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Conflict analysis of Muslim Mindanao

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About this report

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Key websites

- Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System: <http://bcms-philippines.info/vers1/>
- Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process: <http://opapp.gov.ph/ms/news/milf>

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Executive summary

The Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), situated within the Philippines and initially founded in 1989, consists of five provinces – Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi. Conflict between Moro¹ groups seeking an independent state in Mindanao, and the Government of the Philippines (GPH) has been ongoing for four decades (Heydarian, 2015, p. 1). After numerous attempts to resolve the conflicts, a final peace agreement between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the Philippines' largest rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), was signed in 2014 paving the way for the establishment of a new Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR) to replace the current ARMM. However, progress on the implementation of the peace agreement has been slow. The Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), which is the basis for the creation of the new BAR, has not been passed and seems unlikely to do so before the Philippines holds presidential elections in 2016.

The conflict between the GPH and the MILF is not the only conflict affecting the ARMM. Rather, the conflict situation in Mindanao is multi-faceted, involving numerous armed groups, as well as clans, criminal gangs and political elites. While the GPH is actively trying to resolve these conflicts, the degree of violence and unrest in the ARMM serves as a major obstacle to achieving sustainable peace in the region.

There is a relatively small body of recent literature on conflict in Muslim Mindanao. This largely consists of grey literature, although a number of academic journal articles have also been published on the subject. A recent initiative led by International Alert and the World Bank, provides quantitative data on all the main drivers of conflict in the ARMM, disaggregated by province. This is called the Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System (BCMS).

The presence of a plethora of armed groups in the ARMM increases the risk of **accidental clashes** between groups which are aligned, or between armed groups and government forces. However, the Moro insurgencies in the region are not considered to be the main source of conflict in the region by INGOs and academics working in the ARMM. Thus, while resolving the conflict between the GPH and the MILF will be a step towards peace in the ARMM, it will not end conflict in the region.

Rido or clan feuding is one of the primary drivers of conflict in the region. Moreover, it is inter-linked with many of the other drivers of conflict discussed in this report, as conflict actors in the ARMM often belong to multiple groups and frequently shift alliances.

Lawlessness in Mindanao is responsible for thriving **shadow economies**. Principal among these are the trade in illegal drugs and weapons. While the shadow economies in the ARMM are linked to violence and conflict, some of them, such as cross-border trade in the Sulu Sea also have the potential to contribute to peace. This is because they play an important role in the provision of livelihoods for fragile island communities.

Intercommunal tensions are also prevalent in Mindanao. Moros do not constitute a single ethnic group. Numerous Muslim ethnic groups have distinct linguistic and cultural traditions while at the same time identifying as Moro because of their religion. Moreover there are sizeable populations of descendants of Christian settlers from other parts of the Philippines living in the ARMM, as well as non-Muslim indigenous tribes, referred to collectively as Lumad. While intercommunal tensions are not a major source of conflict in the ARMM, the potential for conflict if all groups are not fairly represented in the new BAR is highlighted in the literature.

¹ Moro is a collective term for members of Muslim ethnic groups in the southern Philippines.

The **absence of state services** in the ARMM also contributes to fragility and instability in the region. Regional government spending on services is low, and the provision of healthcare and education in the region is inadequate.

International involvement in resolving conflict in the ARMM has been relatively limited. Conflict resolution efforts have largely been led by, but not limited to, Muslim actors, such as Malaysia and the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). Beyond Malaysia's facilitation of the peace process, regional actors have shown very little interest in conflict in Mindanao in recent years.

Conflict in the ARMM affects men and women in different ways. There is a growing body of literature on **gender** and conflict in Mindanao. Moreover, a number of recent papers look at the role that women can play in peacemaking and peacebuilding in the region.

1. Conflict background

Conflict in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is multi-faceted. It ranges from traditional forms of conflict between armed rebel groups and government forces to inter-communal tensions and clan warfare. As a result of conflict in the ARMM, more than 120,000 people have been killed and many more have been displaced (Heydarian, 2015, p. 4). This section provides a brief history of conflict in the ARMM, and then provides an overview of the current status of the peace process between the Government of the Philippines (GPH)² and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).



Figure 1: Map of the proposed Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.

Source: www.economist.com

1.1 History

Following Philippine independence in 1946, significant numbers of settlers from the northern Philippines came to what is now known as the ARMM. This led to a rise in Moro nationalism, and the formation of a number of armed groups who fought for Moro independence.³ In 1989 the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was established. Despite this conflict continued throughout the 1990s. The Final Peace Agreement between the GPH and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), one of the groups fighting the GPH, was signed in 1996. However this failed to end conflict in the region, which continued throughout the remainder of the 1990s and the 2000s. Numerous attempts were made to resolve conflict in Muslim Mindanao, none of which were successful.⁴

² The Government of the Philippines previously used the acronym GRP, but changed this to GPH in 2012.

³ Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2015/12/15) UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia: www.ucdp.uu.se/database, Uppsala University

⁴ Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2015/12/15) UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia: www.ucdp.uu.se/database, Uppsala University

1.2 Current status of the GPH-MILF peace process

After 32 rounds of negotiations, the MILF and the GPH signed the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) on October 7 2012 (Heydarian, 2015, p. 4). This agreement paved the way for the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR), a new sub-state entity which will replace the current ARMM (Heydarian, 2015, p. 4). The provisions of the agreement include:

- The central government will remain in control of national administrative areas such as foreign diplomacy, defence, citizenship and the currency (Heydarian, 2015, p. 4).
- The BAR will be responsible for:
 - taxation and justice (i.e. the implementation of Sharia law).
 - contracting loans, and soliciting donations and grants.
 - electing its own representatives and leaders, although these will be answerable to the Philippine state (Heydarian, 2015, p. 4).
- The MILF's troops will be decommissioned, and law enforcement will become the responsibility of the local police (Heydarian, 2015, p. 4).
- A new law, the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) was to be drafted, approved by the Philippine legislature, and a referendum by voters in Muslim dominated areas in Mindanao (Heydarian, 2015, pp. 4-5). This law will establish a new government and a new governmental structure for the Bangsamoro (Abuza, 2015, p. 1).

A final peace agreement, the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), was signed on 27 March 2014. This contained annexes on revenue sharing, resource exploitation, and wealth sharing. It also contained provisions for the creation of a local police force in the BAR (Heydarian, 2015, p. 5). The Bangsamoro Transition Authority was to serve as an interim government before the establishment of the BAR (Heydarian, 2015, p. 5). Moreover, the BBL was expected to be passed by the Philippine Congress in 2015 (Heydarian, 2015, p. 5).

However, the peace process has faced a number of setbacks. Primary among these is the clash between the MILF and the government's Special Action Forces (SAF) in the Mamasapano municipality in Maguindanao on 25 January 2015. Members of both sides were killed in the incident, but the majority of casualties were on the government side (Heydarian, 2015, p. 5). Clashes between different armed groups also jeopardise the peace process. Despite these setbacks, a report published by the Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF) argues that the MILF and the GPH have reiterated their commitment to the peace process and on 29 January 2015 signed the protocols for the decommissioning of the MILF's firearms (Heydarian, 2015, p. 5). This was intended to pave the way for the process of disarming and decommissioning the rebels (Heydarian, 2015, p. 5).

However, there have been numerous developments since then that indicate that significant obstacles lie ahead and that these stem, at least in part, from the Mamasapano incident. Written in April 2015, one article argues that many politicians who were previously supportive of the BBL have withdrawn support entirely or demanded significant changes to it (Abuza, 2015, p. 2). The senate announced that two key provisions, block grants, and an independent police commission, would be removed from the BBL. At the same time, the House of Representatives announced that eight provisions will be amended. Included among these are block grants, the requirement for the Philippine army and police to coordinate with the Bangsamoro police, an independent police commission, and the plebiscite in contiguous territory (Abuza, 2015, p. 2).

The same article notes the impact of the forthcoming 2016 presidential election in shaping political actor's stance on the BBL, and the broader GPH-MILF peace process. Those candidates using hard-line rhetoric about the Mamasapano clash, and the BBL have reportedly seen their poll numbers increase (Abuza, 2015, p. 2).

2. Domestic conflict actors

This section looks at the domestic conflict actors in the ARMM. Domestic actors often establish strategic alliances, which transcend existing divisions between armed groups such as the MILF and the MNLF, or between Christians and Muslims, in order gain control over the local political economy (Adam et al., 2014, p. 18). These 'fluid alliances' are described as being indicative of the volatile nature of the region (Adam et al., 2014, p. 18).

2.1 Rebel groups

Rebel groups proliferate in the ARMM. These range from relatively large groups, such as the MNLF and the MILF, to smaller groups like the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). There are also a large number of very small groups, which are reportedly coming out in support of the Middle East based Islamic State (IS) (Banlaoi, 2015). It is alleged that many of these groups had previously declared their allegiance to al Qaeda (Banlaoi, 2015). It is however important to note that obtaining accurate information on many of these groups, their allegiances, and their activities remains difficult.

Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)

The Moro National Liberation Front was founded in 1969. Its aim was to establish an independent Bangsamoro homeland for the thirteen Islamised ethno-linguistic groups in Mindanao (Adam et al., 2014, p. 4). It is argued that Nur Misuari's (founder of the MNLF) conception of Bangsamoro identity was secularist (Adam et al., 2014, p. 4). In 1996, the MNLF signed a peace agreement with the GPH, which created the ARMM. The ARMM was to have limited autonomy and would consist of four provinces (Lum & Dolven, 2014, p. 20). The MNLF reportedly opposes the recent GPH-MILF peace agreement, calling instead for its own peace agreement with the GPH to be fully implemented (Lum & Dolven, 2014, pp. 20-21).

In August 2013, Nur Misuari who reportedly felt side-lined by the GPH-MILF framework agreement, threatened to declare independence for several of the regions in the ARMM. In September 2013, there were major clashes between Misuari-led insurgents and government troops in Zamboanga City and nearby villages (Lum & Dolven, 2014, p. 21). The MNLF insurgents took 300 people hostage. A month of violence ensued with over a hundred people being killed (Lum & Dolven, 2014, p. 21).

The MNLF is better represented in the province of Sulu than the MILF (Sidel, 2015, p. 223). Misuari is based in Sulu, which is also the ASG's main area of operations. Moreover, there may be ties at the clan and/or operational levels between the MNLF and the ASG (Expert comment, Jens Wardenaer). For example, MNLF fighters may have fought alongside the ASG in August 2015, when government forces approached Misuari's suspected base while engaged in fighting against the ASG (Expert comment, Jens Wardenaer). According to one paper published by the London School of Economics, the MNLF is a more decentralised movement than the MILF, discussed below (Adam et al., 2014, p. 12).

Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is the largest rebel group in the Philippines (Heydarian, 2015, p. 1). It was founded in 1977 as a breakaway group of the MNLF, and like the MNLF sought to establish an independent Bangsamoro homeland. In recent years it modified this demand, to accept an autonomous Bangsamoro region. The group is believed to have 11,000 to 12,000 troops in its ranks (Heydarian, 2015, p. 1). The MILF has not been very active militarily since the signing of the peace agreement in 2014, but it was involved in the Mamasapano clash mentioned earlier on in this report. It is argued that should the BBL be watered down too much, there is a risk that members of the MILF will join the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), who are discussed below, rather than supporting the peace process (Abuza, 2015).

While some analysts state that elements of the MILF have provided refuge for, or cooperated with, the ASG and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), others argue that the MILF has sought to officially distance itself from these groups (Lum & Dolven, 2014, p. 20). One expert argues that the MILF profits politically from opposition to them (Expert comment, Jens Wardenaer). However, he acknowledges that individual MILF fighters have fought alongside the ASG, attributing this to clan ties (Expert comment, Jens Wardenaer). After the Mamasapano clash, the MILF reportedly assisted the Armed Forces Philippines (AFP) during a major anti-BIFF operation that decimated the group (Expert comment, Jens Wardenaer). The AFP in turn assisted a MILF unit that was under attack by ASG fighters in Basilan, after the MILF agreed to assist in operations against the ASG (Expert comment, Jens Wardenaer). These joint MILF – AFP counter-terror operations against the ASG and the BIFF has been described as ‘a form of confidence-building measure’ (CBM) (Heydarian, 2015, p. 5). The MILF also claims to have connections with most of the MNLF factions, including the faction led by the fugitive MNLF founder Nur Misuari (Expert comment, Jens Wardenaer).

While formally representing one of the larger rebel groups, such as the MILF or the MNLF, commanders in the ARMM have considerable autonomy (Adam et al., 2014, p. 2). It is therefore argued that rebel groups cannot be seen as tightly structured organisations (Adam et al., 2014, p. 2). Commanders largely rely on a localised support base, which is often based on clan affiliation (Adam et al., 2014, p. 11). In fact, many commanders are often *datusi*, the traditional leaders of a clan (Adam et al., 2014, p. 18). Moreover, many commanders have also participated in local *barangay*⁵ elections in North Cotabato, a province neighbouring the ARMM (Adam et al., 2014, p. 18). It is therefore argued that their actions ‘are as much guided by struggles, for, and over, authority within the local political economy’ as they are ‘driven by the strategic vision of either the MILF or the MNLF’ (Adam et al., 2014, p. 18).

Discussing the role of these commanders, Adam et al. argue ‘as executive, traditional, and coercive authority are combined in one and the same person, these actors come to act as real “kingmakers” or “bosses” in their particular fiefdoms’ (2014, p. 18). However, the fact that the relationship between these commanders and the MILF or the MNLF is one of mutual dependence is highlighted (Adam et al., 2014, p. 18). While the MILF and the MNLF’s authority is exerted indirectly through these commanders, they in turn are dependent on the larger rebel groups because they provide them with a means of interacting with the Philippine state (Adam et al., 2014, p. 18). Understanding these dynamics is crucial to understanding conflict in the ARMM.

⁵ Village or district. The term can also be used to refer to inner city neighbourhoods or to suburbs.

Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF)⁶

The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) are a breakaway faction of the MILF. The group is opposed to the GPH-MILF peace process, as it seeks full independence for Muslim Mindanao rather than autonomy (Adam et al., 2014, p. 4). The BIFF have carried out attacks in the borderlands between Maguindanao and North Cotabato provinces (Adam et al., 2014, p. 4). Violent conflicts involving the BIFF increased significantly in the period 2011-2014, more than doubling between 2013 and 2014 (International Alert, 2014f, p. 10).

According to one article the BIFF is mostly motivated by clan conflicts (Franco, 2014b, p. 2). The group has reportedly explicitly stated they do not require training or financial support from overseas (Franco, 2014b, p. 2). Despite some reports to the contrary, the same article argues that there is little to suggest that the group ever had strong links to overseas terrorist groups, and even less to IS (Franco, 2014b, p. 2).

It is argued that incidents involving BIFF members are often exaggerated by the Manila-based media, with a misunderstanding between a pro-government militia farmer and a BIFF member being represented as a Christian-Muslim clash (Franco, 2014b, p. 2). One article likens joining an armed group in Mindanao, to choosing a vocation (Franco, 2014b, p. 2). It notes that groups like the BIFF have no good reason to affiliate themselves with IS, as such an affiliation would draw greater pressure from the security forces (Franco, 2014b, p. 2). Any pledges regarding IS are considered to be nothing more than 'a superficial declaration of moral support' (Franco, 2014b, p. 2). It is argued that effective self-governance within the future BAR will go a long way in undermining the material motivations of members of the BIFF and ASG. Moreover, it would counter the IS discourse, which argues that Muslims can only be governed by a caliph (Franco, 2014b, p. 3).

Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)

The Abu Sayyaf Group is a terrorist group, or criminal organisation, which largely operates in the province of Basilan where it has its strongholds (Adam et al., 2014, p. 3; Lum & Dolven, 2014, p. 14). However, the group's headquarters is thought to be in Sulu, with significant ASG activity occurring in the Jolo and Patikul areas (Expert comment, Jens Wardenauer). The ASG has reportedly enjoyed shelter and support from local politicians in Sulu (Sidel, 2015, p. 223).

While the ASG is often described as an Islamist group, there are many observers who adhere to the school of thought that ASG has no ideological base. One commentary published by the Singapore based S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, argues that while al Qaeda reportedly provided 'seed funding' when ASG was first founded, ideology has held little importance for the group's members, since the death of its founder Abdurajak Janjalani in 1998 (Franco, 2014a, p. 1). Leaders of the ASG have sworn 'allegiance' to ISIS, but according to one expert this is most probably for publicity purposes, as no operational link with ISIS appears to exist (Expert comment, Jens Wardenauer). According to one article, recruits join the ASG to earn ransom money through the group's kidnapping activities (Franco, 2014, p. 1). It adds that the ASG is very much a localised movement, whose 'subscription to the jihadi narrative is passive and superficial' (Franco, 2014a, p. 2).

A report by the Congressional Research Service states that nearly all ASG leaders have been killed or captured as a result of joint exercises between the US military and the AFP (Lum & Dolven, 2014, p. 14). However, it argues that while the ASG no longer constitutes a major terrorist threat in the Philippines, its

⁶ Also known as the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (BIFM).

continued existence and its criminal activities exacerbate the unstable political and security situation in Mindanao (Lum & Dolven, 2014, p. 14). For example, clashes in Sulu between the AFP and members of the ASG in April 2014 resulted in dozens of casualties on both sides (Lum & Dolven, 2014, p. 14).

The ASG has reportedly been under pressure from security forces in recent months. AFP operations have led to occasional clashes and arrests (Expert comment, Jens Wardenaer). Despite this, the ASG has continued its kidnapping activities, and is currently holding several foreigners, including three that were abducted along with a Philippines national from the city of Samal, in the Davao del Norte province in September 2015 (Expert comment, Jens Wardenaer). Moreover, the ASG recently beheaded a Malaysian hostage, Bernard Then, who was kidnapped from Malaysia in a cross-border operation (Expert comment, Jens Wardenaer).

Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)

Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) is a radical Islamist terrorist group operating in Southeast Asia. There is limited information available about its current status and activities in the Philippines (Expert comment, Jens Wardenaer). The leader of JI Philippines (also known as Ansar Khalifah Sarangani), Basit Usman was killed by the MILF on 3 May 2015. However, some members of the group reportedly remain active (Banlaoi, 2015). Some of these are believed to be associated with a group calling itself Khilafa Islamiyah Mindanao (KIM). The group is considered to be the leading force behind the so-called Black Flag Movement in the Philippines (BFMP), which reportedly idolises ISIS (Banlaoi, 2015). The group is believed to have been behind a number of terrorist attacks in Mindanao (Banlaoi, 2015).

Other Islamist rebel groups

A recent article by the Director of the Philippines Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism lists 15 rebel groups, which claim to be affiliated to, or supportive of ISIS. Many of these groups have no more than a hundred members, but it is argued that they constitute a significant threat to stability, not only in the ARMM, and the broader Mindanao region, but also for the remainder of the Philippines (Banlaoi, 2015). These groups include the Rajah Solaiman Islamic Movement (RSIM), a group declared dormant by the GPH because of the arrest of its leaders (Banlaoi, 2015). However, the RSM reportedly continues to operate with the Philippine prison system (Banlaoi, 2015). Other groups include the Philippines branch of Jamaal al-Tawhid Wal Jihad, a group originally founded by Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, who was also the founder of al Qaeda in Iraq (Banlaoi, 2015).

Communist Party of the Philippines - New People's Army – National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF)

The Communist Party of the Philippines – New People's Army – National Democratic Front (CPP-NPA-NDF) led insurgency is the oldest insurgency in Asia.⁷ The NPA is believed to number about 5000 fighters (Heydarian, 2015, p. 3). The NPA is not active in the ARMM, but it is active in neighbouring provinces. Despite efforts to establish themselves in the region, the NPA has been unable to break into the family and clan networks prevalent in ARMM. This is reportedly because the NPA's nominally Muslim cadres do not have the 'street cred' or ability to organise in the ARMM (Expert comment, Joseph Franco).

⁷ The National Democratic Front is an umbrella organisation for the Communist Party of the Philippines, its armed wing the New People's Army, and a number of other leftist organisations.

The NPA has reportedly criticised the GPH-MILF peace agreement. One expert suggests that this is due to the fact that a successful deal would help stabilise Mindanao and free up AFP resources to focus on the NPA (Expert comment, Jens Wardenaer). As the NPA is not active in the ARMM, it will not be looked at in more detail in this report.

2.2 Clans

Clans are an integral feature of life in the ARMM. Different clans have received backing from the GPH, the AFP, local police, and factions of armed rebel groups, who have enlisted their support and that of their private armies (Lum & Dolven, 2014, p. 6). One of the main clans is the Ampatuan clan which previously governed Maguindanao. The clan's patriarch, Datu Andal Senior, currently stands accused of the murder of 57 people in Maguindanao in 2009 (Co et al., 2013, p. 29). This incident will be discussed in more detail in the section on *rido* under 'Drivers of conflict.' Datu Andal Senior is a former governor of Maguindanao province, who now lists his occupation as farming. The clan is believed to own 500 hectares of land, comprising farmland in Maguindanao and Cotabato, as well as residential lots in 'ritzy' neighbourhoods (Co et al., 2013, p. 29). Andal Senior's son was regional governor of the ARMM at the time of the killings. He has been accused as co-conspirator (Co et al., 2013, p. 29). Many of Andal Senior's other children and close relatives are local government officials at both the provincial and the municipal levels (Co et al., 2013, p. 29).

Private armies belonging to clans

Following the Maguindanao massacre, discussed briefly in section 2.2, President Arroyo created the Independent Commission against Private Armies (ICAPA). The ICAPA was tasked with identifying and dismantling private armies (Co et al., 2013, p. 67). The Commission identified 20 private armies in the ARMM, with a total of 3000 members (Co et al., 2013, p. 67). Of these 3000 members, 8 out of 10 reportedly belonged to the Ampatuan Clan (Co et al., 2013, p. 67).

Sulu was found to have the largest number of private armies with seven (Co et al., 2013, p. 67). While Maguindanao had only three private armies operating within its boundaries, the province had the highest number of members of private armies at 1596 (Co et al., 2013, p. 68). This is three times the number that were identified in Sulu (Co et al., 2013, p. 68).

2.3 Political elites

Political elites in the ARMM often identify as members of a certain clan. Moreover, many of them are involved in a diverse range of illicit activities, including the illegal drug trade, and kidnapping for ransom, which are discussed later on in this report. A chapter in an edited volume on the shadow economies in Mindanao discusses the existence of 'bosses,' who it describes as predatory politicians and local strongmen who compete for political office and power within the local economy with their political enemies, which include the regional and central state (Gutierrez, 2013, p. 120).

2.4 Private armed groups

Private armed groups belonging to clans have already been discussed in the section on clans, however other types of private armed groups also exist in the ARMM. These are discussed below.

Vigilante groups

The origins of vigilante groups, largely comprised of descendants of Christian settlers, can be traced back to the civilian defence forces used by the government to combat the NPA (Co et al., 2013, pp. 26 – 27). The concept was expanded when the MNLF insurgency began. These groups were largely viewed as a low-cost alternative to using the Philippines military to fight insurgent groups (Co et al., 2013, p. 27). The civilian defence forces went through various incarnations as the government wanted to stop them pillaging and terrorising members of the local population, however these efforts were unsuccessful (Co et al., 2013, p. 27).

The vigilante groups which ensued include groups like Alsa Masa, Alamara, Alsa Lumad, Ilaga, Human Group, Kuratong, Baleleng, Nakasaka and Tadtad (Co et al., 2013, p. 27). While these groups were not officially sanctioned by the government, they were welcomed, and sometimes even armed by the Philippines military (Co et al., 2013, p. 27). They continue to resurface during times of conflict (Co et al., 2013, p. 27). The presence of these groups has increased animosity between Muslims and non-Muslims (Co et al., 2013, p. 27). They are considered to pose a serious threat to democracy (2013, p. 27).

Kidnap-for-ransom gangs

The number of incidents involving private armed groups, like the Pentagon kidnap-for-ransom gang, and the Al-Khobar Group, which is a kidnap and terror group, reduced between 2011 and 2012. However, they have been responsible for an increasing number of violent conflict events in the period 2012 – 2014 (International Alert, 2014f, p. 11). There is some overlap between this category and the section on armed rebel groups, as the ASG could arguably also fall into this category.

2.5 Ethno-linguistic groups

The three main identity groups in the ARMM are Moro, Christian Filipino settler, and Lumad. Within these groups there are numerous ethno-linguistic sub-groups, with different ethno-linguistic groups dominating different provinces in the region. These are discussed below:

Moros

There is considerable cultural and linguistic diversity among the Moro people, as well as significant variation in religiosity (Paredes, 2015, p. 169). Moro sub-groups with distinct traditions and identities include the Maguindanao, Maranao, Tausug, Yakan, and Samal (Paredes, 2015, p. 169). Looking at the population of these groups at the provincial level shows the following ethno-linguistic make-up. Figures are not available for Maguindanao and Tawi-Tawi, but the former is dominated by Maguindanaons, and the latter by the Sama population, who speak Sinama. Lanao del Sur is dominated by the Maranao who constitute 88 per cent of the population, and Sulu is dominated by the Tausug who make up 87 per cent of the population. Forty per cent of the population of Basilan is Yakan, and the second largest group is the Tausug with 23 per cent of the population (Co et al., 2013, p. 22).

These groups identify as Moros because of their shared history of colonial and post-colonial state persecution, and because of their long historical identification with Islam (Paredes, 2015, p. 169). However, ethnic rivalries between them remain (Paredes, 2015, p. 169). A number of Moro groups qualify as minorities in the ARMM due to their subordinated socio-political and cultural status (Coronel-

Ferrer, 2014, p. 2101). These include the Badjao, Kalibugan, Jama-Mapun, Iranun, Kalagan, and Molbog (Coronel-Ferrer, 2014, p. 2101).

The most marginalised group of Muslims in the ARMM is the Sama Dilaut. They are a nomadic people who practice religious rituals that predate Islam, despite being Muslim (Co et al., 2013, pp. 25 – 26).

Christian Filipino settlers

Following Philippine independence in 1946, Christian Filipinos moved from the overcrowded north to the ‘unused’ lands of Mindanao, largely with government support and encouragement (Paredes, 2015, p. 168). According to one journal article, ‘settlers have become irreversibly entrenched in Mindanao’ (Paredes, 2015, p. 167). The GPH and the Christian Filipino majority in Mindanao have made a significant number of political and economic concessions in the name of addressing historical injustice (Paredes, 2015, p. 167). The main languages used by these settlers is Tagalog, which is the linguistic base of the Philippine national language Filipino (Co et al., 2013, pp. 23 – 24). The settler population also includes ethnic Chinese settlers (Coronel-Ferrer, 2014, p. 2101).

Lumad

The Lumad are a largely animist ethnic minority in Mindanao, numbering around 60,000. There are about 18 Lumad groups spread across Mindanao, and they are officially classified as ‘indigenous peoples (IPs)’ (Paredes, 2015, p. 168). According to one article, Lumad are primarily defined as ‘those IPs who did not convert to Islam and become Moros’ (Paredes, 2015, p. 168). The majority of the Lumad in the ARMM belong to the Teduray ethno-linguistic group (Coronel-Ferrer, 2012, p. 2101). Other Lumad groups include the Lambangian, Dulangan-Manobo, and the Higaonon (Coronel-Ferrer, 2012, p. 2101).

Like the Moros, the Lumad have valid claims to aboriginality and therefore territorial rights in the proposed Bangsamoro Judicial Entity (Paredes, 2015, pp. 166-167). However, the Lumad in the ARMM are marginalised not only by the GPH and the large number of Christian Filipino settlers who have come to Mindanao, but also by the Moros, who are described in one journal article as dominating them at every level (Paredes, 2015, p. 167). Discrimination against the Lumad has reportedly taken the form of bureaucratic neglect, political domination by Moros, state favouritism towards settlers, and legal exclusions relating specifically to land (Paredes, 2015, p. 168).

In contrast to the Moros, Lumad are dispersed. They experience both displacement and pressure to assimilate, particularly among communities which are located within Moro territories (Paredes, 2015, p. 168). Moreover, the electoral system in the ARMM, which is based on ethnic and clan loyalties, makes it almost impossible for Lumad to become elected officials outside of the municipalities in which they constitute a significant proportion of the population (Coronel-Ferrer, 2012, p. 2107).

3. Drivers of conflict

According to International Alert ‘violent contestations between and among clans, tribes and local elites, rather than insurgency-related conflict have become the dominant form of violent conflict [in Bangsamoro]’ (International Alert, 2014e, p. 2). The primary cause of conflict in the same period, was the shadow economies which are prevalent in the Bangsamoro (International Alert, 2014f, p. 6). Within this

category the illegal production and trade in firearms caused more violent conflict than other shadow economies (International Alert, 2014f, p. 7).

Vertical and horizontal conflicts were equally prevalent in the period 2011-2014. However, there was a sharp increase in vertical conflict in 2014 (International Alert, 2014f, p. 8). Vertical conflicts are insurgency-related and include terrorist actions (International Alert, 2014f, p. 8). They are conflicts against the state. Horizontal conflicts are conflicts that occur between clans, ethnic groups, rival insurgent factions, political parties and private armed groups or shadow authorities. They are conflicts over land, natural resources, and elective and non-elective positions (International Alert, 2014f, p. 8).

In the period 2011-2014 more than half of the total number of violent conflict incidents in the ARMM occurred in Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur (International Alert, 2014f, p. 3). However, in terms of conflict incidence per 100,000 people, Basilan was the most affected. Thus while there were more incidents in Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur, more people were affected by violent conflict in Basilan (International Alert, 2014f, p. 4). Tawi-Tawi was the least affected province according to both criteria (International Alert, 2014f, pp. 3-4). In terms of conflict-related deaths, the majority of these occurred in Maguindanao in 2014, and resulted from the increase in the number of BIFF-GPH clashes (International Alert, 2014f, p. 16). These clashes were also responsible for the high death toll from vertical conflicts in the same year (International Alert, 2014f, p. 17).

Violence in the ARMM reportedly ‘erupts from a multitude of causes that can grow into strings and morph victims into perpetrators and clan feuding into intra or inter insurgent violence’ (International Alert, 2014g, p. 35). Moreover it is seasonal, with significant increases in violence in July and August, the agricultural lean season, which is a time of deprivation and hunger (International Alert, 2014g, p. 30). The number of violent incidents is also higher in May, before the start of the school year, and in February and March, the school graduation period (International Alert, 2014g, p. 30).

3.1 *Rido*

According to one journal article, *rido* or clan feuding, has become the most important conflict issue facing the ARMM (Macabuac-Ferolin & Constantino, 2014, p. 10). Moreover, *rido* tends to interact with separatist conflict and other forms of armed violence, resulting in wider implications for conflict in Mindanao (Torres, 2014, p. 4).

Internal displacement, loss of lives and livelihoods, destruction of property and the disruption of political and community life are among the impacts of *Rido* (Macabuac-Ferolin & Constantino, 2014, p. 12). One article argues that ‘*ridos* instil and institutionalise fear, hatred, animosity, and revenge perpetuating violence and underdevelopment’ (Macabuac-Ferolin & Constantino, 2014, p. 12).

Local governments suffer financial consequences as a result of *rido*. A portion of their internal revenue allotment is allocated to paying blood debts and indemnities for lost lives and property damage to different parties (Macabuac-Ferolin & Constantino, 2014, p. 12).

Common causes of *rido*, in no particular order, include:

- Land disputes
- Theft
- Politics/political rivalry

- Election-related conflict
- Sex crimes (included in this category are rape, physical contact, and elopement)
- Pride/disgrace/shame/affront to *maratabat*⁸
- Homicide
- Accidents
- Business rivalry
- Drugs
- Non-payment of debts
- Jestings (Macabuac-Ferolin & Constantino, 2014, p. 13).
- Damage to property
- Cattle rustling (Co et al., 2013, p. 56).

In terms of the prevalence of *rido* across the different provinces in Mindanao, Maguindanao saw the highest number of *rido* incidents in 2014 (International Alert, 2014f, p. 14). The province was governed by the Ampatuan clan from 2001 until the 2009 Maguindanao massacre, which led to a power shift from the Ampatuan to the Mangudadatu clan (International Alert, 2014g, p. 29). Insecurity and poverty in the province reportedly increased under the Ampatuans (Layador, 2014, p. 11). Whether this trajectory has been reversed under the Mangudadatu is unclear. However, the Maguindanao massacre continues to fuel retribution at the local level (International Alert, 2014g, p. 29).

While Maguindano experienced the highest number of *rido* incidents in 2014, Lanao del Sur experienced the highest aggregate number of *rido* incidents in the period 2011 – 2014 (International Alert, 2014f, p. 14).

Within the ARMM, one form of violence can often morph into other types of violence. For example, in 2012 a *rido* resulting from a land dispute morphed into a clash between MILF and MNLF combatants. This was due to the fact that the two individuals involved in the original land dispute had relatives belonging to the two different insurgent groups, who all rushed to defend their families and their villages (International Alert, 2014g, p. 28). The violence escalated spreading from Maguindano to neighbouring North Cotabato province (outside the ARMM). Six people were killed and 300 families were displaced as a result of the dispute (International Alert, 2014g, p. 28).

In 2009, HD Centre and the Office of the Mufti of Sulu worked together to form the *Tumikang Sama Sama* (TSS or 'Moving Forward Together'). This is a small body of respected local individuals who help resolve clan conflicts (Alar et al., 2013, p. 44). Permanent members come from the religious sector, academia, the local community, and the MNLF. Non-permanent members are usually identified by parties to the conflict, or by the communities affected by the conflict (Alar et al., 2013, p. 44). Volunteers in all of Sulu's 19 municipalities monitor ceasefire agreements between clans undergoing mediation by TSS, and send daily incident reports to HD's Secretariat in Sulu. They pass the reports on to TSS and to their partners in the local government and the security sector (Alar et al., 2013, p. 44). Should the reports indicate a move towards violence, early action can be taken by these partners (Alar et al., 2013, p. 44). One of HD Centre's key activities has been the facilitation of traditional settlement ceremonies (Alar et al., 2013, p. 44).

⁸ The Maranao concept of honour, pride, and shame.

3.2 Shadow economies

The shadow economies in Bangsamoro include the illicit drug economy, illicit weapons, informal land markets, cross-border trade, informal credit provision, and kidnapping for ransom (International Alert, 2014e, p. 1). A policy brief on the shadow economies by International Alert emphasises the importance of differentiating between informal credit provision and cross-border trade, which are described as 'relatively innocuous,' and activities such as drug trafficking and kidnapping for ransom, which are criminal (International Alert, 2014e, p. 1). International Alert argues that shadow economies can be a source of conflict because 'they embody a significant amount of economic and political capital for local strongmen, armed insurgents and powerful clans' (International Alert, 2014e, p. 1).

Powerful clans could become peace spoilers if the peace process disrupts the shadow economies which provide them with economic and political resources (International Alert, 2014e, p. 2). Moreover, it is argued that the peace process cannot succeed without effective institutions of governance (International Alert, 2014e, p. 2). There are a number of ways in which the shadow economies in the Bangsamoro could serve as an obstacle to effective governance. These include:

- Shadow economies represent untaxed wealth and therefore revenue foregone by the future Bangsamoro government. This could serve as a major obstacle to the government's ability to perform its essential functions (International Alert, 2014e, p. 2).
- The development of publicly accountable institutions can be hindered by the existence of shadow economies (International Alert, 2014e, p. 2). This is because access to the profits of the shadow economy remove the need for locally elected representatives to generate taxes, and thus to be accountable to their constituencies (International Alert, 2014e, p. 2). Shadow economy profits are thus likely to strengthen patronage rather than governance institutions (International Alert, 2014e, p. 2). The resulting perception of patronage-based politics and corruption has the potential to undermine the legitimacy and authority of governance institutions (International Alert, 2014e, p. 2).

International Alert emphasises that shadow economies are not beyond the reach of the state (International Alert, 2014e, pp. 2-3). Rather their existence, and their ability to thrive, stem from their proximity to state institutions both at the local and the national level (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3). It is also worth noting that the clash between state and non-state institutions can be a determinant of violence in shadow economies (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3).

Shadow economies thrive when state institutions are fragile (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3). It is therefore argued that they need to be incorporated in to Bangsamoro's sub-national statebuilding project (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3). Moreover, shadow economies transcend geographical and political boundaries. They also constitute a key element of the national and regional political economy (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3). As a result, any attempts to deal with the challenges posed by the shadow economies in Bangsamoro, also need to be complemented with interventions at the national and regional levels (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3).

Not all shadow economies are violent; however according to International Alert 'shadow economies do shape conflict dynamics in the Bangsamoro by triggering or exacerbating violent conflict' (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3). For example, shadow economy related triggers of violence hiding behind the classification 'business competition' were responsible for a significant increase in *rido* in the period 2011-2013 (International Alert, 2014g, p. 27). This tendency to shape conflict dynamics is considered in more detail in the context of each of the different shadow economies discussed below.

Illicit weapons

In Mindanao, there are estimated to be about 500,000 illegal firearms in the hands of civilians (International Alert, 2014c, p. 2). This constitutes about 70 per cent of the total number of firearms in the region (International Alert, 2014c, p. 2). Of these weapons, half are found in the ARMM (International Alert, 2014c, p. 2). Moreover, in 2009 33 per cent of an estimated 15,640 firearms in the hands of 'threat groups' and 28 per cent of the estimated 4,980 firearms in the hands of criminal groups are found in the ARMM (International Alert, 2014c, p. 2).

The proliferation of illegal firearms constitutes a significant challenge to peace in the Bangsamoro (International Alert, 2014c, p. 1). However, the decommissioning of such weapons receives very little attention in the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (International Alert, 2014c, p. 1). Moreover, the problem is exacerbated by weak enforcement of national legislation (International Alert, 2014c, p. 2). The police do not have an operating unit which is specifically tasked with capturing illegal firearms (International Alert, 2014c, p. 2). Moreover, the Firearms and Explosives Office (FEO), the regulatory office responsible for licensing firearms and storing illegal firearms captured by the police has no units at the provincial level (International Alert, 2014c, p. 2).

The Philippines is home to over 100 private armed groups, which are linked to political elites (International Alert, 2014c, p. 2). Such groups have been involved in violence in all five provinces of the ARMM (International Alert, 2014c, p. 2). Their existence complicates the disarmament process because their members are unlikely to surrender their firearms (International Alert, 2014c, p. 2).

Trafficking of weapons is possible because of the connivance of state representatives who can produce the necessary legal paperwork (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3).

Illicit drug economy

A policy brief by International Alert argues that the illicit drug economy in the Bangsamoro can have a negative impact on security, development and democracy in the region (International Alert, 2014a, p. 1). It states that the main reason for the thriving drug trade in the Bangsamoro is the fragility of state institutions. However, it adds that the presence of armed groups almost certainly complicates drug enforcement (International Alert, 2014a, p. 2).

In 2014, anti-narcotics authorities were reportedly monitoring the activities of a drug cartel in Lanao del Sur. The cartel was believed to involve municipal and city mayors (International Alert, 2014a, p. 2). According to International Alert, once they are elected into public office, narco-politicians are able to use their positions to undermine/subvert the rule of law to retain their hold on the drug economy (International Alert, 2014a, p. 3). They argue that 'by actively undermining and abusing the fragility of local governance institutions, narco-politicians foster the criminalisation of state institutions in the Bangsamoro' (International Alert, 2014a, p. 3).

Contrary to expectations, drug related corruption actually reduces violence within Bangsamoro's drug economy. However, there is potential for violent spill over effects (International Alert, 2014a, p. 3). These include the possibility that cracking down on the operations of drug groups could provoke a violent response (International Alert, 2014a, p. 3).

Informal land markets

Informal land markets enable land to be transferred, mortgaged, traded or sold without the monitoring or regulation of the government's land agencies (International Alert, 2014d, p. 3). They thrive because of the shortcomings of government agencies, and because of the complexity and costliness of the formal land market (International Alert, 2014d, p. 3). Problems associated with informal land markets include:

- As the land is not surveyed or covered by a title, ownership is uncertain.
- Price discovery is difficult, so those selling or mortgaging their land often do so at amounts below the real value.
- There are often no contracts, which means that multiple transfers, verbal agreements, and competing claims are rife (International Alert 2014d, p. 3).

In the ARMM these markets have been resilient because local strongmen act as mediators. While promising to enforce agreements between two parties, they often lose their partiality by participating in transactions themselves (International Alert, 2014d, p. 3). Informal land markets can result in violent disputes when state institutions impinge on the institutional arrangements and shadow authorities that govern them (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3).

Cross-border trade

Cross-border trade is an example of a shadow economy that has the potential to contribute to peacebuilding efforts rather than to conflict (International Alert, 2014e, p. 2). While cross-border trade is illegal, it sustains the fragile island economies of the Bangsamoro in the Sulu Sea (International Alert, 2014e, p. 2). According to International Alert, it provides social protection, critical employment, and livelihood opportunities for the marginalised and vulnerable, in communities where the state is absent or weak (International Alert, 2014b, p. 1). This point is also made by a report published by the National College of Public Administration and Governance at the University of the Philippines Diliman (UP-NCPAG) and the Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy (PCID). The report argues that it is politically wise for local executives to allow this trade to continue for the reasons outlined above (Co et al., 2013, p. 47).

However, cross-border trade is also linked to violence. The seas around Mindanao-Sulu are a site of criminal activity, including piracy and human trafficking (International Alert, 2014b, p. 3). These activities 'provoke or reinforce violence' (International Alert, 2014b, p. 3). However, the majority of the violence that occurs in relation to cross-border trade does not take place at sea. Rather, violent conflict is often the consequence of the sale of illicit weapons and drugs, which is linked to inter- and intra-clan wars, and to electoral battles between warlord politicians (International Alert, 2014b, p. 3).

Cross-border traders in the island provinces are able to avoid customs regulations through 'special arrangements' with rent-seeking customs officials (International Alert, 2014e, p. 2). According to International Alert, protecting shadow economies that support livelihoods and tapping the untaxed wealth that they generate, has the potential to provide the future Bangsamoro government with the peace dividends and revenue required to consolidate peace (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3).

Informal credit provision - pagsanda

Pagsanda, an informal credit system used by the Tausug, the largest ethnic group in Sulu, is both a consequence and a driver of conflict (Kamlian, 2013). It involves the offering of collateral to a traditional

money lender in exchange for a loan (Kamlan, 2013, p. 219). These transactions are not documented and are not regulated by the state (Kamlan, 2013, p. 219).

The factors behind the prevalence of *pagsanda* include:

- The weak banking sector in the ARMM and the ensuing lack of formal credit providers.
- The fact that it is deeply inter-linked with the socio-cultural values and traditions of Tausug society.
- Its accessibility for a large spectrum of the population in Sulu (Kamlan, 2013, p. 242).
- Its role as an essential coping mechanism during times of conflict, when it often serves as an 'economic lifeline' for affected communities (Kamlan, 2013, p. 243).

As *pagsanda* transactions are not documented they often lead to misunderstandings between the borrower and the lender (Kamlan, 2013, p. 243). These can escalate into violent clan feuds, although the extent of this problem remains unclear (Kamlan, 2013, p. 243). Traditional lenders provide loans for the purchase of firearms, which also increases levels of violence in Sulu (Kamlan, 2013, p. 243).

A chapter in an edited volume, discusses the existence of 'lender-politicians.' It argues that there is a two-way relationship between *pagsanda* and elections. *Pagsanda* generates the money and debtor support required by the moneylender to gain control over public office. This in turn provides the moneylender with access to government funds, which can then be channelled into further moneylending activities (Kamlan, 2013, p. 244).

Kidnapping for ransom

Kidnapping syndicates continue to exist in the Bangsamoro because local politicians provide them with protection (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3). These groups were discussed in the section on domestic actors in the ARMM. This section will therefore discuss the nature of the kidnapping for ransom industry in the ARMM, and the factors which make it possible, rather than looking at the groups responsible.

All those involved in kidnapping for ransom are embedded in local communities and interconnected with powerful state and non-state actors, as well as with criminal gangs (Gutierrez, p. 141). Moreover, the significant economic returns from kidnapping, which are considerably higher than those from other criminal activities, are shared among local communities. This incentivises these communities to collaborate with the kidnapers (Gutierrez, p. 141).

Enabling factors for kidnapping for ransom are:

- Weak security institutions, which enable those involved in kidnapping for ransom to become private providers of justice and security, and as a consequence *de facto* legitimacy (Gutierrez, p. 121).
- The proliferation of firearms and non-state actors in the region (Gutierrez, p. 121).
- Widespread poverty and the absence of alternative livelihoods (Gutierrez, p. 121).

The number of kidnapping incidents often increases at election time, when local politicians use it as a means of fundraising for their campaigns (Gutierrez, p. 122). Former politicians, who have lost their positions as a result of the election of a new central government also use kidnapping to embarrass or intimidate the incoming appointee (Gutierrez, p. 122). Other factors that lead to a rise in kidnapping incidents are military offensives that tie down state forces, and poorly conceived attempts to dismantle

private armies (Gutierrez, p. 122). Long ceasefires during protracted peace processes also have this effect, as they result in significant numbers of armed men being left without anything to do (Gutierrez, p. 141).

GPH initiatives to address the kidnapping for ransom problem have largely been ineffective due to their reactive nature, and their failure to address the root causes of the problem (Gutierrez, pp. 142 – 143).

3.3 Crime-related violence

This section is closely related to the discussions on shadow economies. Organised crime rose significantly in the period 2011-2013. While this increase has occurred across all the ARMM's provinces, it has been most notable in Maguindanao, Sulu, and Basilan. The often violent activities of criminal groups such as the Pentagon Gang, exacerbate the violence perpetrated by armed rebel groups and terrorist groups operating in the region. Moreover, as discussed earlier in this report, the ASG and the BIFF members are reportedly also engaged in organised crime activities (International Alert, 2014g, p. 25)

3.4 Political violence

Political violence in the ARMM is mostly related to elections (Co et al., 2013, p. 66). Elections in the ARMM are generally competitions between powerful families and clans that are prepared to go to great lengths to win (Co et al., 2013, p. 66). One report notes that while this is a problem across the Philippines, it has been particularly intense in the ARMM in recent years, with 21.5 per cent of election-related violence in 2010 taking place in the ARMM (Co et al., 2013, p. 66). The report argues that election-related violence is a direct result of political families having private armies (discussed in section 2), which either threaten or actually use violence against those who oppose them (Co et al., 2013, p. 66). In 2013 the number of *rido* cases rose, as elections increased political contestation (International Alert, 2014g, p. 27). Elections are reportedly viewed as an opportunity for inter-clan retribution (International Alert, 2014g, p. 29). In 2013 local elections caused more violence than the mid-term elections. According to one report this is indicative of the localised nature of violence in the ARMM (International Alert, 2014g, p. 36). Moreover, the more 'intimate' electoral competition at the village level is responsible for more fatalities than elections at the municipal, regional and national levels (International Alert, 2014g, p. 36).

3.5 Weak institutions and security sector

State institutions, and especially law enforcement agencies, are weak in the ARMM (Coronel-Ferrer, 2014, p. 2103). The police is unable to control the sale and use of unlicensed firearms or drug syndicates (Coronel-Ferrer, 2014, p. 2103). Moreover, corruption is widespread in both regional and national institutions (Coronel-Ferrer, 2014, p. 2103). For example, some police and military officials exploit their positions to engage in criminal activities, such as kidnapping for ransom (Gutierrez, 2013, p. 119). In Sulu, state institutions' failure to provide effective security and justice mechanisms has reportedly led to the Tausugs relying heavily on their clans, who in turn rely on arms and their political alliances, to ensure their survival and protection (Alar et al., 2013, p. 44).

3.6 Intercommunal conflict

The Muslim-Christian divide is not considered to be a significant driver of conflict in the ARMM (International Alert, 2014g, p. 35). However, one article warns that when the BAR becomes a reality, there will be serious new problems resulting from current failures to take the Lumads, and their demands

seriously (Paredes, 2015, p. 168). Such problems might include legal and constitutional challenges, as well as political challenges from dissatisfied parties (Paredes, 2015, p. 168).

Mindanao-based NGOs and minority advocates coined the 'tri-people' approach. This involves Moros, Lumads, and settlers acknowledging each other as legitimate stakeholders in the peace process, and that they have a shared future in Mindanao (Paredes, 2015, p. 167). This approach has arguably been a success, removing obstacles to peace such as Filipino chauvinism towards the Moros (Paredes, 2015, pp. 167-168). It has also been key in keeping the peace between the MILF and some parts of the Philippine military (Paredes, 2015, p. 168).

However, while Lumads have been involved in the peace process, and there were Lumad representatives in the Bangsamoro Transition Commission, 'their legitimacy as stakeholders is regularly belittled' (Paredes, 2015, p. 167). Moreover, the explicit recognition of their rights has not been enshrined in proposals for the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) (Paredes, 2015, p. 168).

3.7 Absence of state services

According to OCHA's 2013 Humanitarian Action Plan for Mindanao, a lack of state services in communities increases their fragility. The majority of *barangays* have no access to civil registry services or to the justice system. As a result the majority of people do not have birth or marriage certificates. This means that many marginalised people are put at risk because of their inability to establish their identity and to claim rights. This also makes them unable to access basic services such as social welfare programmes, scholarships, employment, pension schemes and low interest loans. According to OCHA 'this makes them more vulnerable, in constant debt, and without adequate support mechanisms' (OCHA, 2013, p. 42). The same report highlights the fact that service provision can contribute to peace.

One report notes that while the national government allocated 31.3 per cent of its budget to social services in 2012, prioritising this above other areas, all provinces within the ARMM spent significantly less on social services than they did on other areas in 2010, the only year for which data is available (Co et al., 2013, p. 72). It argues that this demonstrates the local governments' 'rather skewed priorities' and their 'relative neglect of their people's welfare' (Co et al., 2013, p. 72). It also notes that government services in the ARMM are inadequate when compared with those in the rest of the country (Co et al., 2013, p. 86).

However, according to one journal article, low revenue collection, and the ARMM's dependence on the central government for budgetary support, limit its capacity to upgrade social services (Coronel-Ferrer, 2014, p. 2103).

Education

According to OCHA's 2013 Humanitarian Action Plan for Mindanao, children experienced class disruptions 60 per cent of the time due to displacement from armed conflict, clan feud or natural disaster during the period 2008 to 2011. This translates to almost 18 months without regular schooling out of an expected 30 contact months. Moreover, during this period, many of these children were relocated to various evacuation centres where they were exposed to harm (OCHA, 2013, p. 34). The same report argues that the long-term consequences of disrupted schooling cannot be overstated. Many children reportedly never return to school, or return only temporarily. Moreover, missing extended periods of school means that these children are often "over-age" for their year. In the ARMM there were 42,076 children aged 13 and over who were still in primary school in 2013. Moreover, in the province of Lanao del Sur, for example, 86 per cent of children end up falling out of the school system (OCHA, 2013, p. 34).

The report also cites a 2010 assessment conducted by Save the Children, which finds that some children affected by armed conflict become members of armed groups (OCHA, 2013, p. 34). The OCHA report also finds that in conflict-affected communities like Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur, there is a lack of teachers (OCHA, 2013, p. 35).

Health

According to one report, the ARMM has the worst health governance statistics in the Philippines (Co et al., 2013, p. 167). OCHA's 2013 Humanitarian Action Plan for Mindanao notes that 'in the changing context of Mindanao, there is an increasing recognition that health initiatives can significantly contribute to sustaining peace' (OCHA, 2013, p. 38). The reasons given for this are:

- Access to basic health services, including reproductive health, can potentially break the resistance and mistrust brought about by years of government neglect.
- The visibility of health service providers in the internally displaced person's (IDPs) communities can build confidence and respect for public health systems (OCHA, 2013, p. 38).

ARMM Office for Southern Cultural Communities (OSCC)

The OSCC provides support to the Lumad communities in the ARMM. This largely takes the form of rapid response assistance and is provided on an ad hoc basis during emergencies brought about by typhoons or displacement resulting from armed conflict (Coronel-Ferrer, 2012, pp. 2106-2107). Examples of assistance provided by the OSCC include relief and medical missions, provision of scholarships, employment support, birth registration, and processing ancestral domain claims on an ad hoc basis. The OSCC also participates in environmental and peace campaigns and to some degree conflict resolution among the Lumad (Coronel-Ferrer, 2012, p. 2107). In cases where there is conflict between Lumad and Moros, the OSCC works together with the Regional Reconciliation and Unification Commission (RRUC), which is designed to address conflict among Moro groups using customary and Islamic conflict resolution practices (Coronel-Ferrer, 2012, p. 2107). The office's activities are financed by the Department of Social Welfare and international NGOs (Coronel-Ferrer, 2012, p. 2107).

3.8 Climate change

A quantitative discussion paper finds that rainfall affects conflict intensity in the Philippines. While the paper does not explicitly focus on Mindanao, it looks at conflict between the GPH and the MILF and between the GPH and the NPA, so its findings are arguably relevant to this report. However, it excludes the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi due to climatic differences between the Sulu Archipelago, which does experience pronounced rainfall seasonality, and the remainder of the Philippines (Croft et al., 2015, p. 8).

The paper finds that lagged rainfall affects agricultural production, which in turn affects conflict intensity (Croft et al., 2015, p. 21). It also finds that the relationship between rainfall and conflict is seasonal. If above average rainfall is received during the dry season in one year, then there tend to be fewer conflict-related incidents and casualties one year later. The opposite holds true when above average rainfall is received in the wet season (Croft et al., 2015, p. 21). In addition, it finds that rainfall has the greatest impact on conflict in provinces in which there is a greater than median proportion of total area devoted to the production of rice (Croft et al., 2015, pp. 21 - 22). The authors argue that this strongly suggests

that rainfall impacts civil conflict through its impact on agricultural production (Crost et al., 2015, p. 22). They go on to state that climate change 'is expected to amplify the already pronounced seasonal variation in rainfall [in the Philippines]' (Crost et al., 2015, p.22). They then argue that this in turn will exacerbate ongoing civil conflicts in the Philippines (Crost et al., 2015, p. 22).

3.9 The mining industry

While there is significant mining potential in the ARMM, this has not yet been exploited to the extent that mineral resources have in the rest of Mindanao. Moreover, very little, if any, research has been done in this area in the context of the ARMM, so it is impossible to establish the extent to which the presence of foreign mining companies, and disputes over mineral rich land, constitute, or will constitute a driver of conflict.

4. Regional actors

Literature on regional actors' involvement in the ARMM is limited. This section provides a brief overview of the role played by Malaysia, the facilitator for the GPH-MILF peace process, and Japan, which has undertaken significant peacemaking and peacebuilding activities in the region.

4.1 Malaysia

Malaysia has fulfilled the role of facilitator in the GPH-MILF peace process since 2001. It has reportedly been particularly proactive in its support of the peace process under the Mohammed Najib Abdul Razak administration (Heydarian, 2015, p. 1). In 2011, Malaysia threatened to stop facilitating the GPH-MILF negotiations if the MILF demanded more than greater political autonomy from the GPH (Heydarian, 2015, p. 1). One of the motivations for Malaysia's active role in the peace process has reportedly been its concern that the Mindanao conflict might have a spillover effect on regional security (Heydarian, 2015, p. 1).

4.2 Japan

Japan has been actively involved in peacemaking and peacebuilding in the Philippines, both as a member of the International Contact Group on Muslim Mindanao (ICGM), which is discussed in the next section, and in its own right. In 2006 Japan joined the International Monitoring Team (IMT) and established the Mindanao Task Force, as a forum for policy discussion Japan's assistance to Mindanao (Ishikawa, p. 82). The overall framework for Japan's development aid to Mindanao was the Japan-Bangsamoro Initiative for Reconstruction and Development (J-BIRD). Within this framework, an important tool for contributing to the peace process was the Grant Assistance for Grass-roots Human Security Programs in conflict-affected areas (Ishikawa, 2014, p. 82). The aim of this was to ensure that those living in conflict-affected areas would directly benefit from projects, such as the construction of classrooms, vocational training centres, water supply systems, and health centres (Ishikawa, 2014, p. 83).

In 2009 Japan was nominated to become a member of the International Contact Group (ICG), which is discussed in more detail below. According to one journal article, Japan's membership of the ICG enabled it to access first-hand information on the progress of the peace talks, in turn enabling it to take appropriate actions as a peacebuilder (Ishikawa, 2014, p. 84). This information was also shared with JICA

(Japan's development agency), which meant that Japan's development assistance was linked to the peace process (Ishikawa, 2014, p. 84).

5. International actors

5.1 International Contact Group on Muslim Mindanao (ICGM)

The International Contact Group for the Mindanao peace process was formed in 2009. Its members are the UK, Japan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Conciliation Resources, Muhammadiyah, the Asia Foundation, and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (Democratic Progress Institute, 2014, p. 7). It is described by the Democratic Progress Institute (DPI) as 'the first ever formal hybrid mediation support initiative (Democratic Progress Institute, 2014, p. 7). The ICGM's functions are:

- Attending and observing negotiations at the invitation of the parties to the conflict, and the facilitator, the Government of Malaysia.
- Providing 'discreet' advice.
- Providing expert assistance on specific issues.
- Meeting any of the parties to the conflict upon request, in order to resolve any substantive issues.
- The INGO members are also requested to act as a bridge between parties to the conflict, the ICG, the facilitator, and local partners (Democratic Progress Institute, 2014, pp. 9-10).

5.2 Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC)

The OIC played a key role in the peace processes between the GPH and the MNLF, which culminated in the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, which stipulated that full autonomy should be given to 13 provinces in Mindanao, and the 1996 Final Peace Agreement. There is very little discussion of the OIC's ongoing role in conflict resolution in Mindanao in recent literature on the subject.

5.3 United States

The Philippines has been one of the largest recipients of US aid over the last decade. Over half of this assistance has been for development programmes in the Muslim areas of Mindanao and Sulu. The aim of this aid has been to reduce the economic and political conditions that make radical and extremist ideologies and activities attractive (Lum & Dolven, 2014, p. 9). Examples of programmes include strengthening the rule of law, streamlining the process of obtaining business permits, improving government services in Mindanao, expanding access to health care and building the AFP's capacity to patrol and govern the country's maritime areas (Lum & Dolven, 2014, p. 9). This development assistance has reportedly enhanced the legitimacy of the AFP and the GPH among local communities (Lum & Dolven, 2014, p. 12). However, it is unclear whether the GPH has the capacity to sustain these development projects without US support (Lum & Dolven, 2014, p. 12).

Since the mid-2000s an average of 500-600 US military personnel have been based in temporary facilities on the island of Jolo in the Sulu Archipelago and in western Mindanao, as part of the Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines (JSOTF-P). Their role is to advise and assist the AFP on counter-terrorism (Lum & Dolven, 2014, p. 14). Joint exercises in western Mindanao and Sulu reportedly

significantly weakened Islamist groups operating in these regions, such as the ASG (Lum & Dolven, 2014, p. 12).

6. Gender, peace, and conflict in Muslim Mindanao

Conflict affects women, men, girls and boys differently in their experiences of violence, health impacts, economic activity, and political and civic inclusion. Conflict can result in short-term changes in traditional gender roles. However, long-term change is often slower to materialise. Both men and women can be the victims and the perpetrators of violence (Strachan & Haider, 2015). This section looks at the gender in the context of the ongoing conflicts and the peace process in the ARMM.

6.1 Mobility

According to a report published by the Asia Foundation, one of the primary impacts of conflict in the ARMM is curtailed or enhanced mobility (Dwyer & Cagoco-Guiam, 2012, p. 9). Due to the risk of being mistaken for members of armed rebel groups by the security forces, and of being pressured into joining such groups, men in the ARMM are forced to restrict their movements (Dwyer & Cagoco-Guiam, 2012, p. 10). Men's mobility is also constrained by the fact that they are vulnerable to revenge attacks during *rido* conflict (Dwyer & Cagoco-Guiam, 2012, p. 10). This not only affects the local economy, and political processes, but also men's relationships with women, both in their families and in their communities (Dwyer & Cagoco-Guiam, 2012, p. 10).

As a result of men's limited mobility, women in the ARMM often have to take on new responsibilities. These responsibilities are often diverse and can include tending fields and livestock, bringing goods to market, escorting children to school, seeking paid employment, and helping to identify and resolve community concerns (Dwyer & Cagoco-Guiam, 2012, p. 10). During periods of armed violence, women may also serve as emergency medics or rescue agents, and they may be tasked with negotiating with occupying forces for access to subsistence needs, as they are less likely to be seen as physical threats (Dwyer & Cagoco-Guiam, 2012, p. 10). While these new responsibilities are often a source of pride and satisfaction among women in the ARMM, women often feel a sense of exhaustion due to their need to fulfil a 'double role,' because of the lack of male support in their day to day activities (Dwyer & Cagoco-Guiam, 2012, p. 10).

6.2 Participation in peace processes

Women are well-represented in peace processes in the Philippines. The 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro was reached through negotiations led by the government peace panel's first female lead negotiator Miriam Coronel-Ferrer (Change et al., 2015, p. 106). She was supported by Undersecretary Yasmin Busran-Lao, a female peace and gender justice advocate (Change et al., 2015, p. 106). The degree of women's participation in peace processes in the Philippines is largely due to the proliferation of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Philippines, and in particular to women in civil society. They succeeded in bringing about women's participation in peace processes by:

- Using pre-existing networks to mobilise and organise.
- Developing a complex network of local, national, regional, and global alliances.

- Shaping the peace agenda through open facilitated dialogue with a range of different women's constituencies.
- Using personal connections and women's coalitions to pressure parties to the peace process to make women's participation and women's issues a priority on the agenda (Chang et al., 2015, p. 122).

As a result:

- The language, agenda, and format of the power-sharing agreement were influenced (Chang et al., 2015, p. 122).
- Both the 2012 Framework Agreement and the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro contain explicit gender provisions.

Despite women in civil society's substantive participation in peace negotiations, they are not the key decision-makers in the GPH-MILF peace process (Chang et al., 2015, p. 122).

6.3 Transitional justice

Conflict has affected women in many ways. These include:

- Forced displacement
- Gender based violence
- Massacres
- The Zamboanga siege (see section 2.1)
- Land grabbing
- Illegal arrest
- Disappearances (Conciliation Resources, 2015, p. 14).

As a result there is a need for inclusive transitional justice mechanisms.

6.4 Participation in governance

In order to ensure that the role of women in governance and decision-making bodies is institutionalised, and that these bodies adopt a gender-sensitive approach, women's participation in the Bangsamoro Transitional Administration (BTA) is required (Conciliation Resources, 2015, p. 9).

A research report by Conciliation Resources highlights a number of obstacles to women's engagement in governance:

- Women's lack of confidence and education.
- Cultural beliefs and traditions that are responsible for unequal rights and discrimination.
- Poverty and social difficulties among women, such as problems with their husbands or having to look after large families (Conciliation Resources, 2015, p. 9).

6.5 IDPs

The majority of IDPs in Mindanao are women and children. Women in IDP camps are responsible for finding and carrying water, finding ways to feed their children, and treating family health problems (Dwyer & Cagoco-Guiam, 2012, p. 12). In times of extreme food insecurity, women may limit their own nutritional intake in order to feed their children, with serious consequences for their own health (Dwyer & Cagoco-Guiam, 2012, p. 12).

Women face specific security concerns in IDP camps. Many women fear sexual assault because of the lack of privacy for bathing and dressing, and the constant presence of unknown armed men (Dwyer & Cagoco-Guiam, 2012, p. 12). Women IDPs are also extremely vulnerable to human trafficking and to dangerous or unfair migrant work arrangements (Dwyer & Cagoco-Guiam, 2012, p. 12).

6.6 Young women and girls

Conflict disproportionately affects young women and girls both physically and psychologically (Dwyer & Cagoco-Guiam, 2012, p. 15). It is argued that developmentally, young people may have less resilience to the physical and emotional stressors of conflict (Dwyer & Cagoco-Guiam, 2012, p. 15).

7. Recommendations from the literature

Rebel groups

- Governments in Southeast Asia should not rely on counter-ideological solutions to address material-based problems (Franco, 2014b, p. 3).

Shadow economies

- The informal economy should be incorporated into the Bangsamoro's sub-national statebuilding project (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3).
- Shadow economies that harm the peace process, such as the illegal firearms trade, and kidnap-for-ransom activities, should be neutralised (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3). Ex-combatants should be prevented from becoming involved in these criminal shadow economies (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3).
- As the informal economy in the ARMM is not a geographically self-contained phenomenon, efforts to address it need to be complemented with interventions at the regional and national levels (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3).
- A conflict sensitive approach is vital in order to minimise the risk of violent conflict. Inclusiveness is a key aspect of this (International Alert, 2014e, p. 3).
- The formal economy should be expanded to create opportunities for those currently engaged in the informal economy (international Alert, 2014e, p. 3).
- Local politico-economic elites should be involved in attempts to resolve the problem of kidnapping for ransom. This is because they are best placed to negotiate with, or put pressure on communities who provide refuge and support for kidnappers (Gutierrez, 2013, p. 144).

- Micro-credit facilities could be expanded to counter the negative impacts of *pagsanda* (Kamlan, 2013, pp. 244 – 245).
- The scope for regulation of *pagsanda* should be considered, to reduce the conflict risks associated with it (Kamlan, 2013, p. 244).

Institutions

- Police reform is necessary to address the widespread use of kidnapping by criminal gangs, rebel groups and politicians in the ARMM (Gutierrez, 2013, p. 143).

Service delivery

- Given the seasonal nature of conflict in the ARMM, local governments and the private sector could programme the provision of welfare services to coincide with anticipated periods of pressure and stress. Additional livelihood sources could be provided during lean months (International Alert, 2014g, p. 36).

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