Violent and Hateful Extremism in Mindanao: A Contextual Analysis of the Situation and Development NGO Responses

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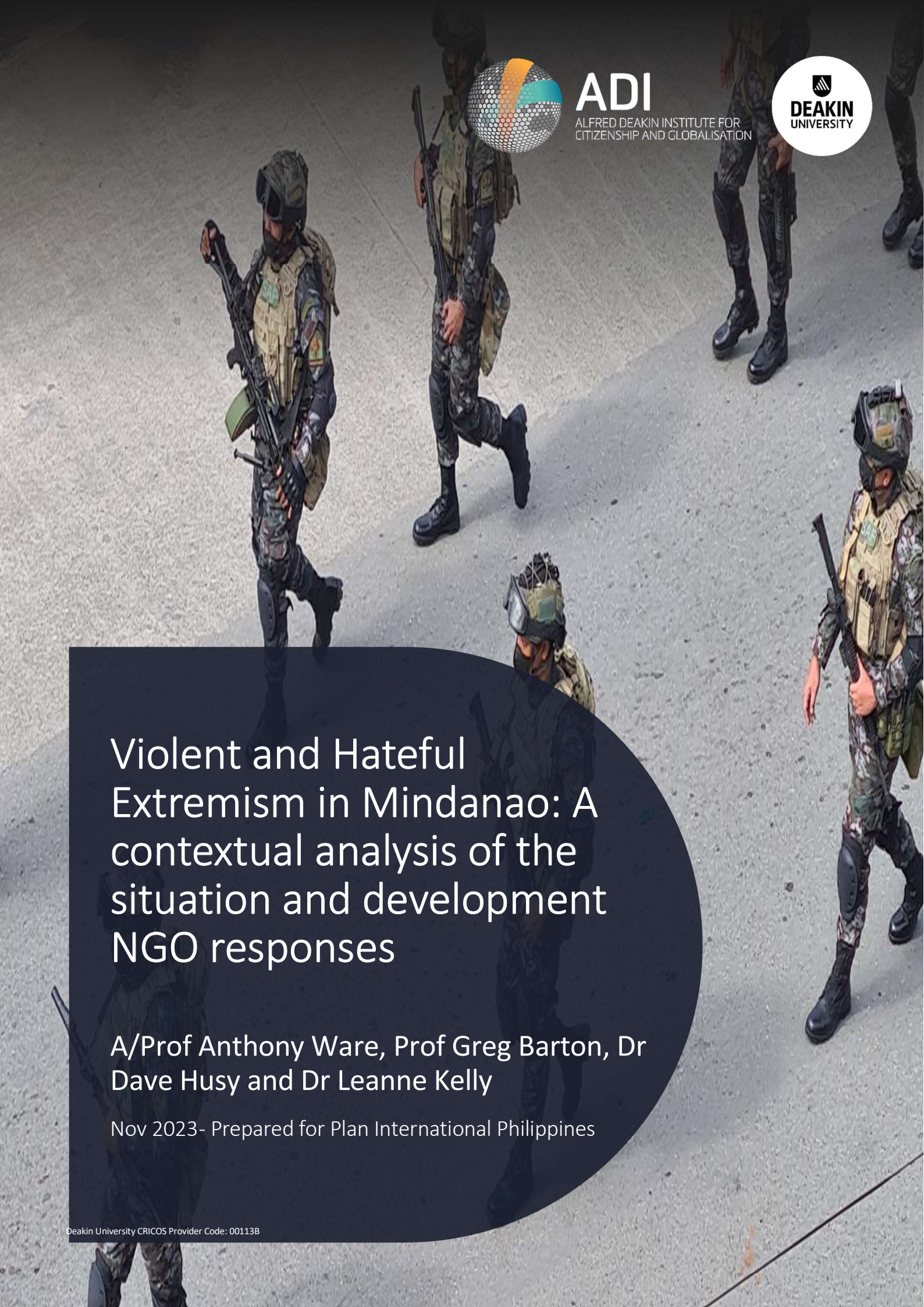

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Violent and Hateful Extremism in Mindanao: A contextual analysis of the situation and development NGO responses

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This report

This is a preliminary report in relation to the Philippines, the first report on a collaborative project between Deakin University (Deakin) and Plan International Australia (PIA) entitled Appropriate International Development Responses to Address Violent and Hateful Extremism. This report presents preliminary analysis of data collected during an initial visit by the project team to the Philippines, in late September 2022, a scoping mission to commence case study work in that country on this 4-year, 4-country joint project. It offers a synthesis and contextual analysis of the violent and hateful extremism (VHE) situation in Mindanao, and NGO responses to this, from the perspectives shared with us in key informant interviews conducted during this visit. The report also discusses some of suggestions made in these interviews of proposed programs that would support current efforts in the preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE) space in Mindanao. It is hoped ideas in this report might be relevant to the work of Plan International Philippines (PIP). Primarily, however, this data and analysis aims to highlight the learnings of the foreign project team, inform the next steps of research engagement by the team with PIP, and point towards further data which might also be collected, plus the opportunities for engagement in co-design and trial of new VHE context analysis and monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning (MERL) tools.

Executive summary

Three members of the Deakin University-PIA research team travelled to the Philippines in late September 2022: Associate Professor Anthony Ware (Deakin), Professor Greg Barton (Deakin) and Dr Dave Husy (PIA). This report synthesises and provides a contextual analysis of the key findings and insights obtained by the project team from interviews conducted with 41 key informants, selected because of their experience and insights into the situation in Mindanao, Philippines, with a particular emphasis on understanding and preventing/countering violent extremism (P/CVE). Interviewees were from 24 different organisations, including international non-government organisations, multi-lateral institutions, international organisations, universities, and local civil society groups. A full list is included in the Appendix. Interviews were all conducted in late September 2022, and most interviews were in-person, face-to-face. A number of interviews were also conducted via Zoom, however, due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 at that time, as well as Australian government travel advisories for Australian nationals covering parts of Mindanao.

Key challenges in the implementation and effectiveness of P/CVE programs, as identified by informants, were around government instability, disparate agendas, clan structures, complexity of the situation, lack of sufficient reconciliation mechanisms, and limited focus on inclusion of marginalised groups. Governance issues included corruption, difficulties aligning P/CVE programs within government's three-year funding cycles, trouble re-establishing relationships after changes in leadership, and centralised structures that undermine efforts to address poverty and social disparities by neglecting certain regions.

Interviewees noted that P/CVE programs are widely perceived to be connected to Western funding and agendas, particularly when labelled or recognised publicly as "P/CVE" or responses to violent extremism. This label can cause suspicion and hinder local empowerment and engagement; use of the label or terminology of "violent extremism" was seen as particularly stigmatising and alienating. Linked to notions of foreign interference, it was noted that development NGOs working in this space struggle to balance the prioritisation of community needs, local ownership, and organisational values with funder demands.

Despite difficulties, interviewees were generally of the view that good work and progress is occurring in the P/CVE space in Mindanao. A range of program approaches are outlined in this report. Interviewees highlighted the following opportunities and offered the following suggestions as to areas of programming that would support and complement current efforts, which may be of particular interest to PIP:

- Document and share the experiences of peacebuilders who reject violence to counter extremist narratives and inspire others to follow a non-violent path.
- Promote cultural exchange and exposure to challenge misconceptions and prejudices, fostering greater understanding and empathy among communities.
- Incorporate peace education in academic curricula and engage with communities to promote non-violent conflict resolution and reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies.
- Address marginalisation, political domination, and clan dynamics to foster inclusivity and promote community-based peacebuilding efforts.
- Encourage truth-telling and promotion of alternative historical narratives to help break the cycle of Moro, Christian, and indigenous people's warring histories and allow communities to redefine their collective narratives.
- Combat misinformation on social media platforms, especially Facebook and TikTok, to prevent radicalisation, intolerance, and misinformation-based voting behaviour.

- Leverage traditional conflict resolution structures and practices to enhance community engagement and ownership of P/CVE initiatives.
- Draft, advocate for and support passage for a Bangsamoro Alternative Dispute Resolution Act to empower traditional leaders and ensure their financial and administrative support as partners in development projects.

It was overwhelming regarded as being essential that the underlying drivers of extremism, such as poverty, political marginalisation, and social disparities, be addressed, while capitalising on opportunities for community engagement and reconciliation within programming. By leveraging indigenous practices, promoting alternative narratives, and integrating community voices, interviewees argued stakeholders can and desire to develop context-specific strategies to prevent violent and hateful extremism themselves. Implementing inclusive and sustainable P/CVE initiatives in Mindanao requires collaboration, local ownership, and a focus on long-term peacebuilding efforts.

Recommended next steps

We think the PIP proposal for data collection in communities around Cotabato City, in which PIP is working or hoping to start work in soon, is an excellent idea. Building on previous discussions with PIP, we propose:

A symposium with local researchers working on P/CVE in Mindanao and PIP team members, to question, challenge and examine the preliminary findings in this report and explore VHE dynamics.

Rapid assessment focus groups with youth, women and household heads, to collect participant/ village-level data from ordinary community members, to understand their perceptions of who may be vulnerable to extremist radicalisation in their communities, how and why, how (young) people are being or might be lured into f violence, their understanding of key issues impacting these dynamics (e.g. poverty, education, livelihood opportunities), and their thoughts on solutions to these issues. We suggest working closely with academics from Mindanao State University to gather data in locations the Deakin University team cannot access due to travel restrictions.

A workshop with Deakin-PIA team plus PIP staff to explore these two sets of data (from this report and the focus groups), and use this to co-design programs and tools for PIP, including theories of change, and monitoring and evaluation indicators.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Plan International Philippines for their strong support with this data collection. Special thanks to Romualdo Codera for organising the fieldwork logistics and accompanying us to Mindanao, and actively participating in most of the interviews.

Over-Arching 4-Country Research Project

This is a report on the first data collection visit by the project team to The Philippines, part of a larger 4-year, 4-country collaborative research project between Deakin University and Plan International Australia. That over-arching project is as follows:

Formal Title:	Appropriate International Development Responses to Address Violent and Hateful Extremism
Lead Agency:	Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia
Partner Agency:	Plan International Australia
Research Team:	A/Prof Anthony Ware, Deakin University – lead Chief Investigator
	Prof Greg Barton, Deakin University – Chief Investigator
	Dr Dave Husy, Plan International Australia – Partner Investigator
	Dr Leanne Kelly, Deakin University – Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Case Study Countries:	Philippines, Indonesia, Mozambique and Kenya
Funder:	Australian Research Council Linkage Program
	Department of Education, Skills & Employment
	Australian Government
Funded Period:	1 September 2021 to 30 August 2025

This project is a partnership between Plan International Australia and Deakin University investigating how violent and hateful extremism (VHE) can be best addressed at the community level, through development and humanitarian activities. It is funded through an Australian Research Council Linkage Project Grant ($540,377) with substantial additional funding and in-kind support from Plan International Australia ($620,940) and Deakin University ($546,242).

Project Aims (as per grant application):

1. Understand VHE dynamics in the communities in which Plan International works in the 4 countries, specifically its impact on those communities and on Plan's programmes and projects,
2. Examine the efficacy of various existing non-Plan programmes in the country which are already in addressing VHE.
3. Develop and test VHE context analysis tools suitable for mainstreaming into all project planning and baseline data collection.
4. Develop and test indicators for measuring effectiveness in addressing VHE.
5. Develop recommendations for Plan country offices, including new project ideas specific to each country context.

Relation of the Research Project to Plan's Triple Nexus and Conflict Sensitivity work:

Conflict-sensitivity is a perspective by which to plan, monitor and evaluate projects. There are numerous toolkits available. It is premised on the recognition that the design and implementation of interventions has the potential to reduce, sustain, amplify or even trigger conflict, thus that careful analysis and adaptation of project design can minimise harm and maximise positive impact. The most common conflict-sensitivity approach is 'Do No Harm', which focusses conflict analysis on seeking to identify social cleavages, 'dividers' and 'connectors' (or bridges), and through these, the pre-existing connections, counter-narratives and norms. It proposes that new projects could be re-orientated to strengthen these local connectors, initiatives or positive attributes. Plan International is conducting a global project to mainstream conflict-sensitivity into all project planning, monitoring and evaluation in conflict affected situations and contexts.

The idea of the Triple Nexus grew out of debates about a Development–Humanitarian continuum in the 1990s – what was known at the time as the 'relief-development continuum'. This sought to identify complementary objectives and strategies, built on the idea that humanitarian aid can provide a foundation for recovery, development and the creation of sustainable livelihoods. There was a lot of talk of the need to bridge funding and operational gaps. The third element, of peace and peacebuilding, was added during the 2000s, with international policy-makers calling for closer integration of the three practices. This was made explicit in the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit's Grand Bargain which included a call for joining up humanitarian action, development programming, and peacebuilding. Many crises are interdependent and mutually reinforcing – conflict, underdevelopment and humanitarian issues negatively reinforce to produce complex emergencies. The Triple Nexus idea argues solutions thus need to be just as interdependent – a combination of peace, development and humanitarian efforts that can mutually reinforce positive outcomes.

Both these ideas are relevant in all four case study countries. In the Philippines, Kenya and Mozambique, however, in contrast with Indonesia, VHE is largely linked to ethnic/religious minority marginalisation and grievance, and complicated by armed insurgencies. Because of societal recognition that armed and violent conflict exists, as well as VHE, it may be easiest to locate this project within Plan International's global conflict-sensitivity push. In Indonesia, the most profound social divide leading to VHE stems more from an extremist Islamist struggle against the legitimacy of the Republic of Indonesia. Salafi jihadi groups inspired by al-Qaeda, such as Jemaah Islamiyah, or by Islamic State, frame their mission as a long-term struggle to achieve an Islamic state in Indonesia. They assert that this end justifies the means of violent jihad, even if they choose, for reasons of expediency, to refrain from violent struggle for the time being and instead focus on building religiously pure, exclusivist, communities. VHE in Indonesia is predominately ideological rather than ethnoreligious in nature. As such, integrating VHE work into Nexus and/or gender and/or resilience work might be more strategic in Indonesia.

Research Project Detail (from the original grant application document)

Awareness of the need for more holistic approaches to Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) has grown steadily over the past decade. Authorities now increasingly seek to engage the problem both upstream (to prevent radicalisation into violent behaviour) and downstream (to disengage individuals from violent extremist social networks and reintegrate them into healthy social relationships). Both approaches recognise that underlying grievances and conflict drivers can crush legitimate aspirations and contribute to some people/groups radicalising. Both require working in partnership with communities and civil society agencies, to build resilience and engage young people, in particular.

At the same time, many international development actors have come to recognise that violent extremism (VE) is a widespread problem in many communities in which they work, and that development programs can influence the dynamics of extremism (positively or negatively). This recognition has led to recent moves to integrate P/CVE into foreign aid strategies and funding.

Many P/CVE interventions, if conducted with sensitivity, could theoretically be a natural fit for international development/humanitarian NGOs. NGOs already implement programs aimed at addressing inequality, deprivation, marginalisation and human rights violations, and seek to enhance social cohesion, community resilience, freedoms and capabilities. Nevertheless, being seen to be working in P/CVE is often problematic. The environments within which extremism flourishes, characterised by violence and fragility, already present many challenges to building trust and providing assistance. Because public attention has focussed primarily on the security aspects of P/CVE, together with counter-terrorism (where most funding has gone), NGO engagement in P/CVE risks them being perceived as aligning closely with securitisation. Thus, aligning with P/CVE agendas risks eroding the independence at the heart of NGO strategies. Moreover, perceptions of such alignment increase direct risk to staff and recipients, and complicate their commitment to 'do no harm' principles.

The project will focus on developing knowledge, tools and elements of interventions, to enable the planning and implementation of appropriate programmes at individual, household and community levels, and ways to wisely and effectively engage government agencies, security forces or religious leaders that either implicitly support VHE, or directly propagate narratives or violence themselves. Of particular need are tools to enable NGOs like Plan to conduct robust, context-specific VHE situation analysis, and then integrate this analysis into their project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. A central contribution of this project will be the development of such analytical tools for NGO programming, more along the lines of the 'do no harm'/conflict-sensitivity and gender analysis tools widely adopted across the sector.

This project defines a new concept, violent and hateful extremism (VHE), as: the incitement of hatred, hate speech and hate acts, and the use or threat of violence by extremist social movements seeking to bring about political and societal change in the name of certain ideological ends, sometimes framed in terms of religion and/or identity, by means that dehumanise and bring harm to others. In the vast majority of cases, this involves significant elements of misogyny. Around the globe, both local and international VHE movements tend to frame their justifying grievances in terms that focus not just on perceived general threats to group rights and status, but also on specific threats to male authority and status. Using this justifying narrative VHE movements are characterised by the channelling of toxic masculinity towards hatred and violence.

Our project thus expands the conceptual and theoretical understandings of P/CVE, to also incorporate responses to 'hateful extremism' (HE). Importantly, this conceptual expansion came from Plan local field staff, through our initial collaboration, and is thus the result of incorporating bottom-up voices and co-design into the conceptual framework.

VHE represents an important theoretical development, in that it also better aligns with the immediate daily needs of most people around the world. Whilst the manifestation of VE in forms such as international terrorism remains a global threat, outside conflict zones it does not generally constitute an existential threat. Nonetheless, violent extremism continues to receive a disproportionate investment in intelligence and policing, often resulting in perverse outcomes—such as high levels of securitisation and the targeting of certain communities in ways that undermine social cohesion, trust and respect. By contrast, hateful extremism is a day-to-day issue. For the majority of people, HE, including misogyny, race hate and the enabling environment of hyper-nationalist political actors, all constituting a more immediate threat and greater problem than VE. As a result, there exists both great need and great opportunity to partner with such communities, and civil society actors serving them, in countering HE. Framing P/CVE more broadly as countering VHE presents a better foundation for cooperation based on trust and mutual interest. Finally, and most importantly, while by definition VE excludes the state and state actors as perpetrators, HE explicitly includes the possibility the state and state actors may be perpetrators of hate acts or speech, and threats of violence against minorities. This is a significant theoretical expansion, with important policy and practice implications to be explored in this project.

This project will contribute significant conceptual innovation to Plan's work in these contexts, to improve project planning. The new analytical tools and planning processes that it will develop, as well as contextual indicators of effectiveness, will facilitate significantly improved programme outcomes. This has significant potential to benefit not only the individuals and families/communities participating in the programs, but also the societies in those countries, by extension, regional stability. The project will develop concrete recommendations for interventions by Plan in contexts affected by VHE in Asia. Beyond PIA, these findings have the potential to benefit the entire sector.

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Introduction

This preliminary report is the product of the first stage of a multi-year collaborative research project between Deakin University and Plan International Australia, as outlined above, linking closely with and seeking to serve Plan International Philippines. The first step for the foreign team, with only limited experience and knowledge of the local situation in Mindanao, was to learn from local practitioner experts, to come understand the local context through their eyes, so that they may quickly gain sufficient insights into the Mindanao situation to engage in meaningful collaboration and co-design work with the Plan International Philippines, who, of course, are already well-versed in the situation.

This analysis of the violent and hateful extremism (VHE) context in Mindanao is based on data gathered through interviews with 41 local leaders actively engaged in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) within the region. Three members of the Deakin University-Plan International Australia research team travelled to The Philippines in late September 2022: Associate Professor Anthony Ware (Deakin University), Professor Greg Barton (Deakin University) and Dr Dave Husy (Plan International Australia). This report lays out the learnings of the research team about the violent and hateful extremism situation in Mindanao, and NGO responses to this, based on synthesis and analysis of the perspectives shared with us in key informant interviews.

As Mindanao has been grappling with a complexity of challenges related to insurgency, historical grievance, poverty, and governance issues, it is critical to gather and synthesise on-the-ground expertise to examine the dynamics of violent and hateful extremism and the opportunities for peacebuilding. The interviews were conducted with a diverse group of individuals representing different organisations, including government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society groups, academic institutions, and international organisations. These leaders provided valuable insights into the current situation in Mindanao, sharing their experiences, research findings, and recommendations for effective P/CVE strategies.

The data collected covers a wide range of themes and topics related to the prevention of violent extremism, including challenges faced by P/CVE programs, opportunities for peacebuilding, the importance of community engagement, the role of traditional and indigenous structures, gender-sensitive approaches, and the impact of social media in shaping narratives.

By drawing on the knowledge and expertise of these key stakeholders, this context analysis seeks to map the complex and dynamic environment in Mindanao. It provides valuable information to inform co-design work with the Plan International Philippines. We also hope that in publishing it that it is also useful for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers working in the field of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, aiding in the design and implementation of targeted and effective P/CVE interventions in Mindanao.

The insights gathered from these interviews shed light on the multifaceted nature of violent and hateful extremism in Mindanao and emphasise the significance of inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding efforts. Through a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities outlined by these leaders, the hope is to contribute to the advancement of strategies that can foster lasting peace, stability, and resilience in the region.

Methodology

This research employed a qualitative approach, utilising semi-structured interviews. The fieldwork was conducted between September 21 and September 30, 2022.

A total of 41 interviewees participated in the study, representing a diverse range of organisations involved in P/CVE work. These organisations included Plan International Philippines (PIP), Mangungaya Mindanao, International Alert, University of the Philippines, Nonviolent Peaceforce, Balay Mindanao Peace Center, OND Hesed Foundation, ECOWEB, UN Women, Mindanao State University, The Asia Foundation, Reconciliatory Initiatives for Development Opportunities, Equal Access International, Maranao People Development Center, Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation, Zamboanga Basilan Integrated Development Alliance, Moro Women Development and Cultural Center, the Office of the UN, and various small development NGOs. The interviewees were all Philippines nationals, except for one, with 54% of interviewees hailing from Mindanao. There were 16 female (39%) and 25 male (61%) interviewees.

All interviews were conducted by Associate Professor Anthony Ware, almost always in collaboration with either Professor Greg Barton or Dr Dave Husy. Romualdo Codera from PIP was also an active participant or observer present in most interviews and set up the interview schedule to include a mix of organisations PIP have or would consider partnering with, and other organisations with a reputation for good work in P/CVE in Mindanao. The interviews were held both face-to-face and online, with venues including University of the Philippines, Mindanao State University, and PIP offices. Some interviews were facilitated in groups, while others were conducted individually. Interviews took place in various locations, at the convenience of interviewees, in Manila, Iligan, Cagayan de Oro and online.

The study adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring informed consent from all participants. The interviewees were briefed on the purpose of the study and how their data will be utilised. As previously mentioned, this field research is part of an Australian Research Council project and has ethics approval from Deakin University (HAE-2022-069). No interviewee requested anonymity and a list of interviewees is provided in the appendix of this report. Interviewee quotes are included in quotation marks throughout the findings section.

Comprehensive notes were taken during interviews, which were later typed-up and interviewers' observations added. This interview data underwent thematic analysis using NVivo to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights related to P/CVE in Mindanao.

As with any qualitative research, this study has limitations. The sample size is unlikely to be fully representative of all stakeholders involved in P/CVE efforts in Mindanao. Additionally, the perspectives shared by interviewees are products of their personal experiences and influenced by their organisational affiliations. Further, this report showcases the views of local leaders and may not be entirely reflective of the viewpoints of community members.

Violent and hateful extremism in Mindanao

Conceptualisation of violent and hateful extremism

Interviewees recognised that there are multiple causes or drivers of violent extremism globally, and that violent extremism can take multiple forms. Most informants identified the main form of violent extremism to be Islamist groups drawing inspiration from the Middle East, as found in parts of Mindanao. The terminology is however, very "clouded with insurgency" in the Philippines, a term applied by government not society, and heavily contested with some interviewees referring to the communist insurgency of the New People's Army (NPA) as also being violent extremism. Several respondents (but not a majority) suggested that violent extremism in Mindanao is comprised of both groups inspired by Middle Eastern Islamism, and "communist terrorism" – that violent extremist groups include the radical Maoist New People's Army (NPA) and not just Islamist groups like Aby Sayyaf and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters. Others, particularly those from the PIP country office and Marawi team, argued the NPA should be considered insurgents, not violent extremists. Some were concerned that the Philippines Anti-Terror Act 2020 is "so broad anyone can be labelled a terrorist", and that the legislation was used by Duterte primarily to silence left-leaning critics of his regime, rather than actual extremist violence.

We note that violent extremism is notoriously difficult to precisely define and remains a highly contested term. Nevertheless, it is widely agreed that VE involves recourse to, threats of or support for violence intended to generate widespread fear, through an indiscriminate targeting of civilians or non-combatants. A key element here is that in VE violence is used, or at least threatened, based on a radical ideological position, rather than out desire for criminal profit or out of personal animus. In most cases violent extremism and terrorism are synonymous. It is interesting to note that while the project team was conducting interviews in the Philippines in September 2022, a Manila Regional Trial Court handed down a judgement against the Department of Justice, ruling that the NPA cannot be declared a terrorist organisation under Filipino legislation. This is despite the fact that the Philippines government has long called them violent extremists and terrorists, and the Department of Justice alleged nine attacks on civilians. Further confusing the issue, the US State Department listed the NPA as a terrorist organisation back in 2002, and that the European Union, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and United Kingdom have also long designated the NPA as a terrorist organisation.

Regardless of whether members of the NPA are seen to be violent extremists or insurgents (or a bit of both), it is clear that the situation in Mindanao involves multiple forms of conflict overlayed and interrelated. The situation in Mindanao involves a complex interplay of identity, resource, and ideological-based conflicts, plus insurgency, clan violence (rido) and criminality. Interviewees cautioned against oversimplifying the issues by framing them simply as violent extremism. They noted that violent conflict has affected Mindanao since long before it was labelled as violent extremism, and long before any engagement with ISIS. It is seen as being locally-driven violence, largely over long-standing governance issues, underpinned by clan wars and sporadic and inter-generational outbursts of violence driven by vendettas for alleged injustices, land, honour, or political power.

Highlighting the issue, one interviewee noted that Abu Sayyaf, for example, grew out of the struggle for self-determination, and was born out of frustrations with the peace process. Nonetheless, interviewees drew a distinction between insurgency as conflict targeting government forces, and violent extremism as broader, ideological, and directed against the people and social structures. Some, such as many in the PIP office, preferred to call Abu Sayyaf insurgents, similar to NPA. The UN Resident Coordinator's security advisor suggested Abu Sayyaf have said and done things to gain a global branding and recruiting edge with foreign fighters, but questions how much radicalisation is really taking place.

Despite identifying Islamist extremism as a general frame for the Mindanao conflict, interviewees consistently raised the role of history and ongoing social inequality and marginalisation as key factors affecting the situation. Further complicating what is already a complex situation, interviewees indicated that the conflict is not just a religious, political or based on clan issues, but is today driven by those who profit from perpetuating the conflict, including through the persecution and eviction of indigenous populations. A political economy approach, examining vested economic interests and beneficiaries, is vital to a good understanding of the dynamics.

Interviewees also emphasised the importance of understanding transitions in types of violence, as well as the complicated relationships between different armed groups and the government. Clan-based conflicts and election-related political dynamics can intertwine with extremist activities. One interviewee expressed concern that many Filipinos and government agencies appear to lack understanding of the distinction between legitimate struggle for self-determination and violent extremism, leading to further marginalisation of certain groups—mainly Bangsamoro groups. Extremism is seen as both a result of and a response to political agendas and processes. Similarly, there is uncertainty among interviewees about how to categorise extreme violence exhibited by some security forces and government actions—some suggest that if state actors abandon humanitarian law, and adopt extreme, ideologically-motivated violence, they become violent extremists or terrorists too.

These multifaceted understandings of violent and hateful extremism in Mindanao emphasise the need to consider historical, social, political, and economic factors in addressing the conflict and promoting peace and stability in the region.

Terminology

Many interviewees expressed opposition or a strong sense of caution about use of the term "violent extremism" (VE) in Mindanao, saying they were either reluctant or refuse to use the term. They felt that the term is foreign and politically laden, associated with exclusion, discrimination, and targeting of Muslims. They note that many locals see violent extremism as extreme violent responses to (often legitimate) political, economic, and social grievances. There is concern about the term carrying negative connotations that can hinder self-determination and legitimate struggles. The fear is that the label may promote discrimination and stigmatise individuals and communities associated with extremist groups, further alienating them. They believe that using this language reinforces power dynamics, particularly between Muslim communities in Mindanao who already feel marginalised by the largely-Christian Filippino majority, and therefore complicates issues. Most interviewees expressed concern that application of the label can be used to limit legitimate struggle for identity, self-determination and rights, redefining the people as much as their struggle as illegitimate.

Many interviewees felt that the term does not accurately capture the complexities of the conflict, and prefer language framed around conflict and insurgency or peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Alternatives suggested for describing the reality of violent and hateful extremism in Mindanao include "extreme violence," "violent conflict," "insurgency," and "rehabilitation", and are seen as more suitable for on-the-ground discussions and local contexts. Those interviewees who emphasise the importance of using terms related to conflict transformation and peacebuilding rather than solely focusing on violent extremism or P/CVE argued that peacebuilding approaches are more effective in addressing the root causes of violence and that this framing is strengths rather than deficit based. Nonetheless, interviewees acknowledged that some groups use the terminology of violent extremism, suggesting this is primarily because they are influenced by global trends or donor requirements. It was noted that emphasis on P/CVE increased significantly after the emergence of ISIS in the Philippines during the Marawi occupation, and both USAID funding linked to the terminology, and the links to ISIS, leading to greater adoption of the term violent extremism and the P/CVE label by some NGOs.

Peace and conflict scholars at Mindanao State University Magindanao explained that they never use the terms themselves in class, preferring even the term “conflict” to describe what happened in Marawi, and engage their classes in discussion of the nuances and critiques of the terminology in class, applying the term violent extremism almost exclusively to ISIS, ISIS-affiliated, or ISIS-like groups. There is a view that a better choice of language can help people disengage, leave violence behind. Even the UN Resident Coordinator’s Security Advisor commented, “I have great suspicions about the whole violent extremism agenda, and I’m concerned at seeing local CSOs desperate for funding all sign up. If talk to them, I often feel that national action plans are part of an anti-Muslim agenda. No one is talking about the massacres of Muslims in 1960s-70s that led to the formation of the current Moro armed groups”.

In summary, the data highlights a nuanced perspective on the use of terminology around violent extremism in Mindanao with a preference for strengths-based approaches framed around peacebuilding and conflict transformation. The sensitivity and impact of language in shaping perceptions and responses to extremism are evident in the diverse views expressed by the interviewees.

The nature of the conflict

Mindanao has been plagued by complex conflict for decades. The conflict revolves around four key elements: land disputes, clan violence (rido), struggles for self-determination and religious extremism. Interviewees' perspectives on the nature of the conflict in Mindanao are largely framed around three intersecting themes: resources, identity, and ideology.

The key resource on Mindanao is land: a recurring theme about the conflict is the centrality and complexity of land disputes. Some go so far as to suggest that the key driver of conflict in Mindanao is clan-based land disputes—but land disputes between the Bangsamoro clans and indigenous Lumad peoples, and between the traditional Bangsamoro and Lumad inhabitants and the newer, largely Filippino migrants (who have been encouraged by the state, at times, over the last half century or more) are also central. The powers over land are spread across three government departments, making land governance challenging. Multiple land titling practices and the lack of large-scale land reform have exacerbated land-related tensions. Indigenous people have often been targeted, as a small and largely powerless minority even amongst the Muslims, who feel marginalised nationally. Some interviewees suggested there have been an increase in attacks and land grabs since the BARMM peace agreement. Some indigenous people have requested police/military posts near their communities for protection against various armed groups, in an escalation of their vulnerability. It was noted that all Moro groups, including MILF and BIFF, are vying for control of land, often belonging to the same families, while IPs feel marginalised. Conflict over land intertwines with issues of identity and ethnicity, resulting in fluid membership within armed groups.

Sporadic feudal clan disputes (rido) are also fundamental to this the violence in Mindanao; as one interviewee put it, "the key problem really is rido". Inter-generational, hateful, and based on payback for alleged injustice by economic/political rivals, these disputes are significant. Many rido disputes are over land. A comment was made in one interview that every household has a gun, and ensure that every child learns how to hold and use a gun because of clan violence. There is certainly a culture of gun ownership across Mindanao, with International Alert confirming at least half a million illegal firearms in Mindanao, in addition to widespread legal gun ownership. There is a strong sense that socialisation to gun violence occurs in the context of the clans and rido, rather than insurgency or extremism, allowing the insurgent or extremist groups to recruit people already open to the idea of armed violence to pursue their cause, and often already owning their own small arms. Some interviewees emphasised that until now, at least, recruitment to insurgent or extremist groups most commonly happens through clan-based kinship ties, rather than social media, and is fuelled by grievances and injustices related to politics, land grabbing, and economic issues more than religious or ideological radicalisation.

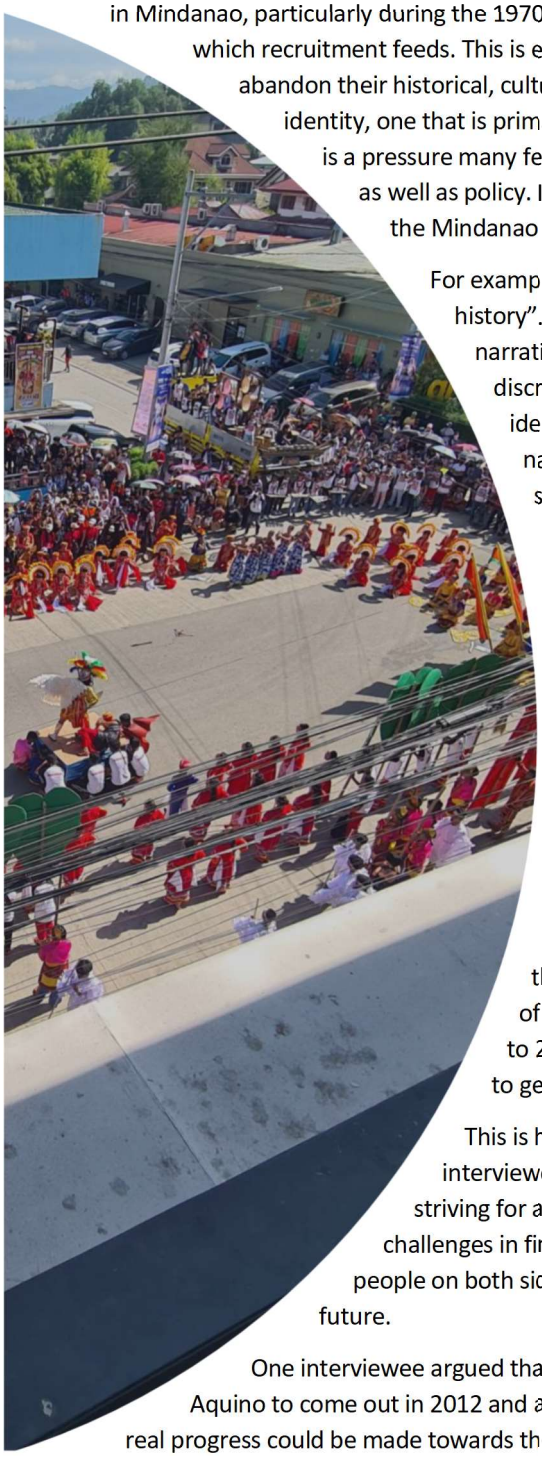
Some clans possess considerable resources and influence, and people often seek their protection or financial support. But this conversely sometimes drives recruitment into insurgent groups, or organisations such as Aby Sayyef, which can be seen as offering alternative forms of protection from rido disputes with powerful local clans. The BARMM agreement between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the government has not resolved many of the underlying clan conflicts, and indeed left some clans feeling excluded. Because a lot of rido is rooted in politics and economic power, the new BARMM administration transition is not in a strong position to address rido, and disputes mobilised for politics during the transition could be quite destabilising. The armed forces are improved their ability to identify clan-based conflicts, distinguishing them from extremism-related violence, although they have traditionally not been good at this. Further, while the government's militarised response has led to a decline in some extremist groups' power, remnants have found refuge in clans and infiltrate communities with violent extremist groups like Abu Sayyaf and Dawlah Islamiyah thus continuing to pose threats. However, the interplay of identity, clan affiliations, and extremism is complex and dynamic, and remains a significant challenge.

There was a strong view in multiple interviews that even the ISIS-backed siege of Marawi was more multidimensional than presented, playing on insurgency themes and tapping into anti-Filipino sentiment, fears of non-Moros taking over the land, squeezing Moros out as much or more than Islamist extremist ideology. In terms of government response, the implementation of the national action plan on violent extremism is criticised for overly empowering the security sector while neglecting social inclusion initiatives. Conflict analyses should also consider partner positional analysis, examining how local CSOs and NGOs impact the conflict dynamics and community perceptions. Inclusivity and addressing grievances are essential in addressing violent extremism and other conflicts.

The conflict in Mindanao is deeply rooted in issues of land, identity, clan rivalries, and extremist ideologies. The power struggle over land resources and the exclusion of certain groups from peace agreements have contributed to the perpetuation of violence. While the government's militarised approach has led to some success in containing certain groups, extremist groups continue to exploit clan affiliations and social grievances to recruit members.

The role of history / use of historical narratives

The interviewees' responses highlight the critical role of history in shaping the Mindanao conflict—or perhaps more accurately, the crucial role that the use of and framing of historical narratives has had in fuelling contemporary grievances and understandings of conflict dynamics. The long troubled, history of colonisation, including both Spanish and US occupation, and the ongoing settlement of Filipinos moving onto Mindanao (at some times with government incentivisation), has had a profound impact on Mindanao. Likewise, the history of massacres and other excessive use of force by state security forces against Muslims in Mindanao, particularly during the 1970s martial law period, is widely recited and rehearsed, and central to the grievances upon which recruitment feeds. This is exacerbated by the perennial pressure felt by the Muslim peoples of Mindanao to abandon their historical, cultural and religious distinctiveness and assimilate into a broader Philippines culture and identity, one that is primarily culturally Catholic and Filipino, rather than Moro, or at least perceived to be so. This is a pressure many feel is projected from most of the bureaucracy and institutions of the central government, as well as policy. In this way, history—or the use of historical narratives today—plays an important role in the Mindanao conflict, influencing identities, grievances, and political dynamics.



For example, as one interviewee put it, the Bangsamoro "articulate our struggle by looking back to history". Another observed there is a "battle over the portrayal of history", with the ability to set narratives and, for example, deny massacres and events even occurred. Another argued that discrimination is enabled by biases in the presentation of history. History is intertwined with identities, and we cannot more forward without addressing it. The Moro's historical narrative of resistance and struggle for land rights has deeply influenced their current sense of identity.

One interviewee explained the common Moro narrative: Islam arrived in the region and spread through the Philippines via Sultanates established from around 600 years ago, but then the coming of the Spaniards spread and privileged Christianity. The physical and cultural resistance to the Spanish shaped the fundamental social, cultural, and political landscape of Mindanao, he suggested. All that is left of Islam now, the narrative goes, is in Mindanao, creating a sense of existential threat due to ongoing cultural and religious imperialism. The narrative notes how Bangsamoro physically resisted Spanish efforts to establish ports and a strong presence in Mindanao, but equally, resisted culturally by reinforcing traditional practices. The community's current growing conservativeness, especially how the women dress, may be seen as a continuation of this resistance to perceived colonisation and assimilation pressure. When the Americans arrived, they hoped that Mindanao might be its own entity under the Americans. That bid failed, then the 1920s saw official government-led resettlement of Filipinos onto Mindanao, 'the land of promise', with the government offering grants up to 24 hectares to Filipino migrant families to run a homestead while locals could only apply to get 8 hectares. Others pointed to the legacy of martial law, instituted during the 1970s.

This is how the grievances driving the conflict are framed, with deep historical roots. The interviewees emphasised the importance of recognising and respecting diverse histories while striving for a vision of a shared future. Diverse interpretations of history create tensions and challenges in finding a shared sense of identity and history. Nonetheless, this interviewee noted that people on both sides voted in Bongbong Marcos, so there is a shared focus on seeking a better, shared future.

One interviewee argued that recognition of past injustices is key to making progress, and that it needed President Aquino to come out in 2012 and acknowledge the historical injustices perpetrated against the Bangsamoro, before any real progress could be made towards the 2014 peace agreement. Addressing historical grievances through transitional justice mechanisms is essential for moving forward and promoting peace. Peace education, coupled with on-site exposure to historical sites and events, can provide a deeper understanding of the region's complexities and historical roots. Ethnic and clan-based politics compound the challenges in addressing historical injustices and promoting equitable development.

Acknowledging diverse histories and historical injustices is essential for promoting social cohesion and peace in the region. Transitional justice mechanisms and peace education can contribute to understanding historical roots and fostering a shared vision of a better future for all communities in Mindanao.

Grievances

These historical narratives are used to express many of the grievances of marginalisation, discrimination and persecution. According to interviewees, these grievances play a significant role in provoking violent and hateful extremism in the region. This was perhaps summed up by the observation by one interviewee that, in around 1900, some 90% of people in Mindanao were indigenous (mostly Muslim Moros but also some non-Muslims), but now a majority are Filipino, and Christian.

Muslims from Marawi, Moro, and other communities in Mindanao report facing discrimination in cities, including difficulties in renting properties. This discrimination contributes to a sense of disempowerment and lack of agency, leaving them feeling like powerless victims. The historical bias against Moro people is evident, with narratives passed down through generations perpetuating mistrust and animosity.

The education system exacerbates grievances when it omits Moro history and culture, leading to a feeling of exclusion from the larger Filipino identity. It contributes to a feeling of exclusion and being outsiders in their own country. For example, one interviewee noted there are no Moros in the list of national heroes taught in the school curriculum, and even on the flag, while 3 stars represent Luzon, Visaya and Mindanao, the 8 rays of the sun supposedly representing the 8 provinces that fought against the colonisers—yet none are Moro. Likewise, discussion of 'national' foods in the curriculum does not include any Moro dishes, and most foods listed include pork, symbols that reinforce the perception that the Bangsamoro are not part of the broader Filipino nation. Unlike in Thailand, for example, where the Muslim minority community is proportionately similar in size to the Philippines, restaurants in the capital generally don't show awareness of, or make allowance for, halal dietary requirements.

Land is a key component of this. One respondent bemoaned: 20,000 died protecting our land in 1902, and now presidential decrees claim further large tracts of land for the military. Land distribution issues in Mindanao have deep historical roots and have been perpetuated by government policies. The control of land by a few powerful families and the central government lead to feelings of injustice and dispossession. The lack of access to traditional land for indigenous peoples and the destruction of Moro properties in Marawi further fuel grievances.

Political inequality and the sense of domination contribute to grievances in the region. The slow progress in providing promised support to people affected by the conflict in Marawi, including the delayed rebuilding of infrastructure and compensation for victims, contribute to a sense of injustice and frustration. Small clans and indigenous communities often feel marginalised by larger political dynasties, leading to a lack of representation and a sense of voicelessness. There is a perception of being treated as second-class citizens in some communities, leading to feelings of alienation and discontent. This perception is fuelled by ongoing social inequalities and the lack of access to basic services and opportunities, which can result in recruitment to extremist groups who claim to fight for their rights.

Interviewees' responses highlight the multifaceted nature of grievances in Mindanao, ranging from discrimination and disempowerment to historical injustices, land issues, and political inequality. These grievances have created a fertile ground for violent and hateful extremism to take root, as marginalised communities seek avenues to assert their rights and achieve justice. Addressing these grievances requires a comprehensive approach, including political representation, equitable resource distribution, education reform, and reconciliation efforts.

Push and pull factors

Responses from interviewees identify various push and pull factors that contribute to the recruitment to violent extremism in Mindanao. These factors are complex and interconnected, and often deeply rooted in historical, social, and economic contexts.

As for push factors: many interviewees argued that recruitment to violent extremism is driven by marginalisation and social inequality. The peripheral treatment of Mindanao, and the continual marginalisation of the people, together with poverty, discrimination, and deprivation are central to recruitment by extremist groups. One noted that before the Marawi siege, 69% of that municipality lived below the poverty line, suggesting this is a key reason for the success of recruitment there. Of course, as others noted, poverty is as much the result of conflict as the cause, suggesting marginalisation is more fundamental. One group of informants observed that recruitment by the Maute extremists who led the Marawi attack played heavily on anti-Filipino sentiment, feeling fears that Filipinos have been taking over the land and region for a century and are continuing to do so, squeezing Moros out.

Poor governance, lack of access to basic services, and limited economic opportunities further exacerbate a sense of alienation and grievances, making some individuals susceptible to extremist ideologies and recruitment. There was concern, for example, that even now the failure to deliver promised support to individuals coming out of Marawi could lead to frustration and disillusionment, potentially pushing some of these survivors towards radicalisation as a last resort for justice. The perception of being neglected or mistreated by the government can drive individuals to seek support from extremist organisations. Conversely,

addressing these historical injustices and improving governance was felt to help reduce recruitment to extremist groups, and would the government delivering basic services even-handedly.

Clan violence and feuds are also a major factor, and was pointed to by most interviewees as a key factor in recruitment. One interviewee pointed to interviews they had conducted with 296 former extremists in Mindanao, which found that 70% joined because the extremist group seemed to offer the best protection against clan violence. Many join extremist groups because they seem strong, and thus to offer a way to deal with clan disputes problems. As one interviewee expressed it, when your family has a rido dispute with a powerful family, and you need to protect your family, joining an extremist group can seem like a viable option, if it is perceived as the best way of offer protection to your family. It can be seen as a way to align with a more powerful group, to gain access to other fighters to support you as well as access to weapons. This is particularly true if the other clan has been supported by a group, or the government, there is an even stronger perception you need a group behind you too. Recruitment may thus not be about ideology, or at least not at first, and the women maybe encouraging their men to join to be the masculine 'protector' for the family.

Others join because they believe the law and state security forces do not protect their rights, and join groups for protection and justice, as way to achieve their rights. Sometimes it is violence by security forces that acts as a push factor for recruitment. There is certainly a fear that the security response in Marawi is only going to fuel further radicalisation. Further, one group of interviewees suggested that a good portion of children socialised to violence through clan feuding end up end up recruited to either insurgent or extremist groups.

As mentioned previously, while social media is commonly believed to play a central role in extremist recruitment in many other countries, this is not the case in Mindanao where many extremists were recruited through kinship ties and prior experiences of clan conflict—suggesting much of it is personal, face-to-face, with little online recruitment up until this point. One went so far as to call idea is that social media is the major recruitment vector for violent extremist groups a 'myth'. One local academic researcher observed that community members interviewed in Lanao del Sur before the Marawi siege said they supported the Maute brothers not because they supported their ideology, but because they are their brothers and sisters in the same clan and they saw they were being attacked by government security forces. Another very experienced local academic researcher noted that all the extremists his team talked to in prison, during extensive post-Marawi interviews with extremists who had been caught, were recruited through kinship ties, not social media, and the pull was not beliefs and religion. Most joined through family relationship, and the push factor was previous experience of clan conflict or violence perpetrated by the security sector. They used jihad language and ideas to further their local cause for land, self-determination, and recognition.

Children exposed to violence through their clans are often prime candidates to later be recruited by extremist organisations offering financial incentives or protection. Children affected by the conflict, including orphans of fighters, are particularly vulnerable to recruitment along family lines and through extended family networks. Trauma and hidden experiences of suffering can play a role in the radicalisation process.

One of the local academic researchers highlighted that most recruits to radical Islamist groups, such as ASG, have a low level of knowledge about Islamic teaching – those most vulnerable to violent extremist recruitment have a low level of Islamic knowledge. That is not to say that recruits are mostly poor and uneducated—not many are poor kids off the street and some recruits in Marawi were comparatively well educated—but the point was made that most have not been well grounded in Islamic teaching. Others noted that there quite a diversity of teaching in the madrasas in Mindanao, sometimes even a clash of ideas in the same mosque, with some leaders being influenced by teachers from the Middle East and elsewhere, repeating various teachings in their mosques. This clash of ideas within religious institutions can lead to diverse interpretations, making some vulnerable to radicalisation, particularly when these narratives are framed around hateful ideologies. Many noted that they have primarily found Madrassas in Mindanao to be places promoting peace, but some madrassas have been targeted by extremist groups for recruitment. One noted that Madrassas are open to all who might volunteer, and most say they cannot stop potential extremists coming in and talking.

The push and pull factors towards recruitment to violent extremism in Mindanao include historical injustices, grievances, socioeconomic factors, and marginalisation as well as exposure to clan violence and dubious religious instruction. Addressing these root causes and providing equitable governance and service delivery is crucial to mitigating the appeal of extremist ideologies and promoting peace. Additionally, empowering vulnerable individuals, including children affected by conflict, and fostering a sense of inclusion and belonging can help counter the allure of extremist groups.

Hate and hate speech

Previous foundational fieldwork with Plan International Australia, which led to commencement of this current research project, was conducted in 2018 with Plan International personnel in the Philippines, Myanmar, and Indonesia. Analysis of those interviews highlighted that staff across these three countries were concerned that the term 'violent extremism' was too narrow to fit the context of these three country situations well, in a number of ways. One of those was a concern that extremism is often manifest in terms of hate and contempt for others, not only as violence, and that only looking at physical violence misses the structural violence, divisiveness and dehumanising side of extremism that is also a potential precursor to physical violence. One of our research team members has explored this concept in much more detail in relation to Indonesia, in an edited volume. As such, in this current fieldwork, interviewees were asked to reflect on the relevance of hate as a form or manifestation of extremism in Mindanao, and their responses confirm that hate speech and hateful narratives play a profound role in the context of extremism in Mindanao.

The region has a long history of animosity between Muslim and Christian communities, which is a legacy of colonialism, as discussed above, and this too often manifests as hate speech. Derogatory terms and stereotypes are still routinely used by some, on all sides, perpetuating division and animosity between different religious and ethnic groups. This is not necessarily related to extremism in the formal sense, but it is an enabling environment within which extremist hate can find greater resonance.

"Hate speech is an important factor in radicalisation", it is "definitely part of the radicalisation" process, explained one interviewee. Recruiters often target those already expressing animosity, and stirring up hostility towards targeted individuals or communities is often used by extremists to mobilise support and radicalise individuals. Through targeting various groups and individuals, these narratives perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices against marginalised communities. Two interviewees reflected on academic research they had done in in Lanao del Sur prior to the Marawi siege, in which they interviewed community members who said they supported the Maute brothers (who later led the ISIS-backed siege). Their reflection was that even then, "before Daulah Islamiyah became strong, there was widespread hate speech including in religious institutions--to the point that we had a joke that we know they are being honest when they have a component of hate in their speech and a loud voice". These interviewees went on to point to the spike in extreme anti-Catholic, anti-Filipino hate speech that led up to and justified the abduction of the Catholic priest in Marawi, Fr Teresito "Chito" Suganob, at the start of the siege—however, they also pointed to the extreme vitriol expressed towards all Moro by non-Moros in Mindanao during the siege, particularly pointing to comments by the mayor of Iligan city, and his obstruction of Moro fleeing the violence from entering Iligan, despite being the most logical safe-haven just 38km away by road. Hate and hate speech, and more particularly, structural violence and racist inequality, are not the sole purview of violent minority groups labelled 'violent extremists'. Looking more widely, some interviewees raised concerns that there has been an increase in LGBTQIA+ related violence and hate speech in recent years, also noting the role of toxic masculinity and misogyny in perpetuating discrimination.

Interviewees noted that hateful narratives help drive some Moro towards extremist groups, especially when individuals feel marginalised and disempowered by the hate and systemic injustices directed at them. Extremist views can be fuelled by online hate, and individuals who engage in extreme language and threats on social media may be more likely to act violently in real life. Hate speech is rife on social media and other platforms in the Philippines, which is a prime victim of Cambridge Analytica, the amplification of social media by algorithms. The result has been deep political polarisation, with very misogynistic, extremist and hateful speech common in social media forums, to the point of even calling for physical or sexual violence against other online commentators. It is often used to prejudice Filipinos against the Moro, perhaps more often than the Moro against Filipinos, and has fuelled and been fuelled by polarising narratives during political campaigns. The use of hate speech and misogynistic language, particularly online, is a vital concern of many interviewees.

The interviews provide valuable insights into the role of hate speech and hateful narratives in Mindanao's context, contributing to the recruitment and radicalisation of individuals into extremist groups. Addressing hate speech and promoting tolerance, understanding, and inclusivity are essential steps in countering extremist views. It is crucial to recognise historical injustices and biases and work towards a more equitable and respectful society to prevent the spread of extremism fuelled by hate. Promoting dialogue, education, and media literacy can also help combat hate speech and foster a culture of peace and cooperation in Mindanao.

Gender

The intersection of misogyny and violent extremism has been well documented as a general phenomena. Toxic masculinity manifests as both a devaluing of women (and men perceived as being too feminine), and a propensity to use violence or threats of violence to exert their will, take that which they want, and reinforce privilege. Interviewees perspectives and observations of gender dynamics illuminate some of the ways that gender impacts violent extremism in Mindanao. While interviewees were asked about gender, conversations focussed primarily on women. One of the few outliers notes that while there is some level of

acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the BARMM, discussing LGBTQIA+ rights remains a completely taboo topic. The BIFF's humiliating treatment of a lesbian woman was offered as an example of the challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ people in the region. Many gay men marry women as a facade to hide their sexual orientation, reflecting the complexities of societal norms and expectations, and while Tawi-Tawi was very open to gay men in the past, there are now increasing attacks on them.

More broadly, and returning to women in particular, interviewees observed growing conservativeness among the Maranao community, a cultural turn to more traditional Islamic gender roles, which is particularly evident in the way women dress. This is in part a reaction against perceived assimilation and colonial pressures, but may also be indicative of a strengthening of patriarchal gender norms and practices in the region. For example, perceptions of Muslim leaders' preference for 'amicable settlements' in resolving issues of gender-based violence often downplay victims' experiences and reinforce power inequities, often not even considering the victims' will in the situation.

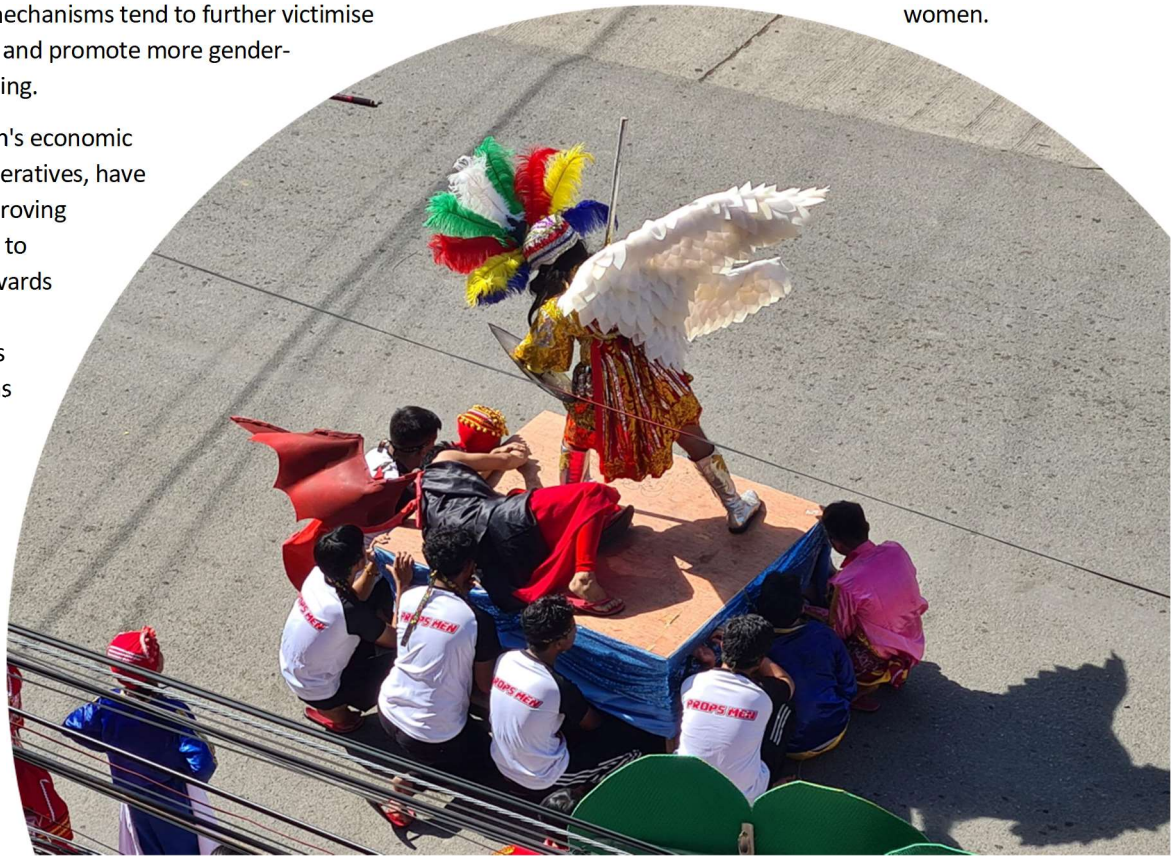
The last few years, since the Marawi siege ended and the BARMM authority set up, conflict in Mindanao has not primarily been between security forces and insurgents or extremists, but the dominant form has been rido clan violence and gender-based violence. The vertical conflict has abated – so now the horizontal conflict dominates. Gender-based violence remains a pressing concern, and more efforts are needed to work with traditional leaders to improve their understanding of victims' needs and rights.

The experiences of women are central to gender-related analysis and peacebuilding efforts. For example, early warning looks different from a gender perspective, as women in communities perceive different threats and look at threats differently. For example, before the Marawi siege women were able to identify and did report an upsurge in stranger coming and going, and an increase of unexplainable resources to certain families, through gossip network. They could see changes occurring months before violence erupted, but their reporting to authorities was ignored.

But likewise, women can be both victims and perpetrators of violence, and indeed, women involved in or even responsible for violence are also often victims, complicating the understanding of their roles in conflict situations. Women combatants and widows are often overlooked in the return and reintegration process. Female combatants were largely overlooked in the return process, as they were not considered real soldiers. And addressing gender-based violence at the family and clan level is vital to addressing macro-level violence.

Positively, efforts are being made to increase women's participation and representation in most aspects of society. For instance, there are calls to mandate a specific number of women in Barangay peace and order councils. Efforts are being made to ensure women's participation in peace mechanisms, particularly within MILF and the BARMM transitional authority. The transitional authority has brought in women technocrats, and some note that the face of the BTA is young, active and lots of women. It is also recognised that female mediators help resolve conflicts and often find better solutions, especially in cases like rape and sexual violence, where traditional mechanisms tend to further victimise women. Efforts to civilianise the MILF and promote more gender-inclusive leadership are ongoing.

Programs focusing on women's economic empowerment, such as cooperatives, have shown positive results in improving livelihoods, which is believed to diminish the push factors towards violent extremism. Women's support networks and groups are crucial in times of crisis, as was noted during COVID lockdowns, and efforts should be made to strengthen these networks. As has been recognised and debated elsewhere, one interviewee raises the point that mothers can help prevent violent extremism by influencing the views and activities of



their children. He suggests that training and support for mothers on parenthood and monitoring their children's activities can be effective in countering extremist influences.

Perspectives from the interviews highlight the importance of understanding gender dynamics in the Mindanao context. There are both challenges and opportunities in promoting gender equality and addressing gender-based violence. Efforts to include women in decision-making processes, support their economic empowerment, and address cultural norms that perpetuate violence against women and more broadly are essential steps toward building a more inclusive and peaceful society in Mindanao.

Working with authorities

Interviewees widely recognised the need to engage with and, at least sometimes, work with authorities and the security sector, although many from civil society groups discussed tensions and difficulties in managing the relationships. This is particularly thorny when some actors, such as the security forces at times, also perpetrate extreme violence. One interviewee commented that while most definitions of terrorism and violent extremism exclude the security sector and state actors as potential perpetrators, if they commit extreme violence, that could also be considered terrorism, regardless of who they are. But, they immediately countered, the way to approach this is via Security Sector Reform, which involves addressing reform of the security sector and ensuring accountability for their actions, and that is beyond the remit of development NGOs. Navigating security sector reform is a sensitive and controversial action, with potential for serious pushback from the security sector. The response of development NGOs and civil society organisations to extreme violence by state actors is perhaps better to be a balance between appeals citing things like International Human Rights Law with a Humanitarian Response to the victims. Nonetheless, this informant noted, everyone needs to combat an attitude that just because a violent extremist group does really bad things, the end justifies the means—meaning it is not true that nothing the security sector does can really be bad.

That said, the security sector, political actors and authorities have legitimate and important roles to play, and are essential to any response addressing violent extremism—and violence in general. Authorities and political leaders is essential in the peace process. Effective responses by NGOs and civil society groups must engage with them, collaborate or coordinate at appropriate occasions. This too has challenges, including limited government support for their work, inadequate resources to both deliver programs and engage with authorities, political favouritism, and risking misunderstanding by recipients who distrust security, authorities and political leaders. One informant, who even helped negotiate an agreement between the ISIS-backed Maute Group during the Marawi siege and the authorities, bemoaned that despite this and 30 years of engagement with authorities, they were still only ever invited and treated as participants by government, never as partners.

Interviewees emphasised the need for inclusivity, transparency, and participation of all stakeholders, including armed groups like MILF and MNLF, in work to prevent violent and hateful extremism. Various interviewees highlighted the importance of working with both local and national authorities in Mindanao, noting involvement of these leaders is essential to establishing effective early response systems to monitor conflict indicators, work to address grievances, and support harmony and wellbeing. Nonetheless, liaising with government and other agencies via things like a robust referral system is challenging, even though engaging them in negotiations is essential.

Many of the interviews noted that they need to, and do, collaborate with national government agencies, local government units (LGUs), and traditional leaders to implement peacebuilding projects and address conflicts. At the same time, some implement peacebuilding activities that try to bring security forces, armed groups and communities together in simple social activities, such as sport, as a means of trust building—noting the need for vertical peacebuilding (between state actors and citizens), not just horizontal (between different local armed groups, clans or racial groups). One group of interviewees emphasised that one way they addressed this was by recruiting long-term specialists, and some short-term staff, carefully identified to bridge that gap, due to long-term pre-existing contacts with key civil leaders, security personnel, etc. Several noted, however, that even when essential, information sharing, even anonymously, may be very challenging.

Working with authorities in the Mindanao context involves various challenges and opportunities. The interviewees stress the importance of security sector reform, inclusivity in the peace process, and engagement with both local and national authorities to achieve sustainable peace. Early warning and response mechanisms, as well as addressing property rights and grievances, are crucial components in preventing and resolving conflicts that authorities can support. Additionally, promoting women's participation and representation in peace mechanisms remains an essential focus. Thus, collaboration with authorities, community leaders, and security forces is necessary for successful peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts in Mindanao, even if challenging.

Development NGO responses to VHE in Mindanao

NGO programs

All discussion explored the work and role the interviewees were involved with, in some detail, and how they saw this working towards preventing violent and hateful extremism in Mindanao. Their initiatives encompass a range of approaches, from peacebuilding and community engagement to education and economic development. Some programs, such as the Balay Mindanao Peace Center, work on rehabilitating former members of extremist groups, with a focus on supporting their reintegration back into society through sustainable, viable cooperatives and income generation opportunities. Many others focus on primary-level community interventions that promote peace and inclusivity to disrupt narratives of violent and hateful extremism, and that is the focus of this research.

Interviewees from Equal Access International explained their "Inspiring Courage" program that targets young leaders in Mindanao from communities vulnerable to violent and hateful extremism. It provides them with five-day tech camp training to develop campaigns against extremism, and then selects some participants for a 3-6 month fellowship program to turn their ideas into full online programs focusing on preventing and countering violent extremism. Equal Access International's "CS-Lift" program focuses on counter-terrorism efforts in high schools by integrating P/CVE content into the curriculum. It seeks to debunk violent and hateful ideology by framing lessons around human dignity, respect for life, and other values. The program also incorporates radio programs to engage parents in discussions with their children about the issues.

Similarly, various universities and organisations incorporate peace education into their programs. This includes instilling peace values in school curricula, training peace educators, and developing lesson exemplars with P/CVE messaging. The goal is to transform mindsets and promote understanding and acceptance among different ethnic and religious groups.

A small, Iligan-based NGO works to bring together faith leaders, especially women and youth, from different religious groups, including the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The participants play sports together, fostering interfaith dialogue and cooperation. The program also aims to rebuild religious structures and promote peace among diverse communities.

Several organisations are involved in community-oriented early warning systems. They identify indicators of potential conflict and radicalisation, enabling prompt responses to address the issues. Local actors, NGOs, and community members are involved in information sharing and conflict resolution efforts.

Plan International Philippines ran the Marawi Response Project (MRP), a USAID-funded project focussed largely on economic development, to find durable solutions for people displaced by Marawi, by improving economic conditions and providing skills and livelihood options. The program was focussed on addressing other vulnerabilities to radicalisation, for example, ensuring all activities enhanced social cohesion and including significant opportunities for positive interfaith, inter-ethnic engagement.

The MWDECC (Mindanao Working Group on the Decommissioning of Combatants) provides capacity building and orientation to BARMM officials, conflict management groups, and other relevant authorities. They train quick response teams in communities to settle conflicts, including rido clan feuds. The organisation also supports the decommissioning process of former combatants and assists them during the transitional phase.

The collective efforts of these programs indicate a wide approach to addressing violent and hateful extremism in Mindanao. From grassroots community engagement to government collaboration, the focus is on building peace, promoting understanding, providing economic opportunities, and enhancing conflict resolution capacities to prevent violent and hateful extremism. While the initiatives mentioned above represent significant efforts in addressing violent and hateful extremism in Mindanao, there was little mention around ensuring the inclusive engagement of marginalised groups, including women, indigenous communities, and other minorities. Further, it was unclear the extent to which these programs have developed rigorous evaluation and learning mechanisms to demonstrate effectiveness and areas for improvement.

Successes

Despite a lack of clarity around evaluation techniques, interviewees identify several aspects of NGO programming which they suggested were effective in preventing or countering violent and hateful extremism in Mindanao.

Top of the list were initiatives bringing people together and facilitating interactions that can allow understanding between different cultural and religious groups to develop—particularly bringing Moro Muslims and Filipino Christians together, but also indigenous people, or those from different clans. This includes projects that encourage dialogue directly, as well as bring people together in shared participatory practice. Equal Access International notes that honest conversions where people have a safe space to express their opinions without pressure to agree promotes open dialogue and understanding. A Mindanao State University (MSU) academic agreed that incorporating peace education across the curriculum and facilitating open and frank

conversations has a lasting impact on promoting peaceful values. Another MSU academic spoke highly of the effectiveness of cultural exchange programs, where groups go on exchange visits to religious centres and events, as well as cultural festivals, has demonstrated effectiveness in challenging stereotypes and fostering understanding between different communities. Staff from small NGOs note that exposing individuals to diverse cultures, traditions, and knowledge systems can promote tolerance and reduce the potential for extremist ideologies to take root. Care to respect religious and cultural values is needed however: one example was given that even an ice-breaker in a participatory event bringing people together could be misconstrued. For example, asking a young women to dance in ways that some might consider immodest may be considered as Christianising.

Engaging religious and traditional leaders in denouncing extremist ideologies and promoting moderation or peace is likewise believed to have been very effective in countering extremist narratives. Religious leaders have significant authority, and are well-placed to denounce extremism and promote moderation; therefore, religious leaders and groups should not be marginalised by secular development ideas, but mainstreamed into programs. The example was given Marawi Catholic priest, Fr Teresito Suganob, preaching messages of peace and non-discrimination, despite suffering extreme hate and discrimination himself when he was captured and held for five months in the Marawi siege. Messages like these from respected religious leaders inspire others to embrace peaceful values, particularly when their personal treatment could have inspired distrust, if not hate.

Integrating peace and development with efforts to counter violent and hateful extremism is considered crucial, as peace is necessary for development and vice versa. Examples were given such as programs that support women combatants into sustainable cooperatives, as demonstrating how peace and development can reinforce each other. Further, using a rights-based approach to gender issues and amplifying voices of community champions for gender rights from within the community was noted as supporting whole-of-community harmony. NGOs like Plan International Philippines have integrated economic development initiatives into the post-conflict context, focusing on specific industries that have a positive impact on the local economy. Providing economic opportunities, especially for out-of-school youth, is expected to address one of the root causes of violent extremism, which is economic inequality.

In Marawi, a positive outcome was achieved by following the guidance of local leaders rather than pursuing the desires of individual groups without local approval. For instance, one group wanted to rebuild St. Mary's Cathedral but instead they cooperated with diverse leaders who suggested that the community return and meeting essential needs should be prioritised over rebuilding religious structures. It was not the answer the St. Mary's group had hoped for, but they recognised the value of collaborative decision-making, and this was reported as having progressed reconciliation and trust building between communities.

Early response systems and community monitoring, particularly those implemented after the Marawi siege, were found to help identify potential signs of conflict or extremism early on, allowing for ongoing monitoring and timely interventions. Amplifying the voices of marginalised groups and addressing their grievances, such as land grabbing, was also noted as effective in reducing attacks and tensions.

NGOs that assert their approaches and expertise while working with funders, such as the example of Catholic Relief Services who pushes back on their American funders, when necessary, to create space to implement what they have learned is needed rather than what the funders frame a grant to be about. They work well with funders, to ensure that programs are tailored to the actual needs on the ground, thereby enhancing their impact on conflict dynamics. Negotiations with funders can be supported through evidence of NGOs conducting highly participatory needs assessments with communities, addressing the host community concerns, and keeping authorities informed and engaged. Alternative dispute resolution approaches, using the customary laws and using traditional local clan mediators, was also championed.

While these approaches have shown promise, it is essential to continually evaluate and adapt programming based on the evolving context and lessons learned. An effective strategy to prevent violent and hateful extremism in Mindanao requires a combination of interventions addressing economic disparities, fostering intercultural understanding, promoting peace education, and engaging communities in a participatory and culturally sensitive manner.

Challenges

The interviews identify several key challenges facing development NGOs implementing programs seeking to prevent or counter violent and hateful extremism. These include perceptions that programmes associated with the term violent extremism have significant foreign or government agendas; political instability; clan dynamics and personal insecurity; underinvestment in essential services, education, and marginalised communities; negotiating funder priorities; and collecting accurate data for monitoring and evaluation.

The use of the term "violent extremism" is very easily associated with excessive Western influence and agendas, and that that funding or programs that are labelled in this way can lead to suspicion and resistance from the local community, hindering the

effectiveness of programs. Programs that do adopt the term PVE or CVE provoke a common reaction, making people feel uncomfortable, less safe, and as if they are seen as vulnerable to recruitment or suspected of already being complicit. This is all the more problematic given the new, more extreme anti-terrorist laws. This highlights the need for alternative language and framing. Similarly, noting fears of foreign interference, other interviewees highlight difficulties around aligning an organisation's core values and programming with the priorities of external funders, particularly Western donors like USAID.

Obtaining support from the government and other stakeholders can also be challenging, affecting the implementation of initiatives. Even when support is forthcoming, or hard-won, sudden changes in political leadership can disrupt the continuity and alignment of programs, and fracture or reorient multi-level collaborations between various stakeholders. This means aligning program lifespan and project cycles with local government 3-year cycles can help, although that of course can be difficult to achieve.

In terms of government support more broadly, overly centralised structures and neglect of certain provinces can hinder efforts to address poverty, corruption, and other drivers of violent and hateful extremism. In conflict-affected areas, ensuring equitable access to services and support for all community members, including former combatants, can be difficult. NGOs have limited ability to rectify these sorts of governance-level limitations, despite their concerns that underinvestment in education and lack of effective implementation of services can contribute significantly to grievances and divisive narratives or are, at very least, a missed opportunity for strengthening peacebuilding.

At a more programmatic level, interviewees explain the challenges working within clan structures and how individual needs to ensure personal security through gun ownership has resulted in a proliferation of small arms. This makes NGO program implementation and the collection of accurate data for evaluation highly problematic and potentially dangerous for NGO personnel.

Overall, these challenges highlight the importance of context-sensitive programming, addressing political dynamics, engaging with local communities, and overcoming issues related to terminology and foreign influence. To effectively prevent violent and hateful extremism, programs need to be adaptable, responsive to local needs, and supportive of community ownership and development.

Interviewees' research

This research involved interviewing leaders working in the preventing and countering violent extremism space across Mindanao. As such, many interviewees have or are conducting relevant studies that explore specific elements of the conflict situation in the region.

Equal Access International has conducted research scoping as part of its P/CVE programming and collaborated with the Department of Education to develop a toolkit and lesson models. The content was carefully developed to consider the history of grievance in Mindanao and ensure approval from Catholic and Muslim leaders.

The Asia Foundation and Reconciliatory Initiatives for Development Opportunities (RIDO) conducted research with 500+ respondents in 12 municipalities to explore perceptions of BARMM. The findings highlighted frustrations among community members who felt excluded from decision-making and perceived limited progress in addressing historical injustices. In fact, 70% of their respondents believe that BARMM will fail in its objectives.

More optimistically, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue published a paper on Basilan's "outbreak of peace", noting that the island may be stabilising and becoming more resistant to violent extremism.

Many of the leaders interviewed for this context analysis have focused their research on women and gender. PIP has conducted ongoing research on perceptions of Muslim leaders of gender-based violence (GBV) in Marano communities, with the aim of improving understanding and support for GBV victims' needs and rights. Plan has also conducted research on child and early marriage in collaboration with Mindanao State University. The Moro Women Development and Cultural Center conducted interviews with 10 women from MILF about their transition experiences that are to be disseminated as videos and booklets.

In the tertiary education space, the Institute of Peace and Development at Mindanao State University acted as a hub, facilitating collaboration between government, CSOs, INGOs, and others regarding issues related to Marawi. These collaborations have resulted in a variety of research studies on peace education, P/CVE, and push-pull factors leading to violent extremism. Additionally, Mindanao State University introduced a mandatory 3-unit undergraduate course on peace education and P/CVE in 2018 post-Marawi. Pre and post surveys and action research with these students is demonstrating that the education is positively impacting their awareness and community engagement.

The University of the Philippines has been collaborating closely with International Alert on relevant research, in particular via Prof Francisco (Pancho) Lara. Dr. Lara's research focuses on illicit economies, political economy in Mindanao, the SPMS box, P/CVE, and peace processes. He authored an open-access book in partnership with International Alert titled "Conflict's Long Game: A decade of violence in the Bangsamoro". The University of the Philippines and International Alert has been gathering valuable data over the past decade that can be used to monitor and evaluate trends and shifts in conflict dynamics, including violence and violence reduction. According to interviewees, this data is gravely under-utilised and should be incorporated into development NGOs' needs assessments and evaluative efforts.

These research studies contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of violent extremism and peacebuilding in the Mindanao region. They offer valuable insights for program development, policy formulation, and evidence-based interventions.

Opportunities

After discussing the situation and what their organisations have been doing to prevent violent and hateful extremism, interviewees provide what they see as opportunities to enhance impact and further promote peace in Mindanao, which might be suitable for a development organisation like Plan International to adopt (in their view).

Top priority, and most essential, is the need to develop strong mechanisms for truth-telling and reconciliation, incorporating marginalised groups, sharing, and learning. Encouraging local communities to write their own histories and compete in truth-telling narratives is seen to help break down historical grievances between Moro, Christian, and indigenous people in Mindanao and promote understanding and reconciliation. It provides one way to begin addressing the legitimate grievances and complaints of communities affected by conflicts, such as the Marawi victims, can foster trust and support for peacebuilding efforts. Developing and implementing a Bangsamoro Alternative Dispute Resolution Act that supports traditional leaders as real partners in development projects could likewise further enhance community engagement and ownership. Helping establish a framework for transitional justice and reconciliation could support the above opportunities by providing a platform for healing. Working with clans and supporting existing non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms can diminish the appeal of extremist groups and contribute to community security and stability. Further, integrating indigenous practices and traditions into these conflict resolution processes is vital for ensuring more culturally relevant and acceptable solutions.

Integrating peace and reconciliation efforts into development plans can create more inclusive and sustainable development outcomes, reducing grievances and conflicts. Within this, ensuring community-wide responses to issues, including addressing the needs of widows and orphans, can prevent marginalised individuals from being vulnerable to extremist recruitment. Additionally, considering gender perspectives, including women's insights and experiences, can improve early warning systems and conflict analysis. More programming addressing the specific needs of female ex-combatants is also required.

Another key opportunity, alongside the need for platforms for conflict resolution and inclusive development-peacebuilding programming, is sharing and strengthening inter-communal relationships. Cultural exchange initiatives can challenge stereotypes and misperceptions, promoting empathy and understanding. Supporting programs that foster inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue can bridge divides and promote peaceful coexistence.

Interviewees highlight the importance of contextual sensitivity and situational awareness. Adopting conflict-sensitive approaches in development programs can address underlying issues, such as those surrounding property-rights, and prevent exacerbating tensions and conflicts. There are also opportunities to extend situational awareness by moving beyond simply measuring the number of violent attacks to monitor transitions in types of violence. This more nuanced approach would provide valuable insights into the changing dynamics of extremism and help development NGOs target their programming.

These opportunities reflect a range of strategies that could improve P/CVE efforts in the Mindanao region. They highlight the importance of community engagement, cultural sensitivity, inclusivity, and addressing underlying grievances and structural issues.

Conclusion

Discussion

Based on the information provided by the 41 interviewees whose insights and perspectives were gathered and synthesised for this contextual analysis, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the current situation in Mindanao. Firstly, the region faces multiple challenges in preventing violent and hateful extremism, including issues related to governance, poverty, corruption, historical grievances, and the presence of armed groups. Government programs and NGO efforts must navigate political changes, ensure community buy-in, and address local dynamics to be effective in countering violent and hateful extremism. Despite challenges, opportunities include emphasising truth-telling and unpacking historical narratives, engaging with indigenous structures and traditional leaders, documenting and promoting positive narratives, investing in cultural exchange, and addressing gender perspectives in conflict prevention. Additionally, establishing a comprehensive transitional justice and reconciliation framework could address past grievances and support healing processes, enhancing peacebuilding efforts.

The role of clans in Mindanao is significant, and engaging with them and promoting non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms could help reduce the appeal of extremist groups. While identified as less significant than the role of clans, the influence of social media in shaping perceptions and narratives is important. Careful consideration is needed to counter misinformation and prevent online conflicts from spilling over into real-world violence. Monitoring transitions in violence, both online and offline, can provide valuable insights into the changing dynamics of extremism, helping to design more targeted and effective interventions.

Integrating peace and reconciliation efforts into development plans can lead to more inclusive and sustainable development outcomes and reduce grievances and conflicts. Ensuring that local communities are consulted and involved in decision-making processes is crucial to gaining their support and ownership in peacebuilding initiatives. Addressing gender perspectives and empowering women in conflict prevention and resolution efforts can lead to more effective early warning systems and conflict analysis. Widows and orphans are vulnerable groups that require specific attention in peacebuilding efforts.

Overall, the current situation in Mindanao is complex and dynamic, with a mix of challenges and opportunities for preventing violent extremism and fostering sustainable peacebuilding efforts. Addressing historical grievances, promoting community engagement, integrating peace and development initiatives, and adopting gender-sensitive and conflict-sensitive approaches are crucial for achieving long-term peace and stability in the region.

Further Research: Next Steps

The day of the project team visit with PIP in September 2022 involved a half day debrief meeting, during which it was proposed that the next step should be data collection in communities around Cotabato City in which PIP is working or hoping to start work in soon. We continue to think this is an excellent idea, despite delays. Building on those discussions, we propose:

A. A symposium comprised 50:50 of local academics/researchers working on P/CVE in Mindanao and PIP team members, to be held in Mindanao, to question, challenge and examine the preliminary findings in this report and explore VHE dynamics in greater depth.

B. Rapid assessment focus groups with youth, women and household heads, to collect participant/ village-level data from ordinary community members in program areas (or target areas), to augment the preliminary findings in this report, about topics such as the:
   - their perceptions of who may be vulnerable to extremist radicalisation in their communities, how and why,
   - their insights into how (young) people are being or might be lured into cycles of violence in their communities, and how much this relates to extremism or other types of violence,
   - their understanding of key issues impacting these dynamics including poverty, lack of education or livelihood opportunities, land disputes, clan issues, negative engagement with authorities/security forces, etc.
   - their thoughts on solutions to these issues, with particular emphasis on solutions they could adopt themselves or which would make a difference with limited support from outside agencies.

   Regarding these rapid assessment focus groups, we propose the following, but are very open to discuss any alternative proposals that might be more in line with PIP:
   i. series of focus groups in program areas, say three focus groups in each of 10-12 villages – one with each of youth, women and household heads.
   ii. co-design the specific questions together, from the above starting list.
   We could also add a few other questions on related topics of interest to PIP. These might include (for example) questions such as how they feel about judicial process for those accused, how returnees from camps or Marawi are being handled, and/or how they see extremism nested into dynamics of the conflict dimensions (clan, land disputes, legitimate struggle for autonomy, etc.). These could be workshopped together, between PIP and the Deakin team.
   iii. we invite academics from Mindanao State University to collaborate with us in data collection and analysis, offering to co-author findings from the focus groups – together with relying on PIP staff, this could allow focus group data to be gathered in areas the Deakin University team cannot access due to travel restrictions on Australian travellers.

C. A workshop with Deakin-PIA team plus PIP staff to explore these two sets of data (from this initial scoping report and the participant/community-level focus groups) and consider how programmes PIP run / hope to run in Mindanao might take these factors into account. In particular, to co-design tools for how PIP might analyse the situation and apply this in project planning or implementation, explore the theories of change, examine potential new projects proposed by the data, and explore monitoring and evaluation indicators for these.

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Appendix: Interviewees

Ana (Annie) Locsin, Country Director	Plan Philippines
Manny Madamba, Head of MERL	Plan Philippines
Cathy Seco, Deputy Country Director	Plan Philippines
Katharine Detros	Plan Philippines
Joe-Anna Belinde	Plan Philippines
Romualdo Codera	Plan Philippines
Michael Cruz	Plan Philippines
Boots Rebueno, Program Area Implementation Manager	Plan Philippines
Derek Senica, Peacebuilding Specialist	Plan Philippines
Dr Datusikie (Dhatz) Ampilan, Executive Director,	Mangungaya Mindanao, Cotabato
Muamar Sharif Alim, Head of Program	Nonviolent Peaceforce
Carmen Gatmaytan	Nonviolent Peaceforce
Dr Francisco (Pancho) Lara	University of Philippines
Nikki Philline C de la Rosa, Country Director	International Alert
Ariel Hernandez	Balay Mindanaw Peace Center, Iligan
Sr Jo-anne C Lorilla, Executive Director	OND Hesed Foundation, Cotabato
Nanette Antequisa, Executive Director	ECOWEB, Illigan
Nery Ronatay	UN Women
Dr Margie Daylusan-Fiesta, Program Coordinator	Mindanao State University
Grant Warren D Lu, RSW	Mindanao State University
Melina Nathan, Senior Peace and Development Advisor	Office of UN Resident Coordinator
Sam Chiddick, Executive Director	The Asia Foundation
Marlon Libot, Chief of Party	Plan Philippines
Larry Agpalo, Marawi Response Project	Plan Philippines
Jane Deita, Marawi Response Project	Plan Philippines
Michelle Chua, Marawi Response Project	Plan Philippines
Sultan Abdul Hamidulla Atar	Reconciliatory Initiatives for Development Opportunities, Iligan
Yasmira P Moner, Program Director and Lead	Mindanao State University, Iligan
Adam Anay, Program Coordinator	Equal Access International, C de Oro
Irish, Communications Officer	Equal Access International
Ahmed Harris (Tommy) Pangcoga, Country Director	Equal Access International
Joel Dizon, Deputy Director	Equal Access International, Cotabato
Salic Ibrahim, Executive Director	Maranao People Development Center (MARADECA), Iligan
Bobby	Small Iligan-based NGO
Gimaidee	Faith-based NGO
Abel, Director	Faith-based NGO
Michael Alar	Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation, Inc
Jovar G Pantao	Mindanao State University

Dr Tirmizy Abdullah	Mindanao State University
Vandrazel Birowa	Zamboanga Basilan Integrated Development Alliance
Baina Samayatin	Moro Women Development and