Research on Youth Vulnerability to
Violent Extremism
in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao

Printed in Manila, Philippines.

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Contents

Acronyms

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AIVD	Netherlands General Intelligence and Security Service (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst)
AKG	Al Khobar Group
AKS	Ansar Khalifah Sarangani
AKP	Ansar al-Khilafah Philippines
ALIVE	Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
BAAD	Big, Allied and Dangerous
BME	Bureau of Muslim Education
BTA	Bangsamoro Transition Authority
BBL	Bangsamoro Basic Law
BIFF	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
BIFM	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement
BUC	Bishop-Ulama Conference
BUSC	Basilan Ulama Supreme Council
CAB	Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro
CAFGU	Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DAESH	ad-**Da**wlah al-Islāmiyah fīl-**E**rāq wa-**Sh**ām
DepEd	Department of Education
DHS	United States Department of Homeland Security
DI	Dawla Islamiyya
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FPA	Final Peace Agreement (with the MNLF)
GPH or GRP	Government of the Philippines
GTD	Global Terrorism Database
HEI	Higher Education Institutions

IV

IEC	Information, Education, and Communication
IKWAN	Ikwan Muslimun
IAG	Institute for Autonomy and Governance
IPAC	Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict
ISIS/ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (Syria)
JaTWJP	Jamaah al-Tawhid Wal Jihad Philippines
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
JIM	Justice for Islamic Movement
KII	Key Informant Interviews
KIM	Khilafah Islamiyah Mindanao
LGU	Local Government Unit
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MOA-AD	Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain
MSU	Mindanao State University
NCMF	National Commission on Muslim Filipinos
OFW	Overseas Filipino Workers
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OSY	Out-of-School Youth
PCID	Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy
PET	Danish Security and Intelligence Service (Politiets Efterretningstjeneste)
PNP	Philippine National Police
PSA	Philippine Statistics Authority
PTO	Permit to Operate
RRG	Religious Rehabilitation Group
RSM	Rajah Soliman Movement
SAF	Special Action Force
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
TRAC	Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UP	University of the Philippines
VE	Violent Extremism
VEI	Violent Extremism and Insurgency

Tables and Figures

Executive Summary

The rapid rise of violent extremism (VE) has been a top concern both for governments and vulnerable communities around the world. In recent years, there have been increasing reports of young Muslims joining VE groups in the conflict-affected regions of Mindanao in the southern Philippines. Until now, there has been little data available that policymakers can use as a basis for interventions to respond effectively to this threat. This research aims to provide a preliminary picture of vulnerability of young people to VE and to inform appropriate responses from government agencies and local communities.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The study investigates the vulnerability of Muslim youth to radicalization and recruitment by VE groups. To do this, we examined how young people viewed Islam and their identity as Muslims. We investigated young people's knowledge of and attitude towards VE and why they believed people joined VE groups. Finally, we explored what they thought were the appropriate responses to VE.

To answer these questions, we conducted the following research activities:
- Distribution of 100 quantitative survey questionnaires among young Muslims from Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, and Sulu (25 from each province, a combination of in-school and out-of-school youth)
- 4 focus group discussions with young Muslim leaders
- 2 focus group discussions with ulama from all four provinces (one for the mainland ulama and one for the two island provinces)
- 35 key informant interviews with leaders from the academe, the security sector, civil society, local government units, as well as Manila-based experts on VE
- 4 case studies of young Muslims with direct experiences as members of VE groups. Two of these individuals continue to be active members of the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and the other two had disengaged themselves at the time of the interview.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

There was no large-scale radicalization of young Muslims in Mindanao. While there were individuals in all provinces that expressed sympathy for extremist groups, they were a minority. There was neither evidence of mass acceptance of more extremist interpretations of Islam nor widespread intentions to join VE groups.

Almost all Muslim young people had at least a basic understanding of mainstream Islamic principles, but there was very limited understanding of the concepts used by extremists. VE groups often use the concepts of 'Al Wala' wal Bara' (only loyalty to other Muslims and the rejection of non-Muslims), 'Takfir' (declaring a Muslim an infidel or apostate) and Hijrah (used to refer to a withdrawal from the "un-Islamist" world) to justify acts of violence. The people in Marawi, the location of Lanao del Sur respondents, did have a much better understanding of these concepts used by extremists than those from other provinces. This low awareness of extremist concepts among young people indicates that VE groups had not yet popularized the concepts they favored. However, without an effective and relevant program to counter the narrative of VE groups, Muslim youth will continue to be exposed to extremist concepts and interpretations and increase their vulnerability to radicalization.

Overall, young people knew little about specific VE groups beyond the Abu Sayyaf (70%) and ISIS (51%). Less than half of the respondents knew of local groups – the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (41%) and the Dawla Islamiyya (DI) aka Maute Group (34%). There was even a lower knowledge of international extremist networks like Al-Qaeda (20%) and Jemaah Islamiyah (14%). There was remarkably little difference between the level of knowledge between young people in or out of school and 26% of the respondents did know the concept of VE, which was unsurprising given that it is a relatively new term.

In all four provinces, there was a minority of young people who expressed sympathy for VE groups believing they were "fighting to defend Islam" and "fighting against oppression." However, far more respondents expressed fear of these groups and condemned their violent activities such as kidnapping for ransom, killing, and other criminal activities. **Almost all participants saw members of VE groups as being genuinely motivated by their Islamic beliefs and they distinguished between VE groups and criminal syndicates.** The exception was the Abu Sayyaf, which respondents did believe to engage in activities primarily for profit. Respondents who did not support VE groups, were particularly scared that the presence of VE groups in their communities would cause them to be targeted by the Philippine Government. Many participants saw the drop in social and family cohesion as the most serious effect of VE as opposed to being direct victims of VE groups.

Youth respondents affirmed the presence of recruiters of VE groups in their community who drove people to being radicalized. Many respondents explained that they knew recruiters and that these were active in local educational institutions (Madaris) and in mosques after the Friday prayers. Even those who were not involved in the VE groups conceded that the recruiters were often charming and persuasive. The recruiters were generally treated with distrust by the community as they had the potential to cause problems however, but there was little discussion of notifying government security agencies of their presence.

There was not a single type of individual that VE groups targeted for recruitment. The conventional wisdom on extremism is that individuals alienated from society are particularly vulnerable to joining extremist groups. In contrast, respondents said that those young people were often pressured into joining extremist groups by their existing social links. Recruiters targeted young people in secular education and religious schools and those not attending any educational institution. VE groups were said to focus not only on those considered traditionally vulnerable but also recruited very bright students or those with particularly useful skills such as engineers or those with medical knowledge. The family members of extremists, drug addicts, orphans, individuals living in remote barangays, and those exposed directly to conflict were all individuals likely to join extremist groups.

There was a range of paths towards joining VE groups and adopting VE beliefs. Most individuals gradually adopted radical views through listening to radical preachers, attending prayer groups, and having regular contact with the recruiters. This was taking place both within and outside educational institutions. In contrast, there were individuals who adopted radical beliefs after having joined extremist groups. This was in stark contrast to the traditional "radicalization pathway" where a person adopts increasingly extremist views before finally joining a militant group. One participant explained that his friend joined an extremist group because he was "lured with gadgets like cellphones, iPad, motorcycles, guns, and money." Only after he joined and was taken to remote camps was "Islamic teachings and discussion on Jihad used for indoctrination." **In the two island provinces of Basilan and Sulu, young people saw poverty as the major driver of people joining VE groups.** Around 92% of Sulu and 84% of Basilan respondents believed that this was an important reason that youth joined VE groups. This was despite the fact that there was worse poverty in Lanao del Sur which potentially indicates a fundamentally different type of extremism in the mainland as compared to the island provinces. The groups operating in mainland Mindanao, particularly in Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao, were driven by radical Islamic ideology. In contrast, the groups like the Abu Sayyaf that operated primarily in the Sulu Archipelago were driven more by profit. This was reflected in the recruitment practices in the island provinces where respondents highlighted that "signing bonuses" were paid to new members immediately after they joined the Abu Sayyaf. Such financial incentives thus made VE groups particularly attractive to those with limited livelihood opportunities.

The survey respondents in all provinces believed that education was a key solution to the problems brought about by VE. This was especially highlighted in the island provinces where access to higher education was poor. In the mainland provinces, respondents believed that the intensification of teaching moderate Islam was an important element in responding to the threat of VE. However, these recommendations should be treated cautiously, because little evidence was found to show that out-of-school youth or those with a deeper understanding of Islam were less likely to join extremist groups. Young people also suggested ending discrimination, concluding the peace processes with the MNLF and MILF, improving governance, and promoting youth activities

could all reduce the risk of VE. Very few young people proactively mentioned policing and security responses, perhaps indicating a deep distrust of national government institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PREVENT VIOLENT EXTREMISM

There is no single panacea to prevent the spread of a violent ideology or prevent people from joining extremist groups. However, considering the findings of this research, the following responses are suggested:

1. Adopt a comprehensive policy framework to prevent and counter violent extremism upon which national, regional, and local government units can develop and coordinate long-term programs on prevention and short-term programs on mitigation. This policy framework should guide the action of international donors.
2. Mainstream the value of Islamic moderation (wasatiyyah) in Muslim communities. The Government of the Philippines should cooperate with civil society, educational institutions, and religious networks to spread messages of inclusive Muslim beliefs to young people.
3. Develop materials so that leaders in formal and informal education system can ensure that all young people understand how extremist groups operate and the negative effects of joining extremist groups on themselves, their families, and their communities.
4. Promote a high-quality and moderate Islamic education sector. This should include facilitating the adoption of common supervision, accreditation, and standardization of curricula to ensure that the teaching and learning is consistent with mainstream Islamic philosophy.
5. Keep the public school system secular and use it and the informal education system as a platform for building inclusive culture, mutual trust, and understanding of unity in diversity.
6. Provide young people with genuine opportunities for accessible quality education both in the basic and collegiate levels for them to get jobs and employment here or abroad.
7. Provide avenues for young people to express their grievances in a non-violent manner through various forms of peaceful processes.

8. Provide programs for people who show signs of post traumatic syndrome after exposure to violence and conflict.

9. Invest in high-quality and contextually-appropriate delivery of government services in areas at high-risk of extremism, particularly education and health services.

10. Fast-track the passage and implementation of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL)/Enabling Law/New Autonomy Law that would address poverty and the lack of development through the efficient, effective, and responsive self-governance by way of implementing peace agreements with the MNLF and MILF.

11. Increase public and private investments with programs to attract business towards job creation in areas at high-risk of extremism.

12. Ensure all government jobs are provided in a meritocratic and non-discriminatory process.

13. Ensure that all young people understand, both in school and out-of-school, how extremist groups operate as well as the negative effects of joining extremist groups on themselves, their families, and their communities.

14. Facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of the people who were previously involved in extremist groups.

While there is an important role for Government, the Muslim community itself can be at the forefront of developing solutions to extremism. Through a process of collective reflection and leadership, it is possible to pursue the many solutions to violent extremism that are rooted in traditional institutions and practices fundamental to well-functioning Muslim communities.

INTRODUCTION

A.   Background

Despite the popularly held view of Southeast Asia as a religiously diverse, tolerant, and peaceful region, there are signs that underlying frustrations and inequities are fueling a worrying rise in radicalization and violent extremism (VE). The rise of the "Islamic State" or "Daesh" now poses an imminent threat to Southeast Asia with the potential to become a local recruitment center for the Islamic State. Experts indicate that it is not impossible for the Islamic State to establish a base somewhere in the Southeast Asian region in the near future and this may be in the Philippines (Habulan, 2016; IPAC, 2016; Ressa, 2017; Banlaoi, 2016). The continuing poverty, poor governance, and the ambiguous implementation of the peace agreements (the 1996 Final Peace Agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)) makes the southern Philippines, specifically the ARMM, the most vulnerable to violent extremism (Strachan, 2015).

A number of Islamist groups in the Philippines have already pledged their allegiance to the Islamic State including the well-known Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the Ansar Dawlah Fi Filibbin, as well as new groups like Ansar al-Khilafah Philippines and Khilafah Islamiyah Mindanao (KIM) (Banlaoi, 2016). Recently, the Dawla Islamiyya aka Maute Group publicly pledged their allegiance to the Islamic State.

The southern part of the Philippines composed of a group of relatively small islands is easily accessible. This has allowed members of foreign terrorist organizations such as Jemaah Islamiyah to travel in and out of the country undetected to train members of the ASG, the Bangsamoro Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and other armed groups. Security concerns have been raised in this part of the country given the number of terrorist activities already conducted, the latest being the Dawla Islamiyya aka Maute group attack of Marawi City this year, 2017, causing the death of hundreds, the displacement of thousands, and the destruction of the city.

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in the southern Philippines has suffered from a long-running conflict between the Philippine Government and the Moro revolutionary groups – the MNLF and the MILF. (Adam, et al, 2014). Although peace agreements have been signed between the Government of

the Philippines (GPH) and these groups, peace is still far off (Strachan, 2015). The ambiguity and delay in implementing the peace agreements have generated tension and division on the ground. The situation has also damaged the credibility of mainstream revolutionary armed groups who are now seen by some to support a never-ending peace process. This threatens to turn the Muslim community away from the path to peace, which, in turn, would create opportunities for the incubation of violent extremism and more radical views among disillusioned field commanders and disaffected youth because they being to lose faith in the peace process and the sincerity of their leaders to actually implement the signed peace agreement (Quimpo, 2016).

Yet, the ambiguous implementation of peace agreements is not the only explanation for the rise of VE in the southern regions of the Philippines. Key stakeholders have been calling for a detailed, robust, and legitimate process of data gathering and analysis to identify the extent of the challenges and determine the underlying root causes of radicalization and VE in Muslim Mindanao. A study is, therefore, required in order to provide the empirical data to inform the needed interventions of government agencies and local communities towards addressing the rise of VE.

B.   Objectives

This research revolves around determining the Muslim youth's vulnerability to violent extremism (VE). It aims to answer the overall research question: How vulnerable are the Muslim youth in Muslim Mindanao to radicalization, VE views and beliefs, and recruitment to VE groups?

More specifically the study seeks to describe:
1. The mindset of the Moro youth
    (a) Understanding of what is a "Muslim"
    (b) Knowledge of basic concepts related to violent extremism and sources
    (c) Understanding of VE
    (d) Attitudes towards VE

2. Radicalization in ARMM: Views and Opinions
    (a) Observations on VE groups
    (b) Observed motivations and Influences of VE groups
    (c) Recruitment
    (d) Outcomes of VE
3. Suggestions and recommendations to prevent the Moro youth from joining VE groups

C. Methodology

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed a descriptive research design, using both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. The quantitative approach generated the following: (a) a brief demographic profile of the Moro youth respondents, (b) their knowledge of and attitudes towards VE, (c) their motivation and what influenced them toward VE, and (d) suggestions to prevent the youth from being recruited into VE groups.

The qualitative approach sought to gather data to provide narratives and descriptions on the knowledge of the Moro youth respondents on Islamic concepts based on their perceptions and experiences acquired from parents, the elderly, madrasah, or from other sources.

SAMPLING DESIGN AND THE STUDY SITES

The study used random sampling in selecting survey participants. A list of members of youth members of Muslim organizations in selected Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and barangays in the study sites served as the sampling frame.
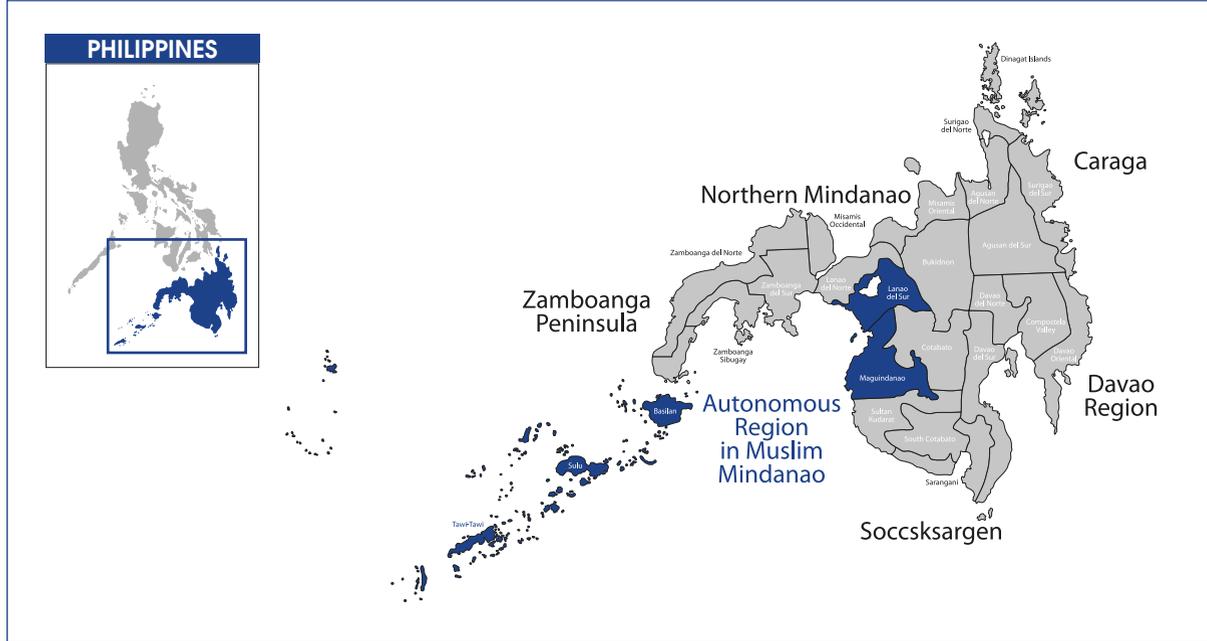
Figure 1: Map of Mindanao showing the study sites

The basic criteria in the selection of respondents were that he or she was aged 18 to 34 years old. The in-school respondents were officers of the Muslim youth organization in the identified HEI while the out-of-school respondents were officers of organization/s based in their barangay. A total of 100 Muslim youth respondents was drawn from the lists of in-school students and out-of-school youth. The lists were taken from the HEIs located in Marawi City in Lanao del Sur, Cotabato City in Maguindanao, Isabela City and Lamitan City in Basilan, and Jolo in Sulu.

The focus group discussion (FGD) and key informant interview participants were selected using purposive sampling resulting in youth leaders from the four provinces participating in the FGDs. Each FGD was composed of 10 youth participants.

Two FGDs of ulama (Muslim scholars) were also conducted, one for mainland provinces and another for the island provinces. Each FGD was participated in by 5 ulama.

The Key Informant Interviews (KII) participants were composed of individuals who had extensive knowledge on VE acts in the mainland and island study sites. They

were influential political, community or traditional leaders, directors of student affairs in HEIs, or security officers of heads of civil society organizations. Seven (7) participants from each study sites were identified for the key informant interviews.

STUDY INSTRUMENTS

Based on the research questions posed by the study, the research team designed four types of instruments that were utilized in data gathering. These were the (a) interview schedule, (b) focus group discussion (FGD) guide, (c) key informant interview (KII) guide, and (d) case study guide. Below are the descriptions of each instrument, the type of respondents, and the data gathered.

Table 1: Types, data gathered and source

TYPE OF INSTRUMENTS	DATA GATHERED	SOURCE
Interview schedule	Perception and attitudes towards VE, context of Islamic concepts, influence and motivation, suggestions to prevent the youth from joining VE groups	Muslim youth respondents
FGD guide	Context/understanding of Islamic concepts, perception and views on VE and acts, interventions to VE	ulama Muslim youth leaders
Key informant interview guide	Context/understanding of Islamic concepts, perceptions and views of VE and their acts, effects of VE, recommendations	Political, community and traditional leaders, heads of civil society, director of student affairs of HEI, officers/advisers of Muslims Student Associations
Case Study Guide	Life experience before, during and after engagement with VE groups	Active or former (surrendered) members of VE groups

DATA GATHERING PROCEDURES

Four (4) field teams were organized to conduct data collection in the four (4) study sites. Each team was composed of a field supervisor, two interviewers, one key informant interviewer, an FGD facilitator and a documenter or a total of six (6) persons for each province. The field supervisors in Basilan and Sulu were also engaged in case study writing. Prior to fieldwork, the teams were

given an orientation on the purpose of the study and the sampling design and were trained on conducting one-on-one interviews with survey respondents using the survey instrument. They were also oriented on how the participants of the youth FGD and key informant interviews were selected as well as how to conduct the FGD and the interviews with the key informants. They were likewise familiarized with the case study guide and the strategies for identifying the case study participants.

Focus group discussions were conducted among the ulama in Cotabato City and Lanao del Sur for mainland ARMM and in Zamboanga City for those residing in the island provinces. These were facilitated by the members of the research team.

All teams were reminded to get the consent of all respondents of the study before conducting the data collection activities in the study sites.

Key informant interviews with individuals who had extensive knowledge and expertise on VE were also conducted in Manila.

The fieldwork was done in the whole month of March 2017.

DATA PROCESSING, TREATMENT, AND ANALYSIS

The completed 100 interview questionnaires were encoded and processed. The raw data were converted into frequency tables and percentages for the interpretation of the results. The qualitative data from both the FGD and KII were processed using templates and analyzed based on themes. Repeated answers were grouped according to themes while unique answers were treated as they were in the report according to their value and relevance to these themes.

The findings from the FGD and KII supplemented the analysis of results from the interview schedules.

The findings from the four (4) case studies formed part of the report and presented as distinct individual cases.

The research team conducted a series of workshops in the interpretation, analysis, and writing of the report in the month of May and June 2017.

D. Conceptual Framework

Figure 2 shows an illustration of the relationships of important concepts focused on in the research. It is loosely based on the Root Cause Model of Veldhuis and Staun (2009). A study on the vulnerability of the Muslim youth toward VE requires looking into the mindset of the Muslim youth and their macro and micro motivations and influences. The study also investigated the perceived and actual outcomes of the youth's involvement in violent extremism.
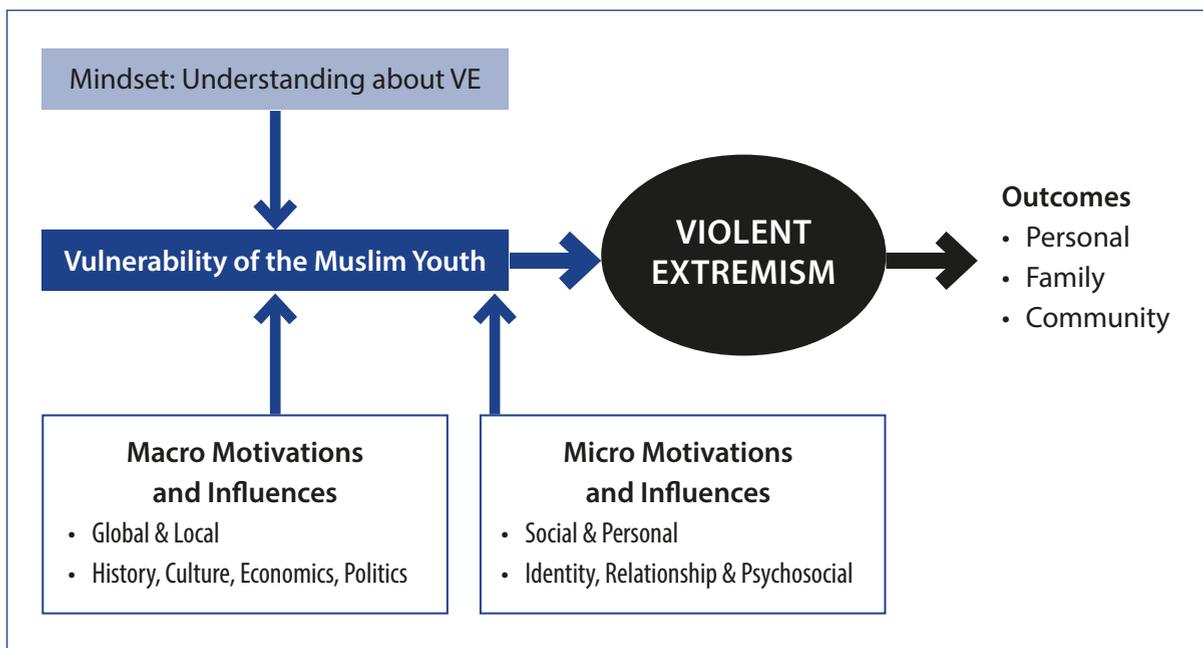
Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

The concepts considered in this research project are as follows:

1. MINDSET

In trying to understanding the youth mindset, this research explored the process of youth radicalization "whereby they are indoctrinated to a set of beliefs that supports acts of terrorism, manifested in one's behaviors and attitudes" (Rahimullah et al, 2013, p.20) thus, creating an identity manipulated

by ideology in religious trappings coupled with neglect playing a central role in driving youth to violent extremism (Hassan, 2012). The "justification" of violence is very prominent in radicalized Muslims and often based on the misuse of the term "jihad" (Chertoff, 2008).

2. YOUTH VULNERABILITY

This research focused on Muslim youth, 18 to 34 years old – the age group considered most vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment by VE groups in the Philippines. This focus is underpinned by studies showing VE groups actively seeking recruitment of young people into their ranks.

3. MOTIVATION AND INFLUENCE

The push and pull factors explained in this chapter partly follow the Root Cause Model of Radicalisation developed by Veldhuis and Staun (2009), by categorizing them into macro (push) and micro (pull) factors. The model covers both pull and push factors of radicalization and serves as a starting point from which to further investigate radicalization processes.

The macro factors are presented at two levels – global and local – in the form of causes that underpin historical, political, cultural, and economic deprivation, marginalization, and discrimination. On the other hand, the micro factors are presented at social and personal levels as social identity, relationship and processes, psychological characteristics, and personal experiences.

4. VIOLENT EXTREMISM

This refers to beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve the ideological, religious or political goals. They seek change through fear and intimidation rather than peaceful means.

5. RADICALIZATION

This is a process by which an individual's beliefs and attitudes move from relatively mainstream to calling for drastic change in society that would have a negative impact on harmony as well as the rights and freedom of many in society.

E. Understanding Basic Concepts Related to Violent Extremism

This is a listing of some Islamic terms, phrases, and concepts to better understand the Islamist extremist narrative. As these terms are not exclusively used by Islamists, their use is not necessarily an indicator of extremist belief. Oftentimes, these terms have similar meanings in general and in non-extremist Islamic contexts.

AL-DAWLAH AL-ISLAMIYAH

This is the Arabic term for "Islamic state" and, when used by jihadists, it may refer to the Islamic State (ISIS). While states that call themselves Islamic may also have man-made laws, Islamists believe that no man-made law should prevail and that it is prohibited to rule a country by any other system than Shari'ah. The most famous application of this system has been by ISIS which has called itself ad-**Da**wlah al-Islāmiyah fīl-**E**rāq wa-**Sh**ām – the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (Syria), hence "DAESH."

"AL WALA' WAL BARA'" (LOYALTY AND DISAVOWAL)

This is the principle of loyalty to God, the religion of Islam, and to its followers and the rejection of other religions and non-Muslims. This is a key concept for many conservative Islamic groups.

BAY'AH (PLEDGE)

This is the pledge extremists give to their leaders and is seen as an equivalent to pledging to Allah Himself. Some would interpret this to mean that if a Muslim broke that pledge to his leader, he would already be considered an infidel and hence be a target of violence. It has historically been seen as the oath of

allegiance to the Khalifa or other ruler and the invocation of God's blessing upon that ruler. Members of an Islamist extremist group will often swear bay'ah to the group's leader.

HIJAB

The veil often worn by Muslim women to cover the head while leaving the face exposed in compliance with an interpretation of an Islamic command for them to dress "modestly."

HIJRAH

The term means to migrate or to change one's affiliation from one group to another. The term generally refers to the Prophet Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina in the year 622, which became the first year of the Islamic calendar. In Islamist extremist ideology, "hijrah" has been used to refer to either a spiritual or physical withdrawal from the "un-Islamist" world.

JIHAD

This is an Islamic term that is translated in various ways: as "struggle," "striving," or "holy war." Violent Islamic extremist groups typically brandish the word as a slogan and a justification for engaging in violent conflict with non-Islamists.

KHALIFAH (CALIPH)

The word **"**Caliph" means "deputy" or "lieutenant" of the Prophet Muhammad on Earth. This was normally applied to the early successors of the Prophet as leaders of the Islamic state or khilafah and by later imperial rulers up to 1924. The word is used by extremists to refer to an earthly ruler in realization of the "blueprint" of an Islamic state. The succession of the Prophet is a source of considerable theological dispute within Islam. The Ottoman Empire (1299-1924) is considered by some to be the last legitimate caliphate.

KHAWARIJ (KHARIJITES)

This is the name given to a group in early Islamic history that is now regarded by "mainstream" Muslims as extremist. ISIS opponents have on occasion equated the terrorist group to the Kharawij in an effort to highlight ISIS's extremist practices and undermine its claims that it represents a legitimate and acceptable strand of Islam.

MADINA CHARTER

Constituted by the Prophet Muhammad in 622, the Charter aimed to establish an Islamic State that sought to forge peaceful co-existence between and among Muslims and Jews and ruling tribes of Madina.

NIQAB

A face veil, worn by some Muslim women, that exposes only the eyes in compliance with an interpretation of an Islamic command for them to dress modestly.

QISAS

The word means "retaliation." Islamic law allows for retaliation within the bounds of justice for those who are wronged. Many Islamist extremists use this as a justification for violence against the West.

SALAFI

This refers to the "companions" of the prophet. Violent extremists want the people to go back to the early days of Islam or to practice it the way it was practiced in Medina during the time of the prophet and the four "rashidun" caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Utman, and Ali – all companions).

SALAFISM

A fundamentalist movement in Islam that attempts to emulate what is understood to have been the way the Prophet Muhammad and the companions practiced their religion. Salafism is a fundamentalist Islamic movement that strives to practice Sunni Islam as it was practiced by Muhammad and his companions.

SHI'AH

Originally, the term referred to the "Partisans" of Caliph Ali. It is a branch of Islam that believes temporal and spiritual authority passed from the Prophet Muhammad to his descendants. The Shi'ah make up less than 20% of the worldwide Muslim population, primarily located in Iran, Iraq, Yemen the Levant, and Pakistan. They differ from the main Sunni population over a number of matters of doctrine and Islamic Jurisprudence and are disliked by many religiously conservative Sunni Muslims.

SUNNI

Originally it referred to a belief that leadership in the ummah (Muslim community) was by consensus agreement among companions. Sunni is the branch of Islam practiced by the majority of the world's Muslims.

TAKFIR

This is used to declare someone an unbeliever or for a Muslim to be condemned as an infidel/apostate. "Takfir" is the term used by Islamist extremists for Muslims whom they believe to have become "non-believers." This designation carries with it a death sentence according to certain interpretations of Islam.

TATARRUF (EXTREMISM)

The term refers to the use of violent tactics such as bombing and assassination to achieve perceived Islamic goals. Key identifiers of this ideology include (a) belief in the applicability of Shari'ah in contemporary times and (b) the concept of belonging to an ummah.

WAHHABISM

This is a term used to describe a puritanical form of Islam instituted in Saudi Arabia. It is the official version of Islam in Saudi Arabia following the mutual ba'yah (submission) by Shaykh Mohammed Abdulwahhab and the House of Saud in the 18th century that continues to be the official religious policy in Saudi Arabia. Followers of this approach normally object to the use of this term to describe them. Wahhabism dictates a literal interpretation of the Quran and introduced the concept of *takfir*, whereby some Muslims could be classified as kuffar (non-believers) and thereby subject to execution.

WASATIYYAH (MODERATION)

This word is derived from "wasata," meaning "center" or "middle way."

UMMAH

This usually refers to the worldwide community of the Prophet.

Literature Review: Exploring The Global and Local Context of Radicalization and Violent Extremism

A. Understanding Radicalization and Violent Extremism

In the review of literature, it can be seen clearly that universally accepted definitions of "radicalization" and "violent extremism" do not yet exist (Christmann, 2012; Schmid, 2015; Rahimullah *et al*, 2013; RESOLVE, 2016; Veldhuis & Staun, 2009). For radicalization, the following diverse definitions from foreign governments have been proposed:

1. Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET): "A process, by which a person to an increasing extent accepts the use of undemocratic or violent means, including terrorism, in an attempt to reach a specific political/ideological objective"
2. The Netherlands General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD): "The (active) pursuit of and/or support to far-reaching changes in society which may constitute a danger to (the continued existence of) the democratic legal order (aim), which may involve the use of undemocratic methods (means) that may harm the functioning of the democratic legal order (effect)"
3. US Department of Homeland Security (DHS): "The process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to effect social change" (Schmid, 2013, p.12).

For this research, a combination of the definitions for *Radicalization*, *(Violent) Extremism* and *Terrorism* is used:

> *Radicalization is a process involving an individual or group committed to a set of beliefs that support acts of extreme violence or terrorism, often aimed at bringing about a social change, which can be manifested in one's behavior and attitudes.* (Rahimullah *et al*, 2013; Schmid, 2013; Veldhuis & Staun, 2009). Alternatively,

and more simply, it can be described as: *"the process of gradually subscribing to a violent ideology espousing terrorism"* (Rahimullah et al, 2013, p.19).

Radicalism is often linked to extreme violence or violent extremism in its definitions, although they are not synonymous (Schmid, 2013). Therefore, it is also important to provide a working definition of (Violent) Extremism:

> *Extremism is manifested as a strong will to power by a social movement based on a rigid ideology, which restricts individual freedom in the name of collective goals and is willing to realise their goals by any means, including extreme violence and mass murder. (Schmid, 2013)*

Since definitions of radicalism often refer to terrorism as well, this term will be defined here, too. However, as with the above two definitions, there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism and hundreds of different definitions currently exist (Rahimullah *et al.*, 2013; RESOLVE 2016). The definition of terrorism below is a combination of many definitions:

> *Terrorism entails intentional criminal acts that are committed with the aim of seriously intimidating a population, unduly compelling a Government or an international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act, seriously destabilising or destroying fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation (European Commission (EC), 2006; European Union (EU), 2002; Rahimullah et al., 2013).*

In the Philippines, Republic Act no. 9372 or the Human Security Act of March 2007 defines a "terrorist" thus:

> *Any person who commits an act punishable under any of the following provisions of the Revised Penal Code:*
> a. *Article 122 (Piracy in General and Mutiny in the High Seas or in the Philippine Waters);*
> b. *Article 134 (Rebellion or Insurrection);*
> c. *Article 134-a (Coup d'état), including acts committed by private persons;*
> d. *Article 248 (Murder);*
> e. *Article 267 (Kidnapping and Serious Illegal Detention);*
> f. *Article 324 (Crimes Involving Destruction);*
>
> *Thereby sowing and creating a condition of widespread and extraordinary fear and panic among the populace, in order to coerce the government to give in to an unlawful demand shall be guilty of the crime of terrorism and shall suffer the penalty of forty (40) years of imprisonment, without the benefit of parole as provided for under Act No. 4103, otherwise known as the Indeterminate Sentence Law, as amended.*

It is important to note that although an expanding body of academic literature examining the radicalization process is emerging, the majority of that body of literature is still focused on terrorism rather than on radicalization (Christmann, 2012). Finally, empirical studies have been limited because of the difficulty and danger in meeting with and interviewing members of radical groups and, even if a meeting were to take place, participants may still be reluctant to share critical information for security reasons (Al-Lami, 2009). So there clearly is a need for further research on radicalization to improve our understanding of the concept in order to address and potentially prevent it.

This research project therefore aims to shed further light on this phenomenon and explain how radicalization is viewed from the Filipino perspective and particularly by those from Muslim Mindanao, rather than defining the term from the onset.

It is also key to highlight that radicalization does not automatically result in extreme violence or terrorism (Rahimullah *et al.*, 2013). In fact, many have classified radicalization in two different ways: (1) violent radicalization and (2) broader radicalization. The first fully accepts and actively pursues the use of violence to achieve a specific goal and the second is mainly focused on pursuing far-reaching changes in society through any available means, which may or may not include the use of violence (Veldhuis & Staun, 2009). For this research, the focus is on violent radicalization.

It should be noted that it has been mostly Western authors from Western universities who have written most studies and academic papers on the concept of radicalization and violent extremism and published these in Western journals (Schmid, 2013). It is evident rather quickly, that not much has yet been written about the concept of radicalization and violent extremism outside the Western setting, such as in the Philippines, apart from several newspaper articles (Geronimo, 2016; Ressa, 2017). More, only a handful of other (opinion) papers have looked into radicalization and violent extremism in the Philippines so far (ICG, 2016; IPAC, 2017; Lingga, 2014; Rasul, 2015; Timberman, 2013).

Moreover, there is also an imbalance between literature analyzing radicalization processes in peaceful (mostly Western) versus conflict settings. It will, therefore, be crucial to mirror and balance these Western views and Western contexts by detailed findings from other parts of the world, including those from the Philippines and, specifically, in conflict-affected Muslim Mindanao.

The existing literature on Muslim radicalization draws the same conclusion about the typical age group and sex. Certain pull factors of extremist groups seem to be particularly attractive to this particular age group and gender like the prospect of building one's reputation, having a sense of belonging, as well as hanging onto promises of fame, glory, and adventure (Hassan, 2012; UNGA, 2016). It is known for example, that the majority of ASG members were motivated by the allure of money and power. This is a common reason why

underprivileged and deprived youth in Muslim Mindanao are pushed into the arms of a group involved in terrorist and criminal activities in the Philippines (Banlaoi, 2016).

Muslim identity and identification have also been linked in numerous ways to radicalization. The process of religious identification can evoke strong defensive reactions against perceived external aggression and, combined with one's perception regarding Muslim suffering and one's own altruistic intentions, can manifest itself in violent radicalization (Rahimullah *et al.*, 2013). For example, the AMISOM bombardment by foreign forces in Somalia is listed as a push factor for Somali youth to join the Islamist militant group al-Shabab (The Youth) in an effort to seek revenge and protect themselves and their families. At the same time, the ability to fight the enemies of Islam is also a pull factor of these groups (Hassan, 2012). Some young Muslims adopt a radical religious identity after going through some form of identity crisis (Christmann, 2012).

Finally, radicalization is a process that has become strongly associated with youth and, in particular, (male) Muslim Youth (Bakker, 2006; Christmann, 2012; Ramakrishna, 2017). In understanding the phenomenon of radicalization, it is important to understand what drove these youths to commit violent acts and what has made them susceptible to radicalism to begin with (Lynch, 2013).

B.   Radicalization and Violent Extremism in the Philippines

The Philippines is already experiencing violence due to the presence of numerous armed groups and the countless attacks on civilian populations in the past decades (Strachan, 2015). However, whether this is all linked to a more radical ideology remains to be seen and VE still needs to be analyzed further. The following provides an overview of a number of current studies and findings on radicalization and the existence of extremist groups operating in the Philippines.

The recent report of the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) dated 2016 concludes that even as ISIS declines in strength in the Middle East, it is more important than ever to understand the followers it has produced in Southeast Asia and how they interact with each other. Cross-border violence is not just theoretically possible, it very likely according to this report.

According to Banlaoi (2016), the ASG morphed into a violent group engaged in both crime and terrorism as its high-profile kidnapping activities made the ASG an organized criminal group while its association with ISIS and its involvement in major bombing and other violent activities in the Philippines made them a terrorist organization. The government in the Philippines has been struggling until this report's publication to defeat the ASG, but so far the ASG has had the ability to regenerate itself because of its resilience and ability to navigate between crime and terrorism.

Amina Rasul (2015) in her online article "Radicalization of Muslim Mindanao: Why democracy is essential" stated that there was a real danger for radicalization of Muslim communities in the Philippines. She pointed to marginalization and unaddressed grievances as contexts of radicalization. She also stressed the need to be sensitive to the diverse historical and cultural contexts of Muslim communities and to help the moderate majority gain the upper hand in the contest for Muslim hearts and minds with extremists. These, Rasul believed, were more important than stronger military action.

Abhoud Syed M. Lingga (2014) indicated that radicalization of the entire or the majority of the Muslim population in the Philippines is unlikely; however, he did believe that extremist groups like the ASG could increase in number and that new radical groups would emerge. He made mention of a number of factors that could cause further radicalization including frustration over delays in the peace process and a failure to resolve the Bangsamoro problem, the existing anti-Muslim bias of at least a third of the Filipino population, and the presence of radical foreign Muslims in the Philippines coming from the Middle East, seeking safe haven (Lingga, 2014; IPAC, 2016).

In a risk assessment for USAID entitled "Violent Extremism and Insurgency in the Philippines," David Timberman (2013) expounded on the three violent extremism and insurgency (VEI) types present in the Philippines: (1) traditional

armed Communist and Moro insurgencies, (2) traditional political and clan (rido) violence, and (3) recent forms of extremism and terrorism such as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). He also classified the drivers of VEI in the Philippines into socioeconomic, political, and cultural drivers. In his assessment, Timberman saw the drivers of violent extremism and insurgency in the country as a complex mix of grievances resulting from diminution of ancestral homelands, poverty and underdevelopment, marginalization and discrimination, poor governance, and military abuses. He suggested that the presence and interplay between actors and drivers made the risk of VEI real. While the VEI risk is real, he also looked at the mitigation and resilience measures aimed at reducing risk thanks to (1) improvements in the political and economic spheres, (2) the conciliatory nature of government, (3) the growing awareness on the risks associated with transnational violent ideologies, and (4) the improvement in counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency efforts.

C. Roots, Beginnings, and Morphing of Violent Extremism in Mindanao

The present form of VE in Mindanao has historical roots in the so-called Mindanao conflict, considered the second-oldest protracted conflict in the world from the Moro sultanates' conflict with Spanish colonizers in the 15th century to the present secessionist movement born during the Martial Law regime. The rebellion was a reaction against government's biased policies on resettlement of migrants from Luzon and the Visayas especially in the 19th century which saw the dilution of Moro hegemony in their own ancestral domains. Peter Chalk et al. (2009) summed up this Moro grievance succinctly:

> *Although constitutionally part of the Philippine state, the Islamic population of this region has never subscribed to the concept of an integrated Catholic polity, defining themselves, by contrast, on the basis of a unique ethno-religious identity. This sense of separation has been exacerbated by blunt attempts to alter the historically*

Muslim centric demographic balance in the southern Philippines through Christian transmigration as well as by economic neglect and crushing poverty. Combined, these factors have ingrained a sense of victimization and oppression that has fueled violence in the region since 1972.

Things began to change as warriors from Muslim groups in those tenuous times slowly got tired of the fighting and were given new lenses with which to see life, these lenses brought to them by experience and age. By the latter part of the 20th century, the MNLF and MILF had accepted the possibility of political autonomy and this did not sit well with groups that favored independence. Initially, the MILF, under Ustadz Hashim Salamat, became a separate entity as early as 1977, highlighting the Islamic orientation of the MILF over the MNLF's secularist and nationalist ideology.

Hashim Salamat viewed the 1996 GRP-MNLF agreement "as side issues only and never touched the core of the Bangsamoro problem which is the illegal and immoral usurpation of their ancestral homeland and the barbarous usurpation of their legitimate rights to freedom and self-determination; and that it is devoid of justice and freedom for the Bangsamoro people believing that peace without justice and freedom for the aggrieved party is another form of colonial oppression", evolving into what is now referred to as "historical injustice." The MILF has been in negotiation with the government since 1997.

Government intelligence had accused the MILF of links with Jemaah Islamiyah, a group affiliated with the Al-Qaeda group in Southeast Asia. In June 2003, Hashim Salamat renounced terrorism as demanded by the Philippine government and as a means to jumpstart negotiations with the group.

The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) under Ustadz Abdurajak Janjalani came about as a result of his dissatisfaction with the MNLF renegotiations in 1986. The ASG has since largely remained outside any political negotiation as it became committed to the formation of a Muslim state, actively fighting government forces mainly in Basilan and Sulu. The controversy with the ASG came about when Janjalani himself issued his own *fatwa* (religious edict) arguing that violence was justified for a number of reasons. These were heard over his Friday sermons

(khutbah) and recordings of such pronouncements circulated by his supporters. The timeline of the rise of VE groups is presented in Figure 3.
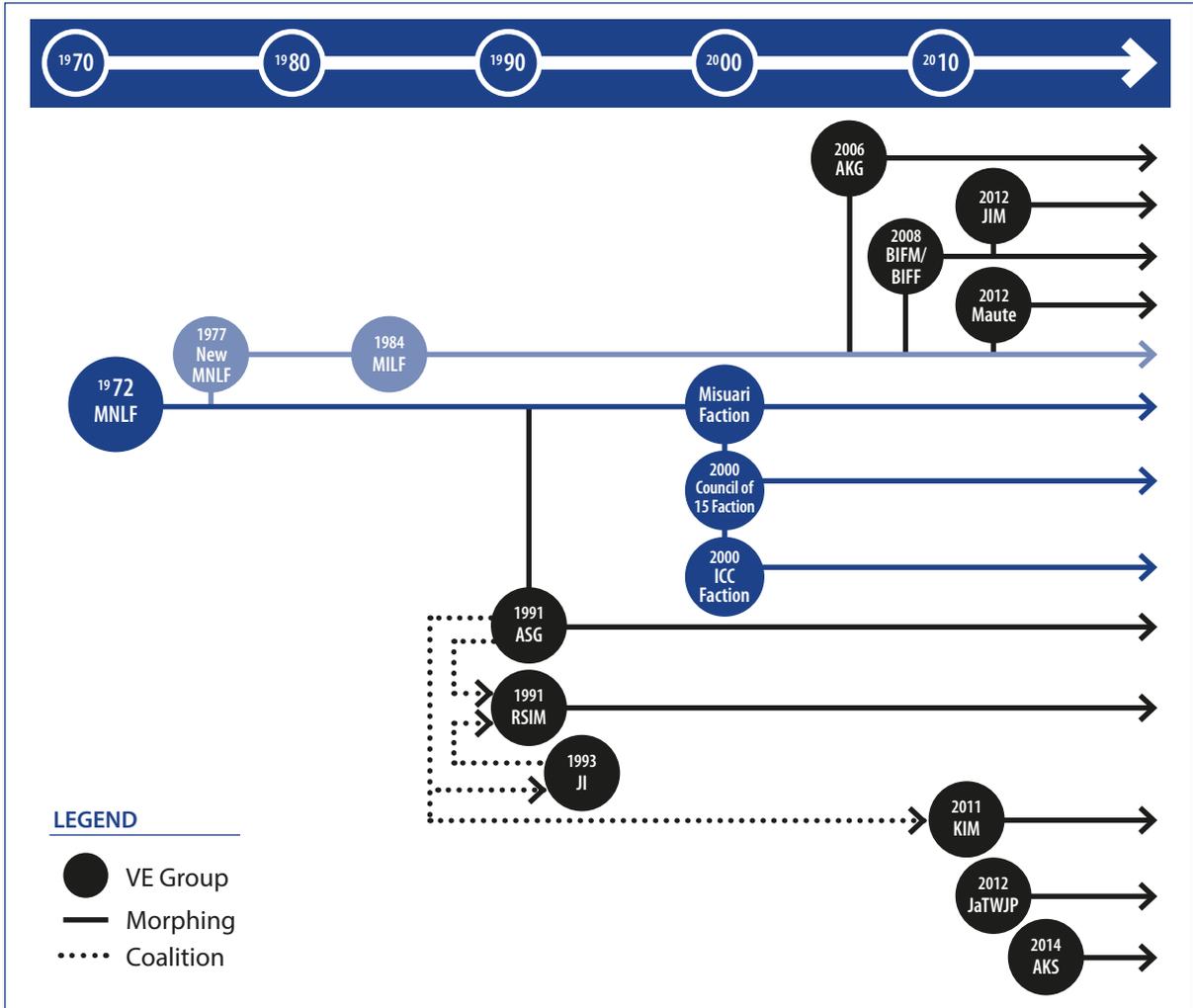
Figure 3: Beginnings, morphing, and coalition among VE groups

More recently, other groups have materialized due to their proponents' dissatisfaction with their old group's leadership and decisions. The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (BIFM) and its armed wing, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) under Ustadz Umbra Kato used to be known as the MILF's 105th Base Command, the same unit that figured in the bloody Mamasapano encounter in 2015 which led to the deaths of the Philippine National Police's

Special Action Force commandos. Aside from the frustration stemming from the failed Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) debacle under President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in 2008, Ustadz Kato harbored the belief that they should pursue independence instead of autonomy. This effort has since morphed into smaller groups after the demise of Ustadz Kato, with Ismael Abubakar (aka Kumander Bungos) assuming leadership of the core BIFF, while earlier successor Mohammad Ali Tambako organized his Justice for Islamic Movement (JIM).

The Dawla Islamiyya or Maute Group under brothers Ustadz Omar Maute and Ustadz Abdullah Maute were initially allied with the MILF with further ties of affinity and consanguinity among members. The group was organized in 2012 and pledged allegiance to ISIS in 2015. While an initial encounter with the Philippine Army happened in Madalum in 2013, they gained initial notoriety in the early part of 2016 when they overran the remote but historic town of Butig in Lanao del Sur. The group, allegedly dissatisfied over the failed passage of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) under President Benigno Simeon Aquino III, started its own operation and wreaked havoc in Butig and, a year later, in Marawi City.

In recent years, other extremist groups coming out of Mindanao have included Jamaah al-Tawhid Wal Jihad Philippines (JaTWJP), Ansar Khalifah Sarangani (AKS), Khilafa Islamiyah Mindanao (Chalk, 2016), and Al Khobar Group (AKG).

From the ASG in 1986 to Maute in 2012, for a period of about two and a half decades, VE groups have carved out areas where they have hegemony over local communities, rendering military and police actions doubly difficult because these VE groups were either successful in intimidating locals or bought the loyalty of the population by sharing ransom monies. They also undertook and expanded violent activities in urban areas like Metro Manila and Davao, which were normally outside their traditional areas of operation. The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) World Map focusing on the Philippines (below) displays the cumulative concentration and intensity (combining fatalities and injuries) of terrorist attacks across 45 years of data. Inside the dotted circle at the bottom right of the diagram is Mindanao, where arguably the highest intensity and concentration of armed encounters occurred in Southeast Asia.
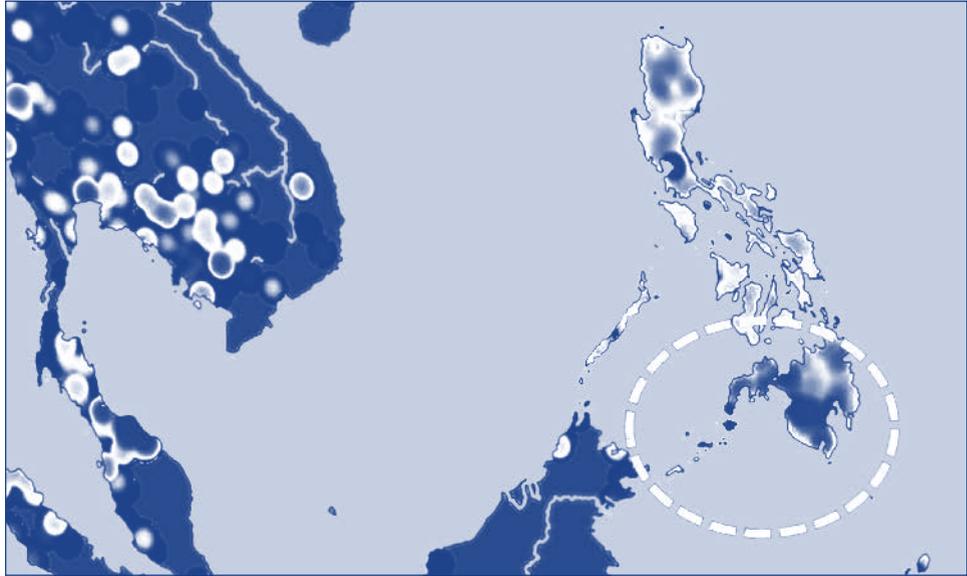
Figure 4: A snapshot of the GTD World Map showcasing the concentration and intensity of terrorism over 4 decades of data. (www.start.umd.edu)

D.   Nature, characteristics, and organization

After the Twin Towers attack in the United States in September 2001, extremist groups were under much closer scrutiny. They started to be considered as completely separate entities from subnational conflict groups. Over time, as subnational conflicts made headway either through active hostilities or peace negotiations (Parks et al., 2013), VE groups became prominent as they shunned political settlements and preferred violent and criminal acts to supposedly achieve avowed political goals.

While these new morphs, i.e. ASG, BIFM/BIFF, JIM, Dawla Islamiyya or Maute Group, and others, were not as large as the subnational conflict groups like the MNLF and MILF, they were nonetheless deadly in their actions, inclined to violent means and strong in commitment to their own brand of Islam and narratives of history and the marginalization and oppression of Muslims.

A sample of these local violent extremist groups in Table 2 provides a picture of evolution and morphing in less than two and a half decades. Data are primarily from the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC) interspersed with those from GTD specifically the Big, Allied, and Dangerous (BAAD) online platform featuring "updated, vetted and sourced narratives, and relationship information and social network data on 50 of the most notorious terrorist organizations in the world since 1998."

Table 2: A Sample of local violent extremist groups and their descriptions ✳

LOCAL EXTREMIST GROUP	IDEOLOGY	OPERATIONAL TACTICS	ORGANIZATION	LOCATION
ASG	Separatist-Moro; Religious-Islamist-Salafist	Criminality: Kidnap for ransom, Trafficking/ smuggling, external support	The most radical and violent of the separatist groups in the country.	Philippines (Southern region, predominantly in the Sulu Archipelago)
	Jihadist Terrorist Groups - Religious (Islamic), Separatist / New Regime Nationalist / Ethnic Nationalist, Economic Terrorism and Extortion, Narco-terrorism	Bombings, Armed Assault, Kidnapping/ Hostage Taking as a Terrorist Tactic, Assassinations as a Terrorist Tactic, Economic Terrorism and Extortion, Narco-terrorism	Several factions or subgroups. The Basilan faction headed by Isnilon Hapilon pledged allegiance to ISIS, but the Sulu factions did not.	Basilan, Sulu
BIFM/BIFF	Separatist / New Regime Nationalist / Ethnic Nationalist	Kidnapping/ Hostage Taking as a Terrorist Tactic	BIFF spun off from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in late 2010	Largely around Southern Maguindanao
Justice for Islamic Movement (JIM)	*No category from Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC).*	*No category from Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC).*	Offshoot of BIFF over leadership tussle in 2013	Mamasapano and Shariff Aguak towns in Maguindanao and Pikit, North Cotabato

✳ Source: The Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium is an online database of information regarding violent and radical groups. More information can be found at https://trackingterrorism.org/about

Setting and Profile

A. The Study Sites

The sites of the study were four provinces in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) namely, Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, and Sulu. These four provinces are inhabited by different Moro tribes – the Maguindanawon, Meranaw, Iranon, Yakan, Tausug, Sama, and Badjao. The Maguindanawon, Iranon and Meranaw occupy the mainland of ARMM while the Yakan, Tausug, Sama, and Badjao are on the islands of Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, and Basilan. There are other ethnic groups also occupying some parts of ARMM. For instance, in Maguindanao, indigenous people like the Teduray and Manobo have their ancestral domain in the mountainous and hilly portions of the province while the migrant settlers from Visayas and Luzon occupy the *poblacions* of some municipalities in the area.

ARMM has five provinces and two component cities – Marawi City in Lanao del Sur and Lamitan City in Basilan, 116 municipalities, and 2,490 barangays. While Cotabato City belongs to Region XII, it serves as the regional seat for ARMM.

In 2010, ARMM had a total population of 3,256,140 people (PSA, 2010), occupying a total land area of 33,511.4 square kilometers.

The economy of the region is generally dependent on agriculture, mostly farming and fishing. The majority of the people in the mainland grow crops like palay, corn, banana, coconut, cassava, and other root crops while those in the islands survive on fishing and growing seaweed. Others are engaged in small and medium business enterprises. ARMM ranks number 1 in the production of cassava and seaweed in the country. The small and medium enterprises in the region are mostly engaged in the processing of agricultural products.

In 2012, ARMM had a per capita Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) of PHP 27,819.00 or USD 618.20 (USD 1 = PHP 45). ARMM is the poorest region in the country with a poverty incidence of 55.8% in 2012. Although this figure declined to 53.07% in 2015 as reported by the Philippine Statistics Authority, still this was high compared to that of other regions in the country. This poverty incidence figure is very high compared to the Philippines' 21.6% for that year.

It is noted that poverty is one of the major reasons for the proliferation of armed struggle in the region. The majority of the armed conflicts in the region are waged by the Armed Forces of the Philippines against the rebel factions like the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), Dawla Islamiyya aka Maute group, and the Abu Sayyaf group. These groups find refuge in barangays of Maguindanao (BIFF), Lanao del Sur (Maute group), Sulu (Abu Sayyaf) and Basilan (Abu Sayyaf). Not surprisingly, the presence of these groups in the barangays of the four provinces has caused the "off and on" occurrence of armed conflict in the area.

A brief description of the socio-economic profile of each province provides a context on the choice of sites for this study on vulnerability of the Moro youth to radicalization.

MAGUINDANAO

The province is located in the portion of Central Mindanao bounded by Lanao del Sur on the north, Cotabato province on the east, Sultan Kudarat province on the south, and by Illana Bay on the west. The province can be reached by land from Davao City, by air through the Awang airport, or by sea through the Polloc port.

The economy of the province is highly dependent on agriculture. The greater majority of its people derive income from farming, fishing, and from being hired farm labor. Other households work in banana, cassava, or coconut plantations. The major crops of the province include palay, corn, banana, coconut, and cassava.

It has a seaport located in Polloc, Parang and an airport in Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat municipality.

The province had a total population of 944,718 in 2010 (PSA QUICKSTAT, Dec. 2015) with an annual growth rate of 1.66%. A total of 157,715 households were reported in the same year with an average household size of 5.98 members. The majority of the population is Maguindanawon with Islam as the main religion with 83.36% residing in rural areas.

Indigenous people like the Teduray and Manobo were found in the South and North Upi municipalities of the province.

The median age of the population in 2010 was 17.6 years old, indicating a generally young population with about 44.1% belonging to the 0 to 14-year old age group. The young dependents were at 81.1%.

In 2010, a large number (185,716) of the population was 5 years old and older and they had the highest educational attainment which was high school level. This number was 22.82% of the total population of 813, 855 in the same age bracket. About 17.2% (139, 589) had no grade completed.

The education of the Moro youth in the concerned areas were provided by institutions such as madaris, schools run by religious congregations, or government schools. These schools were generally located in Cotabato City and in the neighboring municipalities. Most of the older Moro youth in Maguindanao were enrolled in tertiary schools in Cotabato City or in neighboring municipalities. Children of well-off Moro families went to private colleges or universities in the cities of Davao, General Santos, or in Metro Manila.

The madaris were operated by Muslim teachers (ustadz) and the curriculum centers primarily focused on the learning of Arabic and Islamic studies. There were a few madaris accredited by the Department of Education (DepEd) ARMM. These madaris offered subjects required by the DepEd in addition to Arabic and Islamic studies. In ARMM, the Bureau of Muslim Education (BME) oversaw the operation of the madaris that had a Permit to Operate (PTO).

The province had a poverty incidence of 44.24% in 2010.

The province was home to the BIFF, an Islamist militant organization, established in December 2010 by Ameril Umbra Kato, a former commander of 105th Base Command of Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

It was later reported that the BIFF had established alliance with the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Basilan.

LANAO DEL SUR

The province is situated on the elevated part of Mindanao, bounded by Bukidnon on the east, Maguindanao on the south and North Cotabato, by Illana Bay on the west, and by Lanao del Norte on the northwest. Lake Lanao, the second largest lake in the Philippines, is found in the province, and is the primary source of electricity in Mindanao.

The province had a total land area of 3,850.3 square kilometers which was 3.7% of the total land area of Mindanao and 1.80% of the total land area of the country. (ARMM Regional Development Plan Midterm Update 2013-2016).

Despite the presence of hydroelectric power in the area, the economy of the province was heavily dependent on farming and fishing. Some residents were engaged in small and medium enterprises. Major crops raised were corn, palay, cassava, sweet potato, abaca, and coffee.

A large part of the province was populated by the Maranao people with 90% of the total population of 933,260, registered in 2010 by the National Statistics Authority (QUICKSTAT, Dec. 2015). About 95.8% of them lived in rural areas. Of the total population, 797,065 were aged 5 years old and older. In the same year, 14.4% were reported to have had no grade level completed, 35.9% had elementary education, and 23.3% had high school education.

Marawi City served as the center of commercial activities of the people. This was also where the Mindanao State University (MSU) was located. As this area was considered the Islamic City in the south, a good number of madaris thrived in the city. There were government-run elementary and secondary schools serving the educational needs of the Moro children, with Maranaw parents choosing to send their children to madaris for their Arabic and Islamic studies.

The province still had lands covered with forest and untapped fertile valleys surrounding Lake Lanao.

The province was home to the Dawla Islamiyya aka Maute Group with headquarters in the municipality of Butig. The Dala Islamiyya "*pledged to the Islamic State in April 2015, and pledged to support each other to fight the Philippine government.*" (TRAC, 2017)

Some of the activities of the Dawla Islamiyya involved the: (a) recruitment of minors, (b) kidnapping or killing individuals, and (c) destruction of public facilities.

BASILAN

The province is the largest among the major islands of the Sulu Archipelago. It is located off the southern coast of Zamboanga Peninsula. Isabela City belongs to Region 9 but serves as the capital of the province. Among the provinces of ARMM, Basilan had the lowest poverty incidence with 26.19%.

Basilan is bordered by the Basilan Strait to the north, the Sulu Sea to the northwest, by the Moro Gulf to the northeast, and by the Celebes Sea to the southeast. It is composed of 11 municipalities, 2 component cities (Lamitan and Isabela), and 255 barangays (including those in Isabela).

It had a total population of 346, 579 (PSA, 2015), occupying the total land area of 1,327.23 square kilometers. There were three major ethnic groups residing in the area – the Yakans, Tausugs, and Zamboangueño. About 42.3% were young dependents (0 to 14 years old) and the median age was 19 years.

The majority (41%) of Basilan's Muslim population practiced Sunni Islam of the Shafi'i tradition. Basilan had one state college and five private colleges. The Basilan State College was located in Isabela City and had extension colleges in Lamitan City and Maluso. There were three school divisions of the DepEd in the province – Basilan, Isabela, and Lamitan with Claret High Schools having been established in Isabela, Lamitan, Maluso, and Tumahubong and a number of madaris providing private elementary and secondary education to young Moro population.

In 2015, a large number (41%) of individuals, aged 5 years and older, were found to attend or have completed elementary education while 17.3% attended or completed secondary education.

The economy of Basilan was primarily agricultural. The main sources of livelihood of the people were farming and fishing and the main crops were coconut/copra, rubber, coffee, black pepper, African oil and some palay, corn, cacao, and cassava.

The province became the sanctuary of the Abu Sayyaf group (ASG), which was formed as early as the 1990s. Banlaoi (2008) wrote: "*the formation of the group could be traced from the disgruntled members of the MNLF over the dormant secessionist Movement in the late 1970s, Khadaffy Janjalani claimed that the ASG was officially founded in 1993 with the name Al-Haratakul Islamiyah.*" (Banlaoi, 2008)

At present, the Abu Sayyaf is one of the smallest but most violent jihadist groups engaged in kidnapping for ransom wanted by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. It was reported that the group was funded and trained by Al Qaeda. After the death of Janjalani, Isnilon Totoni Hapilon took over as the leader of the group. The group was recognized as an IS-aligned group in the Philippines. It was argued that economic poverty and political disparities were the primary reasons for the rise of Abu Sayyaf in Basilan but others say differently, saying they were fighting for an independent Islamic province.

SULU

The province has a total land area of 1,600.40 square kilometers. It is part of the Sulu Archipelago, and its capital is Jolo. It has 19 municipalities and 410 barangays. There are over 157 islets in Sulu and some are still unnamed. The main island and the islets are situated between the island provinces of Basilan to the northeast and Tawi-Tawi to the southwest. Sulu is bordered by Sulu Sea to the north and the Celebes Sea to the south.

In 2015, the PSA reported 824,731 people in Sulu. The Tausug dominated the province and professed Islam as their religion. There were also Sama, Badjao, and Banguingui people in Sulu. The majority of the Moro people in Sulu practiced Sunni Islam of the Shafi'i tradition as taught by the Arab, Persian, Indian Muslim, Chinese Muslim, and Malaccan missionaries from the 14th century.

Sulu predominantly thrived on agriculture with farming and fishing as the main sources of livelihood of the inhabitants. Crops produced were abaca, coconut, oranges, lanzones, durian, and mangosteen. As the Sulu Sea is one of the richest fishing grounds in the Philippines, some people in the area were engaged in pearl farming. Other industries included coffee processing and fruit preservation.

The PSA Quick Statistics reported a total household population of 351,866 in 2010. The average household size in this year was 5.89 members and the median age was 19.1 years. The young dependents were 67.4% with more than half (58.8%) of the total population belonging to the 0 to 14-year old age group. The proportion of urban population was 25% as against the 75% of those who resided in rural areas. From the total population of 639,513 (5 years old and older), about 24.7% had no grade level completed, 39.8% had attended or completed elementary education, and 20% had attended or completed high school education.

The National Statistics Coordinating Board reported a Human Development Index at 26.6% in 2009 for the province.

Due to its comparatively easy access to Basilan, Sulu had provided refuge to the Abu Sayyaf group. Protracted armed encounters between Abu Sayyaf and the government military forces occurred in the municipalities of Patikul, Indanan, and Talipao where the ASG had established camps.

B.   The Respondents' Profile

The respondents were composed of four groups – Muslim youth, ulama, key informants, and case study individuals. Except for one case study and three key informants who resided in Manila, all respondents were from the mainland and island provinces of the ARMM. These respondents were carefully selected based on their experiences and observations on the vulnerability to radicalization among the Muslim youth in Mindanao.

MUSLIM YOUTH SURVEY RESPONDENTS

A total of 100 Muslim youth participated in the survey with 60% in-school and 40% out-of-school youth. Their mean age was 21 years old. Sixty-seven percent (67%) were males and 33% were females. Classified by province, Basilan has more male respondents with 84% of the total youth respondents.

According to their highest educational attainment, 68% reached college level, 26% had secondary education, while 6% completed only elementary education.

Table 3: Selected Characteristics of the Muslim Youth

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS	MAGUINDANAO (N=25)	LANAO DEL SUR (N=25)	BASILAN (N=25)	SULU (N=25)	TOTAL (N=100)
1. Type of Muslim youth					
% of In-school	60	60	60	60	60
% of Out-of-school	40	40	40	40	40
2. Mean age (in years)	20	21	23	21	21
3. Sex					
% of male	64	56	64	84	67
% of female	36	44	36	16	33

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS	MAGUINDANAO (N=25)	LANAO DEL SUR (N=25)	BASILAN (N=25)	SULU (N=25)	TOTAL (N=100)
4. Education					
% with college education	60	68	72	72	68
% with secondary education	32	28	24	20	26
% with elementary education	8	4	4	8	6
% with Arabic and Islamic education	48	96	80	24	62
4. Employment					
% of employed Respondents	32	0.0	56	20	28
5. Type of occupation					
% engaged in agriculture	20	0.0	20	0.0	11
% engaged in non-agriculture	3	0.0	32	4.0	17

The Muslim youth belonged to large household sizes with 7 members being the average. Among the group, respondents from Lanao del Sur reported an even larger household size with 10 members on the average while Sulu had the smallest with 5 household members.

The family income of the Muslim youth came from the following sources: (a) employment from LGU (26%), (b) small business (23%), (c) farming (20%), (d) fishing (8%), (e) rubber tapping, and (f) other sources like pensions, driving, remittances, and care giving (13%). Their mean monthly family income was PHP 11, 618.55 or USD 238 (USD 1 = PHP45). Maguindanao had a relatively higher average family income with PHP 15,130.40 while the lowest average family income was in Basilan with PHP 6,760.00.

Table 4: Households (HHs) average size and mean monthly income

SELECTED HHS VARIABLES	MAGUINDANAO (N=25)	LANAO DEL SUR (N=25)	BASILAN (N=25)	SULU (N=25)	TOTAL (N=100)
1. Average HH size	6.0	10	6	5	7
2. Mean monthly family income (PHP)	15,130.40	14, 420.00	6, 760.00	10,385.00	11,618.00

MUSLIM YOUTH FGD PARTICIPANTS

The participants of the FGDs were Muslim youth leaders who were either in-school or out-of-school. The in-school participants were officers of Muslim youth organizations in their respective colleges or universities. A total of 39 participants from the provinces of mainland and islands of ARMM were identified to participate in the FGD. Of this number, 13 were female while 26 were male. The in-school participants were 26 and 13 were out-of-school. The participants were composed of 9 Maguindanawons, 10 Maranaws, 10 Tausugs, and 10 Yakans. Their mean age was 22 years.

ULAMA FGD PARTICIPANTS

The 11 participants in the FGD were ulama from the mainland and the island provinces of ARMM. Six of them were 51 to 61 years old while five belonged to 40 to 50-year old age group. The group was composed of individuals with varied ethnic affiliations. Four were Tausugs, two Maguindanawons, two Maranaws, one Yakan, one Sama, and one Iranun.

Seven of them were Islamic scholars from Saudi Arabia, one from Malaysia, while three ulama obtained their post graduate degrees in Islamic education from the Mindanao State Universities in Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, or Zamboanga.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS

The key informants were selected based on the nature of their work in Muslim areas in the province. A total of 35 key informants participated in the interviews for this study. They were employed as teachers in colleges or universities, security officers (police /military), heads of non-government organizations, local government unit officers (mayor, municipal councilor), or advisers to Muslim student associations. Of the total key informants, 17 were males and 11 were females.

CASE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

The case study individuals were either active or dissociated members of extremist groups. All males, two were still active members of the ASG while another two had already dissociated themselves from the group. Their ages ranged from 17 to 35 years. One case study featured a person who had no formal schooling, one belonged to a marginalized family, while another was orphaned at a very young age. Two completed college education while one was a graduate of secondary education.

The Muslim Youth Mindset and Attitudes toward Violent Extremism

In an effort aimed at understanding the Muslim youth's mindset in the research areas, this research explored the process of their radicalization, that is, their grasp about and attitude towards selected concepts relating to Islam and how these concepts were used or misused by VE groups.

A. Understanding of a "Muslim"

In the survey and the FGDs, concepts associated with VE were not introduced at the outset. Instead, participants were initially asked about their understanding of what a "Muslim" was and from whom they learned it. Thereafter, Islamic concepts associated with VE groups were put forward to the respondents for their reactions.

VIEWS ABOUT BEING A MUSLIM

About 93% of the total Muslim youth respondents in the four provinces described a Muslim as one who adhered to the five pillars of Islam, while a few of them said a Muslim was a believer of Islam, submitted to Allah, and was obedient to parents. (Table 5)

Table 5: Understanding of a Muslim (in percent, multiple answers)

DESCRIPTION	MAGUINDANAO (N=25)	LANAO DEL SUR (N =25)	BASILAN (N =25)	SULU (N=25)	TOTAL (N=100)
Adheres to five pillars of Islam	100	92	80	100	93
Islam believer	12	8	8	8	9
Submits to Allah	4	4	0	0	2
Obedient to parents	8	4	4	0	4

FGD participants described a "Muslim" as one who:
• Submits to and consciously follows Islam as a religion and way of life.
• Performs the five pillars of Islam: The testimony of faith that there is only one God (Allah), the performance of daily prayers, the payment of zakat, fasting in the month of Ramadhan, and pilgrimage to Mecca.
• Believes in the six articles of faith namely, Belief in Allah, Belief in His Angels,

Belief in His Books, Belief in His Prophet, Belief in the Day of Judgment, and Belief in Destiny (Good or Bad, all things come from Allah).
- Enjoins what is good and forbids what is wrong.
- Believes in the Holy Books such as the Qur'an which is the last revealed book followed by Muslims today.
- Lives in peace here on earth.
- Wears modest attire, such as women who wear *hijab* and long dress to cover their body.

The youth responses reveal their understanding of being Muslim as a religious identity associated the articles of faith, pillars of Islam, general prescription of good and evil, and external appearance among Muslim women. These are the common understandings among moderate adherents of Islam.

SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT BEING A MUSLIM

Across the research sites, the main sources of the knowledge about being a Muslim among the youth, as reflected in Table 6, came from the following: (a) parents (68%), (b) elders (80%), and madrasah (70%). The "elders" mentioned in this study included the ulama, traditional leaders, and other respected individuals.

The responses can be grouped into three: individuals like parents and elders, institutions like mosques and traditional religious schools, and activities like Islamic seminars or symposia.

- The first sources of knowledge about being a Muslim were individuals like parents and elders but between these two groups, the latter were more influential sources. Elders, especially ulama, were usually considered to be more knowledgeable about Islam, thus the pull towards them.

- The second sources of knowledge were the traditional religious schools and mosques ("masjid" in Arabic). Traditional religious schools are more influential sources of knowledge than mosques and this was observed especially in Lanao del Sur and Basilan, followed by Maguindanao and Sulu. Between these two institutions, formal studies commonly happened in religious schools rather than mosques where the focus was on motivating and inspiring congregants through khutbah (sermons) and nasihat (advice, counsel). Lanao del Sur and Basilan registered the highest possibly because both have the biggest

number of overseas-educated religious leaders (ulama) through the region and Sulu has the lowest among the four areas.

Mosques were the main sources of information in Maguindanao. Basilan and Sulu were next in this regard. Surprisingly, mosques as source of information regarding what it meant to be Muslim was not only considered secondary to traditional religious schools in Lanao del Sur, the respondents did not even view the mosque as a source of information about their being Muslim. One explanation of this is the great influence of better educated religious scholars trained overseas over locally trained mosque leaders like the imam. Another possibility is a divide between these two types of religious leaders.

- The third source was the secular schools. Secular schools were highly considered as sources of knowledge in Maguindanao with more than half of its respondents (52%) saying this. Sulu and Lanao del Sur were next in this. This was affirmed in the FGD in Maguindanao where Muslim student associations were said to be very active in organizing Islamic seminars and symposia with both local and foreign resource speakers. Secular schools, however, were not considered sources of knowledge about being Muslim in Basilan.

- Finally, the fourth source of knowledge was community Islamic seminars and symposia. While community Islamic seminars and symposia organized by religious groups took place across the region, it was considered a major source of knowledge in Basilan. This could have been the effect of the province-wide influence of overseas and locally-educated religious leaders under the Basilan Ulama Supreme Council (BUSC) and the active support for symposia by local government units.

Table 6: **Sources of knowledge about being a Muslim (in percent, multiple answers)**

SOURCE	MAGUINDANAO (N = 25)	LANAO DEL SUR (N = 25)	BASILAN (N = 25)	SULU (N = 25)	TOTAL (N = 100)
Parents	72	76	40	88	68
Elders	96	80	56	88	80
Madrasah	60	88	84	48	70
Masjid	60	0	36	28	31
Schools	52	12	0	20	21
Islamic Seminar/ symposium	8	8	20	4	10

B. Knowledge of religious concepts related to VE

The list of concepts in Table 7 below was taken from the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) of Singapore, A Common Word, Amman Message, and the Marrakesh Declaration. These concepts carry both moderate and extremist interpretations, the latter strongly preferred by VE groups to justify their ideology and violent acts.

CONCEPT AWARENESS AMONG MUSLIM YOUTH

Across the ARMM, the majority of Muslim youth were aware of the top four (4) concepts: Jihad (80%), Ummah (75%), Hijrah (65%), and Khilafah (52%). Youth respondents from the mainland were more aware of these concepts compared with those from the island provinces. It is worth noting that the first three concepts were identified by 100% of Lanao del Sur respondents. A possible explanation is that the province had the highest concentration of ulama, religious schools, and mosques among all Muslim areas in the Philippines.

How were the commonly-known concepts understood by the moderates and the extremists?

- "Jihad" is an umbrella term that includes Jihad Qital, or armed fighting. While construed in the spirit of self-defense, VE groups used the idea of Jihad Qital to justify armed aggression, retaliation, and their criminal acts.

- "Ummah" is that cultural consciousness that binds all Muslims across the world as one community. VE groups use this consciousness towards two propositions: (1) Aggression against Muslims across world is an aggression against the whole Ummah and Islamic religion and (2) Ummah is the natural territory for the creation of one global Islamic State or "Dawlah Islamiyyah."

- "Hijrah" is often referred to as the Prophet Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina. VE groups used it to refer to the migration of Muslims into their "Islamic State" territory.

- "Khilafah" refers to a form of government headed by a caliph and history has referred to the so-called four "rightly-guided caliphs" as successors of the Prophet Muhammad. VE groups called for its revival through their preferred one global Islamic State or "Dawlah Islamiyyah."

A notable number of respondents also mentioned an awareness of the following concepts: Fatwa (41%), Salafi (35%), Bay'ah (33%), and Wahhabi (33%).

- "Fatwa" refers to the religious opinion of Islamic scholars and schools of thought within Islam can establish qualifications and methodology. In Muslim areas, the ARMM Regional Daul-Ifta' (RDI), Darul-Ifta' of Region IX and Palawan, and Darul-Ifta' Central Mindanao were among the local institutions recognized and qualified to issue religious guidance to local Muslims. The ARMM-RDI recently issued a fatwa condemning terrorist acts as un-Islamic. VE groups could easily issue a fatawa (plural) consistent with their ideology which justified their violent actions. In areas where there is no fatwa, their own leader could issue the fatwa for themselves and their sympathizers.

- "Salafi" (35%) is a contraction of the term "Salafus-Salih" meaning "pious predecessors" referring to the early Muslims associated with the Prophet of Islam and, thereafter, the first three generations of Muslims as models of Islamic piety and Muslim development. Today, it is meant to describe opposition to Western colonialism and as alternative to the colonial model of modernity. Salafi argues that the best model for Muslim development is the return to the examples of the pious predecessors. Usually, the Salafi as a movement is divided in current, largely Western, discourses: (1) Islamist Salafi aiming to model Muslim development through the beliefs and actions of the pious predecessors, (2) Puritanical Salafi as a political movement aiming to institutionalize Salafi doctrines in government and at societal levels, (3) Militant Salafi which, in addition to sharing the political activism of Puritanical Salafi, justifies the use of armed struggle, aggression, and even criminal acts as justifiable means. (Bin Ali, 2015) The Wahhabi (33%) as reflective of the Salafi movement institutionalized in Saudi Arabia is categorized under Puritanical Salafi. It must be noted that the term "Wahhabi" is an imposed term and Salafi in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere find its use derogatory and even offensive.

Islamist and Puritanical Salafis can be classified under religious non-violence and although may appear extreme, are perfectly protected in a democracy

under freedoms of expression, religion, and assembly. These are part of the reformative strains within Muslim society. The difference between Wahhabism (as a form of Puritanical Salafi) and Militant Salafi is the latter's intolerance, i.e., the imposition of its views on others and use of armed struggle (Jihad Qital) and aggression to reach its political goal and justification of its criminal acts.

- "Bay'ah" (33%) is an Islamic political term akin to a pledge of loyalty. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Islam, Bay'ah is a pledge of allegiance to a leader. It is still being practiced in monarchies like Saudi Arabia and Morocco. (Esposito, undated) VE groups popularized this term as a way of generating support and loyalty to their leader. They believe a pledge is irrevocable and withdrawal is considered a grave sin. Conversely, those who do not give their bay'ah to VE groups show antagonism to the cause and action.

The least known concepts, according to the respondents, were Takfir (22%), Al Wala' wal Bara' (17%), and Co-Existence in the Medina Charter (14%). This means that these concepts were less likely discussed in any forum participated in or attended by the respondents nor were they extensively discussed in the traditional institutions or activities of learning.

- "Takfir" is the act of accusing a fellow Muslim of apostasy. There is a consensus (ijma') among Islamic scholars through the Amman Message (2004) that the declaration of takfir between Muslims of different schools of theology and jurisprudence is not possible. However, among VE groups, the takfir has been extensively used to silence opposition to a particular cause and act. A declaration of takfir by a VE group leader carries with it a virtual license to exclude and harm a concerned individual or organization.

- "Al Wala' wal Bara'" is an Arabic term denoting loyalty and disavowal. Quiggin (2009) cited Al-Qaeda's ideologue Ayman al-Zawahiri's extensive essay on the matter. According to al-Zawahiri, loyalty between Muslims should be absolute while disavowal or enmity against those who will oppose their cause justifies aggression against the latter.

- The Co-Existence in the Medina Charter reflects the openness and fairness of the Prophet of Islam in dealing with other religious groups and diverse ethnicities that were present after He and his companions migrated to Medina.

The document forged as a basis of co-existence is now called as Medina Charter. The essence of the Medina Charter is Muslim propriety in dealing with other religious groups in their midst and this is reiterated through the Marrakesh Declaration of 2016. VE groups call for homogenization of Muslim society and conversion of non-Muslims even through the use of force.

In explaining these concepts, it should be clear now that youth awareness cuts across moderate and VE interpretations. Fundamentally, efforts toward preventing and countering VE lie in influencing youth towards Islamic moderation (wasatiyyah).

Table 7: Awareness of religious concepts among youth respondents (in percent, multiple answers)

CONCEPTS	MAGUINDANAO (N = 25)	LANAO DEL SUR (N=25)	BASILAN (N =25)	SULU (N = 25)	TOTAL (N = 100)
Jihad	88	100	68	64	80
Ummah	80	100	64	56	75
Hijrah	64	100	48	48	65
Khilafah	40	84	48	36	52
Fatwa	44	64	44	12	41
Salafi	36	56	16	32	35
Bay'ah	44	56	28	4	33
Wahhabi	24	32	24	52	33
Takfir	36	32	16	4	22
Al Wala' wal Bara	24	32	8	4	17
Co-existence as stated in Medina Charter	20	32	0.0	4	14

The low level of awareness on certain concepts here does not necessarily reflect low religious literacy in general. Some respondents may have strong literacy on Islamic fundamentals and rituals; however, they may be less aware about contemporary issues and relevance to their daily lives.

SOURCES AND DESCRIPTION OF CONCEPTS

Across the region, the sources of knowledge about these concepts can be divided into three as reflected in Table 8:

- Institutions like religious schools and mosques are the first sources of information.
- Individuals like overseas-trained ulama, locally-trained asatidz and reformist tableegh group come next.
- Activities like Islamic seminars, Friday prayer sermons (khutabah), Islamic lectures, evangelism (da'wah) sessions; and books, although the participants did not specify the books they consulted.

When asked to describe these concepts, the youth responses ranged from basic to advanced.

- Their understanding about Jihad was around Jihad Akbar (greater struggle) of struggling with own desire and Jihad Ashgar (lesser struggle) in both armed struggle (Jihad Qital) and fighting against oppression (zulm). They also mentioned holy war, a term associated with the Crusades rather than with Islamic traditions, although the term is also being used by VE groups to justify their aggression and promote their ideology.
- Ummah to them was the Muslim community, the followers of Prophet Muhammad, and also the followers of Islam.
- Hijrah to the respondents was the generic description of migration and did not specifically refer to any of the historical migrations in the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad. Respondents also associate the term with the Islamic calendar.
- Khalifah to them was about succession after the time of the Prophet of Islam and leadership in waging jihad.
- Fatwa to the respondents was understood as religious advice or opinion, a decision made by the ulama collectively, a jurisconsult's (mufti) opinion about religious doctrines, and clarification about Islamic rules and regulations.
- Salafi was seen as a group of believers following the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It was also viewed as a group of Islamic scholars with an association with aqeedah or belief system, or, alternatively, with extremism.
- Bay'ah to them was a pledge or oath and obedience to a leader. They also saw this as an agreement regarding who should be leader.
- Wahhabi to the respondents was another sect within Islam and a term applied to followers of the late Saudi religious reformer Muhammad Abdul-Wahhab.

This was held as an orientalist's creation and viewed with disdain by followers of the Saudi reformer.

- Takfir to them was associated with the word "kafir" (disbeliever). To takfir is to judge someone to discriminate against fellow Muslim on the basis that the person had ceased to be a Muslim and had become a disbeliever.
- Respondents associated the term "Al Wala' wal Bara" with aqeedah or a belief system, to love and to hate for the sake of Allah, and as means to protect the ummah (global Muslim community).
- The Medina Charter was seen as a document of truce during the Prophet's period in Medina, which espoused respecting and accepting non-Muslims.

Table 8: Understanding of Islamic concepts and source of knowledge

CONCEPTS	DESCRIPTION	SOURCES		
		INSTITUTION	INDIVIDUALS	ACTIVITY
Jihad	Struggling with own desire and against oppressors; fighting for the cause of Allah; holy war	Madrasah, school (secular),	Tableegh, ulama	Friday Khutbah (sermon), Islamic lecture, seminar
Ummah	Muslim community, Followers of Islam, People of prophet Muhammad (SAW)	Madrasah, Masjid, School (secular)	Tableegh, parents	
Hijrah	Journey for the sake of Allah (tawakul), Migration for one place to another, Madrasah, Calendar of Islam	Madrasah, Masjid, School (secular),	Asatidz	Islamic Seminar
Khalifah	Leaders/successors after the time of Muhammad (SAW), Leader, Group of Muslims doing Jihad	Madrasah, Masjid, School (secular)		
Fatwa	A religious advice, decisions made by ulamas, mufti's opinion on some doctrines, rules and regulations	Madrasah, Masjid, Ahlul sunnah wal Jamaah,	Friends	Dawah, Islamic Seminar
Salafi	A group of believers, Follows the Quran and the Sunnah of prophet Mohammed, Islamic scholars, Extremism, A companion of Rasul (SAW), Aqeedah	Madrasah, School (secular),	ulama, Friends	Dawah
Bay'ah	Agreements of group or leaders, pledge or oath-taking, leadership, Obedience to a leader	Madrasah, School (secular)	ulama, Friends	

CONCEPTS	DESCRIPTION	SOURCES		
		INSTITUTION	INDIVIDUALS	ACTIVITY
Wahhabi	Another sect of Islam, one of the four Caliphs, followers of Imam Abdulwahabi	Madrasah, School (secular)		Books
Takfir	Kafir, judging someone, discrimination of Muslims, claiming that she/he is a disbeliever	Madrasah		Dawah
Albara Al Wara	Aqeedah Protecting the Ummah To love and to hate for the sake of Allah	Madrasah		
Medina Charter	Truce during the time of Prophet Mohammad (SAW) in Madina with the non-Muslims showing that they respected and accepted one another	Madrasah, School (secular)		Islamic seminar, symposium

UNDERSTANDING OF VE

The findings of the survey on the understanding about VE reflect a relatively low level of knowledge across four provinces as shown in Table 9. Overall, 34% had no idea about VE, 26% had no response, another 26% associated the term with "extreme practice of Islam," 20% understood VE as "strategies for the youth to do extremist acts using wrong concept of Islam," 8% associated VE with youth recruitment, and 5% said VE was "against the teaching of Islam."

Only 40% of the survey respondents professed some knowledge on VE. Those who held that VE was an extreme practice of religion in Lanao del Sur were at 48% and in Maguindanao at 44%. The numbers were quite low in Sulu (8%) and Basilan (4%). A number of respondents saw VE as a strategy to get the youth to commit extremist acts using an incorrect idea of Islam. This was said by 20% of the Lanao respondents. A few also explicitly declared that VE was against Islamic teaching (4%) in Lanao del Sur and (8%) Basilan and Sulu.

Surprisingly, a total of 60% of the respondents had no idea or response about VE. This was especially true among island respondents. Seventy-six per cent (76%) of the Sulu and 60% of Basilan respondents gave "no response" or "no idea" answers. This can imply that the majority of the Muslim youth in the research areas may be swayed either towards the moderate or extremist interpretation of Islam.

Table 9: Perception on violent extremism (in percent)

DESCRIPTION	MAGUINDANAO %	LANAO DEL SUR %	BASILAN %	SULU %	TOTAL %
Extreme practice of religion	44	48	4	8	26
Strategies for the youth to do extremist acts using wrong concept of Islam	8	20	16	4	20
Recruiting the youth	0.0	0.0	12	4	8
Against Islamic teaching	0.0	4	8	8	5
No idea	32	28	40	34	34
No answer	16	0.0	20	42	26

In the FGDs, ideas about VE were associated with attempts to clarify the concept of Jihad and the similarities and differences between the two.

- FGD respondents in Maguindanao differentiated the legitimacy, justification, and obligation to undertake armed jihad from criminal acts of VE groups. Although VE groups have expressed the same idea regarding this, the respondents, themselves, recognized inconsistencies with the VE criminal activities.
- The same distinction was also observed among Lanao del Sur respondents. Additionally, they talked about differences in the interpretation of the Qur'an, pointing to VE groups as preferring an extreme understanding.
- Among the Basilan FGD respondents, VE was seen as using violent tactics (e.g., bombings and assassinations even targeting civilians) to achieve political goals. These acts were seen to be undertaken to attract support and continue their existence. VE groups were said to adhere to extremely conservative interpretation about Islam, forcing their women to be segregated and wear the hijab and burqa. They also use niqabi groups to support their activities. Some respondents see the wearing of a plain hijab as an expression of moderation, while niqab and burqa as expressions of extremism.
- Aside from expressing similar views on the use of violent tactics and targeting civilians, Sulu FGD respondents reiterated what they saw as an unacceptable connection between unlawful and inhumane acts with religion as practiced by VE groups.

ATTITUDES TOWARD VE

Twelve (12) statements were formulated to assess the attitudes of Muslim youth towards Islamic concepts. These attitudes were then recorded using a Likert scale. The statements reflected moderate and violent extremist views and could be responded to with Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2) or Strongly Disagree (1). The respondents were asked to express their opinion on the statements using these five choices. Averages were computed by province for each statement. Table 10 shows the results by province as well as the legend used in classifying the entries. The following were the provincial responses:

- On the statement, "Jihad is a daily struggle to improve oneself," all respondents expressed agreement with this generally-accepted definition of the term.
- On the statement, "Jihad as armed struggle is subject to rules of shari'ah, i.e., women, children, and elderly should not be killed or harmed," a protocol clearly established in Islamic jurisprudence, most of the respondents agreed. Lanao del Sur respondents strongly agreed while those from the other provinces simply agreed. In contrast, VE groups are known not to agree with this protocol and consider civilians as legitimate target.
- The statement, "Muslims can only give their loyalty to Islam and Muslims" was given in the context of Muslim minorities living in secular or non-Muslim majority populations. In the Philippines, where peace processes take place between the government and Moro liberation groups, Muslim areas are classified under "Dar al-'Ahd (Abode of Covenant) and Muslims enjoy the protection of the State. This protection is interpreted in the Siyar (Islamic jurisprudence on international law) as the mutual relation resulting from a treaty. In their capacity as protégés (musta'mineen), Muslims are bound by state law as long as the state protects them and does not tolerate attacks on their life and property. (Shadid and Koningsveld, 1996) Responses from mainland province respondents was consistent with this view; however, the "undecided" responses from the island province respondents is something worth looking into. This indecision might either mean lack of knowledge about this aspect of Siyar due to low Islamic education or it might be a negative attitude.
- All respondents were in agreement with the statement, "Muslims can be friends with people of other religions." This is consistent with the interfaith document "A Common Word between Us and You" put forward by a group of eminent Islamic scholars calling for a dialogue across religious traditions and to work on common grounds. The attitude of the respondents across the four

provinces is consistent with this call for openness and dialogue at informal and social levels.

- The statement, "Bay'ah is a pledge of allegiance given to a leader," is a generally-accepted definition of the term. While mainland (Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur) respondents agree with this statement, island (Basilan and Sulu) respondents are undecided. This indecision on the part of island provinces might reflect a lack of knowledge about this term or their low Islamic education background.

- All the respondents were undecided on the statement, "One who breaks the Bay'ah commits grave sins and become a kafir (infidel)." This statement was the usual interpretation of VE groups where a bay'ah given to their leader was absolute and any person revoking his/her allegiance would render that person an infidel and open to harm from any group members or sympathizers. The results show a lack of knowledge on the meaning of the term "Bay'ah" among respondents.

- The statement, "Takfir is possible between Muslims," was premised on the Amman Message (Risalah Amman), another declaration from a group of eminent scholars and leaders from the Muslim world where they qualified that a declaration of apostasy (takfir) between Muslims was not only impossible but was even forbidden. Among the respondents, those from Lanao del Sur agreed with this statement and those from the island provinces and Maguindanao were undecided. Agreement with this statement would imply that intra-Muslim disharmony and conflict are potentially harmful when this belief is practiced in communities.

- All the respondents were undecided on the statement, "A Muslim can be Sunni or Shi'a." This statement was also premised on the Amman Message which said that, "whosoever is an adherent to one of the four Sunni schools (Mathahib) of Islamic jurisprudence (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi`i and Hanbali), the two Shi'i schools of Islamic jurisprudence (Ja`fari and Zaydi), the Ibadi school of Islamic jurisprudence and the Thahiri school of Islamic jurisprudence, is a Muslim." The undecided responses indicate that all respondents were unaware of this consensus ('ijma) among eminent scholars in the Muslim world.

- To the statement "Fatwa can be issued by any Muslim claiming to be a leader," Lanao del Sur respondents showed disagreement while the rest were undecided. The statement comes from the Amman Message and was made in an attempt to quell the proliferation of varying religious opinions (fatawa). Eminent Islamic scholars explained that "Acknowledgement of the

schools of Islamic jurisprudence (Mathahib) within Islam means adhering to a fundamental methodology in the issuance of fatwas: *'No one may issue a fatwa without the requisite personal qualifications which each school of Islamic jurisprudence determines [for its own adherents]. No one may issue a fatwa without adhering to the methodology of the schools of Islamic jurisprudence. No one may claim to do unlimited Ijtihad and create a new school of Islamic jurisprudence or to issue unacceptable fatwas that take Muslims out of the principles and certainties of the Shari`ah and what has been established in respect of its schools of jurisprudence."* The disagreement of Lanao del Sur respondents with this statement reveals an attitude contradicting a consensus (ijma') adopted by eminent scholars.

- On the statement, "Wahhabi opposes the West's oppressive military and political presence in Muslim lands hence advocates for armed conflict," reflects a major political view within the Muslim world. Lanao del Sur respondents agreed with this statement while the rest were undecided. All respondents were undecided on the statement, "Salafi show extreme intolerance for infidels or non-Muslims." This reflects how these terms conflict within the Muslim community.

- The statement, "Ummah manifests strong connections that binds Muslims around the world and is deeply emphatic to the sufferings of Muslim brothers and sisters," reflects the social bond among Muslims worldwide. Respondents from Maguindanao and Sulu agreed with this and respondents from Lanao del Sur and Basilan and strongly agreed.

Table 10: Attitudes towards Islamic concepts related to violent religious extremism

STATEMENTS	MAGUINDANAO (N=25)	LANAO DEL SUR (N=25)	BASILAN (N=25)	SULU (N=25)
1. Jihad is a daily struggle to improve oneself.	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
2. Jihad as armed struggle is subject to rules of shari'ah, i.e., women, children, and elderly should not be killed or harmed.	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Agree
3. Muslims can only give their loyalty to Islam and Muslims.	Agree	Agree	Undecided	Undecided
4. Muslims can be friends with people of other religions.	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree

STATEMENTS	MAGUINDANAO (N=25)	LANAO DEL SUR (N=25)	BASILAN (N=25)	SULU (N=25)
5. Bay'ah is a pledge of allegiance given to a leader.	Agree	Agree	Undecided	Undecided
6. One who breaks the Bay'ah commits grave sins and become a kafir (infidel).	Undecided	Undecided	Undecided	Undecided
7. Takfir is possible between Muslims.	Undecided	Agree	Undecided	Undecided
8. A Muslim can be a sunni or shi'ah.	Undecided	Undecided	Undecided	Undecided
9. Fatwa can be issued by any Muslim claiming to be a leader.	Undecided	Disagree	Undecided	Undecided
10. Wahhabi opposes the West's oppressive military and political presence in Muslim lands hence advocates for armed conflict.	Undecided	Agree	Undecided	Undecided
11. Salafi show extreme intolerance for infidels or non-Muslims.	Undecided	Undecided	Undecided	Undecided
12. Ummah manifests strong connections that binds Muslims around the world and is deeply emphatic to the sufferings of Muslim brothers and sisters.	Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree

Legend: Strongly agree: 4.50-5.00; Agree: 3.50-4.49; Undecided: 2.50-3.49; Disagree: 1.50-2.49; Strongly Disagree: 1.00-1.49.

While there was awareness among respondents of what it means to be a Muslim, the attitude on religious concepts misused by VE groups was ambiguous. Indecisiveness of respondents over these concepts may indicate increased vulnerability of Muslim youth to VE principles in the 4 provinces. Disagreement with generally-accepted interpretation by eminent Islamic scholars is a cause for concern. Therefore, there is an obligation for individuals and institutions identified as sources of knowledge in this research to deepen the grounding of the youth on the true precepts of Islam while countering concepts being misused by VE groups or those associated with violent extremism. The ulama need to define and disseminate moderation (wasatiyyah) as the hallmark of Islam.

Views and Opinions on Violent Extremism

This chapter examines the phenomenon of radicalization and violent extremism from the lens of the youth and local residents.

A. Presence of Violent Extremist Groups

The existence of VE groups in Mindanao has been established in many media reports. On January 25, 2015, the Special Action Force (SAF) of the Philippine National Police (PNP) operated to capture Malaysian Zulkifli Bin hir and Filipino Abdul Basit Usman, both wanted terrorists and bomb-makers, and clashed against the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). ("Inside Mamasapano: When the Bullets," 2017)

The December 3, 2015 issue of *The Philippine Inquirer* said that former Cotabato City Mayor Japal Guiani Jr. reported that armed men linked to the Islamic State (IS) group were recruiting Muslim youth in the city to undergo training on bomb-making. He was said to be alarmed and deeply disturbed by information that "…*at least 30 young residents had been recruited by the IS-inspired Ansar al-Khilafah Philippines. They were promised daily food allowance and pocket money while training on bomb-making in the hinterlands of Palimbang* (in Sultan Kudarat province)." He was further said to have observed that the IS group targeted out-of-school youths and teenagers who were fond of reading the Qur'an. ("Group tied to IS," 2015)

The armed conflict in Marawi, Lanao del Sur that started on May 23, 2017 (still ongoing as of the publication of this study) between Philippine government security forces and the alleged affiliated militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, including the Maute and Abu Sayyaf jihadist groups is a clear manifestation of the presence of violent extremist groups in ARMM. Cardinal Orlando Quevedo of the Archdiocese of Cotabato had this to say: "*Three militant groups have pledged allegiance to ISIS: the ASG, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), and most recently the Maute group. It is the Maute group with its overtly anti-Christian actions (the destruction of a Catholic Cathedral and its religious images, the burning of a Protestant school, the killing of hostages who*

could not recite verses of the Qur'an, the hostaging (sic) of Christians, including a priest and Church personnel) that has projected the reality of terrorism in southern Mindanao unto the world screen." (O. Quevedo, www.taborasj.wordpress.com, June 12, 2017)

Based on the respondents' responses, based in turn on their experience and perception, the presence of VE groups in Muslim communities in the four provinces seems to be, indeed, quite real. Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, and Sulu survey respondents revealed a higher level of awareness on the existence of VE groups compared with that of respondents from Basilan. The top 3 VE groups known by Maguindanao and Sulu respondents were the Abu Sayyaf, BIFF, and ISIS while the Lanao del Sur respondents were unanimous in identifying the Abu Sayyaf, ISIS, and Maute group. About a quarter of survey respondents in Basilan were familiar with VE groups such as Abu Sayyaf and ISIS.

The Abu Sayyaf and ISIS were commonly identified across the four provinces. The VE group identified in their respective locality was the BIFF in Maguindanao and the Maute group in Lanao del Sur.

The order of frequency in identifying local VE groups is as follows: Abu Sayyaf (70%), BIFF (41%), Maute (34%), and Khilafah Islamiyah Movement or KIM (3%). Among the internationally known VE groups were: ISIS (51%), Al-Qaeda (20%), and Jemaah Islamiyah (14%).

Table 11: Violent Extremist groups known by the Moro youth respondents by province

EXTREMIST GROUPS KNOWN	MAGUINDANAO (N= 25) %	LANAO DEL SUR (N=25) %	BASILAN (N=25) %	SULU (N=25) %	TOTAL (N=100) %
1. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)	72.0	100.0	36.0	72.0	70.0
2. ISIS	48.0	100.0	4.0	52.0	51.0
3. BIFF	56.0	80.0	0.0	28.0	41.0
4. Maute Group	28.0	100.0	0.0	8.0	34.0
5. Al-Qaeda	16.0	40.0	0.0	24.0	20.0
6. Jamaah Islamiah	28.0	16.0	0.0	12.0	14.0
7. Khilafah Islamiyah Movement	4.0	4.0	0.0	4.0	3.0

*Multiple answers

Among all respondents, those from Basilan seemed to manifest the lowest level of awareness of the ASG with only 36% admitting to knowing of the ASG. This is quite interesting since the ASG is believed to have started in the area. Fear and reluctance to provide information may account for this. Basilan is a poor island province with very limited access to media and this may explain the respondents' displayed lack of knowledge of VE groups operating outside the province such as the Maute group, Al Qaeda, BIFF, and others. Only 4% of Basilan respondents were aware of the ISIS.

Grouped by in-school and out-of-school respondents, the top three VE groups identified were: Abu Sayyaf (68.3% among in-school and 72.3% among out-of-school), ISIS (53.3% among in-school and 50% among out-of-school), and BIFF (43.3% among in-school and 37.5% among out-of-school). In-school respondents displayed higher awareness of VE groups such as the BIFF, Maute Group, and Al-Qaeda than their out-of-school counterparts.

Table 12: Knowledge on VE groups by type of Moro youth respondents (in percent)

EXTREMISTS GROUPS KNOWN	IN-SCHOOL RESPONDENTS (N = 60)	OUT-OF-SCHOOL RESPONDENTS (N = 40)
Abu Sayyaf group (ASG)	68.3	72.3
ISIS	53.3	50.0
BIFF	43.3	37.5
Maute group	36.7	30.0
Al Qaeda	25.0	12.5
Jamaah Islamiah	13.3	15.0
Khilafah Islamiyah Movement	3.3	2.3

*Multiple answers

The Youth Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participants shared their knowledge of VE groups and their activities. In all four FGDs, some participants were convinced that these groups were genuinely fighting in the name of Allah and were called jihadists. However, many expressed fear of the groups as terrorists, engaging in violent activities such as kidnapping for ransom, killing, and other criminal activities.

B.   Description of VE Groups and their Violent Acts

Survey respondents were aware about local VE groups' claims being religiously motivated, i.e., "fighting for Islam," "for the sake of God," "fighting against kafir (disbelievers)," and "this is jihad (religious struggle)" or by ethno-nationalist tendencies, i.e. "armed resistance against non-Muslims," "because they (Muslims) are being oppressed," "fighting against oppression," "fighting for BBL," and "fighting for the homeland." Survey respondents also expressed their observations, contrary to VE group claims, that these groups were "doing terrorism: kidnapping, bombing, killing," "killing innocent people," and "motivated by money."

FGD youth respondents noted the same inconsistency between the religious claims of these VE groups and their continuing violent actions. Those who favored VE groups were moved by the groups' religious justification, i.e., "fighting to defend Islam," or "fighting against oppression." Those who expressed reservation about the VE group claims pointed to their violent and criminal actions such as beheading, kidnapping, kidnapping for ransom, extortion, and their engagement in drug trade, gunrunning, and motorcycle theft.

In Sulu, it was observed that these groups did not differentiate victims – foreigners, non-Muslims, or locals – as long as there was money to be made. In Lanao del Sur, violence was also seen as a consequence or result of traditional "rido" (family vendetta). While recognizing the presence of the ASG in Tipo-Tipo and Al-Barka, Basilan, respondents claimed that many ASG members were not from their own locality but Tausugs from Sulu. VE groups were also acknowledged to be present in Maguindanao and respondents there claimed that some professionals were joining VE groups in the province. However, over-all, most members of VE groups and students from traditional schools who had been manipulated by recruiters had little knowledge of Islam.

One FGD respondent differentiated terrorism from violent religious extremism by saying, "*Terrorism is plain violence and violent religious extremism is a higher form of terrorism because of the use of religion as justification.*"

The youth respondents' description of VE was largely based on their knowledge and observations of events happening in their communities in the ARMM as shown in Table 13.

Table 13. Extremist groups as described by all survey respondents

ABU SAYYAF GROUP (ASG)	• Claiming to be Islam believers but acting against Islam, damaging its image • Fighting for the sake of Allah • Doing terrorism, kidnapping, bombing, killing people • Drug addicts
ISIS	• A group claiming that they fight for the sake of Allah • Terrorist group, killing innocent people, fast growing terrorist group • Foreign group, a group from other places trying to infiltrate the Philippines • They are the same as Wahhabi resorting to armed resistance against non-Muslims because they are being oppressed.
BIFF	• Breakaway group from MILF, organized by Umbra Kato, brothers in Islam but separated from MILF • A group asking for independence, fighting for BBL, rebel group from Maguindanao, fighting for the homeland • Fighting for the sake of Allah, Jihadists • Under the ideology of ISIS
MAUTE	• One family fighting against *Kafir,* people from Butig, Lanao del Sur, a group fighting for oppression. They are relatives. • Maranao group believing in Jihad Akbar • Terrorist group. Their motive is money. • Under the ideology of ISIS
AL-QAEDA	• Foreign group that fights for Jihad Akbar • People of Bin Laden • Terrorist group, Suicide bombers • True Mujahideen • Under the ideology of ISIS
JEMAAH ISLAMIAH	• International terrorist group • Mujahideen

A Sulu FGD participant shared awareness of the ASG in the area saying, "*The Abu Sayyaf group (ASG) engages in terrorist acts in Sulu such as kidnapping of foreigners/Christians or rich residents for ransom, bombing of downtown Jolo, beheading of kidnapped victims in Indanan and Patikul, robbery/hold up, selling and use of drugs, and fighting with the military affecting civilians.*" A participant of the Basilan FGD talked about the presence of the radical group in "*Tipo-Tipo and Albarka, Basilan but the members are not from the place. Most of them are Tausugs.*"

In the Maguindanao FGD, the participants were one in saying that, "*VE Groups exist here. They are genuinely fighting to defend Islam against oppression; many are professionals who have a different understanding about Islam. The majority of those joining the group are "Morits." They are manipulated…*"

More revealing pieces of information were shared by key informants. They were all aware of the violent acts of extremist groups and they said that their members believed that they were performing acts of jihad. As stated by one participant, "*All of these acts … the bombing ... the ransom… they all connect these to jihad…because for them, if killing a person is halal (permissible)…therefore taking their victims' wealth is also permissible…so with bombing…because they use our religion, in their (pamaham) comprehension under maslahah (general welfare) bombing is allowed, how much more with suicide bombing. Malggu' ini parakala' (This is a huge concern) – Muslim or non-Muslim, malaggu' in mularat niya (the negative effect is tremendous)!*"

A key informant shared that an ASG subgroup known as "*Al Harakatul Islamiyah*" and other extremist groups such as the BIFF, Ansar al-Khilafah Philippines (AKP), and the Rajah Soliman Movement (RSM) exist all over Mindanao. Mentioned also were the Dawlah Islamiyah Wilayah/Islamic State province in the Philippines and the sub-group Dawlah Islamiyah Lanao, the Maute group, and the Dawlah Islamiyah Cotabato allegedly involved in the bombing of Davao. There was also a group reportedly in Kidapawan known as Al Khobar group that trained people in bombing activities.

The FGD results among the ulama provide different views on extremist groups between those from the mainland and those from the island participants. The mainland ulama identified the Maute group in Lanao del Sur and the BIFF in Maguindanao. They also mentioned the ASG in Basilan and Sulu. They attribute

The Case of Ilidji (Case Study 3)

"*Karamihan sa amin any gumagamit ng Shabu kasi hindi kami makakatagal mamuhay sa bundok kung hindi kami gagamit*" (Most of us use Shabu, because it is very hard to stay in the mountains if we don't), he confessed. Shabu and other illegal drugs, aside from sustaining them, are also used to entice young men to join the ASG, he added.

the youth vulnerability mainly to poor religious grounding. These VE groups justify killing out of ignorance, fanaticism, and vengeance against the state for the historical wrong it committed against Muslims.

The ulama participants from the island provinces mentioned that the Abu Sayyaf group was operating in Basilan and Sulu. Their activities were considered part of their strategies to gain public and government attention. Kidnapping for this group was a *negosyo*, a business transaction to raise money used to attract the youth to join their cause.

Some members of certain VE groups were said to be drug addicts while some were supposedly engaged in the drug trade themselves. They were also stronger in areas outside the town proper. The ulama participants even suspected that there were illegal and criminal syndicates behind these VE groups.

Island province ulama claimed these VE groups tried to justify their bombing and kidnap-for-ransom activities by connecting them with jihad. VE groups justified jihad with misprinted Mardin Fatwa of Ibn Taymiyyah. The ulama also claimed that these VE incidents ultimately used historical injustice as a justification for their actions and expressed concern about the improper interpretation and application of jihad. While VE groups misused jihad, there was a bigger problem with fitna (intrigue, discord) within that was said to weaken the unity of Muslims resulting in their inability to address their problems in a concerted way. An aleem argued there was an attempt to malign jihad because this was a concept so close to the hearts of the Muslims and, over time, had been subjected to misinterpretations which brought shame to Muslims.

A general principle in Shari'ah is that, "The goal does not justify the means." This simply means that no matter how important

a goal may be, the steps taken to achieve that goal still need to be correct. A respondent qualified that waging war even, when defense was justified, also called for restrictions. They all concurred that kidnapping, bombing, attacks on civilians were terrorist acts.

According to the ulama, kidnapping cannot be a source of livelihood for Muslims as this is abhorred by Islam. Senior scholars have early on condemned radicalism and extremism in the mosques and school classrooms. Present-day radicalism and extremism is not new, as they find echo in the case of Khawarij, a group that was extremely religious, but their radicalism and extremism eventually turned them to be violent. Accordingly, if Muslims cannot control themselves within the limits set by Shari'ah (law), they will go overboard or become extreme.

The ulama from the island provinces believe that the cause and means of any action should be legitimate and noble. If a combatant causes harm, harm cannot be taken by non-combatants in retaliation. The ulama were in agreement that this issue should be widened to include the grievances (e.g. historical injustices), which burdened the community for a long time. What is happening in other parts of the Muslim world affects the local Muslims, as they are part of the global Islamic ummah (community). Those radicalized by these grievances eventually were found to have moved to local action.

C.   Motivations and Influences

The motives and influences for young Muslims towards violent extremism in the ARMM are intertwined. The youth and adult respondents named interrelated causes classified under the personal and psychosocial factors or the push, the socio-economic, political, and cultural factors.

The personal and psychosocial factors, such as causes emanating from the feelings of the youth, involve the self. This includes alienation, discrimination, ideological/beliefs, and experiences of armed conflict. The macro factor includes causes related to history, culture, economics, and politics.

POVERTY

The survey results show that poverty was the greatest cause for attraction towards violent extremism among the Muslim youth in the four provinces. Some 92% of Sulu respondents and 84% of those from Basilan believed that poverty was the primary reason for the youth joining violent extremist groups. The numbers were lower in the mainland survey results where 44% of Maguindanao and 32% of Lanao del Sur respondents identified poverty as the main cause for joining VE groups.

The condition of poverty in ARMM continues to be one of the major concerns identified by various stakeholders. Poverty was also pinpointed by the participants in the Sulu FGD as the main trigger for violent extremism among the youth. The reasons given were unsurprisingly similar: "*They join for economic reasons," "No source of income," "No influences," "For money."* Ilidji, in Case Study 3, was motivated to join ASG due to poverty. He alleged that *"Ang kahirapan ng buhay. Wala akong trabaho nun. Ilang beses akong nag-apply sa trabaho, pero walang mapasukan sa lugar namin. May pamilya na ako nun; obligasyon ko na pakainin ang mga anak ko at ibigay ang kanilang pangangailangan"* (Poverty. I was jobless and despite my several attempts to apply for work, there was really no job opportunity in our place. I already had a family then; it was my obligation to feed my family and to provide for their needs).

The Philippine Statistics Authority report on the country's official poverty statistics for the first semester of 2015 showed that 11 of the 20 poorest provinces in the country were in Mindanao. Lanao del Sur led the pack with a high 74.3% poverty incidence. Sulu, with 65.7% poverty incidence, was second poorest, and Maguindanao, with 59.4%, was fifth. Basilan was not included in the top 20 poorest provinces. ("Mindanao has 11 of 20," 2016)

Poverty here is understood to mean that basic needs of the people are not met. It means not enough food on the table, limited opportunities for education, poor health services, and limited housing facilities. Hence, poverty has been seen to drive other identified triggers of VE such as limited access to education (mentioned by 36% of respondents), corruption (35%), and poor governance (35%). (Table 14)

Table 14: Motivations and influences

MOTIVATIONS	MAGUINDANAO (N=25)	LANAO DEL SUR (N=25)	BASILAN (N=25)	SULU (N=25)	TOTAL (N=100)
	%	%	%	%	%
Poverty	44.0	32.0	84.0	92.0	63.0
Recruitment	72.0	***	60.0	28.0	40.0
Limited or no access to education	48.0	4.0	68.0	24.0	36.0
Corruption	44.0	****	28.0	56.0	35.0
Poor governance	36.0	32.0	20.0	52.0	32.0
Unstable peace and order	44.0	16.0	24.0	28.0	28.0
Personal experience of armed conflict	48.0	****	60.0	24.0	33.0
Historical injustice	40.0	40.0	4.0	20.0	24.0
Discrimination	28.0	32.0	20.0	16.0	24.0
Delayed resolution of armed conflict	44.0	12.0	12.0	24.0	23.0
Ideological	32.0	20.0	8.0	16.0	19.0

*Multiple answers

CORRUPTION AND POOR GOVERNANCE

Corruption was identified as a driver of VE by respondents from Maguindanao (44%), Basilan (28%), and Sulu (56%). Poor governance was a factor for respondents in Maguindanao (36%), Lanao del Sur (32%), Basilan (20%), and Sulu (32%). (Table 14)

The results of the survey were echoed in the FGDs that articulated in detail the perceived failure of government to provide opportunities to address the basic needs of communities. This was seen in the fact that school buildings were not complete, underutilized barangay halls did not serve to make the people feel government's presence, reported farm to market roads were either missing or incomplete, and poor barangay health services. This was also mentioned by both mainland and island key informants who strongly believed that these factors increased the vulnerability of Muslim youth to VE.

Calls to address corruption had been reportedly made by civil society groups numerous times. A recent call was by the Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy (PCID) that "...*elected leaders should be accountable for good governance and rule of law as well as the deterioration of the peace and order condition in conflict affected communities of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Without good governance, government cannot be effective in improving the socio-economic and political conditions of our people, and the delivery of basic services long denied in the Bangsamoro.*" ("Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy," 2017)

ALIENATION

Some key informants pointed out that a "lack of the sense of belongingness" to family and society was a key factor for young people in joining VE groups. A "sense of belonging" can be defined as "the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment" (Bonnie M.K. Hagerty, et. al., 1992).

Some young Muslims were said to join extremist groups in order "to feel a sense of belonging, their longing for a close and secure relationship." A sense of belongingness as seen in the case of Abdul, who, because of the "*overprotectiveness of his parents, where freedom was not experienced, drove him to seek the company of people who would make him feel welcome and accepted.*" It was this longing for companionship that enticed him to join the VE group.

Muslim youth belonging to poor families are vulnerable to recruitment by VE groups. When children and youth are supposed to be in school but are forced to earn for the family or when they are not able to participate in social activities within the community, VE groups use the opportunity for recruitment by providing cash incentives and group support.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF ARMED CONFLICT

This was mentioned by the majority of Basilan respondents (60%) and almost half (48%) of the respondents from Maguindanao (Table 14). No respondent from Lanao del Sur mentioned this factor, however. A good number of Basilan

and Maguindanao respondents did say personal experience of armed conflict as a driver for the youth to join VE groups especially for victims of the continuing armed conflict in Basilan and the battles in Maguindanao between the GPH and MILF since the early 2000s.

Armed conflicts in Mindanao resulted in a number of factors that affected the development of young people. First, massive displacements occurred during armed conflicts and along with the displacement, children and young people experienced trauma, insecurity, and a lack of parental protection. These children have had difficulty conceiving an alternative life other than that which is violent and conflict ridden (Daiute, Colette et al, 2010).

Second, armed conflict resulted in impoverished communities and a weak society where young people were left with no support or protection from the family. The economic impoverishment of their communities forced parents to seek employment elsewhere. OFW parents abound in many of the communities in ARMM. One or both parents may be out of the country to earn for their family. This situation has left children "desperately hungry" for support and a weak sense of connection and belongingness.

Third, any experience of armed conflict can affect the physical, social, and economic well-being of an individual. This can mean the loss of not only their homes but also of family livelihood and opportunities for schooling. Forty-eight percent (48%) of the Maguindanao youth respondents and sixty-eight percent (68%) from Basilan said that "limited or no access to education" motivated and influenced the youth to join VE groups.

DISCRIMINATION

This is cited by a quarter of the survey participants (24%) as an influence for joining VE groups. A statement shared in the FGD captured the youth's experiences of discrimination: "The *term 'Muslim' is disparagingly used in media with derogatory connotations. The Muslims are the usual suspects and fall guys in almost all criminal and 'terroristic' incidents. Muslim students are forced to abandon religious customs to comply with discriminatory policies of educational institutions. Some Muslims in the Metropolis even have to hide their true identities by assuming Christian names*

in order for them to get a job or rent an apartment or be accepted in dormitories or boarding houses." ("The Discrimination of the Bangsamoro," 2002)

Respondents believe that biases experienced by the Muslim youth "push the youth to the fringes of radicalization since prejudice can cause exclusion from jobs, education, housing and business opportunities" (Lingga, 2006)

DELAYED RESOLUTION OF ARMED CONFLICT

This was acknowledged by a quarter of the survey respondents. This was said to result in frustration which pushed young Moros to explore avenues such as joining VE groups. They were said to strongly believe in what they saw as historical injustices committed against the Moro, the resolution of which was dependent upon the results of the peace processes. Abhoud Lingga (2006) also identified the continuing armed conflict as one of the triggers of radicalization in Mindanao.

D.   Recruitment of Muslim Youth in the ARMM

Among the factors listed in Table 14 as motivations and influences that attract Muslim youth to join VE groups was "recruitment." This was cited by 72% of the Maguindanao respondents, 60% of those from Basilan, and 28% of those from Sulu. Surprisingly, the Lanao del Sur youth respondents did not see "recruitment" as a factor in joining VE groups.

From the FGD and KII results, recruitment was carried out by some influential religious leaders through preaching during Friday khutbah, informal talks led by persuasive leaders, regular conversation in the masjid and madrasah, and indoctrination in social media as well as cash incentives such as signing bonuses and monthly allowances, the promise of livelihood, and the provision of guns.

TARGETS OF RECRUITMENT

According to the youth and adult informants, the targets of recruitment were the out-of-school youth and the "morits" (madrasah students) and Moro youth leaders in secular schools. A Lanao del Sur key informant said that a VE group used "toril" (a boarding school type of Madrasah) and "darul" (center for learning Islam) in recruiting Muslim youth.

Other targets of recruitment were young Muslims not guided by their elders, those influenced by relatives who were already members of VE groups, children of VE members who were killed, orphans and drug addicts, members of families supported by VE groups who were in conflict with other families, and young people from isolated barangays. There were conscious efforts to recruit bright students especially those who had knowledge of first-aid or medical care and engineering.

It was shared in an FGD with island ulama that the old process of recruitment was "*asking the recruits to work first before orienting them. They were members without guns and bullets, but once recruited they were completely provided with guns, food, and cash.*" The FGD of the youth in Sulu revealed that recruitment was on-going in Sulu and this was done through giving cash incentives, though no specific amount was stated. Participants of the FGD in Lanao del Sur shared that recruitment of the youth was done through social media and the majority of those who joined were young people studying in madrasah and those who were bright or were already professionals.

Well-informed key informants from national offices revealed that recruitment targets were usually those who were most vulnerable among the youth – the idle, the orphan, and the angry. The recruitment process would normally use advocacy or social media, starting with issues on historical injustice and the oppression of the Muslim people. The recruiters

would then argue that Christians were oppressors, aggressors, and invaders. The recruitment of the youth was done through local leaders and politicians (through connivance). Meetings were conducted in the mosques, Qur'an studies, camp visits, or even sessions on calisthenics and physical training (as precursor to military, IED training, etc.)

RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Muslim youth were recruited using various platforms. An informant in Lanao del Sur cited the use of social media. Indoctrination and information drives were also employed. A Maguindanao key informant talked about a "*display of videos about global maltreatment of Islam and expression of takbir and other global issues in social media, madrasah, masjid and some secular schools.*"

These effective forms of indoctrination may be the reason for the youth's contention that the youth join VE groups for ideological motivations. "Ideological motivations" was mentioned by 32% of the Maguindanao and 20% of Lanao del Sur respondents. (Table 14). A key informant who shared his own experience said that he was enticed to join the VE group because he was made to believe that it was their religious obligation to participate in jihad and to establish Shari'ah as the law of the land.

An FGD participant from Lanao del Sur shared that the youth joined for ideological reasons but contended that "*These individuals are misled and misinformed.*" One from Sulu explained that some were encouraged to join, "*because of religious encouragement that ASG is fighting for Islam and they are made to believe they have to be mujahideen so that when they die as martyrs they go to paradise.*" Another from Basilan said, "*Religion is used to recruit and instill in youth's minds that it is correct to fight against government and die. Dying this way will usher them to paradise.*"

A case was mentioned by one FGD participant who shared that his friend was recruited and it was this person who also persuaded him to join. They went to the camp and stayed there for three days. Islamic teachings and discussion on Jihad were used for indoctrination. The recruits were lured with gadgets like cellphones, iPads, motorcycles, guns, and money. This participant confessed that he did not join the VE group but his friend did. His friend was a school drop-

out and was from a broken family. Asked how his friend was, the FGD participant replied, "He is already dead."

YOUTH RESPONSE TO RECRUITMENT

The informants explained the youth's usual reactions to recruitment. Some said that *"The youth are convinced by the charms and persuasive preachers of Islamic teachings. Many of them are attracted to Isnilon Hapilon, inspired by his articulation of Jihad."* Others said *"group security and peer pressure pushed the youth to join the VE groups. There is a sense of security and pride in being warriors; moreover, money is also an attraction to the youth."*

The informants further said that the youth reacted to issues like the *"all-out war launched in 2000 where many mujahideen died, leaving orphans and widows."* In Sulu, a youth claimed, *"The military destroyed farms, depriving families of income."* Also included here were contentions that *"Membership in VE groups gave them pride and power and boosted their identity as fighters for the Muslim cause."*

National key informants believed that the recruitment to VE groups was massive and extensive. VE capitalized on the frustrations and disappointment among the youth brought about by the outcome and the long-delayed implementation of the peace process, the lack of patience in waiting for the peace dividends, poverty, unemployment, and the inability to enter school. One more crucial issue is the fact that Madrasah students are religiously and ideologically-inclined and their recruiters have connections with Saudi Arabia, *Al Maarif* in Baguio City, *Markaz Addhiya* in Zamboanga City, and Indonesia.

E.   Outcomes

Exposure of the Muslim youth to violent extremism (VE) affects them, their family, and community in various ways. The results of the FGDs revealed positive and negative perceptions of the consequences for joining VE groups. Some youth respondents believed that a "jihad" was acceptable as long as the struggle was to defend Islam or fight non-Muslim oppressors, but others asserted that

this brand of jihad was not permitted in Islam because Islam is a religion that promotes peace. Collating the views and opinions of the respondents on the outcomes of VE, the findings showed varied responses.

In Maguindanao, the respondents saw VE as having negative effects on the youth where they would stop schooling, broke relations with their families, fought with their parents about Islamic beliefs and practice, felt alienated from their own community, but were proud of their gang. On the one hand, VE groups affected their personalities and twisted the true meaning of Islam and jihad. On the other hand, the recruits would feel happy to practice Islam as taught to them by the VE group that recruited them. It was noted in earlier discussions that Islamic teaching was used to indoctrinate the Muslim youth.

In Lanao del Sur, the respondents claimed that the youth who are recruited most often became the VE group local informants. It was like that they acted as intelligence agents in certain areas. Those who were recruited because they were known to their communities soon lost the acceptance of the people in their own communities. They would then be treated with mistrust for fear that they might inflict harm on the general community and/or their presence would compel government forces to attack their area. Thus, peace in the community was greatly diminished.

Family harmony was adversely affected too, because most parents did not approve of their children joining VE groups. Unable to stand the constant squabbles at home, some recruits left their families to find comfort in groups willing to welcome them. This resulted in their dropping out of school to enable them to support their group all the way. The recruits preferred the VE group over their families because the VE group was seen as a brotherhood. The parents, particularly mothers, were helpless. They wanted their children to return home because they were extremely worried about the future of their children recruited by the VE groups.

One respondent described the effects of VE to the recruits as: "*They feel acceptance there. They think that they have found the true meaning of Islam with the VE group. They give up their parents thinking that their parents failed to Islamize them.*" More, joining the VE group was supposedly giving them the *"feeling of superiority like holding a gun and becoming one of them."*

The Case of Guro (Case Study 4)

The recruitment of militant groups in Mindanao affects the whole community, particularly the youth. In Sulu, for example, very few would like to continue their secular education. Instead they intend to join ASG. It is the shortcut way. Why go to school and spend money and time and land a job with the government and earn a monthly salary while joining the ASG can give millions right away if you participate in kidnapping?

The Basilan respondents expressed the same opinion as their Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur counterparts in connection with the negative effects of youth joining the VE groups. Guro, case study no. 4, said the recruitment of VE members tended to discourage the youth from continuing their schooling since they already earned money by simply joining the ASG.

In some instances, family members felt unsafe and fearful of the military and became isolated. Moreover, since the youth could not proceed to college and finish a degree, the economic development of the community was greatly hampered.

Sulu respondents also felt the same about the youth who were recruited. They said that joining VE groups meant (a) *"Sacrificing the future of the youth, integrity of the family and harmony with the community,"* (b) *"The family will be put to shame and branded as bad influence to the other youths in the community,"* (c) *"The welfare of the families and the community will be badly affected especially with kidnappings and other criminal activities,"* (d) *"The portrayal of a negative image of Islam,"* and (e) *"The loss for the respect of women if Shi'ah dominates the region."*

The overall responses gathered from the KIIs and FGDs on the recruitment of the youth can be summarized thus:

(a) The Moro youth were vulnerable and could easily be persuaded to join the VE using the teaching of Islam with emphasis on jihad. The VE leaders impressed upon them that Jihad was a religious struggle to defend Islam and Muslims against the non-Muslims who were to be considered as oppressors. Most of those persuaded to join were orphans, products of broken homes, ill-educated, poor, and with relatives within the VE.

(b) Joining VE groups gave the youth a sense of belongingness since it was there that they found friends. They took pride being called mujahideens with the

prospect of dying to defend Islam. The money, guns, gadgets, and other amenities that the VE groups provided were good incentives that lured the youth to join them.

(c) The VE groups used current issues for indoctrination such as the all-out war of the Estrada Administration in 2000, the destruction of sources of livelihood due to military attacks in camps of the VEs, peace dividends that did not materialize as promised in the BBL, and acute poverty especially in isolated areas of the ARMM. VE groups proposed that jihad could be used to avenge the plight of the oppressed Muslims.

(d) Outcomes of VE adversely affected the person, that person's family, and the community. The recruits developed alliances with VE groups to the extent that they left their own families, did not listen to the advice of their parents, and got involved in drugs and other criminal activities ordered by their VE recruiters. Their families lived in constant fear that the military might raid their homes at any time. The community also lived in constant fear of military and police operations.

Addressing Youth Radicalization: Suggestions and Initiatives

A holistic response to radicalization and violent extremism is the call of various stakeholders; a military response is hardly the only solution. There is a need to listen to the voices of diverse groups, starting from those directly affected – the youth – the target for recruitment extending to the adult groups, who exert influence on the youth groups. This chapter showcases the proposals of the youth and adult respondents of this study in addressing the issues. It also includes the on-going efforts of the different sectors, ulama, Local Government Units (LGUs), the security sector, and civil society organizations (CSOs).

A. Respondents Suggestions to Prevent Violent Extremism

The survey respondents in all provinces believe that education is a key solution with more than a third of them suggesting the provision of opportunities for complete education. This is especially highlighted in the island provinces where higher education is still wanting. In the mainland provinces, a fourth of the respondents believe that intensification of the teaching of Islam and Islamic values is the solution. (Table 15)

Table 15: Suggestions to prevent the Moro Youth from joining extremist groups

	MAGUINDANAO	LANAO DEL SUR	BASILAN	SULU	TOTAL
	%	%	%	%	%
1. Provide opportunities for complete education (secular)	28.0	16.0	40.0	56.0	35.0
2. Intensify teaching of Islam	24.0	24.0	8.0	4.0	13.0
3. Youth should know very well the group they are joining.	4.0	20.0	8.0	4.0	9.0
4. Provide livelihood program/opportunities to earn	4.0	12.0	24.0	12.0	13.0
5. Scholarship Program	4.0	4.0	16.0	8.0	8.0
n	25	25	25	25	100

*Not all youth respondents gave suggestions.

These suggestions were mentioned during the youth focus groups discussions where the mainland participants recommended an advocacy on Islamic education and values participated in by LGU and religious leaders, while those in the island provinces suggested opportunities for education, scholarship, skills training, job opportunities, and employment.

> A Basilan youth proposed a concrete counter-extremism response by "…*providing opportunities for the youth in terms of education, scholarship, skills training, job, and employment. There should be a program that has packaged deals, like TESDA's skills training program and the provision of employment or even capital assistance for them to start small livelihood activities.*"

Widely recognized by the mainland provinces' youth respondents was the need to focus on the ideological response in forms such as information, education, and communication (IEC) on Islamic values.

> An FGD participant in the mainland suggested the "*Conduct of extensive information drive to discuss jihad in the cause of Islam or jihad from the perspective of Islam.*" The island participants also proposed the following: "*Intensify Islamic teaching by strengthening madaris in all barangays especially in conflict affected areas and strengthen Islamic education among the youth to include both parents and children.*"

Key informants in all provinces were one in supporting the suggestions of the youth to intensify the teaching of Islam in ARMM.

> The Maguindanao key informants recommended "… *education of the youth about the true meaning of Islam through moderate Muslim groups,*" while a Lanao del Sur informant proposed to "*include Islamic teaching in the education curriculum,*" "*de-radicalization of concepts using methods like the ALIVE programs should be institutionalized in all public schools,*" and "*Education should not focus only on western education but should also include Islam, the life of the Prophet and other Islamic related education.*"

The youth and the adult respondents' suggestions also highlighted institution-building as one of the solutions such as:

> "*Strengthening the role of Darul-Ifta' in clarifying issues associated with VE,*" "*Supporting the ulama and their activities for them to strengthen their preaching and increase the understanding on Islam, including in their preaching the advantages and disadvantages of joining VE groups,*" "*Supporting the madaris in implementing a de-radicalization program,*" "*Strengthening the Islamic Da'wah with the ulama, madrasah, and other actors collaborating on Islamic Da'wah,*" "*The state/ government considering giving financial support and training while involving the ulama in the campaign against terrorism, so that true the Islamic faith can take the lead and help diffuse extreme teachings.*"

The key informants from the island provinces viewed the issues just like the youth participants. The focus of their suggestions was socio-economic:

> *"Free education and employment support after graduation," "every child and youth must be in school, including college scholarship," "Undertake development initiatives in areas of community livelihood, education and scholarship," "Provide scholarships, free education," "'Provide livelihood training (TESDA) Skills training."*

The other concerns tackled by the various stakeholders and their corresponding suggestions were:

GOOD GOVERNANCE IS A KEY FACET

This is needed to address corruption, the poor delivery of basic services, and the failure of government to meet people's most basic needs. The absence or lack of visibility of government in remote communities, as pointed out by an FGD respondent, drives young Muslims to join VE groups. The key informants cited the following in connection with the need for good governance: *"If we can have good Muslim leaders and politicians that can lead people by example… then we have a radical Muslim leader who would oppose views of extremism and transform Mindanao," "There should be open space for dialogue and for transparency and for strengthening the teaching of Islamic values against corrupt practices," "Replace the political dynasties, a major source of corruption. They have been there a long time but nothing has changed," "LGUs should look after their constituents and see to the delivery of basic services."*

EXPERIENCE OF ARMED CONFLICT

This was an identified influence among the respondents from the island provinces. Since the ARMM provinces had been experiencing conflict for decades, this exposure to and growth within a culture of violence could influence the youth's participation in violent extremism. The respondents recommended actions to resolve the long-standing Mindanao conflict such as: *"The Bangsamoro Basic law (BBL) should be approved and*

implemented. The right to self-rule will be an effective tool to prevent violent extremism," and *"Historical injustices should be addressed."*

United States Catholic bishops, in a pastoral letter in 1994, noted how *"Communities are destroyed by violence."* They added*: "Beyond the violence in our streets is the violence in our hearts. Hostility, hatred, despair and indifference are at the heart of a growing culture of violence."* (USCCB, 1994) To address this, UNESCO (2014) introduced a culture of peace program. It was an integral approach to preventing violence and violent conflicts and an alternative to the culture of war and violence using education for peace. A key informant suggested the institutionalization of peace education in all education programs.

DISCRIMINATION

This has been a concern in the Mindanao conflict. It continues to be an issue as pointed out by respondents of this study. They suggested "*that government and private institutions should not discriminate against Muslims especially those wearing the hijab from employment," "biases against Muslims as shown in media reports labeling Muslims as insurgents and terrorist should be avoided," "support must be given to intra- and inter-faith dialogues,* e.g., *Bishop-Ulama Conference (BUC) and similar endeavors to promote better understanding and respect," "there should be advocacies that reduce Islamophobia and these should be made part of the solution in addressing radicalism, extremism, and terrorism, especially with local media who use Muslim stereotypes as a description of bombing suspects."* This is a global issue which the United Nations has been trying to address.

UNESCO promotes Education for Tolerance which *aims "at countering influences that lead to fear and exclusion of others, and help young people develop capacities for independent judgment, critical thinking and ethical reasoning."* (UNESCO, 2014) This should be integrated in the formal and non-formal education which may be institutionalized through the Department of Education and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). A key informant stressed also "*the need to educate the Christian population, particularly those in Metro Manila, Luzon, and the Visayas on Islam and Muslim culture, history, and way of life to reduce Christian biases against Muslims."*

ALIENATION

This can result from a lack of family support and was reported as one of the influences of violent extremism. Parental guidance is the key to counteracting this and FGD respondents suggested programs for family formation. "*Government and civil society organizations should intensify programs to educate parents on moral and spiritual obligations, assuring the psychological and emotional security of their children,*" "*There should be open communication in the family. The children should have no fear in telling their parents or guardian the events happening to them,*" "*Parents should be more in touch with the children and their barkadas (peers). Know the activities engaged in by their children and their friends. Make activities that they can monitor their child.*"

They further expressed that: "*Parents should monitor online sources or activities of their children,*" "*Parents generally do not know the social life of their children. The family members have to have time for one another. There is a need for bonding time, where parents can spend time with the children,*" "*Special attention should be given to families where parents are OFWs.*" Another informant added that, "*OFW domestic workers in the Middle East come from Mindanao, mostly Muslims, leaving their children unattended; kids are easily swayed by drugs.*"

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

This was mentioned in terms of community activities and was recommended by both the youth and adult respondents. Youth development activities such as participation in local governance and sports could be avenues for youth empowerment and serve as ways to keep the youth busy and productive.

Varied and holistically designed programs were likewise suggested. Among these were: "*Expose the youth to other cultures or areas. The experience they will go through will have a significant effect on their being. It might divert their interest,*" "*Involve the youth in* the *programs of the community including physical activities,*" "*The Sangguniang Kabataan should have activities for the community, something the youth can enjoy, so they will feel their importance in the community,*" "*Teach the youth to be critical thinkers. Being critical thinkers will also help them participate in things or events happening*

in the society. They will know which to believe and which makes sense thus empowering them," "Engage the youth in community activities as leaders and participants," "Involve the youth in community service," "Provide trauma healing sessions utilizing group or family support, especially among victims of war to eradicate hatred and prevent revenge."

Other suggestions given to prevent youth radicalization were the following:

1. *Engage the youth in matters that pertain to governance and involve them in community building.* The LGUs should play an active role in this endeavor.

2. The government should provide a program for those who want to come back to the fold of the law and are willing to surrender for good.

3. Promote alternative media coverage and advertise developmental news and the use of social media to advocate peace, promote good image, and discourage adversarial journalism.

4. The government should provide the platform and go to the barrios for them to see the root causes of the lack of peace. A full government approach should be employed.

Concrete recommendations were made by the mainland and island ulama in the FGDs. Listening to the voices of one of the most respected sectors in the Muslim community was identified as one of the key strengths of this study. Their suggestions revolved around the micro and macro influences which they and the other respondents expressed:

1. Develop a program helping the traditional private madrasah to teach the correct (Islam) or right curriculum; support qualified teachers and managers and train them well with the support of the Department of Education and other relevant government agencies.

2. *Provide employment for local and overseas madrasah graduates.*

3. *Introduce reforms in the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF). Support a whole-of-nation approach, addressing legitimate grievances, i.e., issues of discrimination, social injustices, and protection of religious rights.*

   a. Institute laws and policies addressing these issues. Grant more religious rights to Muslims and really implement these laws and policies.

   b. Reclaim the real jihad and support the ulama.

   c. State should provide support for legitimate madaris, ulama and their organizations. This will address the issue around young and newly graduated ulama.

d. Promote media coverage of ulama conferences and their positions on terrorism.

e. Condemn all types of terrorism. Stop targeting and harassing (generalizing) madaris and ulama.

f. LGUs and law enforcement agencies must be serious in going after criminals. Kidnappers hide behind ASG, justifying their acts, and victimizing everyone.

B. Current Initiatives Addressing Violent Extremism

There are on-going initiatives in different parts of Mindanao to address radicalization. An Ulama Summit Against Terrorism was held on May 12-14, 2017 in Cotabato City, Philippines participated in by Dr. Aboulkhair S. Tarason, Grand Mufti of ARMM, the Mufti of Lanao Del Sur, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Davao City and representative ulama and alimat from different provinces and cities both inside and outside ARMM. The Summit passed a resolution adopting consolidated outputs of the ARMM ulama against terrorism in promoting peace and development in the country in general and ARMM in particular.

The leadership of the province of Maguindanao had its own contribution. In the May 17, 2017 meeting of the Provincial Peace and Order Council, Governor Esmael Mangudadatu sought the help of the 36 mayors of the province in halting reported attempts by foreign visitors to spread the teaching of "violent extremism." He shared that some foreign Muslim preachers had gone to some secluded parts of the province to teach bomb-making instead how to become a good Muslim. He urged the monitoring of the Madrasah in their localities and the provincial government and the 6th Infantry Division of the Philippine Army signed a memorandum of understanding to boost cooperation in the campaign against crimes and terrorism and in providing humanitarian assistance by sharing resources. (Cabrera, 2017)

In summary, youth vulnerability as regards violent extremism marked by intertwining motivations and influences calls for a holistic response. On the

micro level, the observed perceived lack of support from the family, security from social institutions, threats of violence in the community, and peer influences are some of the key factors. Hence, some of the suggestions are family formation and support of youth activities. Also important is the need to institutionalize peace education and education for tolerance to keep the youth away from hatred and revenge and for them to develop critical thinking.

On the macro level, opportunities for secular education and job openings appear to be the critical recommendation. This stems from the issue of poverty prevailing in the area. This push factor is associated with the problem of corruption affecting the socio-economic and political lives of ARMM citizens. Good governance is strongly recommended and even demanded by the respondents.

This study also recognizes the critical role played by the ulama in the current difficulties faced especially by the Mindanaons. In the midst of the endless cycle of violence and conflict in Mindanao, the ulama are acknowledged as among the key actors that can contribute positively towards walking the road to peace.

Some initiatives to address the situation of VE were shared during the community validations workshops. Among them were:
- The Mayor of Tipo-Tipo, Basilan shared a program where the collaboration of the Mayors of Basilan was used to address security issues including the Tipo-Tipo experiences of preventing an attack of ISIS.
- The women's organization, Nuruh Salam, in Zamboanga City had a family development program focusing on family awareness regarding VE so that parents could be proactive in looking after the welfare of their children and both could then have an informed conversation about the matter. It also informed parents and children on the value of communication and openness and empowered them to engage in fruitful conversations.
- The Regional Darul-Ifta initiated a program to prepare an inventory of ulama and mosques and their organizational affiliation. This was to done to develop a database to be used as a basis for future policy direction and programming.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A.   Conclusion

This research aims to determine the extent of the vulnerability of Muslim youth in the ARMM to violent extremism (VE) by describing the mindset of the Moro youth, their views and opinions about radicalization, and their suggestions and recommendations to dissuade other Muslim youth from joining VE groups.

On the mindset of Muslim youth, the level of understanding of most respondents on Islam was attuned to mainstream interpretation. While there was an awareness of what constituted VE, their attitude was mixed and ambiguous. In order to reduce vulnerability to VE, respondents suggested that the youth be given a deeper grounding on the precepts of Islam. These precepts were, at the same time, used (and misused) by VE groups to recruit youth to their ranks. An ideological response was seen to be needed to prevent and counter the spread of violent ideology. This response must be for the ulama to lead to rally Muslims behind Islamic moderation (wasatiyyah).

The most identified VE groups were the ASG in Basilan and Sulu, Dawla Islamiyya aka Maute in Lanao del Sur, and the BIFF in Maguindanao. Respondents linked VE groups to criminal activities such as bombing, kidnap for ransom, and extortion. There was the lingering claim of third party involvement, local or overseas, that helped sustain the operation and existence of VE groups.

The VE groups capitalized on youth frustrations over the pervasive and alienating secular and western culture and lingering socio-cultural, historical, political, and economic marginalization to justify their existence. However, there was a blatant incongruence between the VE groups' supposedly noble or lofty objectives and their violent ideology and criminal actions.

On the attractive characteristics that lured Muslim youth to VE groups, among those noted were the articulateness of violent extremist recruiters, the use of traditional religious spaces for their recruitment activities, and the use of religious activities as a disguise for indoctrination and exposure to martial training. They identified two requirements for recruitment: Interest to join the group and basic skills to hold and fire a gun. The generous provision of cash incentives upon recruitment to offset any lost income when they became full-

time members and the close-knit sense of brotherhood in the group enticed the youth to join VE groups.

From the case studies, the triggers to join and then to leave VE groups basically depended on   personal circumstances and motivation. There were those who joined to seek vengeance for murdered family members, some for social acceptance, and others for basic subsistence. There were also those who initially thought violence was justified but later grew tired and began to abhor the effects of violence on fellow human beings.

B.   Recommendations

There is no panacea for violent extremism. What is available is a generic-specific interfacing kind of solution that considers both global and local contexts of the problem. It is both countering-mitigating and preventing-promoting in action and driven by short- and long-term gains.

I.   The first set of recommendations points to the partnership government has with the bureaucracy, donor community, civil society, affected communities (Muslim and non-Muslim, youth, ulama), and the academe:
   1.   The national government should put forward a multi-faceted, proactive, all-inclusive, and sustainable policy framework to prevent and counter violent extremism upon which government branches, agencies, bureaucracy, and regional and local government units develop and coordinate long-term prevention programs and short-term rehabilitation, integration, and mitigation programs. The government is also expected to take stock of the current United Nations Global Framework for Preventing Violent Extremism and of good practices in Muslim-majority countries and countries with Muslim minorities.
   2.   The donor community can rally around the government's policy framework by supporting program development and implementation, specializing on issues and interventions while being constrained by the constitutional provision on the separation of the state and church, exposing local actors to good practices in preventing and countering violent extremism in host countries, and hosting a country's policies and programs in the promotion, protection and mainstreaming of its

cultural and religious minorities. On programs and activities that are purely and explicitly religious, donors from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) can take the lead.

3. Civil society can facilitate the establishment of institutions and practices fundamental to a well-functioning Muslim community. This is especially needed in concerns that cannot be accommodated by government agencies, the bureaucracy, plus regional and local government units due to the constraint imposed by the constitutional provision on the separation between the state and the church.

4. All affected communities and sectors can undertake their own collective reflection and rally around and support leadership on moderation, inclusivity, and tolerance thereby developing a high level of maturity in terms of citizenship to harness the full benefits and obligations of citizens as sovereigns in a democracy.

5. The academe and research institutes should provide leadership in research, educational programs, and curricula towards a culture of peace, character formation, and competency development of both the in-school and out-school youth to insulate them from VE.

6. There should be tri-littoral cooperation and partnership in containing the movements and recruitment of suspected extremist groups. The Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia share common borders and confront the real threats of extremism, especially among the youth. By way of sharing common programs and exposure programs, especially for the youth, southern Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia can create and develop showcase (model) communities for moderate, tolerant, and all-inclusive and prosperous Muslim communities. Similarly, the said tri-littoral states can forge cooperation in policing the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas against any movement of VE and other criminal groups (piracy and kidnapping activities).

II. The second set of recommendations is around four thematic measures:

Ideological response
1. Put the following policies and programs in place to prevent and counter VE:
    • Mainstream Islamic moderation (wasatiyyah) to be led and articulated by parents, ulama, and traditional leaders that subscribe and promote the principle. Contemporary reference documents on moderation

that have reached ijma (consensus) and wide acceptance within the Muslim world like the Amman Message (2004), A Common Word (2007), New Mardin Declaration (2010), and the Marrakesh Declaration (2016) should be made available to ulama, families, and the youth. Some of the suggestions enumerated in these declarations are worth revisiting as they are relevant to the Muslim context in the Philippines.

- Create spaces and opportunities for building capacities of Muslim teachers, particularly the teachers of Islamic studies and the prayer leaders (imam) in mosques. It is necessary to assess the functions and role of the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) towards making it the lead body in designing programs to promote moderate and tolerant Islam.

- Review the quality of higher Islamic studies both in the University of the Philippines (UP) and Mindanao State University (MSU). They should be competitive and on a par with their overseas counterparts. This will encourage young Muslims to take their higher Islamic studies in the country rather than overseas where they would have to leave their families.

- Deepen Islamic grounding of informal and non-formal educative processes for Muslim children, youth, and adults. Current platforms such as khutbah (Friday sermon), nasihah (group counsels), seminars in masajid (mosques), Muslim student and youth organizations and federations, and the community must be used for developing and propagating moderate and tolerant Islam.

2. Institute programs to expand the professional opportunities for young ulama, imam, and ustadz teaching in traditional schools (madaris) and mosques (masajid).

3. Consider expanding the current 45-day Philippine Shari'ah bar review to include the English language to target returning scholars, so that they will have the chance to practice and grow professionally in the Philippine Shari'ah courts system.

4. Adopt recognition, supervision, regulation, and placement standards for ulama (religious scholars) returning from overseas scholarships and local graduates to mainstream the philosophy of Islamic moderation (wasatiyyah).

5. Review policies on the recognition of traditional madaris (schools) and adopt common regulation, supervision, accreditation, and

standardization of curricula to ensure that teachings and learning are consistent with the mainstream Islamic moderation (wasatiyyah) and practices.

The recognition, supervision, and standardization of the system must also cover other Islamic institutions: Marakiz (memorization centers), toril (residential schools), darul-Aytaam (orphanage-cum-schools), ma'ahid (institutes), kulliyyat (colleges), jami'aat (universities), and similar educational facilities in MNLF and MILF camps.

6. Strengthen existing models of Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE) in public schools, extend the program to senior high school level, and continue to offer it as a requirement for Filipino Muslim students.

7. Adopt a regional framework on countering violent extremism, strengthen the Regional Darul-Ifta' so it can continue to develop activities similar to the recent ARMM Ulama Summit Against Terrorism.

8. Develop capacities of the four power centers in Muslim communities: (1) the traditional leaders who also control the LGUs, (2) the religious leaders (ulama, ustadz, and imam), (3) the MNLF, and (4) the MILF. All these can serve as "pillars" of moderate, tolerant, and all-inclusive Islam.

There must be strong political will to mobilize substantial resources to support the implementation of the moderate framework in active conflict zones and this must be implemented in collaboration with the NCMF and other accredited and moderate Muslim organizations.

Anti-radicalization Response (Youth Vulnerability)

Government and civil society organizations should adopt a youth and family formation program consisting of the following:

• Psychosocial counseling services for Muslim children and youth who have experienced armed conflict

• Safe spaces for the expression of one's opinions, angsts, and frustrations in a peaceful manner

• Exposure to non-violent articulation and resolution of socio-cultural, historical, political, and economic issues

• Exposure and interaction with successful Muslim professionals and ulama who have made a name for themselves in secular society, their local communities, and even overseas

- Development of youth program and activities in schools and in local communities
- Participation in local governance and sports
- Programs for the integral development and formation of Muslim youth

Counter-Extremism Response

Addressing the Push Factors
National, regional, and local governments need to understand the roles they play in heightening frustration among young Muslims in what can be described as push factors – socio-cultural discrimination and biases, historical, political, and economic marginalization.

The national government and its line agencies, ARMM regional government and LGUs should develop good governance in conflict-affected areas through efficient inter-governmental cooperation and accountability. The ARMM regional government, LGUs and line government agencies should ensure accessible, equitable, and quality public service through all-inclusive, transparent, efficient, and accountable governance. Absentee and non-functional LGUs must be investigated and closely supervised by the DILG.

Conflict-affected areas need a comprehensive policy program support to redress socio-cultural, historical, political, and economic marginalization. The following themes must be prioritized by government agencies:

1. Education and jobs
    - Public and private education should be quality-driven and relevant to the local context.
    - Make sure that every barangay has an elementary/secondary school and children in remote barangays have access to alternative learning system.
    - Ensure that DepEd's high school voucher system is applied to all.
    - TESDA free vocational training and CHED free college education should be available for out-of-school youth in conflict areas. Additional support must be provided such as travel allowance and board and lodging for those pursuing college education out of their communities.

- Jobs be created in marginalized communities to provide sustainable income to Muslim youth especially in remote areas.
2. Discrimination issues
   - Support programs to address social, cultural, and religious stereotypes, discrimination, and prejudices
   - Capacitate media practitioners on peace journalism
   - Launch multimedia platforms for mainstreaming and recognizing Muslim ethno-linguistic groups, histories, realities, and shared futures
   - Support interfaith/intercultural dialogue to develop respect for one another regardless of religious and socio-cultural diversities
3. Implement all peace agreements. This is to respond to the Moro people's clamor for the resolution of historical injustices and for enjoying long-awaited peace dividends.
4. Institutionalize a culture of peace program as an integral approach to preventing the culture of violence, which resulted from the long exposure of youth to armed conflict.

Addressing the Pull Factors
1. Aside from recognizing the current administration's fight against the illegal drug trade and the involvement of VE groups in this, there is a need to take stock of successful models for drug treatment and rehabilitation of drug users and find out a model suited to conflict zones in Mindanao. Unless the so-called "big fish" are apprehended and put behind bars, communities will continue to be skeptical of the sustainability and success of the government's war against illegal drugs. Name calling and public shaming will merely push drug transactions underground and the illegal drug trade will persist.
2. Government must support the rehabilitation of traditional madaris (schools), masajids (mosques), and similar other platforms. This is an important step to curb the use of these spaces for the recruitment activities of VE groups. Also, the possible involvement of some madrasah or masjid to the propagation and recruitment by VE groups must be investigated.
3. The government has to review and assess the recruitment process both in the PNP and AFP. Many young Muslims are interested to join the PNP and the AFP but they are NOT able to qualify.

Respondents made a stark comparison between government and ASG recruitment. To apply for the military and police force, respondents talked about corruption and "palakasan" (the infamous *padrino* system) in the recruitment where one had to pay his way around the recruitment process. In contrast, ASG paid family to recruit family members. The perception, therefore, is that while government recruitment is saddled with too many requirements, VE groups like the ASG only require that recruits are highly motivated and able to fire a gun.

To apply for a government position, respondents also made reference to graft and corruption. It was alleged that vacancies for positions were published just for the sake of compliance and that "preferred" applicants, normally related to officials within the agency, had already been chosen prior to publication of such vacancies. With the ASG, there was no need for any recommendation from any personality. In fact, one's disadvantaged background, being orphaned, out-of-school, unemployed, etc., could be factors for expeditious hiring.

Tailored Personal, Family, and Community Response

The most effective way to win back young Muslims from VE groups is through tailored intervention suited to the youth's personal, family, and community circumstances. Singapore's Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) is a good model on de-radicalization and ideological rehabilitation and it has been successful in rehabilitating detained Jemaah Islamiah members and their families through counseling. It also has a program for self-radicalized individuals and for those who support ISIS.

Learning from the limited case studies that have been undertaken in this research, it is suggested that professional social workers be trained to provide counselling to those detained for suspicion of being members of VE groups. Case studies must go beyond intelligence gathering in order that meaningful change can be effected in the lives of those accosted and those who have already surrendered willingly. Case studies must be the beginning of a tailored and context-specific intervention to take disillusioned young Muslims and their families out of the clutches of VE groups.

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Case Studies

CASE STUDY 1: ALIENATION AND BELONGINGNESS
THE CASE OF ABDUL

Before Engagement

The son of former government employees, 18-year old Abdul described his childhood to be relatively happy. Since his parents were both employed and they had a large piece of productive land, he and his two siblings were amply provided for in terms of their basic needs. He was even able to finish high school, a privilege few of his peers were able to enjoy. One thing he missed, though, was the freedom to play outside their house because his parents never allowed him and his siblings to go beyond their yard. This resulted in his developing a sense of fear in exploring his surroundings because his parents might get mad at him if they saw even the slightest scratch on his skin. So overprotective were his parents that he did not get to have friends in school nor in their community.

He became a person with no self-esteem, no skill to make decisions, and one who was full of fears from his early years at home with his parents. He considered his life to be abnormal compared to that of his peers who could freely play around in the neighborhood.

Abdul recalled that his community used to be very peaceful during his childhood. However, he noticed that later, feuds started to occur eventually becoming so intense that people had to leave the area, making their community almost like a ghost town. His family stayed because both his parents could not leave their work. This enabled one of his uncles, who was an Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) leader in the municipality, to come back home and live close to them. Soon enough, the young Abdul found not only a friend, but also a protector in his ASG leader-uncle.

During Engagement

Abdul was 16 years old when he joined the ASG. He felt he was in good company because he was with a group which kept kidnap victims who were mostly foreigners and people from outside the province of Sulu. His group did not go

out of the municipality to kidnap people; other groups did that and they just brought kidnap victims to them for safekeeping. He said that his uncle's main objective was for his group to be recognized as Muslims who fought for the rights of their fellow Muslims. His uncle believed in jihad, which was one way to enter Janna or heaven.

Abdul admitted that it was his longing for friends and company that made him join the group. He was recruited by his cousin who was one of the close security men of his uncle. No money was offered to him, but he was given guns. His group also recruited young men aged 16-20. These were intelligent young men willing to sacrifice their lives for the group. Some were given PHP 50,000 and guns.

He did not undergo any training, but eventually learned to use the guns through the guidance of both his uncle and his cousin. "In our group," he said, "no special training is needed. All we need to know is how to fire our guns and to recognize the enemy." Among his tasks, aside from being the right hand man of his uncle, was to look after hostages and to keep the ransom money when it came. Once in a while, he went to Jolo, the capital town of the province of Sulu, to buy himself clothes, eat some *halo-halo* (a mix of shaved ice, milk, sugar, and *camote*, jackfruit, bananas, and others), and ride on a motorcycle with friends.

Abdul was still with the ASG at the time of his interview and he had no plans of leaving his uncle and the group. He confessed that he was enjoying his life because he was able to explore things which he never got the chance to do before. "We run here and there, hiding from the military, but the most exciting part is taking care of kidnap victims," he said. For him, it was just like playing games with friends and with guns. "The future that I see for myself is to die in the name of Allah," he said.

Recommendations
When asked what the youth should do to keep them from being recruited by any violent extremist group, he answered that they should be with friends engaged in doing good deeds. He also said that parents must respect the rights of their children.

CASE STUDY 2: THE ORPHAN BROTHERS' VENGEANCE
CASE OF HASAN

Before Engagement

Hasan, 17, and his younger brother Husin, had five other siblings but they were orphaned when their parents and an uncle were killed by a close friend of their father. Hasan recalled that one morning, his father, who was a member of Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU), had just finished cleaning his service firearm when a friend of his came to their house and requested that he be allowed to borrow his gun. Without any warning, this man aimed the weapon at his father, and shot him. A brother of his father who happened to be in their house at the time was likewise fired upon. Hearing the gunshots, their mother who was outside the house rushed inside to check what happened. She too was fired upon and, like the brothers, sustained fatal shots. *"Ang nakakalungkot ay buntis ang nanay namin at kabuwanan na nya nuon,"* (What was really sad was that our mother was due to give birth to our youngest sibling that month) he said. Hasan was 10 years old then, and Husin was five.

This tragic incident was witnessed by the children causing them to feel not only fear but anger and the desire to avenge their untimely deaths. With the loss of their parents, the orphans were forced to live with relatives, and because there were seven of them, they had to be distributed among several families. Hasan and Husin stayed together with their grandfather. Unfortunately, after a year he too died due to old age. Hasan did not know what to do. He kept asking himself why such misfortunes were happening to them. Because of poverty, Hasan completed only Grade 1. "*Marami sana akong gustong marating sa buhay,*" he said, "*pero hanggang isipan na lamang dahil sa trahedyang nangyari sa amin.*" (I had plenty of dreams in my life, but they stayed dreams because of the tragedy that happened in the family).

During Engagement (Recruitment, Reason for Joining, and Nature of Participation in ASG)

One day, a distant relative invited them to a gathering in a nearby barangay. This was how he became a member of the Abu Sayyaf. He grabbed the opportunity to join the group to be able to avenge the death of his parents and his uncle.

He left his younger brother Husin under the care of his older siblings. After a year, an older brother joined the group also. During the four years that he was with ASG, he experienced a lot of hardships, hunger being one of them. He learned how to use an automatic rifle and participated in skirmishes against government forces in different municipalities in Basilan. The group had no permanent place of residence and was always on the run, sleeping where darkness overtook them. They learned the art of war, to do jihad, and the teachings embodied in the Qur'an. They were also taught how to worship Allah and fast during the Ramadhan. When Husin was eight years old, Hasan made him join the group.

In 2016, during an armed encounter between his group and the government forces, three of their companions were killed and many were wounded. Husin was hit in the head and in his rear, but he was not seriously injured. Because of this, Hasan was forced to bring his brother to a relative's place for him to recuperate. At that time, Hasan also felt he needed to rest from active duty with the ASG. While there, his relative persuaded them to return to the folds of the law.

Disengagement (Surrender, Present Undertakings, and Future Plans)
It took Hasan months to finally decide to surrender. As of his interview for this report, he was living with a relative and earned a little income working in a rubber plantation. He hoped that those who had surrendered would be given livelihood assistance like capital to put up small businesses like rubber seedlings, jobs, or the opportunity to go back to school.

Advice to the Youth
Hasan would like to admonish the youth not to join armed groups. "*Mag-aral sila nang mabuti at manatiling may takot sa Diyos,*" (They should study hard and remain God-fearing) he said.

CASE STUDY 3: FIGHTING FOR A CAUSE?
CASE OF ILIDJI

Before Engagement (family background, education, and growing up years)
As far as he could remember, the 27-year- old Ilidji and his family had always been on the run because of military operations in his own community which he described to be the most neglected barangay in his municipality. Family feuds abound due to land-grabbing and political rivalry among relatives. He said that he grew up with the sounds of cannon and gunfire. Having come from a clan whose members are affiliated with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), he was familiar with the sacrifices his father and relatives had to endure to support their cause. As a result, peace was elusive.

Ilidji was in high school when he was trained in military tactics within the MNLF camp in their area. There he learned to handle guns which he felt would provide him the security he needed. His being under the wing of the MNLF gave him the courage to fight for justice denied to them as a people. In his young mind, he believed that creating chaos was the best way to show the world that Muslims were fighting back because they were being discriminated against and the Philippine government was unsympathetic to their plight.

To understand the situation of the Sulu people even more, he decided to go to college. However, his college education did not provide him the answers he needed. He went back to his hometown to be with his family and to live a normal life. Hoping that his restlessness would be relieved by having a family of his own, he got married and was blessed with two children. The marriage did not last though, because he decided to join the ASG to avenge the death of those who had lost their lives in the name of jihad.

He did not need much convincing to do this because his parents and relatives were already members of the group. He elaborated: *"Hindi ko masabi na ni-recruit ako kasi dati naman na mga miyembro ng ASG ang tatay ko at mga kamag-anak namin. Saka gusto kong protektahan ang tatay ko. Gusto ko magkasama kami palagi katulad nuon kaya nagpa-miyembro na talaga ako"* (I can't say I was recruited because my father and relatives were members of the group already.

Besides, I want to protect my father. I want us to be always together like we used to so I decided to join the group officially).

During Engagement (The group he joined, motivation for joining, training undergone, nature of participation, experiences as a member of ASG, future plans)
The respondent confessed to being a member of the Abu Sayaff Group. He said that the ASG considered themselves jihadists. They believed they could be instruments to let the world know that they were strong and that they fought in the name of Allah. This was their definition of jihad. He stressed, *"Karamihan sa amin, kung hindi man lahat, ay iyan ang pinaniniwalaan,"* (Most of us, if not all, adhere to that belief). He said he belonged to ASG groups in two municipalities in his province.

When asked what motivated him to join the ASG, his answer was*: "Ang kahirapan ng buhay. Wala akong trabaho nun. Ilang beses akong nag-apply sa trabaho, pero walang mapasukan sa lugar namin. May pamilya na ako nun, obligasyon ko na pakainin ang mga anak ko at ibigay ang kanilang pangangailangan."* (Poverty. I was jobless then and despite my several attempts to apply for work, there was really no job opportunity in our place. I already had a family, and it was my obligation to feed my family and provide for their needs). Hence, when an ASG leader offered him PHP 200,000.00 and an M14 rifle, he did not have any second thoughts about joining the group. Besides, the ASG organization did not discriminate and was willing to help its members at any time throughout their lives.

The ASG did not provide him any training at all. Ilidji recounted that all that was needed was for a member to know how to use a gun, regardless of his age.

As an ASG member, Ilidji did not have to stay with the group all the time. He narrated:"*Kalimitan dun ako sa poblacion kasama ng mga kaibigan ko. Kung meron kaming hostage, tumutulong akong magbantay sa kanila, mga isang linggo, tapos pumupunta ako sa poblacion para sumagap ng balita o anumang impormasyon tungkol sa aming hostage."* (Most of the time I would just stay in town with my friends. If we have hostages, I would help secure them for a week or so, then I would go to town to get some news or information about our hostages).

Among his usual tasks were transporting hostages from one place to another, looking for some targets to be kidnapped, profiling personalities, scenario building, buying food for the group, and recruiting new members. He narrated that as an ASG member, he had encountered many dangerous situations and had experienced hunger and lack of sleep. "*Karamihan sa amin any gumagamit ng Shabu kasi hindi kami makakatagal mamuhay sa bundok kung hindi kami gagamit*" (Most of us use Shabu, because it is very hard to stay in the mountains if we don't), he confessed. Shabu and other illegal drugs, aside from sustaining them, was also used to entice young men to join the ASG, he added.

The respondent was still an active member of ASG as of this report and had no plans of leaving the group. However, deep within, he confessed to wanting to live a normal life because his children were growing up. He expressed some regrets, saying, "*Kung pwede ko lang ibalik ang panahon, ayoko dito o maging miyembro ng ASG.*" (If only I could turn back the hands of time, I would not want this kind of life or become a member of the ASG.) But he knew it would not be easy to leave the group. "*Dito na lang ako maghinintay ng katapusan ko,*" (This is where I will wait for my end.) he said.

Recommendations
Ilidji believed that the family exerts a great influence in making the youth join extremist groups. The youth, therefore, should be with people that can provide them security to enable them to shine and do what they believe in. Lastly, they must study jihad to support the Muslims in upholding the name of God.

CASE STUDY 4: JOURNEY FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT
CASE OF GURO

Before Engagement (education, family background)

Although born to poor parents in Basilan, Guro was able to acquire a good education because he was a government scholar in college and had an ample background in Islamic and religious education. He grew up in a loving and nurturing family which encouraged him to pursue his dream to obtain more knowledge through education. He had a lot of friends and every one in his community, which was dominated by Muslims, knew him as a good person. People in their place had a high respect for his family also because they were religious.

During Engagement (group he joined, motivation for joining, how he was recruited, nature of participation)

The ASG was just newly created when he decided to join. He was convinced that the group (formerly known as JAMAA) was purely religious in nature and that it was put up to propagate Islam and provide religious services to people. He was recruited by an ASG leader after he finished his madrasah education. Initially, because of his religious inclination, he had wanted to become an ustadz (a Muslim preacher). However, through a scholarship grant, he was sent to a school that taught students not only Islamic tenets but also the establishment of Shari'ah and to defend Islam in the best way they could. When he returned to Basilan, it was this ideology that brought him to the ASG. He was tasked by an overseas group to help provide assistance to the ASG like becoming a member of its propaganda group and planning various programs of the organization. Later, he was made to participate in combat operations against government forces.

Disengagement (reason for leaving the group, present activities, and future plans)

After serving the ASG for several years, Guro realized that it had totally deviated from the path of Islam. It had already engaged itself in kidnapping activities, victimizing poor teachers and children in Basilan and Sulu. These were totally reprehensible to him and, long before he was arrested, he had already contemplated leaving the group. His arrest made it easier for him decide to

cooperate with the authorities, in fact offering himself as a state witness against the members of the ASG, the MILF, and the Jemaah Islamiya. It was during his arrest that he became associated with some people in government, and his interaction with them resulted in his being convinced to turn his back on his former group.

As of his interview for this study, Guro was still helping authorities in their campaign against terrorism and was actively engaged in some de-radicalization programs. He had plans to pursue higher education and earn a doctorate degree in Islamic Studies to help educate others about the real teachings of Islam.

Recommendations for the Youth not to be recruited by extremist groups
For Guro, if the youth are to be kept from being recruited by extremist groups, they should first be engaged by the appropriate government agencies so they will have the opportunity to participate in peace building and be engaged by the government in matters pertaining to governance and community-building. Second, through education, whether formal or non-formal, they should also be given the opportunity to develop their talents and skills. He emphasized that education must be given top priority in most of the areas in Mindanao. Lastly, he said that the religious people in the community should be tapped to lead in peace-building efforts and in educating the youth on the beauty of Islam.

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Founding Executive Director of the Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG). Former Vice President for Research and Extension and Dean of the College of Law of Notre Dame University in Cotabato City, Philippines. Fellow of the United States Institute of Peace (Washington DC) specializing in political solutions to conflicts and in promoting the rights of minorities, a Hubert Humphrey fellow at the University of Minnesota specializing in federalism and conflict management, short-term consultant on constitution-making in Nepal, and visiting lecturer at the European University Centre for Peace Studies in Austria.

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