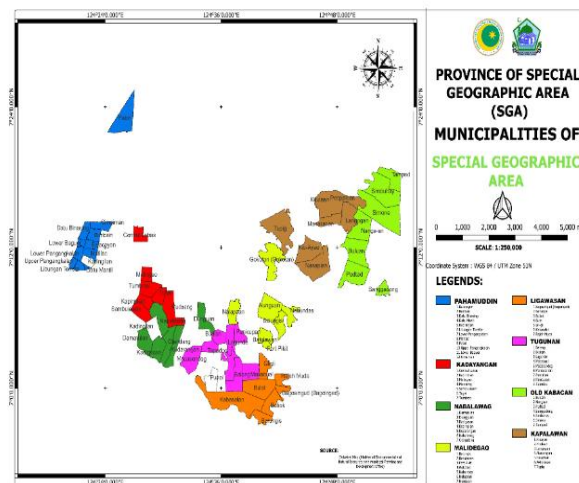


## Background

In mid 2025 Acted conducted data collection for a voter awareness survey to assess knowledge and preparedness among constituents across all 8 municipalities of the Special Geographic Area (SGA) of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), ahead of the first Parliamentary elections, expected to be held no later than 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. The primary focus of the survey was to assess the public’s awareness of the first parliamentary elections in the BARMM, as well as their overall understanding of how the BARMM government and institution's function. The survey specifically targeted a diverse group of respondents to ensure inclusive representation. These included officials from the municipal and barangay local government units (LGUs), as well as individuals from key sectors of society: women, men, persons with disabilities (PWDs), Indigenous Peoples (IPs), senior citizens, and youth. By engaging these various sectors, the survey aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of electoral awareness across different demographic groups within the SGA.

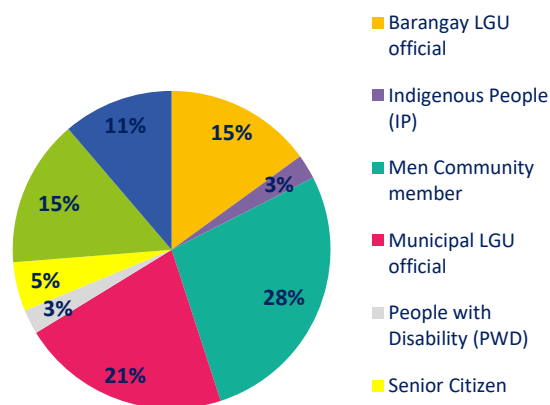
Picture 1. Map of the SGA



## Methodology

- A **non-probabilistic survey** using a **purposive sampling** was conducted in mid 2025 across communities and LGU officials in the SGA
- Respondents included LGU staff, CSO actors, youth, women, people with disabilities, IPs, religious and community leaders
- The survey covered all **8 municipalities in the SGA**, with **80 respondents** in total
- In **each municipality** the following interviews were conducted: **1 municipal LGU, 1 barangay LGU, and 8 community members**
- Data collection was carried out through **face-to-face individual interviews** using KOBO tools.

Figure 1. Sector of the respondents



## Demography

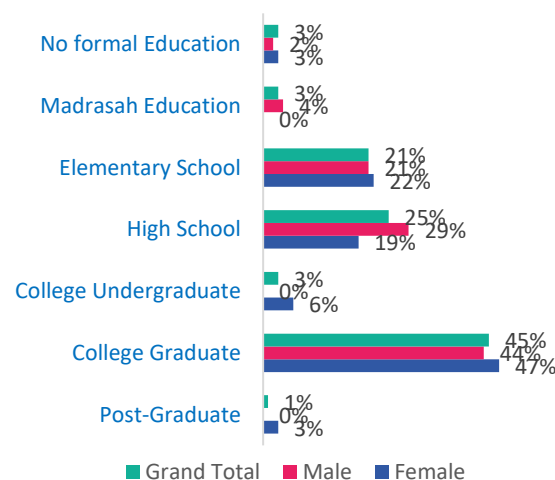
The overall sample was **60% male and 40% female**, with variations across municipalities. For instance, Old Kaabakan had the highest male participation (21%), while Malidegao had the highest female participation (19%).



Figure 2. Gender of respondents

A notable portion of respondents, slightly more women had **only elementary education or no formal education**, with slightly more women affected. **Males were more represented at the high school level and in Madrasah education**, reflecting gendered differences in secondary and religious or traditional educational pathways. **Females showed stronger representation among college graduates, undergraduates, and postgraduates.** Despite this, few respondents continued education beyond college, highlighting limited access to advanced studies for both genders. These educational disparities may have influenced respondents’ knowledge and engagement levels, helping to explain some of the results observed later in the analysis.

Figure 3. Educational attainment of the respondents







## I. Understanding Basic Laws and Governance in BARMM: LGUs and Community Perspectives

### Overall knowledge levels

The general knowledge of the **basic laws of the Philippines and the BARMM Parliamentary Election** varied significantly across groups.

- **LGU staff, from Barangay (83%) and Municipal (82%) demonstrated a stronger grasp on the country primary legal’s framework compared to Indigenous Peoples, the elderly, women, men, persons with disabilities, and youth.** Most respondents (about 95%) understood that the **BARMM regional government operates under the supervision of the Philippine President.** Groups such as barangay/municipal LGUs, IPs, men, women, and youth showed strong awareness of BARMM’s place within the national government. A **significant knowledge gap existed among persons with disabilities and senior citizens.**
- **Awareness of the BARMM parliamentary system** was high among Municipal LGUs and IP (100%), largely due to education, regular trainings, and hands-on governance experience. In the case of the IP respondent, their higher level of knowledge may also have reflected a bias, as one IP respondent was a local official. It was **moderate among most other groups, and lowest among senior citizens and persons with disabilities, with the latter showing the biggest information gap.**

 <b>5% knowledge gap</b>	 <b>100% awareness</b>
Noted among Persons with Disabilities and Senior Citizens about BARMM’s supervision under the President	Of BARMM’s parliamentary system among Municipal LGUs and Indigenous Peoples
 <b>83% of Barangay LGU and 82% of Municipal LGU respondents</b>	 <b>95%</b>
Had strong knowledge of basic Philippine laws	Had overall awareness that BARMM operates under the supervision of the Philippine President

### Members of Parliament & Parliament term knowledge

- Most groups, including youth and both Municipal and Barangay LGUs, could correctly identify the Members of Parliament seat distribution, **but awareness dropped sharply among Indigenous Peoples and especially among senior citizens.**
- **Half of persons with disabilities and half of senior citizens could not identify the MPs at all,** revealing a major information gap linked to mobility barriers, limited access to voter education, and low exposure to digital civic information.
- **Familiarity with the term “Members of Parliament” was very high among Municipal LGU respondents (94%)** and also strong among youth and men, reflecting their exposure to trainings, governance activities and voter education efforts conducted with COMELEC.
- **Awareness was notably weaker among senior citizens, with half unfamiliar with the term,** largely due to mobility constraints and limited access to digital platforms where election information is shared.

**Coordinated voter education efforts is a way to increase awareness and to empower vulnerable groups by improving their access to political information ; “We have already conducted the activity in coordination with COMELEC, which focused on voter education and awareness for the upcoming BARMM Parliamentary Election. Because of this awareness, it could help with the empowerment of vulnerable groups and the people in the community.”** (Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator (MPDC) of Kadayangan)

### SGA parliamentary district knowledge

- Only **49% of respondents knew that the SGA has a single parliamentary district,** showing low overall awareness.
- **Knowledge was highest among Municipal LGUs (82%), followed by Barangay LGUs (50%) and youth (56%),** groups more exposed to governance processes, education and information sources.
- **Awareness was lower among Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities (50%), and particularly low among women (42%), men (27%) and senior citizens (25%).**

 <b>94% of Municipal LGUs</b>	 <b>78% of Youth</b>	 <b>50% of Persons with Disabilities</b>	 <b>Only 49% overall</b>
Were familiar with the term Members of Parliament (MPs)	Correctly identified MP seat distribution	Didn’t know who represented them in Parliament	Knew that the SGA had one parliamentary district

## II. Understanding the Voting Process

### Voter registration knowledge and confidence for the BARMM election

- Most respondents demonstrated **strong knowledge of the voter registration process**. All respondents from municipal and barangay LGUs, Indigenous Peoples, men, women, and youth correctly identified where and how to register. However, **only half of persons with disabilities answered correctly**, pointing to a need for more inclusive outreach and accessible information for this group.
- A **majority (87%) of respondents felt confident in their understanding of the BARMM registration process**. However, **14% reported low understanding**, highlighting the importance of continued education and awareness efforts.
- Respondents declared relying on a **wide range of sources for election-related information**, with **social media, television and the Commission on Elections** emerging as the most common. Many also obtained information through family and community networks, workplaces and radio, while others drew on guidance from religious leaders, schools, print media, traditional leaders or civil society organizations.

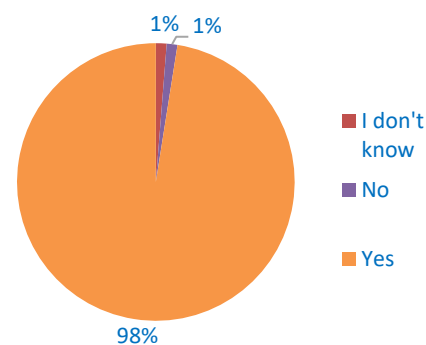


Figure 4. Percentage of Intention to Vote in BARMM Elections

### Voter intention and motivation

**Voter intention was extremely high, with nearly all respondents stating that they plan to participate in the upcoming BARMM parliamentary elections.** Only a very small proportion expressed uncertainty or said they would not vote, limited to a senior citizen and one municipal LGU respondent.

<b>100% of LGUs, Indigenous Peoples, women, men, and youth</b>	<b>Only 50% of Persons with Disabilities</b>	<b>87% of all respondents</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>Top 3 sources of election information</b>
Correctly identified the voter registration process	Knew how to register to vote	Feel <b>confident</b> in understanding the BARMM registration process	<b>Intend to vote</b> in the upcoming <b>BARMM</b> parliamentary elections	<b>Social Media</b> – 71 respondents <b>Television</b> – 70 respondents <b>COMELEC</b> – 71 respondents

## III. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study showed that significant gaps remain in the SGA regarding the electoral process and the broader understanding of the parliamentary system that respondents are expected to engage with. **These gaps affect not only the upcoming BARMM elections but also the progress of the ongoing peace process, as meaningful participation requires that people understand how the system functions and how decisions are made.** The SGA is uniquely vulnerable and requires renewed attention to bridge these gaps and address the barriers communities face. With knowledge at its strongest among municipal and barangay LGUs, understanding remains concentrated within public authorities.

**People with disabilities and older voters are the most clearly left behind, with additional barriers affecting women and Indigenous Peoples.** These gaps are linked to low digital literacy, limited access to information and the absence of adapted or comprehensive civic education materials. These findings point to a deeper issue. **When people lack understanding of how the parliamentary system works, they also struggle to know how to engage with duty bearers once they are elected. This can lead to reduced confidence in institutions and limits the ability of communities to participate in decision making.** There is a need for wider and more accessible civic education that goes beyond the mechanics of voting and covers the rule of law and the parliamentary system in a way that communities can easily understand. **Materials should be translated, adapted and transcribed to ensure accessibility for vulnerable groups. Strengthening knowledge of electoral processes and the new parliamentary system is essential for meaningful participation and for supporting the peace process in the SGA and in the BARMM.**

***“I really hope there will be a voter education activity for the upcoming BARMM Parliamentary Election. It would be great to learn more about the process and make sure we’re all well-informed.”.***