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## The Sampaguita Livelihood System in Sta. Cruz, Laguna, Philippines: A Case of a Transformative Resilience Development

Bacud, Susan T<sup>a\*</sup>, Cardenas, Virginia R<sup>b</sup> and Velasco, Luis Rey I<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Crop Protection Cluster-National Crop Protection Centre, College of Agriculture, University of the Philippines at Los Baños*

<sup>b</sup>*Institute for Governance and Rural Development, College of Public Affairs and Governance, University of the Philippines at Los Baños*

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### Abstract

Sampaguita growing is becoming a communal livelihood in several rice and vegetable producing provinces in the Philippines. The making of sampaguita flower leis provides a livelihood opportunity for many marginalized households. The research on the sampaguita livelihood system aimed to determine the perceptions about livelihood risks and analyze the development processes of resilience to solve the risks. Increased capability of the sampaguita growers to understand their risks prompted a transformative type of resilience. The constructivist methodology of the research used mixed qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the constructs and meanings of lived experiences about livelihood risks and resilience processes.

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*Keywords:* Sampaguita (*Jasminium sambac* [L.]); livelihood risks; pests and diseases; social learning; resilience; constructivist methodology

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### 1. Introduction

Sustainable livelihood is an imperative research issue within the area of global environmental change. A sustainable livelihood research approach is a convergence of analysis and action about the problem of development and environment at a local level (i.e. household, group or community) in the face of risks. Based on the conceptualization of Chambers and Conway (1992), the approach analyzes and develops the livelihood strategies

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\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +63917-6096103; telefax: +6349-536-1315.  
E-mail address: [susan\\_bacud@yahoo.com](mailto:susan_bacud@yahoo.com); [mariahsusanbacud@gmail.com](mailto:mariahsusanbacud@gmail.com)

and capitals of marginalized peoples to alleviate their well-being but in such a manner as not to degrade the natural resource base of livelihoods while solving livelihood risks.

The era for sustainable livelihoods faces an eco-challenge, owing mostly from the combined impact of livelihood activities on the ecological web of life (Roling, 2002). As the eco-challenge is increasingly becoming anthropogenic, the perspective of the social learning theory is an emerging praxiology that informs the intervention practice for sustainable livelihoods (Roling and Jiggins, 2001). The social learning theory underpinning this research is anchored on the definition of resilience.

A typology of definitions has been proposed for resilience within sustainability science. An ecological dimension of resilience was first defined by Holling (1973). Recent studies stress the social dimension or address whole social-ecological systems (Walker et al., 2006). The analytical boundary of this research is limited to social resilience. Social resilience is the capacity to cope in multiple ways to risks, which is made possible by enhancing personal and collective strategies and capitals (Magis, 2007). Social resilience in the context of sustainable livelihood put emphasis on the integrated concept of humans-in-nature, meaning that humans are actively affecting and being influenced by the natural resource base of livelihoods while solving livelihood risks (Berkes and Folk, 1998).

This research analyzed resilience in terms of the learning strategies and processes of local peoples that arise from their interplay with each other, with other groups or agencies and their natural environment. The consequent development changes in the local peoples' livelihood were also analyzed. The general conceptual properties of resilience to risks have been rigorously reviewed, but literatures show that only a few researchers on livelihood have studied the processes of resilience development that leads to successful adaptations. The study tackled this research gap by analyzing the world of lived experience of local peoples in their livelihood contexts.

The research used the sampaguita livelihood system as a case study. The livelihood is becoming a primary alternative income source for marginalized families in several provinces in the Philippines. Sta. Cruz, Laguna is a locality where many farmers have diversified into sampaguita livelihood due to a perceived decreasing profitability of rice-vegetable farming. Farmers wait for months to harvest and market rice and vegetable produce. If there are unfavourable conditions before harvest time, the expected produce and income may not be realized. Consequently, several farmers abandoned rice and vegetable farming in favour of sampaguita livelihood, while others have combined sampaguita-rice-vegetable farming in order to improve well-being (Fig. 1).

The constructivist paradigm that underlies the grounded methodology of this research acknowledges that multiple perspectives about the focal phenomena exist. Different local peoples develop diverse norms, interrelations and actions depending on their shared learning constructions (Maarleveld and Dangbegnon, 2002). A constructivist interpretation can better account for contextual differences in lived experiences.

## 2. Methodology

The research locale was in Labuin of Sta. Cruz, a municipality in Laguna province (Fig. 2). The choice of the study case was based on the observation that resilience is a salient variable in the lifeworld of the sampaguita growers. A wide array of relational strategies influenced resilience processes to perceived livelihood risks. The choice was also based on access to the field of sampaguita growers. Field access was established when the researcher facilitated a sampaguita farmers' field school on integrated crop and pest management (FFS-ICPM) in the research locale from March 2007 to April 2008. The FFS-ICPM was a collaborative project of the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) and Urban Harvest-User's Perspectives with Agricultural Research and Development (UH-UPWARD), together with the area's local government units (LGUs). The researcher re-entered the field in November 2008–April 2014 to conduct a research about the sampaguita livelihood system.

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to gather research data from 34 households who have sampaguita farms. Fifteen (15) of these households attended FFS-ICPM while the other 19 households did not. The study cases were classified into four groups: 1960-1990, the first sampaguita growers; 1991-1995, the households who attended

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