropriateness, a more effective program will be able to provide equal benefits to all target groups, in accordance with the stated objectives. Therefore, the READSI program may need to re-evaluate the strategies and approaches used in providing assistance to farmers to ensure that more of them experience improvements in various relevant aspects. This will help increase the level of accuracy of the program and ensure that the assistance provided is truly beneficial for all target farmers.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conclusion

Based on the evaluation of the READSI Program in North Luwu District using Dunn's (2018) evaluation criteria, there are several conclusions as follow:

- Effectiveness. The READSI program shows signs of effectiveness in achieving most of its objectives, especially in terms of agricultural development and increasing farmer incomes. There is a positive impact that can be seen in increasing production, increasing income and access to financial institutions. This program has the potential to continue to improve and provide a greater positive impact on the farming community in the future.
- On efficiency, the READSI program faces inefficiencies in its implementation, with the average financing realization only reaching 82%. Even though the change of income rated positive, but it still be considered low in the context of efficiency. Evaluation and improvement are needed in terms on how to use the program resources efficient.
- Regarding adequacy, this program has not fully met expectations in terms of increasing farmer income. There is a significant gap between the results achieved and the targets set. Evaluation and improvement are needed on aspects related to increasing income so that this program can be more adequate and effective in achieving these goals.
- Moreover, on equity, the READSI program has yet be considered to equal in providing assistance to farming households. Household farmers who received assistance were only around 87.05% whilst about 12.95% of household farmers did not receive the assistance. Therefore, identifying steps that need to be taken is needed to ensure the assistance can be equitable distributed to achieve the program targets.
- On responsiveness, the training provided by the READSI program was positively responded by the farmers families. The program's responsiveness to the various needs of farmers was sufficient, although there are some groups of farmers who have not experienced improvement.
- Appropriateness. The READSI program has yet to nachieve the expected level of appropriateness in providing assistance to farmers. It is necessary to re-evaluate the strategies and approaches used to ensure accuracy in providing assistance to farmers.

2. Suggestions/Recommendations

Recognizing the importance of having greater impact of the READSI program, the study recommends to further undertake in-depth evaluations regarding the efficiency of the use of resource and program budget management. To increase adequacy, the program should review the current strategy to be able to increase farmer's income and achieve the set targets. Furthermore, the program needs to ensure that the assistance is distributed equally to different groups in society to achieve improved equity. In terms of responsiveness, the program can continue to monitor farmers' needs and

preferences to ensure that the training and assistance provided is appropriate to their conditions. Regarding accuracy, the program can re-evaluate the strategies and methods used in providing assistance, so that more farmers can experience significantand relevant improvements.

Appropriate evaluation and improvement of the READSI Program in North Luwu District will potentially bring greater benefits to the farming community, thereby more effective in achieving the program's goals.

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