

Project ALoHA: An Impact Assessment

Girlye DL. Tayao¹, Hannah Jhamne G. Lamoste¹, Lyca Dianne DB. Geraldo¹,
 Izza Marie B. Ison¹, Ma. Christine Joy S. Ferrer¹, Erica Gwyneth R. Javier¹, Abigail A. Flores¹,
 Alliah Joyce N. Jacoba¹, Micca T. Esguerra¹

¹Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology

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ABSTRACT

Health is a cornerstone of sustainable development, particularly in underserved communities facing inadequate access to essential health services. In response, the NEUST College of Nursing initiated Project ALoHA—community-based extension programs aimed at empowering communities through accessible health initiatives. This study undertakes an impact assessment of Project ALoHA to identify the positive and negative changes brought about by the programs. Using purposive sampling, researchers conducted one-on-one interviews with 15 participants from the community. Thematic analysis of the data revealed that the well-structured programs facilitated direct collaboration between residents and facilitators, enhancing community engagement and health awareness. Participants reported significant improvements in health-seeking behaviors and a sense of empowerment, emphasizing the need for the continuation and expansion of these programs. Gratitude expressed by participants highlighted the tangible benefits experienced at both individual and community levels. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of structured impact assessments in public health initiatives and provide evidence for the effectiveness and sustainability of community health interventions.

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Corresponding Author:

Hannah Jhamne G. Lamoste

College of Nursing, Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology,
 Gen. Tinio Street, Quezon District, Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija 3100, Philippines
 Email: hannahjhamne@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Community health is a fundamental pillar of national development and public well-being. However, many underserved areas in the Philippines continue to face significant challenges due to limited access to quality healthcare. In response, the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology (NEUST) College of Nursing launched Project ALoHA (Alert on Health)—a community-based health initiative designed to improve public health through localized, sustainable, and participatory strategies.

Implemented from 2017 to 2020 in General Tinio, Nueva Ecija, Project ALoHA was carried out under NEUST's COPED (Community Partnership and Engagement for Development) framework. The project focused on key public health areas such as maternal and child health, vaccination drives, disease prevention, herbal medicine promotion, and sanitation improvements. It was rooted in community needs assessments and family profiling, ensuring that interventions were both relevant and responsive to the population's specific needs.

Beyond delivering health services, Project ALoHA also served as a training ground for NEUST nursing students, enriching their hands-on experience in community health and supporting the university's mission of developing socially engaged healthcare professionals.

Recognizing a common gap in the evaluation of similar university-led outreach programs, namely the lack of structured assessment tools, this study was undertaken to evaluate Project ALoHA's actual impact from the perspective of the community.

This research applies a qualitative approach to explore the lived experiences of community members. It aims to uncover both the strengths of Project ALoHA and areas that need improvement. The project's design aligns with global best practices by integrating health education, traditional medicine, and environmental strategies. A conceptual framework links key health indicators—such as disease prevalence and sanitation conditions—to measurable community health outcomes.

Targeted interventions such as the establishment of herbal gardens and improved waste management systems contributed to a sustainable action plan, enhancing both ecological and community health standards. Ultimately, the study investigates whether Project ALoHA achieved meaningful improvements in health outcomes and provides insights to guide the development of more effective, community-driven health programs in similar low-resource settings.

The specific questions addressed are:

1. What health services were delivered by the NEUST College of Nursing?
2. How do participants describe the implementation of these services?
3. What observable changes occurred as a result of the program?
4. To what extent do participants believe these changes were due to the intervention?
5. How satisfied are residents with the health services?
6. What enhancements can be made to strengthen the program further?

Although this qualitative study does not use statistical testing, it is guided by the assumption that Project ALoHA significantly improved health awareness, access, and outcomes among the target community, primarily due to its localized and responsive implementation strategies.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher utilized qualitative descriptive research to explore the experiences and perceptions of participants involved in Project ALoHA in General Tinio, Nueva Ecija. According to Hassan (2023), descriptive research in a qualitative setting seeks to offer a comprehensive understanding of behaviors, attitudes, and opinions, uncovering patterns from participants' lived experiences. Purposive sampling was employed in selecting participants. As noted by Bisht (2024), purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on criteria pertinent to the research question. The researchers specifically chose residents from various socioeconomic backgrounds, household head ages, and geographic locations within General Tinio.

Semi-structured interviews, specifically one-on-one interviews, were conducted to gather comprehensive data. Each interview was recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. Microsoft Excel was used to organize the transcripts, where initial coding and sorting of data were performed. To identify common patterns and themes, thematic analysis was employed. This method assisted in identifying significant themes and drawing conclusions that represent the opinions and experiences of the community, offering insightful information on the efficacy of the health program.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings on Project ALoHA's influence on health awareness, behavior, and access to healthcare in General Tinio. Results are organized and interpreted according to the thematic patterns that emerged from the interviews.

Emergent Themes From The Study

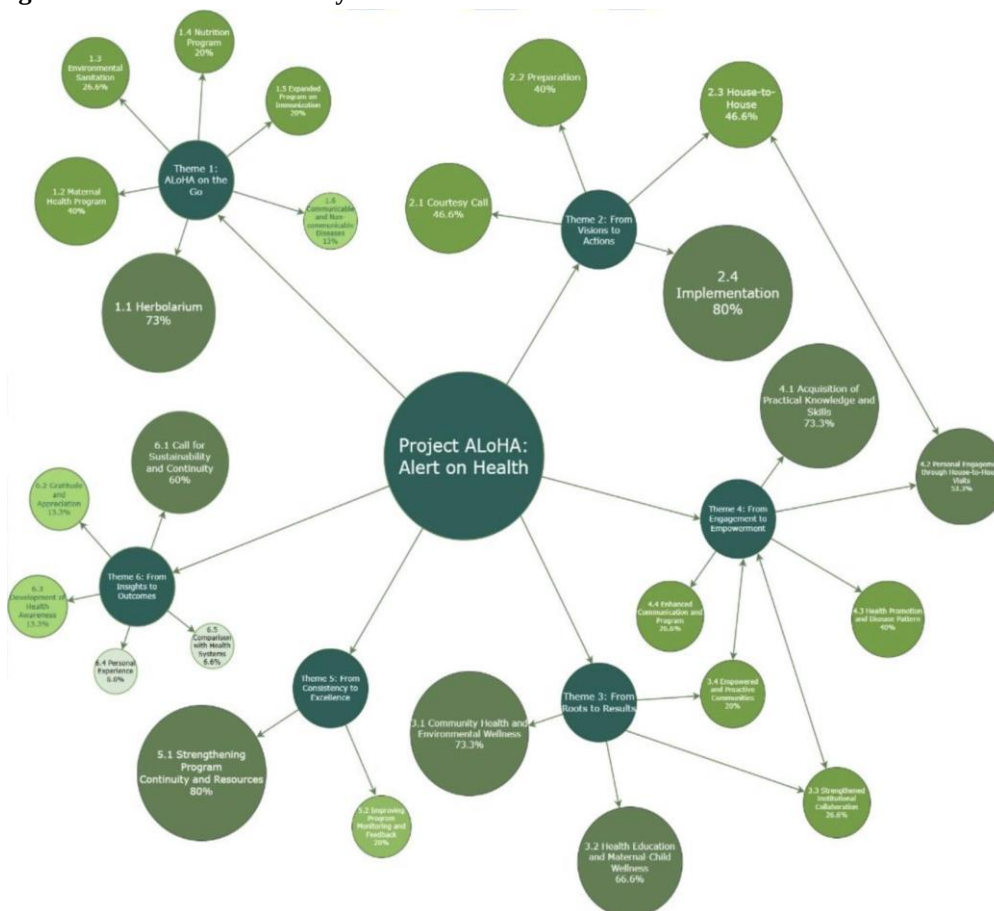


Figure 1. Themes

The study of the Project ALoHA: An Impact Assessment reveals six emergent themes. These six themes highlight the reasons or evidence supporting the belief that the observed changes are attributed to the NEUST College of Nursing's program intervention.

Theme 1: ALoHA on the Go

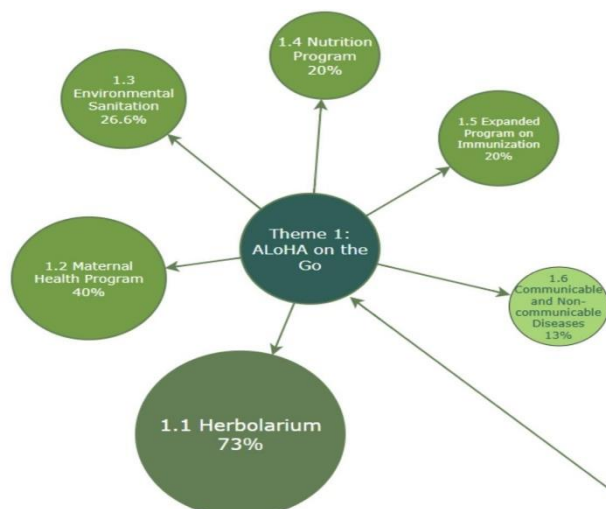


Figure 2. ALoHA on the Go

"Unang una yung mga herbal medicine, na hindi mo na nga kailangan bilhin pag may mga nakatanim na dyan."

This figure illustrates the central theme of "ALoHA on the Go," based on what services they received from NEUST through Project ALoHA (2017–2020). This theme captures the lasting impact of initiatives in herbarium, environmental sanitation, maternal and child health, OPT, immunization, and disease prevention—laying the groundwork for long-term health, self-reliance, and community well-being. Six sub-themes emerged, emphasizing key dimensions of sustainability and community growth.

Project ALoHA implemented a holistic, community-centered approach. From 2017 to 2020, participants accessed integrated services such as herbal medicine promotion, sanitation drives, Operation Timbang, Expanded Program on Immunization, family planning, and disease prevention efforts. These interventions reflect NEUST's commitment to inclusive, sustainable health solutions—captured in the theme "ALoHA on the Go."

Theme 2: From Visions to Actions



Figure 3. From Visions to Actions

"Nagsimula talaga yan nung nag-courtesy call sila sa barangay. Ipinakilala nila nang maayos yung proyekto at malinaw ang layunin nila."

The figure outlines Project ALoHA's implementation process, based on the actual sequence of activities: courtesy call, preparation, house-to-house visitation, and full implementation. These four stages reflect the project's structured, step-by-step approach.

This theme reflects the transformation of Project ALoHA's goals into tangible outcomes through strategic planning and coordinated action. It illustrates how initial concepts were translated into meaningful community engagement and impact. The project emphasized the value of structure, collaboration, and responsiveness in achieving health-related objectives. By systematically bridging intention and execution, Project ALoHA exemplified how vision-driven initiatives can generate real, lasting change in the lives of the people served.

Theme 3: From Roots to Results

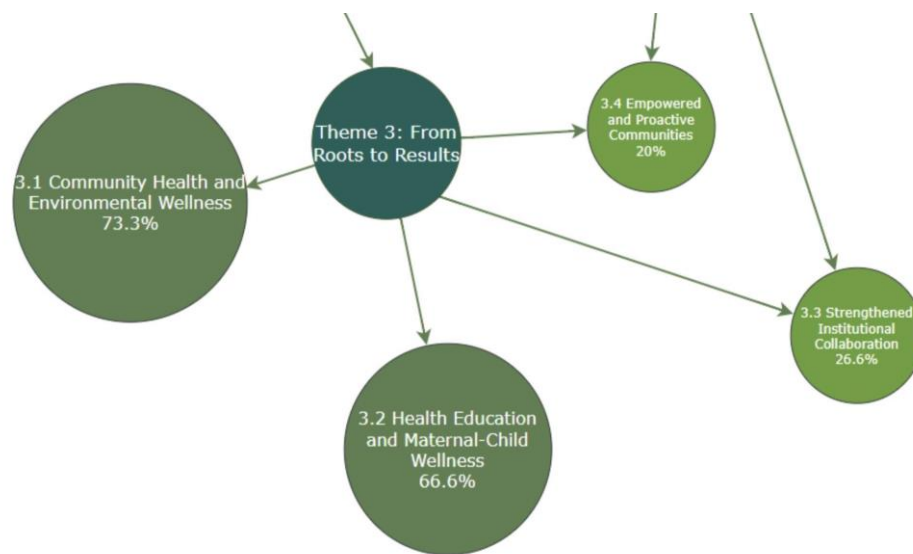


Figure 4. From Roots to Results

“Yun naging success naman po yung programa nila kasi kahit papano nagkaroon ng clean up drive nung panahon na yon. Saka yung mga bata nadagdagan ng timbang”

Figure 3, illustrates the main theme that derived from the participants’ responses with four identified sub-themes including the Community health and environmental wellness, Health education and maternal-child wellness, Empowered and proactive communities, and Strengthened institutional collaboration.

Upon analyzing the statements of the participants, a central theme emerged: “From Roots to Results”. This theme reflects the community’s development through support and active involvement. From environmental clean-ups to maternal-child health efforts, the university-led health programs provided strong foundations that empowered residents to take initiatives, maintain health practices, and collaborate with local institutions. This led to significant improvements in health, awareness, and collaboration.

Theme 4: From Engagement to Empowerment

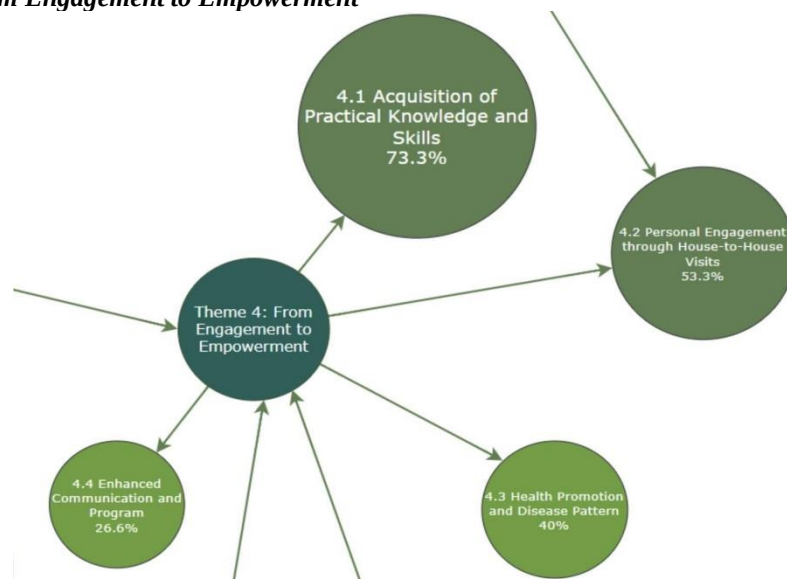


Figure 5. From Engagement to Empowerment

“we are stronger together diba nga, sama sama tayong magtutulong tulong, mas lumalakas yung programa kase mas marami tayo para magpa aware sa tao, mas marami tayong magsasabi, mas marami tayong magagawa na mga survey, profiling, mga ganyan para malaman natin yung mga kailangan nilang serbisyong pang komunidad.”

Figure 4, illustrates the theme of “Engagement to Empowerment”, highlighting factors enhancing implementation and achievement of the NEUST ESP through Project Aloha (2017-2020). This theme encompasses four³ main sub-themes: Acquisition of Practical Knowledge and Skills, Personal Engagement through House-to-House Visits, Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, and Enhanced Communication and Program.

This theme emphasizes the transformative role of community involvement, wherein participants progressed from initial engagement to active empowerment. Participants perceived their involvement in the program as a driving force behind meaningful and lasting changes in their community. The figure organizes this overarching theme into four key subthemes that collectively illustrate the program’s multidimensional impact.

Theme 5: From Consistency to Excellence

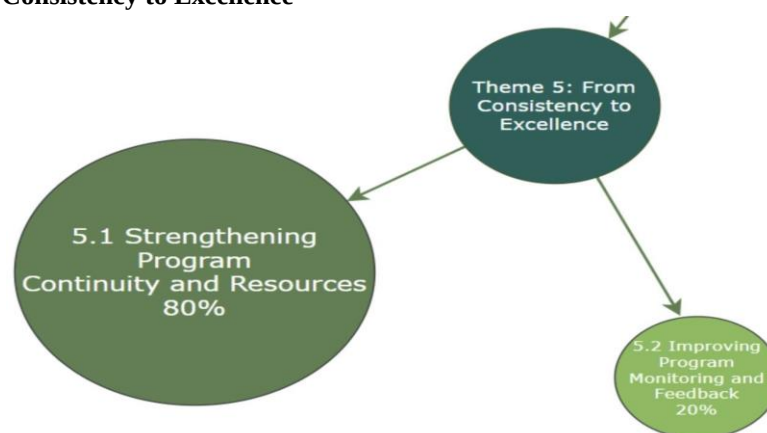


Figure 6. *From Engagement to Empowerment*

“—Siguro big word yung ipagpatuloy, parang ieendorse ganon.—kasi nasimulan na eh, may foundation na, kailangan lang ituloy. So proper continuation, proper planning, proper endorsement.”

Figure 5 outlined the participants' evaluation on the programs conducted under Project ALOHA. It highlights two main insights, Strengthening Program Community and Resources and Improving Program Monitoring and Program Impact, which collectively reflect the participants’ desire for a program that is integrated within the community to enhance its effectiveness.

This theme reflects the participants’ strong advocacy for the sustained implementation of Project ALoHA, emphasizing the importance of continuity in delivering meaningful community services. Their responses highlighted the need for proper succession planning, continuous training, and the institutionalization of best practices to ensure the program's long-term viability. These findings align with prior research on community engagement and participation, wherein the participation in livelihood programs improved financial stability, social relationships, and overall well-being, fostering social cohesion. This positive impact of community involvement extends to education, as shown by Eden et al. (2024), where active parental and community engagement led to improved academic performance and social-emotional development. Moreover, participants called for consistent support, knowledge-sharing, and collaboration with NEUST to maintain the program’s relevance and responsiveness to evolving community needs, expressing a strong commitment to its sustainability and ongoing partnership with NEUST.

Theme 6: From Insight to Outcomes

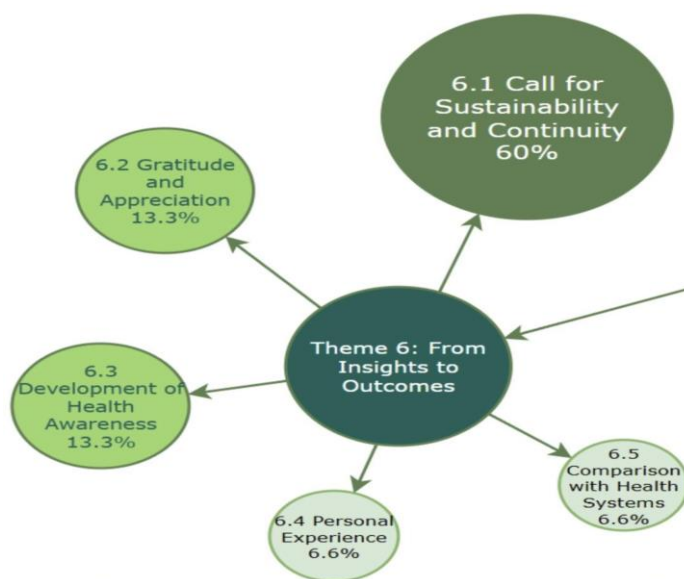


Figure 7. From Insight to Outcomes

“—Salamat sa NEUST at kumbaga may mga ganyang programa na nakakatulong sa mga tulad sa barangay na may mga ganong programa na naitutulong natin sa mga ano natin sa mga community natin. Yun lang at ipagpatuloy lang... tuloy tuloy nyo lang yung pagtulong sa amin barangay...”

This figure encapsulates the community's reflections on both the tangible and intangible outcomes of the NEUST-led health programs, which led to meaningful realizations and positive changes. It highlights the community's shared experiences, illustrating how these initiatives not only delivered essential health services but also influenced attitudes, enhanced awareness, and encouraged positive behavioral changes within the barangay. The collective narratives reflect a deep appreciation for previous interventions and a strong desire for their continuity and sustainability. These insights show that the programs made a real difference and have the potential to do more if sustained and improved.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that Project ALoHA had a positive impact on improving health awareness and practices within the community. Many of the participants developed healthier habits such as boiling water and completing their vaccination schedule were largely influenced by the program's approachable house to house method.

The program also encouraged more people to get involved in health activities such as feeding programs and mother classes. Some of them also even started to share what they have learned with others, it shows that the information was not only understood but also can be transferred or passed on. The implementation of the program, in a step-by-step manner, has strengthened the trust and collaboration with local leaders.

However, some complications were brought up, such as lack of medical supplies and transport, and financial inadequacy that would have made it difficult for residents to maintain certain healthy practices. Regardless of these challenges, the community expressed strong support for the progress of the project, putting their confidence in enhancing the effectiveness of the project with proper support.

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