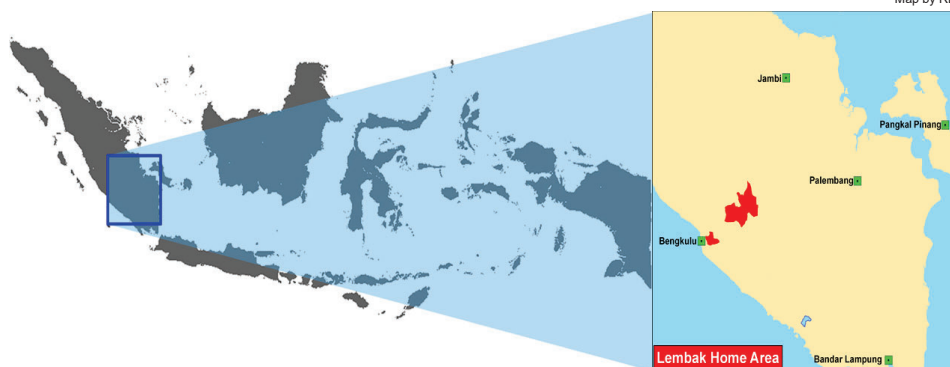


LEMBAK



Photo by RD



Map by RD

Demography	Lembak Language	Status
Location: Sumsel, Bengkulu Population: 230.000 Major Religion: Islam	Bible: No Jesus Film: No Online Media: No	Believers: 10 ⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ Engaged: Yes Indigenous Church: 0

Identity and Location

The Lembak live in the provinces of Bengkulu and South Sumatra. In South Sumatra, they live scattered throughout the entire region of Lubuk Linggau City. These areas include the Muara Beliti, Muara Kelingi, Batu Kuning Lakitan Ulu Trawas, and Tebing Tinggi districts in the Musi Rawas Regency. In the Bengkulu Province, they live in the Padang Ulak Tanding and Sindang Kelingi districts in Kepahyang Regency. They also live in Talang Empat and Talang Empat districts in Central Bengkulu Regency. In Bengkulu Province they call themselves “Sindang Kelingi” or “Lembak Sindang Merdeka” (meaning “free”).

In the areas of Muara Beliti and Muara Kelingi, they call themselves the Saling people because they live along the Saling River. However, other ethnic groups around them call them the Cul people because the word cul in their language means “no”.

Society and Culture

The Lembak’s main source of livelihood is through cultivating rice in both irrigated and un-irrigated fields. Not many of them work in the rubber plantations. Many Lembak also have small-scale brick-making factories in rural villages. The women help work in the rice fields and also manage the household. Lembak men often leave their home area in order to gain more work experience elsewhere. They don’t go as a group, but there is an obligation of dua beradik which means they must go with an older or younger relative. Their other common means of livelihood is as coffee and rubber farmers. When working in the coffee plantations, they don’t work the rubber plantations. But when they finish working on the coffee they return to the rubber. They actually rely more on rubber farming because rubber can be harvested daily to provide income for the community’s daily needs.

Lembak houses are built on stilts with a large open room. Most houses have a ladder beside them. They have more furniture than the Lintang and Rawas people who live nearby. The whole area now has electricity available. But for cooking the Lembak use kerosene and wood.

Unlike groups that have come from other areas, the Lembak sell various types of produce, such as katuk leaves (star gooseberry - a type of bush yielding edible leaves and berries), cassava leaves, guava, bananas and more. The Lembak often give away their crop yields because they only grow them in small quantities and they would be ashamed to sell their produce to their own relatives. Those who don’t have their own produce ask for some for their personal needs, but it is not sold.

Beliefs

Most Lembak people have embraced Islam, although a large part of the community still adheres to animistic beliefs also. Most believe in the power of unseen spirits inhabiting sacred places. The services of a shaman are often sought for healing the sick, exorcising evil spirits, and for other reasons. In one notable case involving religious differences, a Christian volleyball player’s house was burned down. It started with a volleyball match between residents and transmigrants (among whom one player was a Christian). The Lembak team was defeated and, not being satisfied with the outcome, they were angry and burned down the house of the Christian player.

Needs

They need assistance in developing small businesses and home industry. Help with marketing coffee would also greatly help the Lembak community, which is very dependent on coffee farming. ^(E-RD)