



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

## Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage:



# **A Practical Guide to Documenting Traditional Foodways**

Using lessons from the Isukha and Pokot  
communities of Kenya





United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Intangible  
Cultural  
Heritage

Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage:

# A Practical Guide to Documenting Traditional Foodways

Using lessons from the Isukha and  
Pokot communities of Kenya

**Compiled by:** Patrick Maundu, E. Bosibori, S. Kibet, Y. Morimoto,  
A. Odubo, Brian Kapeta, Patel Muiruri, Ruth Adeka, Julia Ombonya

**Editors:** Patrick Maundu, Brian Kapeta, Patel Muiruri,  
Ruth Adeka, Julia Ombonya

Supported by



**JAPAN**  
Official Development Assistance  
Safeguarding Intangible  
Cultural Heritage





United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Intangible  
Cultural  
Heritage

**UNESCO Project Manager:** Mulekeni Ngulube

**Financial Contribution:** Japanese Funds-In-Trust

**Acknowledgements:** This publication was prepared in partnership with the following institutions and groups. Their valuable contribution is highly appreciated.

- Department of Culture, Ministry of State for National Heritage and Culture
- Kenya Resource Centre for Indigenous Knowledge (KENRIK), National Museums of Kenya
- Bioversity International
- Kenya Society of Ethnoecology
- Members of the Isukha and the East Pokot communities
- Teachers and pupils of Muraka and Shihuli primary schools in Isukha and Chemolingot and Churo primary schools in East Pokot.

**Compiled by:** Patrick Maundu, E. Bosibori, S. Kibet, Y. Morimoto, A. Odubo, Brian Kapeta, Patel Muiruri, Ruth Adeka, Julia Ombonya

**Editors:** Patrick Maundu, Brian Kapeta, Patel Muiruri, Ruth Adeka, Julia Ombonya

**Photos by:** Pupils of Shihuli and Muraka primary school, Pupils of Chemolingot and Churo primary schools, Patrick Maundu, Brian Kapeta, Patel Muiruri, Ruth Adeka, Y. Morimoto, Henry Losikiriatum, Zipporah Ayuma, Sammy Lokea, Leah Sapan

**Layout and Design:** Peter Mungai

**Printing:** Digital Process Works Ltd. P.O. Box 35045 - 00200, Nairobi - Kenya

**Copyright:** This publication is not for commercial use. No part of the book may be reproduced in any form including copying or manipulating its content for private interests, without prior or written permission from UNESCO. Non-profit organizations, however may freely distribute parts of the publication where there is no financial gain. The copyright of all photographs used here rests on individual photographers.

**ISBN 9966-955-43-7**

© UNESCO 2013

All rights reserved

The authors of this report are responsible for the choice and the presentation of facts and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

The designations employed and presentation of information do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.



# Contents

<b>Foreword.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Executive summary .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>1.0. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 What are traditional Foodways? .....	1
1.2 What are traditional foods? .....	1
1.3 Why do we need to learn about Traditional Foodways?.....	1
<b>2.0. The purpose of the manual.....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1. Purpose of the manual.....	3
2.2. Users of the manual .....	3
2.3. The term ‘food’ .....	3
<b>3.0 Step by Step Procedures of Documenting Traditional Foodways.....</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1 Participating schools and community .....	4
3.2 Preparation before data collection begins .....	4
3.3 Management and coordination .....	4
3.4 Selecting pupils to participate in the exercise.....	4
3.5 Prior Informed Consent.....	5
3.6 Formulating questions and pre-testing them.....	5
3.7 Learning to handle a camera and other equipment .....	5
3.8 Target informants.....	5
3.9 What information do we collect and how? .....	5
3.10 Material and methods needed during collection of information.....	6
3.11 Where to find information .....	6
3.12 Processing of information and role of coordinators.....	6
<b>4.0 Sample questions.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5.0 Examples of documentation: results from pupils in Isukha and East Pokot communities of Kenya .....</b>	<b>9</b>
1. Bee keeping among the people of East Pokot.....	9
Honey among the Pokot .....	9
2 Chicken eating among the Isukha of Kenya.....	13

# Foreword

Kenya became a state party to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural 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 experiences of school children in using this draft manual in Isukha, a mixed farming community, and East Pokot, a livestock keeping community have been used to produce this Booklet, “A Practical guide to documenting traditional foodways: Using lessons from Isukha and Pokot Communities”. The guide can be adapted to different communities in different contexts.

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 guide.

Djelid Mohamed  
Director  
UNESCO-Nairobi

## Executive summary

This manual is one of four outputs of the documentation work on traditional foodways carried out in Isukha and East Pokot areas of Kenya between 2010 and 2012. The other books are; A Photobook of Traditional Foodways of the Isukha and East Pokot Communities of Kenya, Traditional Foodways of the East Pokot Community of Kenya and Traditional Foodways of the Isukha Community of Kenya. This manual was used for guiding documentation work in the two areas but also went through a lot of improvement during the exercise. Although the manual is designed for use in the documentation of traditional foodways, it can also be adapted for documenting other non-food traditional ways.

The book starts by defining traditional foodways and also the term ‘food’ as used in the manual. It then goes through a step by step explanation on how to document foodways. The manual gives the criteria to use while identifying participating schools, pupils and communities. It also gives the kind of preparations needed before data collection begins and how to manage the exercise and data flowing from the pupils and other individuals collecting it. A coordinator is key in doing this. An important step of the process is the training of teachers and pupils. This training not only exposes pupils to simple methods of interviewing but should also impart skills of using equipment such as a camera. The book also gives who the potential informants are, and what information we need to collect and how. The materials needed during collection of information are outlined. Also given is a guide on where to find information. In some cases, a ‘Prior Informed Consent’ may be necessary and hence the need to have a form for informants to fill.

In formulating the questions, it will be noticed that great emphasis has been put on the questions what, how, who, when, why. An important part of this part of the exercise is carrying out a pre-test of the questions before full-scale documentation. In addition to the general guidelines provided, the manual also provides sample questions which were used in Isukha and Pokot – one on honey and beekeeping in Pokot and the other on chicken among the Isukha. The results from the two questions are provided in this manual but in a synthesized form. The two stories are also available in the detailed Isukha and East Pokot inventories of foodways.

Once collected, the information has to be processed and disseminated, the first beneficiaries being the participating schools and community. The potential users of the manual are, but not limited to young school going pupils and their teachers. Older people including researchers interested in documentation of foodways will find the book useful as well. This manual also gives how the information obtained could be used in community development. Finally up-scaling and dissemination strategies for information collected are outlined. The Museum is an ideal place for long-term storage of material. Many photos were taken both by the pupils and by the collaborating institutions. An archive of these photos is available at the Kenya Resource Centre for Indigenous Knowledge (KENRIK) at the National Museums of Kenya. It is hoped that the book will be valuable to individuals and institutions interested in documenting traditional foodways in partnership with schools.





# 1.0. Introduction

## 1.1 What are traditional Foodways?

Foodways entails knowledge, practices, beliefs and all cultural aspects relating to how a community acquires, stores, prepares and uses its food. It also entails all related gender and seasonal dynamics. It involves understanding how we acquire food (market, cultivation, hunting, gathering etc.), how it is prepared/ processed, who prepares it, what implements/ tools are used, when it is prepared, who eats and where we eat from. The food we eat varies a lot with the seasons and what we do with it is governed a lot by our traditions including taboos, beliefs and so on. Like any other cultures, traditional foodways are dynamic and hence have been changing over generations. What we eat tells a lot about ourselves, our culture, our beliefs, our traditions and our ideals. Other communities can understand us better from learning our foodways which like our way of dressing tell a lot about us. Similarly we understand other communities better by learning more about their foodways too. Foodways are different and are dictated by the natural environment, our culture and values and roles in the community. Food practices of agriculturalists for example differ widely from those of pastoralists.

## 1.2 What are traditional foods?

Traditional foods are foods that various communities have consumed over many generations and have been integrated into their cultures. Every community

has their traditional foods. For example, the Kikuyu of Kenya are known for their Githeri (a mixture of beans and maize), while several pastoral communities in Africa including the Maasai consume lots of milk, and occasionally blood. Some of the traditional foods are eaten during special events such as ceremonies or only by certain people e.g. pregnant women. Traditional foods are part and parcel of a community's foodways. Traditional foods are part of the local food systems and heritage.

## 1.3 Why do we need to learn about Traditional Foodways?

We learn about traditional foodways to help us understand ourselves and other people better. It is easy to make friendship and appreciate other people when we know about their food traditions. Traditional foodways of different members of a country together make their national heritage. The pride of any country is to have an understanding about its peoples' culture, history and aspirations. Traditional foodways are often associated with healthy lifestyles. Traditional foods are associated with less agricultural inputs, harmony with the environment, high nutritional value, dietary diversity and good nutrient balance.

It is also important to note that traditional foodways are under immense threat of disappearing and are already being disrupted at a high rate as people adopt modern lifestyles. One of the unfortunate

consequences of this transition is higher dependence on starchy and fatty foods, loss of knowledge about local foods and their preparation leading to less variety in diet and a sharp increase in nutrition related chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, gout, obesity, hypertension among others that are directly linked to our eating habits.

Many countries have already ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the

Intangible Cultural Heritage and therefore have committed themselves to identifying, documenting and safeguarding the living heritage including knowledge, practices and expressions to do with food. Information on the production, preparation and cooking and associated beliefs and taboos is now limited to a few people, especially the old. As we lose these knowledgeable people, we are also losing this valuable knowledge and hence the urgent need for its documentation.

## 2.0. The purpose of the manual

### 2.1. Purpose of the manual

This manual provides a step by step procedure on how to capture and document our traditional foodways. The purpose is to give a guide on how to identify and inventory traditional foodways. The manual is based on work done in two Kenyan communities; one mixed farming group and the other, a livestock keeping group. The user will have to adapt it to their own situation with the help of the two extreme examples given.

As one prepares to undertake documentation, it is important to keep in mind the questions what?, who?, why?, when?, where? and how? in mind at every stage of a story. In foodways, it is important to know what food, how it is sourced and by who, how it is processed and/or cooked, when, where, with what, how it is served, who eats certain parts and why.

The 'why' question opens important areas like beliefs and taboos associated with food. The 'when' question not only requires information about time of the day but also season and special situations such as ceremonies. Sourcing food requires information such as where the food is obtained, how, if there is any management and how it is harvested and carried away. The 'who' question helps us understand the different actors e.g. in terms of gender and their specific roles.

### 2.2. Users of the manual

This manual is designed for children between ages of 13-15 years (upper primary school pupils) however it should be useful to older groups including students and field researchers aiming at understanding the local foodways of a community.

In the case of young people, it should be used with the assistance of a mentor (e.g. a teacher) who understands the abilities of the pupils of the said age group and is able to simplify further the terms used and the entire exercise.

The manual will help children and others to document traditional foodways and present them in a form that will be easy for them to conceptualize. A wide range of skills will be gained in the process of documentation which involves but not limited to: Conducting an interview, illustrating, photography, audio video recording of songs and other activities, folk sayings and stories and documentation through prose. Documentation of traditional foodways should be fun. Finally after the exercise, those who have partaken in it should share their experience with others in debates, meetings, social media and so on. Their mentor should also assess how useful the exercise has been using an easy pre-test and post-test consisting of simple questions.

### 2.3. The term 'food'

In this manual, the term 'food' has been used to mean everything that we eat for our physical and mental well-being: whether cooked or uncooked; of plant or animal origin; forming minor or major component of our diet (such as spices and other additives); served for dinner, lunch, breakfast or in between meals. The term includes all categories of food within plants (leafy vegetables, roots and tubers, fruits, cereals/grains, gums and resins, nuts and pulses), fungi (e.g. mushrooms) and animals (e.g. insects, birds, fish, mammals and other animal products) as well as other ingredients used in food preparation e.g. salt.

# 3.0 Step by Step Procedures of Documenting Traditional Foodways

The following sequence of activities is proposed for use in the documentation process:

## 3.1 Participating schools and community

For any school to participate in the documentation of traditional foodways, the school administration must show proof of interest in the fields of environment, culture and food production. Schools with active environmental clubs, young farmers clubs, home-science activities and other clubs that expose pupils to theoretical and practical skills are preferred. In addition, the school administration must be committed to supporting the children in this work and at least one or a few of the teachers must show interest so that they can act as mentors.

The selected school must be located within a community which has interesting foodways and is willing to provide information to those seeking it including children.

## 3.2 Preparation before data collection begins

Before the data collection starts, the following preparations are important.

First the whole school community; teachers, students, parents and persons neighbouring the selected schools should be informed through a local administrator or school head of the planned activity, reasons for undertaking it and expected outcomes. All stakeholders must feel part of the exercise.

## 3.3 Management and coordination

There should be a management committee for the exercise which should meet often and assess progress made and provide new ideas. The head teacher could chair this committee. Parents, local administrators and, teachers should be represented in this committee. There should be one or several committed teachers who will mentor the pupils and ensure the task is performed. One of the teachers or someone else not necessarily a member of the school should coordinate the entire exercise. The coordinator will oversee all activities including training on the use of equipment e.g. cameras, computers, software e.tc. He or she receives all gathered information from pupils and ensures that it is well documented and stored in a form that is easy to retrieve or share e.g. a database. He or she coordinates all activities taking place outside the school e.g. organizing meetings with the local administrators and identifying information sources that are likely to elude the children.

## 3.4 Selecting pupils to participate in the exercise

Ideally most pupils in designated classes should participate but participation could also involve a select group of pupils. It is upon the teacher concerned to decide who should participate. Pupils involved in data collection should be assessed for their interest and passion, attitude, writing skills etc. An equal number of boys and girls should participate in the exercise unless in circumstances where this is not applicable.

### 3.5 Prior Informed Consent

This is consent sought from people providing information in which they commit to provide the information freely and in which the purpose to which the information will be put is clearly specified. A special form should therefore be developed where those providing information should sign. In many cases however, this information will be provided within a cultural context where a story is told to children as they record and hence signing may be inappropriate. In such situations it is upon those collecting such information to ensure that the resource people are duly acknowledged in all outputs.

### 3.6 Formulating questions and pre-testing them

Guiding questions should be developed for each key topic – e.g. beekeeping. There should be a consensus among teachers concerned and coordinator on the type of questions needed. The persons developing the questions should then pretest them, improve them, and then test them again with the pupils. Pupils will therefore need to undertake a mock data collection exercise using colleagues first before going to relatives. Teachers should point out to the pupils the best way of approaching their respondents and asking questions.

### 3.7 Learning to handle a camera and other equipment

The coordinator should arrange for basic training on how to use a camera e.g. effect of background light, how to hold a camera and to be steady, taking moving objects, close-up shots e.g. of a flower, zooming in

and out etc. With the help of the coordinator and/or a teacher each pupil should be given a camera and assisted to take photos using different camera functions. By the end of the exercise all participating pupils should be able to take still photos and video, moving objects, change settings for dark shots, bright light, dim situations and so on. This is also time to train on any other equipment that may need to be introduced to the pupils and this may include an audio recorder.

### 3.8 Target informants

After the pre-test, pupils will be given the opportunity to interview their parents or their next of kin at home within a given time limit. They will write this story as they write their English composition. Pupils should also be encouraged to interview neighbours and community experts suggested by respondents.

### 3.9 What information do we collect and how?

The information the pupils will be required to collect regarding their foods of choice includes the following:

1. General significance of the food to the community (diversity, importance in diet and as source of income, ceremonies etc.)
2. Obtaining the food (e.g. acquiring seed, planting, management, harvesting, processing for storage, fishing, hunting)
3. Storage of food and seed for future
4. Food preparation (processing, cooking)
5. Serving and eating food
6. Nutrition and health information
7. Related ceremonies, beliefs, taboos, myths, songs

For each of the items above, the pupils should be guided by the five Ws; what, who (e.g. gender, who decides?, who does it?), where, why, when (e.g. time of day, ceremonies, season, scarcity) and how.

Note: It may not be possible to gather information about all the foods used. Pupils should list some of the commonly used foods and divide the topics amongst themselves or prioritize.

### 3.10 Material and methods needed during collection of information

The following are some of the approaches to use in data collection. One can use one method or a combination of several.

1. Structured questions where you only fill the answer
2. Semi-structured questionnaire where you have only a list of guiding points to ask about
3. Use digital still photographs
4. Audio and video recorders to record the proceedings of your interview and songs. Most modern cameras have these facilities.
5. Illustrate your story through artwork
6. Take notes using paper and pen

Most modern phones and tablets have camera, video and audio recording facilities inbuilt and therefore could be used.

### 3.11 Where to find information

The following constitute some of the sources of data on traditional foodways.

- From other pupils and teachers in school. Meet with fellow pupils and list the range of foods that pu-

pils have eaten in the last one day and also in the last one week.

- From family members (parents, grandparents, uncles, brothers, sisters etc). Set a date with people of different ages and interview them. Learn about everything you need including preparation, taboos etc.
- From observations. Visit different environments e.g. cultivated fields, grazing areas, marketplaces, wild areas with wild food, different food sources. Take a knowledgeable person with you. Note the different types of foods, how common they are, when they are available, how to use them etc.
- From community events such as weddings, circumcisions, burial ceremonies etc
- Exhibitions, agricultural and food fairs

### 3.12 Processing of information and role of coordinators

#### 3.12.1 Information handling and dissemination

All data collected must be handled carefully to avoid damage. Once the pupils have documented the information, the teacher responsible collects all the material and analyses them to assess gaps, areas of improvement as well as the immediate value to the pupils e.g. in agricultural class. He or she hands the material to the coordinator who assembles all the information and keeps it at a safe place. All electronic information (e.g. digital photos) must be stored in computer and a backup copy maintained by the school e.g. in computer, CD, flash disc etc.

### 3.12.2. Data assessment and dissemination

Once the data has been consolidated by the coordinator, they are grouped and assessed. Various formats for display of the information will be agreed upon by all stakeholders (teachers, coordinators, and management committee) depending on what it is intended to achieve. Exhibitions, school events, drama, poems, songs and dance constitute some of the forms through which the information can be shared or disseminated.

### 3.12.3. Summary reports

The field coordinators are responsible for writing summary reports about the data collections, experiences, challenges and propose formats for final forms in which the collected data can be synthesized into information and finally into knowledge. This will be done in consultation with management committee and other knowledgeable persons.

### 3.13 Use of the information in community development

The information collected shall be incorporated into community development agenda. Some of the areas for consideration include teaching materials for primary schools, information fact sheets for cultural centres, establishment of demonstration plots in schools or community plots and so on. It is important that the information is put in a form that can be shared with other pupils, teachers and the community. This could be in form of a video, booklet, a picture book, slide show and so on.

### 3.14 Up-scaling and dissemination strategies

The school should work closely with the nearby Culture and UNESCO offices for support to share lessons learned with schools in other regions and to provide input into this manual. Institutions and individuals interested in this topic (including colleges, secondary schools, cultural groups, research scientists, etc.) should introduce the manual to communities in their areas of work and even adapt it for use in the documentation of other forms of intangible cultural heritage (such as traditional medicine).

### 3.15 Presentation of results, sharing information

The pupils with the help of their teachers, field coordinator and parents or guardians should organize an exhibition to present their information to other children and members of the community.

Pupils can share the information in school during pre-arranged functions but also they could share with their fellow pupils through modern social media facilities.

Other opportunities include field days, school debates, farmer field schools, scientific workshops and seminars.

## 4.0 Sample questions

Date..... The pupils name or code.....

Class.....

Age..... Sex.....Community.....

School name.....Smaller administrative area.....

Larger administrative area (e.g. county).....

Name of person providing information..... Sex.....

Age.....Place of interview (e.g. name of household).....

Administrative area (e.g. village).....

Question: Name a favorite food eaten in your community and tell a foodways story about it. [Remember to include songs, riddles, sayings, taboos, myths, ceremonies, utensils and tools associated with the food. Use the guidelines provided earlier in this manual].



# 5.0 Examples of documentation: results from pupils in Isukha and East Pokot communities of Kenya

## 1. Bee keeping among the people of East Pokot

### Guidelines to information gathering

#### Honey and beekeeping

Tell a story about beekeeping and honey in the East Pokot community using the following guidelines:

- a) Significance of beekeeping and honey in East Pokot (Diversity of bees, importance of honey as a food and source of income, cultural significance)
- b) Making beehives: Who makes hives? How? With which trees? Which implements? When?
- c) Placing the hives: Who places the hives? How? Where? When? (season and time of day)
- d) Harvesting: Who harvests, when (season and time of day)? Why? With which tools? Associated cautions/risks?
- e) Processing and storage: Who processes? How? Where/how is it stored?
- f) Use of honey: How is the honey used? To make what? By who?
- g) Cultural importance, associated customs: What are the associated ceremonies, taboos, beliefs, songs and dance?)

### RESULTS/ OUTPUT

## Honey among the Pokot

### Introduction

Beekeeping is one of the most important foodways activities of the East Pokot community. Honey, kipketin (kh'pketin) among the Pokot is an important source of energy and it is often mixed with other foods such as milk and is also used in the processing local alcoholic drinks. Most of the honey is harvested from traditional beehives. These are usually cylindrical in shape and made from trunks of large trees that have been hollowed out.

### Types of bees

The Pokot recognize two types of bees:

- i) Sakamin - the African honey bee which mainly nests in beehives, rock crevices and hollow trunks. Workers are very aggressive and have a ferocious sting. This is the bee of focus in this story.
- ii) Kulum (stingless bees). These bees are much smaller in size than the sakamin. Their honey is called lowiana. The honey is very sweet and clear. The bee inhabits termite mounds and hard soil types and so digging the honey out can be tiresome and time consuming. The honey is contained in spongy gourd-like chamber enclosed in wax about 40 cm deep. The honey is commonly harvested in July-August. The nest is identified by a small translucent funnel of wax rising about 5 cm above ground. One can notice the small bees getting in

and out. It is usually discovered by children but it is normally the bigger boys who dig the nest out. The round nest could be about 20 cm in diameter but older ones tend to be larger. A single nest may give a cupful of honey. As one digs, most of the bees escape.

## Production of honey

### (a) Making hives



A traditional beehive

The traditional beehive, möghen is made from trunks of huge trees such as mökong'wö (sycamore fig), atat (*Acacia elatior*) and katagh (*Commiphora* sp.). Traditional beehives are being substituted by modern hives. Mököng'wö tree is also used for carving ateker (long wooden container used for watering animals) and otupo (a shallow wooden container for drinking milk while people are away from home).

After cutting down the tree, the size and shape of the final product are considered. Logs each about 1.2-1.5m long by 0.5m wide are cut and hollowed out using a traditional chisel, arökon.

### (b) Placing the hives

Hoisting the hive up the tree is done by energetic men. The hive is hanged or placed on a firm branch of a large tree.

Strong ropes or wire may also be used to fasten the hive to the tree. The tree must be situated in a conducive environment to attract bees and enable them survive during bad seasons such as when it is too dry, hot, or rainy. Beehives are usually placed on the following trees: orol, ses, mököngwö, atat, tuwöt, riron, likwön and köloswo. Reasons for placing the beehives in these trees include:

- tree is strong enough to resist strong winds especially when the beehive is heavy.
- tree is not be preferred by termites which may end up destroying the beehive.
- it should not be easy for wild animals to climb up the tree. The trunk should preferably be slippery.
- the tree should preferably provide good nectar or be among trees that have good nectar for use by the bees.

### (c) Harvesting

Most of the harvesting is carried out in the evening after dawn, from 7:30 pm to around 10.00 pm. This is because the Pokot believe that bees are blind during night time and hence harvesting can be done without protective gear. A traditional torch (atömwö) is used to produce smoke (yiot) to scare away bees to the far end of the hive. The torch is commonly made from branches of rokokon, kiptar, sitot (*Grewia bicolor*) and pilill (*Acacia oerfota*). These plants are preferred because they produce a lot of smoke that easily scares the bees away. After this treatment, the near side of the hive is opened and honey combs extracted using a short knife. The combs are put in traditional wooden container, tokögh.

Modern beehives have been introduced in East Pokot and for these, harvesting can be carried out at any time of the day using protective gear such as gloves aprons, modern cutting knives, gumboots among others.

### Processing and storage



A modern beehive in East Pokot.

The honey is processed by men by squeezing the combs, or placing them at an open sunny place or near a fire place to melt the honey slightly. It is melted into a wooden container called tokogh. Thereafter, it is cleaned and put in a container and sealed for storage. It is stored mainly by men but if it is a woman it has to be under a man's instructions. Traditionally, honey is stored in a gourd, mukon (mikö) (*Lagenaria siceraria*) or a wooden container tokogh.

### (d) Season

Normally the honey season comes about three months after the peak of the rain season (from mid August to September). This is also the flowering time for some good nectar plants. Good nectar trees include talamogh, kiptari, anywa, chemanga, ses, tuwöt, atat, sitet, likwon, koloswo, komolwo, prokokon, sus (a type of grass) and choikwo (cheikwo). When bees feed on nectar (tapuk) from these plants and particularly talamogh, anywa and ses the result is high quality honey and a good

harvest. Some other plants such as pilil have slightly bitter honey.

### Uses of honey

Honey is used for various purposes. These include medicine, food, brews and in traditional cleansing ceremonies.

### Making local brew, kumiket



A woman preparing kumiket



Elders relaxing under a tree enjoying kumiket

Kumiket can be made by both men and women. It is mainly for use during cultural ceremonies such as the graduation of boys after initiation ceremonies (see ceremonies). A large (20-30 litre) flat-bottomed gourd container called somongu (akeret) is used to brew the beer. Honey and water are mixed together. Dried fruits of the sausage tree or rotin (*Kigelia africana*), are put in the gourd which is then placed at the fire place for fermentation. Halves of a gourd called tiwan or

adera and also a wooden container called otupo are used for drinking. Alepit, a wooden jar is also used.

Honey is also used to preserve animal meat, peny. The meat of cows (tany) and wild animals such as antelopes and is sometimes preserved in honey. Meat is cut into small pieces (sirkon) and sun dried or deep fried and dipped in the honey. Bee wax, tiyok (yitin) or tiyokpokumat (yitikumat), (the material that remains after honey has been squeezed out) is used to smear the new bee hives of to attract bees to settle.

### **Beliefs**

A among the Pokot it was believed that when boys eat honey which has pupae in it, they reach their puberty quickly as they soon change their voice.



Roti (sausage tree fruit) used for making a local alcoholic brew.

## 2 Chicken eating among the Isukha of Kenya

### Guidelines to information gathering:

Tell a story about the chicken among the Isukha. Explain the local terminologies used. At each step, mention which member of the family is responsible, when it is done (e.g. season, time of day) or on which occasion or ceremony, how it is done and where.

- a) How significant is chicken keeping among the Isukha? What are the different types of chicken?
- b) Laying eggs: Where do chicken lay eggs? On what? How is it prepared, by whom?
- c) Use of the eggs: How do you use the eggs?
- d) Hatching and raising chicken: How do they feed/ what do you feed them on? Where do they spend the night?
- e) Slaughtering and preparation: Who slaughters? On what occasion? Who cuts up? How is it prepared?
- f) Eating: Who serves? Who gets which part (E.g. Kasundi, Imondo and Lukosi) ? What is chicken served with?
- g) Customs and traditions: What beliefs, taboos and cultural practices are associated with chicken?

## RESULTS/OUTPUT

### 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 pre-

ferred 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, saw dust 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 tsin-gokho). The nails, crown and beak and scales on the legs are removed and 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 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 mushelekha 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 for less time.



Slaughtering chicken



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



Roasting (khusamba ingokho)



The chicken is cut into smaller pieces.



Several parts of the chicken



Cooked chicken

### *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



Iyalukhaka, the pot used for cooking chicken

### **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 while 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.







United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Intangible  
Cultural  
Heritage

## About the book

This book is a practical guide to documenting traditional foodways. It is based on real experiences from school pupils, their teachers and partners working among the Isukha and East Pokot communities of Kenya. The book includes a step by step explanation on how to document foodways. It also provides two sample questions one each for the Pokot and Isukha communities and the outcome of documentation work. The book will be valuable to individuals and institutions interested in documenting traditional foodways in partnership with schools and local communities.

**ISBN 9966-955-43-7**

Supported by



**JAPAN**  
Official Development Assistance

Safeguarding Intangible  
Cultural Heritage

