The SDG Accord

The University and College Sector's Collective Response to the Global Goals

Community Environmental Stewardship Project

SDG focus

☑ Goal 4 - Quality education
☑ Goal 13 - Climate action
☑ Goal 15 - Life on land

What did you do?

De La Salle Lipa, through its Community Involvement Office and in partnership with the Student Government, and other stakeholders, such as faculty and staff referred to as Lasallian Partners (LPs), reaffirmed the commitment to environmental stewardship through a continued tree-growing and coastal care initiative in Barangay Poctol, San Juan, Batangas—an ecologically sensitive coastal area interwoven with tidal streams. This initiative is part of the institution's broader efforts to protect and preserve our shared environment.

As an example of concrete measures, on February 19, 2025, in observance of World Wetlands Day and in line with the theme "Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future," Lasallian volunteers joined a coastal clean-up that removed significant amounts of marine debris, highlighting the urgent need for community-based waste management. This was in addition to the planting of 960 *Sasa* (*Nypa fruticans wurmb*) mangrove seedlings—native

palms that stabilize shorelines, filter water pollutants, and support a rich diversity of marine life (see Figure 1).

More than a planting activity, the initiative offered immersive environmental education. Students, faculty, and local community members took part in on-site learning and hands-on application, deepening their understanding of mangrove ecosystems and the interconnectedness of human action and ecological health. By nurturing and monitoring the growth of the nipa palms, the activity fosters a long-term culture of environmental care and responsibility.

The 2024–2025 implementation of this program was strengthened through close collaboration with the Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO) of San Juan. The partnership brought together Lasallian partners from various departments, showcasing how joint efforts between academic institutions and local governments can yield sustainable outcomes rooted in shared responsibility.

Ultimately, this initiative not only rehabilitates a vulnerable coastline but also empowers individuals to become active stewards of the environment. By combining education, collaboration, and action, De La Salle Lipa continues to invest in a resilient, inclusive, and ecologically sound future for San Juan and beyond.

Figure 1. Tree Growing Activities in Barangay Poctol, San Juan, Batangas for SY 2024-2025

NIPA PALM /MANGROVE PALM			
Date	Number of Sasa (tree)	Number of Volunteers	Division/Unit
January 15, 2025	180	17	Grade School LPs
February 12, 2025	180	15	College LPs
February 19, 2025	180	19	ASP/ASF LPs
March 12, 2025	200	40	SiKAT Volunteers and Lipa Contacts
March 19, 2025	120	18	JHS /ASF/CITE LPs
April 5, 2025	100	11	DLSL Student Government
Total Number of Seedlings			960

What were the benefits and outcomes?

1. **Environmental Impact**

- 960 Sasa mangrove seedlings were successfully planted, with a igher survival rate after the first three months (based on community monitoring reports).
- A sizeable amount of marine debris was collected during the coastal cleanup, improving local water quality and reducing threats to marine wildlife.
- The restored mangrove area now serves as a breeding ground for fish and crustaceans, supporting the livelihoods of local fisherfolk.
- Shoreline stability improved, as reported by Barangay officials who noted reduced erosion in areas where mangroves had been replanted over the past year.
- The initiative promoted a greener environment and contributed significantly to building a more resilient, ecologically balanced, and sustainable future for the community.

2. **Educational and Personal Growth for Students and Staff**

- Over 120 students and faculty from various DLSL departments participated, integrating classroom knowledge with real-world environmental advocacy.
- Students gained practical knowledge on ecosystem restoration, environmental monitoring, and local biodiversity—skills that complement academic learning and foster critical thinking.
- Lasallian faculty and staff reflected a heightened sense of mission-driven engagement, and the initiative fostered a deeper sense of environmental stewardship among participants, empowering them to actively contribute to the conservation and protection of the natural environment they live in.

3. **Community Empowerment and Institutional Collaboration**

- The initiative strengthened partnerships with the Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO) and Barangay Poctol officials**,** enhancing DLSL's credibility as a proactive partner in sustainable development.
- Local residents—including fisherfolk and barangay youth—actively participated in mangrove planting and are now involved in seedling maintenance and monitoring.
- The activity contributed to climate change mitigation by helping reduce carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, reinforcing the community's role in supporting global environmental efforts.

4. **Sustained Institutional Impact**

- The initiative aligns with De La Salle Lipa's broader mission to cultivate socially responsible, environmentally conscious Lasallians.
- It contributes to the school's green campus and community engagement targets, reinforcing its role as a thought and action leader in environmental education.
- The activity affirms DLSL's stand in its annual sustainability reporting as a Silver Star Rated institution in AASHE STARS**.**

Image: DLSL series of Tree Growing Activity in Brgy. Poctol, San Juan, Batangas

What barriers or challenges did you encounter in embedding sustainability into your learning and teaching practice and how did you overcome them?

1. Conflicting Schedules and Faculty Availability

One of the early challenges was aligning the availability of faculty volunteers with the scheduled dates of the sustainability activity. The initial call for participation was issued in advance of finalizing the activity timeline, resulting in scheduling conflicts for some original volunteers. To address this, the call was reopened to a wider pool of interested faculty members, allowing for broader participation and creating a more flexible and inclusive volunteer roster. This also highlighted the importance of synchronizing outreach and planning timelines in future initiatives.

2. Weather-Related Disruptions

A scheduled tree-growing activity had to be cancelled due to heavy rainfall and a safety advisory issued by the local government unit. While disappointing, the team prioritized the safety of all participants and opted to reschedule the activity. The delay was used as an opportunity to deepen pre-activity orientation and strengthen coordination with local authorities, ensuring greater preparedness for future weather-related uncertainties.

3. Distance, Terrain, and Logistical Constraints

The planting site in Barangay Poctol, San Juan, Batangas, was located approximately two hours away from Lipa City, posing logistical difficulties for both transport and time management. To overcome this, volunteers convened earlier than usual to maximize daylight hours and minimize fatigue. Additionally, the swampy terrain of the site and the limited initial availability of nipa palm seedlings posed on-ground challenges. These were mitigated through pre-departure briefings, which included realistic expectations, safety protocols, and a checklist of recommended clothing and gear. Coordinating closely with MENRO also ensured that sufficient seedlings were sourced in time.

Reflection:

These challenges underscored the complexity of integrating sustainability into academic practice—not just as a concept, but as lived, experiential learning. The solutions we implemented reinforced adaptability, collaboration, and community-centered planning. Most importantly, the experience emphasized that embedding sustainability requires not only content knowledge, but also logistical foresight, interdepartmental coordination, and a genuine commitment to the long-term success of both ecological and educational outcomes.

What are your conclusions and recommendations for others?

Conclusions:

The tree-growing initiative in Barangay Poctol, San Juan, Batangas proved to be a meaningful, community-driven effort with both ecological and educational impact. However, the experience also surfaced several actionable insights that can inform future sustainability efforts. Timing emerged as a key factor—scheduling the activity during the cooler months (November to March) would enable more efficient planting, better seedling survival, and increased volunteer comfort and safety.

Additionally, feedback from barangay officials and local fisherfolk affirmed the long-term value of planting *Sasa* (nipa palms). These native mangroves not only protect coastal communities from flooding and storm surges but also contribute to biodiversity and income generation by supporting the natural habitats of fish, shrimp, and crabs. These benefits, while gradual, have significant implications for both environmental resilience and local livelihoods, and should be emphasized in stakeholder communications and sustainability reporting.

Recommendations:

1. **Optimize Planting Season (November–March):**
   Schedule tree-growing initiatives during the cooler and drier months to reduce heat stress on volunteers and increase the likelihood of seedling survival. This extended window also allows seedlings to establish more firmly before the onset of extreme weather conditions.

2. **Broaden and Diversify the Volunteer Pool:**
   Engage a wider network of stakeholders—including alumni, parents, student organizations, and local community members—to enhance participation, foster intergenerational learning, and deepen the sense of shared environmental responsibility.

3. **Implement Post-Planting Monitoring and Evaluation:**
   Institutionalize a follow-up mechanism to monitor the health and survivability of the planted nipa palms. Regular visits and documentation (e.g., growth rates, loss percentages, community observations) will provide data for adaptive management and support more evidence-based planning in future initiatives.

4. **Adopt an Integrated Environmental Approach:**
   Pair tree-growing efforts with complementary activities such as coastal cleanups, biodiversity education sessions, or waste management workshops. This holistic strategy enhances the ecological impact and reinforces the educational value of the initiative.
5. **Strengthen Partnerships with Local Agencies:**
   Maintain and deepen collaborations with local government units, particularly the Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO), for logistical support, site assessment, and technical expertise. These partnerships enhance credibility, resource-sharing, and sustainability of the initiative.

6. **Highlight Community Outcomes in Communication Materials:**
   Share stories and measurable benefits—such as increased marine life and disaster resilience—with stakeholders through reports, social media, and classroom discussions. Doing so builds awareness, celebrates success, and motivates continued action.

Web link to further information

DLSL LP's Tree Growing Activity in Brgy Poctol, San Juan, Batangas

DLSL SG Tree Growing Activity in Brgy Poctol, San Juan, Batangas

DLSL Participated World Wetlands Day

DLSL Tree Growing Activity in Brgy. Poctol, San Juan, Batangas