

The Role of Project Love Kalikasan in Promoting Climate Action and Strengthening Community Participation in Olongapo City

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the implementation and effectiveness of Project Love Kalikasan, a grassroots environmental initiative led by the League of Tourism Students of the Philippines – Gordon College Chapter. Anchored in community-based environmental management, the project engages all 17 barangays in clean-up drives, promoting civic responsibility and sustainability. Using a qualitative-descriptive design, data were gathered from November to April 2025 through interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations with barangay officials, volunteers, and residents. Key concepts examined include civic participation, environmental awareness, and community empowerment. Findings reveal strong local engagement, with traditional practices, teamwork, and shared responsibility driving success. The project aligns with SDGs 11, 13, and 17, highlighting the potential of community-led environmental actions to contribute to sustainable urban governance.

INTRODUCTION

Community-based initiatives have become crucial in guiding communities toward sustainable practices in the face of accelerating climate change and environmental degradation. The coastal metropolitan hub of Olongapo City in the province of Zambales is not immune to the growing risks of waste management, flooding, and pollution. The need to raise community awareness of environmental issues has grown more pressing. A campaign based on community involvement, environmental stewardship, and collective action, Project Love Kalikasan is one of the most promising local efforts aimed at resolving these problems. The goal of this project is to promote ecological restoration and a culture of civic responsibility by organizing clean-up efforts throughout the city's 17 barangays.

The grassroots initiative Project Love Kalikasan, which is based on civic engagement, environmental stewardship, and group action, is among the most promising solutions to these problems. This project plans clean-up drives throughout the city's 17 barangays in an effort to encourage ecological restoration and cultivate a culture of accountability. Project Love Kalikasan's solid community-focused foundation helps to address the need for long-term, inclusive environmental action. It acknowledges that giving people more influence over local environmental management improves results and creates stronger, more resilient communities.

The initiative also contributes directly to the achievement of several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). Through its holistic approach, Project Love Kalikasan also advances other goals, such as SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), and SDG 15 (Life on Land). Notably, the project's collaborative nature aligns strongly with SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), emphasizing the importance of collective, multi-sectoral participation in achieving sustainability.

Academic research supports the effectiveness of community-based environmental efforts. Academic research supports the effectiveness of community-based environmental efforts. Asio et al. (2022) emphasize that community extension programs like clean-up drives contribute significantly to social and economic development, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and long-term environmental stewardship. Obispo (2023a) further highlights the value of community immersion programs for pre-service teachers, suggesting that the active involvement of students in these initiatives creates deeper community engagement and supports sustainable development. Similarly, Paguio et al. (2025) demonstrate how a structured, community-based reading program not only addressed literacy challenges but also strengthened partnerships between educational institutions and local communities, underscoring the broader potential of localized, collaborative interventions. Additionally, Obispo's (2023b) research on initial assessments of learners' needs in communities reveals that localized assessments and tailored community programs like those seen in Project Love Kalikasan – can create more impactful,

community-led solutions. These studies demonstrate that combining action with education and collaboration leads to more resilient and informed communities.

Alam et al., (2021) emphasize that localized clean-up campaigns not only reduce pollution but also foster a sense of shared responsibility and long-term environmental stewardship. A previous study also claimed that students often do waste and recycling activities in their home and school (Asio, 2021a; Asio & Obispo, 2021). These studies demonstrate that combining action with awareness creates more resilient and informed communities.

However, challenges persist. Many urban areas, including Olongapo City, face obstacles such as limited funding, low volunteer turnout, and inconsistent collaboration between citizens and local government units. While some barangays may occasionally conduct clean-up drives, these efforts are often fragmented and lack coordination. . According to Asio et al. (2023), formal recognition and integration of local programs into city development plans lead to more effective implementation and resource allocation. Project Love Kalikasan offers a structured and scalable model that can overcome these barriers by uniting disparate efforts under a common banner.

The campaign also plays a significant role in disaster risk reduction, an urgent concern in flood-prone areas like Olongapo City. By mobilizing communities to regularly clear waterways and manage waste properly, Project Love Kalikasan helps mitigate these risks. This proactive approach aligns with national strategies on climate adaptation and resilience, ensuring that communities are not only responding to crises but also preventing them. In addition to environmental and safety benefits, Project Love Kalikasan promotes social cohesion and civic well-being. Cleanup efforts encourage collaboration among neighbors, strengthen barangay leadership, and instill a collective sense of purpose. Asio (2021b) emphasized that college students often observe different environmental consumption in their school. These positive psychosocial effects contribute to broader development goals and foster a sense of unity that can extend to other local initiatives.

Given these numerous advantages, the expansion of Project Love Kalikasan across Olongapo City's 17 barangays is both timely and necessary. The initiative represents more than just a series of clean-up events it is a strategic community-led movement that aims to address environmental degradation while promoting civic participation and local empowerment. Through regular, inclusive, and well-supported clean-up drives, each barangay can contribute to building a cleaner, safer, and more sustainable city. This study aims to assess the significance of implementing Project Love Kalikasan in Olongapo City by evaluating the impact of barangay-level clean-up drives. Specifically, it will examine the level of community involvement, analyze the environmental and social outcomes of the campaign, and explore how such initiatives align with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. By doing so, this research seeks to provide insights into how a unified, grassroots environmental movement can transform urban communities and serve as a model for sustainable local governance.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

This study employed a qualitative-descriptive research design to examine the implementation and impact of Project Love Kalikasan's clean-up drives in Olongapo City's 17 barangays. A qualitative design is appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences, community interactions, and perceptions regarding environmental stewardship and civic responsibility. Unlike purely quantitative studies that focus on measurable outcomes, this approach emphasizes the richness of human experiences and the context in which these clean-up campaigns operate. A descriptive framework complements this by organizing and interpreting responses in a structured manner, allowing for clear analysis of participation trends, perceived benefits, and challenges.

The urgency to combat climate change continues to rise, especially in vulnerable nations like the Philippines. Environmental threats such as pollution, urban waste mismanagement, and climate-related disasters require immediate, community-based action. Alam et al., (2021) argue that grassroots clean-up initiatives not only reduce local pollution but also strengthen communal responsibility, reinforcing the idea that people-centered approaches must complement broader environmental strategies.

Empowering communities to manage their resources fosters long-term accountability and meaningful change an essential approach for programs like Project Love *Kalikasan*. Participation rates were higher for projects with instructional and recognition elements. Their research backs up CBEM's contention that local structures are where sustainable change starts by instituting such initiatives through unified policy and community leadership.

Additionally, clean-up campaigns help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN, especially SDGs 11, 12, and 13. This is demonstrated by Project Love *Kalikasan*, which supports multi-SDG action through localized participation, which is in line with CBEM and more general environmental governance objectives. Cleanup initiatives reduce the danger of disasters in addition to promoting sustainability. They demanded that plans for disaster risk reduction include clean-up campaigns, particularly in barangays that are vulnerable to flooding. In keeping with SDGs 6 and 13, this reinforces CBEM's emphasis on proactive community action and adaptive tactics. Volunteering in the environment also promotes harmony and well-being. SDGs 3 and 17 are further supported by these social and mental health advantages, highlighting how environmental action benefits communities and ecosystems.

Finally, modern tools and inclusive strategies are vital. Project Love *Kalikasan*, aligned with multiple SDGs, demonstrates how inclusive, collaborative, and locally grounded efforts can drive meaningful and lasting environmental change.

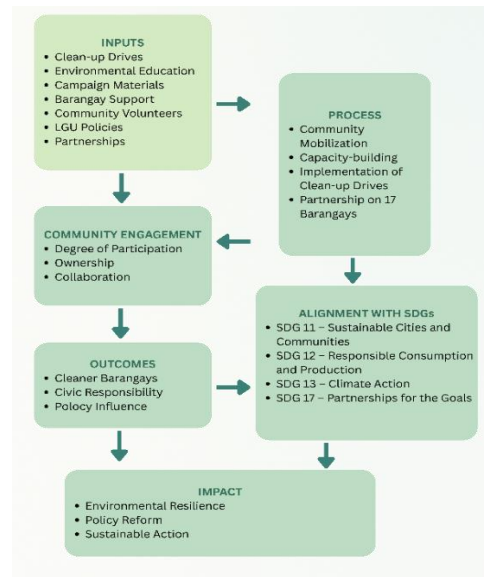


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Participants for this study were selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify individuals with direct knowledge and experience relevant to the topic (Palinkas et al., 2015). This method allowed the researcher to gain insights from those actively involved in or directly affected by Project Love *Kalikasan's* clean-up drives. Participants were chosen based on their involvement in the project's planning, execution, or their lived experiences with its environmental and social impacts.

The sample included three primary groups: barangay officials, local volunteers, and residents. Barangay officials were selected for their leadership roles in coordinating environmental initiatives and their insight into policy challenges and implementation strategies. Volunteers were crucial respondents, offering firsthand accounts of community engagement, daily challenges, and the project's influence on civic participation. Residents, both participants and observers, provided valuable perspectives on the perceived impact of the campaign on health, cleanliness, and neighborhood morale.

To ensure broad representation, two to three participants were chosen from each of Olongapo City's 17 barangays, reflecting diversity in geography, gender, and environmental context. This approach captured regional variations and allowed for a well-rounded understanding of Project Love *Kalikasan's* reach across social levels and barangay settings, aligning with Marshall and Rossman's (2016) recommendation for purposeful, diverse sampling to enrich qualitative research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic distribution of respondents in this study provides important context for interpreting the results, particularly regarding attitudes toward environmental engagement and community participation. Tables 1 to 5 detail the profiles of the 30 individuals who participated, categorized by age, gender, role in the community, educational attainment, and length of residency.

Age. The largest age groups were 25–34 (30.00%) and 35–44 (23.33%), together comprising over half the sample. These young to middle-aged adults are often linked to higher civic engagement and environmental awareness making their perspectives vital for local governance and planning.

Gender. A majority identified as female (53.33%), followed by male (33.33%) and LGBTQIA+ (13.33%). This diverse representation aligns with findings that women and LGBTQIA+ individuals increasingly lead in sustainability efforts, promoting equity and inclusive solutions.

Role in the Community. Regarding the respondents' roles in the community, 26.67% are local volunteers, 23.33% are barangay officials, and half (50.00%) are residents. This distribution speaks to a well-rounded sample that takes into account the opinions of the general public, grassroots volunteers, and institutions or leaders. A comprehensive grasp of local environmental dynamics and governance systems is ensured by a wide representation of roles. This distribution is perfect for gathering comprehensive insights because successful community environmental programs frequently gain from both institutional support and grassroots involvement.

Highest Educational Attainment. Most respondents completed high school (40.00%) or college (46.67%), while fewer finished primary school (10.00%) or held postgraduate degrees (3.33%). Higher education levels often correlate with stronger environmental literacy and civic engagement (Zsóka et al., 2018).

Length of Residency. According to data, 30.00% of respondents had resided in the barangay for 6–10 years, and 36.67% had been there for more than 10 years. This indicates that over two-thirds of those surveyed have been involved in the community for a long time, which is frequently associated with a greater awareness of local issues and a more robust sense of environmental stewardship (Andersson et al., 2020). Residents who have lived there for a long time might offer important historical context for environmental issues like shifting waste management practices, pollution patterns, or flood danger.

Shared Governance & Local Leadership

The survey reveals strong community consensus that barangay officials play a vital role in overseeing local environmental initiatives. Ninety percent of respondents agree that these officials should be actively involved, aligning with the Philippine Local Government Code (RA 7160, 1991), which empowers barangays to implement community-based projects.

SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) emphasize local governance and cooperation as essential to addressing environmental challenges (United Nations, 2015). Barangay leaders act as frontline facilitators by mobilizing resources, encouraging participation, and legitimizing initiatives, which enhances program sustainability. About 73.33% of respondents expressed confidence in barangay support for cleanup efforts, though nearly 27% indicated uncertainty, highlighting room for improved leadership openness and engagement. Previous studies show that inconsistent local government involvement can weaken public trust and program effectiveness (Torres & Mendoza, 2022).

This study reaffirms local governance as a cornerstone of community environmental sustainability. Beyond policy enforcement, barangay leaders inspire collective action toward sustainable development (Perez et al., 2023). To maximize impact, they must actively demonstrate commitment and foster inclusive participation, ensuring all community voices are heard.

Active Citizen Engagement

The results show that community members are very eager to take part in clean-up campaigns organized by their barangay. A high degree of civic willingness to support local environmental activities is suggested by the findings, which show that 80% of respondents said they would "definitely" or "probably" join. Barangay leaders can use this zeal as a great tool to encourage group efforts for disaster risk reduction, sustainability, and public health. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities and 13: Climate Action, which both place a strong emphasis on inclusive involvement to create resilient and environmentally conscious communities, are closely aligned with this kind of community engagement (United Nations, 2019).

Community-driven projects, such as clean-up drives, are also emphasized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as being essential to promoting environmental stewardship at the local level. A favorable community attitude toward shared responsibility in environmental conservation is reflected in the high willingness reported in this study. The statistics show modest levels of participation concerning perceptions of how frequently people volunteer for environmental initiatives. The majority of respondents (46.67%) report occasional engagement, indicating that volunteerism is present but not yet consistent, whereas only almost a quarter (26.67%) perceive frequent volunteering. About 27% believe that community service is either nonexistent or very seldom. This suggests possible obstacles to ongoing participation, which prior research has connected to elements like uneven leadership, a lack of funding, or a lack of appreciation for volunteers.

Research shows that clear leadership from local governments and civic organizations, along with regular, well-organized opportunities for participation, significantly boost volunteer engagement (Bennett & Raj, 2020). Therefore, barangay officials can strengthen environmental volunteering by enhancing communication, acknowledging volunteers, and integrating environmental programs into community events, which fosters a culture of active stewardship.

Integration of Local Knowledge

According to 76.67% of respondents, the community has a high level of confidence in barangay inhabitants' capacity to handle environmental issues in their community. In keeping with the tenets of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM), this emphasizes the importance of place-based knowledge acquired via regular engagement with the environment (Fabricius et al., 2021).

This perspective supports SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 15 (Life on Land), both advocating for local leadership in environmental protection. Trust in community expertise can enhance participatory governance, making barangay initiatives more relevant and culturally sensitive. Regarding environmental priorities, solid waste management emerged as the top issue, with garbage (31.03%) and illegal dumping (25.29%) leading concerns, followed by flooding (21.84%) and pollution (17.24%). These reflect ongoing challenges in urban barangays, such as poor segregation and weak ordinance enforcement.

Cleanup campaigns are not enough to provide effective solutions; comprehensive approaches including community involvement, policy enforcement, and public education are needed. Combining awareness and action guarantees long-lasting effects. SDGs 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and 13 (Climate Action) are also advanced by these initiatives, particularly in the areas of waste, pollution, and urban flooding.

Community Ownership and Responsibility

The results indicate a high degree of personal responsibility among residents regarding the cleanliness and environmental safety of their barangay. A combined 86.66% of respondents said they felt either "very responsible" (53.33%) or "somewhat responsible" (33.33%), while no one reported feeling "not responsible at all." This reflects a robust sense of environmental stewardship, a critical component of successful grassroots sustainability programs.

Long-term behavioral change requires this internalized accountability as a fundamental component. Research in environmental psychology has repeatedly demonstrated a favorable correlation between pro-environmental actions like conservation, volunteerism, and waste segregation and perceived personal responsibility (Schultz et al., 2000; Clayton & Manning, 2018). This realization is in line with SDGs 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and 13 (Climate Action), which place a strong emphasis on community involvement and accountability in addressing environmental issues and boosting urban resilience.

By highlighting important elements that might promote more active participation in environmental projects, Table 13 supports these findings. The availability of incentives or rewards was the most often mentioned motivator (24.49%), demonstrating that material advantages can successfully spur involvement, particularly in the early phases of community mobilization. According to behavioral economics research, extrinsic motivators, including modest monetary or material rewards, can encourage people to engage in desired activities (Gneezy et al., 2011).

Visible outcomes (18.37%) and strong barangay leadership (20.41%) came in close succession, highlighting the significance of feedback loops and organizational trust. When local leaders are dedicated and residents perceive that their efforts are making a significant difference, they are more likely to get involved. These results are consistent with the UNEP's (2019) principles for participatory environmental governance, which place a strong emphasis on the necessity of transparent planning, community acknowledgment, and unambiguous leadership.

Other motivators, such as weekend scheduling (14.29%), educational campaigns (12.24%), and community unity (10.20%), suggest that logistical and social aspects also matter. For example, aligning environmental activities with residents' availability or cultivating a collective identity around community action can further reinforce participation (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2020). Together, these findings underscore the need for multi-dimensional engagement strategies—blending internal responsibility with external motivators and institutional support. Barangays could enhance program outcomes by adopting a hybrid model of participation: combining recognition and incentives with strong leadership, education, and flexible scheduling.

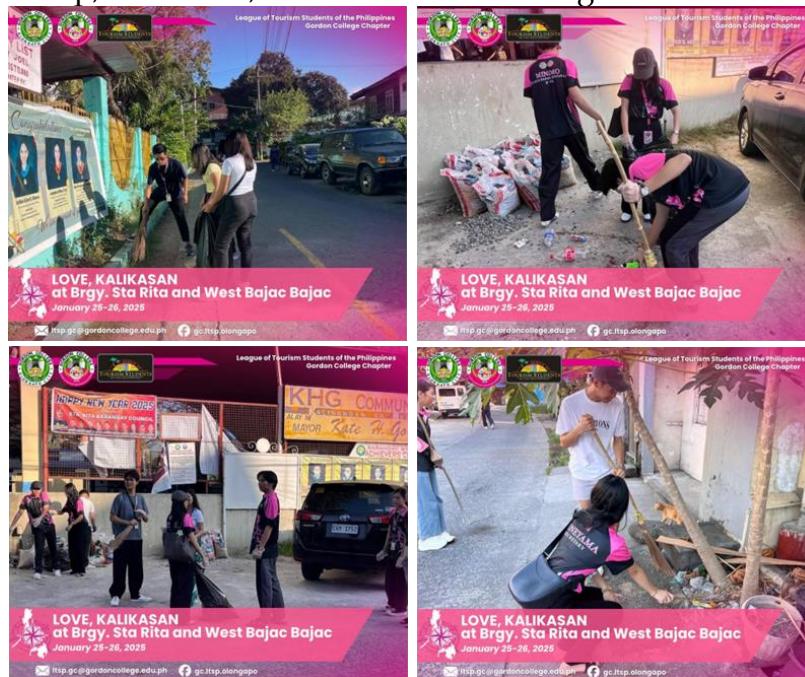


Figure 2. Brgy. Sta. Rita & Brgy. West Bajac Bajac



Figure 3. Brgy. Mabayuan



Figure 4. Brgy. New Ilalim & Brgy. East Bajac Bajac

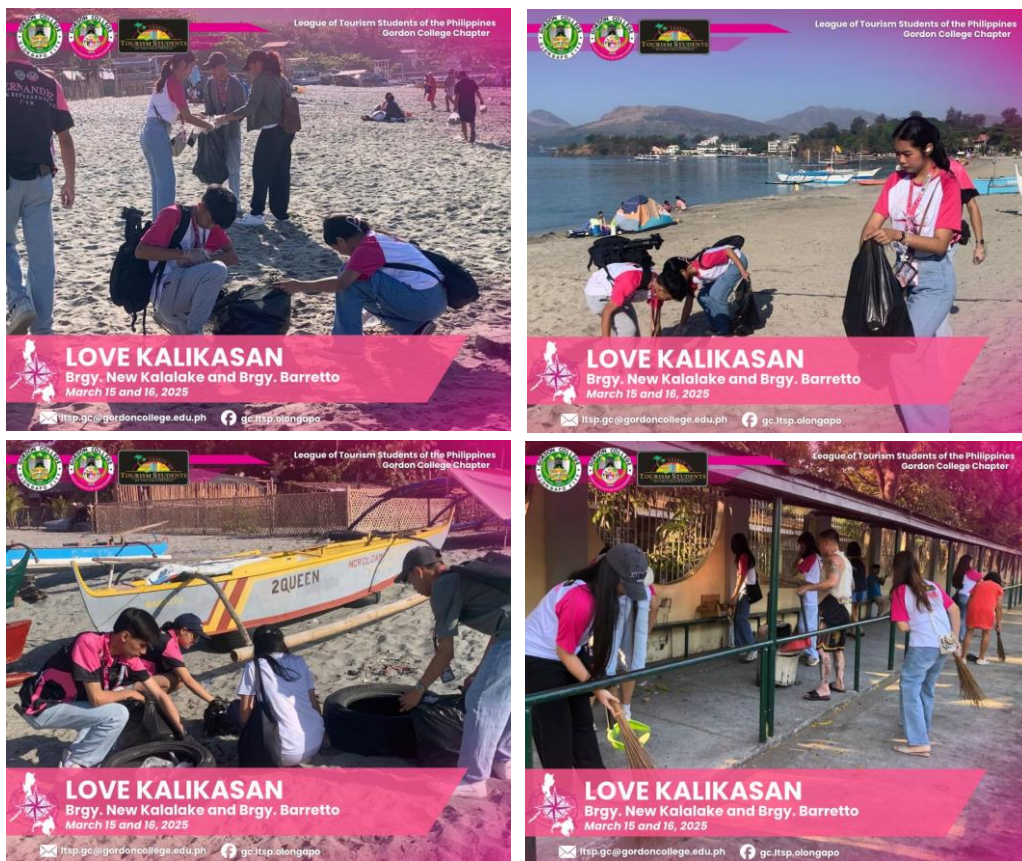


Figure 5. Brgy. New Kalalake & Brgy. Barretto



Figure 6. Brgy. Old Cabalan



Figure 7. Brgy. Gordon Heights

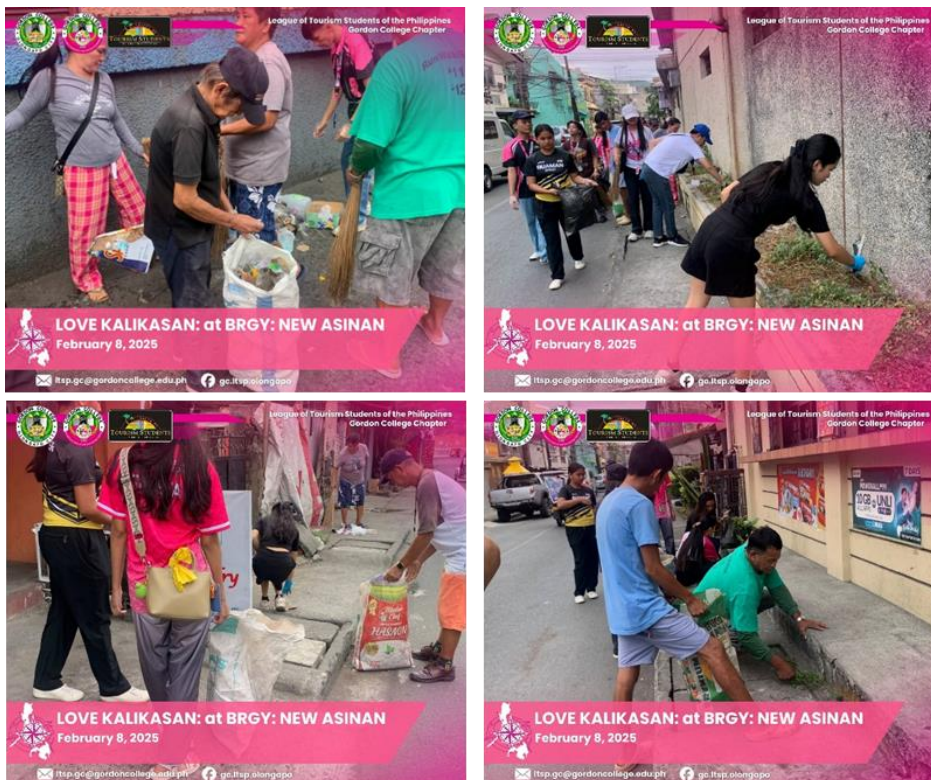


Figure 8. Brgy. New Kababae



Figure 9. Brgy. New Asinan



Figure 10. Brgy. Kalaklan

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that Project Love Kalikasan is both a timely and essential intervention addressing Olongapo City's pressing environmental issues, such as garbage accumulation, illegal dumping, and vulnerable drainage systems. It emerges not only as an ecological initiative but also as a powerful platform for fostering active citizenship, social unity, and local empowerment. Most respondents expressed a strong sense of personal responsibility toward maintaining a clean environment and showed a high willingness to participate in clean-up drives. The success of the project is significantly influenced by the involvement of barangay leaders, whose role in mobilizing communities and implementing sustainable practices is widely acknowledged and trusted. Moreover, the study emphasizes the importance of integrating community knowledge and localized insights in crafting responsive, inclusive environmental strategies. Project Love Kalikasan aligns directly with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), illustrating the critical value of linking grassroots action to broader international frameworks.

The study suggests that Project Love Kalikasan be formally institutionalized in all 17 barangays through integration in local disaster risk reduction and environmental management plans, backed by consistent policy backing and budget allocations, to guarantee the initiative's continuity and scalability. To promote long-term commitment, barangay leadership must be strengthened through focused training, peer learning, and climate governance workshops. Particularly in underprivileged communities, motivational techniques, including public recognition, incentive programs, and visible campaign results, can improve sustained community participation. Fostering long-lasting behavioral change requires integrating environmental education into community events and schools, with an emphasis on youth and intergenerational engagement. The project's reach will be increased by utilizing digital tools and social media platforms, particularly among younger, tech-savvy audiences. Community ownership and equality will be further strengthened by ensuring inclusivity through the participation of marginalized groups in decision-making processes, such as women, LGBTQIA+ people, and long-term residents. To steer adaptive adjustments, the study also recommends continuous monitoring and assessment using participation and environmental indicators in addition to feedback systems. To assess the project's long-term environmental and social effects and investigate its possible replication in other metropolitan environments, it is strongly advised that this research be continued and expanded through longitudinal and comparative studies..

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