

Unveiling the Impact of National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) in Four Barangays of Tangub City

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Abstract. The Communist armed conflicts in the Philippines trace their origins to various communist organizations dating back to 1930, notably the Hukbalahap Rebellion (1942–1954) led by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Subsequently, the New People’s Army (NPA), an offshoot of the CPP, emerged in 1969, continuing the rebellion. In response, the Local Government Unit of Tangub, alongside agencies like the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and Philippine National Police (PNP), adopted the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) under President Rodrigo Roa Duterte’s EO 2018, aiming to achieve peace and halt conflicts between the NPA and AFP in affected barangays. This study assessed the implementation of NTF-ELCAC in Tangub City, Misamis Occidental, using a mixed-method approach involving both qualitative and quantitative methods. Surveys were conducted with 140 respondents from four conflict-affected barangays: Sicot, Owayan, San Antonio, and Hoyohoy. Findings revealed that respondents were well-informed about communist groups in the Philippines and NTF-ELCAC, expressing positive feedback on project experiences, improved socio-economic conditions, enhanced peace and order, and strengthened relationships with the government. Suggestions for program improvement and policy issues were also highlighted. Theoretical implications underscored the importance of social solidarity and the role of social institutions in fostering a balanced society.

Keywords: NTF-ELCAC; Communist armed conflict; Conflict-affected areas; Communist insurgency.

1.0 Introduction

According to Asia Report (2011), the communist insurgency in the Philippines has continued long, and it has ceased to receive the attention it deserves. The Philippine Government was unable to control and develop large parts of the country because of the longstanding communist insurgency. The biggest threat to the Government is the continuing fight against the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the New People’s Army (NPA), which complicates the prospect of peace in Mindanao. They continue to kill hundreds each year, including tribal leaders, local politicians, and civilians who also die due to conflict. They are primarily active in the mountainous and typhoon-hit areas like Central Luzon and Northern Luzon, CALABARZON, Bicol, Eastern Visayas, Negros Occidental, and eastern and southern Mindanao (Caraga, Davao, and the Compostela Valley). The current government has made this strong declaration to stop the conflict between the Communist Party of the Philippines – National Democratic Front – New People’s Army (CPP – NDF – NPA) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). One of its priorities is attaining peace in the country. Stated under the Philippine Development Plan 2017

- 2022 aims to achieve sustainable peace through the process of developing conflict-affected and vulnerable communities.

President Rodrigo Roa Duterte issued a Whole-of-Nation Approach to pursue the country's peace agenda, which is to end the insurgency of the Local Communist Terrorist Groups and to cease the 50 years of trickery, fraud, and brutality they committed against the Filipinos. One of its programs is the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC). The main goals of this program are to obtain sustainable peace in the country under the rule of law and provide different kinds of assistance to former rebels and their families as well as individuals living in conflict-affected areas or barangays (Memorandum Circular No. 03).

"You cannot defeat the government in a million years of fighting. Now, 53 years later, I cannot see any achievements from the communist group. I did not see any progress to their movements, but rather, it has become a group of bandits solely." - (PRRD, 2021)

According to Lt. General Felimon Santos, practicing good governance and efficient delivery of basic services to the cities and provinces would create flexible communities. This act will also encourage the members of the communist terrorist groups to return to the government. Good governance is one of the solutions to resolve the problem with the communist terrorist groups. Executive Order No. 70 is like a signal that this is not only the fight of the AFP and PNP against the communist groups but also includes all government agencies from the national to the barangay level with assigned duties and responsibilities that could help resolve the insurgency problem. To counter the motivations that could lead to insurgency, the Whole-of-Nation Approach assures that there will be no reason anymore for the communist terrorist groups to trouble the helpless communities.

As stated on the Official Website of Tangub City, Tangub City is located on the northern shore of Panguil Bay (an arm of Iligan Bay). It has a coastal road that connects this city to Ozamiz and Oroquieta. The main road of this city connects the Zamboanga Peninsula to the main part of Mindanao. That is why the common occupations of the area are fishing and Coconut (copra) cash crops (Pletcher & Gaur, 2017). Tangub is known for its peaceful and rural atmosphere, but there is a hidden side to the story. Some places in the area are the hen pens of the New People's Army (NPA), which are not pleased with the current administration.

According to the Commanding Officer of the 10th Infantry Battalion (101B), Lt. Col. Ryan Severo, on one Saturday morning of August 2018 in Barangay Hoyohoy, Tangub City, Misamis Occidental, troops under Joint Task Force Zampelan clashed with a group of communist rebels during their operation. The troops were there to verify and respond to the reports regarding the CPP-NPA (Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army) harassing the civilian community in the area. The attack lasted for 40 minutes and ended when the communist group retreated. There were no reported injuries or killed among the rebels, but one of the AFP suffered minor injuries. They have recovered an AK47 rifle with four empty magazines, two half-sacks of rice, a stash of dried fish, and two backpacks during their clearing operations – the 1st Infantry Division Commander of the AFP, Maj. Gen. Roseller Murillo requested the NPA to surrender (Tibay, 2018).

The Local Government Unit of Tangub, together with the different agencies such as the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Department of the Social Welfare Development (DSWD), the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), Philippine National Police (PNP), and other members adopted the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF - ELCAC) under the EO 70 s. 2018 of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte to obtain peace and end the conflict between the New People's Army (NPA) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the area. The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) was the one who identified the four barangays in the city to be included as beneficiaries of NTF-ELCAC these are Barangay Sicot, Barangay Owayan, Barangay San Antonio, and Barangay Sicot, since these barangays are conflict-affected areas. Every cluster under the program has conducted outreach programs, presented plans, and offered many opportunities to the people in the four barangays (Official Publication Vol. 2 October - December 2020 of City Mayor's Office of Tangub).

Tangub City started to implement NTF-ELCAC in November 2020. The implementation of NTF-ELCAC in Tangub City also brought stories of hope to the community. Some are very vocal about the benefits they have received in the program. According to Punong Barangay Alejandro O. Sarajeno of Owayan Tangub City Misamis

Occidental, in his 20 years in service, it is the first time he felt the government's help because of NTF - ELCAC. NTF-ELCAC was adopted and implemented in the four conflict-ridden Barangays of Tangub City (Barangay Sicot, Barangay Owayan, Barangay San Antonio, and Barangay Hoyohoy) to address the insurgency that is happening in the area. This study unveils the impact of the implementation of NTF-ELCAC in the City of Tangub from the perspective of the residents of the four barangays and the responses of the implementers in the area.

Based on the problem identified in this study, the researcher assessed the implementation of NTF-ELCAC. Specifically, this study will explore the impact of the two-year implementation of NTF-ELCAC on the respondents regarding socio-economic aspects, peace and order, and social relations.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study used a mixed-method technique, using both qualitative and quantitative design. It used quantitative research techniques in the four selected barangays of Tangub City: Barangay Sicot, Barangay Owayan, Barangay San Antonio, and Barangay Hoyohoy. The study used a survey questionnaire comprising close-ended and open-ended questions. Although paper questionnaires were used, an open-ended question is still essential since it will be used to uncover trends in thought and opinion and dive deeper into the problem (Wyse, 2011).

2.2 Research Locale

Tangub City is found at the southern curve of the D-shaped province of Misamis Occidental. Mt. Malindang bounds it in the north, Ozamis City in the east, Panguil Bay in the South, and the Municipality of Bonifacio in the West. It can be reached by plane in one hour and twenty minutes from Manila, thirty minutes by plane from Cebu to Ozamis City overnight travel via boat from Cebu City, and three hours and thirty minutes by public utility bus from Cagayan de Oro City. Sheltered by the mighty Mt. Malindang Range and embraced by the placid Panguil Bay, Tangub City comprises fifty-five barangays spread over 16,572 hectares. The topography is approximately 40% plain along the coast of Panguil Bay and 6% rolling and hilly, gradually rising to the Mt. Malindang National Forest Reservation area. The city does not have high-rise buildings and does not have traffic congestion. Based on the 2011 BHW data, the city's population density is four people per hectare. Barangay Maquilao has the highest population density, 4,705 people per sq. km. In contrast, Barangay Owayan has only 24 people per sq. km (City Government of Tangub, 2012).

2.3 Research Participants

A total of 150 respondents, composed of 140 survey respondents who are residents of Sicot, Barangay Owayan, Barangay San Antonio, and Barangay Hoyohoy, were selected as part of this research. They were chosen through a convenience sampling technique. In addition, ten key informants were interviewed who are the implementers of the program NTF-ELCAC, who come from different agencies, and one representative from every barangay. They were selected through purposive sampling.

2.4 Research Instrument

The interview and survey questionnaire were crafted from the guidelines on resolving NTF-ELCAC under Executive Order No. 70 s. 2018. The fundamental elements of the program and goals were converted into questions. The survey questionnaire contains closed-ended and open-ended questions to understand the respondents' answers. The first part is about the Socio-demographic Profile of the respondents; the second part is about the Knowledge and Awareness of the respondents about NTF-ELCAC; the third part is the feedback of the respondents to the programs implemented by NTF-ELCAC, while fourth part is about the changes in the lives of the respondents on the two-year implementation of NTF-ELCAC in terms of (a) socio-economic aspect, (b) peace and order, (c) social relations. The fifth part presents the Concerns and Issues of the Respondents regarding the implementation of NTF-ELCAC, and the last part is their Recommendations. Regarding the key informants, interviews consisted of open-ended questions about the implementation of NTF-ELCAC.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The following was the procedure for the data gathering:

- (a) The researcher submitted a letter to the Local Chief Executive requesting a survey in their Local Government Unit, including the conflict-affected barangays, Barangay Hoyohoy, Barangay San Antonio, Barangay Sicot, and Barangay Owayan.
- (b) Before conducting an interview, the researcher asked for every respondent's consent; upon approval, the data was gathered.
- (c) The researcher assured that every respondent was able to know the flow of the interview, including their confidentiality and anonymity as well as their privacy
- (d) The data were collected and analyzed.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

As this study utilized human participation and assistance, certain issues were addressed. These issues were necessary for ensuring privacy and the security of participation. These issues were identified in advance to prevent future problems that could have arisen during the research process. Among the significant issues, their consent is data confidentiality and protection.

Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation

Before conducting research, both key informants and survey respondents knew what was being asked of them, and consent was provided voluntarily or freely. The study's purpose was disclosed to the participants before the interview and survey; they could choose whether to participate. Following Mindanao State University Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT) protocols, the researcher utilized Form No. 13 to represent participants' informed and voluntary consent. The consent form ensures the freedom to participate or withdraw at any time. They are also assured of the confidentiality and privacy of their data.

Respondents and Key informants

In the research, survey and interview questionnaires were drafted prominently and concisely to prevent conflicts among the respondents. It was also translated into "Bisaya" so that it was easy for the respondents to read and understand such questions. Consent or form 13 has been given for their signature and for them to be aware of the protocols. People who participated in the research were given ample time to respond to the survey; aside from that, they could change their answers as often as they wanted to avoid errors and inaccuracies. The respondents' and critical informants' cooperation was acknowledged very well. For them to be comfortable, they were also assured that the data gathered from them would be treated with the strictest confidence and that they would only be the ones who could view it aside from the researcher; this also helped them to be very open in terms of answering the survey/interview. At the end of the interview or survey, the researcher assured the respondents of respecting participants' comfort and maintaining the highest ethical standards throughout the research process, fostering trust and integrity.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Impact of the two-year implementation of NTF-ELCAC

Socio-Economic Condition

As shown in Table 1, there were changes in terms of the socio-economic status in the area. Before the implementation of the program, it was tough for the farmers in the community to go to the market of city to sell their products because of the muddy road, and only carabaos, horses, and dump trucks were the only modes of transportation that they could use aside from walking. They have mentioned that the farm-to-market road project has helped the socio-economic condition of the barangay, especially now that the city has provided free transportation for their products to the market every Sunday of the week. This is one of the projects of NTF-ELCAC that has also helped the students in the area, aside from the free education that the program has provided. Before the implementation, it was hard for the students to go to school since even motorcycles could not cross the road. Nowadays, it is easy for people to go to the city back and forth because the road is already concrete and accessible to any transportation. Aside from the farm-to-market road, other projects of NTF-ELCAC have developed their socioeconomic condition, such as training for different livelihoods, wood carving, food processing, carpentry, and employment. This can be supported by the statement below.

"Our lives here in Barangay Sicot are complicated; the vehicles that could come near here before were only dump trucks, and it is only every Sunday to transport our bananas, our goods to be sold in the market, that is the only vehicle that could come

near here in our barangay, and it will stop in Barangay Paiton (the barangay before Barangay Sicot) because they cannot cross the road here in our barangay, so the people here would have to walk using balsa and horses to carry their products to where the dump truck has stopped. It was tough, and that is the only livelihood we have; it is still farming, but it is better today, especially since now, every Sunday, there is free transportation that would go here directly because the roads are already accessible; that is why there is a big difference from before and now in terms of our socioeconomic.” - (Barangay Captain, Sicot)

Table 1. Impact of the two-year implementation of NTF-ELCAC in terms of socio-economic

Indicators	Brgy. Hoyohoy			Brgy. Owayan			Brgy. San Antonio			Brgy. Sicot			Total		
	Y	N	M	Y	N	M	Y	N	M	Y	N	M	Y	N	M
1. There is growth in terms of business opportunities in the area.	20		15	23	2	10	15	3	17	30		5	88	5	47
2. Job opportunities are offered.	20		15	24	3	8	16	2	17	25	6	4	85	11	44
3. Livelihood conditions greatly improved.	24		11	26	1	8	13	6	16	26	6	3	89	13	38
4. Unemployed individuals greatly decreased.	26	2	7	24	6	5	19	7	9	22	9	4	91	24	25
5. Free education is being offered.	28		7	32		3	19	4	12	33	2		112	6	22

“As the BDP is envisioned to bring development to conflict-prone communities, the initiatives under the program aim to address the gaps identified by the civilian agencies and the security sector in Davao. It has been a goal for the Regional Task Force of Region XI that the BDP package for the Region shall address the main drivers and causes for NPA recruitment among disgruntled and marginalized communities, such as the lack of education infrastructure, inaccessibility, basic services, healthcare, and connectivity in its isolated and disadvantaged areas.” - (National Security Adviser Sec. Hermogenes Esperon)

According to Gido (2021), the Barangay Development Program of NTF-ELCAC is an initiative that aims to develop the socio-economic aspect of the barangay. It focuses on providing farm-to-market roads, health centers, electrification, water and sanitation facilities, schools, and livelihood opportunities. The BDP is envisioned to give peace and development initiatives through different socioeconomic programs and projects to the communities previously under the CTG.

According to Governor Henry Oaminal (2023), the Province of Misamis Occidental has progressed compared to before, and it is considered one of the poorest provinces in 2021. The governor also mentioned that the business opportunities in the area have been improved and that there are more job offers. Based on the Philippine Static Authority (PSA) records, the poverty issues have decreased due to road improvements and strong budgetary management that helped construct new health centers and educational facilities.

In Tangub City, under the NTF-ELCAC, various projects have been initiated, significantly enhancing the socio-economic landscape of the area. These projects encompass a range of programs, such as the construction of concrete roads, housing provision, access to free electricity, and livelihood training. Furthermore, it is noted that residents from the respective barangays are prioritized for employment whenever construction projects or infrastructure developments occur within their locality. This approach ensures that the community directly benefits from these endeavors, receiving salaries while contributing to the advancement of their neighborhoods. So they will receive a salary while working on their project. Below are some of the statements:

“To address the area's poverty, different programs were implemented. The implementers provided training for wood carving and food processing. The people were oriented. Training was provided, and there were carpenters and ten food processors, but it stopped there. Unfortunately, the training has been implemented; it is just that the people did not apply it, and after the training, it is like nothing.” - (Barangay Captain, Sicot)

“It has helped; it has improved the livelihood in the area; the livelihood in which the people continue is the [making bread stuffing] since there are also people who keep ordering. They have also been displaying these products in their little store at the crossing, especially since this place is a tourist destination; displaying things to sell is nice. They have been trained in livelihood; from the start, they were trained by Northwestern Mindanao State College (NMSC). There was a budget from the province; trainers were given tools and taught how to cook them. Aside from that, there is also training for vase-making, potty-making, and pots, as well as different job offers, such as farmers, carpenters, masons, and welders. Twelve Job Orders (J.O.) are assigned at the view deck and the entrance.” - (Barangay Captain, Hoyohoy)

As mentioned by Secretary Wendel Avisado in the launching of the Barangay Development Program in Davao City via Zoom last February 2021, the barangay and local government units play a critical role in the successful implementation of the Barangay Development Program and the resolution of the armed struggle. The implementers in Tangub City stated that they were trying their best to provide for the needs of the people and that there were changes in the barangay that they could observe. The implementers are confident that the program improved the standard way of living of the people because it provided farm-to-market roads that improved their mode of transportation. Unlike before, the roads were very muddy, and crossing them was hard for them; they had to wear slippers. Today, people can already wear shoes and heels when crossing the road. Aside from roads, the water system project also has helped the people with their sanitation and hygiene, and they can now correctly groom themselves to look pleasant before they go to school or the city. They were pleased with the program because it has improved the lives of the people in the barangay.

Even as implementers, they also appreciate the program because all the offices and local and national agencies are working together to help the affected areas, although they are restrained in budget. They claimed that it has dramatically helped the barangay, especially since the people cannot quickly go down from the mountain, so they have these different programs like the Serbisyo Caravan under the NTF-ELCAC in which different agencies go to the conflicted affected areas to deliver services to the community. They also mentioned that the people in the community are pleased every time they go there and that it should not end there; it will continue because they have this program sustainability and monitor the projects.

Peace and Order

As per the key informants, before the implementation of NTF-ELCAC, there were rampant cases of conflict in the area, which caused fear among the public. It was hard for them to work on their farms in the mountains because they were afraid to encounter the NPA in the area before the NPAs were just around the place. However, they could not do anything every time there were sightings of NPA since it would be hard for them to report to the authorities due to the muddy road, lack of signal, and lack of access to any communication. Nowadays, the renovation of roads due to NTF-ELCAC in the community has improved their lives not only in the socio-economic aspect but also in terms of peace and order. They have technologies allowing them to contact the AFP and PNP whenever they sense something malicious in the area. It is now accessible for the authorities to go to the place to respond to any emergency. The history of conflicts in the area is also one of the reasons that the people are afraid to roam around the place, especially at night. However, due to the implementation of the NTF-ELCAC program, there are already CVOs trained by the police to guard the area during the night, police visitations have become regular, and AFP is also doing its operations now and then. This can be supported by the statement below;

"We only have NPA here; we experienced war here in 1984 when I had just recently got married; it was followed in 1985. So that was the time that there were animals injured, carabao, our house owned by our father been raided by the soldiers because the NPAs were near our house; they did that because they thought the NPAs were inside our house, but the NPAs were not there, they are just across our house." - (Barangay Captain, Hoyohoy)

Based on Table 2, 113 of the 140 agreed that streets are now safe for the public to use even at night 19 said maybe, and only eight contradicted and answered no. Regarding the threat in the area, most respondents confirmed that there is no more threat to the people in the barangay. Also, 121 answered yes, 14 answered maybe, and only five disagreed. Table 2 also shows the case of Terrorism / Communism; out of the 140 respondents, 132 believe that the rate of Terrorism / Communism has been lessened, six are not sure, and only two answered no. Out of 140 forty respondents, 126 agreed that peace could be highly observed in the area, six answered maybe, and no one answered no. Therefore, peace in the area can be highly observed. Most community members agreed that crime incidents in the area have been lessened. Based on the table below, among the 140 survey respondents we have gathered, 133 people agreed, six were unsure, and only one disagreed.

As Governor Henry Oaminal (2023) mentioned, the Province of Misamis Occidental is a hotspot of crimes in the South. without the help of different provisions of peace and order, collaboration with the Local Government Units and law enforcement efforts, and the administration of former President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, the province could have been the drug organized crime capital of Mindanao because of the threat brought by the Kuratong Baleleng

and communist groups in the area. The Governor also stated that peace is one of the government's priorities and that when there is peace, development will follow.

Table 2. Impact of the two-year implementation of NTF-ELCAC in terms of peace and order

Indicators	Brgy. Hoyohoy			Brgy. Owayan			Brgy. San Antonio			Brgy. Sicot			Total		
	Y	N	M	Y	N	M	Y	N	M	Y	N	M	Y	N	M
1. The streets are already safe for the public, even at night.	20		15	23	2	10	15	3	17	30		5	88	5	47
2. There is no more threat to the people.	20		15	24	3	8	16	2	17	25	6	4	85	11	44
3. The terrorism/communism rate has been lessened.	24		11	26	1	8	13	6	16	26	6	3	89	13	38
4. Peace all over the area can be observed.	26	2	7	24	6	5	19	7	9	22	9	4	91	24	25
5. Crime incidence in the area went down.	28		7	32		3	19	4	12	33	2		112	6	22

The answers of the residents from the barangay can support this. Most confirmed that peace and order can be observed in the area. Some claimed that their streets are already safe for the public because of the frequent visits of the AFP and PNP to monitor them. They also mentioned that there are no longer NPAs in the area because of the existence of technology, specifically cell phones, which, according to them, were a big help since it has been easier to contact and report something to the PNP and AFP. Statements from key informants in the barangays further support this;

“The road is now safe due to NTF-ELCAC. For peace and order, armies came here. The police also visit from time to time in the barangay; they were just recently here.” - (Barangay Captain, Sicot)

“It’s not scary to go for a walk during the night; there’s no [threat] anymore. Before, it was not good to go for a walk here, as the CVO was always roving around. This time, the soldiers would enter when they heard something, but for now, there are no rebels anymore, and they [NPA] are also gone. - (Barangay Captain, San Antonio)

As stated on the Official Website of NTF-ELCAC 2019, under it is program is Localize Peace Engagement, which is in collaboration with different agencies such as PNP, DILG, and NICA, which focuses on facilitating peace talks, community consultations, and peace engagement with the CTG members to achieve sustainable peace. From the point of view of the AFP in Tangub City, they mentioned that in terms of the implementation of NTF-ELCAC, their priority is the safety of the people. They prioritize the safety of the workers during the construction of any projects in the area since there were cases of burning of government-owned equipment, which the NPA has allegedly destroyed. It was believed that this was one of the tactics of the CTG and that after that incident, the NPA manipulated the people's minds to point out that the government was the perpetrator. They have this POC (Point of Contact) in the different municipalities and barangays so that during the implementation of projects, especially the BDP, it will be monitored by the AFP and Peace and Order Council to maintain the safety of the people in the community.

Social Relationship

As mentioned by the key informants in the barangay, their relationship with the government is now different from before; they are closer and no longer afraid of the soldiers and police officers. Some claimed that it was also because they were affected by the conflict in the area and that the improvements in the barangay in terms of livelihood, farm-to-market road, electrification, etc., brought by the NTF-ELCAC have helped them feel that they are being heard by the government which has rebuilt their relationship. This statement can support this.

“Our relationship with the government is different from before. The people are closer to the government now. As I always said, the people feared the soldiers, but now they are not scared anymore.” - (Barangay Captain, Sicot)

In terms of domestic violence, Table 3 below shows that 99 people agreed that domestic violence had been reduced, while there are only three people disagreed and 38 of them were not sure. The result shows that domestic violence has been reduced in the area. Most of the respondents agreed that conflict among neighbors has declined. 82 answered yes, only 41 answered maybe, and 17 answered no. So, we can conclude that the conflict among neighbors has declined. Also, 12 answered yes, eight answered maybe, and only three answered no. Based on this result, “Bayanihan” can be observed among the people in the community.

Further, 96 respondents agreed that discrimination had been lessened. 31 were unsure and answered maybe, and 13 and thirteen disagreed. The result indicated that discrimination in the area had been lessened. Almost all respondents agreed that the relationship between the people and the government significantly improved since 103 answered yes. While 29 of them were not sure, and three people disagreed. Based on the results, we can say there is an improvement in the relationship between the government and the people in the barangay.

Table 3. Impact of the two-year implementation of NTF-ELCAC in terms of social relationship

Indicators	Brgy. Hoyohoy			Brgy. Owayan			Brgy. San Antonio			Brgy. Sicot			Total		
	Y	N	M	Y	N	M	Y	N	M	Y	N	M	Y	N	M
1. Domestic violence has been reduced.	26	1	8	24	2	9	18		17	31		4	99	3	38
2. Conflict among neighbors has declined	27	3	5	22	8	5	13	1	21	20	5	10	82	17	41
3. "Bayanihan" among the people in the area can be observed.	33	2		34		1	27	1	7	35			129	3	8
4. Discrimination has been lessened.	28	3	4	25	4	6	20	4	11	23	2	10	96	13	31
5. Relationships between the people and the government significantly improved.	29	1	5	25	3	7	22	2	11	27	2	6	103	8	29

As reported by Joyah Mae Quimoyog in the Philippine Information Agency (2023), the AFP explained that the projects produced by NTF-ELCAC represent the government's sincere desire to discuss, develop, and implement programs that could help the people in the conflicted-affected areas. The Regional Director Agnes De Leon of DILG Region 1 added that the government's effort to bring community services would strengthen public trust. Regarding the people's social relationships in Tangub City, the residents from the different barangays also express their sentiments.

As stated, the dynamic between the residents and the government has undergone a notable transformation, characterized by increased proximity and diminished fear of soldiers and police officers. Some attribute this change to the impact of previous conflicts in the region, suggesting that recent improvements such as enhanced livelihood opportunities, farm-to-market roads, and electrification, among others, have played a significant role in rebuilding trust and fostering a closer relationship with the government. According to some of the informants:

"There has been a big change because people have seen that the government has helped a lot. So, they have nothing to criticize; indeed, we cannot call it criticism and bash [because] it is true, and the people have experienced it. The road here is quite difficult; we always walk to the highway since the road is not cement, no gravel, and only soil; it was very muddy before. Then, when you carry something, you will carry it in your head while walking up to the highway, wearing nothing; you cannot even wear slippers. Can you imagine that? That is how it was before. The students before could not go to [school] because you had to travel that hard to get there, but now it is very okay; we are closer to the government." - (Barangay Captain, Owayan)

"It seems like our relationship with the government has been calm since the conflict is diminishing because it was so bad before that everything has been affected due to the war between NPA and the soldiers. There were many war cases here, but it's worse in Tudela. It was very chaotic, but now it is somewhat peaceful, which made the people in our barangay suffer before. If your barangay is fighting, you will become afraid so that you will evacuate. That is one of the factors that made the people suffer before; it was the conflict." - (Barangay Captain, Hoyohoy)

According to Sangguniang Panlalawigan Member of Ilocos Sur Benjamin Maggay 2023, to bring peace and development the people must cooperate with the government; he was also hoping that through the programs of NTF-ELCAC and the presence of different agencies PNP, DILG, AFP and all other government bodies the people would not be recruited by the CTG. Based on PNP in Tangub City, the people were pleased about the implementation; it has dramatically improved their relationship with them; whenever they would go there in the area, they could now see the smiles on the faces of the people in the community, and that the people are no longer afraid with uniformed personnel. They can now receive different reports of incidents; even minor crimes like drunkards in the areas will now be reported to them. The PNP was also pleased with the current relationship that they have compared to before, and they can now feel the trust among the people in the community. Nowadays, people communicate with them, and when there are sightings of NPA, the civilians would directly call and report it to them.

As mentioned by other implementers, they have noticed good changes in the relationship between the community and government. The AFP also claimed that the people were no longer afraid of them anymore compared to before that every time they visited the area, they could feel hatred in their eyes because they believed that during those times, the civilians were already members of the NPA. Now, it has changed, and there were times when people would cry if ever the military decided to leave the area to be transferred to other places since they had created a good relationship with them already; that is how close the relationship between the people from the barangay and the military is.

4.0 Conclusion

This study can also be supported by the recently published research journal article of Nicolas et al. (2024), wherein the findings declared positive changes in the economic situation of the people in selected communities in Kibawe, Bukidnon, Philippines. The implementation of NTF-ELCAC has developed their livelihood and infrastructures, providing easy access to essential services, healthcare, and education, significantly affecting their socio-economic development. It was claimed that the government has successfully reduced poverty in the areas and also has given programs to the Indigenous people. Aside from that, it has also improved its mode of transportation due to the farm-to-market road project of the NTF-ELCAC. The people in the community can now easily travel from their barangay to other areas with more opportunities for employment, education, and other services. It has been confirmed that the people in the selected communities encouraged their involvement in assemblies and seminars conducted in the barangay, improving their social relationship with the government. The paper also stated that through NTF-ELCAC, the number of insurgency incidents has now lessened. The NTF-ELCAC in Kibawe, Bukidnon, has impacted the lives of the Indigenous people in terms of political, social, and economic. Moreover, according to the study of Sumad-on (2021), through the coordination of different agencies such as PNP, AFP, and the local government and the participation of the community with the help of the Barangay Local Government Unit, the threat against terrorism and criminal will be successfully defeated, and peace and order will be maintained.

Travis Hirschi's Control Theory could significantly enhance this study's analysis of the community's situation. A deficiency in social bonds with society has led individuals to engage in deviant behavior and support the NPA. In conflict-affected areas of Tangub City, no new surrenderees have emerged in the four barangays, with residents often referred to as "MASA" due to their previous support for the NPA, making them eligible beneficiaries of NTF-ELCAC. Before implementation, residents harbored fear towards city dwellers, including soldiers, police, and LGU personnel, as these figures were seldom seen in their barangays. Living in remote mountainous areas with muddy roads, often traversable only by foot or horse, further isolated these communities, hindering the establishment of external relationships. The absence of LGU presence underscores a lack of social bonds, aligning with Hirschi's Social Control theory. However, following NTF-ELCAC implementation, positive shifts in social bonds among barangay residents and society have been observed.

The implementation of NTF-ELCAC has changed the situation; it has also corresponded to the four factors of Control Theory, such as attachment, which explains that strong attachments prevent a person from committing crimes and the rejection of those expected to help them, such as the government is one of the biggest causes of why they have no choice but to commit crimes. Knowing the social relationship status of the people from the conflict-affected areas, it has been revealed that the respondents have no attachment to the people outside their barangays because they do not receive visitors to the area often. However, with the implementation of NTF-ELCAC, the roads are now developed, there are people from the government assigned in the area, and there were a series of visits from the government because of the projects being implemented, seminars, assemblies, and meetings. So, it has resolved the issue of lack of attachment; the government has now established a strong attachment with the people from the barangay. This explains why they are now close with the soldiers, police, and the LGU.

The next factor is commitment; this talks about what the person is committed to doing. People would be less likely to commit deviants if they had properties; they were achievers, accomplished, and educated. This was measured by knowing the socioeconomic status of the area. It was revealed that there were changes in terms of the livelihood, business, and education of the people in the area because of the implementation of NTF-ELCAC, which has helped

them get closer to the government instead of the NPA. The people in conflict-affected areas spend their free time differently than those who live in the city, especially since the area lacks different establishments, activities, and opportunities.

The element of involvement affects the social bond of a certain person, and according to Hirschi, if people are involved in many activities, they are less likely to commit crimes. With this, this study tried to find out the people's experiences with the projects implemented by NTF-ELCAC. The implementation of NTF-ELCAC in the area has greatly helped the people in the barangay to get busy since the program also implemented different projects and provided opportunities and education. So, the people in the barangay, instead of joining the NPAs or committing crimes, are now busy working, and some are now at school continuing their education.

In terms of belief, according to Hirschi, the person would be less likely to commit crimes if they knew the importance and values of the law. The people in the community have been manipulated by the NPA, which was a big factor in why they were trying to question and disobey the law imposed by the government. However, NTF-ELCAC has dramatically changed their views about the law, especially now that they are not afraid to approach our police and soldiers anymore; this is because of the conduction of seminars, awareness programs, and orientation, which has dramatically opened their eyes to the beauty and importance of the program.

The presence of NTF-ELCAC in Tangub City has fostered a robust connection between the Local Government Unit, other agencies, and the residents of the area. This relationship aligns with the factors outlined in Travis Hirschi's Control Theory, particularly attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief, which have been strengthened through various projects initiated by the NTF-ELCAC. As a result, the government has gained better control over the situation, implementing programs and providing free education, thereby deterring individuals from engaging in deviant behavior.

After two years of program implementation, the positive impact on the lives of the residents is evident. The socio-economic development in the area has significantly improved, particularly with the successful execution of the Barangay Development Program (BDP), which addresses the community's fundamental needs. Additionally, there is a notable enhancement in peace and order within the barangay, primarily attributed to the collaborative efforts of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP). Moreover, there has been a notable improvement in the social rapport between the residents and the government. People express a newfound closeness to the government, feeling unreserved in their interactions and reporting suspicious activities directly to the AFP and PNP without fear.

This work helps to determine the program's status and whether the local government of Tangub should continue the program. Aside from that, it has also identified the recommendations of the people for the program. Most of the respondents believed that the program is good and that it has improved their lives. The various implementations of different projects based on the 12 clusters are mainly why they wanted it to be continued. They suggested that the program should finish what it has started and that they are expecting the fulfillment of the ongoing and upcoming projects that should be implemented in their barangays. On the side of the implementer, they also wanted to continue it, especially since they could see the changes among the people in the barangay. They have even suggested more programs to help marginalized individuals like women, laborers, and the urban poor. All in all, the implementation of the program NTF-ELCAC under the Whole-of-Nation-Approach with its policy EO 70 and product RCSP implemented by the different agencies in the LGU Tangub City together with the people of the conflict-affected barangays have gained positive and negative impact based on the collected data of the researcher. This study focused only on Unveiling the Impact of NTF-ELCAC in Four Barangays of Tangub City. Thus, the researcher suggests that future researchers compare the implementation in Tangub City to the other neighboring places that also implemented NTF-ELCAC, such as Lanao Del Norte, Zamboanga Del Norte, Davao Del Sur, etc., for it to be more interesting and intensive.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Reyscielle B. Casuyon gathered data in the four conflict-affected barangays: data analysis, writing, and encoding. Amabelle A. Embornas was the thesis adviser who guided the researcher with data analysis, editing, and writing.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

The authors of this work declare no conflicts of interest about the publication of this paper.

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