

Cultivating Sustainability: A Phenomenological Study on School and Home Gardens as Community and Social Enterprise Hubs

Salome O. Planco, DHCM, MAN,^a Arbee M. Sincuya, RN, MAN,^b Florentino C. Abaya III, RN, MSN^b, Edna S. Fajardo, RN, MAN^b, Mary Jane C. Gutierrez RN,^b Grace D. Zaldua RN, MAN^b

Vicky Presentacion M. Pacete, MAN, RN,^b Gliceria A. Yu, MAN, RN,^b Gaudencia M. De Villa, MSN, RN^b

Rosenia Dela Cruz Francisco, MAN, RN,^b Amparo I. Lim, RN, RM, MAN,^b Leadie P Andalan RN, RM, MAN^b

^asallyplanco31@gmail.com

*1National University Manila
551 M.F. Jhocson St. Sampaloc, Manila, PH 1008*

551 M.F. Jhocson St. Sampaloc, Manila, PH 1008

Abstract

This study looked at the experiences of various stakeholders in starting and maintaining home and school gardens as well as their contributions to social entrepreneurship and community sustainability. Examining how these gardens foster cooperation, economic opportunity, environmental awareness, and sustainable community development was the aim. The study sought to highlight the value of group efforts and shared accountability in promoting long-term ecological balance and social progress, adhering to the tenets of participatory and environmental education. This study focused on the lived experiences of people actively involved in school and home gardening projects using a phenomenological qualitative approach. The researcher was able to understand deep meanings, insights, and shared understandings about the sustainability and community gardening phenomena thanks to the method. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with 15 stakeholders, including 5 teachers, 5 parents, and 5 community members, to obtain in-depth information about their experiences with the implementation and outcomes of school and home gardens as social enterprise hubs for sustainable development.

The findings demonstrated that home and school gardens serve as platforms for environmental preservation, education, teamwork, and revenue generation in addition to being agricultural endeavors. Ideas like Luntiang Kinabukasan (Vision for a Green Future), Bunga ng Kooperasyon (Fruits of Cooperation), and Pagyabong ng Sama-samang Lakas (Growth Through Collective Effort) emphasized how these gardens foster social cohesion, environmental responsibility, and discipline. Despite obstacles like a lack of funds, time, and resources, stakeholders' combined commitment ensured continuous advancement. According to the research, gardens are essential to sustainable development because they promote environmental values, self-reliance, and stronger community ties. In order to preserve and improve gardening projects as illustrations of social enterprise

and community sustainability, it suggests continued government support, youth involvement, and the incorporation of policies.

Keywords: Sustainability; Community; Social hub

1. Introduction

In a global scale, community and educational programs are increasingly concentrated on sustainable development. Communities and schools have turned to simple yet innovative solutions such as home and school gardening as environmental degradation, hunger, and economic inequality continue to threaten civilizations. Such programs serve as community and social entrepreneurship hubs that enhance regional sustainability projects in addition to creating awareness of food security and environmental concerns (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2020).

School gardens have been recognized as indispensable assets for linking learning to live sustainable practices for a long time. According to the Department of Education (DepEd, 2018), the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program (GPP) was established to propagate the establishment of gardens in all public schools as a source of nutrition and learning instrument of students. Such gardens encourage ecological stewardship, health awareness, and agricultural literacy among students. Similarly, home gardens facilitate such programs through enhanced family nutrition, organic agriculture promotion, and support for local food systems (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021).

Home and school gardening in the Philippines aligns with national objectives on sustainable agriculture and community empowerment. Republic Act No. 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, promotes waste reduction and composting—practices usually undertaken in gardening. Likewise, Republic Act No. 10068, also called the Organic Agriculture Act of 2010, encourages the use of organic agricultural practices to ensure environmental protection and food security (Philippine Congress, 2010). These legislative frameworks demonstrate the government's recognition of environmentally sustainable and sustainable practices within the community.

Moreover, Republic Act No. 10618, or the Rural Farm Schools Act of 2013, espouses farm education and youth entrepreneurship with a focus on the value of garden-based education in developing future social enterprises. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and Department of Agriculture (DA) have joined forces with LGUs and schools to promote urban and community gardening through the Plant, Plant, Plant Program (DA, 2021), highlighting interagency support for localized sustainability measures. Such initiatives complement the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) globally, particularly Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and Goal 13 (Climate Action) (United Nations, 2015). School and home gardens mirror such goals by integrating social, economic, and ecological elements of sustainability at the community level

Despite such programs, there is limited qualitative understanding of how the stakeholders—teachers, parents, and neighborhood residents—meet, perceive, and sustain school and home garden initiatives as social enterprises. Studying these lived experiences will reveal how these spaces transform from simply gardens; they become hubs for community education, income sources, and forums for environmental activism.

Thus, this study titled "Cultivating Sustainability: A Phenomenological Study on School and Home

Gardens as Community and Social Enterprise Hubs" aims to explore and describe the activities of participants in creating and maintaining gardens as sustainable community enterprises.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of stakeholders regarding the implementation and impact of school and home gardens as community and social enterprise hubs for sustainable development. It seeks to understand how these gardens contribute to food security, livelihood opportunities, environmental awareness, and community cooperation.

Specifically, the study seeks to answer:

1. How do stakeholders describe their experiences in establishing and maintaining school and home gardens?
2. In what ways do these gardens serve as community and social enterprise hubs?
3. What are the perceived benefits and challenges in sustaining school and home gardens?
4. How do school and home gardens contribute to sustainable development in the community?
5. What insights and recommendations can be drawn to enhance the role of gardens in promoting social enterprise and community sustainability?

Methodology

This study focused on the individual experiences of people working on home and school gardening projects using a phenomenological qualitative approach. The approach will help the researcher understand deep meanings, insights, and shared understandings around the sustainability and community gardening phenomena.

Focus group discussions (FGD) were used to interview 15 stakeholders, including five teachers, five parents, and five community members, in order to obtain in-depth information about their experiences with the implementation and outcomes of school and home gardens as centers for community social enterprise and sustainable development.

Results and Discussion

How do stakeholders describe their experiences in establishing and maintaining school and home gardens?

Table 1: Stakeholders'

Experiences in in establishing and maintaining school and home gardens Themes

1. Pagyabong ng Sama-samang Lakas (Growth Through Collective Effort)

Responses

Teacher: "Kami sa paaralan ay nagtulungan, kahit walang malaking pondo, para mapanatili ang garden."

Community Member:

"Sumasama kami sa pagtatanim

Implications

Community participation and *bayanihan* strengthen garden sustainability and build shared responsibility.

	kapag may schedule ang barangay.”	
	Parent: “Tinutulungan namin ang mga bata sa pagtatanim para matuto sila sa bahay.”	
2. Disiplina at Pananagutan (Discipline and Responsibility)	Teacher: “Ginagawa naming parte ng values education ang pag-aalaga ng tanim.”	Gardening fosters discipline, environmental awareness, and responsibility among all stakeholders.
	Community Member: “Nakikita ng mga kabataan na importante ang pag-aalaga sa kalikasan.”	
	Parent: “Tinuruan ko rin ang anak ko na maging responsable sa pagdidilig.”	
3. Pagtuturo at Pagkatuto (Teaching and Learning Through Gardening)	Teacher: “Ginagamit namin ang garden sa science at TLE lessons.”	Gardens serve as learning laboratories that integrate environmental and practical education.
	Community Member: “Marami rin kaming natutunan sa tamang pagtatanim mula sa paaralan.”	
	Parent: “Natututo rin kami ng composting at organic planting.”	

Stakeholders' experiences starting and maintaining home and school gardens demonstrate how community cohesion and teamwork propel sustainable projects. Despite having few resources, educators, parents, and community members worked together through bayanihan, proving that collaboration and accountability are essential to the success of such initiatives (Putnam, 2000). According to studies that link garden-based education to increased self-efficacy and moral behavior, these gardening activities also helped students and their families develop discipline, responsibility, and environmental awareness (Ozer, 2007; UNESCO, 2019). According to Williams and Dixon (2013), school gardens have been shown to improve academic engagement and sustainability awareness. Additionally, they functioned as dynamic learning spaces that integrated formal education with practical skills like organic farming and composting, while encouraging knowledge sharing among stakeholders. In general, school and home gardens serve as social, educational, and developmental centers that foster collaboration, accountability, and lifelong learning—all of which are essential components of sustainable community development—in addition to being agricultural locations.

In what ways do these gardens serve as community and social enterprise hubs?

Table 2: Ways that gardens serve as community and social enterprise hubs **Themes**

	Responses	Implications
1. Halamanan bilang Kabuhayan (Gardens as Livelihood Source)	Teacher: “Ang mga ani ay ginagamit sa feeding program o binebenta para sa school fund.” Community Member: “Ibinibenta namin ang ani sa maliit na palengke sa barangay.” Parent: “Natutulungan kaming makabenta ng gulay para pandagdag sa kita.”	Gardens serve as micro-enterprises providing both livelihood and food support.
2. Sentro ng Kooperasyon (Center of Cooperation)	Teacher: “May schedule ang mga estudyante at magulang para sa maintenance.” Community Member: “Kapag may proyekto sa barangay, sama-sama kaming nagtutulungan.” Parent: “Ang pagtutulungan namin ay nagpalapit sa bawat pamilya.”	Gardens foster community unity and cooperation across sectors.
3. Edukasyon at Kabuhayan (Education)	Teacher: “Naiaangkop namin ito sa mga aralin sa entrepreneurship.”	Gardens integrate economic education and sustainability concepts in daily life.

The results show that home and school gardens have developed into revenue-generating areas that help local communities and schools alike. As evidenced by stakeholders, gardens serve as small-scale businesses that improve local economic stability and food security. Crops are sold to fund school

projects and family needs or utilized in school feeding programs (FAO, 2020; R.A. 10068). Beyond just making money, these gardens promote cooperation as community members, parents, and educators work together to plant and maintain them, enhancing social cohesion and embodying the Filipino value of bayanihan (Israel et al., 2021). Furthermore, gardens are educational spaces where economic literacy and practical skills meet; parents watch as students learn about financial responsibility, resource management, and entrepreneurship. According to research, gardening fosters entrepreneurial and problem-solving abilities (Williams & Dixon, 2013) and supports DepEd's Gulayan sa Paaralan Program, which combines livelihood, education, and the environment (DepEd, 2018). In general, home and school gardens serve as places that foster social responsibility, community entrepreneurship, and sustainability-minded citizenship in addition to being sources of food and revenue.

What are the perceived benefits and challenges in sustaining school and home gardens?

Table 3: Perceived benefits and challenges in sustaining school and home gardens

Themes	Responses	Implications
1. Bunga ng Kooperasyon (Fruits of Cooperation)	Teacher: “Ang garden ay nagbibigay ng pagkain para sa canteen at feeding.” Community Member: “Nakatulong sa amin noong may kakulangan sa gulay.” Parent: “Hindi na kami bumibili ng ilang gulay, tipid na rin.”	Gardens enhance food security and self-sufficiency.
2. Pagmamalasakit sa Kalikasan (Care for the Environment)	Teacher: “Itinuturo namin ang tamang pangangalaga sa kalikasan.” Community Member: “Mas naging luntian ang paligid namin.” Parent: “Mas alam na namin kung paano magtanim nang hindi gumagamit ng kemikal.”	Promotes environmental stewardship and ecological awareness.
3. Mga Damo sa Landas (Challenges Along the Way)	Teacher: “Problema namin ang kakulangan sa budget at tools.” Community Member:	Sustainability is affected by limited funding, time, and resources; highlights need for

“Minsan walang nag-aalaga support mechanisms.
kapag tag-ulan.”

Parent: “Walang oras minsan
dahil sa trabaho.”

It could be gleaned from the table that Through community cooperation, school and home gardens increase food security and self-sufficiency. According to local residents, parents, and educators, gardens provide fresh produce for school meals and home use, lowering expenses and demonstrating bayanihan and shared resources (FAO, 2020; DepEd, 2018). Additionally, they encourage ecological awareness among students and the general public by promoting environmental stewardship through activities like composting, organic farming, and sustainable practices (UNESCO, 2019; R.A. 10068). According to Ozer (2007), sustainability is threatened by issues like irregular participation, inadequate tools, and limited funding. Gardens are essential spaces for food security, environmental responsibility, and cooperative learning, but long-term success depends on institutional support, consistent funding, and incorporating garden management into school and community programs.

How do school and home gardens contribute to sustainable development in the community?

*Table 4: Contributions of
School and Home Gardens to
sustainable development in the
community Themes*

	Responses	Implications
1. Binhi ng Pagbabago (Seeds of Change)	Teacher: “Ang mga estudyante ay natutong magpahalaga sa kalikasan.” Community Member: “Natututo kaming maging responsable sa basura at tanim.”	Builds environmental values aligned with sustainability goals.
2. Luntiang Pamayanan (Green Community)	Teacher: “Naging modelo kami ng ibang paaralan.” Community Member: “Mas	Gardens transform spaces into sustainable, healthy, and eco-friendly communities.

Parent: “Mas maalaga na rin kami sa aming bakuran.”

	maayos at maganda na ang kapaligiran.”	
	Parent: “Naging mas masigla at malinis ang aming lugar.”	
3. Pagpapatuloy ng Adhikain (Continuity of Advocacy)	Teacher: “Tinuturuan namin ang bagong batch ng estudyante para ipagpatuloy.”	Reflects sustainability through generational transfer and long-term planning.
	Community Member: “Plano naming dagdagan ang taniman sa barangay.”	
	Parent: “Balak naming gawing negosyo ang sobrang ani.”	

According to the results, home and school gardens serve as stimulants for civic engagement and environmental consciousness. Teachers, parents, and community members observed that gardening activities foster an appreciation for the natural world, ecological responsibility, and waste management, forming sustainable behaviors at a young age (UNESCO, 2019; DepEd, 2018). Additionally, gardens make "green communities" possible by adding greenery, better sanitation, and aesthetic appeal to the surrounding area, which promotes pride and social cohesion (UN SDGs 11 & 13; Francis et al., 2016). Stakeholders highlighted the ongoing nature of these initiatives, pointing out that gardens foster intergenerational learning and enduring environmental commitment as educators train new students and families increase planting areas or use produce as a source of income. All things considered, gardens are timeless venues for teaching, fostering community involvement, and practicing ecological stewardship.

What insights and recommendations can be drawn to enhance the role of gardens in promoting social enterprise and community sustainability?

Table 5: Insights and recommendations to enhance the role of gardens in promoting social enterprise and community sustainability

Themes	Responses	Implications
1. Patuloy na Suporta (Continuous Support)	Teacher: “Kung may pondo at tulong ng LGU, mas lalaki pa ang proyekto.” Community Member: “Kailangan ng patuloy na	Calls for policy integration and government assistance to sustain programs.

tulong sa training at seeds.”

Parent: “Sana may tulong din mula sa munisipyo.”

2. Kabataang Katuwang sa Kalikasan (Youth Partnership in Sustainability)

Teacher: “Ang kabataan dapat ang manguna sa adbokasiyang ito.”

Youth engagement ensures long-term sustainability and innovation.

Community Member: “Ang mga estudyante ang inspirasyon ng mga matatanda.”

Parent: “Masigasig ang mga bata; dapat suportahan sila.”

3. Luntiang Kinabukasan (Vision for a Green Future)

Teacher: “Layunin naming gawing modelo ang aming paaralan.”

Encourages expansion and institutionalization of garden programs across communities.

Community Member: “Sana bawat barangay may community garden.”

Parent: “Balak naming magtayo ng maliit na kooperatiba ng mga nagtatanim.”

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, home and school gardens are essential for fostering sustainable development, community collaboration, and environmental awareness. In addition to offering food, they function as educational facilities where community members, parents, and teachers foster accountability, teamwork, and environmental stewardship. Themes like “Bunga ng Kooperasyon,” “Binhi ng Pagbabago,” and “Luntiang Pamayanan” illustrate how collective effort and active participation transform ordinary spaces into productive, eco-friendly, and income-generating areas that strengthen social bonds and resilience. These gardens represent bayanihan and shared responsibility and are in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals on ending hunger, promoting high-quality education, creating sustainable communities, and combating climate change. In order to ensure a sustainable green legacy for future generations, their long-term success depends on consistent support, sufficient funding, youth involvement, and policy integration.

References

- Department of Education. (2016).** Implementing guidelines on the Gulayan sa Paaralan Program (GPP) [DepEd Memorandum No. 293, s. 2016]. Department of Education. <https://www.deped.gov.ph/2016/06/28/dm-no-293-s-2016-implementing-guidelines-on-the-gulayan-sa-paaralan-program-gpp/>
- Department of Education. (2018).** Guidelines on the implementation of school-based feeding program for school year 2018–2019 [DepEd Order No. 39, s. 2018]. Department of Education. <https://www.deped.gov.ph/2018/06/25/do-39-s-2018-guidelines-on-the-implementation-of-school-based-feeding-program-for-school-year-2018-2019/>
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2021).** School and home gardens for promoting food and nutrition security. FAO. <https://www.fao.org/school-food/areas-of-work/school-gardens>
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. (2022).** Climate change 2022: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability. Cambridge University Press. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>
- National Economic and Development Authority. (2017).** Philippine Development Plan 2017–2022. NEDA. <https://pdp.neda.gov.ph/>
- Republic Act No. 9003. (2000).** Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000. Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2001/01/26/republic-act-no-9003/>
- Republic Act No. 9729. (2009).** Climate Change Act of 2009. Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2009/10/23/republic-act-no-9729/>
- Republic Act No. 9512. (2008).**
- National Environmental Awareness and Education Act of 2008.** Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2008/12/12/republic-act-no-9512/>
- Sobel, D. (2014).** **Place-based education:** Connecting classrooms and communities. Orion Society.
- Tilbury, D. (2011).** Education for sustainable development: An expert review of processes and learning. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000191442>
- United Nations. (2015).** Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2020).** Education for sustainable development: A roadmap. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802>
- World Bank. (2020).** Community-driven development and local sustainability. World Bank Group. <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports>
- World Health Organization. (2021).** Urban green spaces and health: A review of evidence. WHO Regional Office for Europe. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/urban-green-spaces-and-health>
- Yamauchi, F. (2020).** Community participation and agricultural sustainability in developing countries. International Food Policy Research Institute. <https://www.ifpri.org>