

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### **Series 1 of SMERU's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: Book Launch and Talk show on "The Role of Independent Think Tanks in Evidence-Based Policy Formulation"**

**28 January 2021**

#### **Background**

The SMERU Research Institute (SMERU) is a nongovernmental independent institution for research and public policy studies. Its main mission is to produce high-quality research to support poverty- and inequality-related governmental, nongovernmental, and private policy formulation. SMERU conducts socioeconomic qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies, particularly on issues affecting the poorest and vulnerable communities in Indonesia. All SMERU's research results are accessible to the public for free from its website ([www.smeru.or.id](http://www.smeru.or.id)).

SMERU was established in January 2001 by several socioeconomic researchers, with its initial mission being to provide information and analyses for encouraging public policy dialogs on solving socioeconomic issues, particularly poverty and vulnerability to poverty, which are relevant to Indonesian people's welfare. For twenty years of its journey, SMERU still maintains this main mission and continue to increase its institutional capacity. While still focusing on poverty, vulnerability, and inequality issues, the topic it studies expands to include nearly every aspect of sustainable development goals. Its research has even covered almost every region of Indonesia. The number of its staff has also increased approximately three folds.

It is undeniable that this development that SMERU undergoes is contributed by many parties, both in terms of funding and the demand for data and analyses, and transparency to share information and open dialogs in policy formulation. The development of the research ecosystem and policy formulation system both in Indonesia and globally surely influence the development of SMERU significantly, just like any other research institute alike.

Having survived and developed for 20 years, SMERU still needs to endeavor to maintain its existence. Indonesia's raised status to a middle-income country, among other things, will significantly affect the funding from donor institutions and countries. Meanwhile, research funding and other supports from domestic sources are still highly limited. In this case, SMERU is of course not alone since many nongovernmental research institutes have been established in the last few years, and they too share the struggle to survive and develop their institutions. The development of these independent think tanks, especially those specializing in social and humanities issues—including socioeconomic ones, constitutes a crucial aspect for the development of democracy and formulation of better policies.

The enactment of Law No. 11/2019 on National System of Science and Technology gives a glimmer of hope for the development of research ecosystem in Indonesia and is expected to increase the quantity and quality of research in various disciplines. However, many analyses still see the great emphasis on nurturing state- or university-owned research institutes and the low attention given to social and humanities sciences. This is understandable since the government is currently facing the challenge of the country's weak research competitiveness—with its Global Innovation Index 2020 being ranked 85<sup>th</sup> out of 131 countries,

remaining unchanged for the last three years—despite the fairly great number of research institutes in government agencies and universities. Nevertheless, the increasing high-quality nongovernmental research institutes and synergy between governmental and nongovernmental research institutes, as well as other research ecosystem elements have the potential to increase Indonesia’s research competitiveness.

To celebrate its 20-year journey, SMERU would like to organize a series of discussions to share experiences and encourage dialogs on the role of nongovernmental think tanks and the attempts needed to build a conducive ecosystem for developing nongovernmental think tanks in social and humanities, particularly socioeconomic, fields. These series of discussions will begin with “SMERU’s 20th Anniversary: The Journey Developing Indonesia through Pro-Poor Policy Research” book launch and discussions in a talk show format on “**The Role of Independent Think Tanks in Evidence-Based Policy Formulation**”, which are financially supported by Knowledge Sector Initiative (KSI).

### Event Objective

This talk show event aims to facilitate multiparty dialogs to build a conducive ecosystem for developing nongovernmental socioeconomic research institutes.

### Participants

The participants of this event are representatives of the central (ministries/institutions) and regional governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), research institutes, academics, practitioners, donors, and the private sector. It is expected to be attended by 300 participants.

### Time and Venue

Date : 28 January 2021  
Time : 09:00–12:00 WIB (Western Indonesian Time)  
Venue : Webinar via Zoom application & YouTube Live

### Contact Persons

Heni Kurniasih (Mobile: 0812 8887 4145/e-mail: [henik@smeru.or.id](mailto:henik@smeru.or.id))  
Ratri Indah Septiana (Mobile: 0816 1361 514/e-mail: [rseptiana@smeru.or.id](mailto:rseptiana@smeru.or.id))