



PHILIPPINES

A self-reliant and resilient Bangsamoro:

The Road to Improved Food Security and Nutrition in BARMM



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

The Philippines has a long history of violent regional conflict that has hindered efforts to reduce poverty and hunger. This means that, despite a strengthening national economy, malnutrition remains a serious and growing issue in the Philippines.

The problem is especially acute in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), where natural hazards as well as armed conflicts have created intergenerational setbacks. About 49 per cent of people in BARMM suffer from chronic malnutrition, while 45 per cent of children under five are affected by stunting – the highest prevalence of stunting in the country. The COVID-19 pandemic, which reduced the incomes for over three quarters of the population in BARMM, has increased malnutrition in the region.

Determined to improve this situation through capacity-building of government entities, the World Food Programme (WFP) has expanded food security and nutrition programmes in BARMM to build inclusive and sustainable food systems while improving social cohesion in conflict affected communities. School meals have been a particular focus of this work, as they provide direct food support to affected children as part of national safety net programmes, increasing children's access to learning opportunities and helping improve their health and nutrition status.

This case study presents important insights from an external evaluation of these efforts over the past five years (2018 to 2022). Documenting these insights aims to inform WFP's efforts in other countries and contribute to the global evidence base on country capacity strengthening, especially in conflict contexts.



1 Implementing a school feeding programme

Following the establishment of a [national school feeding programme](#) in the Philippines in 2018, WFP has provided valuable support to the programme's implementation. That year, WFP gave technical and financial assistance to the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Department of Education to develop the implementing rules and regulations needed to ensure the school feeding programme was successfully enacted. WFP also piloted the use of iron-fortified rice in a school feeding programme in the BARMM Province of Maguindanao. This pilot successfully demonstrated that iron-fortified rice for school feeding could be procured locally from farmers' cooperatives and used in the school feeding programmes.

With the establishment of BARMM in 2019, WFP worked with the Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education to boost the region's readiness to implement school feeding. WFP shared good practices from other countries, invited Ministry staff on a learning and exchange visit to WFP's Cambodia office and conducted a school feeding process review of BARMM. These actions helped inform

the creation of guidelines for programme implementation using BARMM government funding. These guidelines also led to the institutionalization and adoption of iron-fortified rice in school feeding, based on the pilot implementation in Maguindanao.

Since 2020, the BARMM school feeding programme has benefited a total of 160,000 school children in 2,217 selected schools. During this time, WFP has continuously advocated for the expansion of school feeding in 10 municipalities in BARMM, covering 10 schools and 3,000 children, through the adoption and integration of the [Home-Grown School Feeding initiative \(HGSF\)](#). HGSF promotes sustainable change by linking school feeding programmes and the produce they need with local smallholder farmers, and integrating these links into local municipalities and their development plans. By the end of 2022, four local government units (LGUs) in BARMM had adopted and integrated HGSF into their local development plans. This has required them to allocate funds and create technical working groups for the programme's implementation.

Figure 1: The school feeding journey in the Philippines.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Offer technical and financial support for national school feeding programme.	Pilot the use of iron-fortified rice in a school feeding programme in Maguindanao.	Share good practices from other countries and WFP centres to inform implementation guidelines.	Advocate for the expansion of school feeding with the Home-Grown School Feeding initiative.	Provide community-based participatory planning training to help local government develop strategic plans.	Co-facilitate and finance Food Security and Nutrition Roadmap for BARMM and a Task Force to implement the Roadmap.
Ongoing advocacy →					



2 Strengthening the capacity of local communities and governments to build food and nutrition security

Since the establishment of the BARMM government in early 2019, it has been a priority of the regional government to ensure that everyone has access to clean, affordable and nutritious food. To help make this goal a reality, WFP has been strengthening the capacity of LGUs by providing technical assistance for the development of strategic plans.

The guiding principle of this work has been the **food security convergence model** – a method of establishing inter-government collaboration and coordination to boost positive impacts. This can be seen most clearly in WFP's introduction of **community-based participatory planning (CBPP)** to strengthen existing community development plans and identify activities to be implemented in targeted communities based on the local priorities. CBPP is jointly conducted by communities, partners and LGU staff to prioritize actions that significantly improve the food security of the poorest and most vulnerable households. In this way, CBPP and the convergence model not only enhance the participative and consultative aspects of programme implementation but facilitate social cohesion among community members as well as trust between communities and the government. The inclusion of ex-combatants in community-based agricultural activities in particular has helped improve social cohesion in communities affected by conflict. To measure its contribution to peace in BARMM, WFP has also invested in evidence generation by deploying a new peace measurement tool, People-centred Risk Indicator Measurement and Engagement, or PRIME.



To date, WFP has provided CBPP training to the Ministry of Interior and Local Government, the Bangsamoro Planning and Development Authority, the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Energy, the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Agrarian Reform and nine LGUs. Seven of these LGUs have used CBPP to identify development priorities and activities and inform the development of community Convergence Area Development Plans.



3 BARMM's first Food Security and Nutrition Roadmap

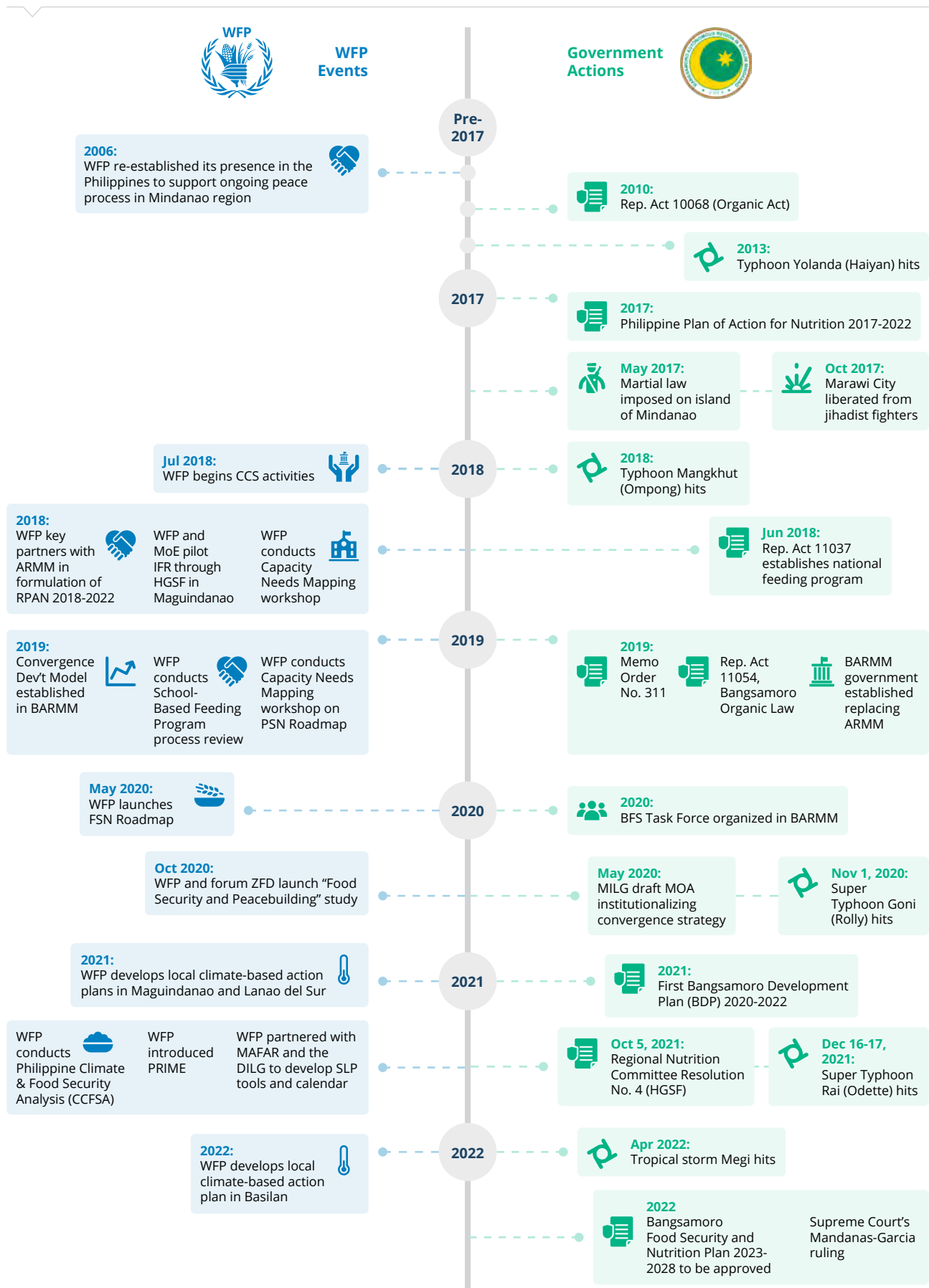
At the heart of the efforts to create a self-reliant, food-secure and resilient BARMM is the region's [Food Security and Nutrition Roadmap \(FSN Roadmap\)](#), facilitated and financed by WFP and the BARMM regional government. Work on the Roadmap began in 2019, when WFP hosted a series of consultations and workshops with 10 regional ministries, including the Ministry of Health; 3 other government bodies, including the Bangsamoro Planning and Development Authority; and provincial government representatives from Maguindanao, Tawi-Tawi, Lanao del Sur, Sulu and Basilan. This led to the publication of the FSN Roadmap, the first for the region, in 2020. The Roadmap offers a feasible, viable and sustainable route to food security, resilience and self-reliance in BARMM through convergence among government agencies and institutions.

That same year also saw the establishment of the [Bangsamoro Food Security Task Force](#) to ensure the full implementation of the FSN Roadmap. As a technical adviser to the Task Force, which now consists of 19 government entities, WFP continues to play an important role in guiding the development of its plans and strategies. Implementing the Roadmap at the local scale remains a challenge due to limited participation

by, and competing concerns between, politically diverse LGUs. At the BARMM Regional Government level, a sense of ownership of the FSN Roadmap has been instilled thanks to government use of the Food Security Convergence model to co-finance the implementation of the Roadmap's programmes, projects and activities at the community level. Together with WFP's technical support, this has led to the gradual institutionalization and incorporation of the Roadmap into development plans at the regional and local level since 2020.

As a result of this incorporation, relevant ministries in BARMM are now held accountable for the Roadmap's implementation. Moreover, the necessity of a Roadmap for achieving food security and nutrition goals in BARMM has become widely accepted. Aware of the need for sustainability, WFP has supported the work of the Bangsamoro Planning and Development Authority by facilitating and funding a series of workshops and consultation meetings for the formulation of a first-ever Food Security and Nutrition Plan for 2023–2028, which is currently being finalized. This plan is aligned with the **Second Bangsamoro Development Plan**, and will be updated every five years.

Figure 2: Timeline of food security and nutrition efforts in BARMM (2017-2022).





4 Success, challenges and lessons learned

WFP has contributed to a significant increase in the BARMM government capacity to improve food security and nutrition since 2018. Its initiation and co-development of the FSN Roadmap, in particular, introduced the framework needed to achieve this. Looking at the local level, WFP's continued support to strengthen the capacity of the BARMM Regional Government and LGUs has helped implement various food security and nutrition programmes. These include: increasing the number of BARMM ministries and offices implementing the food security convergence model; the adoption and integration of HGSP into LGU development plans; introducing iron-fortified rice into the BARMM school feeding programme; introducing CBPP to promote integrated rural development; and the organization of smallholder farmers and fishers into associations and cooperatives that increased their market access.

Looking to the future, the regional government and WFP are interested in strengthening the engagement and participation of civil society organizations and the private sector to implement aspects of the FSN Roadmap and enhance market access for smallholder farmers and fishers.

Challenges over the past five years have centred around the difficulties of securing cooperation and commitments from provincial and municipal government and implementing food security and nutrition initiatives at the local government level. A continued emphasis on local government co-financing of such initiatives, and the integration of food security and nutrition programmes into local community development plans, will pave the way for greater implementation at all levels in BARMM. In particular, the implementation of the 2023–2028 Food Security and Nutrition Plan will be critical for stronger partnerships and increased investment in local capacities to improve food security and nutrition.

This case study was developed under the 2022 Decentralised Evaluation on Country Capacity Strengthening (CCS) Activities in the Philippines. To access the full report [click here](#) or contact wfp.philippines@wfp.org