

One Heart

Global Music Exchange



Cradled in the heart of the African rainforest live one of the oldest and most sensitive musical cultures on Earth. Here you find the Baka hunter-gatherers. Living in a world of natural sounds where to listen well ensures survival, they have become extraordinarily musical. Song and dance have always permeated their lives for ritual, fun and to unite and create harmony in the group. Even the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt called them “The Dancers of the Gods”.

Martin Cradick and Su Hart first visited the Baka in 1992 and a lifelong musical friendship has grown and evolved. Martin’s many recordings provide royalties which are used for forest projects decided on by the Baka themselves. Traditional forest music, guitar-based songs (by the band Baka Gbiné formed by the Baka themselves in 2004) and forest based contributions in Martin & Su’s own band Baka Beyond have found a wide international audience. The charity, Global Music Exchange named One Heart (Booma Gbodé) by the Baka women, was originally created to manage these projects financed by record sales and royalties.

Projects funded by the Baka’s music include:

- Building a large timber-framed ‘music house’ in the rainforest
- Forming a Baka association, giving them legal rights
- Providing National ID cards for all adult Association members
- Providing housing in the village Gbiné around the music house.
- Financing emergency medical care.

For over 20 years there has been a government programme to relocate the Baka from their traditional forest home to roadside villages. Here the Baka’s access to both traditional forest medicines and clean water is severely restricted. They are discriminated against and are discouraged from continuing with their egalitarian, traditional way of life. The loss of these traditions both greatly reduces the status of the women and robs the men of their dignity, since being prevented from hunting they are forced to work on plantations as virtual slave labourers, earning less than \$1 for a hard day’s work - not enough to support a wife and family.

The Baka are facing more and more problems which are reaching crisis point. Their forest is being taken over by logging, mining, safari and plantation concessions, and also by conservationists such as WWF who actively support the government’s policy of settling the Baka in roadside villages. Well-meaning directives to allow the Baka to hunt sustainably are not implemented on the ground, leaving the Baka believing that it is illegal for them to hunt. Although they still do hunt out of necessity, they no longer take their children, as they are afraid of being caught and beaten by “eco guards”. As a result their children are not being taught the forest skills vital to their future survival.

Child mortality is high, mainly due to easily treated diseases such as diarrhoea, and the hard physical labour in plantations leads to very high incidences of hernias. In 2012 the first suicide we had come across occurred. A young man (and a brilliant dancer) could no longer see a positive future and deliberately ate a poisonous fruit.



Global Music Exchange (GME) believes in helping the Baka on two fronts. On one side we are fighting for the Baka’s basic human right to live in their forest (as enshrined in the UN Human Rights charter, signed by the Cameroon government), whilst on the other we are helping create a better environment and more opportunities for those Baka that decide to live in the villages.



Sobi, who died in childbirth

Lekeweh and her baby, who died before his first birthday



Registered Charity Number 1057668



In order for our projects to continue to grow we now need to find different means to finance them. You can find more information about our projects and how to get involved at:

www.1heart.org

To donate to our current health project go to:

globalgiving.org/projects/baka-health