



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
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## Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage:



## Traditional Foodways of the Isukha community of Kenya



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Intangible  
Cultural  
Heritage

# Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage: Traditional Foodways of the Isukha Community of Kenya

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Safeguarding Intangible  
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- Teachers and pupils of Muraka and Shihuli primary schools in Isukha and Chemolingot and Churo primary schools in East Pokot.

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# Foreword

Kenya became a state party to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2007 with a strong commitment to the safeguarding and promotion of the intangible cultural heritage of its communities, groups and individuals.

Since 2010, with financial support from the Japanese Funds-In-Trust, UNESCO has been collaborating with the Kenyan Government in implementing a project, "Safeguarding traditional foodways of two communities in Kenya", Isukha and East Pokot. The aim of the Project is to revitalize the traditional foodways in these two communities by: identifying and inventorying their traditional foodways; encouraging these communities to appreciate traditional food practices; and raising awareness in Kenya about the endangered diversity of its traditional foodways.

Traditional foodways involves practices transmitted within a community concerning the growing, harvesting, collecting, preparation and consumption of food, including the provision of ingredients and the roles of all people involved. Traditional foodways, both those related to everyday life as well as those associated with special occasions (such as rituals, social practices, and festive events) constitute an important part of the intangible heritage of communities in the World. In Kenya, as in many countries, because of globalization, modernization and urbanization traditional foodways are being abandoned for western style foodways. The younger generation is particularly affected as they are no longer aware of the traditional foodways and their associated traditions and practices of their communities.

The Project targeted young people and worked with 2 primary schools in each of the two communities: Muraka and Shihuli Primary Schools in Isukha; and Churo and Chemolingot Primary Schools in East Pokot. Teachers and parents helped school children document information about the various foodways within their community, developing a manual which provided the school children with a step by step procedure on how to identify, document and inventory traditional foodways of their communities, covering aspects such as: types of traditional foods; traditional foodways seasons; harvesting and preparation methods; preservation methods, nutritional values; as well as associated rituals.

The inventories that were elaborated through this Project have been used to produce this Book on "Traditional Foodways of the Isukha Community of Kenya. The Book provides a mirror into the rich and diverse traditional foodways of the Isukha Community and their associated traditions, beliefs, taboos and practices.

UNESCO would like to express its profound gratitude to the Government of Japan for the resources provided through the Japanese-Funds-In-Trust which supported the implementation of this Project. UNESCO is also grateful to the team at Kenya Society of Ethnoecology, National Museums of Kenya, Department of Culture and Bioersity International for their invaluable contribution to this project and the publication of this book.

Djelid Mohamed  
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# Executive summary

This document presents the results of documentation of traditional foodways conducted in the Isukha community of Kenya within the project 'Safeguarding traditional foodways of two communities in Kenya. The documentation was undertaken between 2010-2012 largely by pupils of two primary schools– Muraka and Shihuli assisted by their teachers, a local project coordinator and the project team mainly consisting of staff from National Museums of Kenya, Bioversity International and the Department of Culture.

It would be a difficult task to document the entire foodways of a community within such a short duration and so ten representative themes were chosen for each community in consultation with the local coordinator and teachers. These themes were chosen on the basis of importance to the community. Selected themes/topics were as follows:

1. Chicken
2. Vegetables
3. Busaa (Traditional liquor)
4. Quails
5. Tubers and legumes
6. Fish
7. Cereals (sorghum and finger millet)
8. Mushrooms
9. Termites (flying forms)
10. Ceremonies

For the ten themes in the book, over 100 foods of plant, animal and fungi origin have been described and where possible illustrated by a photograph. As much as possible, the food information in each theme is arranged in the following order:

- General information on the food (significance in the society, available diversity/types)
- Acquiring the food (the source, harvesting, processing for storage, propagation, management)
- Storage of food and seed
- Food preparation (processing, cooking)
- Serving and eating food
- Nutrition and health information
- Related beliefs, taboos, myths, songs

A number of recipes include additives that are prepared separately. These include traditional lye (mushelekha), groundnut paste, sesame butter and animal fat (isiachi). The preparation of these additives is given in Appendix 1. A glossary of Isukha and other Luhya terms (Appendix 2) has been provided. Over 100 entries have been explained. In addition, a list with 225 local names of edible plants of the Luhya with scientific equivalents has also been provided (Appendix 3). Finally, a list of the key resource persons and contacts in Isukha is available at the end of the book. Although the focus of the book is Isukha, one of the 18 or so Luhya communities, additional information from neighbouring Luhya groups such as Kisa and Maragoli has also been included.

The information presented here is by no means complete. Notwithstanding this, the book is a first attempt to document traditional foodways in the country. The richness of local foodways, its complexity and the challenges one has to face during documentation can now be appreciated. It is hoped that this work will act as a motivation for different groups to carry out or support similar documentation work of traditional food ways among other communities.

# Background

Traditional foodways involve the whole range of foods of a community and the practices and knowledge associated with such food. It entails how, where and when such food is sourced, prepared and consumed and the roles of household and community members involved. Traditional foodways concern our everyday life about food including ceremonies, beliefs, myths and songs and dance. All these form part of our Intangible Cultural Heritage which needs to be cherished and carried forward to future generations. In Kenya, as in many other countries, traditional foodways are under threat due to the pressure of modernization leading to abandonment of traditional foods in favour of more modern, often fast but less nutritious foods. Many young people are no longer aware of the traditional foodways of their communities. In 2007 Kenya ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and is committed to the identification and safeguarding of the living heritage practices and expressions present in its territory.

It is as a result of the foregoing that UNESCO and partners in 2009 under the auspices of the UNESCO/Japanese Funds-in-Trust for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage initiated a pilot project, Safeguarding traditional foodways of two communities in Kenya – namely, the Isukha of Western Kenya and Pokot of Rift Valley Province. The project aimed to (1) identify and inventory traditional foodways, (2) encourage these communities to appreciate traditional food practices and (3) raise awareness in Kenya about the endangered diversity of its traditional foodways and related knowledge.

UNESCO and partners, including the Department of Culture, National Museums of Kenya and Bioversity International selected the two communities – the Isukha, an agricultural group in Western Kenya and the Pokot – a predominantly pastoralist group in the Rift Valley Province due to their different lifestyles. In collaboration with community members, two primary schools were selected in each community to participate in the project – Muraka and Shihuli in Isukha (with 420 and 650 pupils respectively) and Chemolingot and Churo (1200 and 800 pupils respectively) in East Pokot. A local project coordinator was selected for each community to coordinate research activities.



Map of Kenya showing location of the two communities – Isukha and Pokot

Two teachers from each participating school and local coordinators were trained in information gathering through interviews and photography. The teachers in turn trained about 20 pupils from each school, mainly selected from primary class 5 to 7 (12-14 years of age). The



pupils went out to interview their parents and relatives and to take photos of foodways. In Isukha, the pupils established and maintained a foodways garden while in pastoralist Pokot, pupils went out on missions to discover wild foods as they took photographs.

Information gathered was discussed with other pupils and responsible teachers and shared with the coordinator who in turn compiled all the information into a foodways inventory. Missing information was later filled in by the coordinator in collaboration with the teachers. The method used was documented by the project team and summarized into a manual which can be used by other communities

to document their foodways.

As part of the campaigns to raise awareness about traditional foodways, each community in conjunction with the participating schools organized a major food festival. The festivals were an opportunity for villagers and other schools to participate in traditional foodways activities. In the festival, raw as well as cooked food, utensils and agricultural tools and information material were displayed. Food related traditional songs were sung and dance and plays performed. Speeches were made by leaders who encouraged the local communities to proudly live and appreciate traditional foodways.



West Kenya showing the location of the four participating schools

# Introduction to the Isukha community

The Isukha is one of the 18 or so sub-groups of the Luhya community in Western Kenya. They have a rich food culture. Although the food differs little from other Luhya communities it nevertheless differs significantly from other Kenyan communities. Isukha have some unique recipes such as Mushenye (mashed potatoes and beans) and shitieni. Mahenjela, a mixture of maize and a pulse such as beans and a popular dish in Kenya (githeri) is however regarded as a breakfast meal or snack and not a main meal. Breakfast is rightly considered an important meal of the day and is therefore usually heavy.

Traditional starchy food crops of the Isukha include sorghum, finger millet, sweet potato and cassava. Common legumes include bambara nuts, ground nuts, beans and cowpeas. The Isukha, like most other Luhya communities have a rich culture of consuming vegetables. Sesame is also grown. Common foods eaten are shitienyi, ugali, mushenye and simsim mashed plainly. Chicken (engokho) and traditional vegetables are commonly used to prepare side dishes to accompany ugali. Other unique foods include termites, mush-

rooms, fish and quails. A popular intoxicating drink is busaa, a thick porridge-like drink brewed in traditional pots and taken using straws (luseshe).

Food activities mainly rest on the woman who is also assisted by the bigger girls. The mother or her daughter serves the food. Preservation of food is not a major activity. However food is preserved by drying and salting. Food related taboos are still observed. E.g. some foods should not be eaten by women and girls such as the chicken gizzard (imondo). Going against this by women would be disrespectful to the family and the community.

Men assist in sourcing for food but in recent years this role has been mainly taken by women. Women cook on special occasions such as in ceremonies and also in their homes. Women also teach their daughters how to prepare different dishes.

In times of drought the sweet potatoes, cassava, sorghum and millet become important food item for the community.



# 1. Chicken (engokho)



## Introduction

Chicken is the most celebrated food among the Isukha and the entire Luhya community. It is so important that traditionally it was a preserve for men. They slaughtered and served it. Nowadays it is increasingly including women but some of the taboos that safeguarded men's domination in its processing are still respected. Knowledge and expertise in its preparation abounds. Its consumption is awash with many traditions and taboos many of which tend to favour the head (husband) of the household. It is prepared during ceremonies, celebrations and for important visitors.

Isukha names used for different stages and types of chicken include:

- 1) Itaywa:-A mature cock
- 2) Shitaywa: - A young cock.
- 3) Inyabuli:-A hen ready to lay eggs.
- 4) Isuyi: - A hen which is yet to lay eggs.

- 5) Makuti (kukuvare-Maragoli): – Chicken with fluffy feathers. The chicken is associated with bad omen if slaughtered for a visitor. It is perceived that the visitor is unwanted.
- 6) Shirembe: – Chicken with short feathers and short legs.
- 7) Lungori: – Chicken with no feathers on the neck part.
- 8) Shiminyu:-A chick that has been hatched.

Inyabuli is preferred because it is fertile and fatty and it cooks fast. Mature cocks (itaywa) cook slowly due to the tough flesh thus they are mostly preferred in ceremonies like weddings. Isuyi is not preferred due to its inferior taste. In Isukha chicken prices soar during festive seasons such as Christmas as it nearly doubles in price. A chicken usually costs Ksh 400 but it would cost Ksh.800 or more during festive seasons. The normal cost of inyabuli is about Kshs.500 and the isuyi Kshs.350-400.

## Eggs

Eggs are laid in the nest prepared by the lady of the house from dry banana leaves, sawdust and ash (likoshe). The nest is mainly put in the kitchen due to warmth. Eggs are used in the household for eating and selling and may also be left to hatch.

### *Hatching and raising chicken*

Eggs hatch after about 3 weeks to chicks after which the hen is allowed to move around the homestead feeding the chicks on insects, left over foods and small seeds found in the rubbish. The chicks also feed on food particles found in the soil so as to obtain grit used for digestion. Chicks are also fed on finger millet, sorghum, coarsely ground maize and leftover foods such as ugali. They drink water from broken pieces of pot called 'luchio'.

The chicks hide themselves in the wings of the mother hen (inyabuli) during cold and rainy weather to provide warmth. They spend the night in the wings of the hen in the house.

## Chicken preparation

### Slaughtering

The chicken is slaughtered on special occasions such as weddings, funerals, payment of dowry, religious occasions, circumcision, forgiveness and appreciation (thanksgiving) ceremonies.

Slaughtering of the chicken takes place in the backyard, amongst banana plants. In the absence of a man, other household members can slaughter. Slaughtering of chicken is carried out by the man or his sons. Women also slaughter chicken when men are not available in the home. Banana leaves are put on the ground to prevent soiling of the chicken. The neck is cut with a sharp knife and blood is spilt out completely to ensure that it does not have an effect on the taste of the chicken.

## Recipe for chicken

- Water is heated to a high temperature then the slaughtered chicken is immersed in it to loosen the feathers from the skin hence ease plucking.
- The feathers are removed by plucking them from the main skin (okhusinja no khumanyula tsingokho). The tongue and the outer hard part of claws and beak are pulled out. The scales on the legs and crown are scraped off. All the waste is thrown among banana plants in the garden (mundangu/mumaramua). together with the plucked feathers to decompose away.
- The chicken is then placed on a wire mesh and roasted on open fire using firewood or charcoal (khusamba ingokho). The chicken is turned while roasting so that it does not burn. This is done to dry body fluids (khuomia ingokho) and to remove the remains of feathers and body hairs. Roasting imparts a characteristic flavour and gives a brown colour to chicken.
- The chicken is placed on banana leaves (amaru) or lutelu and chopped into pieces by women. The legs are cut off and the crop (libotsero) is removed. Internal organs are carefully removed to avoid piercing the bile (induli). The bile is bitter and it spoils the taste of chicken if it is bursts and mixes with the rest of the meat. The intestines are given to young boys who clean them then roast on fire to eat.
- Chopping of the chicken into pieces (khwabula ingokho) can be done either by men or women depending

on who is available at home but it is mostly done by women. The chicken is mainly divided into 7 pieces when it is served to visitors. It can be divided further into smaller pieces when served to family members who may be many.

- The chicken pieces are then washed in clean water and put aside ready for cooking.
- The contents of the gizzard are removed and the inner layer peeled off. The gizzard is then washed thoroughly.
- The chicken pieces are put in a pot and boiled with water mixed with mushelekhha and salt. The chicken is cooked till soft and turned often so that it does not burn.
- The cooked chicken can be served directly or can be fried with onions and tomatoes. Cooking oil is not used because the chicken cooks in its own fat.
- The underdeveloped eggs (in case of a hen) are added to the chicken when it is almost cooked so that it cooks with less heat to avoid mashing.



The chicken is immersed in hot water to ease removal of feathers.



Roasting (khusamba ingokho)



The chicken is cut into smaller pieces.



Slaughtering chicken



Several parts of the chicken



Cooked chicken meal

### **Cooking of a chicken served to a son-in-law**

The chicken is cooked whole for a special visitor such as a son-in-law who has come to pay dowry.

- The inner contents such as gizzard, intestines, liver etc. are removed and washed then put aside.
- The feet and head are cut off and also put aside.
- The whole chicken is cleaned well and boiled in salted water until well cooked. It is then fried in oil shortly then removed.
- Onions and tomatoes are fried separately and salted to taste. The onion-tomato mixture is used as the chicken-filling stuffed in the space where the inner contents were removed.
- The whole chicken is served with ugali and the son-in-law is the one who chops the chicken and eats it alone. He also eats the gizzard which was removed from the chicken



lyalukhaka, the pot used for cooking meat.

### **Serving and eating:**

The chicken is put in a serving bowl 'yambobu' and brought to the table. The father serves other men while the mother serves her children. Imondo (gizzard) and isundi (Pope's nose) are eaten by the head of the house (husband) or elderly people. It is only when the man eats the gizzard that he knows he should not expect more. The fleshy parts such as indumbu (indangulu-Maragoli) are served to other men. Legs (bilenge bie ingokho), intestines (amala), neck (olukosi), wings (amabaa, lusasa) and head (omurwe kwe ingokho) are served to children. The tip of the wing is cut and removed because children are not supposed to eat it. Chicken is served with ugali, chapatis, rice, and green vegetables.

The position of the persons in the society also matters in the serving of chicken. During celebrations Imondo (gizzard) and isundi (Pope's nose) are served to local administrators, religious leaders and village elders, amaguru. Among Christian families, child baptism and naming is followed by celebration where chicken is served. The religious leader eats indumbu (chicken thigh), because it has a lot of flesh.

### Cultural beliefs, myths, riddles etc

Chicken is considered special food. Traditionally, it was food for men only. Women and girls were not allowed to slaughter or eat the chicken and also eggs. Nowadays chicken is served to all members of the family and to important visitors and during family and community occasions including graduation of circumcised boys, weddings and funerals. The tasty and fleshy parts of the chicken still belong to the men and women are supposed to serve such parts of the chicken to their men.

During important events or visits, chicken is slaughtered and intestines removed carefully by men. The chicken is then given to women to cook. Once it is ready, it is emptied into a ceramic container called “yambobu” and then served to the visitors by the head of the homestead. A woman is not even allowed to touch the “yambobu”. Women visitors are not served chicken, instead they are served beef or fish. When serving to visitors, the chicken is cut into 2 pieces (khwabula) only while further chopping into smaller pieces is done in front of the visitors by the head of the family.

The following beliefs are associated with chicken:

- Pregnant women were not allowed

to eat eggs because they would have problems during child birth

- Imondo (gizzard) and isundi was only eaten by elderly men. If women ate khasundi or imondo this was considered disrespectful to their men.
- A cock fight or isuyi fight is an indication that a visitor is coming to the home. The kids would watch the cock fight and would shout ‘bacheni bitsanga’ meaning ‘visitors are coming’.
- It is believed that when one shares the gizzard with someone else, they become enemies for the rest of their lives.

Chicken is also used in sacrificial ceremonies in traditional sacred sites where ancestral God (Nyasae-Isukha and Maragoli) is believed to live. It is often sacrificed at an old kitchen (kitchen of an old homestead where older parents lived long time ago). In such sites, the three cooking stones (amaika) or cereal grinding stones are found. It is difficult to find such sites nowadays due to modernity and particularly Christianity. During such events, chickens are slaughtered at the entry of the kitchen and blood is poured around the stones while praying to the ancestral God. Desecration of these sacred places will attract a fine in form of a livestock (e.g. a goat and chicken). This is still practiced to date.



## 2. Vegetables



### Introduction

Over 20 types of vegetables are used by the Isukha people. About a dozen are cultivated while the rest are picked from the immediate environment where they grow on their own. Vegetables are in plenty during rainy season.

### Main vegetables in Isukha

#### Mainly cultivated

1. Likhubi (*Vigna unguiculata*)
2. Lisebebe (*Cucurbita* spp.)
3. Miro (Mito in Maragoli) (*Crotalaria* spp.)
4. Likhu (or Murere) (*Corchorus* spp.)
5. Tsisaka (*Cleome gynandra*)
6. Libokoyi (*Amaranthus blitum*)
7. Ikanzira (*Brassica carinata*)
8. Lisutsa (3 types) (*Solanum villosum*, *S. scabrum*, *S. americanum*)
9. Makhalaba (bean leaves) –*Phaseolus vulgaris* eaten when other vegetables are scarce.



Pupils of Shihuli Primary school showing vegetables harvested from their school garden

#### Mainly wild but also cultivated

1. Inderema (*Basella alba*). It is common in riverine environments. It is increasingly being planted among banana plants. It is associated with snakes.



2. Lisutsa (*Solanum* spp.) – This is the African nightshade. Three species of nightshade are found in Isukha; *Solanum scabrum*, *Solanum americanum* and *Solanum villosum*. When virgin land is cleared, the black type (*Solanum americanum*) sprouts. It is also common among banana plants. The orange-fruited type (*Solanum villosum*) is rare but occasionally seen in Isukha. *Solanum scabrum* is a relatively new large-leaved cultivated type.
3. Tsimboka (*Amaranthus* spp.) – This is a leafy amaranth and mainly grows within banana plantations, forest areas and in cattle enclosures. It is also cultivated.



Miro (*Crotalaria ochroleuca*)



Murere (*Corchorus olitorius*)



Lisebebe (*Cucurbita moschata*)



Lisutsa (*Solanum americanum*)



Makhalaba (bean leaves) – *Phaseolus vulgaris*



Libokoyi (*Amaranthus blitum*)



Ikanzira (*Brassica carinata*)



Tsisaka (*Cleome gynandra*)

## Wild vegetables

1. Linyolonyolo (*Commelina* spp.) - This vegetable is found in fertile areas in forest and crop fields (shamba). There are several types of linyolonyolo. The vegetables are not popular.
2. Shirietso (*Erythrococca bongensis*) - This is a small shrub found in bushland and roadsides.
3. Lirunde – This vegetable comes out as a weed in cropland especially during weeding time.
4. Shikhubayeka (*Vigna membranacea*) - This vegetable is found in mountain and forest areas and resembles likhubi (cowpea).
5. Imbetsa - A creeping plant and slimy when cooked. Leaves resemble those of miroo (mito). During the dry season it is only seen along streams where there is little interference from cows and people.



Tsimboka (*Amaranthus* sp.)



Inderema (*Basella alba*)



Shirietso (*Erythrococca bongensis*)



Litsusa (*Solanum scabrum*)



Linyolonyolo (*Commelina benghalensis*)

## Vegetable sourcing

Black nightshade (litsusa) and amaranth (tsimboka) are picked from banana plantations where organic waste from the

kitchen and home compound is deposited. They are rarely planted. Cowpea and bean leaves (makhalaba) are grown in the main crop field whereas murere, miroo, lisebebe, libokoyi and spiderplant are harvested from the kitchen garden. Nderema is harvested from banana plantations and on hedges where it is found climbing.



Shihuli primary school pupils preparing vegetables

## Planting

All these vegetables, a part from nderema are grown from seed. Clean healthy seeds are selected for planting. Most vegetables are planted in a small portion of the shamba (the kitchen garden) next to the homestead.

Land is tilled until the soil is fine and deep. The vegetables are planted during both long and short rainy seasons in the months of August – November (short rains) and in March – July (long rains). Vegetables are planted by women who broadcast them in the crop field. Seeds can also be planted in lines are made (khulumba tsilayini). Small seeds can be mixed (khutsukanyinua) with fine soil for even distribution during planting. Cowpea seeds (likhubi) are larger and need not be mixed with soil. Ash may also be mixed to control pests. The soil-seeds mixture is dropped

in a line by hand (khumbara) then covered with thin soil (khukhunika). Most seeds germinate after 4-6 days. The seeds of tsisaka are hard and hence have a problem of dormancy. They generally need more time than other vegetables to germinate (up to 2 weeks or more) but may germinate easily (after a few days) when it rains following a hot season.

### **Management**

Farmers weed and control pests by sprinkling ash on the leaves to kill the pests such as aphids (bulolo). Thinning is done to reduce competition. Thinned plants are not thrown away but used as a vegetable. Birds can sometimes be a menace. The large leaved African nightshade and kanzira (Ethiopian kale) are susceptible to bird attack. A certain type of bird called masokho (a bird with yellow feathers on the chest) also damages the pods of tsisaka.

### **Harvesting and processing**

Harvesting (khwaya tsikutsa) is done by plucking or uprooting entire crop. Plucking the main shoots encourages the sprouting of more side branches (khukabula tsitsa). The vegetables are usually harvested by women and are either carried in the arm or on lutelu (woven tray). Over-harvesting of the leaves weakens the plant and might lead to death.

Processing is usually done by women as they talk under in shade (shinika). The harvested leaves are tapped and shaken gently to remove soil and insects. The vegetables are then placed on a lutelu and exposed to sun for about 20 minutes to remove soil, caterpillars and snails. Leaves are then cleaned (khuogitsa tsikutsa) with enough water (3 washes) to remove soil and other dirt. Whether to cut the vegetables or not depends on the type of the vegetable. Large leaves are usually

cut (khukhalaka tsikutsa) roughly using a knife, while small leaves like those of mitoo are cooked without cutting (tsikutsa manya miroo shichinyala khukhalaka). Flowering of tsisaka and mitoo set in early but the flowers can be cooked together with the leaves.

Vegetables like pumpkin leaves are normally washed then the stem veins and leaf midrib are removed before cutting. The stems and leaves are chopped together. In the olden days, vegetables were not washed before cooking but instead they were spread in the sun then brushed to remove dust and insects.

### **Preservation and storage**

Traditional vegetables may be boiled, sun dried (munyonyo) and kept in a pot (ingalamu – wide mouthed pot) for use during dry season. The practice is rare nowadays.

### **Seed storage and preservation**

Quality seeds are selected from healthy looking plants. Seeds are harvested when mature then dried in the sun and stored in containers such as a calabash (shimuka) or a pot. It is the responsibility of mother and the girls in the family to harvest the seeds.

## **Vegetable preparation**

### **Use of mushelekha**

Mushelekha is traditional lye - a cooking ingredient used in both vegetable and meat dishes. It is a filtrate obtained from ashes of burnt bean pods, dry maize cobs, sorghum husks, banana peelings etc. The filtrate is mainly used as a tenderizer of coarse vegetables, to improve taste and preserve the green colour of vegetables. Vegetables cooked in mushelekha are known to keep longer without spoiling. It also improves the slimy texture of murere. Vegetables that are cooked using

mushelekha include; cowpea, murere, mitoo, nderema and lisebebe. The ash (likoshe) and water are put in a lushelekho in order to extract the mushelekha. The lushelekho has holes which allow clean mushelekha (filtrate) to pass through. The holes allow mushelekha to drip slowly. The filtrate is rich in potassium salt and is effective in softening the vegetables. The remnant of ash after filtering is lishelenje.



Ashes made from banana peelings



Filtering traditional lye (mushelekha) from ashes. A special pot, lushelekho is used. The filtrate (mushelekha) is collected in a bowl placed next to the outlet of lusherekho.

The vegetables are harvested from the shamba and processed.

A pot containing enough cooking water is placed on fire to boil. Mushelekha is added to the water and boiled for a few minutes. Vegetables are added and the pot covered using a lid or shipakuli. The cooking vegetable is stirred from time to time to ensure even cooking and avoid burning of the food. Salt is added to taste. Other ingredients may be added including groundnut paste, milk cream, ghee and animal fat. Most vegetable cook for 15- 25 minutes.

A second method of cooking using mush-eleka involves placing the pot (inyungu) containing water and vegetables on fire. When the vegetables start boiling, mush-eleka (lye) is added. The food is covered using a lid or shipakuli and stirred occasionally. In modern cooking, the cooked vegetables are fried with onions and tomatoes. Mushelekha makes the vegetables tender.

The use of mushelekha is limited to certain vegetables such as cowpea, mitoo, murenda, pumpkin leaves and nderema. Mushelekha is also used to soften flesh (beef, chicken and fish) and also to improve taste. Too much mushelekha causes a burning sensation in the mouth or makes the food too tender.

### **Vegetable mixtures and the use of lye**

The Isukha community, like the rest of the Luhya groups, cooks vegetables in mixtures. Certain vegetable types are mixed with specific vegetables. Mixing is done for a variety of reasons including; to enhance taste, increase the bulk of the cooked vegetable, and also to modify the texture of vegetables to the desired. It is a custom to add lye to certain vegetables and not others as indicated in the list below.

## Mixtures

Vegetable mixtures	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Likhubi and murere (likhu) (add mushelekha)</li> <li>Likhubi and miro (add musherekha)</li> <li>Likhubi and tsimboka or libokoyi with no mushelekha (the dish is referred to as tsimbatikira).</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lisebebe, miro and nderema (add mushelekha)</li> <li>Miroo leaves and pumpkin flowers near maturity (add mushelekha)</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Murere, miro and likhubi (add mushelekha)</li> <li>Likhu and libokoyi also called tsimwanyinya or tsimbatishira which is a mixture without mushelekha.</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tsisaga and libokoyi or tsimboka or kanzira (musheleka is not added)Tsimboka is mainly mixed with other vegetables to modulate their taste and texture.</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ikanzira, tsimboka, tsisaka and libokoyi</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inderema , lisebebe and miro (add mushelekha)</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linyolonyolo – cooked alone (add mushelekha)</li> </ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tsirietso (a lot), cowpea and lisebebe (add mushelekha)</li> </ul>
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tsirietso, tsimboka and of cowpea (a lot) (no mushelekha)</li> </ul>
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lirunde, likhubi and miro (add mushelekha)</li> </ul>
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shikhubayeka and miro (add mushelekha)</li> </ul>
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shikhubayeka, libokoyi, tsimboka (add mushelekha)</li> </ul>



Women preparing vegetables

## Vegetable serving and eating

Cooked vegetables are served by women and are eaten with ugali made from finger millet, sorghum or maize flours.



Frying vegetables and tomatoes

The vegetable is served using bowls. Normally, members of the household would sit together when eating food. Cutlery is not used for eating the meal. Hands are used instead. A piece of ugali is picked and mixed with some vegetable. The process of eating ugali is called khulachila.



Children eating ugali and vegetables

**Mitoo (miroo-Isukha) *Crotalaria* spp.**

Miroo is not used as a main vegetable; it is mixed with other vegetables such as cow-pea. It is used in small amounts.

There are two types of mitoo;

- Bitter type (miroo mirulu) with small leaves and narrow pods;
- Mild type (miroo mihomo) with bigger leaves than the bitter one and fat pods.

Miroo plants form pods which are harvested when mature and dry but before they start to split. Miroo flowers (bawamu) are edible and are consumed with the leaves.



The mild mitoo



The bitter type of mitoo

*Recipe for miroo*

*Ingredients*

- 1 handful miroo leaves
- 1 handful amaranth (tsimboka) leaves
- ½ cup sour milk
- 1 cup cooking water
- Salt to taste

**Procedure**

- Pluck the leaves from stems of vegetables
- Wash the leaves well
- Cut the vegetable roughly
- Boil the vegetable in 1 cup of water for 10 minutes while covered with lid (luchio)
- Stir well with a mwikho
- Add sour milk, stir and simmer for 5 minutes
- Add salt to taste
- Remove and serve with ugali
- *Optional:* Fry the vegetable with onions and tomatoes to improve taste

**Miroo mixture variations**

- Miroo cooked with Inderema with addition of mushelekha and milk, cream, sesame paste or groundnut paste
- Miroo cooked with pumpkin leaves with addition of mushelekha and milk, cream, sesame paste or groundnut paste

- Miroo cooked with cowpea leaves with addition of mushelekha, milk, cream, sesame paste
- Miroo cooked with murere with addition of mushelekha and groundnut paste
- Miroo cooked with amaranth with no addition of mushelekha

#### *Related beliefs, taboos, and myths*

If a herbalist consumes the bitter miroo, his/her herbs will be more effective during treatment.

#### **Pumpkin leaves - *Cucurbita* spp. (lisebebe – Isukha)**

There are two types of pumpkins grown in the area:

- limwamu (pumpkin with white stripes on the leaves. Limwamu means dark)
- lilabu (pumpkin whose leaves are plain. Lilabu means white, light colour)



Limwamu (*Cucurbita moschata*)



Lilabu (*Cucurbita maxima*)

#### *Planting, management, harvesting, and processing for storage*

Pumpkin seeds are removed from the fruit (lihondo) at the time of preparing it for cooking. Seeds are dried in an open place then stored. Pumpkins are planted in the kitchen garden next to the homestead where the soil is deep and fertile. Harvesting of leaves is done by picking the leaves with their stalks (bisala). Young soft leaves towards the end of the vine are plucked. Leaves are picked from those vines that have no fruit.

#### *Recipe for pumpkin leaves (lisebebe/liroo)*

##### *Ingredients*

5 bunches of pumpkin leaves

¼ cup of traditional lye

Milk cream or fresh milk or groundnut paste

Salt to taste

- The leaves are harvested and carried on a lutelu.
- Peel the upper covering of pumpkin leaves and stems
- Wash the leaves and stems then cut them finely
- Mix mushelekha with enough cooking water and boil in a pot
- Add the vegetable and cook for 10 minutes while stirring
- Add salt to taste
- Add cream or groundnut paste
- Simmer for 5 minutes and serve with ugali or rice
- *Optional:* fry the vegetable in onions and tomatoes then serve

#### *Pumpkin leaves variation mixtures*

- Lisebebe cooked with inderema with addition of mushelekha and milk or cream or animal fat (Isiachi)
- Lisebebe cooked with miroo with addition of mushelekha and milk or cream or animal fat (Isiachi)



- Lisebebe cooked with murere with addition of mushelekha and milk
- Lisebebe cooked with tsimboka
- Lisebebe cooked with young cowpea leaves with addition of mushelekha
- Lisebebe cooked with miroo, tsimboka and young cowpea leaves with addition of mushelekha



Lisebebe (pumpkin leaves, sebebe) and inderema ready for eating with finger millet ugali

#### *Related beliefs, taboos, and myths*

- It is believed that if one has a cough and consumes pumpkin leaves, he/she shall cough the whole night
- A woman who is breastfeeding or one with twins (bamama banununia and bamama bali na makhwana) is not supposed to harvest pumpkin leaves. When the need arises she sends someone else to harvest the leaves (even if it is a child). The woman will stand aside and give instructions. It is believed that when a breastfeeding mother harvests the leaves the crop will dry.
- It is believed that if a witch (mundu mulochi) comes close to a pumpkin plant, it will dry up due to what is believed to be 'bad blood' (*omundu wa matsai mabii*).



Processing pumpkin leaves. A girl is removing the main veins of the leaf stalk and leaf blade



The leaf stalk and the leaf blade are cut up

#### **Inderema – *Basella alba***

##### *Planting, management, harvesting, and processing for storage*

Inderema is grown in a shady place like mundangu (backyard) among banana plants (marimwa). Banana plants provide support to the creeping nderema plant and also a moist environment. Inderema is grown vegetatively. After harvesting the leaves, the vines are folded several times (khuboywa) and planted leaving one end of the stem facing upward (ingara). The rolled vine is covered with thin soil. Planting is usually done during the rainy season. It sends out new shoots after only a few days which can now be directed to climb on a banana plant. Inderema (or nderema) remains evergreen even in dry

weather. It is also grown along the fence where the soil is moist. Nderema grows rapidly thus there is continuous supply of the vegetable.

#### *Harvesting inderema*

The individual leaves of inderema are plucked without the stalks. Harvested inderema leaves are placed on banana leaves or a 'lutelu'. The stalks are excluded because they are hard.



Harvesting inderema

#### *Recipe for inderema*

Inderema is usually prepared with other vegetables and not alone because the water content in the leaves is very high. It is cooked with coarse vegetables such as cowpea or pumpkin leaves to modulate their texture. The leaves are not sliced before cooking because they are soft and slimy. Inderema is good for young children and is often eaten with sweet potatoes or yams.

- Both sides of nderema leaves are first checked for any insects or snails (lukhomonio).
- The leaves are washed but traditionally people used to dry them in the sun then brush off any soil or insects.
- Prepare pumpkin leaves (mixed with nderema)
- Boil water for 5 minutes

- Add traditional salt and table salt to taste
- Put inderema and pumpkin leaves in the boiling traditional salt
- Boil the vegetables for 15 minutes turning them occasionally
- Add sesame paste and stir gently
- Simmer for 5 minutes and serve
- Serve warm with ugali

#### *Related beliefs, taboos, and myths*

- It is said that if a herbalist consumes the vegetable, his/her herbs will not be effective in treatment
- The vine is associated with snakes.
- It is said that if a person frequently feeds on inderema their eyes become watery so they end up shedding tears every morning whenever they wake up.
- Luhya lactating mothers eat inderema to increase their breast milk.

#### **Likhubi (*Vigna unguiculata*)**

There are two types of Likhubi

- Ilande: Planted in October – December during the short rains and lasting till March (Long rains).
- Inzekhu: Short lived types planted during the long rains (March – May) and harvested from May – August. Seeds are harvested in July – September.

#### *Planting, management, harvesting, and processing for storage*

The seed is planted during the rainy season. The seeds are often mixed with ash (likoshe) and little paraffin (makure ki tao) to avoid attack by insects. The seeds are broadcasted on prepared shamba. Traditionally, planting is done by women or their daughters but a man can also plant. The seeds are then covered with thin soil using a traditional hoe (mukum-

beti). Pests that attack likhubi are red and black bunenele. These insects also attack banana plants from the base. They are controlled by applying ash. The seeds germinate after a week and weeding is done after 3 weeks when the plants have developed four leaves. Thinning (khurongola) is done to reduce competition and the thinned plants used as vegetable. The vegetable can be harvested by uprooting the entire crop or by plucking individual leaves. In case of the later, the main shoot is harvested first to encourage formation of side branches. Later, the side branches are harvested. When mature the leaves start becoming coarse. They flower and eventually form pods which are harvested later to obtain seed.



Mukumbeti is a curved wooden stick with an iron (stone in olden days) head (imbako). When the imbako wears away it is called shisili. This is a traditional hoe of the Isukha.

Terms used for different types of harvested likhubi:

- Likhubi lihila: These are cowpea plants uprooted while still young and have tender leaves. During preparation, leaves are plucked (khunyola) leaving the stems.
- Likhubi likhalila: Tender leaves are harvested from the main shoot when the plant is still young.
- Likhubi lirolela: Leaves are harvested

from the side shoots. The leaves are a bit coarse. Mushelekha is used to soften the vegetable when cooking.

### Seeding harvesting and storage

The pods are harvested once dry. They are spread on a lutelu and left to dry completely. Later the seeds are removed by beating. The pod remains are burnt to ash to make mushelekha.

### Recipe for cowpeas

Cowpea leaves cooked in mushelekha

- Harvested leaves are placed on a lutelu. In the olden days, harvested leaves were beaten and shaken to remove soil and insect eggs, and then spread in the sun for about 20 min to remove insects and caterpillars (masa).
- The leaves are plucked from the stems then washed in clean water 3 times to remove all dirt.
- Enough cooking water and mushelekha are added into the cooking pot and placed on fire to boil for 5 minutes.
- The vegetables are added in the pot and covered with a lid and left to cook for 10-20 min. Stir (khushula) the vegetable with a wooden spoon when it starts to boil. Stirring ensures that the vegetable cooks uniformly and does not burn at the bottom.
- Add groundnut paste and salt to taste
- Simmer for 5 minutes and serve

Alternatively the boiled vegetable can be fried with onions and tomatoes and served with ugali made from whole maize, sorghum or finger millet flours. Cowpea leaves may also be cooked in mushelekha till dry (shisamama), without frying with onions or tomatoes.

### *Cowpea vegetable mixtures*

Cowpea and miroo cooked in mushelekha (sesame butter, milk or cream can be added).

- Cowpea and murere cooked in mush-elekha (sesame butter or milk can be added).
- Cowpea and wild amaranth (tsimboka) with addition of milk, cream or sesame butter
- Cowpea and libokoyi with addition of milk, cream or sesame butter.
- Cowpea and nderema cooked in mushelekha.
- Cowpea and pumpkin leaves with addition of groundnut paste.



Likhubi and mitoo ready for eating with ugali

### **Murere – *Corchorus olitorius* (likhu) and allied vegetables**

Murere is a slimy vegetable and consists of 3 types.

- a) Reddish leaves and stems
- b) Large leaves
- c) Medium sized leaves

### **Recipe for Murere**

#### *Ingredients*

4 handfuls of cowpea leaves  
2 handfuls of murere  
¼ cup traditional lye  
4 tablespoons of groundnut paste  
Salt to taste

- Harvest the vegetables and put on a lutelu. Put them in the sun to remove insects
- Pluck the leaves from the stems of cowpea and murere
- Wash the vegetables well to remove soil
- Mix traditional lye with water and boil
- Add the vegetables and cook for 15 minutes
- The vegetables produce a lot of foam which spills off while cooking due to use of mushelekha. Thus cover the pot half way
- Stir frequently to prevent burning of vegetables at the bottom of the pot
- Add salt to taste
- Add groundnut paste and simmer for 5 minutes
- Serve warm with ugali alongside fish or chicken
- Each person is served his own plate of murere because it is slimy

There are other slimy species of vegetables also considered as murere. They include imbetsa and lirunde. Both species grow naturally in crop fields.

### *Recipe for Murere*

#### *Ingredients*

4 handfuls of cowpea leaves  
2 handfuls of murere  
¼ cup traditional lye  
4 tablespoons of groundnut paste  
Salt to taste

- Harvest the vegetables and put on a lutelu. Put them in the sun to remove insects
- Pluck the leaves from the stems of cowpea and murere
- Wash the vegetables well to remove soil
- Mix traditional lye with water and boil
- Add the vegetables and cook for 15 minutes

- The vegetables produce a lot of foam which boils over while cooking due to use of mushelekha. Thus cover the pot only half way
- Stir frequently to prevent burning of vegetables at the bottom of the pot
- Add salt to taste
- Add groundnut paste and simmer for 5 minutes
- Serve warm with ugali alongside fish or chicken
- Each person is served their own plate of murere because it is slimy

#### *Murere mixtures*

- Murere and libokoyi and a little cowpea (boiled for 10 minutes)
- Murere and tsimboka (boiled for 10 minutes)
- Murere and cowpea (boiled for 15 minutes in mushelekha)
- Murere and pumpkin leaves (boiled in mushelekha)
- Murere and miroo (boiled in mushelekha)

#### *Related beliefs, taboos, and myths*

It is believed that if a herbalist eats murere, his or her herbs will not be effective in treatment. Murere is said to clean the stomach and that it relieves constipation due to its slimy texture. Pregnant women eat murere as it said to aid child birth.

### **Tsisaka - *Cleome gynandra***

#### *Recipe for tsisaka*

##### **Ingredients**

3 handfuls of tsisaka

1 handful of libokoyi

½ cup fresh milk

Salt to taste

- Put enough cooking water in a pot to boil and add salt to taste

- Prepare the vegetables and clean them well then add to the boiling water
- Cover and cook for 10 minutes
- Stir only once to reduce development of bitter taste
- Remove the vegetable from fire and pound using mwikho to soften and mix well
- Add fresh milk or cream to improve taste
- Serve the vegetables the following day with ugali
- Alternatively, fry the vegetables with onions and tomatoes, then add milk
- The vegetables can keep for 4 days with regular warming

#### **Tsisaka mixtures**

- Tsisaka and libokoyi
- Tsisaka and tsimboka
- Tsisaka and lisutsa
- Tsisaka, lisutsa, libokoyi and tsimboka
- Tsisaka and ikanzira

#### *Medicinal use*

The roots of tsisaka are chewed to relieve stomachache.

#### *Related beliefs, taboos, and myths*

Traditionally pregnant women are advised to eat litsaka (chew uncooked tsaka stem) to ease pain during labour.

### **Case study 1**

#### *Harvesting tsisaka seeds*

Abby is a grandchild of Mama Shimola. The family has tsisaka growing in their kitchen garden. The vegetable has mature pods and masokho (type of a bird) are eating them. Abby has been sent by her grandmother to uproot the plant so that the pods can dry safely and the seeds can be harvested and stored.



Abby in the kitchen garden uprooting tsisaka



She takes uprooted tsisaka plant to the mother



The plant is hanged near the kitchen door then pushed out of the way.



Dried and fresh tsisaka with seed.

The whole plant is hanged near the kitchen door. Here it will dry fast due to the heat from the kitchen. Later Abby's grandmother will thresh the dried tsisaka pods to obtain seed. She will keep them till the next rainy season when she will plant them in the kitchen garden.

**Lisutsa- *Solanum* spp.**



*Solanum villosum*



*Solanum scabrum*



*Solanum aethiopicum*

There are three types of lisutsa easily differentiated by the fruits and size of leaves.

There are three types of Lisutsa;

- Orange fruited type (*S. villosum*) which is introduced to the area. This vegetable has bitter leaves.
- Small black fruited type (*S. americanum*) which is indigenous in the area. This is a slightly bitter type with small black fruits and thin dark green leaves which cook for a longer time.
- Large-black fruited type (*S. scabrum*) type which came later in 2008 and spread all over the area. It is sold in the Kakamega Market. The vegetable has a high demand and is usually finished in the market by 10 am. The large leaf type takes lesser time to cook.

The indigenous type is not cultivated but grows naturally in the farms and is preserved when found. It grows where there is manure and domestic rubbish. It is also found in the forest from where people harvest and sell it in the market. The fallen seeds germinate during the rainy season. It is slightly bitter and therefore it is mixed with other vegetables e.g. libokoyi to reduce bitterness.



Lisutsa (African nightshade) ready for eating with ugali

In Isukha (Muraka), there are two other solanum crop species that are used, though rare –*Solanum macrocarpum* and *S. aethiopicum* both referred to as African eggplants. It is the fruits that are used as vegetable.

#### *Recipe for Lisutsa*

Lisutsa can be mixed with libokoyi or just cooked alone. The traditional type is boiled with tsemboka or libokoyi then milk, cream, cow fat (Isiachi) or sesame butter is added to improve the taste. Mushelekha is not added to the vegetables.

#### **Ingredients**

- 1 handful of amaranth (libokoyi)
- 2 handfuls of spider plant (tsaka)
- 3 handfuls of African nightshade (lisutsa)
- 1 cup fresh milk
- 4 tbsp groundnut paste
- Salt to taste

#### **Preparation**

- Pluck the leaves from stems of each vegetable
- Wash the leaves thoroughly
- Mix the vegetables with enough cooking water and boil for 10 minutes
- Add groundnut paste, stir and cook for 1 minute
- Add 1 cup of fresh milk and simmer for 2 minutes
- Remove and serve with ugali

#### **Kanzira - *Brassica carinata***

Kanzira is a vegetable that was introduced to Isukha by business people from other towns. Some said they first saw it just before Kenya's independence (1962). It has a sharp odour when cooked but it is not bitter. The vegetable is mixed with tsisaka, lisutsa or libokoyi when cooking or can be cooked alone.

## *Recipe for Kanzira*

### *Ingredients*

2 bunches of kanzira  
1 bunch of tsemboka or libokoyi  
1 bunch of lisutsa)  
Cooking water  
1 onion  
2 tomatoes  
Salt to taste

### **Method**

- Pluck the leaves from the stems of all vegetables
- Wash them 3 times to remove soil
- Cut kanzira finely and tsemboka and lisutsa roughly
- Boil the vegetables for 10 minutes
- Fry onion and tomatoes for 5 minutes
- Add the vegetable and cook for 5 minutes
- Add salt to taste, stir well
- Serve with ugali

### *Cooking and serving equipment*

## **Lushelekho**

Lushelekho is a pot used for filtering mushelekhha.

### **Pots**

Pots are most preferred for cooking vegetables, tubers and meats because they conserve heat, water and aroma during the cooking process.

**Yamachere:** These come in two forms – small and large. They are ideal for cooking vegetables and tubers.

**Yandeba:** This pot has ear-like side protrusions used as handles (see photo). It is used for cooking all forms of meat, including chicken, beef, molerats (tsimbuku – mole-like animal with hairless tail and a pest for tuberous crops), tsikhome (a large rat and pest for stored grains) and squirrels (shimuna). Originally it was used for tsikhome, then later for chicken and now used for all forms of flesh including fish. This pot is also called yamboba. A long time ago it was only used by men.

**Yalukhaka:** Medium sized wide-mouthed pot narrowing towards the top and originally used for cooking ugali and porridge. Nowadays it is mainly used for roots and tubers as cooking ugali in it requires special skills.

**Isiongo:** A large clay pot used for carrying water from streams.

**Ingalamu:** Large wide-mouthed clay pot for storing water but also seed (incase shitero is full).

**Lulemo:** A narrow mouthed clay pot related to isiongo and used for keeping water or busaa.

**Isiekha:** A large pot narrow at the top and used for storing water but earlier used for brewing and also putting seeds especially finger millet.

**Shitero:** A large woven basket for storing grain, especially sorghum. The inside is smeared with cow dung.





Pots, yandeba and yamachere



Busaa pot



Isiongo is used for carrying water from a stream.

#### *Gourd (shimuka)*

Gourds (shimuka) were important containers in the past. It was used in fermentation of porridge and milk. A gourd split longitudinally into two gives an important container called shiuhu (one half of a gourd popularly known as a calabash in Kenya). Porridge is served in the calabash. It is also used as a plate, cup and a bowl but modern utensils are rapidly replacing these calabashes. They were popular for serving mapuoni, tsinduma (taro), mahenjere (mahenjela) and also tsinjuku (groundnuts) and tsinuni (sesame).



Shiuhu, one half of a split calabash, used for drinking.



Winnowing tray (lutelu)

It is also also used for drinking porridge. Farmers carry seeds e.g. tsimbindi (cow-pea seeds), amakanda (beans) and amatumu (maize) in them while planting.

#### *Serving utensils*

According to Isukha customs, the head of the family, older children, younger children and the lady of the home were each served separately on their own traditional plate (shitelu – weaved from plants like lulundu, lweyu and simbaya). In times of food shortage the mother would hide her food inside the cooking pot (yalukhaka) where it would not be visible to the children for fear that they may ask for more and finish her portion. The mother would

keep the pot facing down so that the food remains stuck to the pot above. People used to sit on the ground while eating.

#### *Other types of utensils*

Other forms of traditional plates and utensils are:

- Shiibu (bowl) – curved from a tree such as mukomari (*Cordia africana*) which is also used to make isukuti. The bowls are of different sizes. Large types are used for cleaning hands.



### 3. Busaa (Traditional alcoholic drink)



Busaa is a traditional brew prepared using maize flour and sprouted finger millet. It is a popular alcoholic drink of the Isukha and other Luhya communities. It is drunk by older men and old women. Presently some families prepare and sell busaa as a business. Occasionally the busaa is processed into Chang'aa, a local spirit.





Fermenting maize flour



Roasting the fermented maize flour

## Preparation of busaa



Busaa gourd for one person

### Preparation of 200 litres of busaa

- 1) Ingredients: Maize flour water, yeast (mamela) which is germinated finger millet.
- 2) Equipment: Large open metal pan (musupali) and shisili, drum (lipipa), sieving cloth (shichuchilu).
  - Twenty kilos of dry maize grain is milled to flour and then 10 litres of water is added into the flour and kneaded into a consistent mix to make a paste.
  - The mixture is left to ferment for 2-3 days in a warm place at room temperature
  - The fermented mixture is roasted into a golden brown mix on large pan (musupali) using firewood for 30 minutes. During this period the desirable flavor and brown color develops. The roasted fermented maize meal is referred to as *tsimbale*.
  - The roasted mixture is put in a drum (lipipa) then 200 litres of water is added. About 6kg of yeast prepared from finger millet (mumeri or mamela) is add-

ed into the mixture. The mixing ratio of yeast to roasted maize meal is about 1:10.

- The mixture is left for 2 days to undergo fermentation into porridge-like busaa brew then it is ready for consumption.
- The fermented product is then sieved using a cloth. The filtrate obtained is the busaa.

**Preparation of yeast (mamela):** Mamela is prepared by soaking clean finger millet grain in water and allowing it to germinate. Once the radical has emerged, the grains are sun dried until completely dry. The dry semi-germinated seeds are ground into flour using a small grinding stone called isio. This is rubbed against a bigger stone called 'luchina'. The flour obtained is called mamela or mumeri which is used as the yeast to catalyze fermentation.



Germinated finger millet being dried



Filtration of busaa using a clean cloth

## Serving of busaa



Filtering component at the end of a drinking straw.



Women demonstrating busaa drinking using long drinking straws to sip busaa from a pot (indenjeko).

Busaa provided in ceremonies is mostly served in large pots (ingalamu or indenjekho). The busaa is drunk using long

straws called luseshe made from a liana (climbing plant) called luseti. The long straws are preserved for married men and elders. The unmarried men and newly circumcised boys drink busaa using short straws made from bamboo stems referred to as shitundu. Business people serve busaa in cups or well cleaned cooking plastic containers.



Gauze for filtering busaa at the tip of a straw

The busaa is added into ingalamu occasionally by an assigned woman or the lady of the house. Warm water is also added into the busaa to make it easier to suck.

### Drinking occasion

Busaa is drunk during ceremonies such as wedding, circumcision, bull fighting and dowry. It is served by adult women. The women also serve hot water and men pour the hot water into the busaa. Busaa is drunk using busaa siphon or straw (luseshe) while people are seated in a circle around the pot. It is drunk by mature men sitting on a three legged stool and the women sitting on the ground. Busaa is taken at the elderly women's house as people sing and dance. Elderly men and women in the community sit in this circle behind the houses and they discuss community or family matters e.g. solving marriage problems.

## Making of chang'aa from busaa

- Once busaa has fermented, it is strained using a clean cloth or sack to separate the solid from liquid part (filtrate).
- Sugar is added to the filtrate and a little more yeast (mamela) and left to ferment further into kangara. The residue (maseshe) obtained from busaa is not disposed of after its first straining but instead water, sugar and mumeri are added to get kangara. Kangara is then distilled to make Chang'aa, a spirit, which has higher levels of alcohol than busaa.

## Tsimbare

Tsimbare is fermented roasted maize flour which is sold at the market as a snack. The flour is mixed with water to soften it and some sugar.



Tsimbare at the market in Kakamega town.



Men enjoying their tsimbare lunch which served in plastic containers.



Processing Chang'aa



Chang'aa

Chang'aa is a clear spirit which is extremely intoxicating. If misused it can easily ruin life.

## 4. Quails - (tsisindu)



Tsisindu (isindu – sing.) are small wild birds with speckled brown feathers. The birds are captured using an elaborate traditional system where the male is put in a cage (shiyonzo) and used to attract females through its singing. They are seasonal.

Tsisindu live in grasslands and in crop fields. They particularly like breeding in tall grass and appear in August, during the cereal (finger millet, sorghum, maize) harvesting season. They are a delicacy among the Luhya community and are cooked whole unlike chicken.

### Trapping quails

A male isindu (imbanga) is placed in a separate basket (shiyonzo) which is then suspended on a long stick or pole (musale kwi tsisindu, omulatse in Kisa -see picture). The pole is fixed in an uncultivated field (e.g. fallow land) often with a

grass called shibembe used for thatching. As the males sing in the baskets, they attract females (lusaba) which are trapped by snares as they use the paths made in the grassy field below. The snare could be made of a string (often from a tendon as the noose tightens smoothly) or latex extracted from a fig tree. The paths could be man-made (in case of new fields) or made by the birds themselves. The captured birds are put in a basket. Males are put in a slightly larger basket to be used as additional bait. Female birds are put in a smaller basket and can be eaten or sold. The larger basket of the male allows it to move around as it sings. Sometimes a metal 'bell' is also placed in the basket. When the bird knocks or steps on the 'bell', it tinkles, stimulating the bird to start singing. Birds are fed well before they are taken to the field so that they can sing well. Birds that are good at singing are normally retained till they are old.





Shiyonzo hanged on a tree during off season.



Isindu in a shiyonzo

During the day male tsisindu and trapped birds are brought home and are fed with cereals especially sorghum. The cereal is placed near the shiyonzo to allow the bird to feed through the openings around the basket. In the evening or early in the morning (about 4 am), baskets with male birds are taken to the farms and hanged on the long poles to 'call' other quails. The active time for tsisindu is the early hours of the morning and therefore the males have to be up on the poles at that time. Mature female quails are sold at approximately Ksh 50 per bird but become more expensive when the birds are not in season. When quails are not in season, the farmers keep some in the shiyonzo where they are fed with cereals. Shiyonzo are made from reeds or sedges, matsu, found in wetlands. The trapping of quails is done by older men who are referred to as muriechi wi tsisindu.



Men laying tsisindu traps. In the picture is a long pole for suspending a basket for the male bird.



Tsisindu trap in a field. Note the sticks on the sides used for guiding the bird to the trap. Grass can also be used in place of a stick. Instead of a string, some people use latex extracted from a fig tree.



shiyonzo, a basket for placing quails

## Preparation of tsisindu

Quails are killed by twisting the neck (khuborola likosi in Kisa) then throwing it in fire to burn away the feathers. A small incision is made in the stomach to remove intestines then the birds are dried on open fire (khusika). Small holes are then made through the skin that will facilitate entry of mushelekha and salt when cooking. They are cooked in a small ceramic pot called yalukhaka. The birds are not washed before cooking. The birds are put in the cooking pot with just enough water to cook. Traditional lye, mushelekha and table salt are added to improve flavour and soften the meat. Traditionally tsisindu are not fried and are served whole. The dish is served to special visitors like a son in law (omukhwe) and also visitors who have come from far. Preparation is done by men as it is one of the hobbies for men. Slaughtered quails are kept for future use by first drying them on fire.

## Serving and eating

The dish is served as whole birds (3 birds per plate) with ugali made from maize, sorghum or finger millet flours. The dish is quite tasty and is served with soup. One eats the entire bird including bones as these are quite soft.



Cooked tsisindu on a plate



## 5. Tubers and legumes



### a) Sweet potatoes (mapuoni)

There are two types of sweet potatoes consumed in Isukha;

- Miezi tatu
- Tsituma

*Planting, management, harvesting, and processing for storage*



Sweet potato vines ready to be planted.

Women dig the area for planting sweet potatoes then make ridges or heaps of soil on which to plant the vines. Vines are

cut (khuneka milevi) but are not planted the same day. They are put in shade for 12-24 hours then planted in the heaped soil.

#### *Management*

Weeding is done several times during when the farmer usually covers the growing stems with more soil (khusembela milevi) so that more roots can develop hence more yields. The tubers are harvested after 3 to 6 months depending on the types. Women harvest the sweet potatoes with a sharp stick called shilo. During harvesting, cracks are located on the ground or soil, an indication of presence of tubers. The wider the crack, the bigger the tuber. Women and girls harvest the ones which are ready while the ones which are not ready are covered again with soil.

### **Preparation of Mushenye**

Mushenye is prepared by mashing a mixture of cooked sweet potatoes and beans (cowpeas, kidney beans and bambara nuts).

### Step 1: Cooking beans



Dried beans in a lutelu

Clean the beans. Place a cooking pot on fire with water to boil. Put the cleaned beans in the pot to cook. Put enough fire to cook the beans until well cooked. As the beans are cooking prepare the sweet potatoes.



Sweet potatoes for on sale in the market



Harvesting sweet potatoes with a shilo

### Step 2: Preparing sweet potatoes

Harvest the red type of sweet potatoes using a small traditional hoe, shisili or a stick, shilo. Remove soil and mud from the sweet potatoes and clean them with water. Peel off the sweet potato skin with a knife (khubatsa mapuoni) and cut the sweet potatoes into smaller pieces.



Peeling sweet potatoes

### Step 3. Mashing



Adding peeled sweet potatoes to the cooked beans.



Mashing the cooked meal

When beans are well cooked (soft), add sweet potatoes and then salt to taste. When the sweet potatoes are ready, remove excess water and let the mixture dry. Use a cooking/mashing stick to mash the mixture. This is called mushenyé. You may add salt to taste as you mash.

#### *Step 4. Serving and eating*

Mushenyé is first molded into a dome shape on the plate. It is then served warm with black tea or meat stew for lunch or supper. Mushenyé is not covered when hot as this tends to spoil the dish. It is stored dry.



Molding mushenyé before serving

## Preparation of Shitiényi



Grinding the roasted beans using luchina



Cleaned beans without the seed cover

Shitiényi (Isukha) or muduya (Maragoli) is a bean sauce prepared from beans whose coverings have been removed by roasting on fire. The preparation of shitiényi may take several days. First the beans are roasted dry on fire. They are then dried in the sun till the outer seed coat can come out easily. To remove the bean covers (khushililu), one can either rub the beans between the palms or use a grinding stone (luchina with isio). The dehulled beans are boiled in mushelekha and served with ugali. It is served during ceremonies such as burials and weddings.

#### *Ingredients*

1Kg beans (preferably rosecoco type)  
3 litres of water  
100 mls traditional lye  
Salt to taste

#### **Preparation**

- Sort the beans and clean them well
- Roast the beans like groundnuts
- Remove from fire and dry them in the sun for 2 hours (the longer it is dried the easier it is to remove the bean coat)
- Rub the beans between palms to remove the coat
- Alternately use luchina or mortar to remove the coat

- Winnow the beans to remove the outer coat
- Mix 3 litres of water and traditional lye and boil
- Add the beans into the boiling water and cook until soft
- Add salt to taste
- Frying is optional
- Serve warm with ugali



A child enjoying the meal

Traditionally the beans are not fried but nowadays the dish is fried with onions and tomatoes.

## **Tsimbande (njugu mawe)- *Vigna subterranea***



White Bambara nuts



The dark Bambara nuts

There are three types of tsimbande; dark brown, cream and speckled. Dishes made from tsimbande are:

- Mahenjela (Maize + tsimbande) (beans are more commonly used)
- Mushenye
- Boiled tsimbande

### *Planting, management, harvesting, and processing for storage*

Tsimbande are planted after the harvest of maize in the months of August and September. The land is prepared by tilling, and then a small hoe (shisili) is used to make holes for sowing the seeds. The seeds are dropped as the holes are made. The seeds take one week to germinate and weeding is done one month after planting. The second weeding is done with addition of soil around the plant to cover the roots completely. This allows the crop to bear many pods. The beans are harvested after about three months from the day of planting. Harvesting is done by uprooting the whole plant and picking the pods from the plant. The pods are dried in the sun and then seeds removed.



Bambara nuts plant

## Mahenjela

Mahenjela (mahenjele) is a mixture of green or dry maize and a legume cooked together. Sometimes the term makhaya is also used for mahenjela but in the strict sense it means maize that has been boiled alone. The legume in mahenjela can be kidney beans or tsimbande. If any of them is dry, it requires more time for boiling and therefore precedes (for about 40 minutes) till half cooked before adding the green type. The mixture is cooked in a pot, salted to taste and served. In modern cooking, people prefer to fry it to improve the taste.



Mahenjela

Mahenjela is commonly cooked during ceremonies (wedding, funerals) to supplement other dishes prepared in case more people attend than expected. It is normally used for breakfast but at times

of food shortage it can be eaten for supper. It is also prepared as a snack and lunch for people doing heavy manual work in farms such as farm casual laborers. It is also served as low cost food with tea during overnight ceremonies.

## Boiled tsimbande

The pods are harvested before they dry. They are boiled with the seeds inside. Salt is then added to taste and the boiled soft tsimbande (tsimbande tsimotola) served. While eating, the pod covers are removed and the seed eaten.



Bambara nuts boiled with covers



Boiled seeds with pod covers removed

## Related beliefs, taboos, and myths

- It is said that when one is planting or weeding bambara nut, they should not shower or clean their house.
- The planting of bambara nut seeds is done by mature women only.

## Other roots and tubers

Other commonly used roots and tubers include cassava, taro (tsinduma) and the air potato (maruku).

Cassava has edible roots as well as leaves. Roots are peeled and boiled, then eaten with tea for breakfast or as snack or dried and ground into flour. The flour is usually mixed with other types of flours to prepare ugali.

Taro is normally planted among banana plants in the home garden (mundangu) or along the stream (khumwalo). To harvest, one cuts off side roots to weaken the plant. It is then pulled out. The shoot side is chopped off and replanted.

Maruku (air potato) is a climbing yam that produces tubers on the stems. Its popularity has waned significantly and is usually maintained by farmers as treatment for measles in children and to a smaller extent as food. It is boiled (salt added) or roasted, peeled and eaten with tea usually as snack.



Drying cassava



Boiled air potato (maruku)



A woman harvesting taro



Air potato (maruku)





## Case study 2

At the home of Mzee Shiamola in Shihuli, Scholastica wakes up early in the morning to start milking (khushela) her cow. Milking of cows in the Luhya community is mostly done by men and occasionally women.

Later on Scholastica picks a panga (lu-panga) and walks to the garden behind the main house to harvest taro (tsinduma) for breakfast. She uses the panga to dig up taro and to cut off the corm from the main shoot which she plants again.



Scholastica uprooting the taro



She separates the corm from the rest of the plant

Taro (tsinduma) is grown in a swampy place (shitoi) or beside a river because it needs a lot of water. The corms are then cleaned in the river or stream to remove mud (khwogitsa) before they are taken to the house for preparation.



Scholastica peeling the taro

Normally food is processed outside (mundangu) near the kitchen. Scholastica has collected tsinduma from the farm and used a bucket to carry them home. In the past a big basket (indubi) or a small basket (shimwero) were commonly used in the Luhya community. They were used to fetch food from the crop field (shamba) and the market. There is a kitchen stool at the veranda where Scholastica will sit while she peels the taros then use a bowl to put the peeled taro. Scholastica places the unpeeled corms on a sack or mat so that she picks them one by one as she peels and also put the peelings on it. Banana leaves (amaru) can also be used in place of a sack.

Processing tsinduma is mostly done by women. Men do it only when they are bachelors (omusumba). Scholastica

has been joined by her neighbour who will help her peel the corms (khumukhonya). The taros will be cooked and eaten for breakfast. Occasionally and also in the past corms were boiled without peeling to preserve their taste. They were peeled at the table as people ate them.

Scholarstica cleans the peeled corms as she places them in a clean sufuria. A clay pot is preferred for cooking tsinduma. She adds salt on top and a small amount of water then places the sufuria on a three stone fire-place (khu-maika) to cook. The peelings are usually thrown away among banana plants (mumarimwa).



Taro in a sufuria covered with banana leaves



Scholarstica blowing a pipe to rekindle fire

Scholarstica covers the taro with banana leaves (maru), and then she places a well-fitting lid (khukhunika) to retain the steam in the pot. A clean stone can also be placed on top of the lid (in this case another sufuria) to make it airtight. When steam escapes the taro does not cook uniformly as some remain uncooked (khutswilula). Taro is often boiled with sweet potatoes for breakfast. Roasted groundnuts (tsinju-ku) and sesame seeds (tsinuni) are also served in the morning as breakfast with tea or porridge.

Cooking and serving food on the table are usually done by women. Olivia is serving the family members with tea. Heavy breakfast is recommended to provide enough energy for a busy day. Traditionally tsinduma are served in a shisanda (one of the two pieces of a calabash obtained after splitting it in to two and used as a bowl) and are eaten with bare hands.



## 6. Fish



fishing trap (lihuli) and mortar (shinuu)

A number of fish species are consumed in Isukha. Among the most consumed are omena, ingege and mbuta. Fishing is done by men.

Types of fish consumed by the Isukha include:

- Ngege
- Ebobo
- Oluyoko
- Emanje

- Monye
- Omena
- Imbuta
- Ningu
- Eduli
- Sidonge
- Buduba
- Esebu

The small fish, sardines (omena), ingeke (tilapia), mukoye, imbuta (Nile perch) are found in Lake Victoria. Fish is also obtained from the local rivers. Women buy lake fish from the men who go out to fish using nets. Fishing in the lake is normally done by communities living around it. The Isukha specialize in river fishing. Traditional traps called are used for fishing in small streams. The fish can get in but once inside it cannot come out. It is weaved from a plant called machemo. In the early days fish was caught by tradi-

tional traps called omukono made from reeds. Increasingly, fish is now caught using fishing nets or hooks (ingaka).

Fish is served in the household and also during weddings, dowry payment and naming of newborns.

Preparation of the larger fish is done by men and women. The fish is washed well and intestines removed with a knife. It is then washed again and sun dried to make shibambala. It can also be deep fried or cooked fresh depending on one's preference.

## Preparation of fresh fish

1. Fish is prepared by removing scales. Other types of fish do not have scales.
2. The internal organs are removed and then the fish is washed and chopped into 3 pieces which include the head, middle piece and the tail. The fish pieces are put in a cooking pot and other ingredients such as onions, tomatoes, cooking oil, spices and enough cooking water are added. The fish is left to cook for 15-20 minutes, salted then served
3. Fish can be served with finger millet or maize ugali, sweet potatoes, cooked green bananas (matoke) and boiled rice (wali).

## Methods of preserving fish

Scales and internal organs are removed from the fish. In Isukha, fish is preserved by (1) sun drying for about two weeks, (2) deep frying. The fish can be preserved in this dried form for 3 months or more, (3) drying with heat (smoking).

## Etsimena (omena)



Omena displayed at the market

In the Luhya community, omena is preferred because it is relatively affordable and can feed a large number of people. People feed on omena mostly during the dry season when vegetables are in short supply and unavailable in the farms. When omena is in short supply, it is still possible to feed a large family cheaply by using omena soup and ugali.

Omena is sold in 2 kg fat containers which cost less than Ksh100. Smaller tins may cost Ksh20-30.

### *Preparation of Omena*

- Remove stone particles and other types of dirt from omena.
- Clean omena using hot water to kill germs because omena is exposed to a lot of dirt during drying and transportation.
- Fry onions and tomatoes lightly then add omena and let them cook for 5 minutes. Add salt to taste and then stir, let them cook for 3 more minutes.
- Add a small amount of mushelekha and let the omena cook until no sauce is left i.e. dry. Water can be added to make soup if needed.
- It is served warm with ugali.
- Alternatively omena can be cooked without frying. Traditionally omena is boiled in mushelekha with salt and served with ugali.

## Shibambala (ngege)



Shimbaba (dried fish)

This is the tilapia that has been cut open then sun dried for 3 to 4 weeks depending on the weather. When shibambala is well dried it becomes crispy-hard, breaks like wood and can last long without spoiling. It becomes tender when soaked in warm water. Shibambala is cooked mostly when there are visitors in the home because it is expensive to buy. Shibambala is very tasty and popular. When it is cooking neighbours can smell the aroma from far. Children playing outside would then start singing:

-*Shibambala* x2  
-*Meta matsi* x2).

This translates to 'shibambala, add water'. The song means that if it is shibambala cooking, then the ugali with which it will be eaten should be bigger and hence the cook should increase the water for cooking ugali.

#### *Preparation of Shibambala*



Shimbabala dipped in hot water before cooking

#### *Cooking shibambala*

- Soak shibambala in warm water as you prepare onions and tomatoes
- Fry onions and tomatoes lightly
- Add salt to taste and enough cooking water
- Let the water boil for some time then

add a small amount of mushelekha

- Cover the sufuria and let it boil briefly
- Wash the shibambala well and put it in the boiling sauce
- Let the fish cook for about 10 min until its soup turns to a milky colour while turning the fish
- Serve warm with ugali.

Traditionally shibambala can be boiled in water mixed with mushelekha and salt until well cooked and served warm with ugali. The dish is still tasty without frying. When the family is large one can mix shibambala with omena and cook together. Children are often served shibambala soup with some omena to eat with ugali.

#### **Related beliefs, taboos and myths**

It is said that imbuta, the king of all fishes in the lake, is big because it has a large brain and so people are encouraged to eat the brain so that their brain will be like that of imbuta.



## 7. Cereals (sorghum and finger millet)



### Sorghum (amabele)



Sorghum is often sold in a 2 Kg fat tin called gorogoro.

Sorghum is milled to flour and used for making ugali and porridge. It is often mixed with other flours, mainly maize, finger millet and cassava. Sorghum seed is sold in a white form and a red form (kha-sundi). The red coloured type is preferred for making busaa. In the olden days pieces

of the mukombera root were cleaned and added to a child's porridge in shimukha. This was to prevent stomach ailments in the child, to give the porridge flavour and to give the child appetite. Nowadays mukombera is mainly sold as an aphrodisiac but its efficacy is not proven.

#### **Planting, management, harvesting, and processing for storage**

Sorghum is planted as a sole crop or mixed with maize. When it matures, it is harvested with a knife (ikhoni) with which they cut the sorghum heads. The heads are then dried in the sun. Once dry, they are threshed with a stick to release the grain which is stored in a pot or basket, shimwelo. Cleaning of grain is done using lutelu or winnowing tray to remove chuff from the grain. The grain is then ground using a grinding stone, luchina to fine flour. Sorghum flour is collected and put in a shilibi for storage. The flour is used for preparing ugali or porridge.



Ugali made from a mixture of sorghum and maize flours



Finger millet ugali

Atwoko is ugali prepared from a mixture of finger millet, sorghum and cassava flours. Iyalukhaka (a ceramic pot) is used for preparing atwoko.

#### Storage of food and seed

Dry sorghum grain is mixed with ash to protect against pest infestation then stored in a shilibi or a sack placed on raised ground in a moisture-free environment. Sorghum grain for use as seed is preserved in the kitchen above the fire-place for proper drying and preservation.

*Preparation of finger millet- sorghum porridge*

#### Ingredients

250 g finger millet flour  
150 g sorghum flour  
Sugar to taste (optional)  
Enough cooking water

#### Preparation

- Mix the finger millet and sorghum flours well in a container
- Warm 5 cups of water
- Mix the flour with warm water in a clean container (e.g yamachere) and cover
- Cover and keep in a warm place (e.g. next to the fireplace) for 2-3 days to ferment slightly
- Boil 1 ½ litres of water in a sufuria slurry
- Add the fermented mixture while stirring continuously. Stir until the porridge boils and leave it to cook for 15 minutes
- Can add sugar to taste
- Serve warm

The flour used can be finger millet, maize, cassava, sorghum or a mixture.

#### Finger millet (bule)



Finger millet

Finger millet has been a traditional crop of the Isukha since the olden days. It is made into flour which is used for making ugali, porridge and busaa. Finger millet is usually light brown after harvesting but the colour can be changed to black by keeping the harvested seed containing heads covered in a sack for some time.

There are four types of finger millet:

1. Likwenjeli – yellowish and loved by birds. It takes about 5 - 6 months to mature. Heads are loosely held.
2. Inkhumba – whitish in color with a compact erect head and takes 5 – 6 months to mature.
3. Khasuti – reddish in color and takes 3 months to mature. Heads are upright, short and compact.
4. Unnamed type: A type with compact head bent downwards.

*Planting, management, harvesting, and processing for storage*

The land is tilled till the soil is fine and then seeds are broadcasted. The seeds are then covered shallowly with a little soil using a traditional hoe (shisili). The seeds take about a week to germinate. Weeding is done by hand with the help of a stick (shilo). Imbako (hoe) is used to dig out deep rooted weeds. Weeds are gathered into small heaps and later collected and put in one heap elsewhere. The plant takes 3 months to mature. Bird pests that infest finger millet include tsitseru, makholobe (small yellow bird) and masokho (white and black crow).

**Harvesting**

Finger millet is harvested and put in a shilibi (basket). The ground on which to spread the finger millet is prepared by smearing cow dung on it then left to dry. Banana leaves (maru) or cocoyam leaves (maru ka tsinduma) are spread on the prepared ground.



Traditional farming tools

The heads are spread on the leaves in the open to dry in the sun. It is left uncovered during the day so as to dry. In case the black type of finger millet is desired, the millet is left for two weeks covered till it turns black due to fermentation. It is usually very hot inside the covered grain. If the light coloured unfermented type is desired, the finger millet heads are dried while open.

**Threshing**



Lusala

To extract seeds from the heads by threshing (khuhula), the heap of the finger millet is threshed using a long stick (lusala) or a thick oar-like stick. The latter is used for smaller heaps of sorghum. Threshing is mainly done by many women at ago but it can also be done by men. Harvesting can be done by both men and women but planting is done by women. After



threshing, the finger millet is winnowed (khwilula) followed by khusesa (throwing up and down to expose the grain to wind). Khwilula involves the use of two shilibi (bilibi-plural). The husks (matere) are used for making ash used for preparation of traditional lye (mushelekha).

### Storage

The dried heads may be stored temporarily in a larger spherical basket called shitero. Shitero can also be used to store the grain but the inner wall is smeared with cow dung to cover the small holes which might lead to loss of the grain. Shitero can be almost as high as a human being and is usually placed on a wooden stand to prevent dampness from the floor. The basket is made from fibre of the plant known as lulundu (tsinundu – pl). Shitunji is a small basket used for scooping the grain from shitero when need arises. The scooped grain is dried in the sun then ground with a stone (luchina).



Milled maize meal in a shilibi



Ugali served with vegetables

*Preparation of finger millet ugali (bush-uma)*

### Ingredients

4 cups of cooking water

4 handfuls of finger millet flour

### Method

- Boil water for 10 minutes in a pot (iyalukhaka)
- Sprinkle ½ handful of flour and leave it to boil (till it foams)
- Add flour little by little while stirring vigorously to make ugali
- Let it cook for 10 minutes
- Stir again vigorously and cook for 6 minutes
- Reduce the amount of heat and continue to stir with a wooden cooking stick (mwikho) in the same direction as you knead (khumala) any lumps (tsimbunda) that may be forming as you stir
- Continue stirring until the ugali begins to detach from the wall of the iyalukhuka
- Cover to cook for 10 minutes
- Mould it into a round shape
- Remove and serve on a platter or lutelu
- Serve with chicken, beef sauce or vegetables
- Finger millet flour can be mixed with sorghum flour and the mixture used for making ugali



Bule (finger millet) and mabele (sorghum) ugali

### Case study 3:

#### Preparation of ugali

Preparation of ugali starts with the milling of the maize flour at the posho mill (luchina). Scholastica is carrying flour using a basket (shilibi) from the maize milling machine (posho mill).



Scholastica carrying a shilibi with milled whole grain maize meal from the milling machine.



Scholastica adding maize flour to boiling water

Ugali is usually cooked after the vegetables have already cooked so that it can be served while still warm.

Cooking of ugali starts with the boiling of water, then addition of the whole maize flour (busii). The process involves stirring frequently (khulukania) to ensure the ugali cooks uniformly and to avoid burning.



Turning ugali to avoid burning and also for it to cook



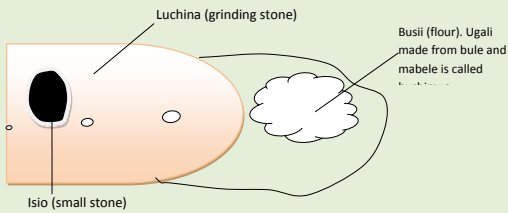
Ugali being made into a dome shape

The stirring stick is referred to as mwikho or kivango (Maragoli). When ugali is cooked, it is molded into a dome shape (khubumba bushuma) to make it look presentable when being served.

## Mwikho



116 Mwikho



As they grind, women may sing to make their work easier. Songs may be in praise of their spouses.

## Song sung during grinding

Lead singer and chorus	Translation
Obule bwanje × 2 .....obule × 2	My millet × 2 .....Millet × 2
Nindajili .....Obule	When I eat .....Millet
Obushuma na khanyama ..... obule	Ugali and meat .....Millet
Awuuwii .....chachacha	Awuuwiii .....chachacha

\*Song by Anne Soita and Welimina Makhamara

When grinding, women can mix finger millet with sorghum.

### Serving and eating

Best served when hot/warm and goes well with the following:

1. Dried meat (inyama imbembele or shihango)
2. Chicken (engokho)
3. Fish
4. Lisutsa and libokoyi
5. Tsimboka and libokoyi
6. Lisebebe and miroo
7. Murere and makalaba (bean leaves) or likhubi
8. Shitienyi

Ugali is served in a shitelu and the vegetables are served in a shitabo. Shitelu

resembles a plate and is woven from plant roots. Shitabo is curved from a tree trunk or molded from clay. Shitabo is also called shibu but this term is used for bigger shitabo.



served meals of ugali, chicken and variety of vegetables . Finger millet ugali (brown) and maize ugali (white) served with chicken and traditional vegetables

Serving of meals is done according to the age served. The older children, the younger ones and the household head are each served alone. The mother eats last from the pot after serving the rest. When the mother is asked why she is not eating she says: “namenekela bisala munda” meaning ‘I have tied sticks in the stomach’, implying one never gets hungry because finger millet ugali lasts long in the stomach.

Finger millet can also be used for porridge. This is prepared by mixing sorghum and finger millet flours. The black finger millet is tastier than the normal one. Porridge is prepared using a ceramic pot known as lyalukhaka.

### Nutrition and health information

It is said that consumption of foods prepared from sorghum prevent fast aging.

### Related beliefs, taboos, and myths

It is believed that when one is threshing grains such as finger millet, sorghum and beans then someone of ‘bad blood’ passes by, the yield of the threshed grain will be low.

## 7. Mushroom (obuoba)- edible fungi



### Introduction

There are several types of mushrooms in Isukha area. The edible ones are shimechero and bukukhuma while the poisonous ones are the malalukhitsa. Mushrooms are collected in termite habitats (shihubu), cowshed areas where there is cow dung and on trees or tree stumps. Most termite habitats have been destroyed by people who often remove termite mounds from their compounds. Women do the preparation of mushroom.

### Harvesting mushrooms

The small and brown types are harvested during heavy rains. All types (species) of mushroom grow in April and May in the shamba and bushes except matere that grows on tree stumps (visishi). Mushrooms are uprooted from the soil with a stick and cut into pieces and put on a sack to dry for about a week depending on the weather. The dried mushroom is stored on a lutelu or in a basket.



Children collecting mushrooms from a forest in Isukha



Various types of mushrooms (matere) ready for cooking



A type of mushroom (matere)

## Mushroom preparation

- Remove the soil from the stalk with a stick, then cut the fresh mushrooms into small pieces.
- Wash the mushroom properly in water.
- Place water in a pot and boil. Add a little mushelekha in the water then add the mushroom and boil for about 15 mins.
- Fry onions and tomatoes for 5 mins, add the boiled mushroom and cook for about 10 mins.
- Add salt to taste, stir well then serve
- Mushroom can be mixed with groundnuts paste, meat or murere and eaten with ugali or rice.

### *Preparation of dry mushroom*

- Soak the mushroom in warm water for 10 mins to become tender, and then wash it properly.
- Place water in a pot and bring it to

boil. Add a little mushelekha and add the mushroom then cook for 20 minutes.

- Fry onions and tomatoes for 5 mins, add the mushrooms and cook for 5 mins.
- Add salt to taste and stir well.
- Serve hot or warm.

### *Preservation*

Fresh mushroom is sun dried in the open. It can also be fixed in wooden sticks by piercing through the mushroom then drying above a fire. The dried mushroom is then kept in well ventilated containers for long term storage.

### *Serving and eating*

It is served with chapati, ugali or rice.

### *Related beliefs, taboos, and myths*

There is a local myth that plenty mushrooms growing in the homestead is an indicator of death in that home.

## Busine

This mushroom grows where cow dung is deposited. It grows in the month of April-May. The mushroom is umbrella shaped with a white body (stem (stipe), top (cap) and gills). It is about 8 – 12 cm high. If the gills are brown then the mushroom is the poisonous type referred to as malalushitsu. It is believed that when one consumes this poisonous mushroom he or she becomes mad or mentally ill. The poisonous mushroom grows to the same height in fertile places such as rotting logs but not on cow dung. The mushroom grows either singly or several together (colonies).

### *Harvesting and preparation*

It is harvested by uprooting. The base of the stem (cup) has soil, which is removed then the mushroom is dried in the sun or cooked directly after washing. It is cooked for a few minutes before adding mushelekha. The dried mushrooms are first soaked

in water to soften, washed, and then fried with addition of mushelekha. Obuoba can also be boiled directly in mushelekha, then salted and served with ugali. Frying is optional.

## Shimechelo

This mushroom grows in large colonies of many small mushrooms. They are associated with termites (not necessarily mounds) and are seen in July. They are white measuring only a few centimeters long. They are cooked with murere and are very delicious. They are believed to grow where snakes drop their droppings around termite holes. They are believed to associate with a certain snake often found in reddish brown soils (bikhobu).

## Matere

Matere are found growing in rotting tree logs and stumps. They are fungi resembling brown flaps (layers). The lusiola type of matere is the tastiest. They are slippery, ear shaped and they grow during the rainy season. They are about 5 cm in diameter and are best used dried due to slipperiness. When the dried mushroom is cooked, it swells again.

### Preparation

The mushroom is added to boiled dehulled beans or cowpeas and cooked together to a thick sauce referred to as shiti-eni. This improves the flavour of the meal.



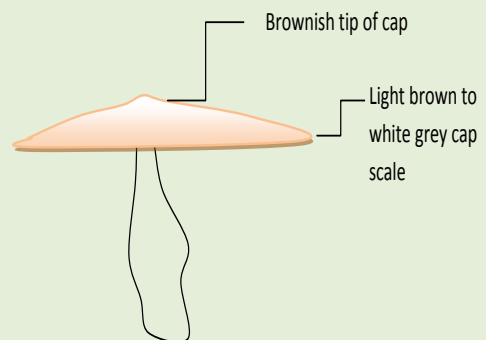
Matere mushroom



Matere growing on a tree stump.

## Bukhusio

This type of mushroom is found growing on the ground in bushland where there are many termites (probably *Termitomyces titanicus*). According to people in Shihuli and women in Muraka, the mushroom is umbrella shaped with a brown cap tip and grayish side scales. In the past the cap could grow to the size of a lutelu in the areas of Kakamega and Kabras because soils were very fertile. It is associated with termite mounds and has a thick grayish head.



## Bukukhuma (Bukukhumi)

Bukukhuma resemble the roof of a traditional hut in shape and have a dark brown head and white-gray gills. They can grow large when the soils are fertile. They grow in bushland in open areas in large numbers. The mushroom is said to be dispersed by birds.



Bukukhumi mushroom



A woman selling an assortment of mushrooms in Kakamega market

## Bukhayu



These fungi are white in colour and tough when harvested late thus takes a long time to cook. It is preferably harvested early when still soft. It is mostly preferred by the elderly women. When harvested late, they are tough and do not cook well, and pro-

duce “kwayu” sound as one is eating it and hence its name ‘bukhayu’. This type grows in rotting tree logs and stumps.



## Shikhubamululi

This is a small, dull, grayish brown mushroom resembling shimechero, often growing over a large area. It grows on the ground during the rainy seasons (April -July). It is believed that once one sees it, he or she should whistle (as the name suggests) so as to find more. If one fails to whistle, the mushrooms may disappear.

### Preparation

Dry mushroom is put in warm water to soften and to remove soil. It is then cleaned well and fried like meat and then milk, cream or sesame butter is added to improve taste. The mushroom makes a thick sauce. The mushroom can be mixed with murere or beef and served with ugali or chapati.

It is believed that when the mushroom is consumed fresh and not cooked well they can cause madness. That is why they are usually dried before consumption.



## 9. Termites (Tsiswa)



Dried tsiswa

### Types of termites in Western Kenya

Many species of termites are known to occur in Western Kenya. These are known by essentially the same names across the different Luhya groups with only slight modifications. The general term, tsiswa is used for all the flying forms but applies more to a common type known as tsisisi that emerges during the day. The sexual flying forms of termites (referred here as termites) come out from termite nests during the rainy season. In some species, the nests may be visible above ground where they appear as termite mounds or hills. Increased termite (mache) activity at the termite mounds is a sign that the sexual forms may emerge. Termite nests are common along the roads, in bushland, farms and open fields. The following are the common edible types of the flying forms.

#### **Tsisishi (tsisisi)**

This is a small dark grey or black flying termite that comes out in large numbers from underground nests. It comes out during the day especially in the month of October. It does not have a conspicuous mound. Signs of its emergence are noticed early and duration of emergence is long, giving collectors ample time to prepare themselves for trapping. It is the form commonly harvested for the market.

#### **Tsirunda**

This termite has a thin brown abdomen. It emerges from a small mound, eshirunda. It can be harvested using a trap.

#### **Mabuli (Isukha) (Amabuli - Kisa)**

Mabuli are dark grey in colour with conspicuous lines on the abdomen. They resemble tsirunda but have a thin abdomen. They arise from underground nests in the evenings at about 6pm when there is no



rain. Its duration of emergence is short and therefore it is mainly picked by hand and eaten straight or put in a cup (with or without water). It emerges at the same time from different outlets and within a short duration and hence the saying that if you want to catch a lot of it, you have to concentrate on one outlet but not many.

### **Amakhubakhubi**

This termite has a dark brown abdomen but the front is dark gray. It has larger wings than those of tsisisi. It is mainly collected by children.

### **Mafwetere (Isukha), Amafwetere (Kisa)**

This is a large brown flying termite with a broad abdomen. It comes out during the early hours of the morning. Mafwetere arise from a large termite mound called elifwetere or shiswa. The larger soldier termites associated with it are also commonly

called mafwetere. The termites are normally harvested using a lamp placed near a hole dug for that purpose. In the morning, the male and female termites can be seen following each other without wings and looking for soft ground to dig themselves in. The worker termites are said to destroy crops and houses and are often fed to chicken. To harvest them, maize stalks are tied together into a bundle using a banana leaf string. The bundle is lowered into a termite hole and left overnight for the termites to feed on. Termites infest the bundle which is then picked in the morning before the termites leave. The termites in the bundle are then fed to chicken.

### **Amasikhwa**

These are black termites with large wings. They emerge like amabuli. Their emergence is easily discouraged by a rain shower.

## **Summary of termites**

Name of termite	Description	Usual time of emerging	Duration of emergence	*Season	Presence of mound
1. Amakhubakhubi	Dark brown abdomen; front dark; larger wings	From 6.30 pm. Can come out even morning during rainy season	Nearly 1 hour	Sep-Nov	No mound
2. Amasikhwa	Black with large wings	6.00-7.30 pm	Short, about 30 min.	Sep-Nov	Small mounds
3. Mabuli (Isukha), Amabuli (Kisa)	Thin dark grey abdomen; similar to tsirunda	From 6.30-7.30 pm. Only when there is no rain.	Short, for only about half hour	Feb-Apr (rain season)	Arises from flat places - road side, farm, houses
4. Mafwetere (Isukha), Amafwetere (Kisa),	Brown, large wide abdomen	2-4 am in the morning	About 2 hours	Mar-May, Aug	From a large termite mound
5. Tsirunda	Thin brown body	6-7 pm	Comes out for only half hour	Jun-Aug	From a small mound
6. Tsisisi (tsisisi)	Black, small body	Day time, 11 am – 4 pm, mainly afternoon	Few hours	Aug-Nov	Arise from flat ground, shiswa

\*Note: The month of emergence may vary year after year.

Tsindikunduku is related to tswana but are not eaten. They are relatively smaller than tswana and are dark brown in colour. They emerge soon after rain during the day. It is believed that a person may lose their hearing if they eat them.



Mafwetere mound - elifwetere

### **Harvesting termites (tswana)**

Tswana come out (khutuma) during the rainy season. They are harvested by men, women and children. Termites with short emergence periods are normally harvested by hand and eaten on the spot or put in small containers such as cups and processed at home. These termites include amasikha tsirunda and mabuli. Their time of emergence hardly goes beyond half an hour. Tsisisi (tsisishi) and amafwetere come out over a longer duration and in large numbers and therefore are usually harvested in large quantities using a trap.

A number of trapping techniques are used but all have a similar basic concept of using a hole in which the flying forms are trapped.

### **Harvesting mafwetere**

Mafwetere come out from huge termite mounds in the wee hours of the morning. These are harvested using a source of light, such as a lamp to attract the flying forms after emerging. A hole is dug next to the lamp in which the termites fall in their attempt to get to the light. The hole is usually lined up with banana leaves. These are slippery and therefore termites easily fall in once they reach the rim of the hole. They also find it difficult to come up once they are in. Sometimes a closely fitting sufuria is put in the hole instead of banana leaves. When harvested, the termites are placed in an enclosed tin or basket which is covered to prevent the insects from flying away. They can be sold in the market in dried form or cooked at home and eaten.

### **Harvesting tsisisi**

A hole is dug in the ground next to the termite outlets. A basin or sufuria is placed in the hole. Thin sticks are erected (khusimikha ebisala) above the termite outlets. The sticks are bent to make a dome. The dome is covered (khufunikhira) with a blanket or banana leaves (amaru), leaving a small outlet on one end for light to pass. A transparent paper is placed at the open end leaving enough room for the termites to pass. The dome should not be too high as the termites will lose direction. There should be no other sources of light. When tswana start getting out of their holes they follow the light source, hit the transparent paper and fall into the basin placed in the hole. When the basin gets full, the termites are transferred to a bigger container. This method of collecting termites (khuyoya tswana) is popular with

most Luhya communities and enough tsiwa can be harvested for sale.

### Harvesting mabuli

Mabuli are collected mainly by children, one by one as they do not fly (tuuma) out for long. They are collected in a cup which has water, and then eaten raw or after salting and roasting. The water in the cup prevents the amabuli from flying away.

Sometimes people could be expecting the termites to come out but fail. Children may then be sent out in the morning to tap on the ground so as to excite them (khukhomachira). At about 12 noon, mache (termites) start moving out then followed by tsiwa, the flying form.

### Processing and serving termites

Tsiwa are sun dried or dried by roasting. In the case of roasting, a sufuria or frying pan is placed on fire to heat up. Meanwhile the termites are washed. The clean termites are then put in the sufuria and roasted. While roasting, they are salted and stirred almost continuously till they are dry. One can add mushelekha but this is optional. Adding mushrekha is said prevent one from developing stomach problems after consumption. Mushelekha also helps in the preservation of the insects for long-term storage. Tsiwa are never fried with cooking oil because it is believed that when one fries them, they will disappear or fail to come out (khutuma) from that site again (tsikhame). It is believed that the termites will shift to other places. Roasted insects are then placed on a lutelu (winnowing tray) and winnowed to remove wings. They are ready for eating. They can be eaten alone as a snack or served with ugali accompanied with other vegetables. The insects can also be mixed with sour milk and served. Termites can be stored in a well aerated container lined with paper if not for immediate use.

### Other edible insects

#### *Makunyu*

These are not termites but worms. They are found in decomposing cow dung. They are white and shorter and fatter than ordinary caterpillars. In the olden days, elders would harvest them, put them in traditional containers (mtungi) and leave them there to empty their stomach contents. They would then be cleaned and boiled in mushelekha, salted and served with finger millet ugali.

\*Note: From the description provided these could be white grubs (grubworms), the C-shaped larvae of scarab beetles found in the soil.

### Cultural beliefs

It is believed that a person may lose their hearing if they eat tsindikunduku, the type that is not eaten. Tsiwa are never fried with cooking oil but are only roasted. It is believed that when one fries them in oil, they will disappear or fail to come out (khutuma) from the site (tsikhame) they were picked from. Such sites are known and often, ownership of a site is claimed by an individual or individuals who have harvested from the site previously.



Termites on sale in Kakamega market. The insects are still mixed with their detached wings.



Tsisi in the air



Tsisi emerging from their nest



Tsisi

# 10. Ceremonies



Isikuti traditional dancers

## Types of Luyha ceremonies

There are a number of Isukha ceremonies that are accompanied by specially prepared traditional foods. Some of these ceremonies include;

1. Bukwi (payment of dowry for bride).
2. Khulolana (a ceremony done to facilitate meeting of mother in law and son in law).
3. Khulola mwana (a ceremony done after the birth of the first born child).
4. Khushebwa (circumcision ceremony).
5. Khurula murumbi (graduation ceremony after boys' circumcision).
6. Likhutsa (death) Rites performed during burial of a member of the family

The most significant traditional food present during most of the ceremonies is traditional alcoholic brew (Busaa) and chicken.

### *Khurula murumbi ceremony*

Khurula murumbi is a graduation ceremony performed after a boy's circumcision. The traditional foods prepared and served

include:

- Busaa kibuyu moja (20 litres of busaa carried in a gallon)
- Chang'aa chupa moja (one bottle distilled brew)
- One chicken
- 1 kg of beef
- One kettle of tea

After slaughtering the chicken, feathers and intestinal contents are removed. However, the chicken is cooked without cutting it into smaller pieces. Ingredients such as onions, tomatoes and cooking oil are used in the preparation. Similarly, a kilo of beef is purchased as one piece and thereafter cooked whole without being chopped into smaller pieces.

### **Serving the food for Khurula murumbi**

Once cooked, the food is handed over to the person who trained the initiates after circumcision (caretaker) who would have the food in an open space outside the house but within the homestead. The caretaker together with the circumciser (responsible for circumcising the boys) will then give the food to the initiates.

The mother of the initiate where the ceremony is taking place is not allowed to partake of the ceremony if she has been unfaithful to her husband as she is considered unclean. If she does partake of the ceremony she brings calamity into the family and she or her son may die.

During this ceremony, songs and dance are also performed. A song called 'mbwambo' is normally sung.

### *Khulolana Ceremony*

This ceremony is done after the marriage between the groom and the bride has been formalized. Khulolana ceremony is done to facilitate face to face meeting between the son-in-law and mother-in-law. In Luyha customs, the mother-in-law and son-in-law must not meet face to face until Khulolana ceremony has been done. During this ceremony other than the eating of traditional foods, the mother-in-law is required to present her son-in-law with a sheep, and in return, he presents her with a cow. It is only after this is done that a face to face meeting can take place.

### **The gifts exchanged during ceremonies**

Gifts to a newly married woman by her mother include:

- Shilibi – A basket used for carrying maize to the milling machine (posho mill).
- Lutelu – A shallow woven basket used for winnowing grains and carrying harvested food from the shamba (crop field)
- Inyungu – A small pot used for cooking vegetables
- Inyungu ya matsi (etshiongo) – pot used for storing drinking water and keeping it cold
- Sufuria used for preparing ugali
- Sufuria used for preparing tea

### *Bukwi (dowry)*

Bukwi is one of the commonest cer-

emonies among the Isukha. It is held to strengthen the relationship in marriage. It is meant to show respect before marriage in the presence of-in-laws, the bride, bridegroom, neighbours, relatives and the administration.

Payment of dowry starts by parents from both sides discussing and coming to an agreement on the amount of payment to be made. They ask the girl how many cows the man can give to her parents. The number of cows can also be translated to cash. The groom's parents give a date by when the dowry should be brought. Food served during the ceremony include ugali, shitiyeni, chicken, green vegetables, finger millet ugali, rice, groundnuts, sesame and mushenyeye.

*How the food is served:* Tea, busaa, chicken are served to men; beef is served to women while shitiyeni and larger beef piece is served to sister-in-law. Ugali is served to all. The older people present are served first followed by the younger ones. No special tools and utensils used.

*Food preparation:* People selected to prepare the food are informed in advance and come to cook early with older women supervising the whole process.



Lipala artists

### *Likhutsa (death)*

Death is considered a rite of passage but also feared among the Isukha community. Death and funeral rites involve not only the bereaved family, but also other relatives and the community. Burial often takes place in the homestead of the deceased. Among the Luhya, funerals and burials are public and open events. Animals are slaughtered, and food and drinks are brought to feed the mourners. Mourning takes a few days.

A cow is often slaughtered very early in the morning on the burial day and the meat distributed among different households of the family to be cooked for the mourners and visitors. The cow is slaughtered on banana leaves to avoid. Internal organs (and some meat) are shared among the relatives of the deceased. The rest is cooked for guests at the burial. Some meat is dried on a charcoal stove and kept for the relatives who live far or who would arrive late. Nowadays the meat is inspected first by a public health officer before consumption. Chickens are also slaughtered and cooked for special visitors such as religious leaders and community leaders who conduct the burial ceremony. Whole chicken is served to grave diggers who eat it at a temporarily fireplace (shotero) setup at the homestead. A lot of ugali, mahenjela and tea are also cooked and served alongside meat, but mahenjela is normally served at night with tea for the mourners who spend the night at the bereaved homestead. Mahenjela is boiled and served without frying. More than one cow can be slaughtered if the bereaved family is wealthy or the dead person is a prominent person in the society.



Mahenjela is normally served at night with tea to participants who spend the night at the ceremony



Ugali in a shilibi cooked for mourners at a funeral



Slaughtering a cow at a funeral ceremony.

# Appendixes

## Appendix 1. Traditional food additives used in cooking

### 1. Traditional lye

#### Ingredients

- Dry maize cobs, bean pods or banana peelings
- Clean water
- Strainer (plastic container perforated at the bottom) or traditional lusherekho

#### Preparation

- Burn the dry plant material completely to ash on a clean surface
- Put the ash in a perforated plastic container and add water
- Filtrate slowly for 15-30 minutes
- Collect the filtrate and use it to cook food or store in a clean container (avoid metallic containers)

*Bean pods and banana peelings produce a filtrate with a brownish tinge while maize cob is clear*

It is also used to relieve heart burn. It is used for cooking other dishes such as meats (chicken, beef, fish). It is put in milk that has started becoming sour so that it can be used for making tea.

### 2. Preparation of groundnut paste

#### Ingredients

½ Kg groundnuts

#### Preparation

- Roast the groundnuts under low heat on a flat pan
- Stir occasionally to prevent burning

- Remove the outer covering of groundnuts, then winnow
- Grind the groundnuts using a modern blender or pestle and mortar
- Use for cooking food as flavouring.

### 3. Preparation of sesame butter

#### Ingredients

1 Kg of sesame seeds

#### Preparation

- Roast the seeds on a pan for 5 minutes
- Grind the seeds using a modern blender or a pestle and mortar to a thick paste
- Use for cooking foods as a source of oil and flavouring

### 4. Preparation of animal fat (isiachi)

The fat from a cow's meat is removed chopped then spread out after 2 – 3 days (Khukunama). The fat is fried to melt to oil then poured into a clay bowl (shitabo). The remnants are cooked with the vegetables or given to children to eat.



Groundnut paste



## Appendix 2: Glossary of Isukha Foodways Terms

Bacheni bit-sanga	Visitors are coming
Buchikha	Quail traps
Bukhwi	Dowry for the bride
Bulolo	Aphids
Busaa	A popular intoxicating drink prepared from germinated finger millet and maize flour
Chang'aa	Distilled brew
Ikhoni	A knife that is curved
Imbetsa	A slimy vegetable. Leaves resemble those of miroo (mito)
Imbinga	Male quail
Imbuta	Nile perch
Imondo	Chicken gizzard
Induli	The bile
Ingalamu	Large pots used for serving busaa in ceremonies
Inyabuli	A hen ready to lay eggs
Shihango	Dried roasted meat
Inyungu	Traditional pot
Inyungu	A small pot used for cooking vegetables
Inyungu ya matsi (isiongo)	Pot for storing drinking water
Ishimuka	A small gourd used as a lid
Isuyi	A hen which is yet to lay eggs
Itaywa	Male cock
Iyalukhanga (inyanguluka)	Small ceramic pot used for preparing ugali
Khubakala khulumule	Expose the vegetables in the sun to loosen up soil and to remove insect then later brush off the dust until leaves are clean
Khukhunikha	To cover
Khulola mwana	A ceremony done after the birth of the first born child
Khulolana	A ceremony done by mother in-law to son-in-law

Khulomba tsi-layini	To make lines
Khumbara	Soil-seeds mixture are dropped in a line by hand
Khunyola	Plucking leaves from the main stems (during preparation of vegetables)
Khunyola kh-waha	Leaves are plucked from the stem
Khurula murumbi	Graduation ceremony held for boys after they have been circumcised
Khusebela milevi	Act of covering sweet potatoes vines with soil during weeding to allow more roots to grow hence produce more tubers
Khusesa	Winnowing of seeds (grains, beans) to remove chuff.
Khushebwa	Circumcision ceremony (To be circumcised)
Khushula	Stirring of cooking food using a wooden spoon to ensure that the food cooks evenly
Khusika/ khuhembela	Roasting meat on low heat until dry
Khutsukanyinya	To mix
Khwihila or khurongola	Thinning
Khuneka milevi	Harvesting sweet potatoes vines for planting
Libotsero	Crop (of chicken)
Lihondo	Pumpkin fruit
Likhomonio	Snail
Likhubi lihila	Cowpea vegetable harvested by uprooting the whole plant
Likhubi likhalila	Cowpea vegetable harvested by cutting the main shoot which are tender soft leaves

Likhubi lirolela	Cowpea vegetable harvested by plucking the side shoot) – mature leaves, can be coarse. One has to use mushelekha to soften them.
Likoshe	Ash
Linyolonyolo	<i>Commelina benghalensis</i> This vegetable is found in fertile areas in forest and crop fields (shamba). There are several types of Linyolonyolo. It is rarely found nowadays as it is not popular.
Lirunde	This vegetable comes out as weed in cropland especially during weeding time
Litsusa (ma-nagu) –	This is the African nightshade and consists of at least three species. A spontaneous yellow-fruited type, <i>Solanum villosum</i> , a spontaneous black fruited type, <i>S. americanum</i> and a new larged black fruited cultivated type, <i>Solanum scabrum</i> .
Luchio	A lid
Lukosi	The neck
Lulemo	A ceramic pot used for making busaa
Lungori	Chicken with no feathers on the neck
Lusaba	Female quail
Luseshe	Long straw made from plants and used by elderly men and women to drink busaa
Luseti	Long straws for drinking busaa
Lutelu	A shallow woven basket used for winnowing grains to remove chuff
Mahenjera	A dish made of mixture of maize and a pulse such as beans. A popular dish in Kenya. Commonly known as Githeri
Makhanda	Bean pods
Makure ki tao	Paraffin oil
Makuti	Chicken with fluffy feathers

Maremwa (amagomia)	Banana plantation
Maru (amatu)	Banana leaves
Massa	Caterpillars
Matere	Mushroom that grows on logs of trees
Mukumbeti	Traditional hoe
Munyobo	Sesame or groundnut paste or cream that is made by pounding in a mortar using a pestle. It is used for preparation of traditional vegetables
Munyumusume (kumufume, uvusaaru)	Traditional salt, prepared by evaporating traditional lye leaving behind crystals of salt. It was used as salt long time ago
Musasu	Wing back
Mushelekha (munyu kwilikoshe)	Traditional lye
Mushenye (mukenye)	A dish consisting of mashed sweet potatoes, beans and sometimes maize
Mwikho (kivan-go)	A wooden stick with a flattened tip.
Nyasae	Ancestral God
Obuoba	Mushroom (edible fungi)
Shibembe	Grass for roofing houses
Shifulia she ichai	Sufuria used for making tea
Shifulia she bushuma	Sufuria used for making ugali
Shihubu	A mushroom ‘garden’ at a site with many termites.
Shitundu	Short straw used by younger men to drink busaa.
Shiibu	Plate made from tree species such as Mukomari which is also used to make Isukuti.
Shikhubayeka	<i>Vigna membranacea</i> . This vegetable is found in mountain and forest areas and resembles kunde (cowpea).
Shilibi	Woven basket used for carrying maize to the posho mill.

Shilo	Small stick sharp stick used for digging out sweet potatoes.
Shimuna	Squirrel
Shirembe	Chicken with short feathers and legs
Shirietso	This is a small shrub found in bushland and roadsides and is used as a vegetable
Shisili	Small hoe (jembe)
Shiswa	Termite mound
Shitaywa	Male, young cock
Shitelu	Traditional plate
Shitieni (muduya)	A thick bean sauce prepared from roasted-dehusked beans cooked in traditional lye. Mainly served with ugali
Shiuhu	One part of a calabash that has been split in to two and cleaned for use as utensil.
Shiyonzo	Small basket fixed on a long stick and placed in millet and sorghum field ?to scare away birds.

Tsikhome	Small animal mainly found in banana plantation. It looks like a mole but its eaten.
Tsimbare	Roasted fermented maize flour in which sugar is added and eaten as snack
Tsimbindi	Cowpea seeds
Tsimboka	This is the leafy amaranth and mainly grows in banana plantation, forest areas and in cattle sheds. Also cultivated but mainly spontaneous.
Tsimbukhu	Mole-like animal with hairless tail
Tsiswa	Edible flying termites. They come out mainly in August and December.
Wele	Name for God among the Bukusu and Gisu (Gishu)
Yalukhaka	Cooking pot
Yamachere	Pot used for cooking vegetables. The pot does not have a handle



## Appendix 3: Luhya plant foods

Luhya name	Scientific name
amabele (Tac)	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>
amabere (Ksa)	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>
amabere (Sma)	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>
amakhuyu (fruit) (Tac)	<i>Ficus sycomorus</i>
amarinda (fruit) (Tac)	<i>Pappea capensis</i>
amarinda (Tac)	<i>Pappea capensis</i>
amatekesi (Tac)	<i>Syzygium guineense</i>
Biembaemba	<i>Lantana trifolia</i>
bubwoba (Buk)	edible fungi
bufutu (fruit) (Buk)	<i>Vitex doniana</i>
bukararambi (Buk)	<i>Rubus apetalus</i>
bukararambi (Buk)	<i>Rubus pinnatus</i>
bukhakasu (fruit)	<i>Antidesma venosum</i>
bulo (Buk)	<i>Eleusine coracana</i>
bunyinyi (Buk)	<i>Multidentia crassa</i>
bunyungululwe (fruit) (Buk)	<i>Flacourtia indica</i>
burobelo (fruit) (Buk)	<i>Lannea edulis</i>
burwa (fruit) (Buk)	<i>Carissa edulis</i>
busangura (fruit) (Buk)	<i>Rhus vulgaris</i>
busangura busecha (fruit) (Buk)	<i>Rhus natalensis</i>
busemwa (fruit) (Buk)	<i>Syzygium guineense</i>
busongolomunwa (fruit) (Buk)	<i>Dovyalis macrocalyx</i>
chifutu (Tac) (Buk)	<i>Vitex doniana</i>
chiisaka (plural) (Tac)	<i>Cleome gynandra</i>
chikhanu (Buk)	<i>Sesamum orientale</i>
chimbande (Tac)	<i>Vigna subterranea</i>
chinduli-chimbukusu (fruit) (Buk)	<i>Ximenia americana</i>
chingaayu (fruit) (Ta)	<i>Tylosema fassoglense</i>
chinjayu (Buk)	<i>Lablab purpureus</i>
chisaka (plural) (Buk)	<i>Cleome gynandra</i>
chisaka (Tac)	<i>Cleome gynandra</i>

ekawa (Buk)	<i>Coffea arabica</i>
ekhubi (Sma)	<i>Vigna unguiculata</i>
Ekiragai	<i>Mimusops fruticosa</i>
emboka (Buk)	<i>Amaranthus dubius</i>
emboka (Buk)	<i>Amaranthus</i> spp.
emifwora (fruit)	<i>Annona senegalensis</i>
emiro (Ksa, Kab, Tac)	<i>Crotalaria brevidens</i>
emiro (Ksa, Tac)	<i>Crotalaria ochroleuca</i>
emuka (fruit) (Buk)	<i>Lagenaria siceraria</i>
endelema (Buk)	<i>Basella alba</i>
enderema (Tir, Sma)	<i>Basella alba</i>
esaka (singular) (Buk, Sma)	<i>Cleome gynandra</i>
esebebe (Sma)	<i>Cucurbita maxima</i>
eshingayangaya (Kab)	<i>Commelina africana</i>
eshivetso (Kab)	<i>Basella alba</i>
esidiba (Sma)	<i>Asystasia mysorensis</i>
esitipa (Tac)	<i>Asystasia mysorensis</i>
esufwa (hairy) (Buk)	<i>Solanum americanum</i>
ibunabuni (Mrg)	<i>Sonchus schweinfurthii</i>
ihranda (Mrg)	<i>Lablab purpureus</i>
lkanzira	<i>Brassica carinata</i>
imbasa (Mrc)	<i>Tylosema fassoglense</i>
imboka (Tac)	<i>Solanum americanum</i>
imito (Mrg)	<i>Crotalaria brevidens</i>
imito (Mrg)	<i>Crotalaria ochroleuca</i>
Inderema	<i>Basella alba</i>
inderema (Tac)	<i>Basella alba</i>
Itogotia	<i>Erucastrum arabicum</i>
itungu (Mrg)	<i>Dioscorea bulbifera</i>
kamachabungwe (fruits) (Buk)	<i>Saba comorensis</i>
kamachayu (fruits) (Buk)	<i>Tylosema fassoglense</i>
kamaemba (plural) (Buk)	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>

kamafwora (fruits) (Buk)	<i>Annona senegalensis</i>
kamakhuyu (fruit) (Buk)	<i>Ficus sycomorus</i>
kamarinda (fruit) (Buk)	<i>Pappea capensis</i>
kamatekesi (Buk)	<i>Syzygium guineense</i>
kihuma (Mrg)	<i>Hoslundia opposita</i>
kimiro (Buk)	<i>Crotalaria brevidens</i>
kimiro (Buk)	<i>Crotalaria ochroleuca</i>
Kisuvu	<i>Asystasia mysorensis</i>
kumuchabungwe (Buk)	<i>Saba comorensis</i>
kumuchayu (Buk)	<i>Tylosema fassoglense</i>
kumufutu (Buk)	<i>Vitex doniana</i>
kumufwora (Buk)	<i>Annona senegalensis</i>
kumukhakasu (Buk)	<i>Antidesma venosum</i>
kumukhomoli (Buk)	<i>Vangueria infausta</i>
kumukhubwe (Buk)	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>
kumukhuwa (Buk)	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>
kumukhuyu (Buk)	<i>Ficus sycomorus</i>
kumukombera (Buk)	<i>Mondia whitei</i>
kumulamalama (Buk)	<i>Piliostigma thonnin-gii</i>
kumulinda (Buk)	<i>Pappea capensis</i>
kununasi (Buk)	<i>Cocos nucifera</i>
kumunyanya (Buk)	<i>Acacia xanthophloea</i>
kumunyanya (Buk)	<i>Acacia</i> spp.
kumunyinyi (Buk)	<i>Multidentia crassa</i>
kumunyungululwe (Buk)	<i>Flacourtia indica</i>
kumuro (singular) (Buk)	<i>Crotalaria ochroleuca</i>
kumurwa (Buk)	<i>Carissa edulis</i>
kumusangura (Buk)	<i>Rhus vulgaris</i>
kumusangura kumuse- cha (Buk)	<i>Rhus natalensis</i>
kumusemwa (Buk)	<i>Syzygium cordatum</i>
kumusemwa (Buk)	<i>Syzygium guineense</i>
Kumusitole	<i>Syzygium cordatum</i>
kumusitole (Buk)	<i>Syzygium guineense</i>
kumusongolomunwa (Buk)	<i>Dovyalis macrocalyx</i>
kumutekesi (Buk)	<i>Syzygium guineense</i>
kumutuli-kumubukusu (Buk)	<i>Ximenia americana</i>

kumuumbu (Buk)	<i>Lannea schimperi</i>
kumuyenjajenja (Buk)	<i>Piliostigma thonnin-gii</i>
Libokoyi	<i>Amaranthus lividus</i>
lidodo (Mrc)	<i>Amaranthus hybridus</i>
lidodo (Sma, Mrc, Bah)	<i>Amaranthus</i> spp.
liemba (singular) (Buk)	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>
lifwafwa (Buk, Tac)	<i>Commelina bengha-lensis</i>
lifwora (fruit) (Buk, Mrc)	<i>Annona senegalensis</i>
lihu (Tac)	<i>Corchorus trilocularis</i>
Likhu	<i>Corchorus olitorius</i>
Likhubi	<i>Vigna unguiculata</i>
likhubi (Ksa, Mrc)	<i>Vigna unguiculata</i>
liliakhunyu (Buk)	<i>Dioscorea bulbifera</i>
Linyolonyolo	<i>Commelina africana</i>
Linyolonyolo	<i>Commelina bengha-lensis</i>
linyolonyolo (Buk)	<i>Commelina bengha-lensis</i>
linyororo (Mrg)	<i>Commelina africana</i>
liola (Buk)	<i>Amaranthus</i> spp.
liondo (fruit) (Buk, Mrc)	<i>Cucurbita maxima</i>
Lirungu	<i>Dioscorea bulbifera</i>
lisaka (Mrc, Wan)	<i>Cleome gynandra</i>
Lisebebe	<i>Cucurbita moschata</i>
lisebebe (Mrc)	<i>Cucurbita maxima</i>
lisiebebe (Buk)	<i>Cucurbita maxima</i>
lisiebebe (Buk)	<i>Cucurbita moschata</i>
lisutsa (Kab, Mrc)	<i>Solanum</i> spp.
lisutsa (Tir)	<i>Solanum</i> spp.
litolotolo (Buk)	<i>Colocasia esculenta</i>
litoto (Buk, Mr'g, Mrc, Wan)	<i>Amaranthus</i> spp.
litoto (Tac)	<i>Amaranthus hybridus</i>
litoto-lia-bamia (Buk)	<i>Portulaca oleracea</i>
Litsusa	<i>Solanum america-num</i>
lukhanukhanu (Buk)	<i>Sesamum calycinum</i>
Lumenenambuli	<i>Lantana trifolia</i>

luoba (Mrc)	edible fungi
lurabu (Buk)	<i>Lagenaria siceraria</i>
Lusebi	<i>Keetia gueinzii</i>
lushindu (Mrc)	<i>Phoenix reclinata</i>
Makalaba	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>
mboka (Tac)	<i>Amaranthus dubius</i>
Miro	<i>Crotalaria ochroleuca</i>
miroo (Mrc)	<i>Crotalaria brevidens</i>
miroo (Mrc)	<i>Crotalaria ochroleuca</i>
mito (Mrg)	<i>Crotalaria brevidens</i>
mito (Mrg)	<i>Crotalaria ochroleuca</i>
mughomoli (Mrg)	<i>Vangueria infausta</i>
mugombero (Mrg)	<i>Mondia whitei</i>
Muholu	<i>Vitex doniana</i>
Mukhomoli	<i>Vangueria madagascariensis</i>
murere (Buk, Mrc)	<i>Corchorus olitorius</i>
murere musatsa	<i>Corchorus trilocularis</i>
murere nalubonga (Buk)	<i>Corchorus trilocularis</i>
murere-nalubembe (Buk)	<i>Corchorus trilocularis</i>
musioma (Mrg)	<i>Syzygium cordatum</i>
muvulu (Buk)	<i>Annona senegalensis</i>
nabikumba (Buk)	<i>Oxygonum sinuatum</i>
Nabusuma	<i>Keetia gueinzii</i>
nalubembe (Buk)	<i>Corchorus trilocularis</i>
namasaka (Buk, Tac)	<i>Solanum americanum</i>
namawa (Buk)	<i>Oxygonum sinuatum</i>
Namwirobelo	<i>Lansea edulis</i>
neloba (Buk)	<i>Lansea edulis</i>
nyag'ori	<i>Asystasia mysorensis</i>
obengele (Mrc)	<i>Lantana trifolia</i>
obukararambi (Tac)	<i>Rubus apetalus</i>
obukararambi (Tac)	<i>Rubus pinnatus</i>
obule (Mrc, Tac)	<i>Eleusine coracana</i>
obure (Mrc, Tac)	<i>Eleusine coracana</i>
oburwa (fruit) (Tac)	<i>Carissa edulis</i>
obusangura (fruit) (Tac)	<i>Rhus vulgaris</i>

obusangura busecha (fruit) (Tac)	<i>Rhus natalensis</i>
obusemwa (fruit) (Tac)	<i>Syzygium guineense</i>
obusemwa (Tac)	<i>Syzygium cordatum</i>
obwoba (plural) (Tac, Mrc, Sma)	edible fungi
olukenukenu (Tac)	<i>Sesamum calycinum</i>
olwoba (singular) (Tac)	edible fungus
Omboga	<i>Amaranthus lividus</i>
omufudu (Mrc)	<i>Vitex doniana</i>
Omufutu	<i>Vitex doniana</i>
omufutu (Tac)	<i>Vitex doniana</i>
omugombera (Mrc)	<i>Mondia whiteii</i>
omukhulumuru (Mrm)	<i>Syzygium cordatum</i>
omukhulumuru (Mrm)	<i>Syzygium cordatum</i>
omukhuyu (Mrc)	<i>Ficus sycomorus</i>
omukhuyu (Tac)	<i>Ficus sycomorus</i>
omukombela (Tac)	<i>Mondia whiteii</i>
Omukombera	<i>Mondia whiteii</i>
omukombera (Mrm)	<i>Mondia whiteii</i>
omurele (Ksa)	<i>Corchorus olitorius</i>
omurere (Kab, Tir)	<i>Corchorus olitorius</i>
omurinda (Tac)	<i>Pappea capensis</i>
omusangura (Tac)	<i>Rhus vulgaris</i>
omusemwa (Tac)	<i>Syzygium cordatum</i>
omusitole (Tac)	<i>Syzygium guineense</i>
omutekesi (Tac)	<i>Syzygium guineense</i> ssp. <i>senegalensis</i>
Shikhubayeka	<i>Vigna membranacea</i> .
Shikomoli	<i>Vangueria apiculata</i>
Shikomoli	<i>Vangueria infausta</i>
Shikuma	<i>Hoslundia opposita</i>
Shimanyamunyi	<i>Vangueria apiculata</i>
shingayangaya (Tir)	<i>Commelina africana</i>
Shirietso	<i>Erythrococa bongensis</i>
sikandakanda (Buk)	<i>Lablab purpureus</i>
sikayangaya (Buk)	<i>Commelina africana</i>

sikhubi (Buk)	<i>Vigna unguiculata</i>
sikhubi (Buk)	<i>Vigna unguiculata</i>
Simbande	<i>Vigna subterranea</i>
sinyamanyama (Buk)	<i>Pappea capensis</i>
sinyungulwe (Buk)	<i>Flacourtia indica</i>
sitanyamurwe (Buk)	<i>Physalis peruviana</i>
sitipa (Buk)	<i>Asystasia mysorensis</i>
Tsibande	<i>Vigna subterranea</i>
tsiderema (plural)	<i>Basella alba</i>
tsimbande (Tac)	<i>Vigna subterranea</i>
tsimboga (Buk)	<i>Amaranthus</i> spp.
Tsimboka	<i>Amaranthus dubius</i>
Tsimboka	<i>Amaranthus cruentus</i>

tsimboka (Ksa)	<i>Amaranthus</i> spp.
tsinuni (Mrc)	<i>Sesamum orientale</i>
Tsisaka	<i>Cleome gynandra</i>
tsisaka (Ks'a, Kab, Tir)	<i>Cleome gynandra</i>
yisaka (singular) (Tac)	<i>Cleome gynandra</i>
yisufwa (Tae)	<i>Solanum americana</i>

Note: Buk: Bukusu; Gis: (Ba-)Gishu; Ida: Idakho; Isu: Isukha; Kab: Kabras; Kha: (Ba-)Khayo; Ksa: Kisa; Man: Banyala; Mrc: Marachi; Mrg: Maragoli; Mrm: Marama; Nya: (Ba-)Nyala; Nyo: (Ba-)Nyore; Sma: Samia; Tac: Tachoni; Tir: Tiriki; Tso: Tsotso; Wan: Wanga.

Source:Maundu et al, 1999



## Appendix 4: Resource persons and useful contacts

### Isukha contacts

Gaudentia Otipa, Culture officer, East  
Kakamega Distrct  
P.O. Box 2600, Kakamega

Zipporah Ayuma  
Field coordinator, Isukha and contact person  
Shihuli

Anne Soita  
Teacher, Muraka Primary School  
Contact person Muraka

Teresia Munika,  
Teacher, Shihuli Primary School  
Contact person Shihuli

Mr. Blacio Khatuti  
Ms. Petronila Wakukha  
Mr. Clement Akhanala Khayumbi  
Box 713 Muraka Primary School.

### Main resource persons in Isukha West Locaton, Kakamega East District

Blandina Museba  
Maximilla Lukhumwa  
Christine Mayungu  
Ann Loti  
Catherine Mukambi  
Brenda Lusiola  
Wilimina Makhamura

### Resource person on vegetables, mushroom and busaa.

Thomas Majoni  
Felix Shiyenzi  
Clement Akhanala  
Regina Ikutu  
Catherine Mukambi

### Resource people on cereals and legumes from Muraka

Petronila Wakukha  
Catherine Mukambi  
Regina Olodi  
Rita Shitsobare

### Resource people on vegetables from Muraka

Rita Shisasabale  
Betty Wakhuku  
Flora Amukamwa  
Flora Shikami  
Everlyne Machioni  
Resource people and exhibitors from  
Shihuli

### Other resource persons

Julia Ombonya  
Ruth Adeka  
Geoffrey Ombonya  
William Shikanda



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Considerable work of documenting the foods of the Luhya community and recipes has been carried out in the past by nutritionists and ethnobotanists. This book which focuses on one of the 18 or so Luhya communities, the Isukha, goes further to avail information on how such food is sourced, processed and consumed. While providing this information, the book also attempts to provide an insight into food related customs including beliefs, taboos, gender issues and the time when food related activities are carried out. Only ten themes have been treated here, selected on the basis of their importance.

This book will be valuable to anyone interested in understanding foodways of the Luhya and specifically those of the Isukha community.

Some of its features are:

- 10 food themes with over 100 foods of plant, animal and fungi origin
- 115 Colour photographs to show specific foods and food related activities
- Food recipes
- A glossary of Isukha and other Luhya terms with over 100 entries explained
- A list of 225 local names of edible plants of the Luhya with scientific equivalents

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