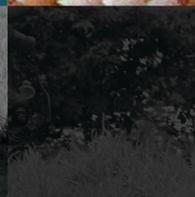
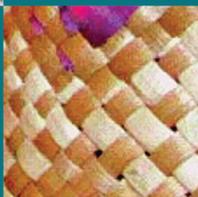
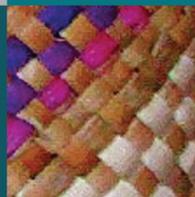


# REBELLION, POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND SHADOW CRIMES IN THE BANGSAMORO

The Bangsamoro Conflict  
Monitoring System (BCMS),  
2011–2013





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August 2014

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## Abbreviations

<b>AFP</b>	Armed Forces of the Philippines
<b>ARMM</b>	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
<b>ASG</b>	Abu Sayyaf Group
<b>BCMS</b>	Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System
<b>BIFF</b>	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
<b>CAB</b>	Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro
<b>CPP-NPA</b>	Communist Party of Philippines-New People's Army
<b>FAB</b>	Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro
<b>GPH</b>	Government of the Philippines
<b>HCB</b>	Heidelberg Conflict Barometer
<b>JI</b>	Jemaah Islamiyah
<b>KFR</b>	kidnap for ransom
<b>MILF</b>	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
<b>MNLF</b>	Moro National Liberation Front
<b>MSU</b>	Mindanao State University
<b>MSU-IIT</b>	Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology
<b>MSU-GSC</b>	Mindanao State University – General Santos City
<b>MSVG</b>	multi-stakeholder validation group
<b>PNP</b>	Philippine National Police
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>VII</b>	violence intensity index
<b>WDR</b>	World Development Report
<b>WMSU</b>	Western Mindanao State University

## Foreword

The goal of the World Bank is to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. Achieving this will hinge on progress in fragile and conflict-affected situations, where 1.5 billion people live globally. By 2030, it is expected that 40 per cent of the world's poor will live in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

Here in the Philippines, the strong link between poverty and conflict is well-known. Poverty levels are as high as double the national average in many conflict-affected areas of the country. Despite significant levels of investment over the past decades, however, successful models for development in conflict areas have proven elusive. Yet, with the historic signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, expectations are high for improved security and development. Pressure is on to deliver measurable results.

To design more conflict-sensitive programs that are adapted to complex and varying conflict contexts requires knowledge in real time, dynamic data to help deepen understanding and inform appropriate responses and develop relevant policies.

Yet, as the World Development Report (WDR) 2011 on Conflict, Security and Development states, the main framework for monitoring development results in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is silent on conflict and violence. The WDR calls for indicators and systems to directly measure violence reduction, citizen security and justice, given their importance to poverty reduction.

This call is being heard in the process for forging the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will replace the MDGs. Current drafts of the SDGs include indicators on reducing violence as fundamental to sustainable development.

This paper is the first in a regular series of analytical pieces and policy briefs that will be produced under the Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System. The system seeks to meet some of the gaps noted above by providing access to data and analysis to help deepen understanding of conflict dynamics. This in turn aims to help policy-makers in government, civil society and the development community to target resources to the places that need them most, to design more conflict-sensitive projects and to be able to better monitor results on security and peacebuilding.

The paper and the system are the product of a partnership between a number of agencies. The World Bank thanks International Alert as the main implementing agency, together with the Mindanao State Universities in General Santos City and Iligan and Western Mindanao State University of Zamboanga City. We also acknowledge the support of the Philippine National Police and a number of media outlets that are providing the main sources of data for the monitoring system. The partnership with the local universities is of particular importance. This, and making the data fully accessible to the public, is explicitly intended to help stimulate local discussions and build local capacity for conflict analysis.

We hope you will find the data and analysis from the BCMS helpful for your policy and programs in the future Bangsamoro areas. We also look forward to your feedback to refine and improve the system moving forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. A. Stephens', written in a cursive style.

Matt Stephens  
Senior Social Development Specialist  
World Bank Office Manila

## Executive summary

The lack of adequate, reliable, and timely conflict data has hampered development and peacebuilding efforts that can deal effectively with the enduring violence in many parts of Mindanao. The available datasets are mostly national in scope or focused mainly on rebellion or both—datasets that inadequately capture the new dynamics of conflict, including the phenomenon of recurring violence, the rise in conflict incidents linked to illicit economies, the persistence of clan conflict, and the rise in criminal violence.

The need to fill this gap cannot be overemphasized. Access to useful and reliable conflict data is critical in dealing with the potential recurrence of violent conflict in the transition phase following the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). It is crucial in informing development policies and programs in conflict-affected areas and vital in determining the effectiveness or lack of it, of current measures designed to reduce conflict.

The Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System (BCMS) fills the gap in dynamic, real-time data that track conflict incidence, typology, cause, actors, and effects in a publicly accessible manner and enables development practitioners and peacebuilding actors to identify where, when, and how resources can be targeted and to understand the conflict effects of development initiatives. The BCMS harvests data from reports of the Philippine National Police and credible media sources.

BCMS data for 2011-2013 shows that violent conflict has fluctuated across most of provinces, except for Tawi-Tawi and Basilan where conflict has been declining since 2012. Conflict incidents are also higher in the mainland provinces, with the combined incidents in Maguindanao and Lanao Sur accounting for more than half the total number of incidents in the past three years.

However, when viewed in terms of conflict density and conflict per person, Basilan overtook the other Bangsamoro provinces. This indicates that a singular focus on the number of incidents tends to conceal other factors that may determine developmental and peacebuilding policies and priorities.

Newly emerging causes of violent conflict resonate across the bulk of the Bangsamoro and its core territories. Violent incidents during this period came from at least three main causes: shadow economy issues, political issues, and extra-judicial issues.

The high levels of violence associated with shadow economies can be seen in the illicit weapons and drugs market, and kidnap for ransom operations. Combined with other shadow economies such as illegal gambling and human trafficking, the shadow economies issue caused more than a fourth (27%) of the total recorded violent conflicts in the past three years.

Political issues continued to play an important role in conflict incidents in the Bangsamoro. Rebellion-related violence mostly came in the form of armed clashes between the government and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), and remnants of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The ceasefire between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) continued to endure except for a few isolated instances when clashes between MILF combatants and the military in Basilan and Maguindanao erupted due to land and other issues.

The rise in political violence in 2013 also coincided with mid-term election in May, followed by the barangay elections in October of the same year. Election-related violence and violent factional

rivalries that led to turf wars between armed groups, plus conflicts between private armed groups accounted for the dominance of incidents associated with horizontal conflict from 2011-2013.

Conflict associated with extra-judicial issues was the third biggest cause of conflict in the Bangsamoro, and is explained by the increasing amount of violence associated with private armed groups and organized crime groups such as the Pentagon Gang and Al-Khobar Group. The most rampant causes of violence were robbery and damage to properties.

The BCMS report identifies the critical moments in a year when violent conflict often erupts in the Bangsamoro. Violent conflict tends to spike during the triennial periods of electoral competition often held in May, the peak of the lean months before the main season harvest in late September to early October, and the annual start of the school season in June.

Clan feuding is endemic in specific localities where it is easily instigated by land disputes, business competition, political contestation, and extra-judicial issues, among others. Clan feuding is heavily concentrated in the mainland provinces of Lanao Sur and Maguindanao.

Clan feuding partly explains the phenomenon of “violent strings” and the morphing of conflict actors in the Bangsamoro, referring to violent episodes that come in pairs, threes, or more, and the shifting roles of conflict actors and the changing triggers of conflict as violence moves in varying directions following an initial eruption of conflict.

Among the more crucial findings in the BCMS is the decisive effect of human cost (death, injuries, and displacement) in the determination of priorities for development and peacebuilding intervention. Analysing the human costs of each incident can show that fewer incidents can actually produce deadlier results. Sulu ranked fourth for conflict incidence, but second in terms of number of deaths for the period 2013, demonstrating that the conflict landscape on the island is of a relatively small number of highly damaging conflict incidents.

Finally, though conflicts emanating from the shadow economy registered the highest incidence, political issues inflicted a much higher human cost. Rebellion-related violence was not only pervasive and enduring, but deadlier as well. This reveals, without a doubt, that ending the GPH-MILF conflict as a major source of rebellion-related violence retires a significant source of political violence with huge costs in terms of death, injury, and displacement, and will impact positively on the prospects for peace and stability across the Bangsamoro.

The BCMS reveals new and important signifiers of violence that should shape development and peacebuilding policy and practice. Greater consideration should be given to horizontal inequalities and other causes of violent conflict that are located in the shadow economy and in the enduring clan feuds that spark recurring violence in the Bangsamoro.

Development and peacebuilding strategies and approaches should not remain blind to these newly emerging sources of violence. It would be a mistake to assume that violent conflict in the Bangsamoro will end simply because formal peace processes have reached a positive outcome.

Immediate steps should also be taken to address the violence emanating from new threat groups such as the BIFF, and against private armed groups and organized crime groups. Organized crime groups are becoming a significant actor in the eruption of violent conflict in the region. The transitional authority and the new political entity in the Bangsamoro will have to mitigate the risk of these groups disrupting the transition process through a calibrated response that requires distinguishing between the more pernicious and deadly shadow economic activities, and the more informal, coping, livelihood economies that involve many poor and disadvantaged people. Any approach should target eliminating the former, and not the latter, in the first instance.

Finally, the seasonal nature of violence reveals new priorities and approaches that should inform and guide the sequencing of responses by the security sector, national government agencies, local governments, and the private sector in preventing violence during particular junctures in a year and during election time.

The BCMS is new and is a living and evolving system that will continue to explore, assess, and harness additional data sources to capture incidents not covered by police and media reports. The database will soon be accessible in the public domain and will provide information and data on sub-national conflict and violence not previously available in real time.

## Introduction

The lack of a better understanding about the causes of conflict has hampered development and peacebuilding efforts that can deal effectively with the enduring violence that afflicts parts of the Philippines, especially in Mindanao. Unpacking conflict is often hampered by the lack of robust evidence on violence and security. The deficit in reliable and timely conflict data and analysis helps explain the many failed attempts to transform conflict-torn communities into sites of sustainable and peaceful development – despite the efforts of local people to improve their lives, the significant investments made by local and national states, and the substantial aid extended by outside organisations.

Development cannot prosper in a hostile and violent environment. Yet the failure to grasp the real sources and triggers of violent conflict mean that development and peacebuilding approaches will remain wanting. Worse, new trends that require new strategies are emerging.

In 2005 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) asserted the need to “redefine security” to incorporate threats emanating from what is now fashionably called 21st-century violence – or the sort of violence that goes beyond inter-state conflicts and insurgencies.<sup>1</sup> In 2011 the *World Development Report on Conflict, Security, and Development* (WDR) underlined the need for more robust evidence to substantiate the distinctive features of new conflict risks, emphasising the need for information on “over-all results in reducing violence” and stronger indicators to determine actual progress and tackle “new or remaining risks”.<sup>2</sup> In 2013 International Alert UK produced a document on newly emerging triggers of violence brought about by criminal economies in places such as South Africa, Mexico and Brazil.<sup>3</sup>

These studies accentuate the inadequacy of conflict datasets that are mostly national in scope or focused mainly on civil war or both.<sup>4</sup> The data sets inadequately capture the new dynamics of conflict, including the increased incidence of subnational conflict, the phenomenon of recurring violence and the rise in criminal violence.

In Mindanao, the urgent need for data that exposes the incidence, intensity and magnitude of violent conflict at the subnational level is critical in dealing with the potential recurrence of conflict after the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in March 2014. It is crucial in informing policies and programmes that can prevent or reduce newly emerging patterns of violence during and after the transition. It is also central to casting aside misconceptions about the real causes of conflict, and the effectiveness, or lack of it, of current measures designed to reduce conflict.

The Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System (BCMS) aims to address these needs. It fills the gap in dynamic, real-time datasets that track conflict incidence, typology, causes, actors and effects in a publicly accessible manner that can be easily analysed. It enables development practitioners and peacebuilding actors to identify where, when and how resources can be targeted and to understand the conflict effects of development initiatives. The BCMS also seeks to provide a baseline for

<sup>1</sup> UNDP (2005). *Human Development Report 2005*. New York: UNDP. pp.153–80. Available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2005>

<sup>2</sup> World Bank (2011). *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development*. Washington, DC: World Bank. p.21. Available at <http://go.worldbank.org/1B0IJMD8H0>

<sup>3</sup> International Alert (2014). *Crime and conflict: The new challenge for peacebuilding*. London.

<sup>4</sup> Uppsala/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, 2005 and 2010. Available at [http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/ucdp\\_prio\\_armed\\_conflict\\_dataset/](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/ucdp_prio_armed_conflict_dataset/); P. Collier et al (2003). *Breaking the conflict trap: Civil war and development policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press and Washington, DC: The World Bank. The Heidelberg Conflict Barometer (HCB) generates comparative conflict data at the subnational level, but similarly focuses on insurgency-related violence.

understanding the likely impact of the ongoing political transition in the Bangsamoro and the associated conflict prevention and management initiatives that are being introduced particularly in the normalisation process (Box 1).

The BCMS has collected comprehensive data on exposure to conflict at the subnational level, generating panel data on violent conflict from 2011 to 2013 from police and media reports in the five provinces that comprise the bulk of the proposed Bangsamoro core territory. This report presents an assessment of the data in a descriptive and analytical manner. The first part of the report presents the research methodology, its strengths and limitations, and the causal categories used for the analysis of conflict data. The second part includes the descriptive statistics on the incidence of violent conflict. The third part presents data on the current causes and newly emerging triggers of violence, the phenomenon of clan feuding and violent strings, and temporal issues that affect violent conflict. The fourth part discusses the human costs of conflict in relation to incidence and causes. The final part presents conclusions, policy implications and future activities.<sup>5</sup>

### Box 1: The Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System (BCMS)

The BCMS is a subnational conflict database established by International Alert UK Philippines Office in partnership with the World Bank. The BCMS aims to systematically monitor and analyse conflict, particularly violent conflict, within the Bangsamoro and adjoining areas to inform policy, development, and peacebuilding approaches and strategies. The BCMS taps the data-gathering and analytical capabilities of three academic institutions covering different parts of Muslim Mindanao. The Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT), MSU-General Santos City (GSC) and Western Mindanao State University (WMSU) are at the forefront of data gathering and validation, and are also involved in analysing conflict trends. The monitoring system depends on two important data sources, namely, the Philippine National Police (PNP) regional and provincial reports and reports from five credible print media sources chosen from a total of 174 media sources as identified in an independent review/assessment conducted by the World Bank across Mindanao. The combination of PNP data and media sources provides a relatively comprehensive picture of violent conflict across the region. Multi-stakeholder validation groups (MSVG) have been established in selected areas composed of credible and experienced individuals coming from local governments, the security sector, development organisations, faith-based groups and civil society organisations. The MSVG meets regularly to generate conflict data that is not reported publicly, uncover explanations for incidents with undetermined causes, and enrich the analysis of violent conflict. Another distinctive feature of the BCMS is the 24-hour, user-friendly database system that is matched by advanced geotagging technology that enable users to access data, generate reports and zoom in on conflict flashpoints down to the municipal level. The BCMS is accompanied by a violence intensity index (VII) to assist development practitioners to target areas with high exposure to violence. The BCMS will produce general reports on an annual basis, with thematic reports on key issues (based on demand) to be produced on a just-in-time basis.

<sup>5</sup> Descriptions of the BCMS methodology, samples of police and media reports; the causal categories used in the study, and selected cases of conflict morphing and strings have been placed in boxes strategically located throughout the paper.

## Understanding violent conflict in the Bangsamoro

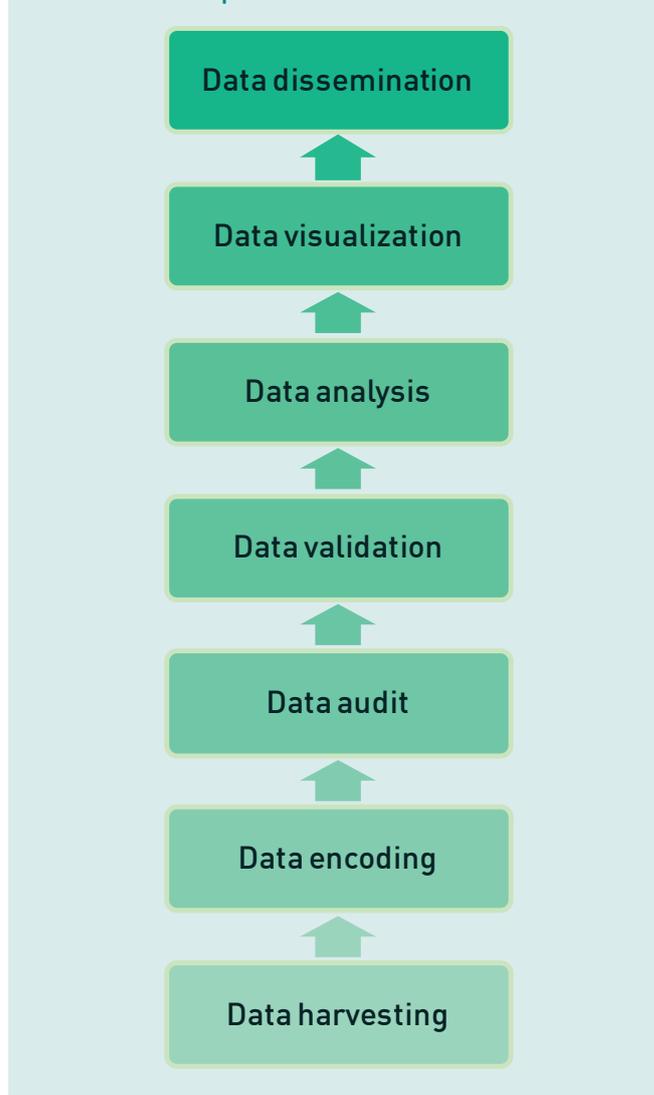
### Rebellion and ethnicity

Rebellion casts a long shadow over violent conflict in Mindanao. Conflict is often seen with a lens focused on the war between the government and various insurgent groups such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the Moro National Liberation Front (MILF), the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA), and more recently the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF).

The armed conflict between rebels and government forces is also the staple of most accounts of conflict in the print and broadcast media. The discourse and analysis of many studies often reify insurgent violence as the most crucial manifestation of escalating conflict in Mindanao.<sup>6</sup> Even the 2005 *Philippine Human Development Report on Peace, Human Security and Human Development* saw it adequate to focus mainly on insurgent-related violence, with a scant accounting of other conflict manifestations and causes that have little to do with separatist or non-separatist violence.<sup>7</sup> Yet violent conflict in Mindanao can easily be the result of political competition between local elites, clan feuding or illicit economic activities – leading to comparable levels of death, injury and displacement.

Meanwhile, popular interpretations of violent conflict continue to dwell upon the Muslim–Christian divide and ethnic cleavages as their principal causes, ignoring the emergence of other threats such as criminal violence or shadow economies that have since reared their head in many conflict flashpoints in the region. For example, recent reports of clan feuding underline the new dynamics of clan

Box 2: BCMS process flow chart



<sup>6</sup> See, for example, W.K. Che man (1990). *Muslim separatism: The Moros of Southern Philippines and the Malays of Southern Thailand*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press; M. Danguilan-Vitug and Gloria G. (2000). *Under the crescent moon: Rebellion in Mindanao*. Quezon City: Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs and Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD); T.J.S. George (1980). *Revolt in Mindanao: The rise of Islam in Philippine politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; T. McKenna (1998). *Muslim rulers and rebels*. Berkeley: University of California Press; E. Mercado (1984). 'Culture, economics, and revolt in Mindanao: The origins of the MILF and the politics of Moro separatism'. In *Armed separatism in Southeast Asia*. Ju-Jock Lim and S. Vani (eds.) Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies; M.A. Muslim (1994). *The Moro armed struggle in the Philippines: The nonviolent autonomy alternative*. Marawi, Mindanao State University Press Office; and S.K. Tan (1993). *The internationalization of the Bangsamoro struggle*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.

<sup>7</sup> Philippine Human Development Network (PHDN) (2005). *Philippine Human Development Report: Peace, Human Security, and Human Development in the Philippines*. Makati City: UNDP, NZAID.

violence at the subnational level, but do not account for the causes that led to violent conflict, often exacerbating ethnic tensions and reinforcing adverse images of the ‘other’.

Against this backdrop, the BCMS gathers data on violent conflict by distinguishing between vertical and horizontal causes of conflict and by including newly emerging causes as described in recent studies. The BCMS database categorises the types, manifestations and causes of violent conflict using a multiple classification system informed by the contemporary literature on conflict, including civil war; studies of post-modern conflict and irregular war; explanations of ethnic conflict, clan feuding and non-separatist violence; the scholarship on insurgent violence; and studies of shadow economies and warlord violence.<sup>8</sup>

## BCMS methodology and data limitations<sup>9</sup>

The target of data gathering is **violent conflict**, which refers to incidents where two or more parties use violence to settle misunderstandings and grievances, and/or defend and expand their individual or collective interests (e.g. social, economic, political resources and power, etc.). The data-gathering process begins with the harvesting of all data on crime and conflict in the Bangsamoro. The second step entails the segregation of discrete incidents found in the police database, and the collection of reports of violent incidents from credible and reliable media sources. Violence is thus used as a proxy indicator for conflict incidence. Criminal acts such as burglary or robbery that result in violence between perpetrators and victims are also included in the database because they inflict the threat and risk of bodily harm. Activities of organised crime groups are also included because they are often an offshoot of violent competition between criminal gangs for control over turf and resources, and are frequently accompanied by violent clashes with law enforcers.

The effort to distinguish violent conflict from non-violent crime is what separates the BCMS database from the overall national or local crime statistics provided by the PNP.

<sup>8</sup> For civil war, see the two volumes published by the World Bank (P. Collier and Sambanis N. (eds.) (2005). *Understanding civil war vol. 2: Europe, Central Asia, and other regions*. Washington D.C.: The World Bank). For post-modern conflict and irregular war, see M. Duffield (1998). ‘Post-modern conflict: Warlords, post-adjustment states and private protection’, *Civil wars*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp.65–102.; Kaldor 2000 M. Kaldor (1999). *New and old wars: Organized violence in global era*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; D. Keen (2008). ‘Complex emergencies’, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp.408–10; and M. Pugh and N. Cooper (2004). *War economies in a regional context: Challenges of transformation*. London, UK: International Peace Academy. ISBN1-58826-211-11. For ethnic conflict and non-separatist violence, see M. Ross (2003). ‘Oil, drugs, and diamonds: The varying roles of natural resources in civil war’. In *The political economy of armed conflict: Beyond greed and grievance*. K. Ballentine and J. Sherman (eds). Colorado, USA and London, UK: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. ISBN 1-58826-197-2 (alk. Paper); ISBN 1-58826-172-7 (pbk.: alk. Paper); S. Kalyvas and M.A. Kocher (2007). ‘Ethnic cleavages and irregular war: Iraq and Vietnam’, *Politics and Society*, Vol. 35, No. 2; The Asia Foundation (2007). *Rido: Clan feuding and conflict management in Mindanao*. Torres III, W. (ed). Makati City: The Asia Foundation, The Asia Foundation (2014). *Rido: Clan feuding and conflict management in Mindanao*. Torres III, W. (ed). Expanded edition. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press ; and F. Lara, Jr. and P. Champain (2009). *Inclusive peace in Muslim Mindanao: Revisiting the dynamics of conflicts and exclusion*. UK: International Alert. June. ISBN 978-1-906677-43-5. For insurgent violence, see S. Kalyvas (2006).

The logic of violence in civil war. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; and J. Weinstein (2007). *Inside rebellion: The politics of insurgent violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press. For shadow economies and warlord violence, see W. Reno (1999). *Warlord politics and African states*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers; M. Berdal and D. Malone (eds.) (2000). *Greed and grievance: Economic agendas in civil wars*. London: Lynne Rienner Publisher; A. Blok (2008). ‘Reflections on the Sicilian Mafia: Peripheries and their impact’. In D. Spiegel and H. Nelen (eds.). *Organized crime: Culture, markets and policies*. Springer Science; and F. Lara, Jr. and S. Schoofs (2013). *Out of the shadows: Violent conflict and the real economy of Mindanao*. Quezon City: International Alert Philippines. ISBN978-1-906677-15-2.

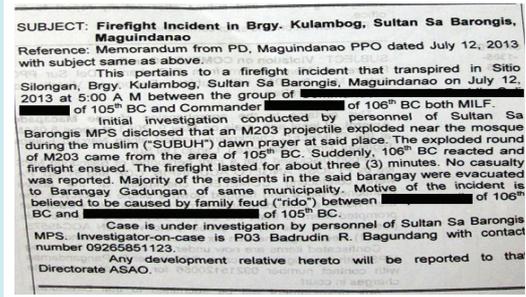
<sup>9</sup> International Alert UK (2013). ‘Robust data requires robust methods’. London. Alert harnessed data-gathering methods employed in a previous study of shadow economies in Mindanao including the creation of community validation groups.

**Box 3: Sample Reports**

**Case 1:** The case is an attempted ambush brought about by political competition in Datu Piang, Maguindanao, or an example of political violence brought about by horizontal electoral contestation.



**Case 2:** The case is a police report of intra-MILF armed conflict in Sultan sa Barongis town in Maguindanao. The report indicates that it was brought about by clan feuding, and is an example of horizontal political conflict.



The BCMS has the following features:

**Police reports combined with media reports**

The key sources of data for the system are police and media reports. While the data from these reports does not always contain the causes of violence, more than half of the cases do so, providing a substantially robust database from which conclusions can be drawn (Box 3).

**Evidence-based and standardised monitoring instrument**

The BCMS uses a standard monitoring instrument that is used to capture all of the relevant data gathered from police and media reports. Each incident is registered with a unique system-generated incident number. The BCMS is also able to trace the links between violent incidents through the use of a reference ID. Each incident goes into the database accompanied by documentary evidence of the incident. To ensure privacy and confidentiality, the actual names of the actors involved are excised from all reports.

**Expanded conflict and causal categories**

The BCMS database is divided into several causal categories including political issues, identity-based issues, resource issues, shadow economy issues, governance issues and extra-judicial issues. Meanwhile, armed conflicts can be vertical (insurgency-related) or horizontal (violent political competition and armed struggles between local elites, clans, ethnic groups and rival insurgent groups) in nature. Studying violent conflict in the Bangsamoro revealed many instances of interrelation and interaction between the two types, suggesting that vertical and horizontal conflicts are often linked and should not always be treated as discrete variables (Box 4).<sup>10</sup>

**Use of single and multiple classifications**

Most police blotter reports include the incident classification, place, date and time of the incident, the actors involved, the alleged cause of the violence and the human costs of violence. Oftentimes the report includes a singular cause of conflict such as *rido* or clan feuding. However, some incidents can

<sup>10</sup> The classic volume on complex emergencies by the conflict scholar David Keen (2008) also referred to vertical conflict as top-down or rebellion-related violence and to horizontal conflict as bottom-up violence, or inter- or intra-group violence.

#### Box 4: Conflict and causal categories\* (Abbreviated List)

##### Types of conflict:

1. **Vertical conflict** pertains to insurgency-related, separatist or non-separatist armed struggles against the State, including terrorist actions.
2. **Horizontal conflict** pertains to violent struggles between clans, ethnic groups, rival insurgent factions, political parties and private armed groups or shadow authorities for control over land, natural resources, elective and non-elective positions, including government resources and rents.

##### Causes of violence:

1. **Political issues** pertain to: (a) separatist or non-separatist armed challenges against the State (*vertical*); and (b) violence emanating from political (electoral) competition, abuse of power and authority or political repression, and violent struggles between rival insurgent groups or factions for politico-military influence and control (*horizontal*). This category also includes violent power struggles among mainstream political parties; tribal leaders and indigenous authorities.
2. **Resource issues** pertain to conflicts over ownership, utilisation, and control of land and other natural resources, including '*lootable*' resources, such as gems and drugs, and '*non-lootable*' resources such as water, oil and gas, including violent business competition. All cases of violence associated with land are included in this category.
3. **Identity issues** pertain to violence arising from inter- and intra-ethnic and tribal identities, violent struggles between and among families and clans, including violence emanating from gender differences and racial and religious tensions. The category includes cases of violence arising from honour (*maratabat*) issues.\*\*
4. **Shadow economy issues** pertain mainly to conflict emanating from the illicit or underground economies of Mindanao, in particular the production and trade in illicit guns and drugs, kidnap for ransom (KFR), cattle rustling, and smuggling. It includes violent conflict from illegal gambling, human trafficking and pyramiding scams.
5. **Extra-judicial issues** pertain to violent conflict triggered by cases of robbery, rape and damage to properties. It also includes cases of domestic violence, sexual indiscretion and slander.
6. **Governance issues** pertain to violent competitions for government resources and rents, including conflicts associated with bidding processes and other government-related transactions. It also includes violence associated with government development projects.

\*The **BCMS Conflict Typologies and Causal Categories Guide** can be accessed online beginning 1 September 2014 at [www.international-alert.org](http://www.international-alert.org)

\*\*Reports that associate violence with *rido* or clan feuds are categorised under identity-based issues. However, some *rido* cases were classified under multiple categories if an incident report adds that clan feuding was due to land, political competition or others.

result from multiple causes. There are violent incidents associated with multiple sources, including clan feuding, electoral competition and illicit drugs, for example. In these cases, the incident will be captured in multiple categories. Hence, the total numbers of causes do not equal the total numbers of incidents (Annex A).

### **Multiple data-gathering teams and multi-stakeholder validation**

Data gathering is undertaken by three partner academic institutions covering different parts of Muslim Mindanao.<sup>11</sup> Research teams are organised in each centre, equipped with a computer system for developing a conflict database with a quality control system. MSVGs are organised in each of the three areas to generate unreported conflict data, validate the data and enrich the analysis of conflict.

### **Detection of double counting and other auditing procedures**

The BCMS enables the early detection of problems related to data classification and tabulation. This is done through the use of an advance search facility that detects incidents of double counting. A weekly audit is conducted on the tools and the system, combined with a monthly audit of the functionality and utilisation of the system. Compliance with audit recommendations is used as a performance measure.

### **Report-generation and visualisation facilities**

The system is equipped with a dynamic report-generation facility that provides flexibility among the different users depending on the type of report to be generated. These reports can be in the form of tables or charts and can be exported in Excel or PDF format. The system is embedded with GIS capacity, and enables the use of geotagging and other mapping techniques.

### **Limitations of the BCMS**

However, the BCMS has at least three important limitations.

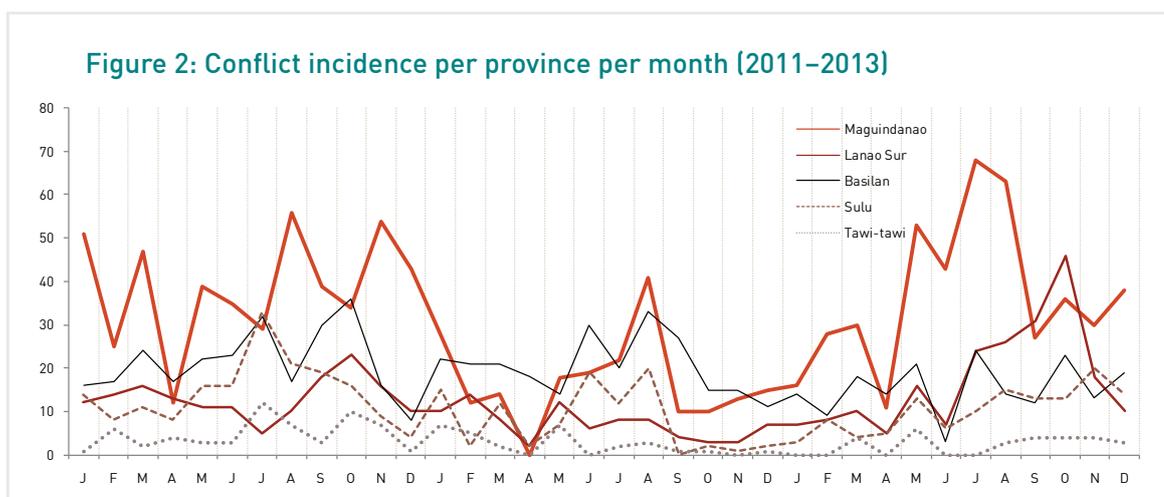
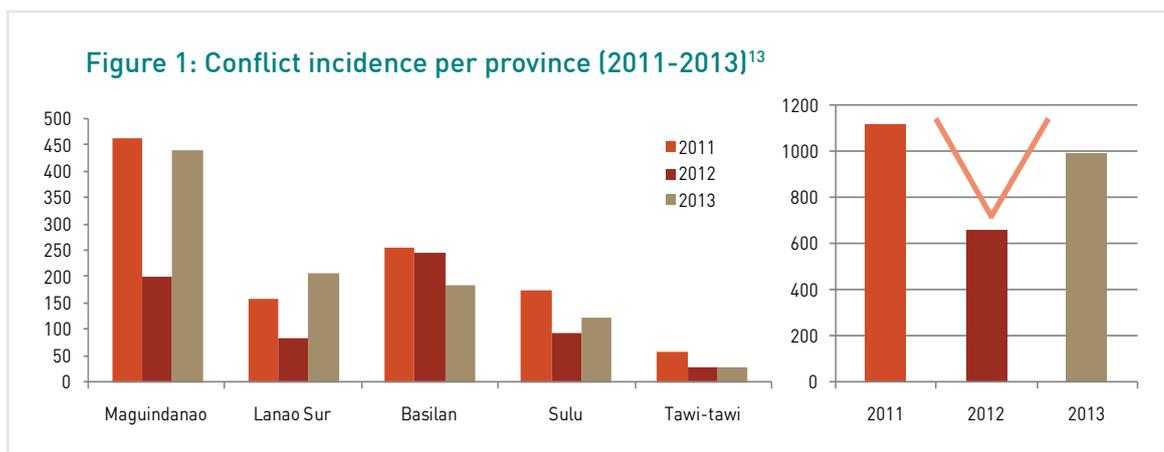
*Firstly, not all cases of violence are publicly reported.* The inclusion of unreported data in the frequent and regular meetings of the MSVG helps mitigate this problem. Data analysis and conclusions will also change as data gathering is enhanced to include comparisons with city and municipal-level data, and more police reports indicate the causes of violence. *Secondly, other cases of violence that happen outside the Bangsamoro but are linked to acts of violence within the Bangsamoro have not been included in the database.* Data gathering will improve as comparable provincial data from adjacent provinces are entered into the system using the same method. *Thirdly, the causal categories used by the BCMS remain rather crude.* It will require more data and a longer time frame for the BCMS to zero in on the more important causes of conflict, and generate more specific causal categories.

## **Mainland violence and the paradox of Tawi-Tawi and Basilan**

There were 2,758 cases of violent conflict harvested from the total of 4,843 incidents of index and non-index crimes reported across the five Bangsamoro/Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) provinces during the past three years (Figure 1).<sup>12</sup> The data shows that violent conflict has fluctuated across much of the region, except for Basilan and Tawi-Tawi where violence has been in decline since 2012.

<sup>11</sup> WMSU gathers data from Zamboanga, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, while the Mindanao State University (MSU) peace and development centres in Iligan City and General Santos City are responsible for gathering data from the Lanao provinces, North Cotabato, Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat.

<sup>12</sup> These include the provinces of Basilan, Tawi-tawi, Lanao Sur and Maguindanao. Despite being administratively and politically excluded from the ARMM, the towns of Cotabato City and Isabela City were included in the tabulation of the provincial datasets of Maguindanao and Basilan respectively. The BCMS also captured data from the adjacent provinces of North Cotabato, Lanao Norte, Sultan Kudarat, and Zamboanga del Sur to complement the analysis of spill-over effects from and into the Bangsamoro.



There was a palpable decline in violent incidents in 2012 and a resurgence in 2013 as witnessed in the V-shaped curve from 2011 to 2013. The drop in 2012 is principally due to the decline in conflict incidents in the provinces of Maguindanao and Lanao Sur, accounting for around 73% of the decline (Figure 2). Among the relevant events that transpired during this period was the signing of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) in 2012. Meanwhile, the resurgence in 2013 is due to a rebound in violent incidents in the same provinces, coinciding with the emergence of a new insurgent group (BIFF).

Most of the violence is located in the mainland, with the combined incidents of conflict in the provinces of Maguindanao and Lanao Sur accounting for more than half (56%) of total incidents. These numbers trump the total number of incidents recorded in the island provinces.

At first glance, the dangers to human security appear higher in the mainland than in the islands of the Bangsamoro. This has dire consequences for recasting the imagery of the Bangsamoro as a *'bad neighbourhood'* – since media, government and development agencies are often based in the mainland centres of the region.<sup>14</sup> However, a singular focus on the number of incidents tends to

<sup>13</sup> Ordering of the bars are based on 2013 data. See Annex A for the numerical table of incidents.

<sup>14</sup> The 'bad neighbourhoods' theory has been variously referred to as "wars before, wars next door", "brute causes", "network war" and conflict "contagion". The theory underscores the negative spill-over effects of armed conflict and warlord economies on adjacent or neighbouring states. De Waal, A. (2000). *Who fights? Who cares? War and humanitarian action in Africa*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press. De Waal, A. (2007). Sudan: What kind of state? What kind of crisis? *Occasional Paper #2*. Social Science Research Council. London: London School of Economics Crisis States Research Center. Di-John, J. (2007). 'Oil abundance and violent political contract. A critical assessment.' *Journal of Development Studies*. Vol. 43, No. 6. Duffield, M. (1998). 'Post-modern conflict: Warlords, post-adjustment states and private protection', *Civil Wars*, Vol. 1, No. 1. pp. 65-102.

conceal other factors that may determine developmental priorities. For example, taking into account both per capita and per square kilometre incidence of conflict in the Bangsamoro reveals that the island province of Basilan should be an equally important focus of development intervention due to the high concentration of incidents per person and per square kilometre (Figures 3 and 4).<sup>15</sup>

Figure 3: Conflict incidence per 100,000 persons per province (2011–2013)

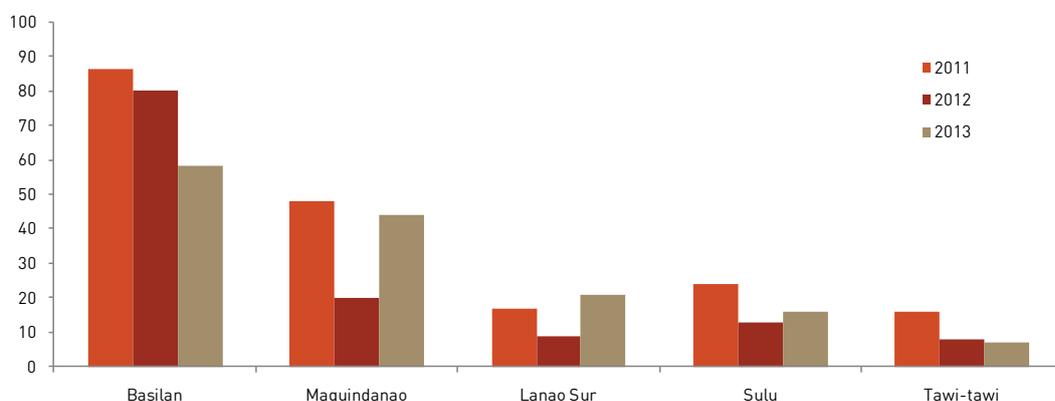
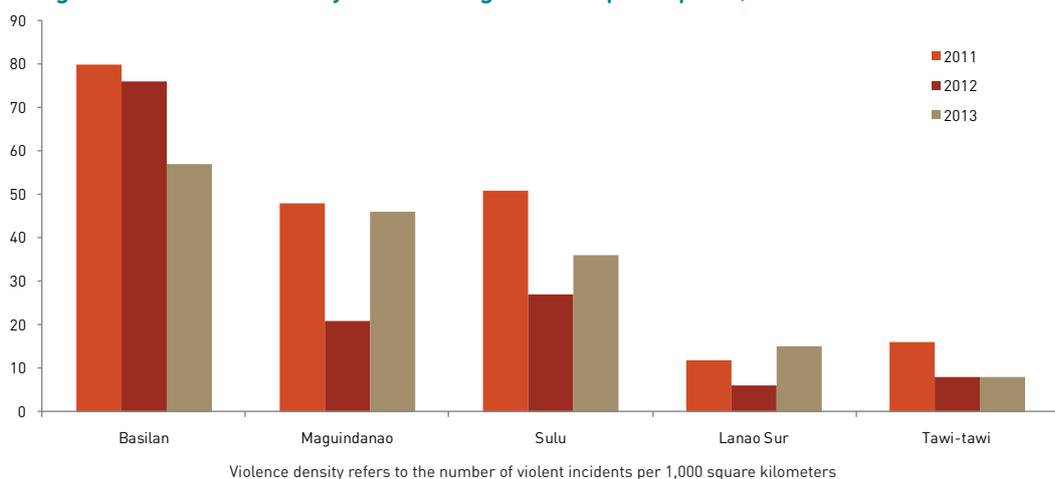


Figure 4: Conflict density in the Bangsamoro (per sq. km, 2011–2013)



Meanwhile, the province of Sulu overtook Lanao Sur in terms of conflict density.

Basilan outpaced the other Bangsamoro provinces with an annual average of 78 violent incidents per 100,000 persons during 2011–2013. Political violence, shadow economies and clan feuding were the dominant causes of violent conflicts in the province. The presence of terror groups such as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) (104 incidents) and the Bin Laden Group (11 incidents) also contributed to the prevalence of violence in the province. Business competition, particularly in several aspects of the shadow economy, is a key trigger of most violent incidents in the province, reaching a high of 30 incidents in 2013 alone.

These figures highlight the conflict risks in the peripheries of the region, and reveal the paradox of Tawi-Tawi and Basilan. *What explains the intensity of violence in Basilan and the diminished risk of violence in Tawi-Tawi?*

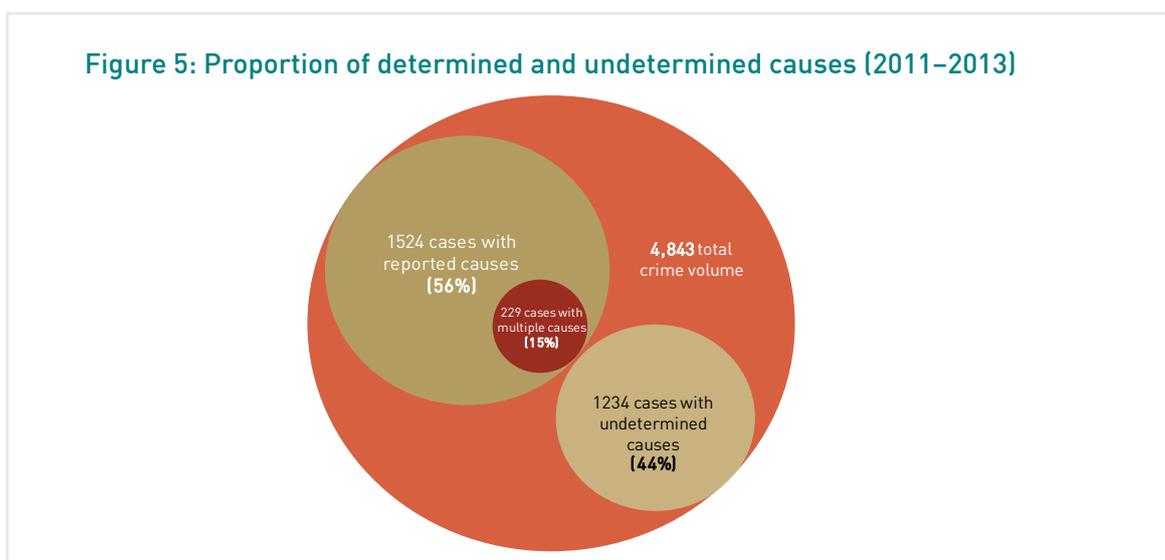
<sup>15</sup> Conflict per capita actually refers to the number of incidents per 100,000 persons, while conflict per square kilometre refers to the number of incidents per 1,000 square kilometres.

Tawi-Tawi is more distant and difficult to reach by the state and its security apparatus, and is situated in the porous borders of the Sulu Sea in what is often referred to as a *'bad neighbourhood'* due to the mix of cross-border illicit trade, kidnapping and abduction, and piracy. Yet violence in Tawi-Tawi is low and has continued to decline since 2012. On the other hand, Basilan is situated less than an hour away from the regional political and commercial centre of Zamboanga City and is more firmly in the grip of the major administrative and politico-military structures and mechanisms of the State – yet reported violence, despite the decline, remains very high.

There is no quick and easy way to explain this conflict puzzle. Unravelling the paradox of Basilan and Tawi-Tawi will require deeper qualitative analysis that complements the quantitative evidence from the BCMS.

## Important causes of violent conflict

From the 2,758 violent incidents recorded by the BCMS, 1,524 incidents had a clear indication of one or more causes of violence, or 56% of the total. Yet the total number of causes registered by the BCMS totalled 1,753, indicating that some incidents had multiple causes. This represents around 15% of the total number of incidents having more than one identified cause of violence (Figure 5).

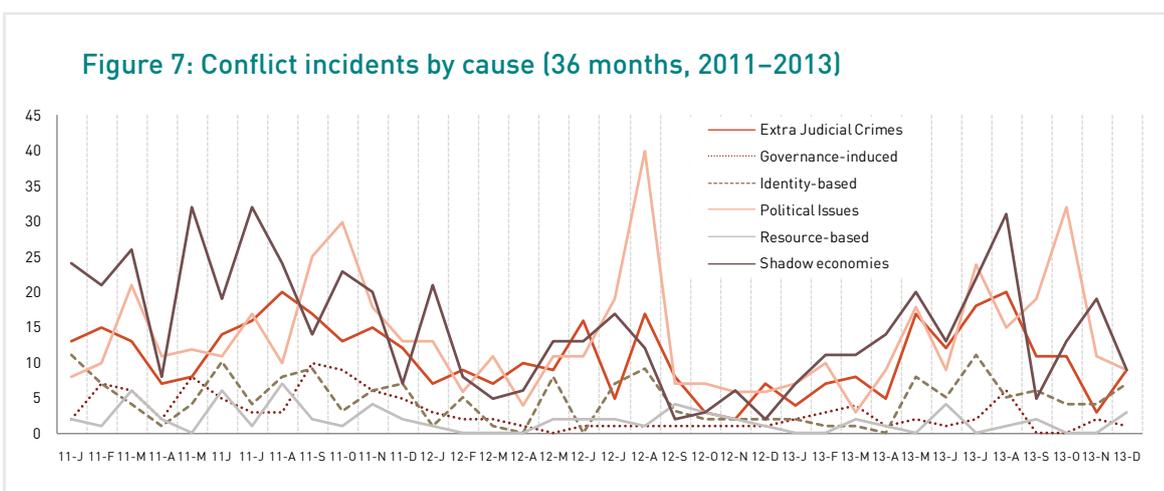
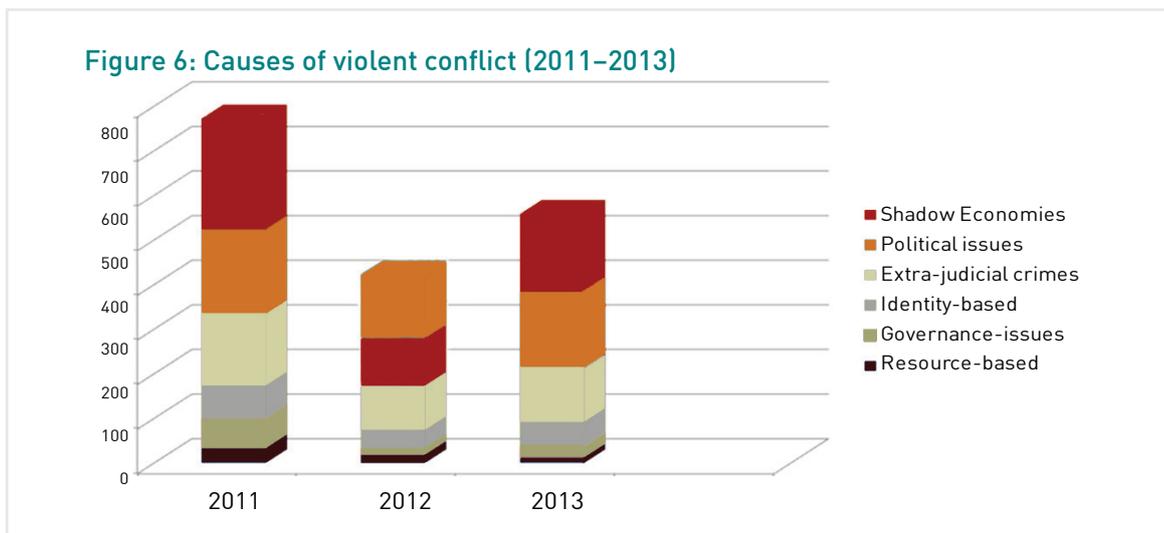


Violent incidents emanate from a variety of causes, but at least three important causes stood out in the data (Figure 6). These are conflicts arising from shadow economies, political issues and extra-judicial issues.

The decline in violent incidents per province in 2012 is based on the drop in the three most common causes of violence, i.e., the shadow economy (57%), extra-judicial crime (39%), and political issues (24%) in that year. The rebound in the number of violent incidents in 2013 is also accounted for by the resurgence in violence caused by the same causes (Figure 7).

Note too that the months from July to early September 2012 were marked by a spike in violence associated with political issues, specifically the insurgent violence displayed in the attack waged by the BIFF in five towns of Maguindanao that coincided with the holy month of Ramadan.<sup>16</sup> This period of heightened violence broke the decreasing trend in violence in 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Spikes in the number of violent incidents have occurred from July to August in the past three years, coinciding with the holy month of Ramadan.



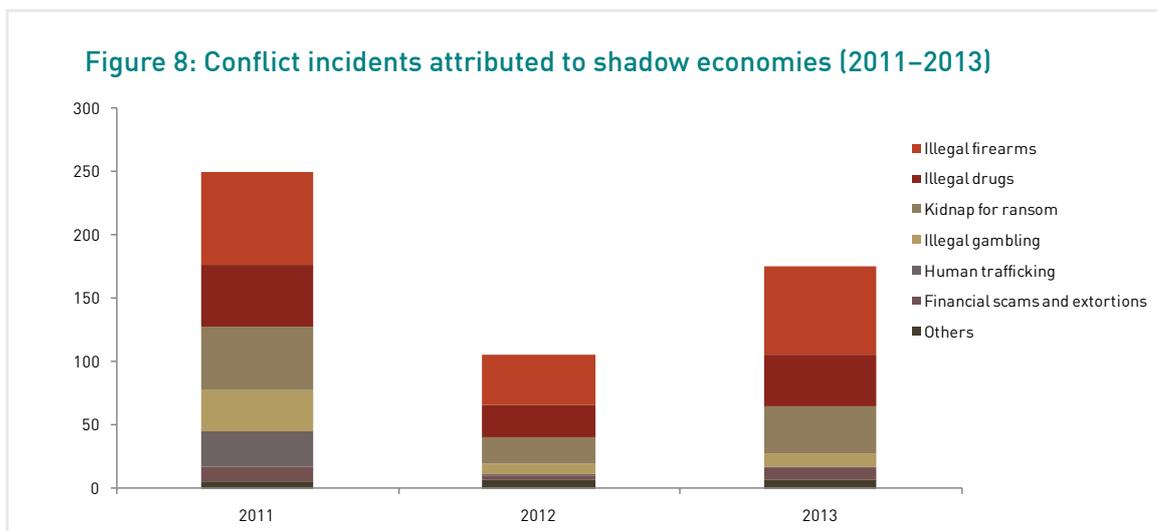
**Violent shadow economies**

Shadow economy issues pertain to the illicit sectors of the economy that tend to fuel violent conflict. The BCMS data bares the violence that is largely attributed to competition and reprisals in the underground drug economy, the illicit trade in weapons and kidnap for ransom (KFR) (Figure 8). A heightened number of incidents emanating from these shadow economies turned it into the biggest cause of violence among the five ARMM/Bangsamoro provinces within this period. More than a quarter (27%) or 477 ascribed causes were linked to operations in the shadow economy.

The higher levels of violence associated with the shadow economies in drugs, illicit weapons and KFR dwarfed the data on violent incidents attributed to shadow economies such as smuggling or illegal logging.<sup>17</sup> Other deadly aspects of the shadow economy include illegal gambling, human trafficking and illicit financial schemes. The resurgence of violence in 2013 is accounted for by the convergence between incidents of political violence and KFR activities. The spike in violence attributed to the Coco Rasuman pyramiding scam during 2012–2013 also provides evidence of a new trigger of violence located in illicit financial transactions.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Violent conflicts connected to illicit cross-border trade and illegal logging was in the single digit and thus placed under the 'other issues' category.

<sup>18</sup> The Coco Rasuman case refers to an investment scheme that started in 2011, offering 50–100% returns on investments after a period of 60 days. It is similar to the operations of other pyramiding scams. The scheme collapsed in July 2012 when payments could no longer be given to investors. This triggered the abduction, kidnapping and killing of agents, and subsequent retaliation by the victims.

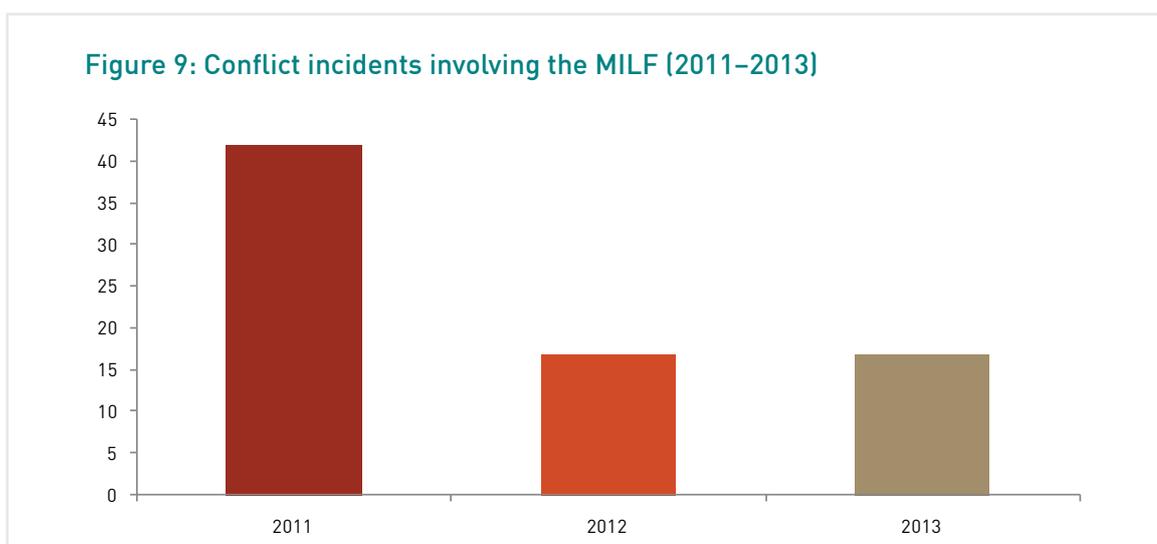


### Political violence and horizontal conflict

Political violence continued to play a critical part in conflict incidents in the Bangsamoro from 2011 to 2013. Politically motivated violence was mainly shaped by insurgent violence – from the MILF, the MNLF, the BIFF, the ASG and the CPP-NPA.

In the past three years rebellion-related or vertical conflict came in the form of armed clashes between the government and MILF splinter groups such as the BIFF, and remnants of the MNLF (Box 5). Armed clashes involving the MILF declined significantly in Maguindanao and Basilan (see Figure 9). The GPH–MILF ceasefire continued to endure except for a few isolated instances when clashes between MILF combatants and the military erupted due to land and other issues. In fact, the level of violence associated with the MILF dropped dramatically before and after the signing of the FAB in 2012.

Nonetheless, the drop in violence associated with the MILF did not dent the popular perception that rebellion was the main cause of political violence, even though most of the violent conflicts associated with insurgents had to do with intra- and inter-insurgent struggles.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, a



<sup>19</sup> Inter-insurgent violence pertains to violence between two insurgent groups such as conflict between the MILF and the MNLF, while intra-insurgent violence pertains to violence within the insurgent group. Both are insurgent-related but are categorised as horizontal political violence.

significant part of the violence resulted from factional rivalries or armed struggles spurred by external factors such as clan feuding.

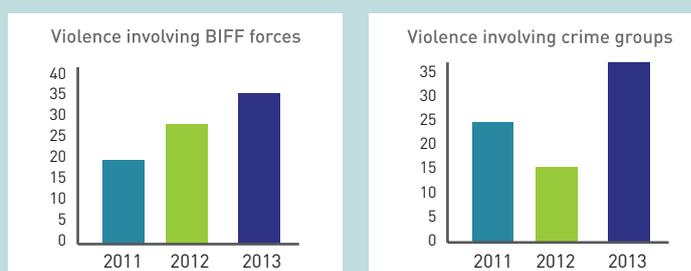
### Box 5: Increasing violence from new threat groups

Political and criminal violence has been increasing from various threat groups such as the BIFF and Mindanao's criminal gangs. As a splinter group of the MILF, the BIFF seemed to time its attacks to coincide with critical moments during the GPH-MILF peace negotiations. The insurgent group's involvement in violent conflict has been steadily increasing from 19 incidents in 2011 to 37 incidents in 2013. Most of these incidents were armed encounters with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and armed confrontations with local clans and communities. These clashes have contributed to the displacement of around 15,157 families in Maguindanao from 2011 to 2013.

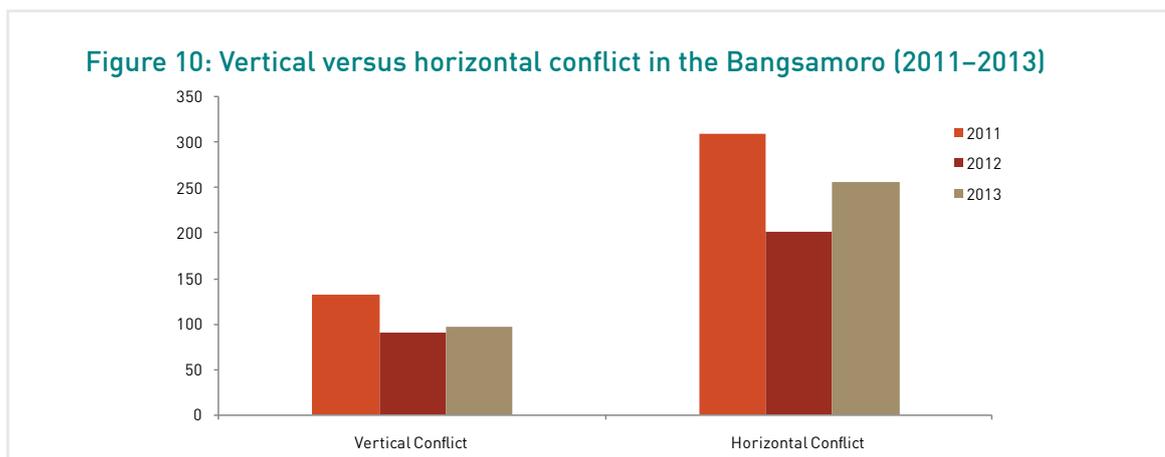
Meanwhile, the ASG remains a potent threat to peace and stability in the region. The ASG was involved in 104 incidents in Basilan and 79 violent incidents in Sulu from 2011 to 2013.

New threats of violence are also emerging with the growing presence of organised crime in the Bangsamoro. Crime syndicates are armed groups with fluid memberships and no clear political agendas, and are mostly associated with criminal activities such as KFR, extortion and sabotage, carjacking, robberies, and illicit drug manufacturing and trade. A clear example of these groups is the Pentagon Gang and the Al-Khobar Group that operates in central and northern Mindanao, and the BASULTA islands. They operate below the radar and seldom engage government security forces. They are distinct from terrorist groups such as the ASG and the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). However, there are several reports linking ASG and BIFF members and followers with organised crime activities.

An alarming increase in organised crime has been observed in the past three years. Their activities increased from 10 to 27 incidents from 2012 to 2013. They are spread out in the Bangsamoro provinces, especially in Maguindanao, Sulu and Basilan. They exacerbate the violence perpetrated by terrorist groups and other rebel factions.

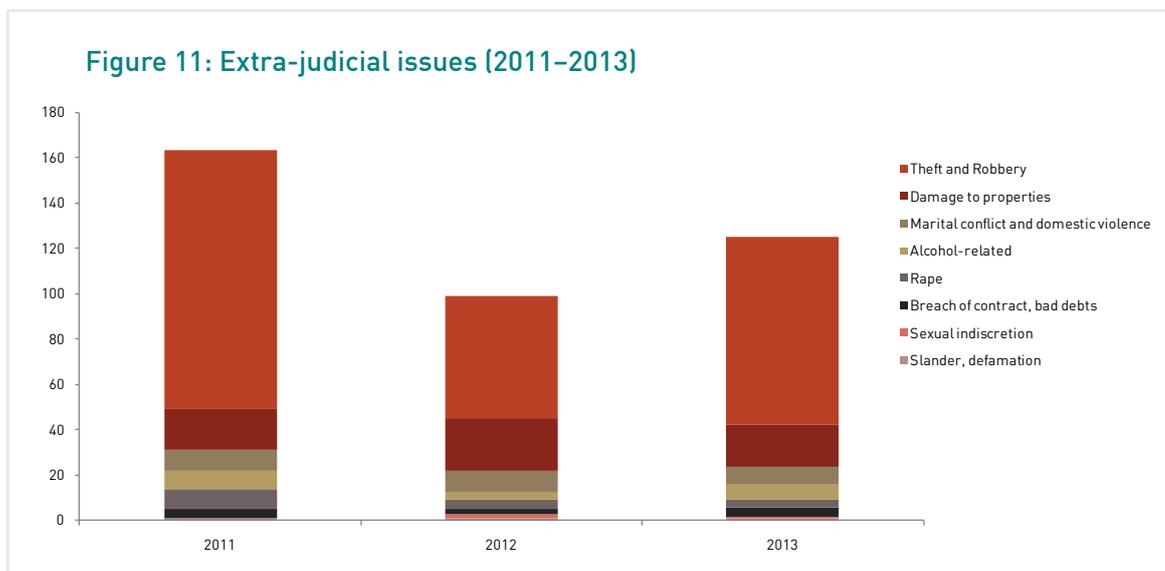


A second cause of the rise in political violence in 2013 was the mid-term election in May, followed by the barangay elections in October of the same year. Election-related violence and violent factional rivalries among rebels, including turf wars between other armed groups and criminal elements, and violence associated with shadow economies and identities accounted for the dominance of violent incidents associated with horizontal conflict from 2011 to 2013 (Figure 10).



### Extra-judicial issues

Violence associated with extra-judicial issues from 2011 to 2013 was the third biggest cause of conflict in the Bangsamoro, and is explained by the increasing violence associated with individual lawbreakers, local criminal groups, as well as the operations of notorious crime groups such as the Pentagon Gang, Al-Khobar Group and the Kuratong Baleleng (Box 6). The most rampant cases related to extra-judicial issues were theft and robbery and damage to properties. Marital conflict, domestic violence, and alcohol-related violence were the other prominent extra-judicial issues (Figure 11).



The pervasiveness of extra-judicial issues as a cause of violent conflict in the Bangsamoro partly explains why civilians are the principal actors in violent conflicts. Civilians were the main victims in violent incidents across the region. However, it must be noted that there were several instances where the morphing of actors from victims to perpetrators and vice versa made it difficult to differentiate between the two. Meanwhile, the proliferation of loose firearms in the hands of ordinary civilians also fuelled violent conflicts in the region, exemplified in shooting incidents as the main manifestation of violence (Figures 12 and 13).

Figure 12: Distribution of violent conflict by actor (2011–2013)

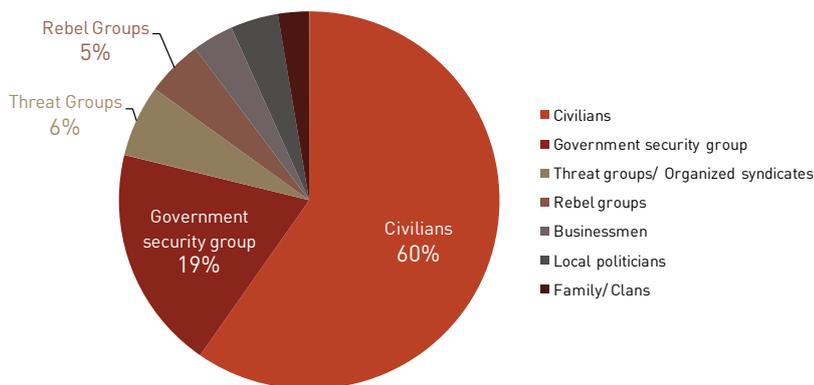
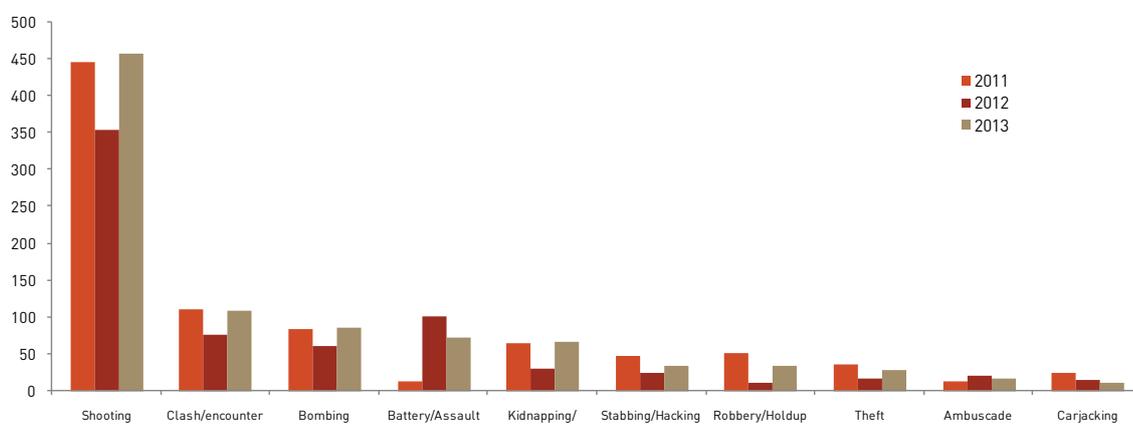


Figure 13: Manifestations of violence (2011–2013)



### Clan feuding and violent strings

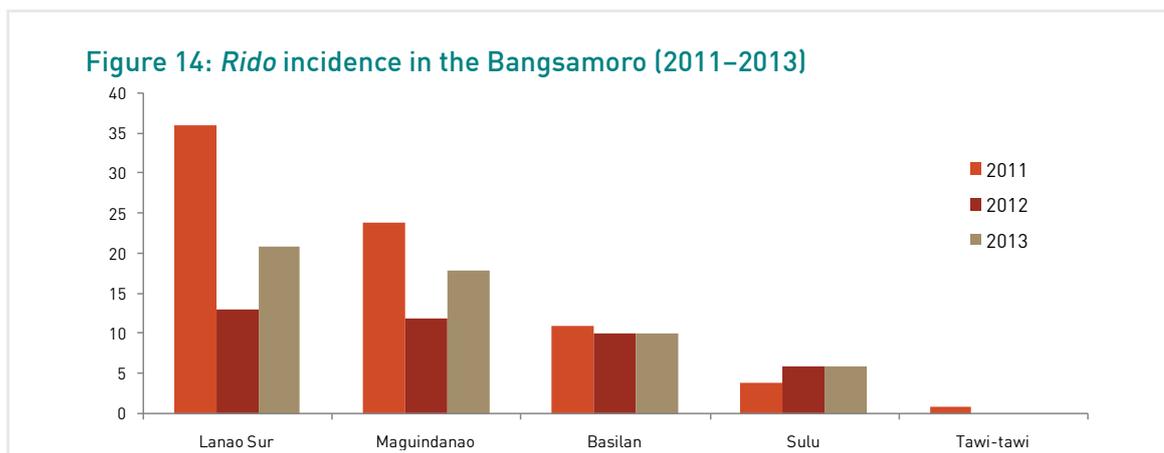
Clan feuding is endemic in specific localities where it is easily instigated by a land dispute, business competition, political contestation, and extra-judicial crime, among others. As a signifier of the underlying clan institutions and dynamics behind violent flashpoints in the Bangsamoro, the BCMS separately gathered cases of *rido* from 2011 to 2013 (Figure 14).

Clan feuding is heavily concentrated in the mainland provinces of Lanao Sur and Maguindanao.<sup>20</sup> The rise and fall in cases of *rido* duplicates the V-shaped curve in conflict incidence across the Bangsamoro. From the total of 152 *rido*-related incidents gathered, shadow economies in illicit drugs and guns, political competition during the elections and unresolved disputes related to land stood out as the major causes.

There was a significant increase in clan feuding that can be traced to shadow economy-related triggers of violence hiding behind the classification ‘business competition’ as noted in police and media reports, including in other studies of *rido*. The twin elections held in 2013 also caused a rise in cases of *rido* triggered by political contestation, a phenomenon discussed extensively in two publications tackling *rido* released by the Asia Foundation.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> There were no reports of clan feuding in Tawi-Tawi in 2011 and 2013.

<sup>21</sup> The Asia Foundation (2007). *Rido: Clan feuding and conflict management in Mindanao*. Torres III, W. (ed). Makati City: The Asia Foundation. The Asia Foundation (2014). *Rido: Clan feuding and conflict management in Mindanao*. Torres III, W. (ed). Expanded edition. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press



Clan feuding partly explains the phenomenon of ‘violent strings’ and the morphing of conflict actors in the Bangsamoro. Strings refer to violent episodes that come in pairs, in threes, fours or more. Morphing, on the other hand, refers to: (a) the shifting roles of conflict actors from being victims to perpetrators, and vice versa; and (b) the shifting triggers of violence as conflict moves in varying directions following an initial outburst of violence. The BCMS generated a substantial number of incidents where strings of violence spun off in the absence of any credible system for heading off the spread of inter- and intra-family and clan feuding that grew from isolated incidents into major violence involving state and non-state armed groups.

Violent strings can also emanate from the economic dislocations caused by illicit financial schemes that affect large numbers of people. The Coco Rasuman pyramiding scam is a case where victims also became perpetrators, and the original causes of violence morphed into other causes. Perpetrators of the scam were abducted by victims’ families, and ransom was paid to secure their release. This in turn led to some retaliatory actions from relatives of abducted victims. What was originally a financial dislocation resulting from a pyramiding scam has morphed into a full-blown *rido* that is likely to last for years (Box 6).

#### **Box 6: Clan feuds morph into insurgent violence in Maguindanao**

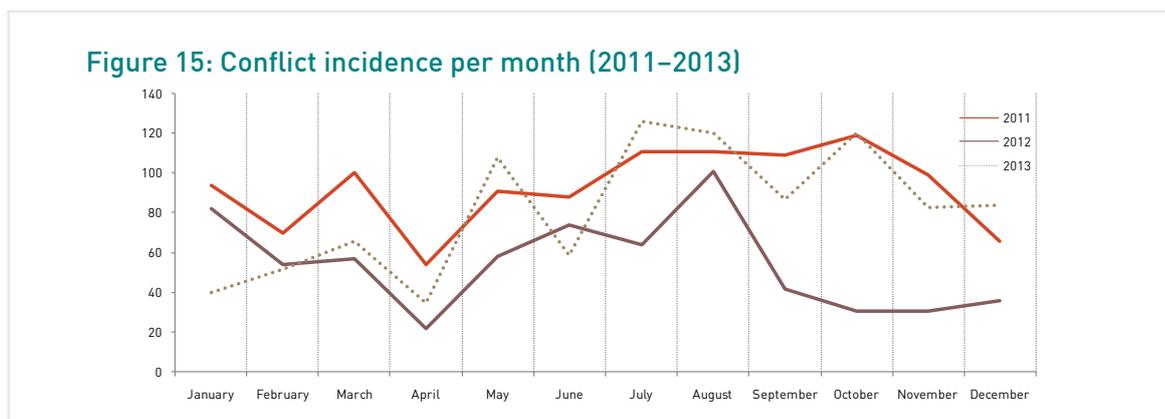
The eruption of an inter-clan war in Maguindanao on 19 May 2012 morphed into an armed dispute between MILF and MNLF combatants. The *rido* between the two clans emanated from a land dispute between two individuals with relatives belonging to the two insurgent organisations who rushed to defend their families and their villages. Clashes soon erupted between the two insurgent groups along the main highways of Maguindanao, and spread out to the neighbouring province of North Cotabato. Six combatants from both sides were killed and more than 300 families were displaced for more than two months as a result of the escalation in violence.

Meanwhile, a case of conflict morphing can be seen in a shooting incident in Barangay Tubig Kutah, Siasi, Sulu on 30 May 2013, where victims were shot by unidentified suspects while on board a motorised pump boat at around 9am. Two hours later the suspected perpetrators were killed by the relatives of the victims. Elaborating the phenomenon of ‘violent strings’ and ‘conflict morphing’ is a significantly new terrain of analysis that can produce future lessons on how to disrupt or ‘interrupt’ these violent strings.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Cure Violence* is a US-based peacebuilding organisation that proposed treating violence as a pathological epidemic of spiralling violence that could be ‘interrupted’ through proactive actions that can tame violence between rival urban gangs.

## Temporal issues that shape violent conflict

The BCMS report identifies the critical moments in a year when violent conflict often erupts in the Bangsamoro. Violent conflict tends to spike during the triennial periods of electoral competition often held in May, the peak of the lean months before the main season harvest in late September to early October, and the annual start of the school season in June (Figure 15).



### Elections periods and violence

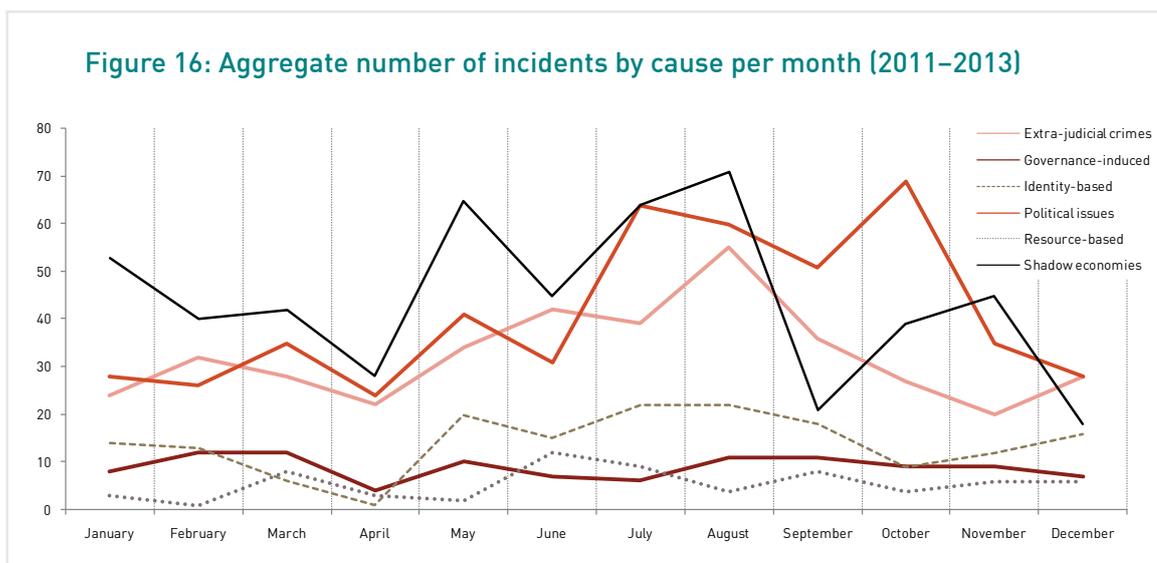
Sharp increases in violence were observed in the months of May and October 2013 when elections were held in the Bangsamoro. Around 52 election-related violent incidents were registered in 2013, with Lanao Sur and Maguindanao accounting for the highest shares of election-related violence at 40% and 35%, respectively.

The election-related violence in Lanao Sur is largely attributed to the long record of violent political competition between and among families. According to the Citizens Coalition for Electoral Reforms in the ARMM, the elections are also an opportunity for inter-clan retribution by parties who belong to the same clustered precinct. One of the more violent cases of clan feuding erupted in Lanao Sur between the Guro, Capal and Macugar families in which 16 persons were killed, 11 wounded, 11 houses burned and more than 150 families displaced in 2013.

The high frequency of election-related violence in Maguindanao did not come as a surprise. The power shift from the Ampatuan to the Mangudadatu clan that resulted from the 2009 Maguindanao massacre continues to fuel retribution at the local level. Many Ampatuan clan members continue to occupy local executive positions in 9 out of 36 municipalities in the province. Hence, the police investigation of a roadside bombing in Sinsuat Avenue, Cotabato City on 6 August 2012 in which 9 persons were killed and 26 injured was pegged to politically motivated violence in which Cynthia Guiani-Sayadi, a key official and supporter of the previous Governor Andal Ampatuan, was the target.

The BCMS data shows a similar spike in violence during the barangay elections in October 2013. While the violence during the mid-term elections were mainly concentrated in Maguindanao, the violent incidents during barangay elections affected 15 municipalities in Maguindanao; 2 in Sulu; 8 in Basilan; and 18 in Lanao Sur. Around 44 violent incidents were associated with the barangay elections compared to only 19 in the mid-term elections. Barangay elections are also deadlier in terms of human costs.

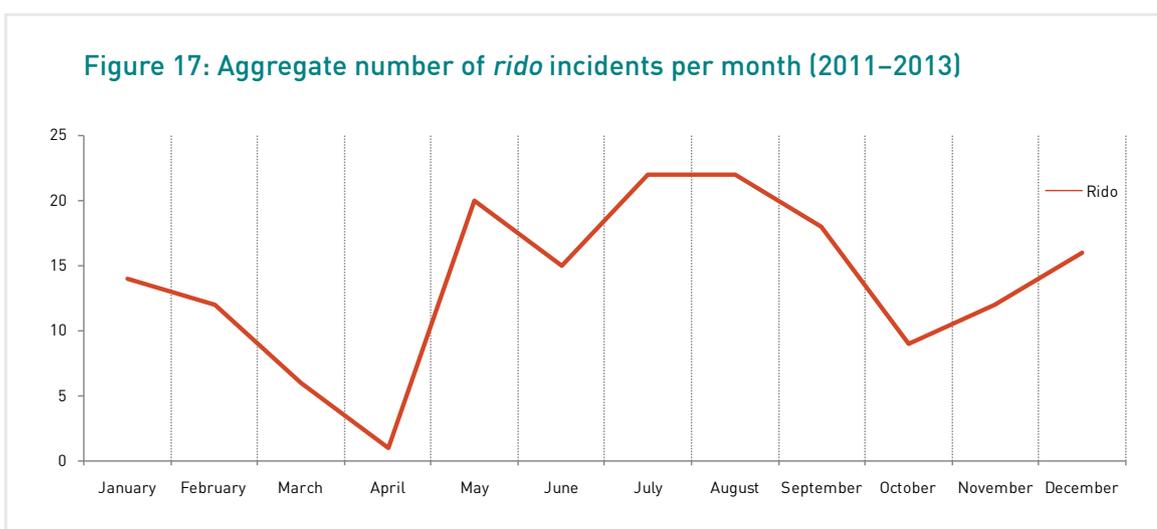
To further illuminate the causes of violence on an annual basis, the following figure zeroes in on the causes of conflict summed up on a monthly basis for the past three years as shown earlier in Figure 7 (Figure 16).



### Lean months and the start of the school season

Dramatic increases in violence are evident in the months of July to late August, coinciding with the agricultural lean season – traditionally the period of extreme deprivation and hunger, and a period when natural calamities often strike before the main season rice crop is harvested in the last quarter of the year. This verifies other studies that have highlighted the lean season and the variable climatic conditions during the same time as a critical period where violent attacks against persons and properties intensify.<sup>23</sup>

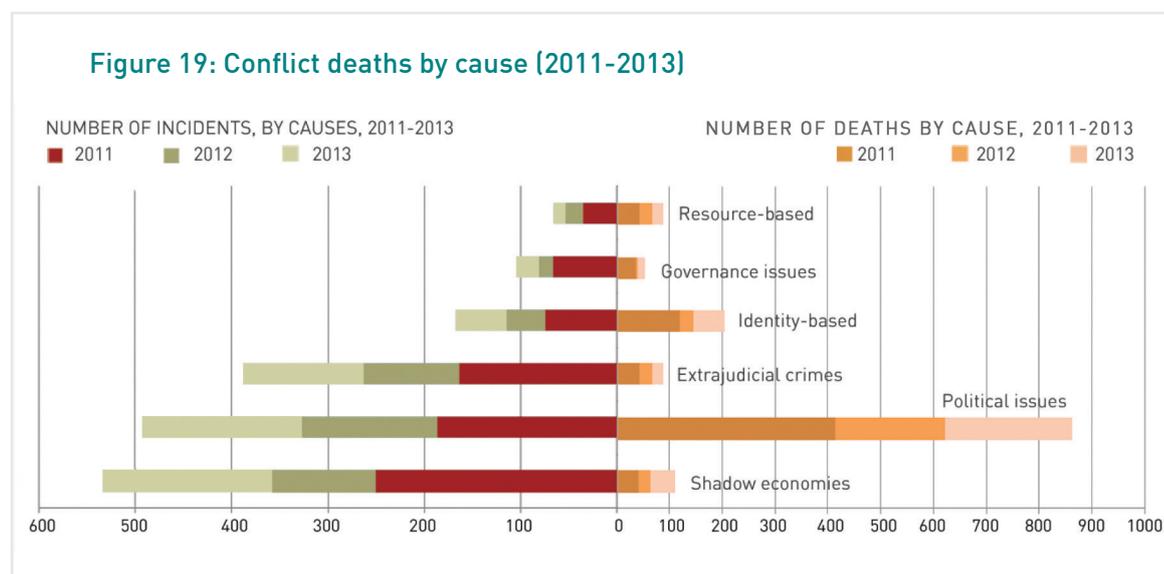
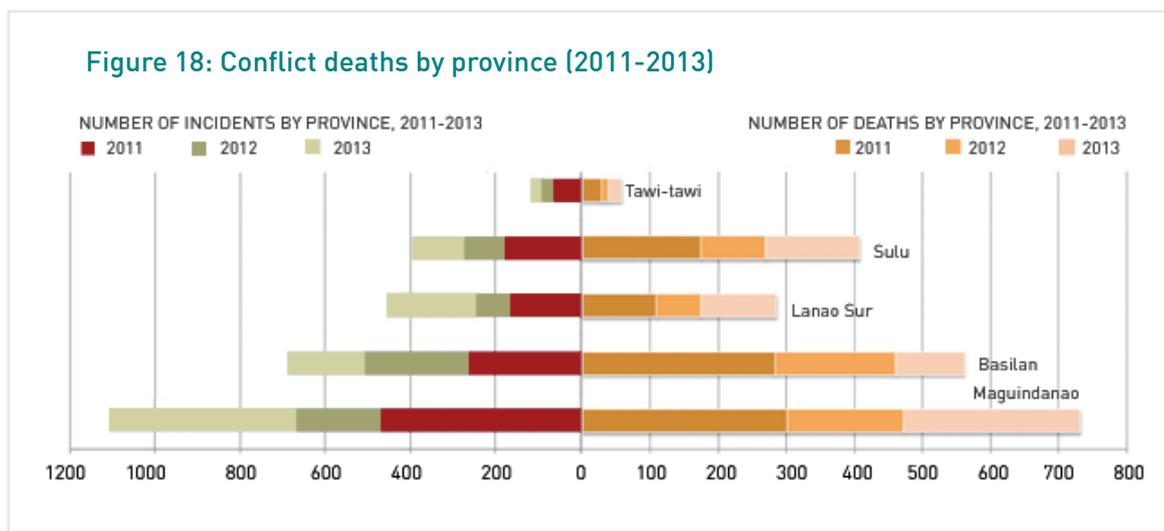
In the meantime, the rise in violence during the months of February to March coincides with the school graduation period, while a comparable increase in violent incidents in May (in years when no elections are held) also coincides with the opening of the school season in June. Extra-judicial causes of violent conflict such as theft and robbery were particularly high in the said months. Increased incidents of *rido* also coincided with the agricultural lean months (Figure 17).



<sup>23</sup> S.M. Hsiang and M. Burke (2014). 'Climate, conflict, and social stability: What does the evidence say?', *Climatic Change*, Vol. 123, No. 1, pp.39–55. Available at <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10584-013-0868-3>; G. Wischnath and H. Buhaug (2014). 'On climate variability and civil war in Asia. Climatic change', *Climatic Change*, Vol. 122, No. 4, pp.709–21.

## Matching human costs with conflict incidence and causes

Among the more crucial findings in the BCMS is the effect of human cost (death, injuries and displacement) in the determination of priorities for development and peacebuilding intervention. Earlier estimates from the BCMS showed that conflict incidence is higher in Maguindanao and Lanao Sur compared to the island provinces. However, analysing the human costs of each incident can show that fewer incidents can actually produce larger human costs. For instance, Sulu ranked fourth in conflict incidence, but was second in terms of total deaths for the year 2013. From 2011-2013, Sulu ranked fourth in conflict incidence, but was third in terms of total deaths.

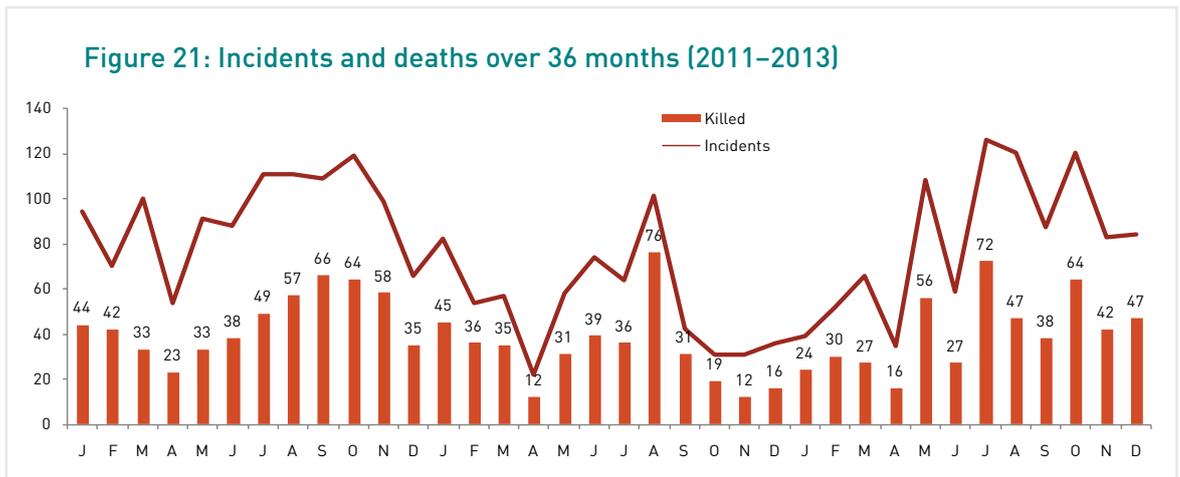
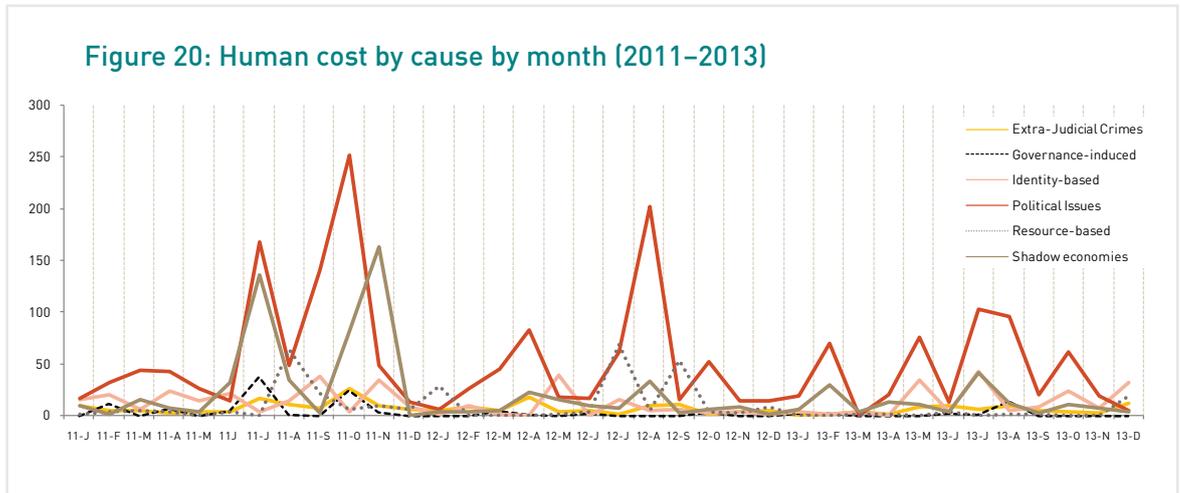


This demonstrates that the conflict landscape on the island is of a relatively small number of highly damaging conflict incidents.

The same tests were conducted on human costs vis-à-vis causes of violence – to ascertain whether the low incidence of violence attributed to ethnic, land and resource issues may be masking higher human costs attached to these causes. The data showed that resource and identity issues had highest human cost compared to number of incidents (Figure 19). Finally, though conflicts emanating from the shadow economy registered the highest incidence, political violence inflicted much higher human costs in the period 2011–2013. In a span of three years, political violence has caused the death of 862

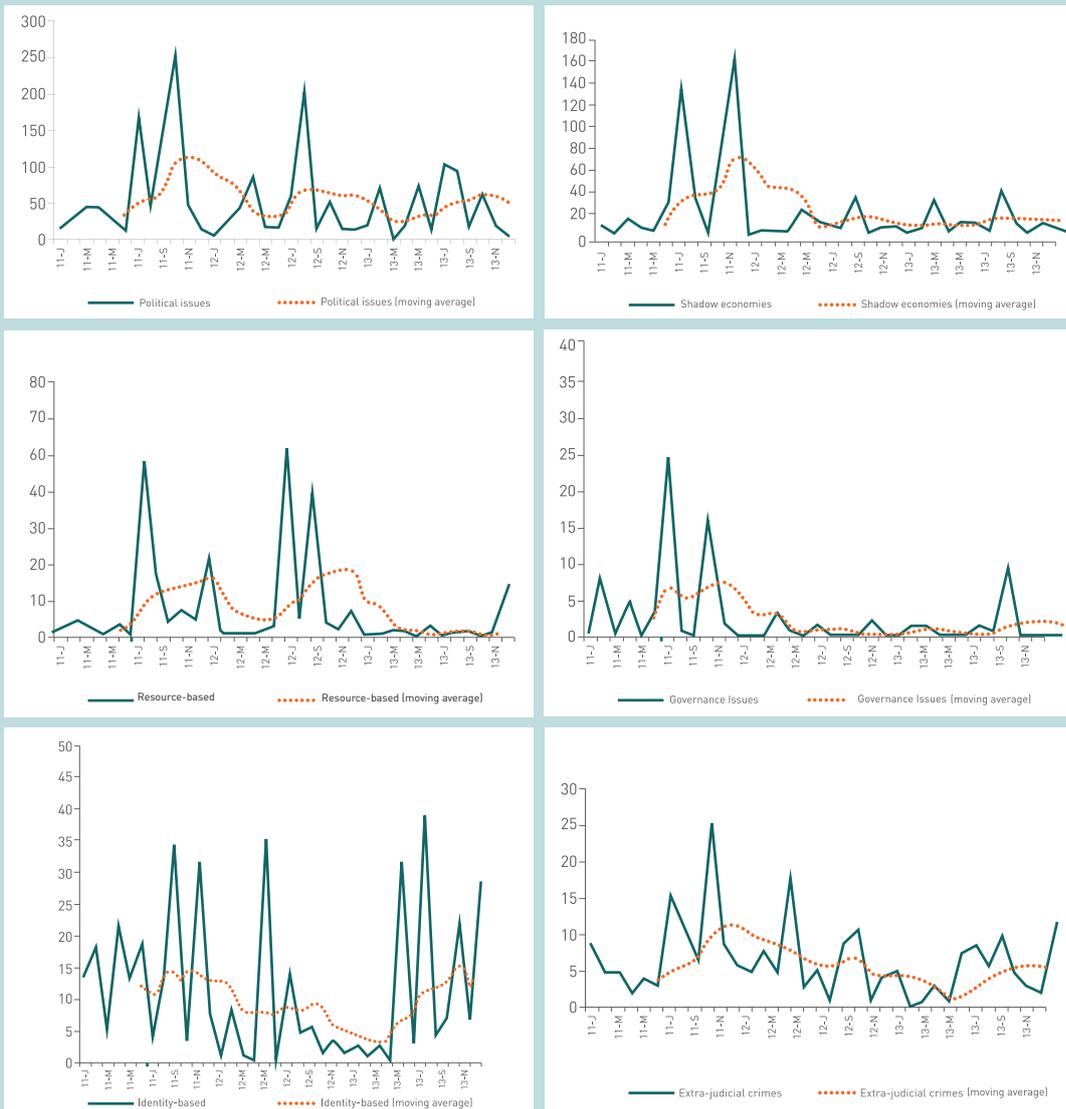
persons, with 973 wounded and the displacement of more than 22,433 families. Political violence was not only pervasive and enduring, but deadlier as well (Figures 20 and 21).

Finally, the good news in terms of human costs is the declining trend over the period 2011-2013, as shown in the moving average trend line for most conflict types. (Box 7).



### Box 7: Average trend lines

Except for the extra-judicial and identity-based causes of violent conflict, we see declining average trend lines for political, shadow economy, resource, and governance as causes of conflict.



## Conclusion

### The enduring and newly emerging causes of violence in the Bangsamoro

Data generated by the BCMS for 2011-2013 reinforces some of the enduring explanations about the dynamics of conflict and its causes, but it also reveals some of the newly emerging causes of violence and exposes some of the myths and misconceptions in the reigning narrative about violent conflict in the Bangsamoro.

#### 1. Persistent clan violence

The armed violence from rebel organisations, local elites, and criminal groups masks an enduring feature of violent conflict in Mindanao exposed by the BCMS data—the resilience of clan institutions and the corresponding persistence of clan-related violence. Political contestation before, during, and after elections is sustained by the entrenched control of clans over political office. The deadly competition for control over certain aspects of Mindanao’s formal and informal economy contains the imprint of local clans. Even flashpoints among different rebel groups and the State are often a function of clan conflicts over land and other resources. Except for armed encounters between rebels and government forces and some incidents erupting from extra-judicial issues, there are few incidents that are not in one way connected to clan institutions—and their principal role in providing protection and ensuring retribution.

#### 2. Shadow economies are pervasive causes of violence

One may argue that the abovementioned data merely supports the prevailing narrative about the links between politics and clans as a powerful signifier of recurring violence in the Bangsamoro. While there is certainly some consistency in the persistent nature of clan violence, the data also shows that the triggers of clan violence that were previously located in land issues and political competition largely ignored how the rapidly expanding shadow economies of Mindanao enabled clans to significantly expand their economic and political power.

The endemic nature and wide scope of Mindanao shadow economies are a neglected aspect in the discourse and practice of peacebuilding in the Bangsamoro. In particular, the illegal firearms and illicit drugs market have figured in many cases of violence in the economic and political marketplace. Increased cases of clan feuding are likewise emerging from business competition and illicit financial schemes.

#### 3. Dominance of horizontal over vertical violence

The quantitative data departs significantly from the value ascribed, for example, to rebellion-related violence as the principal form of violence. The role of ethnic identities, and the importance of land and other resource issues as triggers of conflict have been dissected extensively in the literature of conflict, and still figure in the BCMS database, but not as intensely as the other causes of violent conflict such as Mindanao’s shadow economy. The data also amplifies certain puzzles that need explaining, including the paradox of Tawi-Tawi and Basilan—extreme cases that lie at opposite ends of the conflict pole.

Examining the 2011-2013 data gathered from the PNP and media reports indicates that violence in the Bangsamoro has been largely caused by horizontal conflict as against vertical conflict. Horizontal

inequalities, as underscored in the UNDP 2005 and World Bank 2011 conflict and development reports, between and among clans, ethnic groups, political elites, and private armed groups are producing more violence than insurgent, paramilitary, and government security forces. Most of the cases of horizontal conflict in the Bangsamoro are in the form of clan feuding and violent factional rivalries among rebel groups.

#### **4. Multi-causal nature of conflict and the phenomenon of violent strings**

The data reveals the significant multi-causal nature of violence and the phenomenon of violent strings in the Bangsamoro. Most reports indicate that violence erupts from a multitude of causes that can grow into strings and morph victims into perpetrators, and clan feuding into intra or inter insurgent violence. It is not unusual for political issues to fuse with shadow economy or inter and intra clan violence in the Bangsamoro. The multi-causal nature of conflict and the endurance of clan feuding explain the phenomenon of violent strings, as well as newly emerging shadow economies such as pyramid scams. They beg the development of strategies that can disrupt these violent strings—highlighting the value of traditional and legitimate conflict resolution mechanisms that can interrupt violence at the outset.

#### **5. Religion as weak predictors of violence**

Religious affiliations are dwarfed by other causes of violence. Clan and tribal identities figure more prominently as underlying causes of violence. This finding underscores the conclusions in previous studies showing that the Muslim-Christian divide is not a significant predictor of violent conflict in the Bangsamoro.<sup>24</sup>

#### **6. Magnitude matters, human costs count!**

The BCMS reinforces the need to combine conflict incidence with measures of human cost in determining priorities and approaches. It is clear how the emphasis of peacebuilding actions can shift in spatial and temporal terms when combined with the magnitude of violence. The case of Sulu, which moved from being fourth on the list of conflict affected areas to second on the list after accounting for the costs of conflict demonstrates this need. This also underscores the need for an analytical tool that captures both frequency and magnitude. Alert has begun the process of developing a violence intensity index (VII) to address this deficit in current interpretations and explanations of conflict data. A report on this will be published as a thematic brief and future general reports will include analysis of violence intensity, including regular maps highlighting hot spots and changing trends in intensity.

#### **7. Political violence inflicts the largest human cost.**

Political violence associated with rebellion and insurgency reoccupies the centre stage when human costs are factored into the equation. While horizontal violence trumps vertical violence in terms of incidence and causes, the trend is reversed when human costs are brought to bear on the evidence. Zeroing in on the political issues category also shows that rebellion-related violence trumped electoral and other forms of horizontal political contestation.

Without a doubt, ending the GPH-MILF conflict as a major source of rebellion-related violence retires a significant source of political violence with huge costs in terms of death, injury, and displacement, and will impact positively on the prospects for peace and stability across the Bangsamoro.

<sup>24</sup> McKenna, T. (1998). *Muslim rulers and rebels*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Abinales, P. (2000). *Making Mindanao: Cotabato and Davao in the formation of the nation state*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

## 8. Localised nature of violence in the Bangsamoro

The data shows how the local barangay elections caused more violence than the mid-term national elections, indicating the localised nature of violence in the Bangsamoro. The more intimate face to face competition between rivals for political office at the village level is deadlier than political competitions for municipal, provincial, and national offices. This characteristic coincides with the importance of land-related conflicts as a major source of violence and the predominance of civilian actors as casualties of violence at the local level.

### Policy implications and next steps

The data exposes several policy implications that can inform development and peacebuilding programs and activities in the Bangsamoro, four of which are most important:

**One**, the BCMS reveals new and important signifiers of violence that should shape development and peacebuilding policy and practice. Some of these have been flagged in other studies about the scale of Mindanao's shadow economies, the rise of new insurgent groups and the expansion of organized crime activities. Development and peacebuilding strategies and approaches should not remain blind to these newly emerging sources of violence. For many development actors this means renewing strategies and working on distinct areas of concern such as criminal and seasonal violence while sustaining their support for formal peace processes. It would be a mistake to assume that violent conflict in the Bangsamoro will end simply because formal peace processes have reached a positive outcome.

**Two**, development and peacebuilding initiatives should take into greater consideration horizontal inequalities and other causes of violent conflict that are located in the shadow economy and in the enduring clan feuds that spark recurring violence in the Bangsamoro. The phenomenon of conflict strings and the morphing of violence should pave the way for effective measures that can disrupt these strings of violence. Hybrid arrangements such as anti-clan feuding coalitions or the use of traditional institutions of justice should be explored to prevent violent strings and morphing that can produce higher human costs. With *rido* continuing as a major source of violence, an exploration of which aspects of clan rules that govern behaviour and retribution can be incorporated into development and peacebuilding practice alongside notions of impunity, fairness, equality before the law and human rights. These are particularly crucial in the transition period.

**Three**, immediate steps should be taken to address the violence emanating from new threat groups and criminal gangs. The transitional authority and the new political entity in the Bangsamoro will have to mitigate the risk of these groups disrupting the transition process, by working with key stakeholders, e.g., clan leaders, private sector, local governments, and community-based organisations, to harness, develop, and implement calibrated and nuanced responses to transition-induced violence and the shadow economies in guns, drugs, and kidnap for ransom. A calibrated response requires that a distinction be maintained between the more pernicious and deadly shadow economic activities, and the more informal, coping, livelihood economies that involve many poor and disadvantaged people. Any approach should target eliminating the former, and not the latter, in the first instance.

**Four**, the seasonal nature of violence reveals new priorities and approaches that should inform and guide the sequencing of responses by the security sector, national government agencies, and local governments in preventing violence during particular seasonal junctures and during election time. For example, programming the provision of welfare services to march in step with anticipated periods of great pressure and stress, and infusing additional livelihood sources during lean months could be provided through local government programs and private sector initiatives.

## Next steps

The BCMS is new and is a living and evolving system that will continue to explore, assess, and harness additional data sources to capture incidents not covered by police and media reports. The database will soon be accessible in the public domain and will provide information and data on sub-national conflict and violence not previously available in real time.

Future activities will include:

**First**, widening and deepening the sources of data to improve conflict monitoring and sharpen the conflict and causal categories to better depict causes of conflict and violence—thus enriching the analytical capacities of the system. As aforementioned, the next phase shall include the gathering of comparable data on violent conflict from the adjacent provinces of North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Zamboanga Sur, and Lanao Norte. Supplementary sources of data shall be explored to generate more accurate data on human costs such as displacement; organized crime and shadow economies, and clan feuding. Local conflict resolution mechanisms have been identified as potent sources of these data, and such mechanisms will be tapped.

**Second**, strengthening and resourcing the MSVG to enable the group to more effectively address the data gaps at the local and provincial levels. BCMS partner institutions managing the MSVGs will be continually provided with capacity development support until such time that they can sustain the initiative using their own resources and capacities.

**Third**, publishing thematic policy briefs on important issues underlined in the report, including the phenomenon of conflict strings and morphing; case studies of violent shadow economies; seasonal issues affecting violent conflict; and the violence intensity index. These papers will march in step with the publication of the BCMS methodology handbook and the continued harvesting of data on violent conflict for the publication of the 2014 annual report.

**Fourth**, working closely with inter-agency bodies mandated to monitor and address violent conflict in an attempt to harmonize databases and to share analysis where relevant. The BCMS will engage further in helping and supporting the efforts of the National Law Enforcement Coordinating Council (NALECC) to develop a serious organized crime trend analysis system (SOCTA). This initiative will march in step with efforts to provide advice and technical support to the relevant executive and legislative bodies engaged in strengthening the campaign against loose firearms.

**Fifth**, focusing attention and maximizing support to the organizational infrastructure that is created as an outcome of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB). Emphasis will be given to the provision of regular briefings and reports to the Joint Normalization Committee, the Third-Party Monitoring Team, Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) and other relevant agencies.

**Sixth**, linking with development agencies, local governments, and civil society groups to promote the gathering and sharing of data on violent conflict. The BCMS database will supply relevant information and data that can enhance the programming, planning, targeting, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes of development and peacebuilding agencies and programs.

**Seventh**, fostering cross-learning and knowledge creation through the formation of policy communities that target specific issues that trigger violent conflict, among academics, government executives, security sector professionals, development workers, local and international donor agencies, and others.

**Finally**, launching the user-defined online platform will require a wide range of security features and speedier internet access. In the meantime, as security arrangements and other quality control and advanced search features are being enhanced, selected organizations will be immediately provided with access rights given the urgent need for conflict data. The data will be made available through a project website managed by Alert once these arrangements are put in place.

## Annex A. Data tables

**Table 1.** Geographic distribution of violence (2011-2013)

Province	Incidents		
	2011	2012	2013
Basilan	258	246	184
Lanao Sur	159	85	209
Maguindanao	464	201	443
Sulu	175	94	124
Tawi-Tawi	59	29	28
Total (per year)	1,115	655	988
Total (incidents)	2,578		

**Table 2.** Human cost by cause (2011-2013)

Type of political violence	Total number of persons killed, wounded, and missing/kidnapped		
	2011	2012	2013
Rebellion-related	258	246	184
Conflict over elective positions	159	85	209
Conflict between and among insurgents/ rebel groups	464	201	443

**Table 3.** Causal distribution of violence (2011-2013)

Causes	Incidents			Total (per cause)	% to Total
	2011	2012	2013		
Extra-judicial crimes/ popular justice	163	100	125	388	22.13
Governance issues	66	15	24	105	5.99
Identity-based conflict	74	40	54	168	9.58
Political issues	186	141	166	493	28.12
Resource-based conflict	34	19	13	66	3.76
Shadow economies	250	108	175	533	30.41
Total (per year)	773	423	557		100.00
Total (incidents with clear cause)	1,753				





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