

Child Rights Situational Analysis (CRSA) in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)

Jovar Gallaza Pantao | Brian Adam Salvador Anay



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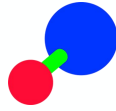
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**Transforming
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ChildFund Philippines is a branch of ChildFund International, a nonprofit organization working toward a world where children are free to live at their fullest potential, no matter where they're from or what challenges they face. Formerly known as Christian Children's Fund (CCF), ChildFund International helps children facing poverty and other challenges in 24 countries, including the United States.

In 1971, the National Office was established in response to a UN report citing the Philippines as one of the two countries in South East Asia with the highest malnutrition rate. ChildFund's mission is to help children living in poverty to have the capacity to improve their lives and the opportunity to bring lasting change to their communities; promote societies that value, protect, and advance the well-being and rights of children; and enrich supporters' lives through their support of ChildFund's cause. Through programs in early childhood care and development, education, child protection, livelihood, and disaster risk management following the life-stage approach, ChildFund seeks to help ensure that children grow up healthy, educated, skilled, and safe.

Transforming Fragilities Inc. (TFI) is a Philippine NGO that focuses on research, monitoring, and evaluation (M&E), capability building, organizational development, and data-driven project management and implementation. Experts in peace and development, technical and management specialists, and cadres of provincial field researchers skilled in gathering qualitative and quantitative data all comprise the organization. They have come together to provide high-quality monitoring and evaluation, research and learning, capability development, organizational development support, and evidence-based project management and implementation with local and international development agencies, as well as programs that help transform fragile communities and situations in Mindanao and select provinces in Luzon and Visayas.

Disclaimer: TFI strongly observes the Data Privacy Act of 2012, otherwise known as Republic Act No. 10173. All audio and visual media were taken with the consent of the individuals who appear in photos, videos, and audio recordings collected by TFI during the conduct of this assessment. TFI ensures that the identities of these individuals remain anonymous.

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This study is the result of a collaborative effort between ChildFund Philippines and Transforming Fragilities, Inc. (TFI).

This study is in line with ChildFund Philippine's current Country Strategic Plan (CSP), which intends to continue and expand its programming and increase its visibility within the BARMM. This study gave TFI the opportunity to work closely with stakeholders and actors that promote the rights and welfare of children in the Bangsamoro Region.

The report was jointly written by Co-Principal Investigators Jovar G. Pantao and Brian Adam Anay of Transforming Fragilities, Inc. Contributors to the report are Bagian Aleyssa A. Abdulkarim, Karl Alvin E. Aglibot, Kartini Tahir-Amilasan, Ludy Duarte Borja, Miguel L. Burton, Clarissa Ayangco-Derramas, Joel D. Dizon, Muhamadissa C. Guiam, Alfadzni S. Haddimah, Janice A. Jalali, Saudi A. Kadil, Judith Joy G. Libarnes, Settie Sahara Mutia-Magompara, Rholaisa B. Mamailao, Yasmira P. Moner, Ahmed Harris R. Pangcoga, Janabeth A. Soguilon, Ayesha P. Warid, and Omar-Mukhtar T. Yap.

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Executive Summary

The primary goal of this situational analysis is to provide a thorough picture of the current conditions that children in the BARMM are living in from the standpoint of their rights. Specifically, this analysis aimed to: provide an in-depth analysis of the current situation of children in the BARMM from a child rights perspective; evaluate the degree to which child rights are being realized; and offer guidance for designing and implementing relevant initiatives

to address gaps and ensure the fulfillment of children's rights.

The situational study employed a multilevel method to generate information about promotion of children's rights in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. It involved a thorough desk review, during which reports, and data about child rights, socioeconomic circumstances, education, healthcare, and protection were thoroughly analyzed. By obtaining relevant data from BARMM offices and other government organizations, secondary data collecting significantly enhanced this endeavor and ensured a comprehensive approach to capture the needed data.

With 28 interviews facilitated around the region, key informant interviews were a critical component of this analysis. These interviews tapped into the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders, including NGOs, provincial officials, public school administrators, and local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). In order to address urgent issues affecting children, formal methods were used during stakeholder consultations with parents, children, CSOs, and Local Government Units. The methodology promoted a participatory approach, collaboration, and inclusivity in the analysis of children's rights in the BARMM by interacting directly with these stakeholders.

The result of the analysis revealed that while there has been some improvement, there are still many major challenges to overcome when examining the state of child rights and freedom in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Even with the passage of the Free Registration Act in 2013, disparities in birth registration rates persist, especially in regions like Tawi-Tawi and Basilan, putting certain children at risk of becoming stateless. The challenges of guaranteeing children's rights and access to education are further exacerbated by problems like forced school dropouts as a result of pandemic-related closures and the existence of non-state armed groups.

Even with the structural commitment to education demonstrated by the establishment of the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE), there are still a lot of concerns in education. Due to decreasing net enrollment rates and attendance, particularly at the secondary level, the learning crisis brought on by pandemic-related closures has brought attention to how vulnerable the students in the area are. The difficulties in guaranteeing fair access to education throughout the BARMM, particularly in isolated and rural areas, are further highlighted by issues including gender inequality, socioeconomic hurdles, and poor infrastructure.

In terms of welfare and health, the BARMM has several challenges to overcome, such as insufficient medical facilities, complicated dietary problems, a high incidence of adolescent



pregnancy, and differences in the care provided to mothers and children. Notable advancements in nutrition, disease prevention, and healthcare accessibility are still present, despite the fact that institutionalized delivery facilities and excellent breastfeeding practices point to some progress. A change in emphasis towards more adaptable funding modalities is shown by the region's changing health financing landscape; nonetheless, tackling enduring issues like HIV/AIDS awareness and tuberculosis surveillance cannot be overlooked.

In addition, the complex vulnerabilities that children in the BARMM face—such as early marriage, underage labor, human trafficking, displacement, and engagement in violent conflicts—are made clear by special protection measures. Although there are proactive programs and legislative frameworks in place, focused interventions are urgently needed to address these concerns in their entirety.

This analysis recommends various measures across multiple sectors in a concerted effort to protect the rights and freedoms of children in the BARMM region. One way to encourage prompt birth registration is by organizing local leaders, community organizations, and religious institutions to conduct outreach programs, especially in remote areas. Comprehensive educational reforms are also proposed, including the creation of a peace education academy, STEAM education promotion, and literacy tutoring programs. On the other hand, health and welfare issues are to be addressed by updating healthcare facilities, creating programs to educate people about sexual and reproductive health, and improving maternity care services.

There is also a need to amplify special protection measures by increasing child protection systems, expanding anti-child labor initiatives, and supporting indigenous rights and climate resilience. Additionally, child rights governance strategies encompass training programs for stakeholders, expanding holistic education approaches, and establishing a dedicated center for children's rights. A pivotal recommendation involves allocating resources to develop an online platform like the Mindanao Children's Rights Data Program (MCRDP), which would provide comprehensive information and datasets crucial for advancing children's rights in the BARMM and institutionalization of the Mindanao Center for Children's Rights. Lastly, establishing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework is proposed to gauge the effectiveness of legislative measures and policies in promoting children's rights.



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Acronyms/Abbreviations

4Ps	Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
AIP	Annual Implementation Plan
ALS	Alternative Learning System
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
BBL	Bangsamoro Basic Law
BCPC	Barangay Child Protection Committee
BDP	Bangsamoro Development Plan
BIFF	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
BIWAB	Bangsamoro Islamic Women Auxiliary Brigade
BLGU	Barangay Local Government Unit
BOL	Bangsamoro Organic Law
BOL	Bangsamoro Organic Law
BTA	Bangsamoro Transition Authority
CAB	Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro
CAR	Cordillera Administrative Region
CEFM	Child, Early, and Forced Marriage
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CPH	Census of Population and Housing
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRG	Child Rights Governance
CRSA	Child Rights Situational Analysis
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DEPED	Department of Education
DOH	Department of Health
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
ECDD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ES	Elementary School
FAB	Framework Agreement of the Bangsamoro
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FLEMMS	Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey
FPA	Final Peace Agreement
GAD	Gender and Development
GPH	Government of the Philippines
GRDE	Gross Regional Domestic Expenditure
GRDP	Gross Regional Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEC	Information, Education, and Communication
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILRC	Inclusive Learning Resource Centers



IP	Indigenous People
IPHO	Integrated Provincial Health Office
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JHS	Junior High School
KII	Key Informant Interview
LCPC	Local Council for the Protection of Children
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
LGU	Local government unit
MBHTE	Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MILG	Ministry of the Interior and Local Government
MinDA	Mindanao Development Authority
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MOA-AD	Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain
MOLE	Ministry of Labor and Employment
MSSD	Ministry of Social Services and Development
NCR	National Capital Region
NPA	New People's Army
NUC	National Unification Commission
NYC	National Youth Commission
OPAPP	Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process
OSAEL	Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Law
OSEC	Online Sexual Exploitation of Children
PCPC	Provincial Child Protection Committee
PES	Parent Effectiveness Service
PH	Philippines
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PNP	Philippine National Police
PSA	Philippine Statistics Authority
RA	Republic Act
RHU	Rural Health Unit
SAF	Special Action Forces
SEA-PALM	Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics
SGA	Special Geographic Area
SHS	Senior High School
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SPED	Special Education
SSG	Supreme Student Government
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
SZOPAD	Special Zone of Peace and Development
TB	Tuberculosis
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
TFBM	Task Force Bangon Marawi
TFI	Transforming Fragilities Incorporated
TPWC	Tawi-Tawi Provincial Women Council
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIPHYL	United Youth of the Philippines
USA	United States of America



VAWC	Violence Against Women and Children
WCPD	Women and Children Protection Center
WHO	World Health Organization
YAFS	Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality

Definition of Terms

Armed Conflict refers to a violent confrontation between government and its armed forces on the one hand, and criminal, terror, insurgent, or separatist groups on the other hand. It also includes political feuds and conflicts between clans or families and between indigenous cultural communities and other conflicts resulting in the displacement of the children.

Bangsamoro refers to any of the thirteen (13) ethno-linguistic tribes indigenous to Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan who have been Islamized prior to the Spanish colonization of the Philippines.

Children refers to persons below eighteen (18) years of age or those over but are unable to fully take care of themselves or protect themselves from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, or discrimination because of a physical or mental disability or condition (RA 7610).

Children in Situations of Armed Conflict (CSAC) refers to:

1. Children facing threat to life due to armed conflict.
2. Children of displaced families as a result of armed conflict.
3. Those physically weakened, abandoned, lost, orphaned or disabled as a result of armed conflict.
4. Emotionally traumatized children due to armed conflict.
5. Children whose immediate family member/guardians have been detained, killed or have disappeared due to armed conflict.
6. Children combatants and those mobilized for other armed conflict related activities.
7. Children whose schooling or lives have been disrupted due to an armed conflict; and
8. Children deprived of liberty due to armed conflict.

Child Poverty refers to the phenomenon of children living in poverty. This applies to children that come from poor families or orphans being raised with limited, or in some cases absent, state resources. Children that fail to meet the minimum acceptable standard of living for the nation where that child lives are said to be poor.

Child Protection refers to programs, services, procedures, and structures that are intended to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, and violence.

Child Rights Approach refers to the approach that uses child rights standards and principles from the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights instruments to guide behavior, actions, policies and programmes: in particular non-discrimination; the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; the right to be heard and taken seriously; and the child's right to be guided in the exercise of his/her rights by caregivers, parents and community members, in line with the child's evolving capacities.

Development refers to the comprehensive economic, social, cultural, and political process aimed at the constant improvement of the self-being of the entire population and of all individuals based on their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of the resulting benefits.

Human Rights refers to the supreme, inherent, and inalienable rights to life, to dignity and to self-development. It is the essence of these that makes man human.



IP/Indigenous People refers to any of the eighteen (18) indigenous tribes in Mindanao who have initially preserved their socio-cultural way of life from the spread of Islam and Spanish rule.

Internally Displaced Persons refer to persons (or group of persons) who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular because of or in order to avoid the effects of natural or human-induced disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border.

Rights-Based Approach refers to is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protection human rights applying the integration of the norms, standards and principles of the international human rights system into the plans, policies and processes of development.

Chapter I. Introduction

I. Rationale

ChildFund Philippines, a well-known nonprofit organization that advocates for children's welfare, has determined that the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) is a strategically significant area. The organization recognizes that children and their families in the BARMM confront significant challenges due to high rates of poverty, deprivation, exclusion, and vulnerability. This commitment is ingrained in the current Country Strategic Plan, where ChildFund Philippines aims to extend its reach to Lanao del Sur in addition to its current programs in Maguindanao, by increasing its programming and visibility specifically in the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi.

ChildFund Philippines has focused on the BARMM because of its distinct socio-cultural setting and the pressing need for focused initiatives to address the various difficulties affecting children and their families. Unfortunately, the availability of updated information regarding the actual situation of children within the BARMM has become difficult due to recent socio-political developments in the region and the ongoing effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Understanding the value of well-informed choices and customized solutions, ChildFund Philippines has launched an extensive study project. The main objective of this study is to close the data gaps that currently exist and offer a comprehensive picture of the current circumstances that children in the BARMM are facing from the perspective of their rights. This endeavor is essential, particularly in light of the region's dynamic nature and the extraordinary challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic.

The purpose of the research findings is to provide ChildFund Philippines and its cooperating partners with useful information for project development, advocacy, and communication. The findings hope to make a significant contribution to the planning and execution of programs that are both pertinent and sensitive to the requirements of children and their families in the area by illuminating the reality that children in the BARMM must contend with.

ChildFund Philippines intends to share the research findings with a wide range of stakeholders, including the government of the BARMM, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies, and local government units. The main goal is to support evidence-based decision-making and direct programmatic and policy actions that put the rights and welfare of boys and girls in the BARMM first.

II. Objectives

This situational analysis aimed to:

1. provide an in-depth analysis of the current situation of children in the BARMM from a child right perspective;
2. evaluate the degree to which child rights are being realized; and

3. offer guidance for designing and implementing relevant initiatives to address gaps and ensure the fulfillment of children's rights.

III. Conceptual Framework

The CRSA framework developed by Save the Children was used as a guide in understanding the situation of children and their rights in the BARMM.

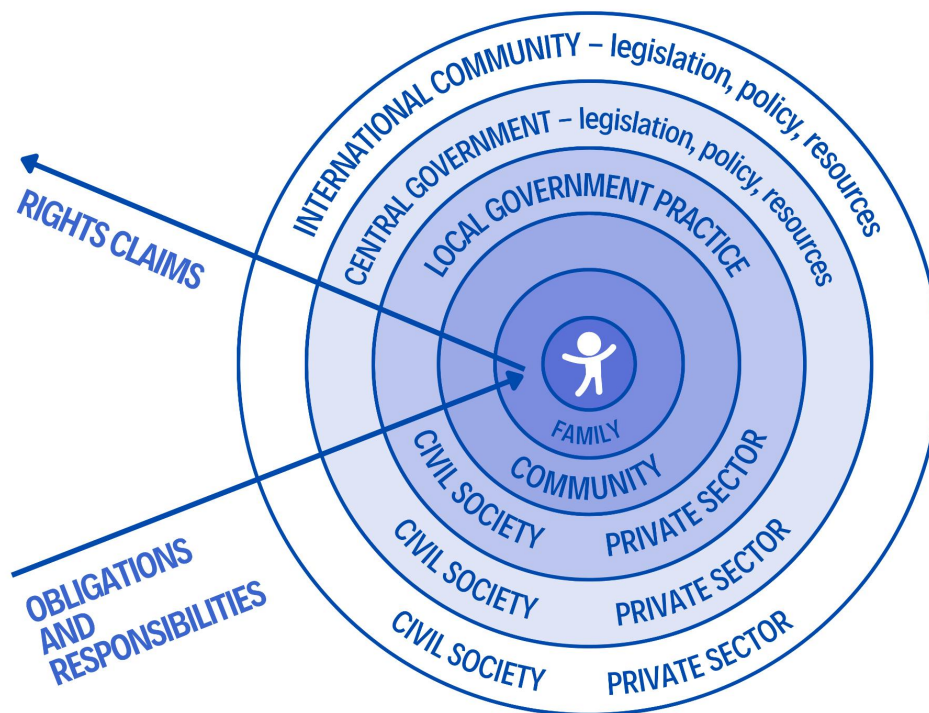


Figure 1. Child Rights Situational Analysis (CRSA) Framework

Save the Children explained that at the core of a CRSA is the status of the relationship between the parties to the social contract, in other words, between the children who are the subjects of rights (the rights holders) and the people and institutions who have obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill those rights (the duty bearers). Key to children's sustained realization of their rights are systems of accountability and the provision of opportunities for rights holders to participate in these systems and in decision-making that affects them and the realization of their rights.

The establishment of rights requires that people and institutions with responsibilities (duty bearers) not only fulfill them but also collaborate and support each other in a chain of public service delivery such that all children everywhere have access to what they need to survive and develop their full potential. All parts of this duty bearer chain should be functioning together for us to say that the right is being fully realized. Every country has its own particular mix of state and non-state involvement in protecting and fulfilling rights. Key actors involved in

the delivery of public services (e.g., health, education, and protection) will include the state itself (at the very least in determining policy, formulating legislation, and raising resources from its taxation base), but may also involve individuals (as taxpayers and electors), civil society, faith and not-for-profit organizations, and the private sector. The mix of actors depends on the way in which a state and society choose to ensure that commitments made to children are best fulfilled.

IV. Methodology

This situational analysis employed the following processes to generate quantitative and qualitative data about the promotion of children's rights in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Desk Review. TFI carried out an extensive desk study for the Child Rights Situational Analysis (CRSA), looking through reports, data, and current literature pertaining to child rights, socioeconomic conditions, education, healthcare, protection, and other pertinent areas. Understanding the background and finding data gaps in Mindanao, especially in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), was made possible thanks in large part to this thorough examination. The desk review examined important topics pertaining to governance as a foundational element in matters concerning children. This involved assessing plans of action for children, investigating provisions in the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), analyzing current and future policy measures, analyzing the Magna Carta for Children's implementation and impact, analyzing regional development plans, closely examining government budgets designated for children, coordinating the current situation with the measures of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), completing a Child Rights Governance (CRG) analysis, and assessing the cooperation among various stakeholders for the effective delivery of children's rights. The goal of this procedure was to offer a thorough grasp of the state of child rights in the area.

Secondary Data Collection. An official letter was sent to the offices of the BARMM, and other relevant agencies were made to gather data on children's rights. Relevant reports and data pertaining to child rights, socio-economic conditions, education, healthcare, protection, and other pertinent areas were thoroughly reviewed. The focus was on extracting valuable information from sources within the BARMM offices and other government agencies.

Key Informant Interviews. Throughout this Child Rights Situational Analysis (CRSA), TFI conducted a total of twenty-eight (28) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), five of which were conducted in each province. Principals of public schools, provincial officials with direct knowledge of and involvement in child-focused and child-oriented programs, and local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that operate exclusively within each province and carry out child-oriented projects and programs with the help of the local government were among the key informants chosen for these interviews. Furthermore, KIIs were implemented in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that served the entire BARMM region and actively participated in initiatives and activities oriented around children. This extensive method of conducting key informant interviews made it possible to thoroughly examine the many viewpoints and insights pertinent to children's rights in each of the BARMM's provinces.

Stakeholder Consultations. In a series of consultations with Local Government Units, Civil Society Organizations, parents and children, representatives were invited to engage in a

structured process aimed at addressing pressing issues affecting the children in the BARMM. A total of six (6) consultations were facilitated to generate input about the children in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

- A. LGUs and CSOs.** Representatives from the Local Government Units and Civil Society Organizations were invited to attend a consultation. They were encouraged to participate in a structured series of steps aimed at addressing pressing issues affecting children in a province. Beginning with community profiling, participants were divided into groups to collaboratively identify and analyze key issues across various domains such as peace and conflict, environment, health, socioeconomics, and governance. Through a gender-sensitive lens, participants delved into the impact of key drivers on children's daily lives. Furthermore, the subsequent steps focused on detailed analyses and modeling. In this process, the participants were engaged in child-sensitive analysis in the local context, mapping the relationship between causes and effects related to the identified key driver of conflict. Following this, child-centered peacebuilding modeling allowed the participants to share and categorize initiatives they had undertaken. Responsive child-centered programming involved positioning these initiatives based on their focus on people and change. The last step was facilitated to make the participants explore the prospects for responsive, child-centered programming. This session prompted the participants to collaboratively identify and propose solutions to address gaps in child-centered initiatives, fostering a comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing children's needs in the BARMM.
- B. Parents.** During the parent consultation, the importance of identifying major issues affecting children was emphasized, fostering a reflective dialogue among participants about their experiences while maintaining privacy. The initial step involved listing and ranking child protection concerns in the community. This was followed by the "Web of Support" activity, where participants named individuals or organizations providing care, support, and protection for children. The passing of a string between volunteers symbolized a collaborative network of protective factors, and the ensuing discussion highlighted the effectiveness of such cooperation. Subsequent follow-up questions delved deeper into the supportive system for children. The community mapping activity allowed parents to visually represent their communities, marking key locations and potential risks, offering valuable insights into community dynamics. Another activity explored factors contributing to children's well-being, with participants drawing and sharing insights about children doing well and facing challenges. Group discussions revealed commonalities and variations, addressing difficulties in children's growth and coping strategies. These activities collectively provided information on child protection concerns, community dynamics, and the factors influencing children's well-being in the participants' respective communities.
- C. Children.** The consultation with children began with the group activity "Body Mapping", where boys and girls were divided into groups and tasked with tracing a child's whole body on Manila paper. Each body part represents different aspects of their experiences and feelings in the community, from thoughts and observations to actions and where they go. The groups of children during this consultation shared their insights, discussing positive and negative aspects related to each body part. Following this was a Children's Participatory Assessment where a group of boys and a group of girls were asked to grade pre-written statements on community conditions. The session concluded with a "Visioning" group activity, where children were divided into groups of three and asked to draw a vision of the community, they wanted to live in one to three years from the

present. They also depicted potential obstacles and identified actions needed to realize their vision. Each child shared their individual visions, ensuring their explanations were documented.

Data Analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches were used during the Child Rights Situational Analysis (CRSA) analysis phase. The information gathered from Steps 1 and 2 of the CRSA was processed and combined by the consultant. To provide a comprehensive situational analysis, this involved doing data and contextual analysis, making use of both quantitative and qualitative findings, and cross-referencing them. The consultant carefully reviewed the results to have a thorough grasp of the state of child rights. The findings were then shared with ChildFund officials for their input, guaranteeing a cooperative and inclusive process for honing the findings prior to the CRSA Report's completion.

V. Geographical Coverage

This study covered thirteen (13) municipalities from six (6) provinces in BARMM. The following provinces and municipalities are as follows: Lanao del Sur (Piagapo, Sagonsongan, Saguilaran); Maguindanao del Norte and Maguindanao del Sur (Datu Paglas, Buluan, Paglat); Basilan (Lamitan, Lantawan, Maluso); Sulu (Patikul, Indanan, Jolo); Tawi-tawi (Bongao).

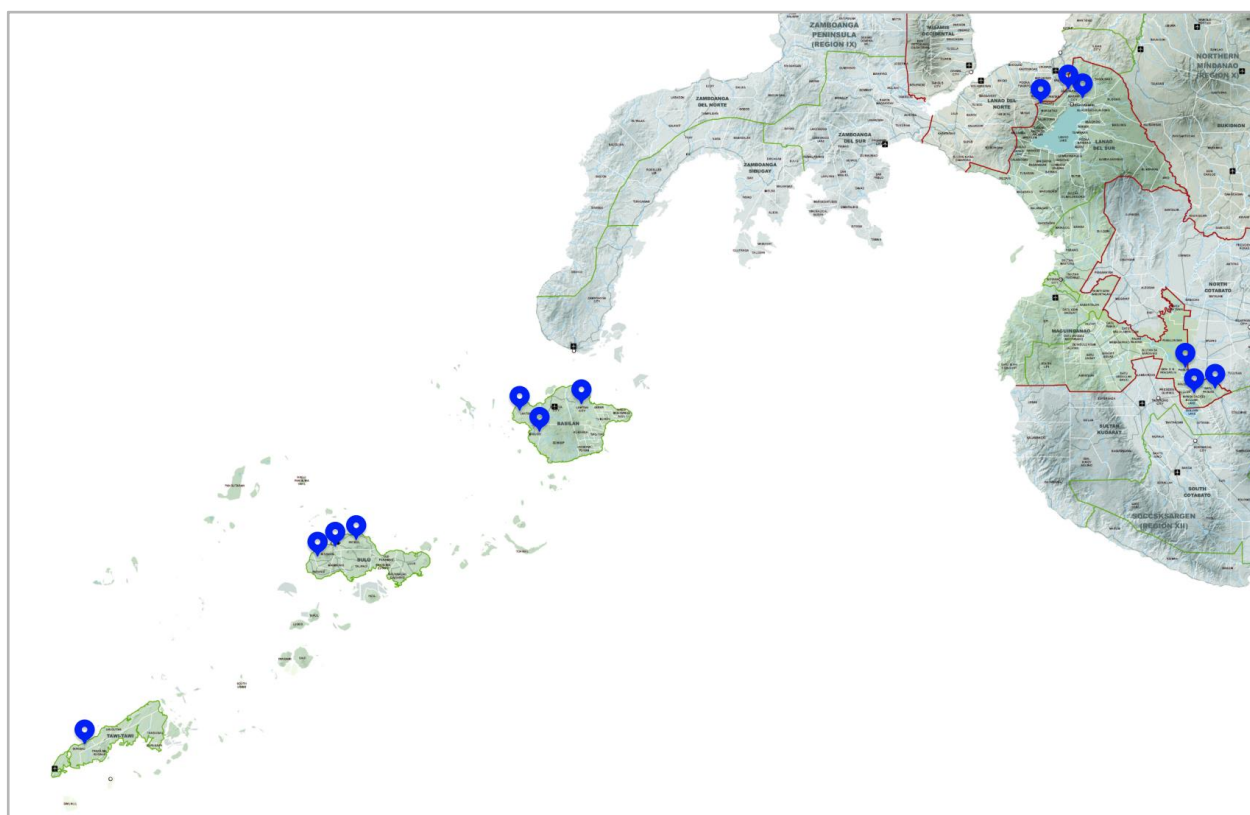


Figure 2. Locale of the Situational Analysis
(Map Source: UNHCR Philippines)

VI. Limitations of the Analysis

A thorough approach to understanding the situation of child rights in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) is demonstrated on a wide range of data collection methods, including a desk review, secondary data collection, key informant interviews, stakeholder consultations with Local Government Units, Civil Society Organizations, parents, and children. These approaches do, however, also bring about some inherent restrictions that should be considered. Despite its length, the desk assessment might have missed context-specific and real-time subtleties that impact children's rights. Although highly valuable, key informant interviews may be skewed by the viewpoints of certain individuals and may not accurately reflect the opinions of the larger community. Even though they were inclusive, stakeholder discussions may not always guarantee equitable participation, particularly when considering the power dynamics within the community. the discussion with kids and parents,

Though enlightening, the parent and child consultation may have drawbacks due to potential participant unwillingness to divulge sensitive information and cultural boundaries. Furthermore, even with the use of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the data analysis stage may face difficulties in efficiently combining various data sources. These restrictions highlight the necessity of interpreting the data with caution and the significance of recognizing any potential biases and limits posed by the research techniques used.

During the analysis, there were various constraints that affected the breadth and depth of the analysis. Because respondents thought the guide questions were too long, there could have been information gaps because participants might not have paid attention to all the challenging questions. Some people denied interviews because they thought they weren't the right people to answer the questions, which could have influenced the results. The Special Geographic Area of North Cotabato does not have any municipalities under BARMM authority, and the recent establishment of significant agencies in target areas added to the difficulties in gathering data.

Moreover, access to thorough information was further hampered by some agencies' reluctance to work with BARMM partners. Effective data documentation was hampered by physical constraints, such as the effect of barangay elections on participant mobilization and scheduling problems that result in concurrent FGD sessions. Unreliable interview locations and frequent power outages were two other factors that affect the reliability of data gathering. In addition, obtaining trustworthy information was made more difficult by some respondents' hesitation, which stemmed from worries about confidentiality as well as a lack of child-centric groups in some locations. In addition, the low quality of the recorded audio made the transcription even more difficult and had a tendency to jeopardize the accuracy of the data analysis.

Chapter II. Context Analysis

I. Physical, Geographic, and Climate Features

Physical and Geographic Features

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) occupies the southwestern portion of the island of Mindanao, encompassing an area of 26,974 square kilometers. Its delineated borders trace a clockwise arc, commencing with the administrative region of Northern Mindanao to the north, followed by the SOCCSKSARGEN region to the west. Further south, the Moro Gulf gives way to the Celebes Sea, before finally yielding to the Sulu Sea in the southeast.

The BARMM consists of six (6) provinces (Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte, Maguindanao del Sur, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi), three (3) component cities (Marawi, Lamitan, Cotabato), one hundred sixteen (116) municipalities, and two thousand five hundred ninety (2,590) barangays¹. The city of Isabela, despite being part of Basilan, is not under the administrative jurisdiction of the BARMM. Likewise, sixty-three (63) barangays in North Cotabato also are part of Bangsamoro despite North Cotabato and their respective parent municipalities not being under the administrative jurisdiction of the autonomous region².

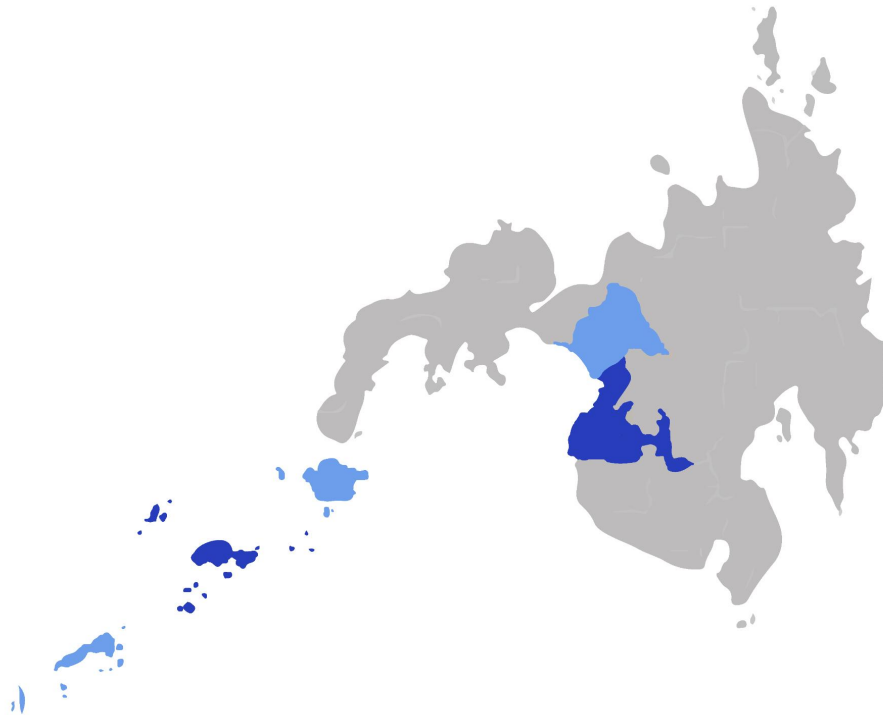


Figure 3. Map of Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao

¹ Mindanews. (2022, September 18). With Maguindanao split into 2, Mindanao now has 28 provinces and the BARMM has 6 . [MindaNews.mindanews.com/top-stories/2022/09/with-maguindanao-split-into-2-mindanao-now-has-28-provinces-and-barmm-has-6/](https://www.mindanews.com/top-stories/2022/09/with-maguindanao-split-into-2-mindanao-now-has-28-provinces-and-barmm-has-6/)

² Arguillas, C. O. (2020, November 10). Pikit's fate: 20 barangays remain with North Cotabato, 22 joining the BARMM. MindaNews. <https://www.mindanews.com/peace-process/2019/02/pikits-fate-20-barangays-remain-with-north-cotabato-22-joining-barmm/>

Maguindanao del Sur and Maguindanao del Norte can be found in the central part of Mindanao. It is bordered by Lanao del Sur to the north, Cotabato to the east, Sultan Kudarat to the south, and Illana Bay to the west. The climate in the area is tropical, with a 29.38 degrees Celsius annual average temperature and with significant 86.97 millimeters of rainfall annually³. The area is generally lowland with areas sloping from the foot of the hills to relatively flat as it approaches the sea. On the other hand, Lanao del Sur is dominated by rolling hills and valleys, and placid lakes and rivers. It has a total land area of 3,872.89 square kilometers. The area's climate is characterized by an even distribution of rainfall throughout the year, without a distinct summer season. Its annual average temperature is 23.66 degree celsius and receives about 283.23 millimeters of rainfall annually⁴.

Basilan is the northernmost and largest island of the Sulu Archipelago. The terrain of the island is made up of several slopes along the coastal areas and hilly towards the interior. The stand of timber and forest vegetation is evenly distributed throughout. The island's climate is like Zamboanga Peninsula, with an annual average rainfall of 1190 millimeters and a mean annual temperature of 28 degrees Celsius⁵. Sulu covers an area of 1,600.40 square kilometers⁶. As an island, it has a tropical climate with a significant amount of rainfall. The annual average temperature is at 28.2 degrees Celsius and the annual average rainfall is at 118.81 millimeters⁷. The area is composed of hundreds of volcanic and coral islands and numerous rocks and reefs. Tawi-Tawi is located at the southwestern tip of the country. It is composed of multiple islands. It is of volcanic origin and is generally hilly and heavily wooded. The climate is warm and moist⁸.

Climate Risks

In 2022, the Philippines ranked first in the World Risk Index among 193 countries worldwide⁹. The BARMM is not exempt from these climate fragility risks. The region is spared from the annual typhoon onslaught that affects other parts of the country because of its unique location. However, communities remain vulnerable to hazards such as erosion, earthquakes, and tsunamis. The 1st Bangsamoro Development Plan (BDP) summarizes the region's vulnerability to disasters and climate change. It states that, 'In recent years, the Bangsamoro region has become increasingly vulnerable to the harsh effects of climate change. Natural calamities have become more frequent and intense, such as flooding in low-lying areas that displaces thousands of families and incurs damages to properties. Environmental degradation also poses a threat, as the region loses the natural barriers and protection once provided by

³ Maguindanao, Philippines climate. Maguindanao, PH Climate Zone, Monthly Weather Averages and Historical Data. <https://weatherandclimate.com/philippines/maguindanao>

⁴ Lanao del Sur, Philippines climate. Lanao del Sur, PH Climate Zone, Monthly Weather Averages and Historical Data. https://weatherandclimate.com/philippines/lanao-del-sur#google_vignette

⁵ Weatherbase. Zamboanga, Philippines travel weather averages (Weatherbase). <https://www.weatherbase.com/weather.php3?s=63889&refer=&units=metric>

⁶ Salahuddin, T. Province of Sulu, Philippines: Brief profile. Province of Sulu, Philippines | Brief Profile. <https://web.archive.org/web/20110226001309/http://www.sulu.gov.ph/Profile.asp>

⁷ Sulu, Philippines climate. Sulu, PH Climate Zone, Monthly Weather Averages and Historical Data. <https://weatherandclimate.com/philippines/sulu>

⁸ Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. (2023, November 17). Tawi Tawi. Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Tawi-Tawi>

⁹ World Risk Report. (2022). Mucke, P., Jeschonnek, L., Garschagen, M., Schaubert, A., Seibert, T., Welle, T., Birkmann, J., Rhyner, J., Kohler, S., Loster, T., Reinhard, D., & Matuschke, I. (2014, September 16). *WorldRiskReport 2014*. Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft. http://books.google.ie/books?id=aSrcBAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=ISBN+978-3-946785-14-9&hl=&cd=1&source=gbs_api

forests. Forest denudation, river siltation, illegal fishing, pollution, and settlement in hazard-prone areas contribute to the deteriorating condition of the environment'.¹⁰

The BARMM lies within the vicinity of two major active faults: the Mindanao Fault and the Lanao Fault System. The Mindanao fault, trending northwest-southeastward, extends over 80 km north of Cotabato City. Additionally, the Cotabato Trench, a significant seismogenic zone, runs parallel to the southwestern offshore of Mindanao. Notably, numerous earthquakes have been documented along the Cotabato Trench, highlighting the region's susceptibility to seismic activity.¹¹ The region is also home to active volcanoes. There are five volcanic complexes within and around the Bangsamoro region, namely, (a) Lanao Volcanic Complex; (b) Ragang Volcanic Complex; (c) Mt. Parker Volcano; (d) Mt. Matutum Volcano Complex; and (e) Mt. Dajoh¹². Active tectonic movements might cause tsunamis where in the areas of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi are classified as high-potential tsunami areas. Earthquakes also cause liquefaction which is spread in lowland areas in Maguindanao and the coastal areas¹³.

The provinces of Sulu, Basilan, Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, and Lanao del Norte were cited as the most drought-prone areas in the country. The droughts that occurred in 1999, 2004, 2007, and 2010 were caused by El Niño. El Niño is a threat to food security as prolonged droughts and long dry spells cut down harvest and affect fishery production due to change in the lake temperature. The Bangsamoro region is classified as a high to very high-risk area for the effects of El Niño.¹⁴

Around 7 to 9 typhoons make landfall every year in the Philippines, most of which affect the BARMM¹⁵. Typhoon Frank in 2008 triggered extensive flooding in the provinces of Cotabato, South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao. In 2009 Typhoon Jolina displaced 15,000 families and submerged 36 out of 37 barangays in Cotabato City causing massive losses in agricultural productivity and income. From May to June of 2011, moderately heavy rain caused massive flooding in 31 of the 37 barangays in Cotabato City, and seven municipalities of Maguindanao were under 5-feet of flood.¹⁶

Erosion is likely to occur due to steep slopes, lack of vegetation cover, and poorly consolidated or compacted sediments. Moderate erosion happens mostly in Lanao del Sur. In most of the lowland area in Maguindanao, no erosion is apparent. In the Teduray upland located in southwestern Maguindanao, mostly moderate or severe erosions occur. The Basilan and Sulu provinces have slight or mostly moderate erosion and a little severe erosion. The Tawi-Tawi Island has no apparent or slight erosion, generally.¹⁷

¹⁰ 1st Bangsamoro Development Plan 2020-2022, BARMM

¹¹ PHIVOLCS. 1976 August 17 Moro Gulf earthquake. Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. https://www.phivolcs.dost.gov.ph/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=37

¹² PHIVOLCS. (n.d.-b). Volcanoes of the Philippines. Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. <https://www.phivolcs.dost.gov.ph/index.php/volcano-hazard/volcanoes-of-the-philippines>

¹³ Ministry of Science and Technology Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim mindanao. MOST. <https://most.bangsamoro.gov.ph/drrm/>

¹⁴ RECS International Inc., Oriental Consultants Global Co., Ltd., CTI Engineering International Co., Ltd., & IC Net Limited. (2016). Comprehensive Capacity Development Project for the Bangsamoro Development Plan for the Bangsamoro Final Report. BARMM: Japan International Cooperation Agency.

¹⁵ Ortega, J. and Klauth, C. (2017, July). *Climate Landscape Analysis for Children in the Philippines*. UNICEF Philippines.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

In the BARMM context, these natural hazards are further intensified by sporadic conflict driven by resource conflict, ethnic and religious discrimination, and recurring displacement that has slowed down the development of the region.

II. Social and Demographic Features

Demographic Features

The BARMM houses 4,404,288 residents as of May 1, 2020, according to the 2020 Census of Population and Housing (2020 CPH). In 2020, this represents 4.04 percent of the population of the Philippines.¹⁸

The 2020 population of the region is higher by 622,901 from the population of 3.78 million in 2015, and 1.15 million more than the population of 3.26 million in 2010. Moreover, it is higher by 1.60 million from the population of 2.80 million in 2000. There is a clear upward trend in the population, indicating overall growth in the region. The data show that the region has experienced steady population growth over the years, with a consistent percentage increase from one census to the next. (Table1)

Based on the 2020 census, Maguindanao had the biggest population with 1,342,179 persons, followed by Lanao del Sur with 1,195,518 persons, Sulu with 1,000,108 persons, and Tawi-Tawi with 440,276 persons. Basilan (excluding the City of Isabela) had the smallest population with 426,207 persons.

Although the rates of rise vary slightly, all the provinces in the region show a broad pattern of population growth. Maguindanao and Sulu have demonstrated notable percentage gains, particularly between 2010 and 2015. Tawi-Tawi, on the other hand, saw a lesser percentage increase between 2010 and 2015 but a greater rate of growth between 2015 and 2020 (Table 2).

In 2015, 42% of the total population in Maguindanao was under 15 years old. Children aged 5-9 comprised the largest age bracket accounting for 27.5% of the population¹⁹. In Lanao del Sur, 44.6% of the population are under 15 years old. The estimated median age for the area is approximately 19 years old and with a population count of 157,609, the age group of 5-9, has the highest population in Lanao del Sur. In Sulu, approximately 44.1% of the population is under the age of 15. The estimated median age is around 29 years old, and the largest age group is 10 years old, with a population count of 30,120. In Tawi-Tawi, 42.7% of the population is under the age of 15 with a median age of approximately 14 years old. The largest age is 10 years old with a count of 12,591. In Basilan, the percentage of the population under 15 is approximately 24.4% of the total population. The median age is estimated to be within the 20-24 age group since the cumulative population up to this point is 189,259, surpassing half of the total population. The largest age group is the 20-24 age group, with 9.2% of the total population, followed closely by the 25-29 age group with 8.8%. The population distribution suggests a relatively young demographic in Basilan, with a significant portion in the early adult age groups (Table 3-7).

¹⁸ Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020 Census of Population and Housing

¹⁹ Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015 Census of Population

All the provinces have shown a consistent pattern of higher male populations in the younger age groups (under 5, 5-9, and 10-14). However, the gender distribution becomes more balanced in the 15-19 age group, with a slightly higher female population. Maguindanao has the highest total child population, followed by Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Basilan.

Table 1. Population in the BARMM, 2000-2020

Census Year	Census Reference Date	Total Population
2000	May 1, 2000	2,803,045
2010	May 1, 2010	3,256,140
2015	August 1, 2015	3,781,387
2020	May 1, 2020	4,404,288

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority

Table 2. Population of BARMM Provinces, 2000-2020

Province	2000	2010	2015	2020
Basilan*	259,796	293,322	346,579	426,207
Lanao del Sur	800,162	933,260	1,045,429	1,195,518
Maguindanao**	801,102	944,718	1,173,933	1,342,179
Sulu	619,668	718,290	824,731	1,000,108
Tawi-Tawi	322,317	366,550	390,715	440,276

* Excluding City of Isabela **Excluding City of Cotabato

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority

Table 3. Population of Children in Maguindanao, 2015

Age group	Both	Male	Female
Under 5	165, 923	85,898	80,025
5-9	172,191	88,582	83,609
10-14	155,819	80,142	75,677
15-19	133,489	67,622	65,867
Total	627,422	322,244	305,178

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015 Census of Population

Table 4. Population of Children in Lanao del Sur, 2015

Age group	Both	Male	Female
Under 5	151,149	76,491	77,658
5-9	157,609	77,713	79,896
10-14	134,175	66,228	67,947
15-19	111,649	54,208	57,441
Total	557,582	274,640	282,942

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015 Census of Population

Table 5. Population of Children in Sulu, 2015

Age group	Both	Male	Female
Under 5	114,626	57,182	57,444
5-9	120,542	59,790	60,752
10-14	113,736	56,743	56,993
15-19	94,363	46,437	47,926
Total	443,267	220,152	223,115

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015 Census of Population

Table 6. Population of Children in Tawi-Tawi, 2015

Age group	Both	Male	Female
Under 5	52,337	26,793	25,544
5-9	53,718	27,399	26,319
10-14	50,232	25,289	24,943
15-19	42,852	21,404	21,448
Total	199,139	100,885	98,254

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015 Census of Population

Table 7. Population of Children in Basilan, 2015

Age group	Both	Male	Female
Under 5	50,098	25,514	24,584
5-9	50,268	25,798	24,470
10-14	45,601	23,091	22,510
15-19	39,087	19,424	19,663
Total	185,054	93,827	91,227

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015 Census of Population

Social Features

The BARMM is composed of various ethnicities, religions, and languages. While each province has a distinct ethnic composition, the overwhelming majority of the population in these provinces adheres to Islam, with some provinces having small Christian minorities.²⁰

Maguindanao del Sur and Maguindanao del Norte showcase different ethnicities with a majority being Maguindanao (66%), followed by Iranun (16%) and Teduray (7%). The religious landscape is predominantly Islamic (83.55%), but there is also a significant presence of Roman Catholics (9.51%) and adherents of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines (2.89%). The linguistic milieu is enriched with Maguindanao, Cebuano, and Tagalog being the main languages.

Lanao del Sur is characterized by a dominant Maranao ethnicity (93%), complemented by Illonggo (1.75%) and Bisaya (1.6%). The province is overwhelmingly Islamic (94.74%), with a minority following Roman Catholicism (4.13%). The linguistic diversity is apparent with Maranao, Cebuano, Iranun, and Tagalog being the principal languages.

Basilan's ethnic composition comprises Yakan (52.3%), Tausug (23.2%), and Sama Bangingi (6.86%). The religious landscape is predominantly Islamic (89.91%), with a noteworthy Roman Catholic minority (9.2%). Yakan is the primary native language, and Chavacano serves as the lingua franca, alongside Tausug, Cebuano, and Sama.

Sulu boasts a diverse ethnic makeup, with Tausug (87.7%), Sama (5.4%), and Badjao (3.5%). The province is a stronghold of Islam (95.24%), with a small percentage adhering to Tribal Religion (4.55%). Linguistically, Tausug prevails as the lingua franca, accompanied by Bahasa Sama, Bajua-Sama, English, Tagalog, Chavacano, and Cebuano.

²⁰ Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020 Census of Population and Housing

Tawi-Tawi exhibits a blend of ethnicities, including Sama (43.8%), Tausug (39.5%), Jama Mapun (6.2%), and Sama Badjao (6.4%). The province is Islamic (97.23%), with a minor Roman Catholic presence (2.04%). Tausug serves as the primary language, complemented by Sama, Chavacano, Cebuano, Tagalog, Yakan, and English.

Islam remains the dominant religion, reflecting the cultural and historical significance of Islam in the BARMM. There are identified variations in the percentages of major ethnic groups which affect the linguistic landscape. These trends are influenced by the historical, social, and economical changes that are happening in the region.

Table 8. Main ethnic, religious and language groups in Maguindanao, 2015 vs 2020

Maguindanao			
2015		2020	
Ethnicity	Religion	Ethnicity	Religion
Maguindanaon tribe (63.51 %) Iranun (14.53%) Teduray (4.66%) Other Indigenous groups include Lambangian and Dulangan	Islam (81%) Remaining 9% include various Christian denominations	Maguindanaon (66%) Iranun (16%) Teduray (7%)	Islam (83.55%) Roman Catholic (9.51%) Episcopal Church in the Philippines (2.89%)
<i>Language: Main languages are Maguindanao, Cebuano and Tagalog.</i>			

Table 9. Main ethnic, religious and language groups in Lanao del Sur, 2015 vs 2020

Lanao del Sur			
2015		2020	
Ethnicity	Religion	Ethnicity	Religion

Meranao (88%) Hiligaynon (3%) Cebuano (3%) Ilocano (2 %) Indigenous groups include Higaonon, Agusan Manobo, B'Laan, Subanen, T'Boli, Tigwahanon, Talaandig, Umayamnon, Mandaya, Bagobo, Pulangihon, Matigsalug, Ilyanun, Klata Manobo (Dyangan), Igorot, Mangyan, Ivatan and Tinguian	Islam (95%) Roman Catholic (5%) Iglesia ni Cristo (0.46%) Other religions (1.41%).	Meranao - 93% Ilonggo - 1.75% Bisaya - 1.6%	Islam (94.74%) Roman Catholic (4.13%)
<i>Main languages are Maranao, Cebuano, Iranun and Tagalog.</i>			

Table 10. Main ethnic, religious and language groups in Basilan, 2015 vs 2020

Basilan			
2015		2020	
Ethnicity	Religion	Ethnicity	Religion
Yakan (41.36%) Settlers (32.9%, largely from Visayas and Luzon) Moro tribes (Tausug, Sama, Badjao, Iranun) (25.74%, largely from Visayas and Luzon)	Islam (65%) Christian, mostly Roman Catholic (33%) Traditional local beliefs, traditions, and rituals (2%)	Yakan (52.3%) Tausug (23.2%) Sama Bangingi (6.86%)	Islam (89.91%) Roman Catholic (9.2%)
Main languages are Yakan, Chavacano, Tausug, Cebuano, and Sama ²¹			

Table 11. Main ethnic, religious and language groups in Sulu, 2015 vs 2020

Sulu			
2015		2020	
Ethnicity	Religion	Ethnicity	Religion
Tausug	Muslim (97%) Christians (2%)	Tausug (87.7%) Sama (5.4%) Badjao (3.5%)	Islam (95.24%) Tribal Religion (4.55%)
Main languages are Tausug, Bahasa Sama, Badjao-Sama, Chavacano, Tagalog			

Table 12. Main ethnic, religious and language groups in Tawi-Tawi, 2015 vs 2020

Tawi-Tawi			
2015		2020	
Ethnicity	Religion	Ethnicity	Religion
Sama	Muslim (96%) Christian (2%)	Sama (43.8%) Tausug (39.5%)	Islam (97.23%) Roman Catholic

²¹ Basilan Province Official Website | Redefining Basilan. (2017, October 12).
<https://web.archive.org/web/20171024141816/http://www.basilan.gov.ph:80/basilan/>

		Jama Mapun (6.2%) Sama Badjao (6.4%)	(2.04%)
<i>Main languages are Tausug, Bahasa Sama, Badjao-Sama, Chavacano, Tagalog</i>			

III. Economic and Poverty Context

Economy of the

The volatile peace and security context in the BARMM has made it one of the most fragile regional economies in the Philippines. The interconnected issues of armed conflict, clan wars, resource conflict and other complex challenges have posed a huge developmental challenge that requires massive intervention. For 2022, the region's economy grew at a 6.6 percent rate and was reported as the tenth-fastest economic growth among all 17 regions in the Philippines. This economic performance is based on the final estimation of the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) and Gross Regional Domestic Expenditure (GRDE) for the year 2022.²²

The economic landscape of the BARMM is significantly reliant on consumption and is connected to the wider country. The region's GRDP constitutes a modest 1.3 percent of the national GDP. While household consumption contributes to 73.8 percent of the national GDP, the BARMM relies extensively on household consumption and remittances. However, the region exhibits negative net exports, with imports exceeding exports by 64.5 percent of the GRDP. Household consumption in the region surpasses its GRDP, totaling 120.8 percent.²³

58.9 percent of the region's GRDP is from the agricultural sector. Crop production dominates the BARMM's agriculture, with fisheries playing a distant secondary role. Leading agricultural products include banana, corn, palay, coconut, cassava, seaweed, and cattle. In contrast, agriculture constitutes only 9.3 percent of the national GDP, with industry and services contributing 30.8 percent and 59.9 percent, respectively. Additionally, manufacturing constitutes 1.0 percent of the BARMM's GRDP compared to 19.1 percent at the national level. Similarly, trade represents 1.3 percent in the BARMM, while it comprises 18.5 percent at the national level.²⁴

From 2010 to 2018, the BARMM has faced negative growth rates in specific years, notably in 2011, 2015, and 2018. The negative growth in these years may signify economic challenges and potential vulnerabilities. However, a notable growth spike was observed in 2017 (7.5%), contributing to the relatively higher average growth rate for the BARMM over the entire period (3.1%). The region's average growth rate (3.1%) is considerably lower than the national average (6.3%) over the same period which indicates that, on average, the BARMM's economic performance lags behind the national trend. (Table 13)

²² Bangsamoro Information Office (2023, April 27). BARMM sets record with 10th fastest economic growth among all PH regions - BARMM Official Website. BARMM Official Website - Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. <https://bangsamoro.gov.ph/news/latest-news/barmm-sets-record-with-10th-fastest-economic-growth-among-all-ph-regions/>

²³ Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018

²⁴ The Socioeconomic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in BARMM. (2021, March). In www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/ph/UNDP_BARMM-SEIA-FINAL.pdf. UNDP in the Philippines. Retrieved December 10, 2023, from https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/ph/UNDP_BARMM-SEIA-FINAL.pdf

For 2023, the region has exceeded its initial target investment of 2.5 billion by reaching 3.1 billion as of August 2023. Over the past five years, the BARMM has consistently ranked in the top five fastest-growing regions in the country, especially in the agricultural sector.²⁵

The BARMM recorded an average inflation rate of 4.1 percent for 2022 while it had a 1.9 percent average rate in 2021. The Philippines average inflation rate is 5.82 percent for 2022 and 3.93 percent for 2021.²⁶

Table 13. GRDP Growth Rate, 2010-2018

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Average 2010-2018
Philippines	7.6	3.7	6.7	7.1	6.2	5.9	6.9	6.7	6.2	6.3
BARMM	6.7	(0.3)	0.0	3.8	3.0	(0.8)	0.4	7.5	7.2	3.1

Source: PSA Poverty Index

In the Philippines, 18.1% of the population lived below the national poverty line in 2021. The National Capital Region (NCR), Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Region III, and Region IV-A ranked with the lowest poverty incidence in the country (Figure 4).

On the other hand, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) consistently figured with the highest poverty incidence among families at 29.8 percent. Significant decreases were observed in the ARMM/BARMM.²⁷ Sulu remained in the cluster of provinces with relatively high poverty incidence among families in 2015, 2018 and 2021 while Basilan was in the poorest cluster in 2018 and 2021.

There is a positive trend in terms of poverty reduction in the BARMM region from 2015 to 2021. The poverty incidence among families has shown relative stability from 2015-2021, with values of 53.8 in 2015, 54.2 in 2018, and a notable decrease to 29.8 in 2021. The decrease in poverty incidence in 2021 indicates potential improvements in economic conditions or targeted poverty reduction initiatives. However, it can be noticed that the per capita poverty threshold of the region has increased over the years, rising from 22,650 in 2015 to 28,293 in 2021. This increase suggests a higher cost of living or increased inflation, impacting the amount required for a person to meet basic needs. It is essential to consider other factors such as population growth, economic development initiatives, and social welfare programs to fully understand the dynamics of poverty in the region (Table 14-15).

A closer look at the poverty incidence in the different provinces of the region allows a more in-depth view of the economic context of the region. The overall BARMM region shows an increase in the poverty threshold from 22,650 in 2015 to 28,293 in 2021, indicating rising living costs. Among provinces, Basilan had the lowest poverty threshold, but it increased from 21,472

²⁵ Patumbon. (2023, December 14). Barmm sparks growth. SunStar Publishing Inc. Retrieved from <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/davao/barmm-sparks-growth>

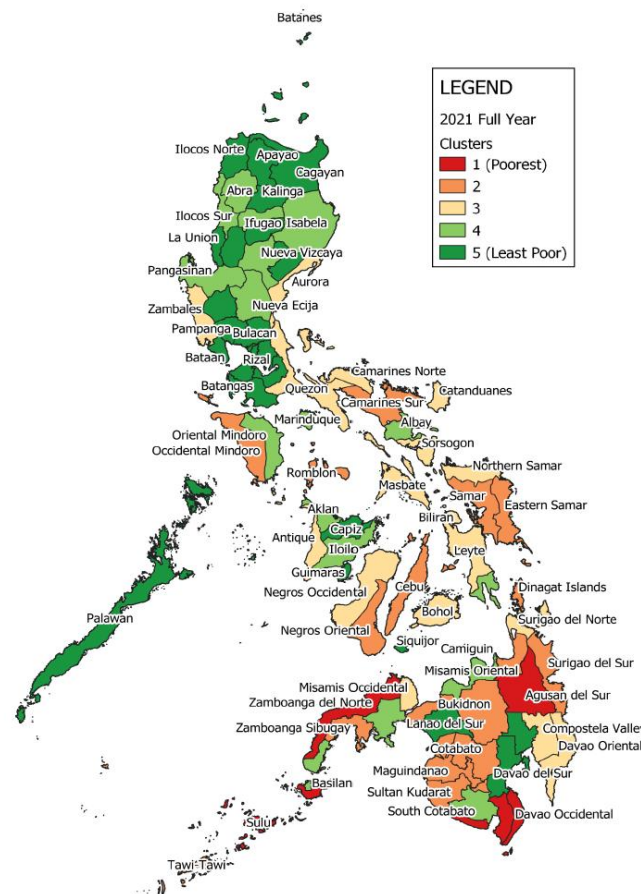
²⁶ Office, B. I., Author: Bangsamoro Information Office <https://bangsamoro.gov.ph> | SKCC, Author:, & SKCC, |. (2023, January 10). BARMM ends 2022 with 6.3% inflation rate; still lowest in ph - BARMM official website. BARMM Official Website - Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. <https://bangsamoro.gov.ph/news/latest-news/barmm-ends-2022-with-6-3-inflation-rate-still-lowest-in-ph>

²⁷ 2021 Full Year Official Poverty Statistics of the Philippines, page ii

in 2015 to 26,728 in 2021. Tawi-Tawi consistently had a lower poverty threshold compared to other provinces, indicating relatively lower living costs.

Lanao del Sur had the highest poverty incidence within the period, although it decreased slightly from 2015 to 2021. Sulu exhibited a significant increase in poverty incidence from 23,115 in 2015 to 31,782 in 2021, indicating worsening economic conditions. The magnitude of poverty, as indicated by poverty incidence percentages, varies across provinces. There is a general trend of poverty reduction in most provinces, with some exceptions like Sulu, where poverty has increased (Table 16).

Cluster of Provinces
Based on the 2021 Full Year Poverty Incidence Among Families



Source: Philippine Statistics Authority

Figure 4. Map of Poverty Incidence among Families by Region, 2021

Table 14. Annual Per Capita Poverty Thresholds and Poverty Incidence among Families in the

Region	Annual per Capita Poverty Threshold (in Php)			Poverty Incidence among Families					
				Estimates (%)			Coefficient of Variation		
	2015	2018	2021	2015	2018	2021	2015	2018	2021
BARMM	22,650	27,715	28,293	53.8	54.2	29.8	5.2	3.5	4.0
Philippines	22,747	25,813	28,871	18.0	12.1	13.2	2.1	1.4	1.4

BARMM: 2015, 2018, and 2021

Table 15. BARMM Provinces in the Poorest Cluster Based on the 2021 Poverty Incidence

Province	2015				2018				2021			
	Cluster	Poverty Incidence	90% Confidence Interval		Cluster	Poverty Incidence	90% Confidence Interval		Cluster	Poverty Incidence	90% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Limit	Upper Limit			Lower Limit	Upper Limit			Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Basilan	3	35.6	25.0	46.3	1	66.3	62.7	70.0	1	42.5	38.1	46.9
Sulu	1	63.8	54.8	72.7	1	75.3	72.2	78.4	1	51.0	46.4	55.5

Among Families: 2015, 2018, and 2021.

Table 16. Annual Per Capita Poverty Threshold and Poverty Incidence Among Families with Measures of Precision, by Region and Province: 2015, 2018, and 2021

Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM/BARMM) ^{2/}	2015	2018	2021
	22,650	27,715	28,293
Basilan ^{1/, 2/}	21,472	26,951	26,728

Lanao del Sur ^{1/, 2/}	24,421	29,224	29,083
Maguindanao ^{2/}	20,399	25,368	25,371
Sulu ^{1/, 2/}	23,115	29,150	31,782
Tawi-tawi ^{2/, b/}	17,666	21,264	26,336

IV. Politics and Governance Context

The establishment of Bangsamoro was the culmination of several years of peace talks between the Philippine government, and several non-state groups. On July 26, 2018, then-President Rodrigo Duterte signed the Organic Law for the BARMM to bring peace to the region. This law is the result of discussions and agreements between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) led to the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The 1987 Constitution of the Philippines provided the basis for the creation of an autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao, consisting of provinces, cities, municipalities, and geographical areas sharing common and distinctive historical and cultural heritage, economic and social structures, and other relevant characteristics within the framework of this Constitution and the national sovereignty as well as territorial integrity of the Republic of the Philippines.²⁸

For the BARMM, the Legislative Power is vested in the Bangsamoro Parliament (BOL, Article VII, Sec. 5). Executive Power is vested in the Chief Minister (BOL, Article VII, Sec. 4). Judicial Power is vested in one Supreme Court and the Shari'ah courts and regular courts within the Bangsamoro territorial jurisdiction that form part of the Philippine judicial system (BOL, Article X, Sec. 2).

The BOL provides that the Parliament shall be composed of 80 Members (Art. VII, Sec. 6), unless otherwise increased by the Congress of the Philippines, elected as a Party Representative, as a representative for a Parliament District Seat, or as a Sectoral Representative or for Reserved Seats (Art. VII, Sec. 7). A Member of the Parliament should be a citizen of the Philippines, at least twenty-five (25) years of age on the day of the election, able to read and write, and registered voter in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region. A candidate for youth representative shall be less than eighteen (18) years and is not more than thirty (30) years of age at the time of election. A candidate for district representative must be a registered voter of the district in which the person is a candidate and has resided in the district for at least 1 year immediately preceding the day of the election (Art. VII, Sec. 12). The Members of the Parliament shall be elected for a term of 3 years and shall serve for no more than three (3) consecutive terms (Art. XVI, Sec. 11)²⁹.

²⁸ 1987 Philippine Constitution (Article X, Section 15)

²⁹ Bangsamoro Parliament. <https://parliament.bangsamoro.gov.ph/about-us/>

As the region is still in the transition period after the ratification of the law in a plebiscite in 2019, the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) is currently the interim government in the BARMM. The BTA shall be composed of 80 members all appointed by the President of the Philippines (BOL, Art. XVI, Sec. 2). Legislative authority shall be exercised by the Bangsamoro Transition Authority while Executive authority shall be exercised by the interim Chief Minister who is appointed by the President as such (BOL, Art. XVI, Sec.3). By virtue of Republic Act No. 11593 signed on Oct. 28, 2021, the law postponed the first regional parliamentary elections in the region to 2025, thereby effectively extending the transition period from 2022 to 2025. During this extension, the BTA shall continue to serve as the interim government in the BARMM with the new interim members serving up to June 30, 2025, or until their successors shall have been elected and qualified (RA No. 11593, Sec. 2).³⁰

To date, the BTA crafted the 12-Point Priority Agenda of the Bangsamoro that include the enactment of priority bills; integration of development plans; establishment of appropriate bureaucracy; continuity of existing government services; special programs for transitioning combatants; supporting the on-going Marawi rehabilitation; development of enabling policy environment; activation of job-generating industries; enhancement of security; maximizing synergistic partnerships; ensure environmental compliance; and exploration of Bangsamoro's economic potentials. Under the Transition Period, these agenda need to be at least substantially accomplished.

V. Conflict Context

The GPH - Bangsamoro Peace Process

Historically, the Muslim majority in Mindanao has possessed a distinct history, culture, identity, and religion from the rest of the Philippines. From this distinction a sense of “separation” has emerged from the rest of the country. Over the period of 50 years, the Bangsamoro people have experienced armed conflict in their land.

- **The ILAGA-Blackshirt War** - By the late 1960s, increasing tensions arose between Filipino Christian settlers in Mindanao and the Bangsamoro people. Fueled by mutual distrust, both populations started organizing militias, including the ILAGA and the Blackshirt17, in a bid to safeguard their respective areas, resulting in confrontations between them.³¹
- **The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)** - MNLF was established in 1972 by Nur Misuari, a prominent Moro revolutionary and political figure. The primary objective of the MNLF was to advocate for the establishment of a fully independent Bangsamoro state, for all the Bangsamoro people in Mindanao through armed struggle.³²

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Kaufman, S. J. (2006). Escaping the Symbolic Politics Trap: Reconciliation Initiatives and Conflict Resolution in Ethnic Wars. *Journal of Peace Research*, 43(2), 201–218. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27640286>

³² PEACE PROCESS WITH THE MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (MNLF). (n.d.). [peace.gov.ph](https://peace.gov.ph/timeline/peace-process-mnlf/). Retrieved November 10, 2023, from <https://peace.gov.ph/timeline/peace-process-mnlf/>

- **The 1976 Tripoli Agreement** - Born from peace negotiations during the Marcos Regime, the agreement granted a level of autonomy to the Moro people. However, dissatisfaction with this autonomy led to the splintering of the MNLF and the emergence of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 1984. Despite its unraveling, the Tripoli Peace Agreement remained a crucial reference point in subsequent peace processes.³³
- **The Moro Islamic Liberation Front** - In 1977, Hashim Salamat, a leader within the MNLF, broke away and founded the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 1984, aiming for an independent Bangsamoro state in Mindanao through armed revolution. Diverging from the secular stance of the MNLF, the MILF embraced a more Islamic orientation, implementing Islamic law in its controlled areas with the belief that an independent Moro state would eventually follow.³⁴
- **An autonomous Muslim government in the 1987 Constitution** - During Corazon Aquino's presidency from 1986-1992, talks with the MNLF resulted in the Jeddah Accord of 1987, aiming to explore democratic processes for Mindanao, but this was constrained by the 1987 Constitution and subsequent legislation. The MNLF rejected the Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and negotiations remained stalled until 1992.³⁵
- **The ARMM** - The incorporation of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in the 1987 Constitution aimed to officially acknowledge Muslim Filipinos in Mindanao as integral to the nation. Subsequently, President Aquino signed Republic Act No. 6734 in August 1989, providing for the organic act of the ARMM. Additionally, Executive Order No. 425, issued in 1990, placed certain National Government agencies under the supervision of the Autonomous Regional Government for various sectors, including labor, local government, tourism, environment, social welfare, and science and technology.³⁶
- **The National Unification Commission (NUC) and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP)** - President Fidel V. Ramos, upon taking office in 1992, prioritized peace for economic progress, initiating talks with insurgents and granting amnesty through Proclamation No. 10. This effort culminated in the establishment of the National Unification Commission (NUC) and the signing of Executive Order No. 125 in 1993, outlining principles and paths to peace while creating the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP).³⁷
- **The Gentleman's Agreement** - Following a four-year interim ceasefire and exploratory talks, Executive Secretary Ruben Torres engaged in discussions with MILF Vice-Chairman Ghadzali Jaafar in August 1996, aiming to explore the potential for negotiations and bring an end to the MILF separatist movement. Subsequently, technical committees from both the MILF and the government were dispatched to formulate

³³ THE TRIPOLI AGREEMENT In hdcentre.org. Retrieved November 15, 2023, from <https://www.hdcentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-Tripoli-Agreement-1976.pdf>

³⁴ Mapping Militant Organizations. "Moro Islamic Liberation Front." Stanford University. Last modified January 2019. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/moro-islamic-liberation-front>

³⁵ R.Domingo (1995). The Muslim Secessionist Movement in the Philippines: issues and prospects

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission (2016). Report of the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission

essential discussion points for peace talks in January 1997, a meeting later informally termed by peace experts in Mindanao as "The Gentlemen's Agreement".³⁸

- **1996 Final Peace Agreement** - After four years of an interim ceasefire and exploratory talks, the Philippine Government and the MNLF signed the Final Agreement on the Implementation of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement in 1996 (Stankovitch & Car, 1999). This accord established a Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD) in Mindanao, outlining governance structures for the autonomous Muslim region and facilitating the integration of MNLF members into the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). While the 1996 Agreement included a two-stage process, satisfying the MNLF, the MILF persisted in armed resistance, expressing their commitment to establishing a self-determining Bangsamoro territory.³⁹
- **GPH-MILF Agreement for General Cessation of Hostilities** - During official peace talks between the Government and MILF, a General Cessation of Hostilities was signed on July 18, 1997, in Cagayan de Oro City. The agreement outlined the commitment of both parties to cease hostilities, with directives for their respective Sub-Committees on Cessation of Hostilities to convene on July 30 of the same year to formulate guidelines and ground rules for the agreement's implementation.⁴⁰
- **2000 All Out War** - The administration of Philippine President Joseph Estrada adopted a firm stance against the MILF, instructing the Armed Forces of the Philippines to launch a comprehensive offensive on March 21, 2000, in response to the group's invasion of Kauswagan, Lanao del Norte, and the subsequent hostage-taking (Melican, 2015). The resulting violence led to the death of hundreds of civilians, widespread destruction, and displacement of 800,000 people, with peace in Mindanao appearing elusive as months passed and bombings persisted.⁴¹
- **The 2003 All-Out-Peace / the Battle of Buliok Complex** - In early 2002, despite a trilateral agreement preventing US forces from entering MILF-held territory, hardliners in the Philippine military, supported by the US, advocated for pursuing the MILF, leading to a policy disagreement with the Arroyo administration. The breakdown in peace talks in February 2003 resulted in armed clashes, with Philippine troops overrunning an MILF base near Pikit, causing displacement and casualties, while the death of MILF founding chairman Hashim Salamat occurred by the year's end.⁴²
- **The Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD)** - On July 16, 2008, leaders from the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) announced an agreement to extend the territory of Mindanao's independent Muslim region. The proposed Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD) outlined the

³⁸ Chang, P., et al. (2015). Women Leading Peace: A close examination of women's political participation in peace processes in Northern Ireland, Guatemala, Kenya, and the Philippines. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. p. 103.

³⁹ Bell, C. and Utley, V. (2015). Chronology of Mindanao Agreements. Briefing Paper 02. Political Settlements Research Programme (PSRP). UN Women. Retrieved from: <https://www.politicalsettlements.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Briefing-Paper-Philippines-Mindanao-Chronology.pdf>

⁴⁰ Agreement for General Cessation of Hostilities. (n.d.). www.officialgazette.gov.ph. Retrieved November 20, 2023, from <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/1997/07jul/19970718-Agreement-for-General-Cessation-of-Hostilities.pdf>

⁴¹ Anson, R. (2004). The Philippines, Seeds of Peace in the Land of Promise, The International Festival of Photojournalism, Visa pour l'Image – Perpignan. Retrieved from: <https://www.visapourlimage.com/en/festival/exhibitions/philippines-terre-d-espoir>

⁴² Abuza, Z. (2005). The Moro Islamic Liberation Front at 20: State of the Revolution, Studies in Conflict & Terrorism. 28(6). 453-479. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10576100500236881>

inclusion of various regions and municipalities, creating the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity with its own police, military, and judicial systems. However, the Supreme Court declared the agreement unconstitutional, leading to a halt in the signing, triggering violent raids by MILF fighters in different villages and resulting in significant displacement and casualties.⁴³

- **The Framework Agreement of the Bangsamoro (FAB)** - In October 2012, the Government and the MILF unveiled the Framework of Agreement on the Bangsamoro, marking the establishment of the Bangsamoro as a new autonomous political entity. The signing ceremony, witnessed by President Benigno S. Aquino III, Malaysian Prime Minister Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, and other dignitaries, took place in Malacañang Palace.⁴⁴
- **Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB)** - Signed in 2014, the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) marked a crucial step in the peace process, outlining the disarmament of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the establishment of an autonomous Bangsamoro with a focus on power-sharing. The CAB served as the basis for the draft Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), incorporating provisions from the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) and annexes covering transitional arrangements, wealth, power-sharing, and water territories (Ver, 2018). Despite these developments, the MNLF, led by Nur Misuari, argues that the 1996 Final Peace Agreement (FPA) remains incomplete or has failed, leading to ongoing efforts for a review.⁴⁵
- **The Mamasapano Mis-encounter** - The peace process with the MILF faced a significant setback during the Mamasapano incident on January 25, 2015. Originally intended as a mission to apprehend high-ranking terrorists, the operation resulted in the deaths of 44 Special Action Forces (SAF) members, 18 from MILF and BIFF, five civilians, and the targeted terrorist, Zulkifli Abdhir. In response to the escalating situation, the government peace panel intervened, requesting a ceasefire from the MILF, while the Armed Forces of the Philippines conducted a rescue operation for the 29 remaining SAF survivors. The incident led to the suspension of the passage of the Bangsamoro Basic Law by the Philippine Congress, posing a threat to the ongoing peace process between the government and the MILF.⁴⁶
- **The Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL)** - President Aquino met with lawmakers to discuss what would become of the BBL on December 8, 2015, as the measure had been pending in the House plenary for second reading since September due to lack of quorum. The 16th Congress eventually failed to pass the BBL when it adjourned in February 2016.⁴⁷

⁴³ Engelbrecht, G. (2008, October 23). The Philippines: The Collapse of Peace in Mindanao. International Crisis Group. Retrieved from: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-eastasia/philippines/philippines-collapse-peace-mindanao>

⁴⁴ Cudis, C. (2019, January 22) Timeline: The Bangsamoro peace process. Philippine News Agency. Retrieved from: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1059598>

⁴⁵ DPA (2006, May 24). OIC agree to review 1996 peace pact with Muslim rebels, Reliefweb. Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/philippines-oic-agree-review-1996-peace-pactmuslim-rebels>

⁴⁶ Cancaran, D. (2016). Justice in the Mamasapano Tragedy: Beyond the Logic of Right and Peace Discourses. Philippine Sociological Review. 64. 157-167. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45014292>

⁴⁷ Cudis, C. (2019, January 22) Timeline: The Bangsamoro peace process. Philippine News Agency. Retrieved from: <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1059598>

- **The Bangsamoro Organic Law (Republic Act No 11054)** - It represents the initial version of a document aiming to replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), established in 1989 and reinforced in 2001, criticized earlier for corruption and mismanagement (Ver, 2018). President Duterte signed the BOL into law on July 26, 2018, officially implemented on August 10, 2018, establishing the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) or simply the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region.⁴⁸
- **Rise of Violent Extremism as and when conducive to Terrorism** - The growth of terrorism in Mindanao started with al-Qaeda-linked group Abu Sayyaf Group which mounted its first major attack in 1991 which included bombings, assassinations, and kidnapping. In 2008, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) broke away from MILF, taking with it more radical, younger fighters. BIFF has pledged allegiance to ISIS and has been behind violent incidents in Central Mindanao. Peripheral extremist groups such as the Maute Group led by Abdullah Maute were responsible for several attacks in Lanao del Sur before the Marawi Siege which has triggered other violent incidents throughout the country⁴⁹.
- **Marawi Siege** - The armed confrontation between government forces and pro-ISIS militants in Marawi in 2017, has forcibly displaced 98 percent of the total population of the city, as well as residents from nearby municipalities, who were compelled to leave due to severe food shortage and/or constriction of local economies. The battle lasted for five months, and resulted in the mass displacement of civilians, the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure, and the loss of civilian lives.⁵⁰

Although this section focuses on the BARMM, it is worthy to note that there are tribes and groups existing outside the BARMM territory who identify themselves as part of the Bangsamoro people.

Existing Conflict concerns in BARMM

The problems faced by the BARMM are caused by a complicated web of interrelated issues. Clan feuds are becoming more common and are entwined with political and resource conflicts; this is especially the case in Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao, which includes the city of Cotabato. These feuds frequently result from a wide range of problems, from property conflicts to political and personal grievances.

At the same time, there is a continuing threat of violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism in several places. Although there have been fewer occurrences involving the BIFF in Maguindanao and the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu and Basilan, the Maute Group in Lanao del Sur has continued to be a constant source of concern. Alarming reports of suicide bombings, continuous recruiting drives, and radicalization of Sulu's youth and women raise concerns about the region's possible resuscitation as a hub for terrorism. The regrouping of armed organizations linked to ISIS in Lanao del Sur warrants ongoing surveillance, and in

⁴⁸ Pabico Lalo, G. (2018, October 30) Sulu LGU asks SC to junk 'unconstitutional' Bangsamoro law. Philippine Daily Inquirer. Retrieved from: <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1048310/sulu-lguasks-sc-to-junk-unconstitutional-bangsamoro-law>

⁴⁹ Abad, M. (2019, September 11). FAST FACTS: Terrorism in the Philippines. RAPPLER. <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/239816-things-to-know-about-terrorism-philippines/>

⁵⁰ Marawi Crisis - UNHCR Philippines. (n.d.). UNHCR Philippines. <https://www.unhcr.org/ph/marawi-crisis>

Maguindanao, reports of financial incentives have been made to entice new recruits of the BIFF. Currently, the Philippine ranks 18th in the 2023 Global Terrorism Index⁵¹ (Table 17).

Compounding these complexities are the increasing numbers of drug-related occurrences. 2019 saw an increase in these kinds of incidents in every province—including Isabela City—aside from Basilan. The security environment in the area is made more difficult by the increase in drug-related occurrences.

In addition, tensions have arisen from Marawi City's reconstruction. The slow progress reconstruction process has caused a great deal of dissatisfaction and division among the displaced and impacted populace. In addition, the city saw a rise in violence in 2019 that was fueled by black markets for illegal firearms and drugs. These numerous interconnected problems highlight the complex web of socio-political and economic difficulties that BARMM is currently confronting and the necessity of thorough and well-thought-out interventions to solve these many issues.⁵²

Table 17. 2023 Global Terrorism Index 2023, Top 20

Rank	Country
1	Afghanistan
2	Burkina Faso
3	Somalia
4	Mali
5	Syria
6	Pakistan
7	Iraq
8	Nigeria
9	Myanmar
10	Niger
11	Cameroon
12	Mozambique
13	India
14	Democratic Republic of Congo

⁵¹ 2023 GLOBAL TERRORISM INDEX. (2023). In economicsandpeace.org. Institute for Economics and Peace . Retrieved December 10, 2023, from <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/GTI-2023-A3-map-poster.pdf>

⁵² International Alert (2021), Conflict Alert 2020: Enduring wars, <https://www.international-alert.org/publications/conflict-alert-2020-enduring-wars-philippines/>



15	Colombia
16	Egypt
17	Chile
18	Philippines
19	Chad
20	Kenya

Source: 2023 Global Terrorism Index

Chapter III. Analysis of Priority Child Rights Issues

I. Civil Rights and Freedoms

The Philippines reports a 94% birth registration rate for children under age 5 with a notable increase from 92% since 2017. However, only 85% of these registered individuals possess birth certificates. On a national scale, all regions achieve a 90% registration rate, but the BARMM lags with 77% in birth registrations and 37% in birth certificates. (Table 18)

The BARMM records the lowest proportion of registered births, impacting 1.10 million individuals. The percentage distribution reveals that, out of the 4,938,539-household population, 77.0% are registered, 22.3% are unregistered, and 0.7% are uncertain. This stark contrast emphasizes a substantial disparity in birth registration between the BARMM and the national average.

Regional breakdowns expose varying registration rates among constituent areas, with Basilan posting the lowest at 64.7%. Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao, while having higher rates, still fall below the overall BARMM rate. Tawi-Tawi stands out with a rate surpassing the national and regional averages, showcasing effective birth registration practices. Efforts to enhance birth registration coverage are crucial, especially in areas with lower rates. Strategies from Tawi-Tawi can serve as potential models for other regions, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to address the multifaceted challenges within the BARMM. (Table 19)

Table 18. Percentage Distribution of Household Population by Birth Registration Status and Region, 2020

Region	Household Population	Birth Registration Status (Percent)		
		Registered	Not Registered	Don't Know
Philippines	108,667,043	96.6	3.2	0.2
BARMM	4,938,539	77.0	22.3	0.7

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020 Census of Population and Housing

Table 19. Household Population by Birth Registration Status, Region, Province, and Highly Urbanized City: Philippines, 2020

Region, Province, and Highly Urbanized City	Household Population	Birth Registration Status			
		Registered	Not Registered	Don't Know	Not Reported
Philippines	108,667,043	104,938,965	3,526,924	190,127	11,027
BARMM	4,938,539	3,801,595	1,099,278	36,836	830
Basilan (excluding the City of Isabela)	425,111	274,951	144,866	5,050	244
Lanao del Sur	1,194,507	865,649	315,269	13,491	98
Maguindanao (including the City of Cotabato)	1,666,353	1,344,600	311,135	10,504	114
Sulu	998,675	792,562	199,496	6,255	362
Tawi-Tawi	438,545	367,721	70,171	641	12
Interim Province ¹	215,348	156,112	58,341	895	-
<i>Note:</i> ¹ A Special Geographic Area (SGA) in the BARMM, which is composed of 63 barangays from six municipalities in the Province of Cotabato, which is part of Region XII (SOCCSKSARGEN)					

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020 Census of Population and Housing

In 2013, the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act 293, known as the Free Registration Act, was passed into law by the ARMM Regional Legislative Assembly. This law changes the normal process of birth registration and late registration in ARMM. It eliminates the corresponding fees which usually dissuade parents living below the poverty threshold from applying for birth certificates for their children.⁵³

In the areas of Tawi-Tawi and Basilan, the issue of undocumented children is still prevalent. Children who are born in Sabah are never registered by their illegal immigrant parents to local Malaysian health authorities. Identified causes are high cost of hospitalization, lack of knowledge on the process, and fear of being deported back to the Philippines. These children are extremely vulnerable to statelessness.⁵⁴

Efforts to bring birth registration to unregistered children are present in various disadvantaged areas in the Bangsamoro region. Families have shared that the lack of access is caused by their long distance from municipal offices, lack of awareness on the importance of a birth documentation, unfamiliarity with the birth registration process, lack of finances, and constant exposure to conflict and displacement challenges.⁵⁵

⁵³ Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 293, An Act Establishing Free Birth Registration in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and Providing Funds Thereof, January 17, 2013, https://lawphil.net/administ/mmaa/7a/pdf/mmaa_293_7a.pdf

⁵⁴ Undocumented People – SUHAKAM. <https://suhakam.org.my/portfolio/undocumented-people/>

⁵⁵ Unregistered children and their families in Maguindanao receive their birth certificates - Philippines. (2023, March 29). ReliefWeb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/unregistered-children-and-their-families-maguindanao-receive-their-birth-certificates>

II. Education, Culture and Leisure

The Philippines has continually faced a longstanding learning crisis, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Reports reveal that nine out of ten children aged 10-year-old were unable to read simple texts, highlighting a critical educational deficiency. Despite constitutional mandates for accessible and quality education, systemic issues persist.

Key challenges in the Philippine education system include inequitable access to quality education, particularly noticeable in lower completion rates for secondary and tertiary education, with significant disparities between socioeconomic groups. The average Filipino student spends more time in school but demonstrates lower productivity compared to counterparts in similar countries.

Higher education faces enrollment stagnation, impacting global competitiveness. In the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, the Philippines ranked poorly, with a significant percentage of students failing to reach minimum proficiency levels in reading, mathematics, and science. Out of the 79 participating countries and economies, the Philippines came in bottom in reading and second-to-last in science and math. In the Philippines, at least 78% of pupils did not meet the required competency levels in any of the three PISA courses. The minimal competence level for overall reading literacy was attained by 19% of the population, while the necessary proficiency level for overall math literacy, Level 2 or higher, was attained by another 19%. In Science, 22% of the students achieved a Level 2 or higher. The Philippines then lagged behind its neighbors in East Asia in terms of social and economic advancement. In addition, vulnerable populations, including those in poverty, isolated regions, and indigenous communities, face barriers to access education in their communities⁵⁶.

Proficiency levels in national achievement tests are alarmingly low, and the country struggles to secure positions in global university rankings. The passing rates of higher education graduates in licensure exams remain a concern.⁵⁷

Overall, the Philippines confronts multifaceted challenges, encompassing educational access, quality, and global competitiveness, demanding comprehensive strategies to address systemic shortcomings in its education landscape.

Education in the BARMM

As the Bangsamoro government is undergoing fundamental institutional transition, the education sector is also affected. On 26 September 2022, lawmakers in the Bangsamoro Transitional Administration tabled bills⁵⁸ that would see the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE) restructured into three separate agencies: a Ministry of

⁵⁶ PBED. State of Philippine Education Report 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.pbed.ph/blogs/47/PBEd/State%20of%20Philippine%20Education%20Report%202023#:~:text=EDUCATION%20CRISIS%20AT%20A%20GLANCE&text=Statistics%20revealed%20that%209%20out,to%20accessible%20and%20quality%20education>.

⁵⁷ Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028 - Philippine Development Plan. (2023, September 20). Philippine Development Plan - the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) Is the Country's Comprehensive Blueprint for Integrated Development of the Country in the Next Six Years. <https://pdp.neda.gov.ph/philippine-development-plan-2023-2028/>

⁵⁸ Bill Number 47. AN ACT REORGANIZING THE MINISTRY OF BASIC, HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (MBHTE) BY SPLITTING IT INTO FOUR (4) AGENCIES. September 29, 2022. <https://parliament.bangsamoro.gov.ph/bta-bills-22/an-act-reorganizing-the-ministry-of-basic-higher-and-technical-education-mbhte-by-splitting-it-into-four-4-agencies-thereby-creating-the-ministry-of-basic-education-mobe-the-bangsamoro-commis/>

Education, a Ministry of Technical Education and Skills Development, and a separate and quasi-independent Bangsamoro Commission on Higher Education. In a recent statement of MBHTE Minister Mohagher Iqbal, he emphasized that education plays a pivotal role in promoting peace in the Bangsamoro region. Education remains a political priority in the BARMM government.⁵⁹

Despite strong efforts to prioritize education in the region, students from the BARMM were not spared from the learning crisis. It has been reported that school closures forced 2.3 million to drop out of school. Violence against children cases increased and access to life-saving services severely impaired due to restrictive pandemic measures. Children in Mindanao have the highest exposure to grave child rights violations with 83 percent of the total cases attributed to the presence of armed groups.⁶⁰

Student Attendance and Performance

The World Bank in 2019 reported that while almost all Filipino children start elementary school at age six, only 70% start school on time in the BARMM.⁶¹ Given the fragile environment where communities and schools are operating, student attendance and performance in the region remain a concern.

The BARMM's total enrollment for the academic year 2021-2022 stands at 1,050,935, with substantial participation across kindergarten, elementary, junior high school, senior high school, and Alternative Learning System (ALS). (Table. Total Enrollment by Region SY 2021-2022) Net enrollment rates in the BARMM are considerably lower than the national average at all education levels (kinder, elementary, and secondary). The most striking aspect is the considerably low net enrollment rate in secondary education (37%) in the BARMM compared to the national average (87%). (Table 20-21)

Participation rates in the BARMM for elementary, junior high school, and senior high school are below the national averages, indicating potential challenges in educational access and retention. The BARMM logs the lowest average cohort survival rate for Senior High Schools all over the country suggesting issues with students progressing through the educational system. (Table 22)

⁵⁹ Bangsamoro Information Office. (2023, October 1). BARMM reaffirms commitment to nurture peace education - BARMM Official Website. BARMM Official Website - Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. <https://bangsamoro.gov.ph/news/latest-news/barmm-reaffirms-commitment-to-nurture-peace-education>

⁶⁰ Country Office Annual Report 2022: Philippines. (2022). In www.unicef.org. UNICEF. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://www.unicef.org/reports/country-regional-divisional-annual-reports-2022/Philippines>

⁶¹ Unlocking the Potential of the Bangsamoro People through the Alternative Learning System. (2019, November 6). In [worldbank.org](https://www.worldbank.org). Worldbank. Retrieved December 4, 2023, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/philippines/publication/unlocking-the-potential-of-the-bangsamoro-people-through-the-alternative-learning-system>

Table 20. Total Enrollment by Region, SY 2021-2022

Region	Kindergarten	ES	JHS	SHS	ALS	Sub-Total
BARMM	117,167	573,475	252,885	89,320	18,088	1,050,935

Source: Department of Education

Table 21. Net Enrollment Rate, By Education level, 2022-2023

Region Division	Net Enrollment Rate		
	Kinder	Elementary (1-6)	Secondary (7-12)
BARMM	53%	63%	37%
Mindanao	69%	86%	76%
Philippines	72%	90%	87%

Source: DepEd Basic Education Information System

Table 22. Basic Education, SY 2019-2020, By Island Region, By Region in Mindanao

Region	Participation Rate			Cohort Survival Rate			Drop Out Rate			Graduation Rate		
	Elem	Jr HS	Sr HS	Elem	Jr JHS	Sr JHS	Elem	Jr HS	Sr HS	Elem	Jr HS	Sr HS
Phil	93.33	81.04	44.17	95.78	85.45	76.67	0.80	2.31	2.31	96.60	85.80	78.70
BARMM	71.50	36.50	10.60	75.20	87.40	70.00	5.60	4.80	6.50	75.00	86.60	66.20

Source: DepEd Basic Education Information System

Student-Teacher Ratio

Over the years, the BARMM consistently exhibits higher student-teacher ratios compared to the national averages. The student-to-teacher ratio in elementary schools in the BARMM is 1:33, indicating that, on average, there is one teacher for every 33 students. Since this ratio is greater than the national average, it is possible that elementary schools in the BARMM have bigger class sizes than what is considered the norm for the country.

The ratio improves to 1:20 in junior high schools, suggesting a more favorable teacher-student ratio at this level. The ratio increases significantly to 1:52 in senior high schools, indicating a higher number of students per teacher. (Table 23)

On a combined regional ratio of all three levels throughout the years, the BARMM was more aligned with the teacher-student ratio from SY 2014 -2018. However, the numbers have increased since 2018 with (1:52 teacher-student ratio) compared to the 1:26 national standard.

In terms of the overall regional ratio over the course of the years, the BARMM has generally been more in line with the teacher-student ratio from the 2014–2018 academic year. But since 2018, there has been a discernible rise in the student-teacher ratio, which is at 1:52. The BARMM's ratio is now far higher than the 1:26 national average because of this growth. (Table 24)

These results have consequences that point to a decline in the teacher-student ratio in the BARMM in recent years, especially at the senior high school level. The increased ratio may influence the standard of instruction since it may be difficult for teachers to give each student the time and assistance they need.

Table 23. Teacher to learner ratio in Mindanao

Region	ES	JHS	SHS
BARMM	1:33	1:20	1:52
National	1:26	1:24	1:26

Source: DepEd Basic Education Information System

Table 24. Combined ES, JHS, and SHS Regional Ration from SY 2016-2021

Region	SY 2016-2017	SY 2017-2018	SY 2018-2019	SY 2019-2020	SY 2020-2021
BARMM	1:33	1:26	1:52	1:52	1:52
National	1:26	1:24	1:26	1:26	1:26

Source: DepEd Basic Education Information System

Functional Literacy and Numeracy

About 91.6 percent Filipinos 10-to-64 years old were functional literate in 2019, according to the results of the 2019 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS). This translates to around 73.0 million out of 79.7 million in the same age group who are considered literate on a functional level. Across regions, the BARMM registered the lowest (71.6%) functional literacy rate. (Figure 5)

On the Basic Literacy rate of 5 years old and over, the BARMM lags significantly behind with 78.7% of the national average of 93.8%. Comparing the 2013 and 2019 available data of the literacy of 10 years old and over, there is a significant decline in literacy rates in the BARMM from 86.1% in 2013 to 83.2% in 2019. Females consistently have higher literacy rates than males in both years. While Region X and Region XIII maintained or improved literacy rates, the BARMM showed a decline (Table 25-26).

The lower literacy rates in the BARMM suggest challenges in educational access, quality, infrastructure, or outreach programs that need attention. It is also important to notice the consistent gender gap in favor of females in the BARMM indicates potential gender-specific barriers to literacy that should be investigated.

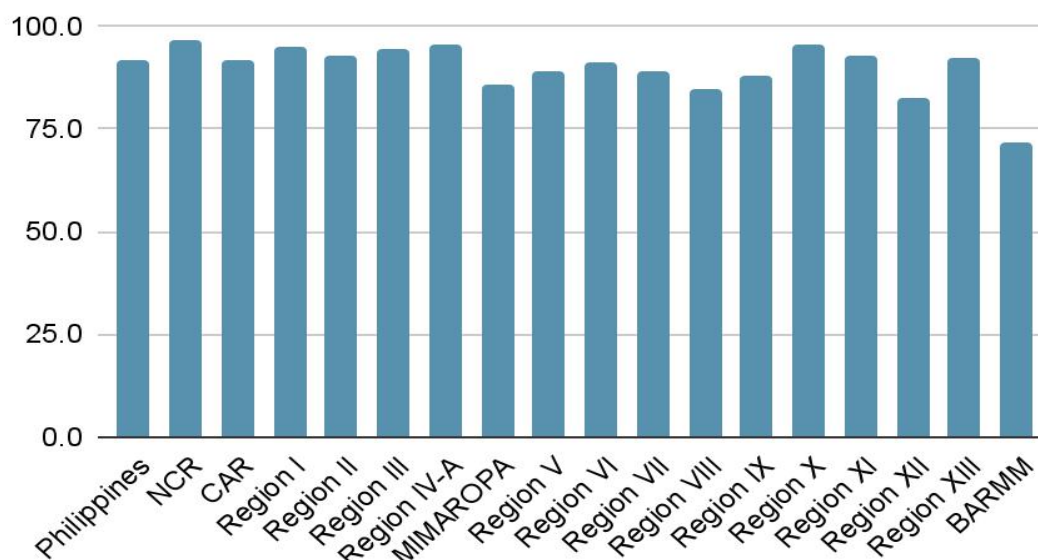


Figure 5. Functional Literacy Rate of Population 10 to 64 years old by region, Philippines, 2019
Source: 2019 FLEMMS

Table 25. Basic literacy rate of population 5 years old and over by sex, age group, and region, Philippines: 2019

Age Group and Region	Population 5 years old and over (in thousands)			Basic literacy rate (in percent)		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
Philippines	96,750	48,757	47,993	93.8	93.2	94.5
BARMM	3,556	1,766	1,790	78.7	78.6	78.9

Source: 2019 FLEMMS

Table 26. Basic literacy rate of population 10 years old and over by sex and age group, Philippines: 2013 and 2019

Age group	2019			2013		
	Basic literacy rate (In percent)			Basic literacy rate (In percent)		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
Philippines (in thousands)	96.5	95.9	97.1	96.5	96.1	97.0

BARMM	83.2	83.1	83.3	86.1	84.9	87.3
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Source: 2019 FLEMMS

Infrastructure

There are 16,446 schools in Mindanao based on curricular classification. In the BARMM, 81% of these schools are Purely Elementary School (K-6). This suggests a focus on primary education in the region. However, there are only very few schools offering K-12 which translates to more than 6,000 barangays in the region that may not have Junior or Senior High School. (Table 27)

The Department of Education is committed to promote digital learning and education technology. At the national level, the ratio of distributed computer units to learners is presented as 1:19 for elementary school, 1:9 for junior high school, and 1:3 for senior high school. These ratios serve as benchmarks for ideal student-computer ratios. The BARMM's data shows that it is slightly higher for elementary school than the national average, for junior high school and senior high school it matches the national average, suggesting an optimal distribution of equipment (Table 28).

Efforts to provide internet connectivity in the BARMM schools are on-going. In recent data, the connectivity rates across elementary, junior high school, and senior high school in the BARMM are comparable, reflecting a consistent effort to provide internet access across different educational levels. While the BARMM's connectivity rates are slightly lower compared to some other regions in Mindanao, they fall within a reasonable range. However, ongoing efforts are crucial to narrowing the digital divide further. The connectivity rates in the BARMM suggest a commitment to digital inclusion, aiming to provide internet access to schools across all educational levels. (Table 29)

The data show that slightly more than half of the BARMM's elementary schools (52.83%) have internet access. With a significant portion of elementary schools lacking online resources for teachers and students, this percentage shows a significant digital divide. Similarly, the percentage of junior high schools (51.84%) in the BARMM with internet connections is slightly lower than that of elementary schools, further highlighting the digital disparity at this educational level. The percentage of senior high schools (52.23%) with internet connectivity mirrors the patterns seen in elementary and junior high schools, indicating a consistent level of internet access across different educational tiers.

All elementary schools in the Mindanao area have a somewhat greater rate of internet connectivity than the BARMM average. This indicates that elementary schools (54.76%) in Mindanao have a little superior digital infrastructure than those in the BARMM on average. The trend continues in senior high schools (61.18%), where Mindanao schools outperform BARMM schools in terms of internet access. The digital divide worsens at the junior high school level (63.03%), where Mindanao schools boast a significantly higher percentage of internet connectivity compared to those in the BARMM.

Comparing national data on the internet connectivity rates of elementary schools (64.12%) to those in the BARMM and Mindanao, digital resources are being used more widely in Philippine classrooms. At the junior high school level (73.07%), the disparity in digital infrastructure is even more pronounced as the Philippines has a considerably higher percentage



of schools with internet connections than the BARMM and Mindanao. Senior high schools (68.59%) nationwide also have a higher percentage of internet connectivity, as does the other level.

The analysis reveals a consistent pattern of lower internet connectivity in BARMM schools across all levels when compared to both Mindanao and the entire Philippines. This digital divide raises concerns about equitable access to educational resources, as schools with limited internet connectivity may struggle to integrate digital learning tools and platforms into their curriculum.

Mindanao reports an average of 83.82% of schools with water supply sources, indicating a generally good provision of water infrastructure. However, the BARMM shows lower percentages in water supply sources across all school levels (Elementary: 62.75%, Junior High School: 73.94%, Senior High School: 75.00%), indicating potential challenges in water infrastructure. A notable discrepancy is seen in the percentage of schools with safe water for drinking in the BARMM, especially in Senior High School (13.39%), emphasizing the need for urgent attention. (Table 30)

On the other hand, the BARMM demonstrates lower percentages in electricity provision compared to other Mindanao regions. In Senior High Schools, only 77% have access to electricity, indicating potential challenges in infrastructure or energy supply. Mindanao, on average, reports high percentages of schools with electricity across all levels: Elementary (94%), Junior High School (93%), and Senior High School (90%). The lower percentages in electricity provision in BARMM schools suggest challenges that may hinder the learning environment, especially in Senior High Schools. (Table 31)

Exploring the connection of electricity access and literacy, data shows that higher literacy rates in urban areas and among households with access to electricity suggest the positive impact of urbanization and electricity on literacy. In the BARMM, students with access to electricity in urban and rural areas logged higher literacy rates than those without access to electricity.

The data on basic literacy rates in the BARMM offer insightful information on the educational landscape, particularly regarding access. A closer look at the numbers indicates a significant difference in literacy rates between the BARMM and the national averages, highlighting the necessity of focused educational efforts.

In detail, the literacy statistics in the BARMM, where 81.4% of all barangays have access, demonstrate that there may be limitations on the availability of education services in the region. Given that the overall literacy percentage in urban areas is 86.2%, it appears that urbanization and literacy are positively correlated. The alarmingly high 58.1% literacy rate in the urban areas without access, however, points to possible obstacles to educational opportunities even in urban settings.

The BARMM's rural areas have a lower total literacy rate of 80.5%, which is indicative of the difficulties that these isolated populations endure. In addition, the 63.4% literacy rate in remote areas without access highlights the urgent need for focused educational programs to close the region's literacy gap.

There is a notable difference when these numbers are compared to the national averages for the Philippines. In comparison to the BARMM, the Philippines has a higher overall

literacy rate of 94.4%, showing a greater attainment of literacy. Even without access, the national literacy rate is 92.5% in rural areas and 95.9% in urban areas, indicating a less prominent urban-rural gap. (Table 32)

Generally, the gap between literacy rates in urban and rural areas within the Philippines is smaller than that observed in the BARMM, suggesting that national policies and programs have been relatively successful in ensuring more equitable access to education across geographical regions. The disparities observed in the BARMM highlight the need for targeted educational interventions, especially in rural areas, to enhance literacy rates and ensure that all residents have equal access to education opportunities, thereby fostering inclusive development within the region.

Table 27. Number of Schools by Curricular Classification in the BARMM 2022-2023

Region	Purely ES (K-6)	Purely JHS (G7-G10)	Purely SHS (G11-G12)	JHS with SHS (G7-G12)	ES and JHS (K-10)	All Offering K-12)	Grand Total
BARMM	2,383	165	17	273	32	55	2,925
Mindanao	11,939	533	242	2,210	792	730	16,446

Source: Department of Education

Table 28. Ratio of Distributed Computer Units to Number of Learners in the BARMM, SY 2020-2021

Region	ES	JHS	SHS
National	1:19	1:9	1:3
BARMM	1:26	1:9	1:3

Source: Department of Education, Processed by Mindanao Development Authority

Table 29. Internet Connectivity in the BARMM, SY 2021-2022

Region	Number of Schools			Percentage of Schools with Internet Connections		
	Elementary	JHS	SHS	Elementary	JHS	SHS
BARMM	2,247	353	224	52.83%	51.84%	52.23%
Mindanao	11,714	3,087	2,114	54.76%	63.03%	61.18%
National	39,243	9,985	7,424	64.12%	73.07%	68.59%

Source: Department of Education, Processed by Mindanao Development Authority

Table 30. Water Supply in Public Schools, BARMM, SY 2021-2022

Region	Elementary				Junior High School				Senior High School			
	No. of Schools	% seasons with Water Supply Sources	% seasons with Water Supply Sources and Safe Water to drink	% Schools with Safe Water to drink	No. of Schools	% Schools with Water Supply Sources	% seasons with Water Supply Sources and Safe Water to drink	% Schools with Safe Water to drink	No. of Schools	% Schools with Water Supply Sources	% seasons with Water Supply Sources and Safe Water to drink	% Schools with Safe Water to drink
BARMM	2,247	62.75%	38.44%	24.12%	353	73.94%	32.95%	24.36%	224	75.00%	17.86%	13.39%
Mindanao	11,714	83.82%	43.68%	36.83%	3,087	89.43%	38.56%	34.65%	2,114	89.74%	25.47%	23.22%
National	39,243	89.89%	40.32%	36.24%	9,985	93.56%	39.69%	37.14%	7,424	93.00%	27.78%	25.84%

Source: Department of Education, Processed by Mindanao Development Authority

Table 31. Electricity in Public Schools, SY 2021-2022

Region	Number of Schools		
	Elementary	Junior High School	Senior High School
BARMM	81%	82%	77%
Mindanao	94%	93%	90%
National	97%	96%	93%

Source: Department of Education, Processed by Mindanao Development Authority

Table 32. Basic literacy rate of population 5 years old and over in urban and rural barangays belonging to households with and without access to electricity by region, Philippines: 2019

Region	Basic Literacy Rate (in Percent)					
	All Barangays		Urban		Rural	
	With Access	Without Access	With Access	Without Access	With Access	Without Access
Philippines	94.4	82.1	95.9	88.3	92.5	79.1
BARMM	81.4	63.0	86.2	58.1	80.5	63.4

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority

Out of School Youth

UNICEF reports that there are at least 213 barangays in the Bangsamoro region where children do not have access to any learning facility. This problem is affecting over 45,000 primary school aged children. This report adds that about 48.5 percent of indigenous children in the BARMM attend elementary school but only 11.2 percent complete basic education. A combination of armed conflict, exclusion and marginalization, and many families valuing

immediate livelihood needs over the education of their children, have contributed to lagging education⁶² (Figure 6).

The BARMM exhibits lower primary school attendance ratios compared to other Mindanao regions, with a total net attendance ratio of 76.1%, highlighting challenges in ensuring primary education access. The gender parity index in primary schools for the BARMM is favorable, indicating relatively equal attendance between genders, although the overall attendance rates are lower. This similar concern is reflected in secondary school attendance, with a net attendance ratio of 57.5%, significantly lower than other Mindanao regions. The gender parity index in secondary schools for the BARMM indicates a significant gender disparity, with a ratio of 1.25, highlighting a larger gap between male and female attendance (Table 33).

Based on the PSA's 2019 FLEMMS, the top reasons for non-attendance in schools among those aged 6-20 years old are lack of personal interest (34%) and the insufficiency of family income to send children to school (25.6%).⁶³ Data from the DepEd and PSA reveal that 32% or 463,963 youth in the Bangsamoro remain out of school.

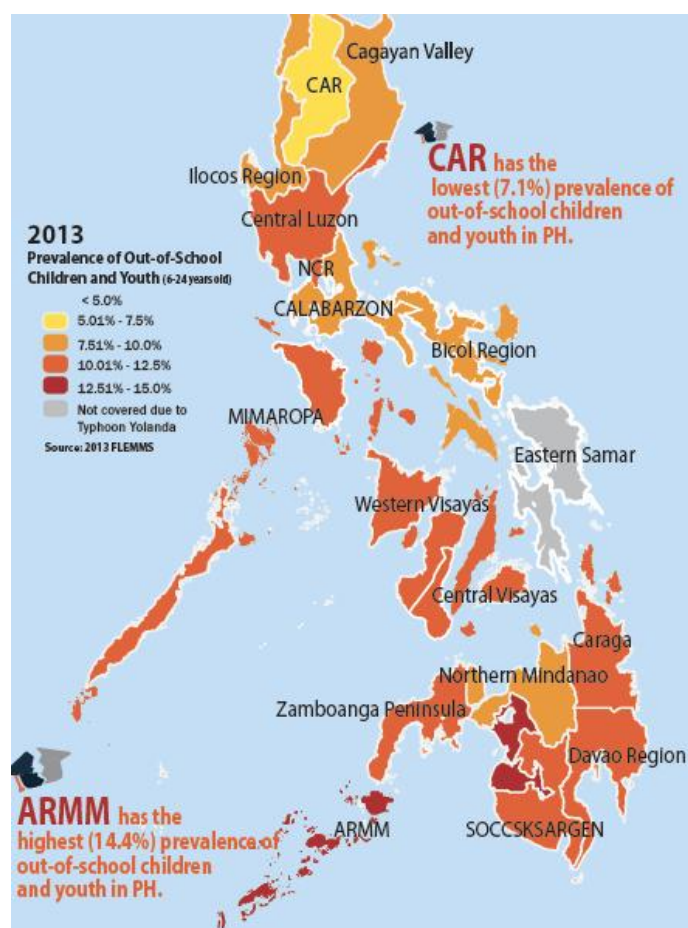


Figure 6. Map on the Prevalence of Out-of-School Children and Youth in the Philippines, 2018

⁶² For every child in Bangsamoro, an education. (n.d.). UNICEF Philippines. <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/stories/every-child-bangsamoro-education>

⁶³ Philippine Statistics Authority | Republic of the Philippines. (2020, December 11). <https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/education-mass-media/node/163646>

Table 33. School Attendance Ratios of Primary Schools and Secondary Schools Mindanao

Region	BARMM							
	Net attendance ratio				Gross attendance ratio			
	Male	Female	Total	Gender parity index	Male	Female	Total	Gender parity index
Primary	72.8	79.4	76.1	1.09	100.9	97.3	99.1	0.96
Secondary	54.2	62.3	57.5	1.15	70.5	88.0	77.6	1.25

Source: Department of Education

Mental Health in Schools

The prolonged lockdown and lack of in-person socialization have surfaced various mental health issues for students, teachers, and parents such as anxiety, depression, and frustration. Data presented by DepEd showed that 404 students died by suicide in 2021 while 2,147 attempted it.⁶⁴ Reports showed that a prevalence of 16% of mental disorders among children was observed.⁶⁵

Data from the BARMM show that suicidal tendencies are disturbingly common, especially among people between the ages of 15 and 19. The disparity in rates, which range from 6.7% to 18.2%, emphasizes how urgent it is to treat mental health issues in this age group. Interestingly, there is a gender difference in the statistics as well; girls regularly report larger percentages of having ever considered suicide than do boys. This gender-based disparity highlights the necessity of focused interventions and systems of support that consider the particular difficulties and stressors that young women in the area encounter.

Moreover, an important finding of the research is the part that technology plays in harassment, both inflicting and receiving it. Higher rates of harassment were reported by those aged 15 to 19, who also reported being victims of harassment. This suggests that there is a worrying trend of problems associated with technology. Suicide attempts and physical harm increase noticeably when people go from adolescent to early adulthood. This emphasizes how vital it is to offer specialized mental health care that is catered to the particular requirements of this age group. In addition, the prevalence of harassment related to technology emphasizes how critical it is to combat cyberbullying and encourage responsible online behavior, especially among teenagers. The detrimental effects of technology on mental health and wellbeing can be reduced by putting effective policies into place, highlighting the significance of digital literacy, and encouraging a safer digital environment. The prominence of technology-related harassment,

⁶⁴ Chi, C. (2023, February 1). Lack of guidance counselors hampers prevention of student suicides. Philstar.com. <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2023/02/01/2241784/lack-guidance-counselors-hampers-prevention-student-suicides>

⁶⁵ Malolos, G. Z. C., Baron, M. B. C., Apat, F. A. J., Sagsagat, H. A. A., Pasco, P. B. M., Aportadera, E. T. C., Tan, R. J. D., Gacutno-Evardone, A. J., & Lucero-Prisno, D. E. (2021, August 18). Mental health and well-being of children in the Philippine setting during the COVID-19 pandemic. Health Promotion Perspectives. <https://doi.org/10.34172/hpp.2021.34>

both as perpetrators and victims, emphasizes the importance of addressing cyberbullying and promoting responsible online behavior, particularly among adolescents⁶⁶ (Table 34).

DepEd has expressed concern on the state of mental health in schools with the disproportionate number of guidance counselors that can handle the total number of students enrolled. An estimated 2,000 guidance counselors in DepEd are required to provide services to almost 28 million students. This translates to a ratio of about one guidance counselor for every 14,000 students. The ideal ratio globally is 1:250 while the Philippines is at 1:500.

Table 34. Percentage of youth suicidal experiences and experiences of violence, by sex and age group: BARMM, YAFS 2021

Suicide and Violence	Male			Female			Both Sexes		
	15-19	20-24	15-24	15-19	20-24	15-24	15-19	20-24	15-24
Ever thought of committing suicide	6.1	7.4	6.7	18.9	17.4	18.2	12.4	12.6	12.5
Ever tried to commit suicide	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.3	6.1	4.6	3.3	4.8	4.0
Been physically hurt by someone in the past 12 months	15.1	21.3	17.7	11.7	2.8	7.6	13.4	11.6	12.6
Ever harassed someone using technology	3.4	3.3	3.4	6.2	1.9	4.3	4.8	2.6	3.8
Ever been harassed by someone using technology	13.8	9.2	11.8	7.7	1.7	5.0	10.8	5.3	8.4

Bullying in Schools

Recent assessments have shown that students face bullying in schools. The Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) 2019 data revealed that 63.2% of Grade 5 students in the Philippines experience bullying at least once a month in schools. This figure is consistent with the National Baseline Survey on Violence Against Children conducted by the Council for the Welfare of Children in 2016, which found that 65% of students in the Philippines have experienced bullying.⁶⁷ The PISA reported that 40% of Filipino students are frequently bullied.

In a report of the Department of Education on the official bullying cases to the committee since 2013, the types of bullying are as follows: Physical bullying: 56.79%; Social bullying: 25.43%; Gender-based/biased: 5.92%; Cyberbullying: 6.03%; Retaliation: 5.83%.⁶⁸ (Table 35)

⁶⁶ 2021 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study. (2022). In <https://www.uppi.upd.edu.ph/>. Uppi and the Demographic Research and Development Foundation, Inc. Retrieved December 10, 2023, from <https://www.uppi.upd.edu.ph/research/yafs5>

⁶⁷ Pastolero, A. (2023, June 14). SEA-PLM 2019 evidence sheds light on bullying in schools at Philippine Senate Hearing - SEA-PLM. SEA-PLM. <https://www.seaplum.org/index.php/component/k2/item/80-seaplum-2019-philippine-senate-hearing#:~:text=The%20SEA%2DPLM%202019%20data,once%20a%20man%20in%20schools.>

⁶⁸ Macasero, R. (2023, February 13). Bullying in schools underreported, says chair of Senate education panel. RAPPLER. <https://www.rappler.com/nation/bullying-schools-underreported-senate-hearing-february-13-2023/>

In the Bangsamoro region, government agencies recognize the need to discuss bullying among basic education learners as a pressing issue.⁶⁹ In a poll with young people from the region, bullying surfaced as a challenge youth face in the community.⁷⁰

Table 35. Official Reported Bullying Cases in Schools (National), 2020

Year	Cases
2013-2014	1,309
2014-2015	5,624
2015-2016	7,221
2016-2017	8,750
2017-2018	15,866
2018-2019	21,521
2019-2020	11,637

Source: Department of Education

III. Basic Health and Welfare

Access to quality healthcare is crucial for children and their families to enjoy a good quality of life. The situation of children in the BARMM deteriorated due to the confluence of crises limiting their access to basic services. The COVID-19 pandemic, sporadic armed conflicts, and natural disasters have affected immunization, nutrition, WASH, education, and child protection in the region.⁷¹

Access to Health Services

The BARMM only has 10 Licensed Public Hospitals with 3 Department of Health (DOH) Retained Hospitals and 7 Public Hospitals). The region has a lower total number of hospitals compared to other regions in Mindanao, but it maintains a balance between DOH Retained and Public Hospitals suggesting a comprehensive approach to healthcare service delivery.

The BARMM has a total of 650 Barangay Health Stations serving a substantial number of 5,535 barangays. Looking closely, the average number of Barangay Health Stations per barangay is 0.3 which is lower (0.3) compared to several neighboring regions like Region X (0.6)

⁶⁹ Commission Proper passes reso requesting MBHTE to implement anti-bullying program. (2023, July 21). Bangsamoro Youth Commission - BARMM. <https://byc.bangsamoro.gov.ph/2023/07/21/news/commission-proper-passes-reso-requesting-mbhte-to-implement-anti-bullying-program/>

⁷⁰ U-Report Philippines. <https://philippines.ureport.in/opinion/5415/https://philippines.ureport.in/opinion/5415/>

⁷¹ Country Office Annual Report 2022: Philippines. (2022). In www.unicef.org. UNICEF. Retrieved November 25, 2023, from <https://www.unicef.org/reports/country-regional-divisional-annual-reports-2022/Philippines>

and Region XI (1.0). Based on the regional average, the BARMM has an estimated gap of 1,885 Barangay Health Stations.

The limited number of hospitals and the gap in Barangay Health Stations may result in challenges in providing timely and accessible healthcare services to children. This can lead to delayed medical interventions, reduced preventive care, and potential disparities in health outcomes for children across different areas within the BARMM.

Table 36. Licensed Public Hospitals in the BARMM, 2020

Region	DOH Retained Hospital	Public Hospitals
9	6	15
10	3	18
11	3	10
12	2	16
13	3	24
BARMM	3	7

Source: DOH List of Maintained Hospitals and List of Licensed Government and Private Infirmarys (2020)

Table 37. Number of Barangay Health Stations and Barangays in the BARMM, 2019

Region	BHS	Barangays	%Share (BHS/barangay)	Estimated gap
BARMM	650	5,535	0.3	1,885
Mindanao	5,787	10,084	0.6	4,297

Source: DOH Philippine Health Development Facility Plan 2020-2040

Nutritional Status

The BARMM faces a complex nutritional landscape. There is a high prevalence of stunting and wasting among children under 5, school-age children, and adolescents. Substantial deficiencies in vitamin A and iodine among children can also be observed (Table 38).

In data compiled by the Mindanao Development Authority, a total of 256,199 individuals were measured in the BARMM, with 94.1% categorized as normal, 3.3% underweight, 1.0% severely underweight, and 1.7% overweight. The overall malnutrition rate in the BARMM is 5.9%. The region exhibits a malnutrition profile like other regions in Mindanao, with a slightly lower percentage of overweight individuals. The percentage of underweight individuals (3.3%) and percentage of overweight individuals (1.7%) is slightly higher than the Mindanao average (2.94%) and (1.10%). (Table 39. Weight-for-Age (Underweight) among Preschool Children 0-59 months (2018).

The majority (95.3%) of children in the region falls within the normal range of weight-for-height, while 2.0% are classified as moderately wasted, 0.8% severely wasted, 1.9% overweight, and 0.8% obese. The percentage of individuals classified as normal in the BARMM (95.3%) is

comparable to the Mindanao average (95.77%). However, the percentage of overweight individuals in the BARMM (1.9%) is slightly higher than the Mindanao average (1.22%). The percentages of moderately and severely wasted individuals in the BARMM (2.0% and 0.8%, respectively) are within the range observed in other Mindanao regions. (Table 40. Weigh/Length-for-Weight (Wasting) among Preschool Children 0-59 months (2018))

The prevalence of stunting is 5.3%, with 2.1% classified as severely stunted. The majority (89.4%) falls within the normal height range. The BARMM's stunting prevalence is consistent with the regional average for Mindanao (5.42%). The BARMM's stunting prevalence reflects an improvement compared to previous years, indicating positive trends in addressing malnutrition.

Mothers directly impact the nutritional status of infants and children. There are still 19.5 percent nutritionally-at-risk pregnant women and 10.9 percent chronically energy deficient lactating mothers. These undernourished pregnant women will give birth to low birth weight and stunted infants.

The infant and young child feeding practices in the BARMM still needs improvement. Only 58.9 percent of children aged 0 to 23 months have been initiated to breastfeed within one hour of delivery. Within the same age range, significantly one out of three infants were given prelacteal feeds. Among children aged 0 to 5 months, only 59.3 percent were exclusively breastfed, and 57 percent continued to be breastfed until they reached their first birthday. This figure continues to significantly drop as only 26 percent of infants continue to receive breast milk until they reach age two.⁷²

The BARMM Regional Plan of Action for Nutrition cites lack of access to food as a major cause of hunger and malnutrition for the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, and Sulu. Low income, limited livelihood and employment opportunities, illiteracy and low education levels, and underemployment come with inadequate food access. In addition, inadequate transport services affect access to food in the provinces mentioned. Food availability is also a major limiting factor for the province of Sulu due to limited self-sufficiency and inadequate nutritious food. Lanao del Sur and Sulu were among the provinces classified under Crisis Phase 3 in the Acute Food Security Analysis carried out in January 2015. This means that even with humanitarian assistance, at least one in five households had food consumption gaps resulting in high or above-usual acute malnutrition. These households experienced acute food deficits combined with long term food deprivation⁷³ (Table 42).

The nutritional profile of the BARMM necessitates a comprehensive and sustained approach, addressing not only immediate concerns but also underlying factors contributing to malnutrition. Initiatives targeting maternal and child nutrition, improving feeding practices, and addressing broader issues of food access and security are crucial for fostering a healthier and more resilient population in the region.

Table 38. BARMM Nutrition Profile, 2020

⁷² BARMM Food Security and Nutrition Roadmap . (2020). In mafar.bangsamoro.gov.ph. MAFAR. Retrieved November 27, 2023, from <https://mafar.bangsamoro.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BARMMFSNRoadmapOct9Final.pdf>

⁷³ Regional Plan of Action for Nutrition 2020-2022. (2021). In www.nnc.gov.ph. National Nutrition Council BARMM.

Estimated Population by Age/Physiological Group Based on Projected Population, 2016 (In Millions)		
Total Population		4,273,149
Male		1,987,392
Female		1,909,456
0-59 months		526,074
121-228 months		938,166
20 years and above		1,906,537
Women of reproductive age (15 to 49 years old)		958,625
Pregnant women		136,390
Lactating mothers		116,905
Nutritional Status Indicators/ Population Group	Prevalence (%)	Equivalent Number in 2017
Low birth weight infants	21.8%	2,468
Infants 5 months old who are exclusively breastfed	24.7% (National Data)	8,768
Children 6-23 months old meeting the minimum acceptable diet	7.2%	149,054
UNDERNUTRITION (NNS, 2015)		
Children under 5 years old		
Stunting	45.2%	236,734
Wasting	8.2%	43,138
School age children (5-10 years old)		
Stunting	44%	231,473
Wasting	6.3%	33,143
Adolescents (Ages 10-19 years old)		
Stunting	44.9%	358,685
Wasting	9.6%	50,503
Adults (≥ 20 years)		
Chronic energy deficiency (CED)	10.2%	81,483

Pregnant women		
Nutritionally at risk	19.5%	20,517
Lactating mothers		
Chronic energy deficiency (CED)	10.4%	10,942
OVERNUTRITION (NNS, 2015)		
Overweight/obese		
Children under 5 years old	4.1%	21,569
School age children	4.2%	22,095
Adolescents	4.3%	34,351
Adults 20 years and above	21.6%	204,507
MICRONUTRIENT DEFICIENCY		
Vitamin A deficiency among children 6 months to 5 years old	22%	125,381
Anemia among women of reproductive age	11.7% (National)	112,159
Median urinary iodine concentration, mcg/L		
Children 6-12 years old	20.6%	130,046
Lactating Women	28.6%	33,435
HOUSEHOLDS WITH DIETS THAT MEET ENERGY REQUIREMENTS	30.4%	188,597
Assessment Criteria in determining magnitude and severity of underweight, stunting, and wasting in children under 5 years old (0 to 59 months old) as public health problem (WHO, 1995): Underweight: <10% - low; 10-19% - medium; 20-29% - high; ≥30% - very high. Stunting: <20% - low, 20-29% - medium; 30-39% - high; ≥40% - very high. Wasting: <5% - acceptable; 5-9% - poor, 10-14% - serious; ≥15% - critical		

Source: BARMM Regional Plan of Action for Nutrition

Table 39. Weight-for-Age (Underweight) among Preschool Children 0-59 months, 2018

Region	Coverage	Normal	Underweight	Severely Underweight	Overweight
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	Total no. measured	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
BARMM	256,199	241,069	94.1%	8,334	3.3%	2,502	1.0%	4,294	1.7%
Mindanao	2,327,519	2,214,613	95.15%	68,396	2.94	18,988	0.82%	25,522	1.10

Source: National Nutrition Council, Processed by Mindanao Development Authority

Table 40. Weight/Length-for-Weight (Wasting) among Preschool Children 0-59 months, 2018

Region	Coverage	Normal		Moderately Wasted		Severely Wasted		Overweight		Obese	
	Total no. measured	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
BARMM	412,988	393,772	95.3%	8,222	2.0%	3,248	0.8%	4,524	1.9%	3,222	0.8%
Mindanao	2,304,665	2,204,147	95.77	36,815	1.60	13,433	0.58	28,088	1.22	19,182	0.83

Source: National Nutrition Council, Processed by Mindanao Development Authority

Table 41. Height/Length-for-Age (Stunting) among Preschool Children 0-59 months, 2018

Region	Coverage	Normal		Stunted		Severely Stunted		Tall	
	Total no. measured	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
BARMM	412,982	369,202	89.4%	21,831	5.3%	8,845	2.1%	13,104	3.2%
Mindanao	2,351,607	2,125,123	90.37	127,352	5.42	44,615	1.90	54,517	2.32

Source: National Nutrition Council, Processed by Mindanao Development Authority

Table 42. Chronic Food Insecurity Situation Overview in the 18 provinces ARMM, 2015

Provinces	Total # (pp)	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Lanao del Sur	1,006,411	101,000	10	377,000	37	302,000	30	226,000	22
Maguindanao	1,024,589	205,000	20	384,000	37	282,000	27	154,000	15
Sulu	772,120	97,000	12	309,000	40	193,000	25	174,000	22

Source: BARMM Regional Plan of Action for Nutrition

Teenage and Early Pregnancy

One of the most pressing issues that the Filipino youth are facing today is teenage pregnancy. Teenage pregnancy among Filipino women aged 15 to 19 years declined from 8.6 percent in 2017 to 5.4 percent in 2022. Among women aged 15 to 19 who have been pregnant as of 2022, the highest percentage was recorded in women aged 19 years (13.3%). This was followed by women aged 18 years (5.9%) and women aged 17 years (5.6%). As expected, the lowest percentage of women aged 15 to 19 years who have begun childbearing was for those who were aged 16 years (1.7%), followed by women aged 15 years (1.4%).⁷⁴

Studies revealed that adolescents in the Philippines who have begun childbearing before the age of 18 are less likely to complete secondary education compared to the adolescents who have not begun childbearing. The non-completion of secondary education impacts employment opportunities in the future and total life earnings of families. The net estimated effect of early childbearing due to lost opportunities and foregone earnings can be as high as 33 billion pesos annual losses for the country. Moreover, childbearing carries increased risks for poor health outcomes for both mother and child; and the younger the adolescent, the greater the risks.⁷⁵

Approximately 6.6% of teenage girls in the BARMM have experienced pregnancy while 6.5% have initiated childbearing. This remains higher than the national average of 5.4%. The data from the Department of Education in the School Year 2020–2021 reported that information regarding menstruation and sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) is also not easily accessible. In a recent report by the Bangsamoro Youth Commission (BYC) it was highlighted that teenage or early pregnancy, which is rooted in different factors including early marriage, is a major health issue faced by young people. The report cites that Bangsamoro people were used to practicing early marriages, caused by a lack of knowledge and interest in participating in reproductive health and sex-related discussions.⁷⁶

Access to family planning methods is part of the global and national strategies in averting maternal and neonatal mortalities and morbidities. The BARMM's contraceptive prevalence rate (any contraception method) appears to be very low at 23.9% for women aged 15 to 49. Naturally, a low average on use of contraception in the region heightens the risk of early pregnancy, which is closely like national trends with 2.2 percent of women already sexually active before the age of 15.

The region's unique context needs to be considered in the discussion of teenage or early pregnancy as some of these are rooted in different factors, including early marriage, lack of knowledge in reproductive health, and low interest in sexual and reproductive health rights discussions.⁷⁷

Table 43. Teenage Pregnancy of 15-19 years old

⁷⁴ Teenage Pregnancy Declined from 8.6 percent in 2017 to 5.4 percent in 2022 | Philippine Statistics Authority | Republic of the Philippines. (2023, January 20). <https://psa.gov.ph/content/teenage-pregnancy-declined-86-percent-2017-54-percent-2022>

⁷⁵ POLICY BRIEF January 2020. (2020). In philippines.unfpa.org. UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND.

⁷⁶ BYC underscores youth health issues in BARMM. (2023, February 20). Bangsamoro Youth Commission - BARMM. <https://byc.bangsamoro.gov.ph/2023/02/20/news/byc-underscores-youth-health-issues-in-barmm/>

⁷⁷ BYC underscores youth health issues in BARMM. (2023, February 20). Bangsamoro Youth Commission - BARMM. <https://byc.bangsamoro.gov.ph/2023/02/20/news/byc-underscores-youth-health-issues-in-barmm/>

Region	Have ever had a live birth	Have ever had a pregnancy loss	Are currently pregnant	Have ever been pregnant	Have begun child bearing	Number of women
BARMM	4.5	0.4	2.2	6.6	6.5	239

Source: Philippine NDHS 2022

Maternal and Childcare

About 2,600 women die every year due to complications from pregnancy or childbirth. These complications often happen at home, where there are no adequate supplies and equipment to respond to the difficulties.⁷⁸ Inadequate healthcare services for mothers and children, poor child feeding practices, and lack of knowledge on proper nutrition and maternal and childcare constitute underlying causes as well.

The BARMM's prenatal, delivery, and post-natal care for women rate as inferior when compared to national averages. Out of 173 women aged 15 to 49 that had a live birth in the last five years from the conduct of the 2013 National Demographic and Health Survey, only 52.8 percent received antenatal care from a skilled provider. Upon birth delivery, only 20 percent were attended by skilled birth attendants and a very low 12.3 percent by institutional delivery. Postnatal care coverage also followed a similar path with only 20.4 percent of women aged 15-49 receiving post-natal checkup in the first two days following delivery.⁷⁹

The analysis of maternal and child health indicators reveals both similarities and differences between the Philippines and the BARMM. In terms of prenatal care, the BARMM exhibits a slightly lower percentage of mothers with a first-trimester check-up compared to the national average (64.9% vs. 69.5%), suggesting a potential need for improved early prenatal care initiation in the region. However, the BARMM excels in the proportion of pregnant women with four or more prenatal visits, surpassing the national average significantly (75.8% vs. 53.5%). This indicates a higher adherence to comprehensive prenatal care in the BARMM, showcasing a positive aspect of maternal health practices in the region.

On vaccinations, the BARMM lags the national average in the percentage of women receiving two or more tetanus toxoid injections during the last pregnancy (44.23% vs. 53.6%), indicating a potential gap in tetanus immunization coverage. On the other hand, the region outperforms the national average in the percentage of births delivered in a health facility (78.0% vs. 61.1%), reflecting better access to institutionalized childbirth services.

Breastfeeding practices in the BARMM are noteworthy, with higher rates of exclusive breastfeeding for 0-5 months (59.3% vs. 48.8%) and longer mean duration of breastfeeding (8.9 months vs. 8.3 months) compared to the national averages. The region also demonstrates positive trends in breastfeeding with complementary feeding for both 6-11 months (69.7% vs. 57.7%) and 12-23 months (47.5% vs. 43.1%).

⁷⁸ Taking Care of Mother and Child Health in Maguindanao. (2021, March 17). UNFPA Philippines. <https://philippines.unfpa.org/en/news/taking-care-mother-and-child-health-maguindanao>

⁷⁹ BARMM Food Security and Nutrition Roadmap . (2020). In mafar.bangsamoro.gov.ph. MAFAR. Retrieved November 27, 2023, from <https://mafar.bangsamoro.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BARMMFSNRoadmapOct9Final.pdf>

However, challenges persist in child nutrition, as the percentage of children 6-23 months meeting the Minimum Acceptable Diet is lower in the BARMM (12.2%) than the national average (18.6%). This signals an area for targeted interventions to improve child nutrition practices in the region.

In essence, while the BARMM showcases strengths in certain maternal and child health indicators, the analysis underscores the need for targeted strategies to address specific health challenges, such as early prenatal care initiation and tetanus immunization coverage, and to further enhance child nutrition practices in the region.

Table 44. Coverage of Selected Services within the First 1000 Days Period

Selected Indicators of Services and Care during the FIK	Philippines (%)	BARMM (%)	Source of Data
Percent of mothers with one time (1st trimester) first prenatal check-up during their last/current pregnancy	69.5	64.9	NNS 2015
Proportion of pregnant women with four or more prenatal visits (%)	53.50 75.8	39.7	FHSIS 2015 NNS 2015
Proportion of pregnant women given complete iron with folic acid supplements (%)	47.22	46.90	FHSIS 2015
Percentage of women receiving two or more tetanus toxoid injections during last pregnancy	53.6	44.23	FHSIS
Percentage of births delivered in a health facility	61.1 78.0	25.98 78	FHSIS NNS 2015
Exclusive breastfeeding (0-5 months)	48.8	59.3	NNS 2015
Mean duration of breastfeeding	8.3	8.9	NNS 2015
Breastfeeding with complementary Feeding of 6-11 months	57.7	69.7	NNS 2015
Breastfeeding with complementary Feeding of 12-23 months	43.1	47.5	NNS 2015
Percentage of children 6-23 months meeting the Minimum Acceptable Diet	18.6	12.2	NNS 2015

Source: Processed by BARMM Regional Plan of Action for Nutrition 2020-2022

Infant Mortality Rate

The infant mortality rate in the Philippines has steadily decreased over the past four years. In 2023, the rate was 17.544 deaths per 1000 live births, showing a 2.36% decline from 2022, which itself experienced a 2.31% decrease from 2021. In 2021, the rate dropped by

2.25% compared to 2020, which had a 2.2% decline from 2019. This consistent downward trend suggests improvements in healthcare and maternal-child health interventions.⁸⁰

In 2021, the BARMM reported 223 infant deaths, contributing 1.2% to the national total while Region X and Region XI had higher contributions at 5.1% and 5.3%, respectively. Within the region, there were more male infant deaths (137) than female (86). On a national scale, the region had the least number of registered infant deaths. The BARMM's lower percentage share may indicate relatively better infant health outcomes compared to some other regions.

Table 45. Number and Percent Share of Infant Deaths by Sex and Usual Residence (Region), Philippines: 2021

Usual Residence (Region)	Number			Percent		
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Total	18,607	10,678	7,929	100.0	57.4	42.6
Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	223	137	86	1.2	0.7	0.5

Note: Figures are results of actual registration without any adjustment for under registration

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority (Data on deaths are those registered at the Office of the City/Municipal Civil Registrars throughout the country and submitted to the Office of the Civil Registrar General using Certificate of Death-Municipal Form 103)

Mandatory infant and child health immunization

Immunization through infant and childhood vaccines is also pertinent in the prevention of vaccine-preventable diseases. Compared to national coverage and to other regions, the BARMM's immunization coverage for vaccinations is significantly lower at 29.4 percent, with the second lowest region, Ilocos Region, still more than twice as high at 61.1%.⁸¹

In 2019, the province of Lanao Del Sur saw outbreaks of both polio and measles—two severe yet easily preventable diseases covered under the seven vaccines of the routine National Immunization Program for children. According to the 2021 Field Health Services Information System of the Department of Health, the BARMM only managed to fully vaccinate about 61% of its eligible children, lower than the national average of 63%.⁸² Recently, efforts to increase vaccination for measles and rubella in the region has been successful with 94.55% of its vaccination target achieved.⁸³

⁸⁰ Philippines Infant Mortality Rate 1950-2024. (n.d.). MacroTrends. <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/PHL/philippines/infant-mortality-rate>

⁸¹ Regional Plan of Action for Nutrition 2020-2022. (2021). In www.nnc.gov.ph. National Nutrition Council BARMM.

⁸² 1 million babies in the Philippines have not had a single routine vaccine, exposing them to diseases. (n.d.). UNICEF Philippines. <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/stories/1-million-babies-philippines-have-not-had-single-routine-vaccine-exposing-them-diseases>

⁸³ Measles-rubella immunization across Bangsamoro at 94% —BARMM. (2020, December 13). GMA News Online. <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/regions/767811/measles-rubella-immunization-across-bangsamoro-at-94-barmm/story/>

The BARMM's vaccination card ownership percentages are substantially lower than the national and regional averages. The region shows a lower percentage (42.8%) of children (13-23 months) who ever had a vaccination card compared to other regions. The percentage of children with a vaccination card seen in the BARMM is also significantly lower at 20.7%, indicating potential challenges in tracking and documenting vaccinations. For children aged 24-35 months, the percentage of those who ever had a vaccination card drops to 53.5%, and the percentage with a vaccination card seen further decreases to 26.9%. (Table 46. Possession and Observation of Vaccination Cards)

Table 46. Possession and Observation of Vaccination Cards

Region	Children age 13-23 months			Children age 24-35 months		
	Percentage who ever had a vaccination card	Percentage with a vaccination card seen	No. of Children	Percentage who ever had a vaccination card	Percentage with a vaccination card seen	No. of Children
BARMM	42.8	20.7	98	53.5	26.9	104

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority

Children with Tuberculosis

The Department of Health Integrated TB Information System reported that there have been 90,678 childhood tuberculosis cases in the Philippines since 2018. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the full scope of the burden of tuberculosis in children is still not fully known. The startling aspect is that this number might just be the tip of the iceberg. In its annual Global TB Report, the World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes the incomplete understanding of the true extent of childhood TB, citing an estimated 1.12 million cases globally in 2018, with a staggering 233,000 resulting in death.⁸⁴ The differences between estimated and reported cases highlight the difficulties in correctly diagnosing and monitoring TB in children, suggesting that data collection methods may be inadequate or that underdiagnosis may occur. These inequalities show that to provide a more thorough understanding of childhood TB and subsequently improve prevention and treatment efforts, there is a need for enhanced surveillance, better diagnostic techniques, and higher awareness among healthcare professionals.

The seriousness of the problem in the Philippines is further highlighted by the WHO's 2019 report, which states that 44,600 children, or around 12 percent of all new and relapse TB cases reported in 2018, were under the age of 15. This concerning figure highlights the age group's susceptibility to tuberculosis and the pressing need for focused interventions. Beyond the short-term health effects, childhood tuberculosis also has long-term effects that impact the development and general well-being of those who are afflicted. The results highlight the need for a proactive and comprehensive strategy that includes community-based and educational programs in addition to healthcare systems to address the many issues raised by tuberculosis in

⁸⁴ Tuberculosis, still a threat to Filipino children (2020). Manila Bulletin. <https://mb.com.ph/2020/10/05/tuberculosis-still-a-threat-to-filipino-children/>

childhood in the Philippines including the BARMM which has a total number of TB cases notified across all regions is 109,323. The BARMM reports a notably lower TB case notification rate compared to other regions, with only 4,135 cases, constituting 29% of the national total.⁸⁵

Table 47. TB Cases Notification by Region, 2019 Q2

Region	Target (Q2)	TB Cases Notified (Q2)	%
TOTAL	109,323	77,988	71%
BARMM	4,135	1,184	29%

Source: KNOW TB Newsletter

HIV and Sexual Risk Behaviors

More Filipinos are getting infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) each day at a rate that is 21 percent higher in 2022 than in 2021. Based on the December 2022 HIV/AIDS Registry of the Philippines report, there were a total of 14,970 new HIV cases detected between January and December 2022.⁸⁶

Based on the 2021 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality (YAFS) Study, 6.0% of males aged 15-19 report engaging in premarital sex (PMS) while females in the same age group are at 1.2%. Both males and females aged 15-19 exhibit early sexual initiation, with 15.8% reporting having had sex before the age of 18. Among those aged 15-19 who have had sex, the prevalence of engaging in casual sex is relatively low, ranging from 2.0% to 3.6%. For females aged 15-19, the data indicates a lower prevalence of having been pregnant or impregnating someone compared to the 20-24 age group. The prevalence ranges from 4.9% to 10.0%.

Early sexual initiation is a notable concern, underscoring the need for interventions to delay sexual debut. The prevalence of casual sex is relatively low among those who have initiated sexual activity in this age group. Tailored sexual education programs for this age group should emphasize delaying sexual debut, contraceptive awareness, and responsible sexual behavior. Access to reproductive health services and information can be made readily available to address the unique needs of adolescents.

On their awareness of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI), 11.1% of the 15 to 19-year-old respondents were aware of STIs; 35.8% have heard about HIV and/or AIDS; and 7.2% have comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV and/or AIDS. Awareness of STIs is moderate among youth aged 15-19 in the BARMM, and efforts should be made to enhance knowledge, particularly among females. While a substantial portion of youth in this age group is aware of HIV/AIDS, there is room for improvement, especially in enhancing knowledge among females. Both males and females aged 15-19 have relatively low comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV and/or AIDS, indicating the need for more targeted education.

⁸⁵ KNOW TB Newsletter November 2019. (2019, November). In <https://www.fhi360.org/>. fhi 360. Retrieved November 2023, from <https://www.fhi360.org/resource/known-tb-newsletter>

⁸⁶ Jaymalin, M. (2023, February 5). HIV cases up 21% in 2022. Philstar.com. <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2023/02/06/2242819/hiv-cases-21-2022#:~:text=Based%20on%20the%20December%202022,12%2C339%20cases%20recorded%20in%202021>

Table 48. Percentage of youth with sexual experience, by sex and age group: BARMM, YAFS 2021

Sexual risk behaviors	Male			Female			Both Sexes		
Age	15-19	20-24	15-24	15-19	20-24	15-24	15-19	20-24	15-24
Ever had premarital sex (PMS)	6.0	23.8	13.7	1.2	3.1	2.0	3.6	13.0	7.8
Ever had sex before the age of 18, among those aged 18-24	15.8	15.8	15.8	22.2	24.5	23.7	19.4	20.3	20
Used contraceptives at first PMS, among those who had PMS	*	(75.7)	(69.9)	-	-	-	(44.1)	66.4	60.6
Ever had casual sex among those who had sex	*	(4.5)	(6.4)	-	-	-	(5.0)	2.0	2.6
Ever been pregnant or got someone pregnant	-	27.1	11.9	10.0	51.4	28.6	4.9	39.4	20.1

Note: Figures in parenthesis are based on 25-49 unweighted cases. An asterisk indicates that a figure is based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases and has been suppressed. A dash indicates that a figure is less than 0.1%.

Table 49. Percentage of youth who are aware of sexually transmitted infections, by sex and age group: BARMM YAFS 2021

Sexual health awareness	Male			Female			Both Sexes		
Age	15-19	20-24	15-24	15-19	20-24	15-24	15-19	20-24	15-24
Aware of sexually-transmitted infections	10.3	12.2	11.1	10.9	16.4	13.4	10.6	14.4	12.3
Heard of HIV and/or AIDS	23.7	49.6	34.8	35.8	51.1	42.7	29.7	50.4	38.8
Comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV and/or AIDS	2.3	10.4	7.2	4.9	19.4	12.8	3.8	15.1	10.3

Health Financing

Historically, health funding in the BARMM heavily relied on national government appropriations, contributing up to 65%. PhilHealth payments and other streams such as local funds, and Official Development Assistance made up the rest. In 2020, under the BARMM government, a block grant system provides more flexibility in fund allocation. Local Government Units traditionally contributed less, and the recent legal decision is expected to boost their funding. Clarifying roles and engaging LGUs can enhance support for health initiatives.

In a recent report on the Universal Healthcare Coverage in the BARMM, respondents shared that nearly 70 percent of monthly health spending went towards medicine and professional fees for doctors, which is consistent with data from other countries.⁸⁷

Table 50 shows the health expenditure in the BARMM. The data reveal that there is a significant increase over the years, rising from 3,943.86 million pesos in 2014 to 15,923.14 million pesos in 2021. This trend reflects a growing commitment to healthcare in the region. However, the year 2020 stands out with a substantial spike to 22,58.79 million pesos, potentially influenced by the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite a slight decrease in 2021, the expenditure remains higher than previous years.

When analyzing health expenditure per capita, the BARMM experienced a notable increase from 1,222.71 pesos in 2015 to 5,128.14 pesos in 2020. This surge suggests an intensified focus on individual health needs. Comparatively, the per capita health expenditure in BARMM is lower than the Mindanao average but reflects a positive trajectory. (Table 51. Current Health Expenditure per Capita, By Region). The increasing health expenditure in the BARMM signifies a prioritization of healthcare services, possibly in response to the pandemic and a rising commitment to individual health needs.

Table 50. Current Health Expenditure in BARMM, Mindanao 2021

Region	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
BARMM	3,943.86	4,623.54	4,751.95	5,056.75	7,508.43	8,320.39	22,58.79	15,923.14
Total Philippines	489,066.90	543,581.63	598,461.98	655,714.20	722,172.57	813,204.01	917,153.16	1,086,991.64

Table 51. Current Health Expenditure per Capita, By Region

Region	2015	2020
BARMM	1,222.71	5,128.14
Mindanao	3,535.42	5,855.09
Total Philippines	5,382.99	8,387.06

IV. Special Protection Measures

⁸⁷ World Bank. 2020. The Transition to Universal Health Coverage in BARMM: Delivering and Financing Health Services in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. © World Bank, Washington, DC. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/35234> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.”

Children displaced as the result of Violent Conflict and Natural Hazards

As of September 2023, there are 137,564 estimated total number of persons who remain displaced in Mindanao. 20,920 families with 104,564 individuals of these are from the BARMM.⁸⁸

34% of the internally displaced population (IDP) in Marawi were children. It was identified that they need support in nutrition, education, and social cohesion. 17% of children in ages 5-11, in the profiling, have not attended or started school. 0.4% of these children are considered as heads of households. A significant number of children are in situations of intersectional vulnerabilities such as disability, children who were either separated from their primary caregiver or parent, single head of the family, pregnant or lactating, and families with young girls who are household heads.⁸⁹

In Basilan, most IDPs were displaced because of crime and violence, or due to the armed conflict between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Abu Sayyaf Group. The ongoing conflict blocks them from visiting or returning to their place of habitual residence.

For Sulu, majority of the IDPs were displaced most recently in 2017 or 2019 within the same municipality due to the conflict between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) (93% of home-based families; 90% of temporary shelter families). Most IDPs had experienced repeated displacements in the past three years, with many displaced to neighboring barangays several times in the same year due to frequent military operations. The security risks and military restrictions were the main obstacles faced by IDPs wishing to visit or return to their places of habitual residence.

In Tawi-Tawi, nearly all IDPs surveyed were displaced most recently in 2019 due to Typhoon "Marilyn" and the associated storm surge. All IDPs were displaced to areas within the same municipality as their place of habitual residence. All houses in the place of habitual residence were destroyed, reflecting the typically weak housing structures and high vulnerability to weather events, given that most of the surveyed IDPs live in stilt houses. Lack of financial resources represented the main barrier for IDPs to return and rebuild their houses.⁹⁰

In all these areas, a significant portion of children were not attending school. Most of the cited reasons were additional associated costs, unwillingness to continue their studies due to the adverse effects of displacement, financial constraints, helping families at home, bullying, and lack of required documentation.

Displacement brings considerable risk to children, who are constantly exposed to injury and even death by being caught up in armed conflict, with poverty compounding these risks. Moreover, it disrupts the protective environment for children, impacting on the ability for parents/carers to meet the needs of their children. During immediate evacuations, children at times are left behind or become separated from their parents temporarily. They are placed in heightened risk, as displacement can exacerbate drivers of child marriage. Some children are drawn into child labor — at times in hazardous situations — given the disruption to their parents' /

⁸⁸ UNHCR. (2023, December 8). Mindanao Displacement Bulletin as of September 2023 – Protection Cluster Philippines. <https://www.protectionclusterphilippines.org/?p=3740>

⁸⁹ BARMM authorities, UNHCR, JIPS (2021). Profiling of Internal Displacement in the Island Provinces of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).

⁹⁰ Ibid.

family's livelihoods. It is important to highlight that, children in evacuation centers – particularly boys – are exposed to the risk of recruitment by armed groups, through being in an unstable situation in which they may be experiencing a sense of resentment toward Government armed forces who they see as responsible for their situation of displacement. On the other hand, girls residing in evacuation centers are at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse, sometimes triggered by the lack of child- and family-friendly spaces and facilities.⁹¹

The repercussions of armed conflict on the education and psychosocial well-being of children in Mindanao are unique, presenting distinct challenges for those who remain in their communities and those who experience displacement. In communities where conflict persists, children face various disruptions in their education. Many temporarily stopped their schooling due to the fear of violence, whether it be encountering armed forces on their way to school or witnessing their schools being used as temporary camps by government soldiers. Even when attending school, the atmosphere is filled with distractions, including the sounds of nearby fighting and the intimidating presence of armed forces. Moreover, logistical inconveniences like longer routes to school and altered living arrangements add to their educational challenges. Balancing the demands of education with the necessity of contributing to family incomes through paid work further complicates their education.

For those displaced by conflict, the impact on education is immediately felt. Financial constraints, the need for child labor, and the physical distance from evacuation centers force many children to discontinue their schooling. Additionally, the destruction of schools during armed conflict intensifies the educational crisis for these displaced children.

The psychosocial toll on children, both for those who remain in their communities and those who endure displacement, is important to look at. Various manifestations of trauma, such as nervousness, sleeplessness, and recurring nightmares, underscore the emotional strain on these children. Anxiety stemming from sudden loud noises, or the mere presence of soldiers permeates their daily lives. Stress-related illnesses manifest physically, with headaches, muscle pains, and nausea being reported. The lingering sense of loss, confusion, and skepticism about the future permeates their psyche, especially for those who experience displacement. Children, whether directly victimized or residing in communities suspected of supporting insurgents, face deliberate threats and attacks. Direct accusations, physical assaults, and forced collaboration with soldiers contribute to a climate of fear for these young individuals.⁹²

Protection of Children Belonging to Indigenous Groups

The Philippines' indigenous population is estimated at between 10% and 20% of the total population. Of these numbers, 61% of them can be found in Mindanao. Indigenous children are among the most vulnerable to climate change effects in the Philippines due to their high dependence on natural resources, their location in remote areas and their already marginalized situation. Many of them live on small islands, or in remote mountains, with limited access to social services, infrastructure or energy.⁹³

⁹¹ Migration and Child Protection Responses. (2023, April). In www.unicef.org/eap/ (No. UNI217243). United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Regional Office for East Asia and Pacific (EAPRO), with support from the European Union.

⁹² IBON Foundation. UNCOUNTED LIVES: Children, Women and Conflict in the Philippines: A Needs Assessment of Children and Women Affected by Armed Conflict For the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

⁹³ Bornstein Ortega, & Klauth. (2017, July). Climate Landscape Analysis for Children in the Philippines. In unicef.org. UNICEF Philippines.

The situation of indigenous people (IP) in Muslim Mindanao is unique. Due to the strong Moro demand for self-determination and greater autonomy, the IP who have an equally valid claim of aboriginality and ownership of ancestral domains are sidelined. IPs have been victims of military skirmishes between local clans and splinter groups of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Adding to the recurring land-grabbing and harassment, IP groups have constantly lived in fear. For indigenous children and teenagers, they have been at the receiving end of bullying and discrimination in schools because of distinct physical features and ways of dressing which make them stand out among the majority.⁹⁴

DepEd reports that there are 2.529 million IP learners in 42,176 public schools around the Philippines.⁹⁵ In the BARMM, 48.5% of these indigenous children attend elementary school but only 11.2 percent complete basic education. A combination of armed conflict, exclusion and marginalization, and many families valuing immediate livelihood needs over the education of their children, have contributed to lagging education.⁹⁶

There is insufficient data on Indigenous peoples and limited disaggregated data on indigenous children. This suggests that deprivations and issues faced by Indigenous children were largely invisible. This lack of data is evidence of the low priority given to these issues by the national government. It has also limited the ability of the BARMM and national government policies and programmes to respond effectively to issues facing Indigenous populations, including Indigenous children.

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage and Unions

Child, early, and forced marriage and unions (CEFMU) are any marriage or informal union, whether under civil, religious, or customary law, with or without formal registration, where either one or both spouses are under the age of 18 and/ or where the full and free informed consent of one or both of the parties has not been obtained. In the BARMM, girls have been forced to participate in the now-illegal practice of child marriage due to pressure from their families, communities, and surroundings.⁹⁷ The global number of child brides is estimated at 650 million. 285 million (44 percent) are in South Asia and 115 million (18 percent) are in Sub-Saharan Africa.⁹⁸

According to a 2017 national survey, 17 percent of women aged 20 to 24 years in the Philippines were first married before the age of 18. Meanwhile, a 2020 survey conducted across

⁹⁴ The Human Security of Indigenous People in Mindanao: Challenges and Prospects – Ideas for Peace. <https://ideasforpeace.org/content/human-security-indigenous-people-in-mindanao-challenges/>

⁹⁵ DepEd Marks 1st decade of Indigenous Peoples Education Program ... [deped.gov. \(2021, October\). https://www.deped.gov.ph/2021/10/08/deped-marks-1st-decade-of-indigenous-peoples-education-program-iped-with-2-5m-learners-served/](https://www.deped.gov.ph/2021/10/08/deped-marks-1st-decade-of-indigenous-peoples-education-program-iped-with-2-5m-learners-served/)

⁹⁶ For every child in Bangsamoro, an education. (n.d.). UNICEF Philippines. <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/stories/every-child-bangsamoro-education>

⁹⁷ Plan International (2020). Child, Early and Forced marriage and Unions Policy Brief

⁹⁸ UNICEF (2018). Child Marriage Latest Trends and Future Prospects

the five BARMM areas of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi found that almost a quarter of the 1,058 respondents were married before the age of 18.⁹⁹

In the BARMM, child marriage is facilitated by gender and socio-economic inequality, which limits adolescent girls' agency when it comes to making their own life decisions. Child marriage in the region is primarily driven by gender and socio-economic inequalities entrenched in a patriarchal system. Harmful gender norms, community expectations on gender, and legal gaps contribute to this phenomenon. Poverty, limited opportunities for girls, restricted decision-making power, concerns about family reputation, religious interpretations, and an enabling legal environment for the act to happen are identified as key drivers. In addition, a recent study discovered that unresolved socioeconomic issues and a variety of cultural variables, including the dominant patriarchal system, are the main causes of child marriage. Among them are: displacement caused by war or natural disasters, limited ability for teenage girls to make decisions, selflessness and a sense of obligation limiting teenage sexuality in order to uphold family honor, poverty and limited access to reliable sources of income, inability to obtain high-quality education, divergent perspectives on the Islamic doctrine of child marriage and enabling legal framework.¹⁰⁰

Displacement and conflict exacerbate child marriage risks by disrupting education, limiting livelihood opportunities, and dismantling protective community structures. Increased insecurity during displacement prompts parents to marry off their daughters for various reasons, including protecting family honor, consolidating power, receiving humanitarian assistance, or expressing gratitude for shelter.

The consequences of child marriage are severe, leading to teenage pregnancy, cyclical poverty, school dropout, intimate partner violence, and adverse health outcomes. Stigma from peers and the community compounds the challenges, contributing to social isolation for married and pregnant girls. Adolescent concerns such as discrimination, lack of quality education, and teenage pregnancy serve as both drivers and consequences of child marriage.

Although there have been advocacy efforts to reduce child marriage to date, there is uncertainty about the best course of action due to the lack of a tangible intervention to complement the legislation that criminalizes child and early marriage with the fatwa that the BARMM Daru'l Ifta has issued. Despite these challenges, some adolescent girls, families, and communities display resilience, supported by a network involving parents, community leaders, law enforcement, religious institutions, schools, government services, and international organizations. This ecosystem provides crucial support, care, and protection for adolescent girls in the face of child marriage risks.¹⁰¹

Children affected by Human Trafficking (Child Sex Workers, OSEC, Pornography)

The Philippines faces a significant challenge in combating human trafficking, with an estimated 859,000 people living in modern slavery in 2021, ranking seventh in prevalence and total number in the Asia Pacific region. Men, women, and children are exploited in various

⁹⁹ Modern slavery in The Philippines | Walk Free. (n.d.). Walk Free. <https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/country-studies/the-philippines/>

¹⁰⁰ Plan International, Transforming Fragilities, and Women's Refugee Commission (2023). Understanding Risks and Adaptive Capacities to Prevent and Respond to Child Marriage in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

contexts, including rural communities, conflict zones, and impoverished urban areas, with Indigenous persons, internally displaced persons, women, and children being the most vulnerable populations.¹⁰²

Child exploitation is a major concern, with the Philippines being one of the largest sources of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC). It is estimated that 50,000 Filipino children work as domestic workers with almost 5,000 are under 15 years old. 60,000 to 100,000 Filipino children are impacted by child labor or sex trafficking. The tight-knit family units in the Philippines sometimes contribute to children being reluctant to speak out about abuse within their families.¹⁰³ The prevalence of online child sexual exploitation is alarming, with one-fifth of Internet-using children aged 12 to 17 experiencing it in 2021. The government reported identifying 740 victims of sex trafficking in 2022, primarily women and girls.¹⁰⁴

In the BARMM, women are forced to work in wealthier households, facing additional risks, and debts may be used to coerce men to join extremist groups. Indigenous populations are also vulnerable, with cases of trafficking for forced labor documented.¹⁰⁵

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the issue, with a significant increase in online sexual abuse of children during the lockdown. Cases of violence against women and children, including OSEC, have been reported in specific regions like Maguindanao province. Despite government efforts, there are challenges in victim identification, and NGOs report gaps in trauma-informed practices. Efforts are being made to address child exploitation, including a study evaluating suspicious transaction reports related to child pornography.¹⁰⁶

Child Soldiers

In the Philippines, underage soldiers are found in many different conflict zones in Mindanao as well as other areas. In a rapid assessment done by International Labour Organization-International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC) Philippines on child soldiers in Central and Western Mindanao, there were estimated that 10.0 to 30.0 % of children in any given community are influenced by non-state armed groups or drafted as soldiers. Data revealed that there are more male than female child soldiers and that the earliest recorded entry to being a child soldier is at 11 years old.¹⁰⁷

From 1999-2007, the AFP reported processing 265 New People's Army (NPA) "child-combatants". In the NPA, minors have historically had a variety of roles from semi-civilian scouts and messengers to direct support roles and active combat. The most common characteristics of underage soldiers in the Philippines include being uneducated, teenagers rather than young children, coming from rural, impoverished, large or separated families, and recruited without physical force. In March 2017, hundreds of underage soldiers were released

¹⁰² Modern slavery in The Philippines | Walk Free. Walk Free. <https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/country-studies/the-philippines/>

¹⁰³ Whitney, C. (2022, November 16). Human Trafficking in the Philippines - The Exodus Road. The Exodus Road. <https://theexodusroad.com/human-trafficking-in-the-philippines/>

¹⁰⁴ Modern slavery in The Philippines | Walk Free. Walk Free. <https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/country-studies/the-philippines/>

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Lennox Townsend, A. (2018). Human trafficking in Mindanao personal narratives and local perspectives.

¹⁰⁷ Caguco-Giam, R. (2022). Child Soldiers in Central and Western Mindanao: A Rapid Assessment

by the MILF in Western Mindanao, as part of an arrangement with the UN to eventually disengage over 1800 children.

Recruitment of child soldiers by non-government militias and terrorist organizations, predominately on the southern island of Mindanao, remains a concern. In Marawi City, many children as young as age 7 were recruited, paid, and trained as fighters by the Maute Group, a terrorist organization linked to ISIS. Research also suggests that the NPA, ASG, and the BIFF continue to recruit children from schools for use as human shields, cooks, and fighters, while offering religious education and material incentives to join.¹⁰⁸

Children with Special Needs/ Disability

PhilHealth estimates that around 5.1 million Filipino children are living with disabilities and 26.56% of these are living under the poverty threshold. In terms of health, a stark disparity exists as only 5% of the 1.5 million children in need of assistive devices have access to the required technology. Moreover, children with disabilities often must overcome significant geographical barriers, with an average travel distance of 5 to 6 kilometers to reach the nearest health facility.

Education is another area where children with disabilities encounter obstacles. 52.60% of children with disabilities from impoverished households are not attending school. Although there are 648 schools offering Special Education (SPED) under DepEd, approximately 84% of municipalities in the country lack SPED centers. Enrollment data from DepEd indicates that 22,817 children with disabilities are enrolled in SPED at the elementary level, with an additional 24,357 students with disabilities and exceptionalities enrolled at the secondary level. This data combines information on children with disabilities and those with exceptionalities.

Concerns related to social protection are evident, with only 5% of the 4.4 million household beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) having persons with disabilities (PWDs), as reported by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) 4Ps National Program Management Office. Additionally, more than half (52%) of children with disabilities reside in provinces deemed at high risk for natural disasters.¹⁰⁹

In the BARMM the MBHTE - Bureau of Special Education reports that there are 1,122 teachers ready to receive children with special needs. Notably, Cotabato City has the highest count with 164 teachers, while Sulu has the lowest with only 9 teachers. Urban areas, such as Cotabato City and Marawi City, tend to have higher numbers of receiving teachers, likely due to the concentration of educational institutions and facilities. On the other hand, rural areas like Sulu and Tawi-Tawi have comparatively fewer receiving SPED teachers, indicating potential challenges in resource distribution to more remote regions. (Table 55. Number of Receiving Special Education teachers in MBHTE, 2023)

MBHTE logs a diverse range of disabilities among learners in the Bangsamoro region, including intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), behavioral disorder, difficulty in communicating, learning disability, and various challenges related to sensory functions. There are variations in the number of learners with disabilities across different areas within the BARMM, such as Cotabato City, Maguindanao,

¹⁰⁸ Bureau of International Labor Affairs (2019). Findings On The Worst Forms of Child Labor

¹⁰⁹ UNICEF (2018). Situation of Children with Disabilities in the Philippines

Lanao Del Sur, Marawi City, Lamitan City, Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. Despite these numbers, there are no recorded universities within the BARMM region that specialize in Elementary Education major in Special Education. (Table 56. Number of Learners with Disability in the BARMM, 2023)

Table 55. Number of Receiving Special Education teachers in MBHTE, 2023

Division	No. Receiving Teachers
Cotabato City	164
SGA	6
Maguindanao Del Norte	306
Maguindanao Del Sur	343
Lanao Del Sur I	43
Lanao Del Sur II	132
Marawi City	38
Lamitan City	21
Basilan	30
Sulu	9
Tawi - Tawi	30
Total	1,122

Source: BARMM MBHTE Bureau of Special Education

Table 56. Number of Learners with Disability in the BARMM, 2023

Division	No. of Learners with Disability	Male	Female	Disability
Basilan	257	117	140	Intellectual Disability/ASD/ADHD/, Behavioral Disorder, Difficulty in communicating, Intellectual Disability, Learning disability, Difficulty Applying Knowledge, Difficulty in Seeing/ Difficulty in Applying Knowledge
Cotabato City	365	152	213	Difficulty in communicating/Learning Disability/ASD, Learning disability/ Difficulty in communicating, Learning disability, Learning disability/ Difficulty in communicating, Speech Disorder/ Difficulty in Seeing/ Learning Disability/ Difficulty in Communicating
Lamitan City	231	91	140	Learning disability, Difficulty in

				Performing Adaptive Skills(Mobility), Difficulty in Remembering and Concentrating, Difficulty in Displaying Interpersonal Behaviour/ Difficulty in Mobility/ Difficulty in Applying Knowledge, Difficulty in Applying Knowledge, Physical Difficulty/ Speech Difficulty/ Intellectual Disability/ Hearing Impairment/ Visual Functions, Difficulty Applying Knowledge, Difficulty in Applying Knowledge/ Difficulty in Seeing/ Difficulty in Remembering and Concentrating/ Difficulty in Communicating/ Difficulty in Hearing
Maguindanao I	2714	1175	1539	Intellectual Disability/ASD/ADHD/, Behavioral Disorder/ Difficulty in communicating, Intellectual Disability/ASD/ADHD/ Difficulty in Mobility/ Difficulty in Hearing/ Difficulty in Seeing, Intellectual Disability/ASD/ADHD/Behavioral Disorder/ Difficulty in communicating Intellectual Disability/ASD/ADHD/ Behavioral Disorder/ Difficulty in Hearing/ Difficulty in Seeing/ Difficulty in Mobility
Lanao del Sur I	1491	681	810	Difficulty in Applying Knowledge/Difficulty in Remembering and Concentrating/ Difficulty in Communicating/ Difficulty in Adaptive Skills, Intellectual Disability/ASD/ADHD/ Behavioral Disorder/ Difficulty in communicating, Difficulty in Applying Knowledge/ Difficulty in Seeing/ Difficulty in Remembering and Concentrating/ Difficulty in Communicating/ Difficulty in Hearing/ Difficulty in Adaptive Skills/ Difficulty in Mobility

Marawi City	299	128	171	Difficulty in Applying Knowledge/ Difficulty in Seeing/ Difficulty in Remembering and Concentrating/ Difficulty in Communicating/Difficulty in Adaptive Skills/ Difficulty in Mobility Learning disability/ Difficulty in Communicating, Difficulty in Hearing/ Difficulty in Seeing/ Difficulty in Applying Knowledge
Lanao del Sur II	551	230	321	Difficulty in Applying Knowledge/ Difficulty in Seeing/ Difficulty in Remembering and Concentrating/ Difficulty in Hearing/ Difficulty in Adaptive Skills/ Difficulty in Mobility Difficulty in communicating/ Difficulty in Hearing Difficulty in Seeing/ Difficulty in Remembering and Concentrating/ Difficulty in Hearing/ Difficulty in Adaptive Skills Difficulty in Communicating/ Difficulty in Hearing/ Difficulty in Adaptive Skills/ Difficulty in Mobility Difficulty in Applying Knowledge/ Difficulty in Seeing/ Difficulty in Remembering and Concentrating/ Difficulty in Communicating/ Difficulty in Hearing/ Difficulty in Adaptive Skills
Maguindanao II	123	52	71	Difficulty in Remembering & Concentrating/ Intellectual Disability / Difficulty in Hearing/Hearing Impairment / Difficulty in seeing/Visual Impairment / Difficulty in applying Knowledge/Learning Disability Difficulty in Displaying Interpersonal Behaviour Disorder Difficulty in Hearing/Hearing/Hearing Impairment / Difficulty in Displaying Interpersonal Behavior
Special Geographic Areas (SGA)	134	61	73	Difficulty in Seeing / Difficulty in Mobility / Difficulty in Speaking / Difficulty in Hearing / Difficulty in Learning

				Squint-eyed Mental Disorder Crippled Seeing / Mobility / Hearing / Enlargement in The Chest / Malnourished
Tawi-Tawi	332	141	191	Learning disability/Intellectual Disability/ Behavioral Disorder Learning disability/Intellectual Disability/ASD/ADHD/ Behavioral Disorder
Sulu	138	70	68	Learning disability/Intellectual Disability/ASD/ADHD/ Behavioral Disorder Learning disability/Intellectual Disability

Source: BARMM MBHTE Bureau of Special Education

V. Family Source of Income and Livelihood

Child Rights and Business Principles

Children are key stakeholders of business - as consumers, family members of employees, young workers, future employees and business leaders. They are present in communities where businesses operate. In the Child Rights and Business Principles framework released by Save the Children, the UN Global Compact and UNICEF, children's rights are integrated into business practice as a significant shift towards corporate responsibility and ethical conduct. The Principles outlines a comprehensive framework for businesses to respect and support children's rights, emphasizing the importance of empowerment, participation, and transparency. By empowering children to have a voice in decisions affecting them and promoting transparency in their efforts, businesses can foster a culture of accountability and inclusivity. The integration of children's rights into business practices represents a paradigm shift towards a more ethical, sustainable, and socially responsible approach to commerce.

The Principles underscores the imperative to eliminate child labor, protect young workers, and ensure product safety, reflecting a commitment to upholding fundamental human rights standards. It underscores the interconnectedness of children's rights with broader societal and environmental concerns. Additionally, it includes proactive measures to address emergencies and support vulnerable children in crisis situations demonstrating a commitment to human rights and humanitarian principles.

Employment in the BARMM

BARMM is highly dependent on agriculture and public spending. The region's Gross Regional Domestic Product is 58.9% agriculture which is dominated by crops such as banana, corn, palay, coconut, cassava, and seaweed. In contrast, the Philippines has a much lower contribution from agriculture, accounting for only 9.3% of the national GDP. The region has a lower reliance on the services sector (36%) compared to the Philippines (59.9%), indicating potential differences in economic structures and development. The Philippines has a higher contribution from the industry sector, with 30.8% of the national GDP than BARMM's 5.1% share.

Working age persons in BARMM show strikingly lower labor force participation than in the rest of the country, with women being particularly prone to remain out of the labor force. Comparing 2020 and 2021 data, the Philippines and BARMM shared an increase in workforce population, employment rate, and underemployment rate. However, BARMM increased in unemployment from 9% to 19.6% while the Philippines decreased from 10% to 7.2%. (Table 58. Labor Force Participation, Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment Rates by Region: July 2020 and July 2021)

In a recent data release by PSA comparing data from January 2022 and January 2023, BARMM generally outperformed the combined results of regions in Mindanao. The region showcased a lower unemployment rate (3.2%) and a smaller increase in underemployment (10.4%) compared to Mindanao.

Labor market interventions include programs and services that support the livelihoods of families and promote their employment. This ensures that the poor and vulnerable households receive sufficient income to not only provide for themselves, but also for their children through quality access to social services. In BARMM, the national programs are complemented by a range of regional labor market interventions, implemented by MOLE. These include, for example, the Employment Promotion and Welfare Program – including job fairs, special recruitment activities, employment assistance for youths, community emergency employment program, and a job portal, among others – and the Labor Education and Workers' Welfare Program – providing career guidance and employment coaching for graduating students and supporting employment through entrepreneurial development in rural areas.¹¹⁰

Table 57. Comparison of PH and BARMM Contributions for GDP, per sector, 2020

	Services	Industry	Agriculture
BARMM	36	5.1	58.9
Philippines	59.9	30.8	9.3

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority

Table 58. Labor Force Participation, Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment Rates by Region: July 2020 and July 2021

¹¹⁰ Shock Responsive Social Protection in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. (2022, April 1). UNICEF Philippines. <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/reports/shock-responsive-social-protection-bangsamoro-autonomous-region-muslim-mindanao>

Region	Total Population 15 Years Old and Over (in thousands)		Labor Force Participation Rate		Employment Rate		Unemployment Rate		Underemployment Rate	
	July 2020	July 2021	July 2020	July 2021	July 2020	July 2021	July 2020	July 2021	July 2020	July 2021
Philippines	74,060	75,574	61.9	59.4	90.0	92.8	10.0	7.2	17.3	21.0
BARMM	2,465	2,551	62.3	49.2	96.2	92.7	3.8	7.3	9.0	19.6

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, July 2020 and 2021 Labor Force Survey

Table 59. Unemployment and Underemployment Rate by Region in January 2022 to January 2023

Region	January 2022		January 2023	
	Employment Rate (%)	Underemployment Rate (%)	Employment Rate (%)	Underemployment Rate (%)
BARMM	7.0	12.0	3.2	10.4
Mindanao	5.38	15.9	3.91	17.47

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, July 2020 and 2021 Labor Force Survey

Child Labor

Filipino children engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes because of human trafficking, and in armed conflict. Child labor violates the rights of Filipino children and reinforces the intergenerational transfer of poverty.

Despite the country having ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor and establishing laws and regulations related to the issue, the Survey on Children indicated that 3.2 million children ages 5 to 17 engage in child labor, of whom approximately 3 million engage in hazardous work.¹¹¹

According to PSA, 828,000 Filipino children were engaged in child labor in 2022. Majority of these were boys covering up to 66.2% while girls were at 33.8%. Child laborers aged 15 to 17 years old account for the largest share of children engaged in child labor while the agriculture sector continues to be the highest industry group contributing to child labor. BARMM was reported with 10.4% of child laborers in October 2022. This is second to the highest based on prevalence in Mindanao with SOCKSARGEN leading with 12.5%.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Bureau of International Labor Affairs (2019). Findings On The Worst Forms of Child Labor

¹¹² 2022 Working Children Situation | Philippine Statistics Authority | Republic of the Philippines. (2023, July 25). https://psa.gov.ph/content/2022-working-children-situation?fbclid=IwAR2Dd7aZ5bvkxuX_8OmCorJF8puV2IjP86ji1MIYjKwerA_mUeGGCLxCfFQ

In a report by E.Cabegin of the University of the Philippines, BARMM was ranked with the highest incidence rate of child labor by region and residence with 91%. This is the highest in the country seconded by Region 2 at 88%. Construction and Mining, Agriculture, and Fishery were listed as the top three industries where child labor is present.¹¹³

The Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE) established the Child Labor Protection Unit in regional and field offices to lead various information, education, and communication activities. In 2022, the conducted a Payout Program whereby the 750 parents of child laborers were beneficiaries. Each area, including Cotabato City, Maguindanao, Special Geographic Area, Lanao Del Sur, Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi, reports 107 beneficiaries, except for Cotabato City, which has 108 beneficiaries.

Table X. *Proportion of Working Children Engaged in Child Labor: October 2020, October 2021, and October 2022*

Month	Percentage	Number in Thousands
October 2020	68.4%	597,000
October 2021	68.4%	935,000
October 2022	56.0%	828,000

Source: PSA 2023

Table X. *Percent Distribution of Child Laborers 5 to 17 Years Old in Mindanao: October 2022*

Region	Percentage
Zamboanga Peninsula	5.8%
Northern Mindanao	9.4%
Davao Region	4.2%
SOCCKSARGEN	12.5%
Caraga	4.3%
BARMM	10.4%

Source: PSA 2023

Table X. *Incidence rate of Child Labor by region*

Region	Incidence rate of Child Labor
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¹¹³ Cabegin. (2022). The real magnitude of child labor in the Philippines: The need to address the undercount in official statistics. University of the Philippines.

NCR	78%
CAR	87%
R1	82%
R2	88%
R3	87%
R4A	75%
R4B	86%
R5	86%
R6	86%
R7	79%
R8	81%
R9	82%
R10	87%
R11	85%
R12	83%
Caraga	80%
BARMM	91%

Source: Cabegin. (2022). The real magnitude of child labor in the Philippines: The need to address the undercount in official statistics.

Table X. Incidence of Child Labor by Industry

Industry	Percentage of Incidence
Construction/Mining	91%
Other Agriculture	90%
Fishery	88%
Farming	87%
Personal and HH Services	84%
Livestock and Poultry	83%
Food catering services	80%

Manufacturing	77%
Sari-sari store retail trade	71%
Others	81%

Source: Cabegin. (2022). The real magnitude of child labor in the Philippines: The need to address the undercount in official statistics.

Table X. Beneficiaries of the Bangsamoro Child Labor Sagip Program

Area	Number of Child Laborers
Cotabato City	108
Maguindanao	107
Special Geographic Area	107
Lanao Del Sur	107
Basilan	107
Sulu	107
Tawi-Tawi	107
TOTAL	750

Source: MOLE-BARMM

Child Poverty

Child poverty is highest in the BARMM at 63.1%, twice as high as the national average at 31.4%. This means that 1.6 million out of 2.5 million children in the BARMM are living below the poverty line.¹¹⁴ In 2018, it was at 68.2% and in 2015, it was 68.5%. Despite a slight decrease from 2015 to 2021, the child poverty incidence in the BARMM remains a significant concern, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions. (Table 60)

In 2018, the BARMM posted a 35.6 percent subsistence incidence among children. This is 3.6 percent higher than the estimate in 2015. This is equivalent to 674.4 thousand children. It implies that 35.6 percent of children in the BARMM belong to food poor families whose per capita income is less than the food threshold. The food threshold in 2018 is PHP 19,557.00. This is the minimum amount needed by an individual to meet his or her basic food needs. The region recorded the highest subsistence incidence among children in the country in 2018.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Bangsamoro government joins 30th anniversary of the UN Children's Convention with Special Parliamentary Session on Children. UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/press-releases/bangsamoro-government-joins-30th-anniversary-un-childrens-convention-special>

¹¹⁵ 2018 Full-Year Poverty Statistics among Children in BARMM

Based on compiled data on the Annual Per Capita Poverty Threshold and Poverty Incidence among Population and Children belonging to Poor Families by Region, Item and Period of PSA, the per capita poverty threshold has increased over the years, from PHP 12,647.00 in 2006 to PHP 21,563.00 in 2015. This increase suggests rising living costs, reflecting the need for a higher income to meet basic needs.

On poverty incidence among the population in ARMM over the years, the trend is fluctuating. The incidence increased from 47% in 2006 to 56% in 2012, and then slightly decreased to 54% in 2015. However, the incidence of children belonging to poor families has shown a general upward trend. It increased from 53% in 2006 to 64% in 2012, indicating a higher proportion of children in poor families. The rising incidence of children belonging to poor families highlights the vulnerability of this demographic group to economic hardship (Table 61).

Table 60. Child Poverty Incidence in the BARMM and PH in 2015, 2018, 2021

Child Poverty Incidence	2015	2018	2021
BARMM	68.5%	68.2%	63.1%
National	31.4%	23.9%	31.4%

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority

Child poverty in the BARMM is deeply ingrained in a complicated web of interrelated issues. Communities that are impoverished are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and climate-related events amplify poverty and add to the scarcity of resources, which may incite conflict. Poverty is exacerbated by the catastrophic aftermath of conflicts, which destroy social services, ruin infrastructure, and uproot entire populations. Children become the most susceptible group in this complex dynamic.

In addition to experiencing the direct effects of poverty, they also suffer disproportionately from the fallout from conflicts and the increased threats to their health and safety brought on by climate change. For example, community leaders in Maguindanao province's SPMS Box consider flooding as a more pressing issue over violent conflict as it has an immediate and significant impact on the local population. The hazard posed by the tainted floodwaters is immediate and direct, increasing the likelihood of contracting waterborne illnesses including diarrhea and cholera. Standing water provides an ideal environment for disease-carrying vectors to reproduce, greatly raising the risk of vector-borne infections—particularly dangerous for children, who are a particularly vulnerable group. Children who try to play or make their way through flooded areas confront extremely dangerous circumstances due to the increased chance of accidents, especially drowning. Flooding, which disrupts education, uproots families, and makes it difficult for children to receive necessary healthcare services, has a negative impact on children's general well-being and future chances in addition to urgent health issues. The psychological cost is significant, showing up as elevated stress levels and a heightened vulnerability to abuse and exploitation.

Nevertheless, the children are especially vulnerable to the domino consequences of displacement brought on by conflicts and climate-related catastrophes because their well-being is so deeply entwined with socioeconomic and environmental circumstances. As a result, poverty is exacerbated by the devastation caused by conflicts and the displacement brought

about by climate-related disasters, continuing to marginalize children and their families in the BARMM.

Table 61. Annual Per Capita Poverty Threshold and Poverty Incidence among Population and

	Per Capita Poverty Threshold (in Pesos)				Poverty Incidence among Population (%)				Incidence of Children belonging to Poor Families (%)			
	2006	2009	2012	2015	2006	2009	2012	2015	2006	2009	2012	2015
ARMM	1,2647	16,683	20,517	21,563	47	47	56	54	53	56	64	63

Children belonging to Poor Families by Region, Item and Period
Source: Philippine Statistics Authority

VI. Family Environment and Alternative Care

The first and most common form of violence endured by children is violent discipline within the home. While teaching self-control and acceptable manners is an essential aspect of child upbringing across cultures, many caregivers use both physical and psychological violent methods to punish undesired behaviors and promote desired ones. It is crucial to recognize that regardless of the form it takes, all such practices violate the rights of children. While children of all ages are at risk, experiencing violent discipline at a young age can be particularly harmful, given the increased potential for physical injuries as well as children's inability to understand the motivation behind the act or to adopt coping strategies to alleviate their distress.¹¹⁶

In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 7610 (the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act of 1992) is one of the laws addressing child abuse concerns. Under this act, the state shall intervene on behalf of the child when the parent, guardian, teacher, or individual caring for or having custody of the child fails or is unable to protect the child against abuse, exploitation, and discrimination or when such acts against the child are committed by the said parent, guardian, teacher, or individual. The act also allows the government to protect and rehabilitate children gravely threatened or endangered by circumstances that affect or will affect their survival and normal development over which they have no control.

Recent data show that 59% of children aged 1-14 years old have experienced at least one form of violent discipline. 48% experienced psychological aggression, 39% experienced physical punishment, and 3% experienced severe physical punishment. Twelve percent of household respondents believe that a child needs physical punishment to be raised or educated properly.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ *Violent discipline - UNICEF DATA.* (2023, July 2). UNICEF DATA. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/violence/violent-discipline/>

¹¹⁷ PSA (2022). National Demographic and Health Survey.

Child Deprived of a Family Environment (Orphans)

Current limitations in data collection does not allow a comprehensive understanding of the number of orphans impacted by the conflicts in Mindanao. Various documents cite a UNICEF estimate that at least 1.8 million children in the Philippines are abandoned or neglected, there are no disaggregated figures for the BARMM.

The PSA 2022 NDHS reported that the BARMM has 2,567 children in various living arrangements and orphanhood and that the entire country has 42,594. Given the context of Mindanao and the BARMM, factors related to conflict and security may impact the living arrangements of children, potentially leading to higher numbers of orphans. (Table 62)

Orphan is defined as broad, encompassing children who have lost at least one parent, typically the father. This category includes, but is not limited to, children of shaheed (martyrs in the service of revolutionary fronts) and civilians who perished in other significant violent events. Further sub-categorization of orphans could be achieved based on specific criteria like the type of parent lost, age, dwelling type, and the nature of the incident leading to parental loss. Importantly, recognizing the cyclical nature of conflict in the Bangsamoro region, communities often extend the definition of "shaheed" beyond immediate death in combat to encompass displacement and its associated hardships.

The MILF's Social Welfare Committee (SWC) maintains an unofficial database as of April 2019, documenting 8,182 orphans across 26 of the 47 declared revolutionary "provinces." Notably, this represents only a partial picture. The MILF's Bangsamoro Islamic Women Auxiliary Brigade (BIWAB) is similarly developing a partial list, identifying just over 500 widows and orphans as of January 2020. It is important to acknowledge that records from the MNLF primarily focus on elite fighters, such as the "Top 90" and "Top 300." Similarly, there is no clear tracking of orphans affected by the Marawi siege, the Kathanon7 biometrics system put in place by Task Force Bangon Marawi (TFBM) notwithstanding.

It is important to note that there are no DSWD-accredited orphanages or shelters in the Bangsamoro. Instead, many Muslim orphans processed by DSWD in Mindanao are often sent to orphanages in Manila. Other private charitable organizations focused on children and orphans from the BARMM have arisen in areas with a sizable Muslim diaspora, such as Maharlika Village in Taguig, Culiati in Quezon City, Quiapo, Manila, and Baguio City. These are used as educational hubs not only by ethnic Bangsamoro, but also by Balik-Islam, or reverts to Islam.

Table 62. Children Living Arrangements and Orphanhood

Area	Number of Children
BARMM	2,567
Mindanao	11,824
Philippines	42,594

Source: PSA 2022 NDHS



Orphans have cited education and access to jobs as primary needs. This includes: (i) Physical safety and security; (ii) Socioeconomic needs; (iii) Educational needs; (iv) Emotional and spiritual needs, and (v) Access to justice. Experts believe that being unattended, ignored, and unloved leaves orphans vulnerable to radicalization and co-option by violent extremist groups. There is a fine line between the kinds of motivations that may draw orphans to 'legitimate' non-state armed groups such as the MNLF and MILF and those that lead to recruitment by 'black flag'-inspired violent extremist groups.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ The Asia Foundation (2020). Children of War: A Rapid Needs Assessment of Orphans in Mindanao

Chapter IV. Analysis of Child Rights Governance

I. Assessment of existing or pending policy instruments affecting children in Mindanao

The assessment of policy instruments impacting children in Mindanao reveals a robust legal foundation deeply embedded in the 1987 Philippine Constitution. This constitutional framework places a paramount emphasis on safeguarding and advancing the physical, moral, intellectual, and social well-being of the young. At the core of this protective architecture lies the indispensable Child and Youth Welfare Code, enshrined in Presidential Decree 603. This landmark decree functions as a cornerstone document, delineating the rights and responsibilities crucial for the comprehensive development of children. Serving as a blueprint, it sets the stage for subsequent legislations, guiding the nation's approach to nurturing its youngest citizens.

The enactment of the Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act of 2015 further fortifies this legal infrastructure. Acknowledging the pivotal role of the youth in local governance, this act strives to elevate youth representation and involvement in community development endeavors. By empowering the younger generation with a direct role in local decision-making, the legislation not only recognizes their potential but actively involves them in shaping the future of their communities. Together, the Child and Youth Welfare Code and the Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act illustrate a unified dedication to upholding the rights and well-being of children in Mindanao. This collective commitment embodies a comprehensive strategy, combining protection and empowerment to ensure a holistic approach to the development and welfare of the region's youth.

Education

The promotion of child rights within education policies in the Philippines is evident through various legislative measures, each addressing specific facets of a child's educational journey. The Alternative Learning Systems Act (Republic Act 11510) stands out for its focus on out-of-school children, adults, and indigenous communities, aiming to provide quality education and strengthen non-formal basic education programs. This aligns with the Department of Education's efforts to emphasize formal education enrollment while ensuring mechanisms for the reintegration of children who may drop out. The Early Childhood Care and Development Act (Republic Act 8980) takes a comprehensive approach, prioritizing the holistic well-being of young children up to six years old. By emphasizing physical, cognitive, social, and emotional needs, this law lays the foundation for lifelong learning and development. Moreover, the Barangay-Level Total Development and Protection of Children Act (Republic Act No. 6972) addresses localized care and developmental support by mandating day care centers in every barangay, contributing to children's overall growth and well-being.

Inclusivity is a key theme in the promotion of child rights, exemplified by the Inclusive Education Act (Republic Act 11650). This legislation eliminates barriers for learners with disabilities by mandating free basic and quality education and establishing Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs) for support. Additionally, the Education Act of 1982 (Batas Pambansa Blg. 232) plays a crucial role in upholding children's fundamental right to education

by establishing an integrated system from elementary to tertiary levels, ensuring broad access to quality education. The Rural Farm Schools Act (Republic Act 10618) enhances accessibility for children in rural areas by introducing alternative modes of secondary education, particularly in agri-fisheries, fostering a more inclusive educational landscape. Furthermore, DepEd Order 32 s 2019 - National Policy Framework on Learners and Schools as Zones of Peace, demonstrates a commitment to safeguarding education in conflict zones, emphasizing the vital role of schools in peacebuilding efforts and institutionalizing conflict sensitivity for secure, inclusive learning environments. Overall, these policies collectively contribute to the realization of child rights within the educational sphere in the Philippines.

Health

The promotion of child rights within health policies in the Philippines demonstrates a multifaceted approach, ensuring the well-being of children from infancy to adolescence. The Mandatory Infants and Children Health Immunization Act of 2011 (Republic Act 10152) reflects a commitment to universal access to essential health interventions, eliminating discrimination based on socio-economic backgrounds through a comprehensive and sustainable immunization program. Republic Act 11148, known as the *Kalusugan at Nutrisyon ng Magnanay Act*, addresses maternal and child malnutrition, emphasizing collaboration among various stakeholders for a comprehensive strategy during the crucial first 1,000 days of life. The Mental Health Act (Republic Act 11036) marks a groundbreaking step by not only focusing on treating mental health issues but also fostering awareness and understanding, contributing to an environment where children grow up with open discussions on mental health.

Republic Act No. 11037, the "*Masustansyang Pagkain para sa Batang Pilipino Act*," establishes the National Feeding Program, combating undernutrition through various initiatives, including supplemental feeding for young children and a school-based feeding program. The Magna Carta for Disabled Persons Act (Republic Act 7277) ensures equal opportunities for health services, particularly in the context of special education. The Department of Education's (DepEd) issuances on Special Education (SPED), such as DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2021, underscore the commitment to providing educational services to learners with disabilities, promoting inclusivity in the learning environment.

The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law of 2012 (Republic Act 10354) contributes to children's rights by ensuring universal access to modern contraceptive methods and mandating age-appropriate reproductive health education, creating a healthier and more informed environment for children while recognizing and safeguarding the rights and well-being of mothers. Collectively, these health policies create a comprehensive framework that not only addresses physical health but also mental well-being, nutrition, and inclusive education, contributing to the overall promotion of child rights in the Philippines.

Special Protection Measures

The Special Protection Measures outlined in various Philippine laws exhibit notable strengths and address critical issues related to the well-being and rights of children. Republic Act 7610, the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act, strengthens deterrence measures and empowers the community, law enforcement, and social welfare institutions to combat child abuse comprehensively. Additionally, Republic Act 11188,



the Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act, serves as a vital legal framework recognizing children's vulnerability during armed conflicts. It designates children as "Zones of Peace," outlining specific measures to protect their rights and prevent their involvement in armed conflict.

The Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004 (Republic Act 9262) is a robust legislative tool aimed at shielding women and children from acts of violence, safeguarding children from the harmful effects of domestic violence. Republic Act No. 10627, the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013, and Republic Act No. 10175, the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012, contribute significantly to creating safe learning environments by addressing bullying and cyberbullying, ensuring children's right to education without fear or intimidation.

Moreover, the DepEd Child Protection Policy, outlined in DepEd Order No. 40 s 2012, is a commendable initiative, creating a safe and nurturing environment for children in schools. The emphasis of the policy on establishing Child Protection Committees within schools and outlining specific preventive and remedial measures demonstrates a proactive approach to addressing child abuse issues.

The National Action Plan to End Statelessness is a comprehensive strategy that showcases the government's commitment to resolving statelessness cases and protecting children's rights by emphasizing birth registration and equal rights for stateless migrants. However, despite these strengths, weaknesses may arise in the implementation and enforcement of these laws, such as gaps in resources, monitoring, and coordination among stakeholders. Continuous evaluation and improvement are essential to ensure the effective protection of children's rights and well-being in the diverse contexts covered by these special protection policies.

Family Welfare

The policies of the Philippine government on family income, livelihood, and environment are marked by a holistic approach to address the multifaceted needs of children and families. The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) stands out as a crucial initiative led by the Department of Social Welfare and Development, offering immediate financial support to the neediest families while strategically investing in the long-term health and education of children. This program significantly contributes to economic empowerment, safeguarding children's rights to education and health. Complementing this, the Family Environment and Alternative Care policies, particularly the Foster Care Act of 2012 (Republic Act No 10165), underscore the commitment to providing neglected or abused children with alternative families that prioritize their overall well-being. The law introduces essential components and incentives, ensuring the comprehensive care of children within foster families. Furthermore, Republic Act No. 11908, the Parent Effectiveness Service (PES) Program Act, plays a pivotal role in empowering parents and caregivers with the necessary skills to create safe and nurturing environments. By addressing modern challenges and fostering positive parenting practices, this law contributes to the prevention of child abuse and promotes the holistic well-being of children, extending its impact beyond academics to areas like health, nutrition, and disaster preparedness. Together, these policies exemplify a comprehensive strategy to uplift families, protect children's rights, and create environments conducive to their growth and development.

Existing and Pending Policies in the BARMM

The policies and legislative actions within the BARMM demonstrate a concerted effort to prioritize and protect the rights of children. The Organic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (Republic Act 11054) explicitly outlines the commitment to respecting, protecting, and promoting the rights of children, particularly orphans, ensuring their safeguarding from exploitation, abuse, or discrimination. The law emphasizes the importance of education and development for children, further committing to establishing an integrated system of quality education. This commitment extends to vocational, technical, non-formal, and special education, with a focus on addressing the unique needs of marginalized groups.

The Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) has adopted resolutions, such as Resolution 79, which seeks comprehensive data and information from relevant ministries to aid legislation in preserving, protecting, and promoting the rights of children in the BARMM. Resolution 48 extends full support to the Bangsamoro Children's Declaration, aligning legislative efforts with the principles outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Moreover, the pending bills and legislation, such as BTA Bill/Resolution No. 22 advocating for free hygiene kits in public high schools, BTA Bill No. 37 establishing the Bangsamoro Science High School System, and others, reflect a proactive approach to addressing specific needs and challenges faced by children in the region. These proposed bills cover various aspects, including education, health, and social services, underscoring the commitment to comprehensive child welfare.

The Bangsamoro Children's Declaration further amplifies the voices of children, expressing their rights to good education, freedom from poverty and hunger, lasting peace, responsible governance, parental support, and active involvement in community problem-solving. Collectively, these policies and initiatives in the BARMM signify a dedicated effort to create a conducive environment for the holistic well-being and development of children in the region.

II. Assessment of the General Measures of Implementation

Assessment of the overall implementation measures is a crucial component. This assessment aims to shed light on the overall framework, policies, and practices that exist in the BARMM context to support the realization of children's rights. The analysis offers a thorough understanding of the benefits and drawbacks of promoting child rights in the region.

Education

Table 63. Result of the Children's Participatory Assessment of Education

Statements	Mean	Description
Our schools are safe to use.	4.40	Good
We can access education.	4.20	Good
We have school supplies to use.	3.60	Good
Our teachers are conducting classes.	4.20	Good
Mean	4.10	Good

The results of the children's participatory education assessment are encouraging; the mean rating for all the main factors is 4.10, indicating that the children feel positively about their education overall. The recognition that schools are considered safe emphasizes how important it is that pupils study in a safe atmosphere (4.40). The favorable mean of 4.20 for access to education also emphasizes how easily accessible schools are thought to be, which helps pupils feel included and equal in their opportunities. The "Good" but somewhat lower rating of 3.60 for the availability of school materials in the assessment highlights the need for ongoing efforts. Students believe their teachers are doing a good job of teaching (4.20), but there is still room for improvement. For example, making sure there are enough resources for learning can improve the quality of education in general.

The qualitative results shed light on the efforts to promote child rights through education in the BARMM, revealing a multifaceted approach to address various challenges and needs.

Diversification of Educational Approaches. A noteworthy strategy involves recognizing and nurturing the critical thinking skills of children through esports, providing an alternative avenue for cognitive development. The emphasis on mental skills resonates with personal experiences, acknowledging that not all children may engage in physical activities. This approach aims to encourage cognitive development and boost the confidence of children, particularly those who may struggle with traditional forms of engagement. As stated, *"It's about nurturing the critical thinking of children... we're channeling our efforts into sports to encourage cognitive development."*

Commitment to Addressing Literacy. The focus on struggling readers reflects a commitment to addressing literacy challenges. Recognizing the impact of negative feedback on children's confidence, efforts are made to build confidence first before delving into reading sessions. This illustrates an awareness of the emotional and psychological aspects of learning and the importance of instilling confidence in children to overcome reading difficulties. The commitment to supporting struggling readers is evident in the statement, "This is the case here, and that is why we are focusing on them because the number of low readers is increasing."

Holistic Support for Education and Peace-Building. Beyond individual development, there is a broader commitment to supporting education as a means to contribute to peace in society. Initiatives include scholarship programs, literacy contests, and activities promoting peace and harmony among youth. This broader perspective aligns education with the promotion

of social cohesion and peace, emphasizing the role of education in shaping future generations and fostering understanding.

Addressing Barriers to Education. Addressing specific challenges such as armed conflict, child labor, and internal evaluation in early childhood care and development (ECCD) programs is crucial. The qualitative data highlights the importance of a comprehensive approach that not only addresses educational needs but also considers socio-economic factors, psychological well-being, and community engagement. This is evident in statements such as, "Youth doesn't have the opportunity to be engaged in education - armed conflict because children were the most affected."

Despite the positive initiatives, challenges persist, including lack of funding, issues related to family conflicts, and the absence of education due to armed conflict. These challenges underline the complexity of the context within which educational programs operate and the need for sustained efforts to address systemic issues.

The qualitative results depict a proactive and varied approach in the BARMM to promote child rights through education. The initiatives discussed reflect an understanding of the diverse needs of children and the challenges they face, demonstrating a commitment to holistic development and social well-being.

Health and Welfare

Table 64. Result of the Children's Participatory Assessment of Health

Statements	Mean	Description
We have access to health services in our barangay.	4.20	Good
Our communities are clean.	3.60	Good
We have clean water to drink.	4.80	Very Good
We have enough food to eat.	4.80	Very Good
Mean	4.35	Good

The quantitative findings pertaining to children's assessments of health-related variables offer a thorough understanding of their living circumstances and availability of necessary resources. Having clean water to drink receives an exceptionally high grade of 4.80, which highlights an important component of public health. A community's ability to prevent waterborne illnesses and maintain its members' general health depends on having access to clean water. Food security is also seen as a strength in the community by the children who report having enough food to eat, who rate it as "very good," and by the mean rating that goes along with it. Sufficient nourishment is fundamental to excellent health, and this favorable evaluation suggests that the community is fulfilling basic requirements, supporting the general well-being and growth of its young.

Furthermore, a good aspect of the children's health environment is further highlighted by the barangay's reported access to health services, which received a rating of 4.20. Encouraging preventative healthcare practices, quickly addressing health concerns, and early identification



and action are all facilitated by adequate access to health services. On the other hand, the relatively lower score of 3.60 for community cleanliness points to a possible area for development. Maintaining general health and stopping the spread of disease depend heavily on keeping the surroundings clean. With an overall mean grade of 4.35, the community's efforts to promote health and well-being are good.

Holistic Health Programs. A key theme is the initial efforts to make the health programs holistic that go beyond traditional medical services. Initiatives such as feeding programs, awareness campaigns on child rights and protection, free haircuts, self-protection programs, and the adoption support program showcase a comprehensive approach. These programs not only address immediate health needs but also contribute to the overall development and protection of children.

Preventive Health Measures. The results highlight a focus on preventive health measures, including lectures on basic life support, emergency response, and hygiene. The Project ABC, for instance, addresses early marriage issues, proper hygiene, and HIV prevention, emphasizing the importance of cleanliness, protection, and enhancement of health. The qualitative data underscore the significance of education and awareness in preventing health-related issues among children.

Collaboration and Partnerships. Collaboration and partnerships emerge as a recurrent theme in promoting children's health and welfare. Engagements with various stakeholders such as MSSD, CSOs, NGOs, INGOs, MBHTE, and local government units reflect a coordinated effort to maximize resources and expertise. Collaborative projects, feeding programs, and awareness campaigns benefit from the combined efforts of different organizations and agencies.

Targeted Health Services. The qualitative data suggest the initiation of smaller projects targeting specific health issues that affect children. These programs aim to provide tailored health services to address specific diseases and illnesses, recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective. This result highlights the importance of targeted interventions to address the unique health challenges faced by children in the BARMM.

Children's Rights Advocacy. There is a need for awareness and education on children's rights, particularly among parents and other stakeholders. The results indicate that cases of abuse may occur due to a lack of awareness. Efforts to educate parents, community members, and other stakeholders on children's rights emerge as crucial for the prevention of abuse and the promotion of a supportive and protective environment for children.

Special Protection Measures

The children exhibit a strong sense of safety and awareness, according to the findings of the participatory evaluation on child protection. The children's perception of their environment as safe and free from potential risks is indicated by their high ranking of 4.60 for feeling protected from harmful behaviors and practices. This favorable evaluation shows that there are adequate safeguards in place to protect the children's welfare and is a testament to the effectiveness of child protection programs and laws that have been put in place in the community or in educational settings.

Table 65. Result of the Children's Participatory Assessment of Child Protection

Statements	Mean	Description
We feel safe.	4.20	Good
We feel protected from harmful behaviors/ practices.	4.60	Very Good
We feel protected by our families, relatives, authorities, and others.	4.00	Good
We know where to report or get help if harmed or threatened.	4.40	Good
We feel looked after.	4.00	Good
Mean	4.24	Good

The children's 4.40 rating for knowing where to report or get assistance if they are hurt or threatened also lends credence to the idea of a knowledgeable and capable group. This favorable opinion emphasizes how crucial it is to give kids the knowledge and tools they need to defend themselves, as well as to promote an environment that is supportive and transparent. The overall success of child protection activities is reaffirmed by the combined mean rating of 4.24, which is classified as "good," but it also emphasizes the necessity of continued attention to guarantee the initiatives' continued efficacy. Updating and strengthening child protection protocols on a regular basis can help keep the kids in a safe and nurturing environment, averting dangers, and enhancing their general wellbeing.

The quantitative findings regarding children's perceptions of safety in their community provide insightful information about a variety of environmental factors. The children's positive appraisal of their safety is highlighted by the total mean rating of 4.00, which is classified as "good." The positive assessment of 4.20 for the safety of the buildings in their community is a major contributing element. This implies that the kids feel safe in the actual buildings surrounding them, which is important for their general welfare. It is indicative of a degree of resilience and safety precautions incorporated into the community's buildings, and it speaks well of the infrastructure and construction standards.

With a rating of 4.40, children's awareness of safe places to go in an emergency serves to bolster the community's sense of readiness and awareness. This high rating shows that the children are aware of possible dangers and have the knowledge necessary to find their way around and seek help when they need it. The somewhat lower scores for safe play spaces (3.60) and road safety (3.80) indicate potential problem areas, nevertheless.

Table 66. Result of the Children's Participatory Assessment of Safety

Statements	Mean	Description
The roads in our community are safe.	3.80	Good

The buildings in our community are safe.	4.20	Good
We have areas where we can play safely.	3.60	Good
We know where the safe areas to go are in case of emergency.	4.40	Good
Mean	4.00	Good

Table 67. Children's Participatory Assessment on Reaching the Vulnerable

Statements	Mean	Description
Equal attention is given to all girls and boys affected.	3.80	Good
<i>The following groups of children are given special attention:</i>		
Girls and boys living with disabilities.	4.40	Good
Infants and young boys and girls	4.60	Very Good
Orphans and girls and boys separated from their families.	3.60	Good
Girls and boys in remote areas	2.80	Good

The results show that all girls and boys who were impacted received equal care; they received a commendable rating of 3.80, which puts them in the "Good" classification. This suggests that, within the framework of the community or program being evaluated, there is a general recognition of an effort to treat both genders equally. Regardless of gender, providing equal attention to all children is essential to fostering fairness and justice, and the attained rating indicates a baseline commitment to this principle.

The assessment goes into further detail about particular children's groups that get extra care. For both boys and girls with disabilities, the high rating of 4.40 indicates a strong dedication to inclusivity and an understanding of the requirements of this population. Infants and young boys and girls had a very high rating of 4.60, demonstrating an excellent focus on the youngest members of the community and an understanding of the significance of offering particular care and attention during this crucial developmental time.

Although some groups receive favorable attention, there is still space for improvement, as indicated by the rating of 3.60 for orphans and girls and boys who are not with their families. Additional support systems could be beneficial to the community to address the unique needs and difficulties that these vulnerable youngsters experience. In a similar vein, the lower rating of 2.80 for boys and girls living in remote areas draws attention to a problem that must be fixed in order to guarantee that children in remote places have equal access to opportunities and resources.

There is generally admirable dedication to providing every child with equal care, along with noteworthy initiatives to meet the needs of particular groups. There is room for improvement, though, especially when it comes to making sure that separated children, orphans, and people living in remote places are included.

Alongside the quantitative results, a qualitative analysis on the data gathered about the special protection measures for children was made. This careful analysis clarifies the nuances

of execution, highlighting both the areas that have worked and those that still need focused assistance.

Safeguarding Children in Schools. It is a great step that the emphasis is being placed on strengthening the execution of the Child Protection Policy in schools. The dedication to establishing a secure and supportive atmosphere is demonstrated by the creation of a committee for guidance and conflict resettlement. Aside from that, offering counseling to children who might behave badly shows initiative in addressing problems at their source. Educating parents and children about school policies and their rights through seminars and orientations helps create a community that is friendly and raises awareness.

Training as a means of empowerment. A dedication to equipping educators to manage the range of difficulties encountered by children is seen in the reference to the 1st Special Education Summit, which offered training for 50 teachers in Lanao del Sur. In dealing with delicate matters like child abuse and exploitation, this is especially important. A concerted attempt to safeguard children's safety is demonstrated by the creation of a Women Peace Center to address abuses and the accessibility of government agencies for involvement.

Handling Abuses. The data drew attention to certain issues including child labor, rape cases, and early child marriage. A thorough and multifaceted approach to addressing complicated issues impacting children is indicated by the construction of counseling rooms and support structures, as well as the readiness of systems to respond to these abuses.

Helping Mechanisms. A good intervention is Child Abuse Welfare, which supports the rights of children in the area. In addition, providing economic support and Kabuhayan Packages for parents, together with training and employable skills in collaboration with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to combat child labor, is a comprehensive strategy in addressing the underlying causes of problems affecting children.

Protection Policies in Schools and Communities. The BARMM government's support and reinforcement of Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) in schools and communities, along with the involvement in Gender and Development (GAD), protection policies, and protection activities, demonstrate a dedication to fostering a protective and gender-sensitive atmosphere.

The initiatives gleaned from the qualitative results show how to protect children in a proactive and all-encompassing manner. Still, ongoing observation and assessment are necessary to guarantee the success of these programs. Furthermore, tackling issues like early child marriage and bolstering abuse response mechanisms would call for consistent work and cooperation across communities, government agencies, and educational institutions. All things considered, the actions that have been detailed go in the right direction in terms of protecting the rights and welfare of children in the area.

Family Source of Income and Livelihood

Delving into the qualitative findings with reference to the family's source of income and livelihood generated themes on interplay of poverty and education, early marriage and intergenerational poverty, children affected by armed conflict and grant-dependent behavior of the people. Family economic environments in the context of the BARMM are shaped by complex dynamics, as revealed by the qualitative study.



Interplay of Poverty and Education. The information that is being provided highlights how intricately linked poverty and impeding children's education are. A recurrent trend in the data indicates that financial difficulties serve as a major impediment, forcing kids into the workforce rather than opening doors for them to pursue further education. This problem has extremely negative effects since it directly denies children their fundamental right to an education, which is essential to ending the cycle of poverty. Because of the complex relationship between poverty and educational barriers, children who are affected by these issues are more likely to be at a disadvantage throughout their lives, which limits their potential for personal development.

The data consistently show how children are forced to participate in labor activities because of economic constraints. In addition to depriving children of their opportunity to go to school, this forced work feeds a vicious circle of disadvantage. Lack of education becomes a fundamental component that contributes to the long-term continuation of poverty rather than just one singular effect. Because of the cyclical nature of this relationship, it is imperative that the economic aspects of children's life be addressed to break the chains of poverty and guarantee that they have the chance to get an education that would enable them to escape their current situation.

In essence, the information shows a stark reality in which children's education is severely hampered by poverty. Economic difficulties set off a cycle that prevents children from accessing education, impeding their ability to move up the social ladder, and sustaining disadvantage over generations. Understanding the complex processes at work is essential to putting into practice focused interventions that break the cycle, provide children with the education they need, and help them break free from the cycle of poverty in addition to addressing immediate financial needs.

Early Marriage and Intergenerational Poverty. A major contributing factor to intergenerational poverty, where children inherit financial difficulties, is parents' ignorance and lack of education. Poor economic circumstances sometimes lead to early marriage, which becomes a contributing factor that raises the risk of mortality for young mothers and feeds the cycle of adversity.

Also, cultural barriers contribute to challenges such as child labor, making it difficult to address effectively. Religious perspectives influence decisions related to early marriage and social engagement. Understanding and respecting these cultural factors are crucial for designing interventions that are culturally sensitive and effective in breaking the cycle of poverty.

Children Affected by Armed Conflict. One obvious and concerning aspect that has a substantial impact on children's academic aspirations and overall well-being in the BARMM is the ongoing armed conflict that occurs there. The persistent existence of conflict creates an environment of unpredictability and uncertainty, exacerbating the difficulties children encounter in daily life. Beyond the immediate physical risks, armed conflict has a lasting psychological and emotional impact on children. Their entire welfare is significantly impacted by the trauma they have endured, especially the experience of hearing gunfire and seeing the upheavals brought on by conflict.

In addition to endangering children's physical safety, the armed conflict fosters an atmosphere of increased tension and anxiety. The continual exposure to the sounds of gunshots exacerbates the difficulties kids already encounter, making it harder for them to focus on their academics or partake in typical childhood activities. Their everyday lives are impacted by this traumatic background, which has a long-lasting effect on their mental health and general



wellbeing. Children's emotional wounds from the ongoing armed conflict might impede their learning, self-expression, and development of critical social skills, which can impede their academic pursuits.

All things considered, children in the BARMM region face a complex issue as a result of the ongoing armed conflict, which profoundly affects their lives and impedes their ability to pursue an education. Ensuring the general wellbeing of these children and equipping them with the necessary support to overcome the challenges posed by armed conflict necessitates addressing the aftermath of trauma and creating a safe and secure environment for them.

Grant-dependent behavior. In the BARMM, families' financial struggles are largely shown by their dependency on public assistance programs like the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). The 4Ps is a program that aims to reduce poverty and enhance the general well-being of recipients by offering financial assistance to low-income families. Families' reliance on these services highlights their financial difficulties and highlights the need for outside assistance to cover basic expenses. The extent of financial hardships faced by families in the area is demonstrated by their reliance on such aid programs, underscoring the significance of focused interventions to alleviate these economic gaps.

But a troubling finding emerges from the data. Some parents appear to be abusing the financial assistance offered by initiatives such as the 4Ps. Instead of allocating the support to their children's education and welfare, this financial assistance is used for daily expenses of the family. This inefficient use of resources indicates that parents' knowledge and education are seriously inadequate. This indicates that the intended impact of these programs may be hampered even in the presence of financial support due to a lack of knowledge about the long-term advantages of investing in education and the general well-being of their children.

III. Assessment of Child Rights Governance Issues (civil rights and freedoms, investing in children)

The analysis explores the complex relationships between civil rights and freedoms and the crucial role it plays on children's welfare. This critical analysis aims to disentangle the several facets of child rights governance, assessing the extent to which the children's civil liberties are protected and investigating the effectiveness of the investments made in their welfare. This section aims to provide a thorough overview of the governance mechanisms in place by examining issues connected to civil rights and freedoms as well as the investments made in children.

Table 68. Assessment of Child Rights Governance

Statements	Mean	Description
We have complaints and suggestion boxes/mechanisms in our community to give our opinions and ideas.	2.20	Poor
In our community children meet regularly to discuss children's issues.	3.00	Average
In our community we/children can present our ideas to local decision-makers regularly.	3.00	Average
We have early warning systems in our community in case of emergency (fire, flooding, typhoon, earthquake etc.).	3.20	Average
Mean	2.85	Average

Table 66 shows the quantitative findings of the assessment of child rights governance which points to several characteristics of children's participation in the decision-making process and their capacity for voice in their community. There is a noticeable deficiency in the channels available for children to express their ideas and concerns, as seen by the low rating of 2.20 assigned to the existence of complaint and suggestion boxes/mechanisms. If these mechanisms are absent, children may be prevented from actively participating in community decision-making and may miss important viewpoints.

A modest level of involvement in community affairs is suggested by the average ratings for children's capacity to offer ideas to local decision-makers (3.00) and for routinely gathering to discuss concerns (3.0). Even if the scores are in the "Average" classification, these factors might be improved to encourage youngsters to participate more actively and be included in decision-making forums. The community's reported early warning system score of 3.20 is a good sign that they are somewhat prepared for emergencies. Though rated as "average," the overall mean rating of 2.85 indicates that there is still potential for making sure that child rights governance is more thorough and efficient.

Table 69. Assessment of Children's Participation and Access to Information

Statements	Mean	Description
We had enough information about what is happening in our community.	4.00	Good
Adults consult us about their plans for the community and for children.	3.20	Average
Adults listen to us and ask us what we think and feel about what they are doing.	3.40	Average
Adults are providing us with opportunities to help in the community if we want to.	4.00	Good
Adults are informing us about what they will do in our community.	3.20	Average
Mean	3.56	Good

The findings of children's involvement and information availability in their community provide insight into the dynamics of interaction and communication between the younger generation and adults. An open and transparent communication environment is shown in the favorable assessment of having enough knowledge about events and happenings in the community, which received a grade of 4.00. This high rating means that efforts are being made to inform kids and help them feel connected to local events and aware of what is going on in their community. Furthermore, a rating of 4.00 for the stated chance for children to actively participate in community projects shows a dedication to include them in worthwhile activities. This shows that children are valued members of the community and that they are encouraged to take on civic responsibilities and a sense of empowerment from a young age.

However, the ratings for adults talking to children about their feelings and thoughts (3.40), asking them about plans for the community (3.20), and telling them about events taking place in the community (3.20) indicate areas that might use work. Although the ratings are in the "Average" category, the amount of advice and information exchanged between adults and children might be improved. A more democratic and inclusive community can be created by promoting a more participative mindset and include children in decision-making procedures. The overall mean rating of 3.56, classified as "good," indicates that children's participation and information access in the community are typically in a good state, highlighting the significance of ongoing efforts to develop these components to create a younger population that is more involved and knowledgeable.

Complementing the quantitative results are the qualitative results which yielded the themes such as:

Development of Child Friendly Policies. The development of child-friendly policies in the BARMM is confronted with multifaceted challenges, as indicated by the qualitative data. The region's history of armed conflict and security issues poses a significant hurdle in ensuring the safety and protection of children. Protracted conflicts adversely affect children, leading to displacement, trauma, and recruitment into armed groups. The qualitative data emphasizes the need for policies addressing access to quality education, as factors like limited infrastructure, poverty, and security concerns hinder children's educational opportunities. Additionally, the prevalence of violence, abuse, exploitation, and gender disparities requires a comprehensive approach to strengthen child protection systems and promote gender equality.

“The access to education of the children, the BARMM faces challenges related to access to quality education, factors such as limited infrastructure, poverty, cultural barriers, and security concerns can hinder children's access to education. Efforts are needed to improve school facilities, address language barriers, promote inclusive education, and provide support for out-of-school children.”

Cultural sensitivity and customary practices in the BARMM context also add complexity to policy development. The region's diverse cultural landscape, coupled with customary practices, may at times conflict with children's rights. Striking a balance between cultural sensitivity and the protection of children's rights necessitates engagement with local communities, religious leaders, and traditional institutions to foster awareness and dialogue.

“Efforts are needed to improve school facilities, address language barriers, promote inclusive education, and provide support for out-of-school children. Additionally, child protection and violence, protecting children from violence, abuse, exploitation, and child labor is a significant concern. Efforts are needed to strengthen child protection systems, raise awareness about child rights, and prevent and respond to various forms of violence against children. ”

The qualitative data further highlights the importance of governance and policy implementation for effective child-friendly policies. Stakeholders express the need for inclusive policies that consider LGBTQ individuals and various vulnerable sectors, emphasizing the importance of catering to multi-sectoral levels. The information suggests that stakeholders recognize the significance of creating policies that address the unique needs of diverse communities within the BARMM.

“BARMM should come sa atin lang within the scope. There is LGBTQ and among others. By including them we know how to make ways to cater the multi-sectoral levels and vulnerable sectors”.

However, challenges in the implementation of child-friendly policies are evident. Issues such as the lack of awareness, unequal distribution of power, constant changes in administration affecting the continuity of programs, and a gap in transparent efforts for children's rights programs pose obstacles. The qualitative data underscores the urgency of not only formulating child-friendly policies but also ensuring their effective implementation through sustained efforts, community engagement, and addressing systemic challenges in the BARMM context.

Strengthening of Local Councils for the Protection of Children (LCPC). The qualitative data highlights a comprehensive approach taken by the LCPC Focal in strengthening local councils for the protection of children in the BARMM. The focus on the four basic rights of children, aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), forms the basis of initiatives. The engagement of Save the Children in Mamasapano, a conflict area, underscores the commitment to addressing violations of children's rights in challenging contexts.

“Being the LCPC Focal my focus is for the basic child rights according to the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the child so our focus of the initiatives we implement for the promotion of child rights is the 4 basic rights of the children.”



Active participation at the local level is a key strategy, with collaboration initiated with Barangay Local Government Units (BLGUs) to implement programs promoting child rights. The LCPC Focal's engagement, starting in 2020, involves a structured approach encompassing participation, development, and protection. Initiatives range from strengthening child participation in governance through assemblies to focusing on Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) and elementary education, including survival programs like the GSM feeding program.

“Yes. Opportunity of the division such as handling all schools and releasing memorandum or directives that the schools follow once the directives came from the division. It may be an opportunity also to include their PAPS on promoting Children’s Rights in their Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) and School Improvement Plan (SIP).”

The LCPC Focal's involvement extends to the strategic convergence of efforts, evident in the provincial plan for preventing Child Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM). The inter-agency approach involves collaboration with various entities such as MSSD, PNP, WCPD, MILG, IPHO, and MBHTE, demonstrating a coordinated effort for monitoring, evaluation, and intervention.

“Yes, through school integration because in the first place, children must know their rights. For example, the MSSD Regional Office organized and mobilized teams such as Supreme Student Government (SSG) in Junior and Senior High-schools in Olandang National High-school, it is the 1st in SGA and after training the children, they have to train also other students about children protection and children’s rights. It’s like training for trainers. When it comes to sharing information in the community, it’s crucial to activate the BCPC so they can be informed and serve as the initial point of contact. However, the issue is that they might struggle because they are the first to violate the child’s rights by not allowing the child to speak. There were already two rape victims, one was attempted rape and the other was actual rape. What’s disheartening was that they prevented the parents and the victim from speaking because it appears that they are simply being bribed in their barangay context. They only communicate with other family members, not the parents.”

Opportunities for collaboration are recognized, such as leveraging the division's role in schools to integrate Children's Rights into the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) and School Improvement Plan (SIP). Additionally, initiatives like school integration and training programs for students, as seen in Olandang National High-school, highlight the importance of disseminating information about child protection and rights within educational settings.

However, challenges persist, as indicated by issues within the Barangay Child Protection Committees (BCPCs), where resistance to information sharing may hinder the reporting of child rights violations. Addressing such challenges requires ongoing efforts to raise awareness, build trust, and empower communities to safeguard children's rights effectively. Overall, the LCPC Focal's multifaceted approach and collaboration efforts indicate a dedicated pursuit of child protection and promotion of children's rights in the BARMM.

Child Participation and Empowerment. The qualitative data indicates a multifaceted approach to children's participation and empowerment, particularly in the context of youth

empowerment, child protection, and preventing Child Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM). The ABC project, focusing on cleanliness and adolescence-friendly facilities in Datu Paglas, reflects a proactive effort to address the needs and concerns of children and youth. The outreach and feeding programs contribute to understanding the challenges faced by children, specifically related to nutrition.

“The youth empowerment and child protection specifically the child in Datu Paglas, we implemented ABC project this project talks about the cleanliness of the child and youth, second we implemented adolescence and friendly facility we have a outreach program, feeding program for the child to know what are their problems in terms of eating specifically the vegetable and 3 types of food which is the GO, GROW, GLOW.; feeding program is a every month activity it is a sustainable development for the children and the youth; Yes, it is in collaboration with the RHU, LGU and the youth organization or the local youth development officers and the council; No, but we have a collaboration with the LGU, RHW, stakeholders and the other youth organization.”

The collaboration with various stakeholders, including the Rural Health Unit (RHU), Local Government Unit (LGU), and youth organizations, demonstrates a concerted effort to involve different sectors in these initiatives. The sustainable nature of the feeding program, conducted monthly, implies a continuous commitment to the well-being of children and youth. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of community and shared responsibility in addressing the needs of the younger population.

The Child Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) Prevention and Response program further exemplifies empowerment through collaboration and awareness-building. The engagement with UNFPA and implementing partners like UNIPHYL highlights a concerted effort to prevent child marriages by empowering young people. The Youth-led Community Mobilization Model is an innovative approach that not only prevents child early marriages but also empowers young people to conduct awareness campaigns, formulate agendas, and lobby duty bearers. This indicates a shift from a passive role to an active involvement of the youth in advocating for their rights and well-being.

“So we empower young people to conduct awareness raising, formulate agendas, and lobby duty bearers to prevent child marriages and provide alternative services such as education and access to healthcare. The focus of the program is on preventing and responding to child early and forced marriages, with a goal of helping duty bearers promote access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities to address poverty and implement RA 11596 because it has to do with gender based violence, it's a harmful practice that is rooted from harmful socio-cultural norms.”

Additionally, the emphasis on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and collaboration with UNICEF to implement the Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Law (OSAEL) reflects a forward-looking approach to address emerging challenges. The recognition of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence and the efforts to combat it through legislation and education demonstrate a commitment to empowering children and youth in the digital age.



“We will also be starting the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). We have started it at the national level, and we also pilot it in the BARMM even though there is a resistance. We also worked with UNICEF in pushing for the implementation of the Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation law (OSAEL). This is because in Gender-Based Violence, we also have what we call Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence, which is covered by Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (OSAEL). This includes threats, bashing, bullying, and the sharing of sex videos to damage someone's reputation.”

However, it is noteworthy that resistance to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is acknowledged, emphasizing the importance of overcoming cultural barriers and ensuring the acceptance of such initiatives. The data indicates a comprehensive strategy that not only addresses immediate concerns like nutrition and child marriages but also aims to equip children and youth with knowledge and skills relevant to their evolving needs and challenges. Overall, the initiatives presented in the data contribute significantly to the participation and empowerment of children and youth in the specified context.

Partnership and Collaboration. The qualitative data underscore the significance of partnership and collaboration in the promotion and protection of children's rights. Several key themes emerge, showcasing a comprehensive and cooperative approach to addressing the needs of children and youth.

The commitment to working directly with children and collaborating with other NGOs reflects a holistic strategy. By engaging children directly, organizations not only empower them but also gain valuable insights into their specific needs and concerns. Moreover, the collaboration with other NGOs amplifies the impact of interventions, fostering a collective effort for the benefit of children. The emphasis on benefiting children collectively indicates a shared vision and purpose among organizations working in this domain.

The activities conducted, such as coordination, Information, Education, and Communication (IEC), forums, dialogues, and training, highlight the diverse strategies employed in partnership initiatives. These activities are designed not only to promote child rights but also to facilitate a broader understanding of these rights among stakeholders. Forums and dialogues provide spaces for discussions, ensuring that the voices of children are heard and considered in decision-making processes.

Partnerships are recognized not only as a means of advancing children's rights but also as an avenue for fundraising and program support. This pragmatic approach acknowledges the importance of financial resources and collaborative efforts in implementing effective programs for children. The focus on awareness campaigns and collaboration with NGOs for capacity building reinforces the long-term sustainability of initiatives.

Collaboration with external entities, such as the National Youth Commission (NYC) and UNICEF, reflects a recognition of the need for broader alliances beyond local organizations. Such partnerships bring in expertise, resources, and a wider reach to address issues related to children's rights effectively. The collaboration with NYC for the creation of a Marawi Youth Hub exemplifies a forward-looking approach, leveraging partnerships to create lasting infrastructures that benefit children and youth.



The acknowledgment of limitations, such as budget constraints and the impossibility of accommodating all children, underscores the need for strategic collaboration. The commitment to a selection process based on need reflects a conscientious effort to prioritize the most vulnerable children while adhering to the principle of "nobody should be left behind."

In summary, the result of the analysis demonstrates a collaborative approach to promoting children's rights. Partnerships are viewed not only as a means of enhancing the impact of programs but also as essential for addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by children and youth in the specified contexts. The emphasis on financial support, training, and the involvement of various stakeholders collectively reinforces the commitment to creating a conducive environment for the well-being and rights of children.

Public Awareness Campaigns. The analysis uncovered initiatives and challenges associated with public awareness campaigns on children's rights across various organizations and sectors. One evident result is the diversity of approaches employed to raise awareness, encompassing lectures, outreach programs, and collaboration with different stakeholders. For instance, Save the Children's focus on child rights and child protection, in collaboration with IDEALS and UNYPHIL-WOMEN, showcases a concerted effort to leverage partnerships for the benefit of children and youth. These collaborative programs underscore the significance of pooling resources and expertise to maximize the impact of awareness campaigns.

Despite these efforts, the analysis highlights persistent challenges in public awareness, with a recurring issue being the lack of knowledge within communities. Instances of parents, community leaders, and even beneficiaries of social welfare programs being unaware of children's rights emphasize the ongoing need for education and outreach. The multifaceted nature of these challenges is evident, encompassing cultural sensitivities, religious teachings, and logistical constraints in reaching remote or marginalized communities.

"In our institution, we focus on a child's right to access education, its quality and respect in the learning and peaceful environment which includes the most factual, their protection against any forms of violence or abuses."

Schools emerge as crucial hubs for children's rights advocacy, with division-wide activities during National Children's Month and ongoing efforts to integrate children's rights education into the curriculum. However, challenges such as time constraints and the availability of informational materials hinder the effectiveness of these initiatives. The need for continuous engagement is recognized, particularly to reinforce awareness and understanding within communities.

"Yes. Schools have initiated activities but the division itself has also major activities when it is time of November as we celebrate the National Children's Month. We conduct division-wide activities such as Kick-off and the whole month activities in November such as National Play Advocacy week and we request schools to initiate their contextualized activities that promote children's rights in the context of their schools."

Targeted interventions for specific issues faced by children, such as early marriage and school dropouts, demonstrate an acknowledgment of the unique circumstances in different communities. The Care Project Program in conflict areas and the CEFM Prevention and Response program reflect a commitment to addressing the distinct challenges faced by

vulnerable groups. These targeted efforts emphasize the importance of tailoring awareness campaigns to address the specific needs of diverse communities.

“We have a multi-faceted school-based advocacy in which we communicate with the children. However, at present, we can’t fully engage or make activities in connection with Children’s Rights due to lack of time and IEC materials. But we are planning to conduct a series of activities as part of the implementation of the R.A 9262 in promoting the rights of children and women’s rights.”

The analysis highlights the importance of ongoing collaboration, not only with NGOs and government agencies but also with local communities. While there is a recognition of the challenges, including logistical issues for follow-up activities, the commitment to connecting, coordinating, and collaborating remains essential for organizations promoting children's rights. In conclusion, the qualitative data underscores the complexity of public awareness campaigns on children's rights, necessitating sustained efforts, tailored interventions, and collaborative approaches to address the multifaceted challenges at hand.

IV. Assessment of Capacities and Interactions of Key Actors in Child Rights

Assessing the capacities and interactions of major players in the field of child rights is an essential task in comprehending the complex dynamics that influence the environment around children's safety and well-being. Examining the responsibilities and capacities of important players in the defense, promotion, and advocacy of children's rights is crucial as societies change. This highlights the advantages and possible weaknesses in the web of organizations cooperating to guarantee that children's rights are met.

The Department of Education (DepEd) is essential to children's education and to the community's access to high-quality education. As a crucial component of the educational system, the school head enforces stringent rules and regulations on campus to defend students' rights and uphold discipline without putting them under unnecessary stress. This involves taking steps to discourage excessive use of social media or online gaming, such as monitoring attendance, requiring students to wear correct uniforms, and planning school activities.

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) is a key player in the advancement of children's rights through its support of skill development and economic empowerment. By offering training and livelihood support, DOLE improves prospects for long-term community development. Through this partnership, children will have access to materials that will help them learn and develop their skills, setting the groundwork for a more promising future.

Through social welfare and education programs, organizations such as the Tawi-Tawi Provincial Women Council (TPWC) and other NGOs are essential in providing support for children. By offering food, toys, and other requirements, they solve childcare concerns and improve the general well-being of the children in the neighborhood. These stakeholders work together to develop a comprehensive and multifaceted strategy for advancing and defending children's rights in their regions.



The Local Government Units (LGU) in the BARMM were reported in its efforts to promote children's rights. They show commitment by emphasizing programs that enhance education and skill development. The LGU emphasizes a commitment to children's education in SGA by providing financial help in the form of educational allowances and scholarships. As a member of the LGU, the Barangay Chairman in Tawi-Tawi assists children in times of need by giving them food and cash support as well as encouraging them to participate in sports. In Lanao, the LGU collaborates with security efforts and implements livelihood programs for solo parents, contributing to the overall welfare of children.

Understanding the value of spiritual development, the Muslim Religious Sector in SGA concentrates on bolstering children's religion and instilling morals. In Tawi-Tawi, their function encompasses educating children's minds via sermons and religious instruction, promoting their overall growth.

The Ministry of Social Services and Development provides financial aid to parents in Basilan so they may afford schooling. This supports programs for Indigenous People (IPs) and the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps). The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) provides health, education, and financial support as part of its multifarious function. Together with partners, they fight unlawful recruitment, support orphanages with scholarships, and improve child protection by fortifying the Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) program.

To improve children's general health and well-being, the Municipal Health Office and Health Centers in different locations carry out medical missions by offering free examinations, medications, and circumcision. The Philippine National Police (PNP) plays a vital role in protecting children and ensuring their safety by regularly patrolling areas, organizing information drives, and keeping an eye out for any unusual activity that may impact children.

The assessment of support to promote children's rights reveals several challenges and opportunities within the community. The primary concern highlighted is the insufficiency of funds and the division of resources, potentially hindering the effective implementation and sustainability of programs focused on children. This financial constraint is particularly emphasized in remote areas such as Tawi-Tawi, where despite the presence of supportive individuals, agencies, and organizations, the lack of external funding remains a significant obstacle.

The involvement of various stakeholders is recognized as crucial in supporting children's rights. Parents are identified as the first line of support, responsible for instilling values and discipline at home. Teachers or Ustads are considered secondary parental figures, dedicating substantial time to academic and value-focused education. However, the challenge arises when negative influences are ingrained in children from their homes, making discipline difficult.

Governmental agencies, including women councils, PCPC, BCPC, and MSSD, play a vital role in supporting children's needs through protection, psychosocial sessions, and cash assistance. The collaboration with NGOs and CSOs further enriches the support system, ensuring the success of children through programs focusing on protection and social welfare goals. School and barangay sports programs are recognized as effective diversion strategies, steering children away from harmful activities.

Crucial issues, such as earthquakes, typhoons, and disasters, underscore the importance of children's preparedness. Specialized youth groups, like "Buluan Young Leader



Advocate," address reproductive health concerns, providing a platform for peer-to-peer discussions. The role of faith is emphasized, with mosques and religious networks contributing to the development of children's values and principles.

In summary, a comprehensive support system involving accessible education, family support, healthcare services, recreational activities, and social services significantly contributes to children's growth and success. The foundation laid at home, the guidance provided by teachers, and the collaboration with external partners create a holistic environment for children's well-being. However, the challenges, especially financial constraints, highlight the need for increased support and collaboration to ensure the fulfillment of children's rights in the community.

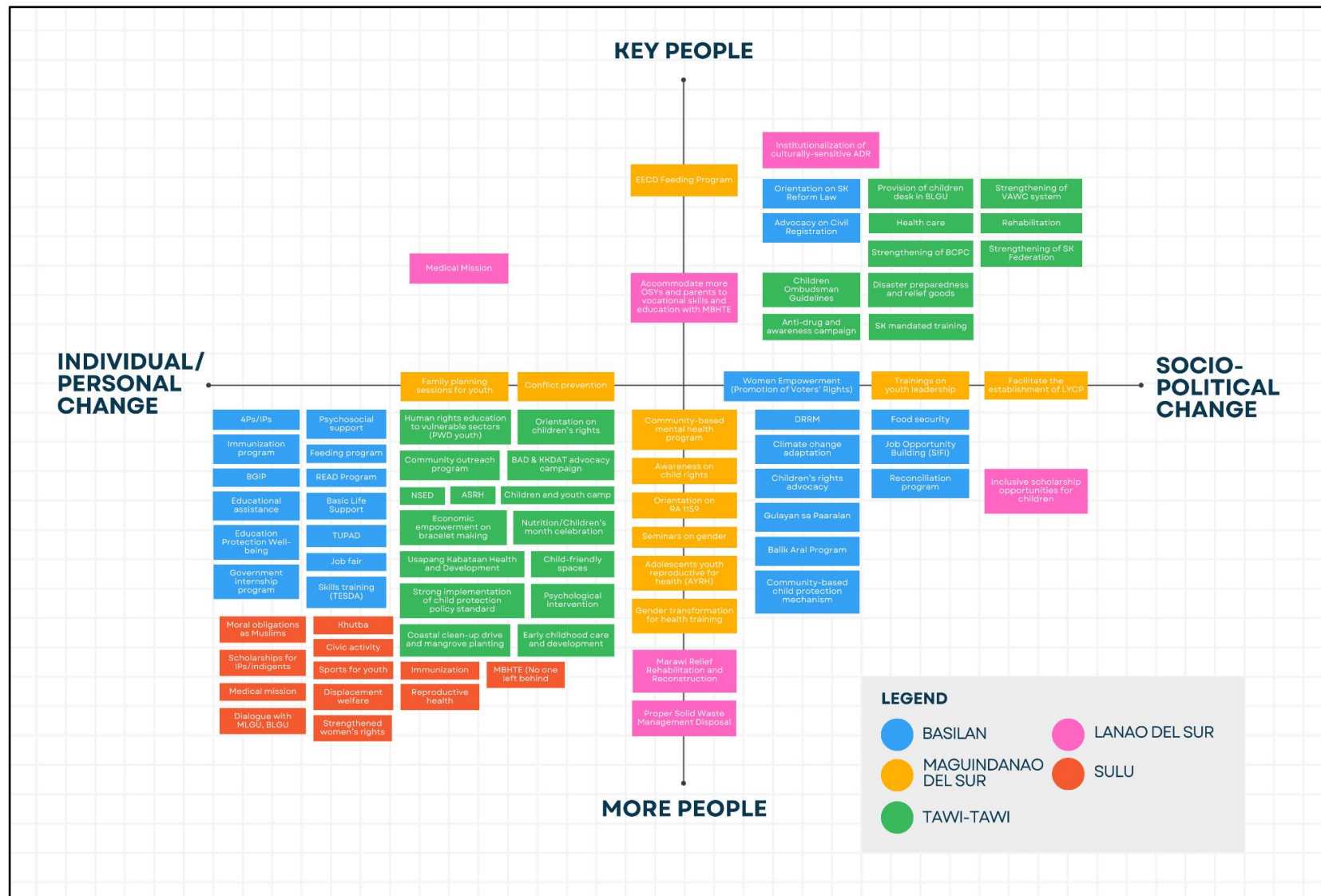


Figure 7. Child-centered and child-sensitive programming



The figure on child-centered and child-sensitive programming shows that there are programs, activities and projects that promote children's rights with a noteworthy emphasis on involving a broader spectrum of individuals rather than concentrating efforts on key authorities. The initiatives seem geared towards creating personal change and immediate changes at the individual level, emphasizing personal development and individual transformations. These efforts are directed towards more people, aiming to instigate positive changes at the grassroots level within the community.

However, the analysis also brings to light a significant disconnect between engaging key individuals and fostering social change, particularly in the context of promoting children's rights. While the projects are inclusive and reach a wide audience, there appears to be a gap in effectively involving authorities or key stakeholders who could drive broader social transformations. Key people, such as community leaders, policymakers, or influential individuals who can enact systemic change, seem to be less integrated into the initiatives designed to promote children's rights.

This disparity raises concerns about the sustainability and scalability of the programs. To achieve comprehensive and lasting social change, it becomes crucial to bridge the gap between initiatives involving a larger audience and strategic efforts targeting key figures. Establishing connections and collaboration with influential stakeholders can amplify the impact of the programs, fostering an environment where systemic changes in policies and attitudes towards children's rights can be effectively championed and implemented.

The qualitative results also provide a nuanced perspective on the environment in the BARM in promoting activities that advance the rights of children. Some express optimism about the future, hopeful for government support in youth activities to prevent them from being left behind. This sentiment reflects a positive outlook on potential collaborations with the government. As one participant puts it, "Currently, it seems there isn't any, but we're hopeful for the government's support in our activities for the youth so they won't be left behind."

Positive success stories emerge, emphasizing the tangible impact of community engagement. Participants observe a significant success in building stronger community bonds through their initiatives. The connections formed are described as growing and expanding, drawing in more participating children. This reflects the positive outcomes of investing time and effort in community-building activities. One participant shared:

"It's a significant success! It's evident that as we spend more time in the community, we're building stronger bonds. These connections are growing and expanding, drawing in more participating children."

Past initiatives are lauded for their success, with participants showing noticeable growth within a short span. The consistent development and progress of the children over six months underscore the positive impact of support provided. This success is a testament to the effectiveness of initiatives in contributing to the growth and development of children.

Education attendance shows improvement, with a significant decrease in the rate of children not attending school within one year. Collaborative efforts from various departments and the local government unit (LGU) are credited for this positive change. Most notably, the rate decreased within a year, indicating a swift response to address educational challenges.



“Last year, the ratings for children not attending school were high. With the assistance of other departments and the LGU, the rate of children not attending school decreased significantly. Most of them have been able to attend school. The rate decreased within one year.”

However, challenges persist, particularly in certain localities where limited resources and armed conflicts hinder the success of promoting child rights. A respondent note that success depends on the specific area, highlighting the impact of restricted resources and limited access due to armed conflicts on the overall success in advancing child rights.

“I believe the success of BARMM in advancing child rights depends on the specific area or locality within BARMM. However, based on my experience and what I've heard, the limited success often stems from factors such as restricted resources and limited access to certain areas due to armed conflicts.”

“Somehow successful, but lack of resources and I think there is a little but not too big a room for improvement for that in the BARMM. If there could be more resources and partners in improving the rights of the children in the BARMM, then it might be successful”.

The prioritization of children's rights is a subject of debate. While some argue that it depends on the specific area, others highlight competing priorities such as women's rights, social services, and infrastructure projects. This reflects the complex dynamics and trade-offs involved in setting priorities within the BARMM.

Concerns about resources are echoed in the assessment that success is contingent on having sufficient resources and partners. The need for improvement is acknowledged, with a call for more resources and partners to enhance the effectiveness of initiatives promoting the rights of children.

There is a diversity of opinions on the overall success of promoting children's rights in the BARMM. Some view it as successful, citing concrete support through the provision of schools, especially in rural areas, indicating a commitment to supporting and prioritizing children. Others emphasize the need for more development, citing ongoing armed conflicts as a hindrance to overall success.

The environment in the BARMM for promoting activities that advance children's rights is marked by a mix of success stories, challenges, and diverse perspectives. While positive strides have been made, the region grapples with resource limitations, armed conflicts, and the need for a more focused and localized approach to fully realize the promotion and protection of children's rights.

Chapter V. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Below are conclusions recommendations gleaned from the quantitative findings and qualitative insights that results from this Child Rights Situational Analysis in the BARMM:

A. Child Rights and Freedom

1. Significant hurdles still exist even if progress has been made in promoting child rights and freedom. In the region, there is discrepancy in birth registration rates, with the BARMM trailing the national average and affecting a considerable number of people. Even after the Free Registration Act was put into effect in 2013, there are still challenges in places like Tawi-Tawi and Basilan, where some children are especially at risk of becoming stateless.

B. Education

1. The continuous commitment to education as a political priority in the region is evident in structuring the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (MBHTE). However, millions of children in the BARMM were forced to drop out of school as a result of pandemic-related closures, demonstrating how badly the learning crisis has affected the learners. The presence of non-state armed groups is making the areas more vulnerable to serious breaches of children's rights, which makes it harder for them to receive an education. With lower net enrollment rates across all education levels than the national average—especially in secondary level, student attendance and performance continue to be worrying.
2. Substantial concerns about the proportions of students attending primary and secondary schools are clear, exposing difficulties in guaranteeing access to education. To promote equal educational opportunities, gender-sensitive measures are necessary, as evidenced by the gender gap in secondary school attendance. The causes for non-attendance that have been found, including a lack of personal motivation and low family income, call for comprehensive approaches to overcome the socio-economic barriers that prevent people from accessing higher education. Aside from that, access to higher education levels is a challenge given the inadequate number of schools for Junior and Senior High students in the BARMM.
3. The BARMM region faces a large digital gap despite attempts to encourage efforts on digitalization and technology integration in schools, as observed by lower internet access rates across all educational levels. Comparing this to Mindanao and the national norm, this disparity calls into question the fair distribution of educational resources, especially when it comes to the incorporation of digital learning resources.
4. Intricate nature of educational difficulties is observed in both urban and rural areas of the BARMM as shown by the relationship between urbanization, literacy rates, and access.

General literacy rate is lower in remote and rural areas and this calls for an urgent need for focused educational programs in these areas.

5. Prolonged lockdowns have made mental health concerns worse for parents, teachers, and learners; alarming statistics show that mental health issues are more common in children and that suicide rates and attempts have increased. The analysis requires specialized mental health care that is suited to the unique needs of the children. Meanwhile, the disparities in suicide tendencies across genders emphasize the need for targeted interventions that consider the particular difficulties experienced by young girls in the area. In addition, the Department of Education's disproportionate number of guidance counselors to learners raises concerns about how well mental health issues may be addressed.
6. The infrastructure problems related to water and energy exacerbate the difficulty that BARMM schools face. Lower percentages of electricity and water supply sources, particularly in senior high schools, suggest possible obstacles to creating a child-friendly learning environment. There is also an urgency to address the disparity in the sources of safe drinking water in schools.
7. The increasing incidence of bullying in schools—both physical and cyber—highlights how critical it is to implement anti-bullying policies and procedures to provide a secure and encouraging learning environment.

C. Health and Welfare

1. Providing children with timely and accessible healthcare services is a challenge due to inadequate licensed public hospitals and the obvious absence of Barangay Health Centers in some communities of the BARMM. Delays in medical interventions, a decrease in preventative care, and possible discrepancies in health outcomes could arise from this.
2. The BARMM has a complex nutritional landscape with high prevalence rates of iodine, vitamin A, stunting, and wasting in children. Though the profile of malnutrition in the region is like other Mindanao regions, targeted interventions are still necessary. Feeding strategies for infants and early children need to be adjusted because of challenges with timely breastfeeding initiation, prelacteal feeding behaviors, and breastfeeding duration. The prevalence of chronically undernourished nursing mothers and nutritionally susceptible pregnant women highlights the need for comprehensive maternity care and the consequences of undernutrition on future generations.
3. The rate of teenage pregnancy in the BARMM is greater than the national average but marginally lower than in other Mindanao regions. In the region, the prevalence of contraception can increase the chance of an early pregnancy, and access to family planning options is quite limited. A customized strategy is required to address the underlying causes of teenage pregnancy due to the region's contextual circumstances, which include early marriage, low reproductive health literacy, and little participation in sexual and reproductive health rights discourses.
4. There is heterogeneity in the landscape of maternal and child care in the BARMM with places in need of focused actions as well as strengths. With lower rates of antenatal

care, institutional delivery, and postnatal care than the national norm, the region faces difficulty in providing maternal healthcare services. One noteworthy advantage of maternal health practices is the large percentage of expectant mothers who have had four or more prenatal appointments.

5. The BARMM has commendable breastfeeding practices, surpassing national averages in exclusive breastfeeding and the duration of breastfeeding. The region also outperforms the national average in the percentage of births delivered in health facilities, indicating better access to institutionalized childbirth services. However, challenges persist in child nutrition, with a lower percentage of children meeting the Minimum Acceptable Diet compared to the national average, signaling the need for targeted interventions.
6. The infant mortality rate in the BARMM is lower than the national average and has improved when compared to several other regions. The lower vaccination card ownership rate in the area raises concerns about immunization records and monitoring, suggesting a potential area for focused efforts.
7. There is a discrepancy between estimated and reported instances of children tuberculosis (TB) in the BARMM. Hence, shortcomings in surveillance and diagnosis, indicating a critical gap that needs to be addressed. Enhancing data collection methods, diagnostic methodologies, and boosting awareness among healthcare professionals are critical steps toward acquiring a more accurate knowledge of the prevalence of childhood TB.
8. Given that young people in the BARMM have a moderate awareness of sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), there is room for improvement, particularly in terms of boosting understanding among females. The levels of HIV/AIDS knowledge, notwithstanding attempts, suggest that more targeted education programs are needed, especially for girls.
9. The health financing landscape in the BARMM region is dynamic and evolving, with a noteworthy shift toward a block grant structure that offers more flexible funding. The former reliance on government funding has been replaced by payments to Local Government Units, indicating a deeper commitment to healthcare initiatives. The noteworthy increase in health spending over the years, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic's problems, suggests that the need for healthcare services has increased. The rise in per capita health expenditure, while still below the Mindanao average, emphasizes the growing importance of individual health needs.

D. Special Protection Measures

1. The precarious state in which displaced children find themselves in Mindanao, especially in the BARMM, highlights the pressing necessity of attending to their special needs in the face of violent conflicts and natural calamities. The numerous difficulties these children face—such as inadequate nutrition and schooling, increased chances of child labor and marriage, and contact with non-state armed groups—highlight the complex effects of being uprooted on their lives. The significant negative effects of armed conflict on education, in addition to the psychological costs associated with stress-related illnesses and trauma, highlight the necessity of swift

- action and all-encompassing measures to protect, educate, and support mental health to lessen the long-term effects on society's most vulnerable citizens.
2. Indigenous children in the BARMM are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change because of their dependence on natural resources, remote location, and long history of marginalization. The region's complex historical narratives, which are characterized by armed conflicts and struggle for self-determination of the Moro, make it more difficult for indigenous people that have been displaced.
 3. Child, Early, and Forced Marriage and Unions (CEFMU) in the BARMM region, are exacerbated by conflict, displacement, and rooted in gender and socio-economic inequality. A patriarchal system, negative gender norms, limited opportunities for females, and policy gaps contribute to the high prevalence of child marriage, which is further intensified by displacement disrupting education and livelihoods.
 4. The BARMM has lower rates of child labor than both the national average and Mindanao, because of proactive initiatives like the Payout Program and the Child Labor Protection Unit that highlight local efforts. To protect the welfare and future opportunities of children in the area, notwithstanding advancements, sustained efforts and focused interventions are necessary to further reduce and ultimately eradicate child labor.
 5. Human trafficking, particularly impacting women, and children, requires careful attention, particularly in light of the vulnerabilities encountered by Indigenous people and the additional risks faced by women in affluent households. The severity of child exploitation, especially online sexual exploitation, has increased due to the COVID-19 epidemic. Despite admirable government initiatives to address suspicious transactions and victim identification, challenges in the region's socio-political dynamics, such as the use of debts as leverage to force people into extremist groups, complicate efforts, with reported challenges in trauma-informed methods.
 6. The socio-political environment of the area is already difficult, and it becomes more complicated due to the presence of child soldiers. The features of child soldier's underage in the BARMM are consistent with wider patterns; male child soldiers are particularly common, and many of them come from rural and low-income families.
 7. Children with Special Needs in the BARMM deal with a wide range of challenging issues. Since not all children who require assistive equipment can afford them, disparities in health access simply make matters worse. A comprehensive strategy for improved healthcare accessibility, improved educational facilities, and targeted policies is required to ensure the well-being and growth of special needs children in the BARMM.

E. Family Environment, Source of Income and Livelihood

1. The labor force dynamics in the BARMM underscore the need for targeted initiatives aimed at enhancing employment prospects, particularly considering the notably lower labor force participation rates, particularly for women.

2. The issue of children deprived of a family environment, particularly orphans, in the context of Mindanao and the BARMM, is complex and challenging to quantify due to data limitations. The absence of disaggregated figures for BARMM highlights the need for more comprehensive data collection efforts to understand the full impact of conflicts on orphanhood in the region.

F. Child Rights Governance

1. The BARMM demonstrates a strong legislative framework with roots in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, that actively involves youth in local governance. These laws set the stage for the holistic development of children in Mindanao and serve as the cornerstone for later legislations. They not only stress the significance of protecting child welfare but also create a comprehensive strategy that combines empowerment and protection. The BARMM's unwavering commitment to continuous reform in the promotion of child rights is highlighted by the proactive efforts shown by the resolutions and pending measures of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority.
2. The BARMM Education sector offers a wide range of policies with a focus on holistic development, alternative learning approaches, and diversity. The Rural Farm Schools Act, the Early Childhood Care and Development Act, and policies regarding students and schools as peaceful zones, in addition to the inclusive education approach, all work together to create a holistic framework for education.
3. Special Protection Measures emphasize how crucial it is to have a strong legislative framework in place to stop child abuse, protect children from harm during armed conflict, and address issues like cyberbullying and bullying. Although these policies provide a solid foundation, any potential problems with implementation and enforcement must be addressed through continuous improvement.
4. Children's rights are prioritized and protected, as evidenced by the Organic Law, resolutions by the Bangsamoro Transition Authority, and forthcoming legislation. The Bangsamoro Children's Declaration highlights children's rights to education, independence from poverty, enduring peace, and active participation in their communities, thereby amplifying their voices.
5. Current initiatives are making strides in creating personal awareness and change, addressing the disconnect between key people and the broader community becomes imperative for achieving meaningful and sustainable social transformation in the realm of promoting children's rights. Efforts should be directed towards ensuring that key influencers are actively engaged and aligned with the overarching goals, fostering a more holistic approach to social change within the community.

Recommendations

The following were the recommendations made:

A. Child Rights and Freedom

1. Organize a convergence of local leaders, community organizations, and religious institutions to disseminate information and encourage parents to register their children promptly after birth.
2. Implement mobile registration services to reach out to the remote communities of the BARMM where access to registration facilities is limited.

B. Education

3. Implement comprehensive reading tutoring program to improve literacy and reading proficiency of the learners
4. Launch programs dedicated to promoting STEAM education across, in direct response to the pressing need for advancing scientific literacy and mathematical proficiency.
5. Institute peace education academy for teachers in partnership with Teacher Education Institutions in State Universities and Colleges in Mindanao (e.g. Mindanao State University)
6. Capacitate school counselors and staff to identify and address the emotional and mental well-being of students affected by conflict, displacement, or trauma.
7. Build additional schools, classrooms, and facilities to address the shortage for Junior and Senior High students.
8. Establish scholarship programs, financial aid schemes, and income-generating activities to alleviate financial constraints and incentivize school attendance.
9. Invest in the expansion of digital infrastructure, including broadband connectivity and network infrastructure, to improve internet access rates across all educational levels in the BARMM.
10. Utilize data-driven approaches to identify areas of need and track progress in addressing educational disparities in the BARMM.
11. Implement interventions to address gender disparities in mental health issues, particularly focusing on the specific challenges faced by young girls in the BARMM.
12. Review the implementation of the anti-bullying policies and procedures and provide training for teachers and staff on recognizing and responding to bullying incidents.

C. Health and Welfare

13. The BARMM government with its partners can consider efforts to upgrade licensed public hospitals and Barangay Health Centers across all communities in order to ensure timely and accessible healthcare services for children.
14. Strengthen comprehensive maternity care services to address undernutrition and its long-term consequences on maternal and child health.

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15. Design a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education to address the underlying causes of teenage pregnancy in the BARMM, considering contextual factors such as early marriage, low reproductive health literacy, and limited access to family planning options.
 16. increase the number of prenatal appointments and ensure comprehensive maternal healthcare services for expectant mothers.
 17. Improve reporting, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to bridge the discrepancy between estimated and reported instances of childhood TB and ensure timely diagnosis and treatment for affected children.

D. Special Protection Measures

18. Strengthen child protection mechanisms to prevent child labor, early marriage, and recruitment by non-state armed groups.
19. Anchor the promotion of climate resiliency and indigenous rights on the Bangsamoro Community Resilience Framework.
20. Increase educational and economic opportunities for females to reduce the prevalence of child marriage, particularly in conflict-affected and displaced communities.
21. Expand initiatives like the Payout Program and the Child Labor Protection Unit to further reduce and eliminate child labor in the BARMM.
22. Strengthen coordination between government agencies, civil society organizations, and law enforcement agencies to identify and support victims of trafficking and exploitation. There is also a need to establish a center/hub that will Implement trauma-informed methods and provide comprehensive support services for survivors.
23. Provide alternative opportunities for education, skill development, and economic empowerment for children at risk of recruitment of non-state armed groups.
24. Implement initiatives that promote inclusive education and community-based support systems to enhance the well-being and growth of children with special needs.

E. Family Environment, Source of Income and Livelihood

25. Promote gender equality in employment through policies and programs that address barriers to women's participation in the labor force, such as childcare support, flexible working arrangements, and equal pay measures.
26. Conduct a scoping research on children deprived of family environment to inform policy development, resource allocation, and targeted interventions to support vulnerable children and address their unique needs.

F. Child Rights Governance

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27. Provide training and capacity-building programs and information campaign for relevant stakeholders, including law enforcement officers, social workers, educators, and community leaders, to improve their understanding of child rights laws and their roles in upholding them.
 28. Expand efforts to promote holistic education approaches in the BARMM, building upon existing policies such as the Rural Farm Schools Act and the Early Childhood Care and Development Act
 29. Establish the Mindanao Center for Children's Rights in collaboration with identified State Universities in Mindanao.
 30. Allocate funds to develop an online platform such as the Mindanao Children's Rights Data Program (MCRDP), which offers comprehensive information and datasets focused on promoting children's rights in the BARMM region.
 31. Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the impact of legislative measures, policies, and initiatives related to children's rights and holistic development in the BARMM.

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