Division of Lanao Del Sur 1, DepEd-ARMM: Its Vital Role in Peacebuilding and Reconciliation in the Post-Conflict Settings

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ABSTRACT

The Philippines has experienced over 40 years of internal armed conflict in the Southern Island of Mindanao, as the resident Muslim population continues to demand self-determination. Hence, this study aimed to locate and explore frameworks on building peace initiatives and conflict tools resolution as the symbolic rites of procedures. Specifically, it sought to: 1) Understand the meaning of peacebuilding and reconciliation in the context of post-conflict settings; 2) Define extremism; 3) Determine the role of Division of Lanao del Sur 1, DepEd-ARMM in preventing extremism, and 4) Determine how education can counter religious extremism. Using documentary analysis method, data were obtained and collected from the Mindanao State University (MSU) System library, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine National Police, the Department of Education (DepEd-ARMM), the Department of Social Welfare

and Development (DSWD), the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC), and Bangon Marawi Task Force. There were six (6) key informants interviewed by the researcher. Based on the nature of the study, no statistical treatment of data gathered was done. This is the limitation of the study. Findings revealed that peacebuilding facilitates the establishment of durable peace and prevents the recurrence of violence through reconciliation, education, institutional and political building for economic transformation. The Division of Lanao del Sur 1, DepED-ARMM recommends that the government should create an independent commission to highlight measurable progress and determine the benchmarks that these programs have met.

INTRODUCTION

Reconciliation, as a peacebuilding activity for social reconstruction, gained recognition in academic policy circles for potentially rebuilding broken relationship during the outbreak of war, establishing institutional mechanisms in dealing with human rights atrocities focusing on victim's right to truth and justice, as well as an avenue for long-term development strategies for divided societies. For those engaged in peacebuilding, reconciliation has been an expanding concept including justice measures, accountability processes, and the rule of law in divided societies in which all strategies receive international support (Sriram, 2010).

The advantages of international tribunals over local courts include that they will not have capacity issues, procedural standards will be followed, accusations of 'victor's justice' cannot be made, and they are not vulnerable to intimidation. However, one of the main criticisms against international tribunals is the lack of enforcement mechanism. Tribunals can indict suspected perpetrators of atrocities and can issue arrest warrants, but are dependent on national governments to apprehend them. Another criticism is that they are often removed from the countries concerned and, therefore, local people feel little connection to them, and they focus on retribution which can undermine local efforts for restorative justice and reconciliation.

Another consideration, particularly for ad hoc tribunals, is the huge cost and time involved (Bloomfield, 2006). Finally, war crimes tribunals can help establish

the guilt of individual perpetrators, but may not establish broader societal patterns of criminal behavior. This was the practice in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia is a solid proof showing the importance given to these processes. For instance, the creation of international tribunals and judicial sector reform is widely supported by international agents as quite essential to reconciliation. Academicians studying divided societies state that reconciliation can meet everyday needs of those living in peacebuilding (Eastmond, 2010) through interethnic dialogue, social empowerment deliberative democracy, and ideational culture as well as non-state factors that can foster legitimacy to peace operation.

Projecting peacebuilding through the reconciliation can contribute to liberal peace critique, a discussion on contemporary peacebuilding that looks at the legitimacy of liberal peacebuilding in post-war societies, the nature of liberal state building as a peacebuilding strategy and the excessive focus on "fragile state" as a threat to international security (Paris, Newman, & Richmond, 2009). Reconciliation contributes to liberal peace debates by critically looking into the negative impact of state-centric security in justice, truth, repair and reconciliation (Conteh-Morgan, 2005).

It has been reported that the Philippines has experienced four decades of internal armed conflict in the country, particularly in the Southern Island of Mindanao, as the resident Muslim population continues to demand self-determination. Since the late 1960s, the conflict between Muslim separatists and the Christian-dominated government has killed approximately 160,000 people and displaced more than two million (Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, 2013). After a decade-long peace process, the Philippine Government and the Muslim separatists, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) signed a final Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) on March 2014 moving the conflict into a transition period toward the establishment of a new Autonomous political entity called "Bangsamoro." The Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) is the legal basis for this new entity. After the BBL's approval by the Philippine Congress, it is expected that public referendum will be conducted to determine and finalize the areas to be included in the territory of the Bangsamoro Government.

Parallel to this concept, the Philippine Government recognizes the need and importance of peace education, particularly, in Mindanao. The efforts of the Government, through the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), has laid a strong foundation at the policy level for peace education. Through OPAPP's advocacy and assistance, a policy instrument has been developed over the years. The national leadership issued Executive Order

No. 570, Institutionalizing Peace Education in the Basic Education Curriculum and Teachers in 2006 to strengthen peace education in the country. The response of the Department of Education was conducted to implement a nationwide consultation on peace education and the subsequent issuance of DepEd Memo No. 469 series of 2008 which states that all teacher courses and activities in the Special Topics be part of Teacher Education Curriculum. The emerging focus now is on honing the teachers with skills, values and perspective needed to ensure that peace should be taught in the classroom and integrated in student activities.

The national Government is doing its best to solve this conflict within the framework of the Philippine Constitution. Yet, the armed conflict continues as the years go by (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). Many lives have been lost and substantial national resources are wasted. Mindanao is a sleeping economic giant sedated by ongoing-armed conflict that affects the entire island, and the whole nation. The Mindanao peace educators, particularly in DepEd Region XII, are being used for conflict resolution and for promoting better Christian-Muslim relations. The overall framework of education for a culture of peace has six dimensions: 1) dismantling the culture of war, 2) living with justice and compassion, 3) building cultural respect, reconciliation and solidarity, 4) promoting human rights and responsibilities, 5) living with harmony with the earth, and 6) cultivating inner peace.

FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on Wilner and Dubouloz (2011) who explained the stages in transformative behavior theory. It points out the critical importance of taking action in the transformative learning process because it involves not only a sense of empowerment, but also a critical understanding of ways in which social relations and culture have shaped an individual's beliefs and feelings, and eventually the development of strategies for a transformed behavior in quotidian activities.

As a transformative phenomenon, radicalization happens suddenly or over a period through the trigger phase, the process of change phase and the outcome phase. Moghaddam (2005) uses the metaphor of a narrowing staircase to describe the path of terrorism. We look at this phenomenon similarly to progress from fundamental to extremism, to radicalism, to terrorism. The staircase progressively narrows as fewer people are persuaded to climb to the top, and commit acts of violence.

Figure 1. The staircase to terrorism (Moghaddan 2005)

Educators must have the appropriate tools to recognize, understand and address the psych-social factors that may lead to any stage in the path to terrorism. Hence, teachers and community members must recognize the push and pull factors toward radicalization to ensure a safe-learning environment for students.

The second theory cited by the researcher is known as the Track 6 Approach. It is a strategy for inclusive peacebuilding. It emphasized that in many countries, the government, civil society, and local communities often act separately to address problems they face (Interpeace, 2017). The integrated Track 6 Approach helps ensure that high-level policies reflect local realities and benefit from local knowledge. They help establish processes of change that connect local communities, civil society, government, and international community-an approach we call Track 6. In the peacebuilding field, initiatives that involve government officials and other high-level decision-makers refer to as Tract 1. Initiatives that work with influential actors from civil society also refer as Track 2. Those that engaged with local population at the community and grassroots level is named Track 3. Interspace works across all levels of society, connecting the three tracks 1+2+3=6.

Figure 2. Conceptual framework of the theory known as Track 6 Approach

The third theory is the Realistic conflict developed by LeVine and Camphbell (1972). It explains that ethnocentrism and outgroup stem from competition or conflict resources, such as territory, employment, and material benefits, or threat to the intergroup access to or possibility of attainment of these resources, such as rank, prestige or status (Tajfel, 1982). This theory is functional and argues that ethnocentrism is useful for reaching a goal. If the intergroup cooperation is essential to meet the goal, then intergroup harmony would emerge. Reviewing experimental studies, Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell (1987) argued between intragroup and intergroup centeredness. Thus, people tend to give more importance to their groups when it is under threat.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the study is to understand the meaning of peacebuilding and reconciliation in the context of post-conflict settings. Specifically, it sought: 1) To understand the meaning of extremism, 2) Identify the ways wherein education can counter religious extremism; 3) Identify the role of DepEd-ARMM Division of Lanao del Sur 1 in preventing Extremism.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study utilized documentary analysis. According to Scott (1990), there are four formulated quality control criteria for handling documentary sources: 1) Authenticity refers to whether the evidence is genuine and from impeccable sources; 2) Credibility refers to whether the evidence is typical of its kind, 3) Representative refers to whether the documents consulted are representatives of the totality of the relevant documents, and 4) Meaning refers to whether the evidence is clear and comprehensible. Based on the nature of the study, no statistical treatment

of data gathered was done. Hence, the researcher found it that by summing up these principles and processes. The documentary analysis is the most appropriate method in this particular study Moreover, often documentary evidence is combine with data from interviews and observation to minimize bias and establish credibility.

Research Setting

The study was conducted in Marawi City, the capital City Province of Lanao del Sur, Philippines located in Central Mindanao. It is a fourth class city and according to the 2015 census by the Philippine Statistics Authority, it has a population of 201,785 people. Marawi was formerly known as Dansalan. Some historians said it served as the capital of the Moro Province, then later of the lone Lanao province before it divided into Lanao Del Norte and Lanao Del Sur. Marawi got its charter in 1940. The charter of old Dansalan municipality was conceived by the Philippine Commonwealth President Manuel L. Quezon and Assemblyman, then later Senator Tomas L. Cabili. The revision of the official name from Dansalan to Marawi was through the Congressional Amendment of the Charter in 1956 sponsored by Senator Domocao Alonto. This embodied by Republic Act No. 1552 dated June 16, 1956. Parliamentary Bill No. 261 in the defunct Batasang Pambansa, which was sponsored by late Assemblyman Jamail M. Dianalan, proposed the renaming of the city as "Islamic City of Marawi."

The Division of Lanao del Sur 1, Department of Education of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (DepEd-ARMM) was among the divisions created under Act No. 14, which was recently amended by Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 279 on August 3, 2010. The office of the Division of Lanao del Sur 1 is located at Datu Saber, Marawi City. Due to the Marawi siege in 2017, they transferred to hold their office located at Poblacion, Saguiaran, and Lanao Del Sur. Based on the report of their Planning Officer II, the Division has thirty-seven (37) districts strategically located in the province of Lanao del Sur. Some Municipalities are being divided into two or three districts to ensure smooth administration and supervision of the school operations.
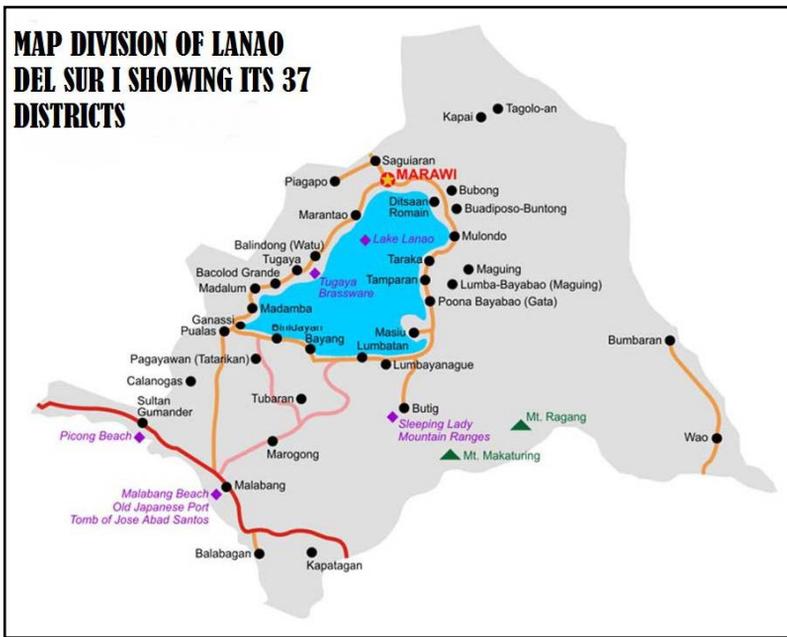
Figure 3. Map of Lanao del Sur

Research Ethics

Prior to the actual conduct of the study, a letter of request was prepared addressed to concerned agencies to conduct study and to gather the necessary documents and interview with the respondents. It was made clear to them that whatever kind of documents they will provide shall be treated utmost confidentiality. There were six (6) Key informants identified prior to official notification in a form of request letter addressed to each informant. The semi-unstructured informal interview was utilized as a preliminary step to generate ideas about the subject being investigated. This method was utilized to enhance the reliability and validity outcome of the study.

Data gathering and analysis

After collecting the data, the researcher has categorized the data into two categories: 1) Documents obtained from the different head of agencies in Marawi City like situational reports, proceedings of conference, workshops and Executive

orders, Memoranda, newspapers, departmental libraries, bulletin on health, economics, employment, economic growth, housing population census reports, and problem on education reported by school officials, and 2) Personal interviews to some selected persons knowledgeable on the subject matter like the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Philippine National Police (PNP), Court officials, academicians, traditional, Ulama leaders and among others. The researcher also utilized the secondary data to uncover in-depth understanding of the context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Understand the meaning of Peacebuilding and Reconciliation in the Context of Post-Conflict Settings

Peacebuilding is an intervention designed to prevent the resumption of violent conflict by creating sustainable peace. Peacebuilding activities address the root cause of violence and create a societal expectation of peaceful conflict resolution and stabilize society politically and socio-economically. Some activities included in peacebuilding vary depending on the situation and **agent of peacebuilding. Successful peacebuilding can also create good environment enhancing durable peace, reconcile opponents, prevent conflict from re-starting, integrate civil society** create the rule of law and address underlying structural and social issue. Researchers and practitioners also found out that peacebuilding is most effective and durable when it relies upon the local conceptions of peace and the underlying dynamics (De Coning, 2013).

The approach of Literacy by Pope John Paul II (1980) recommended that rather than measuring the results, evaluation should be seen as a tool for learning and feedback. He emphasized that given the nature of contemporary armed conflict, peacebuilding faces four main challenges. First, it must transform the international culture, which accepts, and promote the goal sale of weapons. Second, peacebuilding approach must take a very long-term view to build enduring peace. Third, peacebuilding must take a broader, more comprehensive view of the people and contexts which produce conflict. Fourth, people must focus on preventing minor conflicts from escalating into open warfare (Lederach, 1997). He added that a focus on reconciliation recognizes that conflicts are essentially a type of relationship. It also allows to address the psychological components of conflict through categorization of peacebuilding among the peacebuilding fields of many scholars.

On the other hand, reconciliation as adapted by most contemporary post-conflict countries. It is a process that aims to heal the past trauma experience

through forgiveness and public apology to restore the relationship. This concept of reconciliation has earned notable recognition in international politics and has become the focus of discourse in scholarly debates (Meierhenrich, 2008; Moon, 2004).

Reconciliation has been defined in various ways. Meirchenrich proposed a systematized concept of reconciliation as accommodation of former adversaries through mutually conciliatory means, requiring both forgiveness and mercy. Bloomfield defines reconciliation as an over-arching process, which includes the search for truth, justice, forgiveness and healing to find ways alongside with enemies (2004:12). Other authors, however, said that the prospects for radically transforming social structures through education are continually hindered by poorly conceived reforms and continuing disparities like the South Africa's school system (Jansen & Taylor, 2003).

Meaning of Extremism and How Education Counters Religious Extremism

Extremism means the belief in a support for ideas that are very far to what most people considered correct or reasonable. "Extremism," thus, refers to the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals (FBI.gov, n.d.). This includes terrorism and other forms of politically motivated and sectarian violence. Typically, "violent extremism" also identifies an enemy or enemies, who is/are the object/s of hatred and violence. The conceptual core of extremism is that it is an ideologically motivate resort to the use of violence, commonly based on conspiracy theories (UNESCO, 2017). On terrorism aspect, it refers to a particular strategy adopted to achieve political goal, which is singularly the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear (Byman, Chalk, Hoffman, Rosenau, & Brannan., 2001).

In the Philippines, the radicalization of Muslim communities is rooted to survive, both physically and culturally, and has been shaped by the reaction to the impact of the "intrusive" West. This perceived intrusion couched in terms of modernization and globalization may have brought technology, profitable trade, and economic development, but the rural's and urban's poorest have not benefited. The gap between the rich and poor has widened and globalization is seen as a threat to people and culture imposition of Western "descent," consumption-oriented market values that disregard and destroy traditional values.

In this sense, Muslim communities are radicalizing in proportion to their failure to "modernize" themselves relative to their environment modernization which can be traumatic, particularly, if forced. The transformation away from tradition puts societies under deep distress. In Muslim areas such as Thailand

and the Philippines, our freedom is at risk from internal conflicts with central government to take a new level and complicated by the war on terror. The radicalization of Muslim groups, the expansion of an extremist religious interpretation of Islam (by ISIS, Boko, Haram, Jemaah Islamiyah and other terrorist organizations) does not help us. We are at risk from within and from without. Efforts to prevent violent extremism must be considered within a holistic framework (Tang, 2017).

In an article, entitled "OUR MARAWI" Building a better and strong Marawi City from the ashes of war stressed on a competent, clean and accountable governance by the LGUs and other provinces of ARMM as one important intervention. Efficient and responsive services by the various government agencies in the region will project an image of a caring and generous government, which serves as an effective shield against violent extremism and radicalism.

In addition to the above interventions, the following measures are recommended: 1) A multispectral community engagement of suspected terrorist and their sympathizers by local government official's secular and Islamic religious schools; and 2) Muslim and Christian religious organizations, sultans and other traditional leaders and civil society organizations as community support groups for modernization and peacebuilding. These community groups should develop and implement programs and activities (e.g. seminars, conferences, training, discussion groups, other related social events) to promote religious moderation, intercultural understanding, inter-faith relations and a culture of peace (Mindanao Gold Star Daily, 2017). These groups may collectively initiate constructive interaction or reconciliatory moves to win the terrorists and their sympathizers.

Mindanao State University (MSU) should spread efforts along this line by serving on the dialogue center, in-charge of conceptualizing and coordinating the implementation of programs and activities that provide moderating or soothing peacebuilding openings for fundamentalist or extremist views. The Marawi siege conveys one clear message: It is a part of a bigger problem-the contemporary Moro armed struggle. Many of the Maute and Abu Sayyaf fighters who attacked Marawi were former members of MILF and MNLF who were disillusioned with what they saw as a slow or dismal progress in the implementation of a signed peace agreement (Iqbal, 2017). To prevent its repartitioning, Marawi and Lanao del Sur, and the Philippine government has to find a creative approach to implement fully its peace agreements with the MILF and MNLF. The proposed Basic Law and federalism options are not contradictory alternative political solutions.

Both options can be ingeniously link complementary to form an inclusive and progressive peace package (Muslim, 2017) supporting this intervention programs. In relation to this development, the responses of peacebuilders community in Mindanao reported that for the past two years, they had trained 288 volunteers for Peace and Reconciliation. The primary goal is to seek innovative ways to create time and a place to address, integrate, and embrace the painful past and shared future as means of dealing with the present (Marawi Crisis Perspective and Action Plan, 2017).

On Islamic approaches to reconciliation, many of the concepts associated with transitional justice-truth, accountability, justice(retribution) and compensation for victims found in Islam. There is close alignment between Islamic law and transitional justice approaches that seek to foster reconciliation. However, in practice, victims of atrocities in Muslim-majority countries seldom see justice after conflicts. This has been attributed to the problem of weak governance, absence of rule of law and low levels of human development in such countries, rather than Islamic legal thinking (Worden, Ross, Parker, & Azar, 2011).

Role of DepEd-ARMM Division of Lanao del Sur 1 in Preventing Extremism

The role of education in preventing violent extremism and de-radicalizing young people has only recently gained global acceptance. In the report of the United Nations Security Council also emphasized in its Resolution No. 2178 & 2250 which notably highlights the need for "quality education for peace that equips youth with the ability to engage constructively in civic structures and inclusive political processes and call on "all relevant actors to constitute mechanisms to promote a culture of peace, tolerance, intellectual and inter-religious dialogue that involves youth and discourage their participation in acts of violence, terrorism and all forms of discrimination" (UN Security Council, 2015).

The Executive Board Decision 197 of UNESCO reported that violent extremism can be prevented through education. It seeks to strengthen the capacities of national education systems (egg. policies, teachers, and educational contents) to appropriately and effectively contribute to national prevention efforts. This includes equipping learners of all ages and notably young women and men with the knowledge, values, attitudes and behaviors, which foster responsible global citizenship critical thinking, empathy and the ability to take action against violent extremism.

In the case of Justice Murray Sinclair, chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he emphasized in his message during the World Indigenous People's Conference on Education held in Canada on August 25, 2017, "It was the educational system that has contributed to this problem in our country and it is the educational system we believe that is going to get us out of this" (Watters, 2015). In our country, the Philippine government and its national and international development partners need to recognize that education is the early warning barometer by which conflict can be measured. Wider social tensions or divisions are frequently reflected in the classroom, in teaching and in distribution of educational resources. Analysis of the education sector alongside other traditional conflict assessment mechanisms can provide a 'fragility' lens through which to plan, manage and implement tolerant, inclusive, quality education programmers. These education programmers need to build resilience and social cohesion rather than creating divisions and conflicts (UNESCO, 2015).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the various types of documents gathered and analyzed, the following conclusions are drawn: 1) After post-conflict settings in rebuilding and reconciliation must be done in a peaceful non-violent manner where the government and stakeholders and concerned agencies play a vital role to effectively implement their policy and programs enhancing to have better way of life; 2. Understanding that education is a strong tool in preventing extremism through tracing our past history, cultures, traditions, customs, and beliefs. We can do this by conducting an in-depth study based on our curricula offerings in both public and private schools, including the Madrasah schools. School administrators, curriculum developers, policy makers and other experts on the field can be tapped to help formulate an action plan program that will address the problem and its recurrence.

Given the continuing and exponential rise in religious extremism, one must ask why so many gabble effects. One reason is that a long-term approach such as education cannot have immediate effects, and non-formal programs are difficult to assess because randomized trials are problematic in education. To be effective, the right kind of educational measures will have to run their course to make a difference. Furthermore, the researcher has formulated some implications to highlight the findings of the study by applying complexity to the process of

pursuing sustainable peace. In this study, pursuing sustainable peace refers to all actions undertaken by the international community and local actors that work towards consolidating and maintaining the peace in a given social system. Change and conflict are normal and necessary, and sustaining peace should, thus, not be so much about stimulating change and facilitating constructive conflict.

The government serves as the guardians of human rights and help contribute to peacebuilding and reconciliation (Meyer, 2003). Like social reconciliation, reintegration for former combatants is also crucial to the success of any peacebuilding (Bowd, & Özerdem, 2013). In addition, the government must develop anti-terrorism measures and maximize its effort to the ideology of radical extremism. As long as such ideology is alive, there is no guarantee that terrorists will not strike again (Ansary, 2008).

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

With the approval of the Department of Education of the Autonomous Region in Muslim

Mindanao (DepEd-ARMM), the findings will be disseminated through the conduct of seminar-workshops, conferences, symposia, dialogue where school administrators, policy makers, educational planners, stakeholders and other representatives of the society to design a program to prevent extremism and radicalism through education.

The output of these activities shall be published in national and international journals, magazines, newspapers, and radio broadcast and television to magnify the issue. Finally, modules or manuals will be prepared by the school administrators of the Division of Lanao del Sur 1, DepEd-ARMM which serve as their guide in their teaching methods and strategies in ensuring effective teaching-learning process on the part of their students.

Policy recommendation to prevent Violent Extremism and Radicalism:

1. In line with the Philippine Government Policy Program to counter extremism, it is recommended that the DepEd-ARMM should adopt a comprehensive policy framework to prevent and counter violent extremism upon which national, regional and local government units can develop and coordinate long-term programs for prevention and short-term programs for mitigation.
2. The need to understand deeply the value of Islamic moderation (wassatiyyah)

in Muslim Communities is very important. Hence, the administration of the DepEd-ARMM should coordinate with the government and cooperate with the civil society, educational institutions and religious networks to spread the message of inclusive Muslim beliefs to young people.

3. The DepEd-ARMM administration should develop materials so that leaders in formal and informal education system can ensure that all young people understand how extremist groups operate and the negative effects of young extremist groups in themselves, their families and their communities.

4. Design a program that will promote a high-quality and moderate Islamic education sector. This should include facilitating the adaption of common supervision, accreditation, and standardization of the curricula to ensure that the teaching and learning are consistent with the mainstream Islamic philosophy.

5. Keep the public school system secular and use it as a platform for building inclusive culture, mutual trust, and understanding of unity in diversity.

6. The administration of DepEd-ARMM should provide young people with genuine opportunities for accessible quality education, both in the basic and collegiate levels for them to get job employment here and abroad.

7. Create a working committee to provide programs for young people who show signs of post-traumatic syndrome after exposure to violence and conflict. Formative and summative evaluation of the activities conducted must be recorded for analysis and future references.

8. It is highly recommended to the administration of DepEd-ARMM that a program be designed for high-quality and contextually-appropriate delivery of government services in areas at high-risk of extremism, particularly education and health services.

9. The need to increase public and private investments with programs to attract business towards job creation especially, in areas at high-risk of extremism.

10. An effective intervention program must be designed to facilitate the rehabilitation and integration of the people who were previously involved in extremist groups and to ensure that all young people will understand (both in schools and out-of-school youth) how extremist groups operate as well as the negative effects of joining extremist groups to their lives.

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