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Research on the Implementation  
of the **National Action Plan on Preventing  
and Countering Violent Extremism (NAP P/CVE)**  
in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region  
in Muslim Mindanao



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Researchers with the Institute for Autonomy and Governance interviewed 50 key informants at the national, regional and local-government levels, conducted ten focus group discussions with 78 sector and community leaders, and surveyed 150 beneficiaries of various programs and projects identified as part of the National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (NAP P/CVE). Selected findings and recommendations are set out below.

## Findings

1. National agencies, the BARMM regional government, BARMM LGUs and CSOs generally perceive the National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (NAP P/CVE) positively. The whole-of-nation approach, which harnesses government agencies, civil society, the religious sector and other key stakeholders, is seen as a holistic strategy that can potentially make a difference in the fight against violent extremism.

2. National agencies and CSOs, including Nonviolent Peaceforce and Plan International, are also positive on the localization of the NAP P/CVE by BARMM. The localized action plan is described by a DILG key informant as a “clear and good sign of innovation.” Consistent with the localized action plan, the Bangsamoro Task Force for Ending Local Armed Conflict (BTF-ELAC) has initiated P/CVE programs and projects such as Project TuGON and BCORP that are designed specifically to respond to the autonomous region’s unique needs and ways of doing things.

3. However, the structures and mechanisms of NAP P/CVE and BTF-ELAC in BARMM are still evolving. One key mechanism that is still in flux is the monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning system. It is not clear whether the effectiveness of programs and projects are being measured in a systematic way, which raises the questions of waste, duplication and lack of coordination among the programs and projects. Key informants, FGD discussants and beneficiaries surveyed also flag funding and budgeting issues as key challenges.

4. Only 40% of beneficiaries of P/CVE initiatives in BARMM are aware of NAP P/CVE. The majority – 52% – know of BTF-ELAC. These numbers are puzzling given that the respondents have participated in

a P/CVE program and one of the thrusts of NAP P/CVE are education and information campaigns.

5. But 98% of the beneficiaries surveyed agree that the programs and projects they were involved with contributed to the prevention and countering of violent extremism. This indicates that the implementers of NAP P/CVE and BTF-ELAC in BARMM are on the right track.

6. Still, the beneficiaries surveyed flagged problems in the implementation of the programs and projects they participated in. Most frequently mentioned are the lack of continuing support after the program/project ended, and suspicions of bias and discrimination in choosing the beneficiaries of cash handouts, housing, material support to reintegrate into society and other benefits.

## Recommendations

1. **Activate the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Mechanism at the Regional Level:** It is imperative to establish a robust monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) mechanism at the regional level to oversee P/CVE programs and projects across BARMM. While the urgency of implementation is acknowledged, it is equally important to assess the effectiveness and impact of these initiatives. The DILG can extend technical help in implementing MEAL because it is already using this framework.

The courses of action include:

- Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of ongoing programs and projects to ensure they align with objectives and produce desired outcomes.
- Solicit beneficiary feedback post-participation to evaluate program success and identify areas for improvement.
- Establish a central database to maintain comprehensive records of all P/CVE programs and projects across BARMM. This database should ideally be accessible to the public to enhance transparency and accountability.

2. **Design Culturally Sensitive Programs at the LGU Level:** Recognizing the diverse needs, cultures, and circumstances across different provinces within BARMM, P/CVE programs and projects should be tailored to address specific issues prevalent in each locality.

The courses of action include:

- Prioritize conflict resolution training in areas where issues like “rido” are prevalent, such as Sulu and Maguindanao.
- Focus on livelihood and resettlement programs in regions where former extremists and their families reside.

3. **Ensure Sustainability of LGU-Level Programs:** To address concerns about the sustainability of P/CVE programs and projects at the local government unit (LGU) level, it is essential to provide ongoing support beyond skills training.

The courses of action include:

- Offer assistance with logistics, marketing, financing, and other aspects of the supply chain to ensure that beneficiaries can effectively utilize their new skills and resources.
- Help build a business and community ecosystem of cooperatives and enterprises for P/CVE livelihood beneficiaries to join and link them with other players in the supply chain, including suppliers and customers.

4. **Secure Adequate and Consistent Funding:** Adequate and consistent funding is crucial for the success of P/CVE initiatives.

The courses of action include:

- Ensure that BARMM provides consistent and sufficient budgetary support for P/CVE programs and projects, reducing the reliance on internal revenue allotments of LGUs.
- Explore other sources of funding including from national agencies like NTF-ELCAC, foreign aid organizations like USAID and AUSAID, and local and international CSOs.

5. **Counter Suspicions of Unfair Selection of Beneficiaries.** To address suspicions that benefits do not reach “true” beneficiaries and that a “palakasan” system is at play, transparency and accountability measures should be implemented.

The courses of action include:

- Intensify the education and information campaign on P/CVE objectives and processes to win the trust and buy-in of the community.
- Establish a whistleblower system that allows citizens to

lodge complaints anonymously. These complaints should be thoroughly investigated by credible parties to ensure the fairness and transparency of beneficiary selection processes.

- Publish the list of participants of P/CVE programs and projects on the Internet so people can judge for themselves whether the selection process is fair or unfair and to discourage those making decisions from gaming the selection system.
- Invite independent third parties including CSOs to monitor the selection process and the outcomes, and suggest ways to make future programs more effective and efficient.

6. Clarify Roles, Responsibilities and Funding Mechanisms: To streamline P/CVE efforts and create a more structured approach, it is essential to clarify the division of labor, accountabilities, and funding responsibilities between the regional and LGU levels.

The courses of action include:

- Develop annual budgets for each program and project in all provinces, municipalities, and barangays, with funding provided by the regional level. This ensures that funds are allocated systematically and transparently.
- Delegate monitoring and evaluation responsibilities to the regional level, with a focus on assessing program effectiveness.
- Empower LGUs to design and implement programs tailored to their unique needs, with the regional level serving as an adviser and evaluator.
- Encourage LGUs to seek additional funding from private and foreign sources, as well as collaborate with civil society organizations (CSOs) and the religious sector, while giving the regional level the authority to veto initiatives that may have links to violent extremist groups or activities.

7. Enhance awareness of NAP PCVE at local government and community levels.

The courses of action include:

- Create easily understandable and culturally sensitive informational materials about NAP PCVE. This can include brochures, pamphlets, and multimedia content that explain the goals, strategies, and benefits of PCVE efforts.

- Implement mandatory training programs for local government officials, equipping them with a thorough understanding of NAP PCVE. This training should cover the local context, specific challenges, and the role of local governments in preventing and countering violent extremism.
- Conduct regular workshops and dialogues at the community level to disseminate information about NAP PCVE. These sessions should encourage open discussions, address misconceptions, and involve community members in the formulation of localized strategies.
- Work collaboratively with education authorities to integrate PCVE themes into school curricula. This ensures that the younger generation is educated about the risks of violent extremism and the importance of community resilience.
- Collaborate with religious leaders and influential community figures to amplify awareness. They can play a pivotal role in disseminating information and garnering support for PCVE initiatives within their respective communities.
- Partner with local media outlets to run awareness campaigns on NAP PCVE. Additionally, utilize social media platforms to reach a broader audience, sharing success stories, key messages, and engaging content to create a positive narrative around PCVE efforts.
- Create community-based task forces or committees dedicated to PCVE. These groups should include representatives from diverse sectors and work collaboratively to implement and monitor PCVE activities at the local level.
- Require local governments to submit regular progress reports on their PCVE initiatives. This fosters accountability, transparency, and ensures that the implementation of NAP PCVE is an ongoing and monitored process.
- Provide incentives, both financial and non-financial, to local governments and communities that actively participate and excel in PCVE initiatives. This can include recognition, awards, or additional resources for further community development projects.
- Establish a mechanism for ongoing evaluation of the awareness-building strategy. Regularly assess the

effectiveness of different components and be prepared to adapt the approach based on feedback and changing community dynamics.

8. Recognize the Policy Implications of the NAP P/CVE. The National Plan currently operates in an environment where the physical threat of violent extremist groups is at its lowest, but complacency is not an option. The persistence of the ideology of violent extremism means it can be adopted by any group or individual at any time. This can be addressed at the policy level rather than at the execution level. The courses of action include:

- Re-evaluate the role of the Office of the Jurisconsult as outlined in PD 1083. This assessment should explore effective and relevant functioning of the office with the goal of optimizing its role to align with present-day needs and challenges, particularly on P/CVE. The aim is to enhance the Office of the Jurisconsult in fulfilling its vital functions within the legal framework.

The Office of the Jurisconsult under PD 1083 has the “authority to render legal opinions, based on recognized authorities, regarding any question relating to Muslim Law”. The misuse of information and misinformation about Islamic religion by violent extremist groups is a question of Muslim Law, and only the Office of the Jurisconsult has the legal mandate to counter this violent extremist narrative and promote a moderate counter-narrative suited to the Philippine Muslim context.

To complement its role, the functions of the Bangsamoro Darul-Ifta’ in the BARMM can also be revisited and strengthened, especially in terms of countering the violent extremist ideology and promoting a counter-narrative in its place.

- Foster synergy among government institutions with mandates on Muslim development. These government institutions include the Office of the Jurisconsult, Presidential Adviser on Muslim Affairs, National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA), Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BARMM), and DepEd Muslim Education Program. This is crucial for promoting an integrated approach to Muslim development, particularly in the context of P/CVE. This collaborative effort serves to avoid the duplication of efforts and resources, enhancing the potential to minimize gaps and

promoting efficient resource allocation through the pooling of expertise and funds.

Additionally, this synergy fosters consistency in policies related to Muslim development. When these government institutions collaborate, they can ensure that policies, programs, and interventions are culturally appropriate, respecting the unique needs of Muslim communities. The collaborative approach allows for enhanced coverage, with each institution leveraging its expertise to complement and mitigate weaknesses in other areas.

Furthermore, this collaborative effort aids in identifying and addressing the diverse needs of Muslim communities, especially those in remote, marginalized, conflict, post-conflict, or protracted areas. This collaborative approach can be expanded to include key research institutions and civil society organizations operating within the BARMM or in Muslim communities.

- Conduct assessment and consultation on the structure, mandates, and funding of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos to the end that it can play a constructive and effective role in the development, particularly of Islamic law and education, the halal industry, and in general, coordinating policies and programs to promote the development of Muslim communities in the Philippines.

- Conduct research into the ulama (religious) sector to gain a comprehensive understanding of this important part of BARMM society. The sector has the background and credibility necessary to effectively counter violent extremist ideology. Ulamas possess the expertise to promote and articulate a counter-narrative that aligns with the regional and national contexts, particularly in the context of an indigenous Muslim minority within a secular democracy.

The research should focus on the nature, roles, perspectives and dynamics of the ulama sector to facilitate informed decision-making and promote tailored interventions at the national level. The aim investing is to strengthen collaboration, cultural sensitivity, and the development of effective strategies, ensuring a more nuanced and contextually relevant approach to engaging with the ulama sector.

This sector nuancing and contextualizing extend to ethnolinguistic spread, distinctions between overseas

and local graduates, diversity in graduates from different countries, variations across schools of thought and jurisprudence, differences between men and women in religious roles, and distinctions between senior and younger ulama, among others. The research can also delve into the diverse interpretations of Islam within the sector, encompassing differences between Sunni and Shi'a, the contrast between reformist and traditional perspectives, the dichotomy between purist/fundamentalist and syncretic approaches, and more.

Other research objectives include identifying influential figures within the ulama sector, mapping the intricate dynamics of their networks, evaluating educational frameworks and future prospects, assessing the socio-economic context, identifying grievances, and suggesting preferred interventions. The research should be iterative in nature to help in the ongoing process of monitoring and evaluating ulama engagement, interventions and contributions over time and allow for adjustments in strategies based on evolving dynamics on the ground.

- Assess the effectiveness of strategies implemented during the Ramos administration that elevated senior ulamas as focal points for ulama groups. The importance of the religious sector and the crucial role of ulama leaders in countering violent extremist ideology and promoting a moderate counter-narrative are well-established. However, there is a paucity of strategies to advance this conversation. One lesson from past administrations is the recognition of key influencers within the ulama sector as rallying points and bridges for engagement with the government and the wider community. As these key influentials serve as rallying points within, they also lead the ulama sector and the Muslim community in inter-faith dialogue and similar initiatives addressing the ills of insecurity as well as promoting social cohesion and justice.

We can begin with a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of strategies implemented during the Ramos administration that elevated senior ulamas as focal points for ulama groups. This assessment aims to critically evaluate the impact, outcomes, and sustainability of such strategies, with the goal of informing future policy decisions and ensuring that the engagement of senior ulamas remains aligned with the broader objectives of promoting peace, inclusivity, and cultural sensitivity within the Muslim community, and the larger Filipino society.

# CHAPTER 1: Introduction

## A. Background

The Philippine government recognizes that the country “is witness to the radicalization of different vulnerable sectors because of inter-related internal and external factors.”<sup>1</sup> As the National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism points out, “homegrown terrorist groups . . . such as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), Maute Group, and other local terrorist groups (LTGs) have adopted ideologies espoused by and aligned with regional and global terrorist organizations such as the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) based in Indonesia and the ISIS/DAESH.”

“Apart from the presence of multidimensional drivers of [violent extremism] in the country, particularly their shared belief in extremist ideology, the LTGs’ link with foreign terrorists has also been established due to their shared field experiences, training, and schooling in furtherance of terrorist acts,” the document continues. These terrorist groups established their camps mostly in the Bangsamoro region – ASG in the islands of Sulu and Basilan, BIFF in Maguindanao, and Maute groups in Lanao del Sur, provinces that are economically underdeveloped and suffering from high incidence of poverty.

A study conducted by the Institute of Autonomy and Governance (IAG), which was published in 2017 shortly before the Marawi Siege,<sup>2</sup> found that Moro youth in the Bangsamoro region were vulnerable to radicalization that leads to violent extremism. Recruitment of young people is prevalent in urban and remote areas due to poverty, lack of education, and security reasons, the study reports. Recognizing the enormity of the problem, the national government has started implementing the National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (NAP P/CVE).

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1 The National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, page 3.

2 On May 23, 2017, government forces and an alliance of militants including the Maute and Abu Sayyaf groups battled for control of Marawi in Lanao del Sur province. It took the government five months to regain control of the city, which was left in ruins and, according to official figures, caused the deaths of 920 militants, 165 government soldiers and 47 civilians. Amnesty International estimates that 360,000 people in Marawi and surrounding areas were displaced.

The main objective is to prevent radicalization leading to violent extremism through a whole-of-nation approach – the convergence of the government, civil society organizations, the religious sector, and other key stakeholders. NAP P/CVE further aims to:

1. Institutionalize P/CVE strategies from the national down to the grassroots levels;
2. Involve the different stakeholders across the broadest spectrum of society in implementing P/CVE programs;
3. Apply a comprehensive and people-centered approach to address the different drivers of radicalization;
4. Ensure that P/CVE strategies are inclusive and culture- and gender-sensitive; and
5. Ensure that P/CVE strategies uphold the rule of law, international human rights law, and international humanitarian law.

The success of the implementation of NAP P/CVE depends primarily on the initiatives of local governments to mobilize human and non-human resources towards the end of resolving the problem of violent extremism particularly in vulnerable provinces. This current IAG research is designed to track the implementation of the National Action Plan across the BARMM as it is localized to respond to the unique circumstances of the autonomous region.

## **B. Objectives**

Generally, the research studied and analyzed the state of implementation of NAP P/CVE by the BARMM administration and local government units. More specifically, it gathered data from various sources to find answers to the following research questions.

1. How do the BARMM and local government units perceive NAP P/CVE?
2. What are the NAP P/CVE structures and mechanisms at the BARMM and local government units?
3. What NAP P/CVE interventions have been implemented by the BARMM and local government units?
4. What NAP P/CVE interventions have been implemented by CSOs

(international and local) in the BARMM?

5. How are the NAP P/CVE interventions perceived by the community?

6. What are the gaps, challenges and lessons learned in the implementation of the NAP P/CVE?

7. What lessons about improvements and changes can be drawn from the implementation of the NAP P/CVE in the region?

Guided by these research questions, a three-phase conceptual framework was developed. Phase 1 aims to explore the existing structures, mechanisms, and projects related to implementation plans (IMPLANS) in preventing and countering violent extremism in an area, as well as the perceptions of local executives of the NAP P/CVE. The Phase 1 data, generated through in-depth interviews and analysis of past and current programs to prevent and counter violent extremism in the area, was used to identify the study municipalities for this research.

The activities in Phase 2 involved gathering information on the perceptions of the regional and local government units (LGUs) and program beneficiaries of the P/CVE initiatives implemented by civil society groups and LGUs. From the data generated, the gaps, challenges, and lessons learned were extracted and analyzed. Phase 3 focused on gathering data on the benefits derived by the program beneficiaries from the P/CVE interventions.

## C. Definition of Terms

In this research, the following concepts are defined and used:

***Community perceptions of NAP P/CVE interventions.*** Views and opinions of members of the community about the interventions to prevent and counter violent extremism in their locality. These can be positive or negative, depending on how the community regards and understands these programs.

***Countering violent extremism.*** Operations that seek to curtail the capacity of terrorist groups and individuals to translate violent extremist belief systems into action. These operations may use force to counter violent extremism.

***Government personnel and community perception:*** Includes attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of government personnel and the community about government efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism.

**Gaps and challenges in NAP P/CVE implementation.** Limitations or issues encountered by implementers in achieving the desired outcomes.

**Implementation challenges.** Obstacles and issues faced during the implementation process. Categorized as administrative, logistical, social, and political challenges, they can have an impact on implementation effectiveness.

**Implementation changes.** Alterations made to the initial P/CVE plan over time. The modifications to strategies, interventions, personnel or resources are tracked, and an assessment is made on whether these changes align with the evolving threat landscape and community needs.

**Implementation gaps.** Areas where the actual implementation fails to achieve the intended goals. The discrepancy between planned activities and outcomes is examined, possibly using quantitative data on targets met or qualitative assessments of shortcomings.

**Implementation improvements.** Refers to the changes made based on implementation lessons learned or identified gaps. The impact of these improvements on the overall effectiveness of P/CVE implementation is measured.

**Implementation lessons.** Insights from successes and failures during the implementation, which can be used to improve future implementation strategies.

**Implementation mechanisms:** Methods, processes and tools used to put the P/CVE plan into action. This can include strategies for coordination, resource allocation, information sharing, and decision-making.

**Implementation structure:** The organizational framework for P/CVE implementation that specifies the hierarchy of responsible units, departments and agencies, including reporting lines and communication flows.

**NAP P/CVE.** The National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, which aims to prevent radicalization that leads to violent extremism through a whole-of-nation approach or convergence of the government, civil society organizations, the religious sector, and other key stakeholders.

**NAP P/CVE interventions.** Programs and projects undertaken by government agencies or civil society organizations (CSOs) to prevent or counter violent extremism in the regional or local setting.

**NAP P/CVE mechanisms in the regional and local setting.** New or established processes for the implementation of the NAP P/CVE in the regional and local setting.

**NAP P/CVE structure in the regional and local setting.** Refers to the organizational chart related to the arrangement of and relations between the key actors in the implementation of NAP P/CVE in the regional and local setting.

**P/CVE interventions (by regional and local government units, line agencies and CSOs).** Specific actions taken by regional and local government units, line agencies, and CSOs to prevent and counter violent extremism. Includes categorizing these interventions by type (awareness campaigns, educational programs, community engagement) and assessing their impact.

**Preventing violent extremism.** Refers to interventions that aim to reduce the vulnerability of communities, groups, and individuals to ideas and beliefs around violent extremism.

**Radicalization.** The process that culminates in an individual adopting ideas and goals to bring about desired change through violent or non-violent means. Such desired change can be ideological, political, religious, social, economic, and/or personal<sup>3</sup>.

**Regional and local governments' perceptions of NAP P/CVE.** Refers to the government's ways of regarding, understanding and interpreting the National Action Plan in the regional and local setting.

**Violent extremism.** A belief system that drives individuals or groups to commit violent acts. This belief system developed in the context of repression, poverty and other push or pull factors such as money, power desired by the recruits, and charismatic VE leaders.<sup>4</sup>

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3 NAP P/CVE Manual. Page 5.

4 Ibid.

## CHAPTER 2: Review of Related Literature

### A. The Concept of Radicalization

The current phenomena of radicalization that references Islam pertains to a specific religious concept, the armed jihad<sup>5</sup> (Turner, 2014), as understood for many centuries in Sunnite tradition. The first strand of this construct refers to ideological adversity, whose past and current definition allows adherents of violent extremism to speak of a switch from jihad to jihadism. Contemporary jihadist movements locate this switch at the center of their engagement.

This transformation of religion is engineered primarily by building an ideology that is grounded in existential enmity. Certain groups are presented as extreme toward Muslims, justifying the move to declare a form of martial response against those groups. The responsibility of defending "Islam in danger" depends on the political powers that claim responsibility (Roy, 2017) – the caliphates, sultanates, emirates, kingdoms and presidential systems that represent all or part of the umma.

A defensive jihad's mission is to reestablish a power that draws its legitimacy from religious belonging and respect of Islamic orders, in the absence of which the practice of the Muslim religion would be threatened. Because it ensures the continuation of the practice of Islam as a religion, armed combat is a legitimate option (Cook, 2005). From this perspective, the nature of the enmity that is supposed to unite Muslims against otherness is no longer purely metaphysical or religious but also political. The principles of normal times are suspended as authorized by Islamic clergy who conceptualized the Fiqh al-Jihad, rendering violence as lawful because the umma is in a situation of war (Roy, 2017).

The evolution of radicalized Islam in the 20th century gave birth to a new vision. The radicalization of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's thought, which was influenced by Sayyid Qutb (Calvert, 2010), was

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<sup>5</sup> Jihad refers to the effort undertaken to change the state of a person or a group toward a greater degree of moral, spiritual, social and even legal allegiance to Islam. This notion points to positive action whose aim is to achieve compliance with the spirit and the text of this tradition. Central in the different historical forms adopted by Islam, jihad is deeply tied to the aims of believers, who are a part of various social configurations under which they assess specific priorities. Jihad is not only a concept with multiple meanings but is also one that can be stretched and extended. The aspiration toward a more Islamic existence can potentially concern all spheres of human life. Indeed, the scope, activity, methodology and aims of jihad form the social spaces of jihadism.

first carried out against an authority that was guilty, in the eyes of many increasingly violent activists from the 1970s onward, of usurping identification with Islam even though its actions supposedly showed the contrary (such as arresting Islamists). The notion of jihad was reactivated by the first "Islamic groups" (*al-Jama'at al-Islamiyya*) that began to theorize the right to violence against a regime that "betrays" Islam. Armed jihad against "the deviant prince," and by extension against its allies, integrated into the customs of Islamic movements (Kepel, 2003).

The second influence came from the strengthening and globalization of Salafi theses as expressed in the Wahhabi movement in the Arabian Peninsula. Contemporary Salafism (Cavatorta & Merone, 2017) aims to revive the original Islam, Salaf Salih. The schools of thought that are prone toward a systematized armed jihad were influenced by the fundamentalism taught within the oil monarchies. Reminiscent of the religious and military struggle in the 18th century due to the strong links between Imam Muhammad Ibn Abdul-Wahhab and the tribal leader Muhammad Ibn Al- Sa'ud (al-Rasheed 2012), some jihadist movements perpetuated the idea of armed jihad for authentic Islam.

The war in Afghanistan during the 1980s saw fighters from the Muslim world lead the first armed jihad at the global level. Several generations of armed jihad actors agreed that the liberation of Afghan territory was just one step in the struggle for the reestablishment of "scorned" umma rights. The ambition is grounded in a Pan-Islamic perspective and is largely unspecified at a geographic and temporal level (i.e., any situation turning to the disadvantage of Muslims could be targeted by armed jihad). These first movements of defense of Muslim communities turned into a model to follow.

Another influence is the generations of radicalized actors who began to redirect their engagement toward an aim detached from any specific territories to the benefit of an "opportunistic" struggle. The theater of action can be any conflict occurring in Muslim societies, even if the fuse was not lit by religious representation as in Chechnya, Bosnia and Iraq. This can lead to a posteriori justification of armed jihad to mobilize stakeholders against authorities blamed for destroying Islamic belonging. It can also legalize the overthrow of a power that is no longer Muslim while leading the fight against other powers accused of weaving a conspiracy against the umma (Cook, 2005).

## **B. The Concept of Violent Extremism**

Violent extremism is defined as the willingness to use violence, or support the use of violence, to advance a particular political, ideological, and social agenda (Nasser-Eddine, Garnham, Agostino & Caluya, 2011). Countries that are heavily affected by armed conflicts experience fragile security situations, bad governance, organized crimes, social and economic inequalities, and political instability that pave the way for violent extremist groups to mobilize. When extremism is a result of an intractable conflict in a community, violent and dispersed non-state armed outfits proliferate, with many using weapons and armed fighters. In addition, these violent extremist groups infiltrate political parties and establish more terrorist groups (Oliva, 2015).

## **C. Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism**

Khan (2015) defines countering violent extremism (CVE) as “the use of non-coercive means to dissuade individuals or groups from mobilizing towards violence and to mitigate recruitment, support, facilitation or engagement in ideologically motivated terrorism by non-state actors in furtherance of political objectives.” Selim (2016) explains that CVE is “a collection of non-coercive, non-kinetic, and, most importantly, voluntary activities to prevent and intervene in the process of radicalization to violence.”

Romaniuk (2015) argues that CVE-specific measures prevent violent extremism in a direct, targeted fashion. He adds that these measures are broad in scope and attempt to indirectly reduce vulnerability to extremism. Williams, Horgan and Evans (2015) use the US White House's definition of CVE as a “preventative approach to counterterrorism: an approach intended to preclude individuals from engaging in, or materially supporting, ideologically motivated violence.” McCants and Watts (2012) define CVE as an effort to reduce the number of terrorist group supporters through non-coercive means.

CVE prevention and intervention policies apply in the non-criminal space, meaning that these policies target individuals who have not committed a crime. Prevention programming aims to ensure that those who follow the law remain law-abiding. But if individuals cross the line and commit a crime, deradicalization and disengagement programming is designed to assist them to be rehabilitated and return to normal life.

Prevention programs focus on preventing violent extremism by

attempting to address its possible root causes (El-Said and Harrigan, 2012). These types of programs are broad in scope and target a certain community such as the youth (Vidino and Brandon, 2012). Since these initiatives target the possible root causes of violent extremism, and as the current literature has identified many different possible root causes, these initiatives can include a wide range of different programs.

Social and economic welfare programs, after-school activities, inter-faith dialogue sessions, community outreach, and engagement activities – all help address the roots of violent extremism. The interventions can be customized to meet the needs of those vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists. For example, in Florida in the US, Nezar Hamze, director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, helped develop an intervention crisis program for the youth. The team is composed of volunteers who are mental health professionals, social workers, legal representatives, and law enforcers.

### ***1. Integrating Conflict Sensitivity into P/CVE***

Peacebuilding and development agencies adopt conflict sensitivity in their work as a specific intervention in conflict-affected areas. The principles of conflict sensitivity encompass the following: 1) understanding local context; 2) understanding the interaction between context and peacebuilding interventions; and 3) identifying opportunities to reduce the negative impact of intervention and boost the positive impact (Haider, 2014). Integrating these principles makes peacebuilding and development work effective and efficient.

Any intervention aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism inevitably has to interact with the existing conflict and its power dynamics. Whether the outcomes are good or bad depends on the extent to which the actors involved are aware of these dynamics and are capable of responding to them. If the targeted community and its leaders do not see the intervention as neutral, it may worsen the conflict dynamics. For instance, the application of indiscriminate violence by government security forces pushed more youth to support the Maoist cause in Nepal (Subedi, 2013). Thus, conflict sensitivity is a useful instrument to ensure that intervention for P/CVE indeed fosters peace.

### ***2. Dialogue and P/CVE***

Dialogue and interaction are necessary to foster and maintain trust. This positive setting removes false assumptions and negative attitudes that could lead to violent extremism. Local community groups

are suitable for this role. For example, in Indonesia, the Gusdurian network established a safe space for dialogue, which brought together Yogyakarta youth to debate religious identity, respect and celebrate the diversity of young Muslims, and emphasize social solidarity between and among Muslim youth (Zeiger, 2016). The peacebuilding community has significant experience in creating safe spaces for interfaith dialogue as a way to prevent conflict (Smock, 2002). Peacebuilding actors can assess this experience and adopt lessons learned in the field of preventing extremist violence.

### **3. P/CVE and Counterterrorism Efforts**

Nasser et al. (2011) explain that countries can fully adopt either hard power or soft power counterterrorism strategies. For Nye (2008), hard power is when states coerce individuals by use of force to reach certain objectives. Hard power can be in the form of military or economic power (Wilson III, 2008). Hard power strategies seek to disrupt and destroy terrorist networks through military tactics that can happen either in a local or foreign setting (Brimley, 2006).

Soft power refers to “intangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority” (Nye 2008:95). Hearts-and-minds strategies are linked with soft power. These strategies date back to a counter-insurgent model that emphasized activities to win the hearts and minds of individuals to support counter-insurgent operations (Berman et al., 2008).

## **D. Global P/CVE Programs**

That Islamist extremism has spread across the globe is evidenced by the various P/CVE programs in Europe, North America, Africa, Australia, Middle East and Asia. In the context of P/CVE in the Philippines, it is useful to focus on initiatives in the Middle East and Southeast Asia to get a sense of how jurisdictions similar to Muslim Mindanao are approaching the problem of violent extremism.

### **1. P/CVE Programs in the Middle East**

A study by PREVEX (2020) examined why the radicalization of disenfranchised youth by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the jihadism of Jordanian youth did not lead them to join extremist groups, and why young people in Sweden and in Nineveh and Kurdistan region in Iraq did not do so either.

In Jordan, the failure of violent extremism was found to be due to the impact of religious counter currents through a) renowned jihadist ideologues rejecting violence; b) the high costs associated with jihadism; and c) kinship and clan affiliation. In Iraq, Kurdish nationalism provided a bulwark against the spread of jihadism. In Sweden, the genocide in Deir Ez-Zor and the Syrian civil war demonstrated to potential jihadists the high cost of extremism. In all these cases, the lesson was that economic stability and security matter on a collective level in strengthening resilience against extremist groups.

In a Policy Brief (2020), the three drivers of violent extremism in the Middle East were identified as a) the deterioration of economic and social conditions; b) autocratic rule and the absence of good governance; and c) intra-tribal competition, which play into the hands of extremist groups.

The document also enumerated the five intervention areas of the European-backed P/CVE programs in the Middle East and North Africa: (1) preventing radicalization (fostering moderate voices and disrupting hate speech); (2) implementing good governance (promoting liberal values and institutions against violent extremism); (3) advancing social cohesion (opportunities, conflict resolution, inter-religious dialogue and youth empowerment); (4) stakeholder capacity (P/CVE training workshops for key stakeholders, information coordination); (5) supporting population segments and related infrastructure (cooperation with MENA law enforcement officials and securing airports and borders).

## ***2. P/CVE Programs in Central Asia***

The Organization for Security cooperation in Europe highlights the advantages of a whole-of-society approach of the program related to P/CVE in Central Asia:

a) Governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) and other non-governmental actors share common goals, values, and interests when it comes to ensuring stability and defeating violent extremism that leads to terrorism (P/CVERLT);

b) CSOs provide a space for constructive engagement between the state and its citizens. As such, CSOs can be vehicles for ensuring that dialogue involves all segments of society. Partnerships around P/CVERLT allow for trust and understanding to be fostered;

c) Partnerships create new interfaces and enhance communication between all sectors of society. Consultations with and the involvement of non-governmental actors in P/CVERLT efforts create feedback mechanisms that enable governments to better understand the impact of policies while tapping into local knowledge of contexts, drivers and evolving trends;

d) CSOs have the capacity and experience to work on programs that mitigate structural conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism. Government resources devoted to P/CVERLT can be used effectively if spent on programs that focus on peacebuilding, good governance and rule of law, human rights, women's rights and gender issues, interfaith dialogue, conflict transformation, youth engagement, or crime and drug use prevention;

e) CSOs have the expertise, experience, awareness, and flexibility that help them recognize and tackle radicalization to violence in communities. Civil society organizations work with marginalized groups, promote political participation, and provide outlets for groups and individuals who want their grievances addressed. These outlets can help diffuse tensions between government authorities and communities, counter violent extremism narratives, and thwart efforts by violent extremist groups to leverage community grievances for recruitment purposes (OSCE, 2020).

### **3. ASEAN Policies on P/CVE**

The ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalization and Violent Extremism (2018–2025) supports the Manila Declaration to Counter the Rise of Radicalization and Violent Extremism (2017). The Manila Declaration focused on these initiatives: a) Adopt a sustained and proactive approach through capacity-building programs such as peace education; b) Promote information sharing and exchanges on best practices; c) Provide mutual legal assistance in criminal matters and extradition in conformity with the domestic laws of the ASEAN Member States; d) Develop an evidence-based approach to tackling the threats of radicalization; e) Strengthen the mechanisms for dialogue in addressing terrorism and violent extremism; and f) Pursue collaboration between ASEAN Dialogue Partners.

The ASEAN-UN Regional Youth Forum was organized by the United Nations Global Programme on Security of Major Sporting Events and Promotion of Sport and its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism. The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the

International Centre for Sport Security, and the ASEAN Secretariat, through the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Sports (SOMS), held the event on December 10, 2022. The Forum had 40 participants from the ASEAN Member States, athletes, senior experts on youth, education, and sports, and representatives from civil society organizations, the Royal Thai Police, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNOCT, 2021).

ASEAN Secretariat head Dr. Roger Yap Chao Jr. stated that the ASEAN Declaration on Leveraging the Role of Sports in ASEAN Community-Building and Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals sets a high bar in innovations to enhance the contribution of sports to ASEAN Community-building and to the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (ASEAN-UN Regional Youth Forum on Preventing Violent Extremism Report, 2022).

**P/CVE Programs and Youth Engagement.** Marc Sommers (2019) made these recommendations: a) Make the CVE-youth connection emphatic since CVE is a field of youth practice; b) Explicitly link youth to gender issues – gender needs to become fundamental to research on violent extremist organizations (VEOs) and action on CVE; c) Probe and account for class divisions by reassessing community activities; d) Prioritize CVE programming; and e) Combine local programming efforts with sustained advocacy with governments. The advocacy should reform policies and practices and partner with youth vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremist organizations.

The research findings consist of these strategic points: 1) an understanding of what it is like to be a youth in areas vulnerable to VEO activity is largely missing; b) Narrow, implicit understandings exist about gender and youth; c) The gender literature on VEOs and CVE is surprisingly weak overall, particularly on critical issues such as emasculation, alienation, humiliation, the prospect of failed adulthood for female and male youth, and issues of masculinity; d) Counterproductive government behavior has been found to regularly sideline youth and unintentionally boost VEO efforts; and e) Some community leaders exhibit a low tolerance for dissent and actively marginalize youth, who may respond by forming their own communities.

**Women, Peace, and Security.** The ASEAN Regional Study on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) reports that mainstreaming WPS in preventing violent extremism in ASEAN member countries is carried out through the development of action plans. Implementation is monitored through the Regional Action Plans on WPS. Second, the peace network, peacebuilding, and women's peacekeeping are new developments.

Third, the WPS approach is increasingly being applied to P/CVE and non-traditional security issues. Fourth, the ASEAN pillars of political security, economic and socio-cultural communities have been made part of the WPS agenda to promote regional integration (Phelan, et. al., 2022).

**Women P/CVE initiatives in ASEAN.** The ASEAN implementation of the WPS agenda calls for improving intervention strategies in the prevention of violence against women, including prosecuting those responsible for violations of international law, strengthening women's rights under national law, and supporting local women's peace initiatives and conflict resolution processes (ASEAN, 2021). Women and girls can be victims of sexual or gender-based violence at the hands of international terror organizations such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ASEAN, 2021). Below are some national P/CVE initiatives across ASEAN with regards to women:

Cambodia. The Women Peace Makers Organization (WPM), a local peacebuilding network, tackles conflict and communally combats violence against women. The Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT) achieves peace through education, training, research and practice. ACT seeks to transform the post-conflict environment by responding to local needs and sustaining community relationships. This organization helped draft Cambodia's National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women (NAPVW).

Indonesia. The government supports women's inclusion in the prevention of violent extremism (Phelan et al, 2022). Regional WPS Working Groups have been formed in ten provinces: Bengkulu, Lampung, West Kalimantan, Central Sulawesi, West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, East Java, and Papua.

Laos. The Institute for Global Engagement (IGE) partnered with local governments and religious communities to advance freedom of belief through the reinforcement of mutual understanding and peaceful relations. This organization supports the Laos Peacebuilding Team, a volunteer group made up of Catholic laypeople, Protestant clergy, Baha'i community leaders, and Lao Buddhist monks. This organization links government officials and civil society leaders at all levels (ASEAN, 2021).

Thailand. The Peace Agenda of Women, a consortium of 20 non-profit organizations, promotes an increased role for women in peacebuilding and peace negotiations. This network established the Southern Border Provinces Administration Center's Coordination

Center for Children and Women in 2019 (USAID, 2022).

Vietnam. The Vietnam Women's Union worked with public safety officers and government agencies for the Envision 2019: Year of Safety for Women and Children initiative. This non-profit encouraged the active participation of women in the study of sustaining and achieving reforms in the security and public order sector (ASEAN, 2021).

## ***E. P/CVE in the Philippines***

In the Philippines, more than 35 organizations in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao are working on issues of peace, human rights, and women by implementing the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and related Local Action Plans (ASEAN, 2021).

### ***1. P/CVE Threat Assessments***

The Philippines faces a myriad of security challenges. Former Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana stated that the communist terrorist insurgency is still the number one security threat to the country (Philippine Senate Deliberations, 2020). The Philippine National Police cited a plot by Hamas to carry out terrorist attacks against Israelis in the Philippines (Philippine Star, February 15, 2022). A government report noted that pro-ISIS militants in Southern Philippines continued to clash with security forces and warned that the regional online ecosystem may lead to the operational capability of pro-ISIS groups in Indonesia and the Philippines (Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs, 2022).

The Philippine government has implemented a counter-radicalization program called *Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan* (PAMANA) or Resilient Communities in Conflict-Affected Communities. This program provides social protection to former combatants and their close relatives and also helps indigenous people and other marginalized groups. The aim is to help foster sustainable peace and capacity-building for resiliency.

The Philippines co-sponsored the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178, which deals with foreign terrorist fighters. Its government supports the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Violence and Brutality Committed by Extremist Organizations in Iraq and Syria.

## **2. Understanding Violent Extremism in the BARMM**

The Institute for Autonomy and Governance conducted research in 2018 on violent extremism in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. To contribute to P/CVE in the region, it recommended that there should be programs that promote peacebuilding, good governance and inclusive development. Specifically, these programs include:

- a) A regional peace platform for improved prevention-of-violent-extremism programming
- b) Promotion of peaceful narratives of Islam to counter extremist interpretations
- c) People's participation in promoting good governance that can deliver adequate social services, and capacity building to enable youth, women, and communities to assert their economic and political rights
- d) Implementation of community-driven socio-economic interventions that will facilitate self-help and sustainable community-based livelihood programs, improved community-based financial literacy, awareness of health threats, and accessibility to free and quality education
- e) Empowerment of motivated young ulama (Muslim religious scholars) towards resiliency and active involvement in preventing violent extremism

The study found that respondents are not aware of the term "violent extremism," although they live with its reality, and there are communities for which the issue of violent extremism is not alarming. Poverty is identified as the main cause of VE, with jihad second and monetary rewards or benefits for recruits the third most cited. Also cited as reasons are lack of education or information, politics and politicians, rido (recurring retaliatory acts of violence between families and kinship groups), and social injustices (IAG, 2018).

The study compiled the many suggestions, comments and responses from key informants, focus-group discussants and survey respondents on how to prevent and counter violent extremism in the BARMM. Education and livelihood opportunities were the most cited, along with listening to the people and taking care of their concerns, including government provision of basic services. Networking is

emphasized by the informants, while dialogue and intercultural activities are given importance by the discussants.

Finally, the study recommended funding for the development and implementation of programs aimed at including Filipino Muslim communities in the whole-of-nation approach of the National Task Force to End the Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC). The researchers said this is important to prevent the Communist Terrorist Group (CTG) of the Philippines from co-opting, radicalizing and recruiting Muslim youth and other individuals (IAG, 2018).

### ***3. Understanding Local Contexts in P/CVE Work***

A recent report by the Asia Foundation highlights the need for a comprehensive and grounded analytical approach to evaluating how well the local contexts of P/CVE programs in Southeast Asia are understood (The Asia Foundation, 2020). The first point is to recognize the need to assimilate the policy and legal frameworks that shape the enabling environment for addressing violent extremism. New legislation on terrorism and extremism should assess context-specific sensitivities and the implications for navigating the political environment, the report recommended.

The researchers called for a nuanced analysis of ongoing P/CVE studies and suggested that government and civil society initiatives be combined, and the relationship between them clarified and strengthened. The proximity of CSOs to their communities and their knowledge of local grievances should be tapped to form essential and enduring partnerships and to generate insights. Civil society organizations can play a role even in security matters.

The research recommended linking P/CVE to development and peacebuilding approaches. A "strategic portfolio" approach should be adopted by assessing the extent to which the existing counterterrorism, peacebuilding, development and preventing-violent-extremism initiatives address the grievances of identified populations. Initiatives to improve governance and reduce conflict should be affirmed and swift and effective responses to serious problems should be prioritized. Strong relationships across the ecosystem of organizations should be established. PVE should be mainstreamed into governance and other interventions in areas where push/pull factors and vulnerabilities to violent extremism are evident.

The third point is to maintain a balance of initiatives and investments in P/CVE at the macro, meso and micro levels, an approach

that will help sustain valuable support for ongoing programs. In terms of sector funding decisions, funding centered at the meso level should be ensured and should address identified, context-specific drivers of violent extremism within at-risk groups.

The fourth aspect is to support targeted capacity building for CSOs and government stakeholders in marginalized areas. In Thailand and the Philippines, donors encourage CSOs to devise ways of carrying out in-service training as a part of funded projects. In Malaysia and Indonesia, national NGOs and think tanks help to build the capabilities of local community-based groups.

Efforts to improve mutual understanding between civil society and government actors, including security agencies, should be supported. Reinforcing traditional divisions between them should be avoided. Donors should develop and support public forums and safe spaces, and the development of coordinated approaches across identified high-priority sectors. This engagement requires donors to tolerate risk, learn from failure as well as success, and back the role of CSOs under challenging circumstances. CSOs have limited capacity to address the gendered aspects of violent extremism. They should be encouraged to employ female staff and to include women in their target groups.

There is a need for adaptive aid approaches. CSOs in complex and politically sensitive areas are constrained by various issues around current aid-delivery systems, among them short-term project timeframes, inflexible project plans, and a focus on externally driven deliverables. Given the importance of relationships, trust, and sensitivity, there is a need for PVE work to be adaptable, process oriented and, particularly applicable to donors, iterative and flexible.

The report recommends that P/CVE monitoring and evaluation utilize qualitative approaches to data collection. Donors should support successful P/CVE programs in vulnerable countries. During the Covid-19 pandemic, some governments looked to control civic space, highlighting the need for external support and protection for CSOs. Rigorous evidence-based research on clear P/CVE impacts should be set up. Stakeholders must develop a sound research evidence base that reflects the essential role of civil society organizations in P/CVE.

#### ***4. Provincial-Level P/CVE Research***

Kasey (2018) conducted P/CVE research in the five provinces of the BARMM, namely Maguindanao (now divided into Maguindanao

del Norte and Maguindanao del Sur), Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Basilan and Tawi-Tawi, as well as the non-BARMM province of Lanao del Norte. Twenty-five case studies were compiled, providing a diverse array of individual histories of radicalization and membership in armed and extremist groups in central, western and southern Mindanao. The project involved the participation of local government units, academics in the community, and other sectors.

Kasey identified six drivers that showed strong and consistent strength as predictors of support for violence and extremist ideas: feelings of community marginalization and discrimination, belief that Islam is under attack, support for revenge-seeking, lack of self-efficacy, the culture of guns, and sense of personal social isolation and insecurity.

The finding that lower feelings of social isolation correlate with more support for violence and extreme ideologies shows that radicalization and extremism are not primarily a problem of isolated individuals who are poorly integrated into their communities. Instead, it seems that being strongly socially connected to one's community—and conscious of the marginalization and discrimination that one's community faces—makes one more likely to support using violence in defense of that community. The high levels of trust expressed in family and community members and the suspicion expressed towards outsiders explains the acceptance of revenge, which stands at the intersection of the individual, community and violence.

That community marginalization fades in significance to the perception that Islam is under attack among Muslim respondents highlights that, within the Muslim community, support for violence is stronger among those who interpret discrimination as being directed specifically at their religious community. Muslim respondents were also more likely to express lower levels of self-efficacy and more support for revenge, further highlighting how these risk factors overlap in the Muslim community.

The focus on the community and the importance of social integration resonate strongly with the case study interviewees. For many of the individuals profiled in western Mindanao, the pathway to extremism began through family and social networks. Often, individuals became members of local armed groups focused on protecting their family and community from outsiders—only to find themselves, knowingly or not, pulled into the orbit of more extreme groups. This is true as well among interviewees in central Mindanao, where social and family networks are key in guiding individuals toward extremism, and

where being part of a small group of like-minded individuals provides a strong sense of community, particularly in the region's universities.

### **5. P/CVE Narratives of Victims and Survivors of Terrorism**

P/CVE books that shed light on the real-life stories of the victims and survivors of terrorism in the Philippines, such as *Crossing the Red Line* (Toledo, 2019), *Communist Termites* (Toledo & Fabe, 2021), *Narrative Warfare 1*, and *Narrative Warfare 2* (Parlade, 2021), have been widely distributed nationwide in public and private schools, government offices, and religious groups and communities. These P/CVE books allow both academic and non-academic readers to gain knowledge about the first-hand experiences of terrorism survivors.

Art, music and dance are used to treat trauma in cultures around the world, including those conditions brought on by the terror of violent extremism. One of the few systematic studies to compare nonverbal artistic expressions and writing was done by Anne Krantz, a San Francisco dance and movement therapist, and James Pennebaker. They concluded: "The mere expression of the trauma is not sufficient. Health does appear to require translating experiences into language" (Krantz and Pennebaker, 2007). The suggestion is that writing as self-expression, not necessarily for publication, may help victims and former members of violent extremist groups heal from their trauma.

### **6. Barangay-Level P/CVE Programs**

The Philippine public security and safety establishment seeks to empower the local community or barangay to act as a bulwark against violent extremism. In 2017, the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) released a Memorandum Circular that promotes synergy between the state and private sector in fighting criminal activities, corruption, illegal drugs and violent extremism.

In response, the Philippine Public Safety College conducted a course on Training the Trainers on P/CVE to deepen their understanding of the consequences of violent extremism. Participants of the seminar-workshop included regional training directors, members of the Philippine National Police Academy, and representatives from the DILG and the barangays. To improve the capacity building of civilian law enforcers, government bureaucrats, and elected officials on P/CVE,

The consolidation of inputs from the participants and consultations with select subject matter experts became the basis for the Whole-of-Community Approach (WOCA) in P/CVE, with its slogan:

Integrated Community Action against Radicalization and Extremism (i CARE). The WOCA P/CVE program is a people-centric template for intervention that enhances the resilience of local communities in the country against the forces of Islamist and Communist-based violent extremism.

WOCA seeks to empower villages by enhancing the material capability and interoperability of three local institutions, namely, the Barangay Information Network (BIN), Barangay Peace and Order Council (BPOC), and the Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team (BPAT). Taking into account the unique conditions and dynamics of each barangay, WOCA is anchored on community-oriented policing. This is a “philosophy that promotes organizational strategies [that] support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues, such as crime, social disorder and fear of crime” (De Leon, *et. al.*, 2020).

BIN intends to serve as the force multiplier, with field researchers and/or auxiliaries of barangay officials and police officers closely monitoring the barangay for suspected terrorist individuals and activities. The information network is divided into three sub-groups: (i) Operational (village peacekeepers or ‘tanods’, traffic, security guard, market security, company guard, subdivision security); (ii) Support (tricycle drivers’ association, radio group, jeepney drivers’ association, Sangguniang Kabataan, and Reserve Officers Training Corps); and (iii) United Front (vendors’ association, Parents-Teachers Association, non-government organizations, religious groups, media, and civic organizations).

There are four existing grievance platforms that the BIN and ordinary citizens may tap into to report suspicious individuals and activities. These are: (i) face-to-face barangay complaint desk; (ii) text messages (iii) enhanced PNP website, and (iv) national emergency hotlines. The information is validated by BPOC, the decision-making body primarily responsible for addressing reported incidents of terrorism at the local level. It comprises the barangay chairman, Philippine National Police Chief, Sangguniang Kabataan, tanods (barangay peacekeeping and security officers), lupong tagapamayapa (pacification committees), public school teachers, inter-faith groups, seniors, non-government organizations, civil service officers, Armed Forces of the Philippines (if available), and kagawads (councilors) (De Leon, *et. al.*, 2020).

BPAT functions as the Quick Response Team in the barangay

to implement BPOC decisions and avert possible attacks. The peacekeeping team members include the tanods, Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), and other related public safety agencies. In the event of territorial occupation by terrorists, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) personnel would be included in the BPAT.

If a group of terrorists has begun carrying out mobilization activities (establishing militant camps and sleeper cells, mass recruitment, combat training exercises), BPOC would focus on target hardening through barangay mapping, employment of deployment shield concept (prophylactic patrol, visibility patrol, combat ops, raid, deployment of police in high-value targets and critical infrastructures), establishment of panatag na barangay safety zones, and conduct of law enforcement operations.

Under such a framework, there are six key areas for expanded public safety for peace and security in the barangay. These include (i) curbing illegal drugs and other illicit networks of crime and corruption (ii) countering radicalization, violent extremism, and terrorism (iii) maintaining order and keeping the peace in cities, communities, and the countryside (iv) responding to, mitigating and managing disasters, emergencies, and pandemics (v) protecting cyber networks and other critical infrastructures and (vi) safeguarding roads, railways, airports, seaports, coasts, and territorial seas.

WOCA proponents point to the necessity of a Homeland Security law that would cover key strategic actors and sectors in the public safety system and bring them into a single agency that could be labeled as the Department of Homeland Security (De Leon, *et. al.*, 2020).

## **7. Youth Vulnerability to Violent Extremism**

The Institute of Autonomy and Governance carried out a study on understanding youth vulnerability to violent extremism in 2017, comprising a quantitative survey, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and case studies. The research found no large-scale radicalization of young Muslims in Mindanao or widespread intentions to join VE groups. But there was very limited understanding of VE concepts used by extremists to justify acts of violent such as Al Wala' wal Bara (loyalty only to Muslims; rejection of non-Muslims) and Hijrah (withdrawal from the "un-Islamist" world).

Young people do not know the concept of violent extremism (only 26% say they know what the term means) and also know little

about specific VE groups beyond Abu Sayyaf and ISIS. Less than half have heard of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and the Dawla Islamiyya, aka Maute Group, and even fewer are aware of international extremist networks like Al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah. The low awareness of extremist concepts indicates that VE groups have not yet popularized their interpretation of Islam among the young, but without an effective and relevant program to counter the VE narrative, Muslim youth will remain vulnerable to radicalization (IAG, 2017).

Youth respondents affirm the presence of VE recruiters in their community, who operate mainly in local educational institutions (Madaris) and mosques after Friday prayers. They are generally mistrusted by the community. The conventional wisdom is that individuals alienated from society are particularly vulnerable to extremism. In fact, one finding of the research is that those targeted are often bright students in secular and religious schools and those with useful knowledge such as engineering and medicine. The respondents said that those young people are often pressured to join by their existing social links.

Of those radicalized, most gradually adopted radical views by listening to radical preachers, attending prayer groups, and having regular contact with recruiters. In Basilan and Sulu, young people pointed to poverty as the major driver of VE membership. VE groups operating in mainland Mindanao, particularly in Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao, are Various driven by radical Islamic ideology. In contrast, groups like the Abu Sayyaf that operated primarily in the Sulu Archipelago are driven more by profit. Survey respondents in all provinces believe that education is a key solution to the VE problem.

### ***8. The Push and Pull Factors of Violent Extremism***

Various researchers have looked at the push and pull factors that apply to VE. Below are some of the push factors:

- 1) A threat to individual and collective identity occurs when one feels that one's ethnicity, culture, or religion is threatened at a personal or group level. Psychological research points to several instances of perceived deprivation and subsequent threats to personal and collective identity (Taylor, 1994);
- 2) A challenge to one's identity is of particular significance in the case of religious extremists because of the ability of religion to serve identity needs (Seul, 1999);

3) Perceived threats to both personal and collective identities result in alienation or humiliation leading to hatred and anger, and pose challenges to human security (Bhui, Dinos, and Jones 2012);

4) Marginalization, where one is either not recognized or misrecognized as a member of a social group (Taylor, 1997) leading to discrimination, segregation, or bullying (Keddie, 1998). This results in marginalization from mainstream society and may contribute to fundamentalism and radicalization evolving into terrorism (Hui et al., 2012);

5) A feeling of ideological necessity, when one is moved by the plight of the group one identifies with. For example, some young people experience a profound "sense of injustice" with the events they see in Syria. They may think that it is their sacred duty to take revenge (Bhui et al., 2012);

6) Looking for revenge and hatred against a group present in Western nations for invading Afghanistan or Iraq, which leads radicalized individuals to believe that murder is justified and so is killing the enemy (Lindon and Klandermans, 2006). Radicalization is a path wherein disenfranchised Western Muslim youth can reassert their religious identity within non-Muslim settings (Roy, 2004);

7) Searching for life's inherent meaning occurs when individuals seek significance and a reason for living. Extremist propaganda fills this void successfully, including for those who are more vulnerable as a result of depression (Kruglansky & Webber, 2014);

8) Boredom can push individuals from comfortable backgrounds to seek violence. For example, some adherents of Islamic terrorism are neither alienated nor deprived but are seeking adventure through affiliation with the goals of terrorist groups. For these individuals who seek excitement and adventure, the thrill of using weapons is seen to be "cool" (Samuel, 2012, p.12);

9) Globalization fosters religious fundamentalism by facilitating the global reach of terrorist organizations. Ştibli (2010) points out that Islamic terrorist networks are unique in their global reach and decentralized nature that penetrates political boundaries in their spread of propaganda and recruitment through very flexible and mobile networks. According to the Dutch National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (2009), terrorist and extremist websites contribute to the process of radicalization through "ideology formation, ideology reinforcement, and ideological indoctrination" (p.10). The

multilingual character of these websites appeals to both regional and diaspora communities; and

10) Persistent and systemic inequalities may force an individual to self-radicalize to achieve their basic needs. These daily needs encompass the "provision of clean drinking water, education, vaccination programs, provision of food and shelter, and protection from violence, military or otherwise" (Benavides, *et al.* 2011, p. 204).

These are some of the pull factors when considering religious extremism:

- Media stories and messages depicting the West as the source of evil, immorality and inequality. These narratives influence the youth and evoke sympathy in vulnerable individuals who may not be familiar with the complex environments. These narratives may lead to the reinforcement of existing ideological beliefs. Extremist groups take advantage of poverty, unemployment and a lack of education to attract recruits and justify violent acts (Ersen & Kibaroglu, 2011);
- Peer group pressure has an undeniable impact on converting young men and women in schools and universities to extremism and radicalization. An example is the three UK high school friends who left for Syria together (Elgot, 2015);
- Several radicalized groups hire local radicalized recruiters to instigate, convince, and recruit young and vulnerable youth to commit crimes in the name of religion. Radical lectures, sermons and online speeches are regularly shared. There are also in-person events that are aimed to propagate extremist views. For example, Al Qaida features radical religious leaders who give online speeches and sermons (Braniff, 2015).
- Extremists target the youth who seek to achieve more meaning in their personal lives. Extremists make use of beautiful promises of an afterlife that is attained through self-martyrdom or the killing of people in the name of God (Anderson, 2006). Juergensmeyer (2000) presents the idea of violent performance. He recommends that education must address both those who are at risk and those whose actions may marginalize their peers.

# CHAPTER 3: Methodology

## A. Design of the Study

The study employed a descriptive research design that aims to obtain information to systematically describe a phenomenon, situation or population. More specifically, it helps answer the “what” and “how” questions regarding the research problem. In this study, we are looking at the implementation of the NAP P/CVE in the regional and local settings in the BARMM. The research gathered data on the perceptions of regional and local executives of the NAP P/CVE, their understanding of the concepts, the action/interventions undertaken, and the structure and mechanisms established to prevent or counter violent extremism in their community.

Mixed methods of data collection techniques were employed such as key informant interviews, focus group discussions, desk reviews and surveys.

### ***1. Phases of Data Collection***

As indicated in the conceptual framework, the implementation of the research involved three phases of data collection:

***Phase 1.*** Interviews with regional key stakeholders using the interview guide. The aim is to gather initial data on (a) how the implementation is proceeding in a regular administrative region, and the relationship of the Anti-Terrorism Council under the Office of the President and the Project Management Office of the Department of the Interior and Local Government. Preliminary interviews with focal persons at the BARMM Ministry of Interior Local Government and Ministry of Public Order and Safety (MPOS) were conducted to gather information on (a) NAP P/CVE structures, mechanisms and projects in the BARMM, and (b) perceptions of municipal LGUs of NAP P/CVE.

***Phase 2.*** Engagement with regional stakeholders, LGUs, CSOs and local communities to gather data on their perceptions of NAP P/CVE, programs/projects implemented, and the gaps, challenges, lessons learned, and suggestions in the implementation of NAP P/CVE in the region.

**Phase 3.** Survey of NAP P/CVE beneficiaries on the benefits of the interventions and suggestions for improvements in the delivery of programs/projects.

## **2. The Respondents**

Three groups of respondents were involved, selected based on their participation in the implementation of the NAP P/CVE in the region.

**The key informants.** A total of 50 informants were interviewed in this study, 22 in Phase 1 and 28 in Phase 2.

- Phase 1. The informants are municipal local officials and are not part of the Phase 2 key informant interviews.
- Phase 2. The key informants are the main implementers of NAP P/CVE such as the national, regional and local government units (LGUs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and the security sector (AFP and PNP).

**The FGD participants.** The sectoral and community leaders in the focus group discussions were selected based on their knowledge and experience of violent extremism in their community. Two FGDs with at least seven or eight participants from each of five study municipalities were conducted. A total of 78 participants participated in the FGD activities. The sectoral leaders were composed of youth, women, farmers and children's advocates, while the community leaders were composed of traditional leaders, religious leaders, politicians and academics.

**The survey respondents.** A total of 150 beneficiaries of NAP P/CVE programs and projects completed a survey questionnaire. Thirty respondents from each study municipality were selected using simple random sampling. A local government list of the beneficiaries of P/CVE programs was used as the sampling frame for the identification of the respondents. The beneficiaries were former VE members, youth and women.

## **3. The study municipalities**

The study municipalities were selected based on the presence of private armed groups, VE groups, and youth who are vulnerable to VE recruitment, based on data from the Phase 1 key informant interviews. Other factors considered were VE data, number of P/CVE programs, and accessibility and security of the research team.

#### **4. The Instruments**

The tools used in data gathering are (a) a key interview guide, (b) an FGD guide, and (c) a survey questionnaire. The tools were developed based on the research questions of the study.

The data gathered from the primary sources were supplemented by a review of related literature (Chapter 2) on P/CVE with a focus on the VE experiences, practices and programs of other Asian countries.

#### **5. Data Gathering**

Five teams (one team for each province) were organized to lead the data gathering in this study. Each team was composed of four members or a total of 20 field researchers. They were trained on how to conduct interviews and how to facilitate and document focus group discussions. The research team facilitated a four-day workshop on methods of research in Zamboanga City in April 2023.

Data gathering commenced on April 1 and ended on June 30, 2023. It took three months to accomplish the whole fieldwork given that all activities in Phase 1 and Phase 2 needed to be completed first before Phase 3 activities could start.

Before the conduct of interviews with the key informants, focus group discussions with the sectoral and community leaders, and the survey of beneficiaries, the field researchers communicated with the governors, mayors and barangay officials of the study areas. The local security sector (AFP and PNP) were also informed about the purpose and the implementation of the research activities on NAP P/CVE. The primary objective was to gain support from them for the smooth implementation of the research activities in the area.

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

For the KII and FGD narratives, an analysis tool was developed and applied to generate the responses of the respondents to the research questions. The tool generated answers that are most frequently mentioned or least mentioned but significant. From this group of answers, themes were organized, arranged and analyzed.

For the survey, the raw data were encoded and processed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software to generate data frequencies, percentages, tables and graphs for presentation and interpretation.

## **B. The Setting and Interviewee Profile**

The setting of this research is the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which comprises six provinces: Maguindanao del Norte and Maguindanao del Sur (formerly united as Maguindanao<sup>6</sup>), Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi. For the purposes of this study, the two new provinces are considered as still Maguindanao. Violent extremist groups and other armed groups have established their camps in some municipalities of these provinces, such as the BIFF and ISIS in SPMS Box<sup>7</sup> in Maguindanao del Sur, Maute group in Butig and neighboring municipalities in Lanao del Sur, and ASG in Sulu and Basilan.

### ***1. Description of the study municipalities***

According to the 2020 PSA census, Bongao is the most populous of the five study municipalities with 116,118 people. In terms of the number of barangays, Parang has the highest with 40 followed by Piagapo with 37. The majority of the people who inhabit Parang and Bongao are the Tausug. Yakan are the majority in Tipo-Tipo, Maranaw in Piagapo, and Magindanaon in Shariff Saydona Mustapha. The primary sources of income of households in Piagapo and Sharif Saydona are farming and fishing, while the majority of households in Bongao, Parang and Tipo-Tipo are engaged in fishing and small-scale farming.

Rice and corn are the common crops produced in the municipalities of Sharif Saydona, Piagapo and Parang. Marine products are the main sources of livelihood for households in Tipo-Tipo, Parang and Bongao.

The 2020 data classified Shariff Saydona Mustapha and Piagapo as 6<sup>th</sup>-class and 4<sup>th</sup>-class municipalities, respectively. The average annual income generated by a 6<sup>th</sup> class municipality is Php5 million to less than Php10 million. According to PSA data in 2018, high poverty incidence was recorded for Piagapo at 83.94%, Tipo-Tipo at 76.61%, and Parang at 77.17%. The PSA said that, in 2018, about 77% to 84 % of the population in these three municipalities lived below the poverty threshold. Bongao had the lowest poverty incidence<sup>8</sup> at 17.29%.

VE groups were reported in the four municipalities – the BIFF in Shariff Saydona Mustapha, the Maute group in Piagapo, ASG in Parang and Tipo-Tipo. Aside from these VE groups, armed groups are potential threats to security and safety in these areas. The armed groups are

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<sup>6</sup> Republic Act No. 11550, An Act dividing Maguindanao into Maguindanao del Norte and Maguindanao del Sur effective July 27, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> The SPMS Box is a military term referring to the contiguous towns of Shariff Aguak, Pagatin (Datu Saudi Ampatuan town), Mamasapano, and Shariff Saydona. where the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) operates.

<sup>8</sup> The proportion of families/individuals with per capita income/expenditure less than the per capita poverty threshold to the total number of families/individuals.

generally engaged in rido. In Bongao, no VE extremists were reported only the presence of private armed groups.

The table below presents the socioeconomic and vulnerability indicators in the five municipalities.

**Table 1: Socioeconomic characteristics and vulnerability indicators**

| Indicators  | Tipo-Tipo, Basilan            | Bongao, Tawi-Tawi      | Parang, Sulu                 | Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Maguindanao | Piagapo, Lanao del Sur     |
|---|-------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Total population  | 25,531 (PSA 2020)             | 116,118 (PSA 2020)     | 71,495 (PSA 2020)            | 25,080 (PSA 2020)                     | 30,132 (PSA 2020)          |
| Major Ethnic group  | Yakan                         | Tausug                 | Tausug                       | Maguindanaon                          | Maranaw                    |
| Number of households  | 4,195 (2020)                  | 19,589 (2020)          | 11,393 (2020)                | 4,180 (2020)                          | 4,786 (2020)               |
| Number of barangays   | 11                            | 35                     | 40                           | 16                                    | 37                         |
| Main Sources of Income of Households                        | farming, fishing              | fishing, business      | small-scale farming, fishing | farming                               | farming                    |
| Main crops  | rice, fruits, marine products | marine products        | rice, corn, marine products  | corn, rice                            | corn, rice                 |
| Economic classifications <sup>9</sup>                       | 3rd class municipality        | 2nd class municipality | 2nd class municipality       | 6th class Municipality                | 4th class municipality     |
| Poverty incidence   | 76.61% (2018)                 | 17.29% (2018)          | 77.17% (2018)                | No data                               | 83.94% (2018)              |
| Presence of VE groups                                       | ASG                           | none                   | ASG                          | BIFF                                  | Maute group                |
| Other armed groups (MLF-BIAF, MNLF, potential armed groups) | private armed groups          | private armed groups   | private armed groups         | private armed groups, MILF            | private armed groups, MILF |

<sup>9</sup> Executive Order No. 249, s. 1987, providing for a new income classification of provinces, cities and municipalities and for other purposes. **1<sup>st</sup> class** - average annual income of thirty million pesos or more; **2<sup>nd</sup> class**- average annual Income of twenty million pesos or more but less than thirty million pesos; **3<sup>rd</sup> class** - average annual Income of fifteen million pesos or more but less than twenty million pesos; **4<sup>th</sup> class** - average annual Income of ten million pesos or more but less than fifteen million pesos; **5<sup>th</sup> class** - average annual income of five million pesos or more but less than ten million pesos; and **6<sup>th</sup> class** - average annual income of five Million pesos or more but less than ten million pesos.

## **2. The key informants**

In Phase 1, a total of 22 officials from local government units were interviewed. Twenty-one of them are males. Their designations include police officer (8), ELAC coordinator/focal person (6), member of administrative council (4), provincial technical working group for P/CVE, focal person for the municipal peace and order council, MDRRM officer and the information tourism officer. On average, the key informants have been working with the local government for 10 years.

In Phase 2, an additional 28 informants from the provincial, municipal and barangay units participated in this study. Only five are females. Eight are provincial government officials, another eight municipal government officials, another eight were barangay officials and the remaining four connected with the security sector and based at the provincial offices. They have worked with their respective institutions for some years, ranging from 2 to 26 years or about 24 years on average.

## **3. The FGD participants**

Seventy-eight discussants participated in the FGDs, of whom 51% were women. Classified by highest educational attainment, a good number were college graduates (47%), college undergraduates (14%), and high school graduates (14%), while 19 % were elementary graduates. As to their employment data, 33% were employed in government offices, 27% were self-employed, and 12% employed in private offices. About 19% stated they were not employed at the time the FGD was conducted.

Half (50%) of them live in households with six to ten members. The average household number is seven. More than half (54%) derive income from employment salary. Those who are self-employed earned income through farming (18%), fishing (9%), teaching the Arabic language (4%), and other means such as vending/business (6%) and gardening (3%).

Asked about involvement in the community, about 68% are members of community organizations, including women's organizations (18%), farmers' cooperatives/associations (15%), youth organizations (11%), Magtabang Si Kahapan Association (7%), teachers' association (7%), Sangguniang Kabataan Association (7%), and Imam League Council (2%).

#### **4. The survey respondents**

A total of 150 beneficiaries were interviewed, composed of women, youth and former rebels who participated in P/CVE programs offered by the regional, provincial or municipal government or by CSOs.

The majority of the respondents are males: 76.7% in Maguindanao, 63.3% in Lanao del Sur and 57.7% in Sulu. Seven out of ten beneficiaries (76.7%) in Tawi-Tawi were women. Respondents in Basilan were equally represented by gender. Overall, 54% of the respondents were male. The mean age of the group was 33 years.

More than a fifth of respondents in Maguindanao (26.7%) and Lanao del Sur (23.3%) have no formal schooling. More than half have completed elementary school as highest educational attainment in Maguindanao (53.3%) and in Sulu (66.7%). The highest educational attainment of respondents in Tawi-Tawi is a college degree (73.3), with another 6.7% having a master's degree. Overall, more than a third (34%) have attended elementary school while 26.7% have a high school education.

Virtually all respondents are Muslim (99%). A big majority in Maguindanao (70%) and Tawi-Tawi (86.7%) are self-employed. Very few (12.4%) work in government or private institutions. Quite a number (32%) were not employed when the survey was conducted in July 2023, many of them in Lanao del Sur (46.7%) and Sulu (40%).

The average monthly household income of the respondents is Php12,724, which is above the poverty threshold in BARMM<sup>10</sup> of Php11,957. But that average was singlehandedly brought up by respondents in Sulu (average monthly household income: Php32,450.00). The monthly household income of respondents in the four other provinces is actually lower than Php10,000, with Maguindanao at only Php3,850.

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<sup>10</sup> In BARMM, PSA 2021 estimates the poverty threshold estimated at Php11, 957 on average per month to meet the basic needs of a family of five. A person needs at least Php2,391 on average per month to meet his/her basic food and non-food needs in 2021. <https://rssoarimm.psa.gov.ph/release/content/press/55883>

**Table 2: Selected characteristics of survey respondents (in percent)**

| Selected Variables                                       | Basilan<br>(n=30) | Tawi-Tawi<br>(n=30) | Sulu<br>(n=30) | Maguindanao<br>(n=30) | Lanao del<br>Sur (n=30) | Total<br>(n=150) |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Sex   |                   |                     |                |                       |                         |                  |
| • Male   | 50.0              | 23.3                | 56.7           | 76.7                  | 63.3                    | 54.0             |
| • Female   | 50.0              | 76.7                | 43.3           | 23.3                  | 36.7                    | 46.0             |
| 2. Mean age (in years)                                   | 29                | 31                  | 41             | 30                    | 34                      | 33               |
| 3. Highest educational attainment                        |                   |                     |                |                       |                         |                  |
| • No formal schooling                                    | 3.3               | 0.0                 | 13.3           | 26.7                  | 23.3                    | 13.3             |
| • Elementary   | 23.3              | 0.0                 | 66.7           | 53.3                  | 26.7                    | 34.0             |
| • High school  | 46.7              | 20.0                | 20.0           | 10                    | 36.7                    | 26.7             |
| • College  | 26.7              | 73.3                | 0.0            | 0.0                   | 13.3                    | 24.7             |
| • With MA  | 0.0               | 6.7                 | 0.0            |                       | 0.0                     | 1.3              |
| 4. Ethnic Affiliation                                    |                   |                     |                |                       |                         |                  |
| • Maguindanaon   |                   |                     |                | 100.0                 |                         | 20.0             |
| • Maranaw  |                   |                     |                |                       | 100.0                   | 20.0             |
| • Yakan  | 100.0             |                     |                |                       |                         | 20.0             |
| • Tausug   |                   | 70.0                | 100.0          |                       |                         | 34.0             |
| • Sama   |                   | 27.0                |                |                       |                         | 5.3              |
| 5. Religion  |                   |                     |                |                       |                         |                  |
| • Islam  | 100.0             | 98.0                | 100.0          | 100.0                 | 100.0                   | 99.0             |
| 6. Employment data                                       |                   |                     |                |                       |                         |                  |
| • Employed in government agencies                        | 10.0              | 0.0                 | 30.0           | 0.0                   | 3.3                     | 8.7              |
| • Employed in private institutions                       | 6.7               | 0.0                 | 16.7           | 0.0                   | 0.0                     | 4.7              |
| • Self-employed  | 50.0              | 86.7                | 3.3            | 70.0                  | 46.7                    | 51.3             |
| • Not currently employed at the time of the survey       | 33.3              | 10.0                | 40.0           | 30.0                  | 46.7                    | 32.0             |
| • No data  | 0.0               | 3.3                 | 10.0           | 0.0                   | 3.3                     | 3.3              |
| 7. Average household estimated monthly income (in pesos) | 9,206.89          | 9,566.66            | 32,450.00      | 3,850.00              | 8,433.33                | 12,724.80        |

## **CHAPTER 4: Findings**

### **A. Awareness and Perceptions of NAP P/CVE**

Perhaps not surprisingly, given that the National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism was essentially planned and rolled out at the national level, Manila-based key informants generally perceive NAP P/CVE positively. The National Action Plan is also well received at the BARMM level, in part because the lead national agency, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), works with the autonomous region to localize the plan and align it with the BARMM's unique circumstances, politics and culture. Lower down the chain, NAP P/CVE is regarded as an evolving action plan as local government units, civil society organizations and program beneficiaries deal with the realities of implementation on the ground.

#### ***1. At the national level, key informants have high hopes for NAP P/CVE.***

A key informant at the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) is a strong believer in the effectiveness of NAP P/CVE as a reliable government roadmap for addressing the problem of violent extremism. This whole-of-nation comprehensive plan is a culmination of the country's experiences in dealing with various insurgencies over the years, she said, and it is "content-rich and substantial." She emphasized that NAP P/CVE is not one-size-fits-all. Drawing on its institutional experience and history, the DILG has developed a module that tailors NAP P/CVE to the needs and circumstances of all the country's regions.

NAP P/CVE is a living document that is updated and enhanced in response to the changing environment, observed a key informant at the Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC). For example, a specific limitation of the National Action Plan was the absence of a section dedicated to the implementation of strategic communications. "This omission is noteworthy, as strategic communications play a crucial role in the successful execution of the P/CVE initiatives," said the informant. The issue has been addressed after consulting a P/CVE template provided by the United Nations Development Program.

Another key informant, this time from the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos, lauds the close coordination among national agencies,

which bodes well for the success of the NAP P/CVE. The commission is working closely with officials from DILG and the Office of the Executive Secretary under the Office of the President. The collaboration has involved referrals to local resource persons and consultants who can develop, modify and finalize P/CVE training modules tailored for local officials and residents across BARMM.

A key informant at the civil society organization Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund said that GCERF supports NAP P/CVE by extending funding to CSOs to enhance their resilience and facilitate capacity building. GCERF has established a Country Support Mechanism aligned with the goals of NAP P/CVE. This strategic involvement of GCERF is particularly important in executing P/CVE projects in the field, said the informant.

***2. At the regional level, BARMM key informants welcome NAP P/CVE because it is being localized to respond to the autonomous region's unique circumstances.***

All 22 key informants at the regional level said they were aware of NAP P/CVE. A number of them participated in briefings on the National Action Plan with the National Security Adviser, BARMM's Chief Minister, and the autonomous region's Ministry of the Interior and Local Government. The key informants describe NAP P/CVE as pivotal in orchestrating seamless collaboration among government entities that have the shared objective of combating terrorism.

Like their national counterparts, the BARMM key informants also see NAP P/CVE as enabling the active engagement of diverse stakeholders at the local, national and international fronts in settling conflicts and neutralizing violent extremism. NAP P/CVE encompasses multiple strategies and programs to achieve its objectives, they said, which includes engaging with surrendered combatants. By intervening effectively and providing appropriate responses, the program aims to ensure peace and prevent radicalization.

The BARMM Ministry of the Interior and Local Government (MILG) has started implementing Project TuGON (Tulong ng Gobyernong Nagmamalasakit or Assistance by a Caring Government), which aims to reintegrate and mainstream 250 former VE combatants every year. The beneficiaries must be verified as formerly an armed member of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, Abu Sayyaf Group, Maute Group or any insurgent group fighting the government, but they must not be covered by current reintegration programs of the national government.

The key informant at the DILG notes that the BARMM government has appointed regional focal persons for the NAP P/CVE and has crafted a Localization Road Map and Regional Action Plan on Community Resilience. Part of that localization is the integration of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) into the Regional Action Plan. At the regional level, NTF-ELCAC has been renamed BTF-ELAC (Bangsamoro Task Force to End Local Armed Conflict) because communist groups do not operate in the region.

In 2019, when the DILG source first had contact with BARMM MILG officials, “they were utterly confused and disoriented about the parallel implementation of the national government of NAP P/CVE and the NTF-ELCAC,” she recounted. Multiple meetings between DILG and MILG and the resulting localization of NAP P/CVE and NTF-ELCAC have resulted in clarity. “The nature of the relationship was that of close collaboration and not supervision of BARMM because of their strategic autonomy,” she said.

***3. At the local government level, not everyone has the same awareness or clarity about NAP P/CVE as their national and regional counterparts.***

Many of the 23 key informants at the provincial, municipal and barangay levels have attended LGU orientation on the NAP P/CVE, but others have either not heard of it or have an incomplete idea from social media posts or from passing references in academic conferences. “I’m not aware of NAP P/CVE or the municipal P/CVE plan crafted for Tipo-Tipo,” said a key informant from that municipality. Added an informant from Basilan: “I’m not so sure if there was any NAP P/CVE orientation during Municipal Peace and Order Council meetings . . . There is orientation for anti-drugs campaigns, but nothing specific on NAP P/CVE.”

While NAP P/CVE is deemed necessary at the national and regional levels, questions arise regarding its relevance in areas like Sitangkai and Tandubas in Tawi-Tawi, where no armed groups have been seen in recent years. A recent Provincial Peace and Order Council and Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council meeting declared Tawi-Tawi insurgency-free, as evidenced by the province’s annual daily crime rate of just 0.003%.

It is at the LGU level where the rubber hits the road, and it seems the NAP P/CVE bus is rattled by numerous potholes. Some informants perceive the implementation of NAP P/CVE programs as too slow, while others think programs such as cash settlements for surrendered firearms are counterproductive. The concern is that the money might be utilized to acquire newer and more potent weapons. One informant believes that approaching P/CVE solely through lectures is not effective. The suggestion is to engage with diverse activities that demonstrate the beauty of life and

democracy, ultimately steering individuals away from harmful pursuits.

**4. *Not everyone in the community is aware of the National Action Plan, including many NAP P/CVE beneficiaries themselves.***

In the focus group discussions with sectoral and community leaders, most participants said they were not aware of the NAP P/CVE. Information about the National Action Plan was evidently not yet circulated at the community level. "*Di pa nakababa ang tungkol sa bagay na yan,*" Said one sectoral leader. "*Maski sa media wala kaming naririnig.*" (Word about that subject has not been brought down to us. We haven't heard anything even from the media.) A Muslim religious leader said he has no idea about NAP P/CVE, but recounted that he was previously tapped to give a talk on peace mediation concerning VE.

Surprisingly, only 40% of the NAP P/CVE beneficiaries surveyed said they know of the National Action Plan. Most of those aware are in Sulu (90%) and in Basilan (57%). Few respondents know of NAP P/CVE in Lanao del Norte (3%) and Maguindanao (7%). Awareness of BTF-ELAC is higher at 52.7%, particularly in Maguindanao (100%) and Tawi-Tawi (70%). Awareness and other issues around beneficiaries are discussed in more detail in Section D of this chapter.

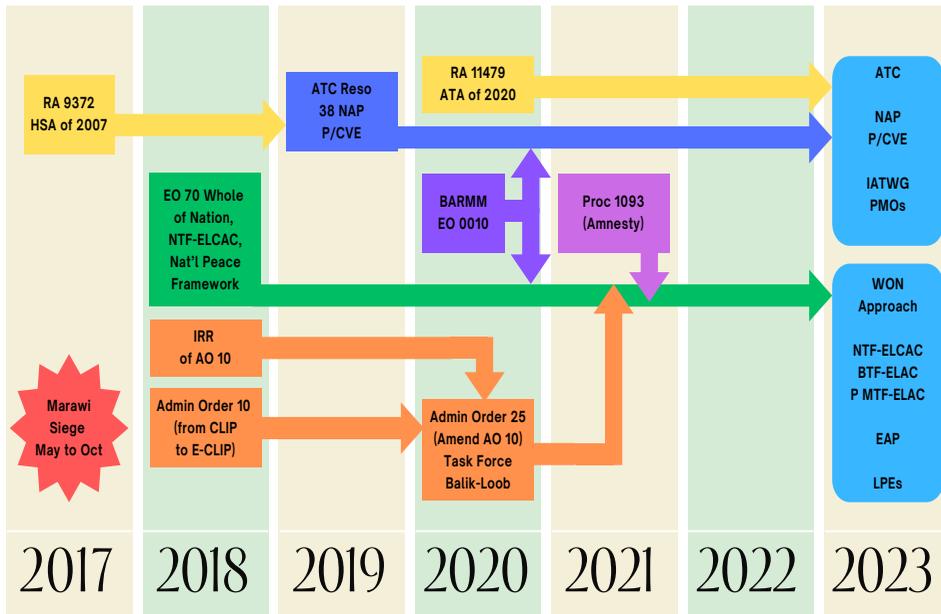
## **B. NAP P/CVE Structures and Mechanisms in the BARMM**

**1. *National policies and programs aimed at dealing with local terrorist groups have been evolving since the 2017 Marawi Siege.***

To understand the evolving content, structures and mechanisms in the implementation of BARMM Executive Order No. 18, series of 2019, signed by Chief Minister Ahod Balawag, it is useful to delve into the history of policy development in the aftermath of the Marawi Siege in 2017, which serves as antecedent to the progression of specific national policies and programs aimed at dealing with local terrorist groups like the ASG, Maute, BIFF and their associates.

Prior to 2017, the national government had two existing programs for rebel returnees. The Comprehensive Local Integration Program (CLIP) targeted non-state armed groups nationwide and was managed by the DILG. The second program, Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA), was managed by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) and covered conflict-affected areas.

**Figure 1. Policy Progression of Relevant Policies on P/CVE.**



In 2018, the national government issued Administrative Order 10 that integrated CLIP with PAMANA under the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP). The inter-agency Task Force Balik-Loob<sup>11</sup> was also created and tasked with developing a strategic communication plan, addressing implementation issues, coordinating with local government units, providing capacity-building assistance, preparing monitoring, evaluation, consolidation and review programs, and calling on the assistance of other government agencies. Implementing rules and regulations were adopted that, among other provisions, specify the benefits and other forms of assistance to former rebels and their immediate family.

In 2020, Administrative Order 25, series 2020, amended AO 10 to include former violent extremists (FVEs) in E-CLIP. Notably, the role of the Presidential Adviser on Local Extremist Groups' Concerns was incorporated within the framework of Task Force Balik-Loob. Two distinct clusters were established: one for former rebels and another for former violent extremists. A dedicated secretariat was created to support these clusters.

<sup>11</sup> Task Force Balik-Loob is composed of the Department of National Defense, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, Office of the President and the National Housing Authority.

AO 25 also empowered Task Force Balik-Loob to collaborate with the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) in formulating and executing a comprehensive program assistance package aimed at aiding former rebels and violent extremists, along with their families and communities. It is important to note that E-CLIP has been allocated a budget as stipulated in the General Appropriations Act.

Formed in late 2018 by Executive Order 70, NTF-ELCAC is comprised of the President as chairperson, the National Security Adviser as vice-chairperson, and several agencies as members: DILG, DOJ, DND, DPWH, DBM, DOF, DAR, DSWD, DepEd, NEDA, NICA, TESDA, the Offices of the Presidential Advisers on the Peace Process and Indigenous People's Concerns, AFP, PNP, NCIP, PCOO, and representatives from the private sector. It is tasked with crafting the National Peace Framework, which embodies the principles, policies plans, and programs aimed at addressing the fundamental causes of insurgencies. EO 70 also established a whole-of-nation (WON) strategy to achieve this goal.

In 2019, the Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC) issued Resolution No. 38 adopting the National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (NAP-P/CVE), which was drafted based on the Human Security Act of 2007. The ATC designated the DILG as the lead agency for the NAP P/CVE. A gender lens into the NAP P/CVE was developed in 2019 led by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women or UN Women, based on considerations that women and men are affected differently by violent extremism.

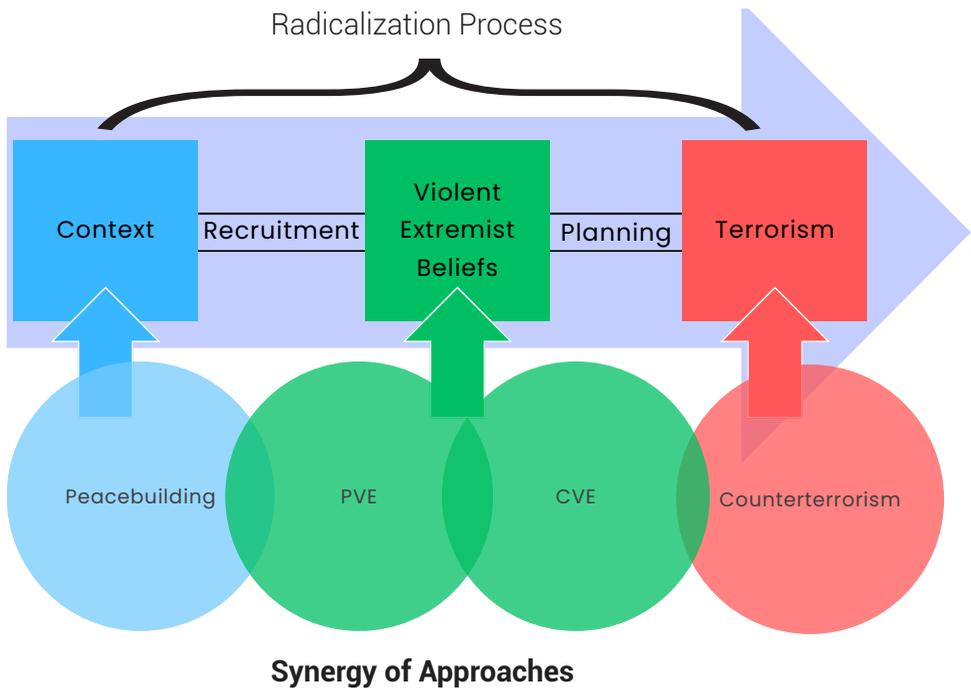
By 2020, Republic Act 9372 or the Human Security Act of 2007 was amended by Republic Act 11479 or the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020. While both laws aim to combat terrorism, they differ in several key aspects around definition of terrorism, terrorist and terrorist groups, as well as measures on preventive suspension, surveillance and wiretapping, human rights safeguards, and punitive measures. It is important to note that both laws have been subject to debates, legal challenges, and discussions regarding their potential impact on civil liberties, national security and human rights.

**Table 3: Comparison of RA 9732 and RA 11479**

| Element  | RA 9372<br>(Human Security Act of 2007)  | RA 11479<br>(Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020)  |
|--|--|---|
| Definition of Terrorism                        | Acts intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to any person, or endangers a person's life.                                 | Acts that cause widespread and systematic terror among the populace or coerce the government to do or refrain from doing something.                         |
| Definition of Terrorist                        | Individuals or groups directly involved in planning, carrying out, facilitating, or supporting terrorist acts.                     | Those who commit terrorist acts, provide material support, recruit, organize, and facilitate the commission of terrorism, among others.                     |
| Designation of Terrorist Individuals or Groups | The law does not provide a specific mechanism for designating individuals or groups as terrorists.                                 | This law allows for the designation of individuals and groups as terrorists through a proscription process facilitated by the Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC). |
| Preventive Detention                           | The law allows for the detention of suspects without a warrant of arrest, but only for a maximum of three days.                    | The law permits up to 14 days of detention without a warrant of arrest, extendable by another 10 days, subject to judicial authorization.                   |
| Surveillance and Wiretapping                   | The law allows for surveillance, but the implementation is subject to strict safeguards and judicial authorization.                | The law provides for surveillance, wiretapping, and other monitoring methods, with proper authorization and safeguards.                                     |
| Human Rights Safeguards                        | Contains provisions for safeguarding human rights, with limitations on the duration of detention and mechanisms for legal redress. | Also includes human rights safeguards, but there have been concerns raised about the potential impact on civil liberties.                                   |
| Punitive Measures                              | Provides penalties for individuals found guilty of terrorism-related offenses.   | Imposes more severe penalties for terrorism-related offenses, and some provisions have raised concerns about potential abuse.                               |

The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 provided new guidance to NAP P/ CVE. In addition, the document clarified its conceptual framework and functional distinction of concepts, drawing inspiration from Lisa Schirch's work "The Ecology of Violent Extremism: Perspectives on Peacebuilding and Human Security" (2018).

**Figure 2. Conceptual framework and functional distinction of concepts, drawing inspiration from Lisa Schirch's work "The Ecology of Violent Extremism: Perspectives on Peacebuilding and Human Security" (2018)**



There are two horizontal layers that underpin the government's whole-of-nation approach based on this conceptual framework.

1. The first layer explains the radicalization process from the contextual situation and the push and pull factors of recruitment to the evolution of the recruits' belief system based on extremism and violence to planning and actually carrying out terrorist acts.

2. The second layer shows the synergy of approaches at each stage of the radicalization process. Peacebuilding is the general approach to understanding and responding to the contextual challenges. Preventing violent extremism (PVE) is the general approach in responding to those who are deemed vulnerable to VE based on

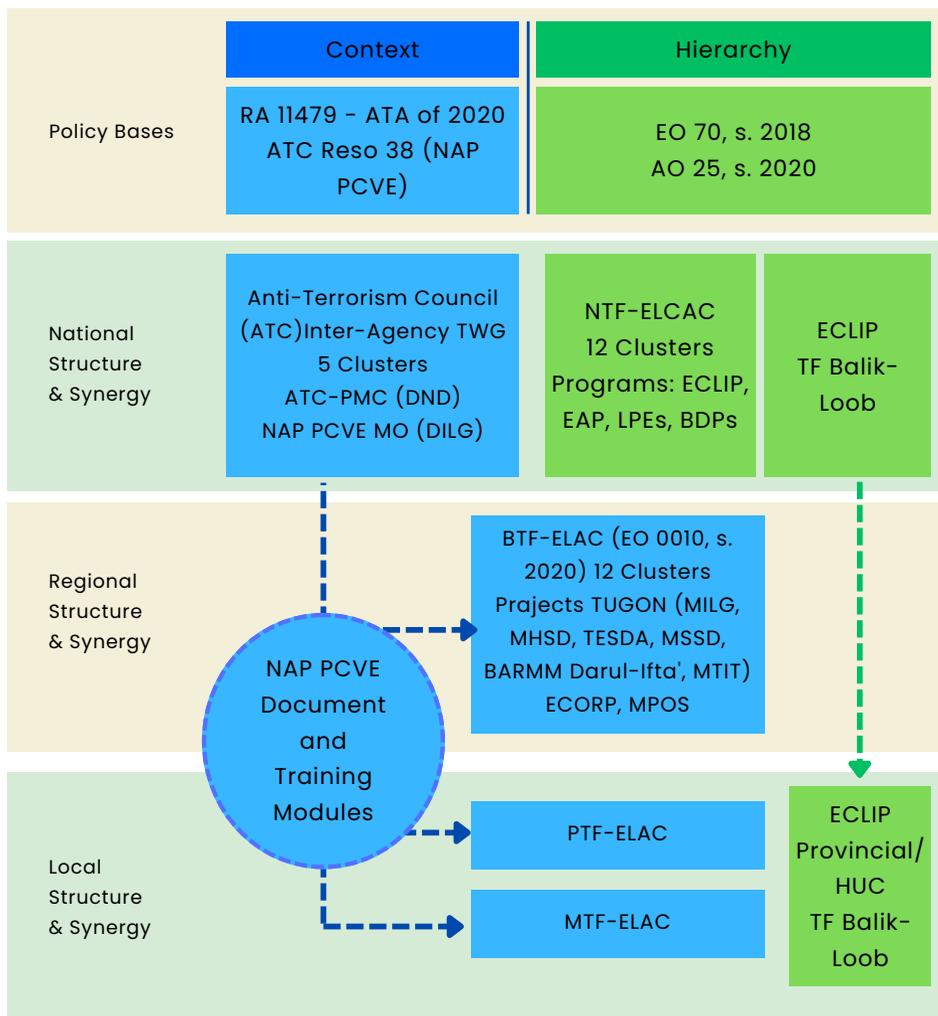
their context, and those in the process of being recruited. Countering violent extremism (CVE) is the general approach to those who have been recruited and have started to accept or have accepted violent extremism as a pathway. For those who have already accepted VE and are planning to sow terror, the general approach is counterterrorism.

**2. At the national level, the structures and mechanisms to implement both ATC Resolution 38 and EO 70 are fairly clear.**

The implementation of ATC Resolution 38 (NAP P/CVE) and EO 70 (NTF-ELCAC, whole-of-nation approach, National Peace Framework) has five dimensions.

1. The first involves the line agencies tapped by ATC and NTF ELCAC for cooperation and complementation through its interagency and clustering setups.
2. The second dimension pertains to intra-agency coordination, such the PNP, regular administrative regions and local government units, where the DILG holds a direct supervisory role.
3. The third aspect pertains to military units in conflict-affected areas, where the AFP has direct control and supervision.
4. The fourth involves close coordination with the BARMM due to its regional autonomy status.
5. The fifth aspect covers cooperation with civil society organizations such as GCERF, TAF-Project CIRCLE and similar donor-funded initiatives.

**Figure 3. Structure and synergy on the implementation of NAP P/CVE.**



**3. The foundations of regional structures and synergy mechanisms have been laid at the BARMM level.**

In October 2020, the Chief Minister of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao issued Executive Order 0010, which outlines the regional policy of the BARMM and aligns it with guidance provided by ATC Resolution 38 and EO 70. Additionally, the order established a framework for organization and mechanism, commencing with the formation of BTF-ELAC. The member-agencies involved in this initiative encompass a diverse range of regional and national entities: OCM, MBHTE, MILG, MPOS, MPW, MSSD, MAFAR, BPDA, BDA, BAGO, BIO, along with representatives from AFP (PA), PNP-BAR and OPAPP.

Structures and mechanisms are in place with regard to NAP P/CVE in BARMM as they involve national agencies, notably DILG, ATC, National Commission on Muslim Filipinos and National Intelligence Coordinating Agency or NICA. In a month-long consultation with the DILG in January and February 2023, officials from the BARMM's Ministry of the Interior and Local Government discussed among other things the role of religious leaders in the BARMM in preventing and countering violent extremism and how DILG can assist MILG with its education and communication efforts in the autonomous region.

With ATC, the regional mechanism is in the form of capacity-building. "We reach out to all the BARMM ministries to carry out staff training on NAP P/CVE," said a key informant in ATC's Program Management Office. "The training is conducted semi-annually in BARMM areas and multiple ATC consultants, military experts and subject matter experts are tapped to carry out the training." The Anti-Terrorism Council also reaches out directly to BARMM governors and mayors to conduct NAP P/CVE training for LGU staff.

In the BARMM itself, the foundation has been laid to ensure effective coordination and execution. Twelve distinct clusters (NAP P/CVE at the national level has seven clusters) have been structured, each catering to specific aspects of the localized P/CVE roadmap in the autonomous region:

1. Local Government Empowerment
2. International Engagement
3. Legal Cooperation
4. Strategic Communication
5. Basic Services
6. Livelihood and Poverty Alleviation
7. Infrastructure and Resource Management
8. Peace, Law Enforcement and Development Support
9. Situation Awareness and Knowledge Management
10. Localized Peace Engagement
11. E-CLIP, Amnesty Program, TuGON
12. Sectoral Unification, Capacity Building, Empowerment, and Mobilization

***4. The next step is to fully activate the budgeting and information management system at the regional level for NAP P/CVE interventions, including monitoring and evaluation of regional and local government initiatives.***

"BARMM officials have to continue laying out and enhancing the framework of the designated initial road map and to identify the specific

outcomes they want to achieve," said the DILG informant. "The next step is to allocate a well-thought-out annual budget for all their programs and activities. The final step is to get the BARMM Peace and Order Council to fully implement it [the road map] and to follow faithfully the schedule of implementation."

Equally important is maintaining a central database of all P/CVE programs and projects in across BARMM and activating a monitoring and evaluation mechanism that will help ensure those programs and projects are accomplishing their objectives in the most cost-efficient way. According to a key informant at the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, the DILG already has a framework called MEAL (monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning) that it uses to track the progress of activities and what else needs to be done.

### **C. NAP P/CVE Programs and Projects in the BARMM**

Programs and projects aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism have been implemented in BARMM even before the advent of the localized framework of NAP P/CVE and BTF-ELAC. Funded and implemented by the national government, the regional government, local government units and civil society organizations, existing programs and projects have been folded into the NAP P/CVE framework. Some have been redesigned to fit into the whole-of-nation strategy, while new initiatives have been started along the lines of the 12 clusters and the four categories in the NAP P/CVE framework of prevention, counter-radicalization, disengagement, and de-radicalization and aftercare.

***1. It is useful to categorize interventions in the BARMM into four groups: prevention, counter-radicalization, disengagement, and de-radicalization and after-care.***

#### Prevention interventions

- a. Addressing the factors that drive violent extremism, such as youth empowerment, scholarships, role in peacebuilding, and values formation
- b. Strengthening social cohesion for peacebuilding, such as supporting socio-economic alternative education, health and well-being of vulnerable communities
- c. Resolving rido conflicts
- d. Raising awareness about drugs, women's and children's rights, P/CVE
- e. Conducting continuous interfaith and intercultural dialogues among political, religious and academic leaders

- f. Sponsoring Islamic symposia and radio programs
- g. Sponsoring Islamic scholars for foreign training to produce more ulamas
- h. Developing a unified madrasah curriculum (Lanao del Sur and Sulu)
- i. Organizing youth peace camps
- j. Adopting a school, madrasah and mosque
- k. Holding information, education and communication campaigns on P/CVE

#### Counter-radicalization interventions

- a. Building up the resilience of vulnerable populations in conflict-affected areas
- b. Organizing initiatives like seaborne patrols and barangay foot patrols (Basilan and Lanao del Sur)
- c. Conducting training and focus group discussions with the aim of building peaceful communities
- d. Establishing and registering radio clubs (Tawi-Tawi)
- e. Mobilizing the community through programs like KASIMBAYANAN, which highlights the synergized and collaborative partnerships of the PNP with the religious sector and the community
- f. Organizing emergency response team
- g. Holding seminar-workshop on early warning and response
- h. Conducting youth development seminar-workshops on P/CVE
- i. Offering seminars on conflict resolution

#### Disengagement interventions

- a. Assisting individuals to stop them from supporting violent extremism

- b. Supporting the Balik Barangay Program (Return to Home Village Program)
- c. Help underage surrenderees through the Reformation Center (Sulu)
- d. Implement programs that aim to reintegrate former violent extremists, such as the AS2G CARE Project, Small Arms and Light Weapons Project (Basilan), and Balik-bala (Surrender Bullets) program in Lanao del Sur

#### De-radicalization and aftercare interventions

- a. Programs aim to reintegrate former violent extremists
- b. Projects aim to transform former combatants into productive citizens, provide livelihood and skills development, and enhance the quality of life in reintegrated communities.
- c. Project TUGON focuses on the reintegration of surrenderees through economic, political, psycho-social, and religious interventions.
- d. AGILA HAVEN – a peace map was crafted to strengthen the program on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) in Maguindanao.
- e. ALS for children of Former ASG in Basilan
- f. Balik-Loob Program surrenderees in Sulu which includes livelihood, education, health services and employment through contract in Sulu and Maguindanao
- g. Cash, farming and fishing materials assistance

#### ***2. A priority in the BARMM are de-radicalization and aftercare programs that help former VE group members and their families.***

The Ministry of Public Order and Safety (MPOS) and the Ministry of Interior and Local Government (MILG) take the lead in implementing these programs and projects. A key informant in MPOS said that their initiatives cater to the vulnerable sectors, namely returnees and local insurgents, widows of BIFF and Maute fighters, orphans of Maute and vulnerable institutions. "We are in the preventing and reintegrating side," the informant continued. *"Tinututukan namin kung paano ang mga pamilya*

*ay makakabalik sa kani-kanilang bahay at kung papaano mapuputol ang VE cycle (We focus on how families can return to their homes and how the VE cycle can be broken)."*

For its part, the MILG's complementary strategy is to empower Bangsamoro communities to prevent VE through the Bangsamoro Community Resilience Program or BCORP. "Instead of extremists, we target the community by making it resilient to prevent the radicalization," said the MILG informant. MILG also leads the E-Clip, Amnesty Program and TuGON cluster, which acts as the central coordinating body that supervises the reintegration effort for returnee VE members and their families.

#### **D. Community Perceptions of NAP P/CVE Interventions**

At the end of the day, what matters is the impact on the lives of the beneficiaries of P/CVE programs and projects and the resilience against VE these have engendered in them, their family and the community. The results of interviews with community and religious leaders in focus-group discussions and with surveyed beneficiaries paint a mixed picture.

***1. As mentioned earlier, awareness of NAP P/CVE is low among community and religious leaders and surveyed beneficiaries.***

**Table 4: Beneficiaries' awareness of NAP P/CVE**

| Answers | Province        |                   |              |                     |                       | Total<br>n=150 |
|---------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
|         | Basilan<br>n=30 | Tawi-Tawi<br>n=30 | Sulu<br>n=30 | Maguindanao<br>n=30 | Lanao del Sur<br>n=30 |                |
|         | %               | %                 | %            | %                   | %                     |                |
| Yes     | 57.0            | 43.3              | 90.0         | 6.7                 | 3.3                   | 40.0           |
| No      | 43.0            | 56.7              | 10.0         | 93.3                | 96.7                  | 60.0           |
| Total   | 100%            | 100%              | 100%         | 100%                | 100%                  | 100%           |

Consistent with low awareness of NAP P/CVE among community and religious leaders in the FGDs conducted in this research, only four out of ten of the surveyed beneficiaries say they are aware of NAP P/CVE. Awareness is highest in Sulu (90%) and Basilan (57%), and lowest in Maguindanao (6.7%) and Lanao del Sur (3.3%).

**Table 5. Sources of information on NAP P/CVE (multiple answers)**

| Source of information                  | Province        |                   |              |                    |                      | Total<br>f=60 |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------|
|  | Basilan<br>f=17 | Tawi-Tawi<br>f=13 | Sulu<br>f=27 | Maguindanao<br>f=2 | Lanao del Sur<br>f=1 |               |
|  | %               | %                 | %            | %                  | %                    |               |
| Local government personnel             | 70.6            | 15.4              | 96.3         | 50.0               | 0.0                  | 68.3          |
| Community leader                       | 23.5            | 15.4              | 40.7         | 0.0                | 0.0                  | 28.3          |
| Military                               | 64.7            | 0.0               | 0.0          | 0.0                | 0.0                  | 18.3          |
| Friends                                | 11.8            | 0.0               | 25.9         | 0.0                | 100.0                | 16.7          |
| Project implementer                    | 0.0             | 38.5              | 11.1         | 50.0               | 0.0                  | 15.0          |
| Social media (television news, Google) | 5.9             | 61.5              | 0.0          | 0.0                | 0.0                  | 15.0          |
| Philippine National Police             | 41.2            | 7.7               | 0.0          | 0.0                | 0.0                  | 13.3          |

Beneficiaries who have heard of the NAP P/CVE were asked about their sources of information. A big majority (68.3%) of that 40% said they knew of it from local government personnel. Other sources of information are community leaders (28.3%), the military (18.3%), friends (16.7%) and Philippine National Police (13.3%). Social media, television news and Google are cited by only 15%, the same proportion who mentioned project implementers.

There are differences in sources of information by province. The beneficiaries surveyed in Basilan cited three primary sources: local government personnel (70.6%), the military (64.7%), and PNP (41.2%). Respondents in Tawi-Tawi, meanwhile, pointed to social media (61.5%) and project implementers (38.5%). In Sulu, the sources of information on P/CVE are local government personnel (96.3%) and community leaders (40.7%).

The differences are likely a reflection of the main actors responsible for the implementation of the national action plan in the locality. For instance, the military and the police play an important role in dealing with the ASG in Basilan. In Sulu, local government personnel and community

leaders have taken the initiative to inform the community about NAP P/ CVE. Tawi-Tawi stands out in terms of social media and television news as key sources of information – a function of the profile of the respondents from there (73.3% college-educated) and their access to mobile networks and the Internet.

**Table 6: Beneficiaries' understanding of NAP P/CVE (multiple answers)**

| Description of NAP P/CVE   | Province     |                |           |                 |                   | Total f=60 |
|--|--------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------------|------------|
|  | Basilan f=17 | Tawi-Tawi f=13 | Sulu f=27 | Maguindanao f=2 | Lanao del Sur f=1 |            |
|  | %            | %              | %         | %               | %                 |            |
| The peace process between Abu Sayaff and other lawless elements and the government | 5.9          | 0.0            | 18.5      | 0.0             | 0.0               | 8.3        |
| Response to violent extremism  | 5.9          | 23.1           | 0.0       | 50.0            | 0.0               | 8.3        |
| Contained in the Municipal Action Plan for P/CVE                                   | 23.5         | 30.8           | 0.0       | 0.0             | 0.0               | 13.3       |
| Conflict resolution to end armed conflict/family feud                              | 17.6         | 23.1           | 66.7      | 50.0            | 100.0             | 40.0       |
| Peacebuilding and advocacy of the government                                       | 11.8         | 0.0            | 11.1      | 0.0             | 0.0               | 8.3        |
| Planning to organize youth empowerment   | 11.8         | 0.0            | 11.1      | 0.0             | 0.0               | 8.3        |
| Helping displaced families to go back to their place                               | 0.0          | 0.0            | 3.7       | 0.0             | 0.0               | 1.7        |
| No idea  | 17.6         | 15.4           | 0.0       | 0.0             | 0.0               | 8.3        |

What exactly do those aware of NAP P/CVE know about the national action plan? In general, their answers to the open-ended question are framed by the experience of violence and conflict in Muslim Mindanao. In Sulu, 66.7% of those aware of NAP P/CVE equate the national action plan with conflict resolution measures to end armed conflict/family feuds (Tawi-Tawi: 23.1%; Basilan: 17.6%). Also in Sulu, 18.5% said NAP P/CVE refers to the peace process between Abu Sayyaf and other lawless elements and the government (Basilan: 5.9%). In Tawi-Tawi, 23.1% said NAP P/CVE is a response to violent extremism (Sulu: 5.9%).

The answers of a group of beneficiaries in Tawi-Tawi (30.8%) and Basilan (23.5%) indicate that information about NAP P/CVE is contained in the Municipal Action Plan, suggesting that a number of LGUs in these two provinces are already integrating the whole-of-nation approach and priorities of NAP P/CVE into their annual planning.

**2. Awareness of the Bangsamoro Task Force on Ending Armed Conflict (BTF-ELAC) is considerably higher than awareness of NAP P/CVE.**

The surveyed beneficiaries were asked if they have heard of BTF-ELAC.<sup>12</sup> The majority – 52.7% – answered yes (NAP P/CVE: 40%). The level of awareness varies by province. Every surveyed beneficiary in Sulu has heard of BTF-ELAC. Basilan has 80% awareness level. Surprisingly, no beneficiary surveyed in Maguindanao, the seat of the BARMM government, is aware of BTF-ELAC. In Lanao del Sur, 53.3% of respondents have heard of the task force; the proportion aware in Tawi-Tawi is 30%.

**Table 7: Awareness of type of Task Force for Ending Local Amed Conflict**

|                       | Basilan<br>n = 24 | Tawi-Tawi<br>n = 9 | Sulu<br>n = 30 | Maguindanao<br>n = 0 | Lanao del Sur<br>n = 16 | Total<br>n = 79 |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Bangsamoro Task Force | 0.0               | 44.4               | 0.0            | 0.0                  | 0.0                     | 5.1             |
| Provincial Task Force | 50.0              | 22.2               | 0.0            | 0.0                  | 0.0                     | 17.7            |
| Municipal Task Force  | 58.3              | 33.3               | 100.0          | 0.0                  | 100.0                   | 79.7            |

<sup>12</sup> Created in October 2020, BTF-ELAC is chaired by Chief Minister Ahod Ebrahim, with the following members: Executive Secretary and Environment Minister, Education Minister, Local Government Minister, Public Order Minister, Public Works Minister, Social Services Minister, and Agriculture Minister. Also, part of the task force are the heads of offices of the Bangsamoro Planning and Development Authority, Bangsamoro Development Agency, Bangsamoro Attorney General's Office, Bangsamoro Information Office, and focal persons from the Philippine Army, Police Regional Office-BAR, and Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process.

The task force is divided into 12 clusters: Local Government Empowerment; International Engagement; Legal Cooperation; Strategic Communication; Basic Services; Livelihood and Poverty Alleviation; Infrastructure and Resource Management; Peace, Law Enforcement, and Development Support; Situation Awareness and Knowledge Management; Localized Peace Engagement; E-CLIP, Amnesty Program, TUGON; and Sectoral Unification, Capacity Building, Empowerment, and Mobilization.

BTF-ELAC operates mostly at the regional level. Provincial and municipal P/CVE task forces deal with violent extremism at the lower levels. Asked which type of task force for ending local armed conflict they are aware of, many of those who say they know of BTF-ELAC indicate that the type of task force they have heard of is the Municipal Task Force (79.7%). Among the five provinces, only the beneficiaries surveyed in Tawi-Tawi know of the Bangsamoro Task Force (44%).

All beneficiaries in Lanao del Sur and Sulu who have heard of BTF-ELAC said their knowledge is in the form of the Municipal Task Force, suggesting that the municipal governments in those two provinces have already cascaded BTF-ELAC to their local level. Nearly six out of ten of those aware of BTF-ELAC in Basilan know of it in the form of the Municipal Task Force (58.3%). Half of the beneficiaries in the same province indicate their knowledge is in the form of the Provincial Task Force (50%).

**Table 8: Sources of information on BTF-ELAC (multiple answers)**

| Source of information  | Basilan<br>f=24 | Tawi-Tawi<br>f=9 | Sulu<br>f=30 | Maguindanao<br>f=0 | Lanao del Sur<br>f=16 | Total<br>f=79 |
|--|-----------------|------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Local government personnel   | 45.8            | 11.1             | 93.3         |                    | 93.8                  | 69.6          |
| Military   | 95.8            | 0.0              | 0.0          |                    | 68.8                  | 43.0          |
| Community leaders  | 12.5            | 11.1             | 43.3         |                    | 43.8                  | 30.4          |
| Project implementer  | 29.2            | 0.0              | 30.0         |                    | 37.5                  | 27.8          |
| Friends  | 0.0             | 11.1             | 16.7         |                    | 43.8                  | 16.5          |
| Philippine National Police   | 20.8            | 0.0              | 0.0          |                    |                       | 6.3           |
| Radio  | 0.0             | 11.1             | 0.0          | 0.0                |                       | 1.3           |
| Others (applicants coming to the barangay asking for clearance, Bangsamoro Human Rights Commission (BHRC), personally observed & info from the community people, seminar, meetings with MLGU / PLGU) | 0.0             | 55.6             | 0.0          |                    | 0.0                   | 6.3           |

Those aware of BTF-ELAC were asked their sources of information. The primary sources mentioned are local government personnel (69.6%), the military 43%, community leaders (30.4%), and project implementers (27.8%).

The responses differ by province. In Basilan, nearly all beneficiaries surveyed said the source of information is the military (95.8%) and, secondarily, local government personnel (45.8%). In Sulu, the key information sources are local government personnel (93.3%) and community leaders (43.3%).

**3. Almost all the beneficiaries surveyed believe that the P/CVE program they attended helps prevent and counter violent extremism.**

When asked whether the P/CVE initiative they participated in contributes to preventing and countering violent extremism in their community and BARMM as a whole, the overwhelming majority of beneficiaries said yes (98%).

**Table 9: Benefits of P/CVE programs**

| Support received                     | Basilan<br>n=30 | Tawi-Tawi<br>n=30 | Sulu<br>n=30 | Maguindanao<br>n=30 | Lanao del Sur<br>n=30 | Total<br>n=150 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Cash benefits                        | 46.7            | 30.0              | 83.3         | 53.3                | 50.0                  | 52.7           |
| Livelihood/<br>enterprise<br>support | 56.7            | 13.3              | 96.7         | 26.7                | 3.3                   | 39.3           |
| Farming/<br>fishing support          | 16.7            | 6.7               | 3.3          | 100.0               | 36.7                  | 32.7           |
| Material<br>package                  | 20.0            | 20.0              | 13.3         | 10.0                | 0.0                   | 12.7           |
| None                                 | 0.0             | 40.0              | 13.3         | 0.0                 | 0.0                   | 10.7           |

The support received by the beneficiaries from P/CVE programs varies according to their needs by area, but one common thread are cash benefits (52.7%). This form of assistance is highest in Sulu (83.3%) and lowest in Tawi-Tawi (30%). Support for livelihood/enterprise needs is also high in Sulu (96.7%) and Basilan (56.7%), but very low in Lanao del Sur (just 3%). All beneficiaries in Maguindanao report receiving support for farming/fishing (100%). Four out of ten beneficiaries surveyed in Tawi-Tawi said they received nothing at all (40%).

**Table 10: Contributions to P/CVE of programs attended by beneficiaries (multiple answers)**

|   | <b>Basilan</b><br>n=30 | <b>Tawi-Tawi</b><br>n=29 | <b>Sulu</b><br>n=28 | <b>Maguindanao</b><br>n=30 | <b>Lanao del Sur</b><br>n=30 | <b>Total</b><br>n= 147 |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Alerted people against joining armed groups fighting the government; resist VE recruitment  | 40.0                   | 37.9                     | 0.0                 | 33.4                       | 53.4                         | 33.3                   |
| Gave hope of a peaceful and prosperous life; better economic prospects; livelihood skills; farming/fishing support                            | 33.3                   | 17.1                     | 30.2                | 46.6                       |                              | 25.8                   |
| Improved peace and order situation; helped people understand it is better to live peacefully; work to end conflict                            | 20                     | 14                       | 42.8                | 13.3                       | 23.3                         | 21.5                   |
| Knowledge of P/CVE from seminars, training, interaction with project implementer/ fellow participants   | 16.7                   | 27.6                     |                     | 10                         | 13.3                         | 13.6                   |
| Learned where to go or report if there is violence against women and their children (VAWC); women encouraged to start a business              | 16.7                   | 27.6                     |                     | 10                         | 13.3                         | 13.6                   |
| Surrenderees and displaced families returned to their original homes to live normal lives; treated as part of society; regained their dignity | 6.6                    |                          | 10.8                | 20                         |                              | 7.6                    |

Those who said the program they attended contributed to P/CVE were asked in what way it did so. Their various answers revolved around several themes:

- Alerted people against joining VE groups (33.3%), most frequently cited by beneficiaries in Lanao del Sur (53.4%)
- Gave hope of a peaceful and prosperous life; livelihood skills and farming/fishing support (25.8%), most frequently cited by beneficiaries in Maguindanao (46.6%)
- Improved the peace and order situation (21%), most frequently cited by beneficiaries in Sulu (42%)
- Other ways such as gaining knowledge about P/CVE (13.6%) and learning about where to go and report if there is violence against women and children (13.6%). Only 7.6% of the answers revolved around the theme of surrendered VE fighters and displaced families helped to return to their original homes and live normal lives.

## **E. Gaps, Challenges and Lessons Learned**

The key informants, focus group discussants and beneficiaries surveyed were asked what they think are the gaps, challenges and lessons learned in the implementation of NAP P/CVE in the BARMM, including its programs, projects and initiatives.

### **1. Gaps and Challenges**

***The need to effectively cascade the NAP P/CVE framework.*** One key challenge tagged by stakeholders at the national level is how to effectively bring the NAP P/CVE whole-of-nation framework down to the grassroots. The challenge is more pronounced with respect to actual implementation of programs and projects, not only in the collaboration of diverse stakeholders (both public and private, across all levels) in pursuing P/CVE, but also in ensuring that the various interventions carried out by these various stakeholders are aligned with the NAP P/CVE framework. The national-level key informants recognize that local government units play an important role in implementing P/CVE interventions, in terms of bringing together national government agencies, BARMM entities, the private sector, and the community.

**Enhanced engagement of CSOs in P/CVE initiatives.** While the national government acknowledges the vital role that Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) play in P/CVE, a representative from a CSO that leads a consortium of local CSOs engaged in Mindanao P/CVE initiatives stressed the need for more robust CSO engagement. This entails increasing both the number of participating CSOs in P/CVE and the scope of their programs (upscaling from mere capacity and competency building to more direct interventions). Key informants underline that a stronger collaboration between the regional government and CSOs will facilitate project synergy within the BARMM. The potential of CSOs eager to collaborate with the government remains untapped.

**Taking the BARMM context into account.** Key informants from the national government and in CSOs emphasized the necessity for all P/CVE initiatives to be sensitive to the specific local context and intricacies of the areas where they operate. These circumstances include the local culture and the distinctive socio-political environment of the BARMM, which should be taken into account not only in the nature of the projects, but also in the way the projects are implemented and coordinated.

According to the experience of a DILG key informant, CSOs sometimes display an inclination to forcefully impose their governance, project management, and evaluation expertise onto the BARMM local units. Such assertive conduct by CSO executives and project officers contradicts the explicit objectives and aims laid out in the NAP P/CVE. As the key informant puts it: "A top-to-bottom corporate management style simply isn't effective in the BARMM."

**Improving the reporting system.** There is a need to harmonize the reporting of P/CVE initiatives in the BARMM, with the raw data subjected to processing and consolidation, according to key informants in the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency. The objective is to create a comprehensive database of all NAP P/CVE initiatives and aligning it with the MEAL (monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning) framework already deployed by DILG.

**Addressing some issues in the NAP P/CVE document.** A key informant at the Anti-Terrorism Council surfaced the need to address the issue of nomenclature within the NAP P/CVE document, pointing to the omission of the Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army, and the National Democratic Front in its category of former violent extremist offenders. In its present form, the NAP P/CVE is exclusively applied to Islamist violent extremists. The key informant said this oversight needs to be given immediate attention.

***Lack of or insufficient funding.*** Key informants from the provincial, municipal, and barangay levels consistently cite inadequate funding as a persistent obstacle to implementing various P/CVE projects and initiatives in the grassroots. This recurring challenge has a severe impact not only the delivery but also the sustainability of crucial programs and projects. Local implementers are forced to prioritize what can be done, with essential activities that necessitate substantial financial backing at the bottom of the queue.

Although this concern is commonly shared across all areas, it is widely expressed in Basilan. In Tipo-Tipo, a municipality with a notably small Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA), the local government severely curtails the scope of potential initiatives. Consequently, a pressing need arises for an augmented budget to support livelihood projects and bolster program effectiveness.

At the grassroots level, the burden of finding additional financial support predominantly falls on the barangay chairman, who is often unable to secure more money from the municipality or province. While CSOs can potentially help, they predominantly focus on enhancing capacity rather than delivering tangible interventions. But civil society organizations also suffer from financial constraints, as key informants in CSOs in Maguindanao and Sulu pointed out.

The delays in the release of benefits due to P/CVE program participants due to the scarcity of funds exacerbates the strain on the overall project timeline and effectiveness. One key informant stressed the importance of continuing the initial progress achieved through P/CVE initiatives by an earlier administration. It was emphasized that failure to sustain these gains could result in beneficiaries reverting to their previous activities. Another key informant observed that NAP P/CVE has become a province-led (rather than a regional government-led) effort, with funding primarily sourced from provincial and local levels.

Sectoral and community leaders who participated in this research's focus-group discussions further validated the financial gap. While insufficient budgets are a recurring concern in all areas, it is most strongly articulated by Basilan-Sulu-Tawi-Tawi participants. They explained that the limited financial resources have led to delays in implementation and are hindering even conflict-resolution efforts (*rido*) in their areas. The shortage is so serious that not all P/CVE beneficiaries are receiving the promised material support.

P/CVE planners and implementers want increased funding allocation from the national government directly to provinces and municipalities. It's

noteworthy to mention that the P/CVE initiatives at the local level also want to receive financial support from the regional office or BARMM, which has its own independent budget as an autonomous region.

***Mistrust of government initiatives.*** Building trust with local communities can be challenging, especially if there is a history of broken promises by the authorities. This challenge is manifested in an underlying resistance from a portion of the community towards P/CVE programs and projects.

Mistrust and pessimism are reinforced by instances of delayed or non-delivery of committed projects to the intended beneficiaries due to funding concerns. A few respondents in the survey of beneficiaries in Lanao del Sur reported that they had not received the assistance that was promised to them. This developed hesitancy among identified beneficiaries to fully participate in P/CVE efforts due to the lack of assurance of receiving the expected help.

CSO key informants illustrated various instances where the trust issues in government can be observed. As seminars are initiated within the community, a sense of fear arises among participants, stemming from concerns about potential arrests or detentions within their locality. This prevailing mindset necessitates a cautious approach, particularly in areas deeply affected by violent extremism. Other program beneficiaries are gripped by apprehension, given the possibility of encountering legal consequences due to unresolved cases. These trust issues lead to some level of difficulties in engaging the communities.

The sincerity of uniformed personnel, who serve as intermediaries for government initiatives, is also doubted by some in the community. Their skepticism extends to questioning the promises made by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), which acts as the immediate overseers of program access and benefits. In general, instances of discrepancies arise when government agencies promise programs, but fail to carry out their implementation.

Survey of beneficiaries in Maguindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi highlighted the lack of sustainability in project implementation as a leading challenge they have observed. For them, short-term interventions are not enough to create lasting change and impact in the lives of the people.

***Delayed implementation.*** Delays in the delivery of materials, often linked to corrupt practices, affect various projects, including housing. Benefits designated for combatants and former violent extremists are sometimes delayed too. In one locality, community aversion towards the

government intensified due to an ill-considered road project that disrupted livelihoods – civilian-owned rubber trees were cut down to facilitate construction.

***Unfinished projects.*** At a focus-group discussion in Lanao del Sur, sectoral representatives disclosed the existence of unfinished projects in their region. Notably, they mentioned Project Pabahay, which was initiated by Governor Mujiv Hataman but seems to have been discontinued when the autonomous region became BARMM. The wooden materials that were purchased for housing foundations have deteriorated, even as the chosen beneficiaries continue to inquire about the project's status.

***Lack of sustainability.*** Programs often face difficulties in maintaining consistent progress. Training sessions may be initiated but not effectively continued, with no follow-through activities. This issue is compounded by sporadic program execution, training held only on a single occasion and then stopped. The absence of efficient implementation mechanisms on the ground also prevents practical application of conflict-resolution training.

***Inadequate and incompetent manpower, other physical resource constraints.*** Data from the survey in Tawi-Tawi surfaced the lack of manpower as a concern. FGD participants in other areas mentioned the need to improve the competence of project implementers. This concern is acknowledged both by key informants from the government sector and the CSOs. Aside from funding, other physical resources to support program implementation are often also inadequate. A youth group, for instance, does not have a dedicated office space, so it makes do by utilizing existing facilities for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management activities.

***Insufficient information on projects.*** There remains a significant gap in disseminating crucial information. Certain initiatives, already in effect through national, regional, and provincial government efforts, sometimes go unnoticed by the community, particularly in the context of P/CVE, where information regarding violent extremism may not always be effectively conveyed. As mentioned by an FGD participant, there exists a misconception associating the establishment of additional madaris and mosques with providing refuge to terrorists. Making sufficient information about the projects available should correct this misconception.

The lack of reliable and comprehensive information about the programs further exacerbates the challenge, resulting in a low-level of involvement and commitment from the community. This lack of information can be a possible reason leading to some confusion expressed by some project beneficiaries in Basilan as to whom to follow – the MILF or the

military. The need therefore to clarify project implementation structures and mechanisms at all levels is evident.

**Limited access to basic support infrastructures.** Another obstacle to the smooth implementation of P/CVE initiatives identified by FGD discussants is limited access to basic amenities such as water, electricity and internet, compounded by the remote locations where potential P/CVE participants live. Accessibility remains a concern in Tawi-Tawi, which is far distant from the regional office. This poses a significant challenge in organizing training beyond the province. Limited internet connectivity makes virtual meetings such as Zoom sessions and even phone calls a struggle at times.

Community leaders in focus-group discussions in Lanao del Sur surfaced the absence of public transportation in some project areas as a big challenge. Their P/CVE program's progress is impeded by ongoing road construction delays. Community aversion towards the government has also escalated because of the delays, which has disrupted livelihoods.

**Security issues.** The continuity in the implementation of P/CVE programs can be impeded by frequent disruptions, often caused by military encounters or engagements. These disruptions are aggravated by extortion activities carried out by lawless elements. Community leaders added that the delay in program execution can also be attributed to the disturbing actions of existing lawless groups. A CSO key informant confirmed this concern, saying that this caused several postponement or cancellation of their project activities.

**Diminishing community participation.** Over time, community involvement can diminish, primarily because community members become preoccupied with household tasks and other economic responsibilities. Planning and scheduling of activities need to take this into account by keeping them relatively short in duration. Activities such as sports events should last only two to three days to accommodate busy schedules. Some beneficiaries surveyed in Tawi-Tawi report that projects targeting youth participants are sometimes scheduled on days that conflict with school activities.

**Frequent changes in institutional leadership.** The frequent rotations within the military and PNP leadership (as mentioned in Sulu and Tawi-Tawi) have an impact on the consistency and continuity in the implementation of P/CVE programs and initiatives.

**"Palakasan system" in choosing beneficiaries.** Some beneficiaries surveyed in Basilan and Lanao del Sur believe that the "palakasan

system" is at work in the identification of project beneficiaries. As a result, assistance is not received by those for whom the P/CVE program was designed to help, as in the case of a housing project in Lanao del Sur.

***Politically influenced working relationship across levels of local government units.*** A persistent hurdle is the absence of cooperation among some LGUs because of political conflicts between factions. This impedes the progress of shared goals and fully realizing the intended objectives of P/CVE programs. If the provincial LGU's role in program implementation is neglected, the level of cohesion and support a P/CVE initiative receives are affected.

The constraints extend to municipal leadership, where a lack of enthusiastic support from the mayor for a barangay's endeavors, including the allocation of their 20% development fund, presents a significant challenge. The process of passing resolutions to access funding particularly for projects responding to violent extremism issues can be challenging. The complex interplay of limited resources, political dynamics and bureaucratic processes underscores the formidable challenges confronting the implementation of P/CVE initiatives at the community level.

***Unclear monitoring mechanism.*** Without tracking mechanisms for ongoing projects and initiatives, there are no clear metrics to measure progress. Accurate data from a solid monitoring system is essential for evidence-based project implementation. The absence of clear monitoring process makes it difficult to make necessary adjustments based on reliable feedback.

***Absence of database on P/CVE programs and projects.*** Comprehensive information regarding P/CVE programs, projects and initiatives region-wide is currently unavailable. The gap can potentially lead to project redundancy, inaccuracies in reporting due to duplicate entries, challenges in recognizing synergistic efforts, and obstacles in implementing evidence-based programming.

***Documentation challenges.*** In Project Salam, the applicants encountered an extensive and expensive documentation procedure, as reported during the focus group discussion in Maguindanao with community participants. Under the ECLIP program, a notable challenge arises in validating the documents of Former Violent Extremists (FVEs), as some struggle to provide the required paperwork. Given that they are transitioning into the community as regular citizens, it is imperative that they meet the documentation requirements to shed their former identity. Relatedly, an FGD in Tawi-Tawi revealed that identifying beneficiaries for a

Basic Literacy Program aimed at MNLF/MILF members proved challenging due to outdated data.

## 2. Lessons Learned

***Cultural and contextual sensitivity.*** All efforts on P/CVE should take into account the local cultural norms, religious beliefs, historical and socio-political contexts across the region. Ignoring these factors can lead to ineffective or even counterproductive interventions. A deep understanding of local dynamics is important in designing and implementing tailor-fit projects and strategies in BARMM communities.

***Resource constraints.*** Sufficient funding and resources are essential for the successful execution of comprehensive P/CVE programs. Inadequate resources can impede substantial progress and the long-term viability of interventions. Proficient management skills among project implementers are required to intensify innovative resource mobilization and guarantee that limited resources are maximized and used efficiently. Relatedly, managing and allocating resources fairly and transparently to cater to the genuine beneficiaries are critical, especially in the process of beneficiary identification.

***Effective project information sharing.*** Providing ample and pertinent project information from the outset is crucial in clarifying uncertainties, erasing doubts, and avoiding confusion, not just among those executing the project but, more importantly, among the beneficiaries. Project information also promotes greater community engagement and showcases the government's commitment to transparency, thereby enhancing the community's perception of good government governance.

***Community engagement.*** Building trust and cooperation with local communities is essential for successful P/CVE implementation. Establishing strong relationships can be challenging, especially if there is a history of mistrust between communities and authorities. Developing community participation as an element in project preparation requires careful consideration.

***Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders.*** Incorporating the whole-of-nation approach into P/CVE endeavors necessitates collaboration among various government agencies, CSOs and community partners. Maintaining effective coordination and communication among these diverse stakeholders is paramount for successful implementation. Collaboration allows the pooling of resources, expertise and insights. The absence of coordination and collaboration can lead to fragmented and disjointed P/CVE efforts.

**Participation of the youth sector.** The young are often targeted for recruitment by extremist groups. The failure to involve and empower them through P/CVE initiatives creates a significant hole in prevention strategies.

**Political challenges.** P/CVE initiative have the potential to be influenced by political agendas, which can pose challenges in maintaining a fair and unbiased implementation. Political considerations can affect the priorities and course of programs, potentially compromising their effectiveness. Managing the politics can mitigate their potential negative effects.

**Holistic interventions.** P/CVE interventions should adopt a holistic strategy, encompassing not just security matters but also addressing fundamental socio-economic concerns like poverty, unemployment and limited access to essential services.

**Appropriate data privacy and surveillance measures.** In the process of effectively implementing a P/CVE project, one aspect of monitoring work includes gathering data on project beneficiaries as well as individuals who might be vulnerable to radicalization. Striking the right balance between the imperative for security and the individual's right to privacy can be a sensitive and contentious issue that requires careful consideration.

**Long-term commitment.** Countering violent extremism is a lengthy undertaking. To achieve lasting and sustainable results, it requires ongoing efforts that extend beyond short-term projects or political cycles.

## **F. Suggestions on the implementation of NAP P/CVE in the region**

### ***Suggestions from National Officials***

The suggestions and insights from among national officials interviewed can be summarized and merged into several related concepts and issues:

**1. Support for BARMM's Current P/CVE Approach:** The current bold, innovative and proactive approach of BARMM in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) is highly commended and should be continued and enhanced. It can serve as a model for other regions to emulate.

**2. Localization of P/CVE Projects:** A key area of improvement lies in localizing P/CVE projects to address specific policy gaps and challenges unique to different provinces and municipalities within BARMM. This involves identifying localized solutions.

**3. Comprehensive Planning and Budget Allocation:** BARMM officials should develop comprehensive plans, projects, programs and activities for the National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (NAP P/CVE). Allocation of annual budgets for all P/CVE initiatives is crucial. The BARMM Peace and Order Council should ensure the faithful implementation of these plans within defined schedules.

**4. Framework Enhancement and Outcome Identification:** Continual enhancement of the framework and the identification of specific outcomes to be achieved should be a priority for BARMM officials.

**5. Continuous Localization and Countering Peace Spoilers:** BARMM officials are advised to continuously implement localization efforts in the first and second quarters of 2023. They should recognize the presence of individuals and organizations on the ground that may disrupt peace efforts. Swift action is needed to counter any opposition to P/CVE programs and projects at national, regional and local levels.

**6. Inclusive Planning and Civil Society Engagement:** A suggested approach is to initiate P/CVE planning at the provincial level, then extend to municipal and barangay levels, involving all stakeholders. Collaboration with civil society organizations (CSOs) and tapping into their expertise in planning, crafting, establishing, and monitoring P/CVE initiatives is essential – but the relationship should be one of respect and accommodation, not one where one party imposes its beliefs and approach on the other.

**7. Regular Discussions and Capacity Building:** BARMM should continue discussions regarding the implementation of the seven clusters (localized to become 12 clusters in BARMM) in the NAP P/CVE. Regular Training of Trainers (TOT) on localization modules should be conducted to expand knowledge of P/CVE interventions. Ongoing joint exchanges of insights and quarterly discussions with the BARM-MILG officers are suggested.

**8. Respect for Local Culture and Processes:** Civil society organizations (CSOs) and international non-profit organizations (NPOs) should respect the local culture, processes, and the BARMM's approach to P/CVE. Initiatives by CSOs and NPOs should consider the nuances and characteristics of the local BARMM culture.

**9. Early Warning and Response System:** Implementing an early warning and early response system for all P/CVE projects and programs is essential to address gaps in this area. Technical expertise can be sought from the DILG Project Management Office.

**10. Patience and Collaboration:** DILG P/CVE Project Management Office staff should maintain patience and engage fully with BARMM point persons.

**11. Utilizing CSO Strength and Engaging with GCERF:** BARMM officials should leverage the strengths and expertise of civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage with local communities during the implementation of P/CVE projects. They should not feel threatened by parallel P/CVE efforts by national government agencies. Continuous engagement with the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) officials is encouraged for complementary P/CVE project implementation.

**12. Expanding NAP P/CVE Scope:** Consider expanding the scope of the NAP P/CVE to include violent extremist offenders related to the CPP-NPA-NDF. Address the issue of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) and their families within the P/CVE framework.

**13. Regular Training and P/CVE Academy:** Conduct quarterly training programs, especially with changes in administration. Establish a P/CVE Academy for the preparation of modules, books, publications, and training materials, with sufficient funding for research and publications. Collaborate with experts from the National Police College and selected CSOs for module development and translation into local languages.

**14. Leveraging Foreign Funding:** BARMM agencies and LGUs can explore tapping additional funding from international sources, such as the United Nations, the United States, Canada, Australia, the European Union, and other foreign governments and funding agencies to support P/CVE efforts.

### ***Suggestions from Civil Society***

Several recurring themes and suggestions emerged among national CSO officials interviewed. These suggestions can be categorized into broader themes:

**1. Funding:** The most frequently mentioned issue is the need for sufficient funding to support P/CVE projects. Suggestions include detailed

and actionable requests on the funding needs, establishing a trust fund for long-term sustainability, and ensuring budget allocation from all levels of government for program activities.

**2. Training and Capacity Building:** The second most frequently mentioned theme revolves around the importance of training and capacity building. Recommendations include conducting training and dialogues involving community members, elders, religious leaders, and youth to enhance their knowledge and skills in preventing and countering violent extremism. The need for continuity in training and providing necessary equipment is emphasized.

**3. Local Government Engagement:** Some CSOs highlight the need for increased involvement of Local Government Units (LGUs) in leading P/CVE initiatives. They suggest that LGUs should take a more active role in implementing and sustaining programs to avoid disruptions caused by changes in military units or other factors.

**4. Coordination and Collaboration:** Suggestions emphasize the importance of coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders. Coordination among core groups and the determination of lead agencies are suggested to ensure the success of programs. Collaboration with LGUs, civil society organizations, and the religious sector is seen as essential.

**5. Tailored Programs and Community Ownership:** Programs should be tailored to address specific needs, cultural contexts, and circumstances in different places. CSOs emphasize the importance of community ownership, with programs drawing on local insights and actively involving communities in their design and implementation.

**6. Sustainability and Monitoring:** Recommendations highlight the need for constant monitoring and evaluation to ensure program effectiveness. Sustainability of programs is crucial, and support should continue after initial training or capacity building. This includes assistance with logistics, marketing, financing and other aspects.

**7. Community Vigilance and Reporting:** The importance of community vigilance and reporting of suspicious activities to authorities is emphasized as a means of maintaining peace and order. Suggestions include establishing police facilities and sub-stations to increase police visibility and serve as a deterrent to potential threats.

**8. Soft Approaches and Integrity:** CSOs advocate a soft approach in P/CVE efforts, including good community relations, dialogues, outreach and coordination with various community stakeholders. The importance

of integrity and ethical conduct is emphasized as a foundational principle for promoting peace and harmony.

### ***Suggestions from Regional Officials***

The ideas and suggestions from BARMM regional officials interviewed can be grouped and summarized as follows:

**1. Awareness Programs:** Promote a harmonious relationship with constituents through regular house visits and community engagement. Provide leadership courses and training for leaders within the Bangsamoro community to strengthen institutional capacities. Develop advocacy and campaign strategies to enhance community relationships, engagement and participation. Strengthen P/CVE programs, particularly at the barangay level, and focus on projects related to violent extremism. Conduct community-based information drives and religious activities connected to P/CVE. Organize seminars and capacity-building sessions for local executives on leadership and management.

**2. Assistance and Support:** Offer livelihood opportunities and economic assistance to individuals as a preventive measure against joining violent extremist groups. Establish community-based economic initiatives, such as cooperatives, to provide livelihood options. Ensure that livelihood programs are accessible to former combatants, including those from the MNLF and MILF. Expand livelihood programs and training opportunities for youth and parents to improve living conditions and educational prospects. Address the housing needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Provide access to essential services like electricity and water in underserved areas.

**3. Funding:** Allocate funds from BARMM's block grant to sustain P/CVE programs and projects. Monitor returned and surrendering individuals and provide necessary funds for project sustainability. Ensure consistent budgetary support for year-round activities and monitoring efforts. Emphasize the importance of budget support for effective check and balance mechanisms. Secure additional funds to meet the diverse needs of beneficiaries.

**4. Direct Involvement:** Encourage participation from all provinces and municipalities, emphasizing the need for collective progress. Strengthen P/CVE programs at the barangay level. Foster collaboration between the national, regional and local governments to unite efforts in P/CVE. Ensure that regional government commitments translate into tangible actions. Address internal disputes within the MILF and engage

directly with communities in conflict-prone areas. Prioritize P/CVE efforts in specific municipalities, particularly Tipo-Tipo, and involve municipal councils in the process. Consider third-party intervention to address issues in Baguindan in Basilan.

**5. Education:** Build schools, madaris and facilities to keep children and youth engaged and away from radicalization. Promote sports activities and scholarships to keep youth away from drug use and VE recruitment.

**6. Infrastructure:** Create job opportunities through infrastructure development to reduce the appeal of VE activities. Use infrastructure projects to provide employment and prevent individuals from turning to violent extremism.

**7. Less Mentioned but Significant:** Focus on the welfare of constituents and maintain harmonious relationships. Pay attention to marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities (PWD) and the Badjaos. Implement proper planning for program implementation, including accountability measures.

Advocate for NAP P/CVE in Tawi-Tawi to strengthen the province's reputation for being peaceful and ensure its long-term security. Involve constituents in determining priority programs and projects. Conduct efficient checking and assessment of ongoing and incoming projects for community resilience. Solidify the amnesty program for MILF/MNLF/FVEs to facilitate their reintegration. Promote cooperation and collaboration among the religious sector, LGUs and NGOs to address issues in Baguindan in Basilan).

### ***Suggestions from the Provinces (Sectoral Leaders)***

In the analysis of the focus group discussions among provincial sectoral leaders related to NAP P/CVE, several key concepts, issues, and ideas were repeatedly mentioned by participants. To streamline and summarize these recurring themes, we can categorize them as follows:

**1. For Immediate Action:** Participants stressed the urgency of translating plans into concrete actions rather than focusing solely on consultations. They emphasized the need for standardized salaries for barangay officials. Calls were made for transparent and righteous governance from the BARMM government, with immediate responses to program and project implementation. The government was urged to promptly address specific concerns such as the lack of electricity and water supply in communities like Tipo-Tipo. Another problem in immediate need of action: housing programs for internally displaced persons.

**2. Information Dissemination:** Participants underscored the importance of advocating and promoting P/CVE-related projects and programs to the community. They called for effective introduction and communication of project objectives to prevent confusion. Sustaining government projects was encouraged, along with seminars to address conflicts and ground-level processes. The need for multi-sectoral forums to enhance understanding of NAP P/CVE was mentioned.

**3. Monitoring System:** Suggestions were made for BARMM to establish organizations representing different sectors, akin to national conventions. Participants highlighted the importance of establishing links between provincial/municipal LGUs and barangay LGUs for the dissemination of information about P/CVE-related programs and projects. They emphasized the necessity of a monitoring system, especially in areas vulnerable to violent extremism and those affected by VE-military confrontations.

**4. Livelihood Programs:** Participants advocated for livelihood projects, including training for women to acquire income-generating skills such as sewing. Livelihood programs were seen as a means to provide for basic family needs and deter involvement in heinous activities.

**5. Housing:** Housing projects, particularly for IDPs displaced due to VE-military encounters, were deemed necessary.

**6. Cash Allowance:** Some participants called for continued cash allowances for families. Increased funding levels were also suggested.

**7. Youth Involvement:** Engaging youth in participatory planning and activities was encouraged as it was seen to expedite progress. Strengthening youth-related initiatives in the area was emphasized.

**8. Less Frequently Mentioned but Significant:** Focus on education, particularly in grassroots communities and island municipalities. Calls for regular government check-ins to ensure community needs are addressed. Concerns regarding the use of social media for recruitment by VEs and the importance of involving youth. Suggestions for facilities or centers where communities can conduct sessions and activities related to P/CVE. Sustaining existing projects and programs related to P/CVE on the ground. Strengthening collaboration with religious sectors for their engagement in P/CVE.

Emphasis on adhering to due process to avoid community misunderstandings and conflicts. Transparent and clear presentation

of project durations, especially to locals. The need for assistance to be available to all who require it, without selectivity. Prioritizing affected areas, like those with rido settlements, as they can be breeding grounds for violent extremism and nepotism.

### ***Suggestions from the Provinces (Community Leaders)***

In the focus group discussions among community leaders, several key concepts, issues and ideas emerged, which can be summarized and merged into the following categories:

**1. Funding and Support:** The community's most frequent concern revolves around the need for more funds and financial support. This includes calls for cash allowances, specific salary grades for madrasah teachers (Asatidh), and dedicated funds for the traditional sector. Participants emphasize the importance of sustaining LGU programs related to P/CVE and providing resources to madrasah teachers through engagement with non-government organizations.

**2. Education and Madrasah:** Education is a significant theme, with an emphasis on implementing the Alternative Learning System (ALS) for children. Participants highlight the importance of providing honoraria to traditional madrasah teachers so they can be more effective in discouraging young people from joining VE groups. They also stress the need for government programs to support traditional madaris and to encourage young Moro students to attend them.

**3. Monitoring and Law Enforcement:** Participants emphasize the importance of monitoring local government actions on P/CVE. They called for regular monitoring of conflict-affected areas, especially those facing economic hardship, to prioritize assistance.

**4. Livelihood and Economic Opportunities:** Livelihood and economic stability are key concerns. The community requests more livelihood programs and capital support to prevent engagement in VE activities. They emphasized the importance of sustained livelihood projects and resourceful initiatives that have a lasting impact.

**5. Relief and Basic Supplies:** There is a need for more relief efforts, including food supplies, medical supplies and medicines to support the community.

**6. Less Mentioned But Significant:** Although less frequently mentioned, several crucial points are raised, including housing projects, the importance of sustaining ongoing projects, aligning community assistance programs with people's needs, ensuring transparency in government programs to prevent corruption, and strengthening peace and order efforts at the municipal and barangay levels.

Suggestions are made to enhance school linkages among parents and teachers, promote intercultural and interreligious communication to address discrimination and hate speech, eradicate racism and discrimination issues, involve religious leaders in P/CVE-related symposiums, and establish effective processes for the surrender of individuals involved in VE activities.

Community leaders also emphasized the need for morally upright leaders and officials who prioritize the welfare of the people.

### ***Suggestions from Beneficiaries on Improving P/CVE Project Implementation***

Here is a summary of the suggestions for improvement in P/CVE project implementation, arranged by percentage from highest to lowest:

#### **Top of Mind Suggestions (10% to 14.7%)**

1. Ensure sustainability of projects, highlighting the importance of ensuring the long-term viability of P/CVE initiatives.
2. Encourage collaboration and support among line agencies/LGUs, emphasizing the need for effective cooperation between different government agencies and local government units.
3. Promote livelihood projects, in recognition of the significance of economic opportunities in countering violent extremism.
4. Continue information drive on P/CVE, highlighting the importance of ongoing public awareness campaigns on preventing and countering violent extremism.

#### **Secondarily Mentioned Suggestions (2.7% to 5.3%)**

1. Focus on the involvement and empowerment of young people in P/CVE efforts; organize youth-focused events and programs.
2. Organize education programs (seminars and training) to raise awareness of P/CVE and build up skills.
3. Address the needs of and implement realistic plans for surrendered former members of extremist groups.
4. Engage provincial government offices in P/CVE interventions.
5. Highlight the importance of adequate financial resources for P/CVE initiatives.
6. Practice openness and transparency in project implementation.

### **Lower Priority Suggestions (0.7% to 2%):**

1. Ensure teamwork and cooperation among team members.
2. Arrange program schedules in such a way as to avoid conflicts with school activities, for example.
3. Be fair and impartial in project implementation.
4. Strengthen coordination between the community and the military/police.
5. Monitor community life in the barangays and encourage increased vigilance against VE within the community.
6. Monitor the implementation of projects and programs, adopting a bottoms-up approach from the grassroots level.
7. Help increase market opportunities for specific products (e.g., chicken); encourage more traders for poultry products.

### **Suggested community programs and projects by the beneficiaries surveyed**

#### **Frequently mentioned (Over 10%):**

1. Additional livelihood programs (45.3%)
2. Housing projects (22.0%)
3. Skills training (18.0%)

#### **Secondary mentions (5% - 10%):**

1. Provision of financial capital (10.7%)
2. Scholarships for students (10.0%)
3. Seminars and training (10.0%)
4. Concrete road (4.7%)

#### **Fewer mentions (Below 4%):**

1. Various P/CVE campaigns (2.0%)
2. Youth empowerment, youth activities (2.0%)
3. Potable water (2.7%)
4. Small businesses (1.3%)
5. Farming facilities (1.3%)
6. Medical missions (1.3%)
7. Site mapping to identify rebel groups (1.3%)
8. Peace building led by community elders (1.3%)

## **CHAPTER 5: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **Summary**

Among national agencies, there is broad consensus at the conceptual level on the contours and details of the National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism, but with some suggested refinements such as the inclusion of members of the Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army and National Democratic Front in the category of violent extremist offenders. There is also agreement about adopting a whole-of-nation strategy, where civilian, military and police agencies as well as religious leaders and civil society organizations work together towards preventing and countering violent extremism, and the localization of NAP P/CVE interventions, particularly in the BARMM.

The BARMM regional government has successfully localized the National Action Plan to fit the autonomous region's culture and ways of doing things. The initial confusion about the parallel implementation of NAP P/CVE and NTF-ELCAC has been resolved through collaboration between the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and BARMM's Ministry of the Interior and Local Government (MILG). The result is the Bangsamoro Task Force on Ending Local Armed Conflict (BTF-ELAC), which has 12 clusters, for example, instead of the National Action Plan's seven.

The Bangsamoro Development Plan recognizes the threat of violent extremism to peace and security in Mindanao, stemming from events like the Marawi siege. Various drivers of instability have been identified, including misinterpretation of Islamic teachings, discrimination against Muslims, family feuds (rido), drugs and human rights violations. To address these challenges, BARMM has outlined several programs and projects, such as Project TuGON, Women and Youth in Peacebuilding; Sustainable Rido Settlement Agreement; Alternative Conflict Resolution Enhancement Program; Bangsamoro Anti-Drug Support Program and intra/inter-religious dialogues.

The Ministry of Public Order and Safety (MPOS) and the MILG lead the implementation of P/CVE projects and programs in the autonomous region via BTF-ELAC, which is chaired by the BARMM Chief Minister. The focus is on prevention (youth empowerment, scholarships, peacebuilding

roles, values formation), counter-radicalization (building up the resilience of vulnerable populations against violent extremism), disengagement (weaning individuals from supporting violent extremism), and de-radicalization and aftercare (reintegrating former extremists in normal society).

Four years after the adoption of NAP P/CVE, the challenge in BARMM today is the effective implementation of P/CVE programs and projects. Initiatives such as the Agila Haven program in Maguindanao and the engagement of local government units in Tawi-Tawi align well with NAP P/CVE objectives. The active involvement of religious and community leaders in P/CVE efforts, especially in areas susceptible to extremism, is helping influence youth away from VE and counter extremist narratives. Almost all the beneficiaries surveyed in this study say the P/CVE initiative they attended contributed to their well-being and to peace and order in their community.

But the implementation of NAP P/CVE programs is also perceived as slow by some, and cash settlements for surrendered firearms are seen as counterproductive. Some suggest focusing on livelihood programs instead. Others believe that the approach should go beyond lectures and include engaging activities to steer individuals away from harmful pursuits. There are worries about the sustainability of some programs that were started by the previous administration, those with limited or ad hoc budgets and those staffed by few and not very competent people.

Some beneficiaries complain about what they perceive as favoritism or bias in choosing participants in P/CVE programs, especially those that extend material support like housing, cash allowances and reintegration support to former VE members who have surrendered to the authorities. Lack of access to basic infrastructure like electricity, transport and the Internet (to attend P/CVE initiatives from home) disrupts attendance to P/CVE training and seminars for people who live in remote areas, which are particularly vulnerable to activity by violent extremists.

## **Conclusion**

The conclusion this study draws from the insights of key informants and FGD participants, hard data from the survey of beneficiaries, and primary documents from government and other sources is that NAP P/CVE and its localized version BTF-ELAC rest on strong foundations. The whole-of-nation strategy and matrix of collaboration among various agencies are clearly set out in the NAP P/CVE documents. The localization of the national action plan to fit BARMM's culture and autonomous status

has progressed to the point of having BTF-ELAC and its 12 clusters.

The next step is to fill out the foundational frame with the solid structure of sustainable funding and budgeting, as well as with monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning mechanisms. The sample of beneficiaries surveyed in this research are overwhelmingly positive on the contributions of the P/CVE programs they have attended and that is a vote of confidence in the effectiveness of the BARMM initiatives so far. That momentum must not only be maintained but quickened. The stakes are too high for national and regional security, law and order, and a peaceful and prosperous life in Muslim Mindanao.

## Recommendations

To bring NAP P/CVE and BTF-ELAC to the next level, this research makes the following recommendations:

**1. Activate the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Mechanism at the Regional Level:** It is imperative to establish a robust monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) mechanism at the regional level to oversee P/CVE programs and projects across BARMM. While the urgency of implementation is acknowledged, it is equally important to assess the effectiveness and impact of these initiatives. The DILG can extend technical help in implementing MEAL because it is already using this framework.

The courses of action include:

- Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of ongoing programs and projects to ensure they align with objectives and produce desired outcomes.
- Solicit beneficiary feedback post-participation to evaluate program success and identify areas for improvement.
- Establish a central database to maintain comprehensive records of all P/CVE programs and projects across BARMM. This database should ideally be accessible to the public to enhance transparency and accountability.

**2. Design Culturally Sensitive Programs at the LGU Level:** Recognizing the diverse needs, cultures, and circumstances across different provinces within BARMM, P/CVE programs and projects should be tailored to address specific issues prevalent in each locality.

The courses of action include:

- Prioritize conflict resolution training in areas where issues like “rido” are prevalent, such as Sulu and Maguindanao.
- Focus on livelihood and resettlement programs in regions where former extremists and their families reside.

**3. Ensure Sustainability of LGU-Level Programs:** To address concerns about the sustainability of P/CVE programs and projects at the local government unit (LGU) level, it is essential to provide ongoing support beyond skills training.

The courses of action include:

- Offer assistance with logistics, marketing, financing, and other aspects of the supply chain to ensure that beneficiaries can effectively utilize their new skills and resources.

- Help build a business and community ecosystem of cooperatives and enterprises for P/CVE livelihood beneficiaries to join and link them with other players in the supply chain, including suppliers and customers.

**4. Secure Adequate and Consistent Funding:** Adequate and consistent funding is crucial for the success of P/CVE initiatives.

The courses of action include:

- Ensure that BARMM provides consistent and sufficient budgetary support for P/CVE programs and projects, reducing the reliance on internal revenue allotments of LGUs.
- Explore other sources of funding including from national agencies like NTF-ELCAC, foreign aid organizations like USAID and AUSAID, and local and international CSOs.

**5. Clarify Suspicions of Unfair Selection of Beneficiaries.** To address suspicions that benefits do not reach “true” beneficiaries and that a “*palakasan*” system is at play, transparency and accountability measures should be implemented.

The courses of action include:

- Intensify the education and information campaign on P/CVE

objectives and processes to win the trust and buy-in of the community.

- Establish a whistleblower system that allows citizens to lodge complaints anonymously. These complaints should be thoroughly investigated by credible parties to ensure the fairness and transparency of beneficiary selection processes.
- Publish the list of participants of P/CVE programs and projects on the Internet so people can judge for themselves whether the selection process is fair or unfair and to discourage those making decisions from gaming the selection system.
- Invite independent third parties including CSOs to monitor the selection process and the outcomes, and suggest ways to make future programs more effective and efficient.

**6. Clarify Roles, Responsibilities and Funding Mechanisms:** To streamline P/CVE efforts and create a more structured approach, it is essential to clarify the division of labor, accountabilities, and funding responsibilities between the regional and LGU levels.

The courses of action include:

- Develop annual budgets for each program and project in all provinces, municipalities, and barangays, with funding provided by the regional level. This ensures that funds are allocated systematically and transparently.
- Delegate monitoring and evaluation responsibilities to the regional level, with a focus on assessing program effectiveness.
- Empower LGUs to design and implement programs tailored to their unique needs, with the regional level serving as an adviser and evaluator.
- Encourage LGUs to seek additional funding from private and foreign sources, as well as collaborate with civil society organizations (CSOs) and the religious sector, while giving the regional level the authority to veto initiatives that may have links to violent extremist groups or activities.

## **7. Enhance awareness of NAP PCVE at local government and community levels.**

The courses of action include:

- Create easily understandable and culturally sensitive informational materials about NAP PCVE. This can include brochures, pamphlets, and multimedia content that explain the goals, strategies, and benefits of PCVE efforts.
- Implement mandatory training programs for local government officials, equipping them with a thorough understanding of NAP PCVE. This training should cover the local context, specific challenges, and the role of local governments in preventing and countering violent extremism.
- Conduct regular workshops and dialogues at the community level to disseminate information about NAP PCVE. These sessions should encourage open discussions, address misconceptions, and involve community members in the formulation of localized strategies.
- Work collaboratively with education authorities to integrate PCVE themes into school curricula. This ensures that the younger generation is educated about the risks of violent extremism and the importance of community resilience.
- Collaborate with religious leaders and influential community figures to amplify awareness. They can play a pivotal role in disseminating information and garnering support for PCVE initiatives within their respective communities.
- Partner with local media outlets to run awareness campaigns on NAP PCVE. Additionally, utilize social media platforms to reach a broader audience, sharing success stories, key messages, and engaging content to create a positive narrative around PCVE efforts.
- Create community-based task forces or committees dedicated to PCVE. These groups should include representatives from diverse sectors and work collaboratively to implement and monitor PCVE activities at the local level.
- Require local governments to submit regular progress reports on their PCVE initiatives. This fosters accountability, transparency,

and ensures that the implementation of NAP PCVE is an ongoing and monitored process.

- Provide incentives, both financial and non-financial, to local governments and communities that actively participate and excel in PCVE initiatives. This can include recognition, awards, or additional resources for further community development projects.
- Establish a mechanism for ongoing evaluation of the awareness-building strategy. Regularly assess the effectiveness of different components and be prepared to adapt the approach based on feedback and changing community dynamics.

**8. Recognize the Policy Implications of the NAP P/CVE.** The National Plan currently operates in an environment where the physical threat of violent extremist groups is at its lowest, but complacency is not an option. The persistence of the ideology of violent extremism means it can be adopted by any group or individual at any time. This can be addressed at the policy level rather than at the execution level. The courses of action include:

- Re-evaluate the role of the Office of the Jurisconsult as outlined in PD 1083. This assessment should explore effective and relevant functioning of the office with the goal of optimizing its role to align with present-day needs and challenges, particularly on P/CVE. The aim is to enhance the Office of the Jurisconsult in fulfilling its vital functions within the legal framework.

The Office of the Jurisconsult under PD 1083 has the “authority to render legal opinions, based on recognized authorities, regarding any question relating to Muslim Law”. The misuse of information and misinformation about Islamic religion by violent extremist groups is a question of Muslim Law, and only the Office of the Jurisconsult has the legal mandate to counter this violent extremist narrative and promote a moderate counter-narrative suited to the Philippine Muslim context.

To complement its role, the functions of the Bangsamoro Darul-Ifta’ in the BARMM can also be revisited and strengthened, especially in terms of countering the violent extremist ideology and promoting a counter-narrative in its place.

- Foster synergy among government institutions with mandates on Muslim development. These government institutions include

the Office of the Jurisconsult, Presidential Adviser on Muslim Affairs, National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA), Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BARMM), and DepEd Muslim Education Program. This is crucial for promoting an integrated approach to Muslim development, particularly in the context of P/CVE. This collaborative effort serves to avoid the duplication of efforts and resources, enhancing the potential to minimize gaps and promoting efficient resource allocation through the pooling of expertise and funds.

Additionally, this synergy fosters consistency in policies related to Muslim development. When these government institutions collaborate, they can ensure that policies, programs, and interventions are culturally appropriate, respecting the unique needs of Muslim communities. The collaborative approach allows for enhanced coverage, with each institution leveraging its expertise to complement and mitigate weaknesses in other areas.

Furthermore, this collaborative effort aids in identifying and addressing the diverse needs of Muslim communities, especially those in remote, marginalized, conflict, post-conflict, or protracted areas. This collaborative approach can be expanded to include key research institutions and civil society organizations operating within the BARMM or in Muslim communities.

- Conduct assessment and consultation on the structure, mandates, and funding of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos to the end that it can play a constructive and effective role in the development, particularly of Islamic law and education, the halal industry, and in general, coordinating policies and programs to promote the development of Muslim communities in the Philippines.
- Conduct research into the ulama (religious) sector to gain a comprehensive understanding of this important part of BARMM society. The sector has the background and credibility necessary to effectively counter violent extremist ideology. Ulamas possess the expertise to promote and articulate a counter-narrative that aligns with the regional and national contexts, particularly in the context of an indigenous Muslim minority within a secular democracy.

The research should focus on the nature, roles, perspectives and dynamics of the ulama sector to facilitate informed decision-making and promote tailored interventions at the national level. The aim investing is to strengthen collaboration, cultural sensitivity, and the development of effective strategies, ensuring a more nuanced and

contextually relevant approach to engaging with the ulama sector.

This sector nuancing and contextualizing extend to ethnolinguistic spread, distinctions between overseas and local graduates, diversity in graduates from different countries, variations across schools of thought and jurisprudence, differences between men and women in religious roles, and distinctions between senior and younger ulama, among others. The research can also delve into the diverse interpretations of Islam within the sector, encompassing differences between Sunni and Shi'a, the contrast between reformist and traditional perspectives, the dichotomy between purist/fundamentalist and syncretic approaches, and more.

Other research objectives include identifying influential figures within the ulama sector, mapping the intricate dynamics of their networks, evaluating educational frameworks and future prospects, assessing the socio-economic context, identifying grievances, and suggesting preferred interventions. The research should be iterative in nature to help in the ongoing process of monitoring and evaluating ulama engagement, interventions and contributions over time and allow for adjustments in strategies based on evolving dynamics on the ground.

- Assess the effectiveness of strategies implemented during the Ramos administration that elevated senior ulamas as focal points for ulama groups. The importance of the religious sector and the crucial role of ulama leaders in countering violent extremist ideology and promoting a moderate counter-narrative are well-established. However, there is a paucity of strategies to advance this conversation. One lesson from past administrations is the recognition of key influencers within the ulama sector as rallying points and bridges for engagement with the government and the wider community. As these key influentials serve as rallying points within, they also lead the ulama sector and the Muslim community in inter-faith dialogue and similar initiatives addressing the ills of insecurity as well as promoting social cohesion and justice.

We can begin with a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of strategies implemented during the Ramos administration that elevated senior ulamas as focal points for ulama groups. This assessment aims to critically evaluate the impact, outcomes, and sustainability of such strategies, with the goal of informing future policy decisions and ensuring that the engagement of senior ulamas remains aligned with the broader objectives of promoting peace, inclusivity, and cultural sensitivity within the Muslim community, and the larger Filipino society.

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## ACRONYMS

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| AFP         | Armed Forces of the Philippines  |
| ALS         | Alternative Learning System  |
| AGILA-HAVEN | <b>A</b> nak na may <b>G</b> inintuang <b>L</b> Ayunin upang Hintuan Ang Violent Extremism Ngayon. |
| ASG         | Abu Sayyaf Group   |
| ATC         | Anti-Terrorism Council   |
| BAGO        | Bangsamoro Attorney General's Office   |
| BIO         | Bangsamoro Information Office  |
| BARMM       | Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao  |
| BCORP       | Bangsamoro Community Resilience Project  |
| BDA         | Bangsamoro Development Authority   |
| BPDA        | Barangay Planning and Development Authority  |
| BIFF        | Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters  |
| BIN         | Barangay Information Network   |
| BPAT        | Barangay Peacekeeping Action Team  |
| BPOC        | Barangay Peace and Order Council   |
| BTF-ELAC    | Bangsamoro Task Force to End Local Armed Conflict  |
| CLIP        | Comprehensive Local Integration Program  |
| CSOs        | Civil Society Organizations  |
| CVE         | Countering Violent Extremism   |
| DAR         | Department of Agrarian Reform  |
| DBM         | Department of Budget Management  |
| DepED       | Department of Education  |
| DILG        | Department of the Interior and Local Government  |
| DND         | Department of Defense  |
| DOJ         | Department of Justice  |
| DOF         | Department of Finance  |
| DPWH        | Department of Public Works and Highways  |
| DSWD        | Department of Social Welfare and Development   |
| E-CLIP      | Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program   |
| ELAC        | End of Local Armed Conflict  |
| FVEs        | Former Violent Extremists  |
| IMPLANS     | Implementation Plans   |
| LGUs        | Local Government Units   |
| LTGs        | Local Terrorist Groups   |
| MAFAR       | Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Agrarian Reform  |
| MBHTE       | Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education  |
| MEAL        | Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning  |
| MILG        | Ministry of Interior and Local Government  |
| MPOS        | Ministry of Public Order and Safety  |

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| MPW           | Ministry of Public Works  |
| MTF-ELAC      | Municipal Task Force to End Local Armed Conflict                                      |
| NAP PCVE      | National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism                   |
| NCIP          | National Commission on Indigenous Peoples   |
| NEDA          | National Economic and Development Authority   |
| NICA          | National Intelligence Coordinating Agency   |
| NTF-ELCAC     | National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict                             |
| OCM           | Office of the Chief Minister  |
| OPAPP         | Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process                               |
| PAMANA        | Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan  |
| PCOO          | Presidential Communications Operations Office   |
| PNP           | Philippine National Police  |
| Project TuGON | Tulong ng Gobyernong Nagmamalaskit  |
| P/CVERLT      | Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism |
| PTF-ELAC      | Provincial Task Force to End Local Armed Conflict                                     |
| PVE           | Preventing Violent Extremism  |
| TESDA         | Technical Education and Skills Development Authority                                  |
| VEOs          | Violent Extremist Organizations   |
| WOCA          | Whole of Community Approach   |

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