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CONFLICT ALERT 2020

Enduring Wars



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About Conflict Alert

Conflict Alert is a subnational conflict monitoring system that tracks the incidence, causes, and human costs of violent conflict in the Philippines. It aims to shape policymaking, development strategies, and peacebuilding approaches by providing relevant, robust, and reliable conflict data.

Conflict Alert was developed and is run by the Philippines Programme of International Alert, an independent peacebuilding organization.

www.conflictalert.info

About International Alert

International Alert helps find peaceful solutions to conflict. We are one of the world's leading peacebuilding organizations with nearly 30 years of experience laying the foundations for peace.

We work with local people around the world to help them build peace, and we advise governments, organizations, and companies on how to support peace.

We focus on issues that influence peace, including governance, economics, gender relations, social development, climate change, and the role of business and international organizations in high-risk places.

www.international-alert.org

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On the cover: Indigenous Teduray residents of Barangay Itaw, South Upi, Maguindanao flee to safety on 3 January 2021 after armed men believed to be members of the BIFF burned down their homes allegedly to force them to leave their lands. 📷 Ferdinandh Cabrera

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Acknowledgements

Work on this edition of the Conflict Alert report began in 2019 and extended up to 2020—a period that was initially heady because of the political milestones that created the new autonomous Bangsamoro region, which turned worrisome and confining as the government turned to lockdowns to control the spread of COVID-19.

Yet the Conflict Alert team soldiered on, intent on delivering the 2019 data on violent conflict in the Bangsamoro, which you can read about in this report. The 2019 dataset extends Conflict Alert's coverage of conflict, from the village up to the provincial level in the Bangsamoro, to nine years, which puts us within reach of our goal to gather 10 years of data.

We could not have done all this without our partners and access to key social networks at local, regional, and national levels. The unstinting support of our partners since the beginning when we established the system in 2013 has allowed us to continue our conflict monitoring work and strengthen the relevance of evidence-based reporting and analysis amidst the grave limitations brought about by the pandemic.

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Message

Michael Young

Chief Executive Officer, International Alert

International Alert Philippines is one of our strongest programmes globally, and Conflict Alert, one of the team's most important analytical products, a consistent watchguard for peace.

As I read this year's report, what struck me most forcefully was how Conflict Alert's long-term monitoring and granular analysis enable us to better understand the many intersectional conflicts happening in the Bangsamoro, particularly their manifold drivers and complex outcomes. Interwoven issues of identity, land and other natural resources, the licit and illicit economies, and the reconstruction of Marawi—to name only a few— all act to drive heightened risk of conflict while signaling where peacebuilding efforts may be most fruitfully directed.

The other impressive and necessary component is International Alert Philippines's breadth in addressing policy makers and shapers from the grassroots of the communities to regional, national, and international authorities and actors. By bringing a deep-rooted understanding of the particularities of the conflicts into focus in ways that are most useful for multiple stakeholders, Conflict Alert once again makes a significant contribution to the endless task of understanding conflict to build durable peace.

Foreword

Ndiamé Diop

World Bank Country Director for Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand, East Asia and the Pacific

We congratulate International Alert on the launch of the Conflict Alert 2020 report. This report once again provides not only a snapshot of the situation of violence in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, but more importantly, clearly illustrates a decline in violence and conflict in the region over the last several years.

The World Bank has since 2015 provided continuous support for Conflict Alert, an initiative led by International Alert. Conflict monitoring in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) is a critical source of data and analysis. The insights and in-depth analysis provided by Conflict Alert inform important discussions and are invaluable to policymakers, development actors and researchers as they navigate the complexities of the conflict situation in the region.

It is encouraging to see that the overall decline in violent conflict across all provinces in the BARMM continued in 2019. I take this opportunity to commend all the dedicated people and institutions who worked hard to secure a more peaceful BARMM, including government counterparts, both in the national government and the BARMM government, the MILF, civil society organizations, community leaders and the moro community as a whole.

The Conflict Alert 2020 report has aptly reflected on the opportunities and challenges that the BARMM faced in 2019. The installation of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) in February 2019 has bolstered the hopes of the Bangsamoro people for genuine autonomy.

Nevertheless, the region still faces several peace and order challenges and we therefore encourage government agencies and development partners to remain committed and bolster their support for development in the BARMM.

As shown around the world, peace and development can be greatly supported by fostering inclusive and participatory approaches to give communities a voice. A special focus on minorities and vulnerable groups like women and indigenous peoples is much-needed and would contribute greatly to achieving peace and development across the region.

More work is also required to contain violent extremism and mitigate what remains a significant threat to security in the region. In the BARMM, the reconstruction of Marawi, and the lives and livelihoods of those displaced, are crucial factors in addressing the grievances that might fuel the resurgence of violent extremism.

The World Bank is optimistic that despite these challenges, the BARMM will continue its momentum towards growth, peace, and security. We remain steadfast in our commitment to support the peace and development agenda in the BARMM and greater Mindanao.

Steven Robinson AO

Australian Ambassador to the Philippines

Australia, together with the World Bank, has been proudly supporting International Alert's conflict monitoring work since 2014. The annual Conflict Alert Report provides essential information and reliable, trustworthy data on the situation in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

This is the sort of knowledge that can only be gained through long-term work in a region and a close relationship with its people – both of which Alert has carefully developed in the Bangsamoro.

International Alert has worked tirelessly to understand the complexities behind the conflict in the BARMM. This year's report considers the many different sources of violence there, and the implications for the peace process. While violence declined for the third straight year in 2019 in the BARMM, this report identifies new flashpoints but also makes some recommendations for addressing them. Violent extremism, clan warfare, and organised crime all flourish when communities are unable to defend or support themselves. Understanding

the sources of these conflicts can help us build more resilient communities, enabling us to identify vulnerabilities to heal, but also strengths to support.

I hope this report provides a trigger for deeper thought and action by all of us who want a stronger, more peaceful BARMM, so that we might see the resolution of the conflict in Mindanao sooner rather than later. On behalf of the Australian Embassy in Manila, I would like to thank and congratulate International Alert for this publication and the strong and enduring partnership that made this possible. In the true spirit of mateship and bayanihan, Australia remains a steadfast partner of the Philippines in supporting peace and development to contribute to a stronger Bangsamoro.

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Abbreviations

ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	LGU	Local government unit
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group	MAA	Most-affected area
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
BIAF	Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces	MSVG	Multi-Stakeholder Validation Group
BIFF	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters	NPA	New People's Army
BOL	Bangsamoro Organic Law	PCL	Philippine Councilors League
BTA	Bangsamoro Transition Authority	PDEA	Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency
CAB	Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro	PNP	Philippine National Police
CEMS	Critical Events Monitoring System	PSA	Philippine Statistics Authority
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development	RA	Republic Act
FHH	Female-headed households	SK	Sangguniang Kabataan
GPH	Government of the Philippines	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
GRDP	Gross regional domestic product	VAW	Violence against women
IP	Indigenous peoples	VAWC	Violence against women and their children
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria	VE	Violent extremism
		VII	Violence Intensity Index

Executive summary

Violence declined for the third straight year in 2019 in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Martial law, first declared at the start of the war in Marawi City in May 2017, continued to tamp down violent conflict.¹ However, in many pockets and corridors of the Bangsamoro, identity cleavages hardened with high incidence of clan feuding, personal grudges, and resource conflicts. Violence due to the shadow economies in illegal drugs and illegal guns surged while extremist violence remained resilient.

The transitions during the year, namely, the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), the cessation of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), the creation of the BARMM and the appointment of members of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) and heads of regional ministries, mostly from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front or nominees by the MILF; and the election of provincial, municipal and city officials, who came from traditional clans that dominated local politics for decades also created a political divide that fueled tensions among the BARMM's leaders that resonate to the present.

Uneven provincial results

By the close of 2019, a total of 2,655 violent conflict incidents were monitored in the five BARMM provinces as well as the cities of Cotabato and Isabela. This was 9% less than in 2018. The provinces performed variably, with Maguindanao including the city of Cotabato, Basilan including the city of Isabela, and Sulu posting lower numbers. On the other hand, Lanao del Sur and Tawi-Tawi recorded increases.

Deaths as a consequence of violent conflict also dropped in 2019, in step with the decline in the number of incidents. The death count fell in Maguindanao, Basilan, and Sulu. Tawi-Tawi also recorded fewer fatalities despite the 26% increase in conflict incidents. However, Lanao del Sur recorded a 26% rise in deaths as it posted a 29% increase in conflict incidents.

The year 2019 represented a turnabout for Lanao del Sur, which raised doubts about its post-war recovery. It had recorded a steep drop in conflict incidents in 2018 after the war subsided. However, by 2019, the province saw more clan feuding, illegal drug- and illicit firearm-related incidents, and robberies. There were as many extremist violence incidents involving remnants of the Maute Group in 2019 as in 2018, but these caused more deaths. There were also more deaths due to illegal drugs and illicit firearms.

On the other hand, Basilan embodied the Cinderella story of a return from the abyss of war and uncertainty towards some level of tranquility and security. The departure of an Abu Sayyaf faction led by Isnilon Hapilon, which linked up with the

¹ Our 2019 report War Makes States first highlighted that the continued decline in overall violent conflict incidence in 2017 and 2018 was largely a result of the imposition of martial law due to the eruption of war in Marawi. Read the full report at www.conflicalert.info.

Maute Group in Lanao del Sur to lay siege to Marawi City in 2017, and the combination of development projects that encouraged surrenders among Abu Sayyaf members reduced the number of extremist violence incidents by 62% to 15 in 2019 and the number of deaths from these incidents by 76% to 9.

Causes of violent conflict incidents and deaths

Conflicts with multiple causes remained significant in relation to the total number of incidents and deaths. They comprised 32% of the total in 2019, gaining from 30% in 2018. The deaths they caused comprised 56% of the total, rising from 54% in the previous year. Meanwhile, conflicts with singular causes made up 50% of the total number of incidents, down from 54%, and accounted for just 12% of conflict deaths.

Identity-political issues dominated as the multiple-cause pairing. Violent extremism was the most common form, while clashes between rebel groups, which aligned members according to family or clan ties, were another. The number of incidents ascribed with identity-political causes fell for the second straight year in 2019, after the war in Marawi City ended in 2017, but tallied the highest number of conflict deaths, compared to other causal combinations as clashes between government forces and extremist militants continued.

Identity-shadow economy issues followed, exemplified by feuds between clans and by grudge-fueled conflicts between individuals that turned deadly through the use of firearms. The number of conflicts ascribed with these causes surged in 2019 and produced the second highest number of conflict deaths.

Common crimes-shadow economy issues were the third top pairing. These were mostly robberies and carjacking, mostly of motorcycles, and

the use of illegal firearms in committing these crimes. Conflicts due to common crimes-shadow economy issues, which had ranked second in 2018 in terms of incidence, moved to third in 2019 after they were overtaken by conflicts due to identity and shadow economy issues.

In terms of singular causes, shadow economy issues stood firmly as the leading cause of violence in the Bangsamoro in 2019. These were followed, in order of frequency, by identity issues, common crimes, political issues, governance issues, and resource issues.

Declines in these issues in 2019 from the previous year caused reductions in the number of violent conflict incidents in the Bangsamoro that year. There were less incidents due to illicit firearms, illegal gambling, and kidnap-for-ransom, which are shadow economy issues; violent extremism, which is both an identity and a political issue; and gender-related violence and personal grudges, which are identity issues. The number of police arrests, which Conflict Alert categorizes as a governance issue, declined as common crimes such as robberies and intentional damage to properties fell. There were also less conflicts over land, a resource issue.

On the other hand, there were more recorded cases of violence due to illegal drugs (shadow economy issue), clan feuding (identity issue), illegal logging and fishing (resource issues), and the May 2019 election (political issue). However, these were not high enough to offset the reductions in the other causes.

Illicit firearms and violent extremism caused fewer deaths in 2019 but remained as the top causes of conflict fatalities. Deaths from gun violence fell by 7% to 246 and from extremism by 19% to 251.

The spate of clan feuding led to a 53% increase in deaths to 107, while the illicit trade in drugs claimed 77 deaths, up by 26% from 2018.

Flashpoints

Even as overall conflict incidence trended downwards, flashpoints developed in many pockets and corners of the Bangsamoro in 2019, some resulting from the transitions that year and others due to previous conflicts or government policies.

Clan feuds intersected with resource and political conflicts

The number of clan feuds rose by nearly 50% to 146, of which the highest concentrations were in Lanao del Sur (64, up by 64% from 2018) and Maguindanao including the city of Cotabato (56, up by 22%). These feuds were fueled by personal and political grudges, and land conflicts, among others.

In Maguindanao, feuds erupted in the municipalities comprising the SPMS Box and involved groups such as the MILF and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) that fought over land. These point to intensifying competition over this resource, encouraged no doubt by the provision in the Comprehensive Agreement of the Bangsamoro (CAB) on the development of six MILF camps into civilian communities, which is taking place along with the decommissioning of the MILF's Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF). The irony is that previous combatants in civil war conflicts that ought to be retired by decommissioning and normalization processes were instead training their weapons against each other, against indigenous peoples, and against other claimants of the lands within and surrounding their camps. These claims are now exacerbating tensions and undermining the post-conflict normalization process.

Resilience of extremist violence

Violent extremism events dropped by 26% to 195 in 2019 from the previous year. There were less incidents involving the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu

and Basilan and the BIFF in Maguindanao, while incidents involving the Maute Group in Lanao del Sur were steady at 21 in 2018 and 2019.

Progress has been made in neutralizing the abovementioned groups, but the 2019 results nonetheless provide caution against complacency. Sulu, compared to Basilan and Maguindanao, posted the lowest decline in number of extremist violence incidents at 13% and 10% in terms of deaths. Wracked by suicide bombings, with reports of continued recruitment and radicalization among youth and women, Sulu is on course towards reclaiming its notorious identification with terrorism.

In Lanao del Sur, continued recruitment and the regrouping of ISIS-affiliated armed groups had been also reported. In Maguindanao, there were reports of financial incentives to lure new members to the BIFF.

On the other hand, Basilan's 15 incidents in 2019 from a peak of 39 in 2018 validate efforts to curb the Abu Sayyaf and encourage members to surrender.

Surge in illegal drug-related incidents

The number of illegal drug-related incidents continued to climb in 2019, with all provinces except for Basilan including the city of Isabela registering increases. The government's campaign against the illegal drug trade revealed new hotspots. For example, Buluan, Maguindanao that had a total of only five incidents from 2011 to 2018 recorded nine incidents in 2019 alone. Other places that previously recorded a high number of incidents posted new increases in 2019. For example, Bongao, Tawi-Tawi had 113 incidents, a leap of 146% from the year before.

Marawi City reconstruction a source of tensions

Marawi City's glacial reconstruction is generating significant discontent and polarization among its displaced and affected residents. At the same

time, the city saw more violence in 2019 than in the previous year. The number of violent incidents rose by 10% to 79, fueled by the shadow economies in illicit drugs and illegal guns. There were more robberies, fighting due to alcohol intoxication, carjacking, illegal gambling, and conflicts due to informal financial transactions. The city also saw more clan feuding in 2019 than in the previous year.

Implications

The first implication is that the national government and the BARMM and BTA need to prioritize and act on land-related disputes and conflicts. Addressing the land issue is a critical and immediate component of development and peacebuilding efforts, whether in rebuilding Marawi or in establishing the foundations of long-term, peaceful, and equitable development.

A strong, evidence-based, participatory, and publicly accessible process is needed that will enable various stakeholders to collectively shape the creation of a land law that would address land disputes and other resource-related issues that cause violent conflict. Separate but immediate action should march in step to also realize the land restitution and redistribution promises made under the transitional justice and normalization aspects of the comprehensive peace agreement.

These land laws and policies would also require the establishment of a mechanism to settle land and property disputes to prevent further escalation of violence across the region. Clan feuding could be prevented with a correct mix of hybrid mechanisms and arrangements that have proven to be effective in conflict resolution.

In parallel manner, joint and coordinated efforts by the MILF leadership and the Government of the Philippines (GPH) security forces should defuse the threats and rein in the violence from active or decommissioned MILF combatants and their respective clans in cases of land and

resource conflicts, while counteracting similar threats from the BIFF. Mediation processes should utilize restorative justice approaches.

The BTA and the BARMM will also need to assuage the fears of settlers and indigenous peoples that their lands will be grabbed by reassuring local communities that the land areas that were used as temporary camps or 'areas of temporary stay' during the long ceasefire with the government would revert to their original inhabitants and claimants as soon as possible.

The second implication is to use a multi-pronged approach to address the shifting nature of violent extremism. Such an approach includes intensified intelligence gathering and military operations, development inputs, de-radicalization and restorative justice initiatives, and tit-for-tat battle in social media to curb extremist propaganda and recruitment.

The establishment and deployment of a granular 'critical events monitoring system' focusing on selected hotspots is critical in developing an early response capability and in preventing an escalation of violence. Alert believes that the most crucial challenge before the national elections in 2022 is the prevention and interdiction of an expanded terrorist attack by violent extremists leapfrogging into the primary and secondary urban areas in mainland Mindanao and the rest of the country.

The recurrence of individual suicide attacks in the islands should not lull development, peacebuilding, and human security specialists into thinking that another Marawi-type attack is improbable in mainland Mindanao.

The third implication is that policies addressing shadow economy issues have failed, and a new aim and strategy must be undertaken that focuses mainly on preventing the illegal drug and illicit firearm trades from fueling war and violent extremism. The current government's

'war on drugs' has caused more harm than good and has created problems instead of solutions as mass arrests and harassments induce retaliatory actions instead of strengthening resilience to the influence of both shadow economies and violent extremist groups.

A more targeted and realistic objective is to prevent rebel groups and violent extremists from capturing the profits from the illicit drug trade and preventing the flow of illicit weapons into their arsenals and forces.

Harnessing the partnership with the MILF in the anti-illegal drug war is critical, as well as strengthening alliances and collective action of networks of families and clans, ethnic groups, religious and traditional leaders, youth and women's organizations, and trade and transport associations in the locality in developing a multi-faceted and realistic solution to cut the links between pernicious shadow economies and violent extremism.

Meanwhile, the access and use of illegal weapons may set back the effort to implement and perhaps hasten the post-conflict normalization process that includes a weapons decommissioning objective. This is so because the target of the decommissioning process had already been reduced through a 'sleight of hand' approach that limited the numbers to those guns allegedly deployed or supplied by the MILF and allowed the exemption of weapons allegedly owned by the combatants themselves. Also, gun-related violence will certainly make it more difficult to convince former combatants to lay down their weapons and render themselves vulnerable to personal attacks.

Alert has consistently advocated for gun-ownership reforms that go beyond local ordinances and the CAB's normalization component. Curbing illicit

weapons can only succeed if significant reforms and revisions are made in the liberalized rules and regulations governing the ownership, registration, and rights of owners to carry their weapons in public as contained in Republic Act (RA) No. 10591 or the Comprehensive Firearms and Ammunition Regulation Act. To date, no action has been taken to strike a coherent policy that would mediate the national gun law and the decommissioning aspects of the normalization process.

Transitional violence and bifurcated leadership

The Conflict Alert 2017 and 2018 reports already spoke of the potential for 'transition-induced violence' to further fracture the tenuous relationships and violent rivalries that have divided clans, tribes, and other ethnic groups in Muslim Mindanao, as well as the dynamics at the local-regional-national level in the distribution of authority and power.² These cycles of violence are often borne out of a new political settlement that brings uncertainty and insecurity over continued access to rents, resources, and protection. It can lead to the violent activation or re-activation of boundaries between various identities; clashes over control of the new centers of power and authority; hamper the Bangsamoro statebuilding project; and intensify violent conflict in the run-up to the 2022 elections.

Did the decline in violent conflict across the region in 2018 and 2019 result in a similar decline in contentious politics in the Bangsamoro?

Violence has not receded and has in fact increased when we assessed areas of recurrent conflict to verify whether the flashpoints were linked to the shifting performance of a regime that is now headed by a new set of actors.³ Ostensibly, the trigger for

² Alert defines transition-induced violence as the violence that emerges during the conflict-to-peace period of transition after a political settlement has been agreed.

³ Charles Tilly's (2006) "regimes and repertoires" was used as a lens to assess the dynamics of regime performance.

“Real change and performance must be measured not in terms of how rulers came to office but whether they appealed, or were sensitive to, the structure of patron-client relationships in a particular setting and the ways in which patterns of accommodation and competition in these patronage relations were affected by democracy or its absence.”

the new claim-making and resiliently contentious politics is the confluence of two major political battles in the first half of 2019 that would shape the nature and pace of the conflict-to-peace transition across the region and the rest of Mindanao.

First was the successful plebiscite that saw the ratification of the BOL, followed by the creation of the BARMM and the State’s appointment of members of the BTA, the interim BARMM parliament. The second was the national mid-term election that saw the election of local officials that cemented the democratic and peaceful transition of power from one set of local state officials to the next.

However, while both battles were democratic in nature, their governance outcomes were not. One produced an unelected set of leaders at the regional level and a set of democratically elected set of leaders at the local level. This bifurcated foundation for rulership in the Bangsamoro saw one set of leaders owe their authority from the President and the other to the people. The bifurcated sources of political legitimacy helped feed perceptions of political illegitimacy towards the regional bureaucracy.

Using economist Mushtaq Khan’s framework on patron-client politics, we realize that variants of patron-client politics are likely to endure and

characterize both non-democratic and democratic processes in state structures such as the BARMM.⁴ Real change and performance must be measured not in terms of how rulers came to office but whether they appealed, or were sensitive to, the structure of patron-client relationships in a particular setting and the ways in which patterns of accommodation and competition in these patronage relations were affected by democracy or its absence.

Looking back to the decisions taken by regional authority during its first year of existence gives us pause and the realization that some insensitivity and a failure to mediate the residual yet enduring effects of patron-client relationships did occur. There are three examples: one, the mass termination of employment of officials and staff of the previous ARMM; two, the perceived exclusionary process in the appointment of ministers and officials who did not include political leaders and social networks outside the core alliances of the MILF; and three, the lack of action towards the targeted attacks waged against the Teduray and other indigenous peoples to force them to abandon their lands.

Addressing the perceived deficit in political legitimacy and being sensitive to the underlying patronage relationships in the Bangsamoro will be crucial in preventing the fragile peace from being destroyed.

⁴ M. Khan, 'Markets, states and democracy: Patron-client networks and the case for democracy in developing countries', *Democratization*, 12:5, 2005, 704-24

Conflicts to Peace

The Bangsamoro experienced another year of relative stability in 2019. The second year following the end of the war in Marawi City, 2019 had the advantage of martial law and security measures that local governments implemented in their localities to address threats from crime and terror groups.

Regional economic growth was at a respectable 5.9%, as the region's industry and service sectors performed strongly. As such, each resident's share of the regional wealth improved, even if it was the lowest compared to residents' share in other regions.⁵ The good news, however, is straining amidst headwinds that are pushing a return to normal, that is, an onset of new cycles of violence as illicit economies surge, extremist violence remains resilient, and resource conflicts reach out from the many pockets and corridors of the Bangsamoro.

⁵ BARMM gross regional domestic product and GRPD per capita of PhP54,020 in 2019 based on constant 2018 prices. See Philippine Statistics Authority, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Gross Regional Domestic Product, by Industry and Per Capita Gross Regional Domestic Product, by Region, <https://psa.gov.ph/grdp/tables>



Children wait in anticipation for the helicopter of the Armed Forces of the Philippines that would airdrop stuffed toys during the Festival of Love and Peace in Mohammad Ajul, Basilan on 4 October 2019.

📷 **Martin San Diego**



The Region in 2019

Critical junctures in the conflict-to-peace transition defined the Bangsamoro region in 2019, influencing and shaping events that occurred over the course of the year.

A two-part plebiscite, held in January and February, asked voters in the ARMM, Cotabato and Isabela cities, six municipalities in Lanao del Norte, and 67 barangays in Cotabato province to ratify RA No. 11054 or the BOL that sought to replace the ARMM with the BARMM. Voters in Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, Cotabato City, and 63 barangays in Cotabato province gave their 'yes' to the BOL and, thereby, to their inclusion in the BARMM. It was a 'no' for Sulu but because the ARMM was treated as one geographical unit, Sulu's votes were not enough to reverse the former region's entry into the new Bangsamoro.

On 22 February, members of the BTA, most of them nominees of the MILF, took their oath of office in Malacañang. MILF Chairman Al-Hajj Murad Ebrahim was appointed as BTA Chief Minister by President Duterte. A turnover ceremony held on 26 February transferred the reins of government from the ARMM to the BTA, which shall administer the BARMM until elections are held in 2022 to choose the new regional leaders.

By November, as part of the transition, the termination of around 6,000 ARMM employees



Supporters parade along Sinsuat Avenue in Cotabato City on 19 January 2019 calling for "yes" votes for the ratification of the BOL. The City Mayor had been vocal in her stand against the inclusion of Cotabato City in the new Bangsamoro territory that would be created under the BOL.

📍 Manman Dejeta

began. Only workers in the ministries of health, education and social services were exempted from the dismissals.

Meanwhile, midterm elections pushed through on 13 May. Voters in the Bangsamoro chose tested and new leaders, though from among the same traditional clans, as their provincial, city, and municipal officials. The elections were the most contested in the region since Conflict Alert began




its monitoring, with all provinces recording more violence during the campaign, on election day and after compared to past electoral exercises.

Elected local government officials began their three-year term on 30 June. Some of these officials did not see eye to eye with members of the BTA, with divisions running deep along administrative and ethnic lines and resource allocations. This bears watching, as the MILF's main leaders transition


from rebels fighting the government to governing the new Bangsamoro region. **(See Box 1 on page 9).**

The decommissioning of combatants of the MILF-BIAF resumed in late August. Around 12,000 fighters, representing 12% of the total, were included in a program that promised cash and livelihood assistance from the government in exchange for laying down their arms and returning to civilian life.



Voters at the Amai Pakpak Elementary School in Marawi City gather around poll officials to get their ballots during the first Bangsamoro plebiscite on 21 January 2019.  **Froilan Gallardo**

The decommissioning process provided under the CAB began on June 2015 with the symbolic decommissioning of 145 BIAF fighters and the ceremonial turnover of their firearms but was halted by the Aquino government's failure to get its proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law through Congress. Under the approved BOL, the projected decommissioning of the estimated total 40,000 BIAF combatants is expected to be finished by 2022.



“The plebiscite and the decommissioning process heightened the tensions between various political interests and coalitions ranged for and against the newly proposed regional authority. However, these tensions did not derail the two exercises.”

The plebiscite and the decommissioning process heightened the tensions between various political interests and coalitions ranged for and against the newly proposed regional authority. However, these tensions did not derail the two exercises.

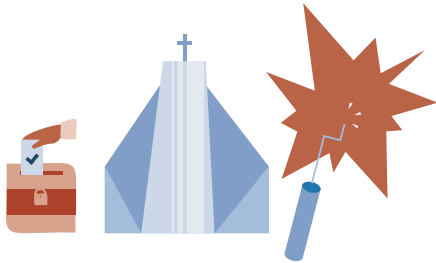
Where violence was a serious cause for worry was in Sulu. In January, explosives set off a minute apart by two suicide bombers ripped through the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, killing at least 20 and wounding at least 100. In June, two suicide bombers – one of them a Filipino, the first to participate in a suicide bombing attack – targeted a military camp in Indanan, Sulu, killing eight and wounding 12. In September, another suicide bombing targeted a military detachment, also in Indanan, but fortunately did not kill anyone other than the bomber. The frequency in suicide bombing attacks – a hallmark of the Abu Sayyaf Group allied with ISIS – had accelerated after a Moroccan first detonated a bomb inside

a vehicle he was driving at a checkpoint in Lamitan City, Basilan in July 2018.

In Lanao del Sur, the military killed Abu Dar, who stood as Maute Group leader after the siege in Marawi. After Abu Dar’s death, the remnants of the Maute Group and their allies dispersed and went underground, though sightings continued to be reported in various parts of the province. In the meantime, the increasing presence of the New People’s Army (NPA) in Lanao complicated the local security situation.

The suicide bombings in Sulu took place despite heightened security due to martial law imposed over the whole Mindanao. However, the military said criminality had decreased while threats from extremists had weakened. The security forces later supported the lifting of martial law by the end of 2019, or two years after it was declared at the start of the Marawi war in May 2017.

2019 in Review



January

21 Jan. – Voters in the five ARMM provinces, Cotabato City and Isabela cities participate in a plebiscite to ratify the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

27 Jan. – A suicide bombing in the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Jolo, Sulu kills and injures scores of parishioners and soldiers stationed near the Catholic church.

March

11 March – Abu Dar, who led militants who were able to slip out of Marawi City during the siege in 2017, is killed in a clash with the military between Tubaran and Pagayawan municipalities in Lanao del Sur, together with close aide Abu Jihad.

30 March – Candidates for House of Representatives and provincial, city, and municipal positions begin campaigning.



February

6 Feb. – Voters in Lanao del Norte (except Iligan City) and in seven Cotabato municipalities signify their intent to join, or not, the new Bangsamoro region.

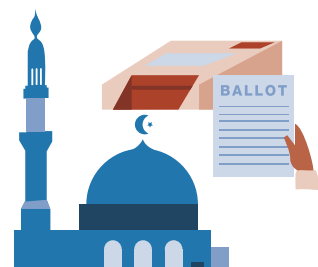
22 Feb. – Members of the BTA take their oath in Malacañang to administer the newly-created Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao until 30 June 2022

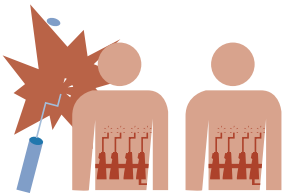
26 Feb. – ARMM officials turn over the administration of the BARMM to the BTA, the BARMM's interim government.

May

6 May – Start of the holy month of Ramadhan.

13 May – Election for the members of the Philippine Congress and for provincial, city and municipal positions.

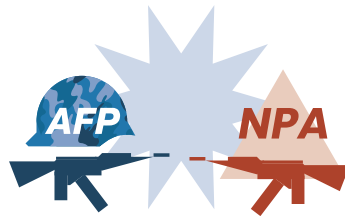




June

28 June – Two suicide bombers, one a Filipino, target a military camp in Indanan, Sulu.

30 June – Officials who won in the May elections begin their new terms of office.



July

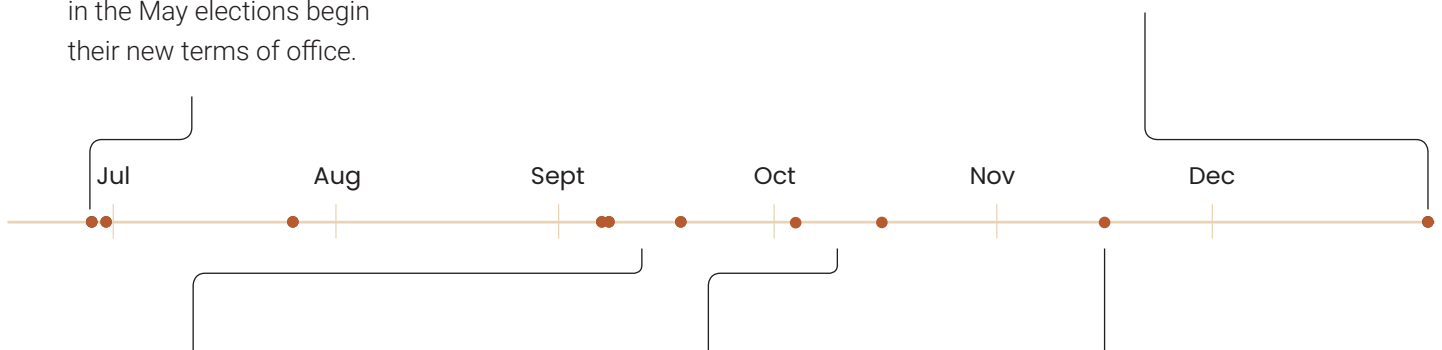
26 July – Military battles the NPA in Lumba-Bayabao, Lanao del Sur; a month after, the Lanao provincial government declares the NPA persona non grata.

MARTIAL LAW



December

31 Dec. – Martial law in Mindanao ends but Proclamation No. 55, issued in 2016 that declared a state of national emergency due to “lawless violence” in Mindanao, is still in effect.

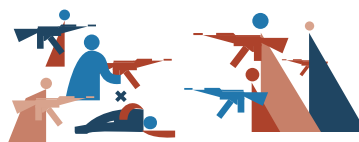
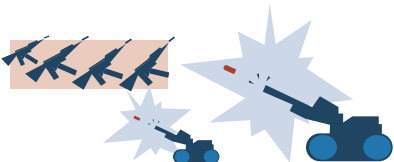


September

7 Sept. – Second phase of MILF-BIAF decommissioning begins, of which 12,000 out of 40,000 combatants are to lay down their arms and return to civilian life.

8 Sept. – A suicide bomber targets a military checkpoint in Indanan, Sulu.

18 Sept. – The military shells an ISIS camp in Piagapo, Lanao del Sur; the explosions, heard in nearby Marawi City, create panic among residents who recall the 2017 siege.



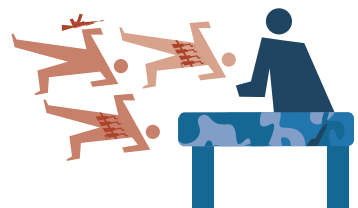
October

3 Oct. – Seven members of the MILF National Guard and Task Force Ittihad are brutally killed in a clash with BIFF members in Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Maguindanao. One of them is beheaded. The conflict reportedly stemmed from a clan feud due to a land conflict.

15 Oct. – A bombing attack reportedly perpetrated by the BIFF targets the St. Therese Parish Church in the town center of Dulawan in the municipality of Datu Piang.

November

5 Nov. – Soldiers manning a checkpoint just outside Jolo intercept and kill three men believed to be intent on a suicide bombing attack in Sulu's capital town. Two of the three were Egyptians while the third was a Filipino, a member of the Abu Sayyaf.



Box 1

Clan dominance of regional politics in 2019

The political transitions brought about by the mid-term elections in 2019 and the successful plebiscite to institutionalize the BARMM has given birth to a new set of leaders with bifurcated claims to legitimacy and authority.

Simply put, local officials were elected to office while regional officials of the new BARMM were appointed by the President or the MILF, making it more difficult for the latter to enforce their 'right to rule'. This political divide set the stage for the continuing animosity and contestation for power between and among powerful individuals, clans, and the MILF at various levels in the region throughout 2019.

To be sure, no major power shifts occurred at the more important local government level as members of the same powerful families and clans of previous political battles filled the municipal, city, and provincial positions that were contested during the May polls.^a These clan

politicos also represented their congressional districts in the House of Representatives. Meanwhile, most of the MILF negotiating panel members and staff, including some ranking MILF commanders, led the appointees to the BTA that will administer the BARMM until 2022.

Divisions had been apparent as early as the campaign for the BOL, with Cotabato City Mayor Cynthia Guiani-Sayadi opposing the city's inclusion in the BARMM and Sulu province voting to exit from the regional government. Though she failed to exclude Cotabato City from the BARMM, Guiani-Sayadi received a short reprieve when the President convinced the BTA to delay the inclusion of the city until the end of 2020.^b This was not the case for Sulu, which was incorporated soon after the plebiscite.

However, despite the fragile legitimacy and authority of an appointed regional government, by 2020, the MILF leadership would demand an extension of the transition process from 2022 until 2025—using the normalization process or their withdrawal from it as leverage.^c At best, this

^a Devolution under the BOL did not remove LGUs' access to the internal revenue allocations and other benefits that went straight to them, including the supervision and management of LGU security forces.

^b Guiani-Sayadi asked President Rodrigo Duterte to delay the city's transfer to BARMM supervision to 2022. The Palace, however, decided to formalize the transfer in December 2020.

^c T. Basman, Bangsamoro chief minister backs extending transition by 3 years, Rappler, 15 Nov. 2020, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/bangsamoro-chief-minister-extend-transition-period>



Mamintal 'Bombit' Alonto Adiong, Jr.
Governor,
Lanao del Sur



Al-Hajj Murad Ebrahim
Chief Minister, *Bangsamoro Autonomous
Region in Muslim Mindanao*



Cynthia Guiani-Sayadi
Mayor,
Cotabato City



Mujiv S. Hataman
Deputy Speaker and Representative,
Lone District of Basilan



Esmael 'Toto' Mangudadatu
Representative,
2nd District of Maguindanao



Yshmael I. Sali
Governor,
Tawi-Tawi



Bai Mariam Sangki-Mangudadatu
Governor,
Maguindanao



Abdusakur M. Tan
Governor,
Sulu

demand was justified as the consequence of the massive delays in establishing the BARMM coordination bodies, in releasing the transition funds for the region in 2019, plus the onset of a pandemic early in 2020. At worst, this demand exposed the insecurity and fear of the MILF that any electoral exercise in 2022 would lead to their ouster from office. Indeed, discussions about extending the life of an appointed authority beyond 2022 seemed too soon and too revealing of the current regional leadership’s difficulty in getting the authority and credibility to effect genuine change.

More importantly, the clans and other traditional leaders of the Bangsamoro, including their economic and politico-military allies, have again proved their enduring capacity to alter

and shape the course of growth, development, and security in the new Bangsamoro region despite the absence of any formal regional authority.

Clans in local politics: Who are they?

Clans have continued to dominate the political arena in the Bangsamoro. The traditional clan responsibility for providing welfare and security to members have been fulfilled by clan members holding political office. Protective of their own and their communities’ interests, political clans could promote or thwart the transition to peace in the region.

Table A lists some of the families and clans that are active in politics. Some of them have intermarried, creating alliances, and in other cases,

Table A. Clan members currently holding elected positions in the BARMM

Clan Names	Provinces					Grand total
	Basilan	Lanao Del Sur	Maguindanao	Sulu	Tawi-Tawi	
Ampatuan-Sangki			16			16
Sali	4		2	4	3	13
Benito		11	1			12
Mangudadatu			9			9
Mindalano		9				9
Tan				8	1	9
Ali		6	3			9
Macapodi		8				8
Hassan		2		5	1	8
Abbas		4		4		8
Hataman	7					7
Lao		6				6
Maruhom		6				6
Sinsuat			6			6
Bansil		5				5
Alonto		5				5
Muksan				4		4

deep divisions. A wide and deep kinship structure with many members, ample economic resources, and extensive networks can reward certain clans with key positions at various levels of local governance in towns, districts, and provinces. For instance, 16 members of the Ampatuan-Sangki clan now serve as public officials in Maguindanao province.^d The Benito clan has 11 members who serve in Lanao del Sur and one in Maguindanao.

Clans have continued to occupy crucial positions, and usually in localities that bear their names. (For examples, see **Table B, p.13** on current mayors and vice-mayors in Maguindanao). In Maguindanao, seven Ampatuan clan members serve as mayors and another seven as vice-mayors. Another clan member, a municipal councilor, was elected as provincial head of the Philippine Councilors League and represents the PCL in the Maguindanao provincial board.

The Mangudadatu clan of Maguindanao was able to secure the win of four mayoralty and three vice-mayoralty bets, and two clan members in the provincial board. Esmael 'Toto' Mangudadatu won as representative of the second district of Maguindanao in the House of Representatives. He previously served as provincial governor for three terms.

The newly elected provincial governor of Maguindanao is Bai Mariam Sangki-Mangudadatu, who is related to the Ampatuans by consanguinity and to the Mangudadatus by affinity. Despite her surname, Bai Mariam is more associated with the Ampatuan clan rather than the Mangudadatu.

Meanwhile, the Guiani-Sayadi-Dumama clans remained firmly ensconced in Cotabato City. Cynthia Guiani-Sayadi won her first term as an elected mayor of the city in the 2019 elections. She had previously won as vice-mayor in the 2016 polls but through the law of succession, served

“Protective of their own and their communities’ interests, political clans could promote or thwart the transition to peace in the region.”

as mayor after the death of her older brother, Mayor Japal 'Jojo' Guiani Jr. Her vice-mayor, Nazer 'Graham' Dumama is her nephew, the son of her older sister, Susan G. Dumama. Another nephew, Japal 'Jay-Jay' Guiani III, the son of the late mayor, won the highest number of votes for city councilor.

Cotabato City, the biggest and most progressive city in the Bangsamoro and seat of the regional government, was the ultimate prize in the transition to the BARMM. Guiani-Sayadi campaigned hard for exclusion of Cotabato City from the BOL. This dynamic will continue to produce tensions between the current mayor and the MILF. Already, the MILF has positioned a possible contender to Guiani-Sayadi in future polls. Johari Abu, who is in his second term in the city council, has been growing in popularity. He is the son of the late Hajji Salik B. Abu, also known as Ghazali Jaapar, former MILF vice-chairman, Bangsamoro Transition Commission chairman, and Speaker of the Parliament designate of the BTA. Ghazali Jaapar died in March 2019 due to a lingering illness.

In Lanao del Sur, political veteran Mamintal 'Bombit' Alonto Adiong Jr. and his son who ran as his vice-governor, Mujam Adiong, handily won over Guiling 'Gene' Mamondiong, former administrator of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, and his running mate for vice-governor, Abu Mohammad Sarangani.

^d Sangki is a sub-clan of the Ampatuan. Both clans are related, having one ancestor.

Table B. Mayors and vice-mayors of Maguindanao's 36 municipalities as of 2020

Municipality	Mayor	Vice Mayor
Ampatuan	Baileah G. Sangki	Bai Yasmin Sangki Mangudadatu
Barira	Abdul Rauf D. Tomawis	Bahrain M. Dagalangit
Buldon	Abolais A. Manalao	Cairoden P. Pangunotan
Buluan	Babydats D. Mangudadatu	Rhamla Mangudadatu-Kadalim
Datu Abdullah Sangki	Datu Pax Ali Sangki Mangudadatu	Samsodhen Ampatuan Sangki
Datu Anggal Midtimbang	Maryjoy Estephanie Uy Midtimbang	Datu Jomar Uka Midtimbang
Datu Blah T. Sinsuat	Marsshall Ibrahim Sinsuat	Raida Tomawis Sinsuat
Datu Hoffer Ampatuan	Bongbong Midtimbang Ampatuan	Bai Noraila Kristina Midtimbang Ampatuan
Datu Montawal	Ohto C. Montawal	Vicman K. Montawal
Datu Odin Sinsuat	Cheryl Mary Rose Ann F. Lu-Sinsuat*	Mohammad Khalid A. Ampatuan
Datu Paglas	Abubakar Pendatun Paglas	Mohamad Pendatun Paglas Sr
Datu Piang	Victor Tirando Samama	Nasser Sambilan Abpi
Datu Salibo	Solaiman Mohammad Sandigan	Herodin Kayob Guiamano
Datu Saudi-Ampatuan	Edris Asim Sindatok	Zaiton Utto Dimaukom
Datu Unsay	Datu Andal 'Datu Aguak' Santiago Ampatuan V**	Janine Ampatuan Mamalapat
Gen. Salipada K. Pendatun	Rafsanjani Pendatun Ali	Norodin Pendatun Masukat
Guindulungan	Midpantao Musa Midtimbang Jr.	Tawakal Buga Midtimbang
Kabuntalan	Salaban Guiama Diocolano	Datu Rahaf Dorado Diocolano
Mamasapano	Akmd A. Ampatuan Jr.	Tahirodin Benzar A. Ampatuan
Mangudadatu	Elizabeth Mangudadatu-Tayuan	Prince Mosafeer Mangudadatu Dilangalen
Matanog	Mohammad-Ali S. Guro	Sanaira Ibay Ali
Northern Kabuntalan	Datu Umbra B. Dilangalen	Mary Jane C. Bayam
Pagalungan	Salik P. Mamasabulod	Abdilah G. Mamasabulod
Paglat	Abdulkarim T. Langkuno	Sagandingan M. Gumonsang
Pandag	Zihan Mamalinta Mangudadatu	Dante P. Mamalinta
Parang	Cahar P. Ibay	Adnan C. Biruar
Rajah Buayan	Yacob L. Ampatuan***	Sittie Jinn Princess U. Lumenda
Shariff Aguak	Marop B. Ampatuan	Ameir Akmd S. Aguak****
Shariff Saydona Mustapha	Datu Sajid Islam U. Ampatuan	Bai Zandria S. Ampatuan
South Upi	Reynalbert O. Insular	Imelda B. Estorninos
Sultan Kudarat	Shameem B. Mastura	Norhaina M. Maik
Sultan Mastura	Rauf T. Mastura	Julhani M. Tumbas Jr.
Sultan Sa Barongis	Al-Fizzar Allandatu M. Angas Sr.*****	Dhats B. Mamalo
Sultan Sumagka (formerly Talitay)	Moner K. Sabal	Montasir M. Sabal
Talayan	Ali M. Midtimbang	Datu Ali S. Midtimbang Jr.
Upi	Ramon A. Piang Sr.	Alexis M. Platon

Mamondiong and Sarangani were endorsed by President Duterte and backed by the PDP-Laban, the president's political party, but were less established in the province. Members of the Alonto clan also won as district representatives: Ansaruddin Abdul Malik Alonto Adiong for the first district and Yasser Alonto Balindong for the second district.

In Sulu, the father-and-son tandem of Abdusakur and Abdusakur Tan II won the gubernatorial and vice-gubernatorial races, respectively. Another son, Samier, represents Sulu's first district in the House of Representatives. Another clan member, Shernee Tan, represents the Kusug Tausug Party-list in the House.

Meanwhile, in Tawi-Tawi, the former mayor of Languyan, Yshmael 'Mang' Sali is now the governor of the province, defeating the traditional Sahali political clan led by Sadikul Sahali (PDP-Laban). The former governor of Tawi-Tawi, Rashidin Matba (2016-2019) is the new Representative for Tawi-Tawi also beating rival Ruby Sahali (PDP-Laban).

Basilan politics has turned into a near-exclusive domain of the Hataman clan. Jim Hataman-Salliman was reelected as governor in 2019. He is the older brother of Mujiv Hataman who ran and won as the representative of the lone district of Basilan after serving as governor of the defunct ARMM. Mujiv Hataman's wife, Sitti Djalia Turabin-Hataman was elected mayor of Isabela City. The vice-mayor of Isabela City, Jhul Kifli Salliman, is the son of the incumbent governor. The Hatamans are also related to the mayor, vice-mayor, and a municipal councilor of Sumisip.

Clans are well integrated into governance structures of the Bangsamoro region, though less within the executive offices of the BARMM-BTA. However, they create a palpable effect on the governance of the entire region, its economic development, political stability, and social cohesiveness. Other strongmen in the previous regional structures of the ARMM learned to harness the authority, legitimacy, and power of the clans, or ignore and sidestep them at their own peril.

Notes for Table B:

* Datu Ombra Quesada Sinsuat was elected as mayor but passed away in November 2019 due to illness. The vice-mayor assumed his post while the first councilor became the vice-mayor. See: <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/11/01/19/maguindanao-town-mayor-ombra-sinsuat-passes-away-due-to-illness>

** The winners for mayor and vice-mayor, Fuentes Toap Dukay and Wanay Salibo Dukay, respectively, resigned in July 2019, allowing the Ampatuans to assume their positions. See: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1075925>

*** The elected mayor, Zamzamin Lumenda Ampatuan, stepped down in December 2019 after he was appointed as Agriculture undersecretary. The vice-mayor assumed his post, while the first councilor now serves as vice-mayor. See: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1089130>

**** The vice-mayor, Akmad Baganian Ampatuan, resigned in September 2020 due to health reasons. The first councilor assumed his post. See: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1115350>

***** The elected mayor, Ramdatu Mamalo Angas died in September 2019 due to liver cancer. The vice-mayor and the first councilor assumed the vacated posts. See: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1079946>





Residents of Mohammad Ajul in Basilan participate in the Festival of Love and Peace on 4 October 2019. The town had been a site of major clashes between government forces and non-state armed groups, and activities such as these aim to provide social healing interventions to child victims of war in the island province.

📷 Martin San Diego

Conflict Alert methodology

Conflict Alert uses police and media reports to collect data on conflict in the five provinces comprising the Bangsamoro, as well as the cities of Cotabato and Isabela that are geographically part of them.⁶ A third source of data are Multi-Stakeholder Validation Groups (MSVGs) established by Alert Philippines in partnership with key academic and research institutions and composed of individuals who come from various backgrounds and experiences and possess local knowledge and sources of information about the local security situation.

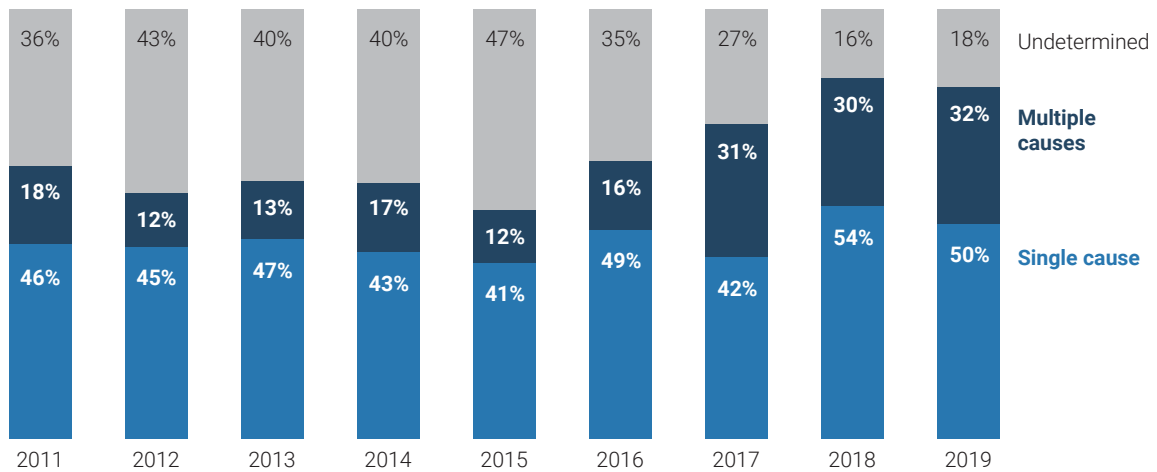
The unit of analysis is an instance of violent conflict, where intimidation, force or physical violence is used by individuals, groups, and organizations to exert control, settle misunderstandings or grievances, or defend and expand their individual or collective interests. An incident of violent conflict is analyzed as to its

cause or causes, links to other incidents, human costs in terms of death, injuries, and displacement, and the actors involved. Finally, the incident is geotagged for mapping purposes.

In tabulating the results, incidents are counted and then grouped according to specific causes and along the following major headings or topics: shadow economy-related violence, identity-based violence, political violence, resource-related violence, governance-related violence, and common crimes. (Please see Annex B and C for an explanation of the Conflict Alert methodology, including the categorization of conflict causes).

Police or media reports do not always identify the cause(s) of violent conflict. But reporting has improved over the years, while inputs from MSVGs have filled in some of the gaps or missing details in conflict reports. At the same time, Conflict Alert's categories of conflict have been refined and expanded to accommodate new conflict triggers. As a result, the determination of these conflict triggers has improved. As of 2019, incidents with 'undetermined' cause or causes comprised 18% of the total, far less than the 36% in 2011, the initial

⁶ Cotabato City's conflict statistics are reported as part of Maguindanao's and Isabela City's as part of Basilan's, being geographically located within these provinces. Violence has the tendency to spill from the city to surrounding areas and vice versa. Cotabato City voted to join the BARMM but was not under the new regional authority's supervision in 2019. Isabela City chose not to be part of the BARMM and remains part of the Zamboanga Peninsula. The 'Bangsamoro' in this report refers to the provinces of Maguindanao including Cotabato City, Lanao del Sur, Basilan including Isabela City, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi.

Figure 1. Conflict incidents by number of causes, as percent of total

year in the Conflict Alert database. (See **Figure 1, p.18**). On the other hand, incidents whose cause or causes were successfully determined comprised a combined 82% in 2019, improving from 64% in 2011. Ascertaining the multiple or combination of causes of an incident is particularly important, as it promotes an understanding of the complexity of conflict and facilitates the formulation of strategies to mitigate or halt the violence. When multiple causes are analyzed as to their component causes, each cause is treated and counted separately.

In a region riven by violence for decades, unpacking conflict to understand its triggers and costs is crucial to inform and improve peacebuilding and development initiatives. The insights are also useful in local conflict monitoring, prevention, and mediation. Conflict Alert, which started as the Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System in 2013, is the only database on violent conflict in the Bangsamoro that provides nine years of granular data and analysis on violent conflict in the region.

“Ascertaining the multiple or combination of causes of an incident is particularly important, as it promotes an understanding of the complexity of conflict and facilitates the formulation of strategies to mitigate or halt the violence.”

A soldier stands guard in an evacuation camp in Pikit, Cotabato. In July 2019, 1,700 families were displaced by successive military offensives against the ISIS-linked BIFF at the border of Cotabato and Maguindanao provinces.

📍 **Ferdinandh Cabrera**



Conflict Incidence

in the Bangsamoro
provinces



By the close of 2019, a total of 2,655 violent conflict incidents were monitored in the five BARMM provinces as well as the cities of Cotabato and Isabela. (See Figure 2). This total is 9% less than in 2018. The lower number of incidents in 2019 was remarkable as the year was marked by events that could have been attended by high levels of violence, such as the plebiscite on the BOL.

From 2011 to 2019, conflict incidents reached 20,433. The years 2016 and 2017 contributed around 42% to the nine-year total. In 2016, conflict incidents spiked as general elections were held, extremist actors emerged, and the Duterte government launched a drive against illicit drugs and weapons. The following year, the war in Marawi City broke out, instigated by violent extremists.

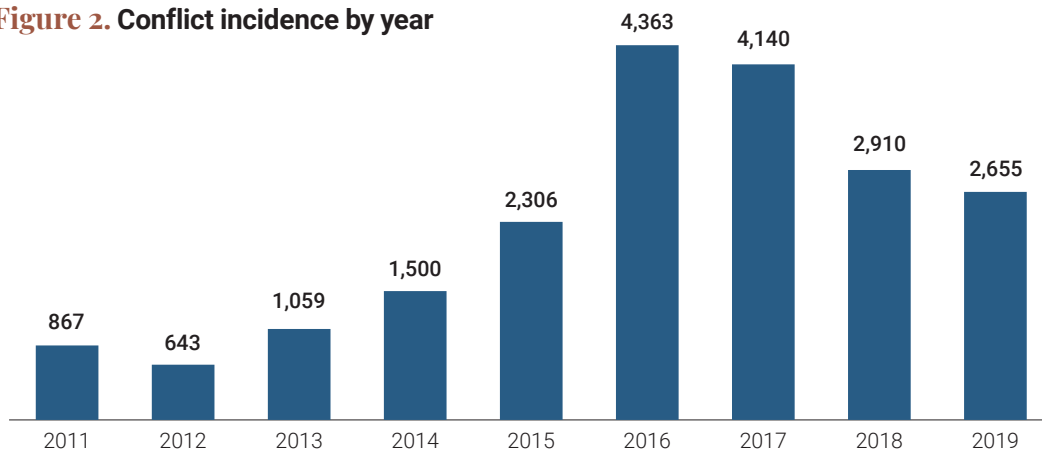
The year 2019 saw the Bangsamoro sustain a decline in conflict incidents from the previous year. As Conflict Alert did for the data in 2018, three possible explanations had to be ruled out to determine if the decline had to do with security or peacebuilding activities. First, was the decline simply a rebound to pre-2016 levels? Second, was the decline caused by a decrease in the population of the region? Finally, did higher employment and economic growth in the region cause the decline?

While the 2019 total comes close to the 2015 total of 2,306, it remains higher compared to the 2013-2015

average of 1,622. This three-year period is used as a benchmark for normalization as it precedes the 2016-2017 outlier years. There was likewise no decrease in population: the Bangsamoro population was estimated to have grown to 4.5 million people in 2019 or by approximately 2% from the previous year.⁷ Unemployment was higher at 6.6% as of October 2019 from 3.8% in the same month in 2018.⁸ A bright spot was the regional economy that continued to expand by 5.9% in 2019 after the 7.7% growth in 2018, but it could not provide ample explanation for the continued fall in conflict incidents as each resident's share of the regional wealth or gross regional domestic product per capita remained the lowest in Mindanao, and in fact, in the whole Philippines even if that had increased in 2019 from 2018.

Having crossed out other explanations, we conclude that the imposition of martial law, which only ended in December 2019, continued to exert a downward pressure on violence in the region and likewise continued to stabilize the local security

Figure 2. Conflict incidence by year



⁷ Based on mid-year projections of the Philippine Statistics Authority, <https://psa.gov.ph/content/updatedpopulation-projections-based-results-2015-popcen>

⁸ Philippine Statistics Authority. (2020). Table 4 Population 15 Years Old and Over and Rates of LFP, Employment, Unemployment, Underemployment, by Region Oct 2018 Oct 2019. <https://psa.gov.ph/content/employment-rate-october-2019-estimated-955-percent>

situation. (See section on martial law on p.23). Martial law also prevented the 2019 election from being bloody. While it triggered 80 incidents of conflicts—higher than the 42 in 2018, 27 in 2016, and 40 in 2013—there were only eight deaths.

Uneven provincial results

At the provincial level, figures varied significantly. Lower conflict numbers were recorded in Maguindanao, Sulu and Basilan, which offset the increases in Lanao del Sur and Tawi-Tawi. (See Figure 3).

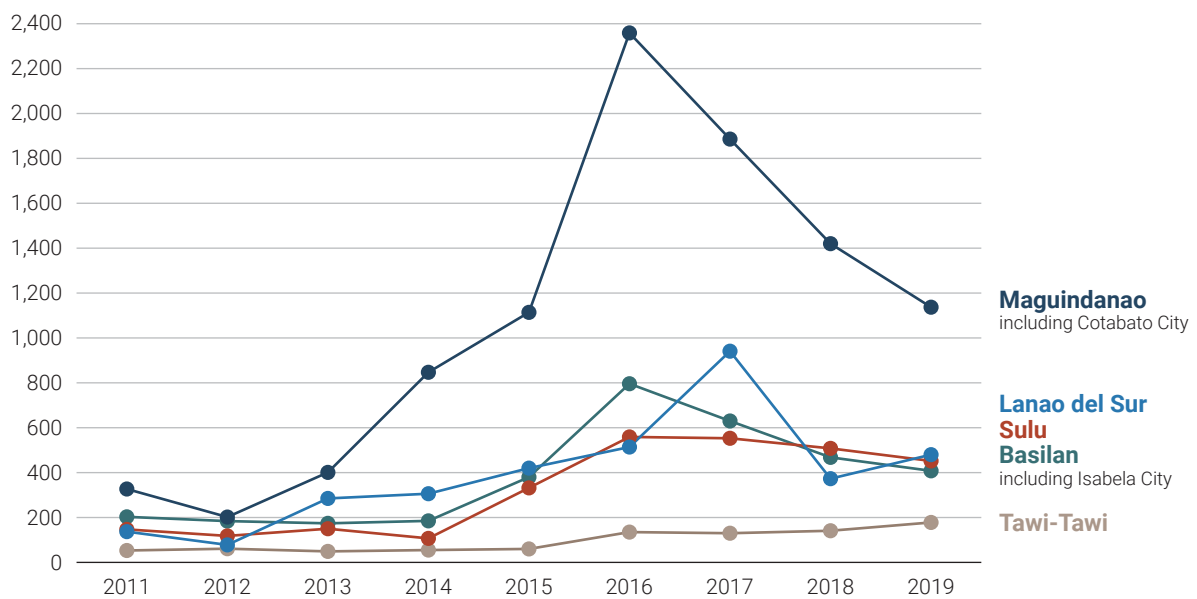
Maguindanao, including Cotabato City, recorded 1,137 incidents, 20% fewer than in 2018, and sustained the decline in conflict incidence that began in 2017 though it still was ahead of the other provinces. Sulu posted a 11% year-on-year fall in the number of incidents to 452 and Basilan, including Isabela City, 13% to 408, and respectively landed on the third and fourth spots in conflict incidence.

The two island provinces had also seen violence begin to decline in 2017, although the pace was slower in Sulu due to resilient shadow economy issues and the presence of the Abu Sayyaf.

On the other hand, Lanao del Sur saw a 29% year-on-year rise to 480 incidents, which lifted it to the second from fourth spot in 2018. The province's record had been uneven, with 2017 distinguished by the war in Marawi, and 2018 remarkable for the steep drop in conflict incidence after the war subsided. However, by 2019, the province saw more clan feuds, which were triggered by personal and political grudges, land conflicts, and family issues such as dowry.⁹ There were also more illegal drug- and illicit firearm-related incidents, and robberies.

Meanwhile, Tawi-Tawi posted a 26% increase to 178 incidents. Tawi-Tawi, the smallest of the BARMM provinces and located far from the Mindanao mainland, has always been the most peaceful of the five provinces but the number of conflicts had

Figure 3. Conflict incidence by province and year



⁹International Alert Philippines, A worrying turn of events in Lanao del Sur, Critical Events Monitoring System Bulletin for Sept. 2019, released 18 Nov. 2019, p. 3, <https://conflictalert.info/cems-bulletins2019/cems-bulletin-september-2019/>

Cotabato City Mayor Cynthia Guiani-Sayadi reprimands suspects busted in an alleged drug den in the city on 29 May 2019. © Ferdinandh Cabrera



markedly increased in 2016 and remained elevated since due to illegal drugs and the resulting crackdown.

Martial law and local government initiatives on security

Strict security measures due to martial law continued to tamp down violent conflicts.

The military and police continued to man checkpoints, confiscate illicit weapons, and hunt down extremists in the mainland and in the islands or cause their surrender.

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA)

and the police, in some cases with the participation of the military, also continued to enforce a national anti-drug drive, pressured by a 2022 deadline set by President Duterte to clear all barangays of illicit drugs. There were more buy-busts and arrests, including attacks on ‘high-value targets’.

Local government units also came up with measures to improve the local security situation.¹⁰ Some of these met with success, which manifested as a reduction in violence, or as increase such as illegal drug-related arrests. Other initiatives showed mixed results. To mention some of these:

“Local government units also came up with measures to improve the local security situation. Some of these met with success... Other initiatives showed mixed results.”

¹⁰ Contributed by the MSVG for the Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao and Cotabato City, Basilan and Isabela City, and Sulu and Tawi-Tawi clusters. Meetings were held via Zoom on 9 July 2020, 17 July 2020, 23 July 2020, and 5 August 2020, respectively.

- **Cotabato City** continued to enforce checkpoints and nightly curfews, while regular mobile patrols sought to discourage criminality and staunch terrorist presence and activity. The city government installed high-tech security devices and set up a command center called 'The Eye in the Sky' to manage the city's security efforts.
- **Parang, Maguindanao** strengthened the local peace and order council, and at the same time, the local bodies tasked to resolve individual grudges and family or clan feuds. It also made its desk for women's and children's issues more visible and organized its youth to be able to participate in or contribute to municipal projects and programs.
- **Isabela City** also implemented curfews and installed checkpoints with a strict 'no ID, no entry' policy. There were also local initiatives, with the participation of the police, to resolve clan feuding.
- **Basilan** continued to implement the 'Program Against Violent Extremism for Peace' that was launched in 2018 to encourage Abu Sayyaf members to surrender by providing jobs, housing, and education through the Alternative Learning System. Meanwhile, continued construction of a 55-kilometer 'peace highway' across the island has exposed areas once controlled by the Abu Sayyaf.
- **Sulu's** municipalities organized their respective Municipal Task Force to End Local Armed Conflict to work on Abu Sayyaf surrenders and the delivery of basic services to them. In light of the suicide bombings, checkpoints required identification before people could pass through. In Indanan, the municipal government launched a campaign to dissuade the youth from joining extremist groups.
- **Lanao del Sur**, aiming for a Seal of Good Local Governance, intensified its anti-illegal drug campaign. The PDEA worked closely with local governments on entrapment operations.
- **Tawi-Tawi**, also aiming for a Seal of Good Local Governance, intensified its anti-drug campaign and brought in the police's Special Action Force to help free its barangays, particularly in Bongao, of drugs.
- **Tawi-Tawi** convened the Tawi-Tawi Provincial Women's Council to encourage reporting of gender-based violence and abuses.
- To prevent human trafficking using **Tawi-Tawi** as jump-off point, the Philippines and Indonesia agreed to monitor the porous boundaries between the two countries. The Philippine Navy and Coast Guard also jointly monitor and patrol the seas used by traffickers, particularly those surrounding the Turtle Islands.

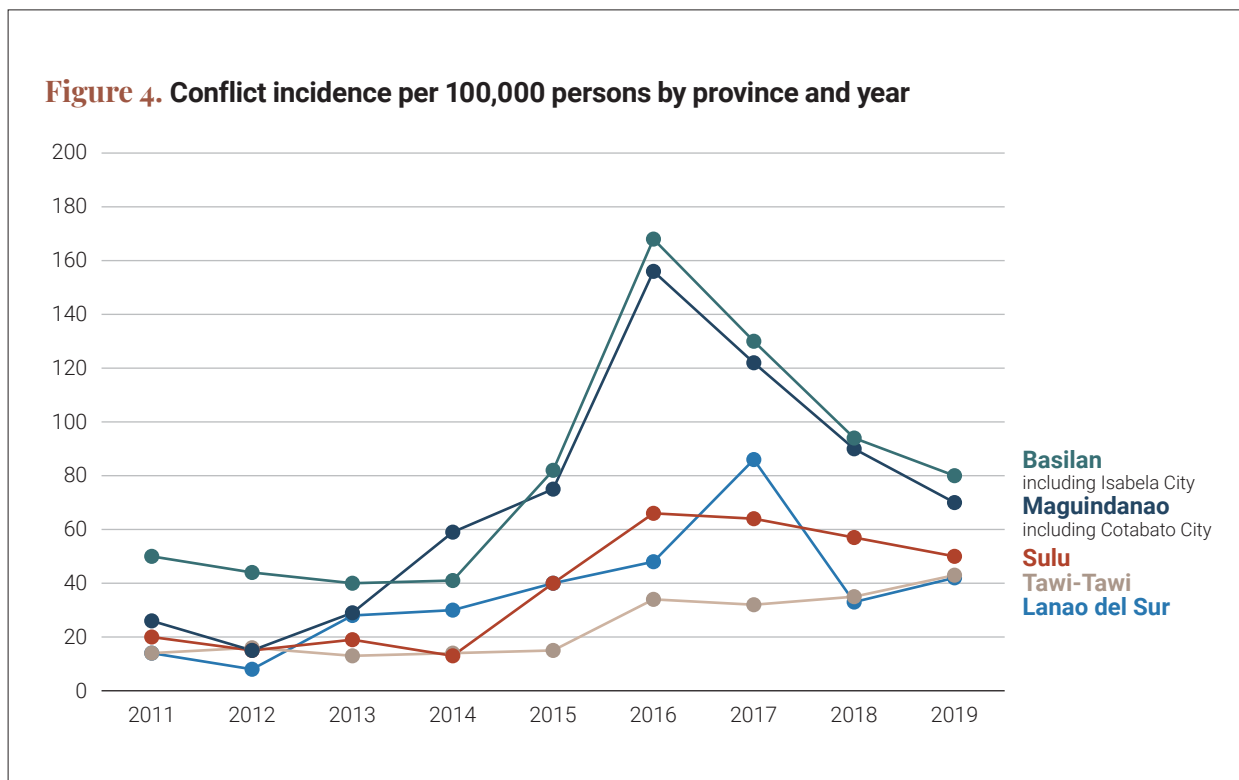
Supplementary measurements of conflict incidence

Examining conflict incidence using frequency counts is only one way of comparing the extent of violent conflict in the Bangsamoro provinces. To deepen the analysis, supplementary measurements are needed to ascertain the intensity of conflict incidence and effects. For example, looking at conflict incidents alone will always place Maguindanao, including the city of Cotabato, on the top spot as it is the most populous and the second largest in terms of area.

However, when we assess conflict incidence per capita or per 100,000 persons and conflict density or per 1,000 square kilometers we can neutralize the imbalance created by population and area and arrive at a supplementary analysis that opens up a wholly new narrative.¹¹

Indeed, **Figure 3 on page 22**, shows that as of 2019, Maguindanao was the most conflict-ridden province in the Bangsamoro, a wide gap separating it from Lanao del Sur, Sulu, and Basilan. Tawi-Tawi was the least conflict-affected. However, **Figure 4** shows that per 100,000 persons, Basilan had a higher concentration of conflicts (80) than Maguindanao (70) and that, surprisingly, very little differentiated Sulu (50), Tawi-Tawi (43), and Lanao del Sur (42).

Hence, peacebuilding in Basilan carried a heavier burden and faced a bigger challenge despite the lesser number of incidents. This explains why the dramatic decline in conflict incidence in Basilan in 2019 in contrast to 2018 was significant—it demonstrated a turning point in the volume of violence in the province, in contrast to Sulu.

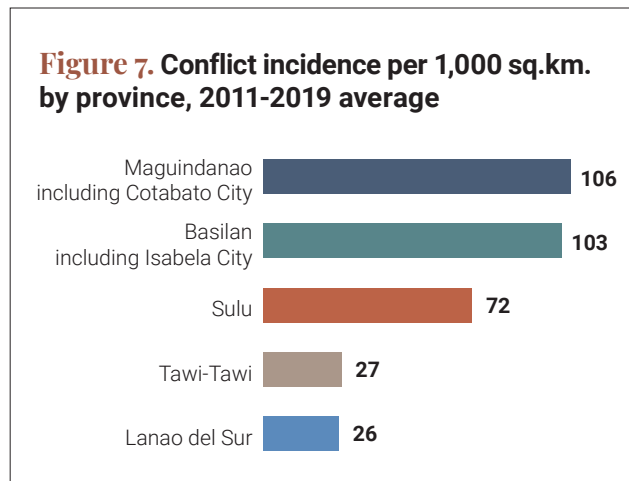
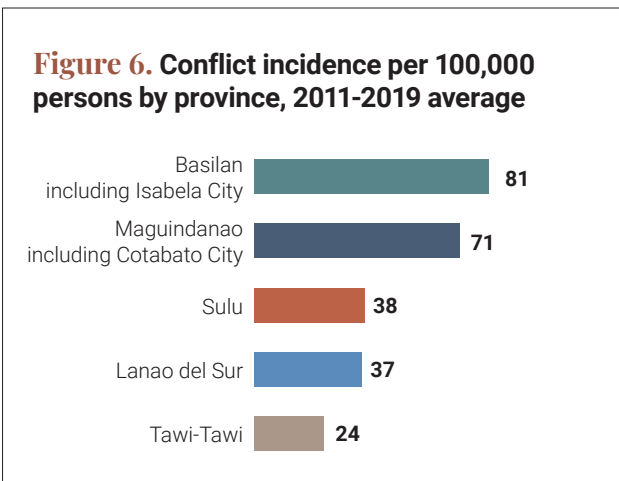
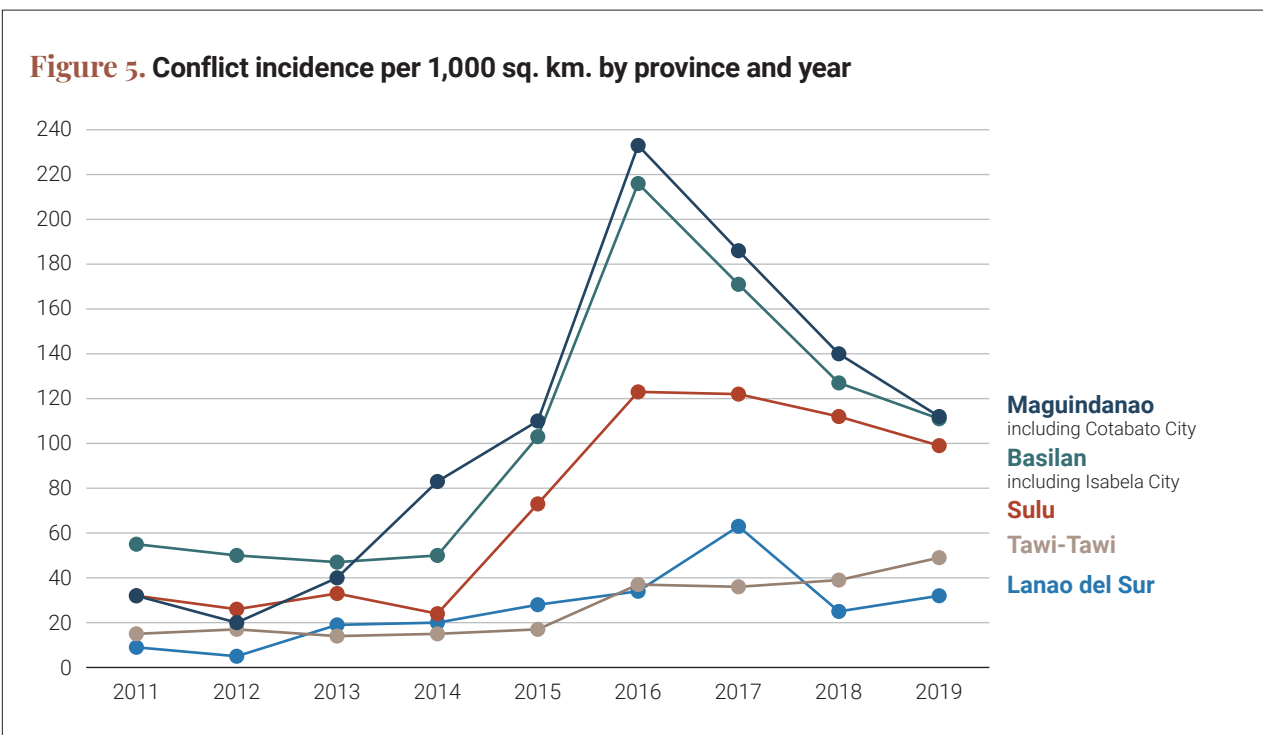


¹¹ Population estimates were used for non-census years.

In terms of conflicts per 1,000 square kilometers (Figure 5), Maguindanao (112) and Basilan (111) had the same level of density in 2019. Sulu followed with 99. Figures 4 and 5 also confirmed an uptick in conflicts in Tawi-Tawi and Lanao del Sur in 2019.

Averaging the number of conflicts per 100,000 population and per 1,000 square kilometers across nine years (2011 to 2019) provides a

snapshot of the conflict situation in each of the five Bangsamoro provinces and in relation to the others. (See Figures 6 and 7). Conflict, in terms of population and area, was most prevalent in Basilan and Maguindanao. It was less intense in the three other provinces, but with some similarities. For instance, Sulu and Lanao del Sur had nearly the same number of conflicts per 100,000 persons, and Tawi-Tawi and Lanao del Sur per 1,000 square kilometers.



Box 2

Peace dawns in Basilan

Just an hour away by fastcraft from Zamboanga City in the Mindanao mainland, Basilan is the second biggest island group in the Sulu archipelago. Rich in natural resources, it boasts of rich fishing grounds and agricultural products, notably, rubber.^a

For many years, however, Basilan had greatly suffered from the violence wreaked by the Abu Sayyaf, which was founded in the island in 1991. But as of 2019, incidents involving the Abu Sayyaf had significantly fallen. Has Basilan turned a corner?

Declining incidence of conflicts

Conflict incidents in Basilan surged in 2015, hit a peak the year after, then gradually fell in the next three years. (See Figure A, p.29). Illegal drug-related incidents began to rise in 2015. The following year, gender-related issues surged to 105 from a total of only 28 over the 2011-2015 period. At the same time, drug-related incidents nearly tripled to 98.

The number of illicit drug- as well as illegal firearm-related incidents continued to increase in 2017 and 2018 then fell in 2019 but remained as the top drivers of violence in Basilan. On the



other hand, the number of gender-related cases dropped in 2017 and 2018 then rose in 2019.

Incidents with undetermined causes, mostly cases of shooting but also assaults and threats of violence helped push up the number of conflict incidents in 2015 and 2016. Their numbers fell in the next two years then picked up in 2019.

Conflict deaths also rose in 2015 and 2016, then fell in the following years. Rebellion from 2011 to 2015, then violent extremism from 2016 to

^a Provinces, Ministry of Public Works-BARMM, <https://mpw.bangsamoro.gov.ph/provinces/>, accessed 30 November 2020.



A busy market scene in Isabela City, Basilan.
 © Najib Zacaria

2018 were the main causes of conflict deaths. These were violent incidents attributed to the Abu Sayyaf.^b The year 2019 provided a break from this trend, when violent extremism fell to the third place in terms of causes of deaths, after illicit firearms, which ranked first, and clan feuds, second.

Isabela City was the loci of most conflict incidents from 2011 to 2019. It recorded a more dramatic increase and decrease in incidents compared to

Lamitan, the other city in the island and the second biggest source of incidents. (See Figure B, p.29). Wider access to police records in Isabela City led to the recording of more than 500 incidents in 2016. Most of these were gender-related and child abuse cases, illegal drug- and firearm-related incidents, robberies, and conflicts due to intoxication. The number of incidents dropped in the next two years before settling at 227 in 2019. The reduction in incidents in 2017 and 2018 came mainly from

^b Activities of non-state armed groups such as the Abu Sayyaf were tagged as rebellion incidents from 2011 to 2015, then violent extremism from 2016, to reflect the change to identity-driven violence. See Conflict Alert 2018 Report, War and Identity, <https://conflicalert.info/publication/war-and-identity/>

Figure A. Conflict incidents and deaths by year in Basilan including Isabela City

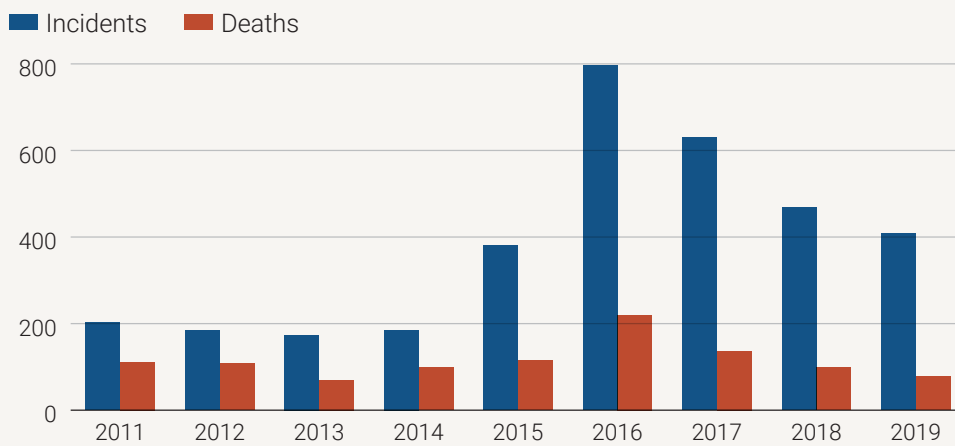
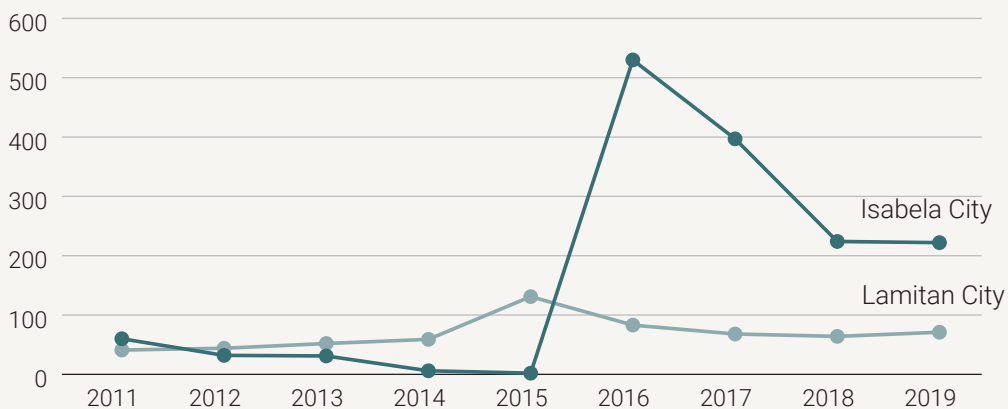


Figure B. Conflict incidents by year in the cities of Isabela and Lamitan



lower counts of gender-related and child abuse cases. In 2019, as civil society groups partnered with the city government and the Isabela City PNP on a barangay-based reporting and referral program for women and children who were victims of abuse, more cases were recorded, while access to police reports improved.

Abu Sayyaf’s shrinking numbers

Incidents involving the Abu Sayyaf were a significant source of violent conflict and cause of conflict deaths from 2011 to 2018. Incidents

averaged 29 annually from 2011 to 2018, and deaths, 41 during the same period. These fell respectively to 15 and nine by 2019. These incidents were mostly clashes with the Philippine military. There were also cases of extortion and incidents related to the illicit shadow economies in drugs, kidnap-for-ransom, and carjacking.

Basilan’s cities and municipalities saw significant reductions in incidents involving the Abu Sayyaf and the number of deaths from these incidents. (See Figure C, p.31). Sumisip, which led in terms of total number of incidents and deaths, recorded only three incidents and four deaths in 2019,



Former combatants of the Abu Sayyaf Group dance in front of a crowd during the Festival of Love and Peace in Mohammad Ajul, Basilan, on 4 October 2019. The former combatants are part of the Program Against Violent Extremism (PAVE) spearheaded by the former ARMM. © Martin San Diego

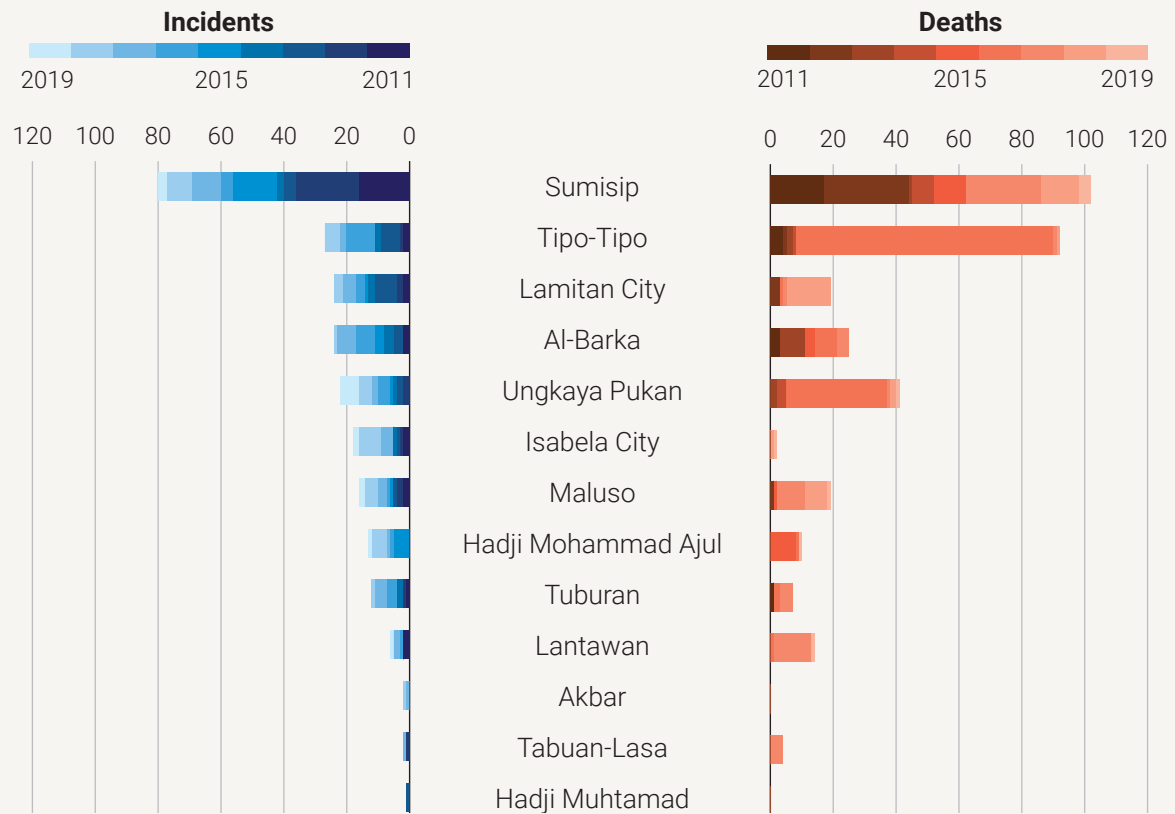
“The decline in Abu Sayyaf-related incidents could be traced to several factors, chief of which was the departure of one of most violent factions led by Abu Sayyaf leader and reported ISIS leader Isnilon Hapilon who perished in the Marawi siege of 2017.”

down from eight and 12, respectively, in 2018. Isabela City and Maluso recorded two incidents each, after seven and four, respectively, in 2018. Isabela City incurred one death in 2019, the same as in 2018 (but none in the previous years), while Maluso had one death after seven in 2018. Lamitan City and six municipalities had zero incidents in 2019. Only Ungkaya Pukan bucked the trend, with six incidents in 2019 from four in 2018. However, there was only one death in 2019 after two in 2018.

The decline in Abu Sayyaf-related incidents could be traced to several factors, chief of which was the departure of one of most violent factions led by Abu Sayyaf leader and reported ISIS leader Isnilon Hapilon who perished in the Marawi siege of 2017.

Other explanations cite the many development projects launched, starting in 2017, or during the first term of Hadjiman ‘Jim’ Hataman-Salliman

Figure C. Number of incidents involving the Abu Sayyaf and number of conflict deaths in these incidents, by city and municipality in Basilan, 2011-2019*



*These were rebellion and violent extremism incidents.

as provincial governor. At the time, the ARMM Regional Governor was Mujiv Hataman, while the mayor of Sumisip was Gulam 'Boy' Hataman. The three are brothers. After the 2019 polls, Jim had won a second term as provincial governor; Mujiv had been elected as Basilan representative; while Jul-Adnan Hataman had replaced Boy, his father, as Sumisip mayor as Boy took over the vice-mayoralty post that Adnan had previously occupied. (See Box 1, p.9).

Among the most impactful of these projects was the 55-kilometer Basilan Transcentral Road or 'peace highway' launched in 2017 and funded by the ARMM. The road is designed to open up Basilan's interior areas, particularly in Sumisip,

which were once controlled by the Abu Sayyaf.^c The road is scheduled for completion in 2021. Other infrastructure projects aimed to connect other localities through roads and to improve agricultural production.

Another program, the 'Program Against Violent Extremism for Peace' that was launched in 2018, was designed to encourage surrenders among Abu Sayyaf members. Under the auspices of the program, a one-story facility called 'Baithus Salam' or House of Peace was built inside the Army camp in Isabela City in 2019 to work on the rehabilitation of surrenderers.^d Former Abu Sayyaf fighters were also sent on exposure trips to Luzon to learn about modern methods of agriculture.^e

Right direction

Ranked against other provinces in terms of conflict incidence per 100,000 persons and per 1,000 square-kilometer area (see Figure 4 and 5, pp.25-26), Basilan ranked high in 2019 along with Maguindanao. Data in 2019 were comparable to figures in 2015, when incidents began to increase: 80 in 2019 and 82 in 2015 per 100,000 persons; and 111 in 2019 and 103 in 2015 per 1000 square kilometers.

However, when it came to conflict deaths, Basilan placed in the middle. (See Figure 19 and 20, p.79). The 15 deaths per capita and 21 deaths in density terms in 2019 compared with 16 and 19, respectively, in 2013. These resulted from the lower death counts in incidents involving the Abu Sayyaf.

Basilan's incident numbers in per capita and density terms remained high, but in terms of human costs, the province's leaders certainly deserve a pat on the back.

“Basilan’s incident numbers in per capita and density terms remained high, but in terms of human costs, the province’s leaders certainly deserve a pat on the back.”


^c T. Garcia Jr., ARMM launches program vs. violent extremism, PNA, 17 April 2018, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1032269>; Construction of P322-M 'transcentral road' starts, PTVNews, 5 November 2017, <https://ptvnews.ph/construction-p322-m-transcentral-road-starts/>;

J. Unson, Construction of transcentral road in Basilan to finish soon, Philstar.com, 5 Sept. 2020, <https://www.philstar.com/nation/2020/09/05/2040317/construction-transcentral-road-basilan-finish-soon>

^d J. Alipala, Basilan opens 'House of Peace' to help ex-Abus start annex, Inquirer.net, 18 Aug. 2019, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1154814/basilan-opens-house-of-peace-to-help-ex-abus-start-aneu>

^e R. Falcatan, Basilan sends Abu Sayyaf surrenderers to various cities to learn livelihood, Rappler, 13 November 2019, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/basilan-sends-abu-sayyaf-surrenderers-cities-learn-livelihood>

Causes of Violent Conflict

Philippine Army troops stationed in Basilan head to a mission site on 3 October 2019. Many of the ISIS-linked Abu Sayyaf fighters who were involved in the five-month battle in Marawi City in 2017, including their leader Isnilon Hapilon, were from Basilan.  **Martin San Diego**



Previous Conflict Alert reports underlined how multi-causal conflict incidents had become the norm in the Bangsamoro due to the conflation of issues underlying the conflict-to-peace transition in the region. While conflicts owing to a singular cause remained dominant, multi-causal incidents were catching up. In 2019, multi-causal incidents accounted for 32% of the total number of incidents whose cause or causes could be determined, up from 30% in 2018. Single-cause incidents made up 50%, down from 54%. (See Figure 8, p.36).

Multiple causes of violence

Identity-political issues were the chief cause of incidents ascribed with multiple causes as of 2019, even if these had trended down after hitting a peak in 2017.¹² (See Figure 9, p.36). Violent extremism was the most common form, as it harnesses identity, whether religious, ethnic, or clan in waging violence in pursuit of political aims, in alliance with organizations that espouse the same beliefs or goals. Clashes between rebel groups were another form. These feuds aligned rebels according to family or clan ties. Identity-political issues overtook common crimes-shadow economy issues as the top multi-causal combination in 2017 as violent extremism raged, best manifested by the takeover of Marawi City by the Maute Group-Abu Sayyaf alliance.

Identity-shadow economy issues followed, exemplified by feuds between clans or by grudge-instigated conflicts between individuals and the use of illicit firearms to attack the other party. A few

Table 1.
Incidents by number of causes

Causes	2	3	4	5
Incidents	735	97	10	3

incidents were clan feuds linked to illegal drugs. The number of incidents rose in 2019 from the previous year due to more clan feuding, grudge-fueled conflicts, and illegal drug-related incidents.

The third top cause of incidents were common crimes-shadow economy issues. These were mostly robberies and carjacking, mostly of motorcycles, and the use of illegal firearms in committing these crimes.

Conflict causes can be in combinations of twos, such as illegal drugs and firearms when an arrest for drugs also results in the confiscation of firearms, or in threes, such as a land conflict that intensifies into a clan feud fueled by the use of firearms. Causes in twos outnumber those in threes by nearly eight times. (See Table 1).

Nearly half of incidents with two and three causes had an identity issue as one of the causes. Identity issues, as established through conflict strings research, have a high propensity for producing other episodes of violence.¹³ In a clan feud, for instance, the killing of a member of a clan provokes retaliation by other members of that clan, which then triggers a cycle of revenge killings with the other clan involved in the conflict. The increase in identity-shadow economy issues in 2019 serves as warning of more violence, unless the appropriate interventions are applied to disrupt or cut the conflict strings.

¹² For a discussion of multi-causal conflicts in 2017, see International Alert Philippines, Conflict Alert 2018: War and Identity, Quezon City: International Alert Philippines, 2018, p. 30-32, <https://conflictalert.info/publication/war-and-identity/>

¹³ N. D. Rosa, Disrupting conflict strings in subnational contexts: Experience from Muslim Mindanao, Philippines, Quezon City: International Alert Philippines, 2014, <http://conflictalert.info/publication/disruptingconflict-strings-subnational-contexts-experience-muslim-mindanao-philippines>

Figure 8. Percent of single-cause and multi-causal incidents by year

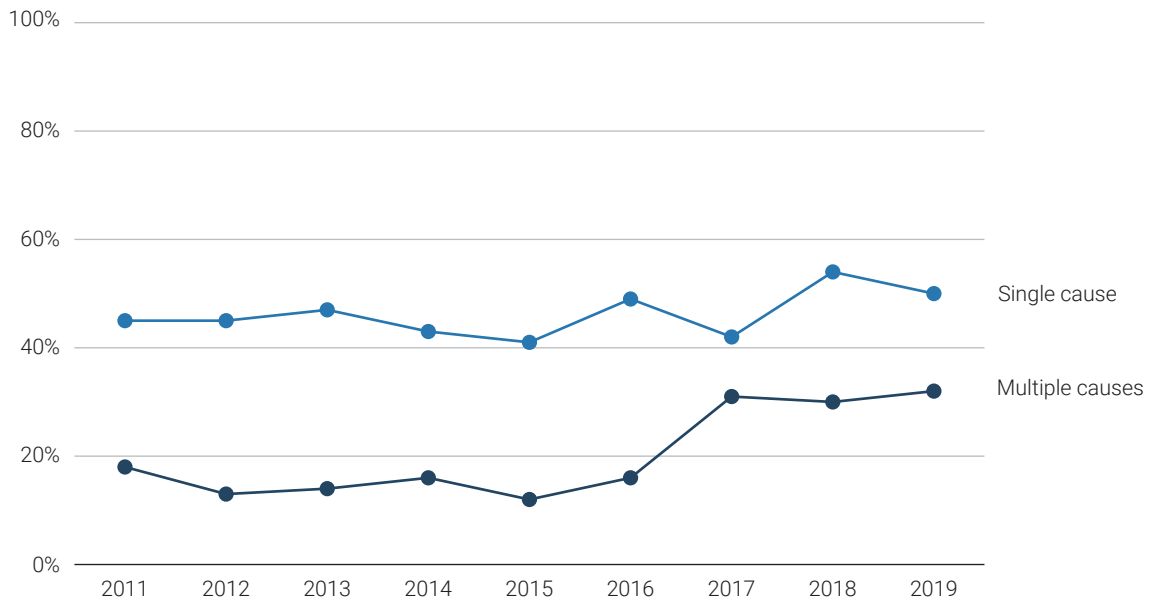
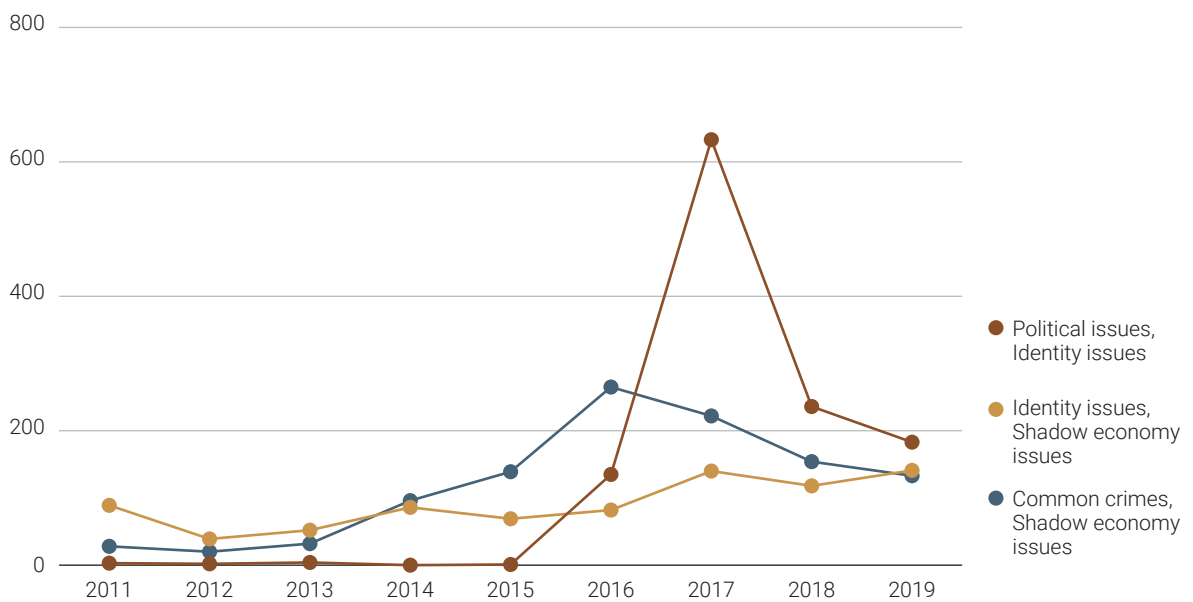
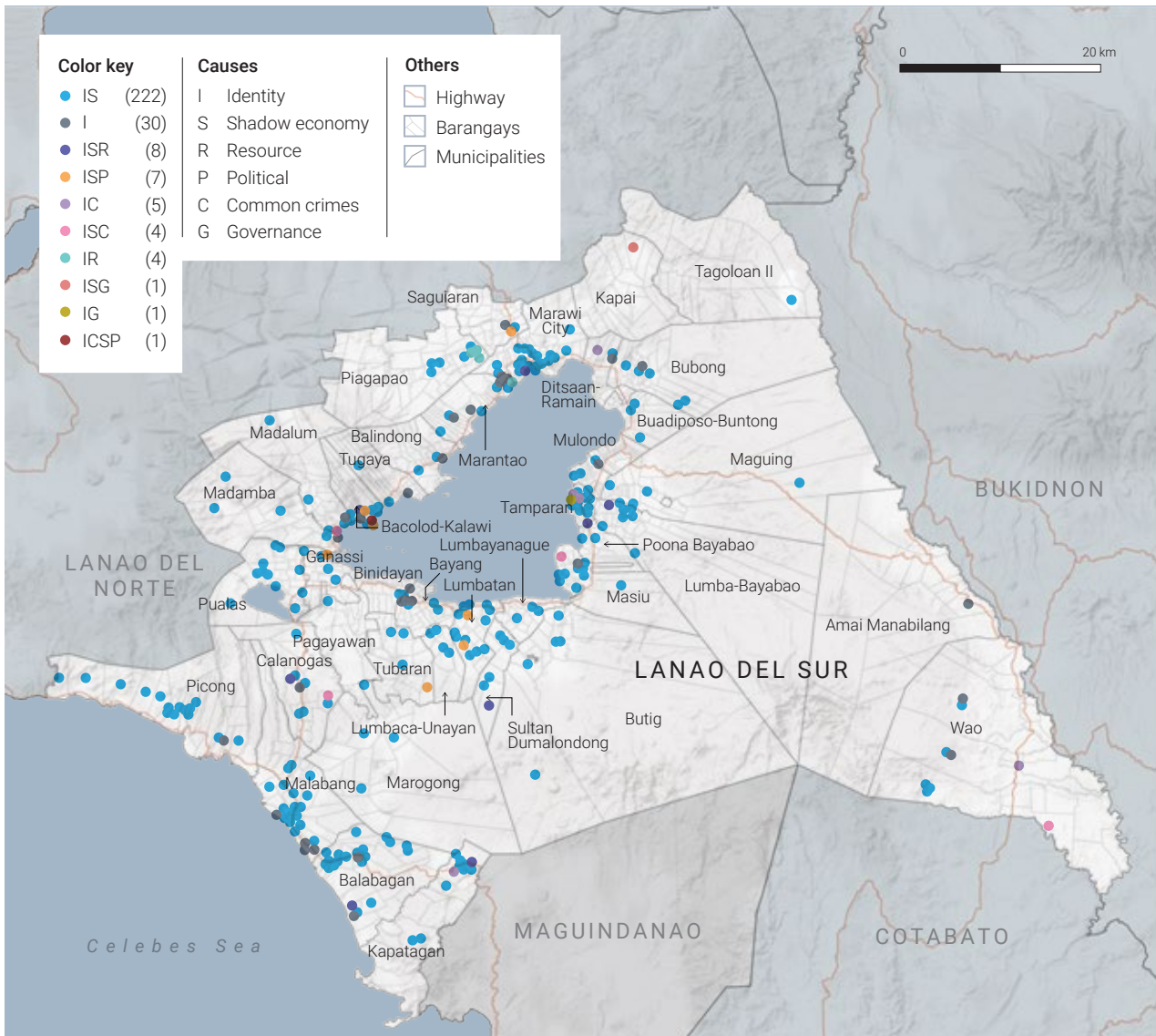


Figure 9. Multiple causes of conflict incidents by year





Map set 1

Multi-causality of clan feuds in BARMM, 2011-2019

From 2011 to 2019, Conflict Alert monitored a total of 689 clan feuds in the Bangsamoro. With these maps, we show which areas in the five provinces of the region including the cities of Cotabato and Isabela, were affected by clan feuding. We also show the distribution of clan feuds as standalone cause and clan feuds that had merged with other causes.

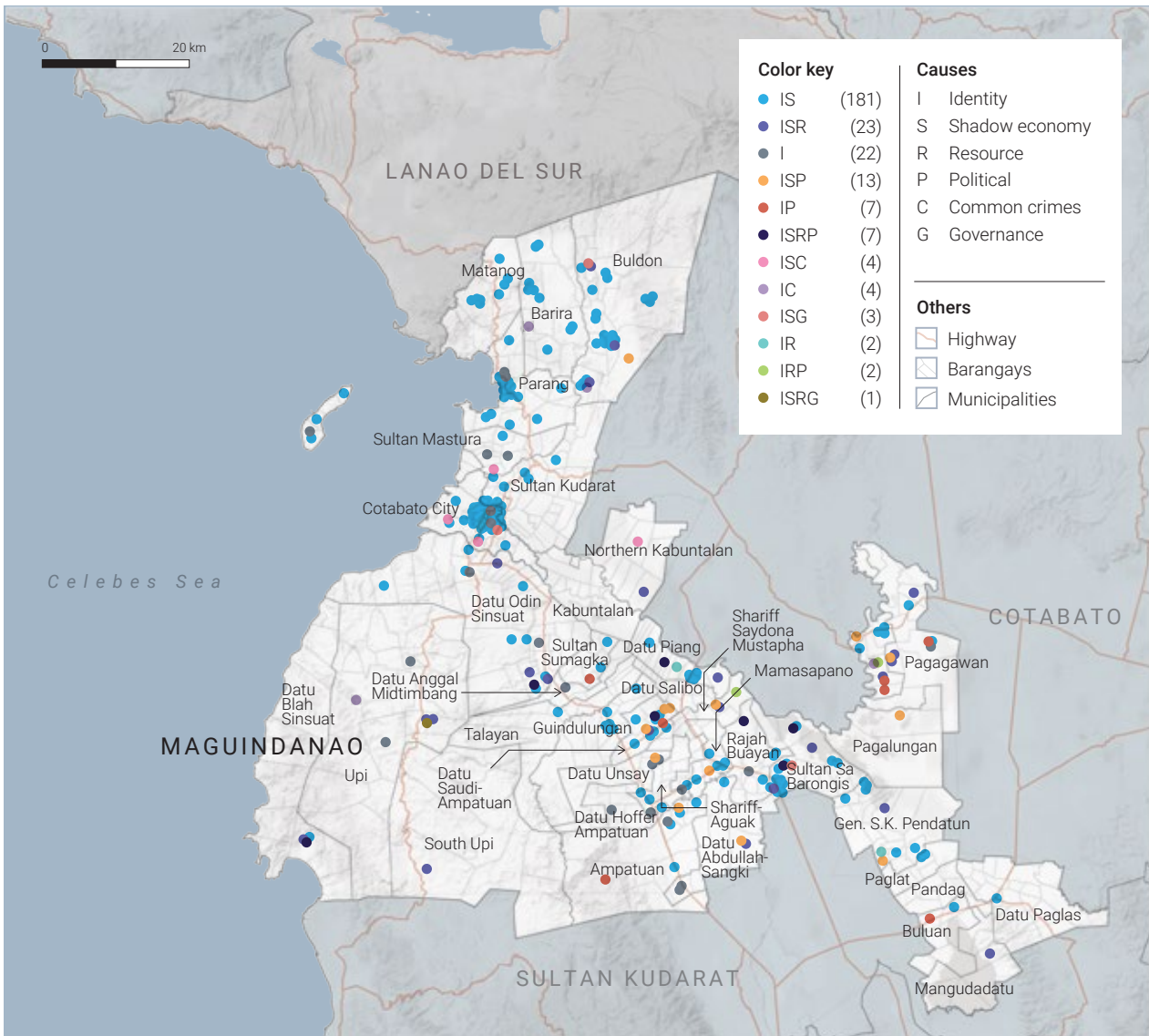
Lanao del Sur

Lanao del Sur had a total of 283 clan feuds from 2011 to 2019, the highest among the five provinces. Clan feuding aided by the use of firearms (identity-shadow economy issues) were the cause of 78% of incidents. Gunfights marred the peace in many places, but Balabagan, Malabang, Picong, Pualas, Lumbatan, and Marawi City were the most affected, recording at least 10 within the nine-year period.

Clan feuds due to land conflicts aided by the use firearms (identity-shadow economy-resource issues) numbered eight over the 2011-2019 period and were recorded in Marawi City, Bacolod-

Kalawi, Calanogas, Balabagan, Kapatagan, Sultan sa Dumalondong, Lumba-Bayabao, and Poona Bayabao. There were five clan feuds due to land conflicts (identity-resource issues) in Piagapo and one in Marantao.

Clan feuds due to political issues and featured the use of firearms (identity-shadow economy-political issues) numbered seven and took place in Saguiaran, Bacolod-Kalawi, Ganassi, Lumbatan, and Tubaran. Political triggers included elections, and grudges between and among elected officials, members of rebel groups, and groups identified with extremist violence.



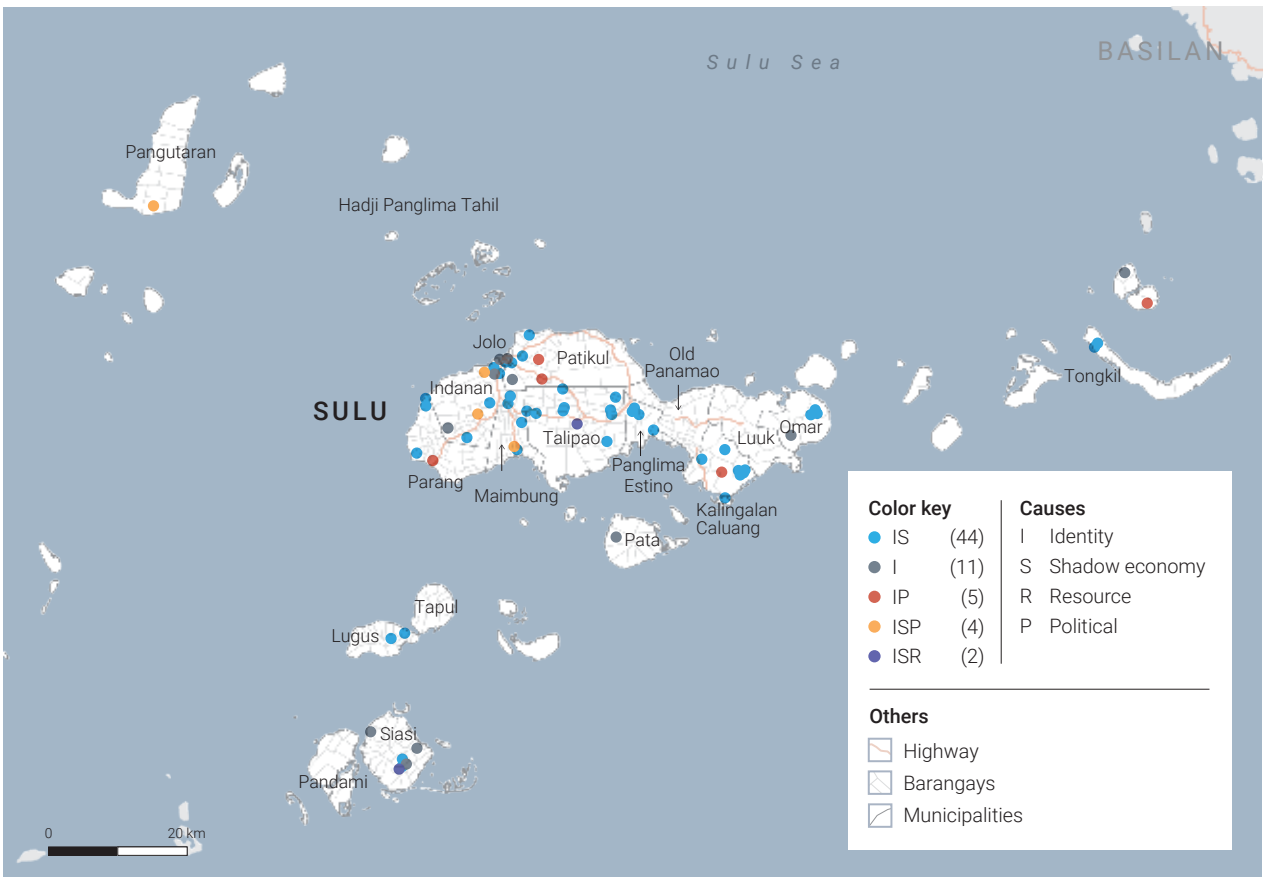
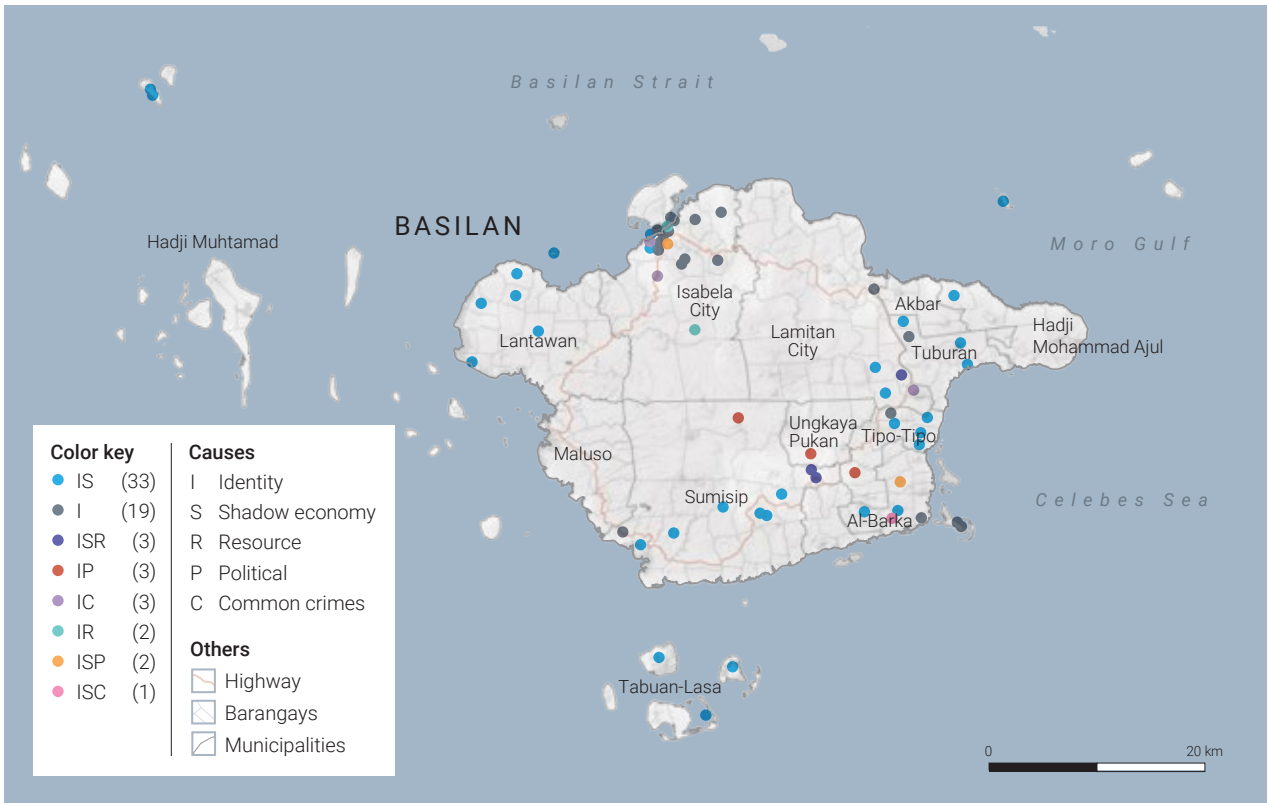
Maguindanao

Maguindanao logged a total of 269 clan feuds from 2011 to 2019. Clan feuds that combined with other causes comprised 92%, while those whose other triggers were not determined comprised the other 8%.

The use of firearms, a shadow economy issue, was common in incidents with multiple causes. It figured in clan feuds (identity-shadow economy issues); in clan feuds due to resource issues such as land (identity-shadow economy-resource issues); and in clan feuds triggered by political issues (identity-shadow economy-political issues) such as elections. The use of firearms also marked clan feuds linked to land conflicts among the MILF and BIFF (identity-shadow economy-resource-political issues).

Assassinations and gunfights attributed to clan feuding were common in Cotabato City, and in the corridor to the north comprised by Sultan Mastura and the Iranun municipalities of Parang, Matanog, Barira and Buldon. They were also monitored in the province’s southeast, particularly in Sultan sa Barongis.

The southeast was also the location of bloody clan feuds due to land conflict, including those between members of the MILF and BIFF. Incidents took place in Ampatuan, Datu Abdullah Sangki, Datu Piang, Datu Saudi-Ampatuan, Gen. S. K. Pendatun, Mamasapano, Pagalungan, Rajah Buayan, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, and Sultan Sa Barongis.



Sources for maps: Rivers and roads: OpenStreetMap; Administrative boundaries: Philippine Statistics Authority 2015; Base map: Stamen; Clan feuding incidents: International Alert Philippines

Basilan including Isabela City, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi

Clan feuds were less a feature of the Bangsamoro island provinces' conflict landscape than in the mainland provinces of Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao. There were 66 clan feuds in Basilan, 66 in Sulu, and five in Tawi-Tawi from 2011 to 2019. The use of firearms figured in many of the incidents in Basilan and Sulu and in one in Tawi-Tawi.

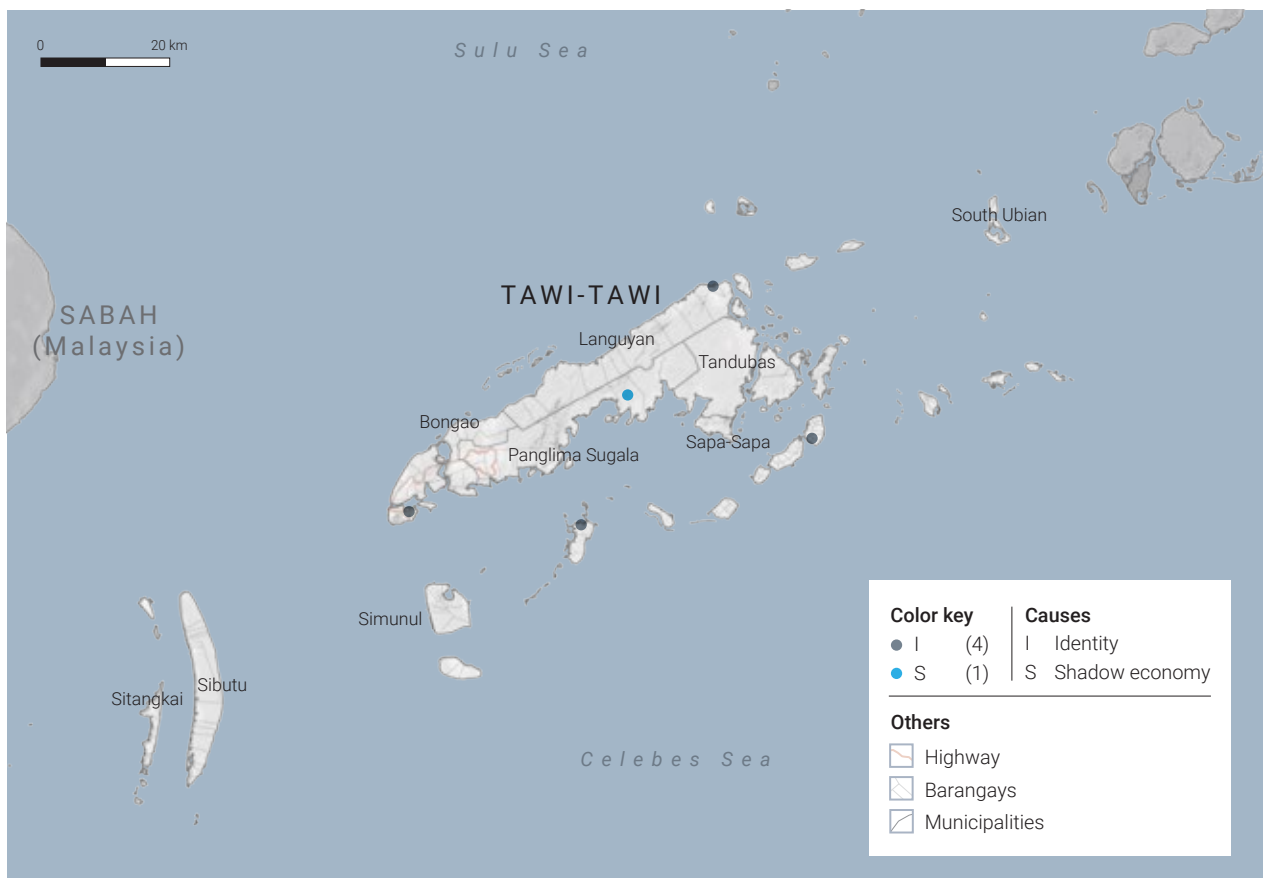
In Basilan, clan feuds that featured the use of firearms (identity-shadow economy issues) were monitored in Lantawan, Sumisip, and in the corridor formed by Akbar, Tuburan, Tipo-Tipo and Al-Barka.. There were at

least five clan feuds stemming from land conflicts, of which three featured the use of firearms (identity-shadow economy-resource issues). Of these three, two incidents were monitored in Sumisip and one in Lamitan City. Isabela City saw most of the clan feuds (as a singular cause) and was the site of the two clan feuds due to land conflicts (identity-resource issues).

In Sulu, clan feuds aided by the use of firearms were well dispersed over the mainland and in the island municipalities but were most numerous in Indanan, Talipao, Panglima Estino, and

Kalingalan Caluang. Clan feuds also developed due to political issues such as elections and grudges between members of rebel groups (identity-political issues), and in other cases, also involved the use of firearms (identity-shadow economy-political issues). Incidents were recorded in Patikul, Indanan, Parang, Maimbung, Kalingalan Caluang, Pangutaran, and Tongkil.

In Tawi-Tawi, clan feuds were monitored in Bongao, Languyan, Panglima Sugala, and Tandubas. Panglima Sugala also recorded a clan feud that was determined to have used firearms.



*Mapun and Turtle Islands, located northwest of Bongao, are not shown on the map. These towns did not log any clan feuds.

Singular causes of conflict

In terms of singular causes, shadow economy issues have stood firmly as the leading cause of violence in the Bangsamoro. Less in frequency but no less prominent are identity issues, political issues, governance issues, resource issues, and common crimes.

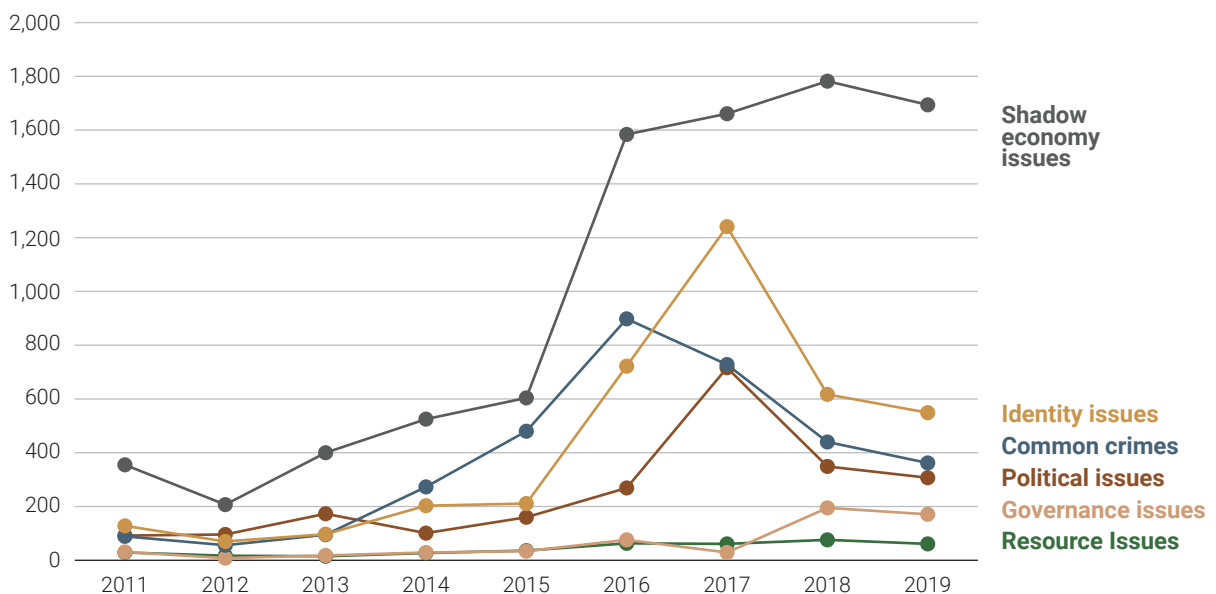
Declines in certain issues caused reductions in the number of violent conflict incidents in the Bangsamoro in 2019 from 2018. (See Figure 10). There were less incidents due to illicit firearms, illegal gambling, and kidnap-for-ransom, which are shadow economy issues, and violent extremism, which is considered both an identity and a political issue.

There were less incidents too from personal grudges or gender-related violence. The number of police arrests, which Conflict Alert categorizes as a governance issue, declined as crimes such as robberies and intentional damage to properties fell. There were also less conflicts over land, a resource issue.

There were more recorded cases of violence due to illegal drugs (shadow economy issue), clan feuding (identity issue), illegal logging and fishing (resource issues), and the May 2019 election (political issue). However, these were not high enough to offset the reductions in the other issues.

“In terms of singular causes, shadow economy issues have stood firmly as the leading cause of violence in the Bangsamoro.”

Figure 10. Singular causes of conflict incidents by year

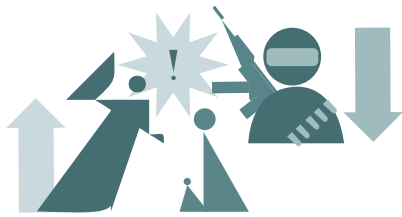




An anti-illegal drug operation conducted by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency in Cotabato City.
📍 Ferdinandh Cabrera

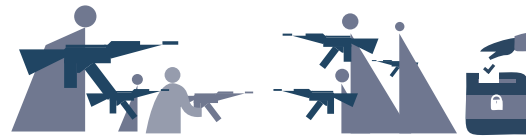
Provincial summaries

An examination of conflict causes by province explains why violence flared or subsided in that locality. But it is important to note that violence can be induced, for example, by the implementation of a national government campaign such as the Duterte government's 'war' on drugs and illegal gambling, or by a local government initiative. It can also be concealed, like gender violence and child abuses, due to a reluctance to report these to the police and because access to data on cases handled by the police's women's and children's protection desks are restricted by the confidentiality provisions of RA 9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004 and the law's implementing rules and regulations.¹⁴ As mentioned in the Methodology section, conflicts can be due to multiple causes that in turn raise the individual tabulation of each specific cause. These considerations are crucial in examining the 2019 conflict profiles of the Bangsamoro provinces:



Basilan and the city of Isabela

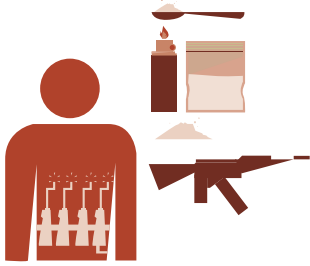
recorded more gender-related and child abuse cases as a program that encouraged reporting of such cases was implemented in Isabela City. There was an uptick in robberies and also more violence due to clan feuding and fighting between and among individuals due to personal grudges. However, these were offset by lower levels of illegal drug- and firearm-related incidents and conflicts that had a bigger impact on human security. More importantly, violent extremism incidents or those involving the Abu Sayyaf plummeted. Basilan presents the best Cinderella story of a return from the abyss of war and uncertainty towards some level of tranquility and security.



Maguindanao and the city of Cotabato

saw more illegal-drug related incidents and clan feuds. Violent incidents related to the May 2019 local election were higher than the 2016 midterm and the 2018 synchronized barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections. However, extremist violence involving the BIFF fell. Cases of gender-related violence dropped for the second straight year, as well as the numbers for illicit firearm-related incidents, robberies, illegal gambling, and violence arising from personal grudges.

¹⁴ These issues were thoroughly discussed in International Alert Philippines, Conflict Alert 2019: War Makes States, Quezon City: International Alert Philippines, 2019, p. 39-43, <http://conflicalert.info/publication/warmakes-states/>



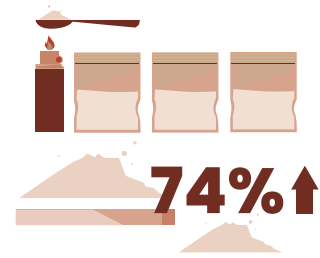
Sulu

experienced more incidents related to illegal drugs and firearms, arrests, and feuds between clans and between individuals. Violent incidents related to the May 2019 local elections outnumbered those recorded in 2016. Despite the suicide bombings that made the news headlines, there were actually less extremist violence involving the Abu Sayyaf. The province also saw a reduction in illegal gambling incidents, robberies, kidnappings, and gender-related cases.



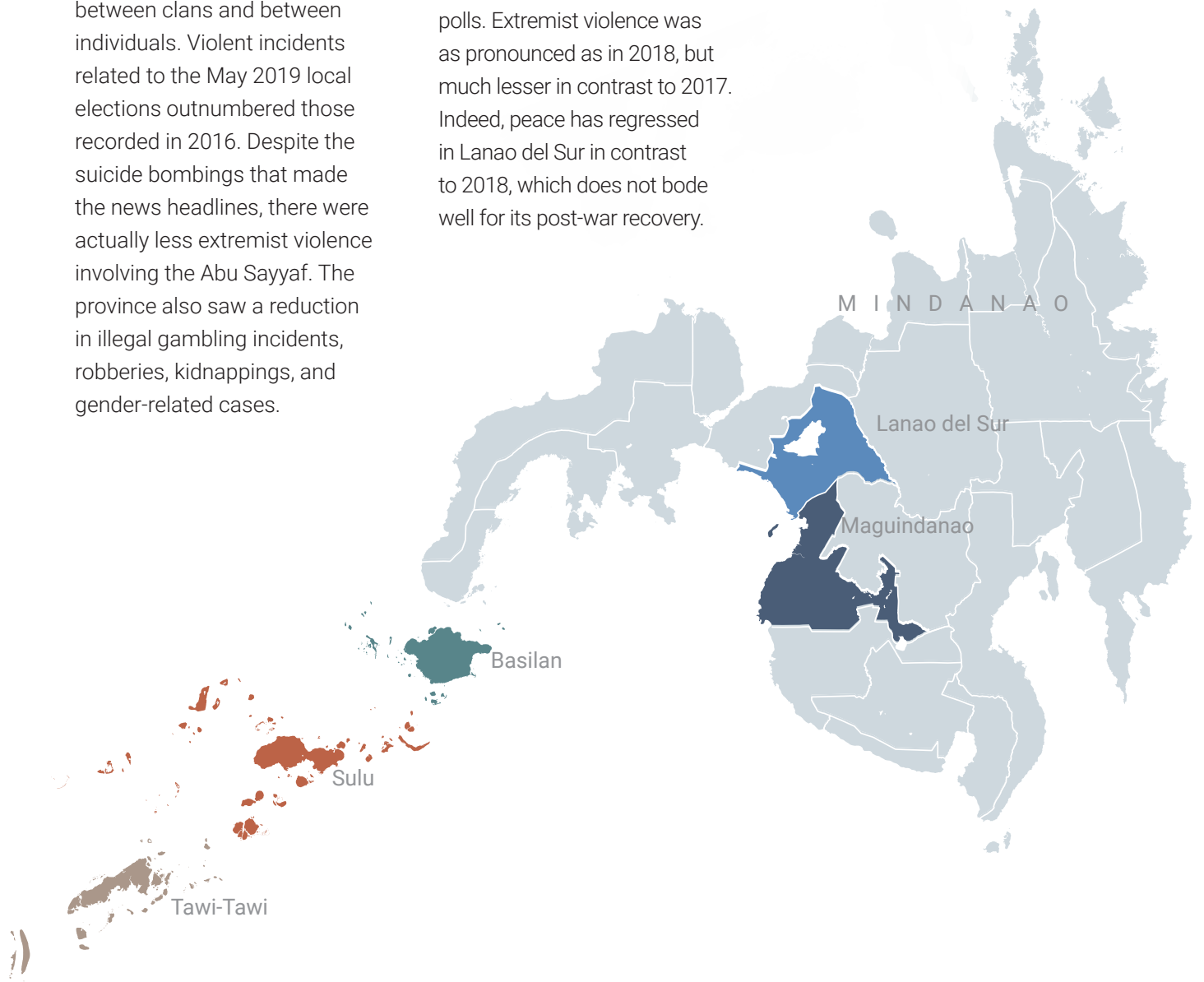
Lanao del Sur

experienced more incidents involving illegal drugs and firearms, clan feuding, individuals fighting due to grudges, gender-related violence, and police arrests. Election-related incidents were higher compared to either the 2016 or 2018 polls. Extremist violence was as pronounced as in 2018, but much lesser in contrast to 2017. Indeed, peace has regressed in Lanao del Sur in contrast to 2018, which does not bode well for its post-war recovery.




Tawi-tawi

tallied less robberies and incidents related to illegal firearms, human trafficking, and gender violence. However, it posted a 74% increase in illegal-drug related incidents, most of which took place in Bongao, the provincial capital. There were also more illegal gambling cases.





A woman in a remote area of Bunawan, Agusan del Sur.  **Veejay Villafranca**

Box 3

Seeking more data and better methods for studying gender-based violence

Disaggregated, longitudinal, and spatial data on gender-based violence are particularly difficult to acquire, making it necessary to widen the sources of data and information through the use of various methods and analytical approaches.^a The most important barrier to data gathering is the social and cultural normative constraints faced by victims in reporting incidents of domestic and other forms of violence committed against them. This is not only specific to Muslim women; the same holds true for most women who experience violence.

^a Conflict Alert 2019: War Makes States, Quezon City: International Alert Philippines, 2019, p. 39-43, <http://conflictalert.info/publication/war-makes-states/>

The National Demographic and Health Survey in 2008 registered 3.31% of women who experienced any form of violence, whether physical or sexual, in the Philippines, in contrast to 3.99% globally.^b This figure nearly doubled in 2017 as 6% of women who experienced violence was able to report to the police.^c

More recently, the Philippine National Police reported that they received more than 3,600 cases of violence against women and children across Luzon during the COVID-19 lockdown period between March and June 2020.^d The pronouncement is a cause for serious concern but the required actions are wanting because of the lack of regular, systematic, and longitudinal monitoring of incidents towards building a robust dataset. Policy reforms in need of a wider perspective and deeper analysis require public access to time-series data as to whether or not there was an increase or decrease in incidents, the location of incidents from city-municipality to the provincial level, and their sources. More data are also needed to determine causal dynamics, strings of conflict reproduced by gender-based violence, and finally, actions taken by whom, and for what purposes.

There are institutional barriers as well. For example, Alert has seen how in the case of the Philippines's RA 9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004, the same rule system that aims to uphold the rights of women and their protection from abusive and violent behavior acts as the same formidable impediment to accessing the sort of disaggregated data that are important in understanding the violent conditions women face.

"... the same rule system that aims to uphold the rights of women and their protection from abusive and violent behavior acts as the same formidable impediment to accessing the sort of disaggregated data that are important in understanding the violent conditions women face."

These barriers need to be removed to prevent women and girls from experiencing domestic violence or from suffering disproportionately during and after violent conflicts. More recently, the added vulnerability posed by the COVID-19 pandemic has magnified existing inequalities and weakened social networks that provide relief and protection, making women more vulnerable to new cycles of sexual violence and exploitation.

This issue is not new. The 2019 Conflict Alert report underscored that there should be no barriers to accessing quantitative data that can be used to test association and causality between gender-based violence and other variables such as education, occupation, shelter, and household

^b T. Palermo, J. Bleck & A. Peterman, Tip of the Iceberg: Reporting and Gender-Based Violence in Developing Countries (Table 1), *American Journal of Epidemiology*, Volume 179, Issue 5, 1 March 2014, p. 602–612, <https://academic.oup.com/aje/article/179/5/602/143069#86227174>

^c Philippine Statistics Authority and ICF, Philippines National Demographic and Health Survey 2017, Table 15.18, Quezon City, Philippines and Rockville, Maryland, USA, <https://psa.gov.ph/content/national-demographic-and-health-survey-ndhs>

^d C. M. Ramos, Over 3,600 cases of violence against women, children reported since lockdown – Duterte report, *Inquirer.net*, 8 June 2020, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1288275/over-3600-cases-of-violence-against-women-children-reported-since-lockdown-duterte-report>.

roles, to name a few. Accurate, context-specific information, and longitudinal data are crucial in determining the magnitude of the problem, establishing baselines, and monitoring changes over time vis-a-vis the interventions applied. These are important in ensuring that appropriate programming, policies, and practice are enacted.

Data serve to raise public awareness of the serious risk of violence and abuse that women face especially in conditions of violent conflict. This can only be guaranteed by allowing access to the information needed to create positive reforms and changes that benefit women.

What other variables can we use to determine violence against women?

Proxy data are potentially available from many sources that can be useful for thematic, qualitative analysis in the absence of comprehensive statistical time-series data. Alert has had some experience in gathering data from alternative sources such as hospital medical services/ emergency room intakes, legal aid services, research and documentation centers, early response bodies at the community level including local government units, emergency response services that cater to general emergencies or organizations that respond to abused women, such as shelters, crisis hotlines, and nongovernment women's groups and advocacy organizations, among others.

However, inherent limitations to these data types include selection bias, differences in methodologies

with respect to categories and definitions of violence, incompatible time frames and population groups that render comparative analysis methodologically unsound. They also bring about data reliability issues because statistics derived from these records depend on their completeness and the consistency with which definitions and rules are applied.^e At most they provide leads that can be pursued to get a deeper analysis of the causal dynamics in play.

Combining quantitative and qualitative data

Q-squared methodologies (combining quantitative and qualitative data) have mitigated some of these methodological problems and red flags. Alert discovered an interesting gender link to violent conflict when it studied the effect of demographic characteristics on violent extremism in its research on **why some communities in Muslim Mindanao are more vulnerable to the influence of violent extremism than others.**^f In the examination of the association between poor households and violent conflict (including violent extremism), the data showed that localities with higher poverty incidence are correlated with higher share of female-headed households (FHH).^g The data also showed that cities and municipalities in the BARMM with higher share of poor female-headed households, on average, have relatively lower violent extremism incidence than other localities. Conversely, lower share of FHH observed have higher numbers of violent extremism incidence.

This indicates that VE incidents behave inversely when associated with the share of

^e See Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women—Statistical Surveys produced by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, 2014.

^f An examination of the drivers of violent extremism using an extreme case study methodology to generate comparative empirical evidence about the emergence, key vectors, and dynamics of violent extremism in Mindanao

^g Data on poor female-headed households in Muslim Mindanao were harvested from the Department of Social Welfare and Development's National Household Targeting Office with reference period of end of 2017. Updates are done every 4 years; the next dataset will be out in 2021.



A woman walks toward her family after washing clothes in the lake in Marawi City. © Veejay Villafranca

poor FHH and that the impact of FHH might be more empowering and contributory to peacebuilding than the simplistic binary depiction of women either as victims or enablers.

Use of surveys

Household surveys can also capture the experiences and the views of a larger representative sample of women, whether they were victims of violence and abuse or not. Perceptions about the situation can be assessed in contrast to the actual evidence in police blotters and incident reports.

A redundant process of monitoring perceptions and the constant use of repeat-surveys can also generate data that is bigger, more reliable, and allows comparative analysis across time for a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis of the gender links to violence.

The way questions are constructed and administered in these surveys often determine whether crucial information can be generated without placing the respondents in a vulnerable or disadvantaged position. For example, Alert's on-going survey to parse the link between gender-based violence and violent extremism asks respondents about incidents they know of, rather than incidents they themselves encountered, including if they belong to a household where an adult female is the sole income earner and decision-maker. This way of phrasing questions has become a useful tool in estimating the range and prevalence of gender-based violence.

In sum, the challenge of access to robust, systematic, and longitudinal data is both an institutional and a technical problem. Addressing this requires progressive approaches and innovative research methodologies that can aid development of smarter policies and development programs against gender-based violence.

Flashpoints in the Bangsamoro





Young people crowd a street on the outskirts of Marawi City in November 2018. Commercial districts began to mushroom in these areas a year after the five-month battle between ISIS and government forces that destroyed the city, displaced thousands of families, and disrupted the Bangsamoro region. © Martin San Diego

While a general conflict profile provides a quick situationer, it can hide granular details that can turn out to be very important. The Conflict Alert annual report provides an opportunity to focus on the evolving events that do not march in step with the general trend each year, revealing flashpoints that are happening in many pockets and corners of the Bangsamoro. The following trends are critical:

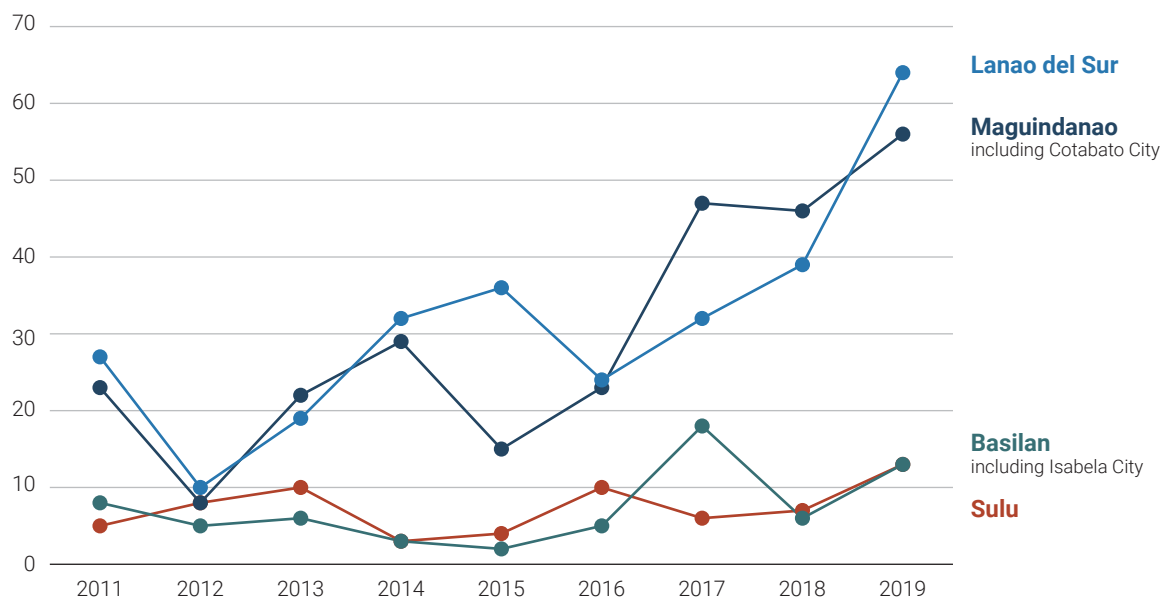
Clan feuds are increasing

Clan feuding reared its head once more in many cities and municipalities across the Bangsamoro. (See Figure 11). As expected, clan feuds led to strings of violence due to retaliation by the parties involved. The highest concentrations of clan feuds were in Lanao del Sur (64, up by 64%) and in Maguindanao, including Cotabato City (56, up by 22%). Picong, Lanao del Sur recorded six in 2019, the most by any municipality in the province and a drastic turnaround from zero incidents in 2018. In Marawi City, and Marantao and Lumbatan municipalities in Lanao del Sur, there were five incidents each from just two in 2018. Both local government officials coming from prominent

families and clans as well as protagonists from lesser-known families and clans were targeted for assassination and ambushes in 2019.

In Maguindanao, violent clan feuds erupted in Mamasapano, Pagalungan, and Guindulungan with reports of 14 incidents in 2019 compared to none in 2018. Mamasapano lies within the ‘SPMS Box’ in the province’s southeast, with Pagalungan and Guindulungan contiguous to this area. The SPMS Box and surrounding areas host the MILF, BIFF, and private armed groups. Some of the clashes in the three municipalities involved MILF commanders or their men or clans affiliated with them. Meanwhile, in Parang, located in the northern part of Maguindanao, the number of incidents doubled in 2019.

Figure 11. Clan feuds by province and year



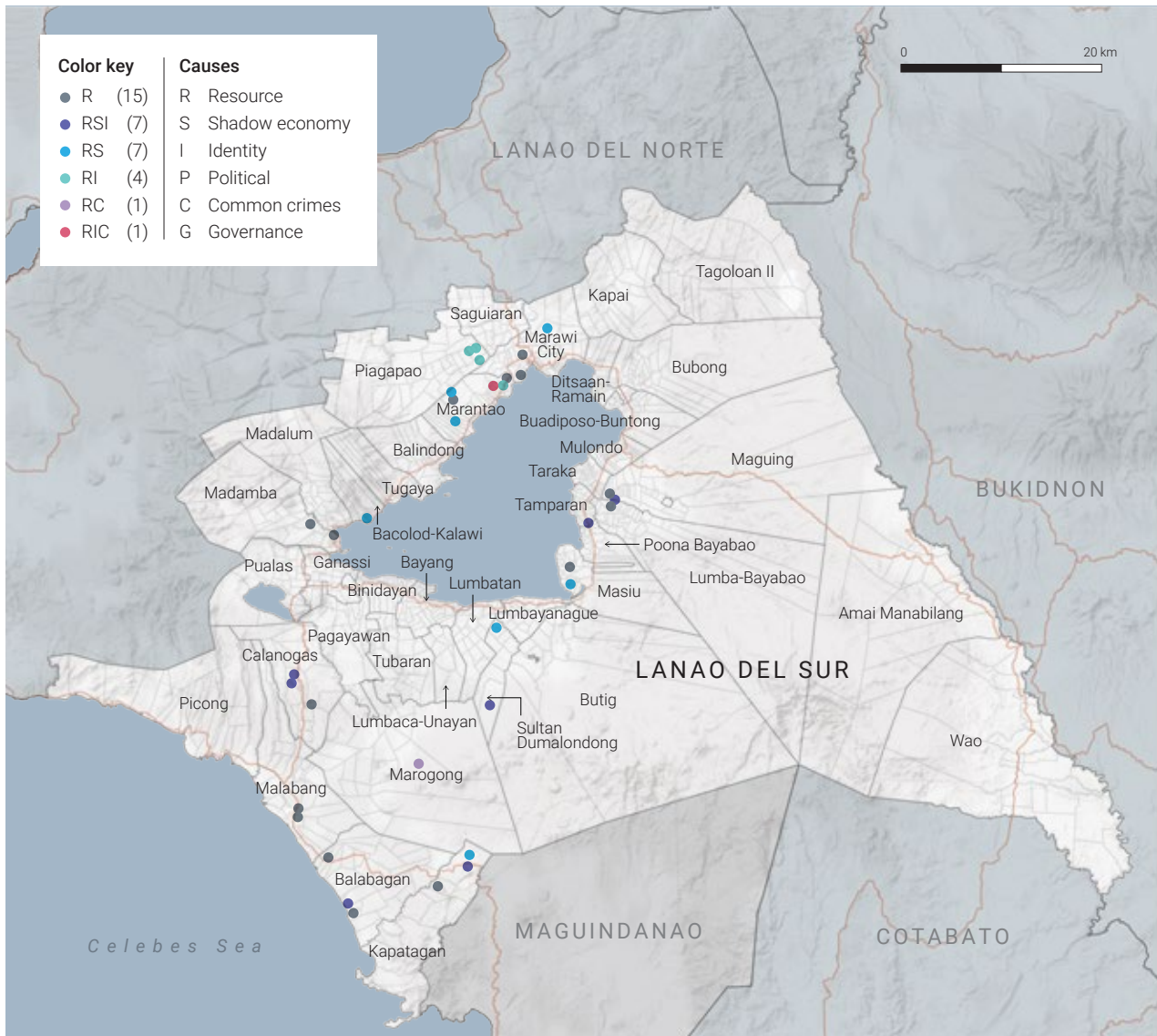


Villagers sail onboard an outrigger in Gen. Salipada K. Pendatun in Maguindanao, one of the BIFF's areas of operation.
 © Keith Bacongco

Resource conflicts intersect with clan feuds

Resource conflicts related to land often intersected with the many identity-related clan feuds that exploded across the region. In 2019, there were 12 clan feuds instigated by land conflicts, up from nine in the previous year. These resulted in 17 deaths, higher than the five in 2018. Incidents took place in Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Datu Montawal (formerly Pagagawan), Sultan sa Barongis, and Pagalungan municipalities in Maguindanao. Shariff Saydona Mustapha is also part of the SPMS Box, while Datu Montawal and Sultan sa

Barongis are located near the area. In Shariff Saydona Mustapha, a clash occurred between fighters from the MILF-BIAF National Guard and the BIFF, whose commanders had a longstanding feud due to a land dispute. In Datu Montawal, two MILF commanders embroiled in a land conflict broke the terms of their settlement and engaged in armed clashes, displacing hundreds of town residents. In Sultan sa Barongis and Pagalungan, MILF commanders also engaged in at least three armed clashes over land issues as well.



Map set 2

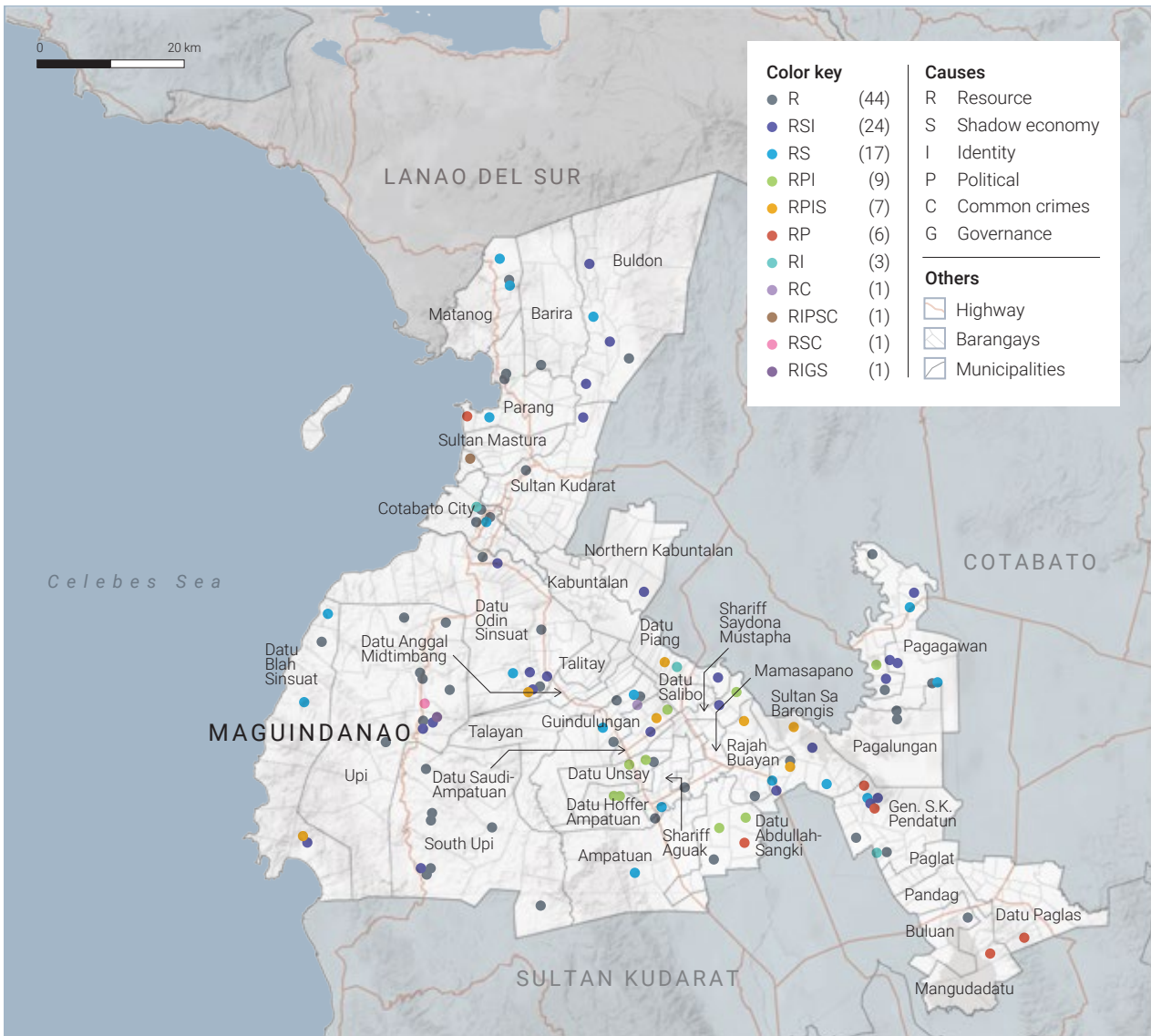
Lanao del Sur

Multi-causality of land conflicts in BARMM, 2011-2019

A total of 190 land conflicts were monitored in the Bangsamoro from 2011 to 2019. When they cannot be resolved, they can become protracted, and as incidents captured by Conflict Alert show, evolve into clan feuds, whose contending parties and allies are often fully armed, as in the case of MILF and BIFF members.

Lanao del Sur recorded a total of 35 land-related conflicts over the 2011-2019 period, which took place in only 14 of the province's 39 municipalities and in Marawi City. Fifteen (15) incidents were attributed to a single cause (resource issue) while seven incidents had seen the contending parties use firearms (resource-shadow economy issues). Meanwhile, 10 had turned into clan feuding, many of which had involved the use of firearms (resource-shadow economy-identity issues).

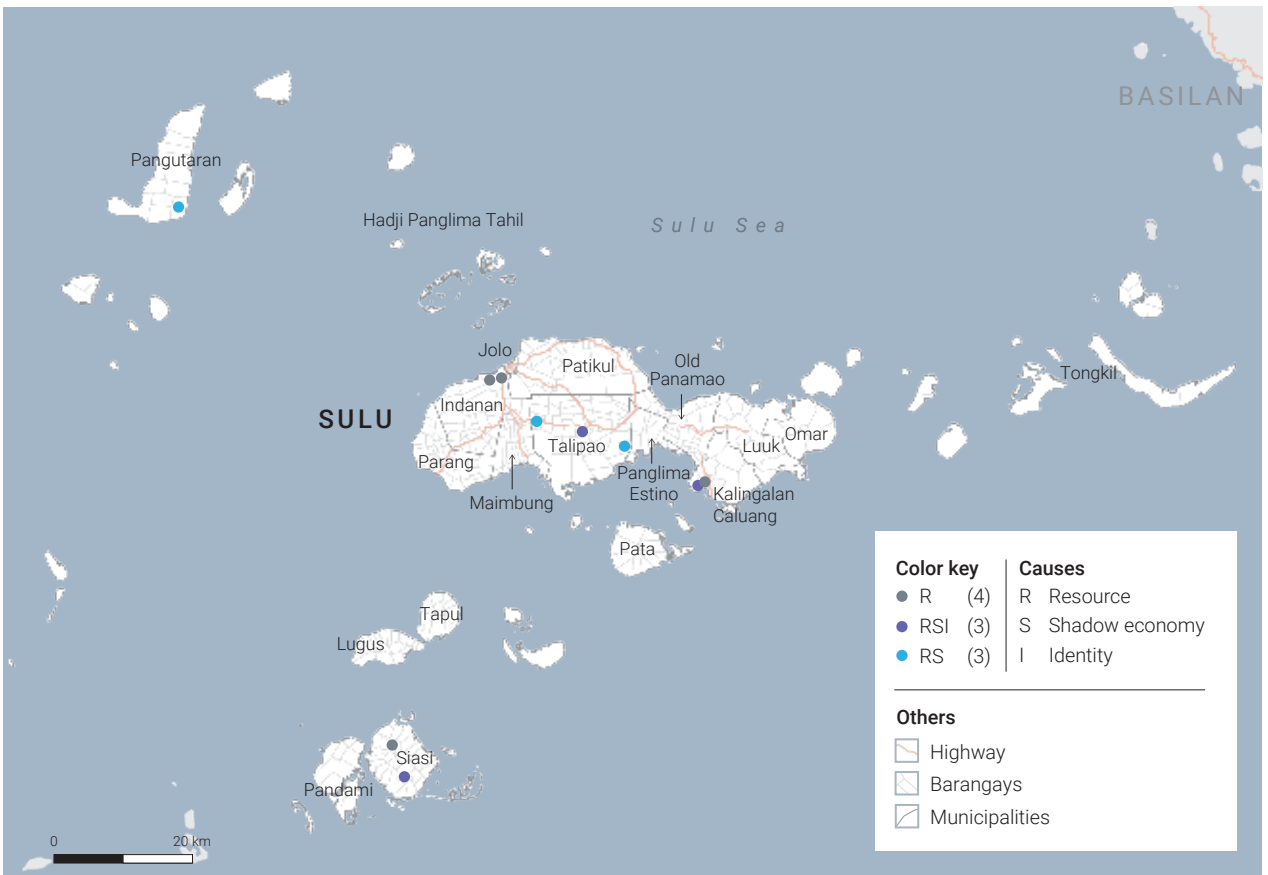
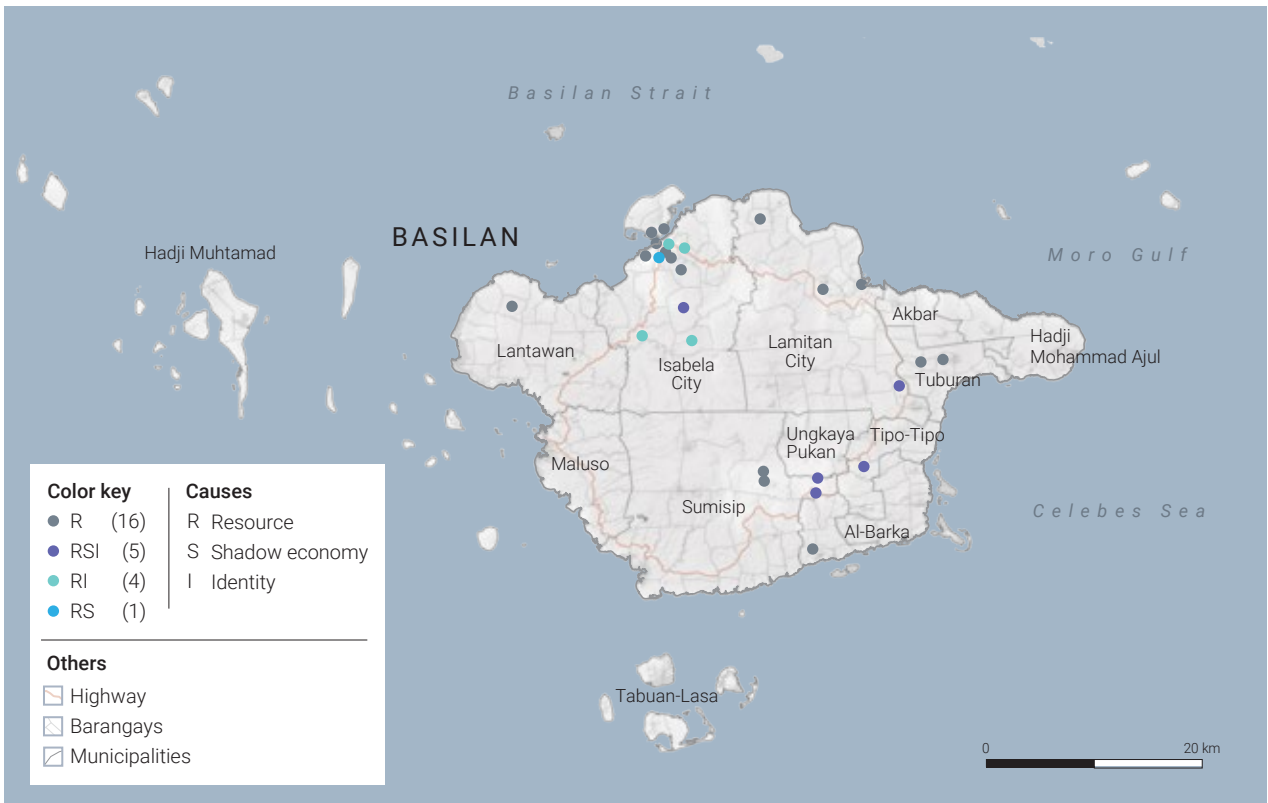
The 15 land conflicts were monitored in the municipalities of Kapatagan, Balabagan, Malabang, Calanogas, Madamba, Marantao, Maguing, Masiu, and Lumba-Bayabao, and in Marawi City. Land conflicts that saw the contending parties square off with the use of firearms were recorded in Bacolod-Kalawi, Kapatagan, Marantao, Masiu, and Marawi City. Land-related clan feuding, with and without the use of firearms, was monitored in Kapatagan, Balabagan, Calanogas, Marantao, Piagapo, Poona Bayabao, Lumba-Bayabao, and Sultan Dumalondong.



Maguindanao

There were 144 incidents due to land-related conflict in Maguindanao, representing 60% of the total number of incidents. Of this number, nearly two-fifths were land conflicts whose additional triggers were not determined (resource issues). The others were land conflicts that intersected with illegal firearms (resource-shadow economy issues) and with clan feuding (resource-shadow economy-identity issues). There were also clan feuds due to land conflicts involving members of the MILF and BIFF (resource-identity-political issues) that involved firefights (resource-identity-political-shadow economy issues).

Datu Odin Sinsuat, Upi and South Upi, which host Teduray IP communities, were sites of the highest number of land conflicts (singular cause). Gen. S. K. Pendatun also experienced a high number of bloody clan feuds due to land conflicts, including those involving members of the MILF. Meanwhile, the 'SPMS' Box' in the province's southeast, which hosts MILF and BIFF camps, was the site of land-related clan feuds between members of the MILF and between members of the MILF and BIFF. Such conflicts were also monitored in nearby municipalities.



Sources for maps: Rivers and roads: OpenStreetMap; Administrative boundaries: Philippine Statistics Authority 2015; Base map: Stamen; Land conflict incidents: International Alert Philippines

Basilan including Isabela City, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi

A total of 41 land conflicts were recorded in Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi over the 2011 to 2019 period.

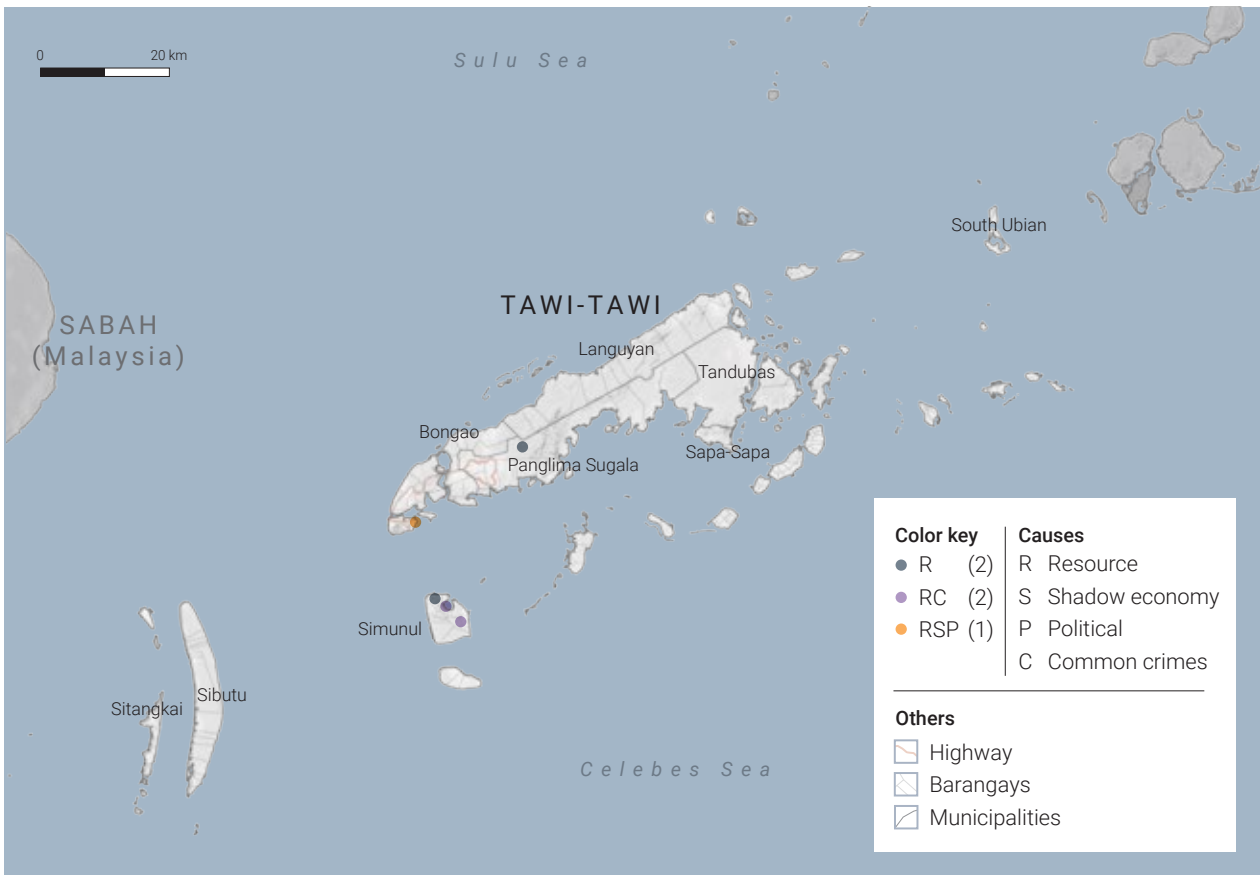
There were 26 incidents in Basilan, of which a little over three-fifths were conflicts with no additional triggers (resource issues). Other incidents were land conflicts that mixed with the use of firearms (resource-shadow economy issues) and clan feuding (resource-shadow economy-identity issues). Isabela City logged 13 incidents, of which seven were

land conflicts with no additional causes, while five were clan feuds linked to land conflicts that in most instances, had turned bloody with the use of firearms. Other places with relatively high number of land conflicts were Lamitan City and Sumisip, with four each.

Sulu's 10 incidents were also comprised by the same standalone cause and causal combinations. Conflicts took place in only five municipalities: Indanan, Talipao, Kalingalan Caluang and the island

municipalities of Pangutaran and Siasi. Four incidents took place in 2019 alone.

Tawi-Tawi's capital, Bongao, recorded one incident linked to elections and the use of firearms (resource-shadow economy-political issues), while the island municipality of Simunul saw two land conflicts that intersected with intentional damage to properties (resource issues-common crimes). Two land disputes (resource issues) took place in Panglima Sugala and in Simunul.



*Mapun and Turtle Islands, located northwest of Bongao, are not shown on the map. These towns did not log any land conflicts.

Horizontal, armed conflicts undermine the post-conflict normalization

The increasing number of violent conflicts involving the MILF and its BIAF commanders revolve around contentious issues and disputes related to land and the over-all competition over natural, non-lootable resources that is a regular feature of post-civil war conflicts in other settings around the world.

The irony is that previous combatants in civil war conflicts who ought to be retired by decommissioning and normalization processes are instead training their weapons against indigenous peoples and other claimants of the lands within and surrounding their previous camps—encouraged no doubt by the CAB provision to transform six MILF camps into civilian communities. The combatants who lived in these camps that were designated as ‘areas of temporary stay’ in the many years when a ceasefire was in place now desire permanent rights and ownership of the land in these camps. These claims are now exacerbating tensions and undermining the post-conflict normalization process.

There are at least six identified MILF camps sprawled across municipalities and provinces in the mainland Bangsamoro areas: Camp Bilal between Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte, Camp Busrah Somiorang in Lanao del Sur, Camp Rajamuda between Maguindanao and Cotabato province, and three other camps all located in Maguindanao: Camp Omar ibn al-Khattab, Camp Bader, and Camp Abubakar as-Siddique. Since the perimeter of these camps is undefined, including the land parcels within the area, conflicts are ignited not only between or among the MILF or the BIFF but also with residents of communities where these camps are located. (See Box 4, p.59).

Horizontal conflicts between or among the MILF, or with parties such as the BIFF and clans are regnant in these flashpoints, and as cases of horizontal rather than vertical violence, one may argue that the protagonists represent themselves and their clans rather than their politico-military affiliations. However, those politico-military links guarantee their access to the formidable firepower emanating from automatic rifles, munitions, and warm bodies that can be harnessed in perpetuating attacks and raids against weaker competitors.

Table 2.
Clan feuds involving MILF-affiliated actors

	Incidents	Deaths
2011	6	25
2012	2	2
2013	5	10
2014	7	6
2015	2	4
2016	5	8
2017	9	1
2018	13	11
2019	13	24
Total	62	91

In 2019, commanders and combatants affiliated with the MILF were involved in at least 13 clan feuds, of which one was against the BIFF. Six were due to land conflicts, the highest since 2011. In those 13 clan feuds, 50% of those killed were MILF, 13% were BIFF, while 17% were affiliated with clans and 8% were local government officials. (See Table 2). Without conflict mitigation measures, including rules governing property rights, conflicts and the fatalities and displacement caused by these conflicts will persist.



Residents traverse the Pulangi River near Camp Rajah Muda in Pikit, Cotabato.
📷 Manman Dejeto

Box 4

A wave of violence in Kuya

Brgy. Kuya is a farming community in the highlands of South Upi, the last village in this part of Maguindanao before the road crosses to Lebak in Sultan Kudarat. Like other agricultural villages, it is quiet, the activities concentrated in the población or town center, and the farms where residents tend to their corn or rice crops.

However, several times in the recent past has seen the stillness broken by gunfire, sending the Teduray and Lambangian families in the area escaping to safety, leaving their homes and farms behind.

The violent flashpoints were over land:^a

- **28 July 2019** – A firefight erupted between two parties whose grievance stemmed from a conflicting land claim and a killing in December 2016 that had not been resolved. Over 100 families residing in four sitios fled to the barangay hall to seek refuge.
- **4 October 2019** – Armed Maguindanaon and purportedly members of the MILF clashed over land they claimed were inherited from their parents.
- **29 May 2020** – Army soldiers on foot patrol clashed with armed men who were allegedly members of the MILF, sending nearly 600 Teduray families fleeing to the barangay hall or to their relatives.
- **5 November 2020** – A Teduray farmer was killed by armed men who allegedly wanted to take over his land.



^a UNHCR Philippines, Displacement in South Upi, Maguindanao, IDP Protection Assessment Report No.9, Issue No. 1, 9 August 2019, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IDPPAR_Displacement-in-South-Upi-Issue-no1-2019.pdf;

NDBC Bida Balita, 8 November 2019, <https://www.ndbcnews.com.ph/news/ndbc-bida-balita-110819>;

Carolyn O. Arguillas, Armed conflict displaces 900 Lumad families in South Upi, Maguindanao, MindaNews, 23 June 2020, <https://www.mindanews.com/top-stories/2020/06/armed-conflict-displaces-900-lumad-families-in-south-upi-maguindanao/>;

J. Unson, 2 Teduray tribesmen killed in South Upi attacks, NDBCnews, 6 Nov 2020, <https://ndbcnews.com.ph/news/2-teduray-tribesmen-killed-south-upi-attacks>;

Community report sent to International Alert Philippines's Critical Events Monitoring System



Displaced Teduray families after an attack by alleged armed Moro groups in South Upi, Maguindanao.
 © Ferdinandh Cabrera

Other barangays in South Upi were also wracked by violence. On 5 November 2020 in Brgy. Lamud, another Teduray farmer was shot dead by a suspected MILF commander also over a land dispute.

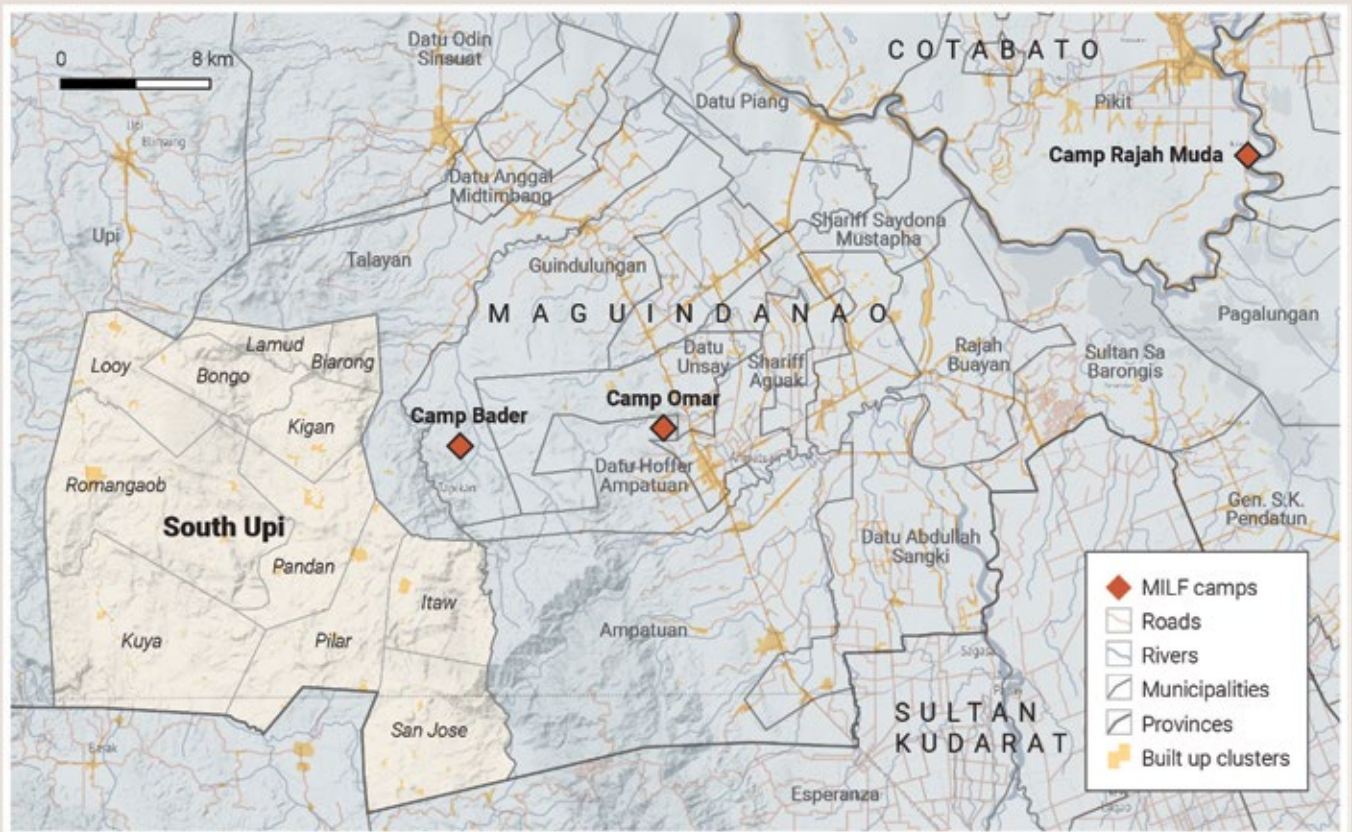
These incidents encapsulate the issues that underlay the land claims of the Teduray and Lambangian indigenous peoples (IP) who see the land areas in the highlands as part of their ancestral domain. The problem is that these same areas are also claimed by the Maguindanaon. For the Teduray and Lambangian, the land that stretches in the highlands of Upi to South Upi has always been theirs, with families owning parcels that, over the course of time, were passed from parents to children. For them, land titles are not the only symbols of ownership nor essential in determining their just use, stewardship, and possession.

The Maguindanaon managed to drive away the Teduray and other indigenous groups from these lands in the 1960s. However, with the help of the Christian Ilaga paramilitary group that banded to fight the Moro Blackshirts during the tumultuous Marcos years, the Teduray, other IPs and their settler-allies were able to return and reclaim their properties.

To be sure, there are many land conflicts between the current Teduray, Lambangian and other settler-occupants of the land—mainly due to unclear boundaries between parcels of land while transfers in the form of mortgages and sales have created layers of ownership that have led to counterclaims.

At the same time, some Maguindanaon families and clans who managed to secure land titles and who resented being driven away feel that now

Map A: Municipality of South Upi and MILF camps in Maguindanao and Cotabato



Municipality of South Upi	
Barangay	Area (Hectares)
Romangaob	9,109.4
Kuya	7,787.9
San Jose	5,237.9
Pilar	4,602.3
Pandan	4,125.5
Itaw	3,319.3
Looy	3,092.5
Bongo	2,320.4
Kigan	2,294.4
Lamud	1,232.2
Biarong	989.5

is the time to reclaim the lives and livelihoods that they lost when they left the fertile upland areas of central Maguindanao. Membership in the MILF or alliances with the MILF have emboldened them, especially as the camps transformation component of the peace agreement between the MILF and the government gets underway.

Some of these flashpoints can be traced directly to the flaws in the GPH-MILF peace agreement and Bangsamoro Organic Law, especially the normalization and decommissioning aspects. There are six MILF camps or ‘areas of temporary stay’ that must be turned into “peaceful and productive communities”.^b These are not camps protected by high concrete walls but communities that MILF fighters and their families occupy and live in

^b Executive Order No. 79, “Implementing the Annex on Normalization under the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro,” <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2019/04apr/20190524-EO-79-RRD.pdf>

during the long ceasefire with the government. Most of these camps blend into their surrounding communities, which extends their reach and provides cause for land conflicts among residents, including individuals and clans affiliated with the MILF or BIFF, and between them and the IPs and settlers.

The Teduray and Lambangian in Brgy. Kuya fear more dislocation even as they were able to go back to their homes and farms. Others could not because, while they were in evacuation sites, their homes had been burned, their farm animals killed, and armed men continue to threaten them. IPs in other barangays in South Upi have also been attacked and harassed by armed men.

Indigenous peoples in the Bangsamoro, including the Teduray and Lambangian, are hopeful that a proposed IP Code will secure their rights over their ancestral domains. While this proposed law awaits deliberation by the interim Bangsamoro Parliament, there has been no serious assessment and analysis of land-related problems, issues and concerns in various areas of the BARMM nor a thorough examination of formal and informal arrangements and tenurial instruments that have been issued.

It is clear that preventing violent flashpoints will require mediating the current and looming land conflicts that have produced so much death and displacement less than two years after the new Bangsamoro region was established.

Ground zero in deaths and displacement is Brgy. Kuya in South Upi where a new cycle of identity-based violence has captured the attention of local, national, and international media. In this barangay, nothing less than guaranteeing that residents are able to return to their homes and lands and ensuring their safety while they tend to their farms and animals are paramount. The current armed attacks and harassments against the Teduray and Lambangian by various armed groups, including

“Indigenous peoples in the Bangsamoro, including the Teduray and Lambangian, are hopeful that a proposed IP Code will secure their rights over their ancestral domains.”

those associated with the MILF and the BIFF will accrue and lead to more suffering and reciprocal violence. The days of terror inflicted by the Ilaga and the Blackshirts may be over, only to be replaced by another round of internecine conflict.

Furthermore, to resolve issues of jurisdiction and accountability, the Inter-Governmental Relations Body between the national government and the BARMM-BTA needs to create a Technical Working Group composed of representatives from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples and the Ministry of Indigenous People’s Affairs to determine the specific roles of each office in promoting, protecting, and fulfilling the rights of indigenous peoples in the BARMM—rights that are guaranteed under RA 8371 or the Indigenous People Rights Act and RA 11054 or the Bangsamoro Organic Law.

Map sources: *Rivers*: Philippine GIS Data Clearinghouse; *Roads*: OpenStreetMap; *Administrative boundaries*: Philippine Statistics Authority 2018; *Base map*: Stamen.

Violent extremism remains endemic

Violent extremism incidents dropped by 26% to 195 in 2019 from the previous year. There were less incidents involving the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu and Basilan and the BIFF in Maguindanao, while incidents involving the Maute Group in Lanao del Sur were steady at 21 in 2018 and 2019. In terms of number of incidents, it could be said progress has been made in neutralizing these groups. However, extremist violence has remained rampant if seen in terms of the number of people affected by it. In particular, it has affected people in Sulu more than residents of other provinces. (See Figure 12).

The 2019 results also provide caution against complacency. Sulu, compared to Basilan and Maguindanao, posted the lowest decline in number of incidents at 13% and 10% in terms of deaths. Wracked by suicide bombings, with reports of continued recruitment and radicalization among youth and women, Sulu is on course towards reclaiming its notorious identification with terrorism. (See Box 5, p.64). Meanwhile, in Lanao del Sur, continued recruitment and the regrouping of ISIS-affiliated armed groups had been reported. In Maguindanao, there were reports of financial incentives to lure new, young members to the BIFF.

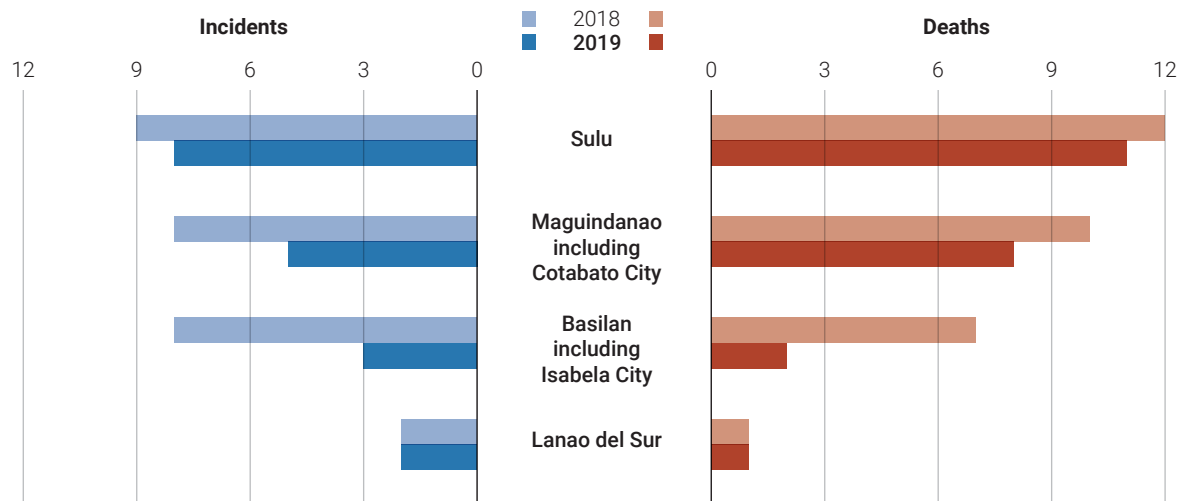
A comparison between 2016, when Conflict Alert first tagged violent extremism as a cause of conflict, and 2019, the latest year, could provide more perspective. (See Table 3). Sulu recorded 35 incidents in 2016 and 71 in 2019. Similarly, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao posted lower numbers in 2016 than in 2019. Extremist groups in these provinces are likely still reconstituting and increasing their ranks. On the other hand, Basilan’s 32 incidents in 2016 and 15 in 2019 validate efforts to curb the Abu Sayyaf and encourage members to surrender.

Table 3.
Violent extremism incidents by province and year

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Maguindanao	80	122	122	87
Sulu	35	61	82	71
Lanao del Sur	18	461	21	21
Basilan	32	38	39	15
Tawi-Tawi	4	7	1	1

*Including Cotabato City **Including Isabela City

Figure 12. Violent extremism incidents and deaths per 100,000 persons





Philippine Army soldiers attend to injured comrades and civilians after the 24 August 2020 twin suicide bombings in Jolo, Sulu. © Nickee Butlangan

Box 5

Extremist violence takes a new form in Sulu

Extremist violence resulted in more deaths per incident in Maguindanao than in Sulu in 2019 (see Table C, p.65), but the island province provides serious cause for worry.

An examination of Sulu's municipalities shows a high increase in deaths per incident in Jolo, the provincial capital, and in Indanan, the municipality that borders Jolo to the west. From zero in 2018, Jolo recorded seven deaths per incident in 2019 while Indanan posted two deaths from virtually none in 2018. (See Table D, p.65).

The suicide bombings carried out by the Abu Sayyaf in Jolo in January and in Indanan in June and September took many casualties, mostly civilians. Ninety percent (90%) of 21 deaths attributed to extremist violence in Jolo was due to the suicide bombing at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, while 72% of 11 deaths in Indanan resulted from the attacks at a military camp and a checkpoint.

Table C. Extremist violence deaths-to-incidents ratios of BARMM provinces

Province	2016	2017	2018	2019
Maguindanao including Cotabato City	0.76	1.49	1.28	1.46
Sulu	1.94	1.36	1.33	1.38
Tawi-Tawi	0.5	1.14	0	1
Lanao del Sur	8.89	2.67	0.43	0.76
Basilan including Isabela City	3.94	1.58	0.95	0.6

Table D. Top 5 Sulu municipalities by extremist violence deaths-to-incidents ratio in 2019

Municipality	2016	2017	2018	2019
Jolo	0.2	0.5	0	7
Parang	0	0.5	1.33	3
Indanan	3	0.92	0.6	2.2
Talipao	0.67	2.71	0.4	1.2
Patikul	3.17	0.7	1.94	1.13

The incidents not only exacted a high toll but struck fear due to their message that extremist violence in Sulu has assumed a new dimension. From clashes between government forces and the Abu Sayyaf that has allied with ISIS, the violence now takes the form of suicide bombing attacks, which are surreptitious and targeted to kill and injure civilians in addition to police and military personnel. And indeed, the bombings in 2019 would be followed by suicide bombing attacks in two different sites in Jolo on 24 August 2020 that killed 14 civilians, policemen and soldiers and wounded 75.

The suicide attacks have several implications. One is the likelihood of more aggressive military operations in Sulu, which could lead to wrongful arrests of Muslim residents. Of particular risk are Muslim women, given the participation of women in three of the incidents in 2019 and 2020. Second, the attacks reveal how the influence of ISIS has remained potent. In Sulu, ISIS, through the Abu Sayyaf, is active and dangerous, and the attacks in August 2020 are not expected

to be the last. Third is the potential for suicide bombings to be reproduced in other parts of Mindanao, as security is tightened in Sulu.

In Maguindanao, extremist violence remained concentrated in the 'SPMS Box' that encompasses the municipalities of Datu Piang, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Mamasapano, Datu Salibo, Shariff Aguak, Datu Unsay, Datu Saudi-Ampatuan, and Rajah Buayan. However, violence in Datu Piang and Shariff Saydona Mustapha noticeably intensified in 2019.

From none recorded in 2018, Datu Piang logged three deaths per incident in 2019, while Shariff Saydona Mustapha recorded two deaths per incident, doubling from 2018. (See Table E). The increase in fatalities was due to more clashes between the military and the BIFF, and in some cases, between the MILF and BIFF. Most of those killed were BIFF fighters.

In Datu Piang, the number of incidents increased to seven in 2019 from one in 2018. Army troops



A tarpaulin bearing photos and names of wanted Abu Sayyaf leaders is on display at a Philippine Army checkpoint in Patikul, Sulu.

📷 Nickee Butlangan

overran BIFF camps in February and March, then bombarded interior barangays in July, targeting BIFF encampments. In October, a bombing attack reportedly perpetrated by the BIFF targeted the St. Therese Parish Church in the town center of Dulawan. From zero in 2018, 22 deaths were recorded in 2019. Shariff Saydona Mustapha saw incidents involving the BIFF increase to 25 in 2019 from 15 in the previous year. The military launched ground and air strikes against the BIFF, while the BIFF deployed improvised explosive devices and carried out attacks against military outposts. The MILF also pursued the BIFF, bound by its peace agreement with the government to go after terrorist groups. The incidents resulted

in 58 deaths, higher by 176% from 2018, and the displacement of more than 1,000 families.

On the other hand, Mamasapano saw a lower death-to-incident ratio as the number of incidents rose to eight in 2019 from two in 2018. However, the number of deaths stayed high at 26 in 2019 from 20 in 2018. Incidents also involved clashes between the military and the BIFF, causing massive dislocation of town residents.

There were surrenders among the BIFF in 2019. However, the BIFF did not show an undiminished capacity to sow violence in the communities where they are based.

Table E. Top 5 Maguindanao municipalities by extremist violence deaths-to-incidents ratio in 2019

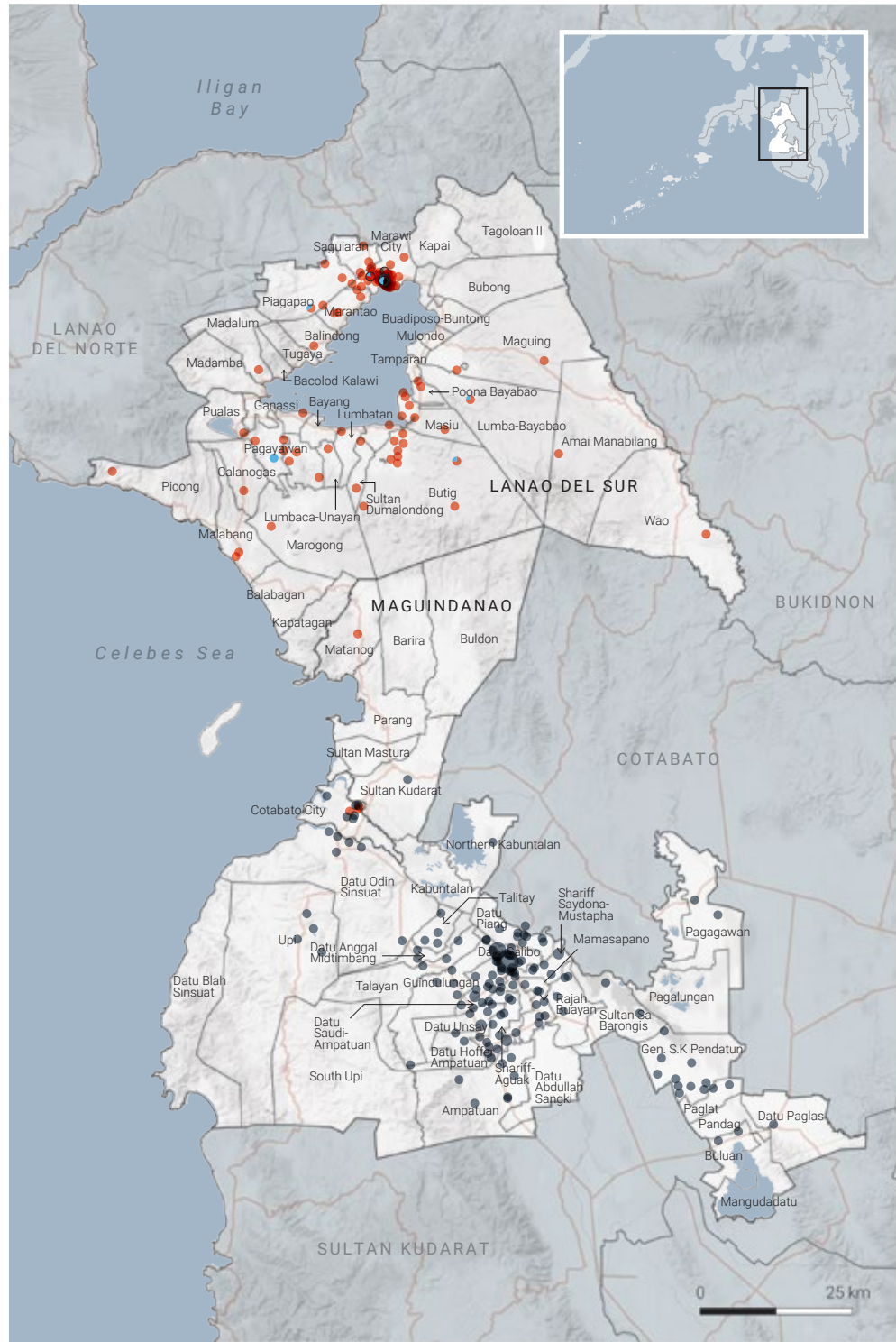
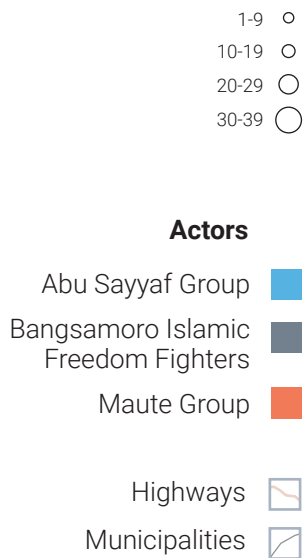
Municipality	2016	2017	2018	2019
Mamasapano	0	1	10	3.25
Datu Piang	0.75	0	0	3.14
Sultan Sa Barongis	0	0	7	2.67
Shariff Saydona Mustapha	2.33	1	1.4	2.32
Datu Salibo	0.76	3.54	0.22	1.67

Map set 3

Violent extremist incidents by actors

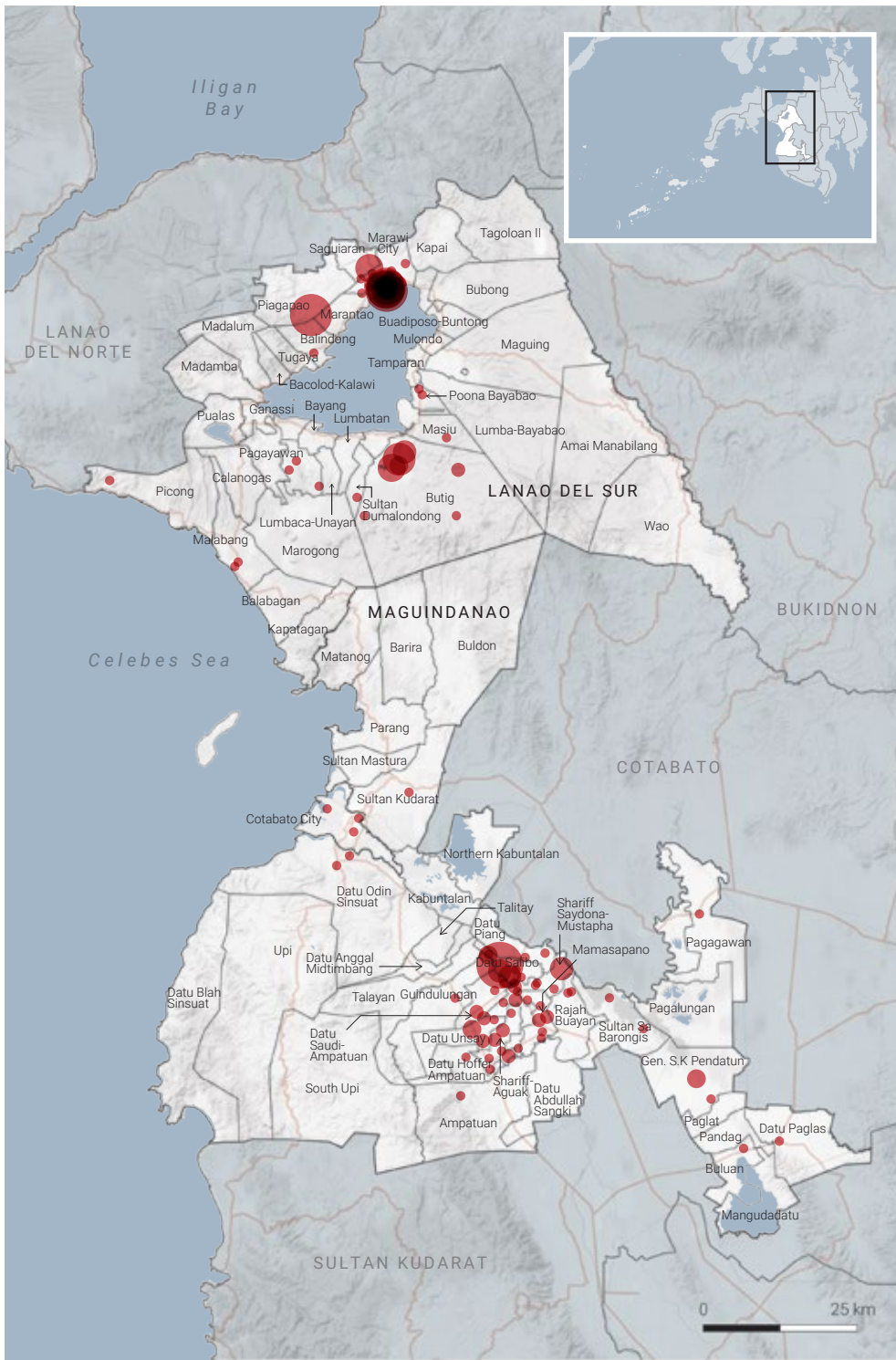
2016-2019

Mainland



Violent incidents involving BIFF were concentrated in the SPMS Box and its environs in Maguindanao while those involving the Maute Group, including its allies, were spread out in Lanao del Sur. In **Maguindanao**, Datu Salibo topped the list of municipalities affected by extremist violence with nearly a hundred incidents as of 2019, followed by Shariff Aguak, Datu

Unsay, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, and Datu Saudi-Ampatuan. The BIFF also reached urban areas such as Cotabato City and Datu Odin Sinsuat. In **Lanao**, most incidents happened in Marawi City and in Butig. Other areas affected by clashes between the military and the Maute Group were Piagapo, Sultan Dumalondong, Masiu, and Tubaran.

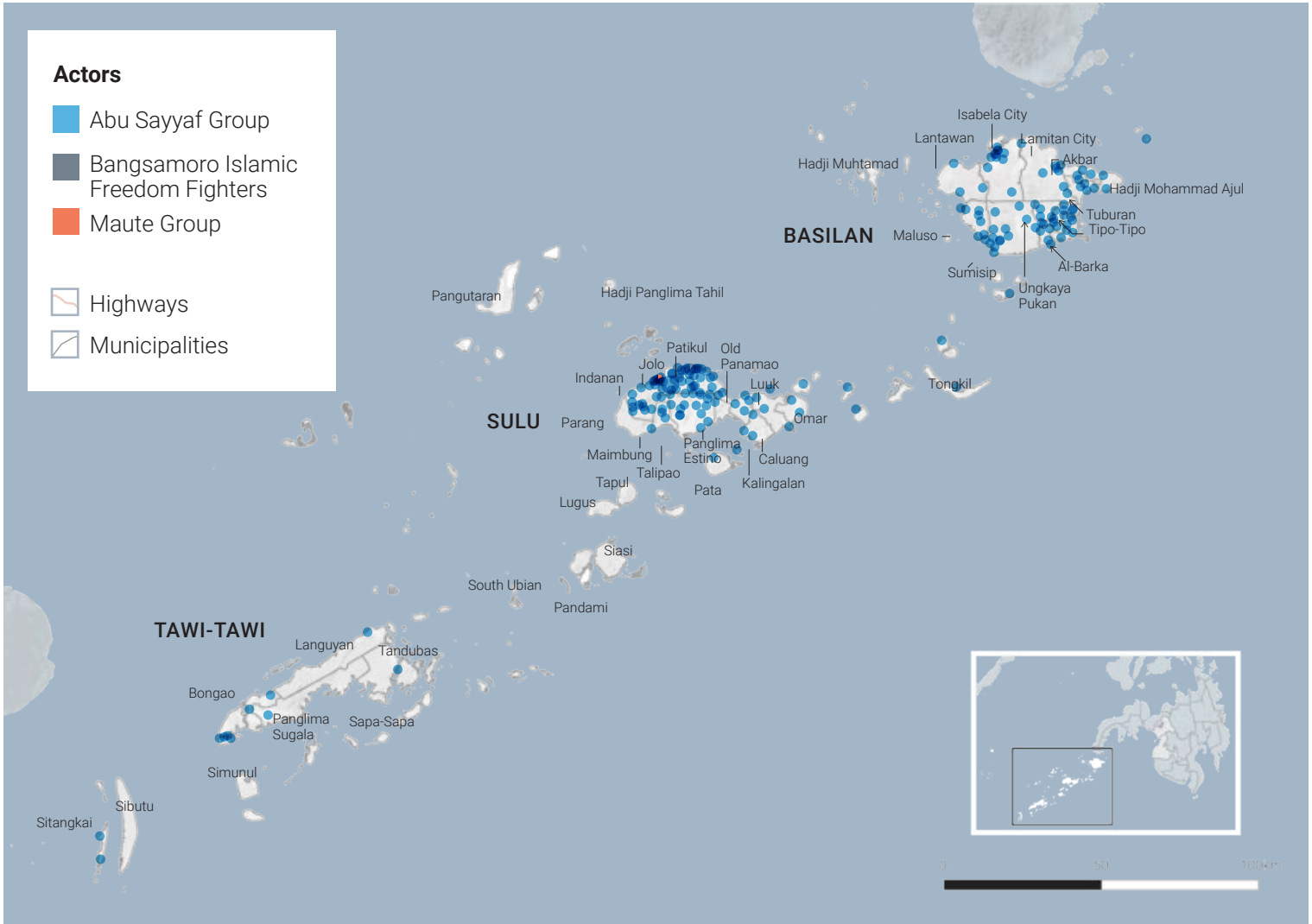


Deaths from violent extremism

- 1-9
- 10-19
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-79
- 80-89

In the SPMS Box in **Maguindanao**, intense military operations against the BIFF resulted in Datu Salibo suffering the highest number of conflict deaths with 169, followed by Shariff Saydona Mustapha with 95. Other areas with high death counts were Mamasapano, Datu Unsay, and Shariff Aguak.

Aside from numerous deaths during the sieges of Butig and Marawi City, the municipality of Piagapo recorded at least 35 deaths as a result of military airstrikes in April 2017, making it third highest in the province in terms of deaths due to violent extremism.



Violent extremist incidents by actors 2016–2019

Islands

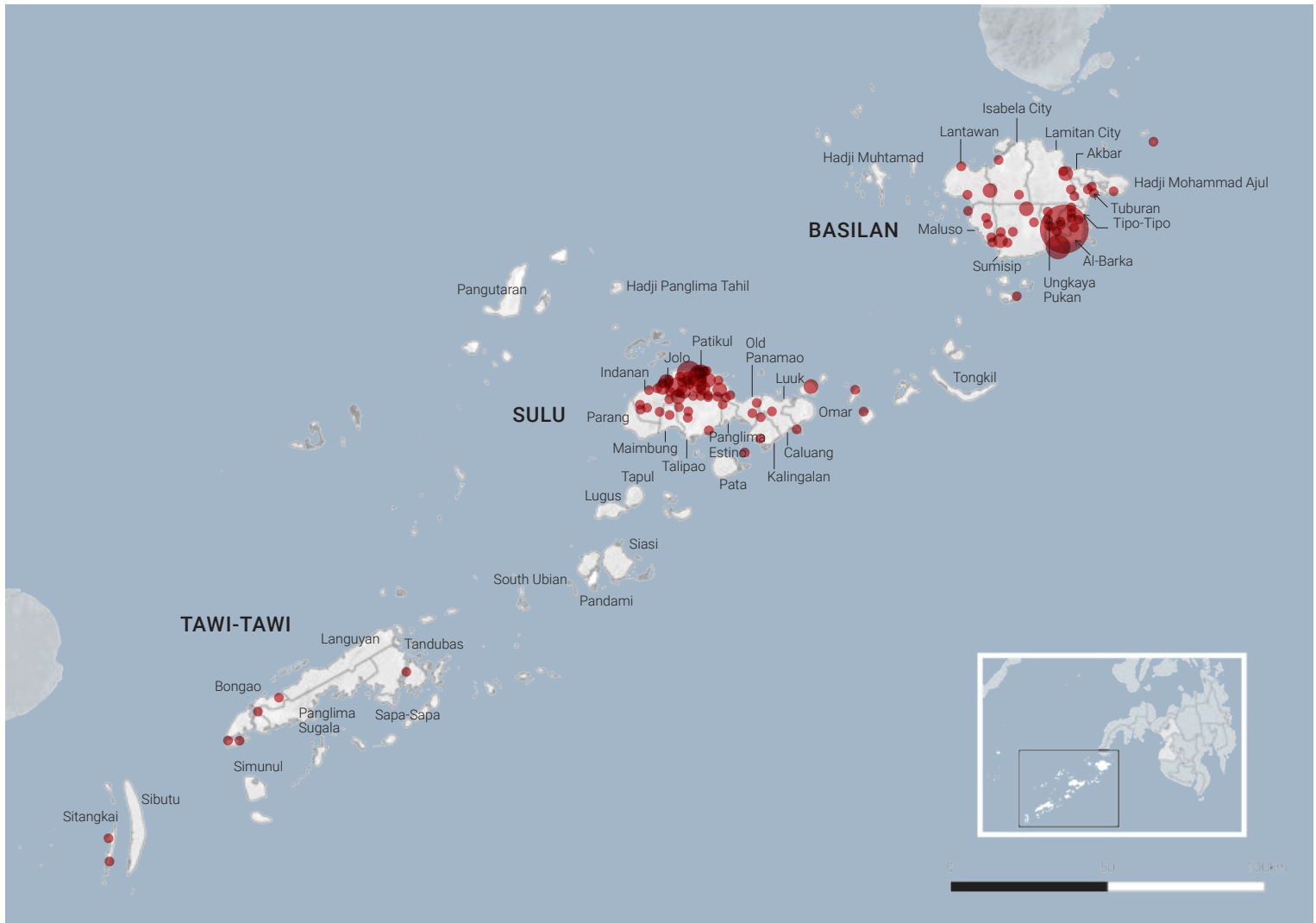
- 1-9 ○
- 10-19 ○
- 20-29 ○
- 30-39 ○

In **Basilan**, Sumisip had the highest number of incidents involving the Abu Sayyaf, followed by Tipo-Tipo, Maluso, Ungkaya Pukan, and Al-Barka. These incidents were mostly comprised by clashes with government troops. In the cities of Isabela and Lamitan, most incidents involved arrests or surrenders of Abu Sayyaf members.

Sulu served as the hotbed for Abu Sayyaf, with high concentrations of incidents in Jolo and Indanan, where suicide bombings had taken

place, as well as Patikul. The island of Tongkil recorded more extremist violence in 2019 while its neighboring island of Omar witnessed an increase in violence in 2017 and 2018.

In **Tawi-Tawi**, Bongao recorded the highest number of incidents, which included shooting and killing of Abu Sayyaf members, as well as arrests due to illegal possession of firearms. Sitangkai was the site of a kidnapping of an Indonesian national in 2016, and the killing of an Abu Sayyaf sub-leader in 2017.



In Basilan, the municipalities of Tipo-Tipo, Al-Barka, Ungkaya Pukan, and Sumisip saw the highest number of deaths from clashes involving the Abu Sayyaf. Lamitan City was not spared, with the 2018 suicide bombing attack perpetrated by a Moroccan, which was later linked to the Abu Sayyaf, which killed 10 people.

In Sulu, the municipality of Patikul registered the highest number of deaths related to violent extremism, with 209,

followed by the municipalities of Talipao, Indanan, and Jolo, each logging more than 20. These resulted from violent clashes between Abu Sayyaf and government troops and bombing incidents, including the suicide bombing attacks in Jolo and Indanan in 2019.

Tawi-Tawi, as expected, registered the least number of conflict deaths involving the Abu Sayyaf, compared to the either Basilan or Sulu. Bongao recorded seven deaths, the highest in the island province.

Deaths from violent extremism

- 1-9
- 10-19
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70-79
- 80-89

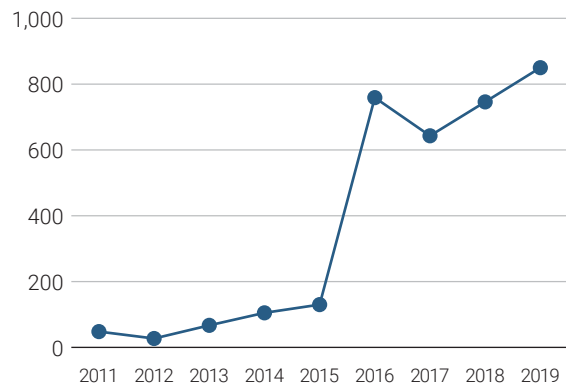
Anti-drug campaign's far-reaching impact

The number of illegal drug-related incidents surged by 14% in 2019 as the government remained focused on a campaign against the illegal drug trade and use. (See Figure 13). Except for Basilan (including Isabela City), all provinces saw a rise in buy-busts, arrests, and confiscations. Tawi-Tawi led with a 74% increase in illegal drug-related incidents, followed by Lanao del Sur and Sulu, each with 19%, then Maguindanao (including Cotabato City) with 5%.

The government's campaign against the illegal drug trade revealed new hotspots in 2019. (See Map 4). Among these were Buluan, Maguindanao, with nine incidents after a total of only five from 2011 to 2018; Kalingalan Caluang, Sulu with six in 2019 from two in the previous eight-year period; and Maguing, Lanao del Sur, with five incidents, also from two in the previous eight years.

Other places that previously recorded a high number of incidents posted new increases in 2019. Jolo, Sulu with 66 incidents in 2018

Figure 13.
Illegal drug-related incidents by year



recorded 74 in 2019. Marawi City had 36 incidents in 2019, rising from 31 in the previous year.

Bongao, Tawi-Tawi stood out with 113 incidents in 2019, a leap of 146% from the year before, as the PNP's elite unit, the Special Action Force, took over the anti-illegal drug operations. As the violence intensified, Tawi-Tawi gained the unfortunate distinction of having the highest frequency of illegal drug incidents among 100,000 persons and per 1,000 square kilometers in the Bangsamoro. (See Figures 14 and 15, p.73).

Map. 4 Hotspots of illegal drug-related conflict in the Bangsamoro

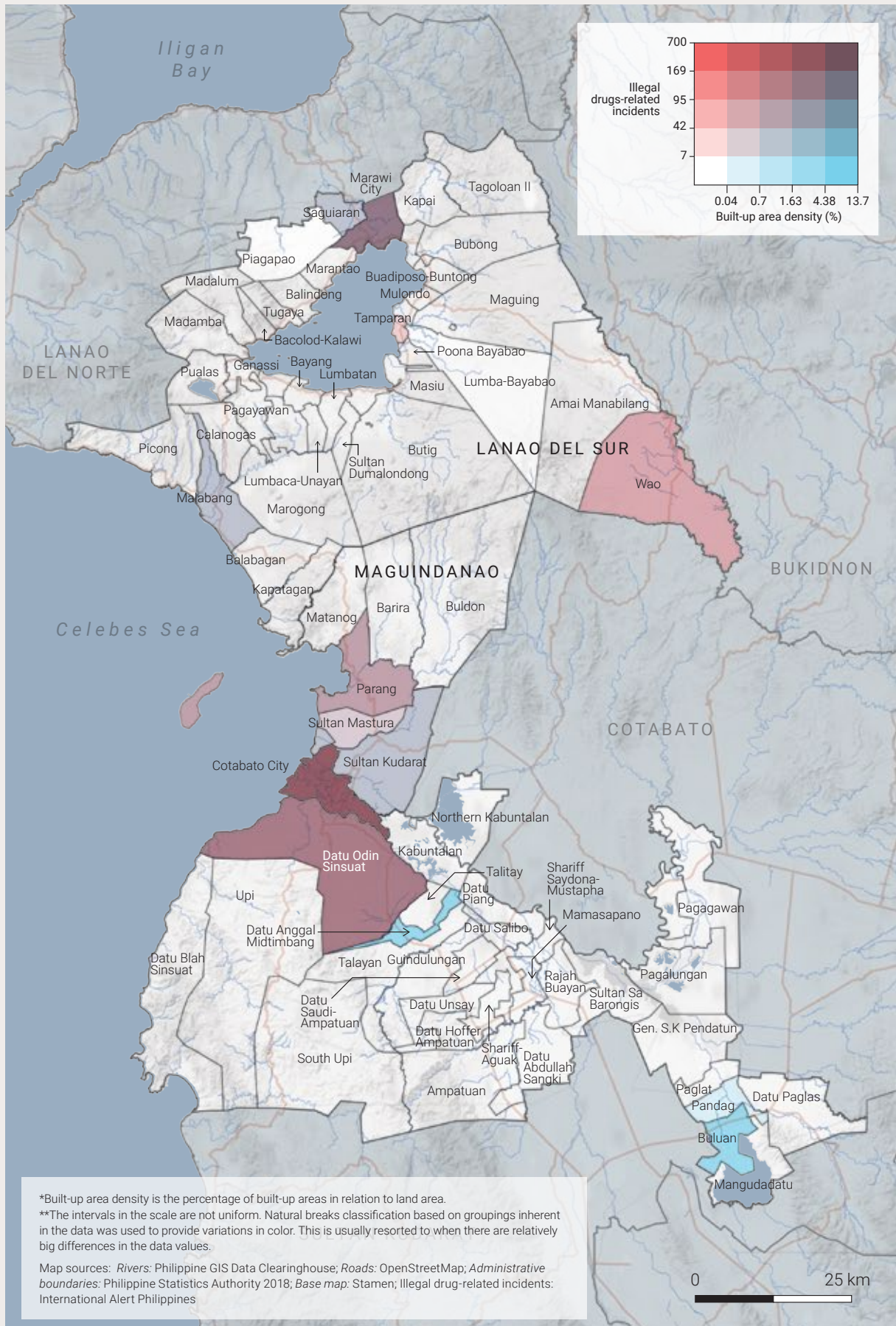
Municipalities with growing incidence of illegal drug-related violence are strategically located, such as along corridors in a province or on the border with other provinces. Datu Odin Sinsuat, Sultan Kudarat, Parang, and Buluan in Maguindanao posted an average 47% rise in incidents in 2019 from the previous year. The first three form a long corridor with Cotabato City, the Bangsamoro's regional center. Buluan became the political center

in 2014 when it was named as the provincial capital and location of the provincial government.

In Lanao del Sur, Marawi City, Wao, Malabang, and Tamparan posted an average 41% increase in incidents in 2019 from the previous year. These areas are geographically strategic. Marawi City, Lanao del Sur's economic center, is accessible through national roads; Wao is situated at the tri-boundary of Lanao del Sur, Bukidnon, and the

province of Cotabato; Malabang faces Illana Bay; and Tamparan lies on the shore of Lake Lanao.

Meanwhile, Cotabato City recorded 181 incidents, the highest among the Bangsamoro's cities and municipalities. However, this was 12% less compared to 2018. The decline was attributed to martial law, strict security during the BOL plebiscite and midterm elections, and the city government's vigorous anti-illegal drug campaign.



*Built-up area density is the percentage of built-up areas in relation to land area.
 **The intervals in the scale are not uniform. Natural breaks classification based on groupings inherent in the data was used to provide variations in color. This is usually resorted to when there are relatively big differences in the data values.

Map sources: Rivers: Philippine GIS Data Clearinghouse; Roads: OpenStreetMap; Administrative boundaries: Philippine Statistics Authority 2018; Base map: Stamen; Illegal drug-related incidents: International Alert Philippines

0 25 km

Marawi City reconstruction a source of tensions

Marawi City’s reconstruction is ongoing but its slow pace has generated discontent among the displaced residents. (See Box 6. p.74). At the same time, the shadow economies in drugs and firearms have flourished, with 36 illegal drug incidents recorded in 2019, increasing from 31 in

2018, while illegal firearm incidents numbered 26, up from 15. The PDEA and the police conducted drug buy-busts and arrests that in some cases, also yielded unlicensed guns. There were more robberies, fighting due to alcohol intoxication, carjacking, illegal gambling, and conflicts due to informal financial transactions. The city also saw more clan feuding in 2019 than in the previous year.

Figure 14. Illegal drug-related incidents per 100,000 persons, by province and year

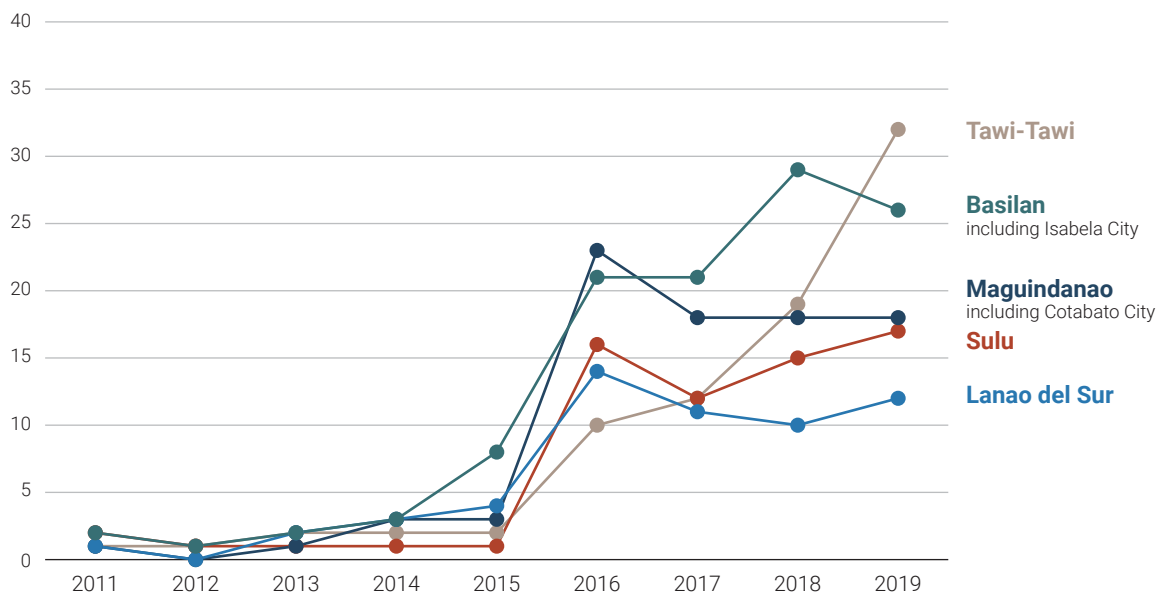
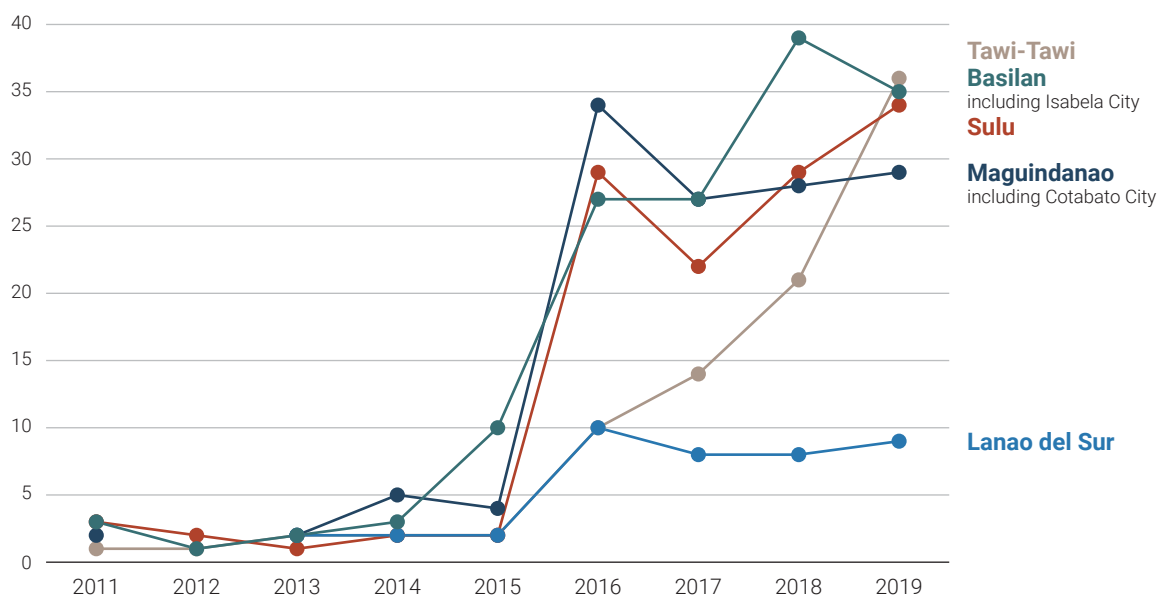


Figure 15. Illegal drug-related incidents per 1,000 sq. km., by province and year





An excavator tears down buildings in Marawi City, 4 September 2019. The Task Force Bangon Marawi intensified efforts in demolishing more than 3,000 ruined buildings in the former battleground to meet its 2020 deadline for clearing the city of debris. 📷 **Froilan Gallardo**

Box 6

Rebuilding a better Marawi City?

More than three years after Marawi City was liberated from the militants who occupied the city for five months in 2017, close to 127,000 individuals remain displaced, most of them living with relatives or friends, while others are housed in transitory shelters, evacuation centers, and permanent shelters.^a

For those living in the temporary shelters, every day is a struggle with hardship and frustration.^b There is no running water and residents are dependent on expensive deliveries of potable water or the rains when they come during the wet season. Power disruptions are frequent. Fires have started from the use of candles that were left to burn. The proximity of different families that were dislocated and later thrown together in cramped shelters has raised tensions and incidents of violence. Getting medical help is difficult with few medical workers on site and with the crowding of health centers and hospitals due to the pandemic. It is also difficult to find jobs and other employment because of the distance of the shelters from public transport hubs or the few commercial areas left in Marawi. The situation of displaced residents has been exacerbated too by the restrictions on movement imposed by the government due to the pandemic.

^a UNHCR, Mindanao Displacement Dashboard, September 2020, Issue No. 73, http://www.protectionclusterphilippines.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Mindanao-Displacement-Dashboard_-SEP-2020-5.pdf

^b Based on reports sent by Early Response Network members in Marawi City and Lanao del Sur to the Critical Events Monitoring System. CEMS was set up by International Alert Philippines to gather real-time reports on tensions and violent conflicts in communities in the Bangsamoro. Reports are transmitted through SM S or VHF radio.



A Marawi resident raises a complaint during a dialogue with Task Force Bangon Marawi at the Lanao del Sur Provincial Capitol in Marawi City on 19 March 2019. 📷 **Froilan Gallardo**

The local government and other authorities have permitted some families to rebuild their homes within the 'most affected area' (MAA). Many of those who saw their homes destroyed by the bombing have filed complaints that their houses were demolished without their knowing. They fear that reclaiming their properties would be doubly difficult as the government builds the structures outlined in the Marawi master plan.

These difficulties and frustrations are being tapped by remnants of the Maute Group who have been seen in the city's environs or tracked in other locations in Lanao del Sur. There are newly emerging reports of a resurgence in recruitment.

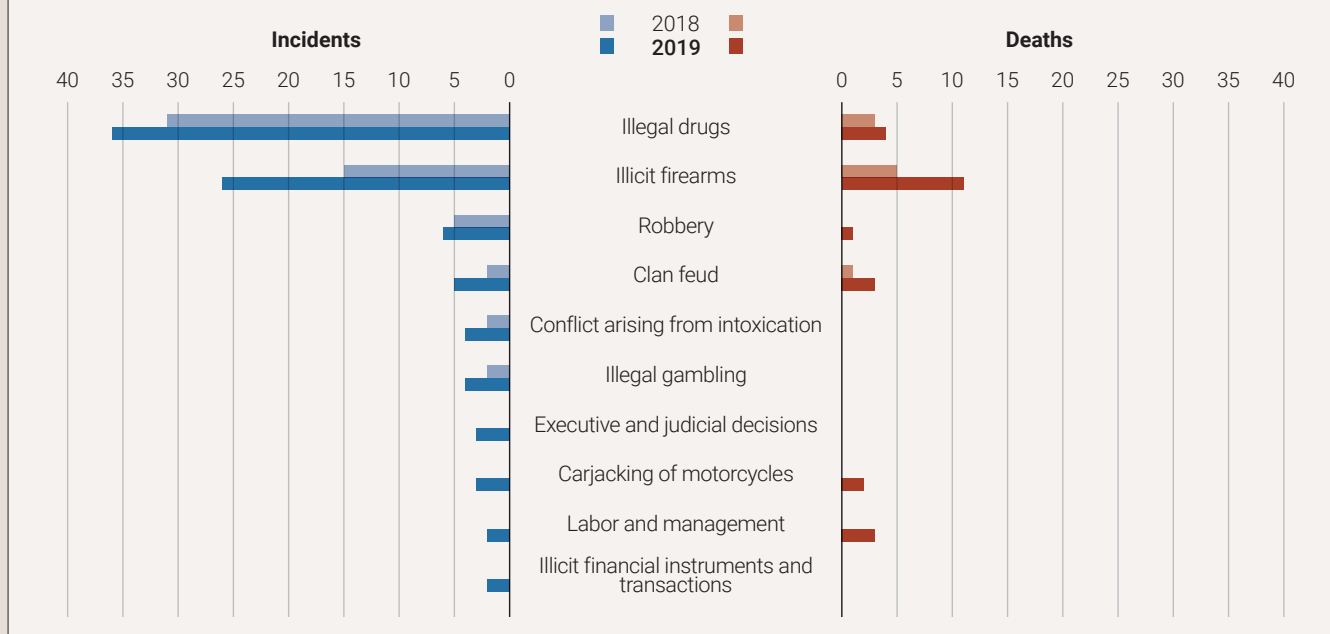
Marawi has also seen an expansion in the criminal weapons and drug trades. These flashpoints

are accompanied by an intensification in clan feuding as previous and new misunderstandings and grievances fuel retaliatory actions.

(See Figure D). These events accounted for the increase in violent deaths in the city in 2019.

Meanwhile, both the national government and the newly established Bangsamoro regional authority are pursuing different programs to address the reconstruction and rehabilitation needs of Marawi and the abject conditions faced by displaced families. The national government's interagency Task Force Bangon Marawi has been spearheading infrastructure development under the Marawi master plan and, already, the construction of permanent shelters, mosques, school buildings, barangay complexes, health centers, and a museum is underway. ◻

◻ Lade Jean Kabagani, Task force reiterates Marawi rehab timeline on track, Philippine News Agency, 23 October 2020, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1119534>

Figure D. Causes of conflict incidents and deaths in Marawi City

A constant complaint, however, has been the slow pace of work. Meanwhile, the Bangsamoro Transition Authority has announced the allocation of PhP500 million from its 2020 budget for Marawi rehabilitation. Despite the already delayed response from the regional authority, these new funding commitments face further delays from the bureaucratic red tape that compels all resources to be released only after project proposals are submitted, evaluated, and approved by several BARMM ministries and regional line agencies in charge of rehabilitation.^d The process consumes too much time and the current fiscal year is nearly over.

The demand for just compensation for the properties destroyed is moving at a slower pace and to date no funding commitments nor budget allocations have been made. Prospects for an approved

compensation act from Congress is getting narrower. The House Committee on Disaster Resilience has endorsed a bill to the plenary level that offers some sort of compensation for the loss or destruction of residential houses, commercial buildings, and other properties during the 2017 siege.^e However, the Senate's counterpart bill has been pending at the Committee on Rules since March 2020.^f

The residents of Marawi have overcome multiple unimaginable challenges since the 2017 siege of the city: escaping from the city by foot, living in cramped and unsafe shelters, scrambling for relief packages, and scrambling for additional relief and subsidies due to the pandemic. A betrayal of the promised compensation package announced at the height of the war is just another source of pain and the growing perception of discrimination and exclusion.

^d Taj Basman, Bangsamoro gov't creates P500-M Marawi rehabilitation program, Rappler, 30 October 2020, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/bangsamoro-government-marawi-rehabilitation-program-october-2020>

^e Charissa Luci-Atienza, Marawi compensation bill endorsed to plenary, Manila Bulletin, 03 September 2020, <https://mb.com.ph/2020/09/03/marawi-compensation-bill-endorsed-to-plenary/>

^f Carolyn O. Arguillas, Whatever happened to the Marawi compensation bills?, Mindanews, 24 October 2020, <https://www.mindanews.com/top-stories/2020/10/whatever-happened-to-the-marawi-compensation-bills/>

Conflict Deaths

Deaths that are a consequence of violence dropped in 2019, in step with the decline in the number of violent conflict incidents that year. (See Figure 16). The 851 deaths were 5% less than in 2018 and sustained the trend in decreasing number of fatalities after the heights recorded in 2017 due to the war in Marawi City. This total was a bit higher than the 2015 record of 827, and still higher than the norm set by the 2013-2015 average of 661 that was recorded before the start of hostilities in 2016 that peaked in 2017.

Less fatalities, except in Lanao del Sur

The lower death count for the Bangsamoro in 2019 stemmed from declines in the number of fatalities in four provinces: by 39% in Tawi-Tawi; 20% in Basilan including the city of Isabela; 8% in Sulu; and 5% in Maguindanao including the city of Cotabato. (See Figure 17). The number of deaths fell in Tawi-Tawi despite the 26% increase in conflict incidents. Meanwhile, Lanao del Sur recorded a 26% rise in conflict deaths as it posted a 29% increase in incidents.

The lower number of deaths in the four provinces was mainly due to less gun-related incidents. In Tawi-Tawi, there were less fatalities from illegal firearm-related incidents. Basilan, Sulu, and Maguindanao recorded declines

in the number of deaths attributed to violent extremism, which is consistent with the drop in the number of incidents. However, in Lanao del Sur, there were more deaths from violent extremism, illegal drugs, and illicit firearms.

These results show how Lanao del Sur has failed to sustain the rapid decline in conflict deaths in 2018. The record is mixed in Tawi-Tawi, which posted lower numbers in 2017, only to see those increase in the following year, then slip back in 2019. Maguindanao and Sulu saw deaths continue to slide after 2017. Basilan stood out for the consistent and steep reduction in conflict deaths after 2016.

A ranking of provinces by conflict incidents and deaths shows Maguindanao ahead of the other provinces and Tawi-Tawi at the rear in both 2018

Figure 16. Conflict deaths by year

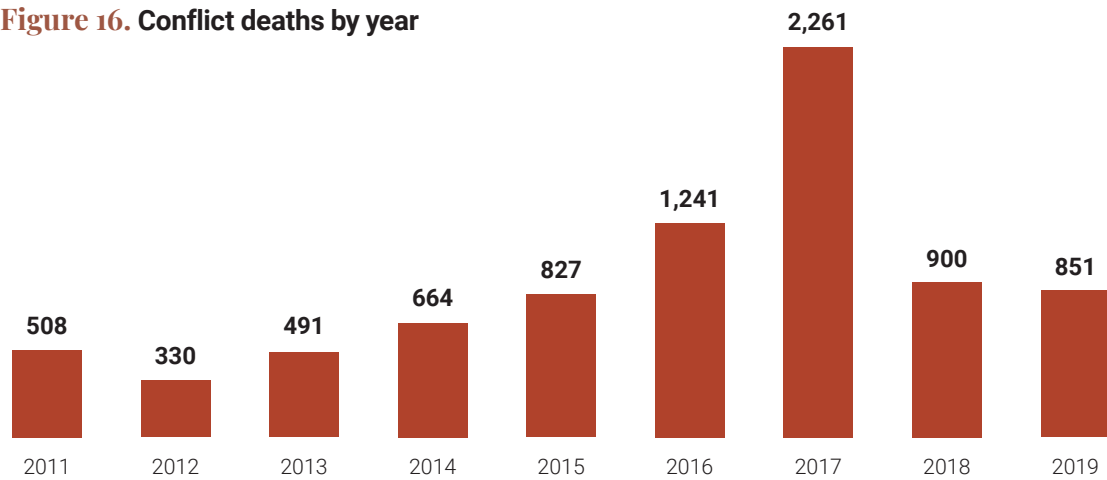
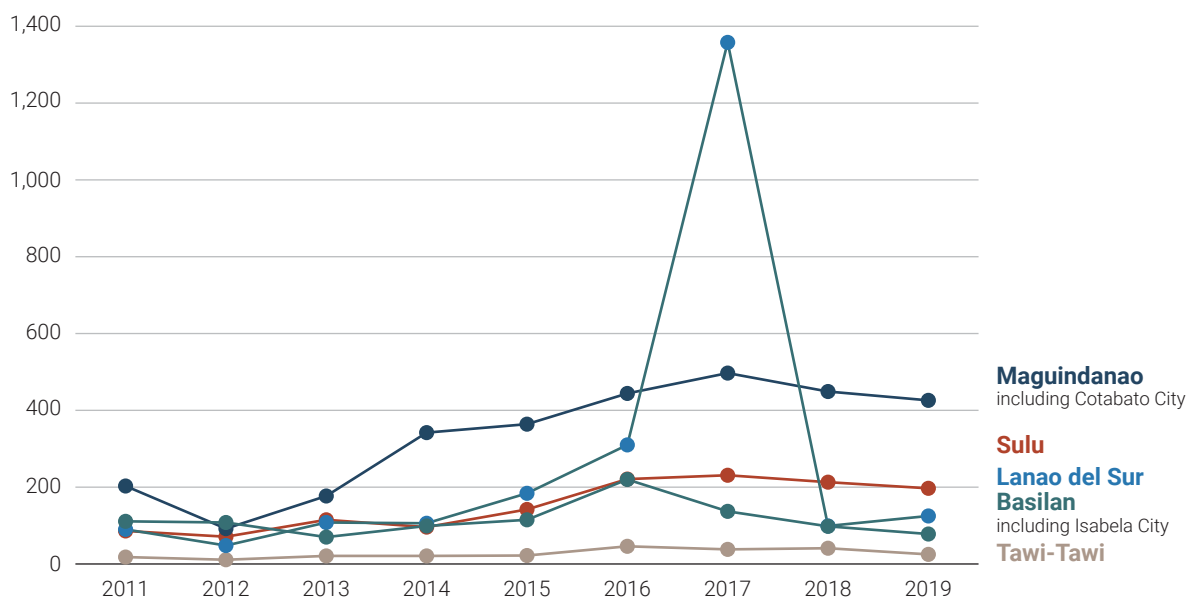


Figure 17. Conflict deaths by province and year



and 2019. The other provinces repositioned such that as of 2019, Lanao de Sur was second highest in terms of incidents but third in terms of deaths; Sulu third in incidents but second in deaths, and Basilan fourth in incidents and also fourth in deaths. (See Figure 22, p.80).

Most of the fatalities in Maguindanao and Sulu were a result of violent extremism, even as the

number of incidents and deaths fell from 2018. In Lanao del Sur, identity-related deaths due to clan feuding and personal grudges increased the identity conflict-related deaths from violent extremism. In Basilan, most deaths resulted from clan feuds and the use of illegal firearms. Tawi-Tawi saw an uptick in deaths due to illegal drugs, consistent with the increase in the number of incidents, particularly in Bongao.

Additional measures of conflict deaths

Measuring conflict deaths by population and area puts Maguindanao and Sulu ahead of the

other provinces as of 2019. (See Figures 18 and 19). Conflict deaths in these two provinces have noticeably trended downwards, although not as fast as in Basilan because of the high number of fatalities from violent extremism. Tawi-Tawi

Figure 18. Conflict deaths per 100,000 persons by province and year

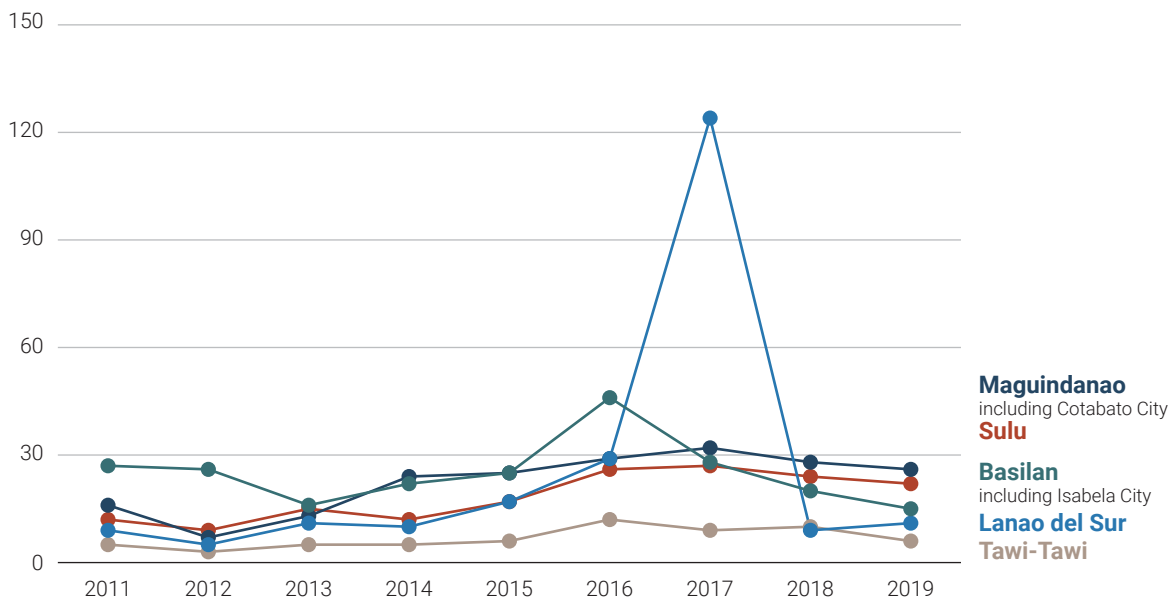
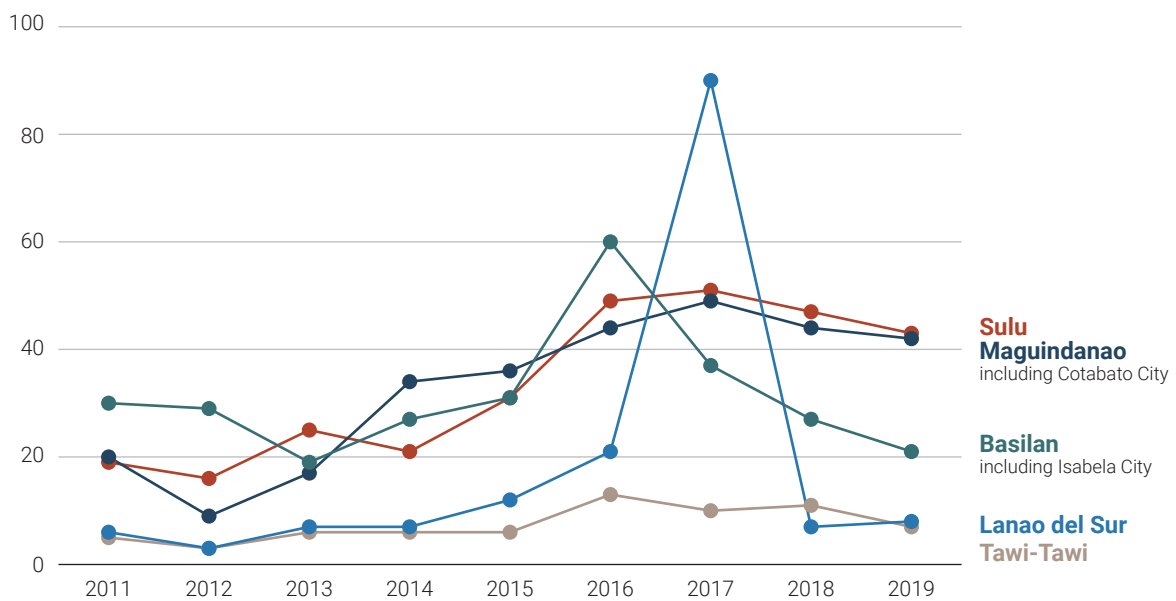


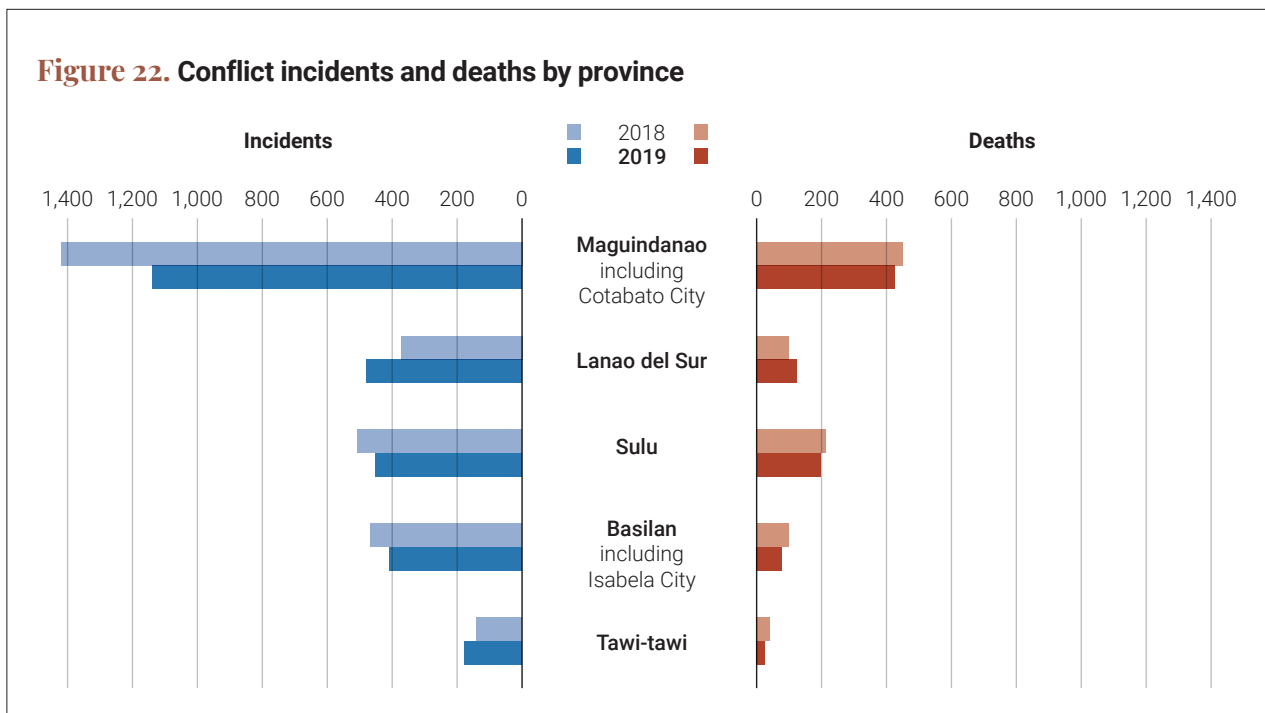
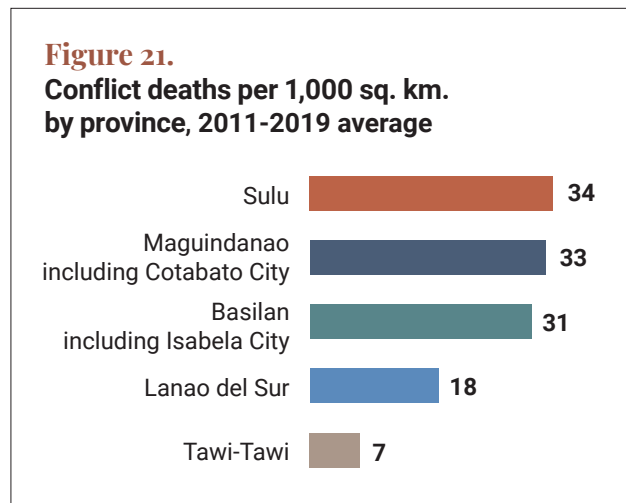
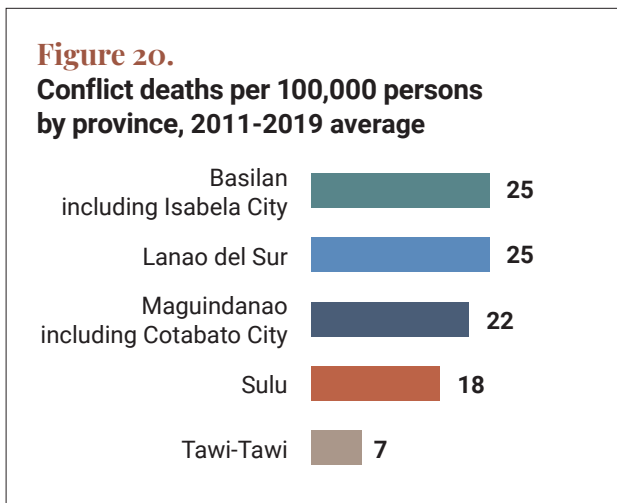
Figure 19. Conflict deaths per 1,000 sq. km. by province and year



was less consistent in reducing conflict deaths after these hit a high in 2016 but appeared to have gained traction by 2019. It was only in Lanao del Sur where conflict deaths had risen.

The nine-year average of conflict incidents and deaths per 100,000 persons and per 1,000 square kilometers provides a rough grouping of provinces. First, in terms of population, the provinces that

bore the brunt of higher conflict deaths were Basilan, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao, while in terms of area, these were Sulu, Maguindanao and Basilan. (See Figure 20 and Figure 21). Lanao del Sur cemented its reputation as an outlier—first to descend into full-scale war, first to rise out from it with a package of inputs, but still the last in shaking off its massive human costs.



Causes of Conflict Deaths

The previous discussions on conflict causes and conflict deaths underscore the importance of understanding conflict triggers and the costs they can exact.



An explosives expert from the Philippine Army inspects weapons from the MILF that were decommissioned as part of the peace process between the Philippine Government and the MILF in Simuay, Sultan Kudarat on 7 September 2019.
© Manman Dejeta



Multiple-cause conflicts and their deadly cost

The year 2017 marked the start of conflicts becoming increasingly multi-causal in nature. Identity-political conflicts surged and caused thousands of deaths amid more attacks by extremist.¹⁵

Incidents with two or more causes continued to account for a significant proportion of conflict incidents and deaths in 2019. Such incidents comprised 32% of incidents that year, rising from 30% in 2018, yet caused 56% of conflict deaths, higher than the 54% in the previous year. (See **Figure 23**). Meanwhile, incidents with a single cause comprised half of the total number of incidents but

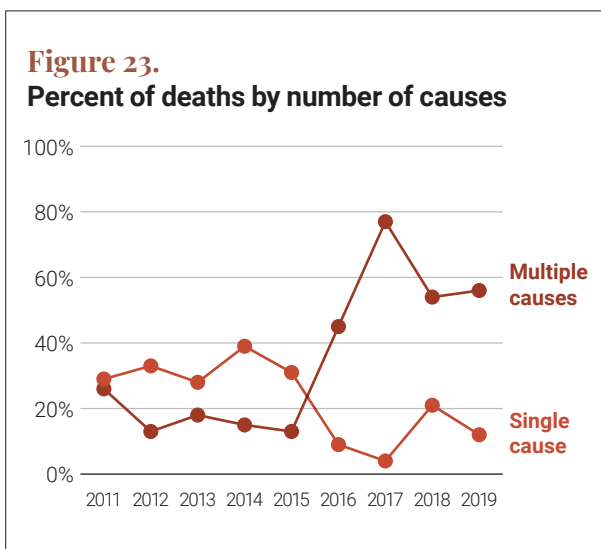


Table 4.
Number of deaths by number of causes

Causes	2	3	4	5
Deaths	411	50	14	1

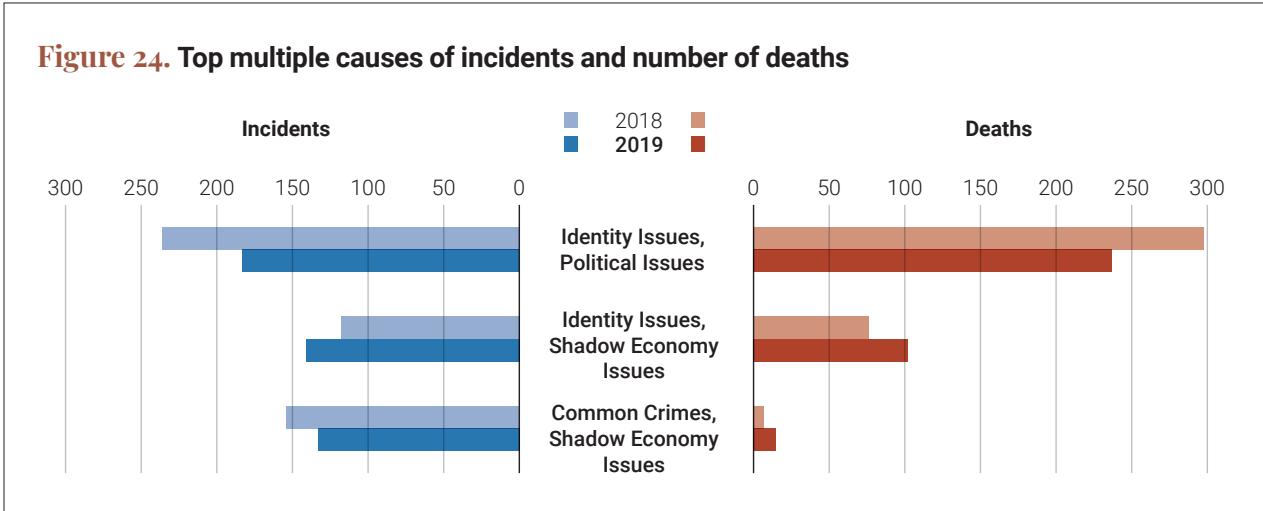
accounted for just 12% of conflict deaths. Multi-causal conflicts caused more casualties and led to deadlier outcomes for those affected. In 2019, 56 people died in 100 multiple-cause incidents, compared to just eight for 100 single-cause incidents.

Conflict incidents with a combination of two causes were nearly eight times more than those with three causes, leading to more deaths caused by the former. (See **Table 4**).

As of 2019, identity-political issues, in particular violent extremism, continued to cause the highest number of conflict incidents and deaths. (See **Figure 24**). Identity-shadow economy issues rose to second from third place amid a surge in clan feuds and conflicts due to personal grudges that were fueled and prolonged by the use of illicit weapons. Some of these clan feuds were also tied to illegal drugs. Common crimes-shadow economy issues, which ranked second in 2018, moved to third in 2019. These were carjacking and robbery incidents that were often enabled by use of illicit weapons.

“Incidents with two or more causes continued to account for a significant proportion of conflict incidents and deaths in 2019.”

¹⁵ International Alert Philippines, Conflict Alert 2018, Op. cit., p. 30-32



Single-cause incidents and conflict deaths

Shadow economy issues were the predominant causes of tensions and conflicts between and among individuals and groups though these did not cause as many deaths as identity issues – or political issues as of 2018. (See Figure 25). However, deaths due to shadow economy issues have been increasing since 2016, the start of the Duterte government’s war on illegal drugs and other shadow economy activities, while deaths due to identity and political issues, principally in the form of

violent extremism, have plummeted after the spike in 2017 that was due to the war in Marawi City.

Shadow economy-related deaths were lifted by the increase in illegal drug-related deaths by 26% to 77 in 2019. (See Figure 26, p.85). The highest number of fatalities were from Jolo and Indanan in Sulu; Bongao in Tawi-Tawi; Parang and Datu Odin Sinsuat in Maguindanao; and Marawi City, Wao, and Picong in Lanao del Sur.

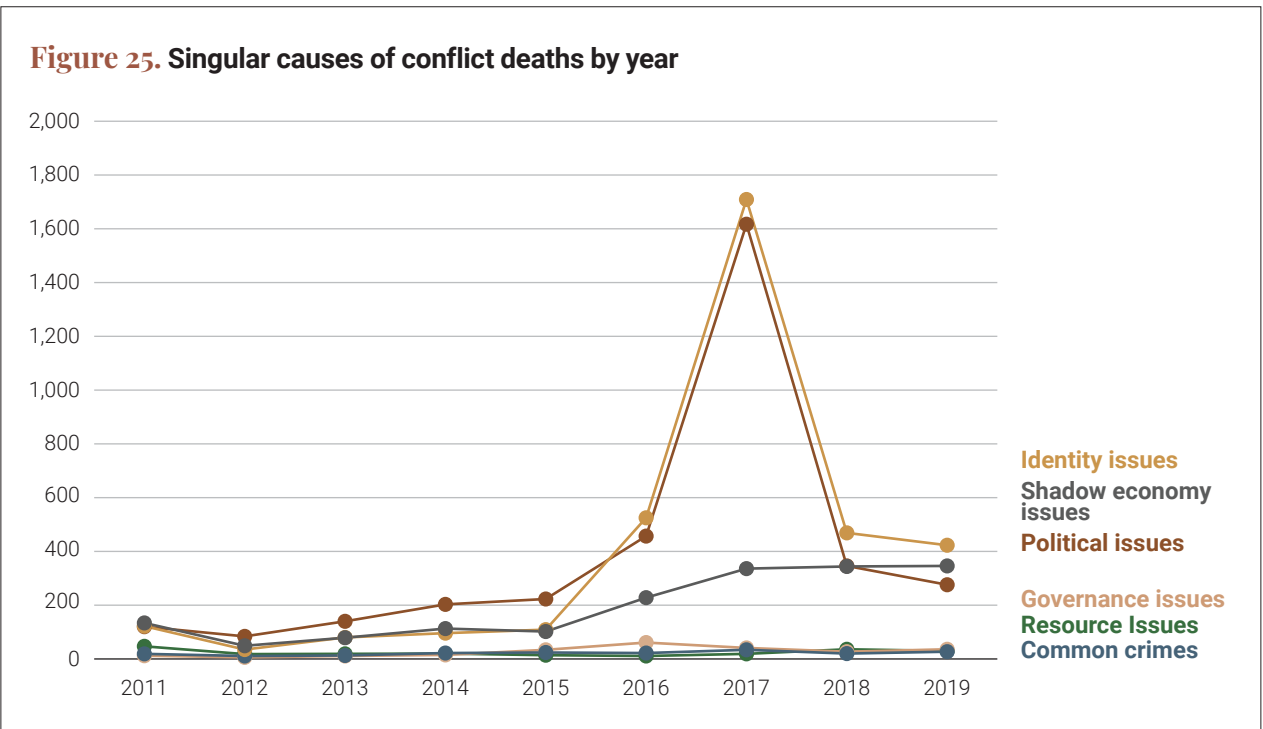
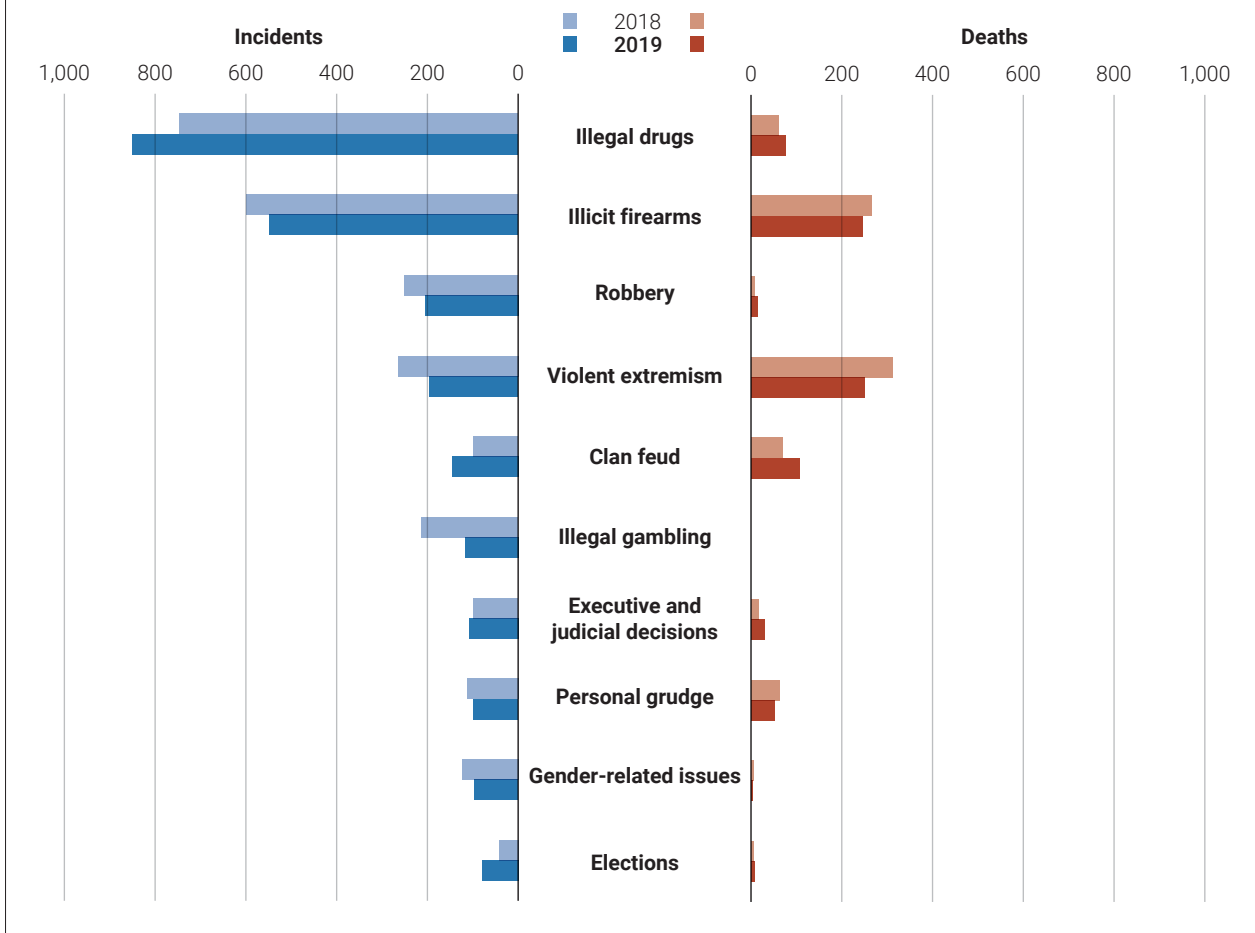


Figure 26. Top 10 singular causes of conflict incidents and number of deaths



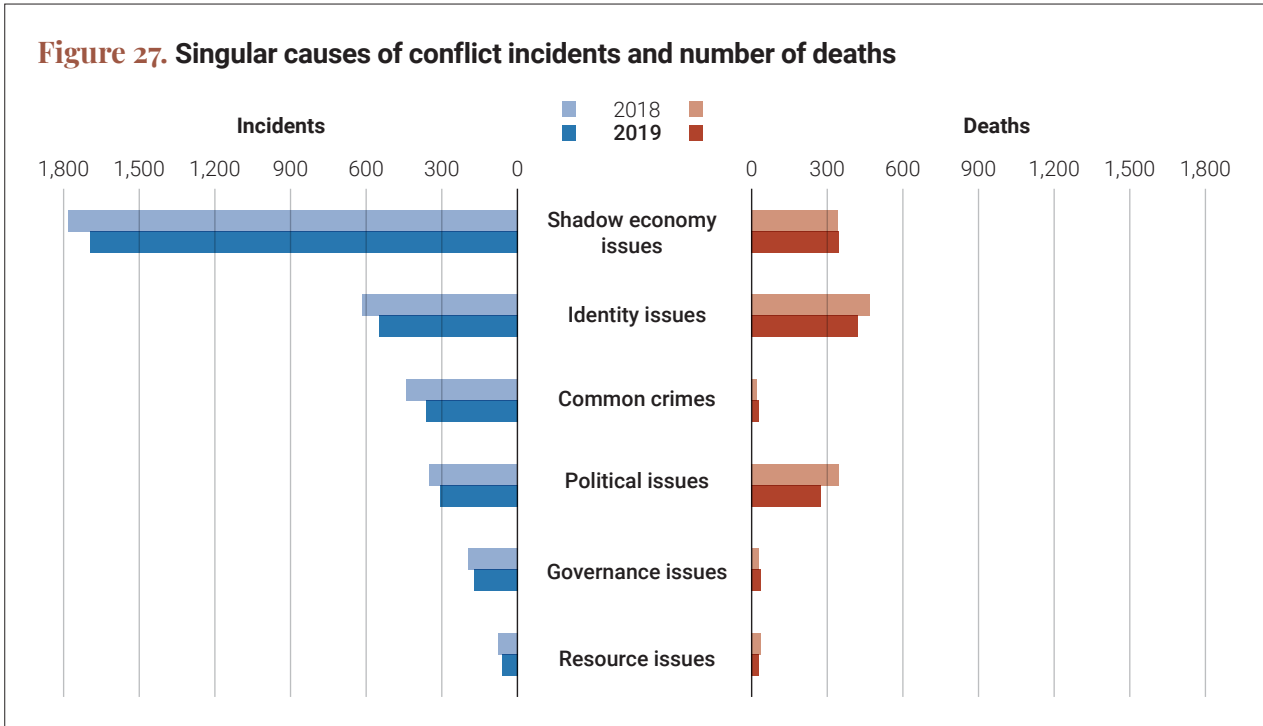
“...Deaths due to shadow economy issues have been increasing since 2016, the start of the Duterte government’s war on illegal drugs and other shadow economy activities...”

Meanwhile, the spate of clan feuding led to a 53% increase in deaths to 107. These included feuds between powerful clans, armed groups such as MILF and BIFF over land, and illegal drug-related retaliations.

Illicit firearms and violent extremism caused fewer fatalities in 2019 but remained as the top causes of conflict fatalities. Deaths from gun violence fell by 7% to 246 and from extremism by 19% to 251.

The increase in casualties from clan feuds plus those from violent extremism and conflicts due to personal

grudge put identity issues firmly in first place in terms of deaths by main conflict causes. (See Figure 27). Meanwhile, fatalities from illegal drug- and illicit firearm-related incidents pulled up shadow economy issues to the second spot from third previously. The 2019 midterm elections led to eight deaths, two more than the 2018 synchronized barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan elections, but the lower number of fatalities from extremist violence pulled down political violence to third place. Common crimes were the third leading cause of conflicts but led to few deaths, as did governance and resource issues.

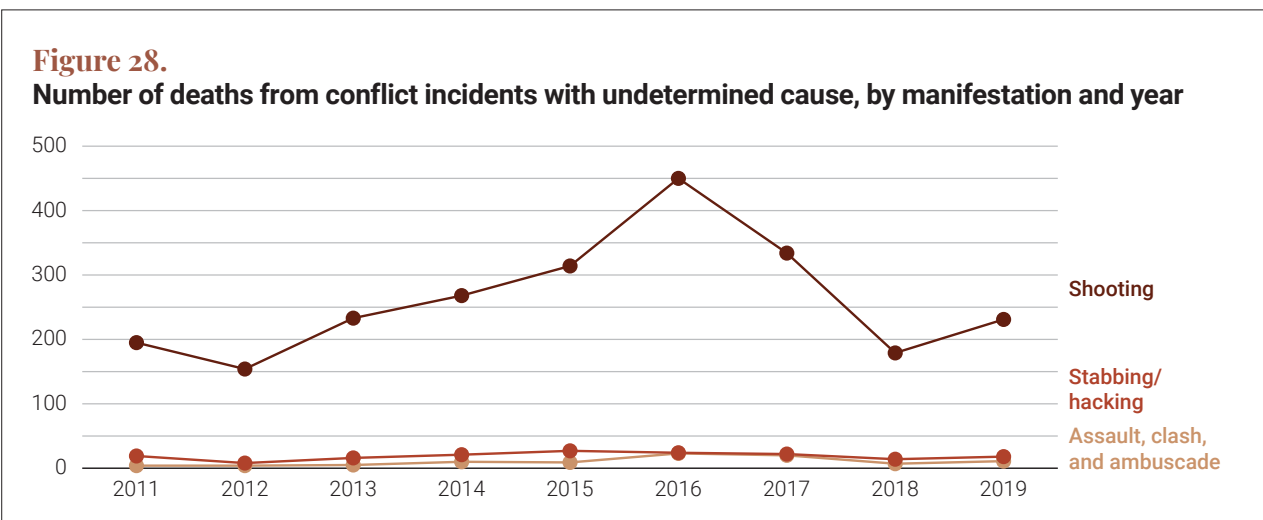


Fatalities in incidents with undetermined causes


Many incidents were difficult to classify as to their cause or causes and were consequently grouped according to their manifestation, whether that was shooting, stabbing, hacking, assault, clashes or ambushes. A total of 2,358 were killed in shooting incidents from 2011 to 2019, of which 231 were killed in 2019, up by 29% from the previous year. (See Figure 28). Stabbing/hacking incidents and cases marked by assaults, clashes and ambushes resulted in much fewer deaths over the years but these

also trended upwards in 2019. These incidents happened even though martial law was in force.

Nearly half of deaths from shooting incidents from 2011 to 2019 were in Maguindanao, including the city of Cotabato. There were 149 deaths in 2019, up by nearly half from the previous year. A fifth of deaths over the nine-year period were in Lanao del Sur; 17% in Basilan including the city of Isabela; 15% in Sulu; and 3% in Tawi-Tawi. Lanao del Sur and Basilan also recorded increases in shooting-related deaths in 2019.





Passengers on their way to Barangay Sandab Madaya in Butig, Lanao del Sur pass by parked military trucks. Soldiers routinely patrol the area, a former stronghold of the ISIS-linked Maute Group.  **Najib Zacaria**

Box 7

Lanao del Sur and Tawi-Tawi slide into more violence

The violence intensity index (VII) provides a measure of the intensity of violent conflict in a locality within a given period by condensing variables such as the number of violent conflict incidents (frequency) and the number of people wounded, killed or displaced in those incidents (magnitude).^a

The VII is useful in identifying places with intensifying violence, providing a guide for conflict prevention and transformation and for policy-making.^b

Eight years of tracking violence in the Bangsamoro showed this building up in 2014, surging in 2016, hitting a peak in 2017 with the Marawi siege, and receding soon after. (See Figure E). In 2019, the region's VII score incorporating displacement numbers fell to 2.19 from 2.40 in 2018, while its score sans displacement data slipped to 0.19 from 0.20. By these two measures, the region appeared to have become peaceful. However, a deeper examination of the provincial scores showed inconsistencies in the reduction of violent conflict.

Provinces' VII scores

Among the five Bangsamoro provinces, Lanao del Sur and Tawi-Tawi saw a deterioration in their peace and order situation in 2019. (See Figure F and Figure G, p.89). Lanao del Sur's VII score, without

^a Displacement data were sourced from UNHCR Philippines and Protection Cluster Philippines, which is a partnership with the Department of Social Welfare and Development. For 2019, International Alert Philippines placed the number of displaced persons due to violent conflict at around 44,000 using the data culled from the UNHCR's Mindanao Displacement Dashboards.

^b E. Abasolo, *Applying a Violence Intensity Index in the Bangsamoro*. Quezon City: International Alert Philippines, 2014.

Figure E. VII in BARMM with and without displacement data by year

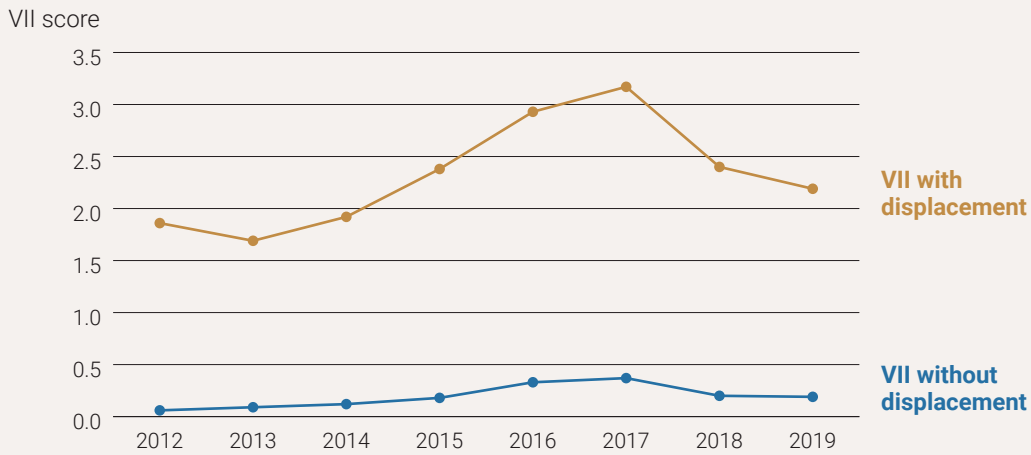
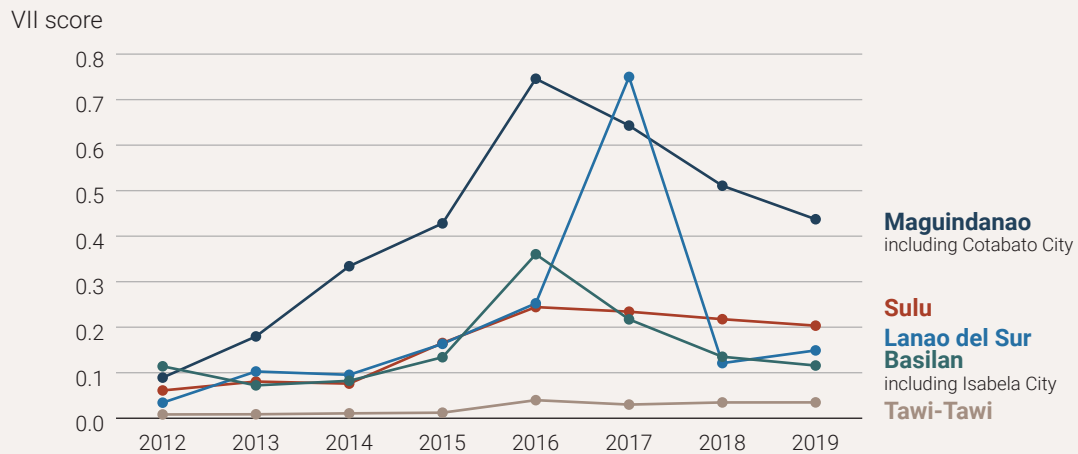


Figure F. VII in BARMM without displacement data by province and year



factoring in displacement, rose to 0.1490 in 2019 from 0.1211 from 2018 as the number of clan feuds, illegal drug- and firearm-related incidents, robberies, and police arrests increased, resulting in more conflict deaths. Incorporating displacement numbers to the VII, Tawi-Tawi’s score rose to 1.03 from 0.03—a leap by 3,333%. The increase, a record for Tawi-Tawi that had been the most peaceful province in the Bangsamoro, was driven by the displacement of 100 families in Bongao in January 2019 due to a land dispute.^c These families remained displaced as of June 2019.

Apart from Lanao del Sur and Tawi-Tawi, and depending on the exclusion or inclusion of data on displacement, other provinces showed sustained declines in conflict intensity by 2019. Sans data on displacement, Maguindanao and Basilan’s VII scores dropped by a similar 14% to 0.4372 and 0.1158, respectively. Sulu’s score fell to 0.2034 or by 6%, slower than Maguindanao and Basilan, due to the enduring presence of the Abu Sayyaf. Tawi-Tawi’s score saw a slight change in 2019 (0.0348) from 2018 (0.0347).

^c UNHCR Philippines, Mindanao Displacement Dashboard, June 2019, Issue No. 59, retrieved August 2020 from <https://www.unhcr.org/ph/protection-cluster/mindanao-displacement-dashboards>; MSVG Sulu and Tawi-Tawi cluster, 5 August 2020 meeting.

If displacement data were considered, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao posted the highest declines of 31% and 24% to score 2.15 and 3.44, respectively. Clashes with ISIS-affiliated armed groups in the two provinces caused the displacement of families but at lower numbers compared to previous years.^d Sulu and Basilan made a similar 1% decline to score 2.20 and 2.12, respectively.

VII by month

Violence intensity by month in 2019 fluctuated less than in 2018, despite the holding of the plebiscite on the BOL and the midterm elections. The VII without displacement data averaged 0.3135 in 2019, improving from 0.3398 in 2018 (See Figure H).

Figure G. VII in BARMM with displacement data by province and year

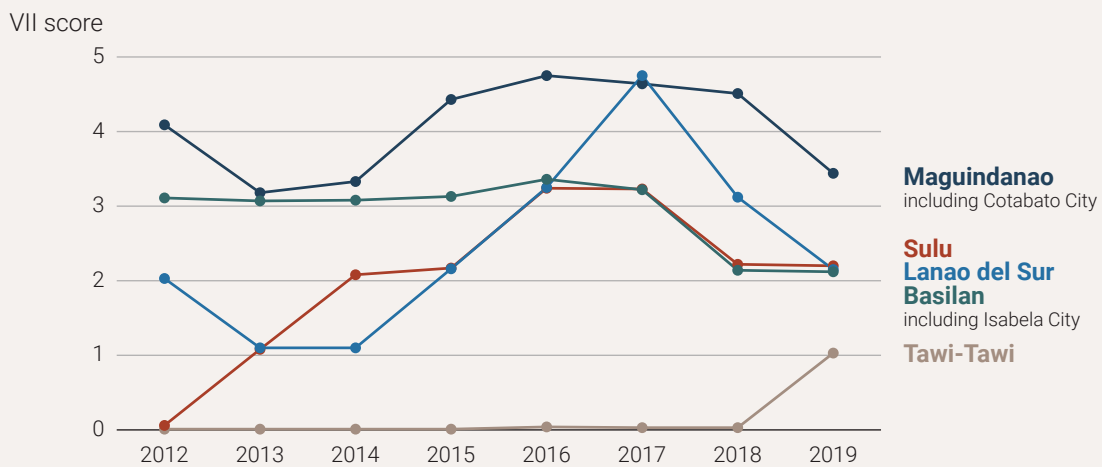
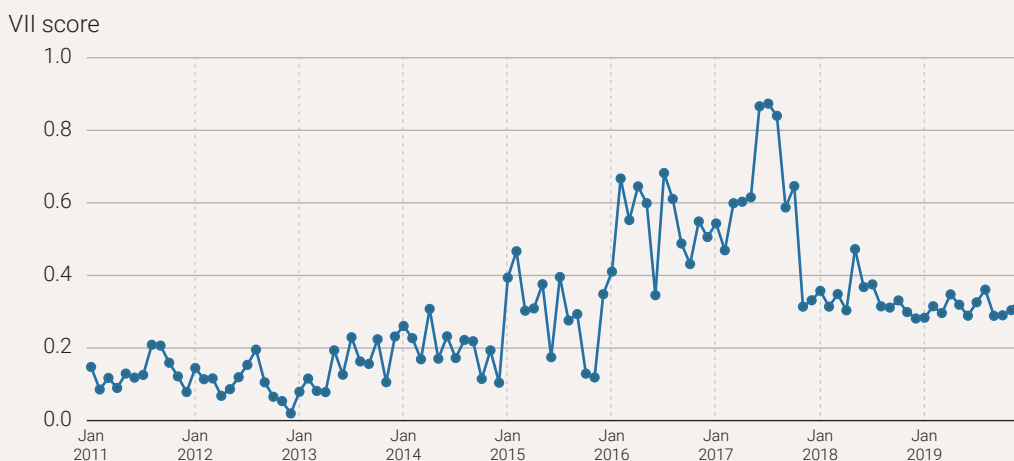


Figure H. VII in BARMM without displacement data by month and year



^d UNHCR Philippines, Mindanao Displacement Dashboards, May, June, July, September and November 2019, Issue No. 58, 59, 60, 62, and 63, respectively.

Violence intensity in cities and municipalities

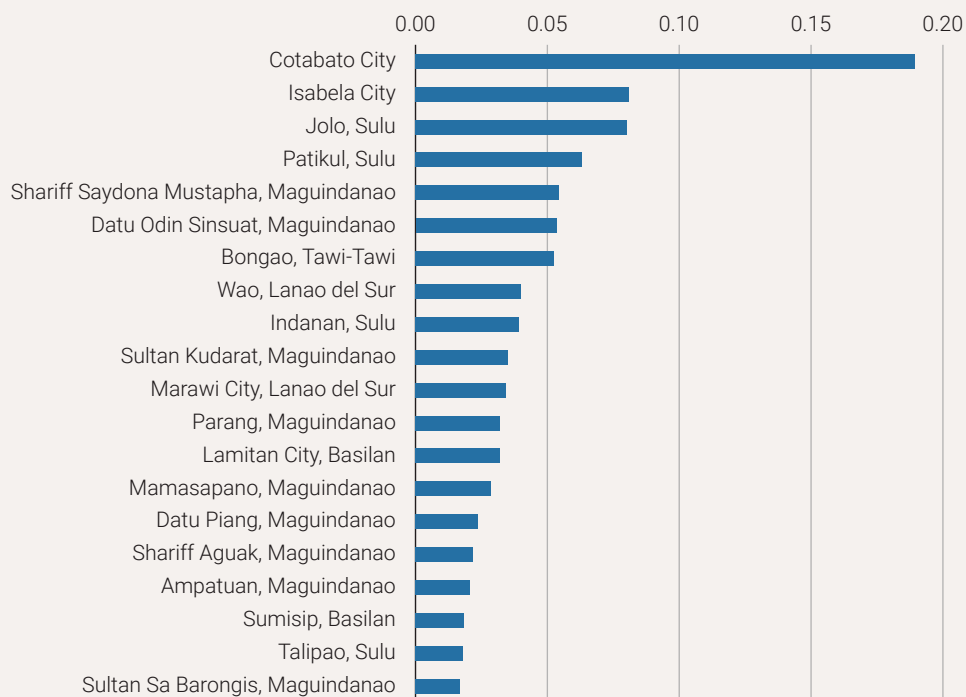
For the first time, the VII scores of Bangsamoro cities and municipalities were computed to provide more granular data and encourage location-specific conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution measures.

Leading the top 20 localities based on their VII scores without displacement figures is Cotabato City with 0.19, more than double that of Isabela City that followed with 0.08. (See **Figure I**). Cotabato City logged 441 incidents of conflict in 2019, 28% less than in 2018, but the highest among Bangsamoro cities and municipalities. Meanwhile, the top five causes of injuries and deaths in the city were: illicit firearms, violent extremism, personal grudge, child abuse, and gender-related issues.

Other urban cities and municipalities (Jolo and Patikul in Sulu; Bongao, Tawi-Tawi; and Parang and Sultan Kudarat in Maguindanao) also figured in the list, which supports the social control perspective on violence that signifies how urbanization and population growth can weaken informal mechanisms of social control that in turn results in greater violence.[•] Known hotspots for violent extremism were also in the top 20, namely, Indanan, Sulu, and Shariff Saydona Mustapha, Mamasapano, and Datu Piang in Maguindanao.

For a more complete story, the violent intensity index with displacement data was also computed. Conflict in Cotabato and Isabela cities did not result in any displacement, which pushed them off the list of the top 20 localities. Instead, known

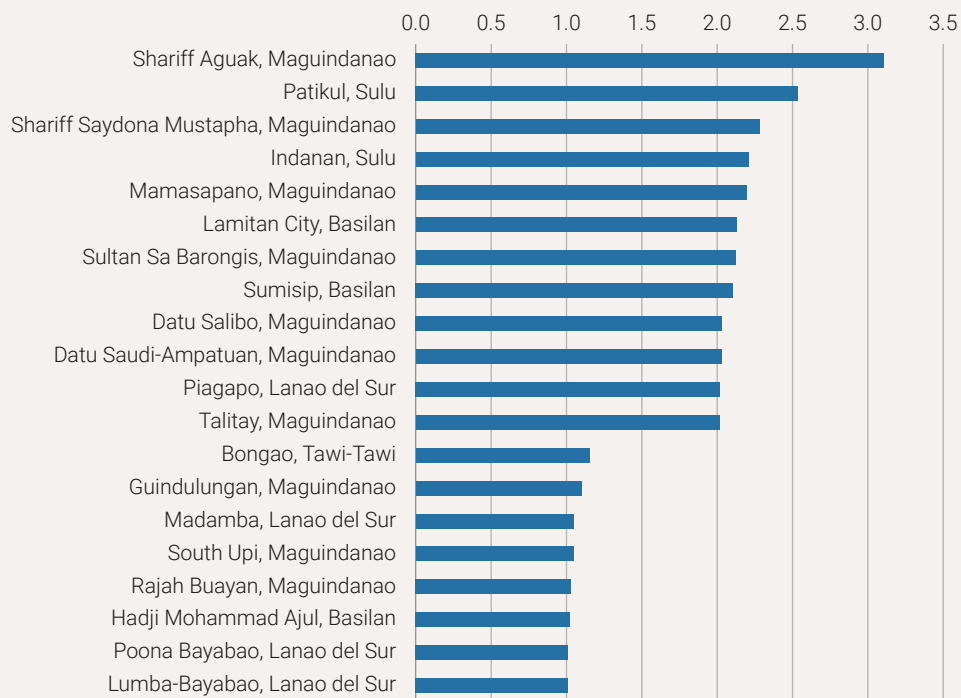
Figure I. Top 20 cities and municipalities by VII without displacement data, 2019



[•] R. Kornhauser, *Social Sources of Delinquency*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978;

C. Shaw and H. McKay, *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Figure J. Top 20 cities and municipalities by VII with displacement data, 2019



hotspots for violent extremism and conflict between and within armed groups occupied the list: Shariff Aguak, Shariff Saydona Mustapha and Mamasapano in Maguindanao and Patikul and Indanan in Sulu. (See Figure J). Over 15,000 individuals were displaced from Shariff Aguak in 2019 as a result of clashes involving the BIFF. In July, mortar shelling by the military targeted BIFF forces; in September,

a BIFF faction that reintegrated into the MILF fought a BIFF faction; and in November, more mortar shelling by the military were aimed at the BIFF. In Patikul, clashes between the Abu Sanyayf and the military forced 1,600 individuals to evacuate. In South Upi, Maguindanao the displacement of 560 Teduray from their lands served as a foreboding of the kind of violence that faced them in 2020 and beyond.

Table F. Top five multiple causes of conflict by VII without displacement data, 2019

VII Score	Multi-causal combinations
0.96	Violent extremism (identity-political issue)
0.28	Illegal drugs and illicit firearms
0.26	Clan feuds and use of illicit firearms
0.18	Carjacking of motor vehicles/motorbikes
0.07	Feuds among individuals fueled by personal grudge and use of illicit firearms

VII by multiple causes of conflict

Another first for this report is a determination of the conflict causes that bring higher conflict intensity. Multiple causes rather than singular causes were subjected to analysis as they exacted higher human costs in terms of deaths. In 2019, the top five multi-causal combinations all involved the use of firearms, which inevitably resulted in injury or death (**Table F**).

Matching multiple causes to location shows the causal combinations that increase the intensity of violence in that location. The results for 2019 are shown by location and by the top multi-causal combinations based on VII scores without factoring in displacement data (**Table G**).

Table G. Top multiple causes of conflict by VII without displacement data by province, 2019

VII Score	Province and multi-causal combinations
Maguindanao including Cotabato City	
0.72	Violent extremism
0.16	Clan feuds and use of illicit firearms
0.11	Illegal drugs and illicit firearms
0.10	Carjacking of motor vehicles/motorbikes
0.09	Feuds among individuals fueled by personal grudge and use of illicit firearms
Sulu	
0.92	Violent extremism
0.21	Illegal drugs and illicit firearms
0.09	Use of illicit firearms in election-related incidents
0.06	Clan feuds and use of illicit firearms
0.04	Feuds among individuals fueled by personal grudge and use of illicit firearms
Lanao del Sur	
0.75	Clan feuds and use of illicit firearms
0.44	Illegal drugs and illicit firearms
0.41	Carjacking of motor vehicles/motorbikes
0.27	Violent extremism
0.12	Use of illicit firearms in election-related incidents
Basilan including Isabela City	
0.24	Carjacking of motor vehicles/motorbikes
0.23	Violent extremism
0.13	Illegal drugs and illegal firearms
Tawi-Tawi	
0.48	Illegal drugs and illicit firearms
0.15	Illegal drugs and illegal gambling



Use of Weapons in Violent Conflict



Pistols and ammunition that were captured during a raid of a suspected safehouse of the ISIS-linked Maute Group in Cagayan de Oro City on 25 November 2020. Police also collected an ISIS flag and bomb paraphernalia.

📷 Froilan Gallardo

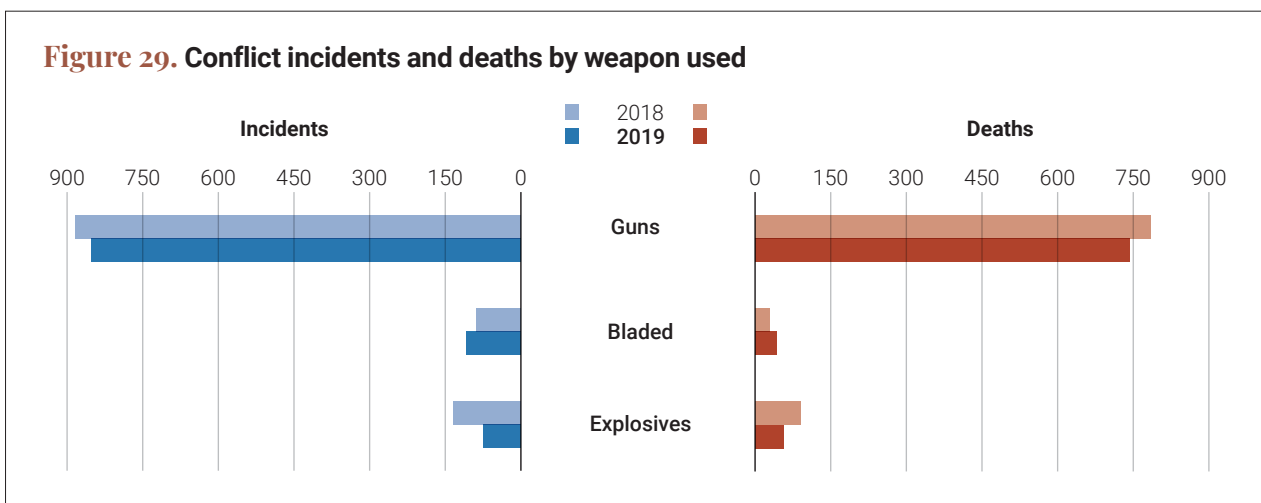
Guns continued to be the weapon of choice in many deaths registered in 2019 in the Bangsamoro despite declines in the number of incidents—both determined and undetermined as to cause or causes—and in the number of deaths from these incidents. Meanwhile, the use of explosives contracted in 2019, leaving lesser casualties. In contrast, the use of bladed weapons increased, leading to more deaths.¹⁶ (See Figure 29).

The slower reduction in gun-related violence highlights the need for sound policy in combatting the proliferation of illicit firearms, the most serious and ubiquitous driver of violence in the Bangsamoro. Conflict Alert saw gun-related violence as directly related to the illegal trade in weapons. Data from the UN Comtrade Database showed the Philippines imported US\$17.2 million worth of revolvers and pistols in 2019, much less than the US\$19.4 million worth reported by exporting countries.¹⁷ The missing two million dollars' worth of weapons have likely leaked into the grey market.

Handguns were the most common type of gun used and their use increased by 6% between 2018 and 2019. (See Figure 30, p.97). On the other hand, the use of rifles declined by 11%. Handguns were mostly used in illicit firearm-related incidents and were logged in

police records as violations of RA 10591 or the Comprehensive Firearms and Ammunition Regulation Act. (See Figure 31, p.98). They were also used in illegal drug incidents, clan feuding, and in conflicts instigated by personal grudge, robberies, and during the 2019 elections. Violent extremists, such as the Abu Sayyaf and the BIFF, used handguns to carry out assassinations of government troops. Clan feuds and incidents related to illegal drugs and violent extremism exacted bloodier results in 2019.

The use of rifles decreased in 2019, except in clan feuds and illegal drug-related incidents. (See Figure 32, p.98). Clan feuding intersected with violence between or among armed groups, notably the MILF and BIFF that squared off over land issues in Maguindanao. These incidents were costly, not only in terms of deaths, but also in terms of the displacement of communities.



¹⁶ Numbers are slightly different from the Conflict Alert 2019 report as a more accurate method was devised to mine the Conflict Alert database. Also, gun confiscations were excluded from the analysis. The new approach provides an accurate and direct measurement of actual gun use. The findings from previous reports still hold that gun-related violence claims the highest number of fatalities in the Bangsamoro.

¹⁷ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division Trade Statistics data. (2020). UN COMTRADE Database: <https://comtrade.un.org/data/>

An example of an improvised explosive device or a homemade bomb used by non-state armed groups to harass, injure, or kill soldiers and civilians.



“The slower reduction in gun-related violence highlights the need for sound policy in combatting the proliferation of illicit firearms, the most serious and ubiquitous driver of violence in the Bangsamoro.”



Police present an ISIS flag, firearms, and bomb paraphernalia that were captured during a raid of a suspected safehouse of the ISIS-linked Maute group in Cagayan de Oro City on 25 November 2020. © Froilan Gallardo

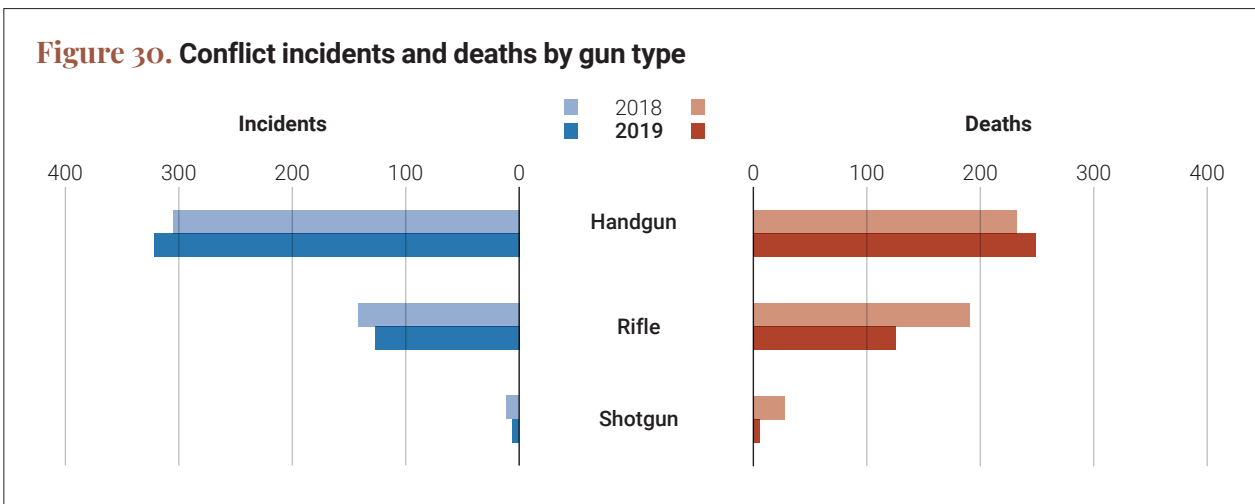


Figure 31. Handgun use by cause of conflict and number of deaths

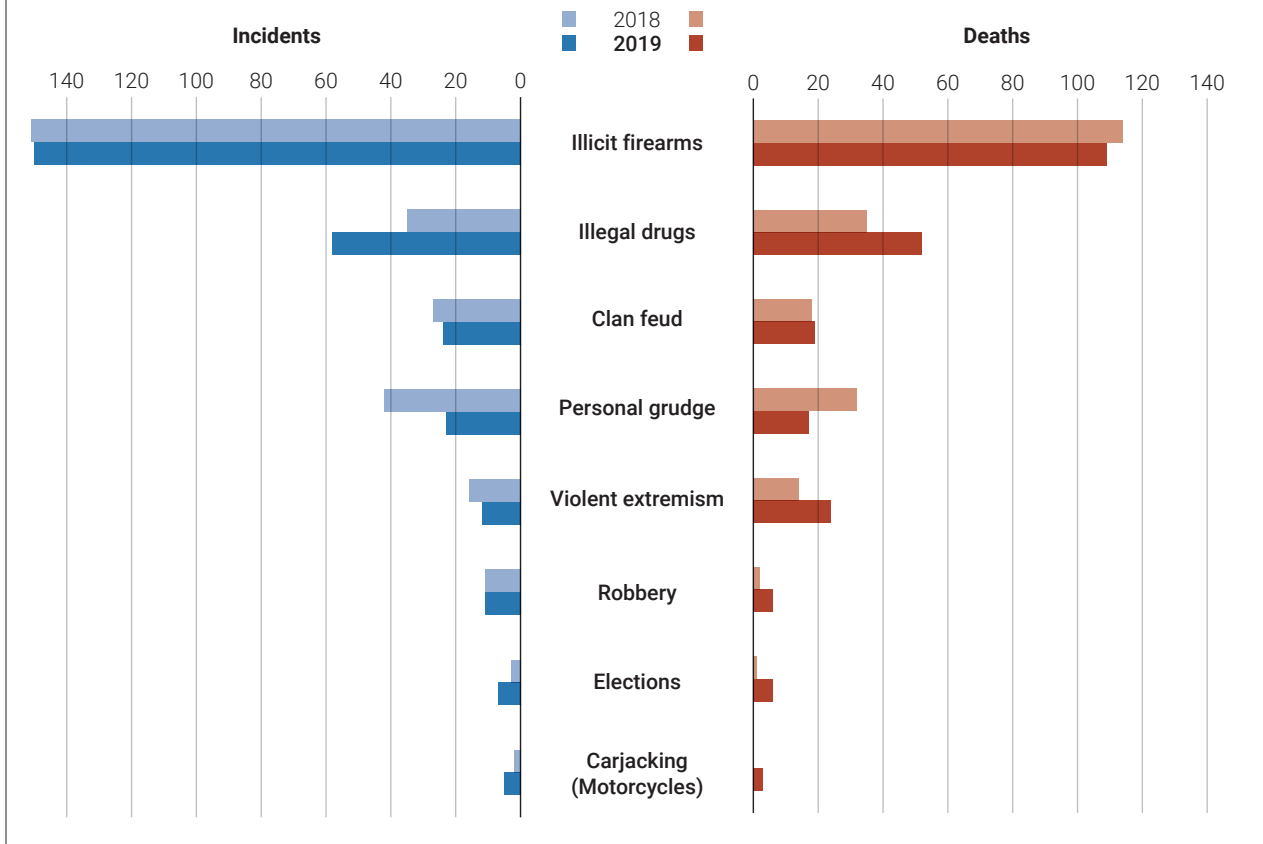
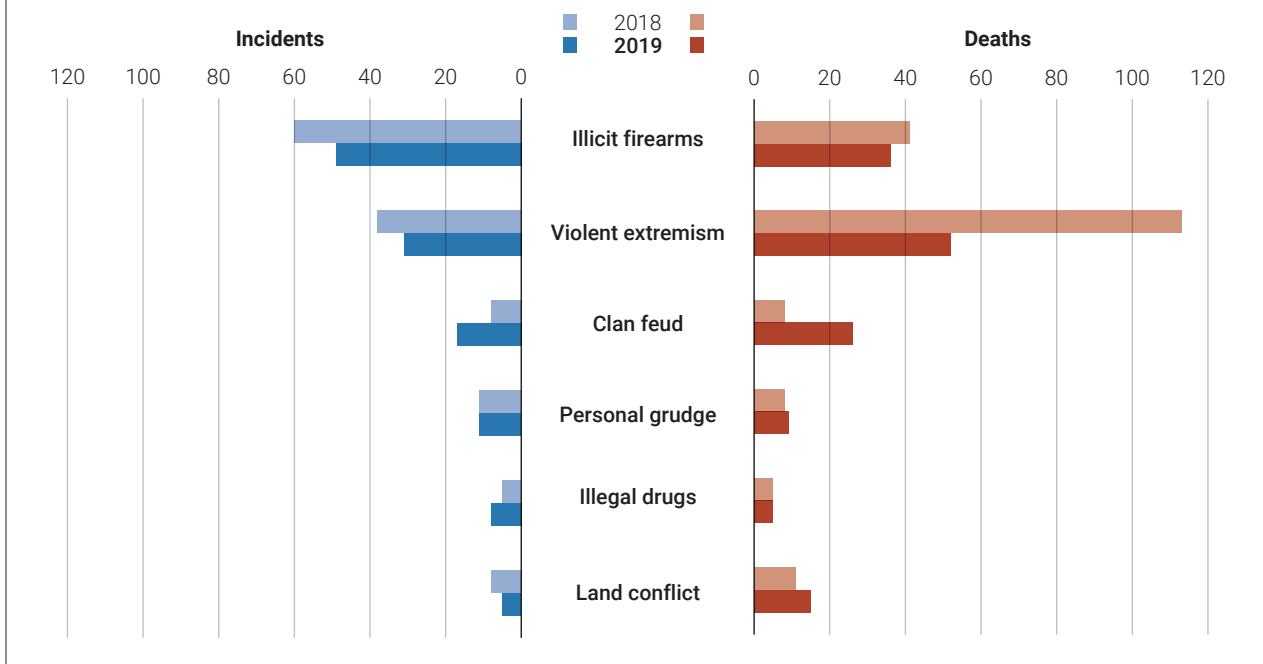


Figure 32. Rifle use by cause of conflict and number of deaths



Temporal Behavior of Violent Conflict



Hariraya prayer at the open grounds of the Provincial Capitol in Patikul, Sulu on 11 August 2019. © Nickee Butlangan





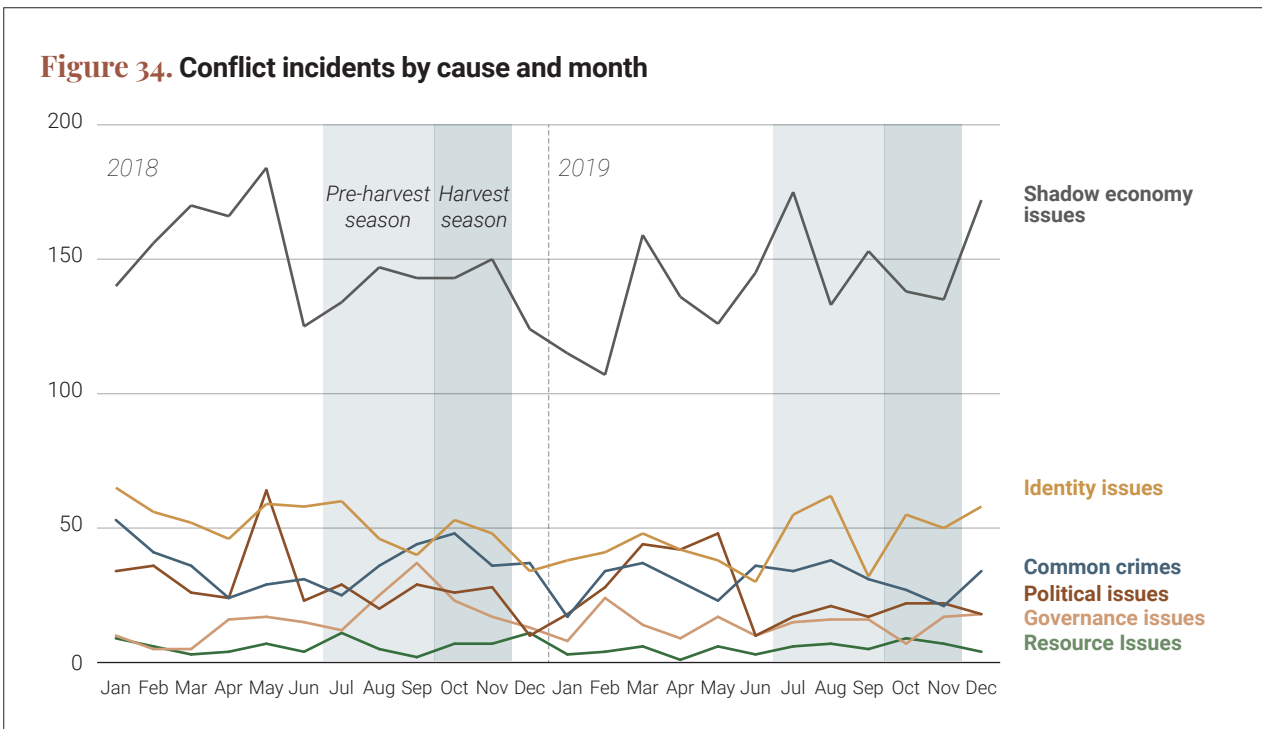
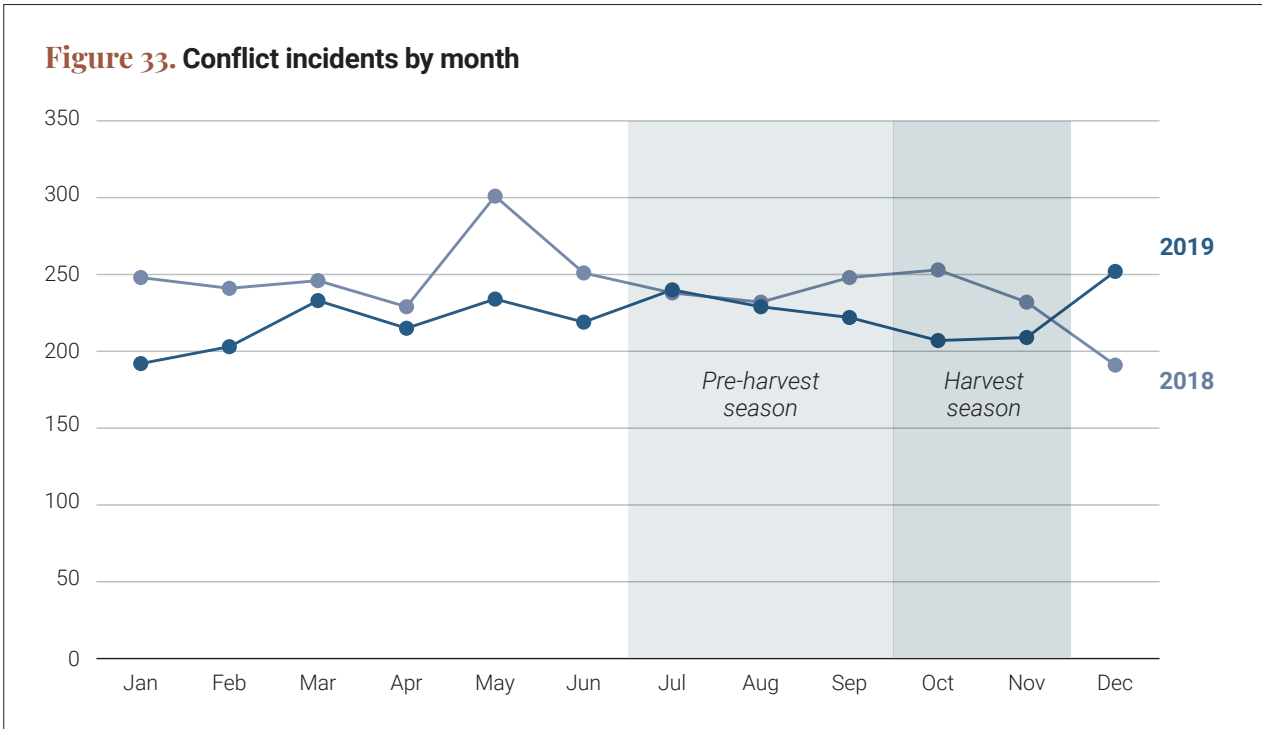
A man rides a horse through a rural village in Carmen, Cotabato. . © Veejay Villafranca

Analysis of the critical periods when violence is most intense allows anticipation and planning to mitigate its impact. Previous Conflict Alert reports highlighted the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the lean agricultural months as farmers wait with insecurity and uncertainty for the main harvest, and election years as coinciding with higher levels of violence.

The years 2018 and 2019 showed similar and contrasting movements in conflict incidents. (See Figure 33). Incidents rose in May in both years, although the rise was sharper in 2018 and less in 2019, despite the conduct of the midterm elections and the start of the observance of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Incidents

dipped before and during the pre-harvest season in June 2018, unlike in 2019 when they rose. From September towards the end of the year, incidents moved in reverse. In 2018, incidents rose despite the harvest, then dropped as security was heightened in anticipation of the plebiscite for the BOL in January and February in the following year. For the same period in 2019, incidents fell during the harvest season but rose as martial law was lifted by yearend.

Shadow economy issues were the dominant cause of monthly violent conflict in the two-year period, with specific spikes in May 2018, and in the months of March, July, September and December 2019. (See Figure 34). Illegal drugs and illicit weapons were the main drivers. Identity issues were the second top cause, with spikes in incidents mainly due to violent extremism, followed by clan feuds and conflicts



due to personal grudges, specifically in the months of June, August, October and December 2019. Common crimes, mostly robberies, registered increasing trends during the pre-harvest season and eventually dipped towards the end of the season.

Political issues, also propelled by violent extremism, steadily rose from January until May 2019—when


election-related conflicts also rose—then declined by June and somewhat plateaued until the end of year.

The Ramadan period in May 2019 coincided with a decline in the leading causes of conflict: shadow economy issues, identity issues, and common crimes.



Conclusions and Implications



Al Hadj Murad Ebrahim is interviewed by the press inside the former ARMM Office in Cotabato City days after he was installed by President Duterte as Chief Minister of the new BARMM.  by Keith Bacongco



Armed conflict in the Bangsamoro has not returned to the same levels seen in the years prior to the 2017 war in Marawi, and neither does the conclusion of the 2019 report depart significantly from the declining trend seen in 2018. In fact, the declining trend is sustained in the first half of 2020 just as this report was being prepared.

This conclusion alone should offer some relief and a seal of approval for the efforts of many people, including traditional and religious leaders, development workers, peacebuilders, and the security forces who contributed towards sustaining the peace in 2019. Demographic and economic data plus crime and conflict statistics validate the reduction in violent conflict.

However, as violence decelerated, there was an alarming rise in violent incidents and their human costs in some pockets and corridors of the region—especially in mainland Maguindanao where disputes over land have intensified and in hotspots such as Sulu and Lanao del Sur where extremist violence has been difficult to quash.¹⁸

Interestingly, the areas listed above are the same places impacted by the rise of a new Bangsamoro political authority and where violent conflict due to identity, politics, and resources were at its worst in 2019. Indeed, the situation begs an important question: **Is there a link between these pockets of violence and the way in which the newly established Bangsamoro political entity is managing the transition process? How stable and secure is the political legitimacy of the new BARMM?**

To address these questions, the authors assessed the evidence, drew an analysis, and interpreted the findings using lessons from previous Conflict Alert annual reports and the rich literature from many scholars who have provided insights into the outcomes and nuances of the conflict-to-peace transition and the post-political settlement period.

Highlights of the 2019 report

The first highlight is the overlap between identity, political, and resource-based conflicts that came to define 2019 due to a surge in clan feuding over land issues and long-standing personal and political grudges, including the many incidents where multi-causal violence erupted. The menu of multi-causal incidents included violent intersections between and among identity, resource, political, and shadow economy issues in many conflicts.

Many clan feuds related to land and control over public office and illicit economies were triggered by the results of the plebiscite and the elections. The reconfiguration of power and authority was reinforced by the shift in the balance of power between the Maguindanao clans and other groups associated with the MILF versus those who were

¹⁸ Alert uses “pockets” to describe contiguous areas such as the corridor of municipalities within the SPMS Box or the Iranun corridor in Maguindanao, and the towns where MILF camps are situated such as those near the borders with North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat, including the Lanao provinces.

allied with other armed groups; and those who won in the local elections versus those who lost. Meanwhile, multi-causal violence surrounding identity and resource issues, or identity and political issues especially during and after the 2019 elections fueled other violent flashpoints. These included deadly clashes between rival clans and between government troops and extremist groups in the marshlands of the SPMS Box and hinterlands of Lanao del Sur.

It is crucial to note too that many of the conflict incidents with heavy human costs were in those cases where rebel combatants began to wage wars between and among themselves, or with other armed groups over land issues and other economic resources.

Many fatalities and displaced families were the result of violent clashes involving armed groups affiliated or allied with the MILF in cases where land ownership and rights were being disputed. Alert's Critical Events Monitoring System (CEMS) noted how several of the armed protagonists involved in these clashes felt a new sense of entitlement due to their links with the new BARMM officials.¹⁹ Armed struggles aimed at securing resources and rents also erupted between the MILF and the BIFF and became a feature of many security reports.

The second highlight is the reproduction of violent extremism along a new and deadlier pattern featuring female, foreign, and Filipino suicide bombers engaging in more targeted, rather than indiscriminate attacks. Most of the suicide attacks were aimed at police stations, military camps or in places where security

forces were temporarily concentrated. Some attacks were aimed at driving a wedge between religious identities, though these actions failed to provoke or reproduce wider ethnic cleavages.

Meanwhile, extremist violence maintained its resilient presence in the previous hotspots in Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur and Sulu but declined dramatically in Basilan—the Cinderella story in this general report. The various sources of conflict data for this report registered a shift away from extremist violence and deadly shadow economies such as kidnap-for-ransom in Basilan.

The third highlight is the increase in conflict incidents due to the surge in illicit drugs and illegal arms-related conflict, particularly in the last quarter of 2019 or just as martial law was about to be terminated. The eruption of shadow economy violence underscores the failed strategy in the war on drugs and the inability of the State at various levels to root out these sources of violence.

A surge in conflicts associated with the war on drugs was reported in new and previous hotspots amid pressure among enforcers to sustain the deadly campaign. Meanwhile, the use and trade of illegal weapons, particularly handguns, remained significant as violent actors squared off in many clashes related to drugs, extremist violence, and the elections. These illicit economies became deadlier when they were paired off with identity-related issues such as long-standing clan feuds and grudges, or in armed clashes between government troops and extremist groups.

¹⁹ International Alert Philippines, Critical Events Monitoring System Bulletin for Sept. 2019, Op. cit., p. 4

Implications

The first implication is that the national government and the newly established BARMM and BTA need to prioritize and act on land-related disputes and conflicts that were predicted long ago as the single most likely trigger of violence in the transition period. This prescription has been repeated several times since Conflict Alert 2017.²⁰ Addressing the land issue is a critical and immediate component of development and peacebuilding efforts, whether in rebuilding Marawi or in establishing the foundations of long-term, peaceful, and equitable development.

A strong, evidence-based, participatory, and publicly accessible process is needed that will enable various stakeholders to collectively shape the creation of a land law that would address land disputes and other resource-related issues that cause violent conflict. Separate but immediate action should march in step to also realize the land restitution and redistribution promises made under the transitional justice and normalization aspects of the comprehensive peace agreement.

These land laws and policies would also require the establishment of a mechanism to settle land and property disputes to prevent further escalation of violence across the region. Clan feuding could be prevented with a correct mix of hybrid mechanisms and arrangements that have proven to be effective in conflict resolution.

In parallel manner, joint and coordinated efforts by the MILF leadership and the GPH security forces should defuse the threats and rein in the violence from active or decommissioned MILF combatants and their respective clans in cases of land and resource conflicts, while counteracting

similar threats from the BIFF. Mediation processes should utilize restorative justice approaches.

Innocent civilians and their communities are being caught in the crossfire between the various armed groups on land-related issues. Deaths and displacement cases are on the rise especially among indigenous peoples and settlers. In the Iranun corridor of Maguindanao, restorative justice processes have been successfully used on land issues to mediate and prevent further harm to the community.²¹

The BTA and the BARMM will also need to assuage the fears of settlers and indigenous peoples that their lands will be grabbed by reassuring local communities that the land areas that were used as temporary camps or 'areas of temporary stay' during the long ceasefire with the government would revert to their original inhabitants and claimants as soon as possible.

The second implication is simply a reiteration of a Conflict Alert recommendation in 2017. The shifting nature of violent extremism will require a multi-pronged approach, which has not been employed. There are a combination of actions that are not orchestrated effectively, including intensified intelligence gathering and military operations, development inputs, de-radicalization and restorative justice initiatives, tit-for-tat battle in social media to curb extremist propaganda and recruitment.

The establishment and deployment of a granular CEMS focusing on selected hotspots is critical in developing an early response capability and in preventing an escalation of violence. Alert

²⁰ International Alert Philippines, Conflict Alert 2017: Guns, Drugs and Extremism: Bangsamoro's New Wars, Quezon City: International Alert Philippines, 2017, p. 54, <https://conflictalert.info/publication/guns-drugs-extremism-bangsamoros-new-wars/>

²¹ International Alert Philippines, Conflict Alert 2019, Op. cit., p. 46-48



Two men share a light conversation at a marketplace in Isabela City in Basilan. © Najib Zacaria

believes that the most crucial challenge before the national elections in 2022 is the prevention and interdiction of an expanded terrorist attack by violent extremists leapfrogging into the primary and secondary urban areas in mainland Mindanao and the rest of the country.

In 2018, Conflict Alert warned about the preponderance of group versus individual violence and the use of targeted bombing attacks. The recurrence of individual suicide attacks in the islands should not lull development, peacebuilding, and human security specialists into thinking that another Marawi-type attack is improbable in mainland Mindanao.

The third implication is that policies addressing shadow economy issues have failed, and a new aim and strategy must be undertaken that focuses mainly on preventing the illegal drug and illicit firearm trades from fueling war and violent extremism. The current government's 'war on drugs' has caused more harm than good and has created problems instead of solutions as mass arrests and

harassments induce retaliatory actions instead of strengthening resilience to the influence of both shadow economies and violent extremist groups.

A more targeted and realistic objective is to prevent rebel groups and violent extremists from capturing the profits from the illicit drug trade and preventing the flow of illicit weapons into their arsenals and forces.

Harnessing the partnership with the MILF in the anti-illegal drug war is critical, as well as strengthening alliances and collective action of networks of families and clans, ethnic groups, religious and traditional leaders, youth and women's organizations, and trade and transport associations in the locality. This, however, requires an understanding of the motivations and incentives of these groups to develop a multi-faceted and realistic solution to cut the links between pernicious shadow economies to violent extremism. Lastly, strengthening the legal institutions and capacity of law enforcers to seize and forfeit assets and profits seized from drug lords is likewise essential.



Two women and a child exit from the Bangsamoro Government Center, the executive office of the chief minister of the BARMM, in Cotabato City. Cotabateños favored the city's inclusion in the BARMM during the 2019 plebiscite despite fierce opposition from local leaders. **Mark Navales**

Meanwhile, access and use of illegal weapons may set back the effort to implement and perhaps hasten the post-conflict normalization process that includes a weapons decommissioning objective. This is so because the target of the decommissioning process had already been reduced through a 'sleight of hand' approach that limited the numbers to those guns allegedly deployed or supplied by the MILF and allowed the exemption of weapons allegedly owned by the combatants themselves. Also, the rise in gun-related violence will certainly make it more difficult to convince former combatants to lay down their weapons and render themselves vulnerable to personal attacks.

Alert has consistently advocated for gun-ownership reforms that go beyond local ordinances and the CAB normalization component. Curbing illicit weapons can only succeed if significant reforms and revisions are made in the liberalized rules and regulations governing the ownership,

registration, and rights of owners to carry their weapons in public contained in RA 10591. To date, no action has been taken to strike a coherent policy that would mediate the national gun law and the decommissioning aspects of the normalization process.

Transitional violence and bifurcated legitimacy

Underneath the uncertainty and insecurity accentuated in the conclusions and implications of the 2020 conflict report is a mismatch between an intensification in contentious politics despite a three-year decline in violent conflict. Moreover, evidence from the 2020 report also showed an evolving and widening perception of politically illegitimate rule—ironically in a year when two consecutive democratic exercises were undertaken. Why?

In 2018, Alert pointed to the very real possibility of new cycles of violence erupting at the outset of the war-to-peace transition in Muslim Mindanao. These cycles of violence are often borne out of a new political settlement that brings uncertainty and insecurity over continued access to rents, resources, and protection. It can lead to the violent activation or re-activation of boundaries between various identities; clashes over control of the new centers of power and authority; hamper the Bangsamoro statebuilding project; and intensify violent conflict in the run-up to the 2022 elections.

David Keen (2012) referred to this phenomenon as “wars within wars” where vertical conflicts provided cover for violent horizontal and local disputes.²²

When the civil wars ended, they created an “enabling environment” for diverse local conflicts to continue and reassert themselves.

Keen pointed to how this enabling process has operated at two levels—one, the onset of a global war on terror enabling national and subnational conflicts and, two, subnational wars enabling more violent horizontal or identity-based conflicts.

In 2017, the Conflict Alert report spoke of the same potential for ‘transition-induced violence’ to further fracture, rather than heal, the tenuous relationships and violent rivalries that have divided clans, tribes, and other ethnic groups in Muslim Mindanao, as well as the dynamics at the local-regional-national level in the distribution of authority and power.²³

In assessing the dynamics above, Charles Tilly’s (2006) “regimes and repertoires” lens is particularly useful.²⁴ Tilly argued that regime performance shapes and is shaped by a repertoire of collective

claim-making processes. Collective violence, in turn, is nothing more than a form of collective claim-making—a process that is contentious because often claim-making is a zero-sum game. **Thus, seeing the consecutive decline in violent conflict across the region in 2018 and 2019 makes us wonder if a similar shift has occurred in the contentious politics of the Bangsamoro. Did lesser violence result in a similar decline in contentious politics or not?**

To determine the ebb or flow of contentious politics we scrutinized the repertoires of violence in the identified pockets or areas of recurrent conflict to verify whether the flashpoints were linked to the shifting performance of a regime that is now headed by a new set of actors.

We found out that contentious violence has not receded and has in fact increased. Initial signs of regime performance under the new Bangsamoro authority reveal that new repertoires of violence have also emerged.

Ostensibly, the trigger for the new claim-making and resiliently contentious politics is the confluence of two major political battles in the first half of 2019 that would shape the nature and pace of the conflict-to-peace transition across the region and the rest of Mindanao.

The first was the successful plebiscite that saw the ratification of the BOL. The ratification was followed by the creation of the BARMM and the State’s **appointment of regional officials** to constitute the BARMM parliament and the interim BTA.

The second exercise was the national midterm

²² Keen, David, *Useful Enemies: When Waging Wars is More Important than Winning Them*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2012 p. 116-118

²³ Alert defines transition-induced violence as the violence that emerges during the conflict-to-peace period of transition after a political settlement has been agreed.

²⁴ Tilly, Charles, *Regimes and Repertoires*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago Press, 2006, p. 34-35

election that came in the second quarter of 2019. The exercise saw the election of national and local officials that cemented the democratic and peaceful transition of power from one set of local state officials to the next, and under both the national government and the newly appointed and autonomous regional authority.

These battles led to a real shift in the ruling elite's access to resources and rents as the dominant control of the means of coercion transferred from one set of actors to another, reproducing new cycles of violence and ruptures in the previous alliances that governed Muslim Mindanao.

However, while both battles were democratic in nature, their governance outcomes were not.

One produced a democratically elected set of leaders at the local level while the other produced an appointed and unelected set of leaders at the regional level. This bifurcated foundation for rulership in the Bangsamoro saw one set of leaders owing their authority to the people while the other owed theirs to the President.

The bifurcated sources of political legitimacy helped feed perceptions of political illegitimacy towards the regional bureaucracy. These perceptions intensified soon after due to a series of decisions that seemed to signal a winner-takes-all approach to the transition process.²⁵

Being installed by the central State certainly has its strengths. In a region where the central government traditionally held the reins of devolved regional political authority, being appointed

by the central state signaled overwhelming force behind difficult political decisions. It also meant absolute control over rents and the contracting of the means of violence.

However, it also has its weaknesses. Stathis Kalyvas (2003) observed a similar paradox occurring in Latin America and how many deadly local conflicts emerged from divergent motives and processes that created new cycles of violence.²⁶ Kalyvas cited the case of Guatemala where a divergence between the democratization efforts of local states moving in the direction of greater participation and accountability were blocked by the actions of national and regional states that moved in the opposite direction. In one instance, local governments using democratic processes to resolve ethnic conflicts were undermined by regional and State officials who decided to field spies and militarize the area instead.

One can argue as well that holding elective office means that the significance of alliances and partnerships beyond one's kinship networks is not lost on the incumbent and will remain an important and strategic element in governing at the regional level. It will also instill in the minds of powerholders the need to redistribute rents and other resources more widely.

The duality in the basis of legitimacy poses an important and critical dilemma—a dilemma that now hounds the Bangsamoro, and it would not take long for appointed bureaucrats to clash with elected politicians. An emblematic example of this violent contestation can

²⁵ Three important and highly contested issues include: one, the mass termination of employment of officials and staff of the previous ARMM; two, the perceived exclusionary process in the appointment of ministers and officials who did not include political leaders and social networks outside the core alliances of the MILF; and three, the lack of action towards the targeted attacks waged against the Teduray and other indigenous peoples.

²⁶ Kalyvas, Stathis, 'The Ontology of "Political Violence": Action and Identity in Civil Wars'. In *Perspective on Politics*, 1:3, pp 475-94

be seen in the continuing conflict between the elected mayor of Cotabato City and the appointed officials of the MILF-controlled BTA.

To be sure, there was wide multisectoral support for the creation of the BARMM and the BTA at the outset. It explains why the BOL was ratified in the first place, despite the opposition from traditional strongmen and other armed groups in the region. However, there was less of a consensus in the way leaders would be chosen. This means that the challenges encountered now would most likely last until an elected set of leaders emerge in 2022.

The contestation over political legitimacy or the right to rule is indeed an important and overarching reason for the newly emerging cycles of violence that beleaguers the Bangsamoro project today.

However, it is not enough.

Taking a leaf from Mushtaq Khan's (2005) classic study of democratization and his work on political settlements suggests that the real issue underneath the tensions and the violence in a post-political settlement period is not between the presence or absence of democracy or democratic procedures in the choice of rulers, but their impact on existing and traditional patron-client relations that have structured claim-making since time immemorial.²⁷ Khan states that "the evidence of democratization in developing countries show that competition, transparency and electoral contests do very little to undermine the dominance of patron-client politics and of informal networks mediating the exercise of power."

Using Khan's framework, we realize that variants of patron-client politics are likely to endure and characterize both democratic and non-democratic processes in state structures such as the BARMM. Real change and performance must be measured not in terms of how rulers came to office—but whether they appealed, or were sensitive to, the structure of patron-client relationships in a particular setting and the ways in which patterns of accommodation and competition in these patronage relations were affected by democracy or its absence. Looking back to the decisions taken by regional authority during its first year of existence gives us pause and the realization that some insensitivity and a failure to mediate the residual yet enduring effects of patron-client relationships did occur.

In conclusion, the recurrence of violence and instability that was foretold in the 2017 Conflict Alert report continues to besiege the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro that we thought would herald a lasting peace. There is no doubt too that the enduring violence experienced by the citizens of the BARMM, including those in the adjacent provinces and regions, was influenced by the unsettled 'wars before' and 'wars next door' that preceded the extremist spike in violence in 2017 and was manifest in the Mamasapano incident of 2015.

However, addressing the perceived deficit in political legitimacy and being sensitive to the underlying patronage relationships in the Bangsamoro will be crucial in preventing the fragile peace from totally being destroyed.

²⁷ Khan, Mushtaq, "Markets, states and democracy: Patron-client networks and the case for democracy in developing countries. In *Democratization* 12:5, pp 704-24





A mother and child from Marawi City enjoy a beach trip in a nearby town to celebrate the end of Ramadan on 9 June 2019. Their family is one of thousands who were displaced during the Marawi Siege in 2017.

📷 **Martin San Diego**

ANNEX A

Data tables

Table 1: Conflict incidents and deaths in BARMM, 2011-2019

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Incidents	867	643	1,059	1,500	2,306	4,363	4,140	2,910	2,655	20,443
Deaths	508	330	491	664	827	1,241	2,261	900	851	8,073

Table 2: Conflict incidence by province, 2011-2019

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Maguindanao*	327	202	401	847	1,114	2,359	1,886	1,420	1,137	9,693
Lanao del Sur	137	78	285	306	420	514	941	373	480	3,534
Basilan**	203	184	174	185	380	796	630	468	408	3,428
Sulu	147	118	150	107	332	559	553	508	452	2,926
Tawi-Tawi	53	61	49	55	60	135	130	141	178	862
Region total	867	643	1,059	1,500	2,306	4,363	4,140	2,910	2,655	20,443

Table 3: Conflict incidence per 100,000 persons, 2011-2019

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Average
Basilan**	50	44	40	41	82	168	130	94	80	81
Maguindanao*	26	15	29	59	75	156	122	90	70	71
Sulu	20	15	19	13	40	66	64	57	50	38
Lanao del Sur	14	8	28	30	40	48	86	33	42	37
Tawi-Tawi	14	16	13	14	15	34	32	35	43	24

* Including Cotabato City ** Including Isabela City

Table 4: Conflict incidence per 1,000 sq.km., 2011-2019

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Average
Maguindanao*	32	20	40	83	110	233	186	140	112	106
Basilan**	55	50	47	50	103	216	171	127	111	103
Sulu	32	26	33	24	73	123	122	112	99	72
Tawi-Tawi	15	17	14	15	17	37	36	39	49	27
Lanao del Sur	9	5	19	20	28	34	63	25	32	26

Table 5: Conflict deaths by province, 2011-2019

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Maguindanao*	203	92	177	342	364	444	497	449	426	2,994
Lanao del Sur	90	48	108	106	184	310	1,358	99	125	2,428
Sulu	86	71	115	96	142	221	231	213	197	1,372
Basilan**	111	108	70	99	115	220	137	98	78	1,036
Tawi-Tawi	18	11	21	21	22	46	38	41	25	243
Region total	508	330	491	664	827	1,241	2,261	900	851	8,073

Table 6: Conflict deaths per 100,000 persons, 2011-2019

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Average
Basilan**	27	26	16	22	25	46	28	20	15	25
Lanao del Sur	9	5	11	10	17	29	124	9	11	25
Maguindanao*	16	7	13	24	25	29	32	28	26	22
Sulu	12	9	15	12	17	26	27	24	22	18
Tawi-Tawi	5	3	5	5	6	12	9	10	6	7

Table 7: Conflict deaths per 1,000 sq.km., 2011-2019

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Average
Sulu	19	16	25	21	31	49	51	47	43	34
Maguindanao*	20	9	17	34	36	44	49	44	42	33
Basilan**	30	29	19	27	31	60	37	27	21	31
Lanao del Sur	6	3	7	7	12	21	90	7	8	18
Tawi-Tawi	5	3	6	6	6	13	10	11	7	7

Table 8: Conflict incidence by main cause, 2011-2019

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Shadow Economy Issues	355	207	400	525	604	1,584	1,661	1,782	1,694	8,812
Identity Issues	128	70	97	203	211	722	1,241	617	549	3,838
Common Crimes	89	56	95	273	480	898	728	440	362	3,421
Political Issues	92	96	173	101	160	269	716	349	307	2,263
Governance Issues	31	8	18	29	34	76	29	195	171	591
Resource Issues	29	17	15	27	36	63	61	76	61	385

Table 9: Conflict deaths by main cause, 2011-2019

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Identity Issues	122	35	80	96	109	525	1,709	469	423	3,568
Political Issues	120	84	140	203	223	457	1,617	346	276	3,466
Shadow Economy Issues	134	49	79	113	102	228	336	344	346	1,731
Governance Issues	12	6	11	15	34	61	41	27	36	243
Resource Issues	47	18	19	20	14	11	19	36	30	214
Common Crimes	19	11	13	22	24	22	34	20	27	192

Table 10: Top 10 specific causes of conflict incidents and deaths, 2018-2019

	Incidents		Deaths	
	2018	2019	2018	2019
Illegal drugs	746	850	61	77
Illicit firearms	598	548	265	246
Robbery	251	205	7	15
Violent extremism	265	195	311	251
Clan feud	98	146	70	107
Illegal gambling	213	117	0	0
Executive and judicial decisions	98	108	17	30
Personal grudge	113	98	63	51
Gender-related issues	124	96	6	4
Elections	42	80	6	8

Table 11: Multi-causal and single-cause conflicts and deaths from these incidents, 2018-2019

	Incidents		Deaths	
	2018	2019	2018	2019
Single cause	1,576	1,327	189	105
Multi-causal	870	845	482	476

Table 12: Top multiple causes of conflict incidents and deaths, 2011-2019

	Incidents									
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Identity, Political	3	2	4	0	1	135	633	236	183	1,197
Identity, Shadow Economy	89	39	52	86	69	82	140	118	141	816
Common Crimes, Shadow Economy	28	20	32	96	139	265	222	154	133	1,089

	Deaths									
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Identity, Political	2	1	4	0	0	377	1,466	298	237	2,385
Identity, Shadow Economy	86	25	33	64	66	59	112	76	102	623
Common Crimes, Shadow Economy	0	2	3	4	3	9	8	7	15	51

Table 13: Conflict incidents and deaths by weapon used, 2018-2019

	Incidents		Deaths	
	2018	2019	2018	2019
Guns	884	852	785	743
Bladed	89	108	28	42
Explosives	133	75	90	57

Table 14: Conflict incidents and deaths by gun type used, 2018-2019

	Incidents		Deaths	
	2018	2019	2018	2019
Handgun	305	322	232	249
Rifle	142	127	191	126
Shotgun	11	6	28	6

Note: Gun confiscations are excluded from the analysis. The new approach provides an accurate and direct measurement of actual gun use.

Table 15: Incidents and deaths involving hand guns by top causes, 2018-2019

	Incidents		Deaths	
	2018	2019	2018	2019
Illicit firearms	151	150	114	109
Illegal drugs	35	58	35	52
Clan feud	27	24	18	19
Personal grudge	42	23	32	17
Violent extremism	16	12	14	24
Robbery	11	11	2	6
Elections	3	7	1	6
Carjacking - motorcycle (violent)	2	5	0	3

Table 16: Incidents and deaths involving rifles by top causes, 2018-2019

	Incidents		Deaths	
	2018	2019	2018	2019
Illicit firearms	60	49	41	36
Violent extremism	38	31	113	52
Clan feud	8	17	8	26
Personal grudge	11	11	8	9
Illegal drugs	5	8	5	5
Land conflict	8	5	11	15

Table 17: Conflict incidence by month, BARMM

	2018	2019
Jan	248	192
Feb	241	203
Mar	246	233
Apr	229	215
May	301	234
Jun	251	219
Jul	238	240
Aug	232	229
Sep	248	222
Oct	253	207
Nov	232	209
Dec	191	252
Total	2,910	2,655

Table 18: Conflict incidence by main causes and month, BARMM

	Shadow Economy Issues	Identity Issues	Common Crimes	Political Issues	Governance Issues	Resource Issues
2018 Jan	140	65	53	34	10	9
Feb	156	56	41	36	5	6
Mar	170	52	36	26	5	3
Apr	166	46	24	24	16	4
May	184	59	29	64	17	7
Jun	125	58	31	23	15	4
Jul	134	60	25	29	12	11
Aug	147	46	36	20	25	5
Sep	143	40	44	29	37	2
Oct	143	53	48	26	23	7
Nov	150	48	36	28	17	7
Dec	124	34	37	10	13	11
2019 Jan	115	38	17	18	8	3
Feb	107	41	34	28	24	4
Mar	159	48	37	44	14	6
Apr	136	42	30	42	9	1
May	126	38	23	48	17	6
Jun	145	30	36	10	10	3
Jul	175	55	34	17	15	6
Aug	133	62	38	21	16	7
Sep	153	32	31	17	16	5
Oct	138	55	27	22	7	9
Nov	135	50	21	22	17	7
Dec	172	58	34	18	18	4

Table 19: Percentage of incidents by causal determination, 2011-2019

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Determined (%)	64%	57%	60%	60%	53%	65%	73%	84%	82%
Single cause	46%	45%	47%	43%	41%	49%	42%	54%	50%
Multiple causes	18%	12%	13%	17%	12%	16%	31%	30%	32%
Undetermined (%)	36%	43%	40%	40%	47%	35%	27%	16%	18%

Table 20: Percentage of deaths by causal determination, 2011-2019

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Determined (%)	54%	46%	45%	53%	44%	54%	81%	75%	68%
Single cause	28%	33%	28%	39%	31%	9%	4%	21%	12%
Multiple causes	26%	13%	17%	14%	13%	45%	77%	54%	56%
Undetermined (%)	46%	54%	55%	47%	56%	46%	19%	25%	32%

Table 21: Clan feuds by province by year

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Lanao del Sur	27	10	19	32	36	24	32	39	64	283
Maguindanao*	23	8	22	29	15	23	47	46	56	269
Basilan**	8	5	6	3	2	5	18	6	13	66
Sulu	5	8	10	3	4	10	6	7	13	66

Table 22: Violent extremism incidents and deaths per 100,000 persons

	Incidents		Deaths	
	2018	2019	2018	2019
Sulu	9	8	12	11
Maguindanao including Cotabato City	8	5	10	8
Basilan including Isabela City	8	3	7	2
Lanao del Sur	2	2	1	1

Table 23: Deaths from conflict incidents with undetermined cause, by manifestation and year

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Shooting	195	154	233	268	314	450	334	179	231	2,358
Stabbing/ Hacking	19	8	16	21	27	24	22	14	18	169
Assault, clash, and ambuscade	4	4	5	10	9	23	20	7	11	93

* Including Cotabato City ** Including Isabela City

Table 24: Violence Intensity Index without displacement by province, 2012-2019

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Maguindanao*	0.09	0.18	0.33	0.43	0.75	0.64	0.51	0.44
Lanao del Sur	0.03	0.10	0.10	0.16	0.25	0.75	0.12	0.15
Basilan**	0.11	0.07	0.08	0.13	0.36	0.22	0.14	0.12
Sulu	0.06	0.08	0.08	0.17	0.24	0.23	0.22	0.20
Tawi-Tawi	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.03

Table 25: Violent Intensity Index with displacement by province, 2012-2019

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Maguindanao*	4.09	3.18	3.33	4.43	4.75	4.64	4.51	3.44
Lanao del Sur	2.03	1.10	1.10	2.16	3.25	4.75	3.12	2.15
Basilan**	3.11	3.07	3.08	3.13	3.36	3.22	2.14	2.12
Sulu	0.06	1.08	2.08	2.17	3.24	3.23	2.22	2.20
Tawi-Tawi	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.04	0.03	0.03	1.03

Table 26: Violence Intensity Index without displacement by month, 2011-2019

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Jan	0.15	0.14	0.08	0.26	0.39	0.41	0.54	0.36	0.28
Feb	0.09	0.11	0.12	0.23	0.47	0.67	0.47	0.31	0.32
Mar	0.12	0.12	0.08	0.17	0.30	0.55	0.60	0.35	0.30
Apr	0.09	0.07	0.08	0.31	0.31	0.65	0.60	0.30	0.35
May	0.13	0.09	0.19	0.17	0.38	0.60	0.62	0.47	0.32
Jun	0.12	0.12	0.13	0.23	0.17	0.35	0.87	0.37	0.29
Jul	0.13	0.15	0.23	0.17	0.40	0.68	0.87	0.38	0.33
Aug	0.21	0.20	0.16	0.22	0.28	0.61	0.84	0.31	0.36
Sep	0.21	0.11	0.16	0.22	0.29	0.49	0.59	0.31	0.29
Oct	0.16	0.07	0.22	0.11	0.13	0.43	0.65	0.33	0.29
Nov	0.12	0.05	0.11	0.19	0.12	0.55	0.31	0.30	0.30
Dec	0.08	0.02	0.23	0.10	0.35	0.51	0.33	0.28	0.34

* Including Cotabato City ** Including Isabela City

ANNEX B

Methodology

Conflict Alert tracks and analyzes violent conflict, defined as incident/s where two or more parties use intimidation, force or physical violence to exert control, settle misunderstandings or grievances, or defend and expand their individual or collective interests (e.g., social, economic, political resources and power, etc.).

Data Sources. Key sources of data are the incident reports from the Philippine National Police (PNP) and news reports from 14 local and national newspapers. Multi-Stakeholder Validation Groups (MSVGs), composed of local people with knowledge of local conflicts, also add incidents to the database. MSVG members' backgrounds range from security provision, crime prevention, conflict research, and crime monitoring, to peacebuilding, local governance, policy formulation, journalism, and grassroots knowledge. The multiple data sources—police, media and the community—make Conflict Alert the largest repository of data on subnational conflict in the Philippines. From collection, the data undergo a strict process of evaluation, validation, and analysis before they are shared with the public.

Data Gathering. Incident reports are collected from the regional, provincial, and city offices of the PNP. Reports from 14 national and local newspapers are gathered.

Data Sorting. Incidents are classified into violent and non-violent. Only the violent conflict incidents are encoded and subjected to analysis.

Data Encoding. At the first stage, trained encoders record all details of the incidents using an online encoding form. They determine the cause or causes of the incidents as provided by the police and newspaper reports. They check for links between newly encoded incidents and previously recorded incidents, or for conflict strings. They geotag the incidents. Duplicate entries are voided using a search facility. At the next stage, data reviewers check the encoded data, in particular, the cause or causes of the incidents and conflict strings. At the third stage, a second reviewer makes random checks to further ensure data quality.

A distinct feature of Conflict Alert is the multitagging of incidents to capture their multicausality. This sharpens the analysis of conflict triggers and promotes understanding of conflict dynamics. Multi-tagging, however, creates a discrepancy between the number of reported incidents and the number of causes. For example, an incident involving illegal drugs and weapons, both shadow economy issues, is counted as one incident in the database. But as to cause, it is counted as one incident under illegal drugs and another incident under illicit weapons.

Conflict Alert also enables identification of conflict strings. Conflict strings refer to episodes of violence arising from a discrete incident with one or multiple causes.²⁸ It can also emerge when the singular source of violence at the outset triggers other issues or causes of conflict. The database is able to track how a single incident is reproduced through violent confrontations or retaliatory actions. For example, politically-motivated conflict can induce an episode of violence that fuses with shadow economy or ethnic and clan identity issues, as it spirals out of control.

Data Validation. Multistakeholder Validation Groups (MSVGs) validate the list of violent conflict incidents. They also add details, such as the cause or causes of the conflict, when these are not provided by police and newspaper reports. Members also add incidents they know of that they did not find on the list. They use the meetings to discuss conflict trends to enhance the analysis of the data.

An MSVG is a multistakeholder body that draws together different individuals with distinctive expertise to examine and validate conflict data, determine the cause/s of conflict, identity conflict strings, and enrich data analysis. Three MSVGs have been established to cover three geographical clusters: Zamboanga-Basilan-Sulu-Tawi Tawi (Zambasulta); Maguindanao; and Lanao del Sur. They are convened bi-monthly by academic partners Western Mindanao State University and Notre Dame University.

Data Analysis. Data are tabulated and analyzed according to conflict incidence, density, causes, strings, and trends. In addition, the severity (frequency) and magnitude (or cost in terms of people injured, killed and displaced) of violence are examined using Alert's Violence

Intensity Index to help pinpoint priorities and interventions in conflict-affected areas.

At this stage, cause or causes of violent conflict are doubly checked to see patterns or trends.

Related incidents are examined for conflict strings.

Data Visualization. The findings are presented using visual tools such as charts, graphs and tables. Incidents are also mapped, providing locational context to the incidents. Users of the Conflict Alert website may generate their own charts, graphs, tables and maps using its charting and mapping tools.

Data Dissemination. Results are presented to key stakeholders such as government agencies, local government units, civil society groups, academic institutions, private institutions, and the security sector. The whole dataset is also stored in a comma-separated values or CSV files and written up in reports that are uploaded to the Conflict Alert website and made available to the public for free.

Note on Marawi City and estimates of the number of war-related clashes and deaths in 2017:

Conflict Alert combined data from newspapers and the Philippine military to come up with a monthly tally of war-related clashes in Marawi in 2017. There were few police incident reports as the Marawi City Police Station was burned down on the first day of the five-month siege. A stepwise process was undertaken to extrapolate the number of incidents. First, the military summaries were broken down and compared with media data. Next, the military data on deaths and the media data on incidents and deaths that took place from May 23 to October 31 were used to extrapolate the number of clashes during this period. Military data served as source for war-related deaths during the conflict.

²⁸ De la Rosa, N. P. C. 2014. "Disrupting Conflict Strings in Sub-National Contexts" Experience from Muslim Mindanao, Philippines." Paper delivered at the WHO and University of Cambridge Global Violence Reduction Conference 2014 on 18-19 September 2014 in King's College, Cambridge, UK.

ANNEX C

Definition of terms

Violent conflict. An incident where two or more parties use violence to settle misunderstandings and grievances and/or defend or expand their individual or collective interests. Violence entails the use of force or physical violence, or the threat to use force or physical violence.

Vertical conflict. These are separatist or non-separatist armed struggles against the State, including terrorist actions that destabilize a State. Rebellions, insurgencies and extremist violence fall under vertical conflict.

Horizontal conflict. These are conflicts between individuals, families, clans, ethnic groups, rival insurgent factions, political parties, private armed groups, among others.

Causal categories. Conflicts are categorized according to their main cause and specific cause. The main causes of conflict are shadow economy issues, common crimes, political issues, identity issues, resource issues, and governance issues. Under each main cause are specific causes. Conflict Alert presently has 59 specific causes of conflict.

Shadow economies. These pertain to the informal or underground sectors of the economy that tend to fuel violent conflict. In Mindanao, these include the illegal drug and illicit firearm trades, kidnap-for-ransom, cattle rustling, smuggling, illegal gambling, carjacking, and human trafficking.

Common crimes. These are cases of robbery, damage to properties, and violent conflict triggered by alcohol intoxication, among others.

Political issues. These include vertical conflict such as rebellion and extremist violence, and horizontal conflict caused by electoral competition, abuse of power and authority or political repression, and violent struggles between rival insurgent groups for politico-military control.

Identity issues. These include clashes between families and clans, violence arising from personal grudges between individuals, and gender-based violence. Religious conflict, an identity issue, is closely linked to extremist violence, a political issue, and manifests as brutal acts targeting individuals or groups holding different beliefs.

Resource issues. These are conflicts over ownership, use, and control of land, water and other natural resources.

Governance issues. These are violent struggles for government resources and rents, including conflicts due to bidding processes, violent responses to lawful actions and processes, and other government-related transactions and/or development projects.

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