

INWARD FLOWS AND UNDERTOWS: Investments in the Bangsamoro

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LAND IS LIFE. About 250,000 hectares of lands and waters within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao are part of the Téduray and Lambangian Ancestral Domain Claim (Fusaka Ingéd) as shown by this 3D Map in Tuladan at Sitio Kiféng-féng, Maguindanao, Philippines. 2017 October 2.
Photo by Galileo de Guzman Castillo.

Dagkong agalon ug mga langyaw

(the landlords and colonizers)

Nanghinayak sa pagpanghikaw

(came and took what was ours)

Mga bahandi gipangkawkaw

(plundered our environment and natural resources)

Gibungkag ang atong kalinaw

(destroyed our peace)

-TUBAW

(Tubong Mindanao, Tulong Mindanao), “Lantaw”

The aggressive drive for more foreign investments has become more glaring as it figures into the post-COVID-19 recovery program and plans of the government. In the Philippines, the amendment of the 1987 Constitution to remove nationalist provisions on the economy—including restrictions on foreign ownership of businesses, public utilities, and land and natural resources—is being pushed in the name of “development” and “economic recovery.” Already, domestic laws and policies have been passed and implemented. These include lifting of the moratorium on new mining agreements, tax reform packages lowering corporate income taxes, and fiscal incentives—all purportedly attracting more investments and creating new jobs. At the end of the day, who stands to gain and lose from all of these?

Whither are we bound?

A particular geographical area of concern is the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), a region in transition from conflict to autonomy, created with the passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL). The transition process involves the implementation of the Bangsamoro Government's First Bangsamoro Development Plan (BDP) 2020-2022 that harmonized the existing development plans in BARMM. These include the BDP I and BDP II of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA), the Unified Bangsamoro Development Plan (UBDP) of the MILF and Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), and the Regional Development Plan (RDP) 2017-2022 of BARMM's precursor, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The Bangsamoro Planning and Development Authority (BPDA) is now in the process of updating the Results Matrices (RM) and the Bangsamoro Development Investment Program (BDIP) accompanying the First BDP. The Regional Board of Investments (RBOI) has conducted consultations on investment incentives policies under the Investments Priorities Plan (IPP), and is now planning to pass the Bangsamoro Investment Code that will provide for "better ease of doing business in the region" according to RBOI Governor Mohammad Pasigan.

Furthermore, various plans were also crafted to resolve land and resource conflicts, address extremist violence and clan feuding, and respond to development challenges including the persistence of shadow economies faced by the region. These include the Bangsamoro Response and Recovery Plan (BRRP) for COVID-19 Pandemic 2020-2022 and the Camps Transformation Plan (CTP) which will cover a six-year implementation phase that will convert former rebel camps into "productive, peaceful, civilian, and sustainable communities."

BARMM initially registered high economic growth around the time of the 17th Congress deliberations of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (10.1% in 2017) but it continuously declined in the following years towards the eventual passage of the BOL (7.7% in 2018), its ratification in the autonomy plebiscite, the formal start of the transition period (5.8% in 2019), and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (-1.9% in 2020). However, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), all regions in the Philippines posted declines in economic performance in 2020, with BARMM posting the smallest drop and registering -1.9% as against the national average of -9.6%.

Notwithstanding the relatively lesser impact of the pandemic on the regional economy, poverty incidence in BARMM remains high over the years, peaking at 63.2% in 2018 or almost twice the whole of Mindanao's poverty incidence of 37.1% and three times the national percentage of 21.1%. While BARMM registered a decrease in the proportion of poor population in 2021, it remains the country's poorest region, with the most recent PSA [data](#) reporting a poverty incidence among population at 45.8% in 2021. In particular, Sulu, one of the provinces comprising BARMM, registered an 80.4% poverty incidence, the highest among all the provinces of the Philippines.

First semester poverty incidence among population in BARMM versus Mindanao and national average from 2015-2021, in percentage

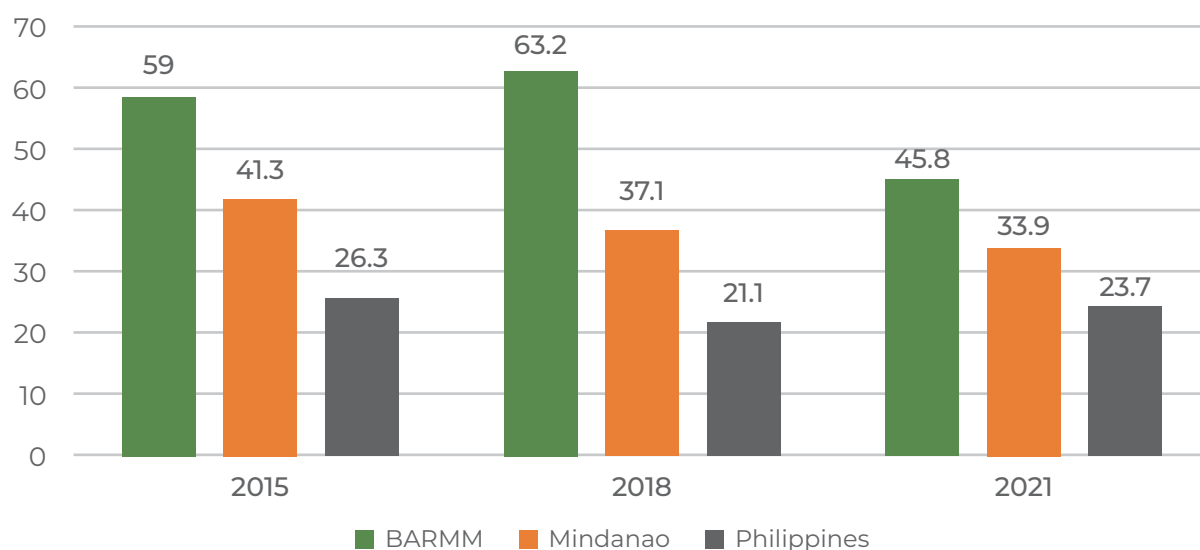


Figure 1. First semester poverty incidence among the population in BARMM versus Mindanao and national average. Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015 data retrieved from <https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/attachments/ird/pressrelease/1st%20Sem%202015%20Official%20Poverty%20Statistics.xlsx>; 2018-2021 data retrieved from https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/2021%201st%20Poverty%20Stats_Full%20Publication_17Dec2021_rev5.pdf

Real GRDP Growth Rate in BARMM, Mindanao, and the Philippines from 2015-2020

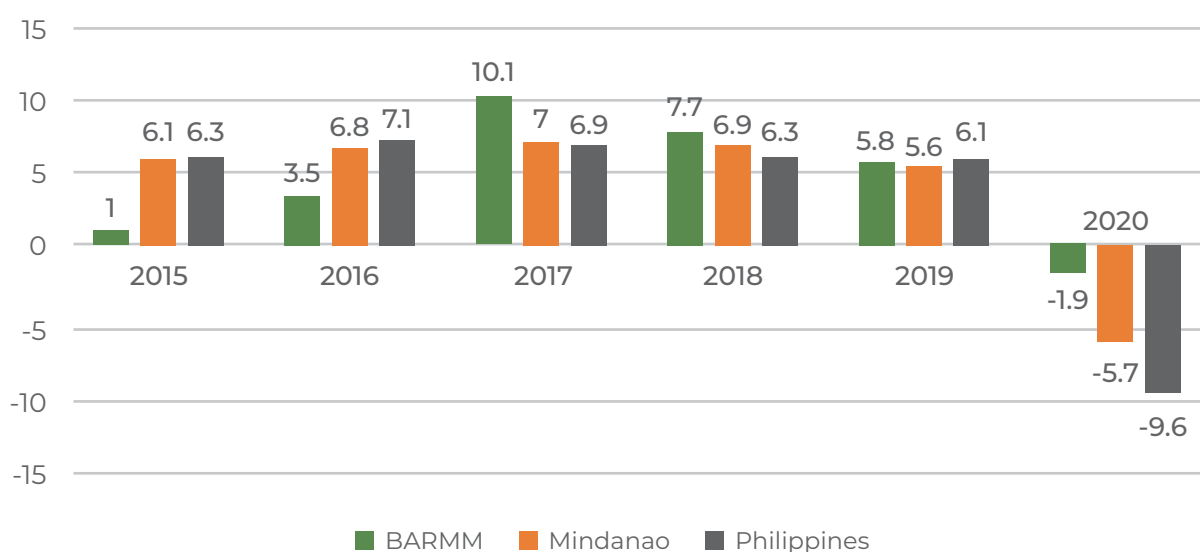


Figure 2. Real GRDP growth rate in BARMM versus Mindanao and national average. Source: Philippine Statistics Authority 2000-2020 Gross Regional Domestic Product data series, retrieved from https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/GRDP_Reg_2018PSNA_2000-2020_0.xlsx

In addition, the brief episodes of growth in BARMM's per capita gross domestic regional product (GRDP)—from a low of -2% in 2015, to 1.4% in 2016, and a peak of 7.9% in 2017—have not significantly improved socioeconomic conditions for the common folk. More importantly, there seems to be no correlation between economic growth and human development during the period in question, so much so that even when the growth levels peaked in 2017, BARMM's Subnational Human Development Index or SHDI (looking at three dimensions: education, health, and standard of living) remained largely the same.

According to the 2021 report of the UNDP in the Philippines, BARMM only marginally sustained a lower-medium rating of its SHDI in 2015 (0.580), 2016 (0.585), and 2017 (0.592), before eventually declining to a low rating of 0.551 in 2020, or an estimated regression to 2011 levels due to COVID-19. From 2010-2019, BARMM's pre-pandemic SHDI mean percentage increase was only at 1.15%, a mere plateau over a ten-year period despite registering consistently increasing GRDP growth rates from 2015 to 2017, and even surpassing the national average in its peak in 2017 (10.1% versus 6.8%) and the succeeding year (7.7% versus 6.3%).

After registering incremental gains over the years, BARMM's SHDI levels saw a significant drop at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when it fell by an estimated -8.32%. This translated to income declines due to mobility restrictions, food insecurity, difficulty in accessing healthcare services, and the pandemic's compounded effects on women and children. The UNDP report further noted: "(...) the people of BARMM are facing persistence of poverty and the need for effective social services, lack of access to formal education, weak health system and infrastructure, and poor social service delivery, and political instability and challenges to local governance—the root causes of conflict in BARMM."

Real GRDP per capita growth rate and percentage increase in BARMM's SHDI from 2010-2020

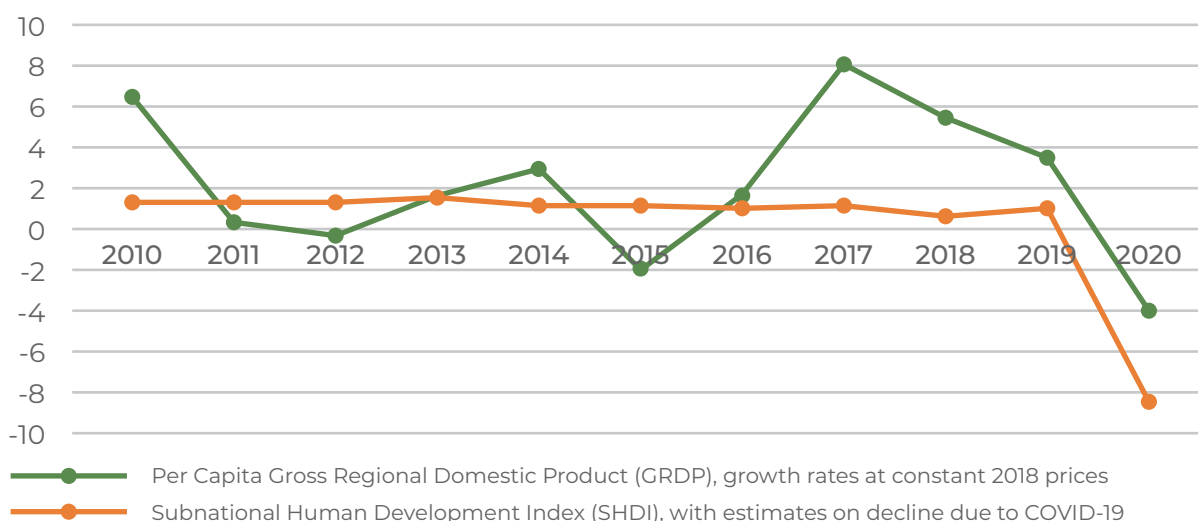


Figure 3. Real GRDP per capita growth rate in constant 2018 prices and Subnational Human Development Index in BARMM over a ten year period. Sources: Philippine Statistics Authority 2000-2020 Gross Regional Domestic Product data series, retrieved from https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/GRDP_Reg_2018PSNA_2000-2020_0.xlsx and UNDP in the Philippines 2021 report, "The Socioeconomic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao," retrieved from https://www.ph.undp.org/content/dam/philippines/docs/UNDP_BARMM%20SEIA-FINAL.pdf

These figures beg the question: What are the implications of purely growth-driven development plans and policies on key issues crucial to peace-building? In particular, how would they address the problems of socioeconomic exclusion and conflicts arising from land disputes and restriction of access to the commons, and the prospect of political and economic democratization amidst BARMM's transition to autonomy and beyond?

Investments for what and for whom?

The Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA)—serving as the interim government that has both executive and legislative functions—asserts that its development goals are anchored on moral governance and genuine and meaningful autonomy. According to the BTA, these will be achieved by strengthening both local and regional partnerships and attracting more investors, both domestic and global, to support BARMM's economic agenda.

The aggressive drive for investments will further be bolstered by the establishment of economic corridors, with at least one economic zone in each BARMM province: Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Polloc Port in Parang, Maguindanao. BARMM will also pursue foreign economic cooperation and partnerships through the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) and ink trade and investment agreements with Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Qatar among others.

Three decades since the establishment of the ARMM in 1989 and its eventual transition to BARMM in 2019, agriculture, agribusiness, aquaculture, and fisheries have remained the top industries with the biggest share of investments (40%), followed by extractives: energy and petroleum (24%), mining and quarrying (18%); and infrastructure and services: telecommunications (15%), construction, logistics, and trading (3%). According to the [data](#) from Access Bangsamoro portal, the Province of Maguindanao generated close to three-fourths of the total approved investments in ARMM from 2012-2018.

However, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a notable decline in investments, stymieing the progress of the fledgling regional economy. The Bangsamoro Board of Investments (BBOI-BARMM) has registered the following figures: ₱2.5B (~US\$47.86M) in 2018, ₱4.1B in 2019 (~US\$78.49M), ₱14M (~US\$268K) in 2020, and ₱2.8B (~US\$53.60M) in 2021, indicating only a return to pre-pandemic levels.

There have been hiccups in facilitating the investment push in BARMM to take off—with RBOI Chair Ishak Mastura attributing the low investment numbers to the hesitancy among investors pending the passage of a BARMM investments and incentives law—but also primarily due to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the RBOI remains optimistic with the entry two months ago of two new investments worth ₱200M (~US\$3.82M) in Cotabato City, BARMM's seat of government, signalling a “good start for the year” according to Chair [Mastura](#).

All the same, it is important to scrutinize what investments have entered BARMM over the years and which ones are in the pipeline, their contribution to the economic growth of the regional economy, and, more importantly, their impacts to the environment, health, livelihood, and the communities of the tri-peoples (Moro, Lumad, and migrant settlers) in which these projects are hosted, willingly or not.

TABLE 1. Non-exhaustive list of private investments in BARMM across industries over the years.

Activity	Industry	Proponent	Capital	Location	Year
Banana plantation	Agriculture	Al-Muzafar Agri-Venture, Incorporated	₱990M	Maguindanao	2021
Corn plantation	Agriculture	Lanao del Sur Corn Development Corporation	₱408M	Lanao del Sur	2021
Banana plantation	Agriculture	Lamitan Agri-Business Corp. and Unifrutti Tropical	₱1.8B	Basilan	2019
Corn plantation	Agriculture	Maguindanao Corn Development DSA-I Corp.	₱515M	Maguindanao	2019
Pineapple packing plant	Agriculture	Wao Development Corporation and DOLE	₱306M	Lanao del Sur	2019
Abaca fiber processing	Agriculture	Hong Kong Feng Sheng Heritage Philippines, Inc.	₱100M	Lanao del Sur	2019
Palm oil	Agriculture	Gintong Agri-Corporation	₱1.3B	Maguindanao	2016
Cassava milling plant	Agriculture	Matling Industrial and Commercial Corporation	₱194M	Lanao del Sur	2015
Napier grass plantation	Agriculture and Energy	Maguindanao Energy Farms Incorporated (Biomass)	₱400M	Maguindanao	2015
Banana plantation	Agriculture	Al Mujahidun Agro-Resources & Development	₱502M	Maguindanao	2014
Oil and gas exploration	Energy	ES Maulana Global Ventures Company, Incorporated	₱998M	Maguindanao, Sulu	2021
Biomass	Energy	Lamsan Power Corporation	₱922M	Maguindanao	2014
Petroleum export	Energy	Bangsamoro Oil and Fuels Corporation	₱848M	Maguindanao	2014
Biomass	Energy	Green Earth Enersource Corporation	₱366M	Maguindanao	2014
Sand and gravel	Mining	JMI Sand and Gravel Truck Services Corporation	₱1.4B	Maguindanao	2019
Nickel	Mining	Mina Vida De Mindanao	₱941M	Tawi-Tawi	2018
Nickel	Mining	Chan C Mining, Inc.	₱742M	Tawi-Tawi	2015
Nickel	Mining	S.R. Languyan Mining Corp.	₱520M	Tawi-Tawi	2014
Nickel	Mining	Pax Libera Mining, Inc.	₱495M	Tawi-Tawi	2014
Nickel	Mining	Darussalam Mining Corp.	₱193M	Tawi-Tawi	2014
Nickel	Mining	Altawitawi Nickel Corp.	₱708M	Tawi-Tawi	2013
Water Distribution	Services	Hanabana Construction and Equipment Corporation	₱100M	Cotabato City	2022
Tourism-related	Services	Pagana Kutawato Corporation	₱100M	Cotabato City	2022
Tourism-related	Services	Eight Z's Properties Building Rentals	₱398M	Cotabato City	2021
Halal certification	Services	Prime Certification and Inspection Asia Pacific	₱49M	Cotabato City	2021
Internet service	Services	Community Wireless and Power Corporation	₱14M	Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao	2020

Source: Author's rendering, data retrieved from the Regional Board of Investments in BARMM.

In 2019, the first and interim Bangsamoro Chief Minister Murad Ebrahim affirmed in a luncheon with mining executives, “I invite you to explore opportunities on mining to bolster the economic development of the Bangsamoro.” He added that the audit of the mining operations in the region will “provide an avenue for a better, pro-environment, pro-people and responsible mining in the BARMM.”

What was left unsaid were the negligible contributions of mining and quarrying to the economy and employment despite its bold promises, the disastrous and oftentimes irreversible impacts of massive and extractive investments in land and natural resources on the environment and peoples’ rights and lives despite its safeguards obligations, and the oxymoronic myth of “responsible mining” that has already been debunked many times by the experiences of host communities.

One need not go back far to remember the 2016 appeal of the then ARMM Regional Legislative Assembly to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to urgently issue a cease and desist order to all mining companies in the region, citing the total devastation of Tumbagaan Island and the municipalities of Languyan and Panglima Sugala in Tawi-Tawi due to unabated mining exploration and activities.

Whose development, whose aspirations?

The Bangsamoro Government outlines in the [First BDP 2020-2022](#) its eight development goals which will be the focus of its policy interventions for the three-year period, to wit:

1. Establish the foundations for inclusive, transparent, accountable, and efficient governance;
2. Uphold peace, security, public order and safety, and respect for human rights;
3. Create a favourable enabling environment for inclusive and sustainable economic development;
4. Promote Bangsamoro identity, cultures, and diversity;
5. Ensure access to and delivery of quality services for human capital development;
6. Harness technology and innovations to increase socioeconomic opportunities and improve government services;
7. Increase strategic and climate-resilient infrastructure to support sustainable socioeconomic development in the Bangsamoro Region; and
8. Improve ecological integrity, and promote and enhance climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction to sustain resilience of communities in the Bangsamoro.

Overall, the BARMM envisions itself as “united, enlightened, self-governing, peaceful, just, morally upright, and progressive region.” The incongruity, however, becomes harder and harder to reconcile as the stated outcomes and strategies on addressing the social and economic marginalization, exclusion, and dispossession appear aspirational at best and contradictory at worst. For one, how will the establishment of special economic zones and corridors and the further liberalization of the trade and investment regime guarantee public access to the commons and improve the socioeconomic conditions of ordinary people?

In 2020, the *baglalan* or tribal title holders of Késëfanangguwit Timuay (Timuay Justice and Governance, the Indigenous Political Structure of the Téduray and Lambangian indigenous peoples) declared that “the *fusaka inged* (ancestral domain) is currently in a state of [guboten](#)

(under siege).” This statement came amidst the cases of land grabbing, destruction of properties, and attacks and killings perpetrated by armed groups in the ancestral domain.

Ownership and control over land has become the main point of contention and root of conflicts amidst the aggressive push for investments in BARMM. Mai Taqueban of the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center-Kasama sa Kalikasan/Friends of the Earth Philippines eloquently [chronicles](#) the indigenous struggle for recognition in the Bangsamoro:

“The threats of encroachment have become more apparent with the acceleration of economic globalization that drives the expansion of areas for resource exploitation. These are also shaped by the tenuous character of a nascent BARMM government, which is eager to promote opportunities for development to external and internal actors. This development paradigm runs the risk of increasing the influence of corporate interest on land and resource decisions, and undermine policies envisioned to promote the public good. It risks not only undermining the time immemorial ecological practices of the Lumads but also the destruction of the land of promise.”

It must then be asked: How will opening the doors wide to unbridled capitalism and globalization and the influx of investment projects—majority of which are extractive in nature—impact on the protection of the environment and indigenous ancestral lands and domains?



SACRED GROVE. A story is told by a Timuay: “When the large companies came bringing their businesses here in our ancestral domain, people were paid—even nature was paid. It is ludicrous, especially that our traditional customs and beliefs were not respected. For one, the trees for us are sacred as there are spirits inside them. But from their point of view, all they could see was: How many board feet is this?” 2017 October 4. Upi, Maguindanao. *Photo by Galileo de Guzman Castillo.*

In October 2021, the BBOI-BARMM welcomed the entry of two new investments aiming to revive the banana plantation farms in the region. According to RBOI Chair Ishak Mastura, the venture will support the displaced Iranun farmers in Buldon, Maguindanao, with a plan to establish a 200-hectare Cavendish banana plantation for export.

The said farmers are formerly contract growers under the unsuccessful Al-Sahar Agriventures that now stand to gain access to a five-year ₱2.12B (~US\$40.28M) concessional loan program from the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) under its Harnessing Agribusiness opportunities through Robust and Vibrant Entrepreneurship Supportive of Peaceful Transformation (HARVEST) lending facility.

This is being pushed and facilitated despite the documented failures and negative, in some cases even fatal, impacts of monocrop plantations, contract farming arrangements, and Integrated Forest Management Agreements (IFMA) not only in Mindanao but also in neighboring Indonesia and other countries in the world. Perhaps a grim reminder of the distressing realities of agribusiness-related deaths is the T'boli-Manobo S'daf Claimants Organization (TAMASCO) 8 massacre in 2017, in the bordering province of Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, which saw the killing of eight indigenous people in their struggle against the encroachment of corporate coffee plantation on their ancestral domain.

If indeed the Bangsamoro Government intends to create a favourable enabling environment for inclusive and sustainable economic development, then it may begin by recognizing and respecting the diversity of development philosophies and visions, and supporting proposals from below put forward by all the tri-peoples, including the Lumads.

Another contradiction is then highlighted: How will the strengthening of high-value cash crop industry and the insistence on agro-industrial plantations and contract farming—motivated by the demands of both domestic and international markets served by export-driven corporate agribusiness—affect small-scale food provision, food sovereignty, and sustainable peace?

Concretely, the Téduray and Lambangian indigenous peoples have worked towards the advancement and realization of Sulagad—their own concept and system on sustainable farming that involves traditional agroecological practices—which is clearly at odds with the kind and nature of investments being facilitated in the BARMM. If indeed the Bangsamoro Government intends to create a favourable enabling environment for inclusive and sustainable economic development, then it may begin by recognizing and respecting the diversity of development philosophies and visions, and supporting proposals from below put forward by all the tri-peoples, including the Lumads.

More kalinaw or pagpangawkaw?

In 2018, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte pronounced that he wanted indigenous ancestral lands and domains to be opened to investors: “The government worked hard now you were given ancestral domain. The problem is you didn’t use it. It’s true that it’s owned in common, but if you continue to make trouble, nothing will happen. So let me be the one to find investors.” Four years since this statement and a few months left in his term, the agenda remains the same.

These are signposts of the dominant economic development framework and strategies reflected in the existing development plans and socioeconomic policies. It is the same neoliberal prescription that has only served the interests of elites and clans while aggravating inequality, sowing exclusion, and thereby creating fertile ground for violence and conflict to continually fester and grow in the region.

For one, cases of displacement due to land and resource conflicts in BARMM have remained unresolved, including those that arose even before the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the [December 2021 Mindanao Displacement Dashboard](#) of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), 65,918 families (267,278 individuals) remain displaced in Mindanao, of which 1,408 families (7,238 individuals) are from the provinces of BARMM that are still displaced since 2017. The UNHCR further noted how the COVID-19 crisis exacerbated the situation of internally displaced persons (IDP) and how their protracted and recurring cycles of displacement have exposed them to greater vulnerabilities including violations of human rights and obstacles to durable solutions.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has had multidimensional and differentiated impacts on the regional economy, and more so on the lived realities of the tri-peoples of BARMM. The government’s response to the pandemic supposedly focused on improving social welfare and development, essential health services, economic recovery, infrastructure support, and governance as articulated in the BRRP. However, the BPDA admitted that the impacts of the pandemic made the attainment of the 12-point priority agenda outlined in the First BDP 2020-2022 even more challenging. Perhaps vividly illustrating the depth and gravity of the challenges compounded by local realities and context in BARMM is the narration of a key informant from an interview by [Internews](#): “We had this initiative for hygiene/hand washing for COVID, but these rural communities don’t even have access to clean drinking water.”

With these problems and issues remaining unresolved, the transition towards a new regional structure reopens another period of uncertainty in the era of COVID-19. And amidst these uncertainties and questions being raised on the BTA leadership and on BARMM governance during the transition period, a critical development has taken place.

Last year, on October 28, Duterte signed Republic Act No. 11593 into law, postponing the BARMM elections to 2025. The implication is that the Bangsamoro transition period has been extended for another three years and whoever Duterte’s successor will be after the general elections this year will be the one appointing another set of non-elected officials. A provision in the BOL that was not amended in the new law stipulates that the leadership of the MILF in the BTA is guaranteed and will stay, despite growing calls for the holding of elections so the tri-peoples of BARMM are able to choose their own leaders.

This move to maintain the status quo on the current composition of the 80-member BTA was confirmed a few weeks ago, on February 21, as Duterte approved the recommendation of the Security, Justice, and Peace Cabinet Cluster (SJPCC). Hence, a democratic mandate by the tri-peoples has not been secured.

Indigenous people are one of the three tri-peoples of BARMM, but their conceptions and visions of development justice can hardly find their way into the economic and development agenda that is taking shape in the region—with not much say in the choice of leaders and voice in governance. For one, the direction towards opening the floodgates of investments for further *pagpangawkaw* (plunder) of the commons runs counter to the indigenous philosophies, systems, and practices on the utilization of natural resources based on customary laws.

To date, nagging questions persist on how the developments in the Bangsamoro transition relates to the indigenous peoples' distinct histories, their collective rights to ancestral domains, self-governance and empowerment, social justice and human rights, cultural integrity, and their own aspirations for *kalinaw* (just and lasting peace).

Just a few days ago, on March 7, the international Third Party Monitoring Team (TPMT)—an independent body mandated to monitor, review, and assess the implementation of the GPH-MILF peace agreements—noted the unfulfilled expectations and the delays on the attainment of sustainable peace. As BARMM implements the normalization process and with its purported goal of transforming conflict-affected areas into peaceful and productive communities through these means, will indigenous communities witness more of the same, or even worse?

The Lumads have long been witness to the systemic violence, oppression, and injustice in their own lands. In times of “peace,” they find themselves as unwilling hosts to extractives, plantations, and other exploitations of their ancestral lands and domains. In times of war, they find themselves caught in the crossfire between the government and rebel forces. This is poignantly encapsulated by one *Timuay* (Téduray and Lambangian indigenous leader) in his account of their struggles: “We have become victims of war... and of peace.”

It is clear that the direction of development that is being pushed in the region runs counter to the goal of addressing the root causes of poverty, marginalization, and unpeace. It remains extractive, exploitative, and without respect to

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both the tri-peoples and the environment. It does not go far as to resolving decades of historical injustices and conflicts, nor does it resist and seek to transform undemocratic systems and practices, cognizant of the interplay between political and economic governance. Consequently, staying in this path will only aggravate the existing conditions and put more pressure on the tri-peoples' struggles for full and meaningful autonomy, social equality and justice, and economic equity and ecological sustainability.

Aside from priority legislation such as Local Government Code and Indigenous Peoples Code that are yet to be passed, there are several **proposed measures** already filed in the Bangsamoro Parliament that could serve as possible starting points of engagement to steer the direction of development in BARMM: 1) Bangsamoro Parliamentary Women's Caucus Act for gender equality and gender justice; 2) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity in Public Service Act for affirmative action and just representation; 3) Bangsamoro Social Enterprise Act for poverty reduction and social justice; 4) Bangsamoro Human Rights Defenders Protection Act for the protection and promotion of human rights as a foundation of development; 5) Renewable Energy for Socialized Housing Act for the development of solar energy as opposed to coal and biomass; and 6) Transitional Justice and Reconciliation legislative package for the strengthening of justice system, among others.

It is imperative that in BARMM's transition from conflict to autonomy, no one gets left behind, no one drowns from the dark undertows of the investments influx, and no one is disempowered in determining and pursuing their own political, social, cultural, and economic development—without interference. Only then can *kalinaw* truly take root and flourish, and *kéfiyo fédéw* (good feeling, peace of mind, and physical well-being) flow freely.



KÉFIYO FÉDÉW. Any undertaking that runs counter to the *kéfiyo fédéw*—the strongest foundation of peace, justice, and development in tribal society—is not good development. Lambangian Rémfing Fenuwo (cluster of villages) Assembly. South Upi, Maguindanao. 2017 October 15. Photo by Galileo de Guzman Castillo.

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