Global Learning Hub
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# “After the Peace Process, the Mountains Are Burning”

## Exploring Transitional and Climate Justice Linkages in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao

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# Abstract

This paper explores the intersection of climate justice and transitional justice through a qualitative case study of community-level climate initiatives in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Philippines. We argue that in this conflict- and climate-affected setting, localised initiatives are already performing integrated, backward- and forward-reaching justice work that remains invisible to formal institutions because it does not mirror conventional justice models. Drawing on 24 key informant interviews and three sectoral focus groups with local scholars, justice practitioners, activists, and community members, the study applies a transformative transitional justice lens to make these practices legible as justice. The findings demonstrate that addressing climate disasters in the BARMM is inseparable from resolving the historical land-based injustices and colonial displacement that created communal vulnerability. We identify community-led actions – most notably Project Bungkas, a Teduray and Lambangian youth initiative integrating cultural reclamation with climate action – that fuse elements of truth-telling, reparative agency, and guarantees of non-recurrence in ways that challenge institutional silos between post-conflict and environmental governance. The study concludes that institutional frameworks must recognise and support community-led justice rather than displacing local agency with top-down technical solutions, and identifies the Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Act of 2025 as a critical institutional opening for this integration.

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## Introduction

Driving along a road in the Bangsamoro interior, once rendered impassable by active combat, a local professor watched a hillside blaze consume an area of dense forest where the land was being cleared for development. "After the peace process," she observed, "the mountains are burning."[1] This was not an isolated observation. Across the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in the southern Philippines, the cessation of conflict between the Philippine state and Moro armed groups has not resolved the layered injustices that have afflicted the residents of Mindanao for centuries, but transformed them. As the region confronts the accelerating force of climate change, BARMM communities face a new wave of extractive exploitation, displacement, violence, and political exclusion that has, in certain respects, deepened their vulnerability. In the wake of a peace process that was supposed to deliver these communities from an endless cycle of land-based marginalisation, the mountains are burning.

This case study takes that tension as its point of departure. It examines how communities in the BARMM experience, understand, and respond to the intersection of climate harms, armed conflict, and sociopolitical marginalisation, and what their responses reveal about the limitations of institutional frameworks that treat political conflict and climate change as distinct spheres of concern. Our central claim is that community-led initiatives in the Bangsamoro, formed of particularised experiences of harm and spurred by the necessity of action in the face of exclusion and neglect, are already performing transformative justice work – fusing together redress and prevention for climate-, conflict-, and marginalisation-based injustice – that remains invisible to formal institutions locked in siloed, technocratic frameworks of conflict justice and climate action. By applying a transformative transitional justice lens, we seek to make these community practices legible as justice, and to demonstrate that addressing the region's climate crisis is impossible without simultaneously confronting the land-based injustices that structure climate vulnerability and undermine climate responses.[2]

The study proceeds from three interrelated propositions. First, as a conceptual matter, transitional justice offers an analytical framework, disaggregated into elements of truth, reparations, accountability, and guarantees of non-recurrence, capable of identifying justice content in community actions that would otherwise be categorised as mere resilience or localised adaptation. Transformative transitional justice scholarship, with its emphasis on local agency, participatory process, and redress for intersecting structures of exclusion, is particularly well-equipped to illuminate the value of these actions. Second, in communities afflicted by conflict and climate harm, the dialogue between these two justice domains addresses a practical reality: experiences of injustice and efforts at repair are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, such that bringing post-conflict transitional justice and climate justice together is less an act of creative bridge-building than an effort to dismantle artificial

1 KI_03. All key informant interviews (cited as KI_01–KI_24) and focus group discussions (cited as FGD_1–FGD_3) were conducted between June and July 2025 either in the BARMM or remotely. Descriptions of participants and focus group compositions are provided in the Annex.

2 This research is part of a larger project linking transitional justice and climate justice. See Jasmina Brankovic and Samuel Sontag, *Transformative Transitional Justice and Climate Action: Nurturing Synergies for Climate Justice* (Berlin: Berghof Foundation, 2026).

silos. Third, this dialogue reveals new possibilities for bottom-up institutional action and engagement. The task is not simply to scale highly contextualised community practices, but to clarify institutional interfaces – whether with transitional justice mechanisms or climate institutions – that can reinforce community measures without instrumentalising or displacing them.

The BARMM provides a particularly revealing case for this inquiry. A recent political construct born of centuries of colonial and post-colonial marginalisation and resistance, the region is simultaneously undergoing a post-conflict transition and an escalating climate crisis, rooted in a shared history of violent land dispossession. Despite the resolution of vertical conflict, the transition remains fundamentally incomplete: the normalisation track has stalled, horizontal conflict has intensified, and new forms of land-based marginalisation have emerged, restructuring rather than resolving victims' grievances.[3]

In January 2026, however, the BARMM Parliament passed the Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Act, creating a transitional justice commission on the regional level.[4] This Act represents a critical opportunity for transformative justice at the intersection of conflict, marginalisation, and climate harm. By extending the commission's temporal mandate to investigate land dispossession, environmental destruction, and land disputes up to the present,[5] the Act opens a window for the integration of climate harms into the transitional justice process, tracing the through-line connecting colonial-era displacement to contemporary conflict and climate vulnerability.

The study draws on 24 semi-structured key informant interviews with local scholars, justice practitioners, activists, and community leaders, and three sectoral focus groups with young people, women, and Indigenous community members conducted in the BARMM in 2025. It proceeds as follows. In the following section, it situates the study within the historical context of the BARMM and the literatures on transitional justice and the intersection of transitional and climate justice, identifying the contribution of a transformative transitional justice lens. Next, it describes the methodology. It then presents the findings, organised around participants' experience of climate harms, root causes and intersecting injustices, visions of justice, community-initiated actions, and institutional roles. Finally, it discusses the implications of these findings for the architecture of a justice ecosystem capable of supporting community-led climate justice in the BARMM and beyond.

## Situating the Study

This section situates the study in the context of Mindanao and its particular history, and in the literatures on transformative transitional justice and the transitional and climate justice intersection.

3 Nora Refaeil and Yasmira Moner, *Independent Study on the Status of the Implementation of the 2016 Recommendations of the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission* (July 2024), 10, 19–20, 28; Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission, *Report of the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission* (Makati City: TJRC, 2016), secs. 2.3.2.6, 3.1.2.

4 Bangsamoro Parliament, Bangsamoro Autonomy Act No. 89, "An Act Establishing a Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Program, Creating for This Purpose the Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes," approved January 28, 2026. Hereinafter Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Act (BTJRA).

5 Ibid., sec. 7(b), 9(d, y-bb).

### *The Bangsamoro Context*

The BARMM occupies a small and geographically non-contiguous territory in southwestern Mindanao and the nearby islands of Basilan and Tawi-Tawi.[6] The Moro majority of the BARMM comprises 13 Indigenous peoples of Mindanao that adopted Islam before the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century.[7] The non-Moro Indigenous Peoples of Mindanao (NMIP), who primarily maintain distinct Indigenous religious and cultural traditions, constitute roughly two per cent of the BARMM's population.[8] Christian residents, who trace their origins to regions other than Mindanao, are collectively referred to as settlers.

Beginning with the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century, the Indigenous peoples of Mindanao faced a programme of forced assimilation and marginalisation.[9] At the core of this programme was a process of what the 2016 Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission Report called "marginalization through land dispossession". A series of land titling reforms systematically displaced Indigenous peoples in order to make way for Christian settlers and extractive corporate interests.[10] Following Philippine independence in 1946, the state made a concerted effort to dismantle Indigenous leadership and justice structures in favour of a monolithic Philippine identity, undermining Indigenous governance and serving as a justification for further subjugation.[11] A Moro armed resistance movement began in 1968, following the Jabidah massacre in which 23 Muslim recruits were executed by government forces. This resistance was brutally suppressed by the Philippine military and associated paramilitaries during the period of martial law, driving further displacement.[12]

In 2014, the Philippine government and the MILF signed the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB), establishing two tracks: a political track, which led to the creation of the BARMM in 2019, and a normalisation track, committing the parties to the transformation of armed struggle into peace, including through transitional justice.[13] The Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission mandated by the CAB's Normalization Annex published its report in 2016, organising

6 The inclusion of Sulu, a third island off the coast of Mindanao, was invalidated by the Supreme Court in 2024, an event one participant called "Sulexit" (KI_10).

7 Report of the TJRC (2016), FN 3, sec. 2.2.2.

8 International IDEA and Institute for Autonomy and Governance, *Full Recognition for Indigenous Peoples' Rights in the Philippines: The Case of the Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples in the Bangsamoro and Lessons for Cordillera* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2023), 4. Despite their shared history of dispossession with Moro groups, the non-Moro Indigenous Peoples of Mindanao—including the Teduray, Lambangian, Dulangan Manobo, Erumanen ne Menuvu, Blaan, and Higaonon—maintain a distinct sociopolitical trajectory and articulate their own claims to self-determination, including within the political framework of the BARMM. See Lena Muhs, "The Struggle for Recognition Continues: Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples in the Bangsamoro," in *Indigenous Peoples' Rights in the Philippines: Realities, Challenges, Struggle for Self-Determination,* ed. Mirjam Overhoff and Hannah Wolf (Essen and Hamburg: philippinenbüro e.V. and Ökumenewerk der Nordkirche, 2025), 24–27.

9 Report of the TJRC (2016), FN 3, sec. 2.1.2.

10 Ibid., sec. 2.3.3.

11 Ibid., sec. 2.1.3.3.

12 Ibid., sec. 2.3.3.

13 MILF negotiators favoured the term normalisation over disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) because of the association of DDR with surrender to government forces. Johanna-Maria Hülzer et al., *Leaving Conflict Firmly Behind through the Political Transformation of Armed Groups* (Berlin: Berghof Foundation, 2022) 12, https://berghof-foundation.org/library/leaving-conflict-firmly-behind-through-the-political-transformation-of-armed-groups.

its analysis around the four dimensions of legitimate grievances, historical injustice, human rights violations, and marginalisation through land dispossession.[14]

While the political track of the CAB has progressed, the normalisation track has stalled.[15] Demobilisation advanced sporadically, with delays attributed by participants to the COVID-19 pandemic and the MILF's concern that premature demobilisation in an unstable political environment would allow clans to consolidate political power. Multiple efforts to enact transitional justice bills in the BARMM Parliament and the Philippines Congress floundered. Meanwhile, the BARMM has experienced growing horizontal conflict driven by competing land and resource claims,[16] illegal logging and mining, and the systematic targeting and dispossession of NMIP communities and land defenders – new forms of marginalisation that have deepened rather than resolved victims' grievances. In January 2026, the BARMM Parliament passed the Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Act, creating the Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission (BTJRC).[17] At the time of writing, a bill is advancing through the Philippines Congress that would create a parallel national body, the National Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission for the Bangsamoro (NTJRCB).

### *Transformative Transitional Justice*

Transitional justice offers a model of justice in which distinct but interconnected elements of truth, reparations, accountability, and guarantees of non-recurrence are pursued through multiple institutional mechanisms and sequenced over time.[18] Its original application in post-autocratic transitions in Latin America and Eastern Europe has been expanded, sometimes controversially, to transitions out of violent conflict and, more recently, to structural and systemic injustices that exceed the temporal and conceptual boundaries of a single political transition.[19]

Transformative transitional justice both extends and challenges this template. A transformative approach emphasises local agency over institutional authority, process over preconceived outcomes, and the dismantling of unequal power structures from the local to the global over the restoration of a status quo ante.[20] It recognises that justice processes are not merely challenges of technocratic design but are themselves sites of power contestation requiring engagement across multiple levels. Crucially, transformative transitional justice scholarship is not naïve about the limitations of the local,

14 Report of the TJRC (2016), FN 3, sec. 2.3.2.6.

15 See Nora Refaeil and Yasmira Moner, *Independent Study on the Status of the Implementation of the 2016 Recommendations of the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission* (July 2024), 10, 28.

16 Ibid., 19–20, 28; Pro Peace, *Addressing Land and Resource Conflicts: A Case Study of Bunawan, Agusan del Sur* (Cologne: Pro Peace, 2024), 20; International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Unraveling the Nexus: A Participatory Action Research on the Dynamics of Climate Change, Conflict and Human Mobility in the Bangsamoro Region, Philippines*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2023), 20.

17 BTJRA (2026), FN 4.

18 United Nations, *Guidance Note of the Secretary-General: Transitional Justice* (New York: United Nations, 2023), 4–5.

19 Ibid., 4–5; Paul Gready and Simon Robins, "From Transitional to Transformative Justice: A New Agenda for Practice," *International Journal of Transitional Justice,* 8, no. 3 (2014): 339–361.

20 Ibid., 339–361; Graeme Simpson, "'From the Normative to the Transformative': Defining and Promoting Justice and Human Rights as Part of Violent Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding," Journal of Human Rights Practice, 9, no. 3 (2017): 379–400, https://doi.org/10.1093/jhuman/huxo30.

or the difficulty of scaling informal, contextualised processes vertically.[21] It advocates interconnected action across multiple levels, including centralised institutional processes that actively engage with, respond to, and draw inspiration from local counterparts.

This emphasis on local agency and multi-level engagement is essential for the present inquiry. Communities in the BARMM have not waited for institutional processes to address their experience of intersecting harms. They have initiated their own justice actions. A transformative transitional justice lens allows us to identify the justice content of these actions, their elements of truth-telling, repair, accountability, and prevention, without requiring them to conform to the institutional templates associated with transitional justice processes.

### *Climate and Transitional Justice*

The intersection of transitional justice and climate change, a small but growing area of scholarly concern, is divided into two broadly distinct approaches. The first treats climate harms as violations to be addressed within the context of a national transitional justice process, integrated into a justice framework built around a post-conflict or post-autocratic transition. This approach, sometimes referred to as green transitional justice, shares much in common with work in environmental peacebuilding, identifying mutually reinforcing systems of harm to develop mutually reinforcing approaches to justice.[22] The second approach identifies an analogy between global climate action and the energy transition on the one hand, and national transitions on the other, exploring the creative transposition of transitional justice principles and mechanisms into the climate space as tools for climate action per se.[23]

This paper purposefully collapses the distinction between these two approaches. By taking community action as our starting point, we approach climate justice and transitional justice not as distinct fields to be bridged, but as an integrated practice emerging from communities' undivided experience of harm. We use transformative transitional justice as a lens to explore how communities address intersecting injustices through locally rooted actions, and how these actions can inform and integrate with both transitional justice mechanisms and climate institutions.[24]

## Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative case study design combining semi-structured key informant interviews and sectoral focus groups. Data collection was conducted over two months from June to July 2025 in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), including the Special Geographic Area (SGA).

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21 Gready and Robins (2014), FN 19, 340, 358; Simpson (2017), FN 20, 379–400.

22 See Rachel Killean and Lauren Dempster, *Green Transitional Justice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2025); The Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies and Columbia Law School Human Rights Clinic, *Conflict and Climate: The Need for Green Transitional Justice in Yemen* (Sana'a: Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, February 18, 2025).

23 Sonja Klinsky and Jasmina Brankovic, *The Global Climate Regime and Transitional Justice* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018).

24 For a fuller articulation of this theoretical lens and its value in identifying justice linkages between community measures and climate policy architectures, see Jasmina Brankovic and Samuel Sontag (2026), FN 2.

### *Research Design and Collaboration*

The research process began with 12 scoping interviews conducted by the first author, which led to the selection of the BARMM as the study site and established the collaborative authorship. Born and raised in the Bangsamoro region, the second author brought critical emic knowledge, linguistic fluency, and community trust that proved crucial for access and analytic specificity in a complex, conflict-affected setting.

The authors engaged in sustained coordination, from the co-development of the instruments through fieldwork preparations and post-fieldwork reflections, ensuring that the design integrated both theoretical framing and contextual expertise.

### *Participants and Data Collection*

Twenty-four key informants were selected through purposive sampling combined with referral methods, drawing on professional networks and advocacy circles in Mindanao. Additional informants were identified through scholarly contributions, referral from initial participants, and purposive selection based on engagement with transitional justice and climate justice advocacy.

The three sectoral focus groups were conducted with communities disproportionately vulnerable to climate harms and armed conflicts: youth (10 participants), women (9 participants), and Indigenous peoples (5 participants). Focus group participants were purposively selected from sites directly affected by recent typhoons, flooding, and landslides in the region.

Data collection utilised hybrid methods. The first author primarily facilitated online interviews with key informants, while the second author conducted intensive fieldwork in the region, including semi-structured, participatory interviews, observations of community settings, and informal engagement, enabling contextual understanding of participants' narratives.

The interview instrument combined semi-structured questioning with a participatory approach, eliciting situated knowledge and lived experience.

Prior to commencing all interviews and FGDs, informed consent procedures were clearly set as part of a do-no-harm protocol. Participants were assigned coded identifiers; identifying information was anonymised while preserving analytical meaning. Given that some themes posed security risks and elicited sensitive narratives from the participants, researchers observed and monitored distress and offered to pause or conclude discussions as needed.

The authors reviewed primary legal, policy, and institutional sources – including the 2016 TJRC Report, relevant BARMM and national legislation such as the BTJRA, and policy documents from international organisations – alongside secondary scholarship on transitional justice theory and the political, conflict, and climate histories of Mindanao.

### *Analysis*

Audio recordings were transcribed and translated using a combination of manual methods and AI-assisted transcription software. While most KIIs were conducted in English or Filipino English code-switching, some were conducted exclusively in Filipino or Bisaya; FGDs were conducted in Filipino and Bisaya. All non-English materials were translated verbatim into English to preserve conversational integrity and analytical fidelity. The first author conducted iterative coding of transcripts, developing a codebook that included seven thematic codes corresponding to anticipated study sections and three cross-cutting inductive codes. The coding process prioritised analytical usefulness and narrative richness over atomisation and frequency counting.

### *Limitations and Risk Mitigation*

The research targeted more than 50 key informants; 24 ultimately participated. Target BARMM agencies did not respond despite repeated outreach, a limitation mitigated by expanding referral chains and engaging advocacy networks. Security risks in the region also constrained in-person fieldwork, particularly reducing NMIP participation in the sectoral focus group. To preserve representation of this critical sector, supplementary online interviews were arranged with NMIP leaders unable to travel, and internet connectivity disruptions, particularly in Maguindanao del Sur, were mitigated through flexible rescheduling and supplementary written communication. Domestic, educational, and livelihood obligations limited weekday availability for women and youth focus group participants, an obstacle addressed by conducting focus groups on Saturdays.

## Findings and Analysis

This section presents and analyses findings from the interviews and focus groups, proceeding through five thematic areas: the experiences and perception of climate harms; root causes of climate vulnerability and intersecting injustices; community understandings and visions of justice; community-initiated actions responding to climate harms; and the roles of institutional actors in engaging with community priorities and initiatives.

### *Climate Impacts*

The BARMM has experienced rapidly escalating climate impacts in the past decade. As recently as 2014, local officials dismissed climate change as irrelevant to their constituents. A mayor participating in a climate adaptation training told a local climate researcher, “Ma’am, we don’t have floods here.”[25] A regional official joked, “Climate change only happens in Manila.”[26] But climate change is no longer a remote concern. A professor at MSU Marawi recalled the novelty of a typhoon hitting campus in the early 2010s.[27] Released from their classes in anticipation of the storm, students flocked to the

25 KI_10.

26 KI_10.

27 Likely Hurricane Pablo in 2012.

school's golf course to watch it roll in, not realising the danger they were in. "They thought at first it was for fun …. We didn't have those kinds of typhoons before."[28] Once outside the Philippines' typhoon belt,[29] Mindanao has over the past decade been struck by severe storms at a rate comparable to surrounding regions of the Philippines.[30] Climate change has brought increasingly devastating typhoons, floods, landslides, droughts, rising sea levels, and shifts in seasonal weather patterns – impacts exacerbated by conflict, weak governance, and environmental degradation from poorly regulated extraction.

As climate change accelerates, perceptions have shifted. "It used to just be climate," one participant observed. "Now it has a surname."[31] An NMIP participant described the change more viscerally. "It wasn't like this before. Trees didn't easily fall; there weren't landslides. But now it is different. When it rains now, it's like the rain is angry."[32] Yet despite its escalating effects, climate change remains, for many, a concern subsumed by more immediate threats. "We are in a general climate of insecurities … and so when you talk about the climate crisis, people would say, 'I don't really have time to think about climate change.'"[33] Several participants, however, argued that climate change was not neglected in favour of competing concerns, but understood through them: embedded in communities' experiences of social marginalisation, displacement, livelihood disruption, and cultural loss.[34]

## Material Harms

Flooding, long a regular occurrence in the Mindanao River Basin and the areas surrounding the Liguasan Marsh, has become more frequent and destructive.[35] In Kabuntalan, in Maguindanao del Sur, the municipal Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office reported a dramatic increase, from once or twice to more than four times a year.[36] During Typhoon Paeng in 2022, the entire municipality was inundated, causing mass displacement. Stagnant water often lingers for months, destroying crops and spreading disease. Because it lies in a catch basin, the municipality floods even without direct rainfall: "When we hear it's raining in Bukidnon, we know that after three or four days, the floods will reach us."[37]

28 KI_03.

29 Laurence L. Delina, Jon H. Gaviola and Rufa Cagoco-Guiam, "Climate and Security Risks and Their Implications for Sustainable Livelihoods: The Case of Maguindanao in Conflict-ridden Philippine Bangsamoro," *World Development Perspectives,* Volume 36, 2024, 100642, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wdp.2024.100642.

30 IOM (2023), FN 16, 9.

31 KI_09.

32 FGD_2.

33 KI_15.

34 KI_15; KI_09.

35 KI_09.

36 KI_13.

37 KI_13.

## In Limbo

In the barangay of Limbo, in Maguindanao del Norte, focus group participants described flooding as their "daily enemy."[38] Ineffective drainage, the product of poor government planning, garbage dumping, and resistance by landowners to infrastructure projects, prolongs inundation for weeks or months, spreading skin infections, diarrhoea, and respiratory illness, particularly among children and the elderly. Women bear the disproportionate burden of caretaking in these conditions.[39] When a flood forced evacuation to the madrasa, the highest point in Limbo, overcrowding and slow government response sparked conflict. "It wasn't personal," a youth participant explained. "It was because the government response was slow …. One year passed, and nothing was done. Each one just healed in their own way."[40]

Flooding and extreme weather events are increasingly accompanied by landslides, a phenomenon participants attributed to soil erosion from quarrying and illegal logging. Often, it is not those conducting these activities but their downslope neighbours who are ultimately affected, a dynamic that drives inter-community tensions.[41]

Drought in both mainland BARMM and the island provinces has disrupted livelihoods, particularly during El Niño: "In Datu Saudi, they couldn't plant at all."[42] The retreat of the Liguasan Marsh, due to a combination of drought and siltification, has sparked new conflict over recently exposed lands.[43]

Sea level rise, in combination with storm surges and coastal erosion, threatens low-lying island municipalities with saltwater intrusion and inundation.[44] As one participant noted, "Soon Sitangkai, Tawi-Tawi might be submerged."[45]

Across the region, the loss of predictable seasonal cycles has disrupted planting, forced farmers into debt, and narrowed livelihood options,[46] reducing resilience to subsequent disruptions.[47]

38 FGD_1.
39 FGD_1.
40 FGD_1.
41 KI_02.
42 KI_12.
43 KI_12; see also IOM (2023), FN 16, 22-23.
44 See ibid., 13 (noting also the incursion of crocodiles into urban areas).
45 KI_12.
46 FGD_1.
47 KI_13.

## Non-Material Harms

Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples (NMIPs) described spiritual harms and identity loss driven by climate effects that disrupt their connection with their ancestral domains.[48] "Our ancestral domain is like an extension of life for us."[49] According to Teduray and Lambangian tradition, a newborn's umbilical cord is tied to a native tree, creating a spiritual bond and establishing a lifelong duty of stewardship. When NMIPs are severed from their ancestral domains by climate- and conflict-induced displacement, their "identity also is being abused."[50] Displacement disrupts not only the physical and spiritual connection to the land, but also the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous knowledge systems and practices (IKSPs). "When you need to survive, the least of your concerns is how are you going to look back on these IKSPs. Because you don't have the space to practise it and you don't have the people who will teach you how to do it."[51]

## The Mount Minandar Landslides

The story of the Mt. Minandar landslides demonstrates the layered, intersecting nature of climate harms in the BARMM. In 2020, Teduray communities residing along the coast of North Upi, Maguindanao del Norte, were forced to relocate to the foot of Mt. Minandar, allegedly to clear the shoreline for resort development associated with a powerful political family.[52] These communities had asserted land claims prior to the creation of the BARMM, but their claims had been effectively frozen when the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority stalled processing of certificates of ancestral domain in 2019.[53] The relocation was conducted without a prior siting study or expert consultations.[54]

The mountain was a sacred site. "The Teduray believe that when someone dies, the soul passes through the mountain towards the sea."[55] Only a single elder was permitted to climb in order to conduct *kanduli*.[56] Once heavily forested, Mt. Minandar had been denuded by government-protected logging concessions during the Marcos era in the 1960s and 70s, eroding the soil.[57] The communities resisted the relocation, warning that the site was both sacred and geologically unstable. "They said, 'We don't want to live there, it's vulnerable to landslides, and besides, that's a sacred site.' But their

48 Muslim communities also described spiritual harms driven by climate events. One participant explained that a lack of access to clean water following massive flooding in Maguindanao del Sur prevented the performance of wudu (Muslim ablutions). KI_07.

49 KI_09.

50 KI_05.

51 KI_09.

52 KI_05.

53 A non-binding resolution of the BARMM Parliament issued in the first months of the transition functionally stalled ancestral domain claims within the BARMM until the Bangsamoro Indigenous Peoples' Act of 2024 restored a pathway to certification of ancestral domain titles. See International Crisis Group, "Southern Philippines: Fostering Inclusive Bangsamoro", *Asia Report,* No. 322 (2022); Bangsamoro Parliament, Resolution No. 38 (adopted September 25, 2019).

54 KI_05.

55 KI_10.

56 FGD_2. *Kanduli,* or ritual gathering, is a cultural practice of the Teduray-Lambangian group, in which prayers are recited over ritual offerings of traditional delicacies and rice, in front of bamboo poles with colourful flaglets. See Ferdinandh Cabrera, "Maguindanao Tribal Group Prays to Goddess of Fire to End Australia Bushfires," *GMA News Online,* January 6, 2020, 3:40 p.m.

57 KI_10.

concerns were brushed off as superstitious."[58] Without political access or the ability to resist with force – in a region with an entrenched culture of armed self-help where armed force and political access are intertwined – the communities had little standing to contest the decision.[59]

When Severe Tropical Storm Paeng struck in October 2022, massive landslides swept down the mountain, burying homes and killing 27 Teduray. Contrary to protocol, the local government search and rescue effort was called off prematurely.[60] The surviving victims, participants recounted, "were treated as normal survivors", their justice claims unrecognised.[61] To the state, they were casualties of a storm. To the communities, they were the victims of a political system that disparaged their knowledge, disregarded their safety, and degraded their sacred land.

### *Root Causes and Intersecting Injustices*

As the story of the Mt. Minandar landslides reveals, climate harms in the BARMM exist in a context of layered, intersecting injustices with deep roots in the history of Mindanao. In this context, climate vulnerability is itself a historically rooted injustice. As one key informant put it, "Climate harms are not just natural; they're political."[62] In a context of incomplete transition, participants traced cyclical patterns of injustice that have transformed, rather than resolved, with the establishment of the BARMM.[63] Participants identified four interconnected structural drivers of climate vulnerability: land dispossession and extraction, governance failures, social exclusion, and the legacies and continuing presence of conflict.

#### Land Dispossession and Extraction

Climate vulnerability in the BARMM is rooted in a process the 2016 Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission Report called "marginalization through land dispossession."[64] This process drove Indigenous peoples onto more climate-vulnerable terrain so as to make way for Christian settlers and corporate interests, degrading both the land and the adaptive capacity of its inhabitants.[65] The native trees that once anchored the soil were among the first casualties: "We lost something because of colonisation …. They log the entire mountain range and then bring this to the US."[66]

58 KI_10.

59 KI_10.

60 KI_10.

61 KI_04.

62 KI_10.

63 Transformative transitional justice scholarship identifies the phenomenon that systems of violence tend to propagate and transmute across changes to the social order. Gready and Robins (2014), FN 19, 339–361; Graeme Simpson, "Reconciliation Beyond Conceptual Debates," *Insights,* Fall 2014 (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2014), 5.

64 Report of the TJRC (2016), FN 3, sec. 2.4.

65 See ibid., sec. 2.3.3; Laurence L. Delina et al., "Living with Climate and State Fragility in a 'Chaotic Paradise:' Securitizing Livelihoods in the Philippines' Cotabato River Basin," *Climate Risk Management* 42 (2023): 100558, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crm.2023.100558.

66 KI_02.

Following Philippine independence, the state continued this policy of displacement and erasure in pursuit of a monolithic Philippine identity. The state dismantled Indigenous leadership and justice structures, providing a pretext for continued subjugation.[67] During the period of martial law, Philippine national forces violently cleansed land of Indigenous inhabitants to enable expanded settlement and corporate encroachment.[68] Logging concessions under the Marcos regime further degraded the local environment.[69] Mining operations continued this pattern, contributing to deforestation and siltification of waterways, exacerbating flooding and landslide risk.[70]

Even in the post-conflict period, weak and corrupt enforcement enables illegal logging that degrades environmental conditions by corporate actors who disclaim long-term responsibility. "They don't see the long-term damage," one participant observed. "When disaster strikes, they'll donate relief goods, take a picture for CSR, and that's it."[71] The primary responsibility, however, lies with the national government: "They gave out logging concessions before, mining permits later …. So when the national government says they're promoting sustainable development, I always ask, 'Sustainable for whom?'"[72]

For NMIPs, resource extraction collides with development aggression. Participants drew a direct line from the lack of ancestral domain titles and enforceable rights to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) through to environmental devastation.[73] A mineral reservation area was recently declared in Maguindanao del Sur on the asserted ancestral domain of the Teduray and Lambangian, without FPIC: "If we are trying to address justice, the government needs to not add salt to the wounds of the people."[74] The 2024 Bangsamoro Indigenous Peoples' Act codified NMIP rights within the BARMM's political structure, including a traditional duty to consult nature and spiritual forces in decisions regarding ancestral domains. "Before we take any action, we conduct *kanduli* or rituals to inform the spirits …. If the spirits give their guidance, then we proceed. If not, we stop."[75] But without certificates of ancestral domain title, the right to FPIC remains unenforceable: "You still have the right to say no – but you have nothing to hold on to legally."[76]

Colonial-era dispossession and continuing structures of marginalisation have also determined the geography of climate vulnerability. Forced outwards from urban centres, marginalised communities have settled on floodplains and on landslide-prone hillsides, with worse access to services, warning systems, and evacuation routes.[77] NMIP communities are particularly disadvantaged: "Disasters

67 Report of the TJRC (2016), FN 3, sec. 2.1.3.3.
68 Ibid., sec. 2.3.3.
69 KI_10.
70 KI_13.
71 KI_10.
72 KI_10.
73 KI_09.
74 KI_05.
75 FGD_2.
76 FGD_2.
77 KI_20; KI_07.

happen indiscriminately …. However, when it comes to response, Muslim communities have more proximate access to services."[78]

## Governance Failures

Governance failures compound climate vulnerability. As the TJRC report documented, the roots of poor governance trace back to the strategic dismantling of Moro and Indigenous leadership structures in pursuit of a monolithic Philippine nationalism, which in turn justified the violent suppression of Moro groups as "wild, dangerous and ungovernable except by force."[79]

Participants described a patronage-based system that undermined climate action and disaster response at every level. In one community, disaster relief was withheld because the barangay captain opposed the ruling political party.[80] Aid flows not to those most affected, but to those with access. The marginalised, particularly women, are sidelined. "When we reach the end of the line to claim the aid, there's nothing left, it's already gone."[81] Fishing supplies were given to *ustadz* (religious teachers) rather than fishing communities, while seed and fertiliser, intended for farmers, were given out to *habal-habal* (motorcycle taxi) drivers who arrived first at the distribution centres.[82] When the intended recipients arrived, they were told, "That's how it goes; it's about connections."[83] Performative planning processes are captured by those with influence while intended beneficiaries learn of consultation processes only after the fact. "When the agricultural office calls for a meeting … forms are filled out, and when the assistance arrives … the real farmers don't even know there was a meeting in the barangay about farming."[84]

These dynamics are not reducible to simple corruption, though corruption is pervasive[85] – on the national level consuming billions of dollars in flood control funding,[86] and on the local level intersecting with economic desperation in ways that blur the line between malfeasance and necessity.[87] Rather, the patronage structure represents a competing governance logic in which direct aid from individual politicians reproduces dependency while appearing responsive, displacing the formal channels through which equitable distribution might occur.

78 KI_01.

79 Report of the TJRC (2016), FN 3, sec. 2.1.3.3.

80 FGD_1.

81 FGD_1.

82 FGD_1.

83 FGD_1.

84 FGD_1.

85 See Balázs Áron Kovács, *From Entry Points to Sustainable Action: Equipping Peace Processes for Accountability and Integrity* (Berlin: Berghof Foundation, 2024).

86 Lex Harvey, "The Disaster-Prone Philippines Invested Billions in Flood Control. Then Officials Looted the Funds," CNN, December 19, 2025, https://edition.cnn.com/2025/12/19/asia/philippines-flood-control-marcos-corruption-dst-intl-hnk.

87 FGD_1, para. 105-107. In one example, a foreman, whose pay had been delayed, salvaged steel bars and cement from his own roadworks project and sold them in order to feed and sustain himself. FGD_1.

## Social Exclusion

The BARMM is itself a response to a history of social exclusion, yet the legacies and cyclical effects of marginalisation continue to structure vulnerability. The perspectives and priorities of those most affected by climate harms are often sidelined both by formal processes and by socially enforced hierarchies of authority and voice. Women, both particularly impacted by climate harms and disproportionately involved in climate responses, are consistently marginalised in decision-making: "They're the ones who make sure everyone eats, finds water, or finds a place to sleep. And yet in meetings or community consultations, they're told to just listen, not speak."[88] In evacuation centres, lack of privacy and the need to travel on foot to collect clean water exposes women to sexual and gender-based violence.[89] Young people, despite the creation of institutional spaces such as the Bangsamoro Youth Commission,[90] remain tokenised in governance processes. Their representation, and advocacy for priorities including climate action, often lacks substantive influence on policy outcomes. Participants emphasised the need to recognise intersecting forms of marginalisation to avoid cyclical harms. "Sometimes we forget that in our rush to talk about 'Muslim women empowerment', we also have IP women and Christian settler women who face different kinds of exclusion. BARMM governance needs to recognise that diversity, otherwise Bangsamoro identity becomes a tool of exclusion rather than inclusion."[91]

The formation of the BARMM has in many ways heightened NMIPs' experience of exclusion. "People would say, 'Ah, may IP pala' [oh, there are NMIPs here]. They are always an afterthought."[92] While Moro communities remain marginalised within the broader Philippine state and continue to bear the consequences of their history of oppression, their political leaders now occupy a position of primacy within the BARMM's sociopolitical structure, producing a cycle of marginalisation in relation to NMIPs. "The oppressed of yesterday have become the oppressors of today."[93] This observation does not negate Moro victimhood but identifies a dynamic in which structures of marginalisation "transmute and evolve"[94] across changes to the political order – precisely the phenomenon transformative transitional justice seeks to address.

The dismissal of Indigenous knowledge, as in the case of the Mt. Minandar tragedy, demonstrates how this exclusionary dynamic drives climate vulnerability. By dismissing Indigenous warnings as "superstitious", officials consigned the Teduray residents of North Upi to an avoidable disaster.[95] "To me, that's a very concrete example of social exclusion; the complete disregard for their belief system."[96] Participants argued that these beliefs are in fact "environmental codes of ethics" with predictive power: "We have many 'experts' who think they know better, but they don't live here.

88 KI_10; see also KI_12.

89 KI_12.

90 Bangsamoro Parliament, Bangsamoro Autonomy Act No. 10, "An Act Establishing the Bangsamoro Youth Commission," approved February 28, 2020.

91 KI_10.

92 KI_10.

93 KI_05.

94 Graeme Simpson (2014), FN 63, 5.

95 KI_10.

96 KI_10.

They don't wake up every morning in that mountain, watching how the soil moves after heavy rain. Indigenous people do."[97] These recognitional harms compound after disasters, when justice claims are also dismissed: "If you do not respect our truth-telling or truth-seeking, you cannot expect peace here."[98]

## The Legacies and Continuing Presence of Conflict

Conflict and climate change are inextricably linked in the BARMM, a reality captured by a local aphorism: "Sometimes it rains water; sometimes it rains bullets."[99] While scholars parse the causal role of climate change as a trigger or "threat multiplier" for conflict, participants largely swept aside these academic debates, emphasising shared vulnerability rooted in land-based injustice. "Sometimes, the question, 'What came first, conflict or climate?' doesn't even matter any more. They've become intertwined. And both are rooted in exclusion, inequality, and poor governance."[100] As another participant put it, "Land is the language of conflict in Mindanao."[101]

Displacement, driven both by flooding and by clan feuds and political violence, creates a compounding cycle. "In some communities, this week they will be displaced because of flooding, and then next week they will be displaced because of conflict. It becomes a cycle."[102] One Indigenous woman described being displaced from her land by conflict to an evacuation centre, only for the centre to flood.[103] This was not an isolated event but a structural pattern: following the Marawi Siege in 2017,[104] evacuation centres were sited in flood-prone areas, heightening IDPs' vulnerability.[105] Conversely, climate-driven displacement sparks new conflict as communities are pushed onto contested land and into proximity with competing groups.[106] Resource scarcity compounds these dynamics, driving petty theft that escalates into violence,[107] and in some cases pushing community members towards recruitment by armed groups.[108]

In a region shaped by what the TJRC Report described as a "culture of violence … in which the horizontal use of violence to solve problems has become the norm",[109] even the absence of violence is a source of vulnerability. As with the Teduray communities forced to relocate to Mt. Minandar, those without armaments or access to armed groups find themselves marginalised in decision-making

97 KI_10.
98 FGD_2.
99 KI_20.
100 KI_10.
101 KI_20.
102 KI_20.
103 KI_09.
104 The Marawi Siege was a five-month conflict between Islamic State affiliates and the Philippine government in the city of Marawi, which resulted in widespread displacement, property destruction, and the deaths of 87 civilians. See Republic of the Philippines, Republic Act No. 11696, "An Act Providing Compensation for the Loss or Destruction of Properties and Loss of Lives as a Result of the 2017 Marawi Siege, and Appropriating Funds Therefor," April 13, 2022.
105 KI_01.
106 KI_22; KI_10.
107 KI_12.
108 KI_07.
109 Report of the TJRC (2016), FN 3, sec. 3.1.2.

processes. They are marginalised not only because of a lack of political access, but also because they are not a threat – they cannot assert their claims in the language of violence.[110] Peace itself – at least in its current, incomplete form – has brought its own destruction. The stabilisation of the region has opened previously inaccessible areas to large-scale extraction, while the consolidation of Moro political power has deepened the vulnerability of NMIPs. When land defenders resist development aggression and land grabbing, assert their right to free, prior and informed consent, or make use of Indigenous justice systems to challenge extractive land use, they become targets of violence. At least 102 NMIPs have been killed since the formation of the BARMM in 2019.[111] "Sometimes," one participant observed, "peace kills us."[112]

### *Visions of Justice*

Participants overwhelmingly affirmed the need to address climate harms as part of transitional justice in the BARMM. They argued that since communities who experience interlinked harms do not silo them into separate domains, neither should the justice process. "We can't separate climate from conflict, or environment from justice. They're all part of one ecology."[113] This section examines how participants understood the relationship between climate justice and transitional justice, the mechanisms they envisioned, and the challenges they identified.

#### The Indivisibility of Justice

Participants argued that interrelated climate and conflict harms must be addressed through integrated justice processes for three reasons: to reflect victims' lived experience of intersecting harm, to address these harms' shared roots in land-based marginalisation, and to acknowledge the inextricable interconnection of NMIP understandings of justice and the land.

First, participants argued that acknowledgement and repair required a recognition of communities' lived experience, one in which concurrent climate and conflict harms are not divisible. They articulated a view of justice grounded in repair of dignitary harm, known in Islamic and Indigenous tradition as *maratabat* and *atad matad* respectively, requiring comprehensive redress for climate- and conflict-linked injustices that contributed to and expressed marginalisation.[114]

Second, they argued that addressing these harms in unison was essential to transforming the underlying structures of land-based marginalisation that would otherwise drive recurring harm.[115] "They see the conflict but not the root cause," one participant said of the BARMM government. "If nobody dares to go beyond the surface, it will not be resolved."[116]

110 See KI_10.

111 Bong S. Sarmiento, "102 Non-Moro IPs Killed in Bangsamoro Region since 2019 – Peace Monitor," *MindaNews,* October 6, 2025, citing data from Climate Conflict Action.

112 KI_05.

113 KI_10.

114 KI_01; FGD_2.

115 KI_10.

116 KI_22.

Third, Indigenous participants argued that for them, these fields of justice were not intersecting but synonymous – to divide them would itself constitute an epistemic injustice replicating NMIP marginalisation. "Transitional justice is also climate justice …. From what I see in studies, it is treated as intersectionality, connections. It's not about connection; it's about oneness."[117] For Indigenous peoples, the distinction between human and environmental rights is an external imposition. "We Indigenous people treat our land as an extension of our life. So, land encroachment … is a violation of human rights for us."[118]

This relational conception is reflected in Indigenous justice practices. Teduray and Lambangian justice systems are restorative,[119] conceiving harm as relational disalignment, and repair as the restoration of relationships, with others and with nature, rooted in the concept of *kefiyo fedew* (the good heart).[120] "When you are talking about human rights, it's not about this body, it's about the environment …. Relationships matter over entities."[121] These practices emphasise the substantive justice content of what might otherwise be understood as purely procedural. FPIC, in this framework, is not merely a compliance regime but a form of recognitional repair involving the participatory consent of nature and spiritual forces as well as the community. As one participant argued, FPIC is "not just a process. I think for indigenous people it is really a way to give justice to all of the things that we've been through."[122]

While participants endorsed the integration of climate harms into a transitional justice framework, some expressed caution. For an incipient transitional justice process in which long-standing justice claims are just starting to be addressed, legibility, capacity, and coherence are significant concerns. "The nexus can confuse people: two kinds of justice in one frame …. People might say, 'We're not even at TJ yet, and now you want to add climate justice?'"[123] In this context, careful framing of the linkage between climate justice and transitional justice is important. The clearest basis, according to the four-part framework of the CAB and the 2016 Report, is through "marginalisation through land dispossession"'.[124]

## Mechanisms and Institutional Approaches

Participants articulated concrete mechanisms for redressing climate harms through a forward-looking transitional justice framework that confronts structural injustices to prevent cyclical harms. They recognised that climate harms were caused by "greed, negligence, and power imbalances [that] demand accountability."[125] Reflecting on the Mt. Minandar landslides, they called for accountability for politicians who ordered logging and forced relocation, those "who profited from logging and

117 KI_22.
118 KI_09.
119 KI_09.
120 KI_09.
121 KI_05.
122 KI_09.
123 KI_14.
124 Government of the Republic of the Philippines and Moro Islamic Liberation Front, The Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (March 27, 2014), Annex on Normalization; Report of the TJRC (2016), FN 3, 7–8; KI_14.
125 KI_10.

mining under past regimes", and for institutions that systematically failed to assess and respond to risks.[126]

In terms of reparations, participants emphasised the need for consultative processes reflecting victim priorities, recognising that community needs are not always intuitive to outsiders,[127] and that for injustices rooted in marginalisation, inclusion is itself a core element of repair.[128] For victims of Mt. Minandar, this could include safe relocation, land restitution, and the formal recognition of Indigenous narratives of harm.[129] An Indigenous participant observed that the demands of repair are positional: Indigenous community members broadly view justice as the ability to pursue traditional practices in peace, Indigenous women emphasise participation in decision-making, and Indigenous leaders, operating in a political realm, emphasise the restitution of stolen lands. But NMIPs share a demand for the preservation, acknowledgement, and non-disparagement of their identity and culture.[130]

Participants emphasised the importance of inclusive truth-telling, truth-seeking, and collective narrative as elements of justice for climate harms. They called for formal platforms for truth-telling by victims of climate-linked disasters such as the Mt. Minandar landslides,[131] and the integration of Indigenous narratives into national and BARMM curricula.[132]

Guarantees of non-recurrence (GNRs) also featured prominently. These include institutional reforms to ensure that agencies that systematically failed to assess, anticipate, and respond to risks have structures in place to prevent similar failures in the future.[133] "Next time any extractive industry is approved, there should be strict safeguards, risk assessments, mitigation plans, proper drainage systems."[134] It also includes concrete preventative measures following disasters to rehabilitate affected areas. On Mt. Minandar, "there's still no visible intervention from the government, specifically Natural Resources and Environment [MENRE], to rehabilitate the area. And if they don't rehabilitate the area, the floods will always recur."[135] Given the geographic marginalisation that contributes to vulnerability, it also involves efforts to locate disaster support, including evacuation centres, closer to communities.[136] Generally, participants recognised that proactive government action was necessary not only to materially address community needs, but also to expressively demonstrate a commitment to prevention.[137]

126 KI_05; KI_10.

127 One participant described a consultation in which a community demanded a streetlight as an element of post-conflict repair. After initial confusion, it became clear that the streetlight was needed to illuminate a memorial inscribed with the names of victims. KI_04.

128 KI_20.

129 KI_12; FGD_2.

130 KI_05.

131 KI_04.

132 KI_05. In transitional justice terms, educational and curricular reforms are often categorised as guarantees of non-recurrence as well. United Nations (2023), FN 18, 20.

133 KI_01.

134 KI_10.

135 KI_04.

136 KI_01.

137 KI_04.

One point of contention concerned temporal scope: how to treat violations that had occurred after the resolution of the vertical conflict between the Philippine state and Moro armed groups, during the period of rapidly escalating climate impacts and the transfer of political authority to the Moro-dominated Bangsamoro Transitional Authority. One participant argued that the BARMM-level transitional justice process could not yet address cyclical injustices against non-Moro communities, because the Philippine government had not itself established a transitional justice process to address Moro victimhood: "You cannot give what you yourself have not received."[138]

The Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Act (BTJRA), enacted after the conclusion of the fieldwork, partially resolved this dispute, but in an unexpectedly nuanced manner. The Act's temporal scope is differentiated between its three primary components. The elements of human rights violations, and history, memory, and truth, are time-bound to the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (in 2019), but the land dispossession element is framed "from the Treaty of Paris in 1898 onward."[139] Land dispossession, the provision through which participants articulated the connection between climate and conflict harms, is thus the only one of the Act's three primary components whose temporal scope extends through the period of escalating climate harms. In addition, the Act empowers the Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission to investigate (without any temporal constraint) and recommend responsive measures for "projects that resulted in massive displacement and harm to the environment."[140] This explicit textual recognition of environmental harm, read together with the provisions on land dispossession, provides a basis for engaging the climate dimensions of land-based marginalisation.

### Risks of Reinscription

Participants cautioned that a technocratic, monolithic justice process could reinscribe patterns of exclusion. "Justice can also create injustices."[141] NMIP participants emphasised the need for transitional justice to embrace multiple, potentially conflicting perspectives. A process dominated by Moro narratives could be an engine of continued oppression – particularly given the divergence of Moro and non-Moro claims to autonomy and self-determination.[142] Echoing the TJRC Report's characterisation of conflicting vertical conflict narratives between Moro armed groups and the state as a "clash of imagined nations",[143] NMIP participants described a "conflict of justice" between ethnically defined articulations of victimhood, marginalisation, and ancestral domain.[144] In practice, this tension can result in reparative action that replicates patterns of extractive exploitation. "When any group demands transitional justice, but their proposal is to get justice through the approval of mining or mineral exploration – for us, that is development aggression. What kind of TJ is that?"[145]

138 KI_14. This participant argued not that such claims should be barred, but rather that they be addressed through ordinary legal avenues. "For the operationalisation of TJ, what happened in the past is covered; ongoing cases fall under the regular legal system."

139 BTJRA (2025), FN 4, sec. 7.

140 Ibid., sec. 9(d).

141 FGD_2.

142 KI_05.

143 Report of the TJRC (2016), FN 3, sec. 2.1.2.

144 KI_05.

145 FGD_2.

They shared the story of a housing project developed on asserted NMIP ancestral domain. Indigenous residents initially believed the housing was for them. Instead, they learned, it was intended for decommissioned combatants as part of the MILF camp transformation programme. They asked, "Is that transitional justice?"[146]

To ensure that transitional justice does not reproduce the logic of marginalisation, participants envisioned a participatory, bottom-up process. Multiple participants identified agency itself as a component of repair – not only the autonomy to pursue one's own needs, but also the ability to contribute to addressing collective challenges including climate change. For marginalised communities, the capacity to help was itself a dimension of justice.[147] "Justice means being heard. It means being part of decision-making, not just receiving aid."[148] In addition, they observed that government – whether at the local, BARMM, or national level – could not meaningfully be held accountable if it defined accountability on its own terms.[149] Participants therefore insisted on a community-owned, community-shaped approach: "If we treat climate justice as purely technical or legal issues, we are actually repeating the marginalisation of the past."[150]

### *Community Actions*

Communities in the BARMM have not simply waited for institutional processes to address their experience of intersecting harms. They have advanced locally-rooted actions that fuse forward- and backward-looking approaches in ways that defy the categorical boundaries of either post-conflict transitional justice or climate policy. While these measures were not always described in formal justice language, they brought together elements of truth-telling, repair, accountability, and prevention that a transformative transitional justice lens makes visible.

#### Project Bungkas

Project *Bungkas,* meaning "Opening" in Teduray, was the most analytically developed initiative to emerge from the data.[151] A community action led by Teduray and Lambangian youth,[152] it embodied the synthesis of forward- and backward-looking justice action addressing climate-, conflict-, and marginalisation-based harms at the centre of this study's argument. It addressed these interconnected harms not in parallel but as one. Reflecting the Indigenous view of climate and transitional justice as synonymous, it advanced cultural repair as a climate non-recurrence measure, and prospective climate action as repair for Indigenous marginalisation.

146 FGD_2.

147 KI_20.

148 KI_10.

149 KI_01.

150 KI_03.

151 The second author, in his previous role at the Alliance of Mindanao Youth for Peace (AKMK), supported the implementation of this project. Its selection as an analytical focus of this section was made by the first author, independently of the second author's prior involvement.

152 The project was facilitated by the Teduray and Lambangian Youth and Students' Association (TLYSA), the youth wing of the Teduray and Lambangian Indigenous political structure *Kesefanangguwit Timuay* (Timuay Justice and Governance), with additional support from AKMK (Alliance of Mindanao Youth for Peace), a tri-people youth peacebuilding organisation, and Human Security Collective (HSC), a Dutch-based NGO.

The project was born from an intergenerational dialogue between Teduray and Lambangian elders and youth, in which young people described how displacement from their ancestral domains had disrupted their connection to Indigenous rituals and traditional knowledge.[153] This displacement, driven by both conflict and climate change, not only severed their physical and spiritual bond to the land, but also disrupted the intergenerational transmission of practices by scattering communities and forcing them to focus on their immediate survival.[154] An elder described the tradition of *semedang fused,* in which a newborn's umbilical cord is placed in a basket, then hung from the branch of a native tree with a prayer: *"Na ang buhay ng batang isinilang ay maging kasing tatag at kasing tibay nga punungkahoy at kagubatan at higit sa lahat ay lumaki ang bata na nakaugat sa lupa."* (May the child that is born grow as strong and sturdy as the tree and the forest where it grows and be rooted in the earth.)[155]

The dialogue helped Indigenous youth identify a circular relationship: dispossession drives cultural loss, which heightens climate vulnerability, which in turn drives further dispossession. Indigenous traditions, they came to recognise, were inherently climate-protective: "All of us were surprised that Indigenous communities, their traditions, have been fighting and mitigating climate change since time immemorial."[156] Yet climate- and conflict-driven displacement, compounded by the long history of cultural marginalisation and erasure, had driven cultural loss and the adoption of unsustainable practices.[157] This cultural loss, in turn, had increased Indigenous youth's vulnerability to climate harm and disrupted their ability to adapt to climate change and avoid further displacement.[158] Project Bungkas represented an attempt to break this cycle by "open[ing] the minds of Indigenous youth to their cultural beliefs and traditional and Indigenous knowledge systems and practices on how to fight climate change."[159]

In Project *Bungkas,* NMIP youth thus pursued repair for cultural loss driven by climate- and conflict-linked displacement while advancing preventative climate action through the reclamation of Indigenous practices.[160] The project comprised three components. The first was a series of intergenerational knowledge transfers conducted in remote NMIP communities, in which elders transmitted climate-adaptive practices to Indigenous youth.[161] In transitional justice terms, this component of the project brought together backward-looking elements of repair – recovering cultural knowledge and reasserting epistemic authority in response to climate- and conflict-linked displacement, systematic marginalisation, and cultural erasure – with forward-looking elements of prevention. As one participant observed, the preventative impact of cultural restoration for remote NMIP communities is not merely about the general adaptive value of these practices, but also the specific structure of NMIP vulnerability to recurring harms. For geographically marginalised and

153 KI_01.

154 KI_09; KI_01.

155 See Gerard Beelt Tiwow, "The Umbilical Cord Connects People: A Story from Teduray," *Cultural Survival,* July 17, 2023, https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/umbilical-cord-connects-people-story-teduray.

156 KI_09.

157 KI_09.

158 KI_01.

159 KI_09.

160 KI_01.

161 KI_09.

systematically under-served Indigenous communities, the reclamation of adaptive traditions is the "most proximate climate practice … not just because it is culturally or spiritually important to their identities" but also "given that other alternatives are not accessible, particularly when we talk about government alternatives."[162]

The second component was a tree stewardship process in Upi, Maguindanao del Norte, near the centre of the Indigenous political structure, in which young people planted and cared for native saplings.[163] This measure echoed the practice of *semedang fused,* the ritual bond of child and tree, which in modern Teduray practice is typically reformulated as a tree-planting ritual.[164] It connected cultural repair through the reclamation of a traditional practice with the reparative and preventative impact of reforestation on land that had been denuded by multiple waves of extractive exploitation. The action reflected participants' framing of reparative agency through the assumption of responsibility – a form of repair through stewardship rather than passive receipt of compensation.[165]

The third component was a climate solidarity walk intended to raise awareness of the need for climate action while protesting the siting of a proposed mineral reservation area within the asserted ancestral domain of the Teduray and Lambangian.[166] Indigenous youths and supporters, marching in the sweltering heat to the sound of a traditional gong ensemble, called for the recognition of Indigenous knowledge as a tool for climate action.[167] This action functioned simultaneously as a symbolic reclamation of Indigenous cultural authority and as a space for truth-telling by Indigenous community members: a public assertion of narratives that formal institutions had dismissed.

### Broader Patterns of Community Action

Project *Bungkas* was part of a broader pattern of community action responding to climate harms and intersecting injustices through solidaristic and self-initiated measures. "Communities help each other rebuild. They have their own systems of *bayanihan*[168], traditional solidarity."[169] In one instance, women pooled finances to create a community flood response fund. "That's local resilience, not something taught by outsiders but something that grew from experience."[170] In this regard, communities advance preventative measures by drawing from their own experience of past harms. These actions include community self-education on disaster preparedness;[171] an emergency pathways project in which communities developed plans for disaster response, including evacuation

162 KI_01.

163 KI_09.

164 Gerard Beelt Tiwow (2023), FN 155: "Today, the tradition of hanging a baby's umbilical cord onto a tree branch is no longer practiced, and has shifted to the planting of a tree instead."

165 KI_20.

166 KI_09.

167 KI_09.

168 Bayanihan is a Filipino tradition where people go out of their way to help those in need. Its root word is *"bayan"* which means nation. It therefore evokes a sense of solidarity and service. See Yolanda Ealdama, *BAYANIHAN: The indigenous Filipino strengths perspective,* International Conference on Strengths Based Practice in Social Work and Human Services (Nepal: 2012), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/297551533_BAYANIHAN_the_indigenous_Filipino_strengths_perspective.

169 KI_10.

170 KI_10.

171 KI_01.

routes;[172] and a community mapping project in which communities identified flood-prone areas and safe zones for evacuation as a preventative measure following Severe Tropical Storm Paeng.[173] Communities also pursued local memorialisation actions, including self-organised commemorations by affected communities,[174] and church-led memorials for victims of the Mt. Minandar landslides.[175] Accountability advocacy from affected communities, demanding justice from external actors, can itself become a site of recognitional repair and memorialisation. As one participant put it, "Traces of memory are driven by the demand for justice."[176]

These actions share a temporal orientation. Communities act not only to resolve the past or address the present, but to build an enabling future – pursuing repair not to return to a status quo ante but to transform the structures that drive recurrence. Youth and women participants particularly articulated climate action as intergenerational claim-making, projecting justice into the future. This understanding casts communities as forward-looking architects of transformation, not merely resilient survivors.

While emphasising the power and value of community measures, participants romanticised neither local knowledge nor local action. They recognised that the contextual specificity of community knowledge could obscure broader systems of harm. The particularity that makes community initiatives uniquely responsive to experiences of harm limits their scalability, while the reparative value of voice and agency is limited without complementary acts of acknowledgement, accountability, and reform from duty-bearers. The transformative potential of community action thus depends on its ability to affect broader structural change, either through horizontal transmission and solidarity, or through vertical engagement with institutions.

### *Institutional Roles*

Community actions are important but not transformative on their own. Participants emphasised the need for a justice ecosystem in which multiple institutions engage, support, and respond to local actions in a manner grounded in community agency, insight, and inclusion. Instead, they observed, institutions too often treat communities as inert, failing to recognise their initiative or listen to their perspectives.

172 KI_01.
173 FGD_3.
174 KI_01.
175 KI_21.
176 KI_01.

## Beyond Resilience

Participants challenged a narrow conception of resilience in which communities' role is to endure the interim between disaster and the arrival of external aid.[177] This dominant view, they argued, promises both too much and too little: it supposes on the one hand that the ability to "bounce back" from climate harms is sufficient to meet communities' needs,[178] while failing on the other to recognise community agency in advancing change.[179] For communities whose climate vulnerability is rooted in historical marginalisation, this failure of recognition is itself a return to the status quo, reinscribing marginalisation and perpetuating vulnerability. Institutional structures not only anticipate but encourage this passive community posture. Siloed, donor-driven INGO mandates and the constraints of project cycles tend to disincentivise community agency and holistic self-initiated actions.[180] At the BARMM level, narrow policy processes focusing on short-term impact lack the capacity to even assess community empowerment.[181] As one participant put it, "They don't see the next generation; there's no indicator."[182]

## Partnership

By contrast, participants envisioned a mode of institutional engagement in which communities are understood as partners. "When you ask, 'What do you need?' you assume they're helpless. They'll just give you a wish list: computers, vehicles, things they think donors want to hear. But if you ask, 'What can we do together?' you recognise their agency …. That's the difference."[183] In some cases, this means institutions helping communities to identify or revive their own preexisting capacities. In one instance, an external organisation helped an Indigenous community to revive Arabica coffee cultivation, a traditional practice that, because Arabica flourishes in the partial shade of mature forest, provided income while preserving the ecosystem.[184] In another, a UN initiative capacitated preexisting women's organisation networks as channels for early warning alerts, not imposing a new structure but identifying latent potential in one that already existed.[185]

In other cases, institutions serve as platforms and catalysts for horizontal solidarity and knowledge-sharing. A professor at MSU Illigan was an organiser and dialogue facilitator in the Global Assembly[186]

177 KI_22; KI_01. See also the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's description of a narrow framing in adaptation programming of resilience as "bouncing back and returning to a previous state after a disturbance", as well as thicker transformative conceptions: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability," *Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, eds. Hans-Otto Pörtner et al., (Cambridge, UK, and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 7, https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FullReport.pdf.

178 KI_01.

179 KI_20; KI_10.

180 KI_22; KI_10.

181 KI_10.

182 KI_22.

183 KI_10.

184 KI_03.

185 KI_07.

186 Global Assembly, "Address the Climate and Ecological Crisis," accessed April 8, 2026, https://globalassembly.org/index.html.

and its successor, the Global Citizens' Assembly.[187] These global inter-community platforms facilitated deliberation and exchange on experiences of, and responses to, climate change between community representatives from around the world.[188] These platforms enable the horizontal transmission of localised approaches as well as the collective formulation of policy priorities and demands.[189]

In others, in turn, partnership produces a synthesis of practice. NMIP communities collaborating with UNFAO explored integration of *sulagad* (traditional farming) and modern sustainable agriculture. Because of the historical richness of the soil, *sulagad* lacked a method of organic fertiliser production; modern practices, meanwhile, lacked integration with Indigenous ritual. "So what we are doing now is to merge or integrate both practices."[190] Such syntheses, however, do not occur on a neutral plane; practices enter with profoundly different positions of institutional legitimacy. Care must therefore be taken to ensure that hybridity in practice does not mean co-optation or dilution.

Institutional engagement fails when it attempts either to extract local approaches or to displace them. On the former, participants observed that practices sustainable within Indigenous systems of land stewardship, such as rotational slash-and-burn agriculture, become destructive when removed from these constraints and scaled without context.[191] On the latter, one community developed an efficient, cost-effective water system for itself using solar pumps, only to have the BARMM intervene with its own project that delivered a less effective alternative at several times the cost.[192] These failures demonstrate the practical consequence of institutional frameworks that fail to recognise community capacity.

### Legibility and Participation

Just as institutional justice action must recognise communities, it must also be recognisable to them. In the BARMM, where the presence of the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority is itself arguably an expression of justice, the intentions of government action are too often left implicit. Government programmes that might otherwise express acknowledgement, repair, or prevention disappear into the routines of ordinary governance because they are not communicated in the language of justice. "If people don't understand that what is given is part of TJ, there's no closure. The wounds remain."[193]

Meaningful justice action also requires genuine participation, yet participation is systematically undermined. Legislative processes are opaque and unresponsive, and opportunities for involvement largely pro forma.[194] Input from civil society is frequently treated with suspicion.[195] The content of the resulting legislation is often "heavily lifted" from the national analogue instead of crafted to

187 Global Citizens' Assembly, "Home," accessed April 8, 2026, https://globalassemblies.org/.
188 KI_15.
189 KI_15.
190 FGD_2.
191 KI_03.
192 KI_11.
193 KI_14.
194 KI_06.
195 FGD_3.

respond to the particularities of BARMM community needs and priorities.[196] Where programmes are legislated, implementation is captured by patronage dynamics.[197] At worst, participation becomes consultation theatre: "There are consultations in some communities where they ask about the needs, but when the assistance arrives, it is opposite to what the people need … as if for compliance only."[198]

## Discussion

The findings presented above support three interrelated conclusions. First, climate harms in the BARMM are political: socially structured injustices with meteorological triggers. Because climate and conflict harms are rooted in the same land-based marginalisation, to separate them risks not only ineffective redress but the reenactment of marginalisation through a failure of recognition.

Second, communities are already confronting their marginalisation and the vulnerabilities it produces through justice practices grounded in their undivided experience of harm. Project Bungkas demonstrates how a single community initiative can address what institutional actions would divide: redress and prevention for climate and cultural harm, pursued not as coordinated priorities but as one braided act of justice.[199] These actions are not mere resilience. In reclaiming cultural authority, confronting land-based marginalisation, and advancing prospective climate action, they shift the structural drivers of vulnerability to construct a more just future. A transformative transitional justice lens makes this justice content visible, rendering legible what formal institutions have overlooked.

Third, the institutional architecture needed to support this work is not one that scales community practices upwards or instrumentalises them in pursuit of external agendas, but one that meets communities in the middle. The justice ecosystem model that participants articulated – in which institutions support, engage with, and respond to community measures without displacing them – requires a fundamental shift in institutional posture, from treating communities as passive recipients of aid to recognising them as partners with endogenous capacity, authority, and agency. This shift is not merely a matter of sound process design. In a context of historical marginalisation, it is itself a form of recognitional repair.

The passage of the Bangsamoro Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Act (BTJRA) in January 2026 creates a critical institutional opening, both for the institutional integration of transitional and climate justice and for the recognition of braided community actions. The Act is textually capable of encompassing climate harms: its land dispossession mandate,[200] along with its power to investigate "projects that resulted in massive displacement and harm to the environment"[201] up to the present, provide an opening for the consideration of interlinked harms precipitated by climate events. It also contains provisions that support a partnership logic of community engagement, both normatively in

196 KI_06.
197 KI_06.
198 FGD_2.
199 KI_01; KI_05; KI_09.
200 BTJRA (2026), FN 4, sec. 7(b), 9(y-bb).
201 Ibid., sec. 9(d).

the form of the "people-owned" principle mandating a "bottom-up approach",[202] and structurally in the form of a CSO forum, a mediated space in which community and institutional actors can engage.[203] Yet the land dispossession provisions through which climate-linked claims could flow emphasise documentation and recommendations to external bodies, not direct redress.[204] Whether the process can realise its potential as a vessel for climate-linked claims and a partner to community actions thus depends on its operationalisation – whether the BTJRC recognises and adopts community articulations of justice, interprets its mandate expansively, and is capable of moving other institutions to take up recommendations that reflect this expansive interpretation. In this regard, the absence of a national transitional justice framework remains a critical structural gap. The BARMM cannot bear alone the weight of accountability for harms whose primary author is the Philippine state. As one participant contended, "accountability is not transferable."[205]

While the BTJRC may not be capable of resolving communities' braided justice claims, it may be capable of receiving them. Rooted in the contextual specificity of the BARMM's history and enabled by the procedural flexibility and community responsiveness of its mandate, it could become the institutional bridge between undivided community actions and the differentiated mandates of institutional actors. The findings of this study offer an interpretive foundation for this approach, as well as a cautionary insight: that without it, transitional justice risks becoming another instrument of the marginalising logic it is meant to address.

## Conclusion

This paper has argued that in the Bangsamoro, climate justice and transitional justice are not separate strands but expressions of a single braided experience of injustice and redress. The communities whose stories populate this study recognise that the flooding that destroys their crops, the landslides that bury their homes, and the displacement that severs their connection to the land are inseparable from the colonial dispossession, state-sponsored extraction, and post-conflict marginalisation that put them in harm's way.

The integrated justice work these communities perform is organised not by the programmatic silos of climate organisations or the institutional templates of conventional transitional justice practice, but by the coherence of their own lived experience. These actions braid truth-telling, repair, accountability advocacy, and prevention, asserting agency and dignity for communities that have been systematically denied both. They offer new models for community action across contexts, and lessons for institutions seeking transformative impact.

202 Ibid., sec. 6(e).
203 Ibid., sec. 19.
204 Ibid., sec. 7(b).
205 KI_14.

The challenge for institutional actors, from the nascent BTJRC to global climate bodies, is to recognise these communities' practices, receive their undivided justice claims, and engage them as partners in the construction of a more just future.

While these challenges bear emphasis, the potential of a justice ecosystem that embraces an ecological approach to intersecting harms is transformative. In a land that holds the layered history of injustice in its soil, justice could finally be, in the words of the prayer, *nakaugat sa lupa* – rooted in the earth.

## Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)

Source: Adapted from Hariboneagle927, "Map of Bangsamoro (local government units).svg," Wikimedia Commons, current version 9 Sept. 2024, CC BY-SA 3.0 / GFDL; administrative composition cross-checked against Philippine Statistics Authority, Philippine Standard Geographie Code, which lists BARMM as five provinces as of 31 July 2025 and reflects the eight SGA municipalities after the 13 Apr. 2024 plebiscite. Changes: title and source/composition note added.

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## Annexes

### Key Informant Codes and Descriptions

1. KI_01: BARMM-based climate, youth, and gender justice activist.
2. KI_02: A senior academic whose work focuses on peacebuilding and development in Mindanao.
3. KI_03: A Mindanao-based historian and advocate for the integration of Bangsamoro and NMIP history into the Philippine education system.
4. KI_04: A peace programme officer in the Bangsamoro regional government.
5. KI_05: A Teduray adviser for the NMIP political structure and the BARMM government, involved in the development of the Non-Moro Indigenous Peoples Code.
6. KI_06: Identity anonymized.
7. KI_07: Two leaders of a local peacebuilding and rights organization that supports community-level climate preparedness.
8. KI_08: A Mindanao-based youth climate justice activist.
9. KI_09: A Teduray Lambangian youth organizer involved in Indigenous political advocacy and community organizing.
10. KI_10: A Mindanao-based anthropologist and sociologist researching climate, conflict, and justice issues.
11. KI_11: A prominent Mindanao-based scholar and civil society leader whose work focuses on peace, governance, and development.
12. KI_12: A young Moro policy researcher focusing on climate energy policy.
13. KI_13: A local disaster risk reduction and management officer.
14. KI_14: A Bangsamoro civil society leader providing capacity-building support for the political transition in the BARMM, including through transitional justice.
15. KI_15: A Mindanao-based political scientist and peace activist.
16. KI_16: A senior Mindanao-based LGBT rights advocate.
17. KI_17: A Mindanao-based academic in environmental studies.
18. KI_18: A Mindanao-based civil society leader whose work focuses on human rights, peacebuilding, and transitional justice.
19. KI_19: A senior Mindanao-based academic whose work focuses on human rights and transitional justice.
20. KI_20: A Mindanao-based peacebuilding practitioner affiliated with UNDP Philippines.
21. KI_21: A civil society leader working on disaster risk reduction and management in the Bangsamoro region.
22. KI_22: A senior official in the Bangsamoro Transitional Authority focused on policy planning, implementation, and monitoring.
23. KI_23: A senior Bangsamoro parliamentary figure with expertise in justice policy.
24. KI_24: An Indigenous scholar and practitioner focusing on Indigenous governance, environmental peacebuilding and conflict transformation studies.

## Focus Group Discussion Codes and Descriptions

i. FGD_1: Participants in the women-focused discussions consisted of community residents, heads, and members of women's organisations, and barangay leaders from Maguindanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte, and Cotabato.

ii. FGD_2: Participants in the youth-focused discussion consisted of Sangguniang Kabataan (Youth Affairs) members, members of church-based youth organisations, NGO volunteers, and representatives from youth-led climate and peace organisations, as well as youth residents from Maguindanao del Sur, Maguindanao del Norte, and Cotabato.

i. FGD_3: Participants in the Indigenous-focused discussion consisted of Indigenous elders, women and youth in Maguindanao del Sur and Maguindanao del Norte.

## Key Informant Interview Guiding Instrument

Identifying and characterising climate harms

- Do you think the climate is changing in the BARMM? How would you describe climate change and what causes it?
- Which community/area in the BARMM has been worst affected? Why?
- What climate harms have you or your community experienced? In your view, what are the most serious climate-related harms in your community (e.g. floods, drought, deforestation)? What have you lost and what has been damaged, or do you feel at risk? What about other people you know or have heard about in this community? (e.g. people passing away, losing their land, losing their property, losing jobs, experiencing grief)
- How have these climate harms affected community members culturally or spiritually?
- Who in your community do you think is most affected by these climate harms and why? Are there links to being marginalised in some way? (e.g. women, youth, elderly, in relation to socioeconomic issues, violence)

Conceptions of climate justice (needs, responsibility, rights, approaches)

- Who or what do you view as responsible for these climate harms? (e.g. governments of countries in Europe, people negotiating climate policies at the international level, big corporations (which sector?), the national government, local councillors, traditional leaders)
- What needs do you have in relation to these harms? Would addressing these needs constitute justice for you?
- Who is entitled to justice for climate harms, and what would that look like? Who would be responsible for ensuring that these justice needs are served?
- In your view, what would a just or right-based response to climate harms look like for your community?

Climate (justice) actions

- What are you and people in your community or organisation doing to deal with climate harms?

Retrospective (truth, memory, accountability, repair)

- Are you doing anything to deal with what happened in the past (backward-looking)? How do you remember or commemorate these events? Can you describe any practices, traditions, or solutions your community [or organisation] has developed or used to deal with climate challenges?

Prospective (reform, adaptation, guarantees of non-recurrence)

- Are you preparing for what might happen in the future? (e.g. changing the way you farm)

Conflict linkages

- How has conflict affected your community?
- How do climate harms relate to conflict? What was there first?
- Have climate harms contributed to tensions, conflict or displacement in your community? How?
- Do you think climate justice and conflict are connected?

Institutional roles

- Do you see a role for formal, informal or traditional justice systems to deal with climate harms? Who leads or initiates these responses?
- How is government (BARMM/Philippines) involved in your community? How are they responding to climate harms and conflict issues/violence?
- How are international actors (NGOs, UN, foreign gov'ts) involved in your community? How are they responding to climate harms and conflict issues/violence?
- Does the government have a role in supporting your community-level response to climate harms? Conflict issues/violence?
- Which people and resources are available locally to assist with dealing with climate harms? Who is important for the community to either work with or put pressure on to achieve justice for climate harms? Are you in touch with any of them? (e.g. local, provincial or national government, traditional or religious authorities, environmental NGOs and lawyers, businesspeople)

Assessing vertical linkages (how community initiatives can inform or connect to institutional approaches)

- Do you consider government responses or solutions to be fair and just? In what ways? Who benefits from these solutions? Are there groups/sectors who are left out?
- Do these government responses reflect your understanding of justice, accountability, and repair?
- Do you feel their understanding of justice aligns with your own or your group's or community's?

- Are there local [or traditional] concepts of justice that are missing or overlooked in formal/institutional processes?

TJ linkages

- What do you know about transitional justice? [consider brief description]
- What do you think about the way in which the BARMM has been dealing with the harms that happened before the comprehensive agreement in 2014, or with ongoing violence?
- Can we learn anything from that about how we are dealing with climate harms, either in a positive or in a negative way?
- Do you think climate harms could be addressed by transitional justice?
- Have your climate initiatives intersected with efforts by peace institutions or transitional justice programmes?

Concluding questions

- Is there something important about this issue you haven't had a chance to talk about yet?
- Who else should we talk to?

Group-specific probes:

- Youth: How are young people contributing to or leading climate responses? What special challenges do young people face as a result of climate change? Do you feel heard in local planning or justice mechanisms in BARMM?
- Women: How have climate harms affected women specifically in your localities? How are women contributing to or leading climate responses? Have women been involved in decision-making for local responses in BARMM?
- Indigenous people: How do traditional knowledge systems inform your community's responses to climate harms? Do external actors respect your cultural and land-based understanding of justice?

## Focus Group Discussion Guiding Instrument

Identifying and characterising climate harms

- Do you think the climate is changing in the BARMM? How would you describe climate change and what causes it?
- What climate harms have you or your community experienced? In your view, what are the most serious climate-related harms in your community (e.g. floods, drought, deforestation)? What have you lost and what has been damaged, or do you feel at risk? What about other people you know or have heard about in this community? (e.g. people passing away, losing their land, losing their property, losing jobs, experiencing grief)
- How have these climate harms affected community members culturally or spiritually?
- Who in your community do you think is most affected by these climate harms and why? Are there links to being marginalised in some way? (e.g. women, youth, elderly, in relation to socioeconomic issues, violence)

Conceptions of climate justice (needs, responsibility, rights, approaches)

- What is the cause of these climate harms? Who or what do you view as responsible? (e.g. governments of countries in Europe, people negotiating climate policies at the international level, big corporations (which sector?), the national government, local councillors, traditional leaders)
- What needs do you have in relation to these harms? Would addressing these needs constitute justice for you?
- Who is entitled to justice for climate harms, and what would that look like? Who would be responsible for ensuring that these justice needs are served?
- In your view, what would a just or right-based response to climate harms look like for your community?

Climate (justice) actions

- What are you and people in your community or organisation doing to deal with climate harms?

Retrospective (truth, memory, accountability, repair)

- Are you doing anything to deal with what happened in the past (backward-looking)? How do you remember or commemorate these events? Can you describe any practices, traditions, or solutions your community [or organisation] has developed or used to deal with climate challenges?

Prospective (reform, adaptation, guarantees of non-recurrence)

- Are you preparing for what might happen in the future? (e.g. changing the way you farm)

Conflict linkages

- How has conflict affected your community?
- How do climate harms relate to conflict? What was there first?
- Have climate harms contributed to tensions, conflict or displacement in your community? How?
- Do you think climate justice and conflict are connected?

Institutional roles

- Do you see a role for formal, informal or traditional justice systems to deal with climate harms? Who leads or initiates these responses?
- How is government (BARMM/Philippines) involved in your community? How are they responding to climate harms and conflict issues/violence?
- How are international actors (NGOs, UN, foreign gov'ts) involved in your community? How are they responding to climate harms and conflict issues/violence?
- Does the government have a role in supporting your community-level response to climate harms? Conflict issues/violence?
- Which people and resources are available locally to assist with dealing with climate harms? Who is important for the community to either work with or put pressure on to achieve justice for climate harms? Are you in touch with any of them? (e.g. local,

provincial or national government, traditional or religious authorities, environmental NGOs and lawyers, businesspeople)

Assessing vertical linkages (how community initiatives can inform or connect to institutional approaches)

- Do you consider government responses or solutions to be fair and just? In what ways? Who benefits from these solutions? Are there groups/sectors who are left out?
- Do these government responses reflect your understanding of justice, accountability, and repair?
- Do you feel their understanding of justice aligns with your own or your group's or community's?
- Are there local [or traditional] concepts of justice that are missing or overlooked in formal/institutional processes?

TJ linkages

- What do you know about transitional justice? [consider brief description]
- What do you think about the way in which the BARMM has been dealing with the harms that happened before the comprehensive agreement in 2014, or with ongoing violence?
- Can we learn anything from that about how we are dealing with climate harms, either in a positive or in a negative way?
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- Indigenous people: How do traditional knowledge system inform your community's responses to climate harms? Do external actors respect your cultural and land-based understanding of justice?

## ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

The Global Learning Hub for Transitional Justice and Reconciliation is a network of organisations from Germany and across the world, initiated by the Berghof Foundation and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development in early 2022. We want to facilitate an inspiring space for dialogue and learning that is driven by solidarity, inclusivity and innovation. By building bridges, generating knowledge and amplifying voices, the Hub seeks to advance the policy and practice of dealing with the past to strengthen peace and justice.

The Berghof Foundation is an independent, non-governmental and non-profit organisation supporting people in conflict in their efforts to achieve sustainable peace. For 50 years, it has worked to bring people in conflict together and enable them to find ways to live peacefully. The Berghof Foundation engages with all relevant state and non-state actors to support dialogue, mediation and negotiation processes. Grounded in a nexus of practice, learning and research, it`s work spans many regions and societies, encompassing conflicts between and within states, whether new or entrenched. The Berghof Foundation also works to address underlying social grievances which, if ignored, deepen divisions and inflame tensions. It`s approach is underpinned by the principles of partnership, inclusivity, sustainability and local ownership.


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