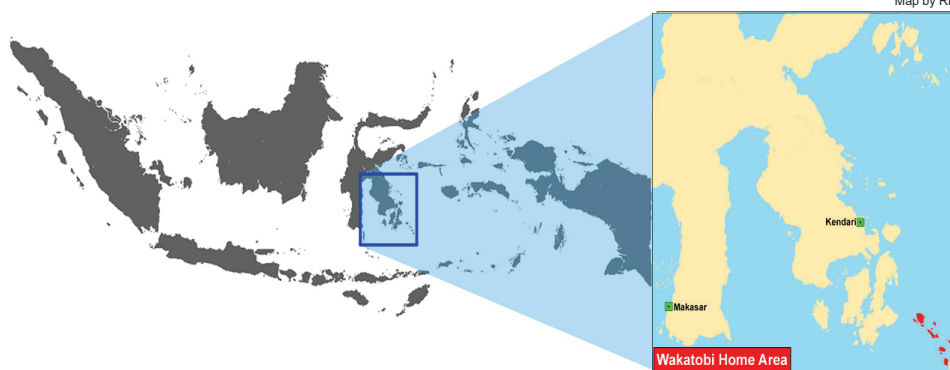


# WAKATOBI



Photo by RS



Demography	Wakatobi Language	Status
Location: Southeast Sulawesi	Bible: No	Believers: <14
Population: 275.000	Jesus Film: No	Engaged: Yes
Major religion: Islam	Online Media: No	Indigenous church: 0

## Identity and Location

The island people formerly known as *Tukang Besi* (Iron worker / Blacksmith) in Southeast Sulawesi is now more commonly referred to as the Wakatobi people, which is an acronym from the four islands they live on: Wangi Wangi, Kaledupa, Tomia and Binongko, in Wakatobi Regency. So the name Wakatobi has been used for some time and describes well the indigenous community of these islands. They are neighbors of the Wolio (Buton) and Muna peoples.

The Wakatobi consist of nine indigenous communities: Wanci, Mandati, Liya, Kapota, Kaledupa, Waha, Tongano, Timu dan Mbeda-beda. Each island has its own dialect, but people from different islands can understand each other when communicating.

## Society and Culture

The Wakatobi base much of their livelihood on agriculture because of their rich soil. Their main crops are corn, rice and cassava. Many Wakatobi are fishermen or boat builders.

However, since economic opportunities are lacking, many sail to other locations in search of work. Because many choose to stay in their new areas, the Wakatobi people are now found scattered throughout much of eastern Indonesia.

Seafaring is considered man's work, along with ironworking, boat building, brass and silver manufacturing and much of the heavier work in the fields. Pottery, weaving, preparing meals, cleaning and managing the family's money are the women's primary jobs.

Wakatobi houses are raised above ground and built of sturdy planks. The roofs are made of small planks, palm

leaves or iron, and the houses have only a few small windows. Most villages have markets where woven silk, cotton and other fabrics are traded.

Although parents are still involved in arranging marriages, young people today have freedom to choose their spouses. After marriage, the couple will live with the bride's parents until the husband can afford to build his own home. Both father and mother are active in raising their children.

## Beliefs

The Wakatobi are Muslim, but they still believe in various kinds of supernatural forces. Ancestral spirits are considered to bring blessings and help in some instances but may also bring bad luck and illness. The Wakatobi people also have a high regard for nature, because it is God's creation.

Sufi Islamic mysticism abounds, with its focus on experientially knowing God. Many people also believe in reincarnation because of the influence of the ancient Hindu kingdoms of the past.

## Needs

The Wakatobi need assistance in improving their physical infrastructure in areas such as electricity and clean water supplies. They also need training in appropriate technology and better formal education.

They also need more medical clinics and medical personnel. The rising tourist industry has great potential because of the exquisite marine life in this area.

