

# Enjoying Their Own Electricity

## A Self-sufficient Energy Initiative in West Sulawesi

**Presenter**  
Linggi  
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**H**e is Linggi, the head of Batang Uru village, West Sulawesi. He made it possible for the inhabitants of his village were able to enjoy electricity using their abundant water resources. For years, there were no signs that the national electricity grid would be extended to their village. In the beginning, the community was not convinced, “Can water really produce electricity?!”

With limited funds, and the experience of the Turbine Foundation in producing electricity from turbines, slowly Linggi began to assemble the power plant. In 1993, his house was lit with neon lights. Soon, cables stretched to neighboring house.

Batang Uru village today is truly energy self-sufficient. In the Energy Self-sufficiency Competition held in Bali on 11-13 November 2008, Batang Uru village took first prize. It's clear, if a village is considered energy self-sufficient when it fulfills 60% of its energy needs with renewable energy, then the people of Batang Uru have easily reached 100%. This is because they have three power plants, which produce a total of 45 Kilowatts, distributed to over 200 families. Linggi himself has two turbines to fulfill the needs of his home and workshop. In addition, in the hamlet of Minanga, one of the power plants is being used to run a rice milling machine.

Electricity is not available all day long to the inhabitants. It's limited to night time, from 5 pm to 7 am, but this development has already exceeded their dreams. It's totally understandable that the people of Batang Uru are over the moon. “When the lights came on for the first time, we, as a family, killed a pig in thanks for the light,” recounted Veronica.

“With electricity, we can learn better,” said Aca, with a shining face. Dewi, a primary school student, agreed, “In the evening I can continue my studies because we have light.”

Hesty, who has worked as a midwife for twelve years, is no longer uneasy about providing medicine. “Before, because we used such a small lamp, I often had difficulty ready the writing on medicine containers. Sometimes I gave the wrong medicine.”

Economic activity also improved. Rice milling can now be undertaken. Economic activity can also continue into the night.

In contrast to the abundant water which can be used gratis, the people cannot use the electricity free of charge. Every household is charged ten thousand rupiah, and each TV is charged an extra five thousand rupiah. “Widows are only charged five thousand rupiah,”

said the wife of Pak Linggi, who is the secretary of the Village Turbine Maintenance Unit.

This success has attracted the interest of other villages. Around 50 villages now have power plants made by Linggi. His workshop is now no longer able to meet demand and his capital is not sufficient. For every village that requests his help, Linggi requires the inhabitants be involved from the beginning. "The key to success is the role of the community. The community must be involved from the beginning, beginning with assessment, surveys, planning, implementation, maintenance, and even development," explains Linggi.

Usually before a plant is built, a preliminary meeting with the community is held to form a Village Turbine Maintenance Unit (UPTD), which consists of a chairman, secretary, and treasurer. The UPTD manages everything, from machine repair, dues collection, and even administration and finance management. Every UPTD has two machines operators who are trained over two days, to learn about the running of the machines, and even how to take apart and put together a turbine. The UPTD is also given management and administration training. Therefore, once the electricity begins to flow, everything can be managed smoothly.

Aside from well looked after machines, the sustainability of the electricity system is determined by the water ways. "Therefore, the community must be aware that the forests, water and electricity are inseparable," said Samuel, from the Forestry Department. This means that the UPTD must also motivate the community to want to protect, maintain, and increase the quality of the water catchment area.

In the time of Indonesia's electricity crisis, because of power plants that rely on fossil fuels, what Linggi has achieved is impressive. From 1993 to 2009, he has built 115 power plants which have produced over 1.15 mega watts provided to 15,000 people. Once again, this is a true achievement.

Borrowing from the advertisement, Talk Less Do More, Linggi's reserved nature proves that electricity scarcity does not have to be accepted. Every community can produce and manage its own electricity.

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