

# LAG Policy Brief

June 2011

## What Ails ARMM?



## What Ails ARMM?

### The premise and the promise

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jesse Robredo recapitulated one of the most compelling views which saw the establishment of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) twenty-one years ago. He said: “When they created the ARMM, the basic consideration was that ARMM would be the institution that would promote better quality of life and empowerment would be the tool to bring this about.”

Secretary Robredo was addressing a group of experts from the government and civil society at IAG’s roundtable in Makati City. The discussion was anchored on one question: “What ails ARMM?” After two decades of existence and past five regional chief executives, the ARMM, as an embodiment of the sentiments and aspirations of the Bangsamoro people, has failed miserably.

Recently, President Benigno Aquino in a bid to popularize support for the postponement of the ARMM elections slated August this year, summarized the two-decade old ARMM as a failed experiment. “(The) ARMM is a failed experiment in terms of the aspirations of the Filipino people to give justice to our Muslim brothers,” Edwin Lacierda, Palace spokesman, told the media.

The president wants to address the causes of rebellion and hopelessness through a master plan of reforms that starts with holding off the electoral exercise this year until 2013 when it will be synchronized with the national midterm polls. The administration has convincingly used its byword reform. The Senate bought it as manifested in an overwhelming majority who signed the poll deferment bill which the lower house earlier passed. Whether these “systemic reforms” will see the light of day in a region deemed already as a failed sub-state is another curious case.

Back in Makati, Secretary Robredo acknowledged the daunting task at hand. While the Aquino administration might not be asking too much for a twenty-month window to get its hand perform major reforms in ARMM before holding another regular elections in 2013, the time might be too short for such reforms to take root. But Secretary Robredo maintained it is ‘pseudo power’ to allow the ARMM constituency to elect its leaders under the normal process prescribed by the Organic Law which Congress recently altered by passing yet another legislative measure. From Secretary Robredo’s view, yes, people can cast their ballots. They can conveniently proclaim, yes, we have voted. But in reality, whoever is catapulted into the regional ranks is merely a result of power play with Malacañan holding the remote control. That is transactional politics in the past which President Aquino wants eliminated in his *daang matuwid*.

On the premise that the master plan to troubleshoot the ARMM has already unfolded in the passage of the poll postponement bill, Malacañan has no time to spare to muster the strongest political will it needs to carve a new kind of politics in the region. Never mind that the advocates of autonomy are frowning over this method of ‘troubleshooting’, let us give P-Noy and his anointed men the time and space to work out the grand design of reforms. Never mind that Malacañan has been accused of tinkering with autonomy, by all means, let

reforms hit the ground. It is along this line that former ARMM Governor Parouk Hussin spoke at IAG's roundtable. He said "synchronization is in effect diluting the autonomous character of ARMM". But like a bitter pill, we will take it on a promise of relief. We will take it trusting the word of the president who has stayed relatively afloat in the recent popularity surveys. Never mind that his popularity is in a downtrend as optimism begins to flicker amidst the current woes of the country.

### **'All the good things in place'**

Secretary Robredo said that instituting reforms will fall on the hands of 'professional managers' who will clean up ARMM in the twenty-month transition until it reverts to the regular electoral process in 2013, already synchronized with the national exercise. Cleaning up will include among others, weeding out ghost voters in the voters' lists and dismantling private armies. "In twenty months, let's have the governance system in place. Let's have the development templates in place, the institutions in place, all the good things in place, before we elect the new set of officials," Secretary Robredo remarked to his audience. Who these professional managers will be is now the prerogative of President Aquino.

It is now in the hands of the president to appoint the officers-in-charge that will oversee and run ARMM in this critical period of transition. The OICs will be composed of governor, vice-governor, regional assemblymen, cabinet secretaries, cabinet undersecretaries and assistant secretaries, and bureau chiefs. In a comment in Facebook, Fr. Eliseo Mercado said this "is a very rare grace either to perpetuate the status quo or set a new direction and new work ethics for the ARMM officials and employees."

Secretary Robredo dispelled criticisms that the Aquino administration's policy over ARMM is a means to influence the 2013 elections as part of a bigger power play. "I look at this as probably the last chance that will allow us to reform ARMM. If we miss this chance, it will be politics as usual again," he said.

The government presents this as the only feasible option. Secretary Robredo added: "This will give the people of ARMM the opportunity to see that good governance can work in ARMM. When people see that it can be done in a better way, their expectations go up. If people see that they benefit from the government, they will engage with the government."

Sulu Governor Sakur Tan had another proposition. Governor Tan dropped right away what he has been meaning to say why he showed up at the roundtable. He wanted ARMM dissolved. The Sulu governor has been publicly denouncing the widespread underdevelopment in the region where his island province belongs. "(ARMM has) failed to enhance agriculture, fisheries and trade. It is helpless in containing crimes and lawlessness. Education, health and social services continue to degenerate," Governor Tan said in a letter sent earlier to President Aquino and other key officials calling for the abolition of ARMM.

### **But what ails ARMM?**

As pestering as the malady confronted by the people in the autonomous region is the question what ails ARMM. UP Professor Alex Brillantes proposed for the proper reframing of the ARMM question. Is it political?

Economic? Security? Cultural? The list can go endless down the lane of the long history of the Bangsamoro people in Mindanao; the ARMM is but a fraction of it.

## **HOT COPY**

IAG was privileged to have at its roundtable the working man on the ground - Atty. Naguib Sinarimbo, the Executive Secretary of the ARMM. Atty. Sinarimbo informed us of the current 'ailments' of the ARMM:

### **1) National-Regional Relations**

- The ARMM is being treated merely as a local government unit, diluting its autonomous character.
- Autonomy is often not considered in the enactment of national policies (NEDA review policies, ODA policies, fiscal policies).

### **2) Weak Electoral System**

- National interference in the selection of ARMM candidates

### **3) Poor Access to and Control of Exploitation and Utilization of Strategic Resources**

- RA No. 9054 provides that ARMM is authorized to exploit its natural resources, except strategic minerals. It says: "The control and supervision over the exploration, utilization, development, and protection of the mines and minerals and other natural resources within the autonomous region are hereby vested in the Regional Government in accordance with the Constitution and the pertinent provisions of this Organic Act except for the strategic minerals such as uranium, petroleum, and other fossil fuels, mineral oils, all sources of potential energy, as well as national reserves and aquatic parts, forest and watershed reservations already delimited by authority of the central government or national government and those that may be defined by an Act of Congress within one (1) year from the effectivity of this Organic Act."

### **4) Weak Fiscal Autonomy**

- Budgeting processes and resources allocation in ARMM is based on national policy guidelines and procedures.
- The ARG is required to present and defend its budget proposal to Congress based on DBM ceiling and not based on its original budget proposal.
- Low revenue generation capacity – all forms of taxing measures are already imposed by the national government to ARMM.

- Non-devolution of income generating agencies to ARMM such as attached agencies of DOTC.
- National Policies seriously disadvantage the ARG in revenue generation 1:e: JMC 2004-1 dated 6 Feb 2004.
- Fiscal autonomy did not accompany the creation of the ARMM. The 10-billion pesos earmarked for the ARMM during its first five years did not materialize. Regional secretaries have to lobby before the Philippine Congress for their budgets. The taxation system, vis-à-vis ARMM and National Government, still favors the latter.

## AT A GLANCE: THE ARMM BUDGET\*

### Historical Budget Trend (CY 2008-2011)

Year	Approved Nat'l Budget (Php 000)	Share of ARMM (Php 000)	Percent Share Equivalent
2008	1,314,613,000	8,767,259	0.0066
2009	1,426,001,000	9,974,824	0.0069
2010	1,541,000,000	9,827,262	0.0063
2011	1,645,000,000	11,179,638	0.0067

### 3-Year Average Regional Allocation of Selected Agencies FY 2008-2010 (000)

AGENCY	REGION I to XIII	ARMM	(Difference)
DEPED	7,735,729	4,584,340	(3,151,389)
Locally-Funded Infra Projects	2,930,230	833,333	(2,096,897)
DENR	334,759	184,778	(149,981)
DAR	117,045	102,416	(14,629)
DILG	90,786	84,711	(6,075)
TESDA	86,817	43,332	(43,485)
DOLE	53,577	25,929	(27,648)
DOTC	38,199	20,721	(17,478)
DOST	31,088	15,537	(15,551)
DOT	11,666	8,881	(2,785)

\*From the presentation of ARMM Exec Secretary Naguib Sinarimbo at "What Ails ARMM?" Roundtable in Makati City, April 29, 2011

**4) Low Agricultural and Industrial Productivity**

- ARMM has 186,551 hectares potential irrigable areas but the irrigation development rate is only 14.5%.
- Two of the biggest Irrigation Projects are in ARMM (Kabulnan and Mal-Mar) yet there is no NIA in ARMM.

**5) Land Tenurial Issues**

**6) Poor Delivery and Access to Basic Services and Facilities**

- ARMM has the lowest literacy rate (about 70%) against the national average of 94.3%
- Poor quality of education due to DepEd-ARMM’s low appropriation as compared to other regions
- Poor quality of health services, housing, water and sanitation

**7) Unstable Peace and Order**

- Recurring armed confrontation and displacement of people
- Proliferation of loose firearms
- Presence of lawless armed groups
- Family Feuds or Rido
- Security Sector not in the control or supervision of the ARG (Article XIII, RA 9054 has not been operationalized)

**WHAT  
WENT  
BEFORE**

Many critics have pointed to the gaps in governance to explain the lingering ‘illness’ that has befallen Muslim Mindanao. Here, Prof. Alex Brillantes lists a history of Executive and Legislative responses to the so-called ‘Mindanao problem.’

Date	Policy/Institutional Set up	Regime	Key Features
30 October 1899	Military District of Mindanao and Jolo	U.S. Army Department of the Pacific and the Eight Army Corps	Created from the provinces of Cotabato, Davao, Lanao, Misamis, Surigao, Sulu and Zamboanga.
October 1901	Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes	American Occupation	Created by the Philippine Commission assigned to make a systematic investigation of the non-Christians in the Philippines: identify their tribes, territories, social organization, language, beliefs, manners and customs.

Date	Policy/Institutional Set up	Regime	Key Features
15 July 1903	Establishment of Moro Province	American occupation	Moro and Pagan inhabitants in the province were subject to Moro laws and tribal customary laws. The province was ruled by a civilian governor.
23 July 1914	Organic Act for the Department of Mindanao and Sulu	Philippine Commission	Extended to the inhabitants of Mindanao and Sulu the general laws of the country and the general forms and procedures of government followed in other provinces.
5 February 1920	Abolition of the Department of Mindanao and Sulu		Ended the effective period of American administration over Moro land. The Secretary of the Interior, through the Bureau of Non-Christian tribes, exercised its powers to govern the seven provinces of the region.
12 February 1935	Act No. 4197 or Quirino-Recto Colonization Act	President Quirino	Launched a vigorous campaign to solve the Mindanao situation through land settlement, under sponsorship by the government.
1957	Commission on National Integration	President Magsaysay	Tasked to bring about moral, material, economic, social, and political advancement of the Non-Christian Filipinos, and making permanent their integration into the body politic, i.e., through scholarships in government schools and universities.
1960s	Homestead policy		Encouraged the migration of non-Muslims to the Mindanao region, and land investments for local and foreign big businesses.
7 July 1975	PD 742 and LOI 290	President Marcos	Established the Office of the Regional Commissioner for Region IX and Region XII. Rear Admiral Romulo Espaldon and Atty. Simeon Datumanong Regional were appointed as commissioners for the two regions, respectively.
23 December 1976	Tripoli Agreement	President Marcos	Signed by the Philippine government and the MNLF under the auspices of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) through its Quadripartite Commission in Tripoli, Libya. Granted autonomy to 13 of the 23 provinces and 9 cities in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan islands, with their respective executive, legislative and judicial branches, and a regional security force independent of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.
14 February 1977	PD No. 1092	President Marcos	Called for a referendum-plebiscite on 17 April 1977 in the 13 provinces.
15 February 1977	Resolution No. 11	President Marcos	Batasang Bayan issued a resolution recommending the promulgation of a decree which provides the functions, powers and composition of the Sangguniang Pampook (Regional Assembly).

Date	Policy/Institutional Set up	Regime	Key Features
25 March 1977	Proclamation 1628	President Marcos	Established a provisional government in the 13 provinces stipulated in the Tripoli Agreement.
17 April 1977	The 1977 Plebiscite	President Marcos	<p>The people - through the qualified voters in the Southern Philippines – approved the creation of Sangguniang Pampook and Lupong Tagapagtanggap with an overwhelming 2,499,375 affirmative votes; 65612 negative votes; and 21,176 abstentions.</p> <p>The people rejected the merger of the 13 provinces into one autonomous region. They proposed two autonomous regional governments – Regions IX and XII.</p>
7 May 1977	Proclamation 1628-A	President Marcos	<p>This proclamation was issued ordering the adoption and implementation of the results of the referendum-plebiscite in 17 April 1977.</p> <p>Based on the results of the 1977 Plebiscite, President Marcos defined the composition (provinces) of the two Autonomous Regions.</p>
1978	Southern Philippine Development Authority	President Marcos	<p>Undertook the government programs for the Muslims and later became the Ministry of Muslim Affairs and the Presidential Assistance on National Minorities (PANAMIN).</p> <p>PANAMIN was tasked to integrate into the mainstream of society certain ethnic groups which sought full integration into the larger community and at the same time protect the rights of those who wish to preserve their original way of life beside the larger community.</p>
23 March 1979	Batas Pambansa Bilang 20	President Marcos	The Batasan Pambansa passed Batas Pambansa Blg. 20 providing for the organization of Sangguniang Pampook and Lupong Tagapagpaganap in each autonomous region.
7 May 1979		President Marcos	Under Batas Pambansa Blg. 20, the election of representative to the Sangguniang Pampook in each autonomous region was held and the successful candidates have been proclaimed and duly qualified.

Date	Policy/Institutional Set up	Regime	Key Features
25 July 1979	Presidential Decree 1618	President Marcos	Provided for the implementation of the organization of Sangguniang Pampook (Regional Assembly) and Lupong Tagapagpaganap (Regional Executive Council) in the Autonomous Regions IX and XII; thus, establishing the final political set up and framework of autonomous governance in two regions.
2 February 1987	1987 Constitution	President Aquino	Provided for the creation of autonomous regions in Muslim Mindanao and the Cordilleras by and Act of Congress with the assistance of a regional consultative commission.
24 July 1987	Mindanao Regional Consultative Commission	President Aquino	Drafted the Organic Act for Muslim Autonomy for submission to Congress
1 August 1989	Republic Act 6734 or the Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	President Aquino	It created the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao to be composed of provinces and cities voting favorably in the plebiscite.
6 November 1989	The 1989 Plebiscite	President Aquino	As stipulated in the Tripoli Agreement, Republic Act 6734 was submitted to the people of the 13 provinces and nine cities. Only four (4) out of 13 provinces and nine cities ratified the Organic Act. These are the Provinces of Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.
9 July 1990	The First <b>ARMM</b> Elections	President Aquino	Regional governor, Vice Governor and regional assembly were elected. The ARMM elections regularized and completed the 1987 constitutional steps in creating the autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao.
10 October 1991	Republic Act 7160 (Local Government Code of 1991)	President Aquino	Mandates the devolution of key functions and responsibilities of the national government to the local government units – provinces, cities/municipalities, and barangays – which include, among others: Health, education, environmental protection, and social protection.
1 September 1992	Executive Order 19 constituted the National Unification Commission (NUC)	President Ramos	Tasked to formulate an amnesty program and negotiation process, based on public consultations, with the aim of creating a comprehensive and permanent solution to the war in Mindanao.

15 September 1993	Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace Process	President Ramos	Created to continue the work of the NUC.
	Executive Order 125	President Ramos	Defined the approach and administrative structure for government peace efforts. It embodied the major recommendation of the NUC, which provided the official policy framework of the Ramos government's peace efforts, including the principles, components and administrative structure.
1995	Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 25	President Ramos	A region-specific local government code for ARMM. It provides for the preservation of education, health and social protection services as basic services delivered by the Regional government.
2 September 1996	Republic Act 9054 (1996 Final Peace Agreement)	President Ramos	Amended the 1989 Organic Law, which reconstituted the new ARMM composed of the 5 province and one city. The first phase entailed a 3-year transition period of confidence building under a new leadership and clear mandate. The second phase provided for substantial autonomy, following a plebiscite that would determine which areas would join a new autonomous region with greater powers than the <b>ARMM</b> .
	Interim Ceasefire Monitoring Committee	President Ramos	Created to ensure the commitment of the government and MILF forces to a general cessation of hostilities, direct their respective sub-committee on the cessation of hostilities to draw and finalize the guidelines and ground rules for the implementation of the agreement, and resumption of their formal talks in a venue to be mutually agreed upon between their panels.
21 July 1997	Agreement on the General Cessation of Hostilities	President Ramos	General agreement to stop the hostilities.
27 August 1998	General Framework of Agreement of Intent	President Estrada	Salient points include the pursuit of peace negotiations until the parties reach a negotiated political settlement and the non-use of threat or force to attain undue advantage while the peace negotiations on the substantive agenda are on-going.

21 June 2001	Agreement on Peace between the GRP (now GPH) and the MILF	President Arroyo	Identified conflict-affected areas, relief and rehabilitation of evacuees, rehabilitation and development projects, MILF designated agency and government agencies, mobilized the implementation of projects and monitoring mechanisms. Secured the full support of concerned communities, agencies and forces, of the relief and rehabilitation and development efforts in conflict-affected areas.
	Joint Statement during the 5 <sup>th</sup> Exploratory Talks	President Arroyo	Consolidated the Terms of Reference for the International Monitoring Team and formalized the agreement for the join GRP-MILF Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities (CCCH) to extend capacity-building programs through the Bangsamoro Development Authority and work closely with the donor community in implementing the joint needs assessment phase of the Multi-donor Trust Fund intended for the rehabilitation and development of the conflict-affected areas.
<p>From the presentation of Prof. Alex Brillantes at IAG's Roundtable – "What Ails ARMM?" April 29, 2011, Makati City.</p> <p>Source: Mindanao Peace Process by Fr. Eliseo R. Mercado, Jr., OMI President, Notre Dame University, Cotabato City; Don Agrasada, Peace Derivative and Probabilities in Muslim Mindanao: Part 1; and World Bank, Human Development for Peace and Prosperity in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.</p>			

### Challenges in Reforms

Professor Alex Brillantes poised the Mindanao problem at the roundtable as “one of the greatest challenges facing the Philippine politico-administrative system over the past century, characterized mostly by the lack of, or absence of peace in the area as manifested by the continuous armed struggle of what has been collectively (though not always correctly) referred to as the ‘Muslim secessionist movement.’”

Recurring symptoms have surfaced out of this problem in the form of underdevelopment and poverty, displacement due to hostilities and insurgencies, economic isolation, fear and mistrust between the civilians and the military, and the public misperception due to media’s portrayal of the peace and order situation in the ARMM, among others.

That the Malacañan has labeled ARMM as a ‘failed experiment’ only pushed the region further down the drain of infamy. As the institution that guided the ‘experiment’, Malacañan must share the brunt of what went wrong.

One of the few decent people in the service of ARMM, Atty. Naguib Sinarimbo remains unfazed despite the negative publicity. “If ARMM has been a failed experiment, it is because of the neglect and the failed

policies of the central government coupled with the failure of the ARG to assert autonomy, its rights and prerogatives and maximize its opportunities,” he said.

We maintain that “autonomy is one of the best things to happen in Muslim Mindanao” borrowing the line of Former Governor Parouk Hussin who also took the rein of responsibility over ARMM once. Twenty years, but as an institution, the ARMM is quite very young. The two-decade experiment might not have turned out well but that does not mean it can be thrown away. Singling out ARMM in the unpopularity contest is undermining many well-meaning efforts to improve its governance and image. Former Governor Hussin pointed out that the problem in Mindanao and ARMM in particular, is but a “microcosm of the greater ailment of the country”. For Governor Hussin, it is not enough to ask what ails ARMM. “It is also good to ask what ails the national government, and what ails us as a people,” he said.

## **THE CHALLENGES**

To institute reforms, the national government and the ARMM stakeholders will have to wade through many challenges. Professor Brillantes provided us at the roundtable the ‘simplified’ complex of what we should look into if we are to reform ARMM. That if we mean business.

At the policy level:

- The separatist movement
- Incompatibility of policies
- Fundamentalism and devolution

**At the institutional level:**

- Corruption among politicians
- Political dynasties and nepotism
- Limited access to basic services particularly health and education
- Financial constraints and dependence on external sources of funds, including the IRA
- Weak leadership
- Bureaucratic practices and the lack of transparency
- Interference of the national government in the institution of the ARMM and its elections

**At the individual level:**

- Prejudice and misconceptions
- Ignorance and poor education
- Hunger for power and vain glory
- Discrimination
- Lack of empowerment
- Cultural differences
- Complacent attitude
- Complacent attitude

## What Reforms?

Professor Brillantes also laid down a four-point reform framework. He said the following must be considered:

### 1- Reform institutions, structures, processes and procedures

- Carefully examine the “continuity” and “discontinuity” of certain policies that have negative effects.
- Review and refine the policies concerning the ARMM, such as the Tripoli Act, PD 1618, the Organic Law, the Local Government Code of 1991 and the 1996 Peace Agreement.
- Clarify and redefine intergovernmental relations between the central government and the regional government, between the regional executive and legislative branches, and define or refine the relationships among the national government, regional government and the local government.
- Financial Matters
- Decentralization and Autonomy?
- Separation or Self-rule?
- Total dissolution of ARMM?
- Demilitarization of the region?
- Or federalism as an option?
- Strengthening of institutions
  - Comprehensive and integrated capacity building efforts in Mindanao
  - Reduction of armed forces intervention in the area
  - Creation of more *shariah* or Islamic courts
  - Stricter implementation of Halal system

### 2- Reform mindsets, behavior, and paradigms

- Look into solutions to stop the continuing divide between Muslims and Christians and the misconception on the state of peace in Mindanao
- At the policy level:
  - Integration of Muslim minority into the system to stop discrimination
  - Establishment of cooperatives
  - Recognition of Muslim tribalism
  - Integration of Islamic studies into the national educational curriculum
- At the institutional and individual level:
  - Advocacy, training, and values education and good leadership as imperatives for greater service delivery
  - Open-mindedness

- Acceptance of the strengths and weaknesses of fellow Mindanao leaders in the ARMM  
Training of AFP personnel

**3- Leadership and political will**

- Elect competent, spiritual and moral leaders
- Highlight good and best practices in the area like what Galing Pook does
- Invest in young Muslim leaders

**4- Active citizen's engagement and people's participation**

- Transparent consultation
- Representation and rights of the indigenous peoples and Christians in the Muslim-led autonomous region Strengthen the peace constituency and citizen's participation in the peace process on the ground.

## Ways forward

There is no shotgun treatment to the malady that has stricken the ARMM. From the bandwagon of promises, P-Noy and his ARMM transition team will have to touch the ground and sow reforms together with the people. From the top, they can see better how this parcel of 'promised land' has become wasted, even soiled, from the culture of impunity that overtook political sanity. By any stretch of imagination, they have to guide these reforms to fall into their proper places. The audit of the ARMM is a good point of departure. But as Secretary Robredo has revealed, the government has yet to summon more political will to send all those accountable to justice.

In the peace fronts, we hope that this government will not treat any agreement sealed with the second parties as yet another ordinary signed contract. A veteran in Mindanao and in the peace process, Fr. Eliseo Mercado cautioned that there is no guarantee there will be no collision post-political settlement. The government must place some dignity and sacredness on the signed agreement. It can spell the difference lest we go through another excruciating journey searching for the elusive peace.

Once in a while, a spot of difference pops up in the wide canvass of banality. Once in a while, hope is re-invigorated with something that outshines the rest of the pack in the noble pursuit of service and humanity. This can pass as an allusion to P-Noy at the time of his reform campaign near the end of the regime of his much criticized predecessor. This gave him landslide victory. Similar thing can now be said about Atty. Naguib Sinarimbo for his steadfast performance as ARMM executive secretary landing him in the people's admiration list.

The shortcoming of media is the fact that it is designed to pick up more bad rather than good news. This was the case as seen at the peak of the Maguindanao Massacre coverage. Those at our roundtable in

Makati have seen the sweeping coverage as putting not only Maguindanao and ARMM, but the whole Mindanao in the bad light. Beaming gruesome images to infinity, the world has judged the ARMM sweepingly and swiftly. But as the few working people in the autonomous regional government have proven, not all is bad news in the ARMM. It is not possible to enumerate the good things done so far but the spirit of service and political will, however faint, tells a different story that is gradually making a difference towards reforms.

The national government must come to the fore now to sustain these little changes. When will it ever stop advertising reforms for good publicity's sake? It is time that the people of the region taste it. A good slogan to guide public servants is "Perform now and publicize later".



DILG Secretary Jesse Robredo (center) speaks at the roundtable discussion on "What Ails ARMM" organized by IAG. Also shown are IAG Director Fr. Eliseo Mercado, OMI and UP Professor Alex Brillantes.

This brief is based on the roundtable "What Ails ARMM?" organized by IAG at the Asian Institute of Management Conference Center, Makati City on April 29, 2011. Written by Ramie Toledo. Lay-out by Omar Tadeja. IAG as a policy platform continues to create more "tables" in our common search for genuine autonomy and governance. The pdf format is downloadable online. Go to [www.iag.org.ph](http://www.iag.org.ph). To read past issues, go to <http://iag2001.wordpress.com> and browse under Policy Brief. The discussion never stops online. Search Institute for Autonomy & Governance on Facebook, join our group, and talk back.

# Shaping Public Policy for Peace and Good Governance

The Institute for Autonomy and Governance (IAG) is an independent and non-partisan think tank founded in 2001 to generate ideas on making autonomy an effective vehicle for peace and development in the Southern Philippines. IAG is an institutional partner of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in the Philippines.



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