



SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS



Filipino Public Opinion on the Bangsamoro Basic Law and the Mamasapano Incident

SWS FEBRUARY AND MARCH-JUNE 2015 SURVEYS

SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS

Filipino Public Opinion on the Peace Process with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front



Years of negotiation between the government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have recently borne fruit. The Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) was signed in October 2012 and this was fleshed out into the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro by March 2014. These agreements led to the drafting and submission to Congress in September 2014 of a draft Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL). Both the House of Representatives and the Senate held hearings on the proposed BBL, and had begun to move to a vote by early 2015.

However, on January 25, 2015, a raid in Mamasapano, Maguindanao, by the Special Action Force of the Philippine National Police, aimed at a wanted terrorist known as Marwan, tragically resulted in the deaths of 44 of the Special Action Force, 17 Moro Islamic Liberation Front fighters, and seven civilians. This event generated enormous coverage in the media, and a number of investigations were launched to understand what happened. Congress itself launched investigations, and halted work on the draft BBL until May.

Throughout the years of negotiations, Social Weather Stations has been asking nationwide samples of citizens about their views concerning the peace process in general and the specific products of the process (the FAB and the BBL). Here we present results from surveys in February, March, and June 2015.

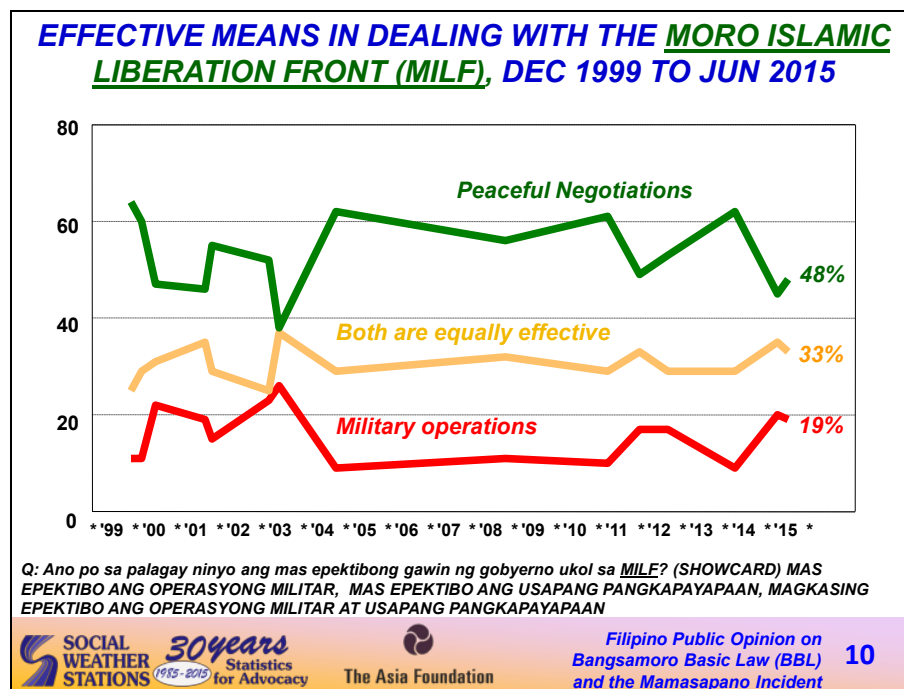
Filipinos prefer peaceful means in dealing with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front

The June 2015 Social Weather Survey found that 48% of adult Filipinos said peaceful negotiations are more effective in dealing with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), 19% said military operations are more effective, and the balance of 33% said military operations and peaceful negotiations are equally effective. [Chart 1]

In the wake of the January 2015 Mamasapano incident, those who say peaceful negotiations are more effective declined by 17 points from 62% in March 2014, preference for military operations rose by 11 points from 9%, while those who said military operations and peaceful negotiations are equally effective rose by 6 points from 29%. We see these opinions are basically unchanged in June 2015, after three months.

Still, in 15 national surveys since December 1999, peaceful negotiations have consistently been seen as more effective in dealing with the MILF compared to military operations. Despite the recent drop in March 2015, the ratio of those who prefer peaceful negotiations to those who prefer military operations is 2 to 1. This finding is worth emphasizing the in face of any calls for “all-out war.”

Chart 1

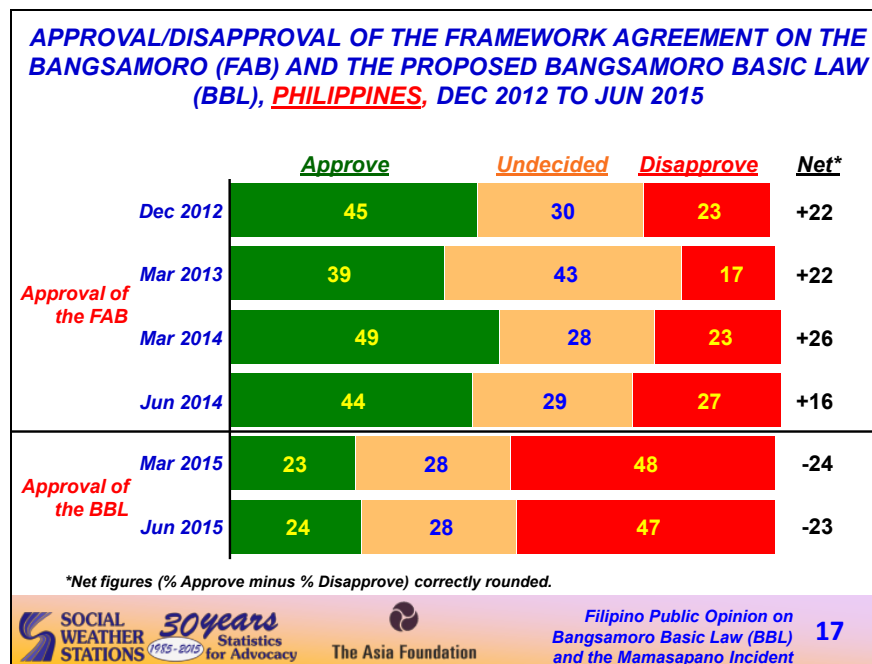


Nationwide Disposition Toward the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) and the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) turned negative after the Mamasapano incident

Beginning with the March 2015 Social Weather Survey, the first time respondents were able to be asked about the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law or BBL (since it was only submitted to Congress in September 2014) only about a fourth (23% or 24%) of Filipinos nationwide *approve* of the proposed **Bangsamoro Basic Law or BBL**, over a fourth (28%) are *undecided*, while nearly half (48% or 47%) *disapprove* of it, for a *net approval* (% approve minus % disapprove) of -24 or -23 in March and June 2015. [Chart 2]

On the other hand, previous national surveys from December 2012 to June 2014 show that approval of the **Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro or FAB** had been prevailing over disapproval before the Mamasapano Incident of January 2015. Specifically, net approval of the FAB was +22 in both December 2012 and March 2013, rose to +26 in March 2014, and fell to +16 in June 2014. This general approval of the agreement within the peace process was abruptly lost in early 2015.

Chart 2



A complement to overall nationwide sampling was in February 2015 a set of specific samples throughout the Core Territory of the Bangsamoro as stipulated in the FAB. Each province and city had a separate sample to represent them, as did 6 municipalities (grouped together as “Lanao

Norte near ARMM”)¹ in Lanao del Norte and 39 barangays (grouped together as “Cotabato near ARMM”)² in North Cotabato.

In this way, we can examine the attitudes of those to whom the Bangsamoro Basic Law is sure to apply (inasmuch as they are to have a plebiscite to see whether they will join in any new Bangsamoro government).

The February 2015 survey of special Mindanao areas found that approval of the proposed BBL prevails in the Sulu archipelago. In particular, net approval of the proposed BBL is higher in Basilan (+48) and Tawi-Tawi (+30) compared to Sulu (+18) and Isabela City (+18). However, it should be noted that the majority of 56% in Sulu are undecided on the issue, and therefore, the +18 net approval indicates the opinion of the minority. [*Chart 3*]

To a much greater degree, approval of the proposed BBL prevails in Central Mindanao areas. In particular, net approval of the proposed BBL is highest in Cotabato near ARMM (+91), followed by Lanao del Sur (+86), Maguindanao (+80), Lanao del Norte near ARMM (+77) and Cotabato City (+71).

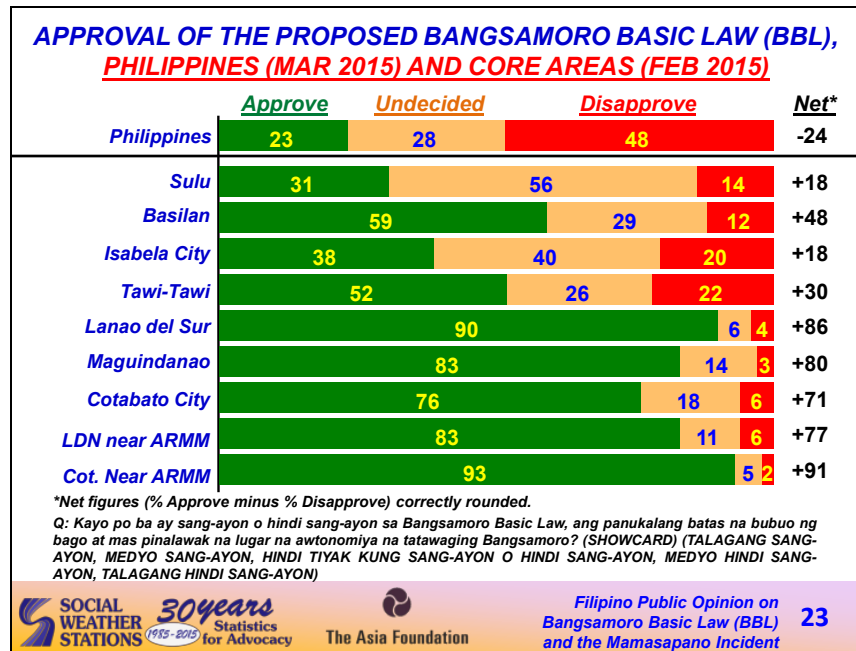
So, we see that the citizens to whom the BBL will apply directly do indeed approve of it. And a pattern emerges:

- Sulu and Isabela City, though positive, are the least so;
- Tawi-Tawi and Basilan are more positive; and
- Areas of the Core Territories on mainland Mindanao are overwhelmingly positive.

¹ The municipalities grouped together as *Lanao Norte near ARMM* are Baloi, Munai, Nunungan, Pantar, Tagoloan and Tangcal.

² The municipalities and barangays grouped together as *Cotabato near ARMM* are Carmen: Manarapan, Nasapian; Kabacan: Nanga-an, Sanggadong, Simbuhay; Midsayap: Damatulan, Kadigasan, Kadingilan, Kudarangan, Central Labas, Malingao, Olandang, Tugal; Pigkawayan: Balacayon, Lower Baguer, Lower Pangangkalan, Patot; Pikit: Bagoaingud, Balatican, Balong, Balungis, Batulawan, Buliok, Gokoton, Kabasalan, Lagunde; and Aleosan: Dunguan, Lower Mingading, Tapodoc, Upper Mingading.

Chart 3



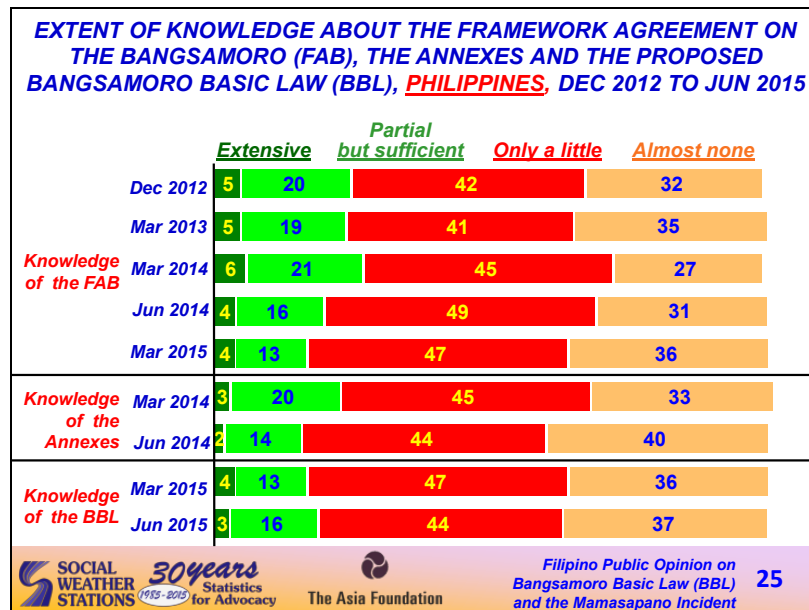
Knowledge of the Proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law is low, and knowledge of the peace process has not been increasing

The March 2015 Social Weather Survey found that a mere 4% of Filipinos nationwide have *extensive* knowledge of the **Bangsamoro Basic Law or BBL**, over a tenth (13%) have *partial but sufficient* knowledge, nearly half (47%) have *only a little* knowledge, and over a the third (36%) have *almost nothing or nothing* at all. Three months of extensive media coverage of Congressional debates and nongovernmental advocacy and analysis, did not lead to any greater knowledge of the BBL: the June results were essentially the same. [Chart 4]

National surveys from December 2012 to March 2015 show that percentages of those with *extensive* knowledge of the **Framework Agreement of the Bangsamoro or FAB** had ranged from only 4% to 6%, while those with *partial but sufficient* knowledge ranged from 13% to 21%. Those with extensive/partial but sufficient knowledge of the FAB had declined in June 2014 and March 2015 compared to March 2014.

Within the variations in percentages, it certainly does seem that the public is not overall becoming more familiar with these agreements or proposals resulting from the peace process.

Chart 4



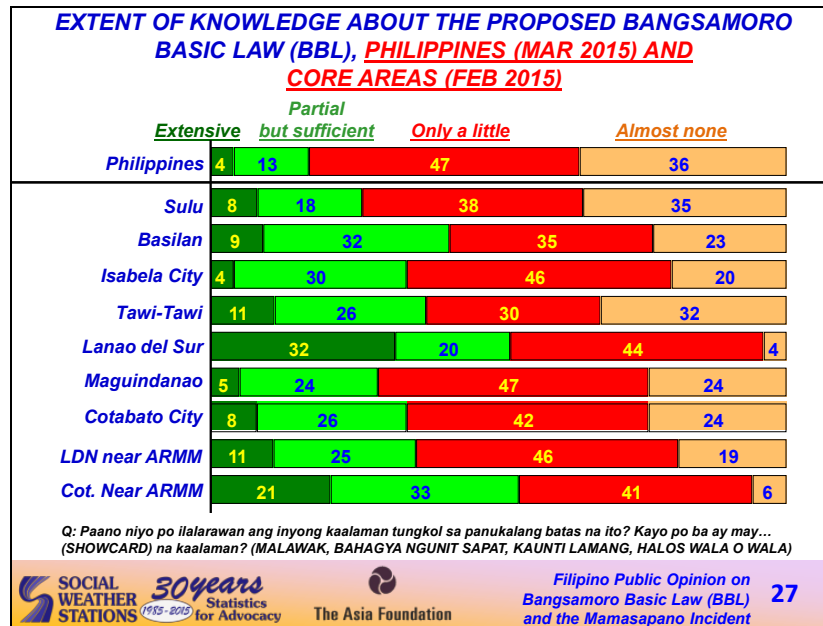
Knowledge of the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law is higher in the Core Territories, ranging up to slight majorities having extensive/partial but sufficient knowledge of the proposed law.

The February 2015 survey of special Mindanao areas found minorities to slight majorities in Core areas who have extensive/partial but sufficient knowledge of the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law or BBL.

The percentage of those with *extensive* knowledge of the BBL in BaSulTa areas is higher at 11% in Tawi-Tawi, followed closely by 9% in Basilan, 8% in Sulu and 4% in Isabela City. [Chart 5]

On the other hand, the percentage of those with *extensive* knowledge of the BBL in Central Mindanao areas is highest at 32% in Lanao del Sur, followed by 21% in Cotabato near ARMM, 11% in Lanao del Norte near ARMM, 8% in Cotabato City and 5% in Maguindanao.

Chart 5



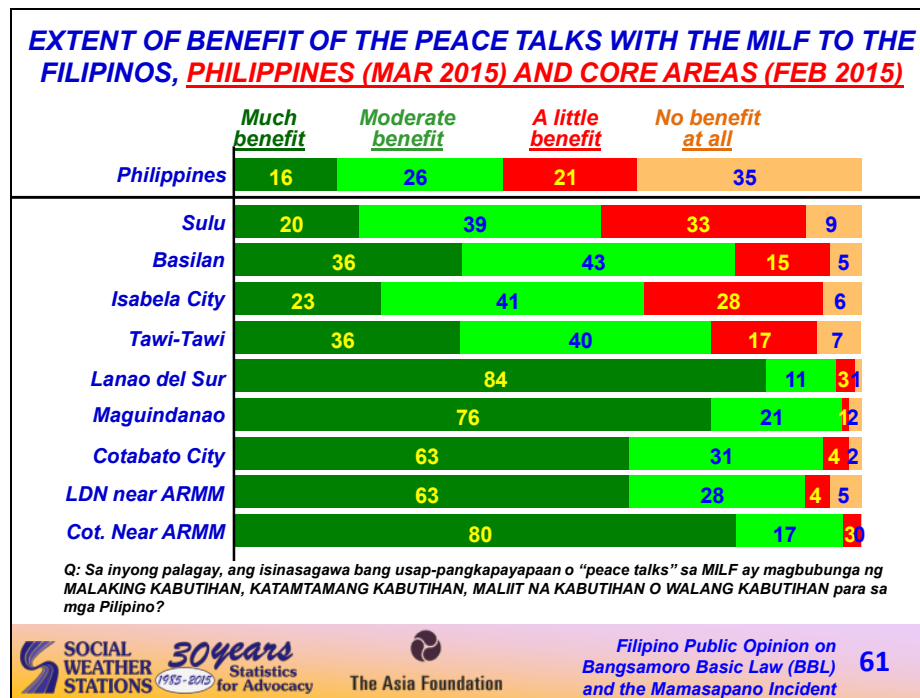
In sum, while knowledge is more extensive in the Core Territories of the Bangsamoro than it is nationwide, only in a couple of localities do a majority of the respondents have sufficient or extensive knowledge of the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law.

Perceived Benefit of the Peace Agreement with the MILF

2 out of 5 Filipinos nationwide think that there is much or moderate benefit to the Filipinos in the peace process with the MILF.

To the question, “*In your opinion, will the peace process with the MILF give MUCH BENEFIT, MODERATE BENEFIT, A LITTLE BENEFIT OR NO BENEFIT AT ALL to the Filipinos?*,” the March 2015 Social Weather Survey found that two-fifths (42%) of Filipinos nationwide think that there is *much or moderate benefit* to the Filipinos in the peace process with the MILF (16% *much benefit* and 26% *moderate benefit*), while the majority of 56% think there is *a little or no benefit* (21% *a little benefit* and 35% *no benefit at all*). [Chart 43]

Chart 6



Majorities in Core areas think that there is much or moderate benefit to the Filipinos in the peace talks with the MILF.

In the February 2015 special survey of Core territories of the Bangsamoro we find stronger affirmation of the benefits of the peace talks³ than we do in nationwide opinion. Those in Sulu and Isabela City already have majorities feeling there is much or moderate benefit to Filipinos (59% and 64% total). Else where there are larger majorities. In short, in the Core territories we find the same pattern for this item as for previous ones:

- Sulu and Isabela City, though positive, are the least so;
- Tawi-Tawi and Basilan are more positive; and
- Areas of the Core Territories on mainland Mindanao are overwhelmingly positive.

Pluralities to majorities in most of the Core areas believe that the Peace Agreement between the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front can still be successful despite the death of the 44 members of the Special Action Force of the Philippine National Police in Mamasapano, Maguindanao.

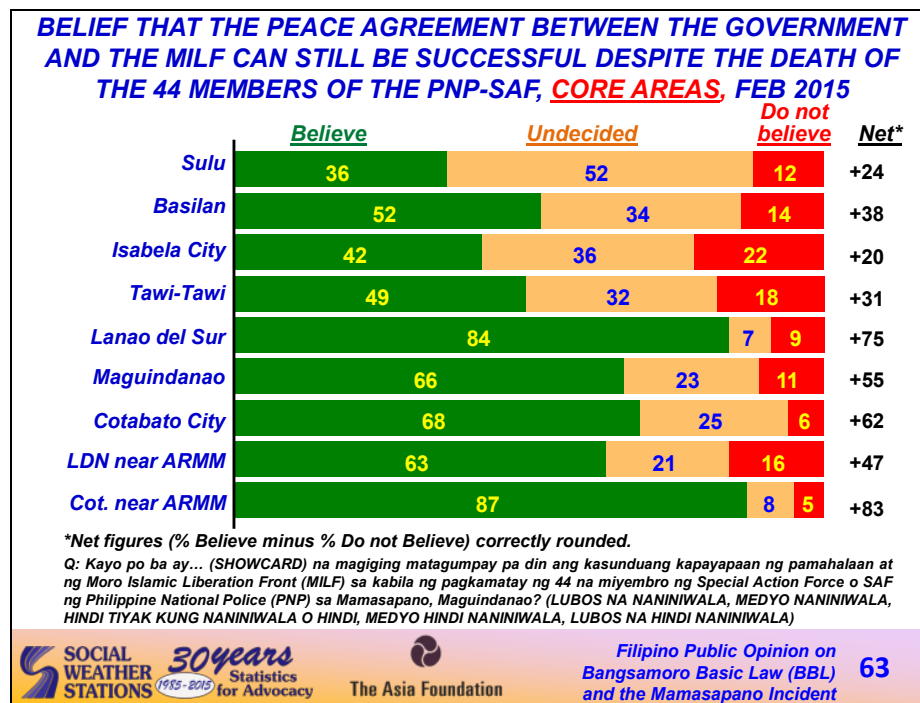
³ While the February survey of the Core territories used the term "peace talks" the nationwide survey in March used the term "peace process."

The February 2015 survey of special Mindanao areas found that pluralities to majorities in most of the Core areas believe that the Peace Agreement between the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front can still be successful despite the death of the 44 members of the Special Action Force of the Philippine National Police in Mamasapano, Maguindanao.

Those in the Sulu archipelago lean toward believing that the Peace Agreement between the Government and the MILF can still be successful despite the death of the 44 SAF members of the PNP in Mamasapano. In particular, net scores (% believe minus % do not believe) are higher in Basilan (+38) and Tawi-Tawi (+31) compared to Sulu (+24) and Isabela City (+20). However, it should be noted that the majority of 52% in Sulu are undecided on the issue, and therefore, the +24 net score indicates the opinion of the minority. [Chart 6]

To a greater degree, those in Central Mindanao areas lean toward believing that the Peace Agreement between the Government and the MILF can still be successful despite the death of the 44 SAF members of the PNP in Mamasapano. In particular, net scores are higher in Cotabato near ARMM (+83) and Lanao del Sur (+75) compared to Cotabato City (+62), Maguindanao (+55) and Lanao del Norte near ARMM (+47).

Chart 7





Founded in 1985, Social Weather Stations is the Philippine's leading survey research institute on Quality of Life, Public Opinion, and Governance. It defines its mission as generating new survey data for education, conscientization, and analysis. SWS is a private, non-stock, and politically non-partisan scientific institute engaged in research, analysis, training, and outreach activities.



The Asia Foundation

Improving Lives, Expanding Opportunities

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Informed by six decades of experience and deep local expertise, our programs address critical issues affecting Asia in the 21st century—governance and law, economic development, women's empowerment, environment, and regional cooperation. In addition, our Books for Asia and professional exchange programs are among the ways we encourage Asia's continued development as a peaceful, just, and thriving region of the world.