Winning "hearts and minds" in moments of crisis? Evidence from the Philippines during Covid-19

Dotan Haim[*]   Nico Ravanilla[†]   Renard Sexton[‡]

Abstract

An expansive research agenda considers whether service delivery in conflict zones leads civilians to cooperate with the 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 amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. We find that the program caused civilian leaders to cooperate with the government's initial pandemic response in 2020, but several months later there was a strong backlash effect after a strict nationwide lockdown halted program administration. The negative effect on trust was driven by the government's inability to meet raised expectations of its capacity to deliver services. After the program restarted in 2021, attitudinal and behavioral outcomes in treated communities recovered, but did not return to the positive effects seen before the pandemic. Overall, our findings suggest that cycles of crisis can wipe out the effects of even highly popular 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 service provision feeds 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 be able to disrupt this negative equilibrium by boosting government legitimacy and spurring civilian cooperation. This perspective is supported by research showing that investment in public services can increase short-run civilian cooperation with the government and reduce insurgent violence (Berman, Shapiro and Felter, 2018).

However, many "development for peace" interventions have failed to meaningfully change the security situation over the long-run course of a conflict.[1] Two main factors are commonly hypothesized to undercut the long-term effectiveness of efforts to win civilian "hearts and minds" through development. First, projects can fail to meet the needs of the population due to micro-level implementation issues such as unfair or corrupt distribution of goods, poor adaptation to the local environment, or insufficient security (Fishstein and Wilder 2012, Zuercher 2017, Crost et al 2014, Sexton 2016). Second, macro-level disruptions like natural disasters, leadership turnovers, and changing policy priorities can undercut civilian beliefs 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 & Tesfaye 2020, Bueno de Mesquita 2019, SIGAR Report, Haim 2022).

In this study, we initially set out to answer whether a government service delivery program that incorporated micro-level 'best practices' could succeed at improving civilian attitudes and behaviors towards the government over a long-run period of several years.

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[1] For example, despite approximately $150 billion in development aid invested over twenty years in Afghanistan, the government was never able to consolidate its legitimacy and it quickly fell to the Taliban after the US departure in 2021.

As it turned out, the program also ended up facing 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 and address a number of crucial questions that existing research has struggled to answer. 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 civilians 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 year-long 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' behavioral cooperation with the government. Leaders in treatment villages reported high satisfaction with the program 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 (as well as the entire Philippines) came to a

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[2]For example, it extended existing service programs of the Philippine government, rather than initiating new programming. This gave the intervention a better chance of becoming part of 'business as usual' by matching eligible participants in previously hard-to-reach areas affected by conflict with government funds that regularly go unspent. Programming was co-led by the security services and human development officials, who held extensive monthly consultations with village leaders to identify the most-needed services. The intervention was primarily implemented by the Sustainability Livelihoods Program of the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Community Relations department of Philippines National Police.

grinding halt. Three months into the pandemic lockdown, treated communities that received the Usap Tayo intervention displayed a massive backlash effect on all measures of government support, collaboration and trust. Results from a pair of endorsement experiments suggest that, during this period, participants in treatment villages increased their support for the communist rebel group operating in the area. In October 2020, the program restarted (initially in a remote format) and continued for nine months, before coming to an end in July 2021. Although actual service provision increases associated with Usap Tayo were at least as high as they were pre-pandemic,[3] citizen attitudes and behavioral measures of cooperation with government did not sustain the positive gains made during the pre-covid era. Instead, they only recovered to levels that were similar to the control group, although this was still a major improvement from the negative treatment effects observed during the lockdown period.

We view these results to be largely consistent with a *dashed expectations* hypothesis, according to which initial citizen cooperation with the government raised expectations about government capacity that, when unmet, undercut citizen trust. A test of mechanisms indicates the backlash effects were driven by the revelation of low government capacity, which included perceptions of bureaucrats' fear, shirking, poor information, and inadequate coordination. Once a disruption reveals this information, long-term improvements to trust and cooperation become more difficult, even if services resume. Our results also provide evidence against the widely held *virtuous circle* hypothesis, which stems from the literature on "co-production" (Ostrom 1993). This hypothesis would suggest that civilian cooperation developed during normal times should translate into increased government access and information during a crisis, which would in turn translate into improved disaster relief and circle back to improved citizen trust and cooperation over the long run.

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[3]After the restart, treated Usap Tayo communities had 2.5 as many beneficiaries of DSWD programming as control communities. In contrast, during 2020 (dominated by the seven month nationwide shutdown,) there was no significant difference in the number of beneficiaries in treated vs control communities, and both groups were barely above zero on average.

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 civilian beliefs develop 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). Even beyond natural disasters, development programs in conflict zones often go through regular cycles of disruption and re-investment as a result of leadership changes, inconsistent funding, and bureaucratic incentive structures. Even the best-designed program could be rendered moot, if not actively negative, if thrown off course by unexpected turbulence in the target area.

The paper continues through the following sections: We begin by laying out competing expectations for how the cycle of service delivery through a macro-level crisis could either lead to resilient community trust (a virtuous circle) or dashed community expectations that undercut the long-term effectiveness of services. We then turn to the context of Bicol Region of the Philippines before and the during the Covid-19 pandemic. After describing the intervention, experiment, data collection and research design choices, we present the main results and mechanism tests.

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).[4] The key mechanisms through which service provision can reduce conflict are improved civilian attitudes towards their government, as well as their behavioral cooperation with government personnel (Berman and Matanock, 2015). The preponderance of evidence indicates that the effects of services on these outcomes are highly conditional and context-specific; only when projects meet a set of good governance standards can they meaningfully move the needle towards peace.

The academic literature on public goods provision in conflict zones focuses primarily on how program success is conditional on a number of *micro-level* factors relating to how and when projects are implemented. The public goods projects that tend to increase government legitimacy and reduce conflict are ones that are relatively small in scale and suitable for the needs of the local population, rather than large-scale infrastructure programs (Berman et al 2013, Kooy et al 2015, Mcloughlin 2018). It is also important that the distribution of goods is done in a fair, transparent manner (Fishstein and Wilder 2012, Karell and Schutte 2018, Evans et al 2019). This tends to work best when funds are administered by local authorities, rather than foreigners (Beath et al 2012, 2015) or at least include robust local consultation (Zuercher and Sexton 2022). Finally, because of the risk of rebel capture or targeting (Crost, Felter and Johnston, 2014), development efforts tend to be more effective when combined with improved physical security (Berman et al 2013, Sexton 2016).

Relative to the academic literature on the subject, government policymakers tend to focus more of their attention on *macro-level* issues that disrupt services and reduce their effectiveness. For example, government assessments of Afghanistan reconstruction efforts tend to focus on the ability of bureaucratic agencies to maintain policy continuity in the face of political incentives, domestic leadership changes, and natural disasters (World Development Report 2011, SIGAR Report 2015). Even programs that start out strong can

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[4]Much of this conceptual framework was pre-registered in our pre-analysis plan. However, the potential for backlash in the face of unexpected disruption was only fully fleshed out after the Covid-19 pandemic took hold in 2020.

be unceremoniously curtailed, face drop-offs in quality over time, or experience unexpected crises that disrupt what might otherwise be high quality sustained service delivery. 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.[5] 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 (Burde et al 2022, Bueno de Mesquita 2019, Lyall et al 2022, Haim 2022).

Virtuous circle or dashed expectations?

In this paper, we investigate how civilian attitudes and behaviors are affected by government service provision through the stages of a macro-level crisis. Two types of crises that are particularly common in conflict zones are natural disasters and disease outbreaks, with the overlap resulting from similar geographic conditions that facilitate crises and conflict, as well as the direct effect that conflict has on crisis vulnerability. 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).

We focus our attention on three specific crisis stages. The first stage is the initial period of a crisis outbreak, when civilian cooperation with government agencies is essential to the government's crisis response efforts. The second stage is mid-crisis, when regular services are disrupted. The third and final stage is when government service provision returns to pre-crisis practices. Communities in conflict zones often go through a repeated cycle of these three stages. By tracking the effects of a government service delivery program through all

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[5]https://oig.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2018-06/USAID_Management_Challenges_2015.pdf

three of these stages, we are able to examine previously untested hypotheses about the effects of development services in the context of macro-level disruptions.

We test two broad hypotheses about how civilian leaders' attitudes and behaviors will evolve through the course of the three stages described above. We refer to the first as the "virtuous circle" hypothesis, which is often framed using the logic of the co-production (Ostrom 1993). According to this hypothesis, effective government service provision can win civilian trust, making them more willing to share information with government agents about service needs in their communities. In turn, the government is better able to identify needs and efficiently allocate resources to solving them, setting the stage for further trust-building (Scott 1998, Lee and Zhang 2017). 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, Felter and Shapiro, 2011).

The virtuous circle logic may also extend to the effects of government service provision through the stages of a crisis. The trust built during "normal times" should increase the likelihood that civilians cooperate with government agencies and bureaucrats during the initial stage of a crisis, when citizens are the most in need. In turn, improved civilian cooperation with government agencies could allow for improved government response during the crisis because its agents have better information about how and where to focus efforts. Even if government services are temporarily cut off during the extreme circumstances of a major crisis, pre-crisis efforts that increased civilians' perceptions of government capacity and intentions could improve the resilience of civilian trust through the crisis, until services resume. Communities that have built a foundation of trust in government may be more willing to accept the government's promises that they will return to provide services over the long term, even in the face of short-term disruptions.

The second hypothesis is a "dashed expectations" hypothesis. A major premise of this perspective is that constant disruptions to service delivery and changing priorities relating to how, when, and where they are delivered undercuts the government's ability to change

peoples' minds about its underlying capacity and legitimacy. According to this logic, it is still the case that effective government service provision during normal times translates to improved civilian cooperation with government agencies during the first stage of the crisis. However, this can generate a dynamic where even projects that initially generate positive returns with a skeptical populace might ultimately fail if they heighten expectations that subsequently are not met.

Prior research across the social sciences have 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 economic development space can eventually result in outright hostility to public service delivery programs (Borup et al., 2006; Massarella et al., 2018), and political scientists have recently extended this logic to policing services (Kruks-Wisner 2021). If the dashed expectations hypothesis is correct, we would expect to see higher levels of civilian cooperation with the government during the initial stages of the pandemic, followed by a backlash in trust during stage two. Even when services re-normalize during stage three, this cycle of raised and dashed expectations can make civilians numb to government promises, making the government unable to recapture the gains it made prior to the crisis.

Figure 1: Hypothesized effects of service delivery through a crisis

Hypothesis	Stage 1: Initial Crisis Outbreak	Stage 2: Mid-Crisis	Stage 3: Late Crisis Resumption
"Virtuous Cycle" Hypothesis	Positive	Positive	Positive
"Dashed Expectations" Hypothesis	Positive	Negative	Null

One important note is that both of these hypotheses assume the effective implementation of government service delivery prior to the crisis outbreak. If, instead, the pre-crisis

implementation did not effectively incorporate the micro-level "best practices" described by the literature, we would expect to see null or negative effects across all stages of a crisis.

Both of the above hypotheses could be shaped by perceptual mechanisms commonly seen in the literature: perceptions of government capacity, effort, fairness and rebel disruption of services. For the virtuous circle hypothesis, improved perceptions regarding any and all of these mechanisms could drive increased cooperation with the government, which could then improve future attitudes and cooperation through sustained civilian perceptions about these mechanisms. It could also be the case that citizen perceptions regarding these mechanisms could be raised and later dashed during a crisis.

Context

We test the above 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. Since the 16th century, outlying regions have resisted forcible incorporation by successive Manila-based governments, including those overseen by Spain, the United States and later the Republic of the Philippines.

Rural insurgencies have been a constant feature of the political landscape over the centuries. During the Spanish period (1521 to 1898), historians documented more than 35 major revolts and rebellions, ranging from the Pampanga Revolt in 1585 to the 1872 Cavite mutiny, where Filipino troops attempted to start a national revolt against continued Spanish rule. The American period (1898 to 1946) began with a major conflict, the Philippine-American war, which morphed from a short conventional battle between US and Filipino nationalist soldiers in Manila into a multi-year guerilla conflict.

After independence in 1946, the Philippine government has contended with two major, longstanding rural rebellions: a constellation of groups representing Muslim Moros in

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Mindanao and a sustained communist insurgency. Although communist and worker organizations have existed in the Philippines since the early 20th century, a group led by Joma Sison became the most prominent communist resistance; this led to the establishment of an armed wing called the New People's Army (NPA) in 1969, which continues to fight against the Philippine state today.

Bicol Region, spanning an area that is approximately 300-600 kilometers southeast of Metro Manila at the southern tip of Luzon (the country's largest island group), is exactly the sort of rural, underdeveloped region where countryside rebellions have long flourished. Of the Philippines' 17 regions, Bicol is the second poorest by GDP per capita. Although mid-size urban areas in Bicol, such as Naga or Legazpi, have seen some economic gains over the last few decades, the rural economy has remained largely stagnant, and state integration into government services has been halting. It is not surprising, then, that the rural zones of Bicol have been a hotspot for communist rebels for several generations. After initial outreach from the Communist Party of the Philippines' (CPP) leadership in 1969, Bicolano communist activists first began sheltering NPA fighters from other regions, before developing local cadres (Santos, 2010). Since then, there has been near constant fighting between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the NPA, resulting in considerable loss of life and collateral damage, along with attendant lapses in public services and private investment. From 2009-2015, nearly two-thirds of the 107 municipalities in Bicol region had a significant NPA presence operating within them.

Events in this paper stretch from 2018 to 2022, spanning two years before the Covid-19 pandemic took hold and two years in the wake of the pandemic. The quality of government engagement in conflict-affected communities varied dramatically over time during this period. Before the pandemic, the government of then President Rodrigo Duterte was actively engaged in efforts to engage conflict affected regions of the country, including signing a bill that created the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), something that was promised in the peace deal to settle conflict. In 2016–2017, Duterte dispatched

negotiators to Norway, where they met with senior leaders of the Commmunist Party of the Philippines living in exile. Although talks were halting, and observers questioned if there was serious interest in a settlement, there was intermittent contact and efforts towards a broader negotiation structure.

At the time this project was conceived in 2018, efforts relating to conflict-affected areas had reached an inflection point. Although security officials believed that the militarized approach of the last several decades had produced some limited gains, the 'roots' of the conflict were not being adequately addressed. In the context of potential peace talks and a growing understanding of the limits of purely kinetic activities, the regional leadership of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Bicol in particular felt that there was an opportunity to test alternative approaches to addressing the core causes of insurgency. They explicitly were interested in learning from the experiences of other countries with internal conflicts, like Afghanistan, Colombia and Thailand, to craft a new pilot approach.

Intervention and Research Design

The authors of this study were present in Bicol Region in 2018 and were in contact with the Bicol PNP, who informed us about a multi-agency program being developed to improve service provision in areas on the periphery of conflict. The program was inspired by the "whole of nation" approach to addressing the roots of insurgency, mandated by the national government. The outreach program, spearheaded by the PNP and DSWD regional leadership, was labeled "Usap Tayo," which translates to "Let's Talk."

Intervention: "Usap Tayo"

Usap Tayo consisted of a series of coordinating meetings between implementing agencies of the government and village leaders from conflict affected barangays in Bicol region, convened

by the PNP's community relations unit and the DSWD municipal program officers. As the lead development actor, DSWD was the primary agency that extended its programming to these areas, though the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Education (DEPED), and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), among others, also played an active role. Before the intervention began, each contributing agency designated existing service programs that were under-subscribed in conflict zones. The government of the Philippines habitually underspends its approved budget, with conflict zones often receiving thirty or forty percent less than planned (Haim, Fernandez and Cruz, 2019).

At the Usap Tayo meetings, village leaders would learn the parameters of government programs, including eligibility criteria and upcoming deadlines, as well as exchange contact information with program officers. Then, in the following weeks, the villages would propose eligible beneficiaries to the line agencies, sending in names and other documentation, usually via mobile phone. Usap Tayo was almost an entirely homegrown program, initially conceived of by the Chief of Staff of the Bicol Regional PNP. Having worked with this chief on a previous project, he shared his ideas with our research team during the middle part of the planning phase, which was when we became involved.

Our interest in evaluating Usap Tayo stemmed from the fact that it explicitly incorporated many of the "best practices" for implementation suggested by the literature. The PNP chief leading the program (who himself holds a PhD) drew from accumulated knowledge to design a program with the following features: First, Usap Tayo was designed to incentivize the distribution of services already funded by existing service programs of the Philippine government. All the sub-programs that were included in Usap Tayo were well-established, and were very likely to be funded for the foreseeable future, regardless of leadership turnover (SIGAR, 2015). Primary among these programs was DSWD's Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP), which provides various trainings and other forms of livelihood assistance. The

police also offered some limited programming of their own, focused on private security guard training and licensure. The key innovation was simply to reduce information gaps between providers and eligible beneficiaries that prevented services from being distributed. The goal of this design was to signal that Usap Tayo would be able to continue providing services over the long-term, undercutting commitment problems that often generate civilian skepticism of government intentions (Haim, 2022).

Second, the program was targeted at areas that were sufficiently "secure," such that they would not risk significant backlash from the NPA (Sexton, 2016). To complement this focus on security, the program involved deep coordination between the security and development arms of the government. Third, the program focused on services that were targeted at individuals, rather than large scale infrastructure programs that are subject to political capture and insurgent targeting (Berman et al., 2013; Crost, Felter and Johnston, 2014). Fourth, Usap Tayo involved deep and repeated consultation with local leaders, who met with agency personnel at least once a month and who were often in contact between meetings, even after projects began to be implemented (Sexton and Zurcher, 2023). Fifth, the program was designed to be incentive-compatible for local politicians. The elected village leaders who represented communities in Usap Tayo were able to claim credit for the services they helped deliver through the program.

In short, the Usap Tayo intervention represented a "bundled" treatment that incorporated many of the best practices of service delivery to conflict zones. We played only a peripheral role in fine-tuning some of these programming choices. When we became involved, the program implementers agreed to implement Usap Tayo as a randomized control trial for a two-year period, before rolling out programming across the region more broadly if the initial program was successful. We also played a role in the sample selection and randomization.

Before the pandemic struck, we saw the potential to uncover several novel insights from the experiment. The opportunity to evaluate a large-scale program that incorporated best practices over a period of several years afforded the possibility to test a best-case scenario for

the prospects of the "hearts and minds" hypothesis. In addition, we focused our interest on two sets of local elite-level outcomes that are key to the literature but are notoriously difficult to measure in the same context: behavioral cooperation with government and fine-grain attitudinal mechanisms that underly government legitimacy. We describe these measures in detail in the following subsections.

Site Selection and Research Ethics

Two primary factors that determined our site selection were research ethics and practicality. Although Bicol is a fairly representative area for the NPA conflict in the Philippines and other small conflicts around the world, it is also a region where our research team has deep knowledge and extensive experience working with the state's security apparatus. Prior to agreeing to help evaluate the program, we went through a year-long due diligence period, during which we relied on our extensive local networks to identify potential risks of the program and determine whether they could be sufficiently mitigated for the program to be implemented safely and ethically. For example, the decision to work with village leaders (rather than ordinary civilians), who already regularly met with government officials, reduced the risk of causing psychological harm or putting people in situations they were not already used to navigating. Of particular concern to us were the PNP's history of abusive practices, as well as the security risks associated with the conflict. We discuss both of these issues in further detail in Section C of the Supporting Information (SI).

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 highly cognizant of these risks as well, decided to aim Usap Tayo at "yellow zones," where security risks were minimal. Figure 2 shows an example of how NPA presence shaped the targeting of Usap Tayo. The AFP uses military intelligence reports to classify each village as either cleared, threatened, or influenced by NPA presence. The AFP categorizes an area as "NPA influenced" if the group has an active party apparatus and

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Figure 2: NPA Presence Example
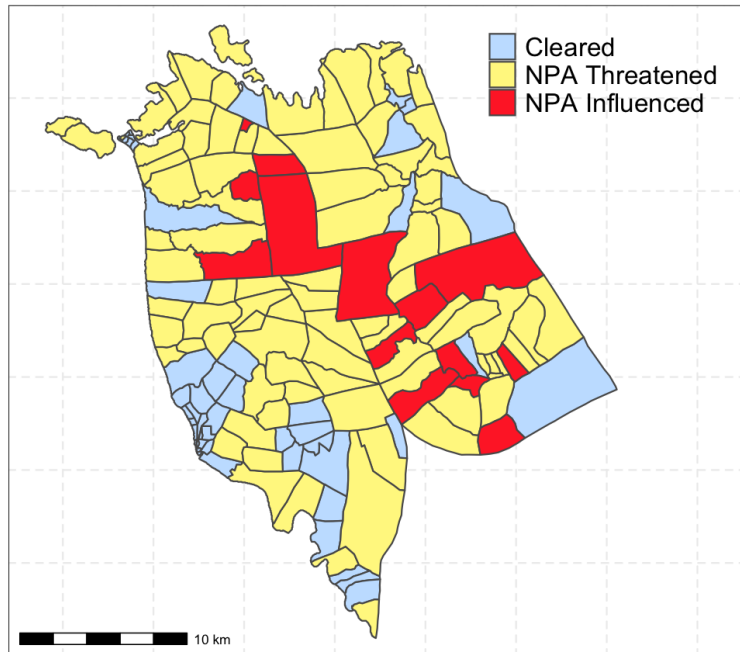
Village conflict affectation categories in these example municipalities is based on military intelligence reports from the AFP. The villages eligible for the Usap Tayo program were the ones that were "NPA Threatened" (yellow zones), as well as nearby "Cleared" villages

insurgents regularly stay in the area. Areas that are "NPA-threatened" are ones where NPA personnel occasionally interact with civilians, but where they do not have a strong-enough presence to play a role in day-to-day politics. The zones that were NPA threatened were eligible for Usap Tayo, but NPA-influenced areas were not.[6] Because these were areas within the PNP's regular patrol radius, they could provide security for all meetings and support program implementation. During the program-planning phase, we relied on updated versions of the AFP 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

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[6]In addition to the areas that were directly threatened according to AFP intelligence reports, we also selected nearby rural barangays that were classified as "cleared." The noise in the AFP data means that the NPA is sometimes also present in these areas.

raise red flags with the NPA and lead them to coerce potential beneficiaries or village leaders. We excluded municipal centers and urban areas because they are already better-connected to government services.

Experimental design

Usap Tayo was implemented as a randomized control trial across a sample of 800 villages in the Bicol Region. Two levels of randomization were employed. First, from among a set of 80 sample municipalities, we randomly selected 40 to be in the treatment group and 40 to be control. Ten (10) eligible villages in each of these municipalities were included in the sample, based primarily on their presence in the "yellow zones" described above. In control municipalities, all ten villages operated under business-as-usual and did not receive the Usap Tayo program. In treatment municipalities, we randomly selected five treatment villages and five control villages. This process yielded a total of 600 control villages (400 in control municipalities and 200 in treatment municipalities) and 200 treatment villages that received the Usap Tayo programming. We used these two levels of randomization so that we could examine the effect of spillovers, which we describe in detail in a later section. Figure 3 displays the structure of our research design, with the municipal-level randomization displayed on the left and an example of the village-level randomization in a single province represented on the right.

Treatment assignment was blocked on a number of variables: 2015 Census data on village population, urban/rural status, average level of education, AFP data on the extent of insurgent presence from 2009-2015, DSWD data on the percentage of 'poor households' in 2018, and DSWD data on previous anti-poverty development program access (KALAHI-CIDSS) from 2013-2017. The summary statistics for the critical covariates, used for blocking and testing balance, are shown in Table 1. Treatment was also stratified based on village leaders' responses to four questions on a baseline survey: (1) whether respondents were

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Figure 3: Research Design
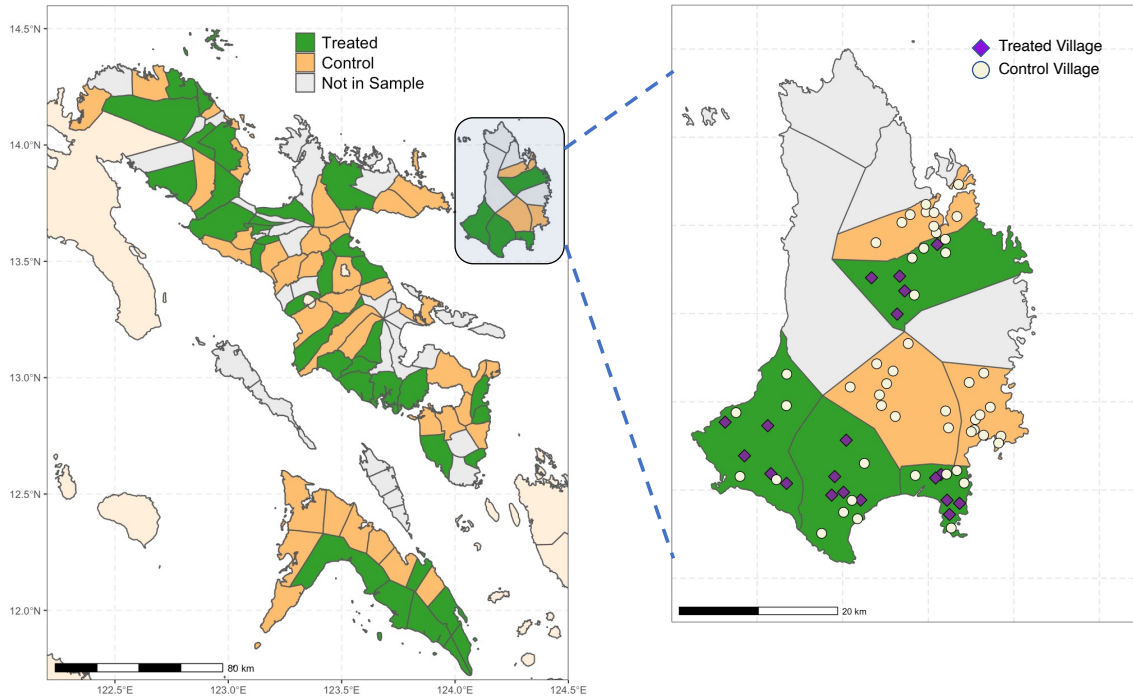
The left panel shows the municipal-level treatment assignment. The right panel shows a zoom-in of a single Province, which displays an example of the barangay-level treatment assignment.

willing to answer a question about level sympathy for NPA (2) how difficult respondents believe it is to access government services (3) trust in government and (4) trust in the PNP.[7]

Outcomes

A key innovation of our study is that we sought to understand the effect of Usap Tayo on the attitudes and behaviors of local *civilian elites*. Most models of conflict focus on "average" civilians, with the idea that by swaying a sufficient share of the public, the government can increase the number of people willing to provide tips about insurgent activities and whereabouts. But in practice, the attitudes and behaviors of local elites have outsized

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[7]Missingness includes 43 village leaders (5% of the sample) that could not be correctly linked to their barangay due to a clerical error by enumerators, as well as questions that respondents chose not to answer.

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

influence on conflict outcomes compared to the average citizen, because of their role as critical intermediaries between the government, the rebels, and the public (Martin, 2014). For one, village leaders have a tremendous amount of influence over how ordinary civilians experience government services. Many government programs require village leaders to provide input, identify beneficiaries, and facilitate effective service delivery. Moreover, because of their position as information brokers, village leaders tend to be especially plugged in to information about rebel activity in the area, which is crucial to government efforts to reduce conflict. Finally, village leaders often play the role of opinion leaders that shape views of government legitimacy among many other people.

Through these mechanisms, the actions of local elites can determine whether conflict-affected villages remain isolated or are re-incorporated into mainstream politics, which can ultimately break the cycle of conflict and poor governance. If village leaders actively engage with national government agencies, share information about the happenings and needs of their locale, and communicate positive messages about the national government to other citizens, the potential for the effective "co-production" of public services increases dramatically. If, on the other hand, local elites prefer to reject government influence or cooperate with non-state actors, statebuilding efforts can be easily undercut.

We focus on three main outcomes that relate to local civilian elites: (1) behavioral cooperation with the government, (2) a survey index to capture pro-government attitudes, and (3) an endorsement experiment to capture support for the NPA rebels.

Outcome 1: Behavioral Cooperation with the Government The first main outcome of interest is village leaders' *behavioral cooperation with government agencies*, beyond the direct context of the Usap Tayo intervention. A key goal of Usap Tayo was to generate positive behavioral externalities of this nature. When the Covid-19 pandemic struck, we focused on one particularly important type of behavior: cooperation with the government's crisis response efforts. A central challenge to disaster mitigation and public health response during ongoing conflict is achieving smooth communication between government agencies and skeptical community leaders (Blair, Morse and Tsai, 2017; Grundy and Biggs, 2019). The quality of crisis response can, in turn, have important implications for future conflict. Effective government-community coordination on disaster mitigation can build bridges and catalyze an end to conflict, but a poor response can further exacerbate grievances and lead to a renewed outbreak of violence (Le Billon and Waizenegger, 2007).

We captured measures of behavioral cooperation with the government's Covid-19 response efforts during stage one (initial crisis outbreak) and stage three (late-crisis resumption) of the crisis. This was operationalized as whether community leaders cooperated with the Region V Covid-19 Task Force, which was led by the Department of Health (DOH) and the "Police Community Relations" (PCR) arm of the regional PNP office. Due to DOH capacity constraints, the PCR unit took the lead when implementing the COVID-19 risk reporting protocol in conflict-affected areas in the region, which included all of our sample barangays. The PNP members of the task force were housed at the regional headquarters and did not interact with any of the villages in our sample as part of the Usap Tayo program.

During the initial crisis outbreak (stage one), President Duterte issued an emergency order on March 16, 2020, that put the entire island of Luzon under "enhanced community quarantine." As part of this order, detailed contact tracing was initiated to prevent further community spread. The Region V Covid Task Force began this process by requesting

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information from village leaders about COVID-19 vulnerability and cases in their village.[8] During stage three (late-crisis), the behavioral cooperation outcome was measured as village leaders' response to another request for information by the same task force. In this case, the task force was collecting information from the village leaders in order to coordinate efforts to supply Covid vaccines.[9] In both cases, the task force representatives reached out to barangay captains using publicly available contact information from the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG).

We operationalize village leaders' behavioral cooperation in each round as a dummy variable measuring whether or not village leaders responded to the government task force's request for information. Our partners informed us that, in all cases, kapitans either responded with all the requested information or none.

We view this type of behavioral cooperation to be indicative of whether village leaders are willing to engage in government efforts to distribute crucial services. For the village leaders, the main costs associated with providing this information is time and effort. It would have required reviewing records, collecting information from people in the village, and probably consulting with the barangay health officer. Taking this sort of effort suggests that village leaders think it is worth their energy to actively provide government agencies with the information they need to provide services in their village. This requires a certain degree of trust in government capacity and intentions. It is exactly these types of actions by village leaders that are ultimately needed for the government to be able to reincorporate conflict-affected areas into mainstream politics.

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[8]Village leaders were asked to provide three pieces of information: 1) How many "high risk" individuals (age 60+ and/or chronic medical conditions, including heart disease, diabetes or lung disease) reside in the barangay? 2) How many individuals in the barangay have visited Metro Manila in the past 30 days? 3) Do any "high risk" individuals currently exhibit COVID-19 symptoms (fever and dry cough)?

[9]Village leaders were asked to provide the following information: FILL IN. In addition, the task force collected information from village "blotters" about public safety incidents.

Outcome 2: Pro-Government Perceptions   The second main outcome is village leaders' *attitudinal support for the government.* We measure this using a survey index of questions asking about village leaders' (1) trust in the government, (2) perception of whether government services address their village's needs, (3) support for a peaceful end to the NPA conflict, and (4) belief that rebel grievances against the government are legitimate (reverse coded).[10] The process of "winning hearts and minds" by improving these attitudes is commonly understood to be key building block for government efforts to reduce conflict (Berman, Shapiro and Felter, 2011; Lyall, Zhou and Imai, 2019). The questionnaire was delivered to village leaders via a Qualtrics link in an SMS message. On the same survey, we asked questions that were used to create mechanisms indices intended to capture government *capacity, effort, fairness,* and *rebel disruption of services.* We present evidence on these mechanisms after the main results.

Outcome 3: Endorsement Experiment   Finally, because leaders' answers to questions about support for the NPA are likely subject to social desirability bias, we carried out an endorsement experiment intended to measure underlying support for NPA rebels. On the corresponding direct survey question about support for the NPA, measured on a 0 to 10 feeling thermometer, the mean score was just 1.3. Following standard techniques, we used a question about a relevant but not highly politicized policy initiative, asking a random subset of respondents a 'placebo' version of the question and another random subset a version where the NPA endorses the policy. The placebo version of the question was: "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 was: "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?" To compute the net

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[10]Disaggregated results for the individual questions that constitute this index and the mechanisms indices are presented in SI Section B.2.5.

endorsement effect, we collapse the results by municipality and subtract the placebo share in favor from the NPA-endorsed share in favor.

Covid Disruptions and Measurement Timelines

After a yearlong piloting period, Usap Tayo began operating in September 2019. Meetings continued until March 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit and a lockdown was enacted across the Philippines. Under the rules of the lockdown, Usap Tayo meetings were not allowed to continue, many of the constituent programs (including SLP) were put on pause, and the agencies shifted their focus to grappling with the pandemic. The outbreak of the pandemic led us to shift our focus to understanding the effects of a best-practices development program during the worst of times.

In September 2020, program activities restarted. This initially took the form of coordinated conference calls and zoom meetings. Once vaccines became available in early 2021 and frontline staff were able to get inoculated, in-person activities gradually increased. From April 2021 to July 2021, the Usap Tayo program was fully running again. For the purposes of testing our hypotheses, we consider the initial crisis outbreak period (stage 1) to occur in late March 2020, the mid-crisis period (stage 2) to occur during the lockdown from April 2020 to September 2020, and the late crisis resumption period (stage 3) to occur from October 2020 until our endline measurement began in July 2021.

The meetings primarily focused on the same set of services discussed during the pre-pandemic period, with DSWD's SLP program remaining the centerpiece. In many cases, barangay leaders and government personnel also used the opportunity to coordinate the delivery of resources available through the government's pandemic response programs. Pre-pandemic and post-pandemic Usap Tayo meetings were similar in their duration, and our field staff who attended meetings noted that the quality of engagement remained high. Although disruptions to mobile data and cell service introduced frustrations during some remote meet-

ings, the barangay leaders and agency staff were still able to identify eligible beneficiaries and sign them up for government services.

In an ideal world for the purposes of the research, we would have been able to measure both the behavioral and attitudinal outcomes during all three states of the pandemic. However, we were constrained by the timing of the Covid Task Force's outreach efforts and the logistics of conducting surveys in the midst of a pandemic. Government activities in rural areas during the months at the height of the crisis were limited, preventing us from capturing behavioral cooperation during this period. Moreover, it was not feasible for us to conduct a survey during the weeks of the initial crisis outbreak. During this period, barangay leaders and our enumeration staff were extremely busy responding to the crisis and did not have time to worry about the logistics of completing a survey.

Figure 4: Project and Measurement Timelines
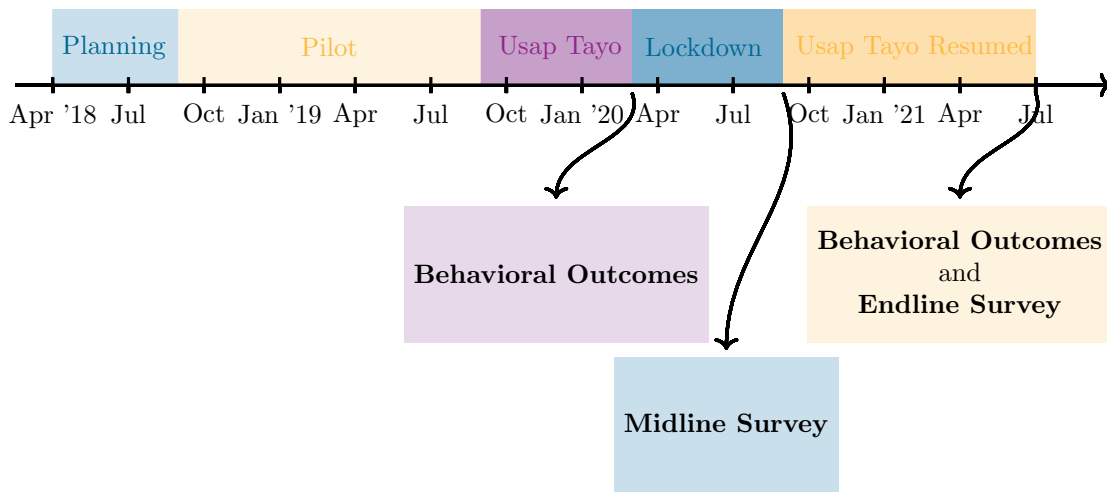
In the end, we were able to capture the behavioral outcomes during stages one and three (initial crisis outbreak and late crisis resumption) and the attitudinal outcomes during stages two and three (mid-crisis and late crisis resumption). As a result of the above challenges, we do not have overlapping measures during stages one and two, though existing theory suggests that the patterns of pro-government attitudes and cooperative behaviors should

track each other. Indeed, during the period when we did have overlapping measures (stage 3), treatment effects on attitudes and behavior were highly aligned.

Estimation

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

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

In the above equation, 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 call for COVID-19 risk information. For survey indices, this is measured as a standardized additive index. For the endorsement experiments, we estimate the same model at the municipal level. T is an indicator of treatment status, while X is a vector of the pre-treatment blocking covariates. Errors are clustered at the municipality level.

The main results presented in the manuscript are from 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 present results from *municipal-level* models comparing the municipal-level aggregates of the 200 treated barangays with the 400 control barangays in control municipalities. We also present results from *within-municipality* models comparing the 200 treated barangays to the 200 control barangays in treated municipalities. Finally, we present results from a *spillovers-placebo* model comparing 200 control barangays in treated municipalities to the 400 control barangays in control municipalities. The full sample (with and without covariates), municipal-level, and within-municipality results are all highly consistent, and the spillovers placebo test suggests no evidence of spillovers, which we discuss after presenting the main results.

Results

Figure 5 displays the results from the full sample for all main outcomes described in the previous section, represented on a timeline that tracks the course of the Covid-19 crisis. The regression tables underlying these results are in SI Section B.1.

Figure 5: Main Results Timeline
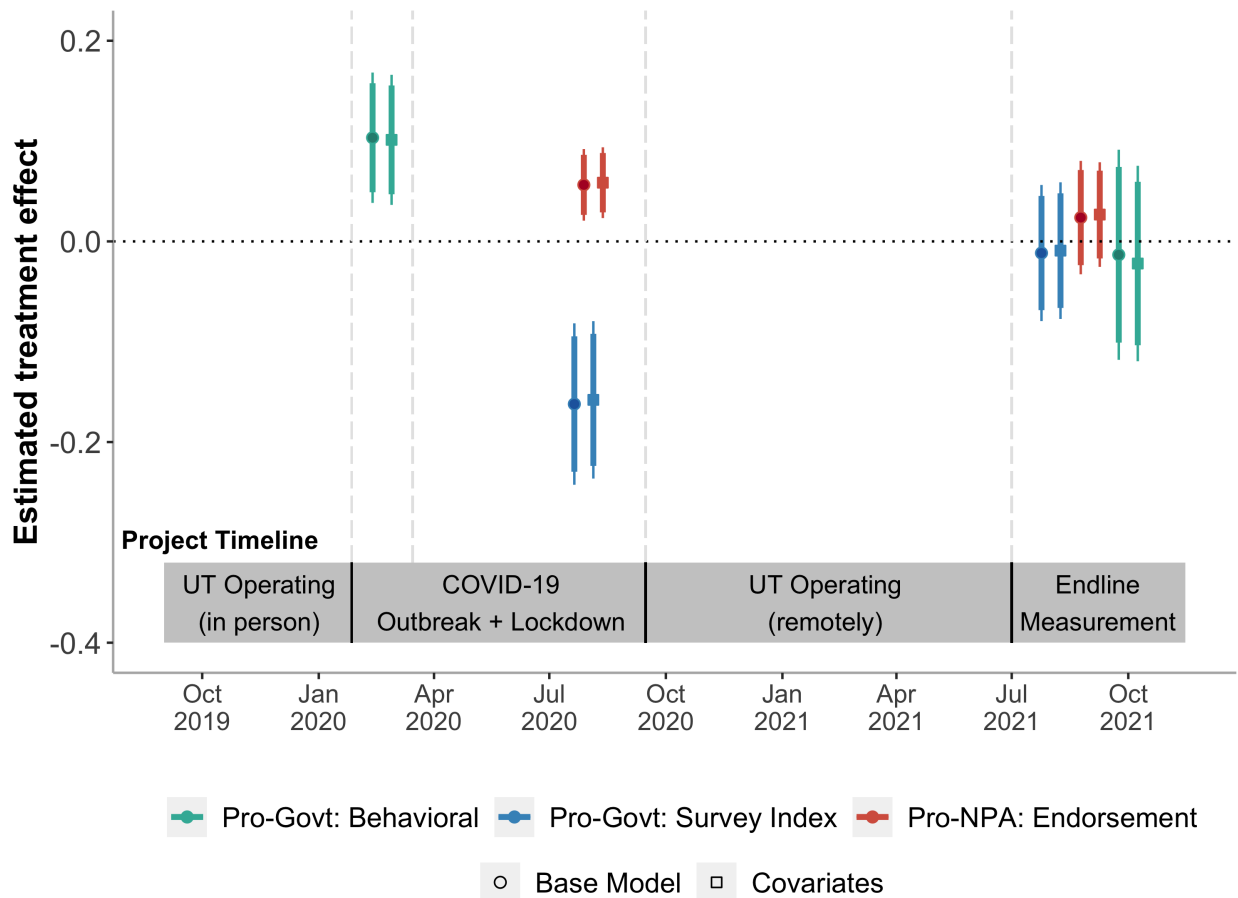
The measures included in all covariate models are village-level measures of population, poverty, education, NPA presence, urban v. rural, and exposure to previous development projects. Covariate models with survey outcomes include additional individual-level controls for the village leaders' role (kapitan v. kagawad), age, and education. Standard errors are clustered at the municipal-level for models with the behavioral outcomes and at the barangay-level for models with survey outcomes.

Villages that were treated with the Usap Tayo program were significantly more likely to cooperate with the government Covid taskforce during the early stages of the pandemic

outbreak (stage one). The effect on initial behavioral cooperation is large in magnitude, representing more than a 20% increase in village leaders' willingness to cooperate with the taskforce (above a baseline response rate of 51% in the control group). The result is consistent with a core assumption for both the "virtuous cycle" and "dashed expectations" hypotheses: pre-crisis enhancements to government service delivery can improve cooperation by community leaders during the initial crisis outbreak stage.

In stage two of the crisis cycle, following several months of the Covid lockdown, the treatment effects on attitudinal outcomes were entirely reversed from the pattern of behavioral cooperation during the first weeks of the pandemic. Relative to village leaders in control villages, Usap Tayo treatment village leaders expressed significantly *less* support for the government in our main survey index and *more* support for the NPA in the endorsement experiment.

Finally, in stage three, after the lockdown ended and Usap Tayo had resumed for a period of 9 months, the government was only able to recover to null effects on both the attitudinal and behavioral measures. Following the experience of the full crisis cycle, village leaders in treatment villages were no more or no less likely than their counterparts in control villages to respond to the government Covid taskforce, express positive views of the government, or support the NPA.

This overall pattern of 1) an initial increase in cooperation, followed by 2) a backlash in attitudes, and 3) the inability to win back previous gains once services resumed is consistent with the "dashed expectations" hypothesis. The initial improvement to civilian leaders' cooperation was not resilient to government failure to meet expectations through a period of crisis. Rather, civilian leaders' experiences through the stages of the crisis made them numb to government promises, even after the initially-popular program resumed.

Mechanisms and Interpretation

In this section, we unpack some of the possible explanations driving the pattern in the main outcomes. We begin by presenting evidence on our proposed theoretical mechanisms before turning to alternative explanations related to: 1) consistency of treatment, 2) consistency of measurement, 3) spillovers, and 4) attrition.

Attitudinal Mechanisms

First, we tested the effects of the Usap Tayo program on a number of attitudinal mechanisms. Specifically, using a series of survey indices, we looked at village leaders' perceptions of the government's a) *capacity*, b) *effort*, c) *fairness*, and d) *the rebels ability to disrupt government services*.[11] Like with the other survey outcomes, we measured these mechanisms during stage two and stage three of the pandemic, respectively represented as "Midline" and "Endline" in Figure 6.

During the mid-crisis stage of the pandemic, after several months of services being disrupted, village leaders in treatment areas developed a significantly worse opinion of government capacity, compared to their counterparts in control areas. This finding supports one of the main mechanisms behind the "dashed expectations" hypothesis. Village leaders initially cooperated more with the government, but they likely expected the government to have the capacity to translate the information they provided into an improved pandemic response. More optimistically, this was also the area where the resumption of Usap Tayo in the later stages of the pandemic allowed the government to win back civilian perceptions –

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[11]The survey indices are based on the following individual survey items: *Capacity Index* - coordination between government agencies, bureaucrats' fear of working in their area, government information about citizen needs, police capacity, and capacity to respond to the pandemic. *Effort Index* - bureaucratic slack, effort of pandemic response, opportunity to provide input on programming, and whether civilians are provided with information. *Fairness Index* - equity in service delivery, level of patronage, ability to claim credit, and role of politics in service delivery. *Rebel Disruption Index (reverse-coded)* - NPA interference in programming, fear of NPA retaliation for participating, NPA disruption of Covid response.

Figure 6: Mechanisms
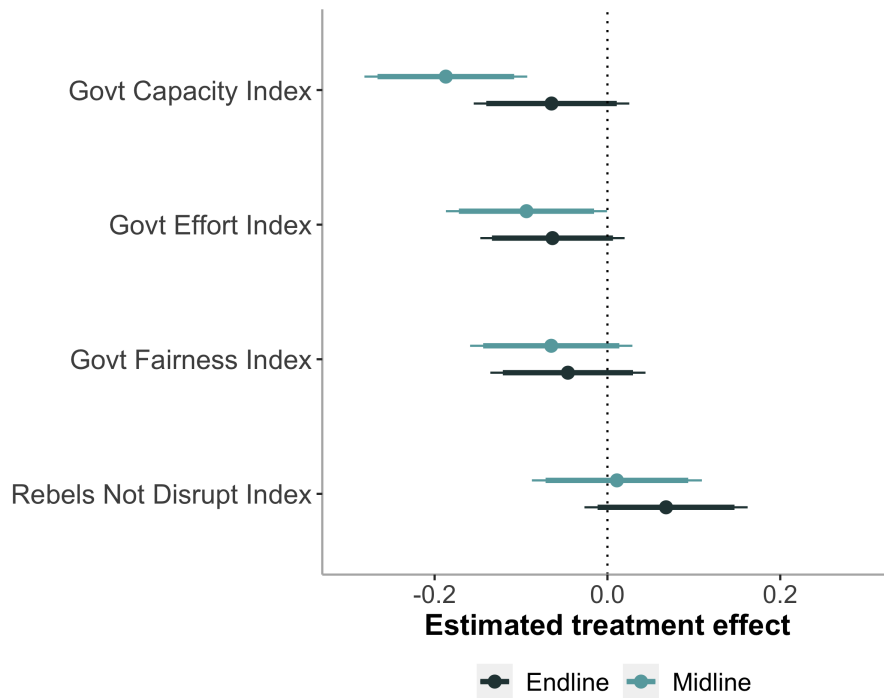
Standard errors are clustered at the barangay-level.

perceptions of *capacity* is the only mechanism that significantly improved between midline and endline.

Perceptions of government effort also significantly worsened among treatment villages at midline ($p = .049$). While there was no significant difference between the midline and endline results for this measure, the treatment effect at endline was back to null. Importantly, there is no indication that the NPA disproportionately targeted government services in treatment villages, confirming the expectations we developed when scoping the ethical implications of the Usap Tayo intervention.

Consistency of Treatment and Measurement

Two possible alternative explanations for our results relate to 1) differences between the intervention during the pre-pandemic and late-pandemic periods and 2) differences in our

outcomes measurements, both across measures and across time. Relating to the first concern, one might question whether the implementation of Usap Tayo was similarly effective before and after the pandemic-induced disruptions to the program. For example, the post-disruption version of the intervention was implemented remotely for several months, and it is possible that government agencies were less able to facilitate service delivery and trust-building through this format. This could explain why Usap Tayo was unable to regain its initial positive effects by endline.

We probed this possibility by looking at data on the number of beneficiaries served by DSWD's Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP), the flagship program incorporated into Usap Tayo meetings across all the barangays in our sample.[12] If the alternative explanation is correct, we would expect to see reduced treatment effects on actual services delivered in the post-disruption period. Instead, we find suggestive evidence that, if anything, Usap Tayo was *more* effective at facilitating the delivery of services during the post-disruption period. In 2019 (the year in which Usap Tayo just started operating), treatment barangays averaged five SLP beneficiary households and control barangays averaged four households, though this difference was not statistically significant. During 2020, dominated by the pandemic shutdown, barangays on average only had one SLP beneficiary household, with no difference between treated and control barangays. In contrast, after Usap Tayo resumed in 2021, we find nine beneficiary households per treated barangay and 3.5 beneficiary households in control villages, a statistically significant difference of more than 250%.[13] Although we cannot entirely rule out that the post-disruption Usap Tayo meetings were less effective due to reasons aside from actual service delivery, our field staff described that these meetings did not substantially differ in their quality relative to the pre-pandemic meetings.

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[12] Unfortunately, we do not have data from all the other government agencies and programs that were facilitated by Usap Tayo. There was significant variation in which agencies were invited to which Usap Tayo meetings based on local needs.

[13] See SI Table B.8. DSWD aggregates these data by barangay-year, so the cutoff periods do not match up neatly with the stages of the crisis outlined in our theory.

Another possibility is that our results are driven by inconsistent measurement. Our behavioral and attitudinal outcome measures are intended to pick up similar underlying motivations held by village leaders. If these are not actually aligned, the pattern we observe may not be capturing the effects of dashed expectations. For example, maybe barangay leaders in treatment villages leaders were more likely to cooperate with the government during stage one of the crisis while at the same time holding worse attitudes towards the government. However, this pattern would be highly inconsistent with existing literature. In addition, during the one period in which we have simultaneous measures of attitudes and behavior (stage three), the treatment effects are highly consistent across all outcomes, lending credence to the idea that they are capturing a similar underlying concept.

One might also argue that the difference in the treatment effect on behavioral outcomes between stages one and three of the crisis are due to differences in the information being requested by the Covid taskforce or the method by which they collected this information. We consider this to be an unlikely explanation, due to the fact that the taskforce's information-gathering efforts were led by the same unit within the regional PNP office and the unit relied on the same contact information for barangay leaders provided by the DILG. In addition, the type and amount of information requested of barangays was very similar in both cases, and required a similar amount of effort to collect on the part of barangay captains.

Spillovers and Attrition

Two additional threats to internal validity are spillovers and attrition. When it comes to spillovers, our main concern related to treated and control villages in the same municipalities. Village leaders within municipalities regularly interact with each other, including during monthly "Barangay League" meetings. If village leaders shared information about Usap Tayo, this might create *negative spillovers* that bias towards finding significant treatment effects if control areas get jealous, or *positive spillovers* that bias against significant effects if control areas update positively about the quality of governance based on the experience

of treatment villages. We were also concerned about top-down spillovers stemming from the fact that much of the service-delivery apparatus is controlled at the municipal level, where the same DSWD officials are responsible for the delivery of services to all villages in the municipality. If service providers in treatment municipalities change their behavior towards control villages (by displacing or adding services, for example), this would create a SUTVA violation.

The two levels of randomization in our research design (both within and across municipalities) allowed us to test whether these spillovers occurred. Specifically, the design allowed us to run a placebo test comparing 1) outcomes in control villages in treatment municipalities (who were exposed to potential spillovers) to 2) outcomes in control villages in control municipalities (who were not exposed to spillovers). We find that the outcomes in these two types of control villages were incredibly similar, suggesting that spillovers were not a major concern, even between treatment and control villages in treatment municipalities. Results of this test, and other tests for spillovers, are displayed in SI Section B.2.2.

A second major concern was attrition. Because we designed the project to focus on service delivery over an extended time period, there was inevitably some turnover in village leaders who participated in the program. Some barangay officials retired from their official duties, assigned barangay councilors to take their place in Usap Tayo, or were ousted in special elections. These reasons for attrition could all conceivably be correlated with participation in the Usap Tayo program. To account for attrition, we run a series of models that use entropy balancing to identify very similar barangays and barangay leaders in treatment and control units between our midline and endline survey outcomes. Using survey weights derived from this entropy balancing procedure, we again find nearly identical results to the base models, which we present in SI Section B.2.1. Based on these results, we find it unlikely that differential attrition is driving our results.

Discussion

In this study, we found that extending government services to conflict-affected areas during normal times, using "best practices" for project implementation, can foster increased cooperation from community leaders when a crisis strikes. 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. In the context of our experiment, the Usap Tayo program initially generated behavioral cooperation with the government, but the sudden lockdown of government services created a major backlash effect in terms of views of the government and NPA rebels. After the program restarted and service-delivery resumed, behavioral and attitudinal outcomes recovered to a null effect, which represents an important improvement from midline. But the result also suggests that after going through a full cycle of disruptions, village leaders may become numb to government efforts to win their support and cooperation.

Our findings speak to the effects of government service disruptions in places with long-standing rural insurgencies, such as the Naxilites in India, ELN in Colombia, or ethnic armed groups in Myanmar. In general, conflict zones are extremely prone to disruptions and disasters that can throw even the best designed development programs into disarray, resulting in uneven or halting service delivery. The Covid-19 outbreak presented an unprecedented disruptive shock, but the pandemic was also emblematic of how the best-laid plans in development tend to face unexpected upheaval in conflict zones. For example, the epicenters of recent polio, malaria, and ebola epidemics all occurred in conflict zones (Gayer et al., 2007). Beyond health crises, similar disruptions are caused by natural disasters like earthquakes, typhoons, tsunamis, landslides, and droughts, which regularly affect conflict zones that do not have the requisite infrastructure or citizen-government cooperation needed to mitigate damage (Harris, Keen and Mitchell, 2013).

Our results also have implications for man-made service disruptions caused by leadership turnovers and inconsistent funding. The failures of international interventions in Afghanistan over the past two decades is an emblematic case of this dynamic. International

actors spent enormous sums of money to execute aid projects intended to extend services to communities across the country. Although some of these projects failed due to poor micro-level implementation practices, studies found that, under the right conditions, it was possible to move the needle in a positive direction in the short run (Beath, Christia and Enikolopov, 2012; Sexton, 2016). Survey responses from the early years of the post-Taliban government indicated that more than two thirds of the Afghan public expected that services would quickly improve, including increased access to clean drinking water, irrigation, electricity, health clinics, education (The Asia Foundation, 2007). But as the population experienced continued cycles of conflict, service disruption, and increasingly weak follow-through of project administration, public opinion shifted: from 2015 onward a growing majority said things were going in the wrong direction (The Asia Foundation, 2007). In the long run, the trillions spent on reaching a vulnerable local population failed to arrest the rise of the Taliban, who successfully ejected the Kabul government and took control of the country in 2021. Dashed expectations due to repeated cycles of service disruption undoubtedly played a role (SIGAR, 2015).

Our study highlights the importance of an under-studied commitment problem between governments and civilians that undercuts efforts to end protracted insurgent conflicts. Civilians in conflict zones are understandably wary of government promises to deliver sustained services even after the conflict ends. As a result, when they see indications that the government does not have the capacity or intentions to sustain services in the long run, they are unlikely to help the government consolidate military control. A central takeaway from this research is that macro-level service disruptions can provide civilians information about government capacity that is incredibly difficult to recover once a disruption occurs. This is an important reason why well-designed hearts and minds programs so often fail and insurgent conflicts last so long. Development efforts may work in the short term while raising expectations that the government cannot meet over the long run. Even if service delivery is

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relatively successful, a repeated cycle of raised and dashed expectations could allow conflict to last.

When big macro-level disruptions take place, it is often difficult for policymakers to push back the tide of unmet expectations. However, they could increase the likelihood of being able to overcome this challenge by building in redundancy and resilience into the project, and adding in preparation for disasters or crises as part of the content of the intervention. For example, it is crucial to create personnel redundancy to insulate from leadership turnovers. Overall, because of how common macro-level service disruptions are in conflict zones, policymakers may be better off accomplishing incremental short terms gains if it means making the project more sustainable in the long-run.

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Supporting Information (SI)

Winning "hearts and minds" in moments of crisis? Evidence from the Philippines during Covid-19

Dotan Haim, Nico Ravanilla & Renard Sexton

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A Materials and Methods

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Might want to include a table with the survey question texts and a column to state which index each question is associated with.

A.3.3 Endorsement Experiment

A.4 Research Design

A.5 Summary Statistics

Table A.1: 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

B Results

B.1 Main Results Tables

The tables in this section display all the regression results displayed in the figures in the manuscript. The results in Tables B.1 and B.2 are represented in Figure 5. The results in Table B.3 are represented in Figure 6.

Table B.1: Main Regressions - Behavioral Outcomes

	Cooperated - Covid (Midline)		Cooperated - Vaccines (Endline)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
UT Treated	0.103**	0.101**	-0.013	-0.022
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.053)	(0.049)
Population		-0.0004		0.025
		(0.025)		(0.030)
Percent Poor		-0.398·		-0.726·
		(0.219)		(0.376)
Education		0.051		-0.119
		(0.101)		(0.166)
NPA ever		-0.023		0.107
		(0.035)		(0.067)
Urban		0.064		0.091
		(0.094)		(0.131)
Previous Development		-0.019		0.015
		(0.035)		(0.053)
R^2	0.00804	0.03067	0.00018	0.03651
Observations	800	800	800	800

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.
The outcome measures in this table are represented as the "Pro-Govt: Behavioral" outcomes in Figure 3. Errors are clustered at the Municipality-level.

Table B.2: Main Regressions - Survey Outcomes

| | Pro-Govt: Survey Index | | | | Pro-NPA: Endorsement | | | |
| | (Midline) | | (Endline) | | (Midline) | | (Endline) | |
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
UT Treated	-0.162***	-0.158***	-0.012	-0.009	0.056**	0.059**	0.024	0.027
	(0.041)	(0.040)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.029)	(0.026)
College Educ		-0.107*		-0.032		0.022		-0.011
		(0.047)		(0.049)		(0.019)		(0.029)
High School Educ		-0.023		-0.0004		0.006		-0.0006
		(0.039)		(0.034)		(0.016)		(0.021)
Age		-0.003*		-0.004*		0.000004		-0.001
		(0.002)		(0.002)		(0.0007)		(0.0009)
Kapitan		0.105*		-0.003		-0.008		0.006
		(0.049)		(0.032)		(0.017)		(0.010)
Population		0.054		0.057*		0.020		-0.015
		(0.028)		(0.028)		(0.013)		(0.021)
Percent Poor		0.183		0.209		-0.118		-0.048
		(0.241)		(0.223)		(0.106)		(0.180)
Bgy Education		0.073		-0.083		-0.051		-0.025
		(0.115)		(0.120)		(0.053)		(0.088)
NPA ever		-0.137**		0.035		0.035		0.051
		(0.044)		(0.042)		(0.019)		(0.035)
Urban		0.162		-0.029		-0.030		0.098
		(0.101)		(0.109)		(0.040)		(0.069)
Previous Development		-0.011		-0.037		0.041*		-0.055*
		(0.037)		(0.034)		(0.017)		(0.027)
Fixed-effects								
Province fixed effects		✓		✓		✓		✓
R^2	0.01936	0.06724	0.00011	0.03050	0.01236	0.11978	0.00114	0.09275
Observations	870	870	1,024	1,023	920	920	1,048	1,047

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.
The outcome measures in this table are represented using the same labels in Figure 3. Errors are clustered at the Barangay-level.

Table B.3: Main Regressions - Mechanisms

| | Govt Capacity Index | | Govt Effort Index | | Govt Fairness Index | | Rebels Not Disrupt Index | |
	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
UT Treated	-0.187***	-0.065	-0.094*	-0.064	-0.065	-0.046	0.011	0.068
	(0.048)	(0.046)	(0.048)	(0.043)	(0.048)	(0.046)	(0.050)	(0.048)
R^2	0.01689	0.00216	0.00505	0.00221	0.00204	0.00108	0.00006	0.00196
Observations	886	1,057	880	1,070	898	1,068	885	1,056

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.
The outcome measures in this table are represented using the same labels in Figure 4. Errors are clustered
at the Barangay-level.

B.2 Additional Results and Robustness Tests

B.2.1 Attrition

We experienced significant attrition of barangay leaders who were the participants in UT over the course of the program. The program lasted multiple years and a number of barangay kapitans lost elections, were replaced, or assigned barangay councilors to take their place in the program.

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To account for attrition, we ran the main models using survey weights based on entropy balancing. This method allowed us to...

Table B.4 shows the entropy-balanced results for the main survey outcomes (the pro-government survey index and the pro-NPA endorsement experiment). Table B.5 shows the entropy-balanced results for the mechanism outcomes. All results remain remarkably consistent using this method, suggesting that when barangay leaders were replaced....

Table B.4: Robustness to Attrition, Main Outcomes - Entropy Balancing

| | Pro-Govt: Survey Index | | Pro-NPA: Endorsement | |
	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
UT Treated	-0.164***	-0.014	0.060**	0.037
	(0.042)	(0.038)	(0.019)	(0.031)
R^2	0.02502	0.00020	0.01939	0.00345
Observations	870	1,023	920	1,047

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.
The outcome measures in this table are represented using the same labels in Figure 3. Errors are clustered at the Barangay-level.

Table B.5: Robustness to Attrition, Mechanisms - Entropy Balancing

| | Govt Capacity Index | | Govt Effort Index | | Govt Fairness Index | | Rebels Not Disrupt Index | |
	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
UT Treated	-0.173***	-0.082	-0.081	-0.063	-0.062	-0.044	0.022	0.063
	(0.049)	(0.051)	(0.049)	(0.043)	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.051)	(0.050)
R^2	0.01921	0.00416	0.00491	0.00276	0.00248	0.00117	0.00029	0.00222
Observations	886	1,056	880	1,069	898	1,067	885	1,055

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.
The outcome measures in this table are represented using the same labels in Figure 4. Errors are clustered at the Barangay-level.

B.2.2 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. Table B.6 displays these results, which are almost identical to the main results presented in Figure 5. 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.6: Robustness to Spillovers, Within-Municipality Effects

| | Pro-Govt: Behavioral | | Pro-Govt: Survey Index | |
	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
UT Treated	0.105**	-0.020	-0.172***	-0.009
	(0.039)	(0.036)	(0.051)	(0.044)
Standard-Errors	Municipality		Barangay	
R^2	0.01117	0.00053	0.02711	0.00009
Observations	400	400	440	509

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.
The outcome measures in this table are represented using the same labels in Figure 3.

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.7 shows a precisely estimated null for this test, again suggesting that spillovers should not be considered a substantial concern.

Table B.7: Robustness to Spillovers, Placebo Test

| | Pro-Govt: Behavioral | | Pro-Govt: Survey Index | |
	(Midline)	(Endline)	(Midline)	(Endline)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Placebo Treatment	-0.003	0.010	0.015	-0.003
	(0.044)	(0.076)	(0.043)	(0.042)
Standard-Errors	Municipality		Barangay	
R^2	0.000006	0.00012	0.00020	0.000009
Observations	600	600	646	737

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

The outcome measures in this table are represented using the same labels in Figure 3. 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.2.3   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 beneficaries for 2021, during which UT was operating remotely. The results in Models 5-6 of Table B.8 suggest that UT indeed resulted in increased access to government services during this remote operation period.

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Table B.8: Manipulation Check - DSWD Beneficiaries

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

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.
The outcome measures in this table are the number of beneficiaries of the DSWD Sustainable Livelihoods
Program in the respective year.

B.2.4 Alternative Specifications

Here we present two additional specifications for the mechanism tests presented in Figure 6 and Table B.3. The first is a diff-in-diff specification to test whether there were significant differences between the mechanism outcomes at midline and endline. Table B.3 shows that there was a significant negative effect on perceptions of government *capacity* and *effort* at midline. Table B.9 shows that only the *capacity* outcome significantly different between midline and endline. The second additional specification runs the models with covariates included.

Table B.9: Supplementary Regression - Mechanisms Diff-in-Diff

	Govt Capacity (1)	Govt Effort (2)	Govt Fairness (3)	Rebels Not Disrupt (4)
UT Treated	-0.187***	-0.094*	-0.065	0.011
	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.050)
Endline	0.035	0.017	-0.034	-0.081*
	(0.029)	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.033)
UT Treated × Endline	0.122*	0.030	0.019	0.057
	(0.056)	(0.055)	(0.054)	(0.064)
R^2	0.01154	0.00379	0.00210	0.00358
Observations	1,943	1,950	1,966	1,941

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.
The outcome measures in this table are represented using the same labels in Figure 4. Errors are clustered at the Barangay-level.

Table B.10: Supplementary Regression - Mechanisms with Covariates

| | Govt Capacity | | Govt Effort | | Govt Fairness | | Rebels Not Disrupt | |
	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)	(Mid)	(End)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
UT Treated	-0.177***	-0.057	-0.089	-0.058	-0.062	-0.038	0.014	0.071
	(0.048)	(0.045)	(0.047)	(0.042)	(0.048)	(0.046)	(0.050)	(0.048)
College Educ	0.037	0.004	-0.021	-0.062	-0.011	-0.021	0.036	0.007
	(0.055)	(0.058)	(0.053)	(0.057)	(0.058)	(0.061)	(0.059)	(0.063)
High School Educ	0.013	-0.004	0.017	0.021	0.003	0.015	-0.045	-0.045
	(0.049)	(0.042)	(0.046)	(0.041)	(0.048)	(0.042)	(0.049)	(0.046)
Age	-0.004	0.0005	-0.002	-0.001	-0.0002	-0.002	0.002	-0.003
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Kapitan	0.214***	0.010	0.243***	0.077*	0.105	0.014	0.214**	0.156***
	(0.061)	(0.039)	(0.057)	(0.037)	(0.060)	(0.037)	(0.066)	(0.043)
Population	0.070*	0.073	0.039	0.071*	0.039	0.051	0.011	0.008
	(0.035)	(0.037)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.035)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.041)
Percent Poor	0.099	-0.0001	-0.033	-0.030	-0.333	0.192	-0.529	0.244
	(0.293)	(0.284)	(0.300)	(0.279)	(0.307)	(0.299)	(0.312)	(0.314)
Bgy Education	0.163	0.109	-0.005	0.016	0.018	0.065	-0.091	0.146
	(0.145)	(0.143)	(0.147)	(0.146)	(0.159)	(0.151)	(0.158)	(0.161)
NPA ever	-0.067	-0.021	-0.039	0.017	0.042	0.027	-0.021	-0.055
	(0.057)	(0.050)	(0.051)	(0.049)	(0.054)	(0.050)	(0.055)	(0.051)
Urban	0.049	-0.092	0.209*	-0.003	0.034	-0.154	0.035	-0.056
	(0.095)	(0.164)	(0.106)	(0.139)	(0.159)	(0.124)	(0.129)	(0.102)
Previous Development	-0.036	-0.080	0.039	-0.039	0.001	0.007	0.021	-0.015
	(0.045)	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.042)	(0.044)	(0.042)	(0.045)	(0.046)
Fixed-effects								
Province fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R^2	0.06206	0.01889	0.04537	0.02124	0.02877	0.01322	0.03431	0.02117
Observations	886	1,056	880	1,069	898	1,067	885	1,055

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.
The outcome measures in this table are represented using the same labels in Figure 4. Errors are clustered
at the Barangay-level.

B.2.5 Sub-Index Results

The figures in this section show the results for each of the sub-indices in the Pro-Government Survey Index (which is a main outcome) and the Government Capacity Index (which is a mechanism).

Figure B.1: Sub-index results: Pro-Government Survey Index
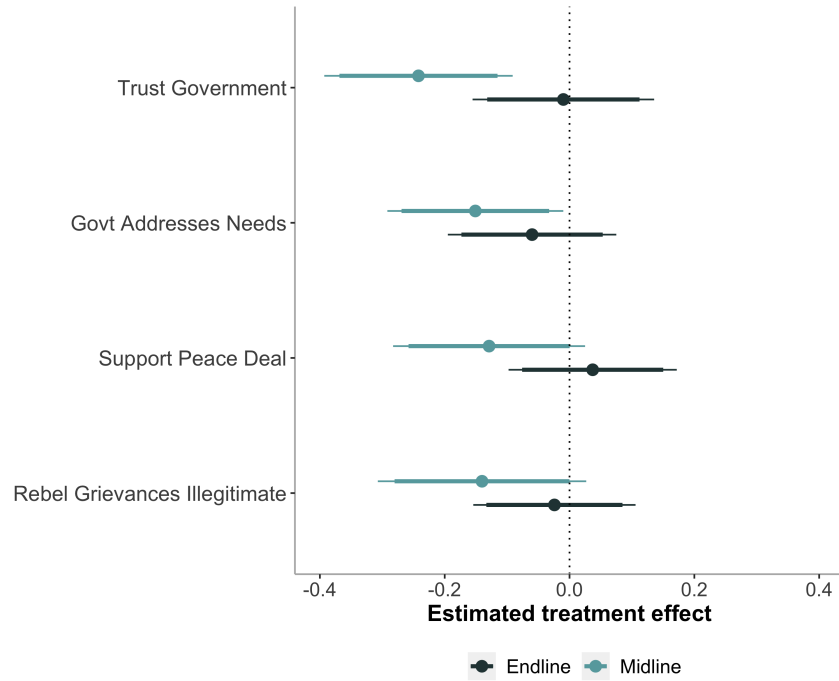
These results are from the base model without covariates. Standard errors are clustered at the barangay-level.

Figure B.2: Sub-index results: Government Capacity Index
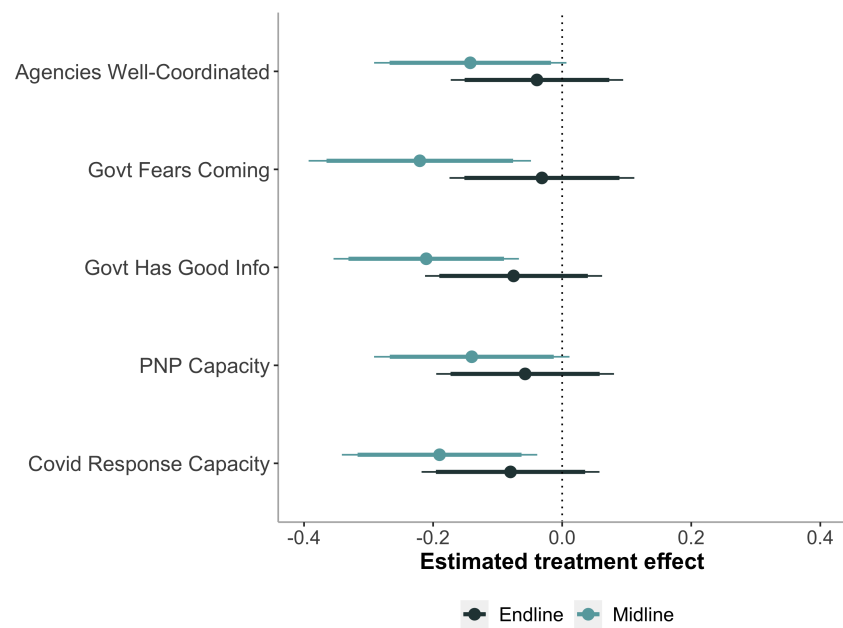
These results are from the base model without covariates. Standard errors are clustered at the barangay-level.

C 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. *The Ethics portion of this SI is re-printed from Haim, Ravanilla & Sexton, 2021. In future iterations of this paper, we will update this appendix to incorporate additional ethical considerations relating to aspects of this project that differ from what was presented in the previous paper.*

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 extra-judicial 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 mu-

nicipal 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."

Our approach to this research was primarily guided by the principle of "do no harm" (Wood, 2006).[1] 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

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

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 dilligence 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 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 (Ravanilla) 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. Prof. Ravanilla's intuitions and experience 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.

C.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.

C.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.

C.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.

C.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.

C.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.

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.

C.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.

C.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 (erring 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.[2] 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

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[2]An 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)

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.

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%)

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 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.

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.

C.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.

C.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 partici- pants 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 dis- cern 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) coordi- nated 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 imple- mentation 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 inter- nal 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.

C.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.

C.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.

C.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.

D   Additional Materials

D.1   Pre-Analysis Plan

Pre-registration for the study was led on March 24, 2020 with the Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) Design registry,[3] can be found at https://osf.io/qwfuv.

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[3]Located at https://www.egap.org/design-registrations