

# **A comparison of the views of the indigenous fishermen of the Wakatobi Marine National Park of Sulawesi, on fish resources and conservation efforts**

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## **Introduction**

The Wakatobi Marine National Park designated in July 1996, covers 1.39 million hectares of SouthEast Sulawesi in Indonesia. Within the park there are two main ethnic groups, the Wakatobi people and the Bajo. The land based Wakatobi people form 95% of the population and are more economically and politically dominant over the Bajo. It is the Bajo however who carryout the majority of the fishing activities. In the past the Bajo were nomadic sea gypsies spending the main part of their lives living on the sea in boats. The Bajo have now formed settlements on coastal areas and occupy houses raised by stilts or rock platforms on reef flats away from the shoreline. The Bajo are still highly dependent on the sea as a vital resource. The Wakatobi Marine National Park authorities have been unable to successfully police the whole park area and are planning to empower the local communities via a stakeholder committee. The committee will be comprised of people from villages from the island of Kaledupa and Bajo settlements. The committee will be responsible for managing a variety of activities within the area to maximise benefits to the overall community and to maintain or increase biodiversity levels. This study is based on interviews carried out with fishers in the Bajo village of Sampela and the land based fishers from adjacent island Kaledupa.

## **Objectives**

Investigate the views of the Bajo and the Kaledupan fishers, with three main aims.

To compare the views of the Bajo with the Kaledupan fishers towards;

1. The status of fish stocks
2. Existing conservation methods
3. Fishery regulations

The results from this study will be used to increase understanding of the fishers views and to highlight common issues which may aid co-operation between the Kaledupans and the Bajau in the proposed stakeholder committee.

## **Methodology**

1. Semi structured interviews were conducted with the use of interpreters. For Indonesian to English interpretation one translator was sufficient, where fishers spoke only local dialects (Bajo or Kaledupan) an extra interpreter was required to translate to Indonesian.
2. A total sample of 50 fishers were interviewed, 25 Bajo fishers from the village of Sampela and 25 Kaledupans fishers from the villages of Laulua, Sombano and Olo.

3. Fishers were interviewed at their homes individually, and were selected at random from across the villages depending on their availability during the time of the visit to the village.
4. Two interviews were conducted, the first collected demographic information; general views on fishery status and management.
5. A second interview was conducted where possible using the same fishers to obtain opinions on different types of regulations.
6. Further interviews were also carried out with the rangers and the Kapala Desas of the village of Sampela and Lauhua.

### **Preliminary Results**

Generally most fishers have observed a decline in fish resources and an increase in the number of fishers. This however is not seen a problem due to the fact that fish prices are greater now and it is easier to make a living. Many of the fishers have not heard of the National Park although they are aware of the rangers and can give examples of the things they forbid. When asked who should make the rules, the responses were divided between the government and the community with more Kaledupans suggesting the government. Both groups of fishers suggest that it would be difficult to have the Bajo and the Kaledupans work together.

On average of all fishers interviewed 90% or above were in agreement that there should be rules for the following

1. stopping outsiders from Kaldeupa fishing
2. preventing bomb fishing
3. poison fishing
4. the use of compressors
5. zoning agar areas

Also 92% of the fishers interviewed approved of the existing sanctuary zone.

### **Preliminary Discussion**

The marine resources within the Wakatobi Marine National Park are essential, providing the local population with their main source of protein. The environment itself also has an intrinsic value, which is attracting interest from outside of Indonesia. It is therefore vital that the resources are conserved for future generations to both utilize and appreciate. The fishers are already aware of a decline in fish resources, many also suggest reasons for the decline. The status of the fish stock is still undetermined and has yet to be managed successfully. The proposed development of a Stakeholder Zone will encourage conservation efforts at a community-based level. Cultural differences and varying opinions divide the Bajo and the Kaledupans. These differences must be acknowledged and addresses or they may hinder the progress of the Stakeholder Zone committee.