



PEOPLE GROUPS: BAKA

The Baka people of southeastern Cameroon are the largest of several pygmy groups scattered throughout Central Africa. Pygmy people tend to be small in stature, with adult men not taller than 155 centimetres.

The Baka worship the forest spirit called *Jengi*, and see his favour as vital to sustaining their way of life.

Most Baka live in small camps or villages, scattered throughout the forests of the Congo River basin. They are hunter-gatherers, collecting their daily food from forest animals and plants. As more trees are harvested and more animals are disturbed, it is increasingly difficult to sustain their families. Many have started planting fields to supplement their meager diet. Most Baka go to work for neighbouring farming tribes, but the pay is low and they are often treated poorly.

Other tribes assign them a low status due to their physical stature and lifestyle. Yet they also revere their “spirituality” and connection with nature, coming to them for medicines and potions.

The Baka have a poor self-image, seeing their denigration

by others as evidence of their inferiority. Alcoholism and drug use contribute to the breakdown of society.

Some missionaries from World Team have been among the Baka for more than 16 years, learning their language and culture and doing evangelism and discipleship. They are working to provide training for pastors and leaders, encouraging them use their culture and skills to make a better life and a stronger church for their people.

The few church leaders often work for neighbouring farmers. This takes them away from their church work.

Their nomadic life and remote locations make formal education difficult. Most Baka use oral methods to pass down traditions. A mission agency, SIL, has created a set of 37 Bible stories to be used for evangelism and teaching.

Though there are some small, growing churches, many camps and villages have no strong gospel witness. John Paul Gouffo, a Cameroonian with Christian Missionary Fellowship International (CMFI), is one of the first local missionaries to the Baka.

At a Glance

- The Baka believe in a creator god, *Komba*, but see him as distant. They instead follow *Jengi*, the spirit of the forest, trusting him to care for them.
- Hunting and fishing are vital to Baka culture, and they dam up streams to catch fish.
- Many Baka are too busy with daily survival to consider spiritual things.

Pray for

- Fruitful work by the linguists who are learning the Baka language and translating the Bible into it.
- The Lord to answer the prayers of the Baka Christians, to build their faith while in their isolated situations.
- Unity and blessing among the various churches and ministries involved with the Baka, and for Baka believers to rise up and reach their own people.

Sources: Wikipedia and World Team missionaries

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