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PHILIPPINES

CONFLICT ALERT 2017

# **Guns, Drugs, and Extremism:** Bangsamoro's New Wars

Peace  
is within  
our power







# **GUNS, DRUGS, and EXTREMISM**

BANGSAMORO'S NEW WARS

CONFLICT ALERT 2017

## About International Alert

International Alert works with people directly affected by conflict to build lasting peace. Together, we believe peace is within our power. We focus on solving the root causes of conflict, bringing together people from across divides. From the grassroots to policy level, we come together to build everyday peace.

Peace is just as much about communities living together, side by side, and resolving their differences without resorting to violence, as it is about people signing a treaty or laying down their arms. That is why we believe that we all have a role to play in building a more peaceful future.

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Inside photos by Mark Navales, Keith Bacongco, Erwin Mascariñas, and from the International Alert Philippines archives



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The year 2016 and 2017 saw Conflict Alert continue to evolve with a streamlined team and the relocation of the data center to Alert Philippines's office in Quezon City from Davao City in preparation for the monitoring system's eventual expansion to cities in Metro Manila and Northern Luzon as the country programme broadens work on urban violence. Enhancements were also made to the encoding instrument and in the functionalities of the Conflict Alert website. Amidst these changes, one thing has remained constant, and that is how Conflict Alert is a partnership among individuals and groups who are driven by the same strong commitment to understand the dynamics of conflict better and develop ways to address these.

At the core of Conflict Alert is data gathering and we would not have been able to provide the analysis and get stakeholders to access data for programming and policymaking without our partnership with the Philippine National Police and the openness of officials to explore the analytical potentials of the database. We thank Chief Supt. Agripino G. Javier, the Acting Regional Director of the Police Regional Office of the ARMM (PRO ARMM) before he was appointed Regional Director of PRO Region 10, and Chief Supt. Reuben Theodore C. Sindac, who had served as Regional Director of PRO ARMM from December 2016 to October 2017. We are also grateful to Supt. Rex O. Derilo of the Regional Investigation and Detective Management Division (RIDM) of PRO ARMM and Apple Iligan, the Statistician Aide at the RIDM of PRO ARMM.

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# Foreword

**PIA PEETERS** | Senior Social Development Specialist  
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At the time of this writing, the Philippine Government has liberated Marawi City from the Maute Group. The five months of fighting resulted in hundreds of lives lost and hundreds of thousands more displaced, and left most of the city devastated. The Philippine Government is planning a massive rehabilitation and reconstruction effort, as well as facilitating collaboration across all local, provincial, regional, and national sectors to help families in and outside of Marawi rebuild their lives.

The poorest areas in the Philippines are rural and agricultural communities in Mindanao, many of them affected by conflict. Protracted conflict rooted in historical and socioeconomic injustices and various forms of vertical and horizontal conflicts, such as clan wars, have created a pernicious cycle of instability and insecurity, leaving many families unable to meet basic necessities.

Addressing the challenge of fragility, conflict, and violence is a strategic priority for the World Bank because we believe it is critical to ending extreme poverty and achieving shared prosperity. Reaching those goals means continually sharpening our understanding of fragile and conflict-affected situations.

## The Mindanao Context

The growing scale of shadow economies and the urbanizing nature of extremism in Mindanao brought to the fore the need for more systematic and evidenced-based studies to better understand the underlying roots of conflict and to enact effective interventions that would empower communities to emerge from violence and instill locally-owned, inclusive, and sustainable growth.

## A Joint Partnership

Starting in 2013, the World Bank, with financial assistance from the State and Peace Building Fund and the Korean Trust Fund, has

supported International Alert Philippines as it pioneered a subnational conflict monitoring system that tracks the incidence, causes, and impacts of violent conflict in the Philippines.

Moving well beyond the profiling of conflict-affected areas and needs assessment, International Alert Philippines has opened a window onto the historical, sociocultural, and political complexities of vulnerable communities, as well as the composite of conflict dynamics in Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and the Davao Region. The well-rounded International Alert Philippines team—its members experts in political mapping, resource use management, and economic governance—also provides grounded recommendations that can aid policymakers in (a) identifying priority resources and places that are most in need; (b) developing more appropriate conflict-sensitive projects; and (c) monitoring results of security and peacebuilding investments.

Through International Alert Philippines's wide geographic reach in Mindanao, the team in this 2017 report continues to present broad-based and deeply nuanced analysis with the goal of violence prevention or, if not possible, early detection to mitigate the consequences of conflict.

## The Work Ahead

The Marawi siege has effectively ended but the dangers of extremism in other areas remain. While the country is rebuilding Marawi, we hope that International Alert's extensive database and detailed insights into the needs and concerns of Mindanao residents will find their way to helping the dedicated government representatives, development workers, and civil society groups build a stronger region that responds to its full potential and is open to all ethnic and religious groups, but leaves no ground for violent extremism. •

## HARRIET LAMB | Chief Executive Officer International Alert

What a difference a year makes. In 2016, promises by the new government to pursue peace talks with communist and Moro rebels raised hopes of finally settling two long-simmering rebellions. A year later, the peace process with the National Democratic Front has stalled, with no clear signs of future action. Meanwhile, the peace agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front hangs by a thread as a new bill establishing the Bangsamoro region continues to be ignored by Congress.

Since then, we have seen a months-long military campaign beginning in May 2017 to reclaim the Islamic City of Marawi, which fell to the control of the Dawlah Islamiya, a grouping of armed groups that had pledged allegiance to ISIS. The human cost of this conflict has been tremendous: over 300,000 injured, killed and displaced.

Yet even before the Marawi siege happened, the growing strength of the Maute Group, which is at the core of Dawlah Islamiya, had been noted by our monitoring system, Conflict Alert. The 2016 report pointed out that judging by the number of conflict deaths (86) from only six incidents involving the Maute Group that were monitored at that time, it demonstrated it had the “resources and capacity to launch large-scale and deadly attacks.” Governments and societies need to get better at taking early action in response to such early warnings.

The siege has ended but it has recast Muslim Mindanao’s conflict terrain. Urban areas are now as much a target for extremist groups as rural areas. Perhaps even more.

The new times, and the shifting nature of conflicts, underscore the need for conflict monitoring, to track when and where

conflicts are happening or have happened, and to document their impacts, particularly on civilians. The data is needed to anticipate conflicts better, and to plan how to respond to them, especially to consider the impact on communities.

It also underscores the need to invest and engage in peacebuilding even more. Data in 2016 had shown that spending on peacebuilding was less than 0.5% of spending on the military. It should be more, and it should be invested in peacebuilding that is underpinned by data.

**The new times, and the shifting nature of conflicts, underscore the need for conflict monitoring, to track when and where conflicts are happening or have happened, and to document their impacts, particularly on civilians.**

The release of this new Conflict Alert report is well-timed. Covering 2011 to 2016, the report highlights the growing threat of violent extremism, not only from the Maute Group, but also other groups that had pledged allegiance to ISIS, namely, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and the Abu Sayyaf Group. It also documents the maelstrom created by the government’s drive against illegal drugs; the increase

in the number of violent crimes against women; and the deadly impact of clan feuds. It further highlights the sad fact that in any conflict, it is the civilians who bear its brunt.

The report is a valuable resource for all those in peacebuilding, whether in government, nongovernment organizations or the development community. By focusing on the causes of conflict in Muslim Mindanao and the interconnections they weave, we can better understand the conflict dynamics in this region, and hopefully, enhance planning and programming in response.

Compiling this report was no small feat, and again, my congratulations to the

International Alert Philippines Programme. The team has not only managed to produce this informative report but also expanded—and continues to expand—the Philippines’s sole database on violent conflicts using data from the police, newspapers and the community. Well done and carry on!

Our thanks go to the Korea Trust Fund for Economic and Peace-Building Transitions, the World Bank, and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for funding Alert Philippines’s conflict monitoring project. Amidst worsening conflicts, your support has been very valuable indeed. Now let’s all redouble our efforts to prevent conflict and build the peace for which people yearn. •



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# Abbreviations

<b>ARMM</b>	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
<b>ASG</b>	Abu Sayyaf Group
<b>BIFF</b>	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
<b>BIFM</b>	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement
<b>CVE</b>	Countering violent extremism
<b>IED</b>	Improvised explosive device
<b>IPDM</b>	Institute for Peace and Development in Mindanao
<b>ISIS</b>	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
<b>LGPMS</b>	Local Governance Performance Management System
<b>LGU</b>	Local government units
<b>MG</b>	Maute Group
<b>MILF</b>	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
<b>MSU-IIT</b>	Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology
<b>MSVG</b>	Multi-Stakeholder Validation Group
<b>NDU</b>	Notre Dame University
<b>PNP</b>	Philippine National Police
<b>PVE</b>	Preventing violent extremism
<b>PRO ARMM</b>	Police Regional Office of the ARMM
<b>RDEC</b>	Research Development and Evaluation Center
<b>RIDM</b>	Regional Investigation and Detective Management Division
<b>SGLG</b>	Seal of Good Local Governance
<b>SOCCSKSARGEN</b>	South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani
<b>TIP</b>	Trafficking in persons
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>URC</b>	University Research Center
<b>VII</b>	Violence Intensity Index
<b>WMSU</b>	Western Mindanao State University



# Executive Summary

**The year 2016 saw an explosion of violence in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)** amid the holding of the May 2016 national and local elections and the coming to power of a new administration dedicated to eradicating the drug problem in the Philippines. The year also saw the emergence of a new form of vertical conflict—violent extremism.

All provinces in the ARMM saw large increases in the number of conflict incidents. Maguindanao posted the highest number of incidents followed by Basilan and Sulu. However, in terms of conflict per capita and deaths per capita, Basilan was ahead of Maguindanao and the other provinces.

Shadow economy issues, primarily caused by illegal drug-related activities, were the biggest causes of violent conflict. The sharp rise in shadow economy-related incidents coincided with the start of President Rodrigo Duterte's term of office, specifically after a nationwide and coordinated anti-drug campaign was announced in July 2016. The volume of illegal drug-related violence grew six-fold from the previous year. Bulk of shadow economy-related conflicts took place in Maguindanao, with illegal drug cases in this province comprising most of the cases.

At the same time, a significant increase in gender-related violence placed this sub-category of identity conflict as the second major cause of violence in the ARMM in 2016, overtaking illicit firearm-related violence, carjacking and robbery, and even other prominent identity-related issues such as *rido* or clan feuding.

Meanwhile, rebellion-related violence increased as a result of the rise in violent extremism. Maguindanao accounted for the highest number of these incidents, amidst increasing attacks by the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, also known as the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (BIFF/BIFM). Sulu and Basilan followed in terms of number of incidents, both islands being host to factions of the Abu Sayyaf. Lanao del Sur saw the emergence of the Maute Group in 2016. The BIFF/BIFM, ASG, and Maute Group have pledged allegiance to ISIS.

Shadow economy issues predominated in Muslim Mindanao's conflict landscape but they didn't result in as many deaths as political issues. Political issues such as rebellion and extremism caused more fatalities. The ASG accounted for many deaths, but paled in contrast to the Maute Group in terms of conflict deaths per armed confrontation.

Another contrast can be found in the prosecution of the government's anti-drug campaign in Muslim Mindanao. Despite the increase in drug related incidents, the death toll from illicit drugs was still lower than those caused by political violence—representing a counterpoint to the rising



human costs of the anti-drug war in Metro Manila and other urban centers of the country. A long history of revenge-killings in the Muslim Mindanao region and the likely clan feuding that may be unleashed may have led to a more cautious approach that lessened the bloodshed in the Bangsamoro.

Common crimes, notably robberies, and identity issues, particularly gender-related violence and clan feuds, were the second and third biggest cause of conflict, respectively. Political issues, particularly rebellion, ranked fourth.

Whether in 2016 or during the 2011-2016 period, shooting was the most common manifestation of violent conflicts in the ARMM. The cause or causes of many of these incidents could not be determined, but where they were ascertained, *rido*, personal grudge cases, and illegal drug incidents frequently involved weapons use.

Conflict in Muslim Mindanao affected civilians and children the most. Shadow economy issues, identity issues and common crimes were the top causes of violent conflicts affecting these two.

The six-year panel data provides the same temporal trend for the main drivers of conflict in Muslim Mindanao that had been noted in previous reports. Conflict typically spikes in May, before the start of classes in elementary, junior high and senior high school, and the month associated with the holding of general and midterm elections in the Philippines. Conflicts dip in June before climbing in the next two months, which

often coincide with the celebration of Ramadhan, the holy month in the Islamic calendar and the planting of the main season rice crop, typically the lean months.

The most important implication in the steep rise in violence in 2016 is the need to go beyond our current understanding of the location, sources, and dynamics of violence.

It is obvious that urban violence will increasingly feature in the conflicts of the future due to some conducive factors, namely, highly dense population, fractious nature of alliances with different groups, ideology, and affiliations in the area. Wars waged in urban areas will require new strategies and new alliances.

Second, violent extremism may overtake the magnitude of deaths associated with rebellion. Violent extremism will require context-specific and conflict-sensitive approaches. The prominence of a security-focused response may neglect the long-term process of building community cohesion and resilience.

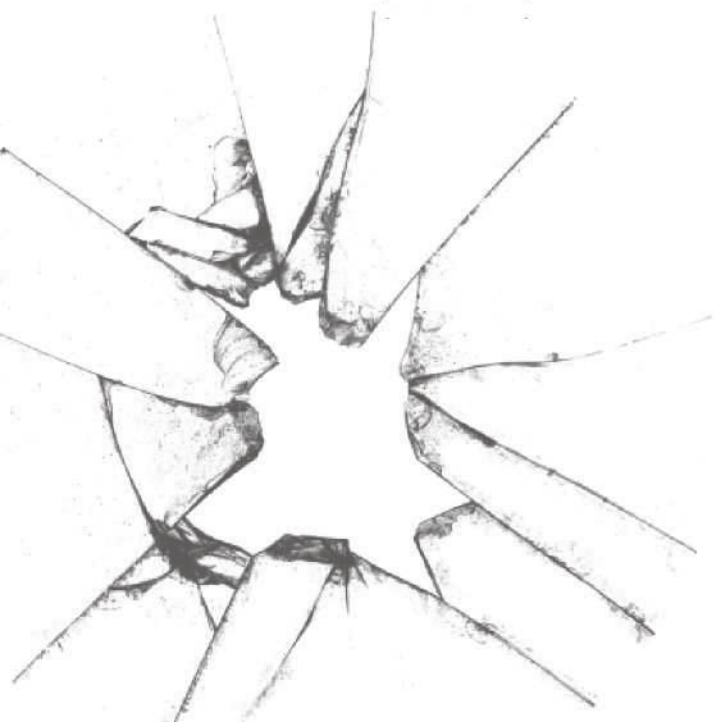
And third, single and limited episodes of violence are giving way to conflict strings that will most likely define the nature and dynamics of violence in the future. We need to understand, monitor, and check episodes of violence arising from a discrete incident with singular or multiple causes.

# Introduction

**At no other time is data on conflict more important than now**, with new 'wars' being waged in towns and cities in Muslim Mindanao, causing even more misery to residents who had already lived through untold violence in the past. In 2016, we saw the emergence of a new threat in the form of violent extremism—a threat that grew and moved quickly through the region—parallel to a new conflict front that was opened by the newly elected government against those who were involved in the illegal drug trade. These two 'wars' continue up to today.

Conflict Alert provides information on conflict incidence, causes and costs, an analysis of 'strings' rather than discrete incidents of violence, and tracks conflict trends, all of which can inform planning and programming of government agencies, nongovernment organizations, and development agencies working in conflict-affected areas such as Muslim Mindanao. The information can ensure more effective, timely, and inclusive development and peacebuilding responses to violent conflict, especially as conflicts have demonstrated that their impacts are not solely confined to where they took place but can spill over to contiguous areas.

As of 2016, Conflict Alert had nearly 40,000 violent conflict incidents in its database. Of this number, nearly 11,000 incidents took place from 2011 to 2016 in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) as well as the cities of Cotabato and Isabela, which are administratively separate but geographically located within the ARMM. The nearly 29,000 other incidents took place in 2011 to 2015 in the Davao Region. As this report was being written, 2016 incidents were being added to the Davao database.



Conflict Alert had quickly expanded in the past four years as it answered the need for data and analysis on conflict. It began as the Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System that was established in 2013 to track conflicts in the future Bangsamoro, envisioned to encompass the present ARMM and other areas. Only two years later, the Southern and Eastern Mindanao Conflict Database was created to monitor conflicts in the eastern (Caraga) and southern (Davao Region) corridor of Mindanao. These two databases now comprise Conflict Alert, which presently covers a large part of Mindanao, and will soon put other areas under its coverage to capture the movements of conflict actors, enable comparison of conflict causes and trends, and thus be able to provide a more comprehensive analysis of conflict.

This report covers incidents in Muslim Mindanao over the 2011-2016 period, with a separate discussion of what happened in 2016, a year that stood out for the record number of violent conflict incidents. It records the swath of destruction, causing deaths, injuries and displacement, which armed groups espousing violent extremism had made across the region and what would happen to a shadow economy—in

this case, the illicit drug trade—when its long-established systems are deliberately disrupted. The main drivers of conflict—the shadow economies—are discussed while the increase in the number of identity-based conflicts, including gender-based violence, is highlighted.

Analytical pieces on the rise of the Maute Group, the links between corruption and violent extremism, gender-related issues, and human trafficking are included in this report. Lastly, this report provides the latest ranking of the ARMM provinces according to their Violence Intensity Index (VII) scores. The VII not only considers the frequency of violent conflicts but also takes their impact—injuries, deaths and displacement—into account.

As Conflict Alert continues to expand and provide data and analysis on conflict in Mindanao to stakeholders, we gratefully acknowledge the support of the Korea Trust Fund for Economic and Peace-building Transitions, the World Bank, and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.





A photograph showing two individuals in a rural setting. The person on the left is wearing a yellow headscarf and a blue shirt, holding a black assault rifle. The person on the right is wearing a red and white floral headscarf and a light blue shirt, also holding a black assault rifle. They are standing in front of a wooden structure and a large tree. The background shows more trees and a clear sky.

# Extremist Violence and the War on Drugs

A comparative analysis  
of violent conflict in the ARMM  
from 2015 to 2016



There were few surprises in the leading causes of violent conflict in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in 2016. In contrast to 2015, we expected a deadlier year due to the May 2016 national and local elections and the coming to power of a new administration dedicated to eradicating the drug problem in the Philippines. The year also saw the emergence of a new form of vertical conflict in the form of violent extremism.

Shadow economy issues involving illegal drugs became the chief cause of violence in 2016, followed closely by gender-based violence and the illegal ownership, use, and trade in firearms. Meanwhile, identity-based conflict in the form of clan feuding and rebellion-related conflict rated lower than common crimes such as robbery and damage to properties.

However, in sharp contrast to the anti-drug campaigns waged in Manila and Luzon in general, or in the other urban areas of the Visayas and Mindanao, there were few conflict deaths attributed to the anti-drug campaign in the ARMM.

Indeed, rebellion-related violence in various forms still chalked up the most number of conflict deaths in the region, continuing the trend over the last few years. Maguindanao province recorded the most number of rebellion-related incidents. The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), also known as the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (BIFM), figured prominently as the armed group most involved in vertical conflict in Maguindanao, while the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) continued to mount deadly attacks in Basilan and Sulu. The armed attacks by the BIFF-BIFM and other smaller allied armed groups in Maguindanao became the most visible face of extremist violence in the

region after the group pledged allegiance to ISIS. The year 2016 also saw the emergence of the extremist Maute Group in Lanao del Sur.

Despite its lower rank compared to other conflict causes, no less important was the escalation in cases of identity-related conflict such as *rido* or clan feuding. The national and local electoral exercise provided the backdrop for the rise in political assassinations, violent rivalries, and revenge killings between and within families, clans, and political groups.

However, a second case of identity-related conflict in the form of gender-related violence emerged as the second most common cause of conflict in 2016 in urban areas such as Cotabato City and Isabela City. Though there were fewer deaths traced to gender violence, at least 16 individuals suffered physical injuries for every recorded death from this form of identity-based violence.

The temporal trends in conflict registered two dramatic spikes in violence coinciding with the May 2016 national elections and another spike in violence and deaths immediately after the inauguration of the new President. That latter is accounted for by a rise in anti-drug operations by the Philippine National Police (PNP).

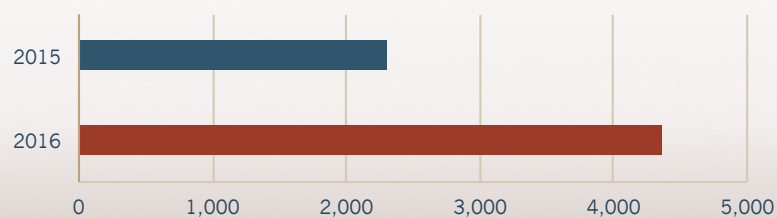
## Violence by province and years

The year 2016 was unusual because of an explosion in violence unseen since the year 2000 'all-out war'. There were 4,356 incidents in 2016, or an 89% increase from the previous year's 2,303 incidents. All provinces in ARMM saw increases in conflict incidents to more than double their previous year numbers in the case of Maguindanao (including Cotabato City), Basilan (including Isabela City), and Tawi-Tawi. Lanao del Sur exhibited the smallest increase at 22% followed by Sulu at 68%.

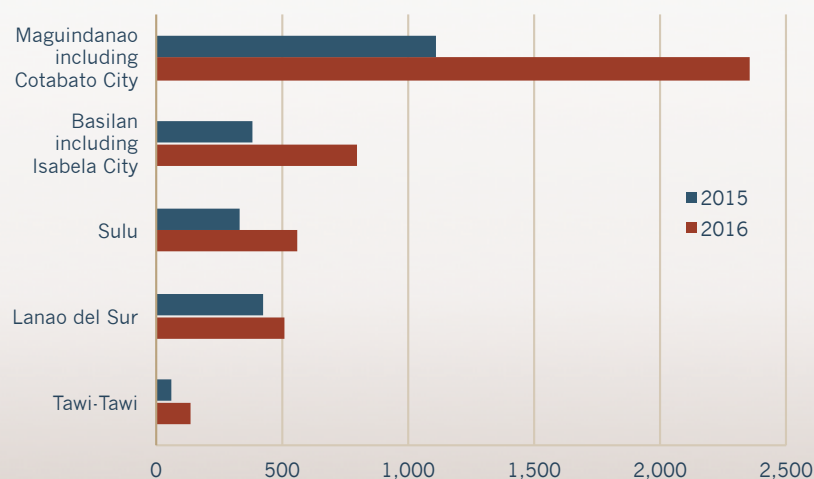
It is also important to note that much of the increase in Maguindanao and Basilan was due to an intensification in urban violence in Cotabato City and Isabela City respectively.<sup>1</sup>

The months of July and August registered the most number of conflict incidents with 543 and 472, respectively. The number of illegal drug incidents had skyrocketed in the first two months of implementation of the PNP's anti-illegal drug campaign, Project Double Barrel.

**Figure 1. Number of incidents**  
2015–2016



**Figure 2. Number of incidents by province and year**  
2015–2016

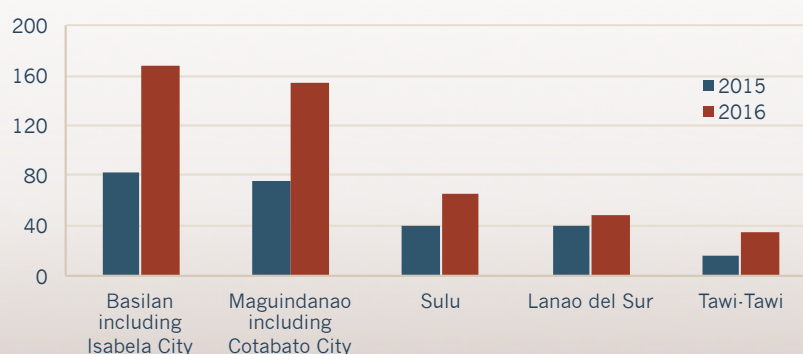


<sup>1</sup> Cotabato City is an independent component city of Region 12 or SOCCSKSARGEN but is located within Maguindanao province while Isabela City is administratively part of Region 9 or the Zamboanga Peninsula but is geographically part of Basilan province. Enumerations of data from Maguindanao and Basilan include data from the two urban centers because spillovers in violence shape and are shaped by the urban violence in these two cities.

## Conflict per capita, density, and deaths

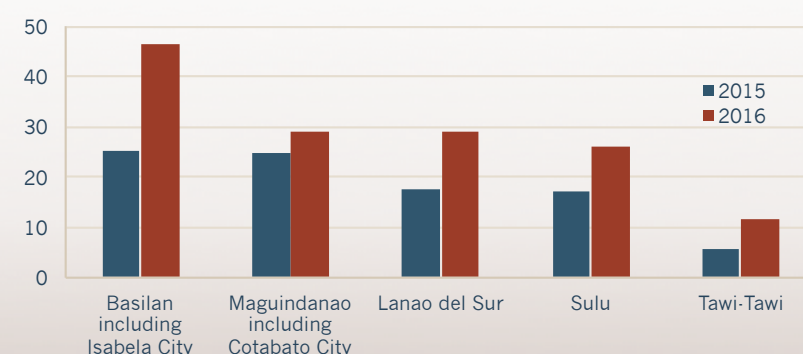
**Figure 3. Conflict incidence**

Per 100,000 persons, 2015–2016



**Figure 4. Conflict deaths**

Per 100,000 persons, 2015–2016



Conflict per capita was most intense in Basilan. The data for Basilan showed a doubling of incidents per 100,000 persons to 167 in 2016 from 83 in 2015. Next to Basilan was Maguindanao with 153 incidents, rising from 75.

Basilan also led in terms of deaths per capita at 46 deaths per 100,000 persons in 2016, rising from 25 per 100,000 in 2015. However, Lanao del Sur tied with Maguindanao in second place with 29 deaths per 100,000 in 2016 from the previous year's 18 deaths.

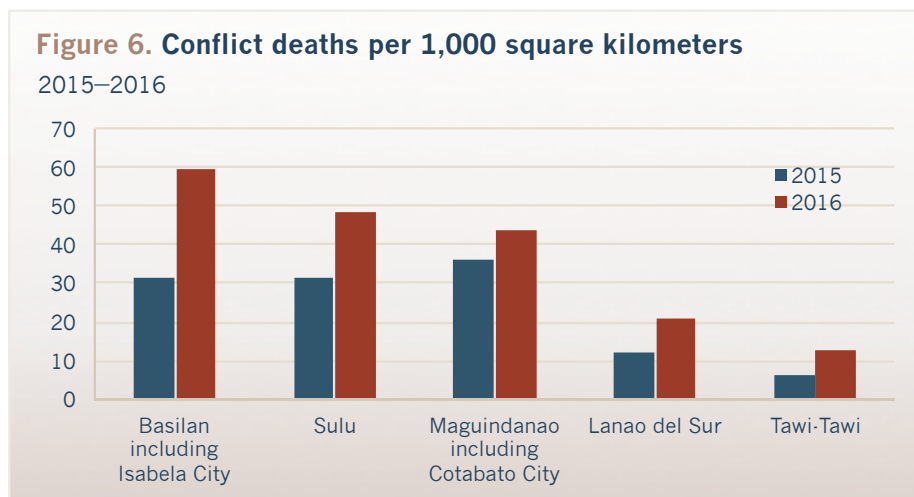
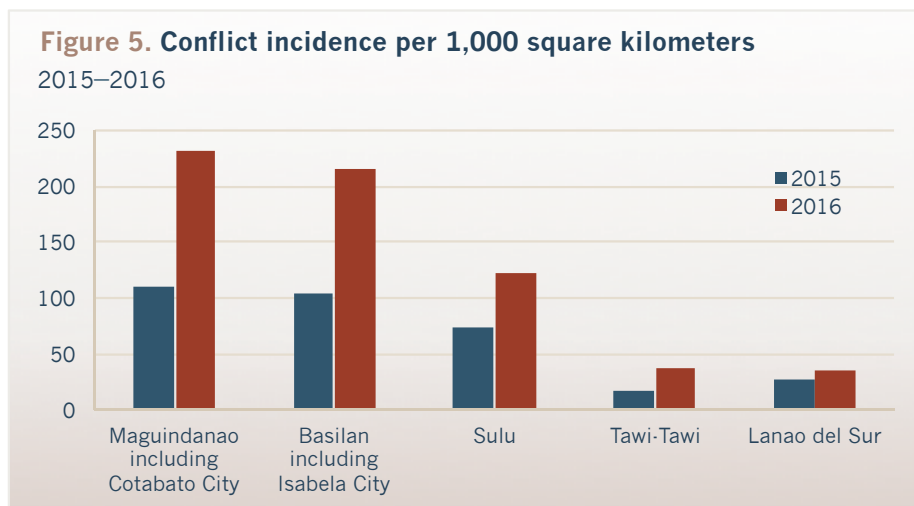
In terms of conflict density, Maguindanao topped Basilan by a slight margin.<sup>2</sup> Maguindanao had 232 incidents per 1,000 sq. km. in 2016 from 110 in 2015. Basilan had 216 incidents per 1,000 sq. km. in 2016 from 103 in 2015.

However, when it came to conflict deaths per kilometer, Basilan led Maguindanao again with 60 deaths per 1,000 sq. km. in 2016 from the previous year's 31 deaths. Basilan was followed by Sulu which registered 49 deaths per 1,000 sq. kilometers, up from 31 conflict deaths recorded in 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Conflict and death per capita refer to the number of incidents and deaths, respectively, per 100,000 persons.

<sup>3</sup> Conflict density is the number of incidents per 1,000 square kilometers. Conflict deaths refer to the number of deaths per 1,000 square kilometers.

Conflict per capita was most intense in Basilan. Basilan also led in terms of deaths per capita.



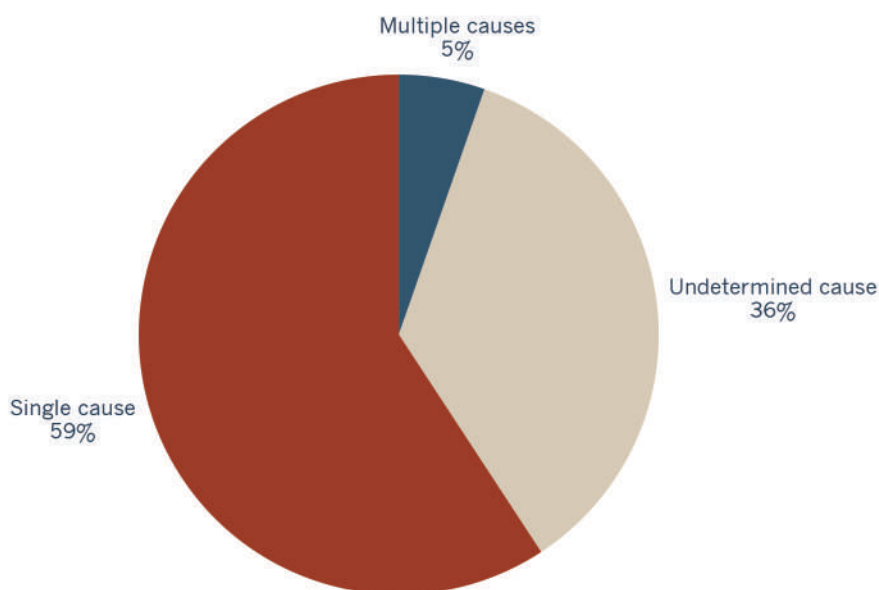
## Main and specific causes of conflict

A marked improvement in the determination of conflict causes was seen in 2016 with 64% of all incidents with clear determined causes, in contrast to the previous year where only 53% of causes could be ascertained from the inventory of conflict incident reports coming from the police, media, and the Multi-Stakeholder Validation Groups (MSVGs). This represents a significant improvement in the recording of conflict incidents by the

PNP—a result of the administrative and operational reforms in the crime reporting system undertaken by the PNP hierarchy starting with the previous administration.

As aforementioned, nearly two-thirds or 2,813 violent incidents were recorded from a total of 4,356 incidents with clear determined causes. Five percent (5%) of the total number of incidents, equivalent to 233 incidents, had multiple causes.

**Figure 7. Incidents with known and undetermined causes, 2016**

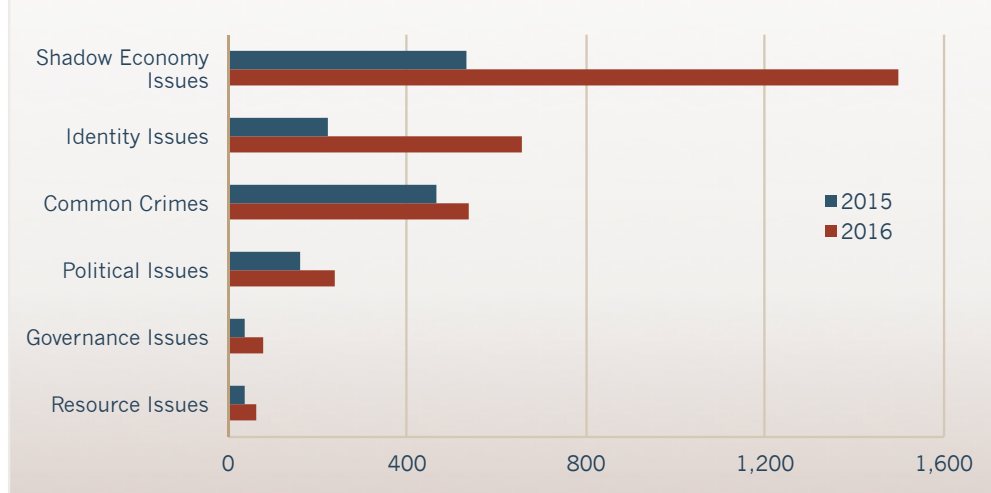


## Shadow economy-related conflict as top source of violence

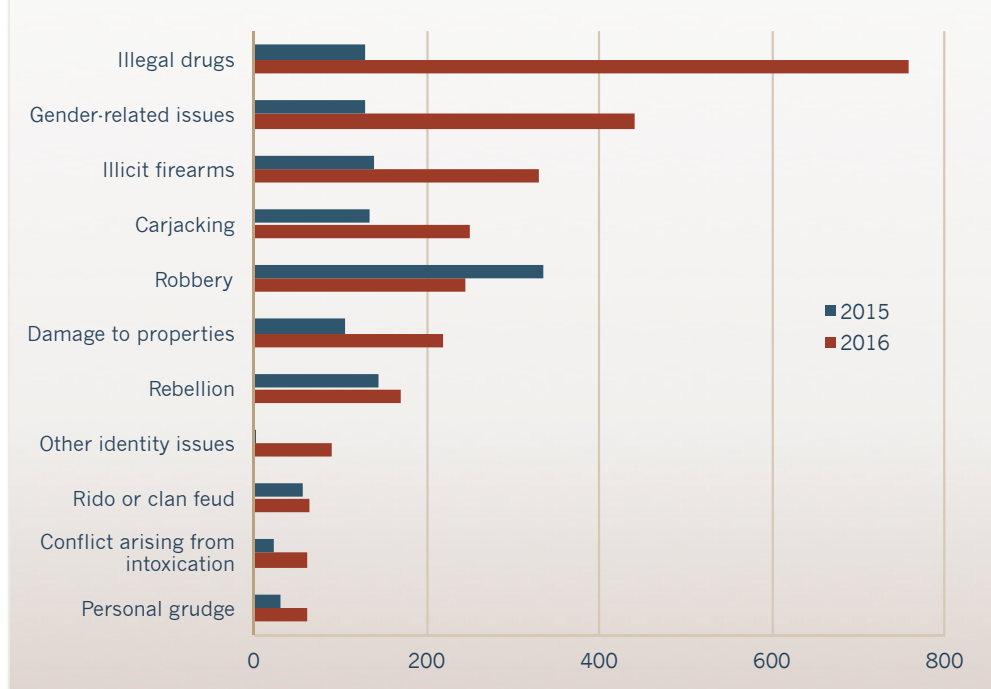
Among the different causes of conflict, those pertaining to violence arising from deadly shadow economies were the most frequent in the ARMM. Shadow economy issues, primarily illegal drugs and illicit firearms-related incidents, numbered 1,498 in 2016, a 181% rise from 534 incidents in 2015. Common crimes,

primarily robbery, were also frequent sources of violence, with 535 incidents recorded in 2016, or a 15% increase from the 467 incidents registered in 2015. Identity issues (examples are gender-related violence and *rido*) were also common with 658 incidents in 2016, a 199% rise from 220 in 2015.

**Figure 8. Number of incidents by main cause**  
2015–2016



**Figure 9. Number of incidents by top 10 specific causes**  
2015–2016



*Conflict arising from intoxication and Personal grudge are tied at 10th place based on 2016 figures.*





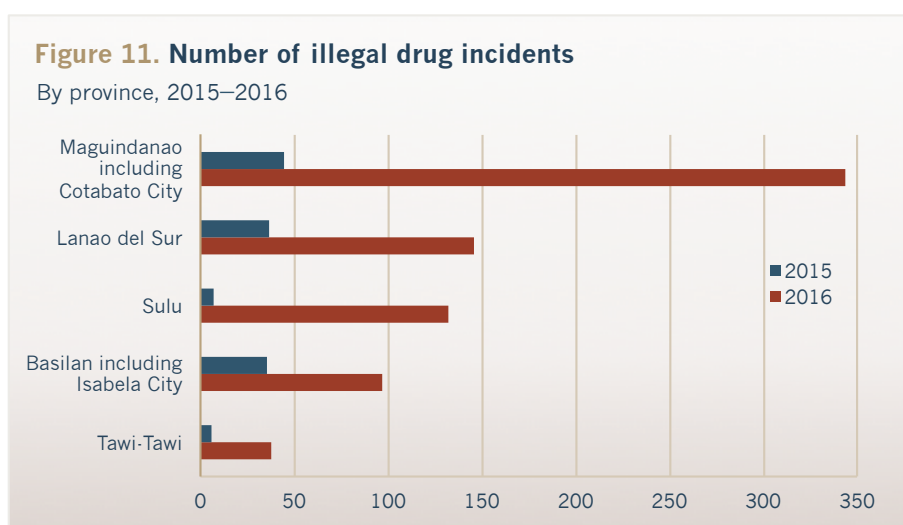
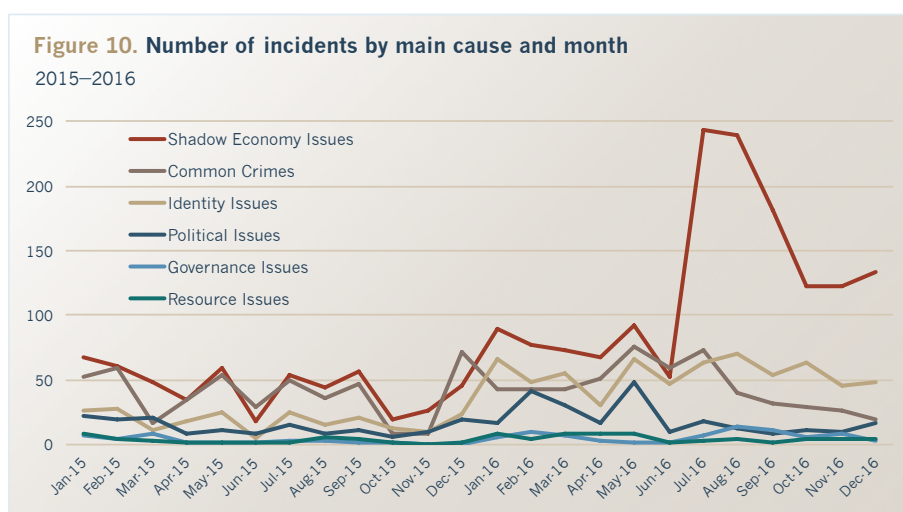
Illegal drug-related violence grew from 130 incidents in 2015 to 757 incidents in 2016, nearly equivalent to a **six-fold increase.**

A sharp rise in shadow economy-related incidents coincided with the start of President Rodrigo Duterte's term of office, specifically after a nationwide and coordinated anti-drug campaign was announced in July 2016. As a result, illegal drug-related violence grew from 130 incidents in 2015 to 757 incidents in 2016, nearly equivalent to a six-fold increase. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the 757 incidents recorded in 2016 occurred in the July-December period. (See graph below)

Maguindanao registered the most number of cases of illegal drug-related violence. From 45 incidents in 2015, the number soared to 344 incidents by 2016. The next

province with a high number of illicit drug-related conflict incidents was Lanao del Sur, with 37 incidents in 2015, rising to 146 incidents in 2016.

The data on illegal-drug related violence suggest that the low levels of illegal drug-related violence prior to 2016 does not imply that the shadow economy in illegal drugs was not as widespread in these provinces prior to this year. What it does reveal is that a hornet's nest was stirred by the Duterte government when it launched the anti-drug campaign, turning a relatively 'peaceful enterprise' into a site of violent conflict.



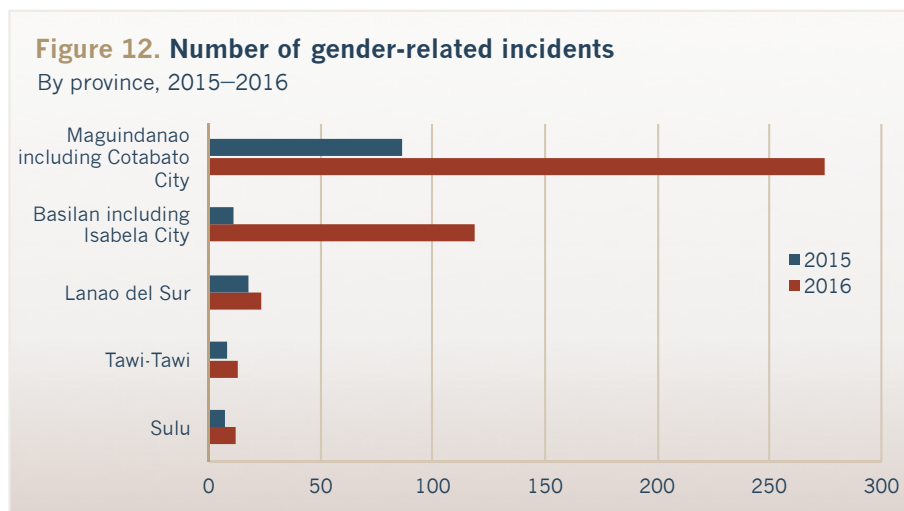
## Gender-related violence rears its head in 2016

A significant increase in gender-related violence placed this sub-category of identity conflict as the second major cause of violence in the ARMM in 2016, overtaking illicit firearms-related violence, carjacking and robbery, and even other prominent identity-related issues such as clan feuding. This is the first time that identity-related conflict, and specifically gender-related violence, was anywhere near the top since the Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System was established in 2013.

Gender-related issues (specifically violent threats and attacks against women)

totalled 442 incidents in 2016, growing more than three-folds from 130 incidents in 2015. Maguindanao and Basilan recorded the two highest numbers of gender-related incidents in 2016.

There were 275 incidents recorded in Maguindanao in 2016 and 119 cases recorded in Basilan. Despite the improved police reporting in the urban centers of both provinces, the numbers may still understate the problem because most data on gender-related violence are quarantined under Republic Act No. 9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004.



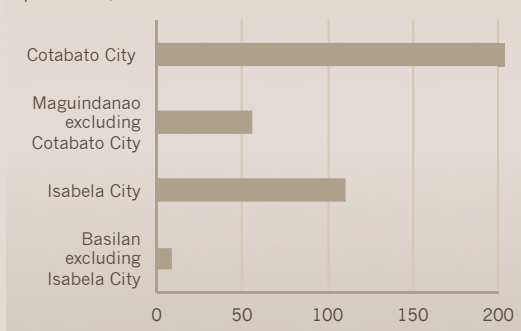
This is the first time that identity-related conflict, specifically gender-related violence, was anywhere near the top since the Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System was established in 2013.



## Violence against women and children: *Intensity and manifestations*

Growing reports of gender-based violence has accompanied the shift from rural to urban and peri-urban violence in the ARMM in the past five years. Though most of the data come from blotter and media reports in the major cities of Cotabato and Isabela, gender-based violence is still relevant because these cities are geographically located within the ARMM.

**Figure A. Number of gender-related incidents, Cotabato City and Isabela City compared to rest of provinces, 2016**



Nevertheless, the data indicate the wide gap between gender-based violence in the cities and those occurring within their contiguous provinces. Conflict Alert data show that in the whole of Maguindanao province, 56 gender-related incidents involving adults and children were recorded in 2016, in contrast to the 219 gender-related cases in the same year for Cotabato City alone. Meanwhile, only nine incidents were reported in the island of Basilan in 2016, in contrast to the 110 cases reported by Isabela City in the same year.<sup>1</sup>

The gap between city and province may indicate that victims are less hesitant to report gender-based violence to police authorities in the former, and that other

<sup>1</sup> Conflict Alert recorded the incidents as found in the police crime reports. Names of victims and suspected perpetrators were kept confidential.



mechanisms for the reporting and settlement of gender cases may be in place in the more rural areas of the province, i.e., victims and their families opt to settle their grievances outside the formal institutions of the law on violence against women and children.

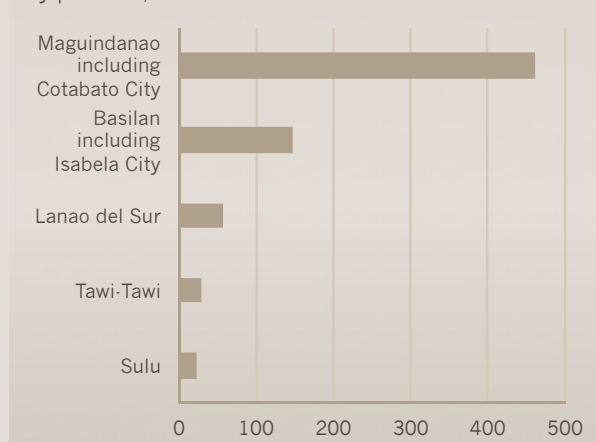
The Multi-Stakeholder Validation Group for Maguindanao pointed out that some incidents are no longer reported to the police because these are settled at the barangay level using customary law. This is particularly common in the upland municipalities in Upi and South Upi, dominated by the Teduray tribe. In other instances, cases reported to the police that are elevated to the courts are withdrawn and settled between the parties concerned. Victims' families want to avoid embarrassment or are discouraged by the long court process.

In Basilan, some cases are also settled at the barangay level while others are not reported at all, particularly by women living in isolated villages, who have nowhere else to run in case they complain against their perpetrators, who can be their own spouses or partners.

The PNP has said while they have encouraged the reporting of gender-based violence by setting up Women and Children's Protection Desks manned by policewomen in their offices, they can't do anything about the cases that parties choose to settle rather than prosecute. It has been frustrating for the police, it has pointed out, that the accused can go scot-free and possibly commit more crime.

These observations raise the importance of safeguarding women's and children's rights and the safety of victims after they report the incidents to authorities, whether traditional leaders or the police. Among the cases reported to the police are those involving family members as perpetrators. What is the role of families and communities in ensuring this problem is addressed at its core, that it does not remain behind closed doors and talked about in hushed conversations, that perpetrators are punished under the law, and that victims are protected and given the proper care he/she needs to heal?

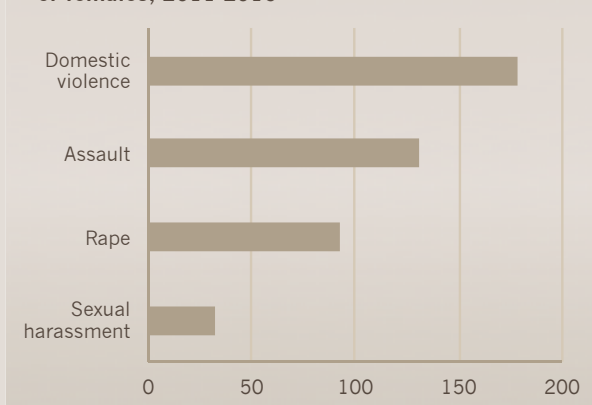
**Figure B. Number of gender-related issues by province, 2011-2016**



An examination of traditional means of settling this kind of conflict needs to be made. Do they mete the justice that victims need? Should they be strengthened? Are they effective in preventing incidents from spiraling into more violence such as *rido*?

Victims and their families opt to settle their grievances outside the formal institutions of the law on violence against women and children... some incidents are no longer reported to the police because these are settled at the barangay level using customary law.

**Figure C. Most common manifestations of abuse of females, 2011-2016**



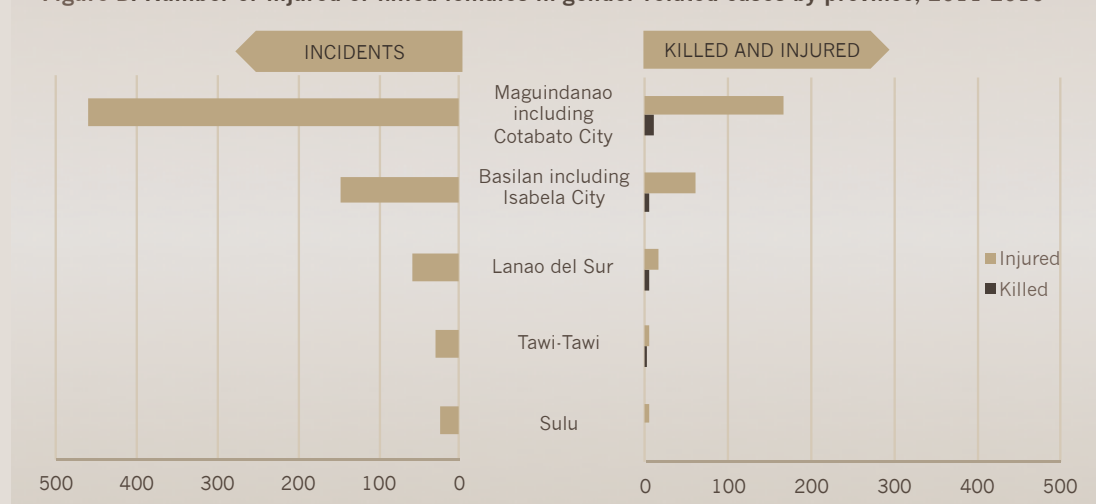
Overall, by area, most of the gender-related issues captured by Conflict Alert occurred in Maguindanao with a total of 460 incidents over the course of six years. (See Figure B). Of the 460 total, 296 took place in Cotabato City. Far behind is Basilan with 148 incidents, of which 114 took place in Isabela City.

Most of the victims were females. Common manifestations of abuse were domestic violence, assault, rape, and sexual harassment. (See Figure C). Among the victims were minors. Most of the suspected perpetrators were males. They were either the spouses or partners of female victims. Male relatives were among the perpetrators in cases involving children.

Most female victims were from Maguindanao, in particular, Cotabato City, matching the data on the location of gender-related incidents. The next highest number of victims came from Basilan, particularly Isabela City.

More female victims got injured than killed, with the highest number of injured based in Maguindanao, followed by Basilan and Lanao del Sur.

**Figure D. Number of injured or killed females in gender-related cases by province, 2011-2016**





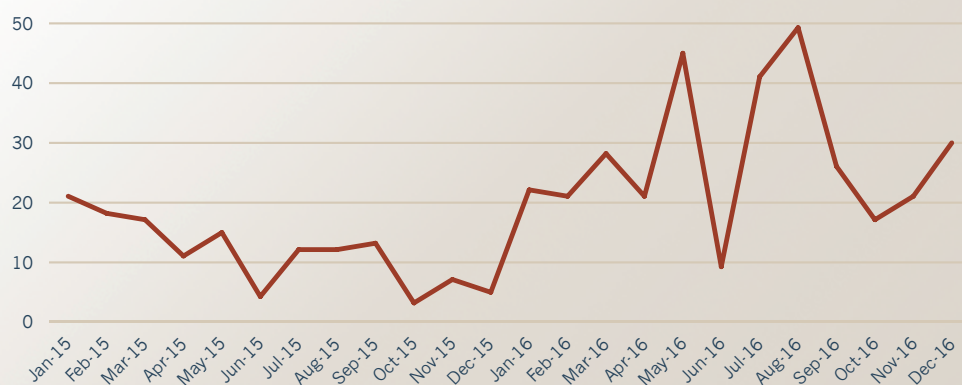
## Illicit firearms and the elections

Illicit firearms-related conflict was third with 330 incidents in 2016, more than doubling from the 138 incidents recorded in 2015. Violence enabled by illegally acquired weapons such as guns and explosives intensified in the run-up to the May 9, 2016 national and local elections and as extremist groups launched attacks on government facilities. The crackdown on illegal drugs beginning in July also led to numerous firearm confiscations. (See graph below).

New sub-categories in illicit firearms-related violence emerged such as the rent-a-gun phenomenon. Local syndicates were renting out weapons for a fee in Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao. This service was particularly useful in providing muscle and some armed leverage to smaller and weaker clans involved in deadly feuds.

**Figure 13. Number of illicit firearms-related incidents**

By month, 2015–2016



New sub-categories in illicit firearms-related violence emerged such as the rent-a-gun phenomenon.



## Rebellion-related and extremist violence

Rebellion-related violence increased by 19% from 144 incidents in 2015 to 171 incidents in 2016. Maguindanao accounted for 96 of these incidents in 2016, up from 71 in 2015. Maguindanao is infamous for the activities of armed group BIFF/BIFM, which had declared allegiance to ISIS in 2014.

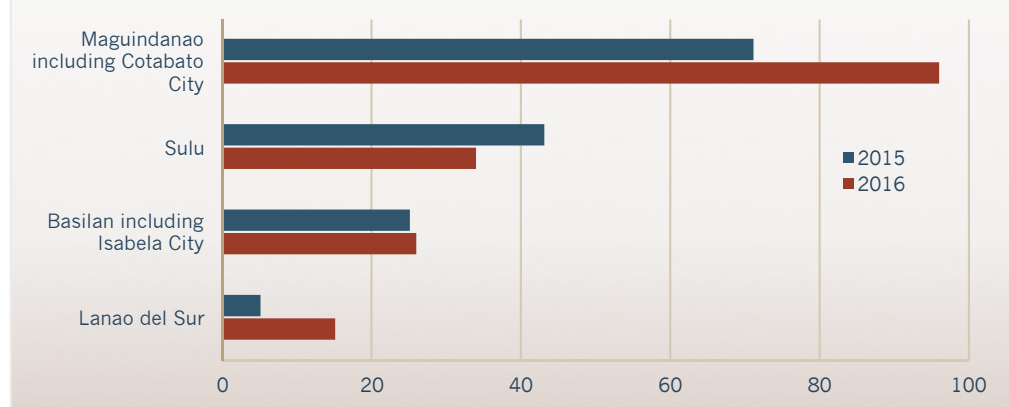
Sulu followed in terms of number of incidents, then Basilan. The two have long been host to the ASG, which also pledged allegiance to ISIS. The ASG also figured in several armed clashes in Basilan. However,

the BIFF/BIFM was still the most notorious armed group involved in extremist violence in the ARMM.

The BIFF/BIFM's involvement in vertical conflict rose to 72 incidents in 2016 from 58 in 2015. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which has a peace agreement with the Philippine government, figured in three armed clashes against the government in 2016. These incidents were triggered by the entry of soldiers into MILF territory while pursuing the BIFF/BIFM.

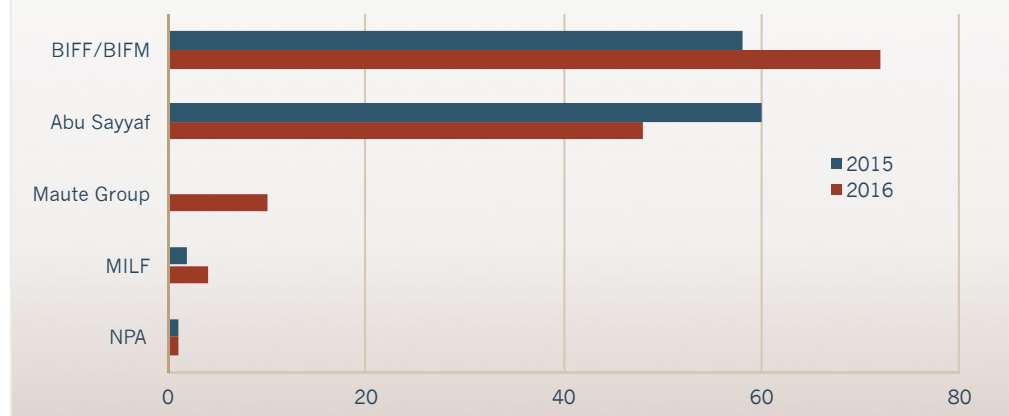
**Figure 14. Number of rebellion incidents**

By province, 2015–2016



**Figure 15. Number of rebellion incidents involving armed groups**

2015–2016



## Clan feuding

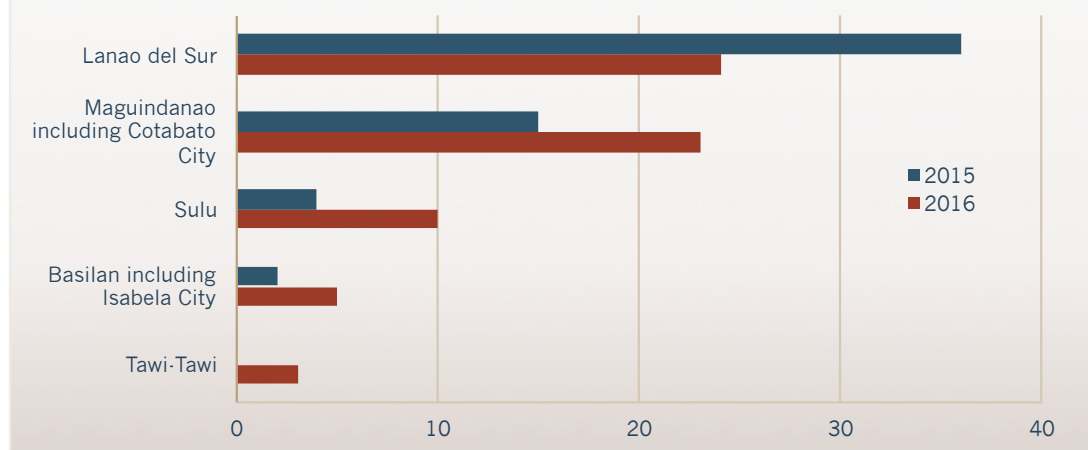
Clan-related violence rose by a tenth to 65 incidents in 2016 from 57 incidents in 2015. Cases of *rido* were most frequent in Lanao del Sur, though the number of clan conflicts in the province fell to 24 in 2016 from 36 a year earlier. In contrast, Maguindanao saw its number of clan feuds rise to 23 from 15. As anticipated,

the various clans resolved their differences violently during the May 2016 elections.

In total, 65 incidents of *rido* were recorded resulting in 56 deaths, in contrast to the 57 *rido* incidents resulting in 52 deaths recorded in 2015.

**Figure 16. Number of *rido* incidents**

By province, 2015–2016



## Human cost of conflict

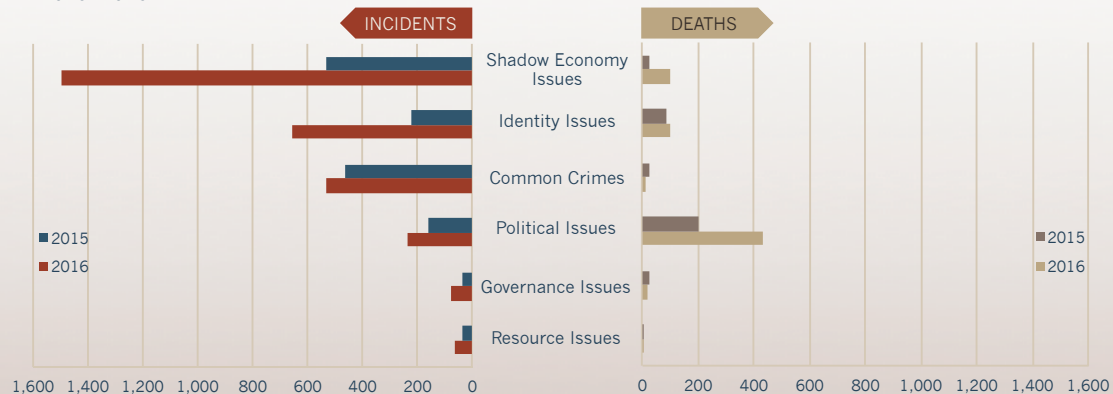
The human cost of political violence far outweighed other causes of violence in 2016 as the region underwent the national and local elections and the scourge of extremist violence. Shadow economy incidents may have dwarfed political issues in the sheer number of incidents, but rebellion-related violence, though only ranked seventh among the top 10 specific causes of conflict, proved to be more fatal.

In 2016, there were 240 incidents caused by political issues resulting in 428 deaths and 552 injured, compared to just 160 incidents resulting in 203 deaths and 271 injured in 2015. The ASG was the deadliest among various threat groups in 2016. Despite the fewer number of incidents registered from ASG atrocities in 2016 (71 incidents) in contrast to 2015 (77 incidents), there were 198 people killed in these attacks, or more than double the 93 deaths registered in 2015.

Shadow economy incidents may have dwarfed political issues in the sheer number of incidents, but rebellion-related violence proved to be more fatal.

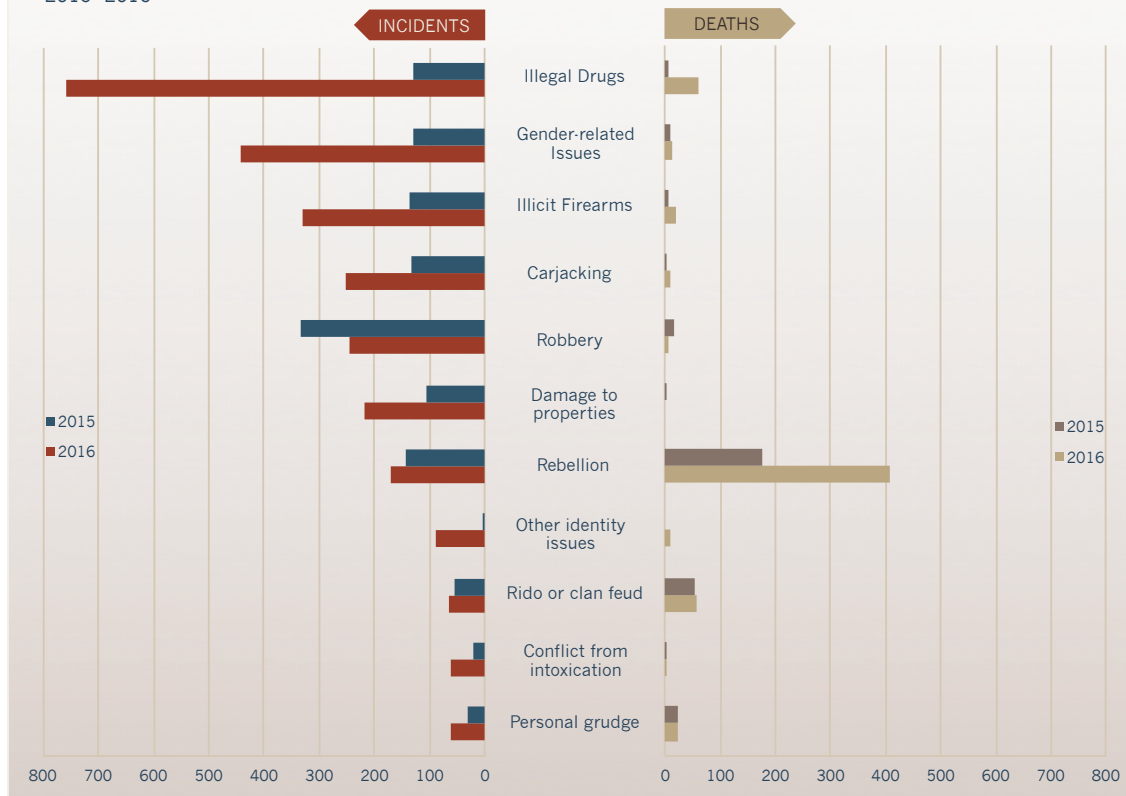
**Figure 17. Number of incidents and deaths by main cause**

2015–2016



**Figure 18. Number of incidents and deaths by top specific cause**

2015–2016







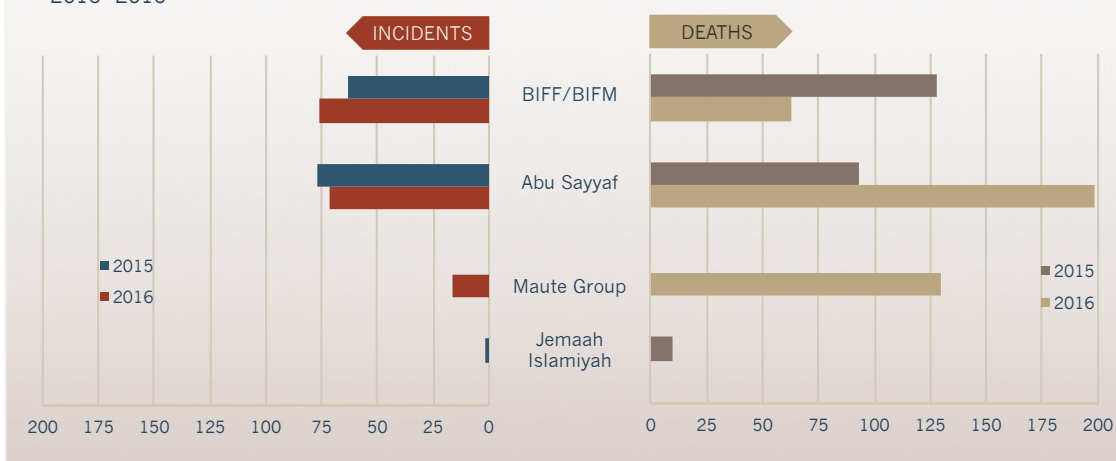
## Maute Group was deadliest

However, the deaths attributed to the ASG paled in comparison to those of the Maute Group, in terms of conflict deaths per armed confrontation. A total of 130 deaths were attributed to the Maute Group for only 16 incidents recorded in 2016. This means that eight people were killed per attack launched by the Maute Group (8 to 1), in contrast to three people killed per ASG attack (3 to 1).

Meanwhile, the BIFF/BIFM was involved in more incidents (76) in 2016 from just 63 in 2015, with combat deaths at 63 in 2016 compared to 128 in 2015. The human costs from BIFF/BIFM activities spiraled in the first quarter in 2015 following the Mamasapano tragedy, before stabilizing towards the end of the year.

**Figure 19. Incidents and deaths due to threat groups**

2015–2016



## Rapid rise of violent extremism in 2016

The year 2016 saw the rapid rise of extremist armed groups carrying the black banner of ISIS in Mindanao. These included the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Basilan and Sulu, the Ansar Al Khalifa in Sarangani, and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) in Maguindanao.

However, the group that really made its mark in 2016 was headed by two siblings from the Maute clan of Butig, Lanao del Sur. People from Butig speak of how Abdullah and Omar Khayam Maute studied abroad and returned to the country completely transformed and preaching a more violent and exclusionary version of Islam, and to organize a new armed group in the Lanao corridor that would adhere to ISIS.

Using their clan base in the town of Butig, the brothers soon mobilized their siblings, cousins, and other relatives, including some of their neighbours, to join their ragtag army of fighters. By the start of 2016, they were prepared to fight off the combined strength of the military and police in their area.

From February to April, the Maute Group (MG) went on a rampage, attacking a Philippine Army detachment from the 51st Battalion in Barangay Bayabao, Butig on February 20. Three days later, the same armed group would ambush troops from the 2nd Mechanized Brigade of the Philippine Army in Barangay Cadapaan in the town of Balindong, 70 kilometers away from Butig.

During the first half of 2016, the MG would also get involved in predatory attacks against construction and logging businesses that were opening new routes for transport and trade along the circumferential road surrounding Lake Lanao. Logging workers were abducted, and at least four were later found beheaded in April, and in June, road construction workers were fired upon and wounded by the MG.

Key informants reported it was a good period for fast recruitment into the Maute Group. Job opportunities remained scarce, ethnic divisions were hardening and political tensions rising with the forthcoming 2016 elections, and a recent pyramiding scam had decimated the capital and savings of many Maranao families.

Recruits were aplenty and available in exchange for a small joining fee, and training programs were prepared to accommodate more recruits. Education included religious training and 'life skills' such as the dismantling and firing of weapons and the conduct of ambush attacks. Aspiring members had to commit they would participate in actual armed actions before they could fully become members of the Dawlah Islamiya, the new name the MG now preferred to call themselves.

The attacks by Dawlah Islamiya would escalate in intensity and magnitude from July to December 2016. Key events from July to September would bear the hallmarks of the MG brand—bold and well-planned actions, mobile and marauding attacks, and the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

In July, the MG would leapfrog across Lake Lanao and conduct ambushes in Marawi City, killing soldiers and civilians, and deploying IEDs on vehicles and roads along the Butig-Marawi City corridor. These actions would culminate with the bold jailbreak of their comrades from the Lanao del Sur provincial jail on August 27.



The atrocities would further escalate in September with the ambush and death of policemen and paramilitaries in Picong, Lanao del Sur, and armed clashes between MG and law enforcers in the town of Malabang, Lanao del Sur. The intensity of the military counter-offensive would force the MG to retreat to Butig by October, and to re-occupy the old and abandoned municipal hall in Butig in November 2016.

Armed clashes, including mortar and aerial attacks would escalate in Butig by December, including parallel attacks in Marawi City through the explosion of IEDs in Barangay Emie Punud, and the targeting of a composite police and military team that was about to serve a warrant to Farhana Maute, the clan matriarch, at her residence in Barangay Lilod Saduc in Marawi City, for violation of anti-illicit firearms laws.

As the year ended, the MG would attempt to regroup in the Iranun corridor through kin residing in Buldon and Barira in Maguindanao, but would find very little support among the Iranun Muslims in the Parang-Barira corridor.

All told, the number of combat and collateral deaths from the MG in 2016 would surpass the ratio of fatalities to attacks recorded for the ASG that year. The MG produced at least eight deaths for each incident, in contrast to the ASG's three to one.

There was no doubt that the experience and momentum achieved by the MG, a.k.a. Dawlah Islamiya, in 2016 would shape the nature, extent, and ferocity of extremist violence across the Bangsamoro in 2017. By this time, their numbers had risen to more than 200 fighters dedicated to extremist principles and with ample combat experience.

## Deaths versus injuries and arrests

Actors involved in illegal drug incidents were more likely to die (59 deaths) than be injured (17 injured) in 2016. As to gender-related issues, the second most common in 2016, individuals involved were more likely to be injured (232 injured), than to be killed (14 deaths). For those involved in illicit firearms, they were more likely to be injured (54) than killed (20).

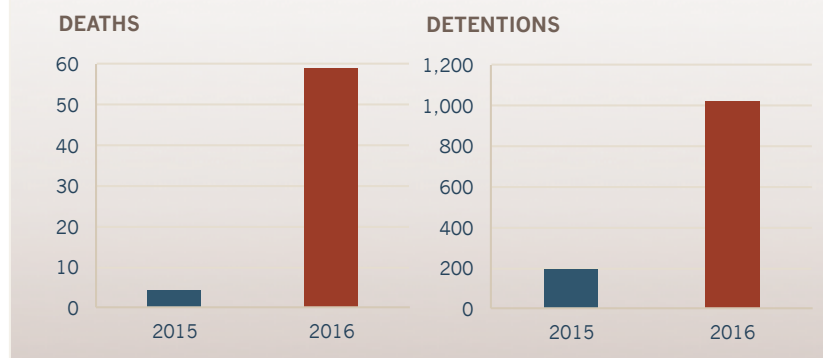
As the number of drug-related incidents increased to 757 in 2016 from 130 in 2015, the death toll due to illegal drugs also increased to 59 from just four in 2015. However, the number of deaths was dwarfed by the number of people detained or arrested in the ARMM for involvement in illegal drugs cases, which rose to 1,019 in 2016 from 192 in 2015.

The data on illicit drug-related deaths is counter-intuitive when one considers the

barrage of media reports in Manila and other urban centers about the death toll from the war against drugs. Despite the increase in conflict incidents, few people are killed in the anti-drug campaign in the ARMM. Consultations among members of the MSVGs reveal the caution and fear among law enforcement agencies in causing conflict deaths due to the long history of revenge-killing in the region and the likely clan feuding that may be unleashed.

The number of displaced also increased as a result of the spike in violent conflict in 2016. Nearly 45,400 individuals were reportedly displaced in 2016, a near tripling of the 16,611 reported internally displaced people in 2015. About 98% of displacement cases were associated with fireships resulting from rebellion and extremism.

**Figure 20. Deaths and detentions due to illegal drugs**  
2015–2016



## Manifestations of violent conflict

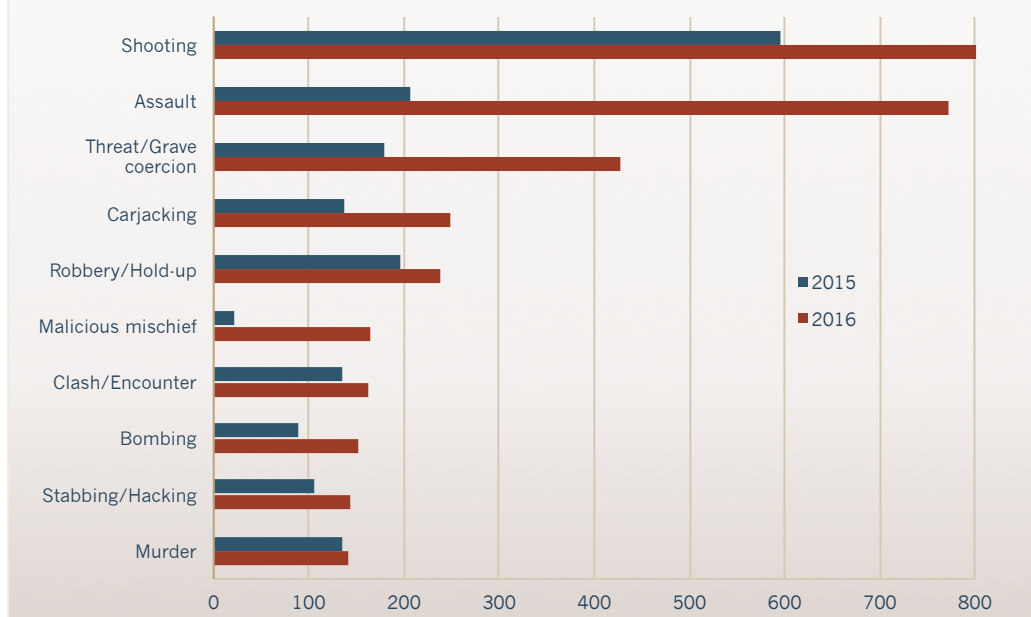
Incidents of shooting were the most common manifestation of conflict in 2016. There were 803 shooting incidents in 2016, up from 596 in 2015. Most of the shootings resulted from *rido* incidents (32), illegal drug cases (31), and conflict due to personal grudge (26).

Incidents of armed clashes or encounters occurred 162 times in 2016 from 135 in 2015. Incidents of bombing and the use of IEDs also represent a big jump in numbers,

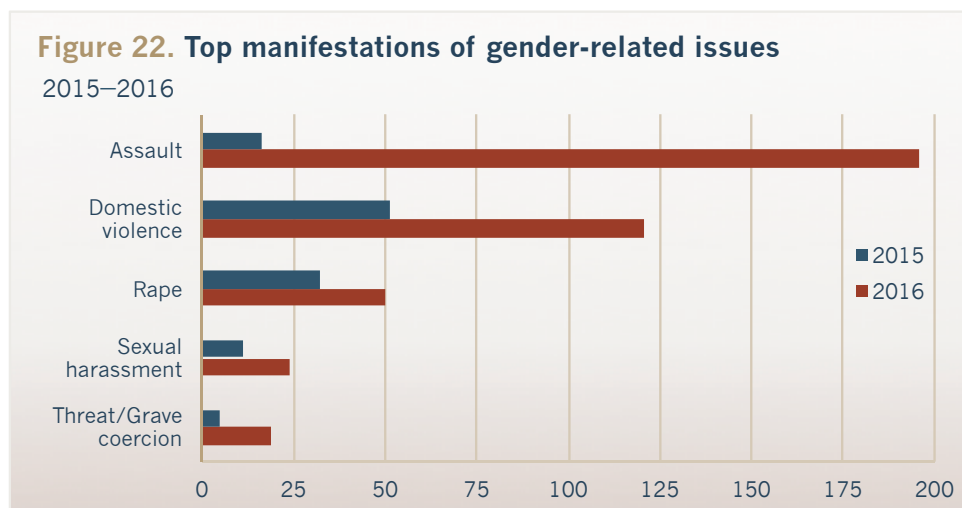
from 89 incidents in 2015 to 152 in 2016.

Meanwhile, physical assault was the most common manifestation of gender-related violence, numbering 196 in 2016 from just 16 the year before. Second was domestic violence, which totaled 121 incidents from 51 in 2015. Rape and sexual harassment cases also rose, registering 50 and 24, respectively, in contrast to 32 and 11 in 2015.

**Figure 21. Top manifestations of conflict**  
2015–2016



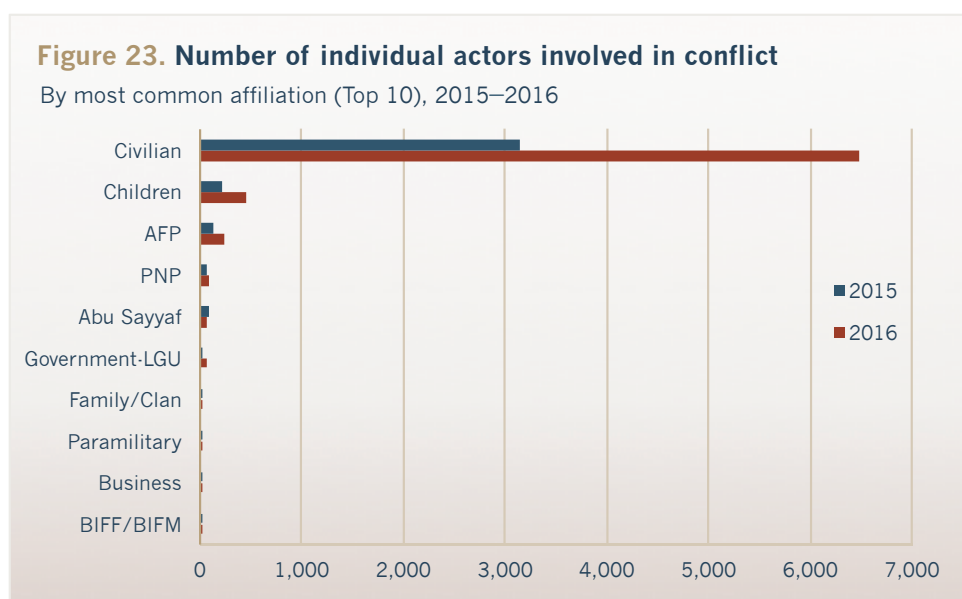
## Despite the increase in conflict incidents, few people are killed in the anti-drug campaign in the ARMM.



## Actors involved in conflict

Civilians and children were the most affected by violent conflict in ARMM from 2015-2016. The number of civilians involved rose to 6,489 in 2016 from 3,147

in 2015. Children/minors numbering 463 also figured in many conflict incidents in 2016 compared to just 212 in 2015.





## **Corruption and violent extremism in Muslim Mindanao**

The task of identifying and analyzing the various potential vectors of violent extremism becomes more urgent and critical as the intensity (incidence) and magnitude (costs) of extremist violence grows across many countries and societies in the developed and developing world. In the Philippines, the intensification of violent extremism has been most pronounced in Mindanao, where newly emerging armed groups saw action during the ISIS attack on the Islamic City of Marawi in the middle of 2017.

Meanwhile, there is not a month that passes by without a seminar, conference, or summit being convened to discuss ways of countering and preventing violent extremism (CVE/PVE). In the past two years, various global summits were organized by the governments of the USA, Australia, UK, Malaysia, and Indonesia, as well as regional bodies such as the ASEAN. Bilateral and multilateral development and peacebuilding programs now often contain a CVE framework that weaves through its conceptual and operational criteria.

Recently, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) began to explore and investigate the links between corruption and violent extremism in a major research project that follows its analysis that “perceptions of injustice, corruption, and mistreatment of certain groups” is a significant driver of radicalization, recruitment, and violent extremism (2016 18-19, Golub 2017 6).

Understanding the connection between corruption and violent conflict, and more specifically, between corruption and violent extremism has become more important in subnational settings where the State is weak, and corruption is pervasive, and where rebellion, criminal, and extremist violence are intertwined.

### **Corruption and violent extremism**

In this new empirical study, Alert uses both quantitative and qualitative means to identify vectors and their dynamics. An initial quantitative analysis was conducted in an iterative study of the links between extremism and corruption. An earlier Alert study (Abasolo 2013) had examined this link by analyzing the effects on violent conflict, or the lack of it, of good governance practices in areas that had received awards for good governance. Using a sample of Galing Pook awardees in Muslim Mindanao, we found that violent conflict was on the rise even in areas that were judged to be good governance performers.



In contrast to the 2013 study, we now have quantitative data on corruption at the provincial and municipal/city level, and thereafter ascertained the association between variables of corruption and incidence of violent conflict at the local government level, specifically in Muslim Mindanao. In this new sample, Alert used performance data that serve as indicators of good governance, or the lack of it, in selected municipalities with or without the presence of extremist violence and actors (see list of municipalities below). The availability of nearly seven years of panel data on violent conflict and extremist violence contained in Alert's Conflict Alert database provides a solid and more-than-adequate reference that can be useful for the sort of comparative analysis that can establish the links, and the strength of the links between corruption and extremism.

The study aimed to show the correlation between corruption and violent conflict incidence in 19 selected areas in the ARMM (Lamitan City, Wao, Parang, Upi, Jolo, Butig, Piagapo, Sultan sa Barongis, Datu Piang, Indanan, Patikul, Datu Salibo, Sumisip, Datu Saudi-Ampatuan, Shariff Aguak, Datu Unsay, Al-Barka, Shariff Saydona Mustapha, and Tipo-Tipo). More specifically, it aimed to determine whether corruption, as measured through good governance scores, has an effect on the frequency of violent conflict incidents in these areas.

Data used were the Conflict Alert database and the Local Governance Performance Management System (LGPMS) scorecards from 2014 to 2016. Predictor variable used was the growth rate of the good governance score in 2015 and 2016, which was extracted from the LGPMS scorecard for each locality. Another was a Seal of Good Local Governance (SGLG) given in 2016 based on improvements in the scores from 2015 to 2016. The outcome variables extracted from the Conflict Alert database were the following:

1. Frequencies of
  - a. total violent conflict incidence (total)
  - b. violent conflict incidence per 100,000 population (per capita)
  - c. violent conflict incidence per 100 square kilometers (density)
2. Year-on-year growth rates of frequencies of
  - a. total violent conflict incidence (total)
  - b. violent conflict incidence per 100,000 population (per capita)
  - c. violent conflict incidence per 100 square kilometers (density)

Pearson's pairwise test was used to determine the correlation between the predictor and outcome variables, while linear panel data regression was utilized to show the effects of good governance score on frequency and year-on-year growth rates of total, per capita, and density of violent conflict incidents.

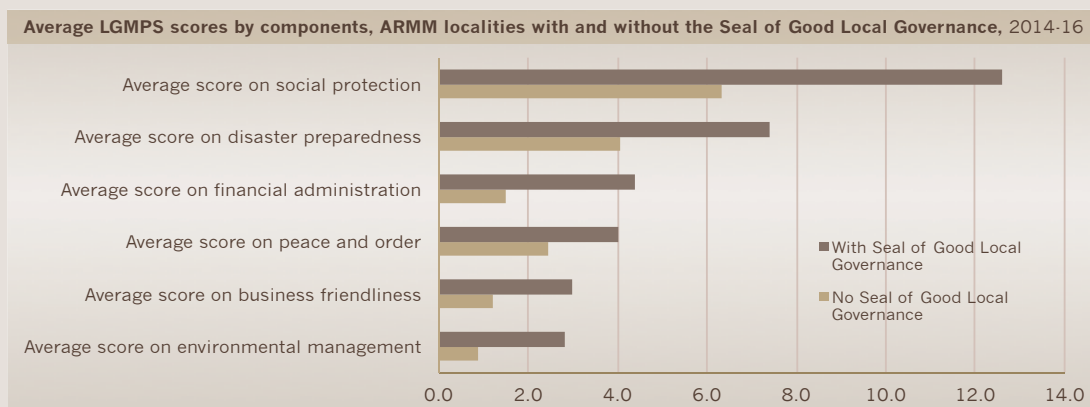
### **Conclusion: deceleration in violence and good governance**

Panel regression results showed a negative effect of good governance scores' growth rate and a positive effect of presence of SGLG on frequencies of total, per capita, and density of violent conflict incidents; both effects appeared insignificant. However, regressing good governance scores' growth rate and presence of SGLG on year-on-year growth rates of frequencies of total, per capita, and density of violent conflict incidents showed that, at 1% level of significance (which means a threshold of 1% probability of making an error in associating the two variables), a Seal of Good Local Governance has a negative effect on the outcome variables in the 19 selected localities in ARMM. It should be noted, however, that values of overall R-squared (or the percentage at which the model is explained by the predictor variable) of all models were very low. This may mean that a good governance score could not solely explain variability in the year-on-year growth rates, and that other factors should be considered.



The Pearson's pairwise test showed a positive correlation between good governance scores' growth rates and frequencies of total, per capita, and density of violent conflict incidents in localities without SGLG, and a negative correlation among those awarded with the SGLG. The same results were obtained with good governance scores' growth rates and year-on-year growth rates (instead of frequencies) of total, per capita, and density of violent conflict incidence. This indicated that an increase in good governance scores would also show a decline in the growth rates (of violence), and vice versa. We noted that the correlation coefficients for local government units (LGUs) with SGLG showed a strong negative association between corruption indicator and outcome variables, while LGUs without SGLG demonstrated medium positive correlation between variables.

The graph shows the breakdown of LGPMS scores by components, comparing the ARMM localities with and without SGLG. As could be observed, average scores of LGUs awarded with SGLG were higher compared to those without SGLG. The largest difference between average scores was on the social protection component, and the smallest difference was on peace and order.



However, we noted that all localities, whether awarded with SGLG or not, needed to do more because conflict incidents were still increasing in these areas. While the LGUs awarded with SGLG had a slower growth in violent conflict incidents, we could not pinpoint which aspect of the SGLG contributed most to this and therefore would need further study. To elaborate, the peace and order component of the SGLG merely measures adoption of plans and conventions of local Peace and Order Councils, while the social protection component only includes measures of support for people with special needs (children, women, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens).

Newly emerging threats of violence such as extremism in high-risk and vulnerable areas such as the ARMM imply a rethinking of policies that incentivize the good governance performance of local governments. The results herein underscore the necessity of examining the current assessment criteria of the Seal of Good Local Governance, in particular on whether or not the indicators within the core areas of financial administration, disaster preparedness, social protection, peace and order, business friendliness and competitiveness, environmental management, and tourism, culture and the arts enable a significant decline in violent conflict in a given locality. Beyond simply complying with establishing mechanisms and structures, as required under the LGPMS, the good governance indicators must incorporate requirements that can make a real dent in addressing the drivers and causes of violence. At the core of good governance is the ability to sustain gains in all these six indicators and conflict prevention and management is an important element to be able to do so.









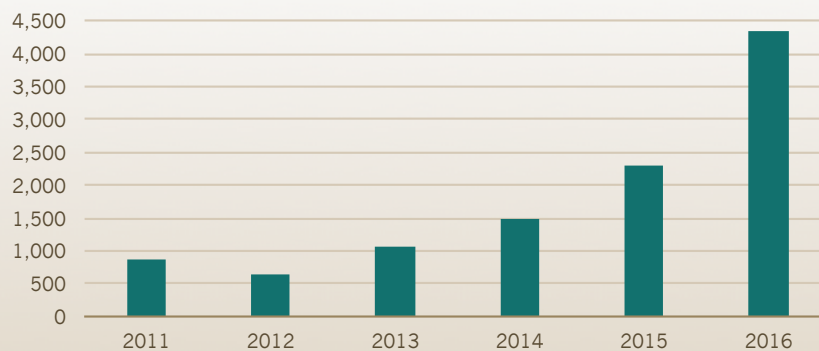
## **Persistent Shadow Economies, High Criminality, and Violent Extremism**

Conflict in the ARMM  
from 2011 to 2016

A total of 10,721 violent conflict incidents that took place in Muslim Mindanao from 2011 to 2016 have been recorded, or since the Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System was established in 2013. The year 2016 set a record for conflict incidence, registering a 68% jump from the total as of 2015, and sustained the steep rise in violence witnessed since 2015. The persistence of shadow economy-related conflict incidents, criminal violence, and the newly emerging violence from extremist groups all contributed towards turning the ARMM into a volatile region for both vertical and horizontal conflict.

**Figure 24. Number of incidents, ARMM**

2011–2016



## Conflict incidence by province

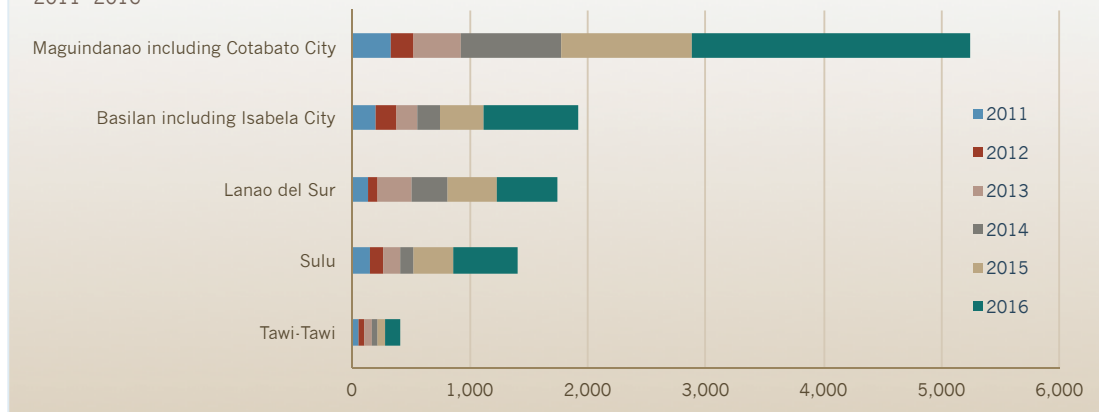
Nearly half of violent conflict incidents that took place over the 2011–2016 period occurred in Maguindanao. The province, with 5,240 incidents as of 2016, has the biggest land area and population among the five ARMM provinces and hosts Muslim Mindanao's biggest city, Cotabato. The city, in fact, accounts for two-fifths of the province's total.

A far second and third to Maguindanao were Basilan and Lanao del Sur, respectively. Basilan counted 1,919 incidents, and Lanao del Sur, 1,739 incidents as of 2016. The cities within two of these provinces, namely

Cotabato City in Maguindanao and Isabela City in Basilan, are not administratively part of the ARMM, but are nevertheless included in the database because they are contiguous to the provinces and spillovers in violence shape and are shaped by urban violence in these two cities. They have certainly contributed towards dramatically increasing the incidence of conflict in the two provinces, and in the ARMM as a whole.

Meanwhile, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi brought up the rear in terms of incident numbers, as in previous years. A total of 1,410 incidents took place in Sulu, and 413 in Tawi-Tawi.

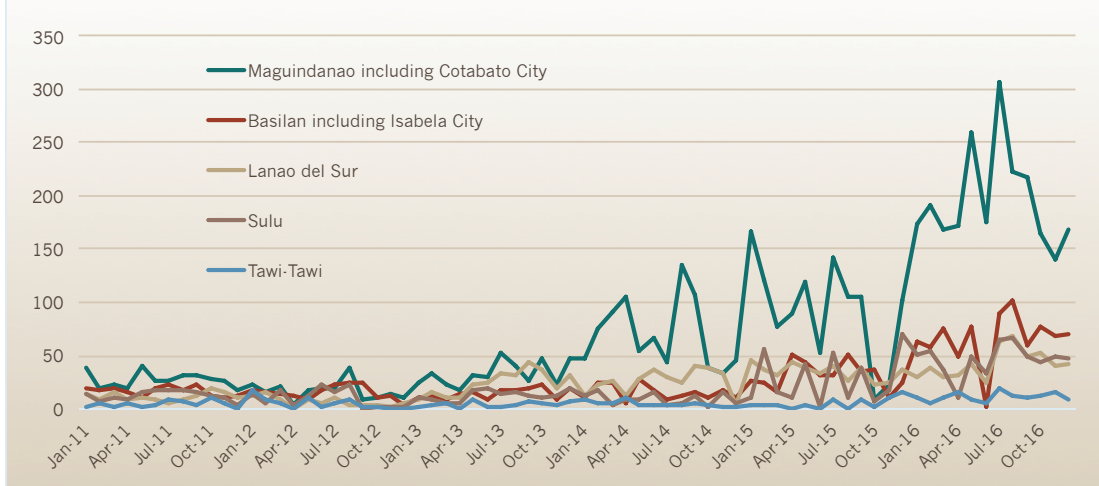
**Figure 25. Number of incidents by province and year**  
2011–2016



As the graph below shows, Maguindanao began to see a rapid rise in violent conflicts in 2014, which peaked in July 2016, or at the start of the Duterte government's anti-drug campaign. If this conflict trend holds, Maguindanao will continue to be the

most conflict-affected province in Muslim Mindanao in terms of number of incidents in the coming years. As for the other provinces, the number of conflict incidents did not increase significantly until 2016.

**Figure 26. Number of incidents by month and province**  
2011–2016



The year 2016 set a record for conflict incidence, registering a 68% jump from the total as of 2015.



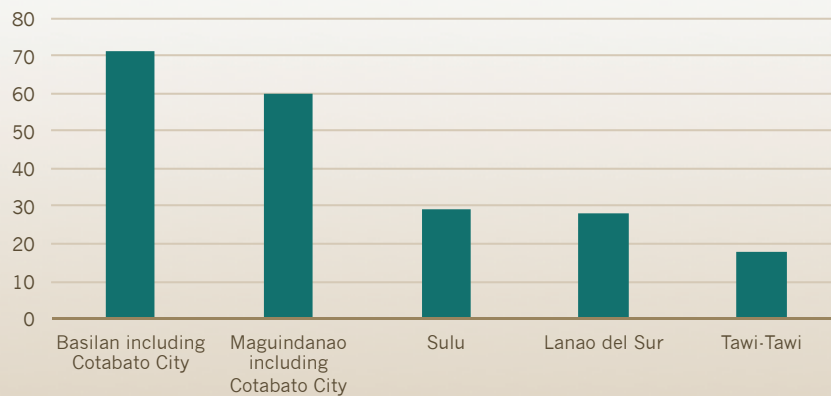
## Conflict per capita, density, and deaths

Looking at more granular data when conflict incidence is calculated per capita yields a different result. Conflict incidence per 100,000 persons (per capita) pushed Basilan ahead of Maguindanao and Sulu ahead of Lanao del Sur. Conflict deaths per 100,000 persons also provided the same ranking of provinces.<sup>4</sup>

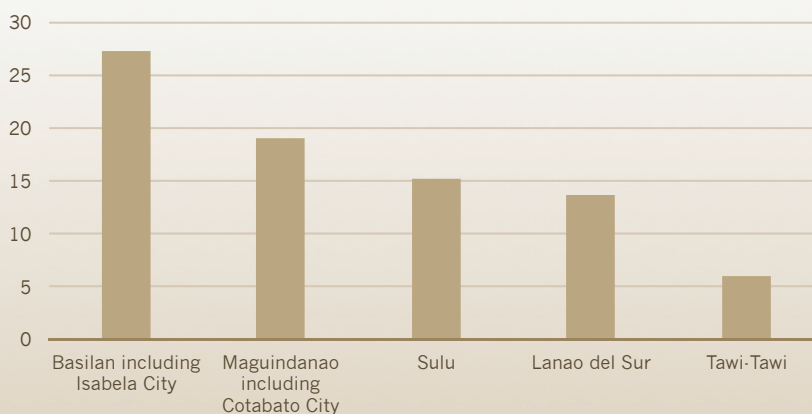
When conflict density or conflicts per 1,000 square kilometers was measured, Basilan

and Maguindanao occupied the top rung, Sulu the middle, and Lanao del Sur and Tawi-Tawi the bottom.<sup>5</sup> In terms of conflict deaths per 1,000 square kilometers, Sulu tied with Maguindanao at second place after Basilan. (See Figures 29 and 30 next page). While there were less conflicts in Sulu compared to Maguindanao in terms of area, these conflicts were so deadly they caused the same number of casualties as in the other province.

**Figure 27. Conflict incidence per 100,000 persons by province**  
2011–2016



**Figure 28. Conflict deaths per 100,000 persons by province**  
2011–2016

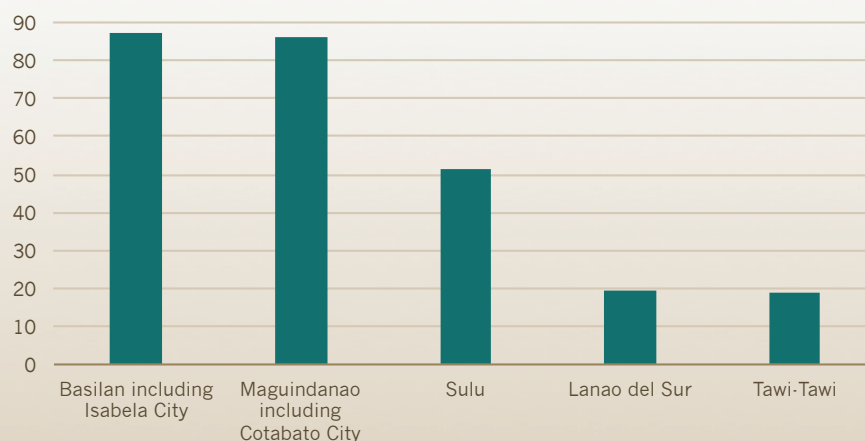


<sup>4</sup> Conflict and death per capita for 2011–2016 was derived by getting the average number of violent conflict incidents and deaths from 2011 to 2016 over the projected population of each province and multiplying it by 100,000.

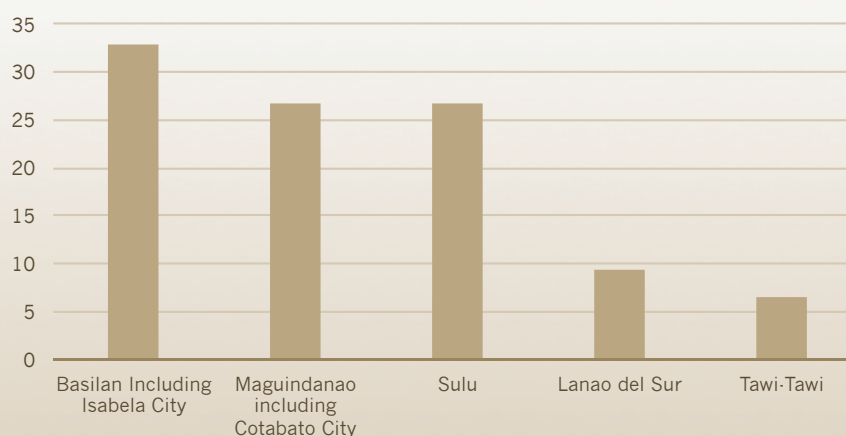
<sup>5</sup> Conflict density was computed by getting the quotient of the average number of violent conflict incidents from 2011 to 2016 over the land area of each province multiplied by 1,000.

**Figure 29. Conflict incidence per 1,000 square kilometers**

By province, 2011–2016

**Figure 30. Conflict deaths per 1,000 square kilometers**

By province, 2011–2016



What's with Basilan? The number of violent conflicts that afflicts it and its relatively smaller population and area means that its communities are affected more by violence compared to those in the other provinces. As for Tawi-Tawi, it has always been the

outlier, whether in terms of the number of conflict incidents, conflict per capita, or conflict density. When violence occurs, what causes it? This is worth examining. (See box).



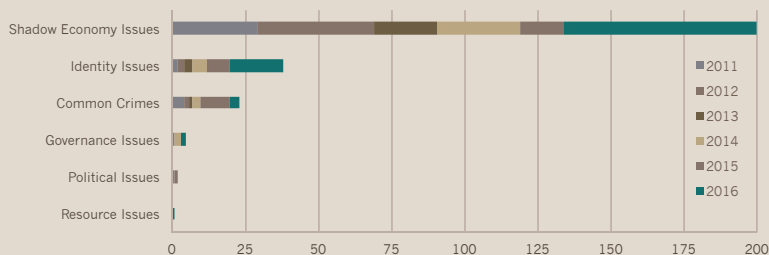
## Center of human trafficking

Tawi-Tawi was the center of human trafficking in Muslim Mindanao until the vigilance of an interagency task force forced illegal recruiters to explore other transit points for their Malaysia-bound victims.

Data show that shadow economy activities were the top causes of conflict in Tawi-Tawi. Until 2015, most violence was caused by human trafficking (64 incidents) followed by the illegal drug trade (30 incidents). In 2016, as the Duterte government sought to eradicate the illegal drug problem, the number of illegal drug-related cases skyrocketed while the number of human trafficking cases dropped. As of that year, there were 66 human trafficking incidents and 68 illegal drug-related incidents.

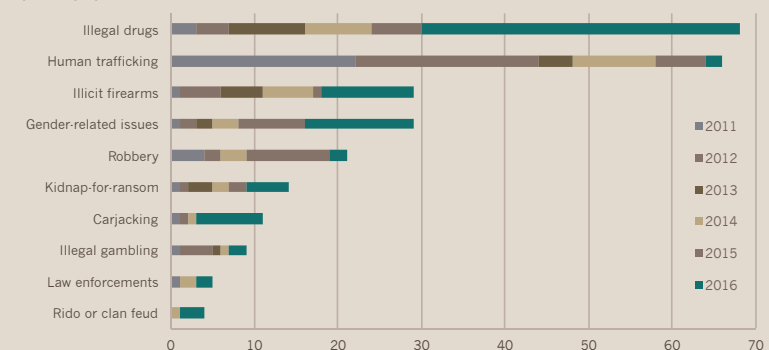
**Figure A. Main causes of conflict, Tawi-Tawi**

2011–2016



**Figure B. Specific causes of conflict, Tawi-Tawi**

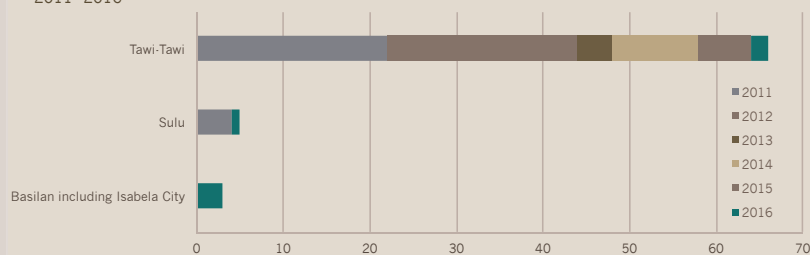
2011–2016



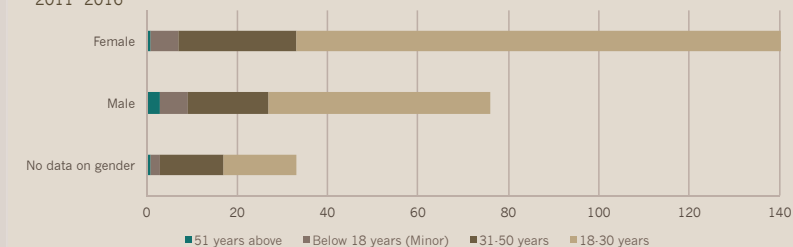
The Multi-Stakeholder Validation Group (MSVG) for the Basilan-Sulu-Tawi-Tawi (Basulta) area pointed out that an interagency task force had become very active and effective in staunching the trafficking of people, mostly women, to Sabah, which is just a few hours away by boat from Bongao, the capital of Tawi-Tawi. Security in the Sulu Sea has also been tightened after the spate of kidnappings by the Abu Sayyaf. Illegal recruiters have made Palawan the new jump-off point for their victims, or have used other ports in the Basulta area to carry on with their crime. The data

show that two trafficking in persons (TIP) cases were filed with the police in Isabela City, one in Basilan, and one in Sulu in 2016. In previous years, there were none, except for four cases in Sulu in 2011.

**Figure C. Human trafficking incidents, Basulta**  
2011–2016



**Figure D. Number of trafficked persons, by age and gender, Tawi-Tawi**  
2011–2016



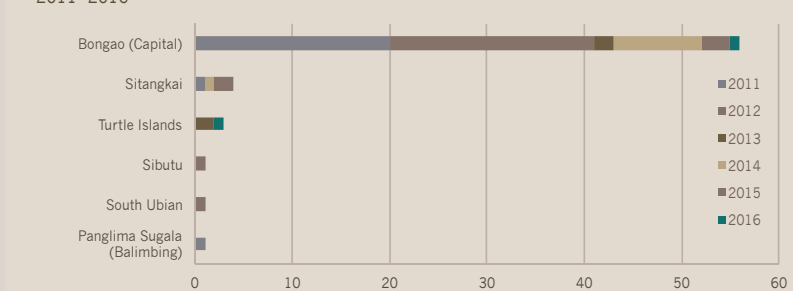
Most of the incidents in police blotters were about the rescue of trafficked persons, who were then turned over by the police to the Department of Social Welfare and Development for assistance. The data showed a total of 253 trafficked persons, of which nearly two-thirds were women, mostly between the ages of 18 and 30. (See Figure D). Men made up nearly a third of victims. A few minors were also TIP victims. The MSVG said some trafficked children were cooped by bandits for training.

The victims came from provinces in Mindanao, both within and outside the ARMM, and as far away as the Visayas and Luzon. Most went to find work in Malaysia, and after getting deported due to lack of documents, they would try their luck again using the same network of illegal recruiters and the same routes. A few were trafficked to work in the Basulta itself.

Most of the human trafficking victims were intercepted in Bongao, followed by Sitangkai and the Turtle Islands. (See Figure E). These were the most popular jump-off points for victims headed for Malaysia. With the ports in Isabela City, Basilan and Sulu beginning to be used as TIP transit points, authorities should closely monitor these ports while keep a tight watch on the ports in Tawi-Tawi.

For the long term, policymakers should address the reasons that force Filipinos to brave the dangers of leaving home to work in other countries without any protection, while keep up efforts to intercept trafficked or kidnapped persons, shipments of drugs and weapons, and the entry of foreigners seeking to join extremist groups in Mindanao.

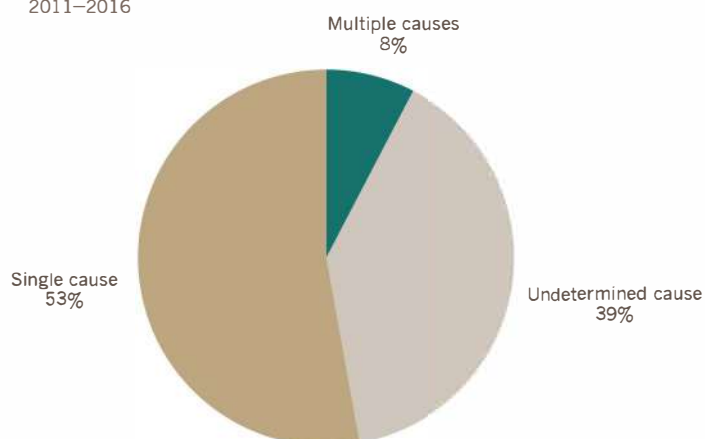
**Figure E. Number of human trafficking incidents, by municipality, Tawi-Tawi**  
2011–2016



## Causes of conflict

Sixty-one percent (61%) of the total number of violent conflict incidents had a cause or a combination of causes that could be clearly determined, an improvement from 57% in the previous report. Of the total 10,721 incidents, 8% or 819 incidents were due to a combination of causes. For the remaining 39% or 4,238 incidents, the cause or causes could not be determined due to inadequate details in the police or newspaper reports.

**Figure 31. Incidents with known and undetermined causes**  
2011–2016



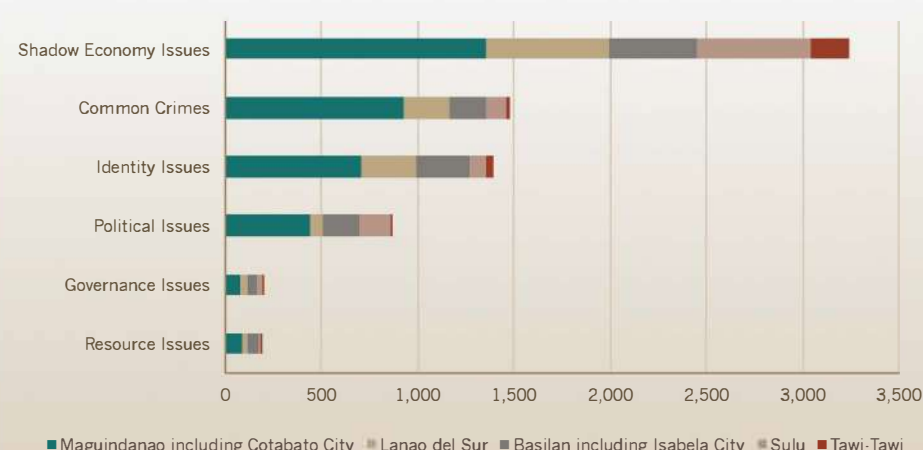
### Main causes of conflict

Violent shadow economies, particularly in the illicit drug and gun trades, were the top causes of violent conflict in Muslim Mindanao. Common crimes, notably robberies, and identity issues, particularly gender-related violence and clan feuds, were the second and third biggest cause of conflict, respectively. Political issues, particularly rebellion, ranked fourth in terms of causes.

Governance and resource issues may not be as numerable as the other causes but

they are hardly insignificant in the analysis of violence in Muslim Mindanao. For one, the implementation of government projects—a governance issue—has pitted various parties against one another. Land—a major resource in the ARMM, which has remained largely agricultural—is the subject of much contestation as titles are either few or doubtful and most transactions are completed informally. Land conflicts are the most common form of resource conflict in Muslim Mindanao.

**Figure 32. Main causes of violent conflict by province**  
2011–2016





## Specific causes of conflict

The shadow economies in illegal drugs, illicit firearms, carjacking, and kidnap-for-ransom predominated as specific causes of conflict in all five provinces of the ARMM.

The majority of shadow economy-related conflicts took place in Maguindanao, with illegal drug cases numbering 477 (42% of the total); illicit firearms, 433 (49%); and carjacking, 259 (48%). The 30 cases of kidnap-for-ransom that took place in the province were exceeded only by the 94 (35% of the total) that took place in Sulu and the 89 (33%) that took place in Lanao del Sur.

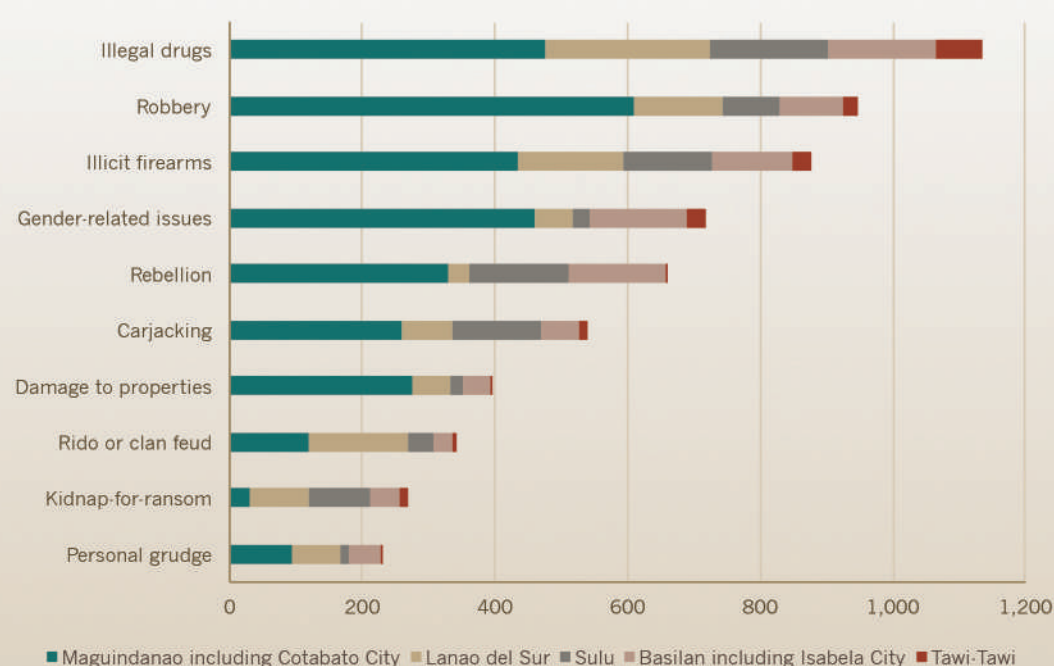
Robberies and damage to properties, both common crimes, were rife in Maguindanao. There were 608 robberies (64% of the total) and 276 damage-to-property incidents (70%), highest among all provinces. Many of these were carried out in Cotabato City.

Gender-related violence took place mostly in Maguindanao, particularly in Cotabato City. There were 460 incidents in the province (64% of the total), with Basilan following with 148 incidents (21%), most of which took place in Isabela City.

Violent personal grudges—conflicts between individuals that in some cases may graduate into full-blown clan feuds or *rido*—also occurred mostly in Maguindanao. There were 95 incidents, equivalent to 41% of the total. However, in the case of *rido*, more incidents were recorded in Lanao del Sur—148 or 43% of the total.

Rebellion-related violence was high in Maguindanao, but also in Basilan and Sulu. There were 331 incidents (50% of the total) in Maguindanao, the hotbed of the BIFF/ BIFM. In the islands, strongholds of the ASG, rebellion-related incidents summed up to 296 (45% of the total).

**Figure 33. Top 10 specific causes of violent conflict by province**  
2011–2016



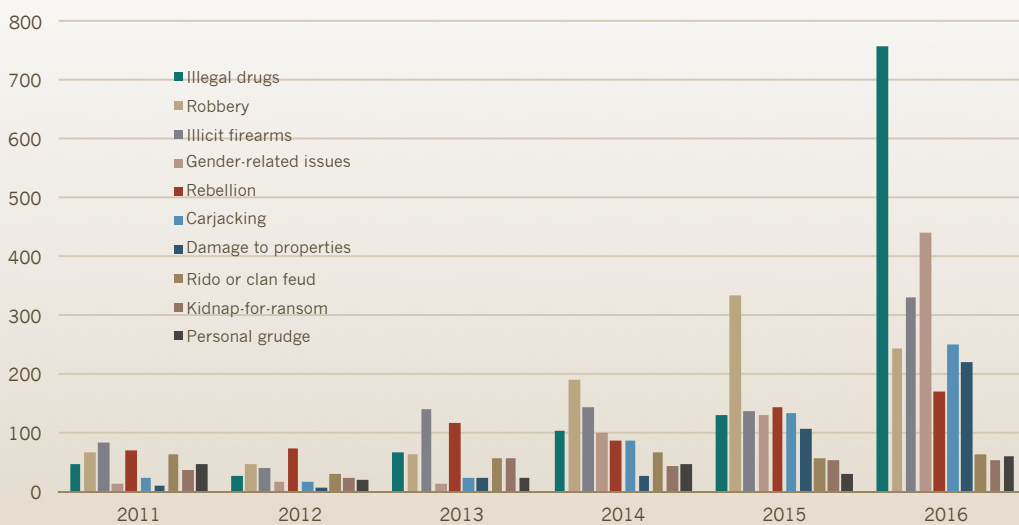
The illegal drug trade was not the top specific cause of violent conflict in Muslim Mindanao until the Duterte government took over in the middle of 2016. In prior years, robbery, illicit firearms, and rebellion were variably at the top of the list.

In the case of gender-related violence, reported incidents were low from 2011 to

2013 but leapt in 2014 and kept increasing up to 2016. It is the same with carjacking; the number of incidents were low from 2011 to 2013, then rose in the next three years. Most of the carjacked vehicles were motorcycles that have gained popularity as mode of transport in Sulu and in Cotabato City.

**Figure 34. Top 10 specific causes of violent conflict by year**

2011–2016



## Multiplicity of causes

Examining the combinations of specific causes of violent conflict in Muslim Mindanao, the illegal drugs-illicit weapons pairing emerged as the most common, particularly in 2016 when the PNP's anti-drug campaign resulted not only in confiscations of drug paraphernalia and drugs, mostly methamphetamine or 'shabu', but also guns and other weapons.

Rebellion could not be dissociated from illicit-weapons use. Extremist groups, notably the BIFF/BIFM, made heavy use of IEDs and high-caliber firearms. Robberies were also enabled by access to illicit guns, and possibly fueled by illegal drug use. It is possible that the decline in the number of robberies may have been the result of the

massive crackdown against drug pushers and users.

The land conflict-*rido* combination was also common. Land conflicts, particularly in Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao, were a common start to clan and family feuds that lead to many fatalities, and give rise to conflict strings or continuing episodes of violence that can take years to resolve. Competition over elective positions and personal grudges can also lead to *rido*.

Meanwhile, gender-related issues that are widespread in Muslim Mindanao's urban areas were in a few instances spurred by alcohol and illegal drug use.

# Maps

## Mapping the conflicts in ARMM

Where do most of the conflicts occur in the ARMM? And what conflicts, by cause, predominate in certain areas? Conflict Alert's geotagging facility provides the location of violent conflict incidents from the regional down to the barangay level and the cause or causes of these conflicts.

In the maps in the next two pages, we see the concentration of conflicts in the cities and the large municipalities in the ARMM. The maps were based on the 2011-2016 panel data.

In Maguindanao, we see the heavy clustering of conflict incidents in Parang, Sultan Mastura, Sultan Kudarat, and Cotabato City. These are mostly conflicts caused by shadow economy issues and common crimes. Political issues are heavy in the municipalities of Datu Piang, Datu-Saudi Ampatuan, Guindulungan, Mamasapano and Shariff Aguak, the sites of clashes between the military and the BIFF and between the MILF and the BIFF.

In Lanao del Sur, many conflicts dot the shores of Lake Lanao and cluster heavily in Marawi City. Conflicts also afflict the large municipalities such as Malabang, Wao and Balabagan. By cause, most of the conflicts in these places are driven by shadow economy issues. *Rido* or

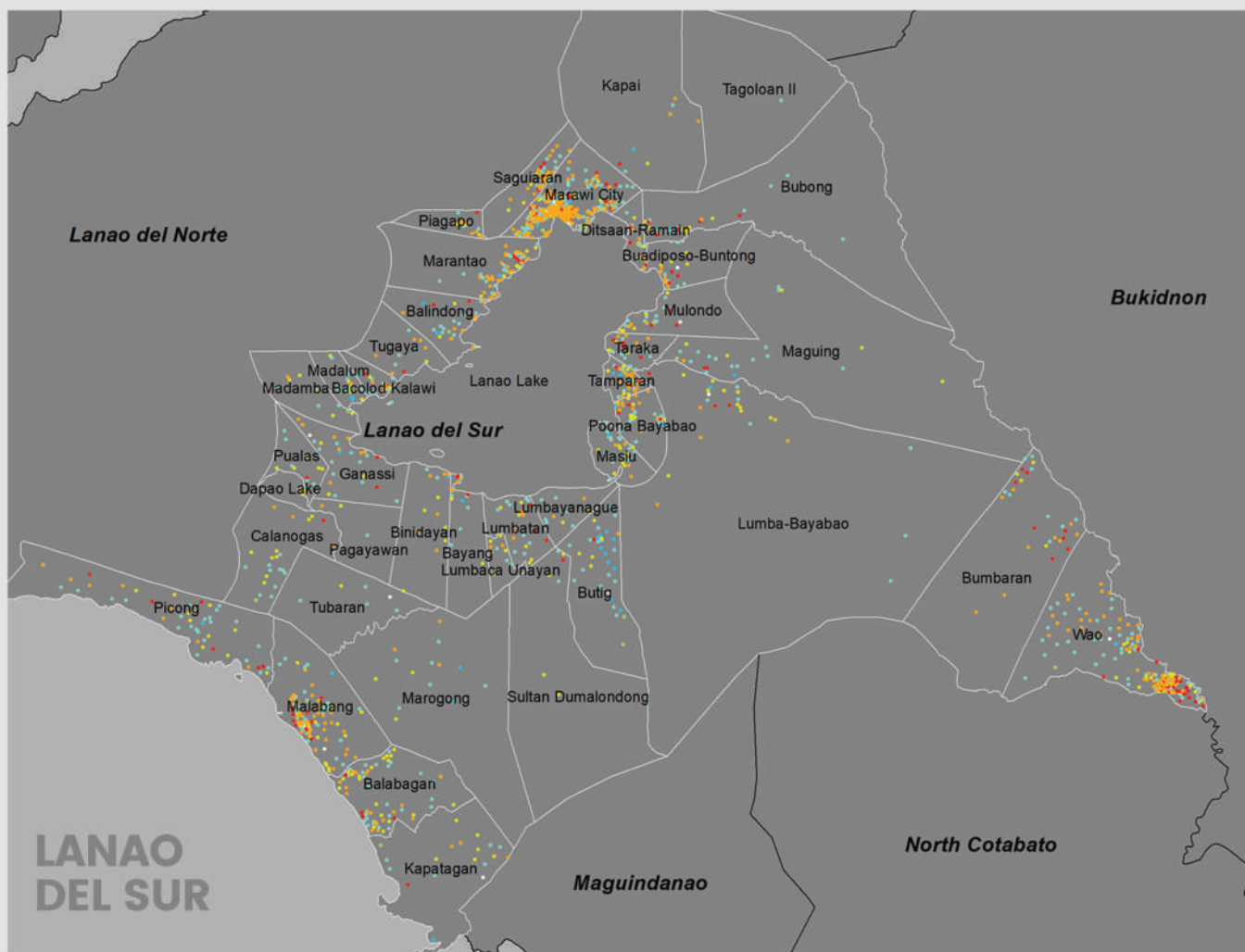
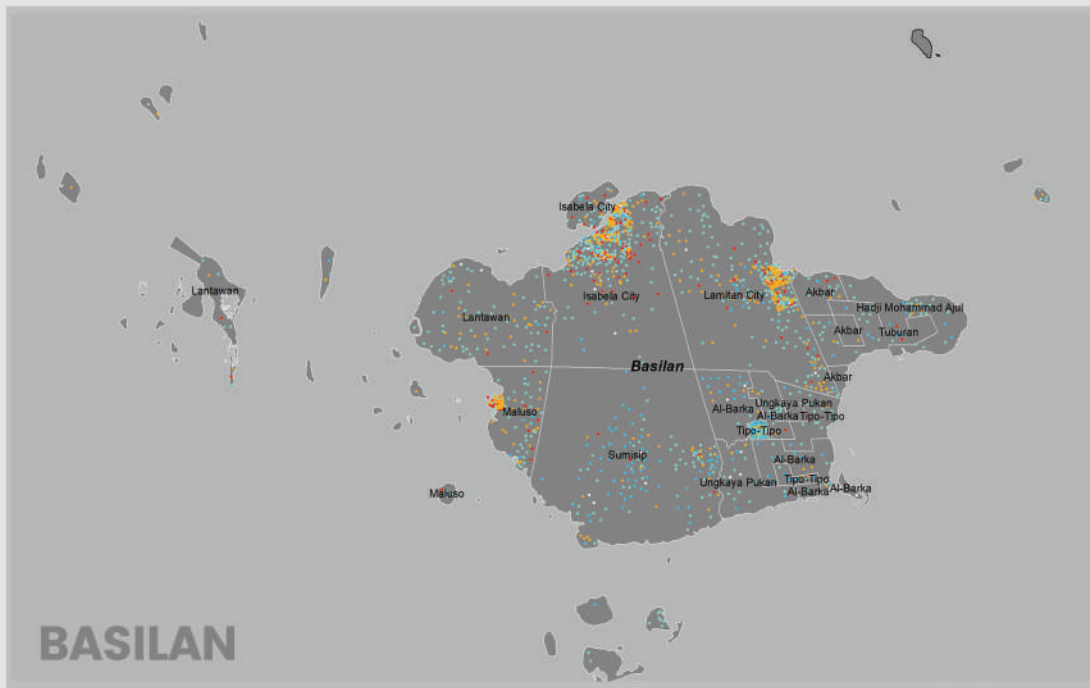
clan feuds, a common feature in Lanao's conflict landscape, are dispersed all over the province.

Isabela City, Lamitan City and Maluso bear most of the brunt of conflicts in Basilan. Here, conflicts are driven by shadow economy issues and common crimes. Outside the cities, political conflicts afflict the municipalities of Sumisip, Tipo-Tipo and Al-Barka, where clashes between the military and Abu Sayyaf have been recorded.

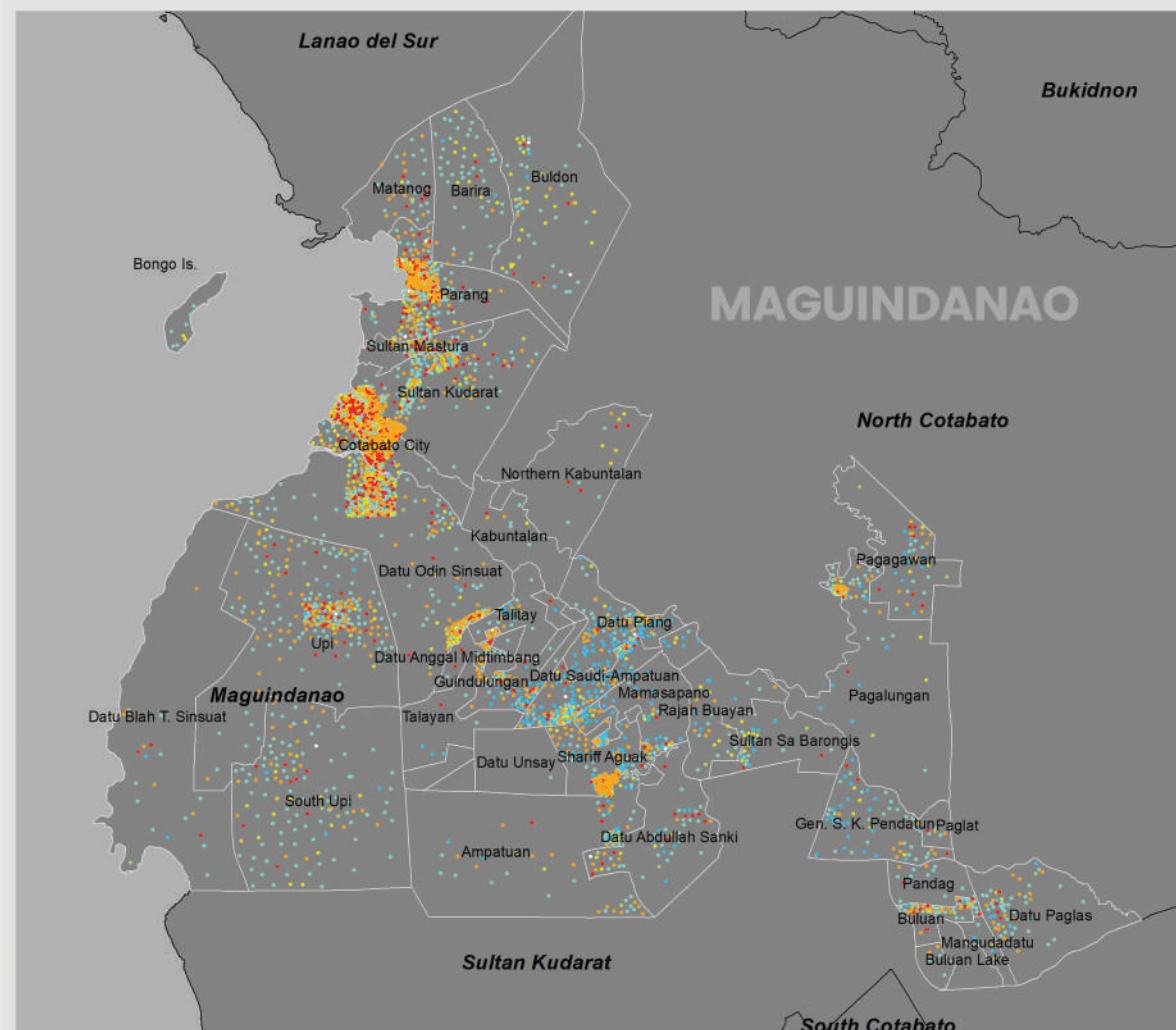
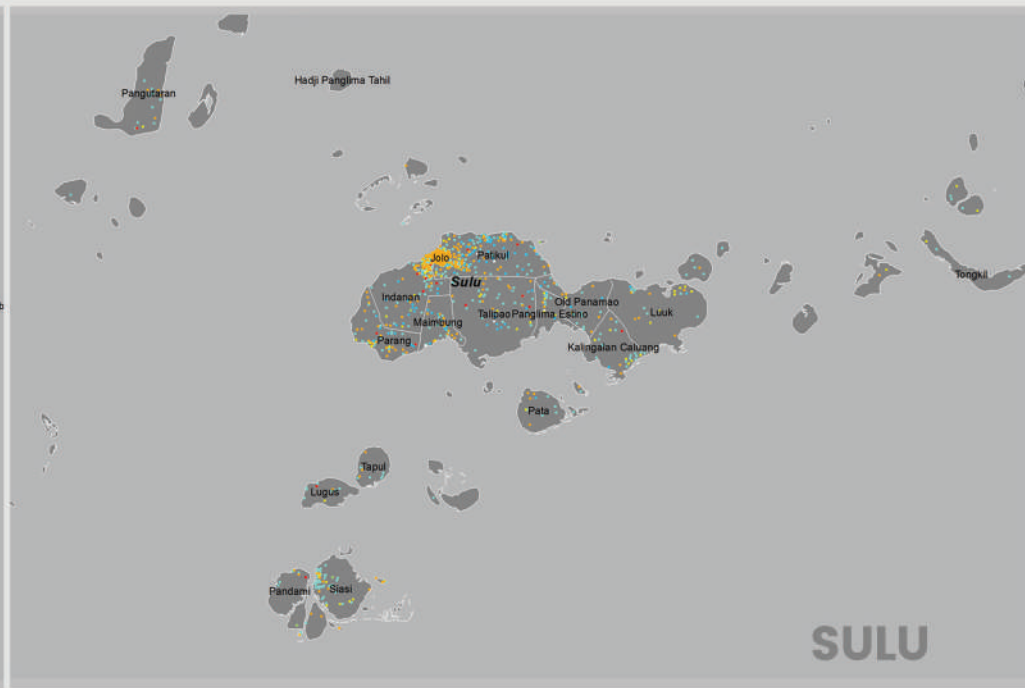
Jolo in Sulu stands out for the heavy concentration of shadow economy issues therein. Political issues, usually clashes between the military and the Abu Sayyaf, occur all over the province but especially in Patikul, Talipao, Indanan, Maimbung and Parang.

Bongao is the hub of shadow economy activities in Tawi-Tawi, along with Sitangkai and the Turtle Islands. These three are the jump-off points for those seeking work in Sabah. Bongao has also seen an explosion of illegal drug incidents.

There are incidents whose cause could not be determined. These are plotted on the maps to show where they happened, to provide an early warning.



LEGEND : ■ Shadow Economies ■ Common Crimes ■ Identity Issues



Governance Issues
  Political Issues
  Resource Issues
  Undetermined

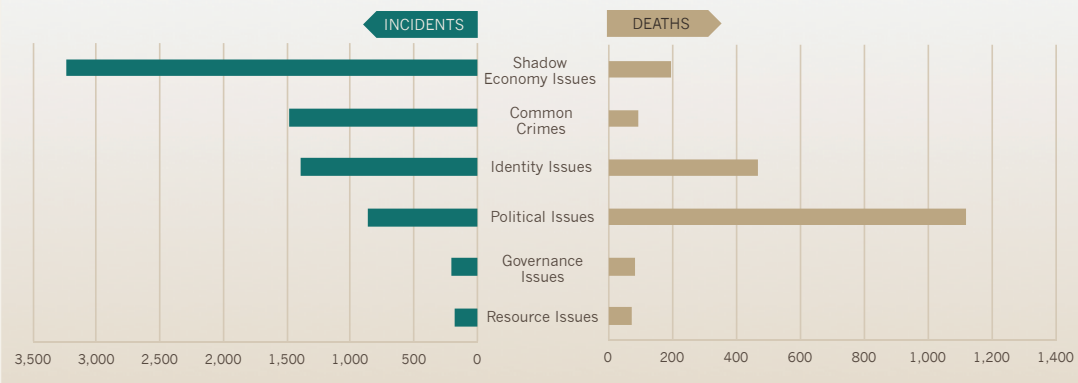


## Human cost of conflict

Shadow economy issues may predominate in Muslim Mindanao's conflict landscape but they don't result in as many deaths as political and identity issues. The data show only 198 casualties from 3,237 conflicts stemming from shadow activities over the six-year period. Contrast this with 1,119 deaths from 862

political conflicts and 466 deaths from 1,392 identity-related incidents. Indeed, the shadow economies are less deadly and essentially 'quiet and peaceful' enterprises until thrown into disarray, as what happened with the illegal drug trade amid a relentless campaign by the national government.

**Figure 35. Number of incidents and deaths by main cause**  
2011–2016



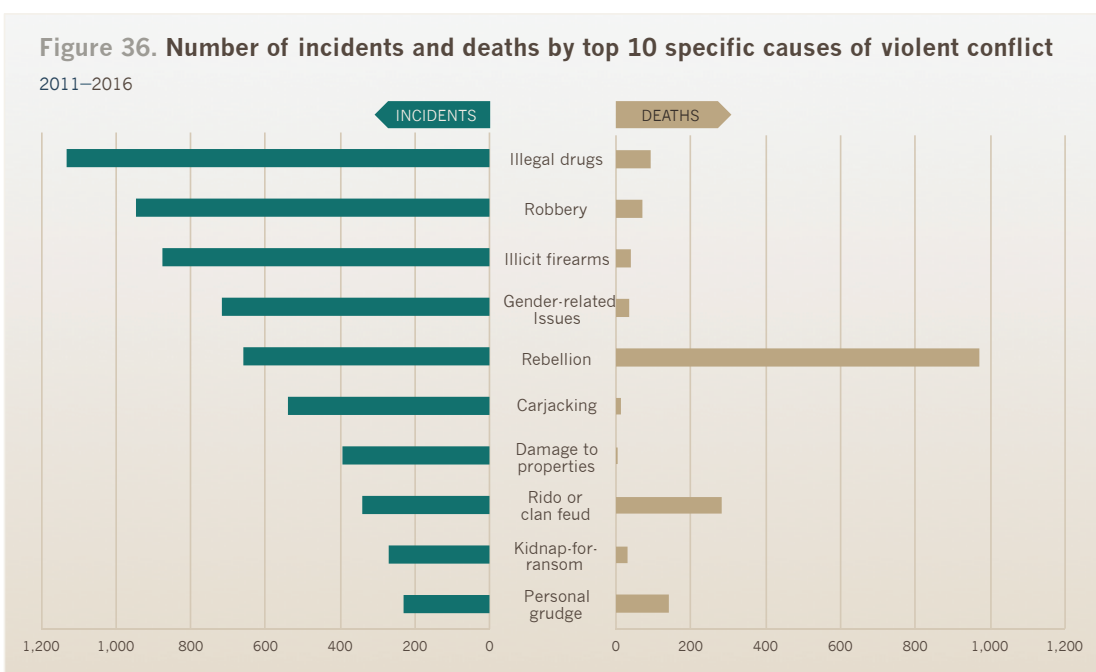
## Rebellion

Rebellion is deadliest in terms of conflict deaths, with casualty count at 973 civilians, soldiers, policemen, and BIFF, ASG, and Maute Group members as of 2016. The number of displaced was also enormous at 47,486 persons.

Rebellion incidents involving the BIFF have been trending upwards since 2011 when only five were recorded. By 2016, the number had reached 72. In the case of the ASG, the number of incidents had seesawed from one year to the next. From 2011 to 2016, BIFF/BIFM incidents

summed up to 235, and the ASG, 231. Maguindanao thus experienced more conflict deaths due to rebellion (326) compared to Sulu (264) and Basilan (218).

Monitoring of the activities of the Maute Group began in 2016, when 16 incidents were recorded, including 10 that were rebellion-related that resulted in 126 conflict deaths. The large human cost from its activities demonstrated the quickness with which the group consolidated its members and weapons and its ferocity in challenging the government.



## Conflicts between clans and individuals

Deaths from *rido* totaled 283. More died in Maguindanao than in Lanao del Sur—115 versus 100—even if there were more incidents in Lanao (148) compared to Maguindanao (120). Meanwhile, deaths

from personal grudges numbered 140. There were 58 individuals in Maguindanao and 42 in Lanao del Sur who lost their lives because of grudges that resulted in violence.

## Illegal drugs

Those killed in relation to shadow economy activities were mostly involved in illegal drugs, their numbers spiking only in 2016, congruent with the spiral in the number of incidents. From 2011 to 2015, the number of incidents averaged only 75 per year, with the number of casualties averaging seven annually. By 2016, the number of incidents had increased 16-folds and the number of casualties by almost 10-folds.

Maguindanao posted 41 conflict deaths in relation to illegal drugs. Basilan followed with 17 even if it ranked only fourth in terms of number of incidents. Lanao del

Sur was third with 15, Tawi-Tawi with 11, and Sulu with eight.

Despite the rise in conflict deaths from the illicit drug trade in the ARMM, the numbers still pale in comparison to the body count from the anti-drug campaigns in urban centers and provinces in Luzon and the Visayas. It is apparent that the State's onslaught against illicit drugs in Muslim Mindanao has not been accompanied by the usual violence elsewhere because enforcers were cautious about unleashing a spate of revenge killings and collateral attacks.

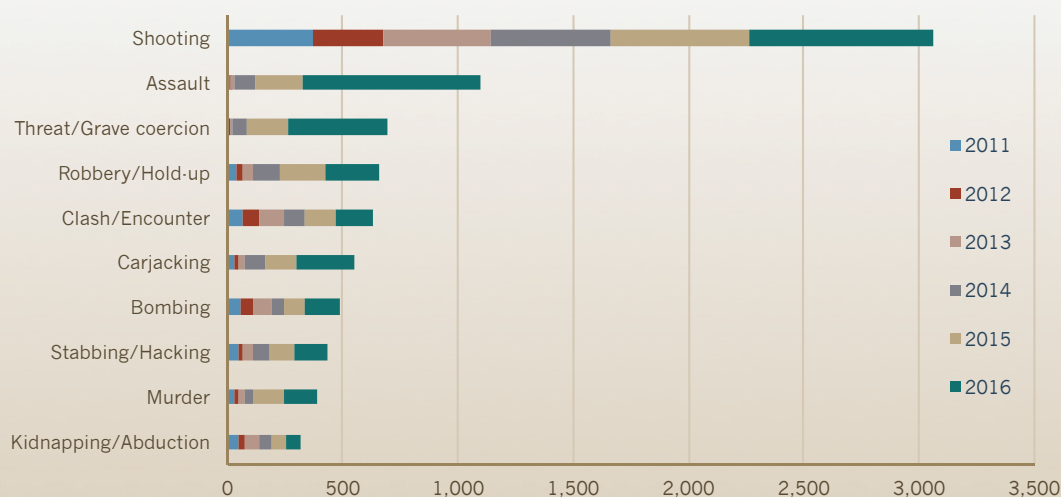
## Manifestations of violent conflict

Most conflicts over the six-year period were manifested as shooting incidents between individuals and between groups. The cause or causes of many of these incidents could not be determined, but where they were ascertained, *rido*, personal grudge cases, and illegal drug incidents frequently involved weapons use. Other incidents whose cause or causes

could not be determined involved threats, stabbing or hacking, and murder.

Clashes—or ‘encounters’ in police-military parlance—and bombings distinguished rebellion, while assaults, which are physical attacks sans the use of weapons, were common in gender-related issues.

**Figure 37. Top manifestations of conflict**  
2011–2016

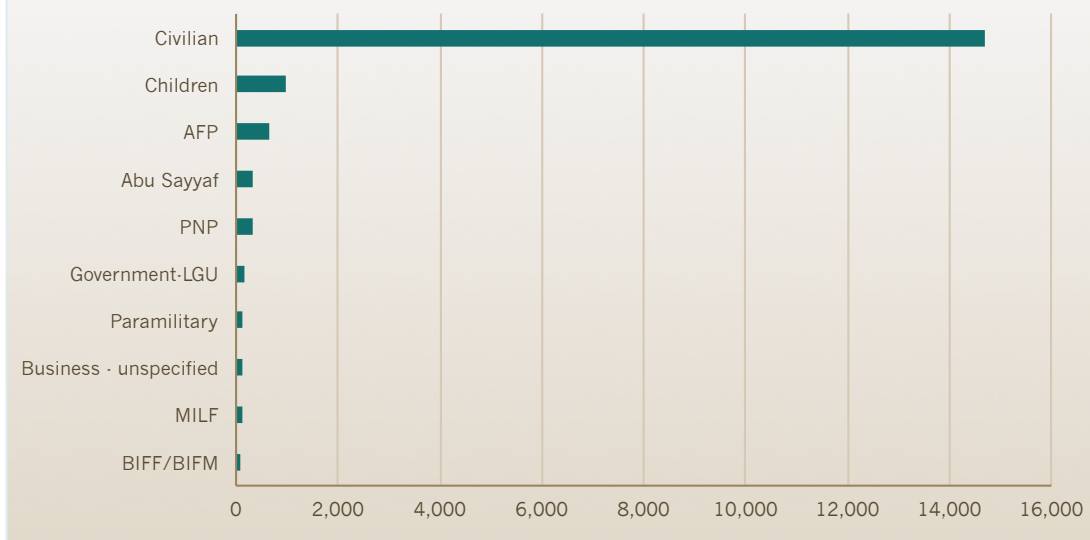


## Actors involved in conflict

Conflict in Muslim Mindanao affected civilians and children the most.<sup>6</sup> Shadow economy issues, identity issues and common crimes were the top causes of violent conflicts affecting these two. The adults were often the targets in robberies and human trafficking and, in the case of women, in gender-related violence. The children were also victims of human trafficking and gender-related violence. In many incidents involving illegal drugs, firearms, and gender-related issues, adults had acted as perpetrators.

While ASG members were mostly involved in rebellion, members also figured in kidnap-for-ransom activities and in revenge-killings arising from *rido*. Meanwhile, a rise in the number of businesses that became victims of robbery and kidnap-for-ransom was recorded, as well as of local government officials who were targets of kidnap-for-ransom, *rido*, and election-related violence.

**Figure 38. Number of individual actors by affiliation**  
2011–2016



<sup>6</sup> Excluded from the count were group actors, whose numbers risk being overestimated. Police and newspaper reports refer to them by group name and provide an estimate of their size. An example of a group actor is Abu Sayyaf Group, with more or less five members. Members are not named. Group actors could be involved in multiple incidents so their numbers could be counted more than once.



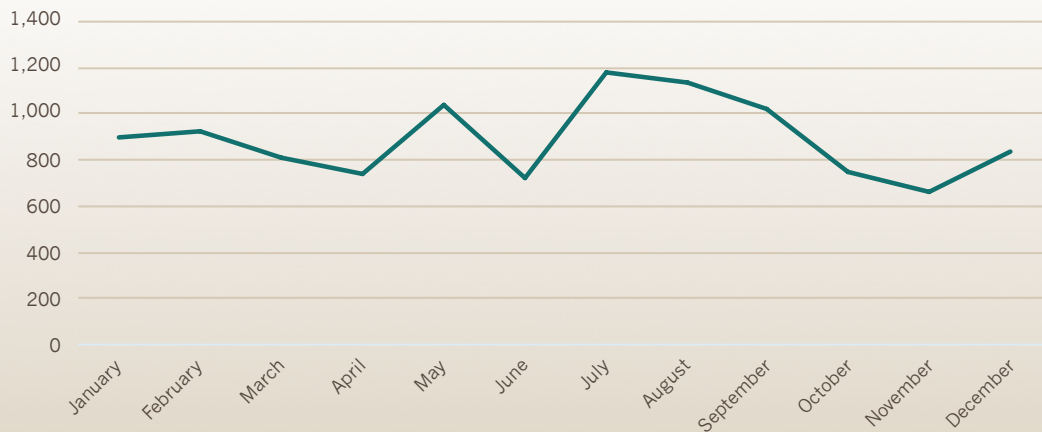
## Temporal nature of violent conflict

The six-year panel data provides the same temporal trend for the main drivers of conflict in Muslim Mindanao that had been noted in previous reports. (See Figure 39). Conflict typically spikes in May, before the start of classes in elementary, junior high and senior high school, and the month associated with the holding of general and midterm elections in the Philippines. Conflicts dip in June before climbing up in the next two months, often coinciding with the celebration of Ramadhan, the holy month in the Islamic calendar.

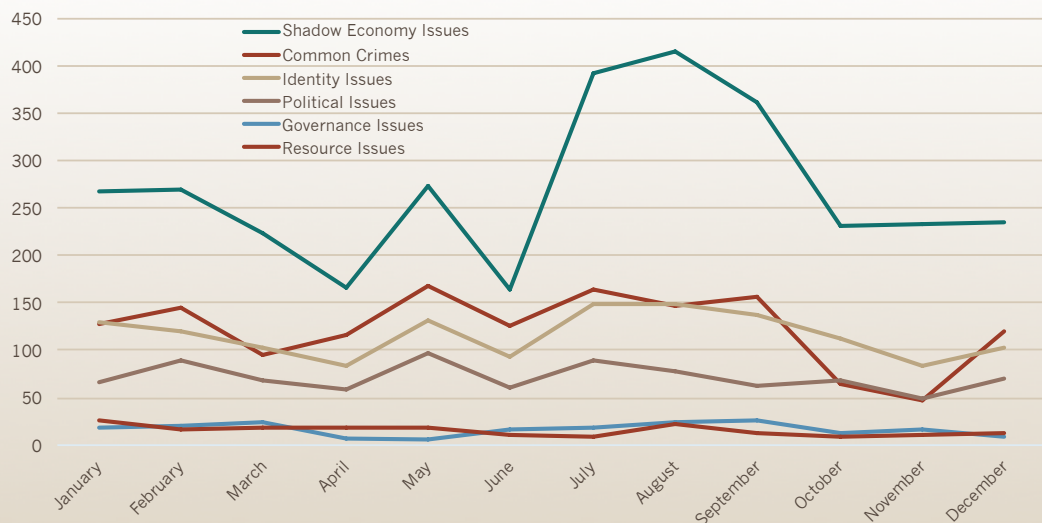
Conflicts numbers generally fall in October and November before rising again in December.

There are specific periods when conflicts attributed to particular causes are highest. Political issues, not unexpectedly, peak in May; common crimes in May and July; and shadow economy issues in the third quarter. Resource issues are highest in the third quarter, during the planting of the main season rice crop—the so-called lean season.

**Figure 39. Conflict incidents by month (aggregated)**  
2011–2016



**Figure 40. Main causes of conflict by month (aggregated)**  
2011–2016







## ARMM provinces' violence intensity

Maguindanao was again the most violent province in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in 2016, as it had been in the years past, on the basis of the Violence Intensity Index (VII).

The VII, pioneered by International Alert Philippines, provides a measure of the intensity of violent conflict in an area in a given period by taking into account the frequency or number of violent conflict incidents and the magnitude or the number of people killed and wounded and the number of persons displaced.<sup>1</sup> It enables the determination of the impact of conflict, which can aid in the planning and targeting of interventions by government agencies and nongovernment organizations working in conflict-ridden areas such as the ARMM.

Below are the results of the latest ranking of ARMM provinces using the 2011-2016 dataset. Provinces were ranked in terms of violence intensity. The computations were done with and without internal displacement figures to provide contrast and to highlight how large-scale and protracted conflict, such as that between the government and rebel groups, can have a massive impact on the affected communities. The month or months with the highest violence intensity was also determined.

### Ranking of provinces

Including data on internal displacement,<sup>2</sup> Maguindanao stood out from the rest of the ARMM provinces for having the highest intensity of conflict despite the dip in its index score in 2013-2014. Its score shot up to 4.61 in 2015 and remained high at 4.99 in 2016—periods coinciding with more government-Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom

<sup>1</sup> For the methodology, download *Applying a Violence Intensity Index in the Bangsamoro* from <http://conflicalert.info/publication/>

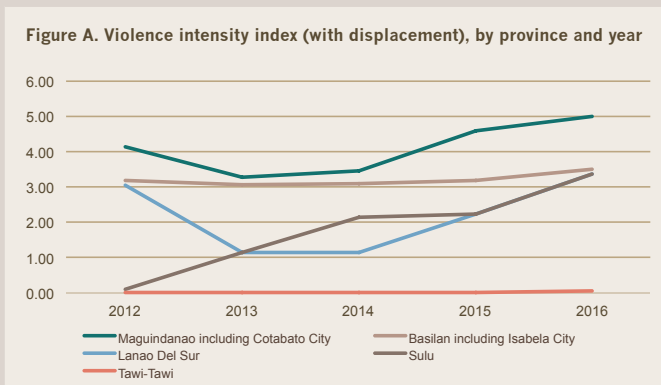
<sup>2</sup> Displacement data by year and province was sourced from UNHCR Philippines and Protection Cluster Philippines.

Fighters clashes, which resulted in thousands of people leaving behind villages to seek safer areas. (See Figure A).

Basilan was in second place, with its score rising to 3.52 in 2016 from 3.19 in 2015, owing to the presence and activities of the Abu Sayyaf Group.

Lanao del Sur's score rose to 3.38 in 2016 from 2.24 a year prior, which marked the emergence of the Maute Group, whose activities resulted in hundreds of individuals killed and thousands displaced.

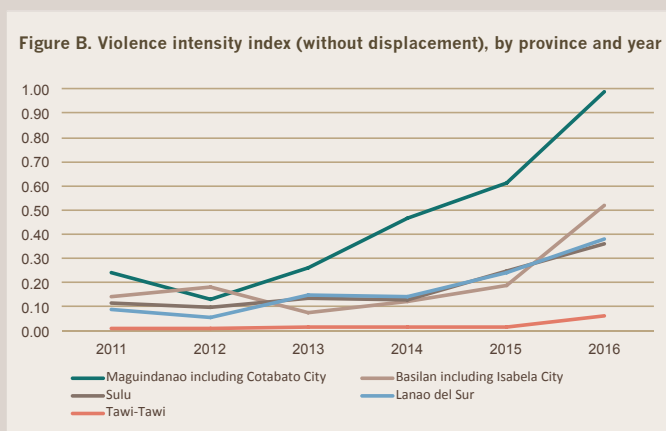
At fourth place is Sulu, whose score rose to 3.36 in 2016. Many incidents that year involved clashes between the government and the Abu Sayyaf Group.



Excluding data on internal displacement lowered the scores of the five ARMM provinces. For instance, from 3.99 with displacement, from 3.99 with displacement, Maguindanao's 2016 score dropped to 0.99 without displacement.

Still, Maguindanao had the highest intensity of conflict among the five ARMM provinces, taking into account only the number of violent conflicts and their impact in terms of the number of people killed and wounded. Its score began rising in 2013, as the number of violent conflicts that took place therein also began climbing. A big jump was noted in 2016 as the number of drugs, weapons, gender-related and rebellion incidents took off.

Basilan, Lanao del Sur and Sulu were second, third and fourth, respectively, in terms of the VII as of 2016. All three provinces experienced higher illegal drug and weapons incidents in 2016. In the case of Basilan, it also saw a jump in the number of gender-related and rebellion incidents. Lanao del Sur edged out Sulu due to the violence from *rido* and incidents instigated by the Maute Group.

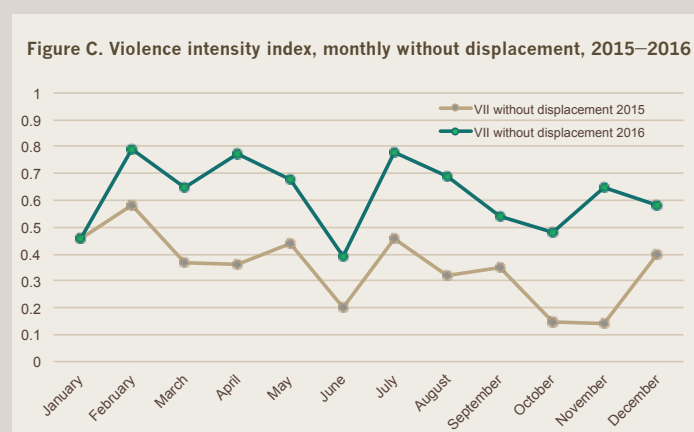


Compared to the four other provinces in the ARMM, Tawi-Tawi appeared to be most peaceful. Its index score stayed very low in 2016, whether displacement data was included (0.06) or not (0.06).

### Most intense months: 2015–2016 in focus

By month, index scores of the five ARMM provinces in 2016 were higher than in 2015 due to the increase in the number of violent conflict incidents, particularly illegal drug-related incidents. Other than this, the index in both years generally displayed the same trend except in the last three months of 2016.

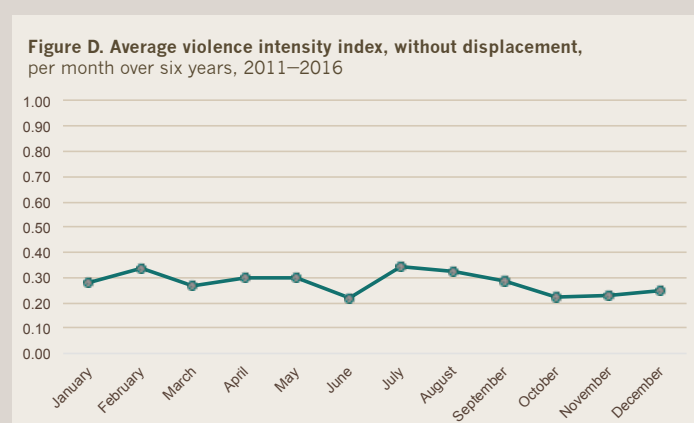
The score was high in February of both years due to rebellion-related violence, and in July up to September, also of 2015 and 2016, due to the lean season. April to May of both years also saw a rash of common crimes and shadow economy and identity issues.



Meanwhile, the number of shadow economy incidents had slid in December 2016 after a moving up in November. In December 2015, the number of shadow economy and identity issues and common crimes had climbed after a slight dip in the previous month.

### Monthly average

In terms of average index score per month for the period 2011–2016, VII without displacement data was stable with July higher than the rest of the months. July coincides with the planting or lean season, which could trigger various forms of violent conflict in the ARMM. In 2016, July had marked the launch of the Duterte government's anti-drug operations. Meanwhile, February 2016 saw many rebellion incidents, particularly in Maguindanao.



The VII results for province and month underscore the need to understand by planners what drives the intensification of violence in a province and at what period spikes happen given particular socioeconomic and political contexts. As such, targeting mechanisms at the local level can result in actual reduction of violence and the proactive and timely provision of welfare to affected communities.





## Conclusions and Implications

### New heights of violence

As in previous years, the intensity of violence in the ARMM has kept growing, and in 2016 grew too fast that it almost doubled the total number of incidents from the previous year. What is propelling violence in the region to new heights?

The answer partly lies in the data on conflict incidence, and the fact that a bigger percentage of the conflict incidents in 2016 had clearly determined causes.<sup>7</sup> The biggest increase in 2016 was clearly

associated with illicit drugs and illegal guns. The Duterte government's war against drugs certainly contributed to this rise in violence, despite having been in office for only six months.

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<sup>7</sup> Sixty-one percent (61%) of conflict incidents in 2016 had clearly determined causes, in contrast to less than the average 59% in previous years.

There is an important distinction though. Previous illicit drug-related conflicts were often a product of deadly turf wars between drug lords and were a far second to violence associated with the illicit gun trade. In the current situation it is the State, specifically the Philippine National Police, that played the principal role in prosecuting the campaign against illegal drugs, and created the spike in conflict that amounted to a surreal self-created and self-inflicted form of violence.

Another source of conflict highlighted in the report revolves around identity-based violence. Gender violence became a focal point because of new data made available for recording and analysis from major urban areas located within the ARMM. Another source of identity-based violence were the various clan feuds that erupted before, during, and after the presidential elections in 2016.

The conflict landscape, it would seem, undermined the default analysis that rebellion is the main cause of the rising violence in the Bangsamoro. Indeed, for those of us who anticipated meaningful and immediate peace dividends from the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro in 2014, there is a deep sense of frustration and fear over the continued absence of a Bangsamoro region that could realize the reforms and development inputs promised under the agreement.

There is an interesting caveat though. The intensity of violence (incidence) is unmatched by the magnitude (costs) of violence in Muslim Mindanao. Despite the growing incidence of conflict in the shadow economy sector and in identity-based violence, the magnitude of violence associated with these causes remained small in contrast to the deaths, injuries, and displacement associated with political violence.

### **This is at least due to two important factors.**

**One**, there has been a lesser magnitude of violence in Muslim Mindanao in the anti-drug war—a counterpoint to the reports and stories of mounting fatalities associated with the campaign against illicit drugs in Metro Manila, other parts of Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao. The reigning explanation is that an anti-drug war claims fewer deaths in the Bangsamoro because a single injury or death can unleash a wave of revenge killings and mutate into conflict strings that can merge with other causes of violence.

**Two**, the newly emerging threat of extremist violence coupled with the violence that transpired during the 2016 presidential elections intensified political violence to an extreme unseen in the past. Combat deaths involving combatants from the police and military, paramilitary, rebel, and extremist groups, and conflict deaths in the form of civilian casualties from partisan politics and clan feuding reinforced the role of political violence as the reigning cause of deaths, injuries, and displacement in the Bangsamoro.

The latter is also significant because it trained the spotlight on urban areas as newly emerging terrains of conflict. Political clans, paramilitary groups, criminal gangs, and extremist groups played their deadly games in the many urban centers of the Bangsamoro, and by 2016 the geotagging of conflict and violent hot spots were seen to be converging in the major centers of communication, transport, and trade in the ARMM.



## Implications

The most important implication in the steep rise in violence is the need to go beyond our current understanding of the location, sources, and dynamics of violence.

It is obvious that (a) urban violence will increasingly feature in the conflicts of the future, (b) that violent extremism may overtake the magnitude of deaths associated with rebellion, and, (c) that single and limited episodes of violence are giving way to conflict strings that will most likely define the nature and dynamics of violence in the future. We also need to recognize that the 2014 political settlement remains fragile and offers no assurance of a durable peace dividend in the next two years.

**1. Urban areas have increasingly become theatres of violence** due to some conducive factors, e.g., highly dense population, fractious nature of alliances with different groups, ideology, and affiliations in the area. Wars waged in urban areas will require new strategies and new alliances, and will likely become more costly than rural wars, but they can also offer time-bound and area-specific peace dividends that can be the basis for a broader and more enduring peace across the Bangsamoro region.

**2. Newly emerging forms of violence such as violent extremism will require context-specific and conflict-sensitive approaches.** The prominence of a security-focused response may neglect the long-term process of building community cohesion and resilience.

**3. We need to understand, monitor, and check episodes of violence arising from a discrete incident with singular or multiple causes.** 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. The multiplicity of causes and the resultant strings of violence of each cause run in parallel and move in multiple directions. Evidence from Conflict Alert suggests that strings are not linear with one incident reproducing episodes in sequence but that each cause can reproduce its own set of conflict strings.

**4. The corollary strings produced by the multiple causes of an incident adopt a trajectory of their own and therefore cutting strings involves parallel and simultaneous action** based on an understanding of the history of the conflict, the web of conflict strings it has produced, the kinship ties and alliances of the conflict actors involved, and the propensity of the combination of causes to produce further episodes of violence.





**5. More than ever, conflict monitoring is strategically important in determining the causes and costs of emerging violence, especially extremist violence,** and must be extended beyond the Bangsamoro region to include adjacent provinces in Mindanao.

**6. Harnessing formal and informal mechanisms for social protection are important,** especially with the existence of rival rule systems that may be exclusionary and despotic.

**7. Resource use management will be needed in stemming violent conflict arising from identity and resources.** A resource use management plan must be developed at the outset in critical conflict-affected areas as the first step in conflict sensitizing vulnerable communities.

**8. More incidents reported in urban areas do not necessarily mean urbanization brought this about or that there is less incidence in rural areas.** The disparity may be explained by the nature of rural and urban areas and available mechanisms or policies for redress. The relationship between gender-based violence and urbanisation and rurality needs to be further examined and how to address this further enhanced.

**9. Illegal drugs and illicit weapons cause most of the conflicts in the region, but do not exact as much human costs as political conflicts.**

This does not make the issue of drugs and weapons less important than political violence. A political economy analysis of the relationship between shadow economies and political conflicts, specifically violent extremism, is critical in establishing what mechanisms and strategies can weaken the factors that drive these conflicts.

## Annex A

## Data Tables

Table 1. Number of violent conflict incidents by province and year

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Maguindanao including Cotabato City	327	202	397	845	1,112	2,357	5,240
Basilan including Isabela City	203	184	174	185	379	794	1,919
Lanao del Sur	137	78	285	306	420	513	1,739
Sulu	147	118	149	107	332	557	1,410
Tawi-Tawi	53	61	49	55	60	135	413
Total	867	643	1,054	1,498	2,303	4,356	10,721

Table 2. Conflict incidence per 100,000 persons by province and year, and average from 2011-2016

	Average	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Basilan including Isabela City	71	50	44	40	42	83	167
Maguindanao including Cotabato City	60	26	16	29	60	75	153
Sulu	29	20	16	19	13	40	66
Lanao del Sur	28	14	8	28	30	40	48
Tawi-Tawi	18	14	16	13	14	15	34

Table 3. Conflict deaths per 100,000 persons by province and year, and average from 2011-2016

	Average	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Basilan including Isabela City	27	28	26	16	22	25	46
Maguindanao including Cotabato City	19	16	7	13	24	25	29
Sulu	15	12	9	15	12	17	26
Lanao del Sur	14	9	5	11	10	18	29
Tawi-Tawi	6	5	3	6	5	6	12

Table 4. Conflict incidence per 1,000 sq. km. by province and year, and average from 2011-2016

	Average	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Basilan including Isabela City	87	55	50	47	50	103	216
Maguindanao including Cotabato City	86	32	20	39	83	110	232
Sulu	52	32	26	33	24	73	122
Lanao del Sur	19	9	5	19	20	28	34
Tawi-Tawi	19	15	17	14	15	17	37

Table 5. Conflict deaths per 1,000 sq. km. by province and year, and average from 2011-2016

	Average	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Basilan including Isabela City	33	30	29	19	27	31	60
Sulu	27	19	16	25	21	31	49
Maguindanao including Cotabato City	27	20	9	17	34	36	44
Lanao del Sur	9	6	3	7	7	12	21
Tawi-Tawi	6	5	3	6	6	6	13

Table 6. Main causes of violent conflict incidents by province, 2011-2016

	Maguindanao including Cotabato City	Lanao del Sur	Basilan including Isabela City	Sulu	Tawi-Tawi
Shadow Economy Issues	1,350	645	458	583	201
Common Crimes	928	231	193	105	23
Identity Issues	705	290	277	82	38
Political Issues	441	66	188	165	2
Governance Issues	76	38	48	33	5
Resource Issues	91	26	57	10	1



**Table 7. Main causes of violent conflict incidents by year**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Shadow Economy Issues	260	167	343	435	534	1,498
Common Crimes	88	55	93	242	467	535
Identity Issues	129	70	97	218	220	658
Political Issues	92	96	173	101	160	240
Governance Issues	31	8	18	29	34	80
Resource Issues	29	17	14	27	36	62

**Table 8. Top 10 specific causes of violent conflict incidents by province, 2011-2016**

	Maguindanao including Cotabato City	Lanao del Sur	Sulu	Basilan including Isabela City	Tawi-Tawi
Illegal drugs	477	246	178	165	68
Robbery	608	136	86	96	21
Illicit firearms	433	160	135	120	29
Gender-related issues	460	58	24	148	29
Rebellion	331	31	148	148	2
Carjacking	259	78	132	59	11
Damage to properties	276	58	17	43	1
Rido or clan feud	120	148	40	29	4
Kidnap-for-ransom	30	89	94	42	14
Personal grudge	95	72	12	50	3

**Table 9. Top 10 specific causes of violent conflict incidents by year**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Illegal drugs	48	27	67	105	130	757
Robbery	69	46	63	190	335	244
Illicit firearms	84	40	142	143	138	330
Gender-related issues	15	17	14	101	130	442
Rebellion	70	73	116	86	144	171
Carjacking	24	19	23	89	133	251
Damage to properties	10	7	23	29	106	220
Rido or clan feud	63	31	57	68	57	65
Kidnap-for-ransom	36	25	56	45	53	54
Personal grudge	48	21	24	47	31	61

**Table 10. Number of illegal drug incidents by province and year**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Maguindanao including Cotabato City	17	5	20	46	45	344
Lanao del Sur	6	4	24	29	37	146
Sulu	12	11	6	10	7	132
Basilan including Isabela City	10	3	8	12	35	97
Tawi-Tawi	3	4	9	8	6	38

**Table 11. Number of gender-related issues by province and year**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Maguindanao including Cotabato City	7	6	6	80	86	275
Lanao del Sur	0	2	3	12	18	23
Sulu	1	2	2	0	7	12
Basilan including Isabela City	6	5	1	6	11	119
Tawi-Tawi	1	2	2	3	8	13

**Table 12. Number of rebellion incidents by province and year**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Maguindanao including Cotabato City	15	30	63	56	71	96
Sulu	25	11	21	14	43	34
Basilan including Isabela City	29	30	25	13	25	26
Lanao del Sur	0	1	7	3	5	15
Tawi-Tawi	1	1	0	0	0	0



**Table 13. Number of rebellion incidents involving armed groups, all of ARMM, by year**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
BIFF/BIFM	5	20	38	42	58	72
Abu Sayyaf	42	27	33	21	60	48
MILF	7	7	9	4	2	4
NPA	0	0	0	0	1	1
Maute Group	0	0	0	0	0	10

**Table 14. Number of rido incidents by province and year**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Maguindanao including Cotabato City	23	8	22	29	15	23
Sulu	5	8	10	3	4	10
Basilan including Isabela City	8	5	6	3	2	5
Lanao del Sur	27	10	19	32	36	24
Tawi-Tawi	0	0	0	1	0	3

**Table 15. Number of conflict incidents and conflict deaths by main cause, 2011-2016 and 2015-2016**

			Number of incidents		Number of deaths	
	Number of incidents (2011-2016)	Number of deaths (2011-2016)	2015	2016	2015	2016
Shadow Economy Issues	3,237	198	534	1,498	24	101
Common Crimes	1,480	92	220	658	23	9
Identity Issues	1,392	466	467	535	83	101
Political Issues	862	1,119	160	240	203	428
Governance Issues	200	82	34	80	27	21
Resource Issues	185	74	36	62	4	5

**Table 16. Number of conflict incidents and conflict deaths by top 10 specific causes, 2011-2016**

	Number of incidents	Number of deaths
Illegal drugs	1,134	92
Robbery	947	69
Illicit firearms	877	41
Gender-related issues	719	34
Rebellion	660	973
Carjacking	539	14
Damage to properties	395	4
Rido or clan feud	341	283
Kidnap-for-ransom	269	31
Personal grudge	232	140

**Table 17. Number of conflict incidents and conflict deaths by top specific causes, 2015-2016**

	Number of incidents		Number of deaths	
	2015	2016	2015	2016
Illegal drugs	130	757	4	59
Gender-related issues	130	442	8	14
Illicit firearms	138	330	4	20
Carjacking	133	251	1	9
Robbery	335	244	17	6
Damage to properties	106	220	2	0
Rebellion	144	171	176	408
Other identity issues	2	90	0	8
Rido or clan feud	57	65	52	56
Personal grudge	31	61	22	23
Conflict from intoxication	23	61	3	3

**Table 18. Number of rebellion incidents and deaths due to extremist groups, 2011-2016**

	Incidents	Deaths
BIFF/BIFM	235	306
Abu Sayyaf	231	424
Maute Group	10	126
Jemaah Islamiyah	4	10
Total	480	866

**Table 19. Top 10 manifestations of violent conflict by year**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Shooting	372	302	471	520	596	803
Assault	8	6	15	92	206	772
Threat/Grave coercion	5	5	6	70	179	427
Robbery/Hold-up	42	27	39	116	196	239
Clash/Encounter	64	69	108	89	135	162
Carjacking	25	21	26	91	138	248
Bombing	53	55	83	54	89	152
Stabbing/Hacking	43	25	39	76	106	143
Murder	30	14	30	32	136	142
Kidnapping/Abduction	45	28	66	54	64	57

**Table 20. Number of individual actors by affiliation (top 10), by year**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Civilian	1,195	886	1,164	1,824	3,147	6,489
Children	66	58	72	114	212	463
AFP	87	69	71	54	126	238
Abu Sayyaf	38	37	46	46	93	73
PNP	24	33	56	53	68	89
Government-LGU	4	25	10	29	7	69
Paramilitary	36	20	12	19	12	27
Business - unspecified	16	19	13	26	15	26
MILF	16	29	13	25	6	23
BIFF/BIFM	6	6	8	27	21	24

**Table 21. Main causes of conflict by month (aggregated), 2011-2016**

	Shadow Economy Issues	Common Crimes	Identity Issues	Political Issues	Governance Issues	Resource Issues
January	268	128	129	67	19	26
February	270	145	121	90	20	17
March	223	96	103	69	24	19
April	166	117	83	59	7	18
May	274	168	131	98	6	18
June	164	126	93	61	17	11
July	393	164	148	90	18	8
August	416	147	149	78	25	23
September	362	157	137	62	27	13
October	232	65	113	69	13	9
November	234	47	83	49	16	10
December	235	120	102	70	8	13

## Annex B

# Methodology

**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 combines two databases: the Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System (BCMS) established in 2013 and the Southern and Eastern Mindanao Conflict Database (SEMCD) launched in 2015. The BCMS covers the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and the cities of Isabela and Cotabato while the SEMCD covers the Davao and Caraga regions along Mindanao's southern and eastern corridor.

Conflict Alert currently contains conflict data from 2011 to 2016 from the ARMM (including the cities of Isabela and Cotabato) and from 2011 to 2015 from Davao Region (excluding Davao City). Data from Caraga are currently being added to the database.

## Data Sources

Conflict Alert sources its raw data from incident reports from police regional and provincial offices. The police reports are supplemented by reports from 15 local and national newspapers.

Police and newspaper reports will not provide the cause or causes of the violent conflict incidents all the time. This has led to the creation of multi-stakeholder validation groups (MSVGs). The MSVGs are assembled to provide depth to the data. Members provide details of the conflict incidents and add conflict incidents not

reported to the police or by the media. They also validate the list of incidents created from the police and newspaper reports. The MSVGs are composed of members with backgrounds in security provision, crime prevention, journalism, peacebuilding, conflict research, crime monitoring, local governance, policy formulation, and grassroots knowledge. Some MSVG participants serve as regular members while others are individuals who serve as specialized resource persons especially when local knowledge is required.

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 and provincial offices of the Philippine National Police. Reports from 15 national and local newspapers are gathered.

## Data Sorting

Incidents are classified into violent and non-violent and thereafter stored in different databases. Violence is used as the proxy indicator for conflict incidence.

## Data Encoding

The violent conflict incidents are subjected to analysis. A team of data reviewers and data encoders, using an electronic monitoring instrument, encode the pertinent details of the incidents. At the first stage, data reviewers make the determination of the cause or causes of the incidents. They are guided by a codebook containing six main causes and 63 specific causes of violent conflict.

Next, data encoders take down the other details of the incidents such as actors, weapons and costs, among others. They also check for links between new incidents and previously recorded incidents and for conflict strings. They geotag the incidents. Duplicate entries are voided using a search facility. At the third stage, data reviewers check that all details about the incidents, as encoded into the monitoring instrument, are accurate. At the fourth stage, a second reviewer makes random checks to further ensure data quality.

### Data Validation

MSVGs are assembled to go through the encoded incidents. Their role is to check the list of incidents, provide more details of the conflict incidents, and add conflict incidents not reported to the police or by the media. They discuss conflict trends to enhance the analysis of the data.

### Data Analysis

Data are tabulated and analyzed according to incidence, density, strings, and trends of violent conflict. Additionally, the

severity (frequency) and magnitude (or cost in terms of people injured, killed and displaced) of violence are also examined using Alert's Violence Intensity Index to help pinpoint priorities and interventions in the conflict-affected areas.

### 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.





## 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 the threat to use force.

**Vertical conflict.** These are separatist or non-separatist armed struggles against the State, including terrorist actions that destabilize a State. Rebellions, insurgencies and violent extremism 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 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. Conflicts are further categorized according to the specific cause or causes under a main cause. For example, a conflict between two clans in Lanao del Sur is categorized as an identity issue and as a *rido* or a clan feud. The Conflict Alert codebook lists 63 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 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. Violent extremism was added as a political issue in 2017.

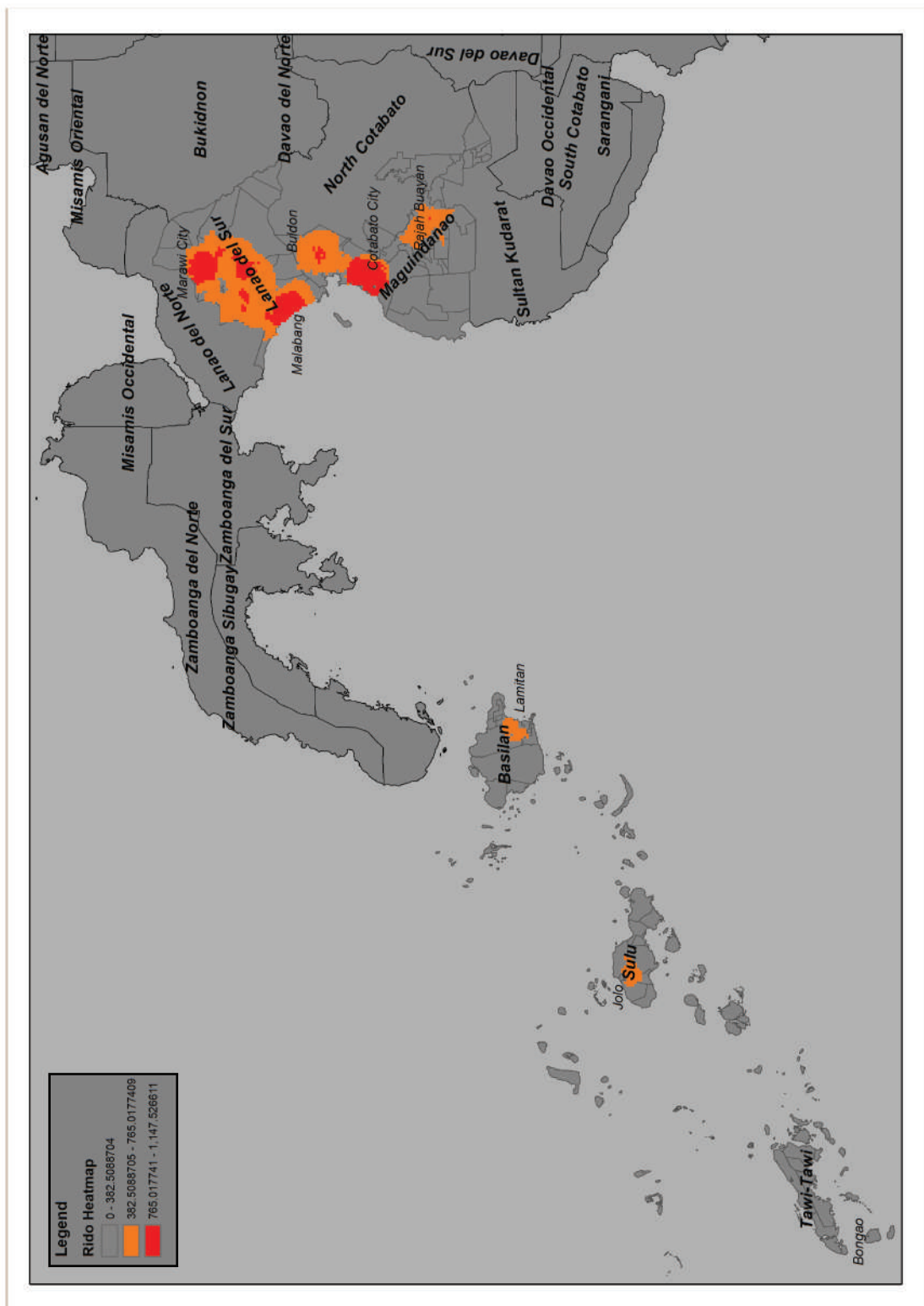
**Identity issues.** These include clashes between families and clans, violence arising from personal grudges between individuals, and gender-based violence. The latter covers violence against women and children.

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

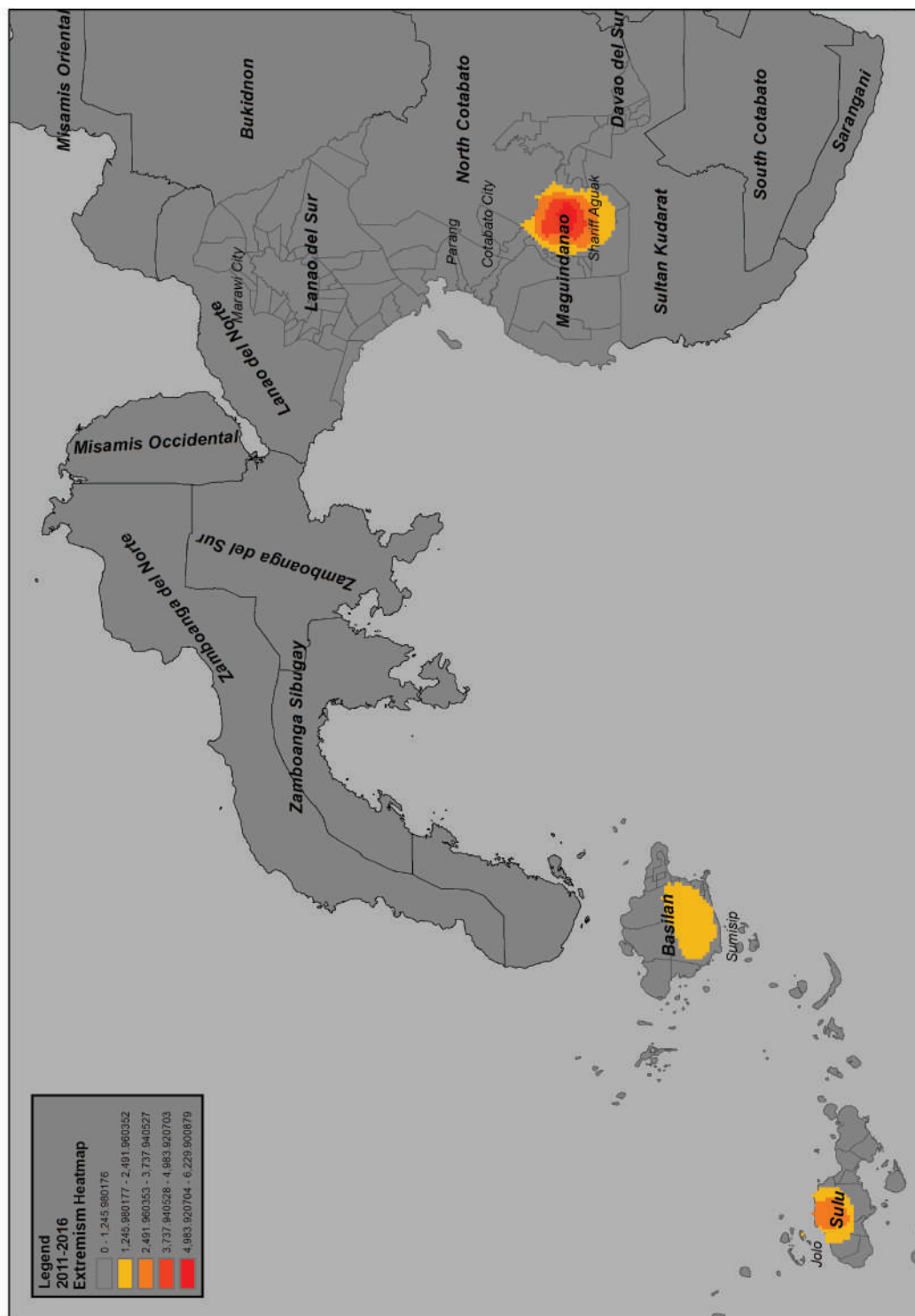
**Governance issues.** These are violent struggles for government resources and rents, including conflicts due to bidding processes, violent responses to lawful actions and processes, and other government-related transactions and/or development projects.

## Annex D

# Rido heatmap



# Extremism heatmap







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