

# SURVIVING AND RECOVERING FROM VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN MARAWI CITY: Reconstruction efforts and Rehabilitation of IDPs

Marilou Siton Nanaman, PhD

Faculty, Department of Political Science MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology, Iligan City, Philippines Email: marilou.nanaman@g.msuiit.edu.ph

## Abstract

The armed conflict and hostaging of church workers of the Maute –Abu Sayyaf (ASG) group in Marawi last May 23, 2017 and the ensuing violent clashes with the Philippine military is recorded by humanitarian and government organizations in the Philippines to have displaced more than half a million people. Massive displacement as a critical humanitarian condition among the people of Marawi is noted to have been exacerbated with the loss of family members, their livelihood and dwellings. As the clash lasted for five months, most survivors are deemed to have been left without homes and suffered economic loss.

This inquiry delves into the extent of displacement of the affected community, the rehabilitation efforts and strategies and the implications of the said recovery efforts. This paper will further look into the prospects of the displaced inhabitants to regain normalcy and the measures that address the resurgence of violent extremism in Marawi.

Key words: violent extremism, rehabilitation efforts, post-conflict peace building



# Introduction

The Mindanao crisis or otherwise known as the Mindanao conflict is deemed to refer Bangsamoro conflict that cover cases rebellion-led violence by the Moro separatists as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) or the Muslim Jihadist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the island (IA, 2014). It has to be noted though that recent violent conflicts in the Bangsamoro from 2011-2013 were caused by shadow economy, political and extra-judicial issues.

This understanding of the Mindanao crisis however is now expanded to include violent extremism borne out of the armed engagement of local ISIS aligned-extremist militants and the Philippine armed forces on May 23, 2017 at Barrio Basak, Marawi City in a five-month long urban war. This Muslim extremist-led war from May 23, 2017 to October 17, 2017 in the Islamic city of Marawi is among the worst human-induced disaster in Southeast Asia with massive destruction of properties and livelihood, displacement hundreds of inhabitants of the city and of its neighboring towns in the Lanao del Sur province as among its immediate impacts.

This study serves as a preliminary attempt to examine on the effects of violence in Marawi City of led by the extremist IS aligned Maute group under the leadership of Isnilon Hapilon. The measures employed to address said effects in terms of reconstruction and rehabilitation, and the track to return to normalcy in lives of the people of Marawi, Mindanao and the Philippines.

Studies on violent extremism delved on the understanding radicalization and violent extremism, assessment of current and prospective risks of violent extremism and insurgency (VEI), government responses that aim to prevent extremism in U.K. Sri Lanka and Indonesia among others. (Timberman, 2013, Kruglanski, et.al., 2014, Thomas, 2009, Somasundaranam & Sivayokan, 2013 & IPAC, June 2014). Moreover, inquiries on violent extremism in Mindanao and the Philippines focused on the process of radicalization and the roots of violent extremism (Timberman, 2013 & IPAC, 2016). This study serves to contribute to the literature on violent extremism and post conflict peace building in the Philippines and in Mindanao.

For purposes of this paper violent extremism is defined as extremism manifested as a strong will by a social movement based on a rigid ideology, which restricts individual freedom in the name of the movement's goal. Such strong will is pursued to realize the group's goals through recruitment via social media and violent means, including extreme violence and mass murder. (Schmid, 2013 as cited in IAG, 2017, p. 17). Effects refer to the outcomes of violent extremism in Marawi City. The effects cover physical damage and displacement. This include how the Marawi siege narrative is employed on addressing violent extremism. Lastly, rehabilitation efforts deals with the strategies to rebuild Marawi after it was declared to be liberated from the Maute group on October 17, 2017.



# Framework of the study

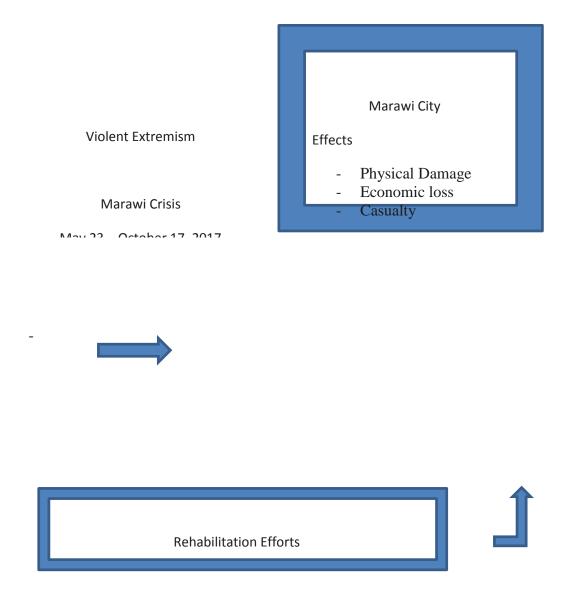


Figure 1 shows the relationships of the important concepts examined in this paper.

It utilizes the peace building theory in post-conflict societies of Galtung (1998) & Ho Won Jeong (2005) as this inquiry looked into the effects and the rehabilitation efforts as among the strategies employed to address the crisis which may by implication reduce if not eradicate violent extremism in Marawi.



#### **Research objectives and methodology**

The study investigates the consequences of the six-month violent clashes between the IS aligned group and the Philippine military in Marawi City terms of human displacement, physical damages, and economic loss. This paper also delves into the immediate steps employed in the area towards peaceful transition, recovery and in reducing the threat of violent extremism in the area and in the Philippines.

Secondary data from government and published sources is beefed up through interviews with a young Muslim who was a member of the group, an OCD personnel, and a peace worker.

#### **Research Site**

Marawi City is inhabited by 200,785 people (Rappler.com & PIA, 2017) of which 98 % are Maranaos. Its poverty incidence on families is estimated by the Philippine Statistics Authority at 66.3 % and 71.9 % poverty incidence on its population in a land area of 8,755 hectares (21,630 acres) (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015). The city has a total of 96 barangays, 24 of which were mostly affected by the May 23, 2017 Marawi siege and is estimated to cover a total of 25 hectares.



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Figure 2. Map of Marawi City. The highlighted portion is area around ground

zero which has been cleared of improvised explosive devices

(IEDs).



# The Marawi Siege and its aftermath

The six-month dialogue with stakeholders from May-October 2017 by the Institute for Peace and Development in Mindanao (IPDM) revealed that armed clashes in selected areas of Lanao del Sur near the municipality of Butig between the Maute group and the Philippine army had occurred from 2011 to 2013. The said group had pledged its loyalty to the Islamic State (IS) by flying its black flag. From these low intensity skirmishes, the Maute group gained the alliance of drug lords from Luzon and Visayas in 2016 which was an unintended outcome of the strengthened war on drugs by the Duterte administration in the national capital and other in cities. A former member of this group supported the existence of this expanded alliance by stating that the year 2016 marked the expansion of its composition as they were joined by militants coming from the MILF lost command and jihadists had huge funding inflow from narco-politicians and MNLF political lords (Personal Interview, March 2018) An estimated 20 Indonesian militants strengthened the ground forces of the Isnilon Hapilon-led Abu Sayyaf and Maute-groups whose dispersed pro-IS cells sustained a five-month combat operation against the military. (IPAC, 2017 & Personal Interview, March 2018)

It is evident that from 2011-2016 the Maute-group from being a small band of local terrorists has morphed into an IS aligned complex entity with financing, weapons from drug money from the north and experienced militants from IS cells in Southeast Asia.

The armed clash between these militants and the Philippine military on the afternoon of May 23, 2017 was triggered by the government's attempt to arrest of Islamic State anointed Emir of Southeast Asia, ASG leader Isnilon Hapilon in Marawi City. (Rappler.com, 2017, Rood, 2017 & IPAC, 2016). The IS militants that led the siege, their use of IEDs and RPGs and an urban warfare strategy wherein they disperse and attack like 'a pack of wolves', is deemed to be an application of their experience in Raqqa and Mosul (Personal Interview, March 2018 & CNN, 2017).

Hospital workers at the provincial hospital facility, Amai Pakpak, noted that a couple of dead extremists were among those first brought in to the hospital. The extremist Maute group burned a Shi'a mosque and a catholic church and kidnapped more than a hundred church workers. One of the sites, a large building where the extremist group hid about 100 hostages, was hit by an airstrike killing 10 civilians. The said religious structures were among the first that was destroyed at the onset of this conflict along with the couple of extremists and a number of civilians as its casualties. These conditions accordingly were among the primordial reasons the President Duterte declared Martial Law in Mindanao on May 23, 2017.

As armed clashes and bombings were engaged in Marawi City widespread damage to properties and infrastructures resulted and was estimated at Php 11,320,760,052.29 and economic loss was assessed at Php 6,712,096,189.05. Most of the properties damaged are located at the 24 barangays surrounding ground zero including 22 schools. (OCD, DPWH, 2017 & PIA, Dec. 2017).



Some 200 buildings, which were totally and partially damaged and located in the said area, were only declared cleared of IEDs by the Philippine President only in July 2018.

Overall the economic opportunities lost after the 5-month crisis is estimated by the TFBM chief Eduardo del Rosario at PhP 17 billion - P11 billion of damaged properties and P6.6 billion of economic opportunities. (ABS CBN News, Jan. 5, 2018) The economic cost of the said crisis were gravely felt by the residents whose livelihood, such as sari-sari stores and commercial stalls, that were dependent on the money lenders, informal and formal economies of Iligan and Cagayan de Oro cities (https://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article41454)

As the massive violence in Marawi continued, human casualties increased. CNS totaled it to 330 Philippine army soldiers, 1,100 Islamists and an estimated 100-150 civilians (CNN, 2017 & CNS, 2017). Indeed, the crisis equally incurred a heavy toll on the lives of the militants, Philippine army and the civilians.



Source: ARMM HEART cmc@armm.gov.ph June 4, 2017

Figure 3. IDP displacement map by the ARMM CMC as of June 4, 2017

As for the residents who evacuated from Marawi, they became displaced and sought shelter and help at nearby municipalities and cities in the Lanao provinces. ARMM Crisis Management Committee and TBFM data indicated that as hostilities continued the initial 235,580 then 353,639 expanded to 600,000 displaced individuals (ARMM CMC, June 2017, Rood, 2017, DSWD, 2017, CNN Philippines, 2017, Rappler.com, 2017 & TFBM, 2018). This became an unprecedented humanitarian crisis that Philippine government has to deal with as a result of violent conflict in Southern Philippines.



Aside from damage to properties, economic loss, death and displacement and total of 1,780 hostages were rescued. It must also be noted that the crisis disarmed the clans and civilians of weapons. Feuding families in this area arm themselves for retribution in the form of '*Rido*". It is not surprising then that 850 firearms were recovered from the battle area after Marawi was 'liberated' from the extremists. The weapons that they left in their homes were either used by the militants or confiscated by the Philippine military.

Division among the CSOs in Marawi also surfaced as one bloc of the civil society function on the narrative that Marawi as the homeland of the Maranaos and that its own challenges should be dealt through their own socio-cultural mechanisms and the other bloc view the necessity of intervention from the national and international agencies in addressing the problems brought about by this crisis. Former MNLF and MILF members that were displaced felt minoritized as they are left without IDs when they evacuated and sought temporary shelter in evacuation and home-based centers in Lanao del Sur (Saguiaran), Lanao del Norte and in the cities of Iligan and Cagayan. The difference in perspective among the civil society and the minoritization of former Moro-separatists are realities on the ground that may further complicate the post-conflict prognosis of Marawi. (Personal Interview, March 2018)

Indeed, the Marawi siege has resulted to complex multi-dimensional obstacles that challenge the core of the Marawi society. Aside from the persistent problem of poverty, the practice of violent retribution in settling feuds, the recruitment and consolidation of violent extremists and the staging of a military capability became an inherent feature of this crisis.

## **Prospects for Recovery**

A month after the onset of the crisis President Duterte issued Proclamation No. 3 on June 28, 2017 to create the Task Force Bangon Marawi (TFBM). This body under the HUDCC is mandated by the national government to undertake a 'unified and comprehensive effort' to rehabilitate Marawi and the rest of the affected communities. (AO No. 3, 2017) When Marawi was declared to have been controlled by the government forces on October 17, 2017, the 24 barangays that became the battleground between the extremists and the military has yet to clear the area of militants hiding in its remains and of IEDs.

While the Marawi crisis was ongoing, TFBM provided the necessary assistance for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in both home-based and in evacuation centers in Iligan city and in other locations.

The presidential proclamation creating TFBM was amended on October 27, 2017, 10 days after Marawi City 'was liberated' from the extremists. Administrative Order No. 9, which is an amendment of A.O. No. 3, specified that the TBFM is created as an Inter-agency body for the recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation of Marawi and other affected localities is now placed under the Secretary of National Defense. Five (5) sub-committees on reconstruction, on housing, on health and social welfare, on business and livelihood and on peace and order notwithstanding the support of other government agencies (The Office of Civil Defense (OCD) along with fifteen



(15) agencies (as the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Housing Urban and Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), Department of Information and Communication Technology (DICT), National Economic and Development Agency (NEDA), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Mines and Geosciences Bureau (DENR-MGB), Technology Education and Skills Development Agency (TESDA), National Electrification Administration (NEA), National Housing Authority (NHA), Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (HLRUB), Social Housing Finance Corporation (SFHC), Local water Utilities Association (LWUA) and in partnership with the local government of Marawi and other stakeholders). (A.O. No. 9, 2017)

These humanitarian efforts were supported by humanitarian activities from private individuals and organizations, schools, religious organizations, local civil society organizations and international humanitarian organizations as the International Organization on Migration (IOM) and the International Red Cross (IRC).

While still providing humanitarian assistance to IDPs even after the 'liberation of Marawi', TFBM deployed five (5) multi-agency Post Conflict Needs Assessment (PCNA) teams in particularly at the 24 barangays that was most affected by the conflict. These teams assessed the extent of damage and losses in their assigned barangay after the Philippine Army completed their clearing operations in the area. They call this procedure Damage and Losses Assessment (DALA).

This indicates that the Duterte administration is employing serious measures to address the enormous challenge of rebuilding from the damage and losses left by the extreme violence in Marawi through institutional approach.

On its eighth (8th) months since its inception, TBFM and its support groups has so far facilitated the return of 6,400 IDPs to Marawi or *Kambalingan* on October 31, 2017 and 17,541 on January 15, 2018. (CNN Philippines, 2017 & TFBM, 2018) This approach according to Galtung and Ho Won Jeong (20050 may serve as an initial phase in recovery and with the appropriate socio-political processes may lead to peace building in this community.

The TFBM took cognizance of the representation and participation of the people and the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and partnered with them through a series of workshops on the rehabilitation and recovery of Marawi. (PIA, 2017) Engaging them as part of the clusters and mechanisms of TFBM, the CSOs as an active partner jointly craft frameworks for an efficient and organized rehabilitation plan. Among the aims of those frameworks are the design and implementation of recovery packages that is sensitive to the context and cultural of the people in Marawi and at the same time deter if not prevent extremism to recur in the area and in the country.

The cluster which is on reconstruction, took charge of distribution of the relief goods, construction of latrines and access roads at the five (5) evacuation centers (ECs) in Iligan City. This cluster through the DPWH, also constructed a main road going into 12-hectare site for transitional shelters at Barangay Sagonsongan, Marawi City. On October 29, 2017 forty-seven (47) heavy equipment from China amounting to a total of PhP 155.4 M arrived at the port of Iligan city.



The equipments were donated for the building of roads to both transition shelters and resettlement sites for the IDPs.

Equipment	Qty.	Cost
Hydraulic Excavator	8	Php 20M
Wheel Loader	8	Php 23.2M
Vibratory Compactor	5	Php 25M
Track type Tractors	5	Php 6M
Bulldozer	5	Php 30M
Dump Truck	8	Php 24M
Cement Mixer	8	Php 27.2M
Total	47	PhP 155.4M

Figure 4. Donations from China (TFBM, 2018)

The clusters on reconstruction and housing got commitments from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for funding the roads to these shelters while San Miguel Corporation committed to provide housing units to the affected community.

For those left homeless by the five-month crisis, President Duterte distributed four hundred certificates of acceptance and occupancy on January 30, 2017 In barangay Sagonsonan, Marawi City. Along with these initiatives for return and reconstruction are processes for the promotion of social healing and community peace and order. This social component of the recovery process is assigned to Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the local government units.

Social healing and peace building among the youth, the religious leaders and the vulnerable were conducted so that an action plan for the said groups that willaddress their concerns at the evacuation center and will define the track of peace building that will be sustainably pursued as Marawi recovers from the crisis.

The health and social welfare cluster on the other hand focused on making medical, mental health and psychosocial services accessible to IDPs at ECs and those who are home-based and their *Kambalingan* to Marawi.

Cluster	No. of	No. of	Total Served	Have not yet
	Barangays	Returning IDPs		Returned
1 <sup>st</sup> Cluster	9 barangays	7,513	5,941	1,572
2 <sup>nd</sup> Cluster	10 barangays	5,005	4,139	866
3 <sup>rd</sup> Cluster	8 barangays -	5,023	4,134	889
	ongoing			
Grand Total	27	17,541	14,214	3,327

Table 1. Data on Kambalingan (TFBM, January 15, 2018)



Table 1 shows that the return of IDPs to Marawi is now on its 3<sup>rd</sup> phase with 3,327 families who have not returned yet. In this cluster, DepEd undertook *Brigada Eskwela sa Marawi* (BESM) by rebuilding fifteen (15) of the most affected schools affected by the siege.

The Business and livelihood cluster received a donation amounting to Php 2.895 million from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for the provision of livelihood equipment, such as business starter kits, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) tanks and livelihood trainings, that were distributed to IDPs by the DTI. Other agencies and international organizations that supported this endeavor were Land Bank, TESDA, DSWD, the Mindanao State University (MSU) Marawi Campus, MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU IIT) and JICA among others.

The cluster on land resource management through the DENR conducted research on the Camp Keithley, Marawi and adjacent areas to harmonize overlapping of claims and political boundaries. This activity among others also involves the identification of potential settlements sites for the IDPs. Technical support the drafting of a post-conflict debris management framework plan is provided by the UNDP.

Aside from the heavy equipment receive from China, commitments of JICA, ADB and technical support from UNDP, TFBM records indicate the receipt of Php 36,773,500.00 from the provincial government of Bulacan, embassy of Thailand, embassy of India, Philippine Veterans Office, municipality of Tagudin, Ilocos municipality of Infanta, Quezon and Mr. and Mrs. Jaime c. Dimson. Anonymous donors also provided financial support to the Marawi survivors. (TFBM, 2018)

As of September 15, 2017, Foreign assistance that received by the Philippine government totaled Php 2.1 billion.

Donor Country	Assistance provided in pesos
Australia	1 billion
United States	730 million
Thailand	100 million
China	85 million
European Union	49 million
Total	2.1 billion

Table 2. Total Foreign Assistance received by the Philippine Government

Secretary Lorenzana in an interview stated that 'of the P85 million from China, P70 million is intended specifically for the medical treatment of soldiers injured in Marawi.' Earlier on, China donated to the Philippines P370 million worth of rifles and ammunition. (Rappler.com, 2017)



The U.S. donation on the other hand, is broken down into the following:

Php 153 million	<ul> <li>to deliver critical relief supplies such as safe drinking water, hygiene kits, shelter materials for evacuation centers, and for programs to protect displaced women and children"</li> </ul>
PhP 577 million	- to support the early recovery, stabilization, and rehabilitation of Marawi and the surrounding area"
Php 730 million	Total U.S. Foreign Assistance

Table 3. Breakdown of Total U.S. Foreign Assistance for Marawi's Recovery

Marawi's road to physical and social recovery is steered by the TFBM, a multi agency body that partners with the CSOs of Marawi and Iligan and representatives of the people of Marawi and nearby municipalities. The approaches employed to address the complex challenges resulting from the crisis is clustered into reconstruction, housing, security, peace and order, health and social welfare, business and livelihood and land resource management. International humanitarian agencies such the UNDP and JICA and foreign donor governments like Australia, China and the U.S. provided generous technical and financial assistance that is crucial to the social transformation of Marawi and Philippines.

## Long term impact

Even as Marawi is declared to be in the control of the Philippine military, IPAC warns that the recent crisis have long-term implications for extremism in Southeast Asia, even (IPAC July 21, 2017). The remaining extremist network in Mindanao need to be tracked and avenues or windows for recruitment should be pro-actively countered or stopped through effective and accessible social services and programs to the Marawi IDPs. A former member of Maute-group stated that recruitment of new members and meetings among those in command still persist in many parts of Mindanao other than Iligan and Marawi despite the death of Isnilon Hapilon. She also attested that this group recruits both men and women among the young Moro elites. In her experience, she used to bring weapons to other IS members in her backpack donning her black '*abaya*' (loose robe-like over garment worn by Muslim women) undetected (Personal Interview, March 2018). This fact brings to fore the need to also examine the role played by women in violent extremism in Mindanao.



Higher risks of violent crisis may loom in other areas if the narrative of the success of IS Maute-group will continue to be used by this group to recruit members and revive the IS *wilayat* (province) in Southeast Asia that is located in the Philippines.(Vatvani, 2017) On top of using the Marawi siege as a showcase by the consolidated extremist group in Mindanao, the delayed action on the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), the need to address the historical injustices that were experienced by the Bangsamoro and the strong bias be some sectors against the Moro community may serve to be instrumental in gaining more sympathizers into their radical ideology. Thus, the need for sincere efforts to engage and dialogue maybe one of the means that will deter the resurgence of the roots of local resentments of the people in Marawi and the rest of the Bangsamoro community.

Moreover, local and national governments should coordinate closely in emergency situations so that responsive, appropriate, secure and accountable humanitarian provision for the survivors is ensured. In country like the Philippines wherein disasters that confront it are both natural and borne out of violent crisis, this mechanism will be useful in emergency situations similar to the humanitarian crisis of the same magnitude to that of the Marawi siege.

The security sectors of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and the rest of the southeast Asia should employ a functional coordinating platform that is focused on an up to date tracking and detailed mapping of transnational extremist networks in the region. One of the functions of this security mechanism is to map out a shared watch-list of terrorist suspects across the region.

## Conclusion

Violent extremism in Marawi is attributed to the consolidation of militant and extremists bands such as the ASG and Maute groups pledging allegiance to the Islamic State (IS). This is one of the factors that this group drew support from IS militants who were veterans of Syria and Iraq, from the drug lords of Luzon and Visayas among others. This phenomenon may also be rooted on the resentment of the Muslims of the government delay of the passing of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

Its manifest outcomes brought not only great physical and economic loss, massive displacement but challenged the already complex and multi-layered socio-cultural core of the Marawi community.

Given the magnitude of the cost of the crisis in terms of billions of pesos and social disarray, the national government employed an institutional response through the creation of Task Force Bangon Marawi (TFBM) but coupled it with parallel processes on the ground through the sustained partnership with the CSOs and the IDPs in order to achieve a social transformation appropriate to the distinct context of Marawi. More importantly, the employment of peace building modes like social healing and dialogue to cater to the issues and concerns of the youth, Ulama, the vulnerable and the LGUs may bring about an aspired social condition Marawi that may hopefully be peaceful.



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