

# Report on the status of an element inscribed on the list of intangible cultural heritage in need of urgent safeguarding

## A. Cover sheet

A.1.

State Party

Name of State Party

Kenya

A.2.

Date of deposit of the instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession

This information is available online.

Date of deposit of the instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession

2007-10-24

A.3.

Element inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding List that is the subject of this report

Name of element

Isukuti dance of Isukha and Idakho communities of Western Kenya

Inscribed in

2014

Submitting State(s)

Kenya

A.4.

Reporting period covered by this report

Please indicate the period covered by this report.

A.5.

15<sup>th</sup> December 2018 – 15 December 2022

Other elements inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding List, if any

Please list all other elements from your country inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding List, together with the year of inscription; for multinational elements, please indicate the other States concerned.

**Other elements inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding List, if any**

Enkipaata, Eunoto and Olng'esherr, three male rites of passage of the Maasai community (2018)

Rituals and practices associated with Kit Mikayi shrine (2019)

Traditions and practices associated with the Kayas in the sacred forests of the Mijikenda (2009)

**A.6.**

**Executive summary of the report**

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Please provide an executive summary of the report that will allow general readers to understand the current status of the element, any positive or negative impacts of inscription, the implementation of safeguarding measures during the reporting period and their possible update for the following years.

**A.7.**

**Contact person for correspondence**

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Provide the name, address and other contact information of the person responsible for correspondence concerning the report.

**Title (Ms/Mr, etc.)**

Mr

**Family name**

Litswa

**Given name**

George

**Institution/position**

Principal Cultural Officer and 2003 Convention Focal Point

**Address**

+254-0202727980

**Telephone number**

+254722688930

**E-mail address**



## Other relevant information

Mr

## B. Status of element inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding List

Refer to the nomination file or to previous reports, if any, as the basis for reporting on the current status of the element, and report only on relevant changes since the date of inscription on the List or since the previous report. Nomination files, specific timetables and earlier reports, if any, are available at <https://ich.unesco.org> or from the Secretariat, upon request.

The State Party shall pay special attention to the role of gender and shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of the communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals concerned as well as relevant non-governmental organizations during the process of preparing this report, and is asked to describe how it has done so in point D below.

### B.1.

#### Social and cultural functions

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Please explain the social and cultural functions and meanings of the element today, within and for its community, the characteristics of the bearers and practitioners, and any specific roles or categories of persons with special responsibilities towards the element, among others. Attention should be given to any relevant changes related to inscription criterion U.1 ('the element constitutes intangible cultural heritage as defined in Article 2 of the Convention').

#### Social and cultural functions

Isukuti is still an important cultural expression among the Isukha and Idakho communities. It is performed in almost all social events, secular and religious. It is central to the identity of the two communities. It does not only give these communities a sense of belonging, but also operates as a viable tool through which cultural values and norms are elaborated and transmitted to community and the younger generation. Through the dance, the communities' aspirations, philosophy about life and death, fears and hope are expressed. It is what underpins the commonness in these two communities for their posterity.

Isukuti is a symbol of unity in the family and society. It provides the community with a sense of oneness and a spirit of continuity. It comprises three drums; (Isukuti Isatsa) the father, (Mutiti Mukhali) the mother and (Mutiti) the child and an assortment of other instruments. The role of each drum is distinct, yet they must complement each other. This is synonymous to unity in diversity. There is no discrimination when participating in the Isukuti dance. Everybody is allowed to enjoy the experience, in diverse styles, irrespective the political, religious, age or gender. Isukuti is not just performed for its cultural significance. It is also used as a call to gather the community for a common goal. Community members will always gather where it is being played. The structural complexity and free movements make Isukuti a cultural expression of great aesthetic value, unique to the two communities. This sense of ownership and appreciation is not just for its explicit expression but also for the spiritual satisfaction the practitioners experience from it. Over the years, Isukuti has united the members of the two communities and guaranteed them harmonious co-existence not just in the villages, but also in the towns and cities where these communities have migrated to.



Other than being a symbol of a steadfast family, the songs in the dance are a strong commentary on social and moral issues in the community and beyond. These songs vilify vices and uphold virtues. They speak to the philosophy, beliefs, and fears of the communities.

Isukuti is a repository of the history of the community that is transmitted from one generation to the other. Many compositions reflect on events and significant periods in the history of the community, the rulers and individuals associated with heroic or abominable acts. Most of these incidences are not recorded anywhere but are exclusively found in the content of Isukuti songs. Isukuti has been significant in giving the community a sense of hope, peace and continuity even in the face of calamities. This is best exemplified when Isukuti is performed at funeral ceremonies. While the dance condoles the bereaved, the general mood is celebratory. The underlying idea is that there is hope and continuity of life for those living as well as the dead.

## **B.2.**

### **Assessment of its viability and current risks**

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Please describe the current level of viability of the element, particularly the frequency and extent of its practice, the strength of traditional modes of transmission, the demographics of practitioners and audiences and its sustainability. Please also identify and describe the threats, if any, to the element's continued transmission and enactment and describe the severity and immediacy of such threats, giving particular attention to any strengthening or weakening of the element's viability subsequent to inscription.

### **Assessment of its viability and current risks**

The enactment of Isukuti dance has improved tremendously during this reporting period. The dance is performed almost on a daily basis in the clans and village where different occasions occur. It is performed in weddings, sports, political, some religious events and almost any social gatherings. This is probably because the Isukuti dance renders itself suitable for any social function whether small or big. In the last few years, the community has witnessed a high number of deaths. The Isukuti dance has to a large extent been part and parcel of these funeral ceremonies.

The dance has also been embraced by other communities in their ceremonies. This is probably because the dance is fluid, spontaneous and easily adaptable.

While certain religious faiths viewed Isukuti as a satanic practice, there seems to be a paradigm shift from this kind of attitude. The previous generation believers were conservative and rigid to change. The new generation is flexible and adventurous and yearn to see things done differently. Consequently, it is not surprising to find Isukuti integrated in the instruments played by church choirs. It has been embraced in the ceremonies of some of the denominations like the Catholic church and many other denominations.

The current administrative institutions have also supported the enactment of the Isukuti dance. Unlike in the years past, the practitioners and bearers of this element were labelled criminals and people who had nothing to offer. This perspective has since changed. Isukuti is not only seen as a symbol of cultural identity and continuity, but also as a viable tool that can create awareness on a myriad issues including matters related to the environment, the economy, gender, religion, and other topical issues. It also promotes peaceful coexistence in the community, while transmitting valuable cultural values and morals.

The informal integration of the dance in the school's co-curricular activities has also had a positive impact on the viability. Coupled with this is the hands-on training that the practitioners and the amateur players undertake. This has been instrumental in the transmission of the element from one generation to the other.

Social media has also contributed towards mitigating against the danger that this element faced.



Many recorded clips about the dance are posted on different social media platforms on the many performances that take place from different occasions. This has not only created awareness about the dance but has also helped to popularise it.

One such threat is the overcommercialization of the dance by some of the practitioners and bearers. It is the feeling of the community that current form of Isukuti is only a replica of what it traditionally symbolized. They feel that the Isukuti drum beats have been corrupted with modern music in the name of creativity, with an aim of appealing to a bigger constituency whose base is predominantly youth. This can nevertheless be attributed to the fact that culture is dynamic and has to adapt to changing trends.

### **B.3.**

#### **Implementation of safeguarding measures**

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Please report on the safeguarding measures described in the nomination file, and previous report, if any. Describe how they have been implemented and how they have substantially contributed to the safeguarding of the element during the reporting period, taking note of external or internal constraints such as limited resources. Include, in particular, information on the measures taken to ensure the viability of the element by enabling the community to continue to practise and transmit it. Include the following detailed information concerning the implementation of the set of safeguarding measures or safeguarding plan:

### **B.3.a.**

#### **Objectives and results**

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Indicate what primary objective(s) were addressed and what concrete results were attained during the reporting period.

#### **Objectives and results**

Objective 1: Research, document and publish the intangible cultural heritage associated with the Isukuti dance for future transmission.

Results: While there was limited research and formal documentation on the dance, the groups had some recorded clips of their performances through the use of smart phones. There are about 50 Isukuti dance groups within the Isukha and Idakho communities. There are a myriad others in the major cities and towns in Kenya. For the reporting period, three formal documentation exercises were carried out during organized events, such as the Kakamega Forest Conservation Marathon – November, 2019, 2021 and 2022. Formal documentation has also been done at the various National and County celebrations. The records are with the Press Units at County and National Governments.

Objective 2: Transmission of Isukuti dance by conducting seminars and training sessions for Isukuti trainers

Results: Every Isukuti dance group is training its own apprentices who continuously keep sharpening their skills and mastery of playing the instruments. It is estimated that 240 apprentices are trained every year. All these apprentices do not necessarily graduate into master players as some of them exit the groups when they find greener pastures, as new ones join the group.

Objective 3: Incorporate Isukuti dance into school programmes as local content or extracurricular activity.

Results: The Kenya National Schools and Colleges Drama Festivals usually held in April and the Kenya National Schools and Colleges Music Festivals usually held in August of each year remains



the main visible way in which the dance was incorporated into school programmes. Over 100 performances basically featuring the Isukuti dance were showcased at these two events from the Sub- County level to the National level. In addition, various schools in the Western Region of Kenya had different special school days where the Isukuti dance predominantly features in the entertainment programmes.

Objective 4: Establish a stock of raw materials

Results: In order to ensure that the Isukuti dance remains viable, the practitioners and the bearers of the element continuously keep taking stock of the materials used to make the instruments. Through their own networks, they have done a mapping of the sources and availability of Mukomari and Mungóma trees that are used in the making of the drums. During the reporting period, they identified 40 mature trees under private ownership that could be used for the production of the Isukuti drums. They reported that a single Isukuti drum has a lifespan of around 20 years. These trees are normally booked or reserved for the use of making the Isukuti drums through local arrangements between the owners and the practitioners.

The practitioners have also through meetings identified alternative sources of raw materials that conform to the regulations of the National and County legislative restrictions on endangered animal species like the Dik-diks (Shiseri), Monitor lizards (Imbulu) which provide the skins used on the drums. Some of these alternatives include the use of cowhides and horns.

### **B.3.b.**

#### **Safeguarding activities**

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List the key activities that were carried out during this reporting period in order to achieve these expected results. Please describe the activities in detail and note their effectiveness or any problems encountered in implementing them.

#### **Safeguarding activities**

Safeguarding activities

1. Research, document and publish the intangible cultural heritage associated with the Isukuti dance for future transmission.

1.1. Documentation was done informally. The groups have therefore been recording their performances using their smart phones. Due to the fact that Isukuti is spontaneous and an ever-present performance that will vary with the occasion and event of the moment, there are hardly any formal forums to record it unless organised. Practitioners have nevertheless documented their performances whenever they enact the dance during the many occasions, happening within the various clans and villages that constitute the Isukha and Idakho communities.

1.2. The annual Kakamega Forest Conservation Marathon

This annual event has been used to document the Isukuti dance as a viable way of raising awareness on the need to conserve the Kakamega forest. Between 10-15 groups participated in this annual event. During the event, the participating teams composed songs and dance expressions that illustrated and enhanced the conservation theme.

2. Transmission of Isukuti dance by conducting seminars and training sessions for Isukuti trainers

The Practitioners and bearers reported that they have been continuously transmitting knowledge and skills on the dance to the younger generations, though not through informally organised seminars and training sessions. This has been done basically through apprenticeship. Younger members of a performing groups, who are not the master players of the instruments, are occasionally given an opportunity to try and play the instruments of their interest depending on the circumstances and occasion. The master players in these situations gauge the expertise of the learners and advise them on how to improve their skills. The apprentices are allowed to try their



hand on all the instruments; however, they are normally encouraged to specialise in one of the instruments. With time, they eventually graduate to skilled players to enable them be given an opportunity to play at major events. Nowadays, transmission through the lineage system is on a limited scale because of urban rural migration, adoption of Western lifestyles and modern education systems.

Learning institutions were also used to transmit Isukuti dance playing skills. In Shinyalu constituency that makes up the Isukha community, the following schools were involved in various trainings of the dance;

Ihondolo, Lihlanda Girls, Shitaho, Munasio, Matende, Muhonje, Busulwa, Shivakala St Joseph's Primary Schools, Fesbeth and Hill School Academies. In Ikolomani constituency which makes up for the Idakho community, the following institutions were involved; Eregi Teachers Training College, Musoli, Shikoko, Bushiangala, Eregi, Shikondi Primary Schools.

During these activities the students were empowered with skills on how to play an instrument of their interest with the guidance of the bearers and practitioners of the element. Besides, the training involved sharpening the skills of those students who had acquired some knowledge and skills on the different instruments.

This mode of transmission was very effective as the dance is best experienced and only becomes meaningful in its live performances. The challenge was that these training are not a continuous process given that they were mainly used during the schools' competitions.

### 3. Establish a stock of raw materials

In order to ensure that the Isukuti dance remains viable, the practitioners and the bearers of the element took stock of the materials used to make the instruments. Through their own networks, they did a mapping of the sources and availability of trees used in the making of the drums. As earlier mentioned, they identified 40 matured Mukomari and Mung'oma trees under individual ownership that could be used for the production of the Isukuti drums. The trees currently in stock and the ones maturing, are sufficient to make drums for the next 10 - 15 years, unless they are used for some other purposes.

### 4. Incorporate Isukuti dance into school programmes as local content or extracurricular activity.

Performances of the Isukuti dance were incorporated in the Schools' and Colleges' co-curricular activities. The Kenya National Schools and Colleges Drama Festivals is usually held in April and the Kenya National Schools and Colleges Music Festivals in August of each year. These events remain the main visible way in which this dance has been incorporated in the school programmes. This cycle was however disrupted in 2020 – 2021 by the Covid 19 pandemic. Schools were also used in the transmission of the skills on the dance. This was by training of students through informal arrangements between the bearers and practitioners and management of the schools that made such requests. These trainings were mainly done during the music and drama competitions seasons in the school's co-curricular calendar. The objective of this mode of transmission for many learners however, was the extrinsic competition focussed value of the dance and not the intrinsic cultural value of the dance for posterity.

Due to the fact that there are so many Isukuti activities that happen almost on a daily basis, it was not very easy to take stock of all these activities. All these activities have enhanced the safeguarding measures through continuous enactment, thus, keeping the element viable. Lack of documentation of some of these activities was because of the fact that Isukuti is not an institutionalised cultural element. There are no formal institutions to sanction its practise or enactment. It is enacted in every small unit in the community and is not restricted to any specific functions or ceremonies. It is spontaneous and can find relevance to any occasion.

In addition, there are many members of the Isukha and Idakho communities who have migrated to urban areas. They have kept the element viable, however, to a large extent for commercial purposes. While these enactment and recreation of the dance might not have strictly followed the proposed objectives to the letter, to a large extent, they have kept the dance viable during this reporting period.



### **B.3.c.**

#### **Participation of communities, groups or individuals in the safeguarding activities**

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Describe how communities, groups or, if appropriate, individuals as well as relevant non-governmental organizations have effectively participated, including in terms of gender roles, in the safeguarding measures. Describe the role of the implementing organization or body (name, background, etc.) and the human resources that were available for implementing safeguarding activities.

#### **Participation of communities, groups or individuals in the safeguarding activities**

Since the last periodic report, the communities, practitioners and bearers of the element have continuously been involved in the process of ensuring the viability of this element in the widest manner possible. Isukuti is a living heritage that interacts with many occasions in the community. Its enactment is witnessed almost on a daily basis across the two communities, in the various clans and villages that constitute these communities. The communities have therefore kept this element viable for its intrinsic values as a cultural expression that is part and parcel of their identity and heritage. The community, practitioners and bears hold constant informal consultative meetings on a need be basis with regard to the enact of the element. Community members are the consumers of the element and have never shied from requesting for the dance whenever they have an event. This has immensely contributed to the safeguarding measures through constant enactment. Other than participating in the dance, women and youth have been instrumental in the development of Mukomari and Mung'oma seedlings around the Kakamega forest. Living treasures too have contributed significantly to information on the element that has been used to update the inventory.

The practitioners and bearers have, through their own initiative, continued to informally transmit knowledge and skills about the dance to the younger generations through the apprenticeship trainings. As earlier mentioned, younger members of a performing group, with guidance from the masters are occasionally given an opportunity to try their hand on the instruments of their interest. These master players monitor the progress of the learners and advise them on how to improve their skills.

The practitioners and bearers put in place initiatives to ensure that the trees used in the making of the drums, are available. They undertook a mapping exercise of sources of the trees available. The community continuous to play a central role in conservation of these trees. In Kakamega East, the community, through CBOs working with the Kakamega forest has seedlings for the Mukomari and Mung'oma trees.

The community therefore has been central and to the implementation of the safeguarding measures. The Department of Culture during this reporting period did not play a significant role with regard to the implementation of the safeguarding measures. This was to a large extent occasioned by the covid pandemic, which, other than disrupting big gatherings, had other ripple effects such as budgetary cuts for Government Ministries and Departments to cushion the people affected by the pandemic. The community implemented the activities on its own.

The Department of Culture is the lead coordinating body for the implementation of the safeguarding measures. The Isukha Mulindi Peace Museum group has been the main link between the community and the Department of Culture. The Departments of Culture at the National and County Governments play a coordinating role by identifying other stakeholder who work with the communities in implementing the safeguarding measures.

### **B.3.d.**

#### **Timetable**

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Indicate in a timetable when each activity was implemented.

## Timetable

1. Research, documentation and publication of intangible cultural heritage of Isukuti dance for future transmission.

November. 2019, 2021 and 2022

a) Documentation of the Isukuti dance during the annual Kakamega Forest Conservation Marathon event usually held at Shinyalu Market. This event was affected by the Covid pandemic.

December 24th – 31st 2019 - 2022

b) Documentation of the element during the bullfighting events at held at the Malinya Stadium in Kakamega South. This is however an event that occurs throughout the year in different places but happens predominantly during the dates indicated above. There are many other bullfight events which are privately recorded on other dates and at different venues.

Continuous process

c) The groups informally recorded their performances using their smart phones. This is because there are numerous Isukuti dance events and can occur at any moment. As earlier mentioned, Isukuti is enacted almost on a daily basis in the many social events that take place privately in the community.

2. Workshop on the transmission of Isukuti dance through informal training

March 4th - 5th 2019

The workshop focused on monitoring the status of the Isukuti dance by giving an opportunity to the practitioners and bearers of the dance to dialogue and strengthen their networks in the enactment of the element. This event was held at Lugala Youth Polytechnic, Shinyalu.

October 25th 2022

Workshop on raising the visibility of the intangible cultural heritage of the communities living in Western Kenya within which framework lies the transmission of knowledge and skills on the Isukuti dance. This event was held at the Masindo Muliro University

3. Informally integrate Isukuti dance knowledge and skills in community and schools' extra-curricular activities.

June – July 2019, January- February 2022

The holding of the Schools and Colleges Drama and Music Festivals

4. Training of students to sharpen their skills in playing the Isukuti instruments.

This is an event that happens annually during the preparation for the schools' competitions through local arrangements between the cultural practitioners and bearers of the element and the managements of the schools.

The schools involved are as outlined below:

3.1 Kakamega East: Ihondolo, Lihlanda Girls, Shitaho, , Munasio, Matende, Muhonje, Busulwa, Shivakala St Joseph's Primary Schools, Fesbeth Academy, Hill school Academies.

3.2 Kakamega South: Eregi Teachers Training College, Musoli, Shikoko, Bushiangal, Eregi, Shikondi Primary Schools.

The exact dates for the trainings of these students were not recorded. This activity was also interrupted by the Covid pandemic.

2019 - 2021

5. Mapping of the trees used for making the Isukuti drums.

This is a process that does not have any institutional guidelines. It is on a need be basis that the practitioners and bearers of the element identified the potential areas where they could find materials for their instruments. The craftsmen too were involved. They source out for these materials not for the demand from the practitioners and bearers, but also for the commercial purposes of the instruments.

## B.3.e.

### Budget expenditures

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Provide the detailed amounts of the funds used for the implementation of each activity (if possible, in US dollars), identifying the funding source for each (governmental sources, in-kind community inputs, etc.).

#### Budget

November. 2019, 2021 and 2022

1. Documentation of the Isukuti dance during the annual Kakamega Forest Conservation Marathon event held at Shinyalu Market.

- a) Lunches and refreshments for the performers;
- b) Incentive for performers of Isukuti dance;
- c) Hire of recording equipment;
- d) Transport reimbursement for the performing teams.

Cost and source of funds: The activities cost approximately US\$ 6255 annually from the Government of Kenya. Equity Bank,

2. Documentation of the element during the bullfighting event at Malinya Stadium in Kakamega South. This is an event that occurs throughout the year but happens predominantly between the dates indicated below.

December 24th – 31st: 2019 - 2022

- a) Transport reimbursement for teams performing;
- b) Lunches for participants;
- d) Fee for (3) owners of the bulls;

Source of funds: Community groups, Individual initiatives.

The activities cost approximately US\$ 1135 annually

3. Workshop to empower practitioners and bearers of the Isukuti dance at Lugala Youth Polytechnic, Shinyalu Market.

4-5th March 2019

- a) Transport reimbursement for six dance groups;
- b) Lunches for participants;
- d) Fee for 3 resource persons;
- e) Stationary.

Source of funds: County Government of Kakamega, Constituency Development Fund

The activities cost approximately US\$ 1513

4. Workshop on transmission of knowledge and skills of the Isukuti dance at Masindo Muliro University

25th October 2022

- a) Transport reimbursement for 5 performing groups;
- b) Performance fee for 5 performing groups;
- c) Lunches for performing groups;

Source of funds: Masindo Muliro university, Kenya National Chamber of Commerce, County Government of Kakamega.

The activities cost approximately US\$ 1891

June – July 2019, January- February 2022



#### 5. Participation at the Schools Music and Drama Festivals.

Training of students to sharpen their skills in playing the Isukuti instruments;

The schools involved are as outlined below:

5.1 Kakamega East: Ihondolo, Lihlanda Girls, Shitaho, , Munasio, Matende, Muhonje, Busulwa, Shivakala St Joseph's Primary Schools, Fesbeth Academy, Hill school Academies.

5.2 Kakamega South: Eregi Teachers Training College, Musoli, Shikoko, Bushiangal, Eregi, Shikondi Primary Schools

a) Transport reimbursement for the trainers

b) Meals for the trainers

Source of funds: Schools administrations where these trainings are held

The activities cost approximately US\$ 756

2019 - 2021

#### 6. Mapping of the trees used for making the Isukuti drums.

Transport reimbursement

Source of funds: Self initiative by the practitioners and bearers of the Isukuti dance.

The activities cost approximately US\$ 378

### **B.3.f.**

#### **Overall effectiveness of the safeguarding activities**

Provide an overall assessment of the effectiveness of the activities undertaken to achieve the expected results and of the efficiency of the use of funds for implementing the activities. Please indicate how the activities contributed to achieving the results and whether other activities could have contributed better to achieving the same results. Also indicate whether the same results could have been achieved with less funding, whether the human resources available were appropriate and whether communities, groups and individuals could have been better involved.

#### **Overall effectiveness of the safeguarding activities**

Although the safeguarding measures put in place were not implemented to the letter, they were very effective in sustaining the viability of the element. The success of the implementation can be attributed to self-initiated activities by the practitioners and bearers of the element. These initiatives have enabled a myriad ways in which these groups can positively contribute to keeping this cultural expression alive as a symbol of the identity of the Isukha and Idakho communities for posterity.

Documentation has been informal. The groups have been recording their performances using their smart phones. This information, in form of video clips, is shared among members of the community and other communities, thus raising awareness on the element. In the process, the community members critique the performances or sometimes share a common memory of their history and identity transmitted through the dance. As a result, many groups receive invitations to perform in different ceremonies because of these clips.

The initiative by the practitioners and bearers to conduct a mapping exercise to ascertain the availability of mature trees is yet another milestone in the implementation of the safeguarding measures. It was through this activity that it was realized that the mature species of 'Mukomari', 'Mung'oma' that are available, need to be protected and conserved for no other use but for the making of the Isukuti drums. Towards this end, another major milestone was unveiled; the complementary role the community plays in safeguarding the dance other leaving the task to the practitioners and bearers. The mapping exercise also opened up new synergies between the practitioners and bearers of the element and other stakeholders including the Department of



Forest Services, Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI) and the local administration. This understanding will lead to a reciprocal relationship between the cultural practitioners and the caretakers of the forest. Other than the practitioners and bearers exploring alternative sources of the skins used on the drums, plans are in place to engage the Kenya Wildlife Services and the County Government of Kakamega on the possibility of rearing monitor lizard, a project similar to the Mamba Village in Mombasa that rears crocodiles for commercial use.

The transmission of skills from the masters of the art to the amateurs through apprenticeship was also an effective way of safeguarding the element. This is in view of the fact that the lineage system has been weakened by modern lifestyles and religious practices, education and urban migration among others, where the older members in the family tree would hand over the art to the younger members.

For this reporting periodic, the number of the students who have been trained has increased, but for the lapse occasioned by the Covid pandemic. More and more schools are requesting for the services of the Isukuti players. In view of the fact that the new school curriculum is skills based, there will be an enhanced interest in integrating the skills and knowledge on Isukuti in the curriculum. In this regard, the Department of Culture intends to conduct more of these workshops with practitioners and bearers to come up with better training strategies. This initiative will be reflected in the Departmental Work plan during the next financial year.

A major challenge that still negatively impacts on the attainment of results is limited funding. Some of the intended activities like the establishment of the cultural centre requires a substantial amount of money to put up the infrastructure required. Funds will also be required to build capacity in the community on how to implement the safeguarding measures.

Litswa

## C. Update of the safeguarding measures

### C.1.

#### Updated safeguarding plan

Please provide an update of the safeguarding plan included in the nomination file or in the previous report. In particular provide detailed information as follows:

- a. a. What primary objective(s) will be addressed and what concrete results will be expected?
- b. b. What are the key activities to be carried out in order to achieve these expected results? Describe the activities in detail and in their best sequence, addressing their feasibility.
- c. c. How will the State(s) Party(ies) concerned support the implementation of the updated safeguarding plan?

#### Updated safeguarding plan

The primary objectives addressed in the updated safeguarding plan are as outlined below: -

1. Research, documentation and publication of intangible cultural heritage of Isukuti dance for future transmission.

Expected results

- a). Audio and visual materials on the Isukuti dance. This documentation will also be in form of written records, photos, videos, books, teaching materials and other publications.
- b). Updated inventory on the Isukuti dance. This will be coordinated by the Isukha Mulindi Peace Museum Group.
- c). Establishment of a website on the Isukuti dance.



Activities:

- a) Recording, filming and photographing of the various forms and expressions of the Isukuti dance;
  - c) Publication and production of audio and audio-visual materials on the dance;
  - d) Dissemination of information on the Isukuti dance;
2. Transmission of Isukuti dance through informal training.

Expected results

100 apprentices trained every year

Activities:

- a) Hold one annual workshop on the transmission of knowledge and skills on the Isukuti dance.
  - b) Establish and inventory of the Isukuti dance troupes from the Isukha and Idakho communities.
  - c) Hold the annual Isukha and Idakho community cultural festivals.
3. Informally integrate Isukuti dance in the schools' co-curricular activities.

Expected Results:

200 students trained on the skills of playing the Isukuti instruments.

Activities:

- a). Hold 4 trainings for 200 students to empower them with skills of playing the Isukuti instruments in Kakamega East and Kakamega South Sub-Counties.
  - b) Revitalize the performance of Isukuti at the annual school's music and drama festivals through special awards.
4. Establish a stock of raw materials used to make Isukuti drums and the instruments that accompany the Isukuti dance.

Expected results

- Availability/ easy access to raw material for making Isukuti drums and other instruments that accompany the Isukuti dance including; jingles, bamboo trumpets, horns, hides of a cow and other assorted metal rattles.
- Establishment of 1 income generating project, beyond the dance earnings, for bearers and practitioners.

Activities

- a)Monitoring and evaluating the status of tree nurseries of indigenous species ('Mukomari', 'Mung'oma' and 'Murembe').
- b)Hold four meetings with practitioners and the County Government Officials to map out a way forward for the establishment of the Isukuti Centre.
- c)Establishing a training centre for the making of Isukuti dance drums, the accompaniments and costumes. The centre will be the main source of raw materials and a one stop shop to buy Isukuti drums and the other accompaniments.

The Government of Kenya and the County Government of Kakamega will fund the programme. The training activities will be coordinated and monitored by the Department of Culture. It is anticipated that the Department of Culture will seek partnership with other stakeholders to meet some of the costs.

## C.2.

### Timetable for future activities

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Provide a timetable for the updated safeguarding plan (within a time-frame of approximately four years).

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### Timetable

1. Research, documentation and publication of the Isukuti dance for future transmission:  
2023-2026

a) This will be a continuous process done in a more structured manner. The informal recordings by the bearers and practitioners will be accompanied by some narrative to give meaning to the performances. There will be two formal documentations of the dance each year. A one-hour documentary on the Isukuti dance will also be produced within the four-year period, subject to the availability of funds.

b) Production and publication of audio and audio-visual materials on the dance will be done. These materials will finally be disseminated to schools and local media houses. The County Government of Kakamega will coordinate this exercise.

c) The updating of information in the inventory on the element will be a continuous process through the four-year period. The Isukha Mulindi Peace Museum will spearhead this activity. In addition, there will be another inventory of the Isukuti groups from the two communities. The local administration through Chiefs and their Assistants will coordinate this exercise.

2. Transmission of knowledge and skills on the Isukuti dance through informal training:  
August (2023-2026)

a) Hold one annual workshop on the transmission of knowledge and skills on the dance. These workshops will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the transmission modes used during this period.

October (2023-2026)

b) The annual Isukha and Idakho community cultural festival will be revived to enhance the documentation of the element and also to enhance the visibility on the dance.

3. Integrate knowledge and skills on the Isukuti dance through the schools' co-curricular activities.  
(2023-2026)

a) Hold 4 trainings for 200 students to empower students with skills of playing the Isukuti instruments in Kakamega East and Kakamega South Sub-Counties. This exercise will be carried out in a more structured approach. The Department of Culture will avail a feedback form that will require basic information about the training sessions. Trainers will be required to have among others, a clear record of the names of the schools, number of students trained to play the instruments and the dates of when these activities were conducted. There will be information on gender and marginalised groups trained and the effectiveness of the training.

April & August (2023-2026)

b) The Department will partner with the Ministry of education to revitalize the performance of Isukuti at the annual School's Music and Drama Festivals through special awards for the Best Item/s that exemplify the Isukuti dance expression at these festivals.

4. Establish a stock of raw materials used to make Isukuti drums and the instruments that accompany the Isukuti dance.

a) Hold four meetings with the County Government of Kakamega to map a way forward for the establishment of this centre.

b) Other than monitoring the stock of trees available, there will be the establishment of a crafts centre for the making of Isukuti dance instruments. The centre will be the focal source of raw materials and a one stop shop for buying Isukuti dance instruments.

### C.3.

#### Budget for future activities

Provide the estimates of the funds required for implementing the updated safeguarding plan (if possible, in US dollars), identifying any available resources (governmental sources, in-kind community inputs, etc.).



## Budget

1. Research, Documentation and Publication of intangible cultural heritage of Isukuti dance for future transmission.

- a) Hire of recording equipment @ US\$ 1500
- b) Translation and interpretation of songs US\$ 500;
- c) Publication of Isukuti dance at a cost of US\$ 1,000;
- d) Production of Isukuti dance in audio-visual format at a cost of US\$ 1500;
- e) Establishment of a website US\$ 2,000.

2. Transmission of Isukuti dance through informal training

2.1 Hold one annual workshop on the transmission of knowledge and skills on the dance

- a) Transport reimbursement for 60 participants representing 20 dance groups @ US\$ 30 = US\$ 1800;
- b) Hire of conference facilities for 80 participants @ US\$ 1600 x 2 days = US\$ 3200;
- d) Facilitation fee for 2 resource persons @ US\$ 200 x 2 days = US\$ 800;
- e) Stationary. @ US\$ 150

2.2 Hold the annual Isukha and Idakho community cultural festivals

- a) Hire of sound equipment @ US\$ 300 x 2 days = US\$ 600
- b) Lunches for invited guest @ US\$ 20 x 100 x 2 days = US\$ 4000
- c) Hire of tents, chairs decoration services @ US\$ 120 x 20 tents = US\$ 2400
- d) Transport reimbursement for the exhibitors US\$ 50 x 10 exhibitors x 2 days = US\$ 1000
- e) Performance fee for 10 performing groups @ US\$ 300 x 6 x 1 day = US\$ 3000
- f) Hire of recording equipment @ US\$ 500 x 2 days = US\$ 1000'

3. Integrate knowledge and skills on the Isukuti dance through the schools' co-curricular activities.

- a) Honoraria for the trainers @ US\$ 40 per training session x 10 schools x 4 years = US\$ 1600
- b) Awards and certificates in the Isukuti category for four years at US\$ US\$ 1500 x 4 years = US\$ 6000

4. Establish a stock of raw materials used to make Isukuti drums and the instruments that accompany the Isukuti dance.

4.1. Monitoring and documentation of the status of tree nurseries for indigenous species ('Mukomari', 'Mung'oma' and 'Murembe') @ US\$ 100 x 4 years = US\$ 400;

4.2. Four meetings with practitioners and the County Government Officials to map a way forward for the establishment of the Isukuti Centre at US\$ 1,500

- a) Transport reimbursement @ US\$ 50 x 80 participants x 2 = US\$ 8000
  - b) Hire of venue @ US\$ 100 X 1 day = US\$ 100
  - c) Hire of conference facilities @ US\$ 20 x 1 day x 80 participants = US\$ 1600
  - d) Coordination of event @ US\$ 200 = US\$ 200
- 4.3. Establishing a crafts centre @ US\$ 40,000

## C.4.

### Community participation

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Please describe how communities, groups and individuals, as well as relevant non-governmental organizations have been involved, including in terms of gender roles, in updating the safeguarding plan, and how they will be involved in its implementation.

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### Community participation

In the spirit of the Convention, the Department of Culture has made efforts to make the community the centre piece in the implementation of the safeguarding measures. Through consultative meetings with segments from the community, members identified weaknesses in the previous safeguarding plan. Besides, cultural practitioners and bearers of the element have been holding consultative meetings to dialogue on effective measures of safeguarding the element within the framework of the proposed safeguarding measures. These meetings have been instrumental in developing strategies such as creating a data base on the element. These meetings have served as important forums for identifying areas that can be improved in the safeguarding processes. The updated safeguarding plan therefore reflects the measures the community proposed, by and large, as within its means, bearing in mind the challenges and limitations. The community committed to be fully involved in the documentation of this element. This was because they can use smart phones to do the recording. However, the community representatives expressed a need to be facilitated with resources specifically meant for documentation and storage of such information. In this regard the representatives committed to establishing a body that would spearhead this process and be supported with the establishment of a website.

In addition, practitioners and bearers have been and remain committed to being used as resource persons in the transmission of knowledge and skills associated with the element through school-based training programmes.

Community elders, cultural practitioners, women groups and youth made a commitment to be central to the organization of the annual Isukuti dance cultural festival. These festivals have been an important platform for creating awareness on the importance and need to safeguard the Isukuti dance.

The Isukha Mulindi Peace Museum and youth from the two communities pledged to initiate research programmes on the dance. They intend to engage living treasures to collect information on the history of the element and traditional songs associated, which the current generation has forgotten about. This information will be used to update the inventory.

At the request of the community, the Department of Culture has initiated dialogue with the County Government of Kakamega and other stakeholders including the Kenya Forest Services, Kakamega Forest CBOs in developing seedlings associated with element to integrate the needs and interests of the practitioners and bearers of the element in their activities to enable easy access to the raw materials.

The practitioners and bearers played a significant role in the transmission of the element from the older to the younger generation through informal school-based programmes in the reporting period. Being a self-initiated programme, this was included in the updated plan as they felt they can do better with some little financial support.

While the updated safeguarding plan intends to have a community centred approach, it is not in doubt that the support from the National, County Government of Kakamega and other stakeholders will be a great impetus to propel the community achieve this fete.

## C.5.

### Institutional context

Please report on the institutional context for the local management and safeguarding of the element inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding List, including:

- a. a. the competent body(ies) involved in its management and/or safeguarding;
- b. b. the organization(s) of the community or group concerned with the element and its safeguarding.



## **Institutional context**

The Department of Culture in the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Culture is the competent body involved in coordination of the management of the element and is in charge of safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Department of Culture collaborates with the County Government of Kakamega, Department of Forest Services, Kenya Forests Research Institute, the National Museums of Kenya and the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa.

At community level, Isukha Mulindi Peace Museum, Kakamega Forest Regeneration Groups, women groups, youth groups, traditional Isukuti dance troupes, Isukuti craftsmen, living treasures from the two communities and the local administration are involved in the safeguarding of the element. Other institutions are the Kakamega Forest Community Based Organizations and Community groups.

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## **D. Participation of communities in preparing this report**

Describe the measures taken to ensure the widest possible participation of the communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals concerned as well as relevant non-governmental organizations during the process of preparing this report.

### **Participation of communities in preparing this report**

In line with Article 15 of the Convention and Article 157 of the Operational Directives, the Department of Culture in collaboration with the UNESCO Regional Office in Nairobi organized for a periodic report writing training with community representatives and practitioners and bearers of this element. consultative meetings were held with representatives from the Isukha and Idakho communities who are cultural practitioners and the bearers of the element and to whom the element renders identity. Members of the community who underwent the training were then involved the data collection, preparation and writing of this report through consolidating the information that had been gathered to from the various stakeholders. Information was collected from among others; the Isukha Mulindi Peace Museum, a number of living treasures in the community with vast knowledge on the element, Isukuti makers, cultural practitioners, women, and youth from various Isukuti dance groups. In addition, relevant stakeholders including the National Museums of Kenya, the, the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa, the Kenya Forest Department (Kakamega) the local administration and other stakeholders participated in offering information needed for this report. The final consultative meeting was held on 3rd and 4th January, 2023 in Khayega, Kakamega East to validate the report.

## **E. Signature on behalf of the State Party**

The report should be signed by an official empowered to do so on behalf of the State, and should include his or her name, title and the date of submission.

**Name: KIPROP LAGAT**

**Title: DR.**

**Date: 29-03-2023**

**Signature** 

**DIRECTOR OF CULTURE**

**Upload signed version in PDF**

**Candidature 2000**



## Executive Summary

Isukuti is a traditional dance expression amongst the Isukha and Idakho communities of Western Kenya. It is performed at almost all occasions in the ceremonies of these communities. Among these are funerals, commemorations, installation of leaders, religious functions, sporting events and other public congregations. Isukuti is a rhythmical movement dance. It can be performed with a fast pace with a vigorous energetic dance that involves expending of energies not just in the drumming but also in the singing and dancing. The second is a slower beat with graceful dance movements. Isukuti is accompanied by singing of specific songs relevant to the occasion. The songs articulate the philosophy and values of the community and make commentaries on social issues, nature and life. There is only one soloist leading the group at any one time.

Within the community, it is believed that, the dance derives its name from a white missionary's appreciation of the dance. On seeing the dance for the first time, the missionary commented "It is good." The pronunciation of this in the local dialect is 'Isukuti' hence the name of the element. Isukuti comprises three drums; Isukuti Isatsa (Man), mutiti Mukhali (Woman) and Mutiti Mwana (child). These drums are hollow pieces of carved wood. Traditionally, the drums were made from Mukomari (*Cordia Abbysinica*); mungoma (*prunus africana*) or murembe (*erithrina*) species of trees. The front and bigger end of the drum is covered with the hide of the monitor lizard, referred to in the local dialect as Imbulu. The drums are played together in synchrony, accompanied by a metal ring, an animal horn and other assorted metal rattles. The big drum (isukuti isatsa) is the main drum that is supported by the other two. Each one of the drums has a specific role in the synchrony. Within this reporting period, the element is still viable in the enactment, in spirit, symbolic values and the sense of identity that it gives the community.

Traditionally, the knowledge and skills about the element was passed on from one generation to the other within a certain lineage. These lineage systems have over the years slowly disappeared. However, the new generation of practitioners and bearers have continued to transmit this knowledge through apprenticeship. Although most living treasures with knowledge and skills about the dance and the craftsmanship of the instruments are now dead, the art of making the drums and the accompanying instruments has continuously been adapted to the changing times. Many Christian faiths have slowly began

embracing the dance in their ceremonies. This is probably because the current generation is more open to change. The element is nevertheless still threatened by excessive commercialization, many times in disregard of the cultural values associated with it.

The inscription of this element has significantly raised awareness on the need to safeguard not only the values associated with the element but also its importance as a symbol of identity for the two communities.