

Can “hearts and minds” survive a crisis? Experimental evidence of dashed expectations in the Philippines

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Abstract

An expansive research agenda considers whether public service delivery in conflict zones leads local elites to cooperate with the central government. In this study, we report on a four-year randomized controlled trial in the Philippines that extended government services to a conflict-affected region, but later suffered a major exogenous disruption to government operations. The program initially increased local leaders’ cooperation and strengthened perceived state capacity. However, once services were interrupted, these positive effects reversed, generating a trust and confidence backlash accompanied by rising and ultimately unmet expectations about government capacity, effort, and fairness. After programming restarted, attitudinal and behavioral outcomes in treated communities partially recovered, but not to positive effects seen before the stoppage, revealing the fragility of improvements to state legitimacy. Overall, our findings indicate that cycles of crisis and disruption can wipe out the effects of even highly popular and effective government programs in conflict zones.

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Introduction

In areas affected by persistent civil conflict, weak or non-existent public service delivery is often both a cause and consequence of conflict. Inadequate services feed grievances that fuel anti-state rebellions and, in turn, violence interferes with the ability of the government to provide public goods. Prominent scholars and practitioners argue that extending development services to areas experiencing conflict may disrupt this negative equilibrium by boosting government legitimacy and spurring local cooperation. Existing evidence indicates that under the right conditions, investing in public services can increase community cooperation with the government and reduce insurgent violence (Berman, Shapiro and Felter, 2018).

Yet many “development for peace” interventions fail to meaningfully change the long-run course of a conflict.¹ Two factors are commonly hypothesized to undercut the effectiveness of efforts to win “hearts and minds” through development. First, projects can fail to meet the population’s needs due to micro-level implementation problems, such as unfair or corrupt distribution, poor adaptation to the local environment, or insufficient security (Fishstein and Wilder, 2012; Zurcher, 2017; Crost, Felter and Johnston, 2014; Sexton, 2016). Second, macro-level disruptions like natural disasters, leadership turnovers, and changing policy priorities can undercut peoples’ belief that the government has the capacity to sustain effective public goods over the long run, rendering them numb to short-term, stop-and-start service improvements (Mikulaschek, Pant and Tesfaye, 2020; Bueno de Mesquita, 2019; SIGAR, 2015).

In this study, we initially set out to answer whether a sustained government service delivery program that incorporated micro-level lessons learned could succeed at improving attitudes and behaviors towards the government over a period of several years. A key feature of our study was to focus on the dispositions of village elites, whose cooperation and support is vital for successful government outreach in conflict zones. We study the responses of barangay captains, who are heads of villages that usually number only a couple hundred households. In study areas, such leaders are neither detached bureaucrats nor ordinary citizens but civilian brokers who mediate between the state and their communities.

¹For example, despite approximately \$150 billion in development aid over twenty years in Afghanistan, the government never consolidated its legitimacy, quickly falling to the Taliban after the 2021 US departure.

Their cooperation determines whether programs reach the population and whether security forces can gather information, making them a crucial hinge between citizens and the state in contested areas.

As it turned out, the program faced a substantial macro-level disruption to sustained service delivery in the form of the Covid-19 pandemic. The timing of the pandemic, which broke out approximately six months into the intervention, allowed us to track outcomes over the multi-year course of the crisis, but also obliged us to adapt the research question to the circumstances. How do government attempts to win “hearts and minds” by extending services fare when crisis strikes? Are gains to government legitimacy accrued prior to a crisis sustainable over the long-term when service delivery is disrupted for a period, or do community leaders come to doubt the long-term sustainability of efforts to improve governance?

We answer these questions in the context of a region-wide public service delivery program in the Philippines known as “Usap Tayo” (which translates to “Let’s Talk”). After an extended pilot period to ensure the safety of participants and other ethical considerations, the intervention launched in August 2019. It was implemented as a randomized controlled trial across 800 villages in 80 municipalities of the Philippines’ Bicol Region, home to a population of more than six million. Usap Tayo was designed to overcome common implementation challenges seen in previous interventions, such as inconsistent funding, insufficient security, and a lack of local consultation.² Our results suggest that these efforts were initially successful at fostering local leaders’ cooperation with the government. Leaders in treatment villages reported high satisfaction and were 20% more likely than their counterparts in control villages to cooperate with the government’s initial response to the Covid-19 pandemic in February 2020.

Despite its initial promise, the program was unable to sustain positive effects through the course of the crisis. In March 2020, Usap Tayo came to a grinding halt. Three months into the pandemic lockdown, treated communities displayed a large backlash effect on measures of government support, as well as perceptions of government capacity and effort. The program restarted in October 2020, initially in a remote format, and continued for nine months. Service provision improvements associated with Usap Tayo were at least as high as they were pre-pandemic, but leaders’ support and cooperation with

²For example, it extended existing services rather than initiating new programming, incorporated repeated feedback from village officials, and was co-led by the security services and development officials.

government only recovered to levels similar to the control group. Although this was an improvement from the negative treatment effects observed during lockdown, lingering doubts about government capacity and effort remained.

We view these results as consistent with a pattern of *dashed expectations*, where initial cooperation with the government raised expectations that, when unmet, undercut community leaders' trust. Central to this pattern is the evidence suggesting that the backlash was driven by perceptions of low government capacity and effort. Specifically, bureaucrats were seen as fearful, shirking responsibilities, poorly informed, and lacking coordination. Once a disruption reveals this information, long-term improvements to trust and cooperation become more difficult, even if services resume. We consider a range of alternative explanations, including poor service delivery, frustrations with remote implementation, and the broader political costs barangay leaders incurred during the pandemic. Although several of these have some merit as well, the evidence points to dashed expectations as playing a central role. Our results also provide evidence against a possible *virtuous circle* pattern, stemming from the literature on "co-production" (Ostrom, 1993) or theories of resilience, which are commonly promoted by development agencies.³

Seeing how best-practices programs fare during the worst of times is crucial to understanding how attempts to win hearts and minds fare over the course of a protracted conflict. To date, much of the literature on development in conflict zones focuses on short-term outcomes. But in terms of understanding the factors that shape the prospects for peace in protracted conflicts that often last for decades, it is crucial to understand how community leaders' beliefs develop and change over extended cycles of statebuilding efforts. Our findings confirm the promise of sustained government service provision in conflict-affected regions, but also sharply caution us about how fragile these gains can be. Although the Covid-19 pandemic was a historic disruption globally, major natural disasters and disease outbreaks are incredibly common in conflict-affected regions of the world (Harris, Keen and Mitchell, 2013; Gayer et al., 2007). Beyond natural disasters, development programs in conflict zones often go through regular cycles of disruption and re-investment as a result of leadership changes,

³For example, USAID's "Center for Resilience," argues that pre-crisis investments in services and relationships should make attitudes in treated communities more resilient and insulate communities from shocks.

inconsistent funding, and bureaucratic incentive structures. Even the best-designed program could be rendered moot, if not actively negative, if thrown off course by turbulence in the target area.

How services fare in the face of macro-level disruptions

Can public goods service delivery de-escalate civil conflict? The existing literature provides mixed evidence, with studies that indicate some reasons for optimism, but also many ways that this approach can fail (Zurcher, 2017; Findley, 2018). The key mechanisms through which service provision can reduce conflict are improved community attitudes towards their government, as well as their behavioral cooperation with government personnel (Berman and Matanock, 2015).

Academic and policy discussions both acknowledge that the impact of public goods provision in conflict zones is highly context-specific; however, each emphasizes different contributing factors. The scholarly literature focuses primarily on how success is conditional on a number of *micro-level* factors relating to project implementation. Development projects that are relatively small in scale and suitable for the needs of the local population are more likely to increase government legitimacy and reduce conflict (Berman et al., 2013; Kooy, Wild and Mason, 2015; McLoughlin, 2018). Distribution of benefits should be done in a fair, transparent manner (Fishstein and Wilder, 2012; Karell and Schutte, 2018) and incorporate local authorities (Beath, Christia and Enikolopov, 2012, 2015; Sexton and Zurcher, 2024). Finally, because of the risk of rebel capture or targeting, development efforts tend to be more effective when combined with improved physical security (Croft, Felter and Johnston, 2014; Sexton, 2016).

Relative to the academic literature, policymakers tend to focus more on the *macro-level* issues that disrupt services and reduce their effectiveness. For example, government assessments of Afghanistan reconstruction efforts highlight the importance of bureaucratic agencies maintaining policy continuity in the face of shifting political incentives, domestic leadership changes, and natural disasters (World Bank, 2011; SIGAR, 2015). Even programs that start out strong can be unceremoniously curtailed or decline in quality over time. Conflict zones are especially prone to this kind of disturbance: in a 2015 audit of its activities, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) noted that it had “serious management challenges” that resulted in project cancellations in every conflict-affected

country it operated in.⁴ Indeed, studies find that development programs in conflict zones are more effective when they are seen to be a long-term investment and when they plausibly impact underlying commitment problems (Bueno de Mesquita, 2019; Lyall, Zhou and Imai, 2020; Burde et al., 2023).

In this paper, we investigate how community leaders’ attitudes and behaviors are affected by government service provision through the stages of an unexpected macro-level crisis. Though impossible to predict any individual crisis, conflict zones are unfortunately prone to disasters and disease outbreak. Worldwide, nearly 60% of deaths resulting from natural disasters occur in places that are also experiencing conflict (Harris, Keen and Mitchell, 2013), and conflict zones are the most common epicenters for large-scale disease outbreaks (Gayer et al., 2007). The Covid-19 pandemic, though historic on a global scale, is not out of line with the kinds of major shocks that conflict zones experience with some regularity.

Community leaders and conflict reduction

We focus on the attitudes and behaviors of communities’ elected leaders, especially village captains. Although the empirical literature on insurgent conflict emphasizes the need for governments to win the support and cooperation of ordinary civilians, it is arguably even more crucial to secure the backing of these local elites. Scholars have recognized the key role of village leaders in shaping the conflict in the Philippines (Hall, 2006), Afghanistan (Martin, 2014; Malkasian, 2013), and Colombia (Acemoglu, Robinson and Santos, 2013; Kaplan, 2017), among other settings. Community leaders act as vital intermediaries between the government and civilians, and their collaboration is essential for maintaining local security. For one, security forces depend on village leaders to gather intelligence about subversive elements. The government’s development initiatives often require that local leaders facilitate matches between beneficiaries and government bureaucrats. Moreover, village-level elites serve as key opinion leaders, legitimizing the role of the central government and countering insurgent propaganda.

Despite their status as elected government officials, local leaders in rural, conflict-affected areas often have tenuous ties to government agencies, meaning that they function less as “local government” and more as a special class of civilians that serve as gatekeepers between the government and their communities.⁵ Village leaders’ cooperation with government efforts to extend reach into conflict zones

⁴https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2018-06/USAID_Management_Challenges_2015.pdf

⁵In SI section A.1.1, we further compare kapitans’ incentives with those of ordinary citizens.

is not guaranteed, and they often engage in fence-sitting or may play both sides. If local leaders lack trust in the government’s intentions or doubt the efficacy of its efforts, they will not invest their time in implementing and legitimizing government initiatives, and they may be deterred by the risk of insurgent retaliation. During crises, they might turn to alternative actors or handle issues internally rather than reaching out to central government agents, actions that diminish opportunities for the government to strengthen its legitimacy.

Resilience or dashed expectations?

At the project’s inception, our objective was to evaluate the impact of a development program, informed by research on micro-level implementation, on community leaders’ attitudes and behaviors towards the government. To shield the program from typical macro-level bureaucratic disruptions, we secured a multi-year commitment from existing government programs and line agency leaders who were recently assigned to new postings and unlikely to be transferred.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, we revised our theoretical framework to incorporate potential impacts of a major health crisis.⁶ At the time, our monitoring surveys in treatment communities indicated that the intervention was going well. Over the first six months of the program, services started being delivered to beneficiaries, more than 90 percent of village leaders reported satisfaction with the program, and leaders’ perceptions of government officials’ performance had risen from the mid-70s to around 90 percent approval. We expected that treatment communities would initially be more cooperative with crisis response.⁷ As the crisis prolonged, we identified two potential trajectories for community leader attitudes and behaviors: a ‘virtuous circle’ hypothesis suggesting sustained cooperation and trust, and a ‘dashed expectations’ hypothesis predicting disappointment and backlash in treatment areas once leaders faced unmet government promises.

Starting with the theory behind the virtuous circle hypothesis, in conflict-affected areas, development practitioners like USAID emphasize “building resilience” by fostering community adaptation during non-crisis periods to prepare for unforeseen economic, social, and political shocks. This approach

⁶Much of this conceptual framework was pre-registered. However, the potential for backlash in the face of unexpected disruption was only fleshed out after the severity of the pandemic became clear. More on the link between our analyses and the PAP can be found in the SI.

⁷This is closely related to our initially planned behavioral measure of cooperation with typhoon relief.

suggests that effective government service during non-crisis periods builds trust, enhancing community cooperation in the event of a crisis. Such cooperation, particularly from community leaders, is critical for efficient aid distribution during emergencies, which sets the stage for further trust-building (Ostrom, 1993; Scott, 1998; Lee and Zhang, 2017).

Communities could also leverage improved connections with government personnel to ensure that aid is routed to their communities during crises. Moreover, consistent government efforts that enhance perceptions of its capacity and intentions can maintain community engagement even when services are temporarily disrupted. Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa supports this logic: prior exposure to state services is associated with sustained political engagement, even amid state retrenchment (MacLean, 2011).⁸ The goal of kick-starting this virtuous circle is the basis for many interventions that aim to improve citizen safety, such as community policing (Blair et al., 2021) and service-based counterinsurgency (Berman, Shapiro and Felter, 2011). Although there is scant scholarly evidence that resilience-building can meaningfully shift behavior in conflict zones through a crisis, policymakers such as the U.S. Government, European Union, World Bank and IMF remain deeply committed to the approach (Gelbard et al., 2015; World Bank, 2020; European Commission, 2016).

A competing hypothesis is one of ‘dashed expectations,’ whereby major disruptions to service delivery following a period of heightened expectations can undercut the government’s perceived legitimacy. A sudden drop in services during a crisis may reveal that governing authorities are ill-prepared and lack capacity, prompting citizens to update negatively about the quality of their leaders (Ashworth, Bueno de Mesquita and Friedenber, 2018). If a drop-off occurs immediately after a period of improved performance, the sharp negative change may also trigger a psychological disappointment mechanism that heightens this effect. Prior research has established that humans are often disappointment averse (Gill and Prowse, 2012), and that raising expectations for good governance can provoke citizens to hold government more strictly accountable for its behavior (Gottlieb, 2016). Sociologists describe patterns of “hype and disappointment” that in the development space can eventually result in outright hostility

⁸This may be especially true for relatively well-resourced community leaders like the ones we focus on in this study, who tend to have the time, skills, and networks to continue engaging the state despite setbacks (Gallagher, Kruks-Wisner and Taylor, 2024).

to public service delivery programs (Borup et al., 2006; Massarella et al., 2018), and political scientists have extended this logic to policing (Kruks-Wisner, 2021).

If the dashed expectations hypothesis is correct, we would see higher levels of cooperation with the government during the initial stages of a crisis, followed by decline in trust after service delivery falls. Even if services re-normalize as the crisis eases, this cycle of raised and unmet expectations could desensitize community leaders to government promises, eroding the trust and cooperation built prior to the crisis. Aside from the feeling of disappointment, government engagement before a crisis may equip citizens to make more informed inferences about government capacity, leading to a more critical ‘rational retrospection’ in areas where services were delivered ex-ante (Ashworth, Bueno de Mesquita and Friedenberg, 2018).

This dynamic of ‘dashed expectations’ is emblematic of conflict zones globally, where instability often results in inconsistent service delivery (d’Errico, Ngesa and Pietrelli, 2021). The ‘boom and bust’ cycles of many aid initiatives in conflict zones are central to the failure in shifting citizen attitudes, a challenge evident in Afghanistan (Lyall, Zhou and Imai, 2020). Despite two decades of stabilization aid by foreign donors, attitudes towards aid efforts and the government gradually worsened, and projects increasingly struggled to bring about shifts in public sentiment, even when they successfully improved livelihoods (Sexton and Zurcher, 2024).

Empirical Context

We test our hypotheses using a randomized field experiment in Bicol Region of the Philippines, the site of a half-century old insurgent conflict. Politics in the Philippines has long been marked with tension between central authorities and the hinterlands. Outlying regions have experienced numerous revolts, including during the Spanish (1521-1898) and American (1898-1946) colonial periods, evolving into major rural rebellions by Muslim Moros and communist insurgents.

The communist New People’s Army (NPA), established in 1969, is one of the major groups still in conflict with the Philippine state. One of the group’s initial strongholds was in Bicol, which is the Philippines’ second poorest region, home to a population of six million people and located at the southern tip of Luzon (the country’s largest island group). Despite economic advancements in its mid-size urban areas, rural Bicol remains underdeveloped with sporadic state integration. The area’s enduring poverty and the historical context of resistance have made it a fertile ground for continuous

NPA activity, resulting in considerable loss of life, lapses in public services, and weak private investment. Military intelligence reports from 2009-2015 suggest that nearly two-thirds of the 107 municipalities in Bicol had a significant NPA presence.

Events in this paper stretch from 2018 to 2022, examining two years before and after the Covid-19 pandemic. Early in its tenure, the Duterte government actively engaged with conflict-affected regions, including enacting the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) as part of a peace deal and initiating peace talks with exiled leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in Norway. Despite their intermittent nature, these talks represented a shift towards negotiation. By 2018, when this project began, there was significant reevaluation of strategies in Bicol. Regional officials from the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) saw an opportunity to implement strategies to address the economic roots of the conflict, informed by scholarship on what worked in Afghanistan, Colombia, and Thailand.

When the Covid-19 pandemic reached Bicol, it constrained both governmental and insurgent capacities, affecting their ability to provide relief in communities affected by the conflict. The government, with its superior resources, was better positioned to deliver pandemic aid, though it faced significant delays in delivering treatments, vaccines, and livelihood relief. Conversely, the NPA, which has recently focused on less resource-intensive services like informal dispute resolution, could not adequately provide essential services during the pandemic. A brief ceasefire between the government and the NPA, announced on March 19th, lasted only three weeks. Analysis of ACLED data indicates that the conflict persisted without significant changes in the patterns of violence during the pandemic.⁹

Intervention and Research Design

In 2018, PNP leadership informed us about a nascent multi-agency initiative aimed at improving service delivery in conflict-adjacent areas. Inspired by the government's 'whole of nation' strategy, the program sought to coordinate agency efforts to address the root causes of insurgency. Spearheaded by the PNP and DSWD regional leadership, the initiative, called 'Usap Tayo' (meaning 'Let's Talk'), was

⁹In the study period, there were 81 violent incidents (51 fatal) involving the NPA in sample municipalities. This was not different across treatment and control municipalities, and very few were in sample villages.

a homegrown effort led by the Bicol PNP’s Chief of Staff. After collaborating with us on a previous project, he introduced the concept to our team during its planning phase. Our role was limited to fine-tuning some programming choices and contributing to the program’s experimental design, which we implemented as a two-year randomized control trial to evaluate its effectiveness before a regional rollout.

Intervention: Usap Tayo

Usap Tayo involved coordination meetings between government agencies and leaders from conflict-affected barangays (villages). Usap Tayo was designed to signal the national government’s long-term commitment to conflict-affected areas and to close information gaps that limited barangay leaders’ uptake of existing programs. In the end, UT barangays gained access to several dozen government programs, although the specific services varied by province and municipality. DSWD’s Sustainable Livelihoods Program (SLP), which supports both micro-enterprise development (e.g. starting a fruit kiosk) and employment facilitation (e.g. matching workers with employers and assisting in getting appropriate documentation) was the most frequently available, in nearly all UT municipalities. Other common programs included a seedlings distribution program for smallhold farmers from the Department of Agriculture (DA), temporary apprenticeships from the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), health screenings from the Department of Health (DOH), school completion and literacy services from the Department of Education (DEPED), community-based forest management programs from Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and security guard training and licensing from the PNP.

Meetings across Bicol region were convened by the PNP’s community relations unit and DSWD municipal program officers, who invited other government agencies to participate as well. These agencies identified underutilized service programs, where government spending typically falls 30-40 percent below budget allocations (Haim, Fernandez and Cruz, 2019). Although many of these communities had previously received aid from individual government programs (with about half benefiting from the country’s KALAH-CIDDS community-driven development program), Usap Tayo represented a uniquely intensive effort to extend government livelihood services in a coordinated way. During Usap Tayo meetings, barangay leaders would learn about eligibility criteria and upcoming deadlines for locally-relevant programs, and exchange contact information with program officers. Subsequently, barangay leaders

would propose eligible beneficiaries and their documentation to the agencies. Barangays held four or five meetings before the pandemic and six additional meetings after lockdown restrictions eased, for a total of roughly ten coordination meetings over the course of the program.

Our interest in evaluating Usap Tayo stemmed from two main factors. First, the program was led by a PNP chief who, himself a PhD holder, sought to integrate findings from the literature on conflict-sensitive development. Usap Tayo maximized the use of already-funded government programs, ensuring sustainability and minimizing disruptions from leadership changes (SIGAR, 2015). Usap Tayo aimed to bridge information gaps and was backed by at least two years of funding, providing a more credible signal of the government’s long-term commitment (Bueno de Mesquita, 2019). The program specifically targeted “secure” areas to avoid NPA backlash, ensuring safety and effective implementation (Sexton, 2016). It emphasized coordination between security and development sectors and focused on individual-targeted services rather than large-scale projects vulnerable to political capture and insurgent attacks (Berman et al., 2013; Crost, Felter and Johnston, 2014). Monthly consultations with local leaders facilitated communication and adjustments (Sexton and Zurcher, 2024). Finally, Usap Tayo aligned with local political incentives, allowing barangay leaders to gain recognition for facilitating service delivery. In short, the intervention was a bundled treatment that drew on lessons from the literature on conflict-sensitive development—linking sustained funding, coordination across sectors, and alignment with local political incentives to improve state-society relations in contested areas.

Second, this study presented a unique opportunity to examine how a program of this nature influenced the attitudes and behaviors of local leaders, an important group whose attitudes and behaviors have been underexplored in empirical studies on conflict. We do not report outcomes for ordinary civilians, which is a tradeoff we view as important to acknowledge. In an ideal world, we would have captured both civilian and elite attitudes. However, given the constraints imposed by the pandemic, we chose to prioritize measuring the attitudes and behaviors of community leaders, who play a pivotal role in shaping conflict dynamics and state penetration in these areas. As earlier described, village leaders act as brokers between the state and their communities, and few existing studies in the hearts-and-minds literature directly measure how such actors respond to development programs.

As previously discussed, the cooperation and support of local leaders is key to bridging the gap between the state and civilians in conflict-affected areas. An elected leader in each village was invited

to participate, with the village captain (Kapitan) serving as the primary representative. The Kapitan participated in over 95% of barangays, but when unavailable, the village councilor in charge of peace and order (POC Kagawad) took the lead instead. Both of these posts are elected positions that receive a nominal honorarium (averaging <\$90 USD per month) but in rural, conflict-affected areas, their roles are similar to informal village leaders in other areas of the Global South.¹⁰

Site Selection and Research Ethics

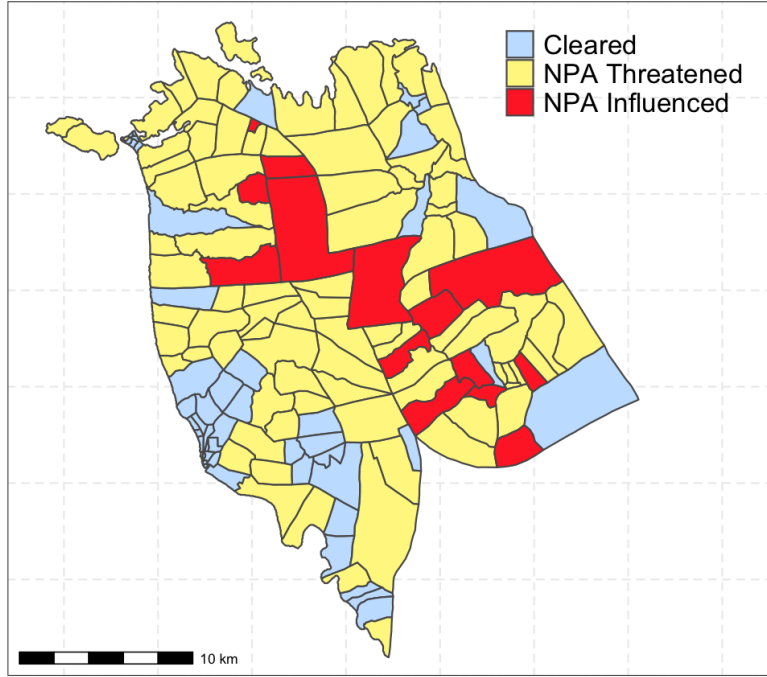
Two key considerations guided our site selection: research ethics and practicality. Bicol is a fairly representative area for the NPA conflict and other low-intensity conflicts around the world, and it is also a region where our research team has deep knowledge and extensive experience working with the state’s security apparatus. We conducted a year-long due diligence process utilizing our extensive local networks to assess and mitigate potential risks. For example, a benefit of working with barangay leaders (rather than ordinary civilians) as the primary participants is that they were already accustomed to interacting with government officials, minimizing psychological harms. Of particular concern to us was the PNP’s history of abusive practices, which we discuss in SI Section D alongside other ethical considerations.

The potential for raised security risks associated with government personnel interacting with civilians in conflict affected areas had a large influence on our village sample frame. The PNP and DSWD, who were also highly cognizant of these risks, targeted Usap Tayo at “yellow zones” and adjacent barangays (an example is depicted in Figure 1). Because these were areas within the PNP’s regular patrol radius, they could provide security for all meetings and support program implementation. In these areas, NPA activities are generally restricted to attempts to identify potential sympathizers, gather information about government operations, and rare attempts to collect “revolutionary taxes.” Violence against civilians or government personnel in yellow zones is exceedingly rare, as the group is wary of turning civilians against them.

In contrast, “red” zones were excluded from our sample. In these areas, the NPA is known to have an active party apparatus, operatives are thought to regularly reside in the area, and police officers or development personnel require advanced AFP patrols in order to operate. During the program-planning

¹⁰On average, between two and three barangay leaders attended each of the meetings. The head of the youth council (SK Chair) was also invited, though they nearly always took on a passive role.

Figure 1: NPA Presence Example



Village conflict affectation categories in these example municipalities is based on military intelligence reports from the AFP. The villages eligible for the Usap Tayo program were the ones that were “NPA Threatened” (yellow zones), as well as nearby “Cleared” villages.

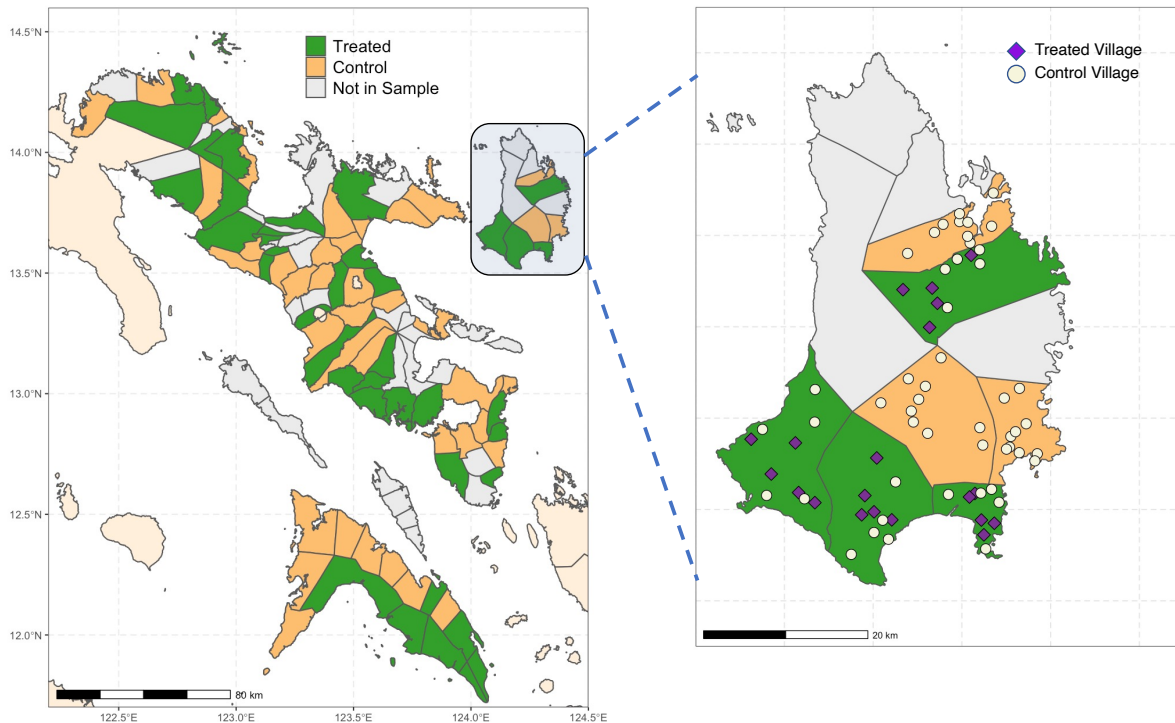
phase, we worked with our partners to identify these areas using internal AFP intelligence reports and also consulted directly with municipal police and local AFP leaders. In addition, we communicated through people in our network who were in contact with NPA personnel to confirm that the specific services and areas targeted by Usap Tayo would not raise red flags with the NPA.

Experimental design

Usap Tayo was implemented as a randomized control trial across a sample of 800 barangays in Bicol. Two levels of randomization were employed. First, from among a set of 80 sample municipalities (the administrative unit directly above barangays), we randomly selected 40 to be in the treatment group and 40 to be control. Ten (10) eligible barangays in each of these municipalities were included in the sample, based primarily on their presence in the “yellow zones” described above. We excluded municipal centers and urban areas because they are already better-connected to government services. In control municipalities, all ten villages operated under business-as-usual and did not receive Usap Tayo.

In treatment municipalities, we randomly selected five treatment barangays and five control barangays. This process yielded a total of 600 control barangays (400 in control municipalities; 200 in treatment municipalities) and 200 treatment barangays that received Usap Tayo. The two levels of randomization enabled us to examine spillovers, which we describe in a later section. Figure 2 displays the structure of our research design, with the municipal-level randomization displayed on the left and an example of the barangay-level randomization in a single province represented on the right.¹¹

Figure 2: Research Design



The left panel shows the municipal-level treatment assignment. The right panel shows an example of the barangay-level treatment assignment in a single Province.

¹¹Municipality treatment assignment was blocked by province, on request of the implementing partners to spread burden across provincial offices. Barangay treatment assignment was stratified based on demographics and baseline survey questions. By construction, we do not have blocks for control municipality barangays, so these strata are only for balance, and are not included in regressions.

Table 1: Summary statistics: Sample of barangays

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.
Log Population (2015)	800	7.01	0.69
Pct. Listahanan (% poor households)	800	0.38	0.14
Education index (1 primary school, 2 secondary, 3 tertiary)	800	1.64	0.26
NPA-Threatened 2009-2015? (per AFP)	800	0.56	0.50
Urban (vs. rural) barangay	800	0.03	0.18
Did village ever receive Kalahi-CIDSS?	800	0.53	0.50

Outcomes

Our outcome measures pertain to the attitudes and behaviors of village leaders. Our primary survey respondents are elected Kapitans, who represented their barangays during the Usap Tayo meetings. Kapitans serve as the chief village executive, and are responsible for maintaining public order, enforcing laws, and leading community development initiatives. In cases where Kapitans were not available to participate in the intervention (2% at midline and 4% at endline), the POC Kagawad was surveyed instead. Kapitan availability is balanced across treatment and control in all waves.

We focus on three main categories of outcomes: (1) behavioral cooperation with the central government, (2) perceptions of government performance, and (3) perceptions of rebel activities and support for the NPA rebels.

Outcome 1: Behavioral Cooperation with Government The first main outcome is village leaders’ *behavioral cooperation with government*, extending beyond the direct context of the Usap Tayo intervention. A key goal of Usap Tayo was to generate positive behavioral externalities of this nature, such as cooperation with government crisis response efforts. Effective government coordination with community leaders on crisis mitigation can catalyze an end to conflict, while poor responses may exacerbate grievances (Blair, Morse and Tsai, 2017; Grundy and Biggs, 2019; Le Billon and Waizenegger, 2007).

Initially, we aimed to measure behavioral cooperation by tracking leaders’ cooperation with the Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council’s (RDRRMC) monitoring and response efforts during typhoon season. Following the outbreak of the pandemic, we shifted our focus to assessing behavioral cooperation by examining leaders’ interactions with the Region V Covid-19 Task Force, led by the DOH and the PNP’s Police Community Relations (PCR) unit. Task force members were

stationed at the regional headquarters, used contact information provided by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), and did not engage with the barangays in our sample as part of Usap Tayo.

We specifically tracked whether community leaders supplied crucial information regarding (1) Covid-19 vulnerabilities in their communities during the early stages of the crisis and (2) vaccination and public safety data in the later phases. On March 16, 2020, Bicol was placed under “enhanced community quarantine,” and detailed contact tracing was initiated to prevent further spread. At this stage, the Task Force requested information from village leaders about the number of “high risk” individuals residing in the barangay, how many residents visited Manila in the past 30 days, and how many exhibited Covid-19 symptoms. In the late stage of the crisis, the Task Force requested information on the proportion of community members who had received Covid-19 vaccinations, as well as the number of local public safety incidents. Behavioral cooperation was quantified with a dummy variable for whether barangay leaders complied with the requests for information. In all cases, kapitans either responded with all the requested information or none.

Compliance with these requests serves as a proxy for whether leaders trusted governmental capacity and intentions enough to expend effort reviewing records, collecting information from community members, and consulting with the barangay health officer. This active engagement reflects a broader willingness to support state efforts, which is critical for integrating conflict-affected areas into governmental frameworks.

Outcome 2: Perceptions of Government Performance The second key outcome category focuses on village leaders’ perceptions of the government, assessed through a series of survey indices that capture their views on (1) support for the government, (2) the government’s capacity, (3) effort, and (4) fairness. These measures were collected via a survey administered to barangay leaders using an SMS-delivered Qualtrics link. Individual survey items were standardized (mean = 0, SD = 1) and then averaged to form composite indices.

The *Support for Government* index includes questions that measure trust in the government, whether government services adequately address the needs of the village, support for a peaceful resolution to the NPA conflict, and beliefs about whether the NPA’s grievances against the government are legitimate (reverse coded). The *Capacity Index* assesses government effectiveness across several

dimensions: coordination between agencies, bureaucrats’ fear of working in the area, the quality of government information on citizen needs, police capacity, and the capacity to respond to the pandemic. The *Effort Index* captures perceptions of effort in bureaucratic responsiveness, effort in managing the pandemic, opportunities for village leaders to provide input into government programs, and whether the government communicates information to civilians. Lastly, the *Fairness Index* evaluates equity in service delivery, the influence of patronage, the ability of local leaders to claim credit for government actions, and the extent to which political considerations affect service distribution.

Outcome 3: Rebel Activities and Support The final outcome category measures village leaders’ (1) perceptions of NPA rebel activities and (2) their support for the rebels. The *Rebel Disruption Index* (reverse coded) includes questions about NPA interference in government programs, fear of NPA retaliation for participating in government initiatives, and NPA disruption of the Covid-19 response.

To capture leaders’ support for the NPA, we employed both direct and indirect measures. First, we asked a direct question using a 0 to 10 feeling thermometer to assess support for the NPA, though the mean score was low at just 1.3, likely due in part to social desirability bias. To account for this, we also conducted an endorsement experiment to measure underlying support for the rebels. Respondents were randomly assigned either a ‘placebo’ version of a question on a relevant, but relatively neutral, policy or a version in which the NPA expressed support for the policy. The placebo version asked, “Recently, people have proposed relaxing the ban on logging. This would help increase jobs but may cause environmental damage. Do you support this?” The endorsement version substituted “the CPP-NPA” as proposing the policy. The difference in responses between the two groups reveals implicit support for the NPA. Details on the analysis strategy for the endorsement experiment are provided in the Estimation section.

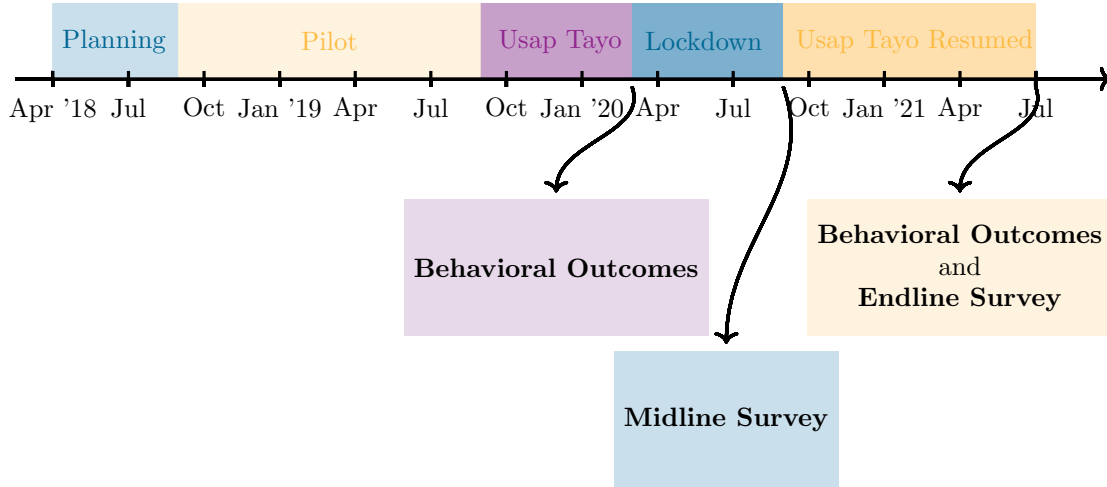
Covid Disruptions, Measurement Timelines, and Pre-Registration

Following a yearlong pilot, Usap Tayo officially launched in September 2019. The program operated smoothly until March 2020, when it was abruptly halted due to the Covid-19 pandemic and nationwide lockdowns. Many of the government programs implemented through the line agencies were paused as the focus shifted to managing the public health crisis. As a result, we adapted the study to assess how a development program designed around lessons learned from previous studies would perform

under such extreme conditions. The program resumed in September 2020, initially through virtual meetings, and returned to full in-person operation from April-July 2021 as vaccines became available. Pre-pandemic and post-pandemic Usap Tayo meetings largely mirrored each other in terms of their format, engagement levels, and the services being offered. The team adjusted to the remote format to continue identifying and registering beneficiaries for government services, though barangay leaders also commonly used these meetings to coordinate the distribution of pandemic-related resources.

One aspect of the study that required significant adjustment was our outcome measurement strategy, including our ability to simultaneously measure the behavioral and attitudinal outcomes. When the crisis initially broke out, we quickly pivoted to measuring village leader responses to the Covid-19 Task Force as our behavioral outcome. However, we felt it was inappropriate to conduct surveys at that time, because both barangay leaders and research staff were focused on immediate response efforts. Ultimately, we captured behavioral outcomes during the early and late stages of the crisis and attitudinal outcomes during the mid and late stages. While this means there are no overlapping measures for the early- and mid-crisis stages, we found a strong alignment between attitudes and behaviors in the late crisis stage, when both types of measures were available.

Figure 3: Project and Measurement Timelines



Another aspect of our study affected by the disruption was our pre-analysis plan (PAP). In March 2020, we filed a revised PAP to register the experimental design, randomization, and measurement of behavioral cooperation before collecting data on cooperation with the Covid-19 Task Force. However, due to the uncertainty around the program's restart and other pandemic-related challenges,

certain updates were not included, such as revised survey questions regarding government and rebel responses to the pandemic, as well as the construction of outcome indices. When conducting the analyses, we grouped questions into indices based on the overarching concepts we aimed to capture. Two factors mitigate concerns that this approach was influenced by selective reporting. First, we report disaggregated results for the individual survey questions. Second, the indices tend to move in parallel, indicating that they capture broader, meaningful patterns in village leaders’ perceptions of the government. Further details on the PAP and results for each survey item are provided in the SI.

Estimation

We calculate treatment effects using OLS regression, with and without pre-treatment covariates. The basic specification is:

$$Y_{mi} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_{mi} + \beta_2 X_{mi} + \epsilon_{mi}$$

Y represents the measure of one of our three outcomes for a village leader in barangay i in municipality m . For the behavioral cooperation outcome, this is a binary indicator for whether a village leader responded to the calls for Covid-19 risk information. T is an indicator of treatment status, while X is a vector of the pre-treatment blocking covariates (used in robustness checks in the SI).¹² Errors are at the barangay level for most outcomes; clustered at the municipality level for the endorsement experiments.¹³ To analyze the endorsement experiment in our main specification, the outcome is each respondent’s support for the policy, and we interact Usap Tayo treatment status with an indicator for whether the leader received the NPA endorsement version of the question.

The main results in the manuscript are based on the *full sample* of 200 treated barangays (in treated municipalities) compared to 600 control barangays (in both treated and control municipalities). In the SI, we also present results from *municipal-level* models, which aggregate outcomes for the 200 treated barangays and compare them to the 400 control barangays in control municipalities. This

¹²The measures included in covariate models are village-level measures of population, poverty, education, NPA presence, urban v. rural, and exposure to previous development projects. Also included are individual-level controls for the village leaders’ role (kapitan v. kagawad), age, and education.

¹³Because the treatment was randomized at the barangay level errors are at that level; the endorsement, because no individual barangay has all versions of the text, is analyzed/clustered at the municipal level.

approach allows for an alternative analysis of the endorsement experiment: we calculate the endorsement effect at the municipal level by subtracting the average support for the policy without the NPA endorsement (placebo) from the average support with the NPA endorsement. We then compare the net endorsement effect between treatment and control municipalities using the OLS model specified above.

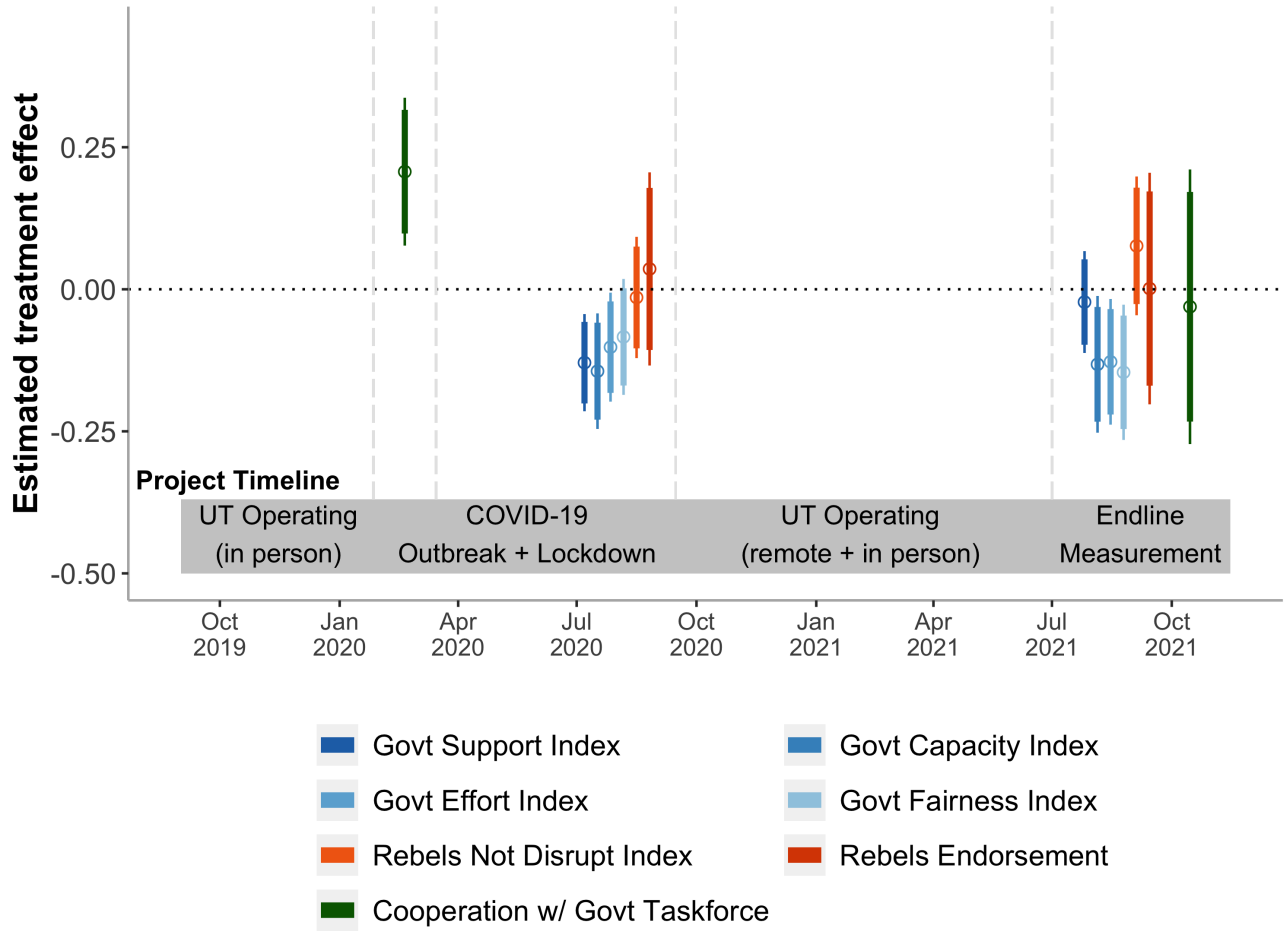
Results

Figure 4 presents treatment effects for all outcomes on a timeline that tracks the progression of the Covid-19 crisis. Leaders in treated villages were significantly more likely to cooperate with the government taskforce during the early stages of the pandemic outbreak. This effect is substantial, reflecting a more than 10 percentage point increase in initial behavioral cooperation compared to the baseline response rate of 51% in control villages, which represents a 20% improvement overall. The result supports a key assumption of both the “virtuous circle” and “dashed expectations” hypotheses: pre-crisis improvements to service delivery can lead to greater cooperation from community leaders during an initial crisis outbreak.

As the crisis unfolded, however, a clear pattern consistent with dashed expectations emerged. Several months into the lockdown, treatment effects on attitudinal outcomes reversed completely. In treated barangays, leaders expressed significantly less *support* for the government, alongside more negative perceptions of its *capacity*, *effort*, and *fairness*, compared to control villages.¹⁴ Despite expressing negative attitudes towards the government at this stage, leaders did not report increased support for the NPA, according to the endorsement experiment results. Moreover, there was no evidence that the NPA disproportionately targeted government services in treatment villages.

¹⁴All coefficients are significant at the $p < .05$ level except for *fairness* ($p = 0.11$).

Figure 4: Main Results Timeline



The figure shows the average treatment effects from the base models, without covariates. Behavioral outcomes are in green, government perception outcomes in blue, and rebel perception outcomes in red. Thinner error bars represent 95% confidence intervals; thicker bars represent 90% confidence intervals. All survey-based outcomes were collected simultaneously but are spaced on the timeline to reflect the survey period. For the endorsement experiment, we report the coefficient of the interaction term of Usap Tayo treatment status and an indicator for whether the leader received the NPA-endorsed version of the question. Standard errors are clustered at the municipal level for models with behavioral outcomes. Full regression results for all models displayed here are in SI Section B.1.

Even after the lockdown ended and Usap Tayo resumed for nine months, the government could not recover its lost credibility. Negative perceptions of the government's *capacity*, *effort*, and *fairness* persisted, and treatment effects remained significant. At the same time, treated village leaders' *behavioral cooperation* with the taskforce and attitudinal *support* for the government returned to levels that were not significantly different from control villages.

In summary, the results reveal a consistent pattern: (1) an initial increase in cooperation, followed by (2) a backlash in attitudes towards the government, and (3) the government’s failure to restore previous gains after services resumed.¹⁵ These findings align with the “dashed expectations” hypothesis, showing that initial improvements in cooperation were not resilient when the government failed to meet leaders’ expectations during the crisis.

Interpreting Results: Validity, Mechanisms, and Alternatives

In interpreting these results, we focus on two areas: first, threats to internal validity—such as spillovers, attrition, power, and measurement consistency. Second, we consider the mechanisms and alternative explanations behind the observed pattern of initial cooperation followed by a backlash. While we contend that the most plausible explanation is the “dashed expectations” mechanism, where unmet hopes undermined trust, we also account for the possibility that negative attitudes stemmed from poor or remote service delivery. Additionally, the results could reflect frustration with service efforts more generally, or changes in rebel activity, though evidence for these explanations is limited.

Internal Validity Threats

One key concern is the potential for spillovers, where control barangay leaders might have been influenced by treated barangay leaders or municipal officials. Barangay leaders in the same municipality often interact during monthly “Barangay League” meetings, which could lead to two types of spillovers: negative spillovers if control areas became envious of the treatment, potentially biasing results upward, or positive spillovers if control leaders updated their perceptions of governance positively, biasing results toward null. Additionally, top-down spillovers could arise if municipal-level service providers displaced resources from control areas toward treated areas or learned to deliver services more effectively across the board. Our research design—with randomization both within and across municipalities—enabled us to assess whether spillovers occurred. We compared outcomes in the 200 control barangays within treated municipalities (exposed to potential spillovers) to the 400 control barangays in control municipalities (not exposed to spillovers) and found no significant differences between the two groups.

¹⁵Overall, 24.5% of barangays provided public safety information and 21.6% provided vaccination numbers to the taskforce in the endline behavioral measure. A difference-in-difference comparison between midline and endline outcomes in the SI shows marginally significant improvements in behavioral cooperation ($p = .100$) and government *support* ($p = .095$).

Moreover, within-municipality models comparing 200 treated and 200 control barangays in the same municipality yielded nearly identical point estimates as in the full sample models, which remained statistically significant. This consistency across models, discussed in detail in SI Section B.2.3, suggests that spillovers were not a major concern for the interpretation of our findings.

Despite pandemic-related contact challenges that resulted in a small amount of attrition, we found no substantively or statistically significant differences in demographic or administrative covariates between treated and control units at midline or endline. Nonetheless, we conduct a series of diagnostic tests in the SI to demonstrate robustness to the minor attrition we experienced. We include models with linear controls, conduct an entropy balancing exercise, and present results in a restricted sample of only barangays that completed both midline and endline surveys – all of which produce the same findings.

Another consideration is statistical power. For our key survey outcomes, the smallest detectable effect size within the 90% confidence interval was approximately a 0.1 SD shift, meaning null results suggest only negligible substantive effects. However, power is more of a concern for the endorsement experiment, where power was about half of what it was for the other survey outcomes. We suggest some additional caution when interpreting these results.

A final concern is the inconsistency in measuring behavioral and attitudinal outcomes across different crisis stages. While these outcomes were designed to capture related aspects of village leaders' responses, if they do not track together, the observed pattern may not fully reflect the dashed expectations mechanism. For instance, perhaps leaders in treatment villages cooperated more during the early stages of the crisis while simultaneously holding more negative attitudes toward the government. While this remains plausible, it would be inconsistent with existing theory suggesting that attitudinal shifts typically precede behavioral changes, rather than the reverse. Furthermore, as we show in the SI, monthly SMS check-in surveys in treatment villages showed a sharp rise in satisfaction with the program before the pandemic began, suggesting that the early behavioral cooperation reflected growing attitudinal support. The endline results, where behavioral and attitudinal measures overlapped, further support this interpretation. The decline in cooperation from the initial crisis to the later stage of the pandemic moved in the same direction as the negative attitudinal shifts, indicating a clear connection between behavior and attitudes, even if the two are not perfectly aligned. One could also argue that differences in the treatment effects on behavioral outcomes between stages one and three stem

from variations in the information requested or the collection method. However, this seems unlikely, as the same PNP unit, using the same DILG contact list, led both efforts, and the information requested from barangay captains was comparable in type and required effort.

Mechanisms and Alternatives

In considering the mechanisms driving our results, we focus on two aspects of the observed pattern: (1) the initial backlash in attitudes following the rise in behavioral cooperation during the early crisis phase, and (2) the long-term inability to regain barangay leaders' support and cooperation after the program resumed. The “dashed expectations” mechanism offers a central explanation, where elevated expectations were met with unmet promises, fostering lasting disillusionment. However, several alternatives may also explain the pattern. To interpret these patterns, we draw on various sources, including data on service delivery provided by DSWD. We also draw insights from focus group discussions with our field officers, who interacted closely with barangay leaders throughout the program. While the evidence points to the “dashed expectations” mechanism as a key factor, we recognize that this analysis is exploratory and should be approached with caution rather than as a definitive conclusion.

The first alternative mechanism centers around poor service delivery itself as the main driver of negative attitudes. There is no doubt that the government's pandemic response was widely seen as inadequate, and services during this period were worse than usual. Our focus groups revealed multiple instances of unmet promises and mismatches between local needs and services, from vocational training to agriculture programs. These failures undoubtedly frustrated barangay leaders. However, while poor service delivery was a key contextual factor (which we discuss as a scope condition in the conclusion), it is unlikely to fully explain the backlash. Importantly, poor service delivery was not unique to the treatment barangays—control barangays experienced the same poor government response, yet the backlash in attitudes was more pronounced in the treatment areas. If the overall inadequacy of services was the only explanation, we would have expected to see an equal backlash in the control group. In fact, evidence suggests that treatment barangays actually received more services after the program resumed. DSWD data shows that Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) beneficiaries in treated barangays far outnumbered those in control barangays during the late pandemic phase. By 2021, treatment barangays averaged nine SLP beneficiary households compared to 3.5 in control barangays, a statistically significant increase of more than 250%. This suggests that it was not merely the quantity

of services, but the dashed expectations surrounding these services that drove the negative attitudinal shift.

Another possibility is that barangay leaders resented being tasked with enforcing unpopular lockdown measures during the pandemic. But this responsibility was imposed uniformly across treatment and control areas by higher-level agencies unconnected to the Usap Tayo program. Our team had virtually no contact with leaders during the lockdown period, and the midline survey occurred before coordination resumed. In short, the experience of enforcing pandemic policies was not differentially shaped by treatment status. Field officers reported that when leaders expressed frustrations with lockdown policies, those frustrations stemmed from national directives, not from UT. This suggests that the backlash we observe is unlikely to reflect a general resentment of pandemic-era duties, and more likely reflects disappointment following earlier engagement with the state.

A third alternative is that barangay leaders found the remote mode of service delivery particularly frustrating, and that this shift explains the backlash. Although the program was conducted remotely for a period, this change again affected both treated and control groups—program officers typically had to coordinate pandemic response efforts in a remote format with both groups. Our field officers noted that leaders in control barangays also expressed great frustration with connectivity hindering access to services during the pandemic. Moreover, by the endline stage, the program had resumed in-person meetings for at least three months in most barangays, providing ample time for frustrations over remote services to diminish. Our focus groups echoed this sentiment, noting that while the shift to remote services was initially frustrating, especially in terms of internet connectivity, barangay leaders became accustomed to it by the endline stage. This suggests that while remote delivery presented challenges, it was not the primary cause of the disproportionate long-term drop in perception of government capacity, effort, and fairness observed in treatment areas.

Another plausible explanation is that the disappointment we observed might have occurred regardless of the pandemic. In other words, the backlash may reflect a common pattern where high hopes for government services are naturally deflated once the realities of implementation set in. This explanation certainly has merit—our focus groups revealed frustration with mismatches between the services promised and those actually delivered, with some leaders expressing that they often had to take matters into their own hands. However, this explanation does not fully account for the sharp increase in satisfaction we observed on our monitoring surveys during the pre-pandemic period. Leaders in

treatment barangays were highly satisfied with the program before the crisis hit, and this enthusiasm only seemed to increase when services were actually implemented. For instance, the DSWD programs were meeting initial expectations, and enrollment in PNP security guard training programs was strong. DSWD, and its SLP program, is widely considered to be one of the most effective government line agencies, and satisfaction with its programs are normally high. The contrast between this initial enthusiasm (along with the increase in cooperation that followed) and the later disappointment suggests that the dashed expectations mechanism driven by the crisis is central to explaining the backlash, rather than an inherent disappointment with government services.

A final mechanism to consider is whether the NPA disproportionately targeted treatment areas, either by disrupting government services or by offering competing services. However, the data suggest this was not the case. First, we see no evidence of increased NPA disruption in treatment barangays, as indicated by null results on our “Rebel Disruption Index.” If anything, we found results that were close to statistically significant, suggesting that the NPA became *less* disruptive by endline. We also tested this using ACLED data and found no treatment effect of Usap Tayo on violent incidents involving the NPA. Second, based on our interviews with local experts and military officials, the NPA lacked the capacity to offer meaningful services during the pandemic beyond limited dispute resolution efforts. In short, the NPA was not in a position to capitalize on government shortcomings in treatment areas. A second, related question is why we did not observe increased support for the NPA rebels despite the backlash against the government. While disillusionment with the state was significant, it did not translate into active support for the insurgents. Based on our endorsement experiment results, we speculate that the level of frustration was not severe enough to push community leaders toward outright collaboration with the NPA. Instead, this reaction seems more like a protest of disillusionment—a withdrawal of support from the government without shifting loyalty to the insurgents.

In summary, while certain alternative explanations—such as poor service delivery and the challenges posed by the remote format—have some merit, they do not fully account for the observed patterns. Instead, we think the dashed expectations mechanism remains the most compelling explanation, particularly for the initial backlash in support for the government. Our field officers reported that barangay leaders’ initial enthusiasm for Usap Tayo quickly turned to frustration when services either failed to materialize or were poorly adapted to the evolving local needs in the post-pandemic context. They further noted that leaders in treatment villages had developed greater expectations regarding the

government’s capacity and effort during the early pandemic response. Although pandemic response was not a core component of Usap Tayo, many of the same government agencies were involved, and village leaders expressed that their faith in these agencies to deliver normal services was undermined by their perceived ineffectiveness in handling the pandemic.

We also find suggestive evidence that the information revealed during the pandemic about government capacity had lasting effects on the government’s ability to rebuild trust. While poor service delivery during the pandemic certainly fueled frustration, it was the heightened expectations from pre-pandemic promises—and the failure to meet those expectations—that seem to have contributed significantly to the longer-term decline in trust and cooperation. Our field officers noted that even in villages receiving higher levels of support from programs like SLP after the pandemic, the sense of disillusionment created by the initial response was difficult to overcome. Leaders welcomed the post-pandemic services, but often viewed them as short-term fixes, and their trust in the government’s ability to deliver sustained improvements remained damaged by their earlier disappointment. The fact that declines in behavioral cooperation mirrored the attitudinal backlash further supports the notion that dashed expectations were central to the story. While we lack definitive evidence for the dashed expectations mechanism, the combination of survey outcomes, service delivery data, and qualitative insights points to this mechanism playing an important role in the patterns we observed.

Discussion

In this study, we find strong evidence that extending government services to conflict-affected areas during normal times can foster increased cooperation from community leaders in the early stages of a subsequent crisis. However, this comes at the cost of raising expectations that can undercut long-term program success in the event of a major disruption to services. Our experiment demonstrates that while the Usap Tayo program initially generated behavioral cooperation with the government, the sudden lockdown of government services created a sharp backlash in terms of leaders’ attitudes toward the government. Although cooperation and support returned to baseline once services resumed, perceptions of government capacity, effort, and fairness remained damaged. This underscores the fragility of gains made through development initiatives in conflict zones when faced with crises.

A key takeaway from these findings relates to the under-studied commitment problem that plagues governments trying to win over civilians in protracted insurgencies. In areas where the state is

already viewed with suspicion, civilians are naturally wary of promises that services will be sustained even after the conflict ends. Once civilians see evidence that the government lacks the capacity or commitment to deliver on its promises, their trust is difficult to regain. This dynamic helps explain why development programs, despite initial success, so often fail to resolve long-running insurgencies. Even if initial service delivery meets expectations, a cycle of raised and dashed hopes can allow the conflict to persist.

Next, we consider external validity and the scope conditions under which our findings are most likely to generalize. While the Covid-19 pandemic was unprecedented globally, conflict zones are especially prone to extended disruptions caused by disease outbreaks and natural disasters—events that, due to their unpredictability, mirror the types of crises to which our results are most applicable. The epicenters of recent polio, malaria, and Ebola outbreaks, for example, were all in conflict zones (Gayer et al., 2007). Similarly, nearly 60% of global deaths from natural disasters like typhoons, landslides, and droughts occur in conflict zones (Harris, Keen and Mitchell, 2013). Crises of this scale can severely disrupt service delivery, making it nearly impossible for governments to fulfill their promises, creating ripe conditions for the dashed expectations dynamic we observe.

Service disruptions caused by man-made factors—such as leadership changes, inconsistent funding, or shifting political priorities—present a somewhat different challenge. While these disruptions may not be as unexpected as natural disasters and are often endogenous to conflict, they can still trigger dashed expectations, especially if civilians see them as signs of deeper systemic failures. For example, the billions spent by international actors to extend services in Afghanistan initially showed promise, with many Afghans optimistic about improvements in healthcare, infrastructure, and education (Beath, Christia and Enikolopov, 2012; Sexton, 2016). However, as the Kabul government failed to consistently deliver these services amid ongoing conflict and bureaucratic hurdles, public opinion soured, driven by people who had been burned before and no longer trusted the government to follow through (SIGAR, 2015). From 2015 onward, a growing majority of Afghans felt things were getting worse (The Asia Foundation, 2019), and future government efforts were met with increasing skepticism. In some ways, man-made disruptions may fuel dashed expectations more than natural disasters, as they more directly challenge the government’s long-term capacity and intentions.

Another important question for generalizability concerns the role of competing insurgent actors. In the case of the NPA, a low-intensity conflict where the rebels generally lack the capacity to compete

directly with the government in service delivery, dashed expectations were primarily directed at the state. However, in conflicts where rebels provide significant services, the dynamic could unfold differently. Civilians might experience dashed expectations toward either the government, the rebels, or both, depending on which actor is seen as failing to deliver during a crisis. Alternatively, if rebels step in to fill the gap when the government falters, it could intensify the backlash against the government and further legitimize the insurgents.

A final scope condition involves the overall level of government capacity to respond effectively to crises. While dashed expectations are common in conflict zones, there are cases where governments manage to turn crises into opportunities to bolster their legitimacy. For example, the Indonesian government's response to the 2004 tsunami in Aceh demonstrated resilience, ultimately helping to end a long-standing conflict with separatist rebels (Le Billon and Waizenegger, 2007). The key point is that pre-crisis goodwill, while important, is not enough to sustain trust on its own. Governments need to demonstrate real resilience and effective crisis response to sustain civilian support. However, such success stories tend to be the exception rather than the rule, as most conflict-affected areas struggle with weak infrastructure and ineffective service delivery, which make dashed expectations more likely.

This leads directly to an important implication for policymakers. When macro-level disruptions occur, it can be incredibly difficult to manage the fallout from unmet expectations. After repeated cycles of such disruptions, village leaders may become numb to government attempts to win their trust and cooperation. However, this does not mean that governments should shy away from service delivery efforts in conflict zones. Instead, they must approach these efforts with a plan for maintaining contact and continuity when crises inevitably arise. Service disruptions are common, and the dashed expectations mechanism underscores the danger of raising hopes that cannot be sustained. To improve long-term success, governments should build redundancy and crisis preparedness into their programs. This means having contingency plans for leadership changes, quickly converting information gathered during crises into effective actions, and incorporating disaster preparedness into development efforts. While it may be tempting to aim for immediate, large-scale gains, our findings suggest that a more incremental, long-term approach may be more sustainable and effective in conflict zones.

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Supporting Information (SI)

Can “hearts and minds” survive a crisis? Experimental evidence of dashed expectations in the Philippines

Table of Contents

A	Materials and Methods	SI 2
A.1	Study Context	SI 2
A.2	Description of the UT Program	SI 3
A.3	Data Collection	SI 5
A.4	Research Design	SI 7
A.5	Summary Statistics	SI 8
B	Results	SI 8
B.1	Main Results Tables	SI 8
B.2	Additional Results and Robustness Tests	SI 14
C	Additional Materials	SI 22
C.1	Pre-Registration	SI 22
C.2	Ethics	SI 24
D	Ethics	SI 26

A Materials and Methods

A.1 Study Context

Our project was conducted in the Bicol Region, which is one of the 17 regions in the Philippines. Bicol is consistently ranked among the poorest and least well-served regions in terms of government public goods. Each region in the Philippines is assigned a number, except for Metro Manila. Bicol is also known as Region V. It has six provinces: Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Masbate, and Sorsogon.

Our study focuses on the two lowest levels of government in the Philippines, municipalities and barangays. Both are local government units (LGUs) with specific governing powers, but they have limited financial and policy-making authority. Municipalities and cities are led by elected mayors who serve three-year terms and can be re-elected twice for a total of three terms. They also have municipal legislative councils that can pass local laws. Barangays, or villages, are the lowest level of government in the Philippines. They are led by captains and barangay councils, who also serve three-year terms, but their elections are not held at the same time as mayoral elections.

A.1.1 Village Leaders

We focus on barangay kapitans, the elected leaders of villages in the Philippines. Barangay kapitans are the primary contact point between villagers and the government. In remote and conflict-affected areas, they function with a high degree of independence from the central government and function more as civilian community leaders who interface between their communities and the government.

In many ways, barangay kapitans in rural, conflict affected areas face similar incentives compared to the ones identified by the literature on “ordinary” citizen information-sharing and trust in government in conflict zones. For example, in the canonical model by Berman, Shapiro, and Felter (2011), civilians’ decision over whether to cooperate with the government is shaped by the extent to which they believe the government will deliver them public goods in exchange for cooperation. Barangay leaders from communities that have experienced a very low baseline of service delivery from the national government face a similar calculus. Like ordinary civilians, barangay leaders gain benefits as a result of their communities receiving access to government services, but their past experience likely makes them wary that the government will actually deliver on these promises. In line with the literature, we contend that experience with effective government service delivery (through a program like UT) can build barangay leaders’ trust in the government and increase the expectation that cooperation will lead their communities to receive public goods.

That said, compared to ordinary citizens, barangay kapitans gain different *benefits* from government service delivery and can also take different *actions* to demonstrate their cooperation with the government. On the first point, barangay kapitans likely face lower direct benefits from partaking in the services provided by national government programs. Instead, they may benefit from the sense that their actions led to improved conditions in the community as a whole or, more cynically, from improved electoral prospects that result from their ability to claim credit for the services. On the second point, barangay kapitans have a wider range of actions available to them compared to regular citizens, whose primary cooperative behavior according to the literature is to provide “tips” on insurgent activity or crime. Local elites, especially the local elected representatives of the population, are critical intermediaries between government actors, rebels and the public. For example, local elites have greater information about insurgent activities in their community, have control over resources that shape the ability of rebels to carry out activities and are opinion leaders that shape the behavior of many other people in their community. Crucially, barangay kapitans also regularly interact with government agencies and can take

efforts that allow the government to conduct regular operations, such as disaster response, that further build a cycle of trust between government and ordinary citizens.

In summary, barangay kapitans are key “gatekeepers” that can determine the effectiveness of government operations in their villages. However, because of the fact that their communities have largely been forced to be self-reliant in the past, the incentive structure and decision calculus of barangay kapitans is in many ways similar to ordinary citizens. But because of the higher stakes and central role for local leaders, they are special cases of citizens for whom the confidence-building mechanism is particularly important and relevant.

A.1.2 Central Government Actors

Key government actors in this program are the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The PNP, DSWD, along with most other national government agencies, have regional offices in Legazpi City, the capital of Region V. These regional offices set political priorities and issue directives to the provincial and municipal offices of their agencies. National government agencies make policy decisions in Manila that are communicated down the chain of command for implementation around the country.

Despite former president Duterte’s advocacy for a “federalism” plan that would devolve more power to the regions, the central government continues to hold fiscal control and policy decision-making power. However, in practice, there is more decentralization than on paper, and local-level offices have substantial influence over the selection of which barangays and individuals benefit from government services. Each region and province has local offices of these national agencies, who are responsible for carrying out government programs. The PNP and DSWD each also have local offices in every municipality, which led the implementation of the UT program.

Within the PNP, Provincial police directors police stations manage all municipal police stations in their area. They are responsible for police operations and serve as a link between the regional command and the police officers on the ground. Each municipality has a police chief who reports to the regional command but is also accountable to the mayor. This means that police chiefs often have to balance the political priorities and aspirations of their mayor with the orders they receive from the province and region.

The PNP has a police community relations (PCR) branch that is responsible for building relationships with the public. PCR officers do this by sharing information, managing public relations and reputation, and engaging with the public in ways that are not related to investigations or suspected lawbreaking. Each police office, from the regional down to the municipal level, has its own PCR unit. In conflict-affected areas, many PCR officers have historically had a difficult time building rapport with local communities. The people directly responsible for carrying out the UT intervention and working with barangays were municipal-level PCR officers and program officers from the various line agencies. The municipality is the lowest level of government for each of these agencies.

A.2 Description of the UT Program

The researchers began discussing the Usap Tayo intervention with the Police Community Relations (PCR) branch of the PNP Region V in April 2018. The Region V PNP team had developed the framework for the intervention (then called “Kapehan” or “Coffee-time”) in the months prior and invited the researchers to evaluate it.

The researchers have a long-standing relationship with the Region V leadership in the PNP and Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), based on past research activities in Sorsogon Province. The Region V PNP leadership, including a former regional Chief of Staff who led project

development through the bulk of the program, are very interested in rigorous research. The Region V PNP leadership had long felt that government efforts to wind down the NPA insurgency had been too focused on military action and not enough on service to the community. They wanted to understand why services were not making their way to conflict-affected barangays, even when the budget had been allocated and government agency staff were officially responsible for these areas.

Several critical factors became clear:

- Line agency bureaucrats were less focused on these areas because they required additional effort to engage with.
- There was a general sense that these zones were the purview of the military, rather than civilian governance.
- Municipal mayors, who can influence line agency officials to distribute funds as patronage, had little political incentive to focus on these low-population areas.
- Some in government assumed that these communities did not want to participate in government programs.

Over the course of 2018, the Usap Tayo program went through two iterations of design with the researchers and two primary partners, the PNP and the DSWD. A first pilot was carried out in Daraga municipality of Albay province in July-August 2018; this allowed the agencies to test out bureaucratic mechanisms and the researchers to pilot data collection techniques and make recommendations to the intervention design. The pilot was carried out in partnership with Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), who provided a small scoping grant to the project in its early stages and hosted staff for the pilot. During this pilot, it was determined that “soft” government services, such as employment and livelihood programs, were a good fit for barangay needs and would also allow for safe implementation. “Hard” government infrastructure projects were left out of the UT agendas. Importantly, the pilot motivated the regional directors of the PNP and DSWD to make commitments to the project for 2019.

A second pilot took place in Daraga municipality of Albay in early 2019, and barangays of Sorsogon that had been left out of the sample (these were primarily “green” and “yellow” areas). Through the pilots, several additional line agencies became interested; once the final Memorandum of Agreement for the Usap Tayo program and impact evaluation was signed between the agencies and researchers on April 15, 2019, nine additional line agencies, including the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and Department of Agriculture (DA), signed on as partners who would participate in the Usap Tayo activities throughout the experiment.

Because the DSWD had the highest capacity and motivation of the line agencies (for example, DSWD has local offices in all municipalities while other agencies do not), they took the leading role among the civilian line agencies.

The final product was a series of meetings that would be convened by the Philippine National Police’s Community Relations officers, but would primarily involve connecting selected vulnerable barangays in each municipality with line agency representatives who could incorporate their citizens into government programs. At the same time, the meetings would build rapport and trust. The police’s imprimatur would help to motivate agencies to participate and carry out their responsibilities.

Before the pandemic, Usap Tayo meetings were held at PNP Municipal Police Stations of 40 municipalities across Bicol region. The Kapitan and SK Chair from five conflict-affected barangays in each municipality attended the UT meetings. The PNP served as the coordinating agency and facilitated communication with all other agencies to ensure proper attendance and preparation.

Each of the UT meetings had a dedicated topic, but all meetings followed a similar structure. Typically, a line agency or two would send representatives who were prepared to present information on

relevant programs and answer questions from the barangay reps. Each agency identified a focus program to promote through the UT meetings.

The research team designed and carried out a monitoring survey to track the progress of the UT activities. The survey was sent to each participating barangay leader in the week following the UT meeting, regardless of whether the leader attended the meeting. The survey asked participants to give feedback on the progress of the program to date, as well as the performance of the specific officers and officials that were involved in the meetings. The monitoring survey also gave participants the opportunity to withdraw from the UT program. Overall, satisfaction with the UT meetings was very high, with more than 90 percent of participants up through the March 2020 shutdown saying that they were experiencing progress and the program was a satisfying experience.

When programming restarted in September 2020 with online only activities, the broad structure of the meetings were maintained, but the logistics were different. The PNP PCR team, and DSWD, with support from our research field coordinator, organized remote meetings with kapitans and government officials approximately every two months. The preferred format was to use video calling, in order to allow for people see one another, however in some circumstances only voice calling was possible due to bandwidth and connectivity constraints, in which case conference calls were conducted.

A.3 Data Collection

This study included five periods of data collection, summarized here:

1. Baseline administrative and survey data collection
 2. First midline behavioral measures
 3. Second midline survey
 4. Endline behavioral measures
 5. Endline survey
- (1) Baseline admin and survey data

Before collecting baseline survey data, we collected administrative data about the municipalities and barangays in Bicol region, including:

- 2010 and 2015 Census data, including population, population density, urban/rural status, average level of education, typical housing construction quality and location.
- Armed Forces of the Philippines data on the extent of insurgent presence from 2009- 2015
- DSWD data on the percentage of households classified under the national conditional cash transfer scheme as ‘poor households’ in 2018
- DSWD data on previous anti-poverty and conflict-zone specific development program access (Kalahi-CIDSS) from 2013-2017

Summary statistics are listed below.

After selecting a sample of 800 conflict-impacted barangays, we surveyed the village leader who was designated to represent the barangay in the UT meetings. In the vast majority of cases, the barangay kapitan was the primary representative, with the highest ranked Kagawad stepping in if they were unavailable. SK chairs were surveyed only at baseline and midline, due to resource constraints and thus were excluded from the analysis. The baseline survey was self-administered on tablets, and respondents could choose which language they wanted to use. The survey data was used to stratify the barangays for treatment assignment and to examine heterogeneous treatment effects. In some cases, our enumerators interviewed an additional Kagawad who voluntarily attended meetings. We retain these observations in our dataset, but they are not included in the analysis. There were a few cases where the enumerators survey multiple kagawads and did not designate which kagawad led the meeting, or where they incorrectly

denoted two kapitans in the barangay. In these cases, we randomly selected one of these participants to be the one included in our final sample.

The survey was self-administered on tablets, which reduced participant discomfort, non-response, and sensitivity bias. Since the participants were local officials and government agency personnel, they were on average significantly more educated than the average citizen in Bicol and all of the participants were literate. This made it possible for them to self-enumerate. The survey data was used to stratify the barangays for treatment assignment and to examine heterogeneous treatment effects. Four baseline survey outcomes were used to measure the impact of the intervention: (1) average NPA net endorsement effect from endorsement experiment, (2) trust in government, (3) perception of whether government agencies are able to meet the needs of the barangay, and (4) perceived difficulty of accessing government resources without a personal connection.

A.3.1 Behavioral Outcomes

Midine 1, 2020

On March 16, 2020, the Philippine government imposed a lockdown of the island of Luzon, including Bicol region, and the Metro Manila area, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this lockdown, contact tracing was initiated to track down infected cases and prevent further community spread. The Department of Health (DOH) was responsible for rapidly assessing the extent of possible exposure to COVID-19. However, the DOH was unable to do this on its own due to budget constraints and limited capacity to deploy resources.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) stepped in to help the DOH with contact tracing in conflict-affected barangays in Bicol region. The PNP developed a short phone survey to collect critical information about COVID-19 community risk. The PNP used publicly available contact information from the Department of Interior and Local Government to reach out to barangay kapitans in remote areas.

The PNP conducted the risk surveying from March 26 to March 31, 2020. The data collected from this survey was used in this study. The PNP shared with the researchers which barangays responded to the request for COVID-19 risk information, but did not provide any personally identifiable information (PII) or specifics about the submissions. The information requested was about how many high risk individuals resided in the barangay, how many individuals recently visited Metro Manila and whether any high risk individuals currently exhibit Covid-19 symptoms.

We have data on whether or not the barangay kapitans responded to the Task Force’s request for information (a yes or no question). Our partners told us that in all cases, the kapitans either responded with all the information we requested or they did not respond at all. The main cost for the barangay kapitans in providing this information is time and effort. They would have needed to review records, collect information from people in the village, and probably consult with the barangay health officer. It is very unlikely that the information we collected could be used against the community or the rebels, because it is not relevant to counterinsurgency efforts.

Limitations: The conflict-affected portion of Bicol region is very rural and some barangays have regular problems connecting to phone and SMS services. This means that some of the barangays that did not respond to the Covid task force’s request for information may not have been able to respond due to technical problems, rather than choosing not to respond. Based on the experience of our field research team when contacting barangay kapitans about research activities, we believe that the maximum hypothetical response rate is around 90%, rather than 100%.

Midine 2, 2021

At the end of the program, following nearly a year of remote Usap Tayo programming, we conducted the survey data collection and collaborated with the PNP PCR units to execute behavioral data collection.

The PNP replicated the process used for the midline, with PCR officers contacting barangay kapitans with two separate requests regarding information about:

- Number of residents in the barangay that had received a Covid inoculation
- Number of public security incidents that had occurred in the past six months

We code barangays as having responded to the call if they sent in at least one of the two sets of information to the PNP.

A.3.2 Survey Index Creation

To avoid multiple comparisons issues and to aggregate information from multiple questions, we chose to create an index of questions that indicates pro-government attitudes on the part of respondents. We did so by combining the following questions, standardized (mean=0, std=1) and averaged:

(1) Trust in Government: “How much do you trust the government of the Philippines” (2) Government addresses needs: “When government agencies implement programs, they sometimes do not address the most important needs of the population.” (reverse coded) (3) Peace possible: “I believe that a permanent deal between the Government and the Armed Rebel Group is possible in the near future.” (4) Rebel grievances legitimate: “Though misguided, the Armed Rebel Group represents grievances of some people who live in my area.” (reverse coded)

A.3.3 Endorsement Experiment

To measure implicit support for the NPA rebels, we conducted an endorsement experiment on the baseline leader survey at the municipality level. This is because nearly all respondents would say they do not support the rebels if asked directly, due to the sensitivity of the question. Even though most of the barangays surveyed are in well-known NPA supporting zones, the mean score on the corresponding direct survey questions on a 0 to 10 feeling thermometer was only 1.3.

Following standard techniques, we used a question about a relevant policy of the day, asking a random subset of respondents a “placebo” version of the question and another random subset a version where the NPA endorses the policy. We describe the questions below.

Logging policy

- Placebo: “Recently people have proposed relaxing the ban on logging. This would help increase jobs but may cause environmental damage. Do you support this?”
- NPA endorsement: “Recently the CPP-NPA have expressed support for relaxing the ban on logging. This would help increase jobs but may cause environmental damage. Do you support this?”

In addition, a random third of respondents received a government-endorsed version of the question.

A.4 Research Design

To evaluate Usap Tayo, we used a randomized controlled trial (RCT) with design features that helped us determine whether there were spillovers between barangays. Of the 80 municipalities in Bicol region, 40 were randomly assigned to the treatment group and 40 to the control group. Within each municipality, five of the ten sampled barangays were randomly assigned to the treatment group and five to the control group. None of the ten barangays in the control municipalities received the treatment.

Our government implementing partners requested that to share the burden for execution equally across provincial offices, there be a similar number of treated and control municipalities within each province. Therefore we first stratify on province, before pair matching municipalities based on NPA activity, population density, average years of education, poverty levels and household construction quality,

and finally randomizing to T and C within each pair. This produced the municipality assignment displayed in Table A.1.¹

Table A.1: Municipality treatment assignment

Province	Treated Municipalities	Control Municipalities
Albay	5	6
Camarines Norte	5	4
Camarines Sur	12	13
Catanduanes	4	3
Masbate	7	8
Sorsogon	7	6
Total	40	40

We then proceeded to village-level randomization, which included stratifying based on administrative and baseline survey measures.²

A.4.1 Randomization Diagnostics

A.5 Summary Statistics

B Results

B.1 Main Results Tables

The tables in this section display all the regression results displayed in the main results figure in the manuscript. The results without pre-treatment covariates in Tables B.1, B.2 and B.4 are represented in Figure 4. The same models with covariates are displayed in Tables B.1, B.3, and B.4. The results for the *Rebels Endorsement* outcome in Figure 4 are the estimates for the interaction term, $UT \times \text{Endorse-NPA}$.

¹Due to an update or change in how Stata processes randomization seeds, we were unable to recover the municipality strata (created in August 2019) when we ran the regressions in late 2023. Thus, for municipality regressions we put in province fixed effects but otherwise must rely on covariates for precision improvements.

²baseline survey outcomes used for stratification were: (1) Reported level sympathy for NPA (2) How difficult respondents believe it is to access government services (3) Trust in government and (4) Would you think twice to report violent incident to the PNP? Note: For barangay-level regressions we do not include strata fixed effects because they are not available for control municipalities; the power gained from including the block fixed effects does not offset the loss from dropping half the sample.

Table A.2: Balance test between treatment and control units

Variable	Municipal Randomization			Village Randomization		
	Control Mean	Treated Mean	p-val.	Control Mean	Treated Mean	p-val.
Log Population (2015)	7.04	6.98	0.45	7.00	7.04	0.38
Pct. Poor Households	0.38	0.38	0.81	0.38	0.38	0.86
Education index	1.65	1.63	0.53	1.64	1.65	0.71
NPA strong presence 2009-15?	0.56	0.57	0.93	0.56	0.57	0.61
Urban (vs. Rural)	0.03	0.04	0.28	0.03	0.05	0.28
Ever receive Kalahi-CIDSS	0.51	0.55	0.67	0.52	0.54	0.65
Leader has no land	0.44	0.4	0.37	0.41	0.45	0.42
Trust in government (out of 10)	7.54	7.39	0.42	7.50	7.38	0.68
Think twice about calling police?	0.36	0.34	0.73	0.34	0.40	0.26
Difficult to access services w/o politics	0.62	0.64	0.53	0.62	0.65	0.63
Ref. Q about NPA sympathy	0.28	0.32	0.29	0.31	0.26	0.16

Table A.3: Summary statistics: Sample of barangays

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.
Log Population (2015)	800	7.01	0.69
Pct. Listahanan (% poor households)	800	0.38	0.14
Education index (1 primary school, 2 secondary, 3 tertiary)	800	1.64	0.26
Did NPA ever have a strong presence 2009-2015? (per AFP)	800	0.56	0.50
Urban (vs. rural) barangay	800	0.03	0.18
Did village ever receive Kalahi-CIDSS?	800	0.53	0.50

Table A.4: Summary Statistics - Survey

Variable	<u>Midline</u>			<u>Endline</u>		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Completed Highschool	776	0.66	0.47	598	0.64	0.48
Age	776	52	10	598	53	10
Kapitan	776	0.99	0.11	598	0.95	0.21
Pro Govt Behavioral Cooperation	800	0.53	0.50	800	0.25	0.43
Pro Govt Survey Index	735	0.039	0.5	557	-0.0046	0.51
Pro Govt (Trust)	769	0.14	0.94	596	0.032	0.99
Pro Govt (Rebel Grievances)	756	-0.012	1	586	0.016	0.99
Pro Govt (Address Needs)	773	-0.042	0.99	595	0.055	1
Pro Govt (Peace Deal)	750	0.078	0.98	571	-0.1	1
Capacity Index	747	-0.022	0.62	578	0.028	0.62
Capacity (Coordination)	764	-0.019	1	596	0.024	1
Capacity (Fear)	767	-0.053	1	595	0.068	0.93
Capacity (Information)	768	-0.026	1	589	0.034	1
Capacity (PNP)	765	-0.0016	1	592	0.0021	1
Capacity (Covid)	761	-0.02	1	593	0.026	1
Effort Index	741	-0.0036	0.56	586	0.0069	0.61
Effort (Slack)	765	-0.053	1	595	0.068	0.97
Effort (Covid)	766	0.043	0.99	593	-0.056	1
Effort (Input)	765	-0.044	0.99	596	0.056	1
Effort (Consulted)	765	0.024	1	595	-0.03	1
Effort (Information)	764	0.008	1	595	-0.01	1
Fairness Index	759	0.03	0.63	582	-0.0071	0.64
Fairness (Services)	771	0.003	1	593	-0.0039	1
Fairness (Access)	774	0.081	1	595	0.047	1
Fairness (Patronage)	764	0.011	1	589	-0.014	1
Fairness (Credit Claim)	769	0.033	0.99	596	-0.043	1
Rebel Disruption Index	745	0.043	0.62	580	0.0064	0.66
Rebels (Interfere)	772	0.0022	1	596	-0.0028	1
Rebels (Think Twice)	767	0.083	0.95	591	0.07	0.96
Rebels (Covid)	747	0.033	0.98	584	-0.043	1

Table A.5: Summary statistics: Baseline survey questions

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.
Does not own land (binary)	710	0.42	0.49
Trust in government (rating out of 10)	752	7.47	2.32
Would you think twice about calling the police? (binary)	725	0.35	0.47
Refused to answer Q about NPA sympathy (binary)	757	0.30	0.46
Difficult to access services if not politically connected? (binary)	739	0.63	0.48
NPA average net endorsement effect	770	-0.14	0.17
Government trust (terciles)	752	2.05	0.83
Government meets needs (binary)	779	0.75	0.34

Table B.1: Main Regressions - Behavioral Outcomes

	Cooperated - Covid (Midline)		Cooperated - Vaccines (Endline)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
UT Treated	0.207*** (0.065)	0.203*** (0.065)	-0.031 (0.121)	-0.051 (0.113)
Population		-0.0007 (0.050)		0.057 (0.070)
Percent Poor		-0.796* (0.438)		-1.68* (0.868)
Education		0.102 (0.202)		-0.275 (0.383)
NPA ever		-0.047 (0.071)		0.246 (0.156)
Urban		0.128 (0.189)		0.211 (0.302)
Previous Development		-0.038 (0.070)		0.035 (0.122)
(Intercept)	-0.052 (0.044)	0.130 (0.561)	0.008 (0.091)	0.532 (0.966)
R ²	0.00804	0.03067	0.00018	0.03651
Observations	800	800	800	800

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Errors are clustered at the Municipality-level.

Table B.2: Main Regressions - Government Perception Outcomes

	Govt Support Index		Govt Capacity Index		Govt Effort Index		Govt Fairness Index	
	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
UT Treated	-0.129*** (0.043)	-0.022 (0.048)	-0.144*** (0.053)	-0.132** (0.058)	-0.102** (0.048)	-0.128** (0.056)	-0.084 (0.053)	-0.146** (0.059)
(Intercept)	0.072*** (0.021)	0.003 (0.025)	0.014 (0.026)	0.064** (0.030)	0.021 (0.024)	0.043 (0.029)	0.051* (0.026)	0.035 (0.031)
R ²	0.01239	0.00040	0.00991	0.00891	0.00611	0.00888	0.00331	0.01048
Observations	735	556	747	577	741	585	759	581

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table B.3: Main Regressions - Government Perception Outcomes with Covariates

	Govt Support Index		Govt Capacity Index		Govt Effort Index		Govt Fairness Index	
	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
UT Treated	-0.131*** (0.043)	-0.014 (0.048)	-0.140*** (0.053)	-0.113* (0.058)	-0.105** (0.048)	-0.114** (0.056)	-0.086 (0.053)	-0.135** (0.060)
College Educ	-0.110** (0.050)	-0.040 (0.061)	0.037 (0.061)	-0.056 (0.073)	-0.012 (0.055)	-0.111 (0.071)	-0.006 (0.062)	-0.058 (0.075)
High School Educ	-0.030 (0.043)	-0.002 (0.050)	-0.025 (0.053)	-0.011 (0.059)	0.020 (0.048)	0.006 (0.058)	-0.014 (0.053)	0.039 (0.061)
Age	-0.003* (0.002)	-0.005** (0.002)	-0.005** (0.002)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.004* (0.002)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.002 (0.003)
Kapitan	0.044 (0.160)	0.116 (0.101)	-0.007 (0.199)	0.089 (0.125)	-0.071 (0.190)	0.189 (0.121)	0.217 (0.204)	0.129 (0.128)
Population	0.052* (0.030)	0.045 (0.036)	0.069* (0.037)	0.123*** (0.043)	0.035 (0.034)	0.112*** (0.041)	0.036 (0.037)	0.091** (0.044)
Percent Poor	0.125 (0.255)	0.318 (0.310)	0.077 (0.315)	-0.048 (0.366)	-0.027 (0.286)	-0.091 (0.355)	-0.256 (0.319)	0.094 (0.376)
Bgy Education	0.021 (0.133)	0.005 (0.158)	0.111 (0.163)	0.196 (0.186)	-0.044 (0.147)	0.077 (0.182)	0.044 (0.165)	0.073 (0.193)
NPA ever	-0.123*** (0.047)	0.017 (0.055)	-0.070 (0.059)	0.014 (0.066)	-0.051 (0.053)	0.093 (0.064)	0.032 (0.059)	0.010 (0.068)
Urban	0.191* (0.113)	0.037 (0.144)	0.083 (0.138)	-0.008 (0.165)	0.216* (0.124)	-0.026 (0.156)	0.068 (0.140)	-0.015 (0.170)
Prior Dev.	-0.025 (0.039)	-0.053 (0.045)	-0.018 (0.048)	-0.187*** (0.054)	0.064 (0.044)	-0.076 (0.053)	0.014 (0.049)	-0.104* (0.056)
(Intercept)	-0.107 (0.375)	-0.248 (0.408)	-0.378 (0.465)	-1.12** (0.487)	0.222 (0.426)	-0.944** (0.468)	-0.215 (0.472)	-0.775 (0.504)
<i>Fixed-effects</i>								
Province FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R ²	0.05722	0.03309	0.04933	0.05655	0.03401	0.05161	0.02668	0.03515
Observations	735	556	747	577	741	585	759	581

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table B.4: Main Regressions - Rebel Outcomes

	Rebels Not Disrupt				Rebels Endorsement			
	(Midline)		(Endline)		(Midline)		(Endline)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
UT Treated	-0.014 (0.053)	-0.018 (0.053)	0.076 (0.061)	0.084 (0.062)	0.001 (0.064)	-0.014 (0.064)	0.014 (0.076)	-0.004 (0.077)
College Educ		0.021 (0.062)		-0.018 (0.079)		-0.024 (0.043)		-0.067 (0.054)
High School Educ		-0.015 (0.053)		0.054 (0.064)		0.00005 (0.037)		0.059 (0.044)
Age		0.0007 (0.002)		-0.004 (0.003)		0.001 (0.002)		0.002 (0.002)
Kapitan		-0.026 (0.202)		0.316** (0.132)		-0.368*** (0.141)		0.017 (0.091)
Population		0.017 (0.038)		0.036 (0.047)		-0.019 (0.026)		-0.029 (0.031)
Percent Poor		-0.536* (0.316)		-0.120 (0.394)		0.281 (0.220)		-0.022 (0.270)
Bgy Education		-0.112 (0.166)		-0.129 (0.203)		0.205* (0.114)		0.222 (0.137)
NPA ever		-0.008 (0.059)		-0.050 (0.071)		-0.032 (0.041)		0.073 (0.049)
Urban		0.027 (0.142)		0.149 (0.178)		-0.075 (0.098)		-0.269** (0.119)
Prior Dev.		0.007 (0.049)		-0.053 (0.059)		-0.011 (0.034)		-0.001 (0.040)
Endorse - Govt					0.073* (0.044)	0.061 (0.044)	0.020 (0.055)	0.006 (0.055)
Endorse - NPA					-0.160*** (0.045)	-0.169*** (0.045)	-0.146*** (0.054)	-0.158*** (0.055)
UT × Endorse-Govt					-0.017 (0.089)	0.021 (0.090)	0.046 (0.103)	0.090 (0.105)
UT × Endorse-NPA					0.036 (0.091)	0.053 (0.091)	0.001 (0.106)	0.024 (0.107)
(Intercept)	0.046* (0.026)	0.403 (0.468)	-0.016 (0.032)	-0.082 (0.530)	0.301*** (0.032)	0.332 (0.325)	0.346*** (0.039)	0.123 (0.358)
<i>Fixed-effects</i>								
Province FEs		✓		✓		✓		✓
R ²	0.00010	0.01762	0.00267	0.02476	0.04234	0.07332	0.03013	0.06675
Observations	745	745	579	579	768	768	593	593

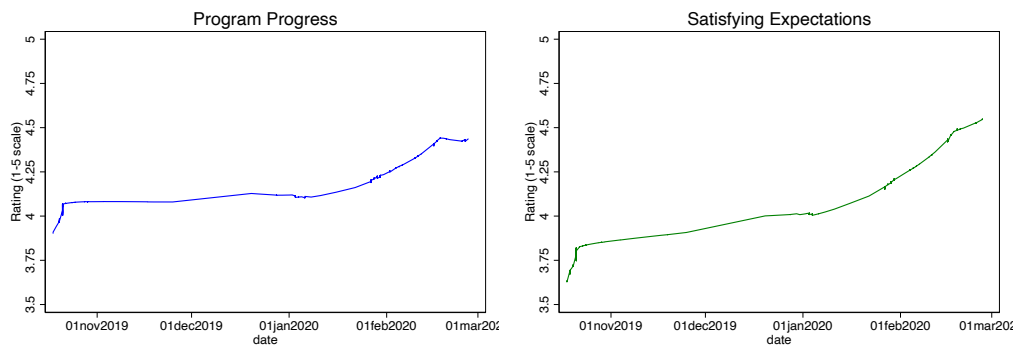
*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

B.2 Additional Results and Robustness Tests

B.2.1 Updating of Beliefs Prior to the Pandemic

In the manuscript, we reference the fact that attitudes towards the Usap Tayo program and the government service providers were improving prior to the onset of the pandemic, based on our monitoring survey of treatment barangay leaders. What we find from our monitoring surveys (see Figure B.1 below) and free response qualitative information is that participants in Usap Tayo updated their beliefs about the effectiveness of the municipal government. In short, the UT program seemed to be improving impressions about government effectiveness, as well as increasing personal trust, and thus made local leaders more likely to feel comfortable cooperating once the pandemic struck.

Figure B.1: Monitoring Survey: Average responses (1-5 rating) over time



B.2.2 Attrition

Through the first year of the Usap Tayo program we did not experience significant attrition at the barangay level – all villages assigned to treated participated in the program, and we did not observe significant attrition in midline data collection. However, as the pandemic wore on, we experienced some attrition in terms of contact with the barangay leaders. Where program participation was previously close to 100%, once UT meetings were being conducted remotely only around 80% were able to regularly participate due in meeting, due to connectivity issues.

The midline survey did not experience significant attrition, though at endline (post-lockdown) we did see a reduction in survey participation (from 97% to 75%) due to connectivity problems. We later learned that some phone numbers for leaders in our control group were out of date, whereas those in treated communities had been updated by the field implementation team after the lockdown ended, in anticipation of executing a newly created online and phone treatment approach. This meant that at endline we have slightly higher survey recall rates for treated villages as opposed to control ones (81.5% in treated villages vs. 72.2% in control villages).

Although differential attrition can be cause for concern – with the possibility that treatment effects could be driven by attrition rather than the intervention – a qualitative investigation into the phone number changes, along with statistical robustness checks, reveal that attrition was likely to be random in nature.

In short, a similar, random proportion of leaders in both treated and control villages likely changed their phone numbers for idiosyncratic reasons (e.g. network provider promotions and family SIM card sharing), unrelated to this study. However, our team only caught the number changes for the treatment

group, meaning that a random subset of the control group was left uncontacted at endline. The following diagnostics demonstrate that the attrition is consistent with missing-at-random.

Survey Wave	Treated Bgys	Control Bgys
Midline survey	193 (96.5%)	582 (97.0%)
Endline survey	163 (81.5%)	433 (72.2%)

Table B.5: Survey wave participation

The first consideration is to test whether there are imbalances between the treated and control units who responded to the endline survey, based on demographics of the respondents, or in terms of the underlying characteristics of the communities. Reassuringly, we find no significant differences (either in substantive or in terms of “statistical significance” testing) between the two groups at endline. Table B.6 shows that there are no significant differences between the treated and control barangays who responded to the endline survey, nor between the demographics of the village leaders who completed the survey. This indicates that this is likely a “missing at random” scenario, where the presence of the treatment program allowed our enumerators to have better information about changes to phone numbers than in control villages. However, because the leadership changes were in a random rather than systemic subset of the two groups, the missingness does not affect the results.

Table B.6: Balance test between treated and control units (endline)

Variable	Control Mean	Treated Mean	p-value
Adult Population (Voters List 2016)	778.11	754.18	0.59
Percent Poor Households	0.36	0.37	0.43
Education Index	1.67	1.65	0.52
NPA Activity 2009-2015	0.54	0.56	0.60
Urban	0.03	0.04	0.30
Prior KALAH-CIDSS	0.53	0.55	0.56
Completed College	0.24	0.25	0.68
Completed High School	0.63	0.66	0.57
Age	52.44	54.10	0.08
Kapitan	0.95	0.95	0.88

Each row reports the means for each covariate at endline for control and treated units. P-values come from regressions that predict treatment status based on the covariate.

The second consideration is to test whether the sample in the endline wave of the survey is comparable to the sample in the midline. Although the results in Table B.6 mitigate concerns about differential attrition within the Endline wave, it could be that there was attrition in both the treatment and control groups due to the pandemic that renders the respondent pool significantly different at midline and endline. This would complicate interpretation because you could not rule out the different in results being due to the change in composition rather than the pandemic circumstances or lockdown.

Examining the two waves, we find some small differences in the backgrounds and the types of barangays who had their leaders respond on our endline vs the midline survey. Although in substantive terms the administrative level variables for the villages are extremely similar, we do reject a null of no

difference in the percentage of poor households. In terms of leader demographics, the only difference in the samples at midline and endline is a small, but significant drop in the proportion of villages where the kapitan responded to the survey, from 99% to 95%.

Table B.7: Balance test between midline and endline survey samples

Variable	Midline Mean	Endline Mean	p-value
Adult Population (Voters List 2016)	753.90	771.58	0.51
Percent Poor Households	0.38	0.36	0.03
Education Index	1.64	1.66	0.16
NPA Activity 2009-2015	0.56	0.54	0.50
Urban	0.03	0.03	0.83
Prior KALAH-CIDSS	0.53	0.53	0.99
Completed College	0.26	0.24	0.49
Completed High School	0.66	0.64	0.41
Age	52.23	52.89	0.23
Kapitan	0.99	0.95	0.00

Each row reports the means for each covariate at the midline and endline surveys. P-values come from regressions that predict the survey wave based on the covariate.

Although these differences are unlikely to be large to enough to be driving the difference in results we see at midline and endline, we see whether the results are robust to three alternative specifications. First, we ran versions of our main models with a full battery of pre-treatment covariates at the village and individual leader level, including the two covariates that showed small imbalances between waves. These are displayed in the main results tables above.

Second, we conducted entropy balancing on pre-treatment covariates and demographics as a robustness test Hainmueller and Xu (2013). Table B.8 shows the entropy-balanced results for the main government perception outcomes. Table B.9 shows the entropy-balanced results for the rebel perceptions outcomes, including the endorsement experiment.

Third, we ran the models on the subset of barangays where we had complete measurement (at both midline and endline). Tables B.10 and B.11 show the results for the complete panel. In all specifications, the results are essentially unchanged. Overall, these sets of results indicate that although there was leader turnover in some barangays and attrition in terms of whether villages were able to be contacted by our enumerators, these were likely orthogonal to our intervention. The results across specifications indicate a consistent set of findings in line with what we present in the main text.

Table B.8: Robustness to Attrition, Govt Perception Outcomes - Entropy Balancing

	Govt Support Index		Govt Capacity Index		Govt Effort Index		Govt Fairness Index	
	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
UT Treated	-0.134***	-0.004	-0.125***	-0.102*	-0.097**	-0.093*	-0.077*	-0.116**
	(0.037)	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.054)	(0.041)	(0.051)	(0.045)	(0.054)
(Intercept)	0.077***	-0.013	-0.005	0.047	0.017	0.029	0.044	0.026
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.029)	(0.032)	(0.032)	(0.034)
R ²	0.01717	0.00001	0.01033	0.00626	0.00750	0.00554	0.00372	0.00783
Observations	735	556	747	577	741	585	759	581

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table B.9: Robustness to Attrition, Rebel Outcomes - Entropy Balancing

	Rebels Not Disrupt		Rebels Endorsement	
	(Midline)		(Endline)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
UT Treated	-0.022	0.097*	-0.007	-0.013
	(0.046)	(0.057)	(0.055)	(0.070)
Endorse - Govt			0.055	0.002
			(0.054)	(0.060)
Endorse - NPA			-0.164***	-0.152**
			(0.056)	(0.060)
UT Treated × Endorse - Govt			0.001	0.097
			(0.077)	(0.095)
UT Treated × Endorse - NPA			0.040	0.037
			(0.079)	(0.097)
(Intercept)	0.053*	-0.030	0.309***	0.353***
	(0.032)	(0.036)	(0.038)	(0.044)
R ²	0.00030	0.00494	0.03496	0.03096
Observations	745	579	768	593

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table B.10: Robustness to Attrition, Govt Perception Outcomes - Complete Panel

	Govt Support Index		Govt Capacity Index		Govt Effort Index		Govt Fairness Index	
	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
UT Treated	-0.121**	-0.030	-0.205***	-0.135**	-0.121**	-0.135**	-0.125**	-0.149**
	(0.049)	(0.048)	(0.058)	(0.059)	(0.054)	(0.057)	(0.060)	(0.060)
(Intercept)	0.078***	0.009	0.050*	0.065**	0.041	0.044	0.075**	0.040
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.028)	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.031)
R ²	0.01109	0.00074	0.02158	0.00921	0.00887	0.00984	0.00765	0.01088
Observations	554	546	564	567	561	575	574	571

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table B.11: Robustness to Attrition, Rebel Outcomes - Complete Panel

	Rebels Not Disrupt		Rebels Endorsement	
	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
UT Treated	0.024	0.077	-0.005	0.014
	(0.059)	(0.062)	(0.071)	(0.076)
Endorse - Govt			0.076	0.022
			(0.052)	(0.055)
Endorse - NPA			-0.187***	-0.151***
			(0.053)	(0.055)
UT Treated × Endorse - Govt			0.005	0.034
			(0.100)	(0.103)
UT Treated × Endorse - NPA			0.049	-0.005
			(0.101)	(0.107)
(Intercept)	0.028	-0.015	0.312***	0.346***
	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.037)	(0.039)
R ²	0.00029	0.00272	0.05422	0.03155
Observations	561	570	582	583

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

B.2.3 Spillovers

Spillovers were a threat to inference we were particularly concerned with during the design phase. The UT program was a relatively high-profile program, which led us to be concerned about control units being jealous of the services provided in UT barangays (which would bias towards finding a positive result) or perhaps using their proximity to these barangays to also benefit from additional government services (which would bias against finding a positive result). If these spillovers were to exist, we thought they were much more likely to manifest between treatment and control barangays in the same municipality. Barangay leaders have municipal-level Liga ng mga Barangay meetings on a regular basis and are much closer in proximity to each other than barangays in neighboring municipalities, on average. As a result, we adopted the research design strategy of selecting entire control municipalities so that we could characterize the nature of spillovers, if they existed (described in the main manuscript).

This allows us to make two comparisons that help us identify whether the results hold independent of spillovers. First, we ran models comparing outcomes for only the treatment and control barangays *within* the treated municipalities, leaving aside the 400 control barangays in control municipalities. Tables B.12 and B.13 displays these results, which are almost identical to the main results presented in Figure 4. The fact that these results are nearly identical to the main specification suggests that there were unlikely any spillovers (positive or negative) within municipalities.

Table B.12: Spillovers: Within-Municipality, Behavioral and Rebel Outcomes

	Cooperated		Rebels Not Disrupt		Rebels Endorsement	
	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
UT Treated	0.210***	-0.046	-0.068	0.0005	0.018	0.004
	(0.077)	(0.084)	(0.065)	(0.074)	(0.077)	(0.095)
Endorse - Govt					0.037	0.031
					(0.074)	(0.098)
Endorse - NPA					-0.144*	-0.185*
					(0.083)	(0.096)
UT Treated $\times$ Endorse - Govt					0.020	0.035
					(0.107)	(0.132)
UT Treated $\times$ Endorse - NPA					0.019	0.041
					(0.114)	(0.133)
(Intercept)	-0.055	0.023	0.099**	0.060	0.284***	0.356***
	(0.069)	(0.128)	(0.046)	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.069)
R ²	0.01117	0.00053	0.00289	1.6×10^{-7}	0.02838	0.04037
Observations	400	400	371	295	387	298

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Errors are clustered at the Municipality-level in the models with behavioral outcomes.

In addition, our design allows us to conduct a placebo test for spillovers by comparing control units in treated municipalities to control units in control municipalities. If there were substantial spillover effects, we would expect these *Placebo Treated* barangays (control barangays in treatment municipalities) to differ on the outcomes compared to the purest control barangays (in control municipalities). Table B.14 shows a precisely estimated null for this test, again suggesting that spillovers should not be considered a substantial concern.

Table B.13: Spillovers: Within-Municipality, Government Perception Outcomes

	Govt Support Index		Govt Capacity Index		Govt Effort Index		Govt Fairness Index	
	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
UT Treated	-0.139*** (0.053)	-0.017 (0.058)	-0.207*** (0.063)	-0.176** (0.076)	-0.128** (0.058)	-0.151** (0.070)	-0.071 (0.066)	-0.136* (0.074)
(Intercept)	0.082** (0.038)	-0.002 (0.043)	0.077* (0.044)	0.108* (0.056)	0.047 (0.041)	0.066 (0.052)	0.039 (0.046)	0.025 (0.055)
R ²	0.01819	0.00033	0.02861	0.01785	0.01309	0.01527	0.00310	0.01136
Observations	368	279	372	293	368	297	379	294

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table B.14: Spillovers: Placebo Test

	Cooperated		Support Index		Capacity Index		Effort Index		Fairness Index	
	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Placebo Treated	-0.005 (0.089)	0.023 (0.175)	0.015 (0.045)	-0.007 (0.056)	0.094* (0.056)	0.065 (0.062)	0.039 (0.050)	0.034 (0.063)	-0.019 (0.056)	-0.015 (0.065)
(Intercept)	-0.050 (0.057)	0.000 (0.121)	0.067*** (0.026)	0.005 (0.031)	-0.018 (0.032)	0.043 (0.036)	0.008 (0.029)	0.032 (0.035)	0.058* (0.033)	0.039 (0.037)
R ²	0.000006	0.00012	0.00019	0.00004	0.00505	0.00255	0.00111	0.00070	0.00019	0.00012
Obs	600	600	550	402	563	420	560	423	570	422

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Barangays that were actually treated by the UT program are excluded from this sample. The *Placebo Treatment* barangays are control barangays in treated municipalities.

B.2.4 Manipulation Check

Here we present suggestive evidence on whether the Usap Tayo program resulted in increased access to government services. Although we do not have data on the many agencies and programs that participated in UT, we do have annual barangay-level data on beneficiaries from DSWD's Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP). This serves as a plausible manipulation check because DSWD was one of the lead agencies for UT and SLP was one of DSWD's primary programs discussed during UT meetings. The data for SLP are aggregated at the annual level. This allows for some comparison of treatment effects during the different stages of UT, though the overlap is imperfect.

Roughly, the in-person UT program ran from October 2019 - February 2020. The government lockdown lasted from March 2020 - October 2020. UT remote operation ran from October 2020 to July 2021, followed by several months of endline measurement. Based on these dates, we feel relatively confident testing treatment effects of the program on SLP beneficiaries for 2021, during which UT was operating remotely. The results in Models 5-6 of Table B.15 suggest that UT indeed resulted in increased access to government services during this remote operation period.

Table B.15: Manipulation Check - DSWD Beneficiaries

	Beneficiaries 2019		Beneficiaries 2020		Beneficiaries 2021	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
UT Treated	0.795 (1.57)	1.06 (1.53)	0.133 (0.250)	0.157 (0.250)	5.49*** (1.70)	5.75*** (1.67)
Population		7.68*** (1.00)		0.404** (0.164)		0.526 (1.10)
Percent Poor		-6.45 (7.91)		0.772 (1.30)		2.30 (8.67)
Education		0.524 (4.15)		1.16* (0.680)		14.4*** (4.55)
NPA ever		2.91** (1.44)		-0.106 (0.236)		6.78*** (1.57)
Urban		-8.23** (3.96)		-0.083 (0.650)		-2.64 (4.34)
Previous Development		-0.072 (1.35)		-0.0006 (0.221)		-2.63* (1.48)
(Intercept)	7.18*** (0.787)	-46.4*** (11.1)	0.397*** (0.125)	-4.58** (1.82)	3.49*** (0.848)	-27.2** (12.2)
R ²	0.00032	0.07726	0.00036	0.01659	0.01295	0.05788
Observations	800	800	800	800	800	800

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

The outcome measures in this table are the number of beneficiaries of the DSWD Sustainable Livelihoods Program in the respective year.

B.2.5 Municipal-Level Models

Here we present results for municipal-level models, where the models compare municipal-level aggregates of the main survey outcomes in 1) treated barangays in treated municipalities (excluding 200 control barangays in treated municipalities relative to 2) control barangays in control municipalities. Table B.16 displays models where the outcomes are the government perception indices. Table B.17 displays models where the outcomes are the rebel disruption index and the rebel support endorsement experiment. The endorsement experiment outcome in these models collapse the endorsement effect to the municipality level. So, for example, rather than having each individual be the unit of analysis, the unit of analysis is the municipality, and the outcome is the average difference between the control group of the endorsement experiment and the NPA endorsement group in the experiment. Results closely mirror the barangay-level models, though reduced power leads some coefficients to be either marginally significant or barely insignificant.

B.2.6 Midline vs. Endline Comparison

Here we use a diff-in-diff specification to test whether there were significant differences between the survey outcomes at midline and endline. Table B.18 shows that the treatment effect for the *Govt Support* increased between midline and endline, at marginally significant levels ($p = 0.096$). None of the other outcomes were significantly different between midline and endline.

Table B.16: Municipal-Level Results: Government Perception Outcomes

	Govt Support Index		Govt Capacity Index		Govt Effort Index		Govt Fairness Index	
	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
UT Treated	-0.124**	-0.050	-0.116*	-0.114*	-0.084	-0.123	-0.094	-0.153**
	(0.052)	(0.055)	(0.067)	(0.068)	(0.062)	(0.074)	(0.057)	(0.076)
(Intercept)	0.068*	0.017	-0.017	0.048	0.008	0.025	0.056	0.036
	(0.037)	(0.039)	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.044)	(0.052)	(0.040)	(0.054)
R ²	0.06812	0.01025	0.03677	0.03572	0.02318	0.03393	0.03347	0.04874
Observations	80	80	80	79	80	80	80	80

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table B.17: Municipal-Level Results: Rebel Outcomes

	Rebels Not Disrupt		Rebels Endorsement	
	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
UT Treated	0.016	0.077	0.020	-0.091
	(0.060)	(0.067)	(0.099)	(0.132)
(Intercept)	0.024	-0.047	-0.144**	-0.126
	(0.042)	(0.047)	(0.066)	(0.082)
R ²	0.00090	0.01665	0.00060	0.00824
Observations	80	80	70	60

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

B.2.7 Sub-Index Results

The tables in this section show the results for the sub-index survey items that compose each of the main survey indices.

C Additional Materials

C.1 Pre-Registration

A pre-analysis plan was initially drafted for this study in late 2019, with the intention of filing once the finalized intervention was firmly ongoing and endline data collection scheduled; before outcomes were realized. This plan, however, was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. After we were forced to halt our intervention and lockdown loomed, we rapidly filed a pre-analysis plan in March 2020 at the Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) design registry, in expectation of doing an emergency midline data collection in cooperation with the regional Covid-19 task force.

In the period of uncertainty that followed, we were primarily focused on making sure our field team was safe and taken care of. It was difficult to know whether the Usap Tayo program would ever restart, and under what conditions we could again collect data. When we learned that the lockdown would be

Table B.18: Supplementary Regression - Midline vs. Endline Diff-in-Diff

	Govt Support (1)	Govt Capacity (2)	Govt Effort (3)	Govt Fairness (4)	Rebels Not Disrupt (5)
UT Treated	-0.129*** (0.043)	-0.144*** (0.053)	-0.102** (0.050)	-0.084 (0.053)	-0.014 (0.054)
Endline	-0.069** (0.033)	0.050 (0.040)	0.022 (0.037)	-0.017 (0.041)	-0.062 (0.041)
UT Treated $\times$ Endline	0.107* (0.064)	0.012 (0.079)	-0.026 (0.073)	-0.062 (0.079)	0.091 (0.080)
(Intercept)	0.072*** (0.021)	0.014 (0.026)	0.021 (0.025)	0.051* (0.026)	0.046* (0.027)
R ²	0.00894	0.01102	0.00753	0.00723	0.00213
Observations	1,291	1,324	1,326	1,340	1,324

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table B.19: Sub-Index Results: Govt Support Index

	Trust Govt (Mid) (1)	(End) (2)	Addresses (Mid) (3)	Needs (End) (4)	Peace Deal (Mid) (5)	(End) (6)	Rebel Grievances (Mid) (7)	(End) (8)
UT Treated	-0.166** (0.078)	0.003 (0.091)	-0.151* (0.082)	-0.104 (0.094)	-0.089 (0.083)	0.024 (0.095)	-0.103 (0.085)	-0.021 (0.091)
(Intercept)	0.185*** (0.039)	0.034 (0.048)	-0.004 (0.041)	0.084* (0.049)	0.100** (0.042)	-0.110** (0.050)	0.014 (0.043)	0.025 (0.048)
R ²	0.00581	0.000001	0.00439	0.00206	0.00154	0.00012	0.00194	0.00009
Observations	769	595	773	594	750	570	756	585

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

phased out and remote data collection would be possible, we had to once again work on an accelerated timeline to develop an appropriate survey instrument for what turned out to be the midline survey. In this chaotic period, we did not upload an updated pre-analysis plan, neglecting certain changes we made, such as the construction of outcome indices or certain question rewordings. As a result, some aspects of our theory and outcomes are pre-registered, while others are not.

In addition, certain details of the intervention that were administered in the second, post-lockdown, period of the program post-lockdown were of course different from what was initially planned. Most importantly, the meetings were held initially remotely rather than in person, before being phased back into the original format. The nature of government services offered was also slightly different compared to pre-pandemic, with Covid-19 relief services being incorporated alongside the original service programs. Overall, however, our data and our team's observations suggest that the delivery of services to beneficiaries was actually slightly higher in the post-lockdown period.

To summarize, the aspects of the project that remained consistent with the original pre-registration include: the experimental research design and randomization, the midline behavioral cooperation measurement, and administrative outcomes of actual service delivery. The main aspects of the project that

Table B.20: Sub-Index Results: Govt Capacity Index

	Coordination		Govt Fears		Govt Info		PNP Capacity		Covid Capacity	
	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
UT Treated	-0.147*	-0.133	-0.135	-0.140	-0.195**	-0.174*	-0.100	-0.036	-0.111	-0.132
	(0.084)	(0.092)	(0.087)	(0.086)	(0.083)	(0.093)	(0.084)	(0.092)	(0.084)	(0.092)
(Intercept)	0.018	0.058	-0.019	0.106**	0.023	0.082*	0.023	0.014	0.008	0.060
	(0.042)	(0.048)	(0.043)	(0.045)	(0.041)	(0.049)	(0.042)	(0.048)	(0.042)	(0.048)
R ²	0.00403	0.00351	0.00310	0.00447	0.00724	0.00591	0.00186	0.00027	0.00231	0.00349
Observations	764	595	767	594	768	588	765	591	761	592

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table B.21: Sub-Index Results: Govt Effort Index

	Govt Slack		Covid Intention		Input Opportunity		Youth Consulted		Civilian Info	
	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
UT Treated	-0.147*	-0.173*	0.013	-0.190**	-0.112	-0.100	-0.126	-0.042	-0.132	-0.146
	(0.085)	(0.089)	(0.083)	(0.093)	(0.083)	(0.093)	(0.084)	(0.092)	(0.083)	(0.092)
(Intercept)	-0.017	0.118**	0.040	-0.002	-0.016	0.085*	0.054	-0.021	0.041	0.028
	(0.042)	(0.047)	(0.041)	(0.049)	(0.041)	(0.049)	(0.041)	(0.048)	(0.042)	(0.048)
R ²	0.00392	0.00626	0.00003	0.00702	0.00237	0.00193	0.00293	0.00035	0.00330	0.00423
Observations	765	594	766	592	765	595	765	594	764	594

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

changed or were not pre-registered are the specific wordings of the survey questions, the construction of the survey outcome indices, and the revised remote intervention protocol.

C.2 Ethics

This study was reviewed and approved by the IRB at [REDACTED], under study number [REDACTED]. To further support transparency and accountability, an extended 21-page ethics appendix is available upon request. This appendix details our multi-step vetting process for site selection to ensure participant safety, our informed consent procedures, and our approach to handling sensitive data. Additionally, we outline the ethical considerations specific to conflict zones, including participant confidentiality and steps to mitigate potential risks from insurgent activity. We also provide details on navigating pandemic-related challenges to protect our field staff and participants.

Table B.22: Sub-Index Results: Govt Fairness Index

	Service is Fair		Govt Cant Access		Need Patronage		Credit Claim	
	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
UT Treated	-0.099	-0.100	-0.160*	-0.239***	-0.066	-0.094	-0.035	-0.131
	(0.083)	(0.092)	(0.084)	(0.092)	(0.084)	(0.093)	(0.083)	(0.093)
(Intercept)	0.028	0.025	0.121***	0.113**	0.027	0.014	0.042	-0.005
	(0.042)	(0.048)	(0.042)	(0.048)	(0.042)	(0.048)	(0.041)	(0.049)
R ²	0.00182	0.00198	0.00473	0.01126	0.00082	0.00176	0.00024	0.00335
Observations	771	592	774	594	764	588	769	595

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Table B.23: Sub-Index Results: Rebels Disrupt Index

	Rebels Interfere		Think Twice Rebels		Covid Rebels	
	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
UT Treated	-0.095	-0.060	-0.042	0.162*	0.082	0.134
	(0.083)	(0.092)	(0.080)	(0.088)	(0.083)	(0.095)
(Intercept)	0.026	0.013	0.094**	0.024	0.013	-0.081
	(0.041)	(0.048)	(0.040)	(0.046)	(0.041)	(0.050)
R ²	0.00168	0.00070	0.00036	0.00566	0.00131	0.00340
Observations	772	595	767	590	747	583

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

D Ethics

In social science research it is a longstanding formal requirement, as well as a moral imperative, to protect human subjects. This section documents the steps the authors took to identify and mitigate risks associated with the research. *Some portions of this Ethics statement are re-printed from [REDACTED] in order to maintain consistency in describing activities undertaken through March 2020, when that study ends. We have added to it ethical information pursuant to activities from March 2020 through 2022.*

The Usap Tayo (UT) intervention was designed to be rolled out throughout Bicol region (Region V), which contains 6 provinces that, in turn, contain 7 chartered cities, 107 municipalities, and a total population of 5.8 million people. Contained in the 114 cities and municipalities there are 3,471 barangays, which have an average citizenry of 1,670 people.

Starting with the full set of administrative units across Bicol region, we then pared down the sample to units that were determined to be safe for research and the UT intervention. In order to protect the safety and security of all participants, we conducted a five step process to determine which units were eligible for inclusion on ethics and safety grounds. These steps were taken in partnership with the Philippine National Police (Region V) and Department of Social Work and Development (Region V), our experienced research manager, and a wide range of civilian stakeholders across the region.

- Step 1** We consulted 2009-2015 AFP intelligence reports to rule out a set of potentially dangerous barangays and set our initial sampling frame. The AFP’s barangay-level coding of NPA infiltration are based on intelligence officers’ reports regarding NPA *presence* rather than counts of violent incidents. The AFP intelligence reports categorize each barangay on a three point scale (green, yellow, red) at the end of each quarter, ranging from ‘cleared’ to NPA ‘infiltrated.’ We ruled out all barangays that were coded as ‘red’ (or ‘infiltrated’) during any year in the 2009-2015 range. NPA presence was significantly more widespread in 2009-2015 than in 2019-2020 which allowed us to systematically limit ourselves to a conservative potential sampling frame as a first step. We ruled out approximately 11% of the barangays across the region in this step.
- Step 2** We reviewed data on the implementation of the ‘war on drugs’ to eliminate locations where extrajudicial killings were reported from June 2016 (when the drug war began) to the end of 2018.
- Step 3** We consulted all regional, provincial and municipal offices of the PNP and DSWD to ensure that none of the barangays in our sample were known to be NPA infiltrated or dangerous. Our prior experience working with the Bicol PNP suggested that municipal PNP offices, in particular, are highly conservative when it comes to accepting assignments in NPA-affected areas, which are generally left under the purview of the AFP.
- Step 4** We relied on the personal networks and local knowledge of our Bicolano coauthor and field research manager to further vet each barangay and confirm that they were safe for research. Over the course of a year leading up to the start of UT, our local research manager and a small team of senior field officers traveled to each municipality across the region and engaged in structured (though informal) discussions with these stakeholders about the benefits and risks associated with the intervention.
- Step 5** We confirmed using the updated 2019 Quarter 2 AFP intelligence reports that none of the final sample barangays were NPA-infiltrated at the start of the program.

This study went through an IRB review and approval process to ensure that the activities were in line with US regulations regarding the protection of human subjects. After a period of due diligence and piloting from April 2018 to February 2019, the project received a full IRB review process at UC San Diego and, after revision, was approved in April 2019. Amendments related to data collection and extensions were approved in June 2019, February 2020 and May 2020. Beyond the formal requirements of the IRB, the PIs took additional care to ensure the ethical appropriateness of the research, concern for which was

heightened by the context: a region affected by conflict, working in collaboration with a government that had been widely understood to have engaged in human rights violations in the context of President Duterte’s “War on Drugs.” For activities that occurred after March 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns began in the Philippines, the research team took steps to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the field research team, and focused on remote activities until full vaccination was possible for the field team. When in-person activities resumed near the end of the project, covid mitigation measures were used to reduce the risks to participants and field staff.

Our approach to this research was primarily guided by the principle of “do no harm” (Wood, 2006).³ Although there were significant potential ethical benefits to the research, simply aiming to offset potential risks with benefits is not sufficient to protect the integrity and safety of participants and the general public in the conflict-affected context. The principles of the Belmont report also guided our decision making. For example, the fact that local elected leaders, rather than the general public, be the primary participants in the intervention was in part shaped by concern that typical civilians in a conflict-affected area are potentially vulnerable to coercion (what the Belmont report calls “justice”).

Second, provided we could sufficiently mitigate risks to participants and the general public, we assessed that there was a very high ethical ‘upside’ for improving practices in a context where there is a long history of abuse and neglect. In addition to the benefits associated with knowledge produced by the project, we assessed that there were substantial potential benefits associated with empowering leadership within the PNP whose policy goals were focused on leaving behind abusive practices and who were committed to evidence-backed approaches. When presented with the opportunity to collaborate on the Usap Tayo project, we felt that there was strong potential for the project to make meaningful and sustainable improvements to policing and development practices across Bicol region, and that the results of the study might lead these practices to be adopted at an even wider scale. Our primary partner within the PNP was credited with overseeing a dramatic, positive transformation to community policing practices as a Provincial Police Chief from 2015-2018, where he received the national award for “Best Province for PCR Practices” in 2018.

During the nearly year-long due diligence phase (from April 2018 to March 2019) the PIs did not commit to carrying out the experiment. It was agreed amongst the authors that even though the learning that would be possible from the project was potentially extremely valuable, we would not engage in a program that would significantly increase the risk to participants. During the course of the due diligence phase we received feedback from experts in the study of conflict and Southeast Asia, specifically on the subject of research ethics, during panels at the Southeast Asia Research Group (SEAREG) annual meeting, as well as the Empirical Studies of Conflict (ESOC) annual meeting. The PIs, with the help of our full-time local research manager, also conducted extensive fieldwork during the due diligence period in order to accurately assess the benefits and risks specific to the context in Bicol.

This critical feedback led us to substantially change the design of the study and rule out activities that would have been too risky. For example, we resolved to not cooperate with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and that we would not allow for any PNP patrol activities to be a part of the project. Based on our fieldwork, we determined that participant safety could be protected by focusing on ‘soft’ government service projects (such as livelihood support and employment training) rather than ‘hard’ infrastructure projects that are subject to NPA capture and violence. We also decided to move the main activities from the barangay level to the municipality level to insulate regular citizens from additional contact with the PNP. Over the course of the design process we made dozens of adjustments to the

³Wood, E. J. (2006). The ethical challenges of field research in conflict zones. *Qualitative Sociology*, 29(3), 373-386.

sampling and baseline data collection process, and suggested changes to structure for the intervention to the PNP, all of which were accepted by the leadership.

Another important contributor to our ethical considerations and subsequent design choices was that one of the PIs for this study is a Filipino scholar, someone who was born and raised in Bicol and has extensive experience working on issues related to conflict in the region. Without extensive local knowledge, our project would be difficult to implement safely and ethically. These intuitions and experiences were crucial to every aspect of the research: including sample selection, enumerator hiring, wording the questionnaire, appropriate consent language, where meetings would be held, and determining how to assess and mitigate any remaining risks of NPA backlash or government abuse.

The structure of this research ethics section follows the American Political Science Association’s “Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research” (ratified by the APSA council in April 2020). We list each of the 12 principles from the APSA, describe the potential risks associated with our project and the set of steps we took to mitigate each one. We also delineate the ethical benefits of the project, which we believe were significant.

D.0.1 Principle 1: “Political science researchers should respect autonomy, consider the wellbeing of participants and other people affected by their research, and be open about the ethical issues they face and the decisions they make when conducting their research.”

Resolving violent conflict is a vitally important goal, and research that will provide actionable insights into the most effective measures for achieving that goal has a clear ethical upside. At the same time, the downside risks are also potentially severe. One must evaluate the trade-off between the benefits of learning what conflict resolution methods are effective — and the potential lives saved and improved by utilizing that knowledge — against the possibility that a research endeavor might inadvertently increase the level of conflict.

Conflict-affected areas are complicated because citizens are typically exposed to very negative experiences that they have no control over. Conflict actors, sometimes including the state, regularly engage in repression, violence, threats and other violations of autonomy and human rights. The flip side is that the benefits of research that can de-escalate conflict by providing conclusive evidence can be transformational in individual people’s lives. In the specific case of this project, we thought about the long duration of the NPA insurgency (ongoing since the 1960s) and the multiple generations of Filipinos that had experienced neglect and violence, determining that there was a significant benefit to be gained as long as we could minimize the downside risks associated with the project.

Importantly, early in the due diligence phase of the project we spent a considerable amount of time with a senior leader in the Philippine National Police Region 5 who expressed a strong desire to change the way that the Philippine security establishment approached the conflict. He expressed to the PI team that the violent approach of the Army and government towards the NPA and citizens over the five decades of conflict had been a major mistake and that a dramatic change towards service delivery and collaboration was the only way forward.

His view was that a scientific experiment that proved that a service-delivery focused method could be successful would be one of the few ways that the decision makers within the military and police could be convinced to change their approach. He told the PI team that the participation of foreign scholars, in collaboration with Filipino researchers, would give the study a weight that could aid in changing the policy. Lastly, he felt that with the imprimatur of US universities he could sell it to the regional commander, which indeed was ultimately successful. It also turned out that the leadership of PNP and the military in Manila were also very interested in receiving presentations of the results and integrating the findings into the updated policy the government is formulating with respect to the NPA conflict.

The aforementioned senior officer was the primary interlocutor for the project within the PNP, who was ultimately promoted to decision making authority in the Region while the project was being implemented. Without the commitment to change from this particular officer, it is unlikely that we would have carried out the study.

The PI team felt that this was an important and timely opportunity. Although it would undoubtedly be complicated, and raise an ongoing number of ethical concerns, the authors felt that the potential benefits were very high. First, greater government services being brought to a region that has long been neglected would be extremely welcome and would be a net social benefit even if there were a null effect on the conflict-related outcomes. Second, if the experiment were to reduce the intensity of the conflict, both by decreasing the incentives for the NPA to engage in violence and demonstrating to the AFP and PNP the value of service-first interventions, this would improve citizen welfare. Lastly, if the experiment were to prompt the PNP and AFP to modify their approach to conflict in general to a less coercive approach, this would improve citizen welfare nationwide.

Once the project began to contend with Covid-19 as an additional risk to Filipino society, including our research team and study participants, we took steps to mitigate these risks. First, we immediately shut down activities to comply with the Government's lockdown in March 2020 and continued to make payments to the research team so that they would have financial resources even though they were not working. Second, we determined that conducting a phone-based midline survey was possible, which allowed field team members to continue to work from home on the project. As reported by our enumerators, this helped give them meaning and focus during a time that was otherwise both distressing and very boring, as the Philippines' lockdown was very restrictive, meaning they were largely stuck at home. Third, when Usap Tayo was restarted in late 2020, it was initially done remotely, although government agents did start to roll out in-person relief and development projects by the end of the year and into 2021. One consideration we had was whether our remote meetings would add additional pandemic risks by encouraging connections that would provoke government officials to travel to far-flung villages and spread the virus in their efforts to bring government services. We determined that these risks were worth it because (1) government officials who traveled were required to be vaccinated against Covid, with certificates checked at police check points (2) communities in conflict-affected regions were suffering as much, if not more, from neglect and lack of relief, than they were from Covid and (3) reassurances from DSWD and other agencies that their officials were going to travel regardless, but our meetings would help them do so more efficiently through the improved information they got from the Usap Tayo meetings. What might take multiple trips in the absence of the U.T. meetings could be condensed into one.

D.0.2 Principle 2: “Political science researchers have an individual responsibility to consider the ethics of their research related activities and cannot outsource ethical reflection to review boards, other institutional bodies, or regulatory agencies.”

Although the insights of the ethical review boards that were involved in this product were helpful and important, throughout the project our team recognized that maintaining the ethical integrity of the research was on the shoulders of the PI team. To achieve this, we carried out a year-long due diligence period that included numerous rounds of feedback from colleagues in the Philippines and the US, both in formal and informal settings. Critical also was having a Filipino PI on the project who could provide critical context and intuitions when making judgments about safety, cultural appropriateness and ethics.

The study went through full review and was approved by the IRB at UC San Diego. The IRBs at the home institutions of the other authors have reliance agreements in place with the IRB of record. The reviews we received from the IRB were very detailed and required multiple revisions, including on many of the same issues addressed in this ethics appendix.

We also presented our research design at the 2019 Southeast Asia Research Group (SEAREG) conference as well as the 2019 Empirical Studies of Conflict (ESOC) conference and subsequently engaged in conversations about research ethics with scholars who had extensive experience conducting research in the Philippines, including scholars of Philippine origin. During the year-long planning period for Usap Tayo, we spoke with leading practitioners at UNDP, the World Bank, and the National Economic Development Agency of the Philippines (NEDA) to ensure that the Usap Tayo program aligned with the principles of the “Conflict-Sensitive and Peace-Promoting” paradigm for development. For ethical considerations specific to Bicol, we reached out and got feedback from local academics at Bicol University and Sorsogon State College.

The PIs, along with our local research team, also conducted extensive field work to appropriately assess risks that were specific to our research context. We relied on the personal networks of our research manager and Bicolano coauthor to vet all the barangays in our sample to ensure that participation would not pose significant risks to barangay kapitans and SK chairs in these areas. During this process, we also identified a number of potential strategies to mitigate risks, including focusing on ‘soft’ development projects and holding meetings in the municipal center. Having worked on more than a dozen projects together across Bicol region over the last decade, the Bicolano PI and field research manager established extensive civilian contacts in most municipalities across the region. These contacts included academics at local universities, NGOs, government agencies, and staff of local politicians. This network also includes former NPA members and individuals that continue to maintain strong relationships with the NPA and their political arm, the CPP (Communist Party of the Philippines). At this stage, we eliminated from consideration 22 of the 107 municipalities in the region. After establishing our initial sampling frame, our field manager returned to discuss all barangays in our sample with the local civilian contacts she had cultivated over the course of the previous year to ensure that none of the remaining barangays were ones where participants would be exposed to considerable risks.

The collection of data conducted by the Region V Covid-19 task force did not undergo IRB review, due to the fact that this constituted administrative data collection from already-existing government procedures that was eventually shared with us. No personally-identified information was collected by the Covid task force as part of their requests to the barangays; they only asked for aggregate, barangay-level statistics. In addition, none of the information collected by the task force posed a risk of the PNP or other government partners discovering other personally-identified information about barangay officials collected during the course of the study.

Once the Covid-19 pandemic was in full swing, we coordinated extensively with the Region V Covid-19 task force, including the RDRRMC, DoH and PNP, to insure that our activities would support, and not interfere with, relief and public health activities in the region.

D.0.3 Principle 3: “These principles describe the standards of conduct and reflexive openness that are expected of political science researchers. In some cases, researchers may have good reasons to deviate from these principles (for example, when the principles conflict with each other). In such cases, researchers should acknowledge and justify deviations in scholarly publications and presentations of their work.”

Throughout the next nine subsections of this ethics note, we do our best to articulate the risks and trade-offs and justify the choices we made, in an open and transparent manner.

D.0.4 Principle 4: “When designing and conducting research, political scientists should be aware of power differentials between researcher and researched, and the ways in which such power differentials can affect the voluntariness of consent and the evaluation of risk and benefit.”

Early in the project due diligence period we decided that we would only participate in evaluating an intervention that was focused on local elected officials rather than regular citizens. The concern was that because of the coercive power of the associated government agencies (the PNP, the DSWD and others) and our own privileges as scholars, typical citizens from far-flung areas would feel compelled to participate and would thus be unable to provide informed consent.

In contrast, elected barangay officials are very familiar with the agencies involved in the project, and are much more comfortable with interactions with outsiders. Because of their experience of regular interactions with PNP officers and line agency officials in a similar setting, the UT intervention was unlikely to put barangay officials in a new position where they would be likely to inadvertently reveal information that would lead to harm. We also resolved that the PIs, especially the foreign members of the team, would not interact directly with any of the research subjects. Furthermore, the subject recruitment and surveying process would provide an easy way for barangay officials to choose not to participate in the program. During the informed consent process for the baseline, the enumerators made sure that officials knew that this was optional and not tied to the normal DILG benefits they are due. Using a monitoring survey by SMS, leaders could easily withdraw their consent if they so chose to, without backlash.

During the baseline survey, only survey enumerators and the barangay officials were present; no police officers or line agency representatives were present. They were enumerated on a different day. In the end, 6 invited barangay leaders did not to participate in the baseline due to communication difficulties and/or challenges traveling to the municipal center on the surveying days (3 that ultimately were assigned to treatment, 3 to control). These were from very remote areas where mobile phone coverage is spotty and travel distances are very far. All 6 of these barangays remained eligible for the program and the three that were randomized into treatment did choose to participate, though we do not have baseline survey data for those units.

As we elaborate in section A.6.9, our team never shared any personally identifiable or geographically disaggregated data with the PNP, AFP or any other government agency. The only survey data reported to the security services was a region-level aggregate report presented to Regional PNP leadership by the PIs immediately after the baseline survey. The purpose of the report was to identify government services that citizens needed most so that appropriate civilian partner agencies could be incorporated into UT programming. We did not share any administrative data collected by our research team with any of the other government agencies participating in the project.

After the pandemic took hold, most activities under the program were conducted remotely, typically by phone (or video call via phone). This allowed participants an even more control over their decision to participate, in that they could easily screen calls or ignore opportunities to join meetings. Some did not make it to many remote meetings, although by accounts of those we later contacted, this was due to connection issues rather than desire.

D.0.5 Principle 5: “Political science researchers should generally seek informed consent from individuals who are directly engaged by the research process, especially if research involves more than minimal risk of harm or if it is plausible to expect that engaged individuals would withhold consent if consent were sought.”

Informed Consent from Community Leaders (Kapitans and SK Chairs)

All of the community leaders included in our research study (from both treatment and control areas) provided their consent to participate. We provided consent forms to all participants prior to the baseline survey and our research staff were on hand to answer any questions that arose. This consent form was approved by a University IRB in the United States as part of the larger project approval, and is included as an attachment at the end of this appendix. We informed barangay officials that they were participating in a research study and that their community was randomly selected for inclusion. In accordance with Principle 6, there was no deception involved in community leaders’ participation in the study or during any parts of the survey.

The baseline survey was self-enumerated on tablets, with barangay officials themselves responding to survey questions (or choosing to skip questions) on their own. Enumerators were available to answer questions and help as needed, but were not able to view the responses that the subjects were submitting. This was made clear to respondents ahead of time.

Because we recognized the possibility that our context was one where the “risks of harm change during a study,” (Principle 5, sub-point B), at each UT meeting we gave community leaders the opportunity to opt out of future meetings. We thought that opting out in person might be seen as socially undesirable, so we also gave leaders the opportunity to indicate that they did not wish to participate in future meetings via a short SMS monitoring survey conducted in the week after each meeting. A small subset of leaders (33 Barangay Kapitans) missed at least one meeting and indicated to our research staff that the reason for being absent was their time commitment to other obligations, not a risk to their safety. In all these cases they attended the rest of the meetings. No community leaders were coerced into participation in the program.

The consent process did not include reference to the queries of the Covid-19 taskforce because this constituted administrative data collection on the part of the government. These queries were part of the agencies’ existing operations and were made across the region. The Covid task force data collection, with the involvement of the PNP, took place without our involvement. The Region V inter-agency Covid Task Force met immediately after the region was placed under “enhanced community quarantine.” The Covid task force in each of Philippines’ 17 regions included the regional PNP, and Bicol region was no different. At the task force meeting, the PNP agreed to contribute to data collection for Covid risk assessment in remote and less secure areas of the region due to resource constraints at the Department of Health (DOH).

Our local research manager learned about the task force meeting and PNP’s commitment to collect data regarding Covid exposure risk during discussions with the Regional Police Community Relations (PCR) leadership at the time. We were not in attendance at the task force meeting and only learned about this commitment after the fact. The official contact list for the barangay kapitans is freely available to all government agencies.

In analyzing possible risks to participants associated with the release of the Covid-19 administrative data to our research team, we considered whether PII or protected health information would be shared. Because neither PII nor personal health information was included in the dataset, we determined this risk to be minimal. Although the identity of the barangay kapitan is public knowledge, no health information

associated with the kapitan themselves could be known to be included in the data.

When collecting data by phone after the pandemic expanded, we were careful to avoid any PII being shared on open lines, and no individual health information was ever collected.

Informed Consent from Police and Line Agency Officials

We provided police officers and line agency officials who participated in our survey and/or the UT meetings with a consent form that was similar to the one provided to community leaders (also included at the end of this appendix). Like with barangay leaders, we gave officers and agency representatives the option to opt-out of the survey at any time. In contrast with barangay leaders, however, participation in the UT intervention by police and line agency officials was part of their regular duties and thus subject to assignment from their supervisors. Thus, officials could be obliged by their supervisors to attend UT meetings or reassigned at will (as researchers we did not have control over this). That said, we did provide opportunities for the police officers and line agency officials to report on their experience with the UT meetings, specifically to learn if they perceived any safety hazards, which we could then bring to the senior leadership. We did not receive any reports of safety issues.

D.0.6 Principle 6: “Political science researchers should carefully consider any use of deception and the ways in which deception can conflict with participant autonomy.”

No deception was used in this study.

D.0.7 Principle 7: “Political science researchers should consider the harms associated with their research.”

Site selection and associated safety considerations

Because this study was taking place in a conflict-affected zone, careful consideration went into site selection for the eligible sample. In line with the “do no harm” approach to empirical research in conflict settings, we chose to err on the side of caution in our sampling procedure (Wood, 2006). Units were only included in the ultimate sample if they passed a five-step vetting procedure that included inputs from a range of partners, administrative data and experts.

In this subsection, we describe our full site selection process, which included the following steps:

1. Consulting 2009-2015 AFP intelligence reports to avoid a set of potentially dangerous barangays (errring on the side of caution) and set our initial sampling frame.
2. Reviewing data on the implementation of the ‘war on drugs’ to eliminate locations where extra-judicial killings were reported from June 2016 (when the drug war began) to the end of 2018.
3. Consulting all regional, provincial and municipal offices of the PNP and DSWD to ensure that none of the barangays in our sample were known to be NPA infiltrated or dangerous.
4. Relying on the personal networks and local knowledge of our Bicolano coauthor and field research manager to further vet each barangay and confirm that they were safe for research.
5. Confirming using the updated 2019 Quarter 2 AFP intelligence reports that none of the final sample barangays were coded as NPA-infiltrated by the AFP at the start of the program.

After discussing site selection, which we think is a crucial part of reducing risks posed by the NPA, we turn to a discussion of additional risks we identified, and the steps we took to mitigate these risks. While

the focus of this section is on ex-ante considerations made by our team, we also think it is important to note that over approximately 9 months of the program, there were no reported incidents of violence against program participants, including community leaders, line agency staff, PNP officers or our field research team.

One concern is whether we were able to effectively rule out NPA-infiltrated “red” areas, a criterion we included to protect participants. As discussed in the manuscript, our goal was to include only “yellow” barangays that are vulnerable to NPA influence. Of particular concern is that the AFP data we used to categorize high-risk barangays might be 1) biased due to the relationship between insurgent presence and levels of violence or 2) out of date.

The data we used were from Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) intelligence reports that explicitly aimed to capture NPA presence.⁴ In four quarterly periods each year, local AFP intelligence officers provide reports that are used by base-level leadership to classify each barangay on a scale ranging from “cleared” barangays to those that are “infiltrated” by the NPA. Using this scale, we sought to avoid all NPA-infiltrated areas from our study sample.

Even though we were using a measure that is explicitly intended to capture insurgent presence, two additional concerns arise. First, the AFP might have an incentive to under-report insurgent presence, which would be an issue if the AFP wanted to show that they are making progress in rooting out the NPA. Mitigating this concern is the fact that these intelligence reports are kept highly confidential and are not shared with the public. They had been shared with the study authors previously for another observational research project. AFP leadership uses these reports for internal planning purposes and so they have an incentive to ‘get it right.’ If anything, interviews with leadership of civilian government agencies (including DSWD) conducted by the PIs suggested that base-level military leadership occasionally over-reports NPA presence in order to justify requesting more resources from Congress. Felter (2005) shows that according to these same intelligence reports, NPA presence consistently increased year-over-year from the early 1990s through 2011, suggesting the AFP leadership is unlikely to manipulate the reports to show reductions in conflict.

A second concern is that the intelligence reports are outdated and do not accurately reflect NPA presence during the study period, given that the most recent year for which we have comprehensive data is 2015. However, we think the 2009-2015 NPA presence data provide a useful starting point. As a half-century old conflict, there is significant stagnation in terms of the barangays where the NPA is able to establish a strong presence. To illustrate this fact, consider patterns of NPA control in the 3,471 barangays in Bicol region over the six-year period preceding 2015 (seen in the table below). In the 2009-2012 period, nearly 11% of the barangays in Bicol Region were classified as being NPA-infiltrated in at least one year. The number of infiltrated barangays declined by half during the 2013-2015 period. Between these two periods, the NPA was only able to infiltrate two new barangays (.0006%). Interviews with local experts on the NPA indicated that in the post-2015 period, the NPA continued to slowly lose ground across the region. Out of an abundance of caution, we took great efforts to exclude from our sample all barangays that were coded as NPA-infiltrated during any year from 2009-2015.

We viewed the process described above as a conservative first step towards eliminating barangays from our sample where program participants might be put at risk. This step was useful for us because

⁴An alternative to this approach, using violence data, is a poor choice when estimating insurgent presence because the most strongly insurgent-controlled areas often experience little violence (see, for example, Kalyvas 2006)

NPA-Infiltrated Bgys 2009-12 (early period)	NPA-Infiltrated Bgys 2013-15 (late period)	Bgys infiltrated by the NPA between the early and late period
379 (10.9%)	196 (5.6%)	2 (.0006%)

it allowed for the use of systematic, region-wide criteria to designate an initial set of barangays for consideration in the study. However, recognizing that despite these precautions we could not entirely rule out the possibility that we were including some post-2015 NPA-infiltrated areas (or that some areas were infiltrated covertly, without the knowledge of the AFP), we took several additional precautions.

First, we gave the leadership at each Municipal Police Station (MPS) the opportunity to eliminate any barangays where the program might endanger participant safety. Because of their day-to-day experience operating in a specific municipality, MPS leadership are likely to have a more accurate sense of up-to-date local conflict dynamics. Based on previous experience working with the Bicol PNP we came in with a prior that MPS leadership is very resistant to operating in NPA-affected areas. At the time of our study, the PNP required advanced AFP clearance in order to conduct any activity in barangays more than five kilometers (5km) from the MPS stations. Receiving this clearance in areas with even minimal risk of conflict is both time consuming and expensive. The PNP is required to foot the bill for the AFP personnel who conduct advance patrols and determine which areas are safe. MPS leadership must receive approval from provincial PNP leadership before making such requests. As a result, MPS leadership usually prefers to avoid potentially risky areas completely and leave them under the purview of the AFP. During advanced visits to all MPS stations, our research manager worked with the MPS leadership to remove any remaining barangays that would require them to receive advance AFP clearance.

Second, we relied on the personal networks of our local research manager and Bicolano coauthor to conduct a vetting of all barangays in our sample. Relying entirely on the security services poses some risks, even though we had strong reason to believe that the initial steps in our security procedure produced a very cautious set of barangays. As described in our description of the fieldwork in above sections, our civilian contacts included academics at local universities, NGOs, government agencies, and staff of local politicians. This network also includes former NPA members and individuals that continue to maintain strong relationships with the NPA and their political arm, the CPP (Communist Party of the Philippines). The preparation and piloting period for the UT intervention lasted more than a year, from July 2018 to August 2019, during which our research manager traveled to all sample municipalities to discuss the project with her contacts. At this stage, we eliminated from consideration 22 of the 107 municipalities in the region. After establishing our initial sampling frame, our field manager returned to discuss all barangays in our sample with the local civilian contacts she had cultivated over the course of the previous year to ensure that none of the remaining barangays were ones where participants would be exposed to significant risks.

Third, one of our PIs, along with our local field research manager, reviewed the most up-to-date AFP intelligence reports in person immediately prior to launching the intervention. The reports were shared with us by the Regional PNP leadership, who regularly receive the updated reports for security purposes. We were able to review together our list of sampled barangays and verify that none of them had become coded as NPA-infiltrated at the start of the program.

Lastly, speaking specifically about pandemic-related risks, as noted above, we considered the possibility that restarting the activities associated with our intervention would provoke viral spread. However, those risks were heavily mitigated by three factors (restated from point 1 above): (1) government officials who traveled were required to be vaccinated against Covid, with certificates checked at police check points (2) communities in conflict-affected regions were suffering as much, if not more, from neglect and lack of

relief, than they were from Covid and (3) reassurances from DSWD and other agencies that their officials were going to travel regardless, but our meetings would help them do so more efficiently.

Additional risks associated with the NPA

We believe our procedure for eliminating NPA-infiltrated areas from the sample significantly reduced the probability of direct contact between NPA personnel and barangay officials in our study sites that might threaten the safety of those officials. Nevertheless, we cannot rule out that barangay officials in study sites did not at any point interact with NPA personnel during the course of the study. A key standard for proceeding with involvement in the project was a determination of whether participation in the UT program would result in increased risks for barangay officials in cases where they did interact with the NPA.

First, only elected officials participated as subjects in the trial. These individuals are those who have chosen to participate in political activities (in conflict zones) and are well-suited to manage the associated risks. Given their positions as community leaders, it is likely that most of the study participants had repeated experience interacting with NPA personnel in the past.

As part of the vetting process during the year-long preparation and piloting stage, our local research manager and Bicolano coauthor discussed with a number of barangay kapitans the potential risks of the project stemming from interactions with the NPA. The main risk we identified during our fieldwork was that the UT program might be labeled as “counter-revolutionary” by the NPA, leading NPA personnel to threaten barangay officials who participated in the program. We also discussed this possibility with our contacts who held ties to the NPA and were familiar with how the NPA assessed programs of a similar nature.

These conversations elucidated the fact that the types of government development projects that lead the NPA to target local officials with threats of violence are almost exclusively physical infrastructure projects. Physical infrastructure projects, roads in particular, involve large sums of money paid to local contractors and are commonly targeted with extortion by the NPA. The NPA sometimes threatens barangay officials because of their role in negotiating the terms of these contracts and determining the ‘cut’ received by the NPA. Roads are also seen as particularly threatening to the NPA because of the increased mobility they afford to security personnel. Finally, physical infrastructure projects provide a coordination point for violent attacks because of their high visibility. As a result of these risks, representatives for the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) were not present at any UT meetings and it was stipulated that no physical infrastructure projects be involved in UT.

Instead, UT agendas focused exclusively on government services that were delivered directly to individuals, such as livelihood assistance and job training programs (commonly referred to as “soft” development in the Philippines). All of our contacts indicated to us that participating in discussions regarding these types of services posed virtually no risk to barangay officials. The amount of money involved in these projects is negligible compared to infrastructure projects and is not easily extorted. Preventing access to these programs targeted directly at the poor would also be extremely unpopular with the NPA’s base of support. Historically, the NPA has not targeted violence at line agency staff or barangay officials who delivered these programs or the recipients of these services. This pattern is evident in two papers by Crost, Felter, and Johnston (2014, 2016), who show that government infrastructure projects (implemented under Kalahi-CIDSS) attracted increased violence by the NPA but that the Philippines’ flagship Conditional Cash Transfer program (4Ps) had a violence-reducing effect. Throughout the project, we monitored whether the NPA issued any public statements labeling UT or any of the participating programs as “counter-revolutionary and anti-development,” the label applied to programs such as Kalahi-CIDSS that the NPA frequently tries to undermine. To date, this has not occurred.

We also considered whether barangay officials may be placed at increased risk due to perceived association with the PNP as a result of UT. For example, civilians who are seen interacting with police officers in private locations or traveling to police stations are sometimes questioned by the NPA. Our conversations with local civilian contacts suggested that risks of this nature associated with UT were negligible. The NPA expects that elected barangay officials will regularly interact with government officials and PNP officers because it is a part of their official duties. For example, for a number of years the Bicol PNP has held regular ‘Enhanced Managing Police Operations’ (EMPO) meetings where barangay officials meet at the municipal police station regarding safety and security issues in their areas. Elected barangay officials, including those from more rural areas of the region, travel to the municipal center for meetings with government officials at least once a month, on average. Meetings where elected officials meet with the police or other government agencies as a group (such as UT) are seen as particularly non-threatening because barangay officials have the expectation that any sensitive information they share could become public. We also want to underscore the fact that we frequently reiterated to barangay officials that they had the option to withdraw from the UT program at any time. If study participants felt that the program too closely associated them with the PNP to the extent that it put their safety at risk, they could drop out of the program or designate a replacement at any time.

D.0.8 Principle 8: “Political science researchers should anticipate and protect individual participants from trauma stemming from participation in research”

Because some of the subjects may have been exposed to violence in the past, is important to protect them from trauma related to revisiting those incidents on the survey or in intervention activities. Also, even if surveys are anonymous, subjects may feel discomfort expressing their true views about sensitive topics.

To mitigate these risks we designed the survey instruments for barangay leaders and government officials to not include questions that refer to past violence. We also chose to use embedded endorsement style questions for sensitive topics rather than asking directly, this helped to insulate subjects from trauma. We also noted in the consent form the range of topics that would be included so that nothing was a surprise. The self-enumeration of the surveys also allowed for respondents to engage with questions at their own pace and skip any questions they were not comfortable with, without external pressure. The wording of questions was done in a cultural sensitive manner. Our research staff is well-trained to identify and respond appropriately to symptoms of distress.

The content of the Usap Tayo meetings themselves were deliberately designed to focus on forward-looking service provision topics. The ongoing insurgency or violence associated with it were not topics of discussion in the UT meetings. This helped to reduce potential trauma among participants.

Lastly, the study did not engage with average members of the public, only local elected village leaders. These leaders have past experience engaging with government in the context of conflict, and, in order to their job, must develop coping mechanisms. We think that the risks for this subjects is much lower than average citizens.

D.0.9 Principle 9: “Political science researchers should generally keep the identities of research participants confidential; when circumstances require, researchers should adopt the higher standard of ensuring anonymity.”

For the baseline data we collected, we kept all information confidential and committed to not sharing the survey data with Philippine government partners or anyone else. The results of the study will only be communicated in aggregate form. Replication data for the study will be published in aggregate form.

Because the research participants are elected officials (barangay leaders) it is not possible to keep their identities anonymous. They play a public role and are responsible for interacting with municipal government agencies on behalf of their constituents as part of their job, which they voluntarily sought as a candidate. That said, we were careful to closely restrict the number of people who knew that the program was taking place and the set of people in the room during the Usap Tayo meetings and the baseline data collection.

The only UT participants were two designated representatives of each barangay (typically the kapitan and SK chair), and the representatives of the government agencies (usually the DSWD and Police Community Relations, and then additional other agencies on occasion). No members of the public participated, only those elected representatives. During surveying, only the survey enumerators were present, no government officials nor members of the public. Furthermore, transport reimbursements were made generic rather than associating them with a government program (e.g. with the insignia of the police or DSWD). The reimbursements were made in cash.

Risk of respondents' views being revealed during baseline

Part of the risk mitigation strategy, given a lack of anonymity, was to assiduously protect the integrity of the baseline data collection process so that no respondent or barangay more generally could be subject to any retaliation for their political views.

All surveys were conducted in private rooms at neutral locations in the municipal centers and the PNP was not informed about the details of the enumeration. Moreover, all surveys were self-enumerated by the respondents on secure tablets with updated security and encryption software installed by Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA). After arriving at the survey site, participants were provided with consent documentation by experienced IPA enumerators who were available to answer questions about the consent process. Participants were then led to a private place to sit and handed a tablet with the survey open in the Qualtrics mobile application. Enumerators helped the respondent with the self-enumeration procedure while answering two practice questions (“How likely are you to eat adobo this week?” and “I like dogs more than cats. Agree/Disagree”). At this point, enumerators let the participants complete the remainder of the survey on their own unless they requested help with a specific question. Respondents chose via a dropdown on the device what language they wished the survey to be displayed in. When they reached the end of the survey, participants clicked the “Finish Survey” button, which locked their responses and closed the survey. Even enumerators could not access participant responses at this point.

The self-enumeration procedure made it virtually impossible for security forces or enumerators to access any information about individual respondents’ attitudes towards the government or the NPA from the survey. Questions and responses were not conveyed verbally and only the respondent had access to their responses. Self-enumeration was possible because the local officials and government agency personnel who made up our list of participants were on average significantly more educated than the average citizen in Bicol and all of the participants were literate. Previous research indicates that self-enumeration procedures like these reduce participant discomfort, nonresponse and sensitivity bias.

In addition, all questions about the NPA were asked using endorsement experiments, making it so that even if participants’ responses were somehow revealed, one could not discern an individual respondent’s views about the NPA.

Risk of learning political attitudes during UT meetings

The municipal PNP officer in charge of Police Community Relations (PCR) coordinated and attended each of the UT meetings. However, we view the risk of the PNP officer ascertaining barangay

leaders' views towards the NPA because of UT meetings to be very low. First, and most importantly, UT meetings were not focused on issues relating to the NPA and all activities focused specifically on the extension of services delivered by civilian government agencies. None of the meeting agendas contained any security-related items. The training session that we planned and funded, which stressed ethical, safety and implementation standards, made it clear that these topics were off base for the UT meetings. Anonymous note-takers from our research team were present at a random subset of UTs in each municipality to spot-check the conduct of the meetings, and in none of these cases was the NPA discussed.

In addition, interactions with PCR officers are in no way unusual for the types of barangay officials who were participants in the UT program. As a result, barangay officials are well-practiced at withholding any information that they do not feel comfortable revealing and the UT program was very unlikely to have put barangay leadership in a new position where their views towards the NPA would be involuntarily revealed.

Protecting PII

Our team never shared any personally identifiable or geographically disaggregated data with the PNP, AFP or any other government agency. The only survey data reported to the security services was a region-level aggregate report presented to Regional PNP leadership by the PIs immediately after the baseline survey. The purpose of the report was to identify government services that citizens needed most so that appropriate civilian partner agencies could be incorporated into UT programming. The PNP only had access to their own internal administrative data (crime blotter reports, for example) along with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) contact list for all elected barangay officials. The DILG contact list is freely available to all government agencies and was already held by regional, provincial, and municipal PNP offices prior to the start of the UT program. The PNP uses these lists to contact barangay officials for other regular meetings, such as Enhanced Managing Policing Operations (EMPO) meetings that are held occasionally between Police Stations and barangay leadership across the region. The same list was used to coordinate UT meetings and contact barangay leadership for COVID-19 data collection.

D.0.10 Principle 10: “Political science researchers conducting studies on political processes should consider the broader social impacts of the research process as well as the impact on the experience of individuals directly engaged by the research. In general, political science researchers should not compromise the integrity of political processes for research purposes without the consent of individuals that are directly engaged by the research process.”

In considering the broader social impacts of this study before we chose to undertake it, we thought about the possible risks, whether they could be mitigated, and the possible broader social benefits from the project. In line with our commitment to “do no harm,” however, benefits would not be weighted against potential risks, instead, those risks would need to be mitigated irrespective of potential benefits before committing to engage.

For risks, we thought about possible issues for line agency staff, enumerators, and community members who were not directly engaged with the program. We considered privacy for potential beneficiaries of programming brought about by the UT meetings (i.e. would youths invited to government training programs be targeted in some way afterwards). We also thought about whether this project would be empowering an agency (the PNP) that has sometimes engaged in abuse of civilians in the context of the recent ‘War on Drugs.’ Lastly, we thought about whether our involvement would raise the probability of sensitive health information being inadvertently released.

On benefits, we weighed the importance of potentially contributing to a major reform in the way that the Philippine National Police engage with the population in conflict affected regions. Given the population's past experience of neglect, punctuated by violence, on the part of the government, we felt that this was a significant opportunity to change the status quo for the better, in social impact terms. By engaging with the Usap Tayo program, we could also steer the site selection away from zones we felt were too risky; in the absence of our engagement the program likely would have occurred in on average more risky locations. Lastly, if the intervention were to help reduce the intensity of conflict in Bicol region, where insurgency has been ongoing since the 1960s, the benefits would be highly significant. The conflict has greatly inhibited economic growth, access to education and healthcare, and has exposed residents to the many negative effects of violence.

Direct risks to non-participants

We believe the risks posed to enumerators were very low. Enumerator activities mainly included 1) overseeing the self-enumerated surveys in the municipal centers and 2) conducting spot-checks of UT meetings. The main risks to enumerators posed by field experiments like ours derive from traveling to conflict-affected areas, where they might risk encounters with insurgents or hostile community members (Wolfe 2020). Enumerator activities for our project were conducted entirely in municipal centers where the NPA virtually never operates. Because the surveys were self-enumerated, the risks of survey respondents becoming hostile to enumerators was very low. It is also important to note that our enumeration team included only five members in addition to our research manager. The enumerators hired for the project were the five most senior members of the IPA Bicol team, each of which was a native Bicolano and had more than five years of experience working as an IPA enumerator prior to the project. Our research manager and enumerators all worked on a previous RCT involving the Bicol PNP, which gave them extensive experience interacting with security officials. Still, we conducted a 3-day training workshop for the enumerators that focused on ethics and safety in the field.

For line agency staff, the main risk we identified was potential targeting by the NPA. Similar to the situation for barangay officials, instances when the NPA targets civilian government personnel with violence almost exclusively involve physical infrastructure projects. For this reason, we concurred with our government partners' preference to omit all infrastructure projects from UT programming and focused instead on services delivered directly to individuals.

In contrast to civilian line agency staff, the NPA does sometimes target PNP officers with ambushes. We do not believe the UT program increased the risk of ambush for PNP officers, because the UT program did not increase police presence in NPA-infiltrated areas. The only areas where there is substantial risk of ambush are those that are NPA-infiltrated, which we took substantial steps to exclude through the process in our sampling procedure.

Even in the unlikely event that a barangay were to be covertly infiltrated by the NPA, our other safety procedures, including holding the meetings in municipal centers, make it extremely unlikely that the program increased the risk of ambushes. The risk of ambush in the municipal centers, where the UT meetings were held, is exceedingly low. In addition, we have strong reason to believe that UT did not result in adjustments to PNP patrol schedules. The PNP staff in the operations division who are in charge of making officers' patrol schedules were not involved in UT. In addition, at the time of our study, the PNP required advanced AFP clearance in order to conduct any activity in barangays more than five kilometers (5km) from the MPS stations. Receiving this clearance in areas with even minimal risk of conflict is both time consuming and expensive. The PNP is required to foot the bill for the AFP personnel who conduct advance patrols and determine which areas are safe. MPS leadership must receive approval from provincial PNP leadership before making such requests. As a result, MPS leadership usually prefers

to avoid potentially risky areas completely and leave them under the purview of the AFP. Finally, to the extent that UT increased PNP officers' understanding of communities, this likely increased officers' ability to interact safely with the population.

Another concern may be that barangay officials would share information about community members that indirectly raised their risk of experiencing violence through contact with the PNP. We assessed this risk to be quite low for a few reasons. UT meetings were used to identify community members who were eligible to receive services through existing civilian government agency programs. Line agency personnel provided barangay officials with the eligibility criteria for certain programs during a UT meeting and indicated that services could be provided if officials identified potential recipients that met these criteria. When barangay officials produced a list of eligible participants, they handed them directly to civilian line agency program officers.

Importantly, during the due diligence phase, we learned that two core agencies that would be involved in providing programming – DSWD and DOLE – have strict privacy protocols around their beneficiary data. They have extensive experience dealing with this in the context of the 4Ps program, which is the Philippines' conditional cash transfer program. In fact, these agencies would not release eligibility data at the household level even to the PIs.

We instructed the spot-checkers on our research team to indicate to us any instances where PNP officers at UT meetings looked at this list of eligible participants or took a copy of the list, and in no cases did this occur. We asked our spot checkers to take note of any instances where a UT meeting turned to a discussion of particular community members, which also never occurred in the meetings they observed. As mentioned above, we got no indication that the PNP adjusted its patrol schedules in response to UT, making it unlikely that the program led to increased contact between officers and community members who were eligible for programs discussed during UT meetings.

One exception where citizen information likely reached the PNP was for DSWD's security guard training program, which reached a few dozen beneficiaries around the region. The PNP are the licensing agency for private security guards in the Philippines and thus upon graduation the completion certificate and biodata for the prospective guard must be shared. The licensing unit within the PNP is distinct from those who participated in the UT program or who are involved in operations. When prospective beneficiaries applied to be part of the security guard training they were made aware by DSWD that licensing required their information to be shared with the PNP.

In addition to the low risks faced by community members, they also faced very large potential benefits. Historically, follow-through on service provision by government programs in sample barangays was very limited. Previous research suggests that the types of government services discussed during UT meetings (livelihood assistance from DSWD, seedling programs from DA, employment training from TESDA, etc.) can bring important economic and social benefits to previously excluded segments of society.

Collaborating with potentially abusive authorities

One of the overarching principles guiding our involvement was that it had the potential to empower leadership within the PNP whose policy goals were focused on leaving behind abusive practices and who were committed to evidence-backed approaches. When presented with the opportunity to collaborate on the Usap Tayo project, we felt that there was strong potential for the project to make meaningful and sustainable improvements to policing and development practices across Bicol region, and that the results of the study might lead these practices to be adopted at an even wider scale. The senior leadership we worked with had been credited with overseeing a dramatic, positive transformation to community policing practices as a Provincial Police Chief from 2015-2018, where he received the national award for "Best Province for PCR Practices" in 2018. In her chapter on the research ethics of development interventions

in conflict zones, Rebecca Wolfe (2020) notes that the ethical benefits of empowering proponents for positive change should be weighed strongly alongside the risks. In short, we assessed that there was a very high ethical upside for improving practices in a context where there is a long history of abuse and neglect.

Second, given the PNP's record of abuse, we were cautious when it came to weighing the downside risks of the collaboration. One manifestation of these risks we spent a lot of time discussing was whether street-level PNP officers and local PNP leadership down the chain of command were likely to commit abuses despite the buy-in of the regional PNP leadership. Collaborating with municipal police stations that were involved in killings of civilians in the name of drug enforcement was not something we were willing to do. However, after reviewing data from ACLED's dedicated dataset on the Philippine Drug War and through interviews with civilian leaders and human rights advocates during the preparatory period, we learned that the drug war and the Usap Tayo program would not overlap much at all.

The drug war was almost entirely conducted in urban areas, with a particular focus on Metro Manila. In contrast, the Usap Tayo program would be operating exclusively in rural municipalities, where drug war operations seldom took place. Bicol region as a whole was relatively quiet during the drug war, even in the several mid-sized urban centers around the region. From 2016 to 2018, there were about 2.7 fatal drug-involved PNP incidents per month across the entire Bicol region (.04 incidents per 100,000 population). Although we do not have data about the pre-Duterte period, our contacts reported that this was roughly the same as before the "War on Drugs." Also, we excluded from Usap Tayo all areas where there was a fatal drug war incident from 2016-2018. Those areas were largely excluded already because we removed the provincial capitals from each of the six provinces in Bicol region, where more than 80% of the fatal drug-related incidents occurred. Municipal capitals, which were also not included in the study, hosted the remaining 20% of the incidents.

Third, while the PNP helped initiate and coordinate the effort, the primary implementing agencies of the program were actually civilian line agencies. The DSWD in particular has a very strong reputation for professionalism and effectiveness. Of all the civilian agencies, the leadership at DSWD has been most vocal about its opposition to policies like the Drug War that have disproportionately affected the poor. In private discussions with the Bicol DSWD leadership, they expressed great enthusiasm for the PNP's involvement in Usap Tayo because they felt that the program could finally improve their ability to deliver services to conflict-affected areas of the region. Within the PNP, it was the Police Community Relations (PCR) units that engaged in all of the Usap Tayo activities, and these units are generally opposed to militarization within the PNP.

Researcher involvement

The UT program would have gone forward without the involvement of the research team. We got involved in the evaluation of the UT program when one of the PIs was in Bicol for another research project. A high ranking regional official invited the PI team to discuss an evaluation of this new program. As noted above the senior officer felt that a new program focused on service provision and "root causes of insurgency," would be an improvement on past, more violent, approaches. His initial plan was to deploy this program to as much of the region as his police community relations team could handle.

Regarding the scope of the intervention, it is likely that a very similar set of barangays would have been treated without our involvement. In the initial planning meeting, the PNP and other agency leadership discussed a region-wide program with approximately five barangays per municipality being targeted. In addition, the type of villages selected for the program would likely have been very similar without our involvement. The program was designed to re-incorporate conflict-affected barangays into

government service provision, but the PNP has strict security procedures in place that prevent them from operating in NPA-infiltrated barangays without an advance security clearance from the AFP.

However, these security procedures would likely have allowed the PNP to operate UT in barangays that although not NPA-infiltrated in 2018 may have been recently in the ‘red’ zone. Our sampling procedure removed a number of zones that had active NPA activity as recently as 2015 that would have been part of UT, which might have put participants, line agency officials or the PNP at risk. Thus, our involvement likely reduced the number of potentially risky barangays involved in the program.

Perhaps the best evidence that the activities of the program would have been similar without our involvement is the fact that we provided very little monetary assistance to implementation. Nearly all of the funds the research team contributed to the project went directly towards research activities (surveying, monitoring, etc.). The only funds we contributed to the intervention itself went towards producing materials and hiring a trainer for a 2-day training of the PCR officers and line-agency staff involved in the UT program. We insisted on contributing these materials for the purpose of standardizing the intervention across all municipalities, and ensuring that PNP and agency participants received ethics and safety training. We also contributed funds to cover the travel costs for some barangay officials who resided very far from the municipal centers. Unlike many other field experiments of this scale, our limited financial contribution to the actual intervention means that our implementing partners were unlikely to have undertaken activities they would not otherwise take.

D.0.11 Principle 11: “Political science researchers should be aware of relevant laws and regulations governing their research related activities.”

We were diligent in following all laws and regulations governing this research. Our local research team and the Filipino PI are highly experienced in conducting survey research and experiments in Bicol region within the confines of the law. In addition, working with government agencies required a strict adherence to the law on their side as well. This included complying with covid-related lockdowns and health mandates. We ensured that our research staff were following DoH guidelines when activities were conducted.

D.0.12 Principle 12: “The responsibility to promote ethical research goes beyond the individual researcher or research team.”

In order to build the strongest ethical foundation that we could for the study, we did trainings for everyone involved in the administration of the data collection and intervention. At the start of the program, we did a training for the enumerators that emphasized ethics and safety considerations. We also did a major training for the PNP PCR officers and DSWD reps that emphasized ethical treatment and protection of human rights. This training required mobilizing dozens of police officers and DSWD representatives from 40 municipalities to two training sites. We also worked with the PNP and DSWD regional leadership to instill that safety and ethical conduct was critical to making Usap Tayo a success.