

GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE OF THE AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO (ARMM), PHILIPPINES: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF ITS PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY FROM THE YEAR 1991 TO 2015.

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ABSTRACT

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This aims to evaluate the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao's (ARMM) performance in fulfilling its mandated functions, specifically in addressing the difficulties and problems that the region faced from 1991 to 2015, including poverty, political instability, a lack of peace and order, and inadequate provision of basic social services. Utilizing secondary data and a qualitative research methodology, the study assessed the ARMM's performance and responses to regional challenges. Additionally, it seeks to examine the actions of the ARMM since it was given the authority to rule the Muslim community in the Southern part of the Philippines. The findings suggest that hunger and poverty remain significant issues in the region. The former ARMM has consistently ranked lowest in terms of the availability of fundamental social services, although other parts of the Philippines continue to experience economic growth. The ARMM government's successful programs and interventions did not address the most critical issue facing the community: access to high-quality education. These findings suggest that even in fundamental areas, such as the rigorous execution of programs aimed at reducing poverty and the delivery of social services like access to clean water, sanitary facilities, and medical care, the ARMM as a whole was unable to fulfill its mandated duties. Additionally, a significant issue is the community's widespread culture of silence, even though crime remains prevalent in the area.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the performance of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. It aims to evaluate how its local government fulfills its assigned responsibilities, particularly in responding to issues and challenges faced by the region, such as poverty, lack of peace and order, political instability, and weak delivery of basic social services from 1991 to 2015. This discussion seeks to analyze the measures taken by the government since it was granted autonomy for the Bangsamoro people in the community.

It focuses on the following research questions:

Main question: Since its inception in 1989, how has the ARMM's performance changed?

Sub-questions:

- 1) What challenges have arisen in ARMM from 1991 until 2015?
- 2) How effective has the Regional Government been in tackling these challenges in ARMM?

This paper is structured as follows. The introduction will provide a concise overview of the region, highlighting its demographics, economy, labor force, educational levels, and poverty statistics. We will cover ARMM's history, its founding, and the shift that ended on August 1, 1989, with

the enactment of RA 6734. RA 9054 amended this legislation in 2000. A theoretical framework will be outlined, utilizing institutional theory and performance management within the realm of local governance. On July 27, 2018, former President Duterte enacted the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), thus instituting the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) (Ishikawa, 2024).

The fourth segment will concentrate on the issues that ARMM encountered between 1991 and 2015. This will be followed by a brief assessment of how effectively the regional government in ARMM has addressed these issues. We will use secondary data to identify the problems in the region and assess the effectiveness of the regional government's response by examining how it has addressed these issues. Additionally, in light of the autonomy granted to ARMM as detailed in the Organic Act (RA 6734), it is equally important to identify the factors contributing to ARMM's underdevelopment, particularly its lack of progress and the widespread inadequacy of social services, coupled with ineffective personnel. Khalid Dumagay, from the Regional Planning and Development Office (RPDO) of ARMM, agrees with this perspective. He says that the problems are caused not just by the long-running hostilities but also by a lack of money for development. He also discussed the lack of fiscal autonomy, which means that the

area cannot obtain the necessary funds to operate and grow (<http://rpdoarmmgov.ph/rpdo/index.php/activities/266-2015-armm-budget-its-development-impact-in-the-bangsamoro-community>).

The problem is exacerbated by ARMM's demonstration of the nation's most severe socioeconomic indices, particularly in the areas of education, health, and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WaSH), as identified by the Bangsamoro Development Agency (2015). A 2005 World Bank report, referenced in the Bangsamoro Development Plan (2015), indicates that limited access to social services is a contributing factor to the injustices that have incited conflict in the region. The region faces further urgent challenges, including fiscal mismanagement within the DepEd ARMM, delinquent teacher contributions, and loan repayments to the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) (<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/specialreports/95470/ghost-teachers-phantom-schools-haunt-education-reforms-in-armm/story/>), bribery for teaching positions, and the undesirable practice of teachers hiring substitutes to manage their classrooms (Jimeno, 2008), all of which exacerbate the inefficiencies in the workforce. The final section will address the research questions presented, culminating in the overall conclusion of the paper.

a. Institutional Theory

In their research, Amenta and Ramsey (2010) identified three varieties of institutionalism, each with its own distinct origins and research methods. Sociological institutionalism is a reaction against organizational frameworks and state interactions, which do not take into account cultural structures and dynamics in their analysis. Historical institutionalism, on the other hand, should be employed to demonstrate how institutions and policies are created and sustained. Political institutionalism emerged as a response to the prevailing pluralist and Marxist ideas about politics at the time. These ideas made states and other political structures seem too simple.

Institutionalism provides a framework for understanding political and social institutions, encompassing formal political entities and bureaucratic organizations, as noted by Frederickson et al. (2018). According to Peter (1999), institutionalism refers to the values, regulations, motivations, or interaction dynamics within institutions that influence governmental decision-making. The individual aspect of policy-making becomes relevant as institution members interpret their institution's rules and values. These include the institution's outcomes, effectiveness, results, and intended purpose (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991).

Moreover, Institutionalism is particularly advantageous in disarticulated governments, as it depends on the political patterns, order, and collective significance inherent in both governmental and nongovernmental institutions. It also advocates for modeling approaches based on the "simplifying assumptions of rational self-interest or competitive markets" (Frederickson et al., 2012, p. 71). To gain a deeper understanding of institutionalism, Guy Peters (2000) identified two distinct approaches to institutional theory. This includes a) the normative approach, which posits that the most efficacious method for comprehending political behavior, both individual and collective, is through a "logic of appropriateness" that individuals embrace based on their affiliations with institutions. Individuals operate

inside institutions according to normative ideals rather than solely pursuing selfish gain. Furthermore, these behavioral norms are acquired through interaction with diverse institutions, which act as the principal social reservoirs of values, and b) empirical institutionalism. This phrase refers to a corpus of literature that poses the ostensibly simple question of whether institutions influence policy decisions or political stability. The definition of institutions in this context is clear, emphasizing the formal forms of governance. This literature has focused on analyzing the differences between presidential and parliamentary systems.

b. Performance Management

Brillantes (2001) contends that a management system, which relates to an organization's oversight of its processes or activities, can provide a framework for the company to implement and operate its system. In contrast, Lebas (1995) asserted that performance signifies the capacity to execute actions effectively, thereby fulfilling an organization's objectives and goals. Burns and Zhiren (2010, pp. 3-4) proposed that systematic efforts to improve organizational performance involve numerous actions, such as reorganizing governmental agencies and implementing reforms in service delivery. Moreover, officials and managers must incorporate the learning and enhancement aspects of performance management for effective implementation (National Performance Management Advisory Commission, 2010). Bititci et al. (1997) characterized performance management as a process by which an organization aligns its performance with corporate and functional plans and objectives. The writers observed that the primary objective of this approach is to improve an organization's overall performance.

In contrast, Atkinson and McCrindell (1997), as referenced by Kloot and Martin (2000), emphasized that the government, as an institution, necessitates enhanced strategies for evaluating its effectiveness in achieving its objectives. Broadbent (1995), Sinclair (1995), and Guthrie and English (1997), as referenced by Kloot and Martin (2000), argue that performance measurement in government is closely tied to accountability, and inadequate performance measurement systems fail to clearly elucidate the nature of services rendered and their intended beneficiaries. Effective leadership in local government is crucial for delivering high-quality services to the community. Pretorius and Schurink (2007) assert that leadership abilities are crucial for the provision and enduring sustainability of social services.

The government requires improved methods for assessing its effectiveness in meeting its goals. Broadbent (1995) (Sinclair, 1995; Guthrie & English, 1997; Kloot & Martin, 2000) asserts that performance measurement in government is associated with accountability, and inadequate performance measurement systems fail to clarify the type of services provided and their intended recipients. Effective leadership in local government is crucial for delivering high-quality services to the community. Pretorius and Schurink (2007) assert that leadership abilities are crucial for the provision and enduring viability of social services.

The implementation of the 1991 Local Government Code granted local government entities enhanced powers and responsibilities, encompassing the delivery of five critical services previously managed by the national government,

including health, social welfare, agriculture, public works, and natural resources (Esden, 2001, p. 112). Consequently, to measure a unit's performance, it is essential to establish performance indicators that serve as benchmarks for determining whether the entity is executing its designated responsibilities. A 2013 ADB report indicates that performance evaluation would mainly rely on the performance indicators established at each level of the accountability structure, applicable to all organizational roles. In Brillantes' (2001) research, "Developing Indicators of Local Governance in the Philippines: Towards an 'ISO' for LGUs," ten essential indicators of effective local governance were delineated. These are a) transparency; b) participation; c) accountability; d) leadership; e) comprehensive organization and management; f) intergovernmental relations; g) rule of law; h) continuity in program execution, predictability, and sustainability; i) prioritization of individuals in poverty; and j) adequate and responsive delivery of essential services.

Municipal authorities play a crucial role in providing essential services to the community. VNG (2007) argues that "government exists because it is the only structure that can properly guide services like public order, safety, infrastructure, management, and maintenance of public roads and so forth." Theoretically, governments can assess their leadership effectiveness and enhance service delivery by implementing performance management. A report from the Advancing Government Accountability-Corporate Partner Advisory Group in 2009 suggested that the success of service delivery largely relies on an engaged and committed chief executive who sees the process as a means for better performance, rather than merely a compliance task. Regular application of metrics can keep the focus on the service delivery process. Government spending has a quantifiable effect on the well-being of society (ADB, 2013). As governments at all levels strive to allocate resources effectively and determine how services are provided to their constituents, it is essential to understand the long-term implications of their decisions. Establishing fundamental compliance-related information systems lays the groundwork for local governments to make informed strategic decisions regarding local matters (Martin & Spano, 2015).

2. METHODS

This qualitative-descriptive study utilized secondary data sourced from the Philippine Statistics Authority, ARMM Progress Reports, the Bangsamoro Development Plan, the ARMM Regional Development Plans and Midterm Updates, and the Philippine National Police (PNP). Document and content analysis were used to examine and assess the effectiveness of the previous Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. To better understand how services are delivered in ARMM, the data were divided into four main areas: (a) education; (b) health, water, and sanitation; (c) poverty and hunger; and (d) peace and order, with a special focus on crime rates. The test focuses on the years 1991 to 2019. This study aims to provide valuable insights and lessons from this period to assist the current regional administration in achieving more effective and responsive governance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The key findings of the study are summarized below, along with their implications for the governance and institutional efficacy of the former Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao. The results of this study could serve as a valuable reference for the new regional government of the Bangsamoro people and provide helpful suggestions in light of the current challenges and issues in local politics.

I. Profile of ARMM

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is located in two geographical regions of Southern Mindanao: the Inland Provinces of Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao, as well as the Island Provinces of Basilan (excluding Isabel City), Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi, spanning a total area of 12,288 km². It is further divided into the following political subdivisions: two component cities, one hundred sixteen municipalities, and two thousand four hundred ninety barangays. According to the 2010 Census and Housing Population report, the total population is 3,256,140 individuals (National Statistics Office, 2010). It is essential to note that the ARMM experienced a significant population decline of 864,655 between 2007 and 2010 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015).

In 2013, it was reported that the economy of ARMM experienced a decrease from 3.8 percent in 2012 to 3.0 percent in 2013, attributed to a reduction in the Agriculture, Hunting, Forestry, and Fishing (AHFF) sector and a slowdown in the Services sector. AHFF remained the dominant contributor to the region's total output, representing 58.8 percent, while the shares for Services and Industry were 34.6 percent and 6.6 percent, respectively (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015). According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, as of July 2015, ARMM had the lowest Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) at 53.5 percent.

In terms of educational attainment, ARMM holds the distinction of having the lowest Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) for primary education at 72.80%. For instance, over the past five years, 27 out of every 100 children aged 6 to 11 in ARMM were not enrolled in primary school. Regarding secondary education, it also has the lowest NER at 31.29%. For example, in the last five years, 69 out of 100 children aged 12 to 15 in ARMM were not attending secondary schools (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2012). Furthermore, ARMM is the poorest region overall, recording the highest poverty incidence among families in the years 2006, 2009, and 2012 (National Anti-Poverty Commission, 2012).

II. History of ARMM

The establishment of the ARMM can be traced back to the Bangsamoro people's quest for self-governance and self-determination. This struggle intensified when Muslims in the Southern Philippines endured a series of human rights abuses during the Marcos administration, which ultimately sparked the formation of the Muslim Independence Movement (MIM) in 1968 and the subsequent uprising led by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) under Nur Misuari in 1973 (<http://www.armm.gov.ph/history/>). Throughout this period, conflicts persisted between the

Military and the MNLF, which eventually drew the attention of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), leading to the signing of the “Tripoli Agreement between the Philippine Government and the MNLF in Tripoli, Libya on December 23, 1976,” which called for the creation of an autonomous region covering 13 provinces and nine cities in Mindanao. On March 25, 1977, then-President Marcos issued Presidential Proclamation No. 1628, which established an autonomous region in the southern Philippines. “The referendum/plebiscite on April 17, 1977, indicated that only the provinces within Region IX and XII had opted for autonomy” (<http://www.armm.gov.ph/history/>).

In 1986, following the EDSA revolution that ousted Marcos from authority, the Muslim members of the Constitutional Commission of 1986 advocated for the provision of Muslim autonomy via the 1987 Constitution. This led to the creation of Republic Act No. 6734, known as the Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, which President Cory C. Aquino signed into law on August 1, 1989, and was subsequently ratified in a plebiscite in November of the same year. The initial region comprised four provinces: Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. These provinces were later expanded on November 26, 2001, to include the City of Marawi and the Province of Basilan. The first regional elections took place on February 17, 1990, signifying the formation of the Regional Government for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (Tanggol, 2008).

III. Challenges in ARMM from 1991 to 2019

The author of this paper opted to use indicators that she thinks have a tremendous impact on the lives of the people of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, specifically on essential issues insofar as the Millennium Development Goals are concerned, such as extreme poverty and hunger, as well as the basic services provided by the regional government. These, however, are linked to the challenges faced by the region in meeting the MDGs by 2015. Moreover, based on the rationale behind the granting of regional autonomy to Muslims, e.g., as a means of promoting peace and order in the Southern Philippines, the author also preferred to delve further into the crime incidence in ARMM since the enactment of RA 6734 in 1989.

a. Extreme Poverty and Hunger

The UN’s Economic and Social Council has defined human poverty as: “a restriction of choices and opportunities, a breach of human dignity. It signifies a deficiency in the fundamental capacity to engage meaningfully in society. It entails insufficient resources to provide food and clothing for a family, lacking access to education or healthcare facilities, not having land to cultivate food, or not having a job to support oneself, as well as the inability to obtain credit. It results in insecurity, a feeling of powerlessness, and the exclusion of individuals, families, and communities. It makes people more vulnerable to violence, and it often involves living in precarious conditions, without access to clean water or sanitation.” In the context of ARMM, tackling poverty has remained a key challenge for its regional government.

Region	1991	1994	1997	2000	2003	2006	2009	2012	2015
ARMM	26.9	60	57.3	53.8	45.4	40.5	39.9	48.7	48.2

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority (2016)

As of 2012, 48.2 percent of total families in ARMM were core poor, a minimal decline from 2012 data presented at 48.7 percent. For the period of twelve years (1991-2003), the subsistence incidence increased by 5.3 percentage points from 26.9 percent in 1991 to 32.2 percent in 2003.

Region	1991	1997	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2009	2012	2015
ARM	5,20	10,43	12,75	13,03	13,23	12,73	13,11	14,16	12,64	14,84	16,68	20,51	21,56
M	1	1	3	7	9	9	3	3	7	5	3	7	3

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority (2016)

The persistent high population growth rate of 3.63 percent (during the five years from 1995 to 2000) further hindered the growth of per capita income. The annual per capita poverty threshold, or the amount required to satisfy basic food and non-food needs in 2015, was estimated at PhP21,563, representing a 96.7% increase over the 1997 threshold of PhP10,431.

According to the First ARMM Progress Report on the Millennium Development Goals, over half of families in various regions are living in poverty. This issue is most prevalent among families led by individuals working in agriculture and fishing. More than fifty percent of families with heads who are farmers or fishermen lack sufficient income to satisfy their basic needs. Between 1994 and 2000, the rate of poverty in ARMM increased as the situation regarding peace and order declined. Balisacan echoed this report, noting that the challenges related to peace and security significantly contributed to the rising poverty rates in some parts of Mindanao (Umbao, 2013).

b. Delivery of Basic Services

b.1 Basic Education

Although there was a continued increase in enrolment in the elementary schools from 327,999 in SY 1993-1994 to 686,024 in SY 2009-2010, ARMM still lagged in terms of educational performance compared with other Mindanao administrative regions and the rest of the country.

Region/ Province/City	SY 93-94	SY 00-01	SY 01-02	SY 02-03	SY 03-04	SY 04-05	SY 05-06	SY 09-10
Lanao del Sur	126,498	161,228	170,507	201,377	196,320	187,551	181,260	213,358
Maguindanao	89,565	115,698	121,556	128,901	135,677	138,463	136,061	186,618
Sulu	68,039	77,609	78,805	81,803	82,189	84,186	89,789	109,170
Tawi-Tawi	43,897	52,330	52,642	55,636	54,803	62,265	61,780	78,776
Basilan	-	-	51,391	43,581	38,546	45,676	46,844	47,142
Marawi City	-	-	29,958	37,531	36,088	39,379	40,297	50,960
ARMM	327,999	406,865	504,859	548,829	543,623	557,520	556,031	686,024

Notes:

SY 1993-1994 to SY 2001-2002 were taken from the DepEd-ARMM

SY 2002-2003 to SY 2005-2006 from the National BEIS

SY 2001-2002 DepEd CO's Statistical Data Bulletin excludes Basilan and Marawi City

SY 2009-2010 DepEd ARMM Office of Planning Services

The increase in enrollment, although fluctuating, continues until SY 2009-2010. Within nine years, the enrolment improved by 69 percentage point or 279,159 increase from 406,865 enrollees in SY 2000-2001 to 686,024 enrollees in SY 2009-2010 which may also be attributed to the implementation of the Early Child Care Development (ECCD) and the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Programs which allow six (6) years old children to enroll in Grade I. These data indicate the need for additional classrooms and desks to cope with the growing number of school-age enrolment (First ARMM Progress Report, 2009).

Region/ Province/City	SY 93-94	SY 99-00	SY 00-01	SY 02-03	SY 03-04	SY 04-05
Maguindanao	38	34.94	36.76	33.66	38.23	35.87
Lanao Sur I	33	24.22	30.04	50.99	20.09	34.00
Lanao Sur II	26	24.22	23.22	64.14	52.72	23.81
Sulu	31.25	37.84	43.39	56.77	57.13	60.00
Tawi-Tawi	41	39.85	49.88	55.44	74.89	52.57
Basilan	-	(41.56)	(49.71)	60.41	60.41	65.84
Marawi City	(30.03)@	(43.33)	(62.37)	28.56	22.27	43.2
ARMM	33.85	32.21	36.66	50.00	46.53	45.04

Notes:

SY 1993-1994, SY 1999-2000 to SY 2000-2001 were taken from DepEd-ARMM

SY 2002-2003 to SY 2004-2005 were taken from National BEIS data

Among the provinces in ARMM, Basilan and Sulu showed the highest survival rates with 65.84 percent and 60 percent, respectively, while Lanao del Sur II had the lowest rate at 23.81 percent, as of the SY 2004-2005. It is worth noting that of these provinces, only Lanao del Sur I and II failed to maintain a cohort survival rate, with a sudden change of 34 percent and 23.81 percent in SY 2004-2005, from 50 percent and 64 percent in SY 2002-2003, respectively. A remarkable decrease was also observed in Marawi City, with a 63.37 percent increase in SY 2000-2001, followed by a sudden decline to 22.27 percent in SY 2003-2004. This raised the question of why Marawi City's public elementary cohort survival rate deteriorated, despite having a higher number of schools compared to other provinces in the region. Meanwhile, the continuous commendable performance of Basilan in terms of education demonstrates the non-traditional framework of learning that has shown great promise, especially for the young people of a province long struggling with problems of insurgency and poverty, adopted by the entire Division of Basilan (<http://partners.smart.com.ph/dlp/news/news/2015/05/18/dynamic-learning-raises-the-bar-for-education-in-armm>).

b.2 Health, Sanitation, Drinking Water, and Nutrition

Only 37% of the population has access to a community water system, while a third uses natural sources such as springs, rivers, or lakes, and a greater number use a drilled well.
Compared to the national average of over 80%, 22% of households have sanitary toilets or water-sealed toilets;
By their first birthday, just 29% of youngsters are fully vaccinated, while 40% have not had any vaccinations.
With 67.35 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, maternal health lags behind other regions.
In ARMM, only 35% of women receive antenatal care from a qualified professional.
12.3% of newborns are born in a hospital (compared to 61% worldwide), 20.4% are delivered by a skilled professional (compared to 72%), and 20.4% of women receive postnatal checks (77% nationwide).
The ARMM recorded the highest unmet need for family planning at 27.6%, in contrast to the national average of 17.5%.
8.5% acute malnutrition in children under 5, compared to 7.9% nationally.

Stunting affects 39% of children under five in Mindanao, a significant public health issue, compared to the national rate of 33.6%.

Source: *Bangsamoro Development Plan (2015)*

Table 5 presents the current health, sanitation, drinking water, and nutrition conditions of the people in ARMM, highlighting the basic social services that they are entitled to receive from the government. The study revealed that, compared to other regions in the Philippines, ARMM remains at the bottom in terms of the availability of these social services. In the case of drinking water which is one of the basic needs of men, study shows that only 37% of the population have access to it due to lack of access to potable water and the prevalent practice of open defecation in the region (<http://interaksyon.com/article/109189/doh-armm-notes-aggressive-occurrence-of-tropical-diseases-due-to-dirty-drinking-water>). Another alarming problem now in the area is the greater number of children who have not received vaccination. Based on the study, 40% of the children in ARMM failed to receive vaccination despite several programs by the DOH. According to Health Undersecretary Janette Garin, the lack of preparation from the ARMM resulted in the delay of the implementation. She urged local government units to help reach children in their locality (Geronimo, 2014).

Just like other regions in the Philippines, the maternal mortality ratio of 67.35 deaths per 100,000 live births may be attributed to the inadequacy of health personnel and the preference of mothers to seek services from traditional birth attendants, especially in hard-to-reach areas. Moreover, the poor socio-economic status of the mother, led by poor nutrition, lack of education, and access to quality maternal care, was a primary factor contributing to the high Maternal Mortality Rate in the region (First ARMM Progress Report, 2009). Other reasons behind these identified problems include the difficulty in accessing most of its barangays. There are no roads, only trails. When it rains, it becomes particularly challenging, especially for those requiring emergency medical attention in parts of ARMM.

c. Crime Incidence

Region	2001	2002	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
ARMM	536	686	1,736	1,207	934	834	2,455

Source: *Philippine National Police (2016)*

The data on the total crime volume in ARMM from 2001 to 2013, as shown in Table 6, suggests an increasing number of crimes in the region. In 2001, only 536 crimes were reported in the PNP, which is four times fewer than the 2,455 total crimes reported in 2013. However, ARMM's crime incidents pale in comparison to other regions in the Philippines, such as NCR. The crimes recorded in the ARMM account for approximately one percent of the 241,644 crimes logged by the PNP for Metro Manila in 2013, according to PNP-DIDM executive officer C/Supt. Augusto Marquez noted that culture played a significant role in why the crime volume in the said region was the lowest among the areas in the country. As told by him, "Because of culture, people will not report [crimes] to the police; they consult their village chiefs because once they report it to the police, it is tantamount to a declaration of war" (Vargas, 2014).

The next page presents the distribution of reported index and non-index crimes by region and type, along with index crimes against persons. Tables 7 and 8 indicate that among these regions, only ARMM exhibits a low index of crimes, despite the significant presence of Moro rebels, militants, and various lawless factions, including Moro separatist groups, the al-Qaeda-affiliated Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), ISIS, and other similar entities. These findings imply that ARMM is capable of handling crimes, whether against persons or property. It is equally important to recognize that, in terms of peace and order, as well as conflict resolution among the Bangsamoro people in ARMM, the law of the land, shari'ah, and ijma/taritib play a significant role (Tawagon, 1989).

Region	Volume								
	Index Crimes							Total Non-Index Crimes	Total Crime Volume
	Crimes against Persons					Crimes against Property	Total		
	Murder	Homicide	Physical Injuries	Rape	Total				
Philippines	8,484	3,022	34,825	4,738	51,069	78,092	129,161	88,651	217,812
National Capital Region (NCR)	820	395	9,098	543	10,856	27,064	37,920	19,058	56,978

Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)	103	96	2,468	162	2,829	3,838	6,667	4,160	10,827
1 Ilocos Region	330	125	1,322	177	1,954	1,376	3,330	9,103	12,433
2 Cagayan Valley	268	109	821	112	1,310	1,113	2,423	1,307	3,730
3 Central Luzon	620	207	3,407	720	4,954	7,071	12,025	10,473	22,498
4A CALABARZON	1,278	316	2,569	911	5,074	4,657	9,731	10,163	19,894
4B MIMAROPA	225	65	527	161	978	326	1,304	1,219	2,523
5 Bicol Region	408	181	2,292	335	3,216	2,641	5,857	4,233	10,090
6 Western Visayas	529	285	1,628	492	2,934	2,800	5,734	2,043	7,777
7 Central Visayas	605	316	2,638	302	3,861	9,251	13,112	7,354	20,466
8 Eastern Visayas	427	163	914	110	1,614	1,031	2,645	1,775	4,420
9 Zamboanga Peninsula	596	167	1,578	187	2,528	2,523	5,051	3,267	8,318
10 Northern Mindanao	578	158	2,053	171	2,960	5,815	8,775	3,483	12,258
11 Davao Region	605	171	1,554	77	2,407	5,092	7,499	6,027	13,526
12 SOCCSKSARGEN	529	146	1,126	169	1,970	1,977	3,947	3,415	7,362
13 Caraga	343	81	666	102	1,192	1,339	2,531	1,347	3,878
ARMM	220	41	164	7	432	178	610	224	834

Source: Philippine National Police (2016)

Region	Index Crimes Against Persons			
	2009	2010	2011	2012
Philippines	142,482	86,008	59,800	188,813
National Capital Region (NCR)	14,124	8,186	9,376	24,437
3 Central Luzon	16,510	15,358	7,960	20,744
4A CALABARZON	13,895	8,644	6,128	18,058
6 Western Visayas	14,328	4,975	3,147	16,770
10 Northern Mindanao	12,548	3,909	3,408	15,337
7 Central Visayas	8,593	6,451	4,700	12,152
11 Davao Region	9,171	4,764	3,528	11,501
8 Eastern Visayas	8,040	1,768	2,319	9,544
5 Bicol Region	6,251	5,317	3,691	9,132
1 Ilocos Region	6,997	5,698	3,261	8,774
2 Cagayan Valley	6,859	2,979	1,527	8,057
12 SOCCSKSARGEN	6,059	2,853	2,089	7,860
9 Zamboanga Peninsula	4,498	4,190	2,714	6,839
Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)	3,870	5,538	2,322	6,537
4B MIMAROPA	4,926	2,306	1,256	5,743
13 Caraga	4,352	1,852	1,512	5,442
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM)	801	635	505	1,226
National Support Units (NSUs)	660	585	357	660

Source: Philippine National Police (2016)

IV. Assessment of the Performance of the Regional Government in Addressing the Challenge

Republic Act No. 6734, known as the Organic Act for the ARMM, was enacted by Congress and subsequently amended for enhanced autonomy under RA 9054. Its purpose was to resolve conflict and alleviate poverty by instituting a framework for limited autonomy in Moro self-governance. Despite its nearly 27-year existence, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) remains the poorest region in the country, with the highest poverty incidence in both 2012 and 2015. The

Poverty incidence among households in ARMM increased to 53.4 percent in the first semester of 2015, up from 46.9 percent during the same period in 2012. In ARMM, 50% of families had an income below the poverty threshold, which is the minimum required to satisfy basic food and non-food necessities (<http://www.napc.gov.ph/articles/armm-still-poorest-region>).

Low literacy rates, poor health and nutrition, and short life expectancy aggravate further the poverty experienced by the people, who are continuously plagued by peace and order problems. In the First ARMM Progress Report in 2009, it was reported that unstable peace and order situation, low production and poor quality of agri-fishery products, low productivity in aqua-culture and industry, lack of processing facilities, less productive employment opportunities, low level of private investment and entrepreneurship, disparities in access to opportunities, insufficient social safety nets, and unexpected occurrence of both natural and artificial calamities aggravated poverty. Tanggol (1995) noted that the establishment of the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines-East ASEAN Growth (BIMP-EAGA) has not led to significant investments and benefits for residents of ARMM. Internal factors encompass unstable peace and order conditions, inadequate infrastructure, land tenure issues, and an unresponsive governmental bureaucracy. He stated that the regional government and its constituent local governments are primarily reliant on the national government for financial support. The taxing authority of provinces, municipalities, and barangays is infrequently employed. The regional government has limited capacity to exercise its taxing authority, as the primary taxation powers are allocated to the national government (Tanggol, 1993).

With these problems existing in the region, the Hataman Administration was able to implement programs like the ongoing implementation of the Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA), Bottom-Up Budgeting (BUB), Transition Investment Support Plan (TISP), Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT), Kalusugang Pangkalahatan-More Services on Health (KP-MSH), Localization of National Action Plan (LNAP) on women, peace, and security, and other nationally funded programs, which provide an opportunity for the region to reduce poverty from 2013 to 2016. However, there are some issues with the poverty reduction programs of the regional government of ARMM. The problem is not the program but the implementation strategies of the regional government. It should be noted that rumors have been circulating regarding how municipal or city link officers, for instance, are being harassed by barangay chairmen whenever the latter are not given the discretion to decide who among their constituents is qualified for the Conditional Cash Transfer. There are cases where local officials threaten the lives of implementing officers or program evaluators in the interest of the latter. There are also instances where employed workers are unexpectedly given a slot for CCT due to their connection to a local official. Therefore, the intended targets for the program are excluded because they were not prioritized during the screening process. In other words, there is a significant amount of politics at the operational level that may not be within the knowledge of higher authorities. With this, the higher authority must authorize someone to closely supervise and monitor every program of

the regional government, taking into account the safety and security of its implementing officers.

Moreover, during the time of the then Regional Governor Datu Zaldy Uy Ampatuan, he emphasized two priority areas of concern in education. These are: (a) reviewing the educational system and policies to introduce reforms and make education and training more responsive and practical; and (b) training and retraining teachers in English, Mathematics, and Science, including ICT use in teaching and learning. He initiated Basic Education Policy Reforms, accompanied by financial management reforms, necessary to institute change in the education sector. Supportive of the ongoing policy and financial reforms, efforts are also directed towards improving access to education and ensuring educational security. In 2001, they strengthened the Madaris Education and Alternative Learning System, as well as successfully trained and retrained teachers, including those on the use of ICT in the learning process. In 2012, when the Oversight Reform Team (ORT) assumed leadership of DepEd-ARMM, one of the Key Reform agendas was to improve the quality of the department's data. Upon data validation, it was found that while we have a surplus of educational facilities, such as school buildings, in some areas in ARMM, we have less access to educational services in other areas, as reflected in the Electronic Basic Education Information System (EBEIS). The DepEd-ARMM is now addressing these shortages. Data validation employing the Learner Information System (LIS) further reveals a significant number of double enrollees (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, 2015).

For one, the above-mentioned initiatives of the ARMM's regional government, irrespective of the administration, may be effective. Still, they have failed to address the immediate concern that challenges the community itself: attaining a quality education, according to Atty. Maisara C. Dandamun-Latiph, there are significant challenges affecting the education quality of ARMM, these include the following: a) underinvestment in education; b) poor performance in basic education indicators; c) low participation rates-lack of interest, no available school, difficulties in coping with school work, high and direct opportunity costs; d) low preparedness for School-only 14% attend ECE; e) low elementary school completion and many students dropping out; f) low secondary school completion and high drop-out rates; g) lagging behind international comparisons; h) low learning achievement; i) gender disparities in favour of girls; j) insufficient day care centers and preschools; k) insufficient classrooms; l) lack of science labs, computer rooms, libraries, and materials; and m) inadequate water and health facilities. She reiterated that the only way to solve these problems in ARMM is to strengthen and improve the management capability of DepEd ARMM by enhancing policy formulation, review, and implementation; establishing responsive organizational structures; strengthening management systems and facilities; and refining management processes and practices. Atty. Latiph added that there is a need to improve the instructional capability of teachers and provide sufficient and appropriate resource materials to enhance teaching and learning outcomes and this is to be achieved by supporting systems for effective and efficient teaching and supervisory processes in public schools thereby contributing to improve student learning outcomes; the integration of Madaris as a

private sector strategy for basic education and as partner in the attainment of education for-all policy; and proving and adequate alternative learning strategies system thereby contributing to improved access to education and student learning outcomes. Lastly, she emphasized the importance of upgrading the Regional and Divisional offices to facilitate efficient and decentralized management, as well as to provide adequate school facilities.

4. CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

Indeed, the success or failure of an organization depends on the kind of people it has. This is equally true of a regional government like the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, including its top management. As a living institution mandated to perform the roles and functions of a regional government, which is expected to respond to the immediate needs of its constituents, we must go beyond the usual functions attuned to the interests or plans of the national government. The regional government should reevaluate and reorient itself to the fundamental reason behind its creation, which is to improve the living conditions of the Bangsamoro people. Poverty is still a prevailing condition. It is unfortunate to say that for almost twenty-seven years of the existence of ARMM, there seems to be no changes in the living conditions of our Bangsamoro brothers and sisters in the Southern Philippines. It can be said that the Multiculturalist approach could be far superior to any peace agreement adopted by the national government and the rebel group. The regional government as a whole failed to perform its mandated functions, even in its simplest duties, including the strict implementation of poverty alleviation programs and the delivery of basic social services, which have been mentioned already in this paper.

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