

**Enhancing the Capacity of Stakeholders on *In Situ* Conservation and Sustainable Use of Indigenous Abaca (*Musa textiles* Nee)**

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Among the indigenous species that play an important role in the well-being and culture of the Filipino people is the abaca (*Musa textilis* Nee). This species is rich in genetic diversity that has potential national and global benefits. Abaca diversity is threatened by the occurrence of destructive pests and diseases, natural calamities, use of a few genotypes, overexploitation due to over-harvesting of natural stands, and change in land use brought about by development and population pressure. *In situ* or on-farm conservation through conservation field schools (CFS) is envisioned to mitigate the major loss of diversity of indigenous and wild abaca germplasm by enhancing the capacity of farmers and stakeholders on *in situ* conservation and its sustainable use. With the active participation of local farmers, LGU technicians, and researchers from institutions concerned with conserving the abaca, this study was conducted in Sitio Klubi, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, Philippines, the center of abaca production in the area. A baseline survey of abaca growers in Lake Sebu and nearby communities was conducted to collect data and information on socio-demographic profile, farm profile, field maintenance and conservation practices, seed flow, variety use and preference, harvesting practices and marketing. The study also conducted a training of trainers on on-farm conservation of abaca, whose participants later acted as facilitators in the 20-week abaca Conservation Field Schools (CFS). The farmers submitted to the local municipal office action plans and barangay resolutions to address the expansion of abaca plantations in identified sitios, rehabilitation of disease-affected areas, holding of an Abaca Conservation and Consciousness Week, and sustainable funding for the municipal and community nurseries that were established during the CFS.

Keywords: Abaca, *Musa textilis* Nee, *in situ* conservation, on-farm conservation, diversity, germplasm, conservation field school (CFS)