

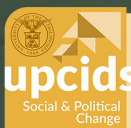
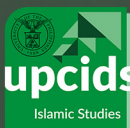
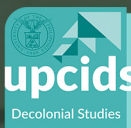
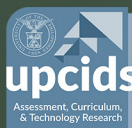


UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES  
CENTER FOR  
INTEGRATIVE AND  
DEVELOPMENT  
STUDIES

proceedings of the up cids  
mindanao forum series

# MINDANAO

fractured promises,  
continuing challenges







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February 20, 2020

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# Rationale

Since colonial times, Mindanao has been an enigma and a challenge for the Philippine national government and its attempts at nation-building. Mindanao has always been an attractive national development project, mainly due to its rich natural resources and generally hospitable climate. Efforts at assimilation and integration into the national polity and economy have been vigorously pursued, prompting resistance from local populations and their leaders. The full colonization of Mindanao was finally accomplished via the large-scale migration of settlers from the north, the aggressive entry of outside investments, large-scale development projects, and often brutal politico-military interventions.

Despite these, Mindanao continues to be a political, economic, social, and cultural conundrum that defies clear-cut and easy solutions. The presence of significant Islamic and indigenous populations provides a counterpoint to the predominantly Christian and modernity-oriented northern and central Philippines. Insurgencies arising from the conflicts spawned by class, ethnic, and religious differences have been features of Mindanao's history. Social exclusion and inequalities in the areas of health, education, and other essential services, as well as lack of economic opportunities and political



marginalization, have yet to be addressed substantially and meaningfully.

It is in this context that the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) organized a forum series on the challenges faced by Mindanao. The UP CIDS, as the UP System's primary policy research unit, is mandated to develop, organize, and manage research issues of national significance by utilizing an integrated and collaborative approach to address current national policy and development needs. The forum series aims to harness the research of the various UP CIDS research programs conducting policy-oriented studies on issues and concerns that define the Mindanao conundrum and arrive at recommendations addressed to the country's decision-makers and other stakeholders.

The "Mindanao: Fractured Promises, Continuing Challenges" Forum Series of the UP CIDS has the following objectives:

- (1) To surface current issues and concerns of the Mindanao situation;
- (2) To highlight the interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary characteristics of the Mindanao situation;
- (3) To enable scholars from various disciplines to relate to each other and compare notes from their respective studies;
- (4) To enable academic researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders on the ground to coordinate and validate their perspectives and study results; and
- (5) To bring to the attention of decision makers the issues and concerns of peoples from Mindanao.

The UP CIDS programs with Mindanao-related research projects are: (1) the Islamic Studies Program (ISP); (2) the Decolonial Studies Program (DSP); (3) the Program on Escaping the Middle-Income Trap: Chains for Change (EMIT C4C); (4) the Political Economy Program (PEP); (5) the Assessment,

Curriculum, and Technology Research Program (ACTRP); (6) the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev); and (7) the Program on Social and Political Change (PSPC).

The first installment of the series was conducted on February 20, 2020 at the UP CIDS Conference Hall in UP Diliman, Quezon City. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the second and third installments were conducted as webinars via the teleconferencing platform Zoom and streamed on Facebook on August 26 and September 2, 2020, respectively.



# Opening Remarks

**TERESA S. ENCARNACION TADEM, Ph.D.**

Executive Director

University of the Philippines

Center for Integrative and Development Studies

Dr. Encarnacion Tadem welcomed the guests and participants of the “Mindanao: Fractured Promises, Continuing Challenges” Forum Series. She gave a short account of the history of the UP CIDS and its function as the policy research unit of the UP System. The Center contributes to the University’s mandate of national development and knowledge creation and popularizes its research work through activities such as lectures, workshops, and conferences. It also produces a wide range of publications, including discussion papers, policy briefs, monographs, proceedings, and the *Philippine Journal of Public Policy: Interdisciplinary Development Perspectives* (PJPP).

Dr. Encarnacion Tadem also gave an overview of the research programs of the UP CIDS, which are grouped into three clusters: (1) the Education and Capacity Building Cluster; (2) the Development Cluster; and (3) the Social, Political, and Cultural Studies Cluster. The Center also hosts the Local-Regional Studies Network, which is composed of the Cordillera Studies Center in UP Baguio and the Central Visayas Studies Center in UP Cebu.

She recalled that during the October 2019 UP CIDS Program Convenors’ Meeting, it was noted that six of the Center’s programs have been doing research in or

on Mindanao. As such, these programs thought of holding a forum series on Mindanao to share their researches and their implications to policy with a wider audience.

Dr. Encarnacion Tadem listed the topics and issues in store for the webinar series. For the first installment (held on February 20, 2020), the presentations dealt with a range of issues outside of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). The second and third installments (held on August 26 and September 2, 2020, respectively) focused on educational, political, and historical issues besetting the BARMM.

In closing, the UP CIDS Executive Director expressed her anticipation for the forum series: “I have no doubt that the paper presentations will generate an interesting relevant dialogue during the open forum to thresh out all issues and concerns confronting Mindanao. And like all of you, I am looking forward to a truthful exchange of ideas which will feed further into policy research on Mindanao.”




IMAGE CREDIT  
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# PART 1

# Development and Political Issues

February 20, 2020





## PANEL 1

### DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

#### **Going Against the Grain: The Unifrutti Transformational Business Partnership Model**

**ANNETTE O. BALAOING-PELKMANS, Ph.D.**

Program on Escaping the Middle-Income Trap: Chains for Change  
UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies

**VICTOR ADRIAN L. PABILONA**

Unifrutti Tropical Philippines, Inc.

Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans began her presentation by providing an introduction to Unifrutti Tropical Philippines, Inc. (UTPI), which was followed by a discussion of the evolution and features of the the company's Transformational Business Partnership model. She also emphasized that the key to the company's success is its ability to build its social capital.

Unifrutti has been an exporter of Cavendish bananas from the Philippines since 1992. It is known for operating in conflict areas (such as in Datu Paglas, Maguindanao and in Bumbaran, Lanao del Sur), with its first plantation located in La Frutera in Maguindanao, which is known to be a war zone. The company is also known for its good environmental practices (it is the first banana plantation in Asia certified by the Rainforest

Alliance), good labor practices (75–25 percent regular–seasonal workers), open and flexible contracts to its banana growers, and organizational excellence. These positive features of the company were a result of the evolution of its business model.

The UTPI conducted an action research to understand why the standard model of banana production is non-inclusive. This produced a collaborative learning environment involving both the researchers and the community. It followed the science and practice of working together, thereby creating an opportunity to build trust in the process. According to Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans, “the extent to which you reach the core of the story is directly proportional to the trust that you build in the community and the company.”

The company further explained that relationship with farmers can be categorized among three types: relational, captive, or hierarchical—depending on the level of competence of the partner-farmers. The higher the level of competence of the farmers, the more that it becomes a relational partnership. On the other hand, the more that the partners have to be capacitated, the more that control is exercised.

Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans then explained the Transformational Business Partnership model practiced by UTPI. This model has key characteristics which include values-based formation (employees attend weekly values formation sessions) and proactive and communication-intensive conflict resolution (typified by the introduction of the Values Reconciliation Board). The company also enters into relational (long-term) contracts with their partner farmer cooperatives. Moreover, its environmental policies are guided by the principle of stewardship.

The Transformational Business Partnership model evolved because of market and institutional failures that need to be addressed, especially those involving smallholder/cooperative farmers in small-scale agriculture. Prior to the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), farmers perform specific tasks on the land they till. When the program was implemented,

farmers began to handle all aspects of production: from sourcing to financial management, to adapting and use of technology and leadership. This posed a big problem to farmers as they do not have sufficient knowledge and skills for overall production.

Some farmer cooperatives that have contractual relationships with a company have experienced being locked in through loans and stringent requirements in delivering products to keep up with the demands of the global market. On the other hand, the Transformational Business Partnership model is built upon a close partnership between company and cooperatives. It is more than a transaction, but a relationship between partners. This approach ensures high productivity by building trust and knowing that both the company and the cooperative/farmers have the same interest to bring high-quality products.

The model also tries to address both the intrinsic and extrinsic motives of institutions by creating inclusive business models that are grounded on relational goods and social capital. Dr. Balaoing-Pelkmans added that such a transformative process allows for the communities to escape the never-ending cycle of fractured promises because it is based on trust and social capital.

The journey of Unifrutti, according to the company itself, is a journey towards stewardship. As Mr. Pabilona said:

Who we are defines what we do. It [transformation] is a process of discovery and becoming, hoping that this process would be passed on in the communities around us. [In fact], 95 percent of our employees are from the communities. We conduct a weekly values session one hour paid time where we talk about shared values of God. This is not talk of religion but talk of what characteristics should be seen in each and everyone of us. Engaging our employees is also engaging the community as well [...]. We also have a values reconciliation movement,

where rank-and-file employees and supervisors directly talk to top management about what they see that we are doing that are not aligned with who we are.

Mr. Pabilona further claimed that because they say that they are “one family under the Lord,” Unifrutti needed to standardize their salary structure, create uniform health care benefits, and provide scholarships to the children of their employees.

In conclusion, he said that Unifrutti has embraced the concept of sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) to be part of the core identity of the company. The company ultimately hopes to continuously transform for their employees, for the communities, and for the nation.



## Resource-based Conflicts and the Politics of Identity in Eastern Mindanao

**FRANCISCO “PANCHO” J. LARA, JR., Ph.D.**

Political Economy Program

UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies

Dr. Lara presented an ongoing research that he and his team are doing on resource-based conflicts and the politics of identity in Eastern Mindanao. According to him, property rights in relation to ancestral domain areas have been reinforced in recent years through legislation enabling indigenous peoples (IPs) to lay claim over large tracts of land and to negotiate the terms for the use of such land. However, conflict has continued to rise in the same areas where IP groups were placed in the driver’s seat and where new investments (i.e., in mining, agribusiness, energy, logging,

and forestry), development inputs, and royalty payments for the use of ancestral lands have been secured. In fact, there has been an increase in resource-based conflict and conflict-induced forced displacement in these areas. There are also arguments pointing that violence is being aggravated by rebellion-related conflict, and that the Lumad is being harnessed in a proxy war between the government and communist rebels. Given this background, the research tries to answer the following questions:

- Is violence occurring in the same areas where ancestral land rights have been strengthened and investments made?
- If this is the case, then why have stronger property rights and investments failed to alleviate conflict in ancestral lands?

Dr. Lara then explained the methodology of the research, which is both quantitative and qualitative. The study explores if conflict in affected areas of the CARAGA region is caused by new property rights under the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) and from business investments, or otherwise. It also looks at the rival institutions offered by insurgents and those arising from traditional institutions. The study analyzed descriptive statistics from a five-year panel data on the causes and costs of violent conflict in the CARAGA provinces from 2011 to 2015. The research used mapping techniques and map overlays and conducted in-depth interviews of key respondents and focus group discussions. The study compared specific actors and communities using a with-or-without case study to accompany the quantitative and qualitative analyses. The comparative analysis offered by the extreme cases (the towns of Lianga and Lanuza in Surigao del Sur) helped explain why some areas are more violent than others, and establish the links between natural resources and new property rights under the IPRA law. The results of the research were shown through the interpretation of maps, tables, interviews, and case studies.

The conflict report of the Philippine National Police (PNP) in Surigao del Sur demonstrates that the main cause of conflict are common crimes, then followed by identity issues. Meanwhile, the report of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) shows that the main cause is rebellion, followed by resource issues. The difference between the reports may be due to the distinct mandates of the two institutions. When connected to effects on displacement, a disconnect emerges between the causes and (human) costs. There are more incidents caused by rebellion and/or common crimes, but their displacement effects are less than identity-based conflicts. The empirical evidence clearly points to identity-based conflicts as the main cause of death and displacement. In short, ethnicity or ethnic identity trumps ideology or political identity as a predictor of violence, death, and displacement.

The extreme case studies of Lianga and Lanuza likewise suggest that demographic differences in population and language composition makes Lanuza more fragmented (than Lianga), yet less vulnerable to tribal or ethnic conflicts.

Initial endowments, such as natural resources, also influence displacement (i.e., the “resource curse”). Further, the effects of mineral wealth, including potentials for fossil fuel (coal) extraction in CARAGA, as a source of rents is undisputed. The extreme cases of Lianga and Lanuza have similarly turned up some interesting empirical evidence about how the differential impact of access to ancestral lands may predict the onset of identity-based conflicts, as IP groups in Lanuza have been able to secure Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs) in their ancestral domains, while IP groups in Lianga have not.

The study’s conflict heat map showed higher incidence of violence and human costs (deaths) outside CADT-covered areas and mining tenements, which are in Surigao del Norte and Agusan del Sur. Further, the extreme cases indicate that the non-existence of CADTs in one municipality and their presence in another had some association with resource-related violence (when tested with causes).

Dr. Lara ended his presentation by reiterating that first, identity-based conflict feeds resource conflict, leading to polarization and rebellion. Second, identity-based conflicts are partly a product of institutional reforms that exclude others groups and claimants. Third, the study could not distinguish a robust linear connection between conflict, displacement, and rebellion; instead, conflict has to induce polarization (i.e., on lines of identity) for rebellion to occur. Fourth, ethnic polarization is facilitated by a history of resource-based conflicts that often takes the form of revenge killings. Lastly, initial endowments in an area certainly affects the nature, incidence, and magnitude of identity-based violence.



## Development and Distress in Mindanao: A Political Economy Overview

**EDUARDO CLIMACO TADEM, Ph.D.**

Program on Alternative Development

UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies

A deeper analysis of Mindanao reveals that contrary to popular belief, it is in fact a major performer and contributor in the Philippine economy. Large-scale government projects have improved communications, transportation, irrigation, and power generation in the island. Local and foreign businesses have invested capital and technology, generating enormous profits. However, the wealth and income of big businesses and investments in Mindanao are created through the unsustainable and destructive use of its resources. At the same time, this does not benefit a great majority of its people due to internal colonialism, as seen from the transfer of wealth from southern regions to the nucleus of power or “imperial Manila.” This reality in the south

poses a paradox: there is high growth rate, but communities are impoverished.

Mindanao's forest area is equivalent to 41 percent of the country's vegetative cover and 56 percent of Philippine commercial forest land, while its agricultural land covers 36 percent of the country's total farm area. Commercial and export crops, including coconut, tobacco, rubber, sugar, export bananas, palm oil, coffee, abaca, and fruits, are planted in about 51 percent of Mindanao's farm area, and more than half of timber licenses are located in the island. Deposits of copper, gold, iron, nickel, lead, zinc, magnesite, cobalt, chromite, coal, manganese, limestone, and marble can also be found in Mindanao's soils. Apart from these, Mindanao also produces 100 percent of the country's rubber exports, 80 percent of canned tuna exports, 75 percent of coffee exports, 90 percent of export fruits, 60 percent of copra and coconut oil exports, and more than 90 percent of wood products.

Mindanao contributes to 73 percent of the national value added in forestry, 43 percent of the Philippines' agricultural farm output, 25 percent of rice harvests, 60 percent of corn production, 60 percent of agricultural exports, 25 percent of total export receipts, 30 percent of national food trade, 32 percent of fishery products, 30 percent of livestock, 40 percent of country's food requirements, and 21 percent of mining output.

In 2018, investment in Mindanao was at around Php 300 billion, which is more than a quarter of the country's total investments. Around 78 percent of these investments were made by Filipino investors.

Mindanao's economic annual growth rate rose from five percent in 2010 to 7.1 percent in 2018. Mindanao's gross regional domestic product (GRDP) from 2016 to 2018 amounted to Php 3.75 trillion, while its gross value added for agriculture, forestry, and fishing amounted to Php 718 billion, or 33 percent of the national total.

There are also large investments in infrastructure development in Mindanao. Under the administrations of former presidents



Ferdinand Marcos, Cory Aquino, Fidel Ramos, and Joseph Estrada, the biggest investment was the Cotabato–Agusan River Basin Development Project (CARBDP) which was implemented from 1975 to 2000 with a then projected cost of Php 15.7 billion. These investments in infrastructure are mostly funded from foreign loans.

Under the current administration of President Rodrigo Duterte, investments for infrastructure development in Mindanao reached Php 13.86 billion. In 2017, official development assistance (ODA) for Mindanao alone amounted to almost USD 1 billion for 62 projects. In 2018, ODA for Mindanao has totaled to USD 1.375 billion, 57 percent of which were loans and 43 percent were in the form of grants. About USD 400 million of this amount went to the reconstruction of Marawi City.

Economic growth, however, has not benefited Mindanao's peoples. Based on human development index (HDI) data, Mindanao fared badly compared to other parts of the Philippines. In 2018, five out of the six regions with high poverty rates (above 30 percent) are in Mindanao. GRDP per capita shows that all of Mindanao's six regions have lower GRDP per capita than the national average.

Data on food security shows that for all Mindanao regions in 2015, 16 percent were below the threshold, as compared to the national average. Among the regions, ARMM and Region XII (SOCCSKSARGEN) had the worst incidence of 21 percent (17th) and 20.4 percent (16th), respectively. This is an ironic situation, as Mindanao supplies 40 percent of the country's food requirements and 30 percent of the national food trade.

The Mindanao Strategic Development Framework 2010–2020 was crafted as part of the country's development strategy for Mindanao. Its objective is to integrate the southern economy into the national mainstream and into the global economy. However, the strategic framework posed more problems than solutions. The framework has little to no regard to the people of Mindanao due to its market-driven, productivity-based, and growth-oriented

approach. And although agribusiness is seen as Mindanao's competitive edge, especially in high-value crops, it has caused more problems than solutions due to environmental degradation, human rights violations, corruption, health problems, and unequal wealth transfers. Further, the strategy ignores the redistribution of wealth and income, agrarian reform, and other social justice issues.

Massive infrastructure projects have generated social and environmental consequences that have erupted into conflicts. Mindanao's economy is also dependent on exports, which, in turn, is dependent on the vagaries of international trade which local producers have no control.

Workers are always at a disadvantage in their relations with management and corporate owners. There have been issues on forced layoffs or drastic reductions in a worker's take-home pay, shifting of workers from being permanent to non-permanent in status, and an increasing preference for piece-rates and subcontracting arrangements by corporate farm owners over regular daily wages.

Although this existing unfair relationship between workers and corporate management can also be seen in Luzon and Visayas, Mindanao's situation is also unique because of internal colonialism, which refers to "the distribution of power and advantage within states...where economic resources and power are concentrated at the center (i.e., Manila or the north), to the advantage of which the periphery (i.e., Mindanao) is subordinated" (Hechter 1975). This would largely explain why the Mindanao regions remain poor, deprived, and marginalized.

Hence, the oft-repeated line that Mindanao has not been left out of government and private development efforts does not have any basis in reality. There is a need for a new development paradigm to render social and economic justice for Mindanao's peoples.



## Open Forum

**Question:** In terms of the classification of incidents being recorded in the database, was there an attempt to triangulate the data gathered from the military, the police, civil society, and the media?

**Dr. Francisco J. Lara, Jr.:** In relation to the data, this is probably the sixth year that [International] Alert has come out with what is called The Conflict Alert Annual Launch. We do this every year and we present the sources which are fourfold. The background behind that is that prior to this database, what you had were databases that were only based on media reports, even the global [databases] in Sweden and in New York, etc. This is the first database that harnesses police reports for obvious reasons. The data that are in police reports is about 20 times bigger than media reports. The data from the media—96 percent of them are in the police reports. Ostensibly, therefore, the media also gets its sources from the police. The police are able to distinguish between “communist-terrorists,” (CT) which is the language of the military. And of course, they would describe their own as not CT. When we look at them, they are very small. Actually we were very fortunate because at that time, the General in charge of AFP Eastern Mindanao Command, which is in charge of South and Eastern Mindanao, was actually very happy to share the data that was really confidential. The data is small but very revealing; but we still get [data] from the media. Then we had a multi-stakeholder validation phase. These are community reports where you have civil society, church people, [and] local experts who sit and meet regularly for two reasons: (1) to add data that they know of that is not in the database, or (2) to clarify incidents that do not have causes (e.g., *rido*). This adds data, rather than clarify the causes. Finally, when it comes to displacement, we went to the gods—the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). They do it with really detailed data.

We started in ARMM (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) in 2014 with 7,000 [cases]; now we have about 23,000 of discreet incidents of violent conflict in the entire Bangsamoro area. We thought we would get a bigger number there because there is a myth that the Bangsamoro is more violent than anywhere else in Mindanao. The first time we went to Southern Mindanao, we found 30,000 incidents of violent conflict. When we went to CARAGA, there are 20,000 incidents of violent conflicts. We have two teams working three shifts just to encode the data. So if you look into the database, and it is available, you can see, because it is now on CSV (common separated values). You can do SPSS (a statistical software) and do your calculation to see the relationship of conflict on health, education, etc. That is the source of the data.

Now, the problem is, even if there is data, there should be tests of association for the data. Oftentimes, the data is not enough to do tests of association. For example, I can tell you now very confidently that in the case of CARAGA, the more important source of displacement that is very high in association is not the rebellion; it is about resource in relation to identities. Secondly, I can also tell you, there is a very strong correlation between female-headed households and peaceful communities in Mindanao. If you have female-headed households, there are more chances that that area is peaceful than violent; but I can't make final conclusions because the data is not so robust as of the moment. What is important there is to test association, but is it statistically significant? Not yet. We're still gathering data. But you can just imagine the bulk of the data. You are talking about 30,000 plus discreet incidents. I am cautious not to conclude because the data we have in CARAGA is only from 2011 to 2015. We have data until 2019, but we have not yet encoded it because it's very expensive to encode and we are focusing now on the Bangsamoro.

**Question:** When you say identity conflict, is it the same as *rido*?

**Dr. Lara:** Yes. Identity conflict comes in many forms. They can be inter-ethnic or intra-ethnic [and] inter-clan or intra-clan. You have inter- or intra-conflict within the MILF commanders, [as well as] inter- or intra-conflict within the New People's Army (NPA).

**Question:** Are there other companies with the same perspective as Unifrutti's?

**Dr. Annette O. Balaoing-Pelkmans:** On the first slide, the last item is "Why is it so hard to replicate?" The importance of social capital is not recognized and it's not something you build overnight. Trust begets trust. There are not many companies, although they try to replicate the Unifrutti, but taking only a part of it. And that is the problem. When you do business in Mindanao, the most difficult part in the equation is not the resources or the land, it's the human interaction. If it is one source of the risk: less engagement with the community would mean less risk—that's one idea. The opposite is building social capital. Social capital building is difficult; it takes a mindset. There is also this challenge of the reality of poverty penalty, that is, poverty breeds behavior that actually ensures you remain in poverty. Poverty breeds opportunism, short-mindedness, and risk aversion, among others. There is also that mirror phenomenon for the companies. There's also this behavior of a lack of engagement which also breeds a certain behavior that basically prevents them from building social capital.

**Question:** On the data on violence in non-CADT areas, are you also trying to see if there is a relationship of the diaspora and the displacement of Bakwit if they go to those areas? Are those areas where they go to have violence? Also, the alternative development in Mindanao, they have a model on agribusiness that's been developed in the region for decades and it's not working. In the

**alternative paradigm, is there a model that is not agriculture and is not the outsource/service industry?**

**Dr. Lara:** Most of these are major groups from the forest areas. Those who get caught in the middle of the violence are those who witnessed the death of people they know. What is just missing in the slide is an indicator to determine the human cost, incidence, and location of those who witnessed these deaths. We can come up with a slide on this so you can see these issues in clusters. But most of the evacuation is nearby—we are not talking about more than 50 kilometers in any direction. And oftentimes, our interviews with the local government units (LGUs) really happened in the cities. It's really a burden when there are evacuations.

**Dr. Eduardo C. Tadem:** Just a disclosure: I'm a socialist, and I believe that only socialism can take the place of capitalism, except that I believe that socialism has to be reformatted, reconstructed, and rethought. There is a need to go back to the basics of what really a socialist society is. But let us put that aside.

What we are doing at the Program on Alternative Development is to look at actual practices on the ground by the grassroots—what people in the communities have been doing for many decades and centuries of how they are responding to issues of poverty, food security, health, etc. In Southeast Asia, we have been looking at the alternative practices on the ground, for example, political alternatives in terms of alternative decision-making processes and action. [There's also] economic alternatives in terms of looking at cooperation rather than competition, looking at basic needs rather than profit. [There are] social practices—alternative education, alternative health, alternative social protection service, alternative cultural practices. We've been doing it for two years. We have been able to document about 56 alternatives by grassroots communities that go against the mainstream capitalist paradigm. This is what we can use as building blocks for the development of a new paradigm that we

can use not only for Mindanao and for the Philippines, but also for the rest of Southeast Asia, and hopefully, for the rest of the world. In the US (United States), you now have an alternative paradigm promoted by Bernie Sanders—democratic socialism—and [that's] probably something to look at.

**Question:** How do you cultivate social capital towards building solutions in the plantation?

**Victor Adrian L. Pabilona:** For growers, we have people on the ground and we run a values formation program. We hired facilitators to embed the values of the company in small groups of 25 people.

## PANEL 2

### POLITICAL ISSUES

#### **Cross-cutting Vulnerabilities of the Poor: Experiences of EJK, Marawi Siege, and Martial Law in Mindanao**

**ASSISTANT PROFESSOR GIL I. ESPENIDO and COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

College of Social Work and Community Development  
University of the Philippines Diliman

The UP College of Social Work and Community Development (CSWCD) conducted a research project to (1) determine current programmatic sectoral and multi-sectoral responses to human rights issues and concerns that confront rural and urban communities; (2) establish a network of educators, researchers, and activists towards innovative, gender-responsive, humane, and community-centered responses to substance abuse; and (3) provide support and protection for human rights defenders, especially women.

This research conducted by the team of Asst. Prof. Espenido shows that the war on drugs overlaps with the martial law in Mindanao and the Marawi siege. Extrajudicial killings (EJKs) in President Rodrigo Duterte's drug war is not a single moment of the violation of the right to life, but a complex set of actions and processes initiated by state actors that lead to the death of an individual. EJKs cannot be reduced to a peace



and order issue, as it is a political issue. Further, human rights violations (HRVs) not related to the drug war are occurring in the same population as those experiencing drug war-related HRVs. The research also shows that impunity is accorded to the killers, and those working against EJKs and with the victims are harassed and killed, creating a climate of fear in affected communities.

With this spate of EJKs and HRVs, the state as a whole is failing the people. The media too has failed in its duty to inform and protect the people. The drug war is likewise extremely gendered, as women and children suffer its long-term effects the most.

With these issues happening in Mindanao, some recommendations of the research project include:

- Moving forward with the research results towards creating a nationwide network of human rights defenders and advocates;
- Creation of synergy among partner participants through the formation of a more scoping network;
- Synergized, coordinated, and shared capacity building endeavors among partner participants;
- Centralized data bank including the creation of a common instrument that meets the needs for human rights documentation with an eye to the future needs for transitional justice;
- Protection for human rights defenders; and
- Identification of unities in the struggle against the war on drugs and impunity in general.

A community partner, a human rights defender in Mindanao, also shared the current situation in the south. According to her, people in Mindanao, particularly in Davao, are scared to talk about EJKs. Raids have also been frequent. Even some HR defenders choose to stay silent as those who speak out are either

wrongly accused of being drug addicts or tagged as communists or terrorists.

She also noted that in studying the situations of communities, it is important to visit them to see the reality on ground and to not merely rely on data.



## **Pakighitinduga Hu Bugta Hu Kabilin Hu Mga Apo Day** (The Struggle for Land of our Ancestors)

**BAE MERLINA DUMOTAN**

Baclig Farmerworkers' Association

**AMELITA ASLAG**

Panalsalan Dagumbaan Tribal Association

Two stories, one struggle. Bae Merlina Dumotan of the Baclig Farmworkers' Association (BACFA) and Amelita Aslag of the Panalsalan Dagumbaan Tribal Association (PADATA) both shared the story of their struggle for the land of their ancestors.

Bae Merlina was the first to share her story by retelling BACFA's fight for their ancestral land since 1993, when former San Fernando, Bukidnon mayor Levi Edma sold their land to a businessman named Allan Uy. In 2005, Uy forcibly drove Merlina's father away from their land. It was then that they got introduced to Task Force Mapalad (TFM) who helped them take back their land in 2007. TFM helped the BACFA in surveying the land and offered legal and technical assistance.

The year 2008 was a historic moment for the BACFA. It was the year that the association filed for a petition to cancel Uy's Forest Land Grazing Lease Agreement (FLGLA). They also went to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to consult with former Secretary Joselito "Lito" Atienza on their

plight. Eventually, Uy's FLGLA was cancelled. However, BACFA was not able to get the whole 400 hectares of their ancestral land. Uy pledged to Governor Jose Zubiri, Jr. of Bukidnon and called the DENR to keep a portion of the land with him. In the end, the BACFA only got 200 hectares. The Talaanding tribe, led by its women members, began occupying the lands and soon, they applied for a Community-based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA). However, in 2009, the Talaandig was falsely accused of destroying the forest, pasture land, and watershed. Come 2010, they were finally granted with a CBFMA that will be renewed every 25 years. However, in order for them to keep the land, it was in the agreement that they have to ensure that 80 percent of the land is planted with forest woods.

On the other hand, the story of Amelita Aslag of the PADATA began in 1997, with the expiration of the Pasture Lease Agreement with former Kibawe mayor Ernesto Villalon. Fast forward to 2008, the Talaanding tribe began occupying the land. However, in 2010, Villalon's lease agreement was renewed using the dummy profile of an indigenous person. As the harassment of the Talaandig tribe intensified, they decided to have a dialogue with former Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Jesse Robredo. From 2010 to 2012, they tirelessly campaigned to have the fake FPIC (Free and Prior Informed Consent) revoked. It was also in 2012 that the Talaandig sat in front of the DENR for three months to protest against the harassment that they experienced. Finally, they received a Status Quo Order from the DENR.

In 2013, the DENR finally released its "win-win" solution on the land dispute. The solution stated that the PADATA will have the claim to 264 hectares of the land, while the remaining 200 hectares will remain with the Villalon Ranch.

The PADATA applied for a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT)/Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim (CADC) in 2015. In 2017, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) began a survey for them to finally take back their land.

Presently, the government supports the PADATA's farming with fertilizers and other agricultural needs, but they are continuously fighting for their full rights to their ancestral domain. They have teamed up with the BACFA to apply for a Unified CADT for 1,200 hectares of land.



## The Lumad School as a Struggle for Land, Life, and Liberation

**JOSE MONFRED C. SY**

Program on Alternative Development  
UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies

### SAVE OUR SCHOOLS NETWORK

Mindanaoan indigenous peoples (IPs) have long been deprived of basic social services, such as access to health and education from the government. In order to address these shortcomings, they built Lumad schools where education focuses on academics, agriculture, and health.

Young IPs who go to Lumad schools are also taught the school's orientation of learning, which revolves around being:

- *Makamasa* (for the masses): Young IPs are taught to serve in the interest of the people. They also learn to understand the struggle of the masses, and honor the strength and work of the people.
- *Makabayan* (patriotic): Young IPs are taught the importance of loving the nation and its natural resources. Being *makabayan* recognizes national values, and places importance on the history of struggle. Lumad students

are also taught to uphold the honor, independence, and sovereignty of the nation.

- *Siyentipiko* (scientific): Young IPs are taught to form curiosity and critical thinking, and to strive towards truth.

Despite these progressive aims, attacks by the military remain rampant in Lumad schools. Some of these attacks resulted in the Capión Massacre, Pangantukan Massacre, and Lianga Massacre. Lumads who fell victim to military and paramilitary rampage (such as the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU) and Alamara group) were defenders of their schools and ancestral domain. Even teachers and parents became victims of illegal arrests and detention. Some Lumad youth were also killed, and a fake list of mass surrenderees was released, tagging the Lumads as rebels or members of the NPA.

This continuous militarization and plunder in Mindanao are met with resistance from Lumads and Moros. They also occasionally travel to Metro Manila to voice out their struggles to the government so that their needs and demands could be addressed.



## Open Forum

*Question: Is there systematic support for you, for the children, and the IPs?*

**Amelita Aslag:** There is already a school for IP children in Bukidnon. There is no more reason not to go to school. The DSWD (Department of Social Welfare and Development) also helped via financial assistance for elementary and high school [students].

**Lumad Youth:** [We] actually receive a lot of help, except from the government—individuals, church people, financial assistance from individuals abroad, free food, and beddings.

**Assistant Professor Gil Espenido:** There is no update in Marawi. It's worrying because there are developments in Marawi that are being traced. First is that Hapilon landed near the military checkpoint, so the military knows. Second, the siege happened in May. From January to April, there is already stockpiling of food and weapons in the area. Bullets are running out. People were starting to doubt because a surveillance facility was being handled by a platoon-sized military [troop]. Third, CSO (civil society organization) leaders, the church, and the academe began a dialogue with Maute group and ISIS—but there could be no intervention; [a few players want to] continue the war. Fourth, [we] don't understand why there is an excessive use of aerial power wherein the weight of a bullet is 300 to 400 tons, for 90 days. Fifth, the people can no longer return [to their places] even if they wanted to. They were shown a declaration that the place is already a part of a military reservation. The government asserted that they own the land. Sixth, we interviewed Ret. General [Eduardo] Del Rosario (Head of Task Force Bangon Marawi) on what will be done to Marawi. He said, there will be a clearing operation because there's three million tons of debris [that needs to be cleared]. Other areas will be reclaimed; the structures will not be different from the structure in Bonifacio Global City (BGC). Seventh, the military has built a military reservation in Marawi, so the people of Marawi asked, "Who will reside in that place that needs to be guarded?" Definitely, they are not the ones who will reside in the place. What they do now, in the Ground Zero, is they put up tents to reclaim the land that was theirs before the siege happened.

**Question:** There are two alternative modes of learning by DepEd (Department of Education). Why did they [Bakwit] not use the

provision for ALS (Alternative Learning System) or why did they not take the exam here in Manila if it's already included in the old curriculum? Those children who graduated can get an accelerated exam. Why did they not use the ALS model in the facility, so that the NGO (non-government organization) can deliver this system of education anywhere? How do you present the modality of the Bakwit school? How does it run?

**Mr. Sy:** On the fact that these children can take the exit exam in Manila is a very obvious intent of DepEd to close the Bakwit school. Last year, 54 campuses were closed to build ALS schools in the area. The IP schooling that these children experience is different from the ALS of DepEd. DepEd's alternative modality [i.e., the ALS] is about those children or people who were not able to enroll in a formal education with the same curriculum in formal institutions, and sometimes, in fact, it's a bit advanced. In the curriculum of Lumads, it's centered on a nationalistic, scientific, and mass-oriented type of education—it is anchored in the community and their ways of living. Their learning is integrated [in their ways of living] unlike in ALS. We are actually conducting a case study to differentiate the alternative pedagogy of what you call the alternative state-envisioned learning development. This is in partnership with SOS (Save our Schools). For the third question, I think it's better to be answered by a Lumad student. Bakwit schools are not only located in Manila. There is also one in Cebu and [in] Davao.

**Lumad Youth:** Those of us who are in Bakwit school here in Manila are hungry for our land. In our Bakwit school, we farm from morning to afternoon. Here in Manila, our teachers accompany us to farm in Krus na Ligas or in Ateneo. Some of what we do in Mindanao, we can still do here. Regarding the examination, we really need it. When the Salugpongan was closed, the DepEd was accompanied by five intel[s] interrogating the students so we were not able to go home. They said [that] they

will close down our school again. They asked why there's only a few students in the school. They don't know that there were some of us who went to the Bakwit school in Manila. They don't know because they never listened to us in the first place, so we decided to leave. What is taught to us by our teachers here in Manila, who are also UP and Ateneo professors, are not different from what we learn in Mindanao. We learn even if we're not inside of the four walls of a classroom. We still learn and continue to learn outside of a school environment.

**Mr. Sy:** Since Bakwit school teachers are volunteer teachers, SOS ensures that they undergo a Lumad situationer and educational discussions so they know how to discuss and teach the subjects to the children, and so they also know the situation in Mindanao.

**Question:** First question, did these children evacuate their land? Were they raised in a situation that their ancestral land is a war zone? What do they do if they're displaced in their land? Also, the practice in their public school is there's a temporary makeshift [school] because these children are displaced. My question is, what is the importance of learning the English language in a nationalistic, mass-oriented, and scientific framework? Because if we notice in the discussions earlier, many of these are written in English, the permits are written in English.

**Lumad Youth:** We need to learn English because that's the order of our elders who never learned how to read. We study English so we can fight the imperialists, so we can fight those who oppress us, so we don't have to go to another country. We need to learn how to read in English so we can read the documents and permits that they ask us to sign. That is the reason why we were deceived—we didn't know how to read.



A black and white photograph showing a classroom full of students. In the foreground, several young girls wearing white hijabs are seated at wooden desks, focused on their work. One girl in the center is writing in a notebook with a pen. To her left, another girl is looking down at a piece of paper. To her right, a third girl is also writing. In the background, other students are visible, some looking towards the camera and others looking away. The overall atmosphere is one of quiet concentration.

IMAGE CREDIT  
MindaNews

## PART 2

# Education Issues in the BARMM

August 26, 2020



# Sustainability Concerns of the Madrasah Education Program: Basis for Philippine Islamic and Madrasah Education Policy Review

**ARLYNE C. MARASIGAN, Ph.D.**

Philippine Normal University–Manila

Dr. Marasigan highlighted the fact that recent education reforms have placed greater emphasis on promoting education for all (EFA) and on achieving inclusive and quality education. Global education programs have been part of the agenda of international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank in aiding countries towards fostering quality education under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030. In the Philippines, efforts towards providing quality education to all Muslim learners through mainstreaming and institutionalizing *madrasah* education have been the focus of government agencies and non-governmental organizations through the years. Dr. Marasigan's presentation centered on the sustainability concerns of the Madrasah Education Program (MEP) in the country.

Dr. Marasigan traced the policies and memoranda since the 1976 Tripoli Agreement that pertain to the implementation of public and private *madaris* education and to support systems for *madrasah* school teachers. Given the policies issued by the Department of Education (DepEd), Dr. Marasigan believes that the Department's commitment to providing support system to Muslim Filipino students and teachers is clear.

Nevertheless, she also highlighted various challenges in the mainstreaming and institutionalization of the MEP. Before the implementation of the K to 12 curriculum, the MEP has

already been confronted with various challenges such as learning content, inadequate resources and materials, lack of competent teachers, lack of facilities, and peace and order. Even with the implementation of the K to 12 curriculum, the same challenges besetting the MEP remains unsettled.

By way of conclusion, Dr. Marasigan highlighted the following aspects of MEP that need immediate policy review and action to ascertain its sustainability: teachers' qualification, curriculum, management competency, technical and financial assistance, and policy formulation. She stressed that sustainability is not an overnight task, especially if concerns and issues are deeply rooted in a long history of educational challenges. Listening to the issues of people on the ground and facilitating dialogues among stakeholders are great opportunities to working towards sustainability.



## **Alternative Delivery Mode of Education in the BARMM**

**MARIE THERESE A. P. BUSTOS, Ph.D.**

Assessment, Curriculum, and Technology Research Program  
UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies

Education provision has become a perennial problem in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), owing to its geographic isolation and the displacement of communities due to conflicts. Given this situation, alternative delivery models (ADMs)—instructional modalities that follow the Department of Education (DepEd)'s K to 12 curriculum but deliver instruction in a more flexible manner—are being explored in the region. One of these ADMs are learning centers patterned

after the model of the Bangladesh Rural Agricultural Committee (BRAC) built in far-flung communities.

Dr. Bustos gave an overview of some of the components of ADM, namely learning facilitators (LFs), the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, instructional supervision/materials, the learning center, and the learners. The LFs in the BRAC learning centers are all females who are part of the respective communities of the learners. Despite being unlicensed teachers (LFs are either high school graduates or college graduates but not education majors), the BRAC provides them with monthly refresher trainings to equip them with the content and skills to teach the curriculum. For Kinder up to Grade 3, the BRAC created their own instructional materials, but for Grades 4 to 6, the LFs use commercially available textbooks that are most aligned with the K to 12 curriculum.

The research project of the ACTRP aims to know the extent of the effectivity and sustainability of ADMs in delivering basic education in the BARMM by analyzing the performance of the learners in two subjects and by looking at how the curriculum is implemented by the LFs.

As an initial point, Dr. Bustos cited a related longitudinal study her research team previously conducted among learners in Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao. It was found that learners in ADM and in DepEd ARMM (i.e., regular classroom setup) exhibited a similar pattern of acquisition of literacy and numeracy. It is also suggested that attendance in ADMs that are tightly bound to the community might reduce attrition of learners. During the fourth quarter, in an examination administered to two groups of Grade 5 learners (one under ADM and one under the regular setup), combined results for English reading comprehension show that more than a third of the learners who took the test were performing at Level A (below the expectations for the Grade 5) and only 4.7 percent performed at Level D (accomplishing the expectations for the grade level). Results for Mathematics show that more than half of the students

were also performing at Level A. None of the students reached Level D.

Comparing the scores of the two groups of learners, for English reading comprehension, the scores are comparable in terms of performance, with the number of learners performing at Level A being quite the same (only with a difference of 2 percent). It is a different picture for Mathematics, as more students from under ADM performed at Level A, while more learners from the regular setup performed at Levels B and C.

Dr. Bustos suggested that the factors that may be considered to explain the results are the learners' physical and cognitive characteristics, absenteeism and class disruptions, home environment, curriculum and the distribution of lessons, pre-service teacher preparation, the disposition of LFs, and teacher competence as affected by the physical and social milieu.

While LFs were found to have a positive disposition with strong commitment and sense of mission, they needed improvement in their content and pedagogical knowledge. Specifically, LFs need support in contextualizing the lessons and activities from commercially available instructional materials so that the learners are able to relate them to real-life situations. Another area that needs attention is the difficulty following the curriculum and the amount of work. LFs also found some topics to be difficult and learners needed more time to master core competencies. Class disruptions also contributed to difficulty in following the schedule of lessons.

Without the ADM learning centers, cohorts of students from far-flung areas would not have been able to have education. In terms of providing access and participation, ADM makes a great deal of contribution. However, if it is going to be an effective way of addressing basic education, attention also needs to be paid to quality. First, learner-related factors such as hunger, poverty, and lack of resources need to be addressed. Second, the readiness of the learners for the curriculum and the suitability of the latter to learners' contexts need to be considered, while making sure that

the students' focus is on learning the core competencies. Third, there is a need to consider teacher qualifications for teaching in intermediate grade levels to make sure that they have mastered the more complex content and the necessary strategies to teach these. Finally, in order for ADMs to become sustainable, these have to be supported and funded by the DepEd so that LFs can enjoy security of tenure.



## **COVID-19 and Armed Conflict: Exacerbating Precarity and Marginalization in the BARMM**

**Professor RUFA CAGOCO-GUIAM**

Mindanao State University-General Santos City

Prof. Guiam began with an affirmation of the previous presentations which emphasized the challenges affecting education in the BARMM. She then introduced her presentation on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the BARMM and the challenges it poses to the region's leadership.

Prof. Guiam first established how the BARMM, which currently covers five provinces, came to be as a result of several ratifications. The first of these was the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) in January 21, 2019. With Lanao del Norte, including Marawi City and Cotabato City, added to the territorial jurisdiction of the region, a total of 63 barangays opted to be part of the new region, with almost 90 percent of the population being Muslims. The remainder is a composite of Christian settlers and IPs like Teduray, Lambangian, and Manobo Dulangan, among others. Prof. Guiam also established that in terms of structure, the governance of the

previous Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is asymmetrical to the national government through a parliamentary system, which now operates as a transitional parliament called the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority (BTA). The BTA is an 80-member parliament, majority of whom came from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), headed by Interim Chief Minister Ahod Balawag Ebrahim. The BTA and BARMM's key ministries are headed by and composed of former MILF members or supportive officials, including Mohagher Iqbal (chair of the MILF's peace negotiating panel), Hatimil Hassan, Bainon Karon, and other national government appointees.

Prof. Guiam then presented how the BARMM responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. First, the BARMM government created its own Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) in late March 2020. The task force is led by the Ministry of Health (MOH), with BARMM Interim Chief Minister Ebrahim as its chair, and Minister Naguib Sinarimbo of the Ministry of the Interior and Local Government (MILG) serving as spokesperson. The MOH was quite upfront in addressing the crisis by converting all the hospitals in the region into dedicated referral facilities by the end of March through the leadership of Minister Dr. Zaffrullah Dipatuan. This was the time when there were only few COVID-19 infections in the region. The MOH also provided additional testing and isolation facilities for COVID-19 patients by allocating Php 14 million to the Cotabato Regional Medical Health Center (CRMHC). There were only 461 cases in July 2020, which increased to almost 600 in September. Many of these cases are locally stranded individuals (LSIs) who either came from other regions or are returning overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). Prof. Guiam emphasized that there were only 65 local cases (non-LSIs and non-OFWs), many recoveries, and a low number of fatalities in the region.

Aside from the pandemic, Prof. Guiam also identified poverty as another problem besetting the BARMM. She cited how provinces in the former ARMM used to be part of what is called "Club 20," which refers to the poorest twenty provinces in the



country based on official statistics. In the first semester of 2018, BARMM recorded a 63 percent poverty incidence rate, which is significantly higher than the national average of 27 percent. Sulu is the poorest province due the frequent incidents of violence, which is followed by Basilan, which is frequently infested by the coconut scale insect (popularly known as *cocolisap*), Maguindanao, and Tawi-Tawi. Prof. Guiam also cited indicators of the region's socio-economic situation. First, she showed that there are more underweight than overweight children in the region. Second, in terms of health and sanitation, the region has the highest open defecation rate of 21.8 percent based on her research in 2017. The region is also the second highest in the country in terms of shared toilet facilities. Third, in terms of vaccination, four out of ten children do not have any type of vaccination, resulting to a very high mortality rate of children five years old and below.

Prof. Guiam also cited the intermittent but ongoing vertical and horizontal conflicts in the region. The vertical conflicts are those between the state and non-state actors challenging the former's authority. Examples include those waged by breakaway factions of the MILF, such as the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), the Abu Sayaff Group (ASG), Ansarul Khilafah (AKF), and other violent extremist groups. On the other hand, horizontal conflicts are those referring to cultural vengeance or criminal violence due to political power, also known as *rido* among the Maranaos, or vows among the Tausug and Maguindanao. According to Prof. Guiam, "usually, the causes of these conflicts are so trivial like a basketball court dispute, an abduction of a girl from one family to another, confiscation of political power, boundaries of land, or fighting between security groups."

She then presented data from the Bangsamoro Monitoring Conflict System (BMCS) showing Maguindanao and Cotabato as having the most number of conflict incidents from 2011 to 2017 (prior to the Marawi siege). Together with the increase in the number of conflicts, the number of deaths, ranging from

random killings to celebrated assassinations, also increased. Prof. Guiam surmised that these disruptions in many locations in the region have a real impact on learning outcomes of students. As protracted armed conflicts also lead to protracted displacement and permanent displaced communities, an increase in numbers of informal dwellers in municipal and city centers in the region (and in adjacent areas like the SOCCSKSARGEN) is also apparent.

Given the aforementioned challenges, Prof. Guiam identified the cracks in BARMM's health and governance systems, such as the inadequate delivery of basic health services and corruption among government officials. With the three-year transition period becoming narrower because of the pandemic, the limited resources of the region have to be redirected to funding badly needed health services as a response to COVID-19. Indeed, the already very narrow window for the provision of basic social services and political reform in the region became even narrower. For instance, the need for the education sector to develop alternative learning platforms prove to be a challenge for the poorly-resourced BARMM, with internet access only limited to roughly five to ten percent of both urban and rural areas. Prof. Guiam further emphasized the need to think of flexible learning options. Furthermore, it is important to work very closely with international agencies in order to deliver such options and to include the displaced and vulnerable sectors. She cited how massive displacement from Marawi City has triggered a lot of disappointment and desperation among people, which resulted in them becoming easier to be recruited by violent extremist groups.

Finally, Prof. Guiam identified some low-cost change and innovation initiatives for the region. One is the activation of *barangays* to build community resilience and security by utilizing the mechanisms for assembly and by demanding accountability and social services from local government officials. An example of this is the Ginipalad Ta Ka Spaces for Peace, a federation of seven barangays in Pikit, North Cotabato aiming to create more

resilient and secure communities. Another example is the joint monitoring practice of barangay representatives and collaborative partners from non-government organizations (NGOs) or civil society organizations (CSOs) and the academe. These groups work closely on monitoring and addressing social and political issues affecting communities. Another example is how Barangay Layug in Pagalungan, Maguindanao utilizes the sitio or barangay assemblies in organizing a community security working group. Prof. Guiam emphasized the need for inclusion and wider participation in barangay or local governance in order to address security and marginalization issues and to create a more cohesive society, especially during this time of pandemic.



## Open Forum

**Question:** To whom does the BRAC turn over the ADM learning centers: the DepEd Central Office or the BARMM Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE)?

Dr. Bustos responded that the learning centers and their learners were turned over to the BARMM MBHTE. The students were given Learner Reference Numbers (LRNs), signifying that the students are actually part of the education system.

**Question:** Given the diversity of Islamic contexts, denominations, and professional training of teachers, what is the possibility of having a unified curriculum for *madrasah* education?

Dr. Marasigan affirmed that there is indeed a diversity of *asatidz* (*madrasah* teachers) in terms of educational philosophies, especially considering some were professionally trained in

countries like Indonesia, Egypt, or in the Middle East. This is one source of the difficulty in standardizing the curriculum for *madrasah* education. But in the recent National Conference on Madrasah Education at UP Diliman, there has been clamor of teachers for a “unified curriculum” for *madrasah* education.

Asst. Prof. Darwin Absari (moderator of the forum) added that the desire and the initiative to unify the *madrasah* education curriculum in Mindanao started as early as the 1980s, but it was only two years ago that the initiative started to gain ground when the initiative was taken up by the BARMM MBHTE and the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF).

**Question:** Please elaborate on how the community security group in Pagalungan, Maguindanao has been effective in assisting the people affected by COVID-19.

Prof. Guiam emphasized that she brought up the example of Pagalungan to show how a community can address a crisis by organizing themselves. Because of the absence of mobile signal from the country’s leading telecommunications companies, people in various barangays that are in close proximity to one another use handheld radios to be able to transmit information. For instance, they alert one another when a suspected armed group approaches their area. In times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and when face-to-face interaction is not ideal, this practice of using handheld radios to disseminate information in pursuit of community security and well-being would be immensely helpful.

**Question:** Do you have suggestions on addressing the issues raised by teachers on modular learning approach being implemented by the BARMM MBHTE? Considering that most of the learners’ parents are unable to read and write, should alternative media (such as radio) be explored to supplement the modular approach?

Dr. Bustos agreed that there are various issues on the implementation of the modular learning approach. With this approach, the parents are being asked to help their children deal with the modules, but some parents are unable to read and write, which makes academic tasks difficult. Everyone in the education sector is also wondering how to best address this issue. For children who can hear a radio broadcast, using a public address (PA) system to deliver instruction is a workable option. In fact, in several places in BARMM, there are PA systems in place.

Television (TV) broadcasting is also an option. However, if the community does not have TV signal, the creation and dissemination of videos can also be explored. These videos may be uploaded and viewed online or accessed through portable hard drives if internet connectivity is not available (provided they have the necessary technologies). For special education, these videos may be especially helpful for parents of deaf children who do not know how to communicate with their children in helping them with remote learning.

**Question: What is the percentage breakdown of general and religious subjects in *madrasah* education in the Philippines?**

Asst. Prof. Absari thinks that in accredited *madrasah* schools in the country, 50 percent of instruction time is given to secular subjects (e.g., Mathematics, English, Civics) and 50 percent is allotted to religious subjects (e.g., Islamic values, Islamic laws, etc.).

**Question: How can higher education in the BARMM be more involved in terms of specific action research projects or extension projects?**

Prof. Guiam thinks that the academe has to step up in terms of research and extension projects. An example of extension project

towards self-sufficiency in food is an initiative by BTA member Atty. Maisara Latiph where women are supported to tend community vegetable gardens in their respective localities.

Concerning research, the academe could think of ways to do research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on different communities in the BARMM. Research institutions can also look into the conditions that create more resilient communities in times of crisis. There are examples of what we can consider templates of communities in addressing crises. In cases of disasters such as massive flooding or security issues, there are barangays in Pikit, Cotabato that organize in order to respond and coordinate through text brigades or use of handheld radios. It is also worth looking into local community responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although there are attempts to document concrete local initiatives, the dominant mode of response has been government- or donor-driven. Higher education institutions can also be involved in identifying learning options for the delivery of instruction given the challenges to accessing necessary technologies and the varying needs and contexts of Filipino learners during this time of the pandemic.

**Question:** For teachers, this is an exciting time to do research. As a teacher of language subjects to B'laan and Muslim learners, I am planning to do a feasibility study on modular learning. Where is the best place to look for topics for research?

Dr. Bustos emphasized that the terrain for research is quite expansive. Thus, it is important to focus on a particular area of investigation, narrow the topic down, and set manageable parameters. She shared her email address so that she may be contacted for further discussion and consultation.

**Question:** Are you familiar with the Lumad schools of the Save Our Schools (SOS) Network in Mindanao? Could you say they can fall under the ADM?

Dr. Bustos responded that she is not familiar with the schools run by the SOS Network. She highlighted however that the way to distinguish whether schools can be classified as ADM is if they are following the K to 12 curriculum, but with distinct changes in the delivery of the instruction.

**Question: How might the COVID-19 pandemic affect the delivery of education in the BARMM, especially *madrasah* education and ADMs, this coming school year?**

Prof. Guiam remarked that, of all the sectors in the BARMM's MBHTE, the MEP is the least developed and has already been suffering setbacks even before the pandemic. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the MEP is already rocked by several problems, including the lack of *asatidz* who are qualified to teach and the lack of materials and facilities. According to Prof. Guiam, these issues have only been compounded by COVID-19 and the postponement of face-to-face classes.

As Prof. Guiam previously mentioned, there are fewer internet users in the BARMM and the region also has the highest illiteracy rate in the country. Because of this, home-based learning has been challenging as students struggle with online classes and parents are unable to fully guide their children. Consequently, there have been calls to allow face-to-face classes in low-risk areas. However, this must be thought of very carefully as this could develop into a situation where local transmission would be made possible.

Prof. Guiam also stressed that there is a need for a new way of thinking in terms of delivering educational services to children in the BARMM without holding face-to-face classes. One way is the reformatting of some of the modules for radio and video broadcast. Additionally, with the assistance of the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society (CBCS), the BRAC has also started mobilizing LFs in different areas in the BARMM. They aid the parents within communities in providing learning delivery to children through guided teaching.

Dr. Bustos agreed with Prof. Guiam that not having face-to-face classes has been a challenge because of the lack of infrastructure in the BARMM to support distance learning. Dr. Bustos suggested to focus on honing the core learning competencies of students, so students can manage learning at home even without the help of their parents. This, however, is easier said than done.

Dr. Marasigan echoed the sentiments of Dr. Bustos and Prof. Guiam. She noted that before the pandemic, textbooks and modules in the BARMM were already limited. Now, educators are tasked to provide physical copies of these modules to every student in the region. She also mentioned that private schools lack the resources that the DepEd has to produce modules on *madrasah* education.

Dr. Marasigan also noted some positive things that have come out from the pandemic. Because *madrasah* education aims to promote Islamic values, being together at home presented the best opportunity for parents to inculcate good Islamic values and faith to their children.





# PART 3 Political and Historical Issues in the BARMM

September 2, 2020



## **From Rebels to Rulers and Legislators: What Went Before and What is Happening Now?**

**Atty. MAISARA C. DANDAMUN-LATIPH**

Member of Parliament

Bangsamoro Transition Authority

Atty. Latiph discussed first the history of the peace process and the current status of the BARMM after the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL; Republic Act No. (RA) 11054). It was in January 1997 that the peace process between the Government of the Philippines (GPH) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) began. The peace process continued through the signing of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) on October 15, 2012 and was followed by the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement of the Bangsamoro (CAB) on March 27, 2014. Finally, on January 25, 2019, the BOL was ratified, facilitating the establishment of the BARMM.

Atty. Latiph further emphasized that the CAB is the product of the pursuit to answer the Bangsamoro question of identity and self-governance and their aspiration to chart their political future through a democratic process. It is also meant to correct historical injustices against Moros and signals the end of armed conflict through a negotiated political solution. Hence, she emphasized, the BOL must be congruent with the CAB to ensure that the Bangsamoro question is addressed.

To further understand the Bangsamoro, Atty. Latiph explained that it has three concepts: identity, political identity, and government. Based on the definition found in the BOL, identity refers to the Bangsamoro people or those who are original inhabitants of Sulu and Mindanao. The Bangsamoro is also a secular autonomous government and not an Islamic state.

In 2015, the transition process of the BARMM began with the creation of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) by then President Benigno Aquino III. The BTC was later expanded when President Rodrigo Duterte took over the presidency and promised that the BOL will be passed during his term. The first plebiscite for the ratification of the BOL was conducted on January 21, 2019. According to Atty. Latiph, what they did during this process was to enhance the draft BBL and submitted the enhanced version to the Congress for deliberations. She also expressed that it was a historic deliberation as it was the first time that the Bangsamoro was invited in the Congress and the Senate to sit in the process of deliberations, something which had not happened in the country's history. Upon the ratification of the BOL, the BARMM was established along with the appointment of the members of the Bangsamoro Parliament, of which Atty. Latiph herself is a member of. She explained that part of the transition process is an election set in 2022 that would formally establish the Bangsamoro Government. To finalize the process, she emphasized that there should be a signing of an exit document based on the conditions in the CAB.

Regarding the Organic Act for the former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), Atty. Latiph explained that it was a failed experiment on autonomy primarily because its amendment provides for an inherently defective government structure. Specifically, the former Regional Government (RG) has no control over the local government units (LGUs) within the autonomous region. For example, internal revenue allotments (IRA) will be released directly to the LGUs without passing through the RG. The RG was also a weak oversight institution that supervises and monitors the implementation of all programs and projects by line agencies and LGUs, including official development assistance (ODA) and national government projects. At the same time, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) do program and project formulations for the ARMM budget allocation without proper consultation and coordination with the

RG. According to Atty. Latiph, national line agencies deal directly with ARMM line agencies and LGUs without proper coordination with the ARMM Office of the Regional Governor (ORG). There was also an incomplete devolution of powers and functions, as well as programs and projects, from the national government to the ARMM. Thus, neighboring regions (i.e., Regions IX, X, and XII) are being tapped to implement projects for the ARMM, while some ODA programs and projects are implemented either by its Project Management Office (PMO) or through local and international NGO partners without coordination with the RG. Lastly, this failure was triggered by the bloated bureaucracy and perceived mismanagement, graft, and corruption in the RG.

In the current BARMM, the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) ensures transparent and efficient delivery of services in the region. Among its accomplishments is the adoption of parliamentary rules procedures and practices and the approval of plans for the region, including the Bangsamoro Transition Plan, the Bangsamoro Development Plan, and the Bangsamoro Appropriations Act (2020 Expenditure Program). Moreover, the BTA has also created laws creating Bangsamoro Human Rights Commission, Bangsamoro Youth Commission, Bangsamoro Women Commission, and the Attorney General's Office. Furthermore, they have also created the Enactment of (70) Legislative Acts that phase out approximately 6,000 ARMM permanent employees. Despite this, employees' incentives will be received pursuant to the schedule to be set by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). More importantly, the BARMM established a working bureaucracy composed of 15 ministries and offices responsible for the delivery of basic services.

Atty. Latiph also discussed the functions and priorities of the BTA. First is the enactment of priority legislation such as the Bangsamoro Administrative Code, Bangsamoro Revenue Code, Bangsamoro Electoral Code, Bangsamoro Local Government Code, Bangsamoro Education Code, and Bangsamoro Civil Service Code. Secondly, the BTA also prioritizes the determination

of parliamentary districts for the first regular election for the Parliament subject to the provisions of Article VII, Section 10 of the BOL. Lastly, the BTA oversees the organization of bureaucracy of the Bangsamoro Government during the transition, including the approval and implementation of the transition plan and the institution of a placement process for hiring personnel. She further elaborated that part of the BTA's priority is the setup of offices and other institutions, the full transfer of powers and properties of the ARMM to the BARMM, downsizing the bureaucracy, and other matters that may be necessary for the protection and promotion of the general welfare of the constituents of the region.

For the enactment of priority legislation, Atty. Latiph explained that BARMM has three (3) priority codes that have been filed in the BTA and went through the first stage of legislation on July 22, 2020. These are the Local Government Code (Cabinet Bill No. 58), the Civil Service Code (Cabinet Bill No. 59), and the Administrative Code (Cabinet Bill No. 60). As part of the legislation process, the Parliament conducted consultations with various stakeholders and sectors for the Bangsamoro Administrative Code.

On the determination of parliamentary districts, Atty. Latiph highlighted that it is still a work in progress. This entails an organizational structure for the various ministries, offices, and agencies from the BARMM and a timeline for the gradual phasing out of agencies and offices under the now defunct ARMM. The BARMM Coordination Team for Transition (CT4T), which drafted the transition plan, is composed of members from the government such as the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the Civil Service Commission (CSC), and representatives from the former ARMM and the MILF.

As to the institution of a placement process for hiring personnel during transition, Atty. Latiph shared that there is a Bangsamoro Job Portal wherein job seekers in the region can submit their resumé. The creation of the portal is pursuant to

the mandate of the BTA to adopt a policy for a merit-based hiring process and credible job placement.

Atty. Latiph likewise reported that the BTA has already passed legislation creating the various commissions and offices such as the Bangsamoro Human Rights Commission, Bangsamoro Women Commission, Bangsamoro Youth Commission, Bangsamoro Planning and Development Authority, and Office of the Attorney General. Also part of the transition plan is the creation of other offices such as the Bangsamoro Pilgrimage Authority, Bangsamoro Sports Commission, Bangsamoro Madaris Education Office, Bangsamoro Budget Office, Bangsamoro Commission for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage, Shari'a Public Assistance Office, Shari'a Special Prosecution Service, Shari'a Academy, Office of the Jurisconsult of Islamic Law, Office for Traditional or Tribal Justice System, Bangsamoro Commission on Audit, Bangsamoro Treasury Office, and Bangsamoro Revenue Office.

Regarding the transfers of power, Atty. Latiph mentioned some challenges and limitations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic which incapacitated the BARMM to exercise its full power. She also acknowledges that this is a work in progress. Although most of the powers and properties have been fully transferred to the Bangsamoro Government, there are powers granted to the Bangsamoro Government which are new. In these cases, it may be said that “full” transfer of powers and properties has not been accomplished yet, as it requires careful coordination and the use of intergovernmental relations. An instance is on the jurisdiction and management of inland waters for power generation, such as Lake Lanao.

Atty. Latiph explained further the transition plan of the government which has six chapters. The chapter on transition mechanisms describes the transition from the ARMM bureaucracy to the Bangsamoro Parliament and agencies, intergovernmental relations mechanisms, and offices to be abolished, merged and created. Following the abolition of the ARMM and the establishment of the BTA, the latter exercises the full powers of

the Bangsamoro government. The functions of the ARMM to be transferred to the BTA include planning, programming, and budgeting of funds; arranging program and projects, overseas development assistance, access and auditing; internal auditing; elections; and civil service.

Finally, Atty. Latiph discussed the ongoing plans and the ways forward for the BARMM. Out of the seven priorities of the BTA, only the determination of parliamentary districts has not commenced. She also assures that the COVID-19 pandemic has not substantially affected the BTA with respect to its mandate and functions. She also emphasized that technology will play a vital role in working under the present health crisis. Hence, the Parliament has already amended its Rules to include the use of teleconferencing during sessions, hearings, and consultations to ensure uninterrupted services during the transition period.



## Moral Governance Framework for the BARMM

**NASSEF MANABILANG ADIONG, Ph.D.**

Decolonial Studies Program

UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies

Dr. Adiong's presentation centered on the notion of moral governance in relation to the BARMM. Highlighting an Islamic perspective towards moral governance, Dr. Adiong underscored five principles that would lead to moral governance: faith, freedom, moral authority, common good, and social ethics.

He emphasized that faith in Islam (*iman*) consists of three elements: (1) affirmation of the heart; (2) confession of the tongue; and (3) actions of the limbs. It is rooted in the monotheistic belief in Islam and also pertains to faith as a lived experience in



thought and practice. The *shahada*, the profession of faith, is the highest expression of this firm belief in the divine goodness. The person who perfects the practice of *iman*, succeeds in this life and in the next. Dr. Adiong notes how the *iman* is enshrined in the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

*Ikhtiyar* (freedom) pertains to the absence of human coercive forces which would arbitrarily limit and stifle decision making. Freedom comes with responsibilities, as it is also the freedom to choose between good and evil. After outlining the Islamic tenets pertaining to freedom, Dr. Adiong pointed to how the *ikhtiyar* is also resonated in the BOL.

Moral authority is sourced through the prophethood bestowed to Muhammad and pertains to the strong leadership in the executive, legislative and judicial dimensions. As the Islamic community grew, the Qur'an provided revelations to serve as guide for various aspects of Islamic life. The notion of moral authority has also brought some tension in terms of reckoning leadership in Islam as diverging interpretations and commentaries become apparent.

Dr. Adiong then expounds on the notion of common good based on the Islamic concepts of *maslaha* (public welfare) and *istislah* (public interest). The Islamic prescription of *maslaha* underscores the need to prohibit or permit something based on whether or not it serves the public benefit or welfare. *Istislah* is limited to specific situations and contexts as long as it is in line with Islamic law. Dr. Adiong relates these concepts to the powers of governance outlined in the BOL.

Social ethics, the last principle, highlights how Islam interprets ethical social conduct. Here he mentioned the importance of the *ummah* as the collective of believing individuals that holds mutually reinforcing moral obligations to the community as a whole and among themselves. Dr. Adiong also emphasized the Islamic notion of administration of justice as resting on truthful human testimonies. Administering justice and upholding moral standards are important to keep the cohesion of the *ummah* and

to maintain social harmony. Part of this endeavor to maintain social harmony also hinges on notions of essential human equality and striking the balance between rights and responsibilities. These are likewise enshrined in the BOL.

As a way of synthesis, Dr. Adiong highlighted how moral governance could be emphasized further, and at the same time, strengthen what is already enshrined in the BOL. He mentioned how Islamic notions on faith, freedom, moral authority, common good, and social ethics could lead to a clearer perspective on moral governance in the BARMM.



## Philippine Muslim History: Prospects and Challenges

**Assistant Professor DARWIN J. ABSARI**

Institute of Islamic Studies  
University of the Philippines Diliman

Asst. Prof. Absari started his presentation by noting that his presentation is derived from a discussion paper produced from the roundtable discussions on Philippine Muslim History organized by the UP CIDS Islamic Studies Program (ISP), which was participated in by selected historians and teachers. He explained that prior to the arrival of the Spanish colonizers, Islam already had an important place in Philippine civilization and linked its peoples to Southeast Asia. He also cited how the Sulu Sultanate became a model of politics and governance in the Philippines during the 14th century.

With the coming of the Spaniards with self-declared mission of bringing salvation and civilization to the natives, a bipartite historical production was promoted. In this historical narrative,

Spain divided the period of Philippine history into two: the pre-Hispanic period which was considered a dark age, and their arrival to be the beginning of the country's civilization. This was where the legacy of Islam and the history of the Muslims first suffered. This bipartite historical narrative was viewed by many scholars as putting forth the history of Spain in the Philippines rather than a new period within Philippine civilization.

When the Spaniards reached Mindanao, Asst. Prof. Absari cited that they promoted the idea that Islam was a false religion and that Muslims were savage people. The Islamic heritage was systematically written out of the country's historical narrative. It was only in the latter part of the 19th century when the educated ilustrados challenged and resisted this by providing a counter-vision of a native interpretation of Philippine history. This was what many scholars called the tripartite historical vision. But as Asst. Prof. Absari mentioned, during this time of awakening, as exemplified by the birth of the Propaganda and Katipunan movements, Islamic heritage and civilization was omitted. Instead, these movements were still bound by the Spanish colonizer's propaganda against the Muslims. When these movements tried to revive pre-Hispanic history and civilization, the contributions of Islam were fully set aside.

Asst. Prof. Absari further explained that the Propaganda and Katipunan movements shared the tripartite historical vision to awaken the Filipino people's consciousness from the real dark age besetting them in the long Spanish colonization. However, according to Asst. Prof. Absari, the fundamental difference between these two movements lies in their respective imaginings of society. The Propagandists wanted reforms in the Catholic church by transferring the power of the Church from the friars to the natives, but keeping the political status quo with the colonizers. The Katipuneros' vision, on the other hand, was for a total emancipation of the Filipino people from the hands of the colonizers, both politically and religiously. With the death of both

Jose Rizal and Andres Bonifacio, a new society fell into the hands of the ilustrados who immediately subscribed to the American ideology at the turn of the 19th century.

Asst. Prof. Absari explained that during the American period, a new historical narrative was produced: that of the Americans as saviors of the Filipino people from the Spanish colonizers, spreading the news of liberty, and training the natives for self-governance. He cited that “to many scholars, the imposition of the English language as a medium of instruction and the importation of books made the Filipino people alienated to their own country, which resulted to what Renato Constantino called the ‘miseducation of the Filipino.’” Thus, he argued that this advancement of the American agenda further made pre-Hispanic culture and civilization, along with the Islamic heritage, hidden from the consciousness of the people. This agenda also included the assimilation of Muslims into wider society and make them forget their culture and faith. To some extent, this also meant making them subordinate to the Christian Filipinos. Asst. Prof. Absari surmised that from Spanish colonization to the American occupation, Islamic heritage was neglected and erased from the consciousness of the Filipino people.

Throughout succeeding periods in postcolonial Philippines, the government carried the colonial historical narratives and continued colonial policies in assimilating the Muslims in wider Philippine society. For example, the policies and programs of the Commission on National Integration established in 1957 still reflect the assimilation program of the Americans. Philippine Muslim History remained insignificant until this period.

Asst. Prof. Absari called the period of “the second reawakening” as the most interesting period, as the prospect for the relevance Philippine Muslim history (PMH) started to unveil. In the 1960s, a number of Filipino scholars began a movement to bring indigenous knowledge (including Islamic influences) into the intellectual traditions of psychology, anthropology, philosophy, and historiography. During the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos,

a vision of a “New Society” was introduced to address a national identity crisis. President Marcos produced *Tadhana: The History of the Filipino People*, which included Muslim history as part of national history, and issued Letter of Instruction No. 1221, which aimed “to preserve and enhance the nation’s Islamic heritage.” On May 24, 2013, Republic Act No. 10573, which declared the Sheikh Karimul Makhdum Mosque as a national historical landmark, was signed into law by President Aquino III. More recently, Eid’l Fitr was declared a national holiday, the Integrated History Act of 2016 (RA 10986) was enacted, and President Rodrigo Duterte called for the correction of historical injustices against Muslims. Asst. Prof. Absari emphasized that with the push for PMH, the Moros are able to uphold their historical narrative and heritage, while remaining free and not subjected to any outside conquest. Asst. Prof. Absari affirmed that Moros continued to pass their culture and heritage to generations through both oral traditions and written documents. Unfortunately, most of these artifacts were destroyed and burned down in wars, such as the burning in Sulu in 1680, the burning in Jolo in 1974, and the Marawi siege in 2017.

In closing, Asst. Prof. Absari stated that while the writing of Philippine Muslim history is still a continuing process, we should affirm the contributions of scholars who catalyzed the writing of the history of Muslims in the Philippines. Among them were Saleeby, Majul, Tan, Haji Salibu, Harum, and many others, including those who wrote in the indigenous Jawi script. He also noted that with the continuing dominance of the state-centric colonial constructions of history, various trends in PMH emerged, including the nationalist-integrationist approach, the tri-people approach, and the Islamic revivalist approach—which is close the ideology of Hashim Salamat or Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani, founder of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)—among others. At present, the teaching of PMH is yet to be organized and its goals are still to be established. Asst. Prof. Absari cited that what the Filipino people experienced during the time of

the Spanish colonization and the propagation of a bipartite historical production seemed to be what the Muslims have been experiencing from within when radical Islamist ideologies would deepen the divide between the highly Hispanized Filipinos and the Muslims. He recommended some interventions for the writing and teaching of PMH, including the conduct of discussions with historians and teachers, unifying the goals and content of courses on PMH, further research on the history of Muslims and Islamic heritage, and building a network of Philippine Muslim historians, among others.



## Islamic Finance and the BARMM

### YASSEN ALA

Youth Peace Hub and  
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Mr. Ala contextualized his presentation by noting the place of Islam in Mindanao. As such, he noted how Islamic finance finds resonance in the area. As an alternative to conventional finance, Islamic finance is defined as financial pursuit that is profit-oriented (engaging in business that provides income), participative (both provider of capital and partner shares both risks and success of business), and ethical (follows the Shari'a which prohibits engaging in businesses that induce harm to society).

Mr. Ala then identified some key challenges in implementing Islamic finance. First of these is the lack of clear and legal regulatory frameworks. There are also few investors, which fuel low acceptance of Islamic finance and banking. He also cites that there is a paucity for experts on Islamic finance to spread awareness. Taken together, these factors result in the lack of

information on the demand and availability of Islamic finance and banking.

He then forwarded some updates with regard to moves in addressing these challenges. He noted how there have been legislations that encourage and recognize Islamic banks in the Philippines. He particularly noted the Philippine Halal Export Development and Promotion Act of 2016 (RA 10817). He points to how this legislation has and could serve as a gateway to more opportunities in the halal industries. Since this legislation mandates the establishment of institutions in support of halal industries, it brings the necessary condition to train experts and create awareness about Islamic finance and banking. Aside from this law, he also noted how the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion could play a part in terms of highlighting the need to have wider access to financially inclusive institutions. It is important to note the pivotal role of Islamic finance institutions in catering to Muslim Filipinos.

After these developments, Mr. Ala shared some optimistic outlooks in terms of the viability of Islamic finance, noting how it has been implemented at the local level in Mindanao and how it has been part of national conversations. He emphasized the importance of supporting such endeavors if the country is to truly actualize the goal of having inclusive financial institutions.



## Open Forum

**Question: Is it possible to extend the transition period given to the BTA? What will be the implications or consequences if the transition period is extended?**

Atty. Latiph remarked that the BTA was formed through a legislation passed by the Congress, the highest legislative body of the national government. Being a subnational agency, the BTA has no authority to extend its own term. It was also stated in the BOL that the transition period is from 2019 to 2020 only. The BTA's term will expire upon the election of the Bangsamoro Parliament in 2022.

Atty. Latiph shared how the BTA ensures that the Bangsamoro will have a worthy and functional government as the transition is intended for MILF leaders to determine their competencies, assert their leadership mandate, and transform themselves politically. According to Atty. Latiph, the leaders can develop their expertise within the transition period and lay the foundation for an effective government that will be run by a regular parliament come 2022.

**Question: Share your thoughts on the greatest challenge the people of BARMM are facing in realizing their own identity and in the pursuit of their collective aspirations.**

Atty. Latiph mentioned that the transition period itself is challenging, mainly because it involves transitioning former rebels to become legislators. According to her, the current leaders are attuning themselves with the bureaucracy. She believes that while technical skills can be learned, leadership skills are already inherent in the organization, given that the leaders have been supporting and uniting the Bangsamoro people all this time. She further elaborated that the transition period is very challenging for the MILF and the Bangsamoro government because of the need to set the leadership vision that the people will embrace



and support and that will express their collective will. Hence, it is important to include the people in the decision-making process by respecting their voice and consulting them in matters of direct impact to them. This process should include minority groups, such as non-Moros, indigenous peoples (IPs), youth, women, and other sectors. When the oppressed become the rulers, there should be an assurance that fundamental forces for democratic government are in place and moral governance must be clear and understood by the people concerned.

Atty. Latiph added that the COVID-19 pandemic had exposed a lot of challenges. Despite this and with the appropriate communication platforms and technology, the BTA remains on board and continues to do its job smoothly.

Another challenge pointed out by Atty. Latiph is the issue of security or the series of killings outside the Bangsamoro areas. She added that there is a need to make sure these concerns are addressed effectively, allowing people to feel safe and assured of the Bangsamoro and the national government's responses to security issues.

**Question: Has the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting global crisis exposed any difficulty in BARMM's relationship with the national government?**

Atty. Latiph remarked that the BARMM has been coordinating with the national government on its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The BARMM even immediately set up its own Bangsamoro Task Force on COVID-19. According to her, when it comes to the initiatives on COVID-19, the relationship of BARMM and the national government is laudable, given the protocols established by the latter.

**Question: What are your thoughts on how to take into consideration the abstract nature of moral governance with the Bangsamoro framework and the Philippine Constitution?**

Dr. Adiong suggested that in order to integrate the framework, there should be a mechanism on how to relay its messages to the people. This is important to make them understand the meaning of moral governance. According to him, the communicative mechanism can be integrated into the educational systems or institutions in the BARMM. As an example, Dr. Adiong suggested adding literature that signifies the framework, training teachers on how to teach the moral governance framework, and providing space for cultivating cultural scholarship among Moros, Christians, and IPs.

Dr. Adiong also remarked that there is a challenge when speaking about political secularism. However, he explained that secularity recognizes and accords social-political rights for non-Muslims living within the territorial jurisdiction of the BARMM. By this, he refers to philosophical secularism, adding that the challenge for the BARMM Parliament and its judiciary is to find ways on how to engage Islamic-oriented moral governance with Western-oriented political secularity. According to Dr. Adiong, this is a challenge since the Philippines as a nation-state is a system influenced by the Western political ideas. Hence, it is a great challenge for the BARMM officials to reconcile Islamic-oriented moral governance with political secularism.

**Question:** Since history is also very much embedded within power relations, were there efforts from UP CIDS or the UP IIS to look into the representation of Moros in textbooks—for example, those that are circulated all over the country? Had there been interventions in this aspect? How do you see the importance of transitional justice being included in the narrative of Muslims in the Philippines?

Asst. Prof. Absari mentioned that the Commission of Higher Education (CHED) and Department of Education (DepEd) have consulted with the UP IIS with regard to possible studies on representation of Moros in textbooks. He also clarified that one of

the interventions discussed in his presentation was a five-year plan which aims to produce a unified syllabus for teaching and studying PMH. He also shared that in one of the roundtable discussions organized by the UP CIDS Islamic Studies Program (ISP), which was attended by historians and history professors, it was identified that the goals of PMH is to heal the wounds of animosity between Christians and Muslims and to promote national unity. He also mentioned about the need to affirm traditional Muslim heritage and culture, which would help promote PMH.

**Question:** Regarding the viability of Islamic finance, based on your studies, has there been any study conducted showing that it could actually be implemented on a large scale within the BARMM? In your opinion, how have the Philippine Halal Act and the Islamic Banking Act been implemented and what are the challenges that have been faced legislation- and implementation-wise?

Mr. Ala remarked that the feasibility of Islamic finance has already observed on a large scale in the BARMM. One highlight was the implementation of Islamic microfinance in Isabela City, Basilan, where vendors were provided some capital. Another was the establishment of a microfinance institution called ASA Philippines, which implements Islamic finance programs in Mindanao quite successfully. According to Mr. Ala, several international NGOs (such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) implement programs in conflict-affected areas by providing capital to internally displaced persons (IDPs), following an Islamic financial framework.

On the Philippine Halal Act and the Islamic Banking Act, Mr. Ala shared that the Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) is very active in conducting partnerships with several Islamic financial institutions. He mentioned that the BPI would organize a virtual conference with Islamic financial institutions in other countries to discuss how to conduct or broaden engagements, particularly in the Halal industry. He further added that the Bangko Sentral

ng Pilipinas (BSP) has also been active in implementing these programs and in engaging with financial institutions and international experts.

**Question:** How do you see social ethics being fully realized if the Moro population in Mindanao is essentially a minority people group compared to non-Muslims in the region? How do you see it fitting in this particular context?

Dr. Adiong explained that the concept and practice of social ethics depend on the ummah's principles that speak of justice, faith, and balancing rights, among others. According to him, it is essential to fully understand social ethics within the Moro communities before engaging in the national community. Hence, if a mechanism to operationalize social ethics within the Moro has been set, social ethics would be realized first within the Moro communities, which will be followed by engagement within Moros at the national level.

Dr. Adiong acknowledged a question from a webinar participant on the concept of Moro governance in Islamic teaching. He remarked that while the Muslim message is universal, it is essential to include the indigenous concept of governance, which plays a vital role in local governance. Specifically, creating a balanced perspective on Moro governance based on the diverse ethnolinguistic communities in Mindanao should be taken into consideration. According to him, these particular topics are primarily what the UP CIDS Decolonial Studies Program (DSP) is currently doing. The DSP seeks to study the ways to decolonize universalist claims and understand spirituality at the grassroots and from the normative realities of people living on the ground. He further explained that to decolonize universalist claims expounded by the Abrahamic religious traditions, we can go back to the norms, folklore, and traditions of local communities.

Dr. Adiong further elaborated that Islam came to Southeast Asia not only through trade, but also through Sufi orders. As the

Sufi orders expanded, they formed the pioneering movements through which Southeast Asians received the message of Islam. According to him, it is through Sufis that Islam was acculturated within the societies of Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, and precolonial Philippines. He emphasized that there are historical and empirical proofs that universalist claims of Islamic faith have been embedded in Southeast Asia through the Sufi movements.

**Question: How do you see the role of Muslim women in the building of the BARMM, especially towards the end of the transition period?**

Atty. Latiph explained that the Bangsamoro government has the duty to create an enabling condition where women can exercise their maximum potential in terms of their personal, family, and societal goals. Such a condition will stem from respect for women's rights, the strengthening institutions that uphold and nurture women's rights, and a united women's voice in the Bangsamoro Parliament. She points out that it is also essential to ensure women's participation in government and non-government affairs, because women make up half the population of the BARMM and that they have a right to do so.

Atty. Latiph shared that the Bangsamoro Government is on the right track by having many women take part in the Bangsamoro Parliament. Apart from this, there are strong advocates of women's rights and welfare who truly embody who Bangsamoro women are.

**Question: What are your thoughts about the role of businesses in continuing the peace process and in promoting Islam in the region?**

Mr. Ala answered that in order for peace to be achieved, there has to be a certain level of economic sustainability among the people. As studies show, one factor in the rise of violent extremism is the

lack of economic sustainability and prevalence of poverty. This could be addressed with the help of businesses, through providing employment opportunities or financial support. The growth of businesses in the region also means greater revenue for the region, hence creating better living conditions for its peoples.

**Question:** It has been said that the Moros and IPs in the Philippines have their own ways of telling their respective narratives. How can these be accommodated in the national narrative of Philippine history? Regarding the relationship of Muslim Mindanao with the Muslim peoples of Southeast Asia, how do you see the issue of Sabah within the context of writing the history not only of the Muslims in Mindanao, but also in the Southeast Asian region?

Asst. Prof. Absari remarked that there are historical narratives such as the dominant state-centric narrative and Muslim and Lumad historical narratives, which have apparent differences. But the Integrated History Act is a positive development that is seen as the confluence of different historical narratives where the history of Muslims and Lumads will be taught in the teaching of the History of Filipino people.

On the question regarding Sabah, Asst. Prof. Absari mentioned that Sabah is an important aspect in the history of the Muslims and in the history of the Philippines. He emphasized that the birth of the contemporary Moro struggle is situated in Sabah's history when then President Marcos tried to get it back through invasion, which led to the training of Muslim recruits from Tawi-Tawi and Sulu. Asst. Prof. Absari said that it is about time to end the issue, which, he points out, was not published by the media, and that many Malaysians had been involved in it. Asst. Prof. Absari also commented that we cannot impose our sovereignty over that particular territory.

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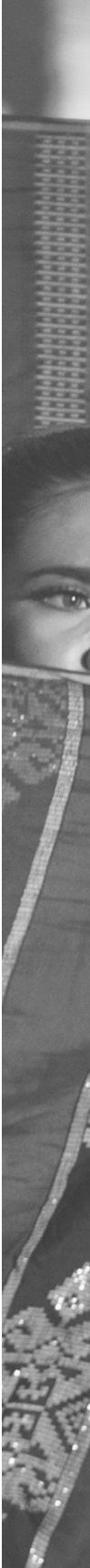
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