

Stakeholders' Awareness and Integration of Global and National Health Agenda in the Ilocos Norte's Local Health System

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the stakeholders' level of awareness on the global, national and local health agenda as well as the extent of integrating the global and national health goals into the local health system. Qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in exploring the problem. Respondents are five groups of stakeholders: 1) public service providers, 2) private sector 3) educational institutions, 4) community leaders, and 5) service users. In determining the samples, total enumeration was employed to public service providers (Local Health Board) and health personnel (Municipal Health Office); heads of educational institution, officers of health-related NGOs and businesses (private) and community leaders. There were a total of 744 respondents. Purposive sampling was used for service users or those who availed of essential health services in the last 12 months who were intercepted during the study. A questionnaire was used in data gathering supplemented with documentary analysis on the vision of the Local Government Units to see the relevance to health agenda. The questionnaire was reviewed by knowledgeable evaluators from the health stakeholders. The researcher sought endorsement from LGUs to gather data from concerned departments and groups of stakeholders. The statistical tools used in the data analysis are frequency counts and means. Results of the study revealed that public service providers, community leaders and service users have "High" level of awareness on the Health Agenda and "High" level of perception on the Local Health System's Integration of the City/Municipal Health Agenda. Those in the private sector and educational institutions had "moderate" level of awareness and perception on the integration of the global and national health agenda in the local health system.

Keywords: *cascade, congruence, embrace, shared vision, sustainable*

INTRODUCTION

Health is the most excellent form of wealth, a key driver of sustainable development and inclusive growth. With the significant role of health in total development, health becomes paramount in the global and national agenda. The "Health for All" of the World Health Organization was proclaimed as the central vision of health in the 21st century across all nations around the globe which is parallel to Sustainable Development Goal #3 "ensuring good health and well-being for all at all ages".

The Philippines, being a member of the United Nations aligned the global health agenda. This is manifested by the policies that are promulgated to promote and protect the health of the people and instill health consciousness among them (Article 2, Section 5 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution). Section 17 of the Local Government Code empowers LGUs to provide more convenient delivery of essential services through the provision of health services such as access to primary health care, maternal and child care, medicines, medical supplies, and equipment, among others. Hand-in-hand with the policy is the Philippine Health Agenda 2016-2022 is "*All for Health towards Health for All,*" which is carried out by the Department of Health (DOH) with seven strategies dubbed as **A C H I E V E**: Advance quality health promotion and primary care; Cover all Filipinos against health-related financial risk; Harness the power of strategic HRH Development; Invest in eHealth and data for decision making; Enforce standards, accountability, and transparency; Value all clients and patients, especially the poor, marginalized and vulnerable and Elicit multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder support for health.

Health is indispensable in attaining the Philippine's long-term goal, the "*Ambisyon Natin 2040*" which envisions every Filipino to have a decent job that brings sustainable income, live a long and comfortable and healthy life. The "*Ambisyon Natin 2040*", is a 25-year long-term vision of the Filipinos, was adopted under Executive Order No. 5, series of 2016, which serves as a guide in development planning with three pillars: *Matatag*: that Filipinos are firmly rooted, Filipinos live longer where there is work-life balance; *Maginhawa*: where Filipinos are comfortable, that no one is poor, no one is ever hungry; and *Panatag na Buhay*: where Filipinos are secure over their entire life and expect to live long upon retirement.

The Province of *Ilocos Norte embraced the global and national* health agenda as manifested in the "access to quality /cheap health care" as its health objective. Essential health programs and services were initiated to augment ongoing programs of the Department of Health.

Health goals is vital in local development planning as this serves as basis in developing plans and programs congruent to development goals of the government. According to Friedman (2014), public administration has six vital elements: the goal, the agenda, or the vision and mission of the organization, structure, resources, policies, and program. Bryson (2011) defined vision as a description of what an organization should be in the future, consisting of mission, strategies and performance criteria, which set the direction of an organization and action. Vision is a mandate, a massively inspiring goal, overarching, and long-term, and it represents a destination that is driven by and evokes the passion (Dess et al. 2014). Senge (1990), as cited by Denhardt et al (2014), said that vision creates a sense of

commonality that binds people together for a greater good, and a shared vision must be co-created.

Public administration always begins with a clear strategic direction, a mandate, an agenda, or a vision and mission, however, promoting awareness among stakeholders is a challenge. If stakeholders are aware of government's goals, it gives interested groups particularly the service providers to demonstrate sense of shared responsibility and win greater support from them. Stakeholders can share resources and talents to pursue promotion in the realization of health goals. Also, lack of awareness on the mandate of the government may restrict them to collaborate. Further, integration of agenda into the local health system through policy formulation and program development can achieve greater synergy as this may prompt the local government to adopt strategies that contributes to sustainable growth and development.

Given the gains of stakeholders' awareness and integration of agenda in the system, this study serves as an input in decision making and developmental planning, policy formulation and program development to ensure that good health and well-being for all, and at all ages are responded through the voice and sentiments of various stakeholders. Alignment of health programs and services to the global mandates would ensure congruency, consistency and synergy of programs and policies which are vital components advancing the health goal of the community through a more relevant programs and services and with the support of all health stakeholders.

Results of the study shall also be used in instruction and extension projects of the Graduate School particularly, the Public Administration program through a capability enhancement program among stakeholders along governance and leadership with emphasis on the importance of creating awareness of a shared vision to win greater commitment among stakeholders in program planning and implementation.

The study is anchored on the idea that government's sustainable health programs and services at its best demands relevant and timely information from the different groups of stakeholders on health-related information such as goals, programs and services of LGUs. Within the context of sustainable health, awareness of stakeholders on the global and national health agenda is an essential input to development planning to come up with responsive programs and services, which consequently lead to the attainment of the global goal of the "Health For All" agenda.

The concept of this study is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Conceptual Paradigm

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized qualitative-quantitative approaches with a questionnaire as the primary data gathering instrument.

A total of 744 respondents from the eight Local Government Units (LGUs) in Ilocos Norte grouped into five types of stakeholders were taken as samples of the study as follows: the public service providers (168); the private sector (80), the community leaders (296); educational institutions (119); and service users (80).

Table 1
Distribution of respondents according to type of stakeholders per zone

Type of Stakeholder	Local Government Units Based on Inter Local Health Zone									Total	
	METRO LAOAG		METRO BATAC		GREAT EASTERN		DOUBLE NORTH		F	%	
	Bacar -ra	Lao-ag	Ba-tac	Pa-oay	Nueva Era	Solso -na	Pagud-pud	Bur-gos			
Public Service Providers	23	32	25	14	22	25	15	12	168	23.37	
Private sectors	10	20	20	8	8	6	4	4	80	11.01	
Community Leaders	36	38	38	32	40	35	32	251	296	40.00	
Educational Institutions	18	20	15	10	10	15	14	13	119	16	
Service Users	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	80	9.81	
Total	97	120	108	74	90	91	75	290	744	100	

Data were supplemented with interviews and document analysis on relevant information obtained from the City/Municipal Health Offices covered in this study, the Provincial Health Office and Sustainable Development Office (SDO) of the Province of Ilocos Norte (PGIN), Local Government Units (LGUs) and other institutions.

The statistical tools used in the data analysis are frequency counts and means using the following range of values with their corresponding descriptive interpretation were used:

Range of Means	Item Descriptive Rating	Overall/Composite DR	
2.50-3.00	Highly Aware (HA)	Highly Integrated (HI)	High
1.50- 2.49	Moderately Aware (MA)	Moderately Integrated (MI)	Moderate
1.00-1.49	Not Aware (NA)	Not Integrated (NI)	Low

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stakeholders' Level of Awareness on Global, National, and Local Health Agenda

Successful implementation of government programs and services demand partnership with stakeholders who are aware of the goals and direction of the institution.

Table 2 presents the level of awareness of the five groups of stakeholders on the global, national, and local health agenda. In general, there is a "high" level of awareness (\bar{X} =2.58) across stakeholders, from global to national to the local level, including the strategic goals of the Philippine Health System. The health agenda that

Table 2
Mean ratings of stakeholders' level of awareness on global, national, and local health agenda

Health-related Agenda	Public Service Providers		Private Sector		Community leaders		Educational Institutions		Service Users		Overall Mean	
	\bar{X}	DR	\bar{X}	DR	\bar{X}	DR	\bar{X}	DR	\bar{X}	DR	\bar{X}	DR
A. Global health agenda:												
"Health for All in the 21 st Century	2.83	HA	2.37	M	2.57	HA	2.26	MA	2.5	HA	2.52	H
"Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages."	2.88	HA	2.30	M	2.64	HA	2.34	MA	2.5	HA	2.54	H
B. National Health Agenda												
"All for Health towards Health for All" or "Lahat para sa Kalusugan tungo para sa Kasusugan ng Lahat."	2.87	HA	2.32	M	2.56	HA	2.24	MA	2.5	HA	2.51	H
C. Provincial Health Agenda												
"Access to quality /cheap health care."	2.74	HA	2.48	M	2.60	HA	2.29	MA	2.6	HA	2.56	H
Composite Mean	2.63	H	2.36	M	2.61	H	2.28	M	2.59	H	2.53	H
D. The Strategic Goals of the Philippine Health System:												
1. <i>Financial protection</i> , where Filipinos, especially the poor, the marginalized, and the vulnerable, are protected of the high cost of health care;	2.86	HA	2.45	M	2.69	HA	2.41	MA	2.6	HA	2.62	H
2. <i>Better health outcomes</i> , where Filipinos attain the best possible health outcomes with no disparity; discrimination; and accessibility to quality health services	2.85	HA	2.43	M	2.56	HA	2.30	MA	2.6	HA	2.56	H

Norm:

Statistical Range	Item Descriptive Rating	Overall/Composite/Grand DR
2.50 -3.00	Highly Aware (HA)	High (H)
1.50- 2.49	Moderately Aware (MA)	Moderate (M)
1.00-1.49	Not Aware (NA)	Low (L)

generated the "highest" level of awareness is the strategic goal along "*financial*

protection, where Filipinos, especially the poor, the marginalized and vulnerable are protected from the high cost of health care" with 2.62 total mean scores acrossstakeholders. Also, the stakeholders have a "high" level of awareness on the "All for Health towards Health for All "of the Philippine government which is aligned with the global mandate with a mean rating of 2.51, the lowest but within the high range. This implies that health agenda is properly cascaded to all concerned groups particularly to the key stakeholders, the public service providers who have gained the highest grand mean on the awareness of health agenda (2.74), followed by the service users (2.66) and community leaders (2.62). The "high" level of awareness is attributed to the active participation of the local chief executives, health personnel and other front liners during health summit and other fora which is regularly conducted by the local, national, or international health institutions. The disclosure of critical stakeholders reinforced this claim during the interviews that when a new health program or strategy is introduced, this is presented to concerned authorities for proper policy action and program implementation.

Findings also indicate that health-related agenda are cascaded correctly to the different levels of government. In the course of probing, the researcher found out that health goals are already integrated into the local health system, as reflected in the vision and mission statements of the different Municipal Health Offices, which are posted in strategic places making the broader reach to service users and community citizens. Moreover, the findings indicate that the vision is shared and embraced by all key stakeholders who make them highly aware.

On the contrary, the two other stakeholders, the private sector and educational institutions have a "moderate" level of awareness, obtaining the lowest mean scores of 2.44 and 2.31, an implication that the health agenda is not widely disseminated to the education institution and the private sector. There is a need for an innovative mechanism to promote the health goal of the government extensively. Promotion primarily to groups that can share resources such as drugstores, pharmaceutical companies, medical practitioners, and other health-related NGOs as they, too, have their own Corporate Social Responsibility activities and initiatives geared toward promoting health and wellness of the community, corporate citizenship, and goodwill to the community. Consequently, engagement of the private sector during health summits and other events would be a step toward a more meaningful partnership in the quest for health for all. It must be noted that health-related NGOs are engaged in high impact projects and supportive of global and national health institutions' advocacies.

The moderate level of awareness among educational institutions coincides with Najorda (2015) findings that teachers are moderately aware of one of the critical themes of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Signifying the need for a creative strategy to reach out to the academic community to make them fully

aware of the health agenda and imbibe their role in pursuing sustainable education as UNESCO underscored educational institutions' role toward the health of learners.

Extent of Integration of the Global and National into the Local Health Agenda

Anchored on the principle of congruency and unity of direction, local government units are expected to align their agenda with the national and global health agenda for greater synergy and sustainability. Table 2 shows the extent of integrating the health-related agenda from the global, national, and provincial to municipal levels. In general, the health agenda of the province "*access to quality and cheap health care services*" ($\bar{X}=2.51$), and two of the strategic goals of the Philippine Health System: "*financial protection, where Filipinos especially the poor, the marginalized and vulnerable are protected from the high cost of health care*" ($\bar{X}=2.57$) and "*responsiveness whereby Filipinos feel respected, valued, and empowered in all their interaction with the health system*" ($\bar{X}=2.53$) are believed to be "highly integrated" as indicated in the overall mean scores generated.

Results imply that the battle cry of the world's health organizations and the national strategic goals are already incorporated in the local government's developmental planning but only to a moderate extent. The local governments have already taken steps towards fully integrating the goals set forth by the WHO, UNDP, and the Philippine government. The beneficiaries or service users could attest the actions and initiatives of the government to protect them from health care cost such as Universal Health Care,

The Point-of-Care, the financial assistance extended by various agencies for indigents, Senior Citizens, and others who need help, made vital stakeholders fully aware of the government's services that would address the gaps in the health system. It must be mentioned that health is one of the priorities of the province. The Point-of-Care program is fully supported by the provincial government to help the poor and the marginalized with free hospitalization needs. The Capitol Express (CAPEX) of the PGIN continuously extends free medical and dental services and free medicines to community residents who need health care assistance (Pas-Pas Dur-as, 2017).

On the other hand, the "Health for All" agenda; the SDG# 3, "Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all ages"; and the "All for Health Towards Health for All" of the national government, are "moderately integrated" in the local agenda as shown in the overall mean ratings of 2.48, 2.47 and 2.48, respectively. With the moderate level of awareness on health-related agendas as revealed by the private sector and educational institutions in the earlier discussion, the low level of integration follows, as shown in this study's findings.

Table 3
Mean ratings of stakeholders' level of integration of health-related agenda in the city/municipal health agenda

Health-related Agenda	Public Service Providers		Private Sector		Community leaders		Educational Institutions		Service Users		Overall Mean	
	\bar{X}	DR	\bar{X}	DR	\bar{X}	DR	\bar{X}	DR	\bar{X}	DR	\bar{X}	DR
Global health agenda:												
a. "Health for All in the 21 st century.	2.74	HI	2.30	MI	2.56	HI	2.29	MI	2.53	HI	2.48	M
b. "Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages."	2.76	HI	2.28	MI	2.56	HI	2.29	MI	2.47	MI	2.47	M
National Health Agenda: "All for Health towards Health for All"	2.79	HI	2.28	MI	2.58	HI	2.24	MI	2.51	HI	2.48	M
Provincial Health Agenda: "Access to quality/cheap health care."	2.81	HI	2.34	MI	2.59	HI	2.29	MI	2.56	HI	2.51	H
Composite Mean	2.77	H	2.32	M	2.58	H	2.28	M	2.51	H	2.48	M
The Strategic Goals of the Philippine Health System												
1. <i>Financial protection</i> , where Filipinos, especially the poor, the marginalized, and the vulnerable, are protected against the high cost of health care;	2.80	HI	2.37	MI	2.66	HI	2.34	MI	2.67	HI	2.57	H
2. <i>Better health outcomes</i> , where Filipinos attain the best possible health outcomes with no disparity, no discrimination; and accessibility to quality health services;	2.67	HI	2.33	MI	2.55	HI	2.29	MI	2.60	HI	2.49	M
3. <i>Responsiveness</i> , where Filipinos feel respected, valued and empowered in all their interaction with the health system	2.78	HI	2.37	MI	2.61	HI	2.32	MI	2.56	HI	2.53	H
Composite Mean	2.75	H	2.35	M	2.60	H	2.31	M	2.61	H	2.52	H
Grand Mean	2.76	H	2.33	M	2.59	H	2.32	M	2.56	H	2.50	H

Norm:

Statistical Range	Item Descriptive Rating	Overall/Composite/Grand DR
2.50 -3.00	Highly Integrated (HI)	High (H)
1.50- 2.49	Moderately Integrated (MI)	Moderate (M)
1.00-1.49	Not Integrated (NI)	Low (L)

The limited knowledge among educational institutions on health goals of the government, which resulted in a "moderate" level of integration, calls for action or strategy to involve all teachers during re-echo or cascading seminar on health summit or any other fora for greater appreciation and emphasis of "health" as a critical driver of sustainable education and human development. It must be mentioned that in the study conducted by Najorda 2015, it was found out that teachers perceived that health promotion, one of the key themes of sustainable education, is not yet fully integrated into instruction. This implies that health as a component of sustainable education is not yet fully imbibed by the teachers in the elementary and high schools, and even in higher educational institutions though school heads believed that health is a part of the child's mental development revealed during the interview. Proper cascading or sharing of this vital component of development must be done to teachers covered in this study and all academic institutions' personnel for greater awareness and appreciation of health as a component of sustainable development. UNESCO said that young people with life-saving skills could better protect themselves and show care to others.

Respondents from the critical stakeholders which include the public service providers, community leaders and service users have "High" level of awareness on health agenda of various levels of health institutions. This includes the "*Health For All*" agenda of the World Health Organization (WHO); health-related SDG 3, "ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages" of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the "*All for Health towards Health for All*" of the Philippine Government. The private sector and educational institutions had moderate level of awareness.

Consistently, the same groups of stakeholders had "High" level of perception on the Local Health System's Integration of the City/Municipal Health Agenda. The private sector and educational institutions perceived that the level of integration is moderately integrated into the local health system.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings above, the following conclusions are drawn: Cascading of health-related information during summits and other fora are instrumental in promoting health awareness. Awareness among private sectors and the educational institutions on health-related information can be increased through invitations during developmental planning (executive-legislative agenda) as they are potential partners of health governance and administration. The local health agenda is anchored on global organizations' mandate that governs human life's health aspect. Successful implementation of health programs demands the awareness of, and integration in the local health system. Global health mandates are widely cascaded

to proper authorities and concerned groups. Local health goals are congruent with the global mandate of WHO and UNDP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Health education and advocacy campaign of the government must be strengthened using various media platforms be specific as these were identified in the study as the sources of awareness. Stakeholders' engagement should be extensively advocated to all groups of stakeholders particularly educational institutions to become partners in health promotion and sustainable education. To increase the perceived level of integration of the global health agenda at the local level, the private sectors and educational institutions should be invited during health summit and other for a. LGUs must align their health programs, projects and activities to the global and national health agenda to create synergy and sustainability of relevant PAPs. The LGUs may consider utilizing the result of the study in policy formulation and the development of health-related programs and services. The researcher including the faculty and students of the Master of Arts/Master in Public Administration should disseminate results in various fora particularly to the stakeholders of health at the local level. Further studies should be conducted to identify strategies to sustain health programs and services and to maximize the gains of goal awareness and integration.

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