

# EMPOWERING MADARIS IN THE BARMM

THROUGH PUBLIC POLICY AND  
REGIONAL AUTONOMY TO HELP  
PREVENT AND COUNTER  
VIOLENT EXTREMISM



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## ACRONYMS

ALIVE	Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education
ALS	Alternative Learning System
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao
BEC	Bangsamoro Education Code
BIFF	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
BME	Bureau of Muslim Education
BOL	Bangsamoro Organic Law
CALABARZON	Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon
DepED	Department of Education
DGHE	Directorate - General for Higher Education
DGME	Directorate - General for Madrasah Education
DGTVE	Directorate - General for Technical Vocational Education
FPA	Final Peace Agreement
IAG	Institute for Autonomy and Governance
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ISAL	Islamic Studies and Arabic Language
LGUs	Local Government Units
MBE	Madrasah Basic Education
MBHTE	Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education
MEP	Muslim Education Program
MIMAROPA	Mindoro Occidental, Mindoro Oriental, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MoRA	Ministry of Religious Affairs
NAP PCVE	National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism
NCMF	National Commission on Muslim Filipinos
PCVE	Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism
PSA	Philippine Statistics Authority
RPOC	Regional Peace and Order Council
SEC	Securities and Exchange Commission
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VE	Violent Extremism

# Table of Contents

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v	Acronymns
9	Executive Summary
13	Chapter 1: Introduction
20	Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature
35	Chapter 3: Methodology
43	Chapter 4: Findings
43	A. Nature and extent of vulnerability and resiliency of madrasah system
55	B. Current and future trajectories
58	C. Issues, challenges and opportunities
80	D. Suggestions on policies and programs
84	Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

## List of Tables

42	Table 1: Selected background of the respondents by province
59	Table 2: Awareness of any overseas models influencing madrasah education in BARMM
59	Table 3: Overseas models that are perceived to have an influence on madrasah education in BARMM
62	Table 4: Madrasah models used
64	Table 5: Direction of madrasah education according to ownership and supervision
65	Table 6: Direction of madrasah education according to enrollment (gender distribution of students)

# Table of Contents

---

66 Table 7: Direction of madrasah education according to curriculum focus

67 Table 8: Direction of madrasah education according to curriculum development process

67 Table 9: Direction of madrasah education according to medium of instruction

69 Table 10: Relationship between national DepEd and the regional MBHTE

73 Table 11: Awareness on the provision of a public madrasah under the Bangsamoro Education Code

73 Table 12: Respondents’ knowledge of the public madrasah

74 Table 13: Attitude towards the establishment of a public madrasah

75 Table 14: Reasons in support of the establishment of the public madrasah

List of Figures

18 Figure 1. Conceptual Framework





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Previous studies conducted by the Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG) revealed the madrasah as the main source of information on Islamic concepts among the youth. Islamic education in the Bangsamoro includes the new Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (ISAL) program offered in public schools, the Integrated Madaris, the traditional Madaris, and the yet-to-be-built public madrasah articulated in the Bangsamoro Education Code (BEC).

In Muslim Mindanao, homegrown terrorist groups such as Abu Sayyaf (ASG), Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), and Maute Group are said to have strong links with international terrorist organizations such as the Jemaah Islamiyah and ISIS/DAESH<sup>1</sup>. The primary targets of these extremist groups are Moro youth enrolled in Islamic schools.

This study investigates the nature and extent of vulnerability and resiliency of the madrasah to violent extremism and identifies trajectories that will define the context of the madrasah system in the Philippines, as well as the challenges and opportunities of public policy accommodation, and the flexibility that regional autonomy can bring to madrasah development.

A survey of 198 respondents composed of madrasah heads and senior teachers, interviews with seven regional and local key informants and focus group discussions with 44 key stakeholders in the five BARMM provinces were conducted.

### Findings

**1. Key informants see brighter prospects for the holistic improvement of Madaris across BARMM.** The former Bureau of Madaris Education has been elevated to the Directorate General on Madrasah Education (DGME) and allocated substantial resources to promote fundamental Madrasah education in BARMM. A new law has also been signed that creates public Madaris owned and operated by BARMM's Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education (MBHTE). According to a key informant, these developments are positive in terms of capacity building for madrasah teachers and staff, infrastructure development, and upgrading of the curriculum to include peace concepts in the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions.

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<sup>1</sup> NAP P/CVE, page 3.

**2. But there are fears about the vulnerability of Madaris to recruitment by groups that espouse violent extremism (VE), particularly those schools located near conflict zones or in communities where VE groups are present.** Seven out of ten of the madrasah heads and teachers surveyed agree that these two factors — proximity to conflict zones and presence of VE groups — do contribute to VE vulnerability, in addition to limited financial support and, to a lesser extent, lack of regulatory oversight of the schools by the government (59%). Interestingly, when asked about the vulnerability to VE of their own madrasah, most respondents judge that these factors do not really make their own institution vulnerable — except for one factor: limited financial support (67.2% vulnerable or very vulnerable).

**3. Asked what factors contribute to the resiliency of Madaris against VE, all respondents cite strong madrasah leadership and the involvement of parents in their children's education.** Large majorities cite religious guidance, partnership with the community, and parents' support in reinforcing values at home, along with active countering of misinformation, interfaith and intercultural dialogue, civic engagement and community outreach, and local government support.

**4. There is strong support for the creation of public Madaris managed and operated by the MBHTE.** More than eight out of ten school heads and teachers surveyed are in favor, with only 12.6% against. Asked to describe the ideal relationship between the national Department of Education (DepEd) and BARMM's MBHTE in relation to madrasah education, the majority of survey respondents (54.5%) said the two agencies should work together on a common program such as madrasah education in secular public schools, but MBHTE should have operational control of the public madrasah.

**5. Going forward, the heads and teachers surveyed would like Madaris across BARMM to teach a mix of religious and secular subjects (72.2%), with the curriculum developed by MBHTE and Madrasah stakeholders (97%).** No one wants enrollment to be for boys only. Both boys and girls should be able to attend the madrasah in separate classes by gender but in the same school (70.2%). The medium of instruction should be Arabic, English, Filipino and vernacular/mother tongue (48%) or Arabic and vernacular/mother tongue (35.9%). Only 1% advocates Arabic only.

## Recommendations

**1. The momentum currently propelling forward madrasah education in BARMM should be accelerated.** A national key informant lauds the improvement in madrasah education but urges quicker implementation to take advantage of the autonomous region's political transition. A potential impediment is a legal challenge to the constitutionality of creating public Madaris because doing so would violate the separation of church and state. BARMM must be ready with a defense that argues, for example, that public monies are not being spent to promote a religion but to help Muslim youth recognize that the VE interpretation of Islamic beliefs such as jihad is incomplete or plain wrong.

**2. Madaris in the BARMM should adopt overseas models of madrasah education that emphasize moderation and balance.** The models in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore are more suited to the Philippine context, given that all these countries are in Asia. The Singapore model is the most relevant since it is a multi-religion nation where Muslims make up a minority indigenous community, as is the case in the Philippines. This should apply in particular to the MBHTE-owned public Madaris, when they are finally operational. Nothing prevents the public madrasah to adopt a homegrown model, of course, in which case this indigenous model should explicitly reject violent extremism, promote peace concepts in the Qu'ran and Prophetic traditions, and espouse the principle of Ummah Wassatan or moderation.

**3. Madaris in the BARMM should be supported to address the factors that contribute to their vulnerability to violent extremism.** Such support includes driving out VE groups in communities where Madaris are located and bringing peace to conflict zones. Madaris should also be helped to strengthen their resiliency against VE, including developing strong madrasah leadership, promoting robust involvement by parents in their children's education and in values formation in school and at home, and aiding Madaris to actively partner with the local government and the larger community.

**4. In addition, financial support should be extended to traditional Madaris to help them achieve resiliency against VE.** Integrated Madaris are subsidized by the national government while the envisioned public madrasah will be financially supported by the MBHTE. But as flagged by a majority of the survey respondents, limited financial support is making their traditional madrasah vulnerable or very vulnerable to VE. The privately owned traditional madrasah has a place in madrasah education in the BARMM, along with the integrated madrasah and the public madrasah. But ways must be found to make them financially viable, including higher tuition on students able to pay, and thus resilient against VE.

**5. The MBHTE through the DGME should work synergistically with the DepEd, LGUs, other BARMM agencies and civil society organizations.**

The ministry should resist the temptation to go it alone on madrasah education, a course of action that is legally indefensible since the terms of BARMM autonomy provide that the regional education system, including madrasah education, is subject to general national supervision. The relationship preferred by survey respondents should be adopted, where DepEd and MBHTE work together on a common program in integrated Madaris while MBHTE has operational control of public Madaris.

**6. Fill the post of Undersecretary for Muslim Education in the DepEd Central Office to rejuvenate the Muslim Education Program.**

The institutionalization of Muslim education, encompassing initiatives such as ALIVE in Public Schools, Integrated Madaris, and Techvoc + ALIVE within DepEd, served not only as an educational intervention to enhance access, quality, and equity among Muslim learners but also as a political and security initiative to help address historical, political, socio-economic, and cultural grievances.

However, since the departure of the last occupant following the conclusion of the Arroyo Administration, the Muslim Education Program has been less proactive. It has struggled to articulate its roles in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE), particularly in conflict- and post-conflict Muslim areas. In these regions, education can play a pivotal role in countering violent extremist ideologies and promoting a moderate Islamic narrative.

The need for a more assertive and proactive stance from the Muslim Education Program is underscored by the significant role education can play in the redress of historical grievances and the fostering of a peaceful and tolerant society. Addressing these challenges requires renewed commitment and strategic engagement to ensure that education continues to serve as a potent tool against the influence of extremist ideologies in Muslim communities. This can begin by reinstituting the Office of the Undersecretary for Muslim Education who will serve as the conductor for the program improvement and expansion, especially on P/CVE.

## CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Studies in 2017<sup>2</sup> and 2022<sup>3</sup> conducted by the Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG) revealed that the madrasah is consistently identified as the main source of information on Islamic concepts among the youth. Islamic education in the Bangsamoro includes the new Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (ISAL) program offered in public schools, the Integrated Madaris, the traditional Madaris, and the yet-to-be-built public madrasah articulated in the Bangsamoro Education Code (BEC).

- The ISAL program is a six-subject package (Qur'an, Hadith, Aqeedah, Fiqh, Sirah and Arabic) offered to Moro learners enrolled in public schools. Currently, there are 4,868 ISAL teachers across public schools in the BARMM, with a monthly salary of Php 15,600 under contractual status. The current offering is limited to the primary level.
- The integrated Madaris are private sectarian schools recognized by MBHTE. The ministry's recognition is based on the integrated madrasah's use of a prescribed curriculum and class program that integrates the regular K-to-12 subjects with the ISAL package. There is also a required MBHTE annual visit as basis for the grant of financial subsidy of Php 5,000 per student per year.
- Traditional Madaris, which offer classes either on weekdays or weekends, are not regulated by any government education agency. Their minimal compliance with government requirements is registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission. The curricular offerings of traditional Madaris often reflect those of the country where school organizers obtained their religious education. In the study<sup>4</sup> conducted by IAG on traditional Madaris in 2019, researchers counted 1,805 traditional Madaris in the BARMM and neighboring regions. Some 5% of the 1,152 teachers in traditional Madaris are foreign-schooled, most of them in Saudi Arabia. About 94% of them studied Islam religion at their local madrasah.
- A novel concept in the Philippines, the public madrasah is to be established in the BARMM as called for the BARMM by the

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2 Research on Youth Vulnerability to Violent Extremism in the ARMM, IAG. 2017.  
3 Youth Vulnerability to Violent Extremism: A Follow-through Study in the BARMM, IAG. 2022.  
4 Research on Traditional Madaris in ARMM and Adjacent Regions, 2019, page 115.

Bangsamoro Education Code (BEC). While the implementation details are still to be announced, the BARMM public madrasah seems to echo those existing in Indonesia, which are managed by that country's Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA).

The Directorate-General for Madrasah Education (DGME) within MBHTE issues elementary and high school permits for integrated Madaris. Those integrated Madaris offering technical-vocational programs need to have recognition from the Directorate-General for Technical and Vocational Education (DGTVE), while the Directorate-General for Higher Education (DGHE) provides recognition for those offering collegiate and graduate programs.

The range of madrasah programs in BARMM reflects the government's attempts at recognition and integration. Despite these efforts, a large chunk of Muslim learners continues to patronize the traditional Madaris, which remains an influential and important sector in Islamic education.

As institutions without a government regulatory framework, traditional Madaris are left to fend for themselves, including looking for resources. They develop their curriculum and manage their operations. Together with their remote geographical location, proximity to conflict zones and relative isolation from broader society, the perceived government apathy contributes to the vulnerability of traditional Madaris to the influence of violent extremism.

In Muslim Mindanao, homegrown terrorist groups such as Abu Sayyaf (ASG), Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), and Maute Group are said to have strongly links with international terrorist organizations such as the Jemaah Islamiyah and ISIS/DAESH<sup>5</sup>. The primary targets of these extremist groups are Moro youth enrolled in Islamic schools and learning the fundamentals of Islam.

Aside from the establishment of the Bangsamoro political entity in 2019, other legislation address Muslim concerns, including the madrasah system. One national agency with a mandate to oversee traditional Madaris is the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), which was created under Republic Act No. 9997. One of its functions is to ensure that the curriculum of the madrasah education system conforms with the basic curriculum of the national formal education system, along with teachings on Arabic Language, Islamic Studies, and Filipino and Islamic Values as educational institutions<sup>6</sup> catering to the needs of Muslim youth. NCMF has policy obligations under the National Action Plan on Preventing

<sup>5</sup>  
<sup>6</sup>

NAP P/CVE, page 3.  
<https://ncmf.gov.ph/about-us/powers-and-functions/>

and Countering Violent Extremism (NAP P/CVE) that includes liaising with religious leaders, learning institutions and students returning from overseas religious studies.

The current Muslim Education Program under the Department of Education Central Office evolved from the 1996 Final Peace Agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front. The MEP includes a provision on Muslim representation at national agencies. In 2004, madrasah advocacy gained new momentum under President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's Mindanao Nation Agenda. In the following year, a process of madrasah education development was undertaken within the Department of Education with technical assistance from SEAMEO-INNOTECH and the Australian-funded Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM) Project.

Against this background, the intersection of the madrasah system, public policy accommodation, and the need to maximize the regional autonomy setup becomes apparent. There is a need to revisit the madrasah system, especially amid the ongoing security challenges of violent extremism globally and locally. This research is designed to delineate the nature and extent of vulnerability and resiliency of the madrasah and identify trajectories that will define the context of the madrasah system in the Philippines, as well as the challenges and opportunities of public policy accommodation, and the flexibility that regional autonomy can bring to madrasah development.

### **Significance of the Study**

While violent extremist activities have waned in areas like Basilan and Sulu, the threat and evolution of violent extremism (VE) remain in other parts of the autonomous region. On one hand, there is the urgency to reduce the vulnerability of the madrasah and to strengthen its resiliency to the influence (pull factors), narrative (push factors), and recruitment by VE groups. On the other hand, there is the question of how relevant and responsive current public policy and regional autonomy are in empowering the madrasah as a key and influential education subsector among Filipino Muslims.

Consistent with the program of the national government "to increase the capacity of state actors in key agencies and local government agencies in the BARMM to undertake counter-extremist strategies that are conflict-sensitive and cognizant of human rights and basic freedom," this study hopes to generate data on madrasah education in the BARMM in terms of stakeholders' suggestions on policy improvement, program development and optimizing regional autonomy in empowering Madaris for their development as well as in positioning Madaris to prevent and counter



violent extremism in their midst through such strategies as the promotion of the teaching of wasatiyyah (moderation).<sup>7</sup>

## Goals and Objectives

The goal of this research is to help the madrasah basic education system in the BARMM prevent and counter violent extremism in the autonomous region through public policy initiatives and the exercise of regional autonomy. The main objective of this study is to analyze the interface among public policy, regional autonomy, and reforms in the BARMM's madrasah basic education. More specifically, the study aims to:

1. Understand the nature and extent of the vulnerability and resiliency of the madrasah basic education system with regard to violent extremism.
2. Identify the current and future trajectories, challenges, and opportunities of madrasah basic education in relation to preventing and countering violent extremism.
3. Generate suggestions and recommendations on policies and programs to empower the madrasah basic education system to prevent and counter violent extremism.

This study looks at the potential trajectories of madrasah basic education through three prisms: (a) program offering, (b) overseas model, and (c) national-regional synergy.

***Trajectory according to program offering.*** This trajectory set reflects the BARMM government's attempts to accommodate the madrasah system in the regional education system through initiatives such as the inclusion of Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (ISAL) in the public school system and the establishment of public Madaris. But a significant proportion of traditional Madaris are not likely to benefit due to their inability to comply with government regulations and/or their intention to remain independent of government regulation.

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<sup>7</sup>

Wasatiyyah is the Arabic word for best, middle, centered, balanced, middle way or moderation in the Islamic context. <https://www.ijsrp.org/research-paper-1120/ijsrp-p10724.pdf>



Program	Definition
ISAL in Public School	Offering six (6) Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (ISAL) subjects to Muslim learners in public schools, on top of the K-to-12 subjects.
Integrated Madrasah	Implementation of K-to-12 and ISAL subjects in a full-time madrasah setting. Recognized by DepEd and receives a subsidy for implementing a government-prescribed curriculum.
Traditional Madrasah	Offering a wide range of religious subjects, autonomous and not subject to government regulation, largely weekend classes.
Public Madrasah	A new concept contained in the Bangsamoro Education Code (BEC) that mimics the Indonesian model of a full-fledged madrasah wholly operated by the government like a regular public school. In Indonesia, this type of madrasah is managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA).

***Trajectory according to overseas model.*** This reflects the nature and degree of overseas influence in traditional and integrated Madaris, as well as those involved in the implementation of the ISAL program in public schools. The influences can vary from those in Muslim-majority countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran and Afghanistan, where the madrasah is the only education system in the country, to those in Indonesia and Malaysia, where the madrasah exists alongside secular and sectarian schools. There are also Madaris in countries where Muslims are a minority, either as an indigenous or immigrant population.

Overseas Model	Definition
Influence 1 - Saudi Arabia and Iran	Madrasah is <i>the</i> mainstream education system, entirely managed and regulated by the government. Both boys and girls can attend.
Influence 2 - Afghanistan	Madrasah is <i>the</i> mainstream education system, entirely managed and regulated by the government. Only boys can attend.
Influence 3 - Indonesia and Malaysia	Madrasah is a component of the mainstream education system, those with public school status are entirely managed and regulated by the government; those in private hands are regulated but not managed by the government.
Influence 3 - Singapore and Australia	Madrasah is a private sectarian school regulated by the government. Religious content is created and managed by the school itself.

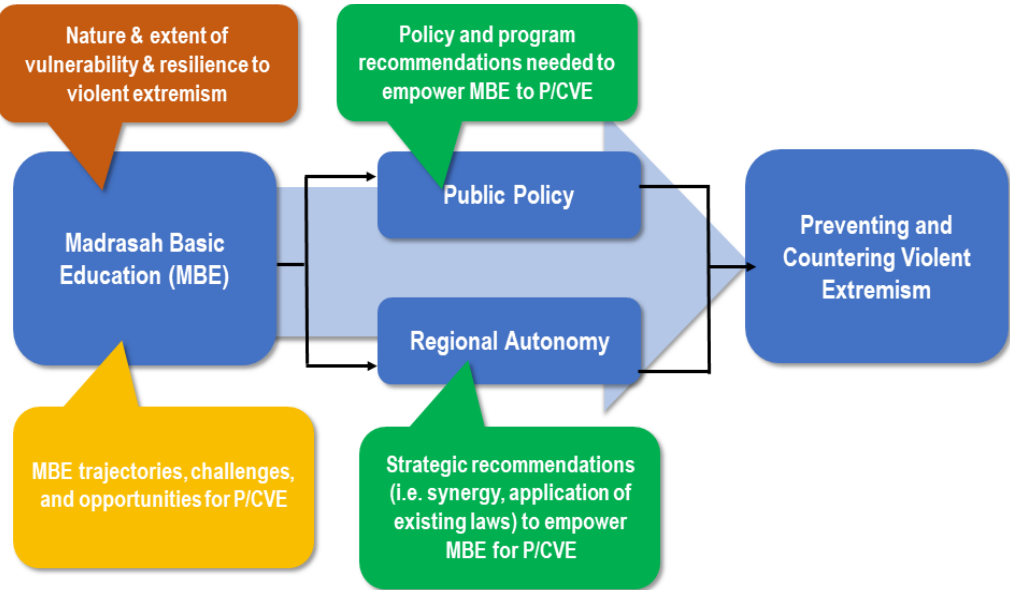
**Trajectory according to national-regional synergy.** This reflects the level of synergy, complementation, and flexibility in madrasah policy development, programming and implementation between the concerned government agencies at the national and regional levels.

Scenario	Definition
Scenario 1 – high level of synergy and complementation	BARMM and national DepEd working together; the same programs implemented
Scenario 2 – high synergy with flexibility	BARMM and national DepEd working together on the common program, with BARMM offering an additional program – public madrasah
Scenario 3 – low synergy, but with high complementation	BARMM and national DepEd going separate ways; the same programs implemented
Scenario 4 – low synergy and complementation	BARMM and national DepEd going separate ways with BARMM offering an additional program – public madrasah

Conceptual Framework

The various concepts utilized in this study and how they inter-relate with each other are presented in the framework below. By situating and analyzing the data within this framework, strategic recommendations designed to empower the Madaris can be drawn up to actively involve them in preventing and countering violent extremism.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



## Definition of Terms

**Madrasah basic education.** A comprehensive program in public and private schools that aims to provide appropriate and relevant educational opportunities within the context of Muslim culture, customs, traditions and interests through the integration of Islamic Studies and the Arabic Language (ISAL).

**Vulnerability to VE.** Refers to a set of risks facing Madaris due to the schools' proximity to conflict zones, geographical isolation, disadvantaged status and history of neglect and displacement, conditions that could allow them to be threatened or targeted by VE groups. Other risks include lack of regulatory oversight, isolation from broader society, and socio-political and economic factors.

**Resiliency to VE.** Refers to the inherent strengths of Madaris in preventing, countering and overcoming the propagation, recruitment and influence of VE groups. This includes having a balanced and contextualized curriculum; trained teachers with the capacity to provide emotional, social and religious support to students at risk of radicalization; engagement with the wider community; monitoring and early intervention; and collaboration and partnership.

**Trajectories.** Nature, influence and extent of madrasah programs and their implementation and direction in the BARMM and the Philippines.

**Public Policy.** The outcome of studying problems and creating solutions that can improve society, and underlined by the idea that the government could, by making policies, solve the problems of the people.

**Regional Autonomy.** Decentralization of governance to outlying regions, especially in areas where the local population is ethnically different and a minority at a national level. In this way, autonomy is self-governance and allowing the local population to address their issues at the level they are created and unique to their own geographic and cultural contexts.

**Preventing and countering violent extremism.** Refers to the national program of the Philippines mandating key stakeholders to build the capacity of beneficiaries and partners to become more resilient to violent extremism and reduce the threat of terrorism.

## CHAPTER 2: Review of Related Literature

Madrasah education is the traditional school system in the Muslim and/or Moro communities. Its twin mission is (1) to produce practicing Muslims, and (2) to prepare the next generation of religious leaders (ulama)<sup>8</sup>. While becoming a practicing Muslim does not require higher religious education, those intending to become religious professionals must attend and complete the kulliyah (college) degree in religious studies.

Many contexts must be considered to fully comprehend the madrasah system in a particular region and why it may be different to the system in another jurisdiction. Seeing madrasah education through three prisms helps contextualize the differences and similarities in approaches, curriculums and other factors.

### First Prism: Muslim-Majority and Muslim-Minority

Seen through the prism of whether a jurisdiction is Muslim-majority or Muslim-minority, madrasah education can be described as the mainstream or a component of the mainstream, as open to all genders or just to boys, and other characteristics.

- In Muslim-majority countries<sup>9</sup> like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Afghanistan, where Islam is the state religion<sup>10</sup>, the madrasah is the mainstream education system<sup>11</sup>. While Saudi Arabia and Iran allow boys and girls to study in segregated schools<sup>12</sup>, the situation in Afghanistan is quite different because only boys are allowed to attend school. Girls study and stay at home<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Institute for Autonomy and Governance (2001). "Research on Traditional Madaris in the ARMM and Adjacent Regions." - [https://www.iag.org.ph/images/pdf/Research\\_on\\_Traditional\\_Madaris\\_in\\_ARMM\\_and\\_Adjacent\\_Regions.pdf](https://www.iag.org.ph/images/pdf/Research_on_Traditional_Madaris_in_ARMM_and_Adjacent_Regions.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> The Pew Research Center (2011) defines "Muslim-majority countries" as those with countries with Muslims comprising more than 50% of the population. "As of 2010, there are 49 countries in which Muslims comprise more than 50% of the population." - <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-muslim-majority/>

<sup>10</sup> According to the Pew Research Center (2017), "more than 80 countries favor a specific religion, either as an official, government-endorsed religion or by affording one religion preferential treatment over other faiths" and "Islam is the most common government-endorsed faith, with 27 countries (including most in the Middle East-North Africa region) officially enshrining Islam as their state religion." - <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/10/03/many-countries-favor-specific-religions-officially-or-unofficially/>

<sup>11</sup> Saudi Embassy - Washington DC. "Education" - <https://www.saudiembassy.net/education#:~:text=General%20education%20in%20the%20Kingdom,sciences%2C%20or%20a%20vocational%20school.>

<sup>12</sup> Shabnam Moinpour (2022). "Iran's Educational System and the Institutionalization of Gender Inequality" - <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2022/04/04/irans-educational-system-and-the-institutionalization-of-gender-inequality/>

<sup>13</sup> Leila Fadel et al (2021). "Some schools in Afghanistan are back, but only for boys. Girls have been told to wait" - <https://www.npr.org/2021/09/22/1039800029/some-schools-in-afghanistan-are-back-but-only-for-boys-girls-have-been-told-to-w>

- In Muslim-majority countries like Malaysia (where Islam is a state religion)<sup>14</sup> and Indonesia (a secular state)<sup>15</sup>, the madrasah is a component of the mainstream education system<sup>16</sup>. Public Madaris are entirely managed by the government, but non-government entities such as religious organizations can operate a private madrasah. In Indonesia, "private [Madaris] are typically organized by local religious foundations (yayasan) often associated with one of the two largest Muslim organizations—Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah."<sup>17</sup>

- In Muslim-minority countries like Singapore (where Muslim Malays are an indigenous population) and Australia (where Muslims are part of the immigrant population), a madrasah is a private sectarian school regulated by the government and required to follow a government-prescribed curriculum, while allowed some leeway in offering religious subjects or providing religious instruction. In the case of Singapore, "all the [Madaris] come under the Education Act. Under sections 87 and 88 of the Administration of Muslim Law Act, the control of Muslim Religious Schools shall be vested in MUIS [Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura]."<sup>18</sup> Islamic schools in Australia apply for government permits to operate as sectarian schools and receive government funding to implement the state curriculum. In 2018, Malek Fahd Islamic School in New South Wales Australia's largest Islamic school, secured government funding to the tune of A\$19 million<sup>19</sup>. On the other hand, the Islamic School of Canberra was stripped of federal funding over concerns about its independence, governance and financial management.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> "Islam, Malaysia's official religion, is followed by about three-fifths of the population. Islam is one of the most important factors distinguishing a Malay from a non-Malay, and, by law, all Malays are Muslim". In Britannica. "Religion of Malaysia". - <https://www.britannica.com/place/Malaysia/Religion>

<sup>15</sup> "Indonesia is a secular democratic country that has a Muslim-majority population. The Indonesian constitution guarantees all people in Indonesia the freedom of worship, each according to his or her own religion or belief. It also stipulates that the state shall be based upon the belief in "the one and only God" (a condition which also forms the first principle of the Pancasila, the Indonesian state philosophy introduced by Soekarno in 1945)." In "Religion in Indonesia" - <https://www.indonesia-investments.com/culture/religion/item69#:~:text=Indonesia%20is%20a%20secular%20democratic,her%20own%20religion%20or%20belief>

<sup>16</sup> "The education system in Indonesia has two main sub-systems, one under the management of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), and madrasah education and religious education under the management of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA)." 18% of the 233,517 schools in Indonesia are Madaris, and 13% of the 49,402,000 student enrollees are madrasah students. ". Indonesian laws and regulations require state schools and madrasah to be treated equally. Moreover, madrasah teach the same national curriculum in addition to Islamic religious subjects regulated by MoRA". - Asian Development Bank (2013). "Madrasah Education Financing in Indonesia" - <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/176611/ino-madrasah-education-financing.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Asian Development Bank (2013). "Madrasah Education Financing in Indonesia" - <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/176611/ino-madrasah-education-financing.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS). "Key facts about our full-time madrasahs" - <https://www.muis.gov.sg/madrasah/About/Key-Facts-About-Our-Full-Time-Madrasahs>

<sup>19</sup> Stephen Johnson (2018). "Australia's largest Muslim school secures \$19million in government funding – two years after Federation of Islamic Councils was caught running the institution for a profit" - <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6150089/Australias-largest-Muslim-school-Malek-Fahd-19-million-funding-restored-new-minister.html>

<sup>20</sup> "Islamic School of Canberra loses federal funding after failing to meet standards" - <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/apr/21/islamic-school-of-canberra-loses-federal-funding-after-failing-to-meet-standards>

## Second Prism: Regional Autonomy

Madrasah education can also be seen through the prism of the degree of political autonomy provided to an indigenous Muslim population, such as the Bangsamoro in the southern Philippines. In this political arrangement, the regional government enjoys a degree of autonomy over its education system and recognition of its traditional madrasah system. Given this degree of autonomy, the relationship of the national and regional education agencies, vis-à-vis the madrasah system, can be described as follows:

- ***National and regional education agencies working together and implementing the same set of programs.*** This is the situation between the national Department of Education and DepEd-ARMM, until ARMM's dissolution in 2019 to make way for the BARMM.

- ***National and regional education agencies working together but with the regional education agency having some leeway in offering additional programs.*** In the run-up to ARMM's dissolution, its Bureau of Madrasah Education was developing a standardized curriculum for traditional madrasah. The curriculum development was completed up to thanawiyyah (upper high school level) and was endorsed by the Regional Peace and Order Council (RPOC) as an antidote to violent extremism. , this was not fully implemented.

- ***National and regional education agencies going their separate ways, but both still offering similar programs.*** This has been the situation between the national Department of Education and the regional Minister of Basic, Higher and Technical Education (MBHTE) in the three years since the establishment of the BARMM in 2019.

- ***National and regional education agencies going their separate ways and offering their own programs.*** This now appears to be the emergent situation, with MBHTE offering an expanded curriculum (six subjects) in public schools (now called ISAL in public schools) and working to implement a provision in the Bangsamoro Education Code establishing public Madaris owned and operated by MBHTE.

## Third Prism: Public Policy Accommodation

Madrasah education can also be looked at through the prism of public policy accommodation towards the end of creating opportunities and accommodating the different types of traditional Madaris in the Bangsamoro and other Muslim communities.

- ***ALIVE in public schools in Moro/Muslim communities outside BARMM.*** Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) in public schools started in 2005 and is currently offered in all regions outside of the BARMM. The bulk of its enrollees are in Mindanao (Regions IX, X, XI, XII and XIII) followed by those in Luzon, mainly in Region IV-B (MIMAROPA), National Capital Region (NCR), Region IV-A (CALABARZON) and Region III (Central Luzon).

- ***ISAL in public schools in BARMM.*** With the establishment of BARMM in 2019, the adoption of the Bangsamoro Administrative Code (BA Act 13) in 2020, and the Bangsamoro Education Code (BA Act 1) in 2021, the ARMM Bureau of Madrasah Education (BME) became the Directorate-General for Madrasah Education (DGME). The renamed agency spearheaded the implementation of the Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (ISAL) program in public schools, which is billed as different from the ALIVE program. An additional 2,374 new teachers or *asatidz* have been hired in the Bangsamoro region as of the end of 2021<sup>21</sup>. Under a contract of service agreement, each ISAL teacher is paid Php16,200 monthly<sup>22</sup>.

- ***Integrated madrasah in BARMM.*** In the past, integrated Madaris in ARMM received their permit to operate from the ARMM Bureau of Madrasah Education, enabling them to apply for financial subsidy from the DepEd Central Office. Now under BARMM, integrated Madaris both receive their permit and apply for subsidy from DGME of MBHTE-BARMM.

- ***Integrated madrasah in Moro/Muslim communities outside BARMM.*** Integrated Madaris outside of the BARMM region remain operational under the previous set-up of applying for a permit from the BARMM regional office and seeking subsidy from the DepEd Central Office. The latest guidelines for integrated Madaris seeking financial subsidy are contained in DepEd Order 049, series 2021<sup>23</sup>.

- ***Unregulated and independent traditional madrasah both in BARMM and outside.*** Most Madaris in the Philippines are the traditional, largely weekend schools spread out across Muslim communities. While the bulk of traditional Madaris are in BARMM, they are also found in Luzon and the Visayas. In IAG's Research

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21 - Julmunir I. Jannaral (2021). "BARMM MBHTE hires teachers for Arabic and Islamic studies" - <https://www.manilatimes.net/2021/11/01/news/regions/barmm-mbhte-hires-teachers-for-arabic-and-islamic-studies/1820511>

22 - "Renewal of Contract of Service and Orientation for Islamic Studies and Arabic Language (ISAL) Teachers in the province of Lanao, including Marawi City." - <https://mbhte-meiso.bangsamoro.gov.ph/2021/06/09/%F0%9D%90%91%F0%9D%90%9E%F0%9D%90%A7%F0%9D%90%9E%F0%9D%90%B0%F0%9D%90%A5%F0%9D%90%A8%F0%9D%90%9F%F0%9D%90%82%F0%9D%90%A8%F0%9D%90%A7%F0%9D%90%AD%F0%9D%90%AB%F0%9D%90%9A%F0%9D%90%9C-2/>

23 - DepEd Order 049, series 2021. "Revised Guidelines on the Grant of Financial Assistance to Private Madaris Adopting the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum" - <https://www.deped.gov.ph/2021/11/22/november-22-2021-do-049-s-2021-revised-guidelines-on-the-grant-of-financial-assistance-to-private-Madaris-adopting-the-k-to-12-basic-education-curriculum/>



on Traditional Madaris in the ARMM and Adjacent Regions (2001), a total of 1,850 Madaris were covered, 83% in BARMM and 17% outside of BARMM.

Within BARMM, Maguindanao has the largest number with 643 Madaris (34.8%), followed by Lanao del Sur with 444 Madaris (24%), plus 45 in Marawi City. Among the island provinces, Basilan has the highest number with 112 Madaris (11%), followed by Sulu with 138 Madaris and Tawi-Tawi with 61 Madaris. Outside of BARMM, Cotabato Province has the highest with 112 Madaris.

More than 66% (1,228) of all Madaris were established between 1994 and 2017, 29.30% (542) were established between 1936 and 1993, and 3.95% (73) were established between 1942 and 1967. The seven oldest Madaris in operations were established between 1915 and 1941.

There are more female students in these Madaris. In terms of madrasah personnel, there are more female personnel in Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte and Marawi. In the rest of the covered areas, there are more male personnel. Madrasah heads are overwhelming male.

The bulk of overseas-trained teachers in these Madaris are highest in Maguindanao (340), Lanao del Sur (253), Basilan (121), Sulu (74) and Marawi City (59).

Finally, it is interesting to note that in terms of their vision for traditional Madaris, madrasah leaders (84.6%) overwhelmingly favor traditional Madaris offering back-to-back curricula (secular and Islamic) and supported by government subsidies. In the same vein, 71% of them advocate for Madaris and public schools operating as an integrated system.

- Public madrasah authorized in the Basic Education Code. The concept of a public madrasah in BARMM originated from the state madrasah institutionalized in Malaysia and those managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) in Indonesia. In BARMM, the idea gained momentum from Part VII of the Bangsamoro Autonomy Act 18 (Bangsamoro Education Act), which specifies the public madrasah's levels (Section 91), curriculum structure and content standards (Section 92), integration of basic education (Section 93), special learners (Section 94), medium of instruction for basic education (Section 95), and monitoring and evaluation (Section 96).



There are also provisions on assessment standards (Sections 97 to 102), madrasah teacher concerns (Sections 103 to 109), textbook and learning resources (Sections 110 to 111), infrastructure (Section 112), management (Sections 113 to 115), private madrasah financing (Sections 116 to 118), and quality assurance (Sections 119 to 121)<sup>24</sup>.

## The Madrasah and Violent Extremism

In the 1970s, the madrasah was in the spotlight for supporting secessionist movements. According to Giora Eliraz, an affiliate Instructor at the University of Washington's Jackson School of International Studies, the Islamic separatist aspiration in southern Philippines and Thailand was deeply grounded in the local context, among others, of yearning for the Islamic golden age of the sultanate era, nourished by the sense of living as Muslims in their own "Dar al Islam" (Abode of Islam) homeland and refusal to submit to a rule of the kuffar (infidels)<sup>25</sup> and instead insisting on own self-rule. It is a world view that is quite different from the Islamic radicalism in the Middle East, even though the Middle East's strong and natural affiliation with the center of the Islamic World may have paved the way for its brand of Islamic radicalism to infiltrate the radical fundamentalist ideology, beliefs and spirit of Southeast Asia<sup>26</sup>.

The spotlight on Madaris in 21st-century discourse<sup>27</sup> intensified after the September 11, 2001 Al Qaeda attack against the United States,<sup>28</sup> with "Islamic educational institutions like [Madaris] coming under intense international scrutiny, being variously accused [of] perpetuating and nurturing 'anti-Western' attitudes among the people, leading to radicalism in Muslim lands."<sup>29</sup> Based on overseas experiences in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indonesia, several Madaris have been identified as having connections with VE leaders and groups:

In a special report,<sup>30</sup> Reza Fazli et al (2015) point out that youth recruitment into extremist groups in Afghanistan is diverse, with rural and urban demographics being targeted differently. Rural, less educated individuals have traditionally been the primary targets for recruitment of violent extremist groups like the Taliban. Urban, educated individuals, are

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<sup>24</sup> Bangsamoro Autonomy Act 18 (Bangsamoro Education Act) - file:///D:/2023.%20IAG%20Research%20-%20Madrasah%20Policy/BA-Act-No.18-Bangsamoro-Education-Code.pdf

<sup>25</sup> Giora Eliraz (2009). "Radical Islam in the Middle East and Southeast Asia: A Comparison" in - [https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/090623\\_deBorchgrave\\_Conflict\\_Web.pdf](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/090623_deBorchgrave_Conflict_Web.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Mohamad Waseem Malla. (2021). "Madrasahs and Extremism: South Asian Perspectives". In book: Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives (pp.1-18) Publisher: Springer - [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348741064\\_Madrasahs\\_and\\_Extremism\\_South\\_Asian\\_Perspectives](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348741064_Madrasahs_and_Extremism_South_Asian_Perspectives)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Reza Fazli, Casey Johnson, and Peyton Cooke (2015). "Understanding and Countering Violent Extremism in Afghanistan". USIP Special Report 379, September 2015 - <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR379-Understanding-and-Countering-Violent-Extremism-in-Afghanistan.pdf>

more susceptible to recruitment by non-violent extremist groups. The sites of radicalization and recruitment mentioned in the report include Madaris mosques, universities, and prisons. A single charismatic mullah, just over thirty years old, was repeatedly mentioned as the principal source of radicalization in one province. His mosque attracts the largest Friday sermon crowds in part because he is a powerful orator. Interviewees said that the madrasah network operated by this individual had a powerful reach among the youth.

One important lesson is that “the concept of CVE was misunderstood in the Afghan context, and labels such as ‘extremist’ or ‘violent extremist’ risk creating a backlash, warns Middle East scholar Nishank Motwani.<sup>31</sup> Further, “the notion and terminology of extremism and violent extremism are problematic in the Afghan context due to the historical baggage that accompanies [them]. Interviewees noted that violent extremism is an alien term, lacked clarity, risked creating sweeping categorizations of individuals and organizations, and that its use may backfire against moderate forces or international actors, particularly if the terms are seen as attacking Islam.”

The problem of violent extremism in Pakistan is illustrated in the hearing of the US House Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Relations in 2007, and in how the US “has not moved sufficiently beyond security assistance to include significant funding for education efforts.” This is further aggravated by the poor state of public education manned by “untrained, unmotivated, and absenteeism-plagued teachers have led to the phenomenon of the so-called “ghost schools,” where a building sits idle and filled with students chaperoned by minders instead of educators.”

“This void and, in some instances, financial hardship has led some families to send their children to one of the 12,000 tuition-free [Madaris] in Pakistan,” the sub-committee report continues. “Most of these [Madaris] teach the fundamental tenets of Islam, but in many cases, they lack a curriculum for science, math, and English.” The sub-committee concluded that “a minority of these [Madaris] are indoctrinating students ... This is the life cycle of the terrorists. The first step is indoctrination. The next step is graduation to terror training camps, many of which have connections with Al Qaeda or Taliban...”<sup>32</sup>

According to a report by Scott N. McKay and David A. Webb (2015),

<sup>31</sup> Nishank Motwani (2022). “How Afghanistan's Overthrown Governing Elites Viewed the Violent Extremism Challenge”. CTC Sentinel. August 2022, Volume 15, Issue 8. - <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/how-afghanistans-overthrown-governing-elites-viewed-the-violent-extremism-challenge/>

<sup>32</sup> US House Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Relations (2007). “Extremist madrassas, ghost schools, and US Aid to Pakistan: are we making the grade on the 9/11 Commission report card?” - <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-110hhrg37093/html/CHRG-110hhrg37093.htm>  
US House Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Relations (2007). “Extremist madrassas, ghost schools, and US Aid to Pakistan: are we making the grade on the 9/11 Commission report card?” - <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-110hhrg37093/html/CHRG-110hhrg37093.htm>

“following 9/11, linkages between Al Qaeda and Southeast Asia emerged” – especially in Indonesia and the Philippines. The Bali bombings on October 12, 2002 are considered the region's counterpart to 9/11. Three types of terrorist groups exist in Southeast Asia, said the report: global, regional and national, and there is interconnection among them, sharing leaders, members, tactics and objectives<sup>33</sup>.

The potential sources of vulnerability to violent extremism in Indonesia can be summarized as follows:

- Critique of Democracy: The report cites the opinions of most focus-group participants that were critical of the quality of Indonesia's democracy, often citing elitism, the importance of money interests, and growing intolerance. Participants from Islamic political parties were particularly disillusioned with democratic outcomes.
- Government Performance Concerns: Most participants were critical of the Indonesian government's performance on specific issues, including corruption, insecurity, economic hardship, and its defense of free expression. However, members of the nationalist parties, which control the government, were less critical of the government and its overall representation of constituents and ability to address the country's primary challenges.
- Inaccessibility of Local Government: Most participants find local government inaccessible, with many saying social media and street protests are more effective forums for expressing grievances.
- Religious Justification: Many participants cited Islam as a justification for their opposition to minorities and the prospect of women being elected president.
- Government's Islamic Orientation: Participants were closely divided on whether the government should be more Islamic, with proponents often citing Islam's orientation toward justice and morality.

The focus group discussions also shed light on potential sources of resilience to violent extremism in Indonesia.

- Common Understanding of Democracy: Most participants across the focus groups shared a common definition of democracy and

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<sup>33</sup> Scott N. McKay and David A. Webb. “Comparing Counterterrorism in Indonesia and the Philippines”. In CTC Sentinel, Volume 8, Issue 2, February 2015. - <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CTCSentinel-Vol8Issue28.pdf>

had positive associations with the nation's founder, Sukarno, and his ideology, Pancasila.

- Opposition to Violence: Most participants were opposed to violence in all cases and associated the Islamic State (ISIS) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) with negative characteristics. However, a small group of participants believed violence can be justified when defending Islam or a political position.
- Negative Views on Extremism Drivers: Most participants described the drivers of violent extremism in negative terms, often citing lack of education and opportunity as push factors.
- Support for Minority Religious Groups: Participants from religious conservative parties, Islamic organizations and university groups expressed some support for minority religious groups, despite opposing other inclusive policies and political behavior.

The common understanding of democracy, a general aversion to violence, and negative perceptions of extremism drivers are potential sources of resilience to violent extremism. Additionally, there were nuances in the attitudes of different participant groups, with some showing unexpected support for minority religious groups<sup>34</sup>.

The relationship of the Indonesian madrasah vis-à-vis violent extremism can be viewed in two ways. Firstly, violent extremism, while not widespread, persists and indicates the potential for terrorist ideology to thrive. Certain Islamic educational institutions actively promote Islamism, and students are exposed to this violent ideology. This situation underscores the need for the government to closely monitor curriculum and instructors, especially within Islamic educational institutions.

Secondly, the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, notably Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, play a crucial role in supporting government efforts to combat extremism and terrorism. They oversee a vast network of religious schools and institutions, which are vital in countering radical ideologies. These organizations are instrumental in the government's counterterrorism and law enforcement initiatives<sup>35</sup>.

Malaysia's context in the realm of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) differs from that of Indonesia and the Philippines. The unique aspect of Malaysia's situation lies in the danger posed by the Islamic

<sup>34</sup> International Republican Institute. (2018). "Violent Extremism in Indonesia: Radicalism, Intolerance and Elections". - [https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2018-5-17\\_indonesia\\_vea\\_report.pdf](https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2018-5-17_indonesia_vea_report.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Jamhari Jamhari and Testriono Testriono. (2021). "The Roots of Indonesia's Resilience Against Violent Extremism." *Studia Islamika*. Volume 28, Number 3 (2021) . - <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/studia-islamika/article/view/23956>

State's influence, which can radicalize individuals, both men and women, even without formal affiliation. In contrast to Indonesia and the Philippines, Malaysia has succeeded in preventing attacks, but the allure of the Islamic State's ideology among Malaysian Muslims remains a concern.

To tackle this issue, Malaysia should prioritize the development of resilience against violent extremism by addressing social and political divisions that may have contributed to the growth of the Islamic State's influence. One proposed strategy involves using the term "Daesh" to disconnect extremism from religion. Ultimately, nurturing resilience in Malaysia's multicultural society is closely linked to the strength of its social cohesion, integration among various ethnic groups, and responsive leadership at all levels.<sup>36</sup>

### **The Role of the Madrasah and Ulama in P/CVE**

In the National Action Plan for P/CVE in the Philippines, the identified vulnerable groups to the process of radicalization and violent extremism and terrorism include religious leaders, learning institutions (schools, colleges, universities and Madaris), and students sent abroad for religious studies<sup>37</sup>.

To reduce vulnerabilities of learning institutions, the NAP P/CVE prioritizes strategies that include addressing the following factors:

1. Discrimination, alienation, bullying, historical injustice, dysfunctional family, or marginalization;
2. Inadequate capability of teachers, guidance counselors, school administrators and parents to identify early signs of radicalization among students;
3. Non-inclusive madrasah curricula, including the ALIVE curriculum in DepEd.

To reduce vulnerabilities among religious leaders, the NAP P/CVE prioritizes addressing the exposure to teachings that espouse radicalism and intolerance to the different schools of thought. In short, NAP P/CVE as a public policy in the Philippines is geared towards promoting a balanced and moderate approach to madrasah education, and in countering extremist influences.

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<sup>36</sup> Amira Jadoon et al (2022). "Risks, Recruits, and Plots: Understanding and Mitigating the Influence of the Islamic State in Malaysia". Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point. <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Risks-Recruits-and-Plots.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Guidance on Implementing Gender Provisions in the National Action Plan for P/CVE in the Philippines - [https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAAsia/Docs/Publications/2019/07/ap-BLS19221\\_Action-Plan\\_004\\_web.pdf](https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAAsia/Docs/Publications/2019/07/ap-BLS19221_Action-Plan_004_web.pdf)

## Madrasah and Regional Autonomy

Regional autonomy can take various forms and be implemented in different ways, depending on the political, social and economic context of a particular country or region. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines regional autonomy as delegating political, administrative and fiscal power from the central government to subnational bodies, either elected or appointed. These subnational entities have the authority to govern certain aspects of their community and receive a portion of resources to fulfill these responsibilities. The primary goal of regional autonomy is to stimulate local development and enhance the ability of subnational governments to address the specific needs and desires of their residents.<sup>38</sup>

Regional autonomy is also a public policy concept that involves granting a degree of self-governance and decision-making authority to regions or subnational entities within a country. This policy is typically implemented to address various objectives, such as promoting local development, preserving cultural diversity, and managing specific regional issues. In the case of BARMM, this includes addressing historical injustices and recognizing the Moro's right to self-rule.

As a policy concept, regional autonomy has frequently been regarded as a potent institutional framework for delivering local public services with efficiency and effectiveness, especially when dealing with diverse population characteristics.<sup>39</sup> In Indonesia, the intersection of madrasah education and autonomy is premised on the internal and external contexts of the former. Madrasah education in Indonesia has been criticized for supposedly having a shaky foundation, unclear objectives, a curriculum that lacks relevance, and a shortage of qualified teachers. Madrasah graduates are said to often lack creativity, leading to high levels of unemployment, as they tend to gravitate towards civil service jobs with limited vacancies.

External factors also contribute to the difficulties faced by madrasah education in Indonesia. First, there is a significant disparity in government funding for Islamic education compared to non-Islamic educational institutions. The allocation of resources for Islamic education is notably lower, creating disparities in resources and opportunities. Second, the bureaucratic approach to Islamic education predominantly follows a sectoral framework rather than a functional one. As a result, Islamic education often falls outside the purview of the Education and Culture

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<sup>38</sup> United Nations Development Programme. (1998). Governance for sustainable human development: A UNDP policy document. Retrieved from <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/democratic-governance/democratic-governance-publications/Governance%20for%20Sustainable%20Human%20Development.pdf>  
<sup>39</sup> <https://brill.com/display/book/edcoll/9789004394612/BP000006.xml?language=en>

Department, hindering its integration into the broader education sector.

Third, many young individuals turn to Islamic education institutions as a last resort when they are unable to secure admission to non-Islamic educational institutions. This underscores the prevailing societal bias and limited opportunities for individuals seeking education outside the mainstream system.<sup>40</sup>

The question of whether madrasah education should be government-managed or stay autonomous has been explored by Hilman Latief et al. (2021).<sup>41</sup> In their paper, they note that private Islamic schools are in financial trouble and it is challenging to predict how they will manage their institutions and maintain their traditions. This difficulty is amplified in a country like Malaysia, where politics and Islam are deeply intertwined, such as they are in Kelantan state. But while Islam has strong influence, not all Islamic schools can sustain their institutions and legacies easily. In Malaysia, the government's options may boil down to offering limited support to these schools or transforming them into publicly funded institutions.

Integration and/or recognition of the madrasah system is also a divide between *kaum tua* (old thinking) of staying as they are and *kaum muda* (new thinking) of modernizing the madrasah system and moving towards state sponsorship. This was the initial pattern in Aceh and as found out by Eka Srimulyani (2013) in her paper "Islamic Schooling in Aceh: Change, Reform, and Local Context", educational change and reform are closely intertwined with external factors like government policies and local socio-political shifts, highlighting their interconnectedness<sup>42</sup>.

Under the Special Autonomy for the Province of Aceh Special Region (Law No. 18 of 2001), the administration of Ibtidaiyah (elementary) and tsanawiyah (secondary) Madaris have been transferred to the local government units (city/district) of Aceh subject to the national education standards. The national government committed to the delivery of infrastructures, funding, personnel, and documents relating to madrasah education from the government to the district/city government in Aceh at the latest at the beginning of the budget year of 2008.

In the southern Philippines, the responsibility for education and

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40 Dahlena Sari Marbun. (2013). "Regional Autonomy and Its Impact On Madrasah Education". 3 rd Annual International Conference Syiah Kuala University (AIC Unsyiah) 2013 In conjunction with The 2nd International Conference on Multidisciplinary Research (ICMR) 2013 October 2-4, 2013, Banda Aceh, Indonesia. - file:///C:/Users/ACER/Downloads/5978-12330-1-SM.pdf

41 Hilman Latief et al (2021) in their paper entitled, "Becoming the state-funded madrasah or retaining autonomy: The case of two madrasahs in Kelantan", Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies (QIJS) Volume 9, Number 1, 2021 (PP : 1-36). - <https://journal.iainkudus.ac.id/index.php/QIJS/article/download/7620/pdf>

42 Eka Srimulyani (2013). "Islamic Schooling in Aceh: Change, Reform, and Local Context". December 2013 *Studia Islamika* 20(3). - [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307718798\\_Islamic\\_Schooling\\_in\\_Aceh\\_Change\\_Reform\\_and\\_Local\\_Context](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307718798_Islamic_Schooling_in_Aceh_Change_Reform_and_Local_Context)



skills training has been delegated to the regional government according to Section 2(v) of Article V in the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL). Section 18 of Article IX focuses on the establishment and oversight of the madrasah system in the region, with support from the national government. The Civil Service Commission is expected to develop guidelines for the qualifications, appointments, and promotions of madrasah teachers.

The law also emphasizes the integration of Islamic and Arabic studies into the elementary and high school curricula of public schools for Muslim students. Lastly, it grants the regional parliament the authority to enact laws aimed at strengthening the madrasah educational system within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.<sup>43</sup>

Signed in 2021, the Bangsamoro Education Code made explicit the establishment, maintenance, and supervision of basic education in both the school system and madrasah system to meet learning needs and provide the foundation on which subsequent learning can be based (Section 8, Chapter 2. Policies, Principles, and Mandate). Additionally, madrasah education can now be delivered through formal and non-formal education systems. Tahfidz Al-Quran Institutions are mentioned as part of the non-formal delivery (Section 49, Chapter 1. Learning Systems, IV. Bangsamoro Education System).

The Code also provides for the establishment of the Directorate-General for Madrasah Education (Section 50, Chapter 2. The Levels of Education) to manage the ISAL in public schools, integrated and traditional Madaris, as well as the emergent public madrasah system (VII. Public Madrasah System) envisioned as separate from and complementary to the public education system. Here is a case of madrasah education integrated into the education system and is offered alongside other programs by the regional government, as an exercise of its regional autonomy. The BEC grants authority to the regional education ministry to design and implement its own madrasah curriculum and to adapt it to fit the specific cultural context and needs of the region, towards a more culturally responsive and locally relevant education system.

In regions where madrasah education is primarily offered by private sectarian schools and is regulated by the national government, there may be fewer opportunities for regional autonomy. The schools may have limited autonomy in designing their programs and may be subject to national education standards and regulations, which may not always be well-suited to the specific needs and cultural context of the region.

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43 Bangsamoro Organic Law - [https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2018/ra\\_11054\\_2018.html](https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2018/ra_11054_2018.html)



## Madrasah and Public Policy

Philippine policy on madrasah education is set in DepEd Order 41, series 2017, Policy Guidelines on Madrasah Education in the K to 12 Basic Education Program.<sup>44</sup> The policy covers programs on (1) Kindergarten Madrasah, (2) ALIVE for Grades 1 to 6, (3) ALIVE in the Alternative Learning System (ALS), (4) Special Program in Foreign Language for Arabic, and (5) Program Support for Private Madaris.

In a 2018 policy review, stakeholders identified several challenges related to the Madrasah Education Program (MEP). These challenges include the need for technical and financial assistance, curriculum improvement, enhancing management competency, ensuring teacher qualifications, and revising policies. Despite improvements in the MEP program in both public and private Madaris over the years, these issues persist. The government has taken diplomatic initiatives to enhance and integrate the Madrasah Education Program, particularly in preparation for the implementation of the K to 12 curriculum. Finding a consensus or a well-suited solution that aligns with the community's needs is essential for establishing sustainable educational practices.<sup>45</sup>

Beyond education, the other dimensions of public policy on madrasah include:

- Social Development. Providing madrasah students with skills and knowledge that are relevant to their communities and cultures will help with their social development. Public policy can play a role in promoting the development of a madrasah curriculum that is responsive to the needs of students and communities, and in ensuring that madrasah graduates are prepared to contribute to society.
- Gender Equity. More girls than boys are enrolled and are teachers in the madrasah system while leadership positions are dominated by men. Public policy can play a role in promoting gender equity in madrasah education by ensuring that boys have equal access to education and out-of-school youth are supported to stay, and by promoting Islamic sensitive curriculum that promotes gender equity.
- Poverty Reduction. Often the traditional madrasah is the last educational resort for youth from poor socioeconomic

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<sup>44</sup> DepEd Order 41, series 2017 – Policy Guidelines on Madrasah Education in the K To 12 Basic Education Program - <https://www.deped.gov.ph/2017/08/11/do-41-s-2017-policy-guidelines-on-madrasah-education-in-the-k-to-12-basic-education-program/>

<sup>45</sup> Arlene Marasigan. (2019). "Sustainability Concerns of the Madrasah Education Program: Basis for Philippine Islamic and Madrasah Education Policy Review." UP CIDS Discussion Paper 2019-10. - <https://cids.up.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/UP-CIDS-Discussion-Paper-2019-10-1.pdf>

backgrounds. Public policy can provide financial assistance to low-income families and support madrasah development in isolated and marginalized communities.

- Language Policy: Madrasah education is often conducted in Arabic or other local languages that are not the primary language of instruction in the country. Public policy can play a role in promoting language policies that support bilingual or multilingual education and that ensure students have the skills they need to participate fully in society.

- Integration and Inclusion: Madrasah education has sometimes been criticized for promoting a separate and insular identity among Muslim students. The current policy accommodation in BARMM can be a stepping stone towards promoting integration and inclusion of Muslim students into the broader society, including efforts to promote cross-cultural understanding and address discrimination and bias.

- International Relations: Madrasah education has become a topic of international concern, particularly concerning the potential for extremist influences. Public policy can play a role in promoting international cooperation and dialogue on issues related to madrasah education, including efforts to promote a more moderate and inclusive approach. ASEAN, through the SEAMEO-INNOTECH, can create a technical working group to explore policy development, sharing and complementation of madrasah education.

Overall, the intersection of madrasah education, violent extremism, regional autonomy, and public policy revolves around the complex relationship between these elements. There is a range of policy issues related to madrasah education, and public policy can play an important role in shaping its development and impact in BARMM. This reality highlights the need for a comprehensive and well-coordinated approach.

Effective public policies should aim to enhance the quality of madrasah education while also addressing security concerns related to violent extremism. Regional autonomy provides an opportunity to develop context-specific strategies to strike a balance between preserving cultural and religious identity and promoting a peaceful and stable environment within BARMM. The success of BARMM can be a model for engagement about education in minority Muslim communities in ASEAN, such as those in Singapore, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Lao, Timor Leste and Vietnam.

## CHAPTER 3: Methodology

### Study Design

The study employed a descriptive research design, using mixed methods of data collection techniques as follows:

- (a) Key informant interviews (KIIs) with major stakeholders of madrasah education at national and regional levels
- (b) Focus group discussions (FGDs) composed of participants including the division coordinators of integrated madaris and ISAL, the president of the traditional madrasah, the association of integrated and traditional madaris, the ulama provincial council, LGU school board members, and community leaders
- (c) Survey of madrasah heads and senior teachers of (i) Integrated madrasah, and (ii) traditional madaris in rural and urban settings

The study also gathered secondary data to supplement the findings from the primary sources, such as:

- Desk review of records and relevant documents from the MBHTE Basic Education, and Madrasah Education Directorate office for policy and program documents. A checklist of data was prepared for this purpose.
- A review of related studies and literature that include topics on:
  - a. Nuancing madrasah education
  - b. Muslim majority and minority context
  - c. Education in a regional autonomy set-up
  - d. Madrasah education as reflection of public policy accommodation
  - e. Madrasah and regional autonomy
  - f. Madrasah and public policy
  - g. Intersection of madrasah education, violent extremism, regional autonomy and public policy

### Sampling Design

The study employed the following sampling design in identifying the madrasah where respondents were chosen and interviewed.

*For the survey.* A checklist of traditional madaris and integrated

madaris in the identified urban and rural study sites was obtained and used as sampling frame to derive the sample size. About 180 traditional and 35 integrated madaris were recorded. Systematic sampling with a random start was used to identify the sample size of 68 traditional Madaris and 31 integrated Madaris. A total of 198 respondents comprised of madrasah heads and senior teachers from these Madaris were included in the survey.

*For the KII.* The respondents were selected using a purposive sampling design. They were identified based on their knowledge of and experiences with madrasah education in the region. Seven key informants were interviewed, representing national and regional agencies. They include a Special Needs – Curriculum Learning/Special Education Supervisor, DepEd NCR Education Program Focal Person for Regional Madrasah Education Program Coordinator, a Former DepEd ARMM Madaris Undersecretary, the Director General for Basic Education, Director General for Madrasah Education, and the Commission for Muslim Filipinos Regional Director XII.

*For the FGDs.* A purposive sampling was used to identify a total of 44 participants for the FGDs. They are composed of division coordinators of integrated Madaris and ISAL programs, teachers, the president of a traditional madrasah, a provincial school board member, a representative of an association of traditional/integrated madaris, a representative from the Ulama Provincial Council, and selected community leaders from the five provinces.

## **The Instruments**

The instruments used in gathering the data for this study include (a) a key informant guide, (b) a focus discussion guide, and (c) a survey questionnaire. They were developed using the research objectives as a guide in the formulation of specific questions to generate the data responding to the main objectives of the study.

## **Data Gathering Procedures**

Five teams with three members from each of the five provinces were selected and trained on methods of data gathering using key informant interviews, focus group discussions and surveys of respondents. The training was held in Zamboanga City in May 2023. The interviewers were given orientation on the purpose of the study and how to identify the participants to the FGDs and respondents for the surveys.

The interviewers made a courtesy call with the local government officials of the study sites and discussed the purpose of the research. They also secured permission to ensure the safe conduct of interviews

and focus group discussions in the area.

The interviewers were reminded to inform the respondents about the importance of their participation in the study and asked to sign the consent form if they agreed to be interviewed.

The field data gathering started on July 15 and ended on August 30, 2023.

## **Data Processing, Treatment and Analysis**

The data from the surveys were processed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software to produce the frequency and percentages of the variables included in the study. The figures were presented in tables for ease of analysis and interpretation.

The qualitative data extracted from the KIIs and FGDs were processed using an analysis tool. The most frequent answers to the questions were collated and presented in themes. Those answers that are least mentioned but with significant implications for the study were also considered. The findings of the KIIs and FGDs were used to supplement and enhance the quantitative data generated from the surveys.

## **The Setting and Profile**

### **A. The Study Areas**

The study sites are selected rural municipalities and urban areas in the five provinces in the Bangsamoro region – Mamasapano and Cotabato City in Maguindanao del Norte, Butig and Marawi City in Lanao del Sur, Tipo-Tipo and Lamitan City in Basilan, Patikul/Indanan in Sulu, and Bongao in Tawi-Tawi. The Madaris in these study sites offered one or more of the following programs: Tadiiriyyah (kindergarten), Ibtidai (primary), intermediate (Idadi), Thanawi (secondary), or Kulliyah (college). Most parents enrolled their children in tadiiriyyah, ibtidai or Idadi for them to learn the basic Arabic language and Islamic education.

A brief description of the study sites is presented to provide context.

**Cotabato City.** A center of commerce for the provinces of Maguindanao del Norte and Maguindanao del Sur, the city serves as the seat of the BARMM government. Crops produced by neighboring municipalities are brought to the markets of Cotabato City, which banks, malls, hospitals, markets of wet and dry goods, higher educational institutions, and other facilities. The Muslim-majority city is host to 55

traditional Madaris and eight integrated Madaris. Located in Barangay Tamontaka, the Jamiat Cotabato offers programs for Muslim students who pursue Kuliyah or Majister.

**Mamasapano.** A fifth-class municipality that is part of the conflict-ridden SPMS Box<sup>46</sup>, the area's 14 barangays depend on the MILF-BIAF to provide security in coordination with local government units. Mamasapano's barangays are prone to flooding because most of the land is marshy and surrounded by small water tributaries. The inhabitants are all Muslims, many of them members of the MILF. According to local officials, extremist groups occupy the periphery areas of Mamapasano and are seen roaming around at night. Some 31 traditional Madaris and two integrated Madaris provide Muslim basic education.

**Marawi City.** Officially the Islamic City of Marawi, this fourth-class component city is the capital of Lanao del Sur province. It was attacked by violent extremists in 2017 and suffered a siege as fighters from ISIS-linked Maute and other groups hunkered in for five months until government troops managed to dislodge them. Six years on, the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Marawi is not yet complete and more than 1,000 people are still living in temporary shelters or with relatives outside the city. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, 60% of the population are considered poor<sup>47</sup>. Marawi City hosted eight registered traditional and seven integrated Madaris during the conduct of the survey in July-August 2023.

**Butig.** A landlocked municipality in the coastal province of Lanao del Sur, the sixth-class Butig is one of the poorest places in the country. It is home to the Maute group, which is a sympathizer of ISIS and Jemaah Islamiyah. The Maute group led the Marawi siege in 2017, intending to establish a caliphate in Southern Mindanao. At present, residents of Butig enjoy relative peace and order maintained by the Philippine military, but there are rumors that active VE recruitment of the youth is ongoing due to poverty. Basic education in Arabic language and Islam is provided by 21 traditional and three integrated Madaris in the municipality.

**Lamitan City.** This sixth-class component city is the capital of Basilan province. Three ethno-linguistic groups live in 45 barangays across the city – the Chavacanos, Yakans and Cebuanos. About 33 barangays are devoted to agriculture, producing crops such as coconut, rubber, coffee, corn and banana. Barangays in the coastal areas are in the fishing industry. Lamitan City has 12 traditional and three integrated Madaris that provide Arabic lessons and Islamic studies to Yakan and

<sup>46</sup> SPMS Box is a collective term referring to the contiguous towns of Shariff Aguak, Pagatin (now Datu Saudi Ampatuan), Mamasapano, and Shariff Saydona Mustapha in Maguindanao, which are vulnerable to armed conflicts.

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/travel-notebook-marawi-city>, July 23, 2018

other Muslim children and youth in the area.

**Tipo-Tipo.** This third-class coastal municipality in the province of Basilan is inhabited by Tausug and Yakan ethnic groups, who make up the majority of the population. Fishing is the main source of livelihood. The municipality remains underdeveloped due to the presence of armed groups. Two traditional and three integrated Madaris were reported to be teaching Arabic language and Islamic culture and values to Muslim children and youth.

**Jolo.** The municipality serves as the capital of Sulu. The economy of Jolo depends primarily on trade and commerce, mostly agricultural products. The Tausug people comprise the majority of the population. Jolo suffered a bombing attack by extremists in 2020, prompting the military to set up detachments to provide security for residents. Twenty-three traditional and one integrated Madaris were reported to be operating in Jolo during the survey period.

**Indanan.** This third-class municipality in the province of Sulu has both coastal and landlocked barangays. According to the 2020 census, it has a population of 93,168 people. About 85% of the household population identify as Tausug. Other ethnic groups include Sama and Badjao, who comprise the minority. Farming and fishing are the main sources of livelihood. Five traditional Madaris operate in the municipality, as reported in this survey.

**Patikul.** A coastal third-class Sulu municipality with a total population of 79,564 recorded in PSA 2020, representing 7.96% of the Sulu population. The majority of the households generate income from farming and fishing. In 2021, the municipality was a recipient of the program from the Department of Agriculture through the Special Area for Agricultural Development (SAAD) Program<sup>48</sup> for victims of VE groups in the area.

The municipality has one integrated madrasah, as reported in the survey.

**Tawi-Tawi.** The province is located in the southwestern Sulu archipelago, lying between the Celebes Sea (southeast) and the Sulu Sea (northwest). It is the farthest island province of BARMM, with 307 islands and islets. In 2020, the PSA recorded a total population of 440, 276. The majority of its population is composed of Tausug, Sama and Badjao. Tawi-Tawi is the leading producer of seaweed in the country. The main sources of income of the households are agriculture, fishing and seaweed farming.

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<sup>48</sup> SAAD was implemented to aid in the economic conditions of the marginalized or poorest households in the province through agricultural livelihood assistance to increase food production for consumption and livelihood.



Quite a number are engaged in the barter trade business. Copra is the top agricultural product, followed by root crops, fruits, and vegetables. The survey of Madaris was done in the Poblacion and the neighboring barangays of Bongao. A total of 23 traditional and three integrated madaris were reported in this survey.

## **B. The Respondents' Profile**

The main sources of data for this study were from the participants to the key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys of respondents from the sample Madaris. Respondents are briefly profiled in this section.

***The key informants.*** Seven key informants were interviewed, all males, who hold positions in education, Islamic or secular. Four of them work in agencies in Manila (two each from the UP Institute for Islamic Studies and Department of Education-NCR) and the rest in the Bangsamoro region, holding positions at the MBHTE-Basic Education, Madrasah Basic Education, and NCMF Regional Director in Region XII in Cotabato City.

***The FGD participants.*** A total of 44 individuals participated in the focus group discussions. A majority (79%) are males. By secular education, 35% had a college education, 20.7% had a master's degree, and 27.9% had a doctoral degree. Few were high school graduates or had not completed college, at 5% and 12%, respectively.

In terms of madrasah education, more than half completed a kulliyah education, equivalent to tertiary education. About 16.3% said that they had completed a majister (MA in Islamic studies). Those who completed an Ibtidai (primary) or Thanawi (secondary) Islamic education accounted for 5% and 9.3%, respectively. Only 11.6% reported that they had no madrasah basic education.

When asked about their position/designation, a good number mentioned being ISAL teachers (18.6%), employees in the government or private offices (16.3%), community leaders (14.0%), Madaris coordinators (9.3%), Division Chief/Supervisor (9.3%), or School Board Committee members (9.5%). Others held the position of school principal (4.7%), or head of Madrasah (4.7%). Others positions stated include Grand Imam, Indigenous People Mandatory Representative (IPMR) at the local government unit, LGU Board member and agency nurse.

About 65% of FGD participants were members of community organizations related to their field of study or expertise.

***The survey respondents.*** The respondents were heads and senior



teachers of traditional and integrated Madaris.

The mean age of the group was 43 years. Seven of ten were males while more than a fifth were females. A large number of male respondents were from Tawi-Tawi with 82.6%, followed by Basilan with 77.5%.

In terms of ethnic affiliation, the province of origin of the respondents showed the tribe composition of the majority – Maguindanaon (87.5%) in Maguindanao, Meranaw (100%) in Lanao del Sur, Yakan in Basilan with 97.5%, and Tausug in Sulu with 97.5%. Tausug and Sama comprised the largest number of respondents in Tawi-Tawi with 65.8% and 28.9% respectively.

The educational background of the respondents revealed that more than half (52%) had a college education. Basilan (80%) and Tawi-Tawi (71.1%) posted a high percentage of respondents with a college education.

The data on the Islamic education of the respondents disclosed that most of them had completed a *kulliyah* 71.7%. Sulu respondents posted a high of 92.5%, followed by Sulu (75.5%) and Maguindanao (72.5%).

**Table 1: Selected background of the respondents' by province**

Selected Variables/ Province	Maguindanao (N = 40)	Lanao del Sur (N=40)	Tawi- Tawi (N=38)	Basilan (N=40)	Sulu (N=40)	Total (N=198)
<b>Sex</b>						
% Male	70.0	75.0	81.6	77.5	60.0	72.7
% Female	30.0	25.0	18.4	22.5	40.0	27.3
Mean Age (in Years)	43	43	37	38	45	41
<b>Ethnic Affiliation</b>						
% Maguindanaon	87.5					17.7
% Meranaw		100.0			2.5	20.7
% Tausug			65.8	2.5	97.5	32.8
% Sama			28.9			5.6
% Yakan				97.5		19.7
% Iranon	12.5					2.5
% Bisaya			2.6			0.5
<b>Highest Educational Attainment</b>						
Secular						
% with elementary educ	45.0	7.5	5.3	0.0	5.0	12.6
% High school educ	17.5	42.5	5.3	5.0	42.5	22.7
% Voc tech	0.0	10.0	0.0	7.5	2.5	4.0
% with college educ	30.0	37.5	71.1	80.0	42.5	52.0
% with a Master's degree	5.0	2.5	15.8	0.0	5.0	7.1
<b>Islamic education</b>						
% Ibtidai	15.0	0.0	13.2	0.0	5.0	6.6
%Thanawi	5.0	25.0	26.3	7.5	17.5	16.2
% Kulliyah	72.5	67.5	50.0	92.5	75.5	71.7
% Majister	0.0	2.5	2.6	0.0	0.0	1.0
<b>Madrasah connected with</b>						
% Integrated Madrasah	35.0	40.0	21.1	32.5	7.5	27.3
% Traditional Madrasah	65.0	60.0	78.1	67.5	87.5	72.7
<b>Position in the Madrasah</b>						
% Head of Madrasah	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	47.5	50.0
% Senior Teacher	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	47.5	50.0

## CHAPTER 4: Findings

### A. Perceptions on Madrasah Sector

#### 1. Views About Madrasah in the BARMM

##### Madrasah Aspiration

In the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), there is a shared aspiration among key informants and focus group respondents to improve the state of madrasah education. A key respondent believes that the establishment of the Directorate-General on Madrasah Education (DGME) under the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE) in BARMM holds the promise of holistic development. This development includes curriculum enhancements to address learners' needs, the integration of peace concepts from Islamic teachings, capacity building for madrasah teachers and staff, and vital infrastructure development.

But a former madrasah official is concerned about the slow progress of madrasah education, despite the opportunities presented by the BARMM. He advocates for a shift towards integrated Madaris, with a curriculum equally divided between secular and Islamic subjects. This approach, he believes, can help combat extremist ideologies by instilling in young people beliefs in responsible citizenship, patriotism and universal values of peace.

##### BARMM Policy and Program Development

The creation of DGME in the BARMM is seen as a significant policy development because it aligns Madaris with mainstream education. The new post is of the same level as other directorate-generals within MBHTE, emphasizing the integration of Madaris into the regional education system. The recognition of madrasah education as a separate office is welcomed by key respondents in the region. Their hope is to see madrasah education coexisting alongside conventional basic education.

##### Curriculum and Learning Materials

One of the key aspirations is the revision of the madrasah curriculum to make it more comprehensive and responsive to the needs of learners. The integrated Madaris aim to balance subjects such as English, Science, Math, Filipino and Makabayan with Qu'ran, Hadith, Lughat Al-Arabiya, and Values Education. This 50-50 curriculum division is seen as

a way to offer a well-rounded education that encompasses both secular and Islamic knowledge.

### **Pedagogy and Classroom Management**

The focus is on creating teaching and learning strategies that foster a balanced education in Madaris. The goal is to ensure that they are organized and managed efficiently, which are the same objectives of formal schools. While some urban Madaris have taken initiatives to provide better compensation for teachers, rural Madaris struggle with limited resources and limited learning spaces.

### **Madrasah Management**

Traditional Madaris in BARMM faces various challenges, including insufficient financial support, inadequate infrastructure, and unstandardized curricula. Key interviewees, focus group discussants and survey respondents emphasize the need for better administrative support and supervision to ensure the efficient operation of Madaris.

### **Madrasah Infrastructure and Facilities**

Issues related to infrastructure and facilities are common across Madaris in BARMM. Many Madaris, particularly in rural areas, face challenges such as insufficient classrooms and inadequate resources. Urban Madaris have made efforts to address these issues, but the rural Madaris lag behind.

### **Finance and Resourcing**

Financial challenges are a common theme, with irregular and meager salaries for madrasah teachers being a prevalent concern. The financial support for Madaris varies across the region, with some areas receiving more attention than others. The lack of budget allocation and resources for traditional Madaris remains a significant issue.

### **Responding to Governance, Peace, and Security Challenges**

Madaris in BARMM have faced challenges related to allegations of involvement in violent extremism. While some military and police personnel have visited Madaris under suspicion, madrasah leaders and teachers have been working to ensure that their institutions do not promote violent extremism. The recognition and legal status of Madaris under the BARMM government are seen as positive developments, and there is hope for continued support and curriculum improvement to promote Islamic values and prevent violent extremism.

In essence, there is a collective aspiration in the BARMM to enhance madrasah education by addressing various challenges, improving curriculum, strengthening infrastructure, and ensuring financial support. The establishment of the DGME and its integration into the education system is seen as a significant step toward achieving these goals. The focus is on providing balanced education that combines secular and Islamic knowledge while promoting peace, tolerance and responsible citizenship.

## ***2. Practices and Issues: ISAL in Public Schools***

### **General Perceptions of ISAL in Public Schools**

One key informant, an associate professor in a leading university, mentioned a now defunct ARMM program known as ALIVE, which stood for Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education. The ALIVE program featured only two subjects: Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education, which encompassed important elements such as the Qur'an, Hadith and Seerah. In essence, this component of ALIVE was a blend of these important elements due to the relatively short amount of time allocated to the program. For instance, students had to cover three to four subjects within just one hour or 45 minutes. The result was a somewhat limited depth of knowledge imparted to learners.

In BARMM today, ALIVE has been replaced by a new program called ISAL (Islamic Studies and Arabic Language). The subjects of ISAL were sourced from the integrated madrasah system. A regional director of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos noted that more ISAL subjects are on offer compared to ALIVE because the basic education structure is already in place. Another key interviewee said the MBHTE's supervision of ISAL is helping improve the practices of teachers who handle ISAL classes. These temporary instructors are aware of the policy direction of the program, observed another DGME official, and are beginning to see a path to becoming regular Arabic teachers in the future. The ministry is currently examining a proposal to establish local eligibility for ISAL teachers to encourage job security for them.

### **Specific Perceptions of ISAL in Insular BARMM**

**Basilan.** A focus group participant in Basilan believes that madrasah education is indeed a plan and priority of the BARMM government. The region has several interventions for Madaris in the province, such as the ISAL program, he noted. There are asatidz deployed to public schools on contractual basis with a monthly salary of Php16,000. There is also the integrated or pilot madrasah program, where subsidies are provided if the

private institution complies with requirements such as getting a permit to operate.

The plan in Basilan includes allocating funds for infrastructure for madrasah buildings and providing salaries for all madrasah teachers, whether private, integrated or traditional, said the participant. There is also a plan to establish public Madaris owned and managed by the BARMM government. Textbooks and references are currently being developed at the regional level for distribution to all Madaris in BARMM, including Basilan.

Another Basilan discussant believes Madaris in BARMM are being strengthened. Madrasah education here is better compared with those in other regions – whereas ALIVE teachers in non-BARMM areas receive Php6,000 a month, ISAL teachers get almost three times that in monthly salary. A third discussant, a representative of the local Ulama Council and head of a madrasah, has noticed the expansion of Islamic Values and Arabic Language content standards in Basilan.

But Basilan FGD discussants point out that the competence levels of ISAL teachers vary. Many are not very proficient in creating lesson plans, in using the correct references and pedagogy, and in deploying communications and technology tools. Some ISAL teachers find it challenging to teach because they lack knowledge of classroom management and the use of appropriate teaching strategies for the five components of the ISAL program.

Another issue is pedagogy. New recruits require training to strengthen and enhance their teaching strategies. A unified curriculum is needed to meet international standards if this program continues to an advanced level, such as preparing learners to do a master's degree abroad as scholars. Unfortunately, there is as yet no clear curriculum or curriculum guide to serve as a reference for ISAL teachers, let alone a unified curriculum.

Time is also an issue. The time allotted for teaching the five learning areas of the ISAL program in public schools is deemed insufficient, according to Basilan FGD participants, in the same way that the public school teachers complain that they do not have enough time to cover all eight learning areas within the eight-hour school day.

Yet another issue identified by Basilan discussants is the unease of ISAL teachers over not being "regular permanent" employees. "Many of our asatidz desire to obtain permanent status because the current contract of service provides no assurance regarding their tenure of service," said a participant. "They are worried that they can be terminated anytime or that

their contract may not be renewed."

Based on what they hear from school heads, some discussants said there are ISAL team members who do not report regularly to their respective stations. Others do not participate in school programs and activities. The school heads feel they should make adjustments to cooperate with their colleagues because they fall under the jurisdiction of MBHTE, and they need to perform well due to their substantial monthly salary.

**Sulu.** FGD participants in Sulu laud the implementation of ISAL in public schools for addressing the need to instill customs and lessons pertaining to Islam while children engage in various secular and academic studies. They think it serves as a response to secular learning, with its focus on Islamic values and the Arabic language. ISAL encompasses the teachings of Islam, the study of the Prophet's life, and acquisition of the Arabic language. Islamic values formation and Arabic language instruction also encompass the ways and practices of Muslims, drawn from the life story of the Prophet Mohammad as recorded in Hadith. ISAL in public schools encompasses instruction in Arabic language reading and writing, Islamic values, and the teachings found in Hadith.

**Tawi-Tawi.** FGD participants in Tawi said madrasah education in BARMM is needed and very important because the youth and even children are distracted by cellphones and spend too much time on social media. The BARMM program with *asatidz* will help strengthen the teachings of religion. Imparting the correct *aqeedah* (belief system) and *tarbiyah* (skills training), starting from kindergarten to Grade 6 and so on, will make learners learn more about Islamic values and teachings that will guide them and will make the community peaceful.

In public schools, the integration of ISAL has proved to be beneficial in preserving and reinforcing Islamic education among children and within the community, many FGD participants said. The key point is that it opens new opportunities for learners. ISAL adheres to the standardized curriculum established by the Department of Education and significantly contributes to achieving a balanced educational curriculum that includes secular subjects, they added.

The incorporation of ISAL into the learning curriculum, along with the deployment of ISAL teachers to island municipalities and barangays, has had a noticeable impact in certain schools. Directly or indirectly, ISAL has led to the elimination of some programs that were traditionally conducted by the school, such as Junior-Senior Prom, dance contests and other non-academic activities that some religious parents in Tawi-Tawi think are irrelevant to school life.



### Specific Perceptions of ISAL in Mainland BARMM

**Lanao del Sur.** When comparing the ALIVE teachers from the past to the current ISAL teachers, it becomes evident that the latter are significantly superior, thanks to the stringent qualifications established by the MBHTE, said a key informant. The MBHTE BARMM has elevated the standards for hiring ISAL teachers. The informant argued that what distinguishes the BARMM approach as superior is twofold: the greater number of ISAL teachers available and the implementation of regular salary payments. ISAL teachers are now selected based on a rigorous set of qualifications established by the MBHTE, a significant improvement over the recruitment process for former ALIVE teachers during the ARMM era. And the Madaris program implemented by the BARMM surpasses its ARMM predecessor due to the provision of competitive salaries to ISAL teachers.

The most common issue that the MBHTE should consider is the student-teacher ratio so that they could supply enough number of ISAL teachers per school, said the informant. Accordingly, MBHTE BARMM should hire more ISAL teachers because every school should have ISAL teachers based on the number of students. Some schools do need more ISAL teachers because of their larger enrolment numbers.

One drawback of ISAL teachers is that individuals with advanced degrees, such as doctorates or master's degrees, were sometimes assigned by the MBHTE BARMM to teach at lower grade levels, such as elementary grades. The responsibility of itemizing the ISAL teachers rests with the MBHTE BARMM, as it is directly involved with the national government, not just within the region but also formally within DepEd.

There are instances in which ISAL teachers face challenges, especially regarding their technical needs, such as creating lesson plans and using new technologies. The MBHTE should take action to address these issues by providing technical training specifically tailored to ISAL teachers, the FGD participants suggested.

**Maguindanao.** Some FGD participants observed that madrasah education today is more detailed compared to ALIVE in the past. It is commendable that Islamic Studies and Arabic Language are now being taught in public schools. The issue with the curriculum in some public schools is their reluctance to embrace the Standard Madrasah Curriculum (SMC). In fact, the SMC has been in use since the time of the ARMM. Since the curriculum for BARMM has not yet been completed, we are currently adopting the SMC, said one participant. But while SMC serves as the reference for ISAL, its application differs across schools and ISAL teachers.

One of the problems discussed in various seminars is that the government allocates only one hour a day for ISAL subjects, which is significantly shorter compared to the time allocated for secular subjects. This discrepancy makes it challenging to achieve a balanced education, some FGD participants argued.

Similar to sentiments expressed by FGD participants in other places, those in Maguindanao said the situation with asatidz/ISAL teachers is satisfactory because they receive a monthly honorarium. However, they do not enjoy job security because they are still on six-month renewable contracts.

### ***3. Practices and Issues: Integrated Madrasah***

#### **General Perceptions of the Integrated Madrasah**

A key informant from the University of the Philippines noted that the BARMM government is now responsible for supporting the institutionalization of integrated Madaris throughout the BARMM region. This entails a commitment to capacity building among administrators, teachers, and staff to enable them to develop programs that are responsive to the specific needs of Bangsamoro learners.

But another key informant from the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos said he is not aware if the rule on ISAL programs in public schools also applies to the integrated madrasah. Those schools might not be as focused on science and math. The regional office also does not know the status of elementary integrated Madaris even in the regional center of Cotabato City.

#### **Specific Perceptions of the Integrated Madrasah in Insular BARMM**

**Basilan.** Basilan discussants observed that the teachers of the K-12 curriculum in integrated Madaris are facing difficulties because those who teach are not graduates of secular education. They possess adequate knowledge and competence in teaching the Islamic content standards and competencies, but they are lacking in their ability to teach the K-12 curriculum.

In the opinion of participants, based on what they heard during visits together with their madrasah chairman, integrated madrasah teachers are struggling with teaching the K-12 curriculum because they have received insufficient training in pedagogy and lack the necessary references and textbooks.

The integrated madrasah also suffers from a shortage of qualified workforce capable of teaching the subjects of the Basic Education curriculum. They lack the required experience and hold college degrees that are not related to teaching.

Aside from teacher preparation, Basilan discussants also observed the lack textbooks and references for both the madrasah and K-12 curriculum. There is a shortage of facilities, seating, textbooks and learning materials.

The third issue with integrated Madaris pertains to the permit to operate. The issue that FGD discussants hear about when it comes to operating an integrated madrasa is the numerous requirements that are not easy to satisfy. Even though many traditional Madaris want to become integrated schools, some are rethinking the idea due to the rigid requirements. The incentive is the subsidies the regional government extends to integrated Madaris. So far in Basilan, few traditional Madaris have become integrated Madaris.

**Sulu.** Sulu participants perceive the integrated madrasah as offering both secular and Islamic education, that is, as combining the regular school curriculum with Islamic teachings. They offer secular education and Islamic education, and they are operated by private individuals but also receive government subsidies. The discussants pointed to Sahaya Integrated School in Sulu as an example of an integrated madrasah that focuses equally on secular education and Islamic education, with a balanced approach.

**Tawi-Tawi.** According to one FGD discussant, the difference between traditional and integrated madrasah is that, in the United Arab Emirates, those who have completed the two-year Ma'had program can already conduct khutbah (sermon at the mosque), while those who have graduated from the integrated madrasah (equivalent to Grade 6 in BARMM) are only considered equivalent to Grade 1 in Ma'had.

Still, the integrated madrasah programs play a role in maintaining and enhancing Islamic education for children and the community as a whole. In theory, it provides a balanced learning environment, combining both secular and Islamic education.

### **Specific Perceptions of Integrated Madrasah in Mainland BARMM**

**Lanao del Sur.** Lanao FGD discussants noted that integrated Madaris in the province are formally overseen by their private proprietors or board of directors. The Lanao integrated Madaris predate the establishment of MBHTE BARMM, they added. The FGD participants said they do not

encounter many issues with these schools, which experience fewer internal problems than traditional Madaris. Integrated Madaris primarily rely on the quality assessment of the head of school in accordance with their activity plans.

While owned and managed by private entities, integrated Madaris also collaborate with MBHTE on matters concerning their curriculum and other educational aspects. One of the challenges they encounter is that the current financial assistance from the MBHTE is not sufficient.

**Maguindanao.** Discussants in FGDs held in Maguindanao observed that the integrated madrasah curriculum is not yet in order among integrated Madaris in the province. There has been a standard madrasah curriculum for a while, but it needs to be updated and enhanced. Some reported that leaders of integrated Madaris are worried about the political winds. Will the BARMM government continue to focus on madrasah education if the MILF is no longer at the helm?

To ensure that Maguindanao Madaris receive the technical and financial assistance they need, they must be fully supported, the discussants urged. However, some people still believe that integrated Madaris are religious institutions, so they insist that public funds should not be allocated to them.

The discussants wished that integrated Madaris across BARMM will have a Standard Curriculum to make instruction uniform, although some public schools are said to worry that they will lose students if this were to happen. In the recruitment and hiring of asatidz/ustadz, educational background, qualifications and experiences should be checked to help ensure only the qualified are accepted and those sympathetic to violent extremism are kept out. The discussants also called for a regulatory board for the Ittihadul Madaris Bil Philippines, the association of the administrators, officials and asatidz of Madaris and other Islamic institutions of learning in BARMM.

The issues around the stringent requirements for a permit to operate were echoed in the Maguindanao FGDs.

#### ***4. Practices and Issues: Traditional Madrasah***

##### **General Perceptions of the Traditional Madrasah**

According to a key informant in academe, the traditional madrasah offers classes largely on Saturdays and Sundays, and follows a curriculum that is entirely focused on Islamic education. There are no or few subjects related to secular education in this type of madrasah. The medium of instruction varies depending on the local language, such as Tausug, Yakan

or Sama. Additionally, most traditional Madaris, especially those at higher levels, include instruction in Lughat Al-Arabiya (Arabic Language).

One prominent type of a traditional madrasah in places like Lanao and Maguindanao is known as toril, which starts the education of children at a very young age. These learners are nurtured until they have memorized the Qur'an – the term toril means the memorization of the Qur'an. Over time, these type of traditional madrasah evolved to include subjects such as language (Lugha), Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh), Qur'anic interpretation (Tafsir), and more. This evolved toril represents another type of madrasah found in the BARMM.

A key informant at the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos noted that traditional Madaris are often left behind by public schools and integrated Madaris. This is because the traditional madrasah primarily focuses on teaching Arabic and the Qur'an. The curriculum does not include science and math subjects. Additionally, the teachers in these traditional Madaris often lack well-rounded training and preparation.

### **Specific Perceptions of the Traditional Madrasah in Insular BARMM**

**Basilan.** An FGD discussant observed that traditional Madaris in Basilan have improved their teaching and have established standards. Most now conduct entrance/aptitude assessments for students enrolling in each grade level. There is a reading assessment before official enrollment. What is good in their traditional Madaris, said the participant, is that some are supported by local governments.

In Lamitan, for example, traditional madrasah teachers receive a monthly allowance from local government funds while waiting for a regional plan to provide them salaries to materialize. Several traditional Madaris are being established, whether privately funded or with local government subsidies. The traditional madrasah is now being given attention, unlike in the late 1990s when only a few supporters prioritized them. The number of traditional Madaris is increasing in the city and far-flung barangays, indicating a strengthening and wider dissemination of Islamic education.

Another discussant in Basilan said that BARMM, under the leadership of MILF, has prioritized traditional Madaris in their area. New Madaris have been built in Baguindan and Tipo-Tipo using funds from the district's Member of Parliament. There are also traditional Madaris in conflict-affected areas that were established by cooperatives to teach young people the truth about the Islamic religion. But some mayors are still not supporting the activities and programs of their Madaris. There is still a need for more support, especially in terms of teacher salaries from the regional government.

The Basilan FGD participants said, however, that *asatidz* in traditional Madaris are leaving to become ISAL teachers in public schools. Many *ustadz* have applied for positions as instructors in ISAL, even while they are currently teaching in traditional Madaris – they are apparently just waiting on the MBHTE's decision. "Our talented educators are leaving the traditional Madaris due to their preference for the higher salaries offered by ISAL," said one discussant. Participants described the trend as a "brain drain." Some *asatidz* are trying to teach in both public schools and traditional Madaris, but face scheduling difficulties.

Traditional Madaris are severely lacking in facilities such as chairs and classrooms. Morale is low because they little support from the region. There is no regular salary – *asatidz* receive variable amounts depending on the traditional madrasah's cash flow – and there is no capital outlay even if the madrasah is granted a permit to operate and thus becomes eligible for subsidies. "There is also a shortage of textbooks, as most of traditional Madaris rely on donations from other countries," said a participant. The textbooks are not consistent because the curricula of different countries vary, so traditional Madaris end up using a mixed bag of textbooks.

**Sulu.** According to Sulu participants, the traditional madrasah is informal in nature and lacks a formal curriculum structure because its main emphasis is on teaching reading and writing in the Arabic language, particularly in the context of the Qu'ran. They do not follow a structured sequence as seen in integrated Madaris and ISAL programs. They place a strong emphasis on Qu'ranic learning and also impart knowledge about living according to Islamic principles. They uphold traditional practices and values. Traditional Madaris are typically operated by traditional Islamic teachers and imams.

**Tawi-Tawi.** Participants view the traditional madrasah as catering to children who are interested in learning Islamic education but only have the time to do it on weekends. Enrolling in a traditional madrasah allows them to maintain a balance between their regular studies and religious education.

In the current BARMM administration, there is strong support for traditional madrasah education, the participants in the Tawi-Tawi FGDs opined. In fact, there are policy guidelines in place to ensure the proper operation of this type of madrasah. With the increased emphasis on Islamic teaching and its integration via ISAL into public education, some discussants think more and more young people are likely to continue learning to be good Muslims by attending the traditional madrasah on weekends, even as adults who were unable to receive Islamic education during their younger years but now wish to learn Islamic teachings can do the same.

## Specific Perceptions of the Traditional Madrasah in Mainland BARMM

**Lanao del Sur.** Discussants in Lanao reckon traditional Madaris in the province face numerous challenges that require assessment and improvement. These institutions are truly in need of support to address their specific requirements, such as regular monthly salaries for teachers and adequate classrooms for students. Traditional Madaris currently lack collaboration both with the BARMM and the national government. However, they should be given priority as they are the ones predominantly serving local communities in the BARMM region, they urged.

Traditional Madaris have a longer history compared to integrated ones, the participants pointed out. Alumni of traditional Madaris have become prominent individuals and scholars in contemporary society. This fact cannot be denied, emphasizing the need for various forms of assistance from both the BARMM government and the national government.

Furthermore, traditional Madaris should obtain permits to operate and register as institutions of learning, said the participants. This has become especially crucial in the wake of the Marawi Siege in 2017, when traditional Madaris in Lanao del Sur came under scrutiny, rightly or not, for allegedly providing a conducive environment for violent extremism.

**Maguindanao.** Respondents noted that in Maguindanao del Sur, more than 200 Madaris have been established, all of which are registered with the Ittihadul Madaris bil Philippines Inc. (IMBP), the association of administrators, officials and asatidz of Madaris and other Islamic institutions of learning in BARMM. However, some traditional Madaris cannot afford the fee to register with the Securities and Exchange Commission, although the IMBP can help them with the paperwork. (Traditional Madaris rely mainly on the support of families who are financially capable to pay tuition fees.) Being an SEC registrant is one requirement for getting a permit to operate from the MBHTE's DGME.

The discussants bemoaned the lack of administrative support for the traditional madrasah in Maguindanao and hoped that a regulatory board for traditional Madaris can be established. As for financial support, the participants said traditional Madaris should continue to seek assistance from madrasah supporters in the wider community, not just parents of students and, despite the initial cost, to register with the SEC and get a permit to operate to gain access to government subsidies.

Some traditional Madaris have already obtained permits to operate under the DGME. But financial considerations aside, others are struggling



to meet the stringent requirements for obtaining a permit. Another issue is the lack of management competence in many traditional Madaris, with insufficient honorarium for the asatidz/ustadz. Then there is the issue of a uniform curriculum.

"Currently, each traditional madrasah develops its own curriculum," said a key informant. "The community comes together to ensure the continuous operation of our Madaris and to provide honorariums to our ustadz." He added: "The Ittihadul Madaris bil Philippines will establish a regulation commission to accredit our Madaris and conduct an information drive."

## **B. Nature and Extent of Vulnerability and Resiliency of the Madrasah Sector**

### ***1. Nature of Vulnerability of the Madrasah Sector to Violent Extremism***

Vulnerabilities to violent extremism are negative factors that make entities more susceptible to radicalization and involvement in violent extremist activities. These vulnerabilities can vary from entity to entity and from one context to the next, but they often share common underlying themes.

In general, past studies have shown about seven factors that are likely to contribute to vulnerability of the madrasah to violent extremism. These are proximity to conflict zones, presence of extremist groups in the locality, financial difficulty, lack of regulatory oversight by the government, influence of overseas entity, local political issues, and isolation from broader society.

Survey respondents from Lanao del Sur and Sulu agree that all seven multifactorial elements can make any madrasah vulnerable to violent extremism. Respondents in Maguindanao concur that three – proximity to conflict zones, presence of extremist group, and financial difficulty – are likely to contribute to vulnerability to violent extremism in a madrasah. Additionally, survey respondents in Maguindanao mention community poverty when asked to name other factors not on the list.

Asked as well to name other factors, Lanao del Sur respondents pointed to:

- financial difficulties
- lack of knowledge among students/learners
- the attraction of financial support from VE recruiters
- influence of foreign scholars who advocate violent uprising
- lack of support from the government

- misleading youth with wrong information about Islam
- wrong teaching about aqeedah (belief system)
- teaching without Qur'anic foundation, thus misunderstanding the real meaning of Islam

Basilan survey respondents singled out the presence of extremist groups, while Tawi-Tawi survey respondents zeroed in on the lack of regulatory oversight by the government as most likely to contribute to vulnerability to violent extremism.

## ***2. Extent of Vulnerability Among Respondents' Madrasah to Violent Extremism***

When asked about the extent of vulnerability of their own madrasah to violent extremism, survey respondents in Sulu identified financial difficulty and the lack of regulatory oversight by the government as contributing to their vulnerabilities.

Survey respondents in Lanao del Sur identified all the factors except the lack of regulatory oversight and external influence, while those in Tawi-Tawi considered all factors except external influence and isolation from broader society.

Maguindanao identified solely their madrasah's financial difficulties as their vulnerability, while survey respondents from Basilan did not consider any of these factors as their vulnerability.

## ***3. Nature of Resiliency of Madrasah Sector to Violent Extremism***

Resilience to violent extremism refers to the capacity of individuals, communities and societies to withstand, respond to and recover from the influences and threats posed by violent extremism. This concept emphasizes the importance of proactive and preventive approach to counter radicalization and extremism, rather than relying solely on reactive security measures.

In past research, six factors were identified as contributing to the resiliency of the madrasah sector to violent extremism:

- strong madrasah leadership that provides religious guidance and is committed to the promotion of peace, tolerance and in countering extremism;
- partnership with the community, civic engagement and community outreach;
- involvement of parents in the education of their children and in reinforcing positive values at home;

- presence of local government support;
- involvement in inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue;
- countering misinformation and propaganda on violent extremism

The overwhelming majority of survey respondents agreed that all these contributory factors contribute to the resiliency of the madrasah sector to violent extremism.

#### ***4. Extent of Resiliency to Violent Extremism of Respondents' Madrasah***

When asked about the extent of resiliency of their own madrasah to violent extremism, survey respondents in Maguindanao singled out strong madrasah leadership that provides religious guidance and is committed to the promotion of peace.

Lanao del Sur survey respondents pointed to all listed factors as contributing to the strong resiliency of their respective madrasah, except civic engagement and community outreach.

Tawi-Tawi survey respondents chose all listed factors except local government support, countering misinformation and propaganda, and civic engagement and community outreach.

While recognizing their potential contribution to resilience, Sulu and Basilan survey respondents did not view these factors as exerting a very strong influence on the resiliency of their own madrasah.

#### ***5. Vulnerability-Resiliency Nexus***

The Vulnerability-Resiliency Nexus to violent extremism refers to the complex interplay between individual and societal vulnerabilities, as well as the resilience of entities and individuals, in relation to the risk of becoming involved in violent extremist activities. This concept is often discussed in the context of countering violent extremism (CVE) and understanding why some individuals or groups are more susceptible to radicalization and recruitment by extremist groups while others are more resistant.

The top three factors that survey respondents in aggregate chose as the most likely to contribute to the vulnerability the madrasah system to violent extremism are (1) proximity to conflict zones, (2) presence of extremist groups in the community and (3) the financial difficulty. In terms of their own madrasah, survey respondents pointed to financial difficulties as the one factor that makes their madrasah vulnerable.

In terms of resilience, they unanimously concur with past research that found six factors contribute most strongly to resiliency against violent extremism in the madrasah sector: strong madrasah leadership; partnership with the community, civic engagement and community outreach; involvement of parents in their children's education and in reinforcing positive values at home; local government support; involvement in inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue; and countering misinformation and propaganda on violent extremism.

However, among these factors, and looking at their respective madrasah, survey respondents opine that the single most influential resiliency factor is their strong madrasah leadership that provides religious guidance and is committed to the promotion of peace, tolerance and in countering extremism.

The way forward for the madrasah sector and the BARMM government then is to recognize that there are seven factors that cause vulnerabilities in the madrasah system and to address them. In addition, they should also help individual Madaris, particularly traditional Madaris, strengthen their resilience against violent extremism by boosting the six factors identified as contributing to such resilience.

In the vulnerability-resilience nexus, the most likely factor to cause vulnerability is identified as the madrasah's financial difficulties while the top resiliency factor is the strong leadership of the madrasah. In prioritizing actions steps to take, the madrasah sector and the BARMM government should focus on this particular nexus.

### **C. Current and Future Trajectories**

This section presents the current and future trajectories of the madrasah basic education sector based on the survey of madrasah heads and senior teachers from integrated and traditional Madaris. It also presents data drawn from focus group discussions, as well as the key informant interviews of madrasah stakeholders at the national and regional levels.

#### **1. Overseas Models Influencing Madrasah Education in BARMM**

##### Awareness of overseas models

***Overall, the survey of madrasah stakeholders showed that a high percentage (60.1%) are aware of at least one overseas model that influences madrasah education in BARMM.*** The level of awareness is high in Maguindanao (100%), Lanao del Sur (80%), and Tawi-Tawi (79%),

but relatively lower in Basilan (40%). The outlier is Sulu, where only 2% of respondents are aware of any international models influencing madrasah education in BARMM.

**Table 2: Awareness of any overseas models influencing madrasah education in BARMM (N=198)**

Aware	Maguindanao (%)	Lanao del Sur (%)	Basilan (%)	Sulu (%)	Tawi-Tawi (%)	All Areas (%)
Yes	100.0	80.0	40.0	2.5	78.9	60.1
No	0.0	20.0	60.0	97.5	21.1	39.9

***The Saudi Arabia model is the most frequently mentioned model.***

Among those who reported awareness, Saudi Arabia is overwhelmingly cited (94%) as the overseas model influencing madrasah education in BARMM, followed distantly by Jordan (22%), Egypt (15%), and Libya (11%).

**Table 3: Overseas models (by country of origin) that are perceived to have an influence on madrasah education in BARMM (n=119)**

Overseas model	f	%
Saudi Arabia	112	94.0
Jordan	26	22.0
Egypt	18	15.0
Libya	13	11.0
Indonesia	9	8.0
Syria	7	6.0
Sudan	7	6.0
Others: (Iran, Kuwait, Pakistan, Turkey, Yemen)	9	8.0

The survey respondents provided a general description of the overseas models with which they are familiar (effectively the Saudi Arabia model). They described the models as:

- Schools have diverse learners and offer purely Arabic/Islamic teaching from K-3.
- Instruction focuses on Hadith, Sunnah and the Qu'ran, with a strict implementation of Qu'ranic teachings and the Hadith of

Prophet Mohammad.

- The curriculum is comprehensive, covering various subjects, and there are strict rules regarding Sunnah and Hadith.
- Schools are government-managed and provide Islamic education along with Arabic language instruction
- Schools are open to both boys and girls, promoting peace and imparting basic knowledge about Islam.
- The curriculum is formulated by Ulama and is highly regarded for teaching the real message of Islam, which is peace.
- Students learn Shariah and Arabic language, and the schools follow Shariah law.
- The Quran serves as the foundation of the education.
- Schools welcome both boys and girls, making it a well-known model that has produced many great Ulama.

#### Key informants' response

##### ***Key informants affirmed the popularity of the Saudi Arabia model.***

The high level of awareness of the Saudi Arabia model, as revealed in the survey, is consistent with observations by key informants that there is a large number of graduates from that country in BARMM. In general, graduates tend to bring the curriculum of their host country back with them, be it from Saudi Arabia, Egypt or Libya, which may influence their teaching styles and perspectives.

However, a key informant emphasized that “there is no hard data to support which of the schools abroad have a dominant say in madrasah education in BARMM.” Nevertheless, there is a growing perception that Saudi graduates tend to adopt a more conservative stance, particularly when it comes to applying the teachings of Prophetic Traditions. For his part, an FGD participant said that, currently, we cannot precisely identify where the curriculum for madrasah education in the BARMM region is derived from. What can be said is that it is widely influenced by the Saudi Arabian curriculum.

***Key informants at the regional level stressed the importance of arriving at a curriculum that is attuned to the context of the BARMM.*** It was pointed out that Egypt, specifically Al-Azhar University, was among the earliest influencers and is characterized by a comprehensive educational framework. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, follows the Hanbali madhhab, particularly in the teachings of Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Some individuals tend to take an extreme approach in their application of Hanbaliya concepts. It was emphasized that blame cannot be placed on Saudi Arabia for this; their rigorous implementation is influenced by their status as an Islamic State. This context is not directly transferable to BARMM since the region is not a sovereign nation like Saudi Arabia. Instead, it operates within the

context of autonomy.

Regarding curriculum models, a key informant noted that there is a lack of uniformity in the curriculum employed within the madrasah educational system in BARMM. Graduates from Saudi Arabia may demonstrate different educational approaches compared to those who completed their studies in Egypt, Sudan, Libya and various other Arab nations. Given this, the suggestion is to avoid replicating foreign systems and instead develop a context-specific curriculum.

On the issue of violent extremism, the key informant asserted that it ultimately depends on individuals and cannot be attributed solely to graduates from Saudi Arabia, Libya, Syria or elsewhere. The learned extremism in their views of implementing Islam should not be applied in BARMM due to differing contexts.

#### Use and preference for madrasah models

***Close to 60% of madrasah heads and teachers surveyed use a 'local model' in their respective madrasah.*** The survey findings indicate that a majority (59.6%) of madrasah heads and teachers in all areas, except Tawi-Tawi, employ a local model in their respective madaris, with others opting for either the Philippine model (20.7%) or an overseas model (19.7%). The local model is typically used by traditional Madaris and can be characterized as 'syncretic.' This is a blend of diverse influences, making it challenging to pinpoint any predominant overseas influence.

The 2019 study on traditional Madaris in BARMM<sup>49</sup> conducted by the IAG revealed that 65% of traditional Madaris use local or traditional curricula – those that were developed within the Philippines and handed down from one madrasah teacher to the next. The Philippine model in this study refers to the curriculum used by integrated Madaris that adhere to the basic madrasah curriculum prescribed by the DepEd. Among those who reported using overseas models, a vast majority identified Saudi Arabia as the primary influence.

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49 <https://www.calameo.com/read/00222929445d1ae6a4531?trackersource=library>.



**Table 4: Madrasah models used (N=198)**

Madrasah Model	Maguindanao (%)	Lanao del Sur (%)	Basilan (%)	Sulu (%)	Tawi-Tawi (%)	All Areas (%)
Overseas	27.5	20.0	7.5	0.0	44.7	19.7
Philippines (for those implementing integrated madrasah)	30.0	22.5	30.0	5.0	15.8	20.7
Local (for those traditional Madaris without overseas influence)	42.5	57.5	62.5	95.0	39.5	59.6

***Participants from the focus group discussions further reinforced the above findings, with the Saudi Arabian model as the most frequently mentioned model used across all areas.*** The preference for the Saudi Arabian model in madrasah education, according to them, can be attributed to several key factors. Firstly, this model promotes gender equality by providing equal access to both girls and boys in madrasah education, aligning with contemporary notions of inclusivity. Additionally, the Saudi Arabian madrasah curriculum is renowned for its high standards, particularly in Arabic language instruction, which is essential for a deep understanding of Islamic teachings. The approach of this curriculum ensures that students fulfill required units and meet academic standards, which is crucial for those aspiring to pursue higher education abroad as scholars.

Moreover, the Saudi Arabian madrasah curriculum is appreciated for its clear focus on Islamic teachings without any misinterpretation or deceptive use of religion, making it a reliable choice. However, it is recognized that some adjustments may be necessary when implementing it in the proposed public madrasah due to its rigorous content standards and emphasis on competencies like logic (mantiq).

The influence of the Saudi Arabian model in Marawi City and traditional Madaris in Lanao del Sur can be attributed to the educational

backgrounds of respected Ulama elders who received their education in Saudi Arabia, thereby naturally aligning with the educational system they encountered during their time in that country. This historical connection and the positive reputation of the Saudi model contribute to its predominance in the region.

Other overseas models mentioned are Indonesia, Sudan, Pakistan, and Brunei. In the seminars attended by ISAL/Madaris Division Coordinators (expressed by FGD participants in Basilan), the Indonesian Madaris Curriculum was introduced as part of BARMM's efforts to establish government-owned and managed public Madaris.

The appeal of this curriculum lies in its alignment with BARMM's goals and its ease of adoption, given the contextual similarities. The Indonesian curriculum seamlessly integrates madrasah education into the regular basic education system, which is under government administration. It is worth noting that Indonesia emphasizes the study of Islam through the establishment of social regulations, particularly in integrated schools, highlighting its holistic approach to Islamic education.

Some FGD participants discussed other overseas models. Sudan's education system, they said, places strong emphasis on the widespread propagation of Islamic teachings and Quranic lessons, particularly through a somewhat strict approach that prioritizes self-defense training. Unlike some Westernized systems, Sudan's educational landscape maintains its focus on traditional Islamic education, with the madrasah primarily dedicated to the teaching of the Hadith, underscoring the preservation of Islamic traditions and values.

Those that mentioned using a curriculum from Brunei stated that in that system, they have separate leaders for religious and secular education, but both work under the same principal in a unified system. They make sure that each program has its own independence, and they do not interfere with each other to ensure a peaceful coexistence of religious and secular education.

## ***2. Direction of Madrasah Education in BARMM***

This section presents the future trajectory of madrasah education in BARMM seen through five prisms: ownership and supervision, enrollment (gender distribution of students), curriculum focus, curriculum development process, and medium of instruction.

### **Ownership and supervision**

***In the survey, all areas (except Sulu) favored a madrasah education***

**system with a mix of ISAL, integrated Madaris, traditional Madaris and public Madaris.** Table 5 presents the survey respondents' preferences with respect to ownership and supervision of madrasah in the BARMM region. In most areas, the majority of respondents expressed a preference for a setup where the government continues to implement the ISAL program in select public schools while also accommodating integrated and traditional madrasah. In addition, they favored the establishment of a public madrasah under the ownership and operation of the MBHTE.

This inclination was notably high in Basilan, where 85% of respondents shared this preference, while it stood at 57.5% in Maguindanao and 52.5% in Lanao del Sur. In contrast, respondents in Sulu (85%) favored the idea of entirely government-owned Madaris, aligning with the stipulations of the Bangsamoro Education Code. Overall, nearly a quarter of respondents (24.7%) expressed a preference for retaining the current madrasah system in BARMM.

**Table 5: Direction of madrasah education according to ownership and supervision (N=198)**

Ownership	Maguindanao (%)	Lanao del Sur (%)	Basilan (%)	Sulu (%)	Tawi-Tawi (%)	All Areas (%)
Entirely government-owned (i.e. Public madrasah)	5.0	0.0	5.0	87.5	10.5	21.7
Government and privately owned (i.e. ISAL + Integrated Madrasah + Traditional Madrasah)	35.0	35.0	10.0	12.5	31.6	24.7
Madrasah entirely private	2.5	12.5	0.0	0.0	13.2	5.6

Government and privately owned (with public madrasah) (i.e. ISAL + Integrated Madrasah + Traditional Madrasah + Public Madrasah)	57.5	52.5	85.0	0.0	44.7	48.0
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### Enrollment (gender distribution of students)

***Of the total respondents surveyed, 70.2% expressed a preference for separate classes for boys and girls.*** This preference is particularly pronounced in Sulu, where 95% of respondents favored segregated classes, followed by Maguindanao at 87.5% and Tawi-Tawi at 76.3%. Approximately 19% indicated a preference for mixed-gender classes, while 11.1% opted for the establishment of separate schools for boys and girls. Interestingly, none of the respondents expressed a preference for exclusively boys-only madrasah.

The above preference of the majority conforms to the FGD finding that the Saudi Arabian model is the most preferred overseas model for madrasah education in the BARMM. In Saudi Arabia, Madaris are typically segregated by gender, with separate classes for boys and girls. This separation aligns with cultural and religious norms prevalent in BARMM.

**Table 6: Direction of madrasah education according to enrollment (gender distribution of students) – (N=198)**

Gender distribution	Maguindanao (%)	Lanao del Sur (%)	Basilan (%)	Sulu (%)	Tawi-Tawi (%)	All Areas (%)
Accept a mix of boys and girls	5.0	32.5	37.5	5.0	13.2	18.7
Separate boys and girls (but in one school)	87.5	42.5	50.0	95.0	76.3	70.2

Separate school for boys; separate school for girls	7.5	25.0	12.5	0.00	10.5	11.1
For boys only	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

### Curriculum focus

***In general, a combination of religious and secular education emerges as the favored curriculum focus among 72.8% of the total survey participants.*** This preference is particularly pronounced in Sulu (97.5%) and Maguindanao (92.5%). Conversely, in Basilan, the majority of respondents (65%) expressed a preference for a curriculum entirely centered on religious education.

**Table 7: Direction of madrasah education according to curriculum focus (N=198)**

Curriculum Focus	Maguindanao (%)	Lanao del Sur (%)	Basilan (%)	Sulu (%)	Tawi-Tawi (%)	All Areas (%)
Entirely religious education	7.5	35.0	65.0	2.5	26.3	27.3
Mix of religious and secular education	92.5	65.0	35.0	97.5	73.7	72.8

### Curriculum development process

***Collaboration between MBHTE and madrasah stakeholders is strongly preferred for crafting the public madrasah curriculum.*** With respect to the formulation of the madrasah curriculum, an overwhelming majority of respondents (96%) across all study areas expressed a preference for a collaborative effort involving both the MBHTE and madrasah stakeholders. Notably, none of the respondents in Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur favored the idea of the curriculum being solely developed by the MBHTE.

**Table 8: Direction of madrasah education according to curriculum development process (N=198)**

Curriculum development	Maguindanao (%)	Lanao del Sur (%)	Basilan (%)	Sulu (%)	Tawi-Tawi (%)	All Areas (%)
Curriculum developed entirely by MBHTE	0.0	0.0	2.5	2.5	7.9	3.6
Curriculum developed by MBHTE and madrasah stakeholders	100.0	100.0	95.0	95.0	92.1	96.4

#### Medium of instruction

***The survey showed 48% preferred a mix of Arabic, English, Filipino, and the local language for madrasah instruction.*** Nearly half (48%) of respondents favor a combination of Arabic, English, Filipino, and the local vernacular as the medium of instruction in madrasah education. This preference was notably strong in Basilan, where 72.5% of respondents expressed support for this multi-language approach.

In contrast, respondents from Sulu (72.5%) predominantly leaned towards the use of Arabic and the vernacular as the primary medium of instruction, cutting out Filipino. Some respondents from Maguindanao (37.5%), Basilan (27.5%), Tawi-Tawi (23.7%), and Lanao del Sur (17.5%) also show an inclination toward this particular language combination.

**Table 9: Direction of madrasah education according to medium of instruction (N=198)**

Medium of Instruction	Maguindanao (%)	Lanao del Sur (%)	Basilan (%)	Sulu (%)	Tawi-Tawi (%)	All Areas (%)
Arabic only	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.6	1.0
Vernacular/ mother tongue only	7.5	20.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.6
Arabic and English	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	15.8	4.0

Arabic and vernacular/ mother tongue	37.5	17.5	27.5	72.5	23.7	35.9
Arabic, English, and Filipino	2.5	0.0	0.0	22.5	0.0	5.1
Arabic, English, Filipino, and vernacular/ mother tongue	50.0	60.0	72.5	0.0	57.9	48.0

### 3. Relationship between the National DepEd and the Regional MBHTE

Survey respondents were asked their preference regarding National-Regional Synergy, particularly on the level of synergy, complementation, and flexibility in madrasah policy development, programming, and implementation between the concerned government agencies at the national and regional levels.

The data indicate that stakeholders in various areas hold distinct preferences when it comes to the collaboration between BARMM and the national DepEd. In Sulu (90%), Lanao del Sur (67.5%), Maguindanao (57.5%), and Tawi-Tawi (50%), the majority favored Scenario 2, in which BARMM and the national DepEd collaborate on common programs, supplemented by BARMM's public madrasah initiative.

Conversely, respondents from Basilan (87.5%) leaned towards Scenario 4, where BARMM and the national DepEd pursue separate paths, with BARMM introducing its public madrasah program as an additional offering.



**Table 10: Relationship between national DepEd and the regional MBHTE (N=198)**

Relationship	Maguindanao (%)	Lanao del Sur (%)	Basilan (%)	Sulu (%)	Tawi-Tawi (%)	All Areas (%)
Scenario 1: high level of synergy and complementation	40.0	0.0	5.0	7.5	28.9	16.2
Scenario 2: high level of synergy with flexibility	57.5	67.5	7.5	90.0	50.0	54.5
Scenario 3: low level of synergy but with high complementation	2.5	15	0.0	2.5	15.8	7.1
Scenario 4: low level of synergy and complementation	0.0	17.5	87.5	0.0	5.3	22.2

### Results from focus group discussions

In the FGDs conducted, participants provided more detailed descriptions and observations as to how they see the current and future relationship between the national DepEd and the regional MBHTE. Generally, the stakeholders emphasized the importance of ongoing collaboration, recognition, support and a close working relationship, both currently and in the future, to advance madrasah education in BARMM. Below are significant points expressed by the FGD participants:

***Basilan stakeholders stressed the importance of a strong collaborative relationship and urged continued collaboration in developing a unified madrasah curriculum with national support.*** The FGD participants in Basilan consistently emphasized the importance of a robust and collaborative relationship between BARMM and the national government in regional madrasah education. Despite BARMM's autonomy, they underscored the need for formal agreements with the national DepEd to facilitate cooperation. Key aspects include the recognition of the BARMM curriculum and standards by universities in other regions offering higher

Islamic-studies-related courses, as well as the integration of BARMM's educational priorities within the programs of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF).

Looking ahead, the stakeholders expressed optimism about the continued collaboration between BARMM and the national government in madrasah education. They anticipate further involvement of BARMM in capacity-building activities organized by the national government's Madrasah National Curriculum. A unified madrasah curriculum across the Philippines remains a shared vision among the stakeholders. They look forward to continued support from the national government, including practical assistance in addressing issues such as resource shortages and curriculum development.

***Sulu stakeholders have a positive outlook on the relationship, emphasizing shared goals and a desire for transparent communication.***

The sentiments expressed by Sulu discussants reflect a generally positive outlook on the relationship between BARMM and the national government in madrasah education. There is a sense of shared goals and aspirations, particularly in their pursuit of the freedom to study Islam. Many Sulu FGD participants see no significant issues between the two sides, considering that BARMM is still part of the national government.

Some discussants expressed a need for transparent communication to avoid potential misunderstanding. One specific concern raised is the discrepancy between the competencies or skills emphasized in BARMM's ISAL program compared with the ALIVE program that is offered in non-BARMM areas. Despite this, they remain hopeful that open communication can bridge any gaps and ensure that BARMM's objectives are well understood.

***Tawi-Tawi stakeholders appreciate the national government's support and highlight the need for collaboration and consultation.***

The participants in Tawi-Tawi FGDs praised the generally positive and cooperative relationship between BARMM and the national government in implementing the madrasah education program. They expressed appreciation for the national government's involvement and support, which is seen as a step towards promoting peace and unity. There is a sense of collaboration and consultation between the two levels of government, and the respondents recognize the importance of national approval for regional programs, given the overarching authority of the national government.

Additionally, they said, the presence of an adviser for Muslim affairs within the Office of the Vice President facilitates communication and consultation between BARMM officials and the national government's

Department of Education. Overall, the relationship is viewed as mutually beneficial for strengthening Islamic institutions and achieving common goals in madrasah education.

***Lanao del Sur stakeholders see the current national-regional relationship as somewhat unclear, and therefore call for greater transparency and more collaboration.*** While they see a sense of positivity and cooperation, Lanao del Sur participants expressed a desire for more transparency and updates on the madrasah program. Some emphasized the need for a stronger and lasting partnership between the national government and the regional administration, particularly in the pursuit of peace and harmony within the community. Moreover, it is suggested that the BARMM government should work diligently to regain public trust and establish itself as a responsible entity in the context of the madrasah program. Overall, there is recognition of the need for more concrete information and collaborative efforts in this area.

***Maguindanao respondents note the reduced role of DepEd National in madrasah education and express a desire for continued oversight and cooperation with DepEd.*** Many Respondents frequently mentioned that the DepEd National is no longer involved in the madrasah education. Supervision by DepEd was mentioned a couple of times, indicating a desire for continued oversight and collaboration between the BARMM and DepEd, particularly in terms of curriculum development and quality assurance. It was noted that while the education system in BARMM is part of the national education system, the Bangsamoro government has the authority to develop an educational framework that suits the needs of the Bangsamoro people, including both secular and Islamic education. The establishment of ISAL (Integrated System of Alternative Learning) was highlighted as a significant step in this direction, ensuring that no Bangsamoro child is left behind in either form of education.

In summary, the stakeholders across different regions consistently stress the importance of a collaborative relationship between BARMM and the national government in advancing Madrasa education. They highlight the need for formal agreements to facilitate cooperation, recognition of BARMM's curriculum and standards, and integration of BARMM's educational priorities into national programs. Looking forward, there is optimism about continued collaboration, with expectations of BARMM's increased involvement in capacity-building and public Madrasa programs. A unified Madrasah curriculum for the entire Philippines is a shared goal, and stakeholders anticipate ongoing support from the national government.

### Responses from key informants

***Key informants at the national level highlight the absence of a clear and effective relationship between DepEd, other national government agencies and BARMM concerning madrasah education.*** The informants believe that there is a concerning misalignment between the way the national government implements its madrasah program in public schools (ALIVE) and BARMM's approach (ISAL). They think even the basic concepts of these entities differ, presenting a considerable challenge in harmonization efforts. While the national government's ALIVE program has remained stagnant with only two subjects, BARMM has introduced ISAL and expanded the curriculum to ten subjects.

This underscores the missed opportunity in the national government's ALIVE program, which could have significantly influenced youth outside of BARMM, deterring them from falling victim to violent extremist ideologies, said the key informants. Extremist groups often prey on young individuals using a distorted interpretation of Islam. The lack of comprehensive Islamic education leaves Muslim youth vulnerable to manipulation, as they lack the necessary knowledge to discern authentic teachings from extremist ideologies. Strengthening the ALIVE program and making its implementation more effective are essential to counter this threat..

***Key informants at the regional level differ in their views of the national-regional synergy.*** In the judgment of one key informant, the relationship between BARMM and DepEd is distinctive and characterized by collaboration. BARMM faces no significant issues regarding its education system primarily because it operates within the framework set by the Bangsamoro Organic Law which recognizes that the Bangsamoro Education Program is a sub-system of the national education program. However, as an autonomous region, BARMM enjoys the freedom to shape its education system according to its preferences, provided it aligns with existing laws.

From another perspective, the current nature of the relationship between the DepEd and madrasah education in the BARMM is not entirely clear, said another key informant. There is a perception that DepEd has not given sufficient attention to madrasah education. To address this, BARMM needs to take an assertive stance in strengthening madrasah education within the DepEd framework. There is a call for BARMM to proactively elevate traditional madrasah education, especially because these institutions lack a standard curriculum.

#### 4. Establishment of the Public Madrasah

**A notable 87.5% of respondents in Maguindanao and 63.2% in Tawi-Tawi are aware of the proposed establishment of the public madrasah.** However, an equally notable 90% in Sulu and 52.5% in Lanao del Norte said they had no information about it. The establishment of the public madrasah is mandated by the Bangsamoro Education Code. Basilan showed an equal distribution of those who are informed and those who are not.

**Table 11: Awareness on the provision of a public madrasah under the Bangsamoro Education Code (N=198)**

Aware	Maguindanao (%)	Lanao del Sur (%)	Basilan (%)	Sulu (%)	Tawi-Tawi (%)	All Areas (%)
Yes	87.5	47.5	50.0	10.0	63.2	51.5
No	12.5	52.5	50.0	90.0	36.8	48.5

**Knowledge about the public madrasah is limited.** Of those who indicated their awareness of public madrasah, 56.9% mentioned that they believed this institution would be established and overseen by the MBHTE BARMM. In contrast, 20.6% did not provide specific information, such as the expected implementation timeline. A small percentage (7.8%) had the misperception that the public madrasah would offer a blend of integrated secular and Islamic education.

**Table 12: Respondents' knowledge of the public madrasah (n=102)**

Knowledge about public madrasah	f	%
Public madrasah to be established and run by the MBHTE BARMM	58	56.9
Don't know the details (i.e. other information, when to be implemented)	21	20.6

Similar to integrated but secular and Islamic education	8	7.8
Others: Curriculum to be crafted by Ulama of BARMM; No answer; Free education; similar to ISAL; etc.)	15	14.7

***Regardless of limited awareness and knowledge, there is widespread support for the establishment of the public madrasah.*** Nearly nine out of ten (87.4%) survey respondents said they favored the idea. This support was uniform across Basilan (100%), Sulu (97.5%), Maguindanao (97.5%) and Tawi-Tawi (84.2%). Support in Lanao del Sur is lower at 57.5%, though that still represents a majority of respondents.

**Table 13: Attitude towards the establishment of a public madrasah (N=198)**

In Favor	Maguindanao (%)	Lanao del Sur (%)	Basilan (%)	Sulu (%)	Tawi-Tawi (%)	All Areas (%)
Yes	97.5	57.5	100.0	97.5	84.2	87.4
No	2.5	42.5	0.0	2.5	15.8	12.6

***The creation of the public madrasah is perceived to open doors of opportunity for both Islamic educators and Muslim learners.*** The survey results reveal several significant reasons for the strong support of the establishment of the public madrasah. A substantial 23% of respondents believe that these institutions offer a vital opportunity for Islamic teachers to secure permanent employment with a regular salary. This reflects the importance of job security and fair compensation for educators within the Islamic education system.

Another compelling reason noted by 18.6% of respondents is the expected improvement in the overall quality of madrasah education. The establishment of the public madrasah is seen as a way to increase the

number of Madaris with well-equipped classrooms, thereby expanding access to Islamic education and enhancing the learning environment.

Some 16.9% of respondents highlighted the positive impact on learners, emphasizing that the public madrasah provides opportunities for students to access quality education rooted in Islamic teachings. This reflects the desire to empower Muslim youth with a strong educational foundation. In addition, 11% of respondents mentioned the role of the public madrasah in strengthening knowledge about Islam and aqeedah, the Islamic creed. This underscores the importance of religious education and the preservation of cultural and religious values within the community.

Moreover, 9.9% of respondents expressed their support for the public madrasah for the greater good and welfare of everyone, demonstrating the belief that these institutions can contribute to the overall well-being of the community. The same proportion of respondents (9.9%) emphasized the concept of free madrasah education, which aligns with the idea of making Islamic education accessible to all, regardless of financial circumstances. Finally, 9.3% of respondents recognized the need for a balanced education, indicating that the public madrasah can help achieve this by combining Islamic teachings with a well-rounded academic curriculum.

**Table 14: Reasons in support of the establishment of the public madrasah (n=172)**

Reasons	%
Opens opportunities for the Islamic teachers to have permanent job with salary	23.0
Increases the number of madrasah with good classroom facilities	18.6
Provides opportunities for learners	16.9
Strengthens knowledge on Islam and aqeedah	11.0
For the good and welfare of everyone	9.9
Free madrasah	9.9
To have balance education	9.3

***The perceived slow implementation of the public madrasah was cited as reason by those who do not favor its establishment.*** Among the relatively small number of survey respondents (12.6%) who do not support



the establishment of the public madrasah, the primary reason cited was the perceived sluggish implementation process. Some of these individuals also expressed apprehension about potential losses to traditional Madaris and a decrease in the number of students attending private Madaris as a whole.

Views of madrasah stakeholders (focus group participants and key informants)

***There is a strong backing for the establishment of public madrasah in key informant interviews and FGDs.*** The results of the focus group discussions are consistent with the survey data in terms of overwhelming support for the establishment of the public madrasah. This strong backing is evident across all study areas. The reasons cited are primarily that the new institution a) opens new employment opportunities especially for the Ulama; b) provides an excellent way to strengthen Islamic education in BARMM; and c) contributes to the overall spread of quality Islamic teaching among learners in the region.

Participants in Maguindanao FGDs consider the establishment of the public madrasah as a way to reinforce the community's positive perception of Madaris and to offer permanent employment among asatidz. However, they stressed that, in the process, there should be a licensure examination for permanent teachers, and an assurance of parity between public schools and public Madaris in terms of the salaries they offer to their respective teaching force.

While participants in Lanao del Sur FGDs favored the public madrasah, a common sentiment prevailed regarding how it is managed. They firmly believe that while the MBHTE should take the lead in its establishment, its management should be a collaborative effort involving the national DepEd, with some even suggesting the involvement of the Ulama. Therefore, they recommend a thorough assessment to anticipate potential issues.

In Basilan, the FGD participants view the public madrasah as a better option than the current ISAL program because it is expected to cover all subject areas with the appropriate time allocation. Nevertheless, they acknowledge that its establishment may have an impact on the operation of private Madaris.

Stakeholders in Sulu perceived the public madrasah as an institution that will enable more in-depth and comprehensive Islamic education in the region. In Tawi-Tawi, FGD participants said the public madrasah will deliver education in both secular and Islamic studies, thereby producing future Aleem and high-ranking officials and professionals who are ulama.

***National-level key informants expressed strong support for the establishment of the public madrasah in BARMM, citing its potential contribution to education, employment and countering violent extremism.***

According to the informants, the public madrasah is envisioned as a platform to equip learners with the skills and values necessary to become responsible individuals, well-prepared to contribute to and uphold moral governance. Once operational, these Madaris can provide employment opportunities for ustadz who can then become vital partners of the government in curbing violent extremism. One informant suggested that the public madrasah be established as a package intervention that include the construction of madrasah facilities in a compound that also houses the mosque and administration building. The presence of a public madrasah in every barangay in BARMM is seen as a crucial step towards holistic development within the region.

***Region-level key informants hold the view that establishing the public madrasah system will lead to an enhanced quality of life and help dispel misconceptions often associated with madrasah education.***

They believe BARMM should aspire to create a public madrasah network but recognize that the process would be long and costly. Once institutionalized, the public madrasah system is hoped to significantly enhance the quality of life of the community and foster a more positive outlook on life among learners. As well, the regional key informants believe the public madrasah will rectify the common misconception that Madaris are exclusively religious institutions. The public madrasah will challenge and correct this misperception, which is believed to be a source of misconceptions related to violent extremism, as many of these issues are rooted in a misunderstanding of madrasah education itself.

### **C. Issues, Challenges and Opportunities**

BARMM has been taking steps to strengthen and support madrasah education in the autonomous region. As some key informants pointed out, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of Madaris over the years. The Bureau of Madaris Education of ARMM, now the Directorate General of Madrasah Education in BARMM, plays a vital role in this regard. "In fact, they have the funds to cater children's education needs in BARMM," said a key informant with the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos. "It's only right that madrasah education should be side by side with basic education to create balance."

The informants further noted that the national government's Department of Education has been implementing the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) since 2004, focusing on offering relevant educational opportunities to Muslim learners and integrating content and

competencies of interest to them in the national curriculum.

However, various challenges and issues have been identified in the implementation of madrasah education in BARMM. According to survey respondents, these include:

**1. Capital Outlay (24.7%):** This includes the critical shortage of suitable classrooms and improving existing facilities, with more than 50% of Maguindanao respondents citing this concern.

**2. Limited Financial Support (20.7%):** Traditional madaris depend on tuition fees, community donations, and local government support to sustain their operations. This particular issue is one of the greatest concerns in Tawi-Tawi and Sulu.

**3. Curriculum and Learning Materials (15.7%):** There is a need for clearer curriculum guidelines and policies to ensure quality madrasah education, an issue especially highlighted in Basilan and Sulu.

**4. Personnel Services (14%):** The inability to provide adequate salaries for teachers and staff is a concern across all regions, particularly among Maguindanao respondents.

**5. Professional Development (5.5%):** Enhancing teaching strategies and competencies of madrasah educators is crucial, especially in the island provinces.

6. Other issues raised include:

- **Delayed financial support (6.1%)**
- **Difficulties in implementing BARMM policies (3.0%)**
- **Absence of regular updates (1.5%)**
- **Limited opportunities for training (ISAL) teachers (1.5%)**
- **Concerns about the lack of specific programs (1.5%)**
- **Low parental involvement (0.5%)**

FGD discussants across various provinces echoed the above challenges, with each area emphasizing specific concerns. For example, Maguindanao discussants highlighted the lack of a well-established standardized madrasah curriculum for integrated Madaris. The province's traditional Madaris face financial issues, overcrowded classrooms, and concerns about madrasah involvement in violent extremism. FGD participants in Maguindanao also raised concern about traditional Madaris losing teachers to public schools that need ISAL instructors.

The Lanao del Sur FGD participants raised several issues confronting Madaris in the province, namely, lack of financial assistance including the irregular payment of allowances of the traditional madrasah teacher, limited learning facilities and resources, and lack of standardized madrasah curriculum. They also noted the non-implementation of the BARMM madrasah education program, except for the hiring of ISAL teachers.

The Tawi-Tawi FGD participants expressed worries about the employability of madrasah graduates and the difficulty of recruiting qualified ISAL teachers. They also raised some issues around the public madrasah, such as overlapping of programs with privately owned Madaris and the impact on their operations from competition with public Madaris.

An issue raised in the Basilan FGD emphasizes further the need for a uniform curriculum and proper training of teachers. A participant pointed out that teachers teach the way they were taught, which sometimes no longer fits contemporary ideas about how to teach today's young people. At times, the way teachers teach and interpret the Quran leads to learners misunderstanding Islamic practices, thoughts and belief.

A key informant pointed out that despite the opportunity provided by the organization of the BARMM, improvement in the madrasah education program is slow. The teaching pedagogy has not changed, and the madrasah education program has not expanded its coverage with the academic competition *Musabaqah* remaining as its focus.

Another key informant underscored the slow improvement in the madrasah education program, suggesting a need for a summit to gather support and develop guidelines for madrasah education from both national and BARMM governments. Also raised by another key informant is the lack of policy guidelines for the implementation of projects. For instance, what are the implementing guidelines of the public madrasah as provided in the Basic Education Code?

The issue of violent extremism was the focus of another key informant. ***"Why is the madrasah blamed as one of the sources of violent extremism? This issue should be a major concern of BARMM."***

A potentially tricky question is the constitutional principle of the separation of Church and State. Could the establishment and operations of the public madrasah be challenged in court on the grounds of violating the prohibition on the use of government funds for religious purposes? Section 29 (2), Article 6 of the Philippine Constitution states: "No public money or property shall be appropriated, applied, paid, or employed, directly or indirectly, for the use, benefit, or support of any sect, church, denomination, sectarian institution, or system of religion, or of any

priest, preacher, minister, or other religious teacher, or dignitary as such, except when such priest, preacher, minister, or dignitary is assigned to the armed forces, or to any penal institution, or government orphanage or leprosarium."

In summary, these issues highlight the multifaceted challenges facing the implementation of madrasah education in the BARMM, emphasizing the need for comprehensive solutions and reforms. Addressing these concerns can contribute to the improvement and sustainability of madrasah education in the region.

#### **D. Suggestions on Policies and Programs**

The key informant interviews, focus group discussions and research survey yielded a wide array of suggestions to enhance madrasah education in BARMM. These calls to action span both policy and program dimensions.

On the policy front, stakeholders emphasized the need for fiscal autonomy for the Directorate General for Madaris Education to bolster its management capacity. Additionally, there is a call for stronger administrative management within Madaris. Teaching values at the regional level is urged, alongside the development of a program to engage local and foreign Islamic scholars in teaching Islamic values and the biography of the Prophet Muhammad. There are also calls for financial and technical support from both national and regional authorities to develop guidelines for madrasah education. Furthermore, stakeholders advocate for a policy framework that empowers madaris to prevent and counter violent extremism.

**1. Fiscal Autonomy for the Directorate General for Madrasah Basic Education:** To enhance the quality and management of Madrasah education, a policy should be established to grant fiscal autonomy enabling the DGME to independently and effectively manage financial resources and programs.

**2. Enhanced Administrative Management:** Madaris should be required to strengthen their administrative management practices. This policy aims to improve governance, resource utilization, and overall efficiency within madrasah institutions to ensure their effectiveness.

**3. National-Level Values Education:** A national-level policy should be implemented to incorporate values education in madrasah curricula. This initiative seeks to promote moral and ethical development among madrasah students, fostering a sense of

responsible citizenship, inter-religious dialogue, religious and cultural pluralism (ta'dudiyah), and majority-minority relations based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah as well as the national values system (*Maka-Diyos, makatao, makabansa, makakalikasan*).

**4. Supportive Guidelines and Frameworks:** Regional and national authorities should collaborate to provide financial and technical support for the development of comprehensive guidelines and a policy framework for madrasah education. This policy will serve as a roadmap for the sustainable growth and enhancement of madrasah programs, ensuring their alignment with educational standards and goals while addressing specific needs and challenges. They should empower Madaris to play a proactive role in preventing and countering violent extremism, contributing to peace and stability in the region.

On the programs, stakeholders suggest strengthening the relationship between regional and local education authorities to provide increased support for madrasah education. Needs assessments and capacity-building initiatives for madrasah educators are seen as vital. A curriculum development program should be initiated to enhance educational content, with a focus on integrating values.

Also, leveraging websites and social media platforms can improve communication and outreach. Training in administration management is deemed necessary, as well as the creation of an institutionalized department under the Directorate General for Basic Education on Madaris for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) programs.

Integrating topics in the curriculum such as values education, the history of the Prophet Mohammad and PD 1083 (Muslim Personal Laws) is essential. Ongoing training in peace education for traditional Madaris is recommended for community-level peace promotion. Incorporating peace education in the madrasah curriculum is also suggested to empower basic education.

Other proposals by stakeholders are (a) advocate for the certification of Madaris, (b) offer scholarships to out-of-school youth to engage them positively in society, and (c) provide livelihood programs in the community, especially in remote rural areas.

**1. Strengthening Educational Support and Partnerships:** Enhance the collaboration between regional and local education authorities to provide increased and more targeted support for integrated and traditional madrasah education in BARMM.

**2. Capacity-Building for Madrasah Educators:** Implement needs assessments and capacity-building initiatives for madrasah educators to empower them with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective teaching.

**3. Curriculum Enrichment and Values Integration:** Launch a comprehensive curriculum development program that focuses on enhancing educational content while integrating core values into the curriculum to promote holistic development.

**4. Leveraging Technology and Outreach:** Utilize digital platforms including websites and social media to improve communication and outreach efforts, ensuring wider access to madrasah education resources and information.

The survey respondents, composed of madrasah heads and teachers, have specific suggestions to address problems and issues associated with the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) in the region, organized below by frequency from most to least mentioned:

**1. Government Support (27.3%):** The most frequently mentioned suggestion is for the government to provide support to the Madrasah Education Program. This support can come in various forms, including funding, policy development and project implementation.

**2. MEP Implementation (9.1%):** Stakeholders emphasize the importance of effectively implementing the MEP. This involves expediting project implementation, avoiding delays, and ensuring that the program's goals are met.

**3. Curriculum Guide (8.1%):** Many suggest the creation of a curriculum guide that outlines the educational content and structure of madaris. This guide can help standardize the curriculum and ensure quality education.

**4. Financial Resources (6.6%):** Several stakeholders believe that financial resources are essential to address MEP issues. Allocating funds to madaris can help improve their infrastructure and overall quality.

**5. Clear Policies (5.1%):** It is recommended that clear policies be established to address various aspects of the MEP. These policies can provide guidelines for hiring teachers, curriculum development, and program management.



**6. Screening, Interview, Exams for Madrasah Teachers (4.0%):** A policy and guidelines for hiring ISAL teachers through a rigorous process involving screening, interviews and exams are suggested to ensure recruitment of qualified educators.

How to empower Madaris to help prevent and counter violent extremism? The survey respondents suggest establishing an institutionalized department under the DGME dedicated to P/CVE programs. This department should advocate for the integration of values and peace education into the madrasah curriculum and provide regular training for teachers on peace education.

Other suggestions are (a) develop a program to increase awareness of violent extremism for madrasah heads, teachers and learners, (b) strengthen community programs on P/CVE with the active participation of the traditional madrasah, (c) establish a strong partnership with parents, community leaders and the madrasah, (c) an active role for the DGME in promoting peace education in teaching and learning in traditional Madaris, and (d) integrate P/CVE in madrasah curricula.

Finally, on the question of how regional autonomy can be maximized to empower Madaris to help prevent and counter violent extremism, a good number of the surveyed madrasah heads and teachers suggested (a) creating a BARMM policy on violent extremism in consultation with the madaris/ulama, (b) conducting regular consultation with the Ulama Council with regards to madrasah education and support program, (c) regional monitoring of all Madaris, (c) local government providing support to Madaris in the locality, (d) standardizing madrasah curriculum, (e) developing P/CVE programs specifically for Madaris, and (f) strengthening cooperation/unity of major stakeholders such as the regional government, military, local government units, barangay government units, and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).



## CHAPTER 5: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1. Summary

In recent years, strides have been made in madrasah education in BARMM, as shown by the rise in the number of Madaris across the autonomous region. Adding new momentum to this progress is the elevation of the former Bureau of Madaris Education to the Directorate General on Madrasah Education (DGME), and the resulting substantial resource allocation and mandate to establish public Madaris under BARMM's Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education. The stakeholders who participated in this study deem these developments as advantageous for enhancing capacity, infrastructure and the curriculum of the madrasah system.

However, there are concerns about the vulnerability of Madaris to violent extremism, particularly in areas near conflict zones or where extremist groups are present. Stakeholders say challenges like limited financial support for Madaris and insufficient regulatory oversight contribute to this vulnerability – meaning that fixing the financing and regulatory aspects of madrasah operations can contribute to the fight against violent extremism. Making the madrasah more resilient against violent extremism will also help. Stakeholders point to strong madrasah leadership, parental involvement, religious guidance, community partnerships and local government support as effective ways to build up resilience.

There is resounding support for the creation of public Madaris owned by MBHTE, with a preference for collaborative efforts between the Department of Education and MBHTE, where MBHTE assumes operational control over the new schools. Looking forward, the envisioned direction includes a blended curriculum encompassing religious and secular subjects, developed by the public madrasah in collaboration with MBHTE, and the inclusion of both boys and girls in separate classes within the madrasah. The preferred medium of instruction are Arabic, English, Filipino and vernacular/mother tongue, reflecting a comprehensive approach to education.

### 5.2. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight both promising developments and pressing concerns in the madrasah education system

across BARMM. The elevation of the former Bureau of Madaris Education to the Directorate General on Madrasah Education, coupled with significant resource allocation, is a positive commitment to holistic improvement. However, there are legitimate fears regarding the vulnerability of Madaris to recruitment by violent extremist groups, particularly in conflict-prone areas. The stakeholders underscore the importance of factors such as strong leadership, parental involvement, and community partnerships in fostering resiliency against extremism.

The recommendations put forth suggest a need for accelerated implementation of madrasah education improvements, with a potential legal challenge necessitating a robust defense that separates state support from religious promotion. Drawing inspiration from overseas models, especially the Singaporean model emphasizing moderation, could guide the development of madrasah education in BARMM. To address vulnerability, efforts should focus on driving out extremist groups, promoting peace in conflict zones, and providing financial support to traditional Madaris. Collaboration between the MBHTE, DepEd, LGUs and civil society organizations is crucial. The preferred relationship between the two education agencies (DepEd National, MBHTE in the BARMM), as indicated by the survey respondents, should be adopted to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to madrasah education. Ultimately, the key lies in balancing religious and secular subjects, involving both genders, and employing a diverse curriculum and pedagogy, reflecting the nuanced needs of the BARMM region.

### 5.3. Recommendations

**1. The current momentum that propels madrasah education in BARMM should be accelerated.** The call to accelerate the momentum in madrasah education within the BARMM underscores the urgency of capitalizing on the positive trajectory witnessed in recent improvements. The commendation by a key informant acknowledges the strides made in enhancing madrasah education but emphasizes the need for swift implementation, aligning with the ongoing political transition in the autonomous region. This alignment is seen as a strategic opportunity to solidify and build upon the positive changes, ensuring that the educational landscape evolves in sync with broader political developments.

However, a potential stumbling block arises in the form of a legal challenge questioning the constitutionality of creating public Madaris. The concern centers around the perceived violation of the separation of church and state, a fundamental principle in many democratic societies. To navigate this challenge effectively, BARMM must be well-prepared with a robust defense strategy. A suggested defense approach is to articulate that the allocation of public funds to support madrasah education aims

not to promote a specific religion but rather to empower Muslim youth with a more nuanced and accurate understanding of Islamic beliefs in order to counter the VE narratives.

By framing the allocation of public resources in this manner, BARMM can make a persuasive case that the primary objective is to counter the misinterpretation of Islamic tenets propagated by violent extremist groups. The emphasis shifts from religious promotion to the broader goal of fostering a comprehensive and accurate education that equips students with the critical thinking skills necessary to discern and reject distorted interpretations of their faith. This defense strategy aligns with the broader objectives of countering violent extremism by addressing root causes and promoting a more informed and tolerant society. In essence, it positions madrasah education as a tool for dispelling misconceptions and nurturing a generation equipped to contribute positively to both their community and society at large.

**2. Madaris in the BARMM should adopt either an indigenous or overseas models of madrasah education that emphasize moderation and balance.** This recommendation to adopt an indigenous or overseas models of madrasah education, particularly from Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, emphasizes the importance of moderation and balance in the BARMM context. These models, rooted in Asian countries with diverse Muslim communities, offer valuable insights that align with the cultural and religious landscape of the Philippines. Among these, the Singaporean model stands out as particularly relevant due to its success in managing a multi-religious society where Muslims constitute a minority indigenous community, mirroring the situation in the Philippines.

The MBHTE-owned public Madaris, once operational, suggest a potential blueprint for a new model. While acknowledging the possibility of developing a homegrown model, the recommendation underscores the need for any indigenous approach to explicitly reject violent extremism, promote peace concepts from the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions, and adhere to the principle of Wasatiyyah or moderation. This alignment with moderation is crucial in fostering an educational environment that not only imparts religious teachings but also instills values of tolerance, coexistence, and peaceful cohabitation within a diverse society.

By drawing inspiration from successful overseas models, especially those that navigate similar challenges posed by violent extremism, the Madaris in BARMM can position themselves as beacons of education that contribute to social harmony and counter the influence of extremist ideologies. This approach not only enhances the quality of madrasah education but also ensures that it aligns with the broader goals of promoting understanding, dialogue, tolerance, and moderation within

the BARMM region.

**3. Madaris in BARMM should be supported to address the factors that contribute to their vulnerability to violent extremism.** This recommendation underscores the importance of a multi-faceted and community-centric approach. First and foremost, efforts should be directed towards eliminating the presence of violent extremist (VE) groups in communities where Madaris are situated. This involves collaborative initiatives with security forces and community members to identify and remove any elements that may pose a threat to the educational environment. By creating safer surroundings, Madaris can function more effectively in providing education without the influence of extremist ideologies, including hostile attitude and intolerant views and behaviors perpetuated by violent extremists toward other faith traditions.

Simultaneously, addressing the root causes of conflict in specific zones is essential to create an environment conducive to learning. Initiatives aimed at bringing peace to these conflict zones not only contribute to the overall stability of the region but also ensure that Madaris can operate without the disruptions caused by ongoing violence.

To enhance the resiliency of Madaris against violent extremism, there is a need to invest in building strong leadership within these educational institutions. Leadership that is committed to the values of moderation, tolerance and peace can significantly influence the school's ethos and, by extension, the mindset of the students. Additionally, involving parents actively in their children's education and fostering values formation at home creates a holistic approach to counteracting extremist ideologies. Parents, as primary influencers, play a key role in instilling values that act as a counterbalance to potential extremist influences within and outside the madrasah.

Moreover, it is important to foster partnerships between Madaris, local government and the larger community. This collaboration not only strengthens the ties between educational institutions and the broader society, but also enables a collective response to potential security threats. By actively engaging with the local government and community organizations, Madaris can tap into additional resources, benefit from shared expertise, and contribute to the larger goal of creating a stable and secure educational environment that is resilient against violent extremism. This multifaceted support system aims to create a robust foundation for Madaris to thrive as centers of education, promoting values of peace, tolerance and moderation.

**4. In addition, financial support should be extended to traditional Madaris to help them achieve resiliency against VE.** Integrated Madaris are already subsidized by the national government while the envisioned public madrasah will be financially supported by the MBHTE. Traditional Madaris have been left out. They continue to rely primarily on tuition fees paid by financially able students and assistance from donors. The majority of survey respondents express concern about the limited financial support that renders traditional Madaris vulnerable to VE influences. This represents a critical gap in the current support structure that must be addressed to ensure the overall resilience of the madrasah education system in BARMM.

Recognizing the unique role of privately owned traditional Madaris alongside integrated and the proposed public madrasah, the recommendation suggests exploring innovative ways to enhance their financial viability. Proposals such as socialized tuition fees for students capable of paying in effect subsidizing their less fortunate peers represent a pragmatic approach to generate revenue and strengthen the financial resilience of traditional Madaris. With more diversified funding sources, these institutions can become less susceptible to external influences and better focused on providing quality education while actively countering the threat of violent extremism. In essence, this recommendation underscores the importance of a comprehensive financial strategy to safeguard the sustainability and effectiveness of traditional Madaris within the broader context of madrasah education in BARMM.

**5. The MBHTE through the DGME should work synergistically with the DepEd, LGUs, other BARMM agencies and civil society organizations.** This recommendation emphasizes the imperative for collaborative efforts in shaping and implementing madrasah education policies within BARMM. The call for the MBHTE to work synergistically with the Department of Education, local government units (LGUs), other BARMM agencies, and civil society organizations underscores the recognition that the success of madrasah education is contingent on a collective and coordinated approach.

The insistence on resisting the temptation to pursue an independent path in madrasah education highlights the legal framework within which BARMM operates. The terms of BARMM autonomy necessitate that the regional education system, including madrasah education, remains subject to general national supervision. This acknowledgment underscores the need for alignment with national education standards and regulations.

The proposed collaborative model, where the MBHTE and DepEd work together on a common program in ALIVE/ISAL programs and in integrated Madaris while granting operational control of public Madaris to

MBHTE, reflects a balanced and pragmatic approach. This arrangement acknowledges the strengths and expertise of both entities, leveraging the broader educational landscape while ensuring that regional nuances are considered. This cooperative framework not only promotes efficiency and resource optimization but also aligns with the preferences expressed by survey respondents, indicating a consensus among stakeholders on the importance of collaboration in advancing madrasah education within the BARMM context. Further, this collaboration can also find realization in the nuancing, development, review and updating of madrasah curricula and textbooks that aligns with the values national and regional values system, in addressing the contemporary challenges of violent extremism, as well as in bringing forward the positive model of education articulated in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

**6. Fill the post of Undersecretary for Muslim Education in the DepEd Central Office to rejuvenate the Muslim Education Program.** The institutionalization of Muslim education, encompassing initiatives such as ALIVE in Public Schools, Integrated Madaris, and Techvoc+ ALIVE within DepEd, served not only as an educational intervention to enhance access, quality, and equity among Muslim learners but also as a political and security initiative to help address historical, political, socio-economic, and cultural grievances.

However, since the departure of the last occupant following the conclusion of the Arroyo Administration, the Muslim Education Program has been less proactive. It has struggled to articulate its roles in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE), particularly in conflict- and post-conflict Muslim areas. In these regions, education can play a pivotal role in countering violent extremist ideologies and promoting a moderate Islamic narrative.

The need for a more assertive and proactive stance from the Muslim Education Program is underscored by the significant role education can play in the redress of historical grievances and the fostering of a peaceful and tolerant society. Addressing these challenges requires renewed commitment and strategic engagement to ensure that education continues to serve as a potent tool against the influence of extremist ideologies in Muslim communities. This can begin by reinstituting the Office of the Undersecretary for Muslim Education who will serve as the conductor for the program improvement and expansion, especially on P/CVE.

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