

# **An Assessment of the Effectiveness and the Awareness of Wakatobi**

## **Marine National Park Management Plan**

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### **Background:**

The Wakatobi Marine National Park was designated in July 1996 by the Ministry of Forestry. The information used as a basis for the plans for the National Park came from surveys of the marine habitats in the area carried out in 1995 by Operation Wallacea volunteers. A baseline report of the area was then compiled and used by a private consultant to draw up a management plan for the park which conforms with national guidelines. From this the WMNP was formed. The park covers 1.39 million hectares of the Tukang Besi Archipelago containing many pristine reefs. There are about 40 villages throughout the archipelago mainly on the 4 main islands of Wangi-Wangi, Kaledupa, Tomia, and Binongko. The majority of the population are subsistence fishermen, farmers or traders. There are 2 main ethnic groups – (i) The land based Wakatobi people, who make up 95% of the population; and (ii) the sea dwelling Bajau people. Although the Wakatobi's dominate the region politically and economically, it is the Bajau who do the large majority of the fishing. Therefore our study will focus primarily on the Bajau because these people will be more affected by the rules of the National Park.

This report outlines the aims, methods and initial conclusions of the survey carried out into the perceptions of the national park both from a government and community level 4 years on from its establishment.

### **Aims:**

1. A summary of the National Park management plan.
2. A comparison between theory of the management plan and the reality in the park.
  - Is the management plan enforced?
  - Are all its aims met?
  - What are the rangers responsibilities and what they actually do?
  - What are the current problems in the park - according to the NP authorities

- according to local fishermen

3. Why is the management plan not working?
  - Was there initial community input into the management plan?
  - When and how was the management plan presented to the community?
  - Awareness and satisfaction with MNP rules and their enforcement
    - to include a comparison between people of Kaledupa and Bajau (primarily from Sampela)
  - How do the NP authorities and the fishermen think the management plan can be improved?
  
4. The result of this process is to enable suggestions to be put forward as to how to improve the management plan to ensure the future success of the park.

### Methods:

1. Translation of the park management plan executive summary.
  
2. Interview with Pak Haricot (the head of WNP) – to confirm and expand on the management plan; how the national park was set up; how the park is run (i.e. what are the ranger's responsibilities?); what are the main problems in the park and what are his future plans?
  
3. Interview with the Head of Conservation and rangers – to reconfirm some of the points contained in the management plan, but more specifically to gain information about the rangers and their training and their duties within the park.
  
4. Interview with park rangers on Kaledupa – to find out if they were carrying out their responsibilities, as laid out in the management plan, properly and find out their opinions on how management of the park could be improved.
  
5. Questionnaires with fishermen. These were initially piloted on Tomia, where we discovered difficulties with some of the questions as the fishermen simply did not understand the concepts we were asking about. The adapted questionnaire was carried out on 20 fishermen around Sampela,

with Pak Mantis (local government statistician) asking the same questions in villages around Kaledupa. The aim of the questionnaire was to determine fishing habits, awareness and satisfaction of park rules and their enforcement, focusing particularly on the activities of and the perceptions of park rangers.

6. Interview with Ili (head of Sampela) – to establish amount of communication between national park authorities and the Bajau before and after the park was set up; rangers activities; success of the park; effects on the community and possible solutions for the future.

## Findings

Our findings indicate a number of things about the perceptions of the Wakatobi Marine National Park. The views from a management level in comparison with those from a community level are often contradictory.

The head of the park sees it as being a success but with some room for improvement if finances allowed. One of the major problems he identified was a lack of resources; for example for a staff of about fifty five rangers, the park has only two speed boats in operation. The operational budget for these is so low that the rangers on Kaledupa reported that even if an incident is reported they often have insufficient fuel to follow it up. This was reiterated by some of the Bajau fishermen who claimed to have reported instances of bomb fishing but the rangers were unable to act. The funding of the park is controlled by Jakarta and consequently is not an easy issue to address.

One area of the park management that is currently under review is the zonation system. The current boundaries have proved unsuccessful and a revised zone system is currently being proposed. We discovered a lot of confusion and a lack of knowledge amongst the fishermen regarding where they were allowed to fish. Around half were familiar with the old system which involves obtaining permits to fish certain outer reefs from the local government office on Kaledupa. It was noted that as the park is still young the resource use is still mainly controlled by the local government. One of the problems with the zones is that the classifications are a national standard which are not necessarily appropriate for the Wakatobi park. From the fishermen we found that some were unaware of any restrictions on where they are permitted to fish whereas others knew of some restrictions but none were fully aware of the zones as they presently stand. The concept of excluding fishermen from certain reefs was extremely unpopular with the Bajau suggesting an alternative approach needs to be

found. Without far more frequent patrols from the rangers the zones will remain almost impossible to enforce on a community that struggles with the very concept behind conservation.

Far more communication is needed between the rangers and all communities, particularly the Bajau. The Bajau on Sampela had almost all had some contact with the rangers but the village head told us there had been only three official meetings with the rangers since their arrival in 1997. One of the fundamental problems is the language barrier between the rangers who do not speak Bajau and the Bajau who mostly do not speak mainstream Indonesian. This, coupled with the Bajau's inherent suspicion of outsiders makes effective communication almost impossible. We identified a possible opportunity for Bajau to train as park rangers as some fishermen felt that Bajau rangers would be more readily accepted and communication would be easier. Although some fishermen claimed the origin of the rangers would make no difference the head of the village concluded that the only way rangers would ever be accepted and therefore perform an effective role in the community is if they were Bajau.

Once effective lines of communication were in place it would be possible to negotiate some community based conservation. Due to the lack of consultation before, during and since the implementation of the WMNP, community involvement has been almost non-existent. If a success is to be made of the park the local communities must be consulted and actively involved.

Some of the results from the fishermen questionnaire's indicate that there are some areas where there is definite potential for co-operation between the park and the locals. One of the main issues raised is that there is consensus that fishermen from outside the park should not be allowed to fish there. Although this is one of the objectives of the park and numbers have been reduced there is still more that could be done to control these outsiders. This is one area where locals could be involved; if they felt that rangers were committed to keeping outsiders out it could be a basis for forming positive relations. Upon speaking to the head of Sampela it was said that the villagers would even provide boats and fuel for the rangers to follow up reports of outside fishermen nor users of destructive techniques but this offer had not been taken up by the rangers. Destructive fishing techniques are another area of common ground between the National Park Authorities and the locals. Although it was acknowledged that these practises, particularly bombing, still occur, the consensus seemed to be that this should be stopped. There was some recognition among the fishermen of the consequences of such destructive techniques for the fish populations dependant on the reefs and the reefs themselves. A similar system of co-operation between rangers and locals could be appropriate for controlling these illegal practises. If

successful links were to be made this could go some way to compensating for the lack of resources available to the rangers. This in turn would create better relations and initiate further community based conservation.

At present one of the apparent voids in National Park policy regards the use of compressors. Our survey revealed that the vast majority of fishermen disagreed with the use of compressors on the grounds that they allow such intensive collection of some resources such as lobster and sea cucumbers that there is often none left for traditional fishermen. Another issue connected to the use of compressors is that their use is often associated with the use of cyanide which is nationally banned throughout Indonesia. It seems ironic that these clearly unpopular devices are not outlawed by the park. The head of Sampela commented that this was possibly due to the fact that the minority of fishermen who are in support of these devices are those who are politically recognised because of their marginal wealth and who would stand up to the authorities whilst other fishermen who suffer from their use remain silent. The banning of compressors would surely be another way to build bridges to gain badly needed community support.

These are just a summary of our findings from the interviews carried out in Sampela and on Kaledupa. The findings from Kaledupa were slightly different and possibly reflect the fact that the population there as a whole are not so totally reliant on the fish resources for their economic survival whereas the Bajau are solely reliant on what resources they can collect from the sea and therefore any decisions regarding the management of these resources will affect them more acutely.

## Conclusions

In conclusion it seems that there are some positive opportunities emerging from the problems of this National Park. Despite ongoing problems of communication and awareness there is potential for some community based conservation if the authorities are willing, with the support of organisations like Operation Wallacea, to try to adapt the system to compliment the livelihoods of the people that depend on the resources of the park.