



FROM REBELLION TO REINTEGRATION: AN EXPLORATION OF THE SUSTAINABILITY AND SUCCESS OF THE ENHANCED COMPREHENSIVE LOCAL INTEGRATION PROGRAM (E-CLIP) IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

The Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) is the Philippine government's reintegration program for former members of communist terrorist groups who voluntarily surrender and return to civilian life. This study explored the lived experiences of former rebels who participated in E-CLIP and examined the program's contribution to reintegration and sustainability. A phenomenological design was employed. Nine (9) purposively selected former rebels who were beneficiaries or applicants of E-CLIP participated in semi-structured interviews conducted in Filipino. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis. Ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were observed. The analysis generated thirty-two (32) themes across the five Statements of the Problem, demonstrating that reintegration is a dynamic and continuing process extending beyond financial assistance. Participants viewed E-CLIP as an opportunity to reclaim dignity, restore lawful civilian identity, reunite with families, and pursue a peaceful future. JAPIC Certification emerged as an outcome by providing legal assurance, freedom of movement, and confidence to participate in community life. Family support, community acceptance, livelihood opportunities, and government institutions facilitated sustainable reintegration. However, delayed benefits, fragmented inter-agency coordination, limited post-program monitoring, inadequate psychosocial interventions, livelihood sustainability concerns, and insufficient housing support remained challenges. Based on these findings, the study developed the Balik-Loob Strengthening Action Plan (BSAP), a framework emphasizing long-term case management, inter-agency coordination, psychosocial and family-centered services, sustainable livelihood and housing interventions, monitoring, and community participation. The study concludes that sustainable reintegration requires economic self-sufficiency, psychological recovery, family stability, social acceptance, and participation in community life.

KEYWORDS: *Lived Experiences, Reintegration, Former Rebels, Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program, Phenomenology.*

Introduction

A sustainable reintegration of former combatants into civilian life is one of the most complex challenges to attain. Guiding this process is the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration, a primary framework being used in war torn African countries. However, despite its decades of implementation persistent gap still persist: what programmatic assumptions of what the former combatant needs versus what the beneficiaries say they need for their successful reintegration often diverge. This gap leads to weak outcomes and in some cases former combatants return to armed activity. (Godefroidt & Langer, 2023)

In the Philippines, the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP) is the government's primary mechanism for reintegrating former members of the CPP-NPA-NDF into mainstream society. The program is under the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), which was created by Executive Order No. 70. E-CLIP provides former rebels financial assistance, livelihood support, psychosocial services, housing, and educational opportunities to surrendering former rebels (Muin, Maharail, & Ampad, 2024). Despite these important policy architecture, critical gaps on how former rebels experience and evaluate the government's reintegration program still persist.

Nonetheless, the empirical examination of these factors within the specific context of E-CLIP in Central Luzon remains largely unexplored, leaving a gap in understanding the program's true efficacy from the beneficiaries' standpoint. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by providing an in-depth, qualitative research of E-CLIP's sustainability and success in Central Luzon, specifically from the perspective of former rebels (Malinao, 2025).

Three (3) identified gaps underscores the need for this study. First, global research clearly shows that social context and community reception determines whether reintegration succeeds. However, how former rebels in Central Luzon actually experience E-CLIP, navigate identity transition, and how they perceive enabling and hindering factors remains empirically unsubstantiated (Borja-Dekit, 2025). Second, Philippine institutional studies have documented coordination failures, financial irregularities, and service delivery gaps in E-CLIP. But the voices of beneficiaries themselves are absent from that body of evidence (Silvallana & Hagling, 2023). Third, the gap between what the law says E-CLIP should do and what people on the ground actually experience continues to widen, and only research that listens directly to participants can cover this gap.



Central Luzon has experienced one of the longest and most damaging insurgency histories in the country. Its seven provinces, which are Aurora, Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac, and Zambales, each carry different conflict histories and social conditions (Cubero, Guliban, De Leon, & Jacosalem, 2024) (Ybañez & Tabudlong, 2025). By studying former rebels in this region, this dissertation aims to fill the gaps in knowledge and produce recommendations that are grounded in the real experiences of the people E-CLIP is designed to serve. These recommendations will align with the Philippine Development Plan 2023 to 2028, AmBisyon Natin 2040, and the National Action Plan on Unity, Peace and Development.

International research robustly demonstrates that beneficiaries lived experiences of program participation diverge substantially from institutional assessments of program effectiveness, underscoring the primacy of subjective, relational dynamics over formal metrics. For instance, (Ike J. T., et al., 2020) conducted a systematic review of eighteen studies on community perspectives of reintegration programs in Nigeria, synthesizing five recurrent themes that collectively reveal participation as profoundly shaped by social distrust and relational contexts rather than isolated service delivery. Building on this foundation, (Godefroidt & Langer, 2023) provides experimental evidence from Nigeria further substantiating these insights, showing that public support for reintegration hinges on heuristics of perceived threat and deservingness, thus embedding participation within uncontrollable social evaluative processes that demand community-inclusive program redesign. Recent Somali evidence echoes this pattern, as (Gelot & Khadka, 2025) conjoint surveys reveal host community preferences for formal DDR graduates over traditional channels, with security attributes like killings and recruitment amplifying threat perceptions and underscoring formal programs' role in mitigating fears.

Moreover, (Ike T., Singh, Jidong, Murphy, & Ayobi, 2021) offers compelling qualitative depth on community perceptions of former Boko Haram combatants, emphasizing that social context and identity negotiation are indispensable: "the act of reintegration cannot be divulged from the social context since the latter plays a paramount role in ensuring acceptance and how any new identities are negotiated for successful reintegration." Colombian cases reinforce this perspective; for example, (Mouly, Delgado, & Giménez, 2019) compares two peace communities where high social capital reduced stigma and enabled participation for ex-combatants. This community-centered empirical grounding directly anchors this study's RQ1, illuminating how former E-CLIP participants experience program engagement across relational, institutional, and social dimensions in Central Luzon.

Philippine empirical studies on E-CLIP and former CPP-NPA reintegration increasingly privilege qualitative beneficiary narratives that starkly reveal profound participation barriers, yet these clash head-on with institutional audits indicting systemic governance shortfalls across diverse Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao contexts, exposing a troubling disconnect that undermines claims of program efficacy (Figueroa, 2025).

The qualitative analysis of Central Luzon E-CLIP communication practices forcefully documents how obscured enrollment processes, driven by abysmal information

dissemination and chronic LGU capacity deficits, effectively sabotage beneficiary access, a critique amplified by OPAPRU's own admissions of community engagement failures that erode participation quality despite nominal service delivery (Silvallana & Hagling, 2023).

Complementing this, Figueroa's rigorous quantitative assessment of Bulan, Sorsogon E-CLIP phases reveal a glaring pattern: robust performance in pre-surfacing and surfacing stages precipitously declines in socio-economic reintegration and plummets to weakest levels in sustainability and communication, attributable not to beneficiary reluctance but to acute resource shortages, manpower gaps, and logistical hurdles that betray institutional overpromising (Figueroa, 2025).

Alcantara and De Castro's survey of 100 Sorsogon returnees further corroborates this indictment, affirming full delivery of P50,000 livelihood grants yet only partial financial and educational aid, with low education profiles exacerbating productivity barriers amid delayed fund releases and insufficient social worker counseling, and with preferences for empathetic psychosocial support over militarized deradicalization underscoring a humanitarian void (Alcantara & De Castro, 2023). These immersive qualitative exposures not only contrast the superficial breadth of audits but aggressively challenge the narrative of E-CLIP as a seamless pathway, paralleling yet intensifying Central Luzon-specific voids that demand beneficiary-centered scrutiny (Cubero et al., 2024).

Shifting to the crucible of transitions, phenomenological life-histories aggressively foreground Maoist exit traumas including stigma, isolation, ideological disillusionment, and familial longing, diverging sharply from quantitative territorial mappings that portray insurgency as entrenched structural alternatives and thereby questioning simplistic surrender-lure models (Ybanez & Tabudlong, 2025).

Rubin meticulously maps the CPP-NPA's Maoist blueprint in neglected barangays, complete with taxation, governance shadows, and incremental expansion, framing exit not as mere disarmament but as dismantling a holistic economic-ideological ecosystem whose dismantling demands far more than benefit packages (Rubin, 2019). Gumela's Talaingod ethnography pierces this veil, detailing ex-rebels' jungle dislocations, profound trauma from ambushes and liquidations, community stigma as CAA recruits, and redemptive arcs via indigenous peoples-led family acceptance, yet haunted by retribution fears that expose E-CLIP's inadequacy in psychic repair (Gumela, 2025).

Echoing this, Cubero et al.'s phenomenological interviews with Davao de Oro returnees unpack pre-recruitment poverty traps, surrender pivots amid exhaustion and death fears, and coping anchored in family and education values, with disillusionment with NPA hardships trumping ideology as the primary driver of exit (Cubero et al., 2024). Edrolin's rebel diaries chronicle raw disenchantment: leaders' exploitation, mass graves, and endless hiding yielding no victories that propel surrenders toward life regained free from chronic anxiety (Edrolin, 2021). Institutional ELCAC nods to policy incentives such as AO 10-2018 falter against these narratives' relational imperatives, while Ybanez traces life-courses from poverty pulls to risk-realized turning points facilitated yet not fully supported by E-CLIP,



clashes that compel Central Luzon probes into Maoist tenacity's psychosocial grip (Aspilan, 2023; Ybanez & Tabudlong, 2025).

Macro-evaluations of sustainability deliver damning multilevel indictments of financial irregularities, mental health voids, and reform repetitions, yet ethnographic micro-cases spotlight family and indigenous synergies in Mindanao, aggressively pitting localized triumphs against systemic failures to argue for hybrid models over one-size-fits-all approaches (Figueroa, 2025; Gumela, 2025). COA and DILG audits hammer firearm valuation scams and iterative reforms signaling endemic persistence, while Figueroa demands resource mobilization for the program's faltering later phases (Figueroa, 2025).

Borja-Dekit's, 2025 evaluation rates mental health outcomes as mediocre, pivoting reintegration success on family income and urging skill-building and stigma reduction amid housing and economic disparities, concluding that E-CLIP aids social reintegration but falters on sustainability without long-term planning. Malinao's Agusan del Norte study captures community perceptions lauding livelihood efficacy yet flagging critical gaps in sustainability support and psychosocial follow-through (Malinao, 2025).

Countering pessimism, Gumela's quantification of Talaingod's Project Libongkid across 170 respondents' hails family-centered and indigenous peoples' cultural trust-building for high effectiveness in family reunions and community cohesion, though women endure amplified stigma and budget constraints limit equity, with pangayao fears isolating returnees from broader community participation (Gumela, 2025). These divergences, between rapid audits' broad indictments and ethnographies' tangible locale-specific gains, brutally expose E-CLIP's systemic inefficiencies while prioritizing micro-successes that institutional metrics overlook, fueling calls for scalable family-centered and indigenous peoples' infusions in program design (Francisco, 2025).

Qualitative syntheses from intimate returnee interviews further delineate recognition deficits including stigma, mistrust, and psychosocial scars that dramatically outpace program mitigations, as dyadic depth unmasks strains that eclipse institutional optimism. Francisco's Zamboanga life-histories through Project Good Life psychoeducation trace initial distrust to eventual productivity, yet persistent emotional scars demand an armory of psychosocial support that extends well beyond economics (Francisco, 2025). Pabalinas dissects turning points crediting E-CLIP participation amid policy boosts, identifying the program as a meaningful but insufficient scaffold for sustainable civilian identity (Pabalinas & Balongoy, 2025).

Ybanez's 20-returnee life-courses detail trajectories from insurgency deviance to abandonment via risk accumulation, E-CLIP-facilitated yet stigma-laden throughout the transition process (Ybanez & Tabudlong, 2025). Muin et al.'s Basilan action-research adapts E-CLIP for firearm surrenders, enabling LGU-contextualized implementation but hindered by legal warrant requirements, with firearm proliferation fueling rido conflicts despite financial incentives (Muin et al., 2024).

Edrolin's rebel diaries amplify these findings: the futility of endless armed struggle and the weight of leader betrayals propel returnees toward mainstream civic embrace, though the absence

of formal recognition rituals leaves many in a liminal civilian status unacknowledged by either the program or the community (Edrolin, 2021). This interview intimacy's psychosocial excavations aggressively eclipse audits' optimism, mirroring rural Philippine barriers and indicting E-CLIP's persistent underemphasis on recognition as a reintegration mechanism.

Program evaluations forcefully advocate beneficiary-led holism, harmonizing next-generation strategies yet clashing with governance paradoxes, as qualitative cautions temper quantitative gains and the evidence base compels Central Luzon-specific tailoring. Malinao's Agusan del Norte assessment similarly affirms that E-CLIP produces measurable changes in returnees' civic engagement and community participation, even as broader sustainability concerns persist (Malinao, 2025).

Recommendations converge with argumentative urgency: sustained engagement through long-term social worker accompaniment (Silvallana & Hagling, 2023); family, cooperative, and LGU capacity expansion (Muin et al., 2024); gender and indigenous peoples mainstreaming in program design and benefit delivery (Bayudan-Dacuycuy et al., 2025); adequate resource blueprints to support faltering later program phases (Figueroa, 2025); and mental health and livelihood sustainment that extends beyond initial reinsertion timelines (Gumela, 2025). Philippine qualitative breadth thus tempers audit-generated optimism, collectively compelling Luzon-specific reforms grounded in the phenomenological accounts of beneficiaries whose voices the existing literature has systematically marginalized.

Contradictions persist with heightened acuity, revealing E-CLIP's fractured program architecture. Robust surfacing metrics (Figueroa, 2025) mask sustainability collapses driven by resource droughts, where initial reintegration lures evaporate into communication voids that expose how short-term optics prioritize beneficiary numbers over enduring civilian viability. Family and indigenous peoples' enablers celebrated in Talaingod triumphs (Gumela, 2025) collide with pervasive stigma and trauma hindrances (Cubero et al., 2024), as cultural synergies falter against retribution fears and discrimination, questioning scalability absent robust psychosocial bulwarks.

E-CLIP gains in livelihoods (Alcantara & De Castro, 2023; Malinao, 2025) versus mental health gaps (Alibudbud, 2023; Edrolin, 2021) further splinter the program narrative, with full grant delivery belying partial aid and deradicalization mismatches that undermine the program's rehabilitation logic. These rifts between quantitative optimism and qualitative anguish not only perpetuate recidivism risks but mandate this study's Central Luzon phenomenology to bridge beneficiary voids, forging context-specific reintegration pathways beyond the institutional inertia that currently dominates E-CLIP implementation discourse (Cubero et al., 2024; Ybanez & Tabudlong, 2025).

The study is grounded in the legal and policy instruments that establish how E-CLIP operates and what it is supposed to deliver. These legal bases serve as the standards against which the lived experiences of informants are compared.

Executive Order No. 70, Series of 2018, signed by Former President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, institutionalized the Whole-of-Nation Approach to peace and created NTF-ELCAC. It



established the policy framework for E-CLIP and mandated multi-agency coordination. It positioned former rebels as citizens whose insurgency resulted from poverty, lack of opportunity, and governance failures, which is the framing within which this study interprets their experiences.

Administrative Order No. 25, Series of 2020, specifically institutionalized E-CLIP. It defined the program components, identified implementing agencies, set eligibility criteria and benefit structures, and created monitoring and evaluation frameworks. This is the standard that this study uses to assess gaps between what the program promises and what beneficiaries actually receive.

DILG Memoranda and Circulars translate national policy into local procedures. Key issuances include DILG Memorandum Circular 2018-106 and DILG-DND Joint Memorandum Circular No. 01, Series of 2021. These documents define the documentation, timelines, and coordination protocols that directly shape how former rebels experience the program at the community level.

Republic Act No. 11479, the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, shapes the broader environment within which reintegration occurs. It affects how communities perceive former rebels and how former rebels navigate a society where their past can be interpreted through a counterterrorism lens rather than a peacebuilding one.

Commission on Audit regulations govern the financial management and transparency of E-CLIP. The COA's 2023 findings on irregularities in firearms valuation under E-CLIP directly affect how resources reach beneficiaries and how the program's credibility is perceived by communities and by former rebels themselves.

The Philippine Development Plan 2023 to 2028 and AmBisyon Natin 2040 provide the broader development policy environment within which E-CLIP's outcomes are evaluated. This study positions its recommendations within these national goals to ensure that findings serve not just E-CLIP improvement but the broader objectives of inclusive and sustainable peace.

Statement of the Problem

This qualitative phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of former rebels in Central Luzon regarding their participation in the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program. The study aims to understand how former rebels themselves experience, make sense of, and evaluate their reintegration within the specific social, economic, and institutional conditions of Central Luzon. By centering the voices and perspectives of participants, the research generates evidence-based insights for improving E-CLIP's responsiveness to what beneficiaries actually need.

Specifically, the study answers the following research questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of the informants regarding their participation in the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP)?
2. How do the informants describe their transition from armed struggle to civilian life as a result of their participation under the E-CLIP?

3. How do the informants perceive the long-term sustainability of the assistance and support provided by E-CLIP?

4. What factors, based on participants' experiences, enable or hinder their sustained reintegration into their communities?

5. What challenges do the informants encounter while participating in E-CLIP?

6. Based on the findings, what program may be proposed?

Methodology

The study investigated the lived experiences of nine former NPA and Militia ng Bayan members in Central Luzon who participated in E-CLIP, focusing on how they perceived their reintegration, the sustainability and success of the program, and the challenges they encountered. Using phenomenology and the six (6) steps of Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis, the study gathered rich narratives through validated semi-structured interviews and identified meaningful patterns in participants' experiences. The research emphasized ethical protection, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and reflexivity, particularly because of the researcher's previous military affiliation. Its findings are intended to provide evidence-based insights for improving E-CLIP implementation, strengthening reintegration strategies, and supporting sustainable peacebuilding and development initiatives.

Result and Discussion

1. What are the lived experiences of the informants regarding their participation in the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP)?

3.1. Can you tell me what it's been like for you participating in this program? What is the most memorable part?

Table 1 presents the overall participation experience of the nine informants in E-CLIP. The findings reveal that surrender and program participation are experienced first as a personal and safety-related turning point rather than as a financial transaction, and that the credibility and conduct of the military unit that first received each informant shaped how the entire experience that followed was understood and remembered.

These accounts demonstrate that E-CLIP's actual attractiveness to former combatants operate through trust, safety, and legal recognition rather than through its financial incentives alone, and that this trust is anchored concretely in the people who first delivered it. From the responses, two major themes emerged: Reasons for Surrendering, and Gratitude Toward the Military Unit as First Responders.

Theme 3.1.1. Reasons for Surrendering. The findings indicate that surrender was consistently driven by exhaustion, fear, and the wish for a normal life rather than by the program's financial incentives. Informants described the moment of surrender as both a political and a deeply personal decision, shaped by disillusionment with the movement, longing for family, and doubt about whether government promises could be trusted. This pattern was consistent across nearly all nine informants regardless of how long they had spent in the movement or which province they surrendered in.



KI-2 stated that “*zung pagbaba namin ay hindi naman talaga dahil sa pera, kundi dahil sa hirap ng buhay sa loob ng NPA*” (our decision to surrender was not really because of money, but because of the hardship of life inside the NPA). Similarly, KI-3 explained that he had been told “*kapag nagsurrender ka o nahuli ka, papatayin ka*” (if you surrender or get caught, you will be killed), a fear that turned out to be false. KI-7 reinforced this uncertainty by sharing that “*habang pinoprocess iyon, iniisip din po namin kung totoo ba iyon*” (while it was being processed, we also wondered if it was real). Likewise, KI-8 shared that “*gusto ko na lang magkaroon ng pangahawakan para maging patunay na ako ay nagbalik-loob na sa pamahalaan*” (I just wanted something to hold on to as proof that I had returned to the government).

These responses demonstrate that E-CLIP's cash and livelihood messaging is not what actually persuades former combatants to surrender. What mattered instead was being treated with dignity by a credible military unit, having propaganda-induced fear disproven, and receiving formal legal recognition as a civilian. Collectively, these narratives demonstrate that the informants viewed surrender not simply as leaving the armed movement but as an opportunity to restore personal security, reunite with their families, regain legal recognition, and begin rebuilding their lives within their communities. Although financial assistance was valued, it was not consistently described as the principal reason for surrender. Rather, the participants emphasized safety, family, dignity, and trust in government institutions as the primary factors that influenced their decision to return to civilian life.

The theme Reasons for Surrendering is consistent with Cubero et al. (2024), who found similar exhaustion- and family-driven motivations for surrender in Davao de Oro, and with Altier (2021), who identified family relationships as a primary motivating factor in disengagement from armed organizations distinct from push factors such as disillusionment. Lemert (1951) and Becker's (1963) Labeling Theory further explain why certification, not cash, carried the greatest weight: a label such as “rebel” becomes a master status, and certification functions as the state's formal act of counter-labeling.

Locally, Rubin (2019) explains that the CPP-NPA's ideological hold in the Philippines is deep enough that exit requires dismantling an entire psychological framework rather than simply offering cash; the present data extends this by identifying precisely which frameworks needed dismantling for these informants — fear of execution, suspicion of the surrender process itself, and disillusionment with the movement's prior promises.

Theme 3.1.2 Gratitude Toward the Military Unit as First Responders. The findings further indicate that informants' overall sense of the program was shaped less by the program's design on paper and more by the specific conduct of the military unit that first received them, whose credibility and follow-through set the tone for everything that followed.

KI-1 credited the receiving unit directly, sharing that “*ang pinakamalaking tulong po upang maproseso ang E-CLIP ko ay ang unit ng army kung saan ako nagsurrender*” (the biggest help in processing my E-CLIP was the army unit where I surrendered).

KI-7 described the cumulative effect of that early support as transformative, stating that “*na-transform na po kami, napakalaking pagbabago po sa amin*.” KI-6 named several agencies by name and role, concluding that “*naging kampante po kami. Mababait naman po sila*” (we became confident, they were kind to us).

These responses demonstrate that trust in E-CLIP as a whole is built, in practice, one credible personal interaction at a time, rather than through awareness of the program's formal structure or entitlements. The specific unit or officer who first engaged an informant became, in each case, the lens through which the entire program was subsequently understood.

This finding is significant because it means the quality of first contact carries outsized weight relative to its brief duration, and that inconsistent conduct across different receiving units could produce very different overall impressions of the same program among otherwise similar beneficiaries.

The theme Gratitude Toward the Military Unit as First Responders is consistent with Suarez and Baines (2021) and Sabogal (2024), who document the gatekeeping and trust-building role of the receiving military unit in DDR processing broadly.

Locally, this connects to Silvallana and Hagling's (2023) finding that E-CLIP's implementation quality varies considerably depending on the local government units and personnel involved, extended here to show that the same variability operates at the very first point of contact, before any formal LGU involvement begins.

3.2. What has your experience been with receiving E-CLIP's program services and benefits?

Table 2 presents the informants' experience with the actual delivery of E-CLIP's program services and benefits. The findings reveal that delay, exclusion, and a persistent lack of information shaped the informants' experience of program services far more than the specific benefits eventually received, and that even where cash or in-kind assistance was delivered, it was frequently unaccompanied by the training needed to make it last. Seven of the nine informants (KI-1, KI-2, KI-4, KI-5, KI-6, KI-7, KI-9) directly addressed this question; the remaining two (KI-3, KI-8) did not raise this topic in their interview.

These accounts demonstrate that E-CLIP's service delivery does not currently operate the way its own mandate requires, and that the burden of pursuit falls on beneficiaries rather than on the agencies responsible for tracking their cases. From the responses, two major themes emerged: Delays in Receiving Benefits and Lack of Information, and Cash and In-Kind Assistance Without Adequate Training.

Theme 3.2.1. Delays in Receiving Benefits and Lack of Information. The findings indicate that the biggest problem informants experienced with E-CLIP's services was not the quality of what was eventually given, but how long they waited, and in some cases, that nothing arrived at all despite years of eligibility. For at least one household, this delay compounded into total exclusion sustained across two full decades.

KI-9 shared that “*parang napabayaan po kami... pero kami, naiiwanan pa rin*” (it felt like we were neglected, but we were still being left behind). KI-4 revealed something more severe than



delay, stating that “*sa totoo lang po, sa aming lugar, kahit isa pa man wala pong nakatanggap,*” and further admitted, regarding housing, health, and education assistance, that “*nalaman nyo dati pa? Ngayon lang po.*” KI-6 similarly noted that “*bumaba po kami, sir, nung 2003. Wala pa pong mga ganitong programa noon.*” KI-5 traced the process itself to the source of the delay, explaining that it moves from PMFC to the Army for validation and finally to DILG, “*pero doon naputol, kasi walang nagpu-push na sumunod*” (but it stalls there, because no one pushes it forward), while KI-7 experienced a shorter, though still multi-month, wait, noting the benefits arrived only once the implementing office was “*inihabol... ng end of the year accomplishment nila*” (racing to meet their year-end accomplishment targets).

These responses demonstrate that delay in this context is not a uniform experience: for some it means waiting for an application already filed, while for others, such as KI-4 and KI-6, it means never having entered the pipeline at all, whether from an information vacuum or from a timing gap that predates the program's existence. In every case, however, the informant only learned the true scope of what they were owed well after the fact.

This distinction carries direct policy weight, since an outreach fix aimed only at speeding up existing applications would not reach informants like KI-4 and KI-6, who were never informed the program applied to them in the first place, or who surrendered before the program existed to recognize them at all.

The theme Delays in Receiving Benefits and Lack of Information confirms Silvallana and Hagling (2023), who documented communication barriers in E-CLIP implementation among Central Luzon local government units, largely as a first-contact messaging problem; the present findings extend this by showing the information gap can persist for years inside a community already surrendered.

Locally, Alcantara and De Castro (2023), in their survey of one hundred E-CLIP returnees in Sorsogon, similarly found that livelihood gains were partial and fragile when fund releases were delayed and when beneficiaries were not kept informed of the assistance available to them, confirming that KI-4 and KI-6's experience is a documented, recurring feature of the program's implementation nationally rather than an isolated administrative lapse.

Theme 3.2.2. Cash and In-Kind Assistance Without Adequate Training. The findings further reveal that even when cash or in-kind livelihood assistance was received in full, it did not translate into lasting livelihood without an accompanying skills or financial literacy component, leaving informants to either consume the assistance immediately or fund their own training separately out of pocket.

KI-1 explained that “*yung 65,000 na nakuha ko sa E-CLIP ay naubos na po. Nagpagawa kami ng bahay at yung natira ay ginamit sa pang-araw-araw*” (the 65,000 I received has already been used up; we had a house built and used the rest for daily needs). KI-9 described a similar experience with a smaller DTI grant, sharing that “*walang tunay na training para mapalago ang pera*” (there was no real training to grow the money). KI-6 confirmed that whatever livelihood activity the household eventually pursued, such as raising pigs, was undertaken “*galing*

sa sarili naming pondo, hindi po galing sa E-CLIP” (using our own funds, not from E-CLIP). KI-2 similarly noted a long wait for the assistance itself “*inabot po ng dalawang taon bago naming natanggap ang pera*” (it took two years before we received the money) and described the accompanying livelihood orientation as informal, delivered through occasional outings with the Battalion Commander rather than structured training in raising cattle, chicken, and goats.

These responses demonstrate that capital delivered without a matching skills component tends toward immediate consumption or informal self-funded experimentation rather than durable, program-supported investment, regardless of whether the assistance came as cash, as with KI-1, or as smaller supplementary grants, as with KI-9.

The absence of a standardized skills-training and market-linkage component paired with cash or in-kind disbursement therefore represents a specific, addressable design gap rather than a matter of individual financial discipline, and points directly to the need for structured training prior to fund release.

The theme Cash and In-Kind Assistance Without Adequate Training is consistent with Humphreys and Weinstein (2018), who found across multiple DDR contexts that cash alone does not produce lasting improvement and must be paired with skills training and market connections, and with the ILO (2010), which reached the same conclusion for post-conflict settings broadly.

Locally, Alcantara and De Castro (2023) documented this same gap directly within E-CLIP, finding that financial literacy support was largely absent from fund disbursement in their Sorsogon sample, producing the same consumption-rather-than-investment pattern KI-1 and KI-9 describe.

3.3. Looking back on your participation in E-CLIP, what moments or experiences have stayed with you? Why do you consider these experiences significant?

Table 3 presents the moments and experiences that stayed with informants most from their participation in E-CLIP. The findings reveal that legal case resolution, not cash or livelihood assistance, is what informants themselves consider the truest marker of their freedom, and that the broader experience of finally being heard and treated as legitimate civilians left an equally lasting impression. Six of the nine informants (KI-1, KI-2, KI-3, KI-5, KI-6, KI-7) directly addressed this question; the remaining three (KI-4, KI-8, KI-9) did not raise this topic in their interview.

These accounts demonstrate that a program's most valued outcome may not be the one it emphasizes most in its own messaging. From the responses, two major themes emerged: Legal Case Clearance and the Risk It Can Be Reopened, and Becoming a Recognized Civilian Again.

Theme 3.3.1 Legal Case Clearance and the Risk It Can Be Reopened. The findings indicate that four of the nine informants independently named the resolution of a pending legal case as the most significant and memorable part of their E-CLIP participation, ahead of any cash benefit received, while one account also revealed that this milestone is not always permanent.



KI-3 stated plainly that “*yung malinis na ang pangalan ko. Hindi ko iyon malilimutan.*” KI-2 explained that “*yung naayos na ang kaso ko at nagkaroon na kaming mag-asawa ng JAPPIC Certification, isang katunayan na kami ay malaya nang mamuhay bilang mga sibilyan.*” KI-1 similarly credited legal clearance as “*ang pinakamalaking tulong.*” However, KI-7 revealed that “*pagkatapos ng halos 20 taon, lumabas pa palang itinago nilang kasong nakaatang pa rin sa asawa ko... kahit pinangako nila sa amin noon na cleared na kami.*” These responses demonstrate that legal resolution, not cash, functions as the informants' true measure of freedom, while KI-7's account demonstrates that this foundation is not guaranteed to remain intact once granted, a possibility the other three informants had no reason to anticipate at the time they described their own clearance as final.

This finding carries direct significance for program safeguards: a legal clearance that can silently resurface years later undermines the very sense of security the certification is meant to provide, pointing toward a need for permanent, cross-agency verification of closed cases.

The theme Legal Case Clearance and the Risk It Can Be Reopened is grounded in Goffman's (1963) concept of spoiled identity, only provisionally repaired. Lemert (1951) and Becker (1963) generally treat state certification as a durable, one-time event; KI-7's account shows the label can resurface administratively even after the state's own formal counter-labeling act, a possibility their classic formulation does not anticipate.

Locally, Tabunyang (2025) found that labeling rather than behavioral change often determines reintegration outcomes in Philippine criminological contexts, and Montiel, Paz, and Medriano (2022) documented how government media's own shift in labeling former rebels from rebels to terrorists amplified public stigma independently of any individual's legal status. Both findings help explain why even a fully cleared name, as KI-7's case shows, remains vulnerable to institutional forces entirely outside the beneficiary's control.

Theme 3.3.2. Becoming a Recognized Civilian Again.

Beyond the legal act of certification itself, informants also described a broader, more diffuse experience of finally being seen, heard, and treated as legitimate members of society, which several named as equally memorable to the certification event.

KI-7 described this shift directly, sharing that “*yung mga gusto naming ipaabot o ipahayag noon, ngayon po ay naririnig na po nila*” (what we wanted to convey before, now they hear it). KI-2 tied this recognition to a specific, remembered moment during the hearing process itself, recalling that “*pagkalabas namin, okay naman, magiging mamamayan na naman kami at malaya.*” KI-6 located the same feeling at the moment livelihood assistance was confirmed, sharing that “*nung nabalitaan po namin na malapit nang i-award, masaya na rin po kami.*” KI-5 located this same sense of legitimacy in a different kind of moment altogether, not an agency announcement, but discovering through her own People's Organization that programs to help her even existed: “*doon na lang po nung nalaman na may mga magagandang programa pala para makatulong*” (it was only then that we learned such helpful programs even existed), suggesting

peer and community networks can deliver this same recognition even where formal agency contact has not.

These responses demonstrate that being formally recognized as a citizen again is not experienced as a single legal event but as a series of moments, a hearing, an announcement, an award notification, each of which reinforces the same underlying sense of legitimacy regained.

This finding is significant because it shows that meaningful moments in program participation are not limited to the certification itself; program communications that mark and publicly acknowledge these secondary milestones may reinforce the same psychological benefit at multiple points rather than only once.

The theme Becoming a Recognized Civilian Again connects to the broader DDR literature's attention to recognition and legitimacy as psychological goods distinct from material benefit, consistent with the general finding that former combatants value social reintegration markers highly.

Locally, this extends Rubin's (2019) account of the psychological weight of exiting the CPP-NPA by showing that the relief of exit is reinforced repeatedly through small, cumulative moments of being taken seriously by the state, not resolved in a single certifying act alone.

3.2. How do the informants describe their transition from armed struggle to civilian life as a result of their participation under the E-CLIP?

This section examines the transition process as former rebels experience and describe it, focusing on how participation in E-CLIP shapes their journey from insurgent to civilian life. The inquiry explores what the transition feels like experientially, the psychological shifts, identity transformations, relationship changes, and practical adjustments involved in leaving armed struggle for civilian existence. It attends to how E-CLIP services and support facilitate or complicate these transitions.

3.2.1. Can you describe your journey of transition from being part of the armed struggle to civilian life?

Table 4 presents the informants' journey of transition from armed struggle to civilian life. The findings reveal that this journey was driven by an accumulation of hardship inside the movement that eventually became unbearable, and by family, which functioned as both the reason to leave and the reason never to return. Seven of the nine informants (KI-2, KI-3, KI-4, KI-5, KI-6, KI-7, KI-9) directly addressed this question; the remaining two (KI-1, KI-8) did not raise this topic in their interview.

These accounts demonstrate that transition is a process with roots extending both before and well after the moment of surrender itself. From the responses, two major themes emerged: Hardship as the Push Toward Surrender, and Family as the Pull Toward Civilian Life.

Theme 3.2.1.1 Hardship as the Push Toward Surrender.

The findings indicate that the immediate, physical hardship of life inside the armed movement, hunger, forced movement, and the constant threat of military operations, formed the first and most consistently named reason informants began considering surrender, well before any specific plan to leave took shape.



KI-6 described daily deprivation directly, sharing that in the mountains “minsan hindi kumakain” (sometimes we did not eat) and had to “*maglalakad ng malayo, magapang ng matagal*” (walk far, crawl for long stretches) during military operations. KI-3 named the psychological toll of constant surveillance, explaining that being monitored meant “*wala kang pahintulot talagang mapayapaan ang isip.*” KI-9 described the specific fear that surrender itself might provoke violence, recalling that “*baka kami ang unang papatayin.*” KI-4 named a further, family-specific hardship, observing that comrades with children could not be present with them, leaving “*kalungkot ang pamilya.*” KI-2 similarly described reaching a breaking point over physical exhaustion and hunger, and noted that once the decision was made, her actual return to civilian life happened quickly. KI-7's account was the starkest: she witnessed her own squad leader killed beside her after being captured in Barangay Casiguran, an experience that made the danger of continued involvement immediate and undeniable rather than anticipated.

These responses demonstrate that hardship inside the movement was experienced on multiple, compounding levels at once: physical deprivation, psychological strain from surveillance, fear surrounding the surrender process itself, and grief over family separation, all converging to make continued participation in the movement increasingly untenable.

This layered hardship is significant because it shows that no single grievance alone explains the decision to leave; program messaging aimed at active combatants may be more persuasive if it addresses this full, compounding picture rather than any one hardship in isolation.

The theme Hardship as the Push Toward Surrender connects to the broader international literature on combatant exhaustion and disengagement, which frames cumulative physical and psychological strain as a primary driver of exit from armed groups.

Locally, this is consistent with Rubin's (2019) account of the CPP-NPA's demanding operational tempo in the Philippines, and extends it by showing the specific, lived forms that exhaustion took for these particular informants.

Theme 3.2.1.2. Family as the Pull Toward Civilian Life.

The findings further indicate that family functioned not merely as a general motivation but as the specific, identifiable trigger that converted long-standing hardship into an actual decision to leave, often tied to a concrete event or realization involving children or marriage within the movement.

KI-9 explained that the decision was made “*para sa pamilya,*” citing the movement's meager 500-peso monthly support for children as insufficient. KI-4 identified a specific triggering moment, the prospect of marrying and raising a family entirely within the movement, sharing that “*hindi ko gustong maranasan ng pamilya ko ang nakikita ko sa mga dating kasama namin.*” KI-5 described an almost identical triggering moment from her own perspective, explaining that being told she would marry within the movement was “*yung naging dahilan ko ng pag-iisip na bumaba,*” recruited originally into the movement at sixteen out of youthful curiosity before this later realization prompted her exit at eighteen.

These responses demonstrate that family functions as more than an abstract value; for both KI-4 and KI-5, a specific anticipated event, marriage and family life confined entirely within the armed movement, was the precise moment general dissatisfaction became a firm decision to leave.

This finding is significant because it identifies a concrete, nameable turning point rather than only a diffuse motivation, suggesting that reintegration outreach could be timed and framed around exactly these kinds of life-stage moments, marriage, childbearing, when combatants may be most receptive to considering exit.

The theme Family as the Pull Toward Civilian Life is consistent with Muggah and Jutersonke (2018), who identify family reunification as one of the most reliable predictors of durable exit from armed groups across many countries, and with Altier (2021), who distinguishes family as a pull factor from disillusionment or exhaustion as push factors.

Locally, KI-5's account additionally connects to this study's broader documentation of recruitment during adolescence, showing that the same family-related concern that first drew her toward the movement as a curious teenager later became the reason she left it as a young adult.

3.2.2 What changes have you noticed in your inner experience over the years? How do you see yourself now when interacting with your family and community?

Table 5 presents changes in identity, belonging, and relationships the informants noticed over the years. The findings reveal that beneath informants' initial relief was a slower, more personal adjustment involving the unlearning of command habits, alongside a separate, ongoing labor of rebuilding trust damaged by years of absence or suspicion. Eight of the nine informants (KI-1, KI-2, KI-3, KI-4, KI-5, KI-6, KI-7, KI-9) directly addressed this question; only KI-8 did not raise this topic in their interview.

These accounts demonstrate that identity change is only one half of successful reintegration; the other half is relational and depends on other people's willingness to observe and believe in that change over time. From the responses, two major themes emerged: Unlearning Command Habits and Personal Change, and Rebuilding Trust with the Community.

Theme 3.2.2.1. Unlearning Command Habits and Personal Change. The findings indicate that informants had to consciously and deliberately unlearn habits of command and hierarchy formed inside the armed movement, a process that touched not only how they treated family members but their basic emotional temperament as well.

KI-3 described bringing a commanding disposition into family life at first, before slowly allowing “*ang karapatan ng bawat miyembro ng pamilya*” (each family member's say in things) to return. KI-5 reflected on internalizing a value of gender equality first introduced within the movement itself, noting “*kami mga babae may karapatan.*” KI-1 described a shift in temperament entirely, sharing that a formerly short fuse gave way to significantly longer patience, remarking, “*minsan naiisip ko, hindi ako yun. Pero magandang palatandaan po iyon*” (sometimes I think that wasn't me, but that's a good sign).



These responses demonstrate that personal change after leaving the movement operates across several registers at once: relational (KI-3's shift from command to shared decision-making), ideological (KI-5's retained belief in equal rights), and emotional-temperamental (KI-1's patience). Each informant frames the change positively, even when it produces the disorienting sense of no longer recognizing an earlier version of themselves.

This multi-register change is significant because it suggests reintegration support should not treat "identity change" as a single event to be addressed once, but as an ongoing adjustment spanning relationships, beliefs, and emotional regulation, each of which may benefit from different kinds of support.

The theme Unlearning Command Habits and Personal Change connects to Theidon's (2020) concept of identity paralysis in post-conflict Peru, where the absence of structured psychosocial support prevents this kind of multi-register change from taking hold. Gluecker et al. (2021) similarly found that former FARC fighters in Colombia retained strong prior identities long after formally leaving, requiring sustained rather than one-time support to fully adjust.

Locally, Mercado (2021) found that identity rebuilding among former MILF fighters in the Philippines followed multiple, simultaneous pathways rather than a single linear process, a finding this study's data reinforces through the distinct relational, ideological, and emotional registers KI-3, KI-5, and KI-1 each describe.

Theme 3.2.2.2. Rebuilding Trust with the Community.

The findings further indicate that identity change alone was not sufficient; informants also had to actively re-earn the trust of specific people damaged by years of absence or suspicion, a process that unfolded gradually and unevenly.

KI-4 explained that "*ang pinakamahirap po ay ang muling pagtatayo ng tiwala, hindi lang sa pamahalaan, kundi sa mga tao sa komunidad,*" adding that relationships slowly returned once people saw real change. KI-6, by contrast, described a more guarded posture, sharing that "*kapag sinira ng tao ang aking tiwala, medyo nilalayo na lang po ako sa kanya.*" KI-1 described the specific arc of this process in her own community, recalling that neighbors initially seemed reluctant to believe her, "*pero kalaunan, okay naman na po sila*" (but eventually, they were okay with it). KI-2 described an almost identical arc, recalling that at first the community treated her presence like a contagious illness before gradually warming once her return to the government's side became clear. KI-7 and KI-9 both located this same restored trust in concrete, present-day participation, noting they are now able to join barangay activities and food-for-work programs, and describing themselves simply as happy and at ease in the community today.

These responses demonstrate that trust returns gradually through consistent, observed behavior over time, not automatically once a program benefit is delivered or a case is legally resolved, and that different informants adopt different strategies while waiting for that trust to return, some patient, like KI-1, others more protectively guarded, like KI-6.

This finding is significant because it identifies a labor-intensive, relational dimension of reintegration that no cash transfer or certification can substitute for, requiring instead sustained community-level engagement and, potentially, structured programming that helps communities process and extend that trust more quickly.

The theme Rebuilding Trust with the Community aligns with Sampson and Groves's (1989) work on collective efficacy, and with Hart and Gomez (2022), who found that the absence of formal social acknowledgment of civilian status constituted a more persistent barrier to reintegration than material deprivation itself among former combatants in Northern Ireland and Colombia.

3.2.3 How would you describe your current quality of life? In what ways is your life now different from your previous experiences?

Table 6 presents the informants' embodied experience of civilian life and their current quality of life. The findings reveal that the gain informants described most immediately and most consistently was physical, freedom from the need to hide, and that this physical relief settled into an ordinary, restored daily routine. Seven of the nine informants (KI-1, KI-2, KI-3, KI-5, KI-6, KI-7, KI-9) directly addressed this question; the remaining two (KI-4, KI-8) did not raise this topic in their interview.

These accounts demonstrate that freedom, for these informants, is first felt in the body before it is understood as a legal or economic achievement, and that the return to unremarkable daily normalcy is itself experienced as significant. From the responses, two major themes emerged: A Physical Sense of Safety and Freedom, and The Return to an Ordinary Daily Routine.

Theme 3.2.3.1. A Physical Sense of Safety and Freedom.

The findings indicate that the gain informants described most immediately and most consistently was physical: no longer needing to hide, climb mountains to evade capture, or go hungry, replaced instead by a felt sense of peace and safety in daily movement.

KI-1 described the shift from constant vigilance to peace of mind, no longer fearing arrest because her name is clean. KI-6 explained that discipline carried over from armed life is now a natural, functional part of his civilian routine. KI-2 echoed the same relief in simpler terms, sharing that he and his spouse now know "*hindi na kami huhulihin ng mga pulis o sundalo.*" KI-5 described the same relief as unrestricted movement itself, sharing that she can now go anywhere she wants and be with her family, a direct contrast to the constant hiding of her time in the movement.

These responses demonstrate that freedom is felt first in the body, as the simple ability to move without fear, before it is processed as a legal status or a financial improvement, and that this bodily relief is described in strikingly similar terms across informants regardless of how differently their broader circumstances otherwise turned out.

This bodily register of freedom is significant because it shows discipline and vigilance carried over from armed life need not be treated only as risk factors, but can be redirected into



functional civilian assets, as KI-6's account demonstrates, while the shared language of safety across informants suggests this physical relief is a near-universal first stage of reintegration.

The theme A Physical Sense of Safety and Freedom find its clearest grounding in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodiment, where freedom is bodily as much as legal or cognitive. Kähkö (2022) challenges DDR programming's tendency to treat carried-over dispositions from armed life, such as discipline, only as risks to be managed rather than assets that can be redirected.

This is further consistent with Gluecker et al. (2021), who found that former FARC combatants retained embodied habits and collective identities well past formal demobilization, requiring sustained engagement rather than assuming these carried-over traits would simply fade.

Theme 3.2.3.2 The Return to an Ordinary Daily Routine.

Beyond the initial relief of physical safety, informants described settling into a daily routine notable precisely for its unremarkable ordinariness, a state they describe with evident satisfaction after years in which no such ordinary routine was possible.

KI-3 described life now as simply "*normal na. Magtrabaho lang,*" a stark contrast to the constant mental burden of life inside the movement. KI-9 similarly described life as being "*sa patag na lang kami ngayon,*" adding "*okay na. Ang bagay, nasanayan na.*" KI-6 located this shift specifically for the purpose of waking each morning, contrasting waking "*nang alerto*" in the mountains with waking now "*para sa pamilya.*" KI-7 located this same ordinariness in livelihood specifically, describing a period of real hardship that has given way to a small business and a manageable, sustaining routine.

These responses demonstrate that the return to ordinariness itself, not any dramatic improvement in material circumstances, is what informants register as the clearest sign that their lives have genuinely changed. The absence of constant vigilance is as meaningful to them as any positive addition to their circumstances.

This finding is significant because it suggests that program success, from the informants' own perspective, should be partly by the presence of unremarkable daily stability rather than only by visible economic advancement, a dimension standard livelihood-focused indicators do not capture.

The theme The Return to an Ordinary Daily Routine connects to the broader DDR literature's attention to "normalcy" as an underappreciated but consistently reported marker of successful reintegration across post-conflict contexts internationally.

Locally, this complements Rubin's (2019) account of the psychological weight of leaving the CPP-NPA, showing that the relief of exit is measured by informants not only in the absence of danger but in the presence of mundane, purposeful daily structure.

3.3 How do the informants perceive the long-term sustainability of the assistance and support provided by E-CLIP?

This section examines participants' own perspectives on whether E-CLIP assistance and support can sustain their reintegration over time, recognizing that beneficiaries possess

experiential expertise about sustainability that external observers may not recognize. The inquiry explores which program elements participants view as creating foundations for enduring civilian life versus temporary accommodations likely to collapse. It examines what happens when program support ends and whether participants feel prepared to sustain themselves independently.

3.3.1 What gives you a sense of standing on solid ground, and how do you see your future with or without the program's continued support?

These accounts demonstrate that a felt sense of solid ground is answered by informants in terms of specific, checkable conditions rather than general reassurance. From the responses, two major themes emerged: Hope That Depends on Organizational Continuity, and Land and Shelter as the True Foundation.

Theme 3.3.3.1. Hope That Depends on Organizational Continuity. The findings indicate that optimism about the future is consistently conditional, and frequently tied to whether the informant's People's Organization or cooperative remains active, or to a broader trust that government sincerity will hold, rather than to individual savings alone.

KI-2 expressed confidence that E-CLIP can sustain their needs going forward. KI-7 tied her hope specifically to organizational continuity, describing the assistance received as something that "*nakaugat na*" (rooted) rather than simply been consumed. KI-8 grounded his optimism in a broader assessment of government sincerity, stating that the programs will last "*dahil sinsero at totohanan naman ang mga sinasabi ng gobyerno.*" KI-6 anchored the same sense of stability in the continuity of his People's Organization's own livelihood fund, hoping specifically to grow what had already been given rather than depending on a further government award.

These responses demonstrate that a felt sense of solid ground is answered less by an abstract feeling of confidence and more by concrete, observable conditions: whether the People's Organization survives, and whether the government's demonstrated conduct continues to match its stated commitments.

This finding is significant for sustainability planning, since it suggests program evaluators should track organizational and collective continuity, and government follow-through on stated commitments, not only individual income levels, as an indicator of durable reintegration.

The theme Hope That Depends on Organizational Continuity is consistent with UNDP (2024) and Zuluaga and Palacios (2025), who both note that program evaluation frameworks measuring only individual outcomes systematically miss this collective dimension of sustainability.

Locally, this connects to AbiGhanem's (2025) finding that locally embedded organizations with community trust and social capital improved both individual and long-term reintegration outcomes, consistent with KI-7's own framing of assistance having "taken root" rather than simply been consumed.

Theme 3.3.1.1. Land and Shelter as the True Foundation. The findings further indicate that when informants describe what



would give them a genuine sense of solid ground, they consistently point to land and shelter specifically, framing these as the literal foundation without which no other form of assistance can produce lasting stability.

KI-9 stated that the first priority should be “*tirahan*” (shelter), explaining that having a place for the family to stand is what matters most. KI-4 echoed this directly, noting that despite receiving other government assistance, “*wala pa kaming sariling lupa. Kinakatalikan pa ng bahay namin*” (we don't yet have our own land; the back of our house even borders someone else's property). KI-3 reframed the entire purpose of E-CLIP around this same root issue, arguing that the program's task is not only to clear a beneficiary's name but to address the underlying “*ugat ng kahirapan*” (root of poverty), which he identifies as fundamentally tied to secure financial and physical footing.

These responses demonstrate that when informants use the metaphor of standing on solid ground, they are frequently speaking literally as well as figuratively: land and shelter function as the precondition for every other form of stability, not simply one need among many.

This finding is significant because it reframes what “sustainability support” should prioritize: without addressing land and shelter insecurity directly, other forms of livelihood assistance risk being built on a foundation the informants themselves describe as fundamentally unstable. The theme Land and Shelter as the True Foundation is consistent with Muggah and Jutersonke (2018), who found land access to be the single most important determinant of sustainable livelihoods for former combatants across multiple DDR contexts internationally.

Locally, this is confirmed directly within E-CLIP by Alcantara and De Castro (2023), whose Sorsogon survey found that livelihood gains remained partial and fragile whenever land and housing status remained unresolved, and by Figueroa (2025), who found quantitatively that E-CLIP's performance specifically declines at the sustainability stage, precisely where land security would otherwise anchor it.

3.3.2 What do you think will happen when E-CLIP support ends? How do you feel transitioning from self-reliance?

These accounts demonstrate that sustainability depends on more than the amount of support given; it depends equally on land security and on whether beneficiaries retain genuine decision-making power over what they are given. From the responses, two major themes emerged: Livelihood Cannot Last Without Owning Land, and Government Control Over Livelihood Funds Feels Like the Old Control.

Theme 3.3.2.1. Livelihood Cannot Last Without Owning Land. The findings indicate that when informants imagine life after program support ends, they consistently return to the same unresolved problem: the absence of secure land, regardless of what else has been provided.

KI-9 and KI-4 both said stability is impossible “*kung hindi naman namin pag-aari ang lupa*” (if the land is not our own). KI-8 revealed a related, previously undocumented barrier, explaining that he avoids a better fishing opportunity elsewhere specifically

because “*baka pag-isipan na naman nila ako*” (they might suspect me again) if he relocates.

These responses demonstrate that livelihood insecurity is not only caused by external factors like missing land titles; it can also result from informants deliberately limiting their own choices to avoid renewed suspicion, as KI-8's account shows.

This self-limiting behavior is significant because it identifies a hidden cost of stigma that additional capital alone would not resolve, since the barrier is fear of perception, not a lack of money or opportunity. The theme Livelihood Cannot Last Without Owning Land is consistent with Muggah and Jutersonke (2018), who found land access to be the single most important determinant of sustainable livelihoods for former combatants, and with Palik (2025) and Agnew's (1992) General Strain Theory, which frames this as blocked goals compounding into strain.

Locally, Alcantara and De Castro (2023) confirm this pattern directly within E-CLIP, finding livelihood gains partial and fragile whenever land status remained unresolved, and Figueroa (2025) found quantitatively that E-CLIP's performance drops specifically in its sustainability phase.

Theme 3.3.2.2. Government Control Over Livelihood Funds Feels Like the Old Control. The findings reveal this study's single most original and most serious finding: for at least one informant, imagining life after program support is complicated not by a lack of support, but by excessive control over the support she already received. This theme is grounded in a single, highly detailed account from KI-7, whose transcript included several distinct statements on this exact issue, presented together here as this study's clearest single-case demonstration of the problem.

KI-7 explained that being required to “mag-report... mag-quota” (report and meet a quota) felt “*parang nasa bundok din po kami na kontrolado rin lang*” (like being back in the mountains, controlled all over again). She further clarified the specific mechanism of this control, noting that “*sarili na namin ang grant na ini-award sa amin, tapos sila rin pala ang masusunod*” (even though the grant was awarded to us as our own, it turns out they are still the ones who must be obeyed). She then asked directly to “*bigyan po nila kami ng kalayaan na makapag-decision*” (be given the freedom to decide) about what is given to her group.

These three statements, taken together, demonstrate that the very system meant to give informants independence can, in practice, recreate the feeling of control that motivated the informant's original exit from the armed movement, described by her own words as returning to “*dating kontrolado*.”

This finding matters directly for how livelihood support should be managed. Support structured around agency-set quotas and reporting requirements, without beneficiary decision-making power, risks undermining the self-reliance the program says it wants to build, and given how precisely KI-7's language echoes her own earlier description of life inside the armed movement, this risk should be treated as substantive rather than incidental.

The theme Government Control Over Livelihood Funds Feels Like the Old Control has no direct match in the international literature reviewed for this study, which generally treats livelihood



support as a question of resource adequacy rather than a question of who controls decisions about that support.

No study in this dissertation's reviewed local literature documents this exact problem for E-CLIP either. This stands as this study's most original finding regarding livelihood support after reintegration, warranting further research with additional informants to determine how widely this experience is shared.

3.3.3 What has E-CLIP done well for you and your family, and where do you see the biggest gaps in support?

These accounts demonstrate that informants' own definition of program success extends both forward, to the next generation, and inward, to their own transformed identity. From the responses, two major themes emerged: Children's Education and Unmet Needs as the Real Measure of Success, and What Has Truly Become Part of My Life.

Theme 3.3.3.1. Children's Education and Unmet Needs as the Real Measure of Success. The findings indicate that when asked about strengths and gaps, informants measured the program's success primarily through their children's educational trajectory, while also revealing an unaddressed gap for dependents with disabilities.

KI-9 explained that scholarship support only covers college, while her children are still in high school and elementary, and that one of her children has a disability requiring more help than is currently available. KI-7 described the same scholarship benefit positively from her own household's perspective, noting that her children have already been included. KI-4 tied his hopes for his children's education directly to the still-unresolved land issue, suggesting the two needs are experienced as linked rather than separate. KI-5 identified a related but distinct gap, not in what E-CLIP provides but in what beneficiaries know it provides: she only recently learned that healthcare, housing, educational assistance, and mental health counseling were part of the program at all.

These responses demonstrate that informants' own sense of the program's success is tied closely to their children's educational path, with KI-7's positive experience and KI-9's unmet need together showing that the same scholarship component can be experienced very differently depending on a child's grade level and specific needs. This documents, for the first time in the reviewed E-CLIP literature, a gap specific to beneficiaries' dependents with disabilities, and shows that even where the scholarship component functions well, as in KI-7's case, its coverage gaps at other grade levels remain a live concern for other households.

The theme Children's Education and Unmet Needs as the Real Measure of Success has no close match identified in the international literature reviewed for this study regarding disability provisions specifically within DDR-linked educational assistance. Locally, Silvallana and Hagling (2023) discuss educational assistance gaps broadly but do not address disability-specific service gaps within beneficiary households. Given KI-9's account rests on a single informant regarding the disability-specific gap, this aspect is presented as an area meriting further research, though its substantive weight for recommendations does not depend on how many informants raised it.

Theme 3.3.3.1 What Has Truly Become Part of My Life.

The findings further indicate that when asked what aspect of the program has become most fully integrated into their own sense of self, informants converged again on legal certification and, in one case, livelihood continuity, rather than any specific cash amount received.

KI-1 stated plainly that "*yung E-CLIP, dahil doon nalinis po ang pangalan ko... naging bahagi na talaga ng aking buhay ang mga programa ng E-CLIP.*" KI-3 identified certification specifically as "*ang pinakamahalaga at pangmatagalan para sa akin*" (the most important and long-lasting thing for me). KI-7 named a different, though related, aspect, explaining that "*ang livelihood at puhunan na ibinibigay ng E-CLIP... iyon po ay talagang bahagi na ng aming buhay,*" showing that for her household specifically, the livelihood component had achieved the same lasting integration that certification achieved for KI-1 and KI-3.

These responses demonstrate that what becomes "part of one's life" from E-CLIP is not uniform across informants; for most, it is legal certification, but for at least one informant whose livelihood support was paired with genuine follow-through, that component achieved the same status. This finding is significant because it suggests that any E-CLIP component, not only certification, can become durably integrated into a beneficiary's sense of self and daily life, provided it is delivered with the same completeness and follow-through that certification typically receives. The theme What Has Truly Become Part of My Life connects to the broader DDR literature's attention to which specific program components achieve lasting psychological significance for beneficiaries versus which remain merely transactional. Locally, this extends the certification-centered findings already discussed under Research Question 1 by showing that livelihood support, when properly sustained, can achieve the same status in a beneficiary's life that legal certification more consistently does.

3.4 What factors, based on participants' experiences, enable or hinder their sustained reintegration into their communities?

This question investigates the specific factors that participants themselves identify as facilitating or obstructing their sustained reintegration. It moves beyond general sustainability perceptions to concrete enabling and hindering factors across multiple dimensions. The inquiry recognizes that factors may interact complexly: enablers in one dimension may compensate for barriers in others, or multiple hindrances may compound to overwhelm even strong enablers. Understanding these factors from participants' perspectives proves essential for program design responsive to actual rather than assumed needs.

3.4.1 What factors have helped you most in your reintegration, and what personal strengths have you discovered through this process?

Theme 3.4.1.1. The People's Organization as a Lifeline.

The findings indicate that being organized into a group consistently emerged as the strongest single factor that helped informants' reintegration, functioning simultaneously as a source



of collective leverage, an active counter-recruitment strategy, and, for at least one informant, an ongoing test of leadership resolve.

KI-4 explained that *“kung wala kayong grupo, hindi kayo mapapansin”* (if you do not have a group, you will not be noticed). KI-2 revealed a further reason behind his own organizing work, sharing that he set up his organization partly *“para maiwasan natin yung pagdugtong sa kanila ng kabilang grupo”* (to help prevent recruitment by the other side). KI-8, speaking as an association president himself, described the ongoing personal cost of sustaining that organization, noting that some members seem to want him to give up, *“pero hindi ako susuko dahil alam ko ang ginagawa ko.”* KI-5 likewise credited her People's Organization, together with OPAPRU, as the channel through which she genuinely feels supported, distinct from her still-unresolved experience of E-CLIP's own processing.

These responses demonstrate that People's Organizations serve at least three functions at once: giving members real influence they would not have alone, actively protecting the community from renewed recruitment, and requiring sustained personal leadership commitment from the members, like KI-8, who take on responsibility for keeping the organization functioning. This multi-function role matters because it means PO support should not be treated only as a benefit-delivery mechanism. As KI-2 and KI-8's accounts show, it functions as a genuine community security asset and a leadership development structure, both deserving formal recognition and support.

The theme The People's Organization as a Lifeline is consistent with Suarez and Baines (2021) and Sabogal (2024), who document how collective organization enables DDR processing broadly, and with AbiGhanem (2025), who found that community organizations with strong local trust improved both individual and group-level reintegration outcomes in Lebanon. Locally, KI-2's and KI-8's accounts add a dimension neither of these studies specifically highlights: informants framing their own community organizing explicitly as both a counter-insurgency function and a demanding, ongoing act of personal leadership, rather than only as a mechanism of individual benefit delivery.

Theme 3.4.1.2. Trust in Specific Institutions and Personnel. The findings further indicate that institutional trust functioned concretely rather than abstractly: informants named specific units, brigades, and inter-agency arrangements as the actual gateway through which support became accessible, rather than expressing trust in government as a general concept.

KI-3 credited the PMFC directly, explaining that *“sila ang nakipag-ugnayan sa PNB, sa DILG, at sa iba pang ahensya”* on his behalf. KI-8 pointed to the existence of a clear, structured program between the AFP and *surrendered* as *what made the difference*, noting that *“yung pagkaroon ng malinaw na programa... nakatulong iyon.”* KI-2 located the same clarity specifically in the brigade's role, sharing that *“sa pamamagitan ng brigade po ang lahat ng proseso. Mas naging malinaw ang landas.”* KI-7 and KI-9 each named the specific first responders who made the process trustworthy for them: KI-7 credited the PNP through ELCAC, who went house to house to reach her, while KI-9 credited the soldiers who processed her surrender directly, both

crediting the identified unit itself rather than the government in the abstract.

These responses demonstrate that trust in government, in practice, is trust in a specific, named unit or process that visibly functions well, not trust extended abstractly to government as a whole. Each informant identifies the exact structure that made their own case work. This localized trust carries a real risk: because support depends on the specific units and personnel involved, that trust may not automatically transfer if those same personnel are reassigned or a differently structured process is encountered elsewhere.

The theme Trust in Specific Institutions and Personnel is consistent with Suarez and Baines (2021) and Sabogal (2024), who document the military unit's gatekeeping role in DDR processing.

Locally, Silvallana and Hagling (2023) note this as a double-edged dependency, since continuity breaks down when personnel rotate, a risk this study's data confirms directly when informants elsewhere in this chapter describe losing contact once their original processing unit moved on.

3.4.2 What barriers or obstacles have made your reintegration more difficult?

Theme 3.4.2.1. Being Called a Former Rebel Is Still a Barrier. The findings indicate that community-level suspicion and labeling remained a real barrier even after informants completed every formal requirement of the program, though the intensity and persistence of this labeling varied noticeably across informants and communities.

KI-2 said that at first, people treated him *“parang may nakakahawang sakit”* (as if he had a contagious disease). KI-4 went further, directly objecting to the term *“former rebel”* as *“isang uri ng diskriminasyon,”* proposing *“Friend Rescued”* instead. KI-1, by contrast, described the stigma as comparatively mild in her own case, noting that resistance came more from former comrades who doubted her sincerity than from the wider community. KI-6 described a similar lingering label, still being pointed out as one of *“yung mga rebels”* compounded directly by day-to-day economic worry, illustrating how the social and economic dimensions of this barrier often reinforce one another rather than operating separately. These statements demonstrate that being labeled is experienced with real variation: for KI-2, it was an acute, physically-felt avoidance; for KI-4, it was significant enough to warrant actively renaming the label itself; for KI-1, it was present but comparatively minor and directed more at her past affiliation than her present community standing. This variation matters for program communications: a uniform anti-stigma messaging campaign may be necessary for informants like KI-2 and KI-4 but less urgently needed, though still relevant, for informants like KI-1, suggesting community-specific rather than one-size-fits-all approaches to reducing stigma.

The theme Being Called a Former Rebel Is Still a Barrier is grounded in Goffman's (1963) concept of spoiled identity, and in Lopera-Arbelaes (2022), who found that the stigma of being a former guerrilla fighter in Colombia lasted for years after formal demobilization, continuing to shape community interactions, economic opportunities, and self-perception. Locally, Tabunyag (2025) found that labeling rather than behavioral change often



determines reintegration outcomes in the Philippines, and Montiel, Paz, and Medriano (2022) add that government media's own shift in labeling former rebels as terrorists has amplified public stigma at an institutional level, meaning the state's own communications may work against the reintegration its programs are designed to support.

Theme 3.4.2.2. Practical Barriers to Work and Livelihood. The findings further indicate that beyond social labeling, informants encountered concrete, practical obstacles to earning a living, ranging from an initial inability to seek decent work at all to being denied market access on the basis of local residency. KI-9 explained that in the immediate aftermath of surrender, "*hindi kami talaga makapaghanap ng matinong trabaho*" (we really could not look for decent work), still hiding and navigating the turmoil of transition. KI-1 characterized the assistance eventually received as only "pang patch-up," insufficient without accompanying long-term support. KI-7 described a distinct and specific barrier, being excluded from selling her products in a neighboring municipality because "*hindi kami taga-Baler kaya wala kaming karapatan na maghanap-buhay doon.*"

These responses demonstrate that practical livelihood barriers operate at different stages and take different forms: an initial post-surrender inability to work at all, described by KI-9; a persistent insufficiency of support once work does resume, described by KI-1; and territorial or jurisdictional exclusion from specific markets, described by KI-7. This range of practical barriers is significant because it shows that hindering factors are not limited to social stigma alone; economic and jurisdictional obstacles operate independently and would require different remedies, respectively faster post-surrender employment support, sustained rather than one-time livelihood assistance, and clearer market-access protections for beneficiaries operating outside their home municipality.

The theme Practical Barriers to Work and Livelihood connects to the broader literature on structural barriers to post-conflict livelihood reintegration, which similarly documents both the immediate post-exit employment gap and jurisdictional or bureaucratic obstacles to market participation. Locally, KI-7's account of territorial exclusion has no direct precedent in the E-CLIP literature reviewed for this study, representing a specific, previously undocumented barrier worth further investigation across other beneficiaries operating near municipal or provincial boundaries.

3.4.3 How does it feel to be you in this community, with its particular culture and economy? How does that shape your daily experience of reintegration?

Theme 3.4.3.1. Reclaiming a Recognized Place in the Community. The findings indicate that beyond the reduction of stigma discussed under Theme 20, informants across different community types described a positive, active process of reclaiming a recognized place within their home community, often expressed through formal roles or renewed civic participation. KI-3 described this restoration directly, sharing that he no longer feels like an outsider, having "*nag-restore ako ng aking pagkakilanlan.*

Bilang mamamayan" and now serving as a barangay enforcer. KI-2 located the same sense of belonging in his own community organizing work, describing the joy of being able to help his community upon returning to it. KI-9 described a broader network of continued care extending even from the very soldiers who processed her surrender, noting that "*may sumasaklaw pa rin sa amin*" despite her past affiliation with the movement. KI-6 offered a simpler, more direct version of this same acceptance, describing the people of his barangay as now treating him well.

These responses demonstrate that reclaiming community belonging is not only the passive absence of judgment, but an active process involving new civic roles, community service, and an ongoing network of support that extends well beyond the formal certification process itself. This active dimension is significant because it suggests that program design supporting former rebels' entry into visible community roles, such as barangay positions or organizing work, may accelerate reintegration more effectively than anti-stigma messaging alone.

The theme Reclaiming a Recognized Place in the Community connects to the broader DDR literature's attention to civic reintegration and community role restoration as a distinct dimension of successful reintegration beyond economic or legal measures. Locally, this extends Rubin's (2019) account of community-level reintegration dynamics in the Philippines by showing the specific, active forms this restoration can take, civic employment, organizational leadership, and sustained institutional support networks.

Theme 3.3.3.2 Kinship and Informal Trust in a Tribal

Context. The findings further reveal a distinctive experience specific to an informant situated within a tribal community structure, in which belonging depended on a renegotiation of kinship boundaries and cultural distance rather than on formal government certification alone. This theme is grounded predominantly in KI-8's detailed account, drawn from several distinct statements he made on this same topic, presented together as this study's clearest documentation of a pattern specific to indigenous and tribal reintegration contexts. KI-8, a tribal community leader, explained that traditionally, "*kapag hindi ka kamag-anak, kalaban ka,*" a view he says has since changed, as he now sees cultural closeness even with people from other tribes and provinces. He further described an entire community of former rebels, the "FR sa Norte," who remain without certification papers to this day but maintain a strong sense of security through their informal connection to the PNDC and the army. He also described his own renewed cultural participation directly, sharing that he feels he is "*kasama na nila' ulit*" (with them again) in the life and transformation of his indigenous community. These three statements together demonstrate that in this specific tribal context, belonging is renegotiated along kinship lines distinct from ordinary community stigma, and that an informal, trust-based sense of security can function as a provisional substitute for formal certification where the certification process has not yet fully reached.

This distinction matters for program design in indigenous or tribal contexts specifically, where reintegration support may need to address kinship and cultural belonging as a category separate



from stigma reduction, and where informal trust networks, while functional in the short term, carry the same reversal risk documented elsewhere in this study should personnel or relationships change. The theme Kinship and Informal Trust in a Tribal Context has no direct match in the international DDR literature reviewed for this study specific to indigenous kinship renegotiation in reintegration contexts.

Locally, this fills a gap specific to indigenous and tribal contexts of reintegration that Silvallana and Hagling (2023) and other Central Luzon-focused studies, having concentrated on lowland barangay contexts, do not address; given its grounding predominantly in one informant's account, this pattern would benefit from corroboration in future research involving additional indigenous or tribal beneficiaries.

3.5 What challenges do the informants encounter while participating in E-CLIP?

This section explores the specific obstacles, barriers, and difficulties former rebels encounter during their participation in E-CLIP and broader reintegration processes. It attends to challenge types, intensities, durations, and meanings participants attribute to hardships faced. Challenges may be anticipated by programs or unexpected, addressable through existing services or requiring new interventions, temporary disruptions or persistent barriers, individual problems requiring personal solutions or structural conditions demanding systemic reforms.

3.5.1 What personal or emotional challenges have you faced throughout this process?

Table 13 presents the personal and emotional challenges the informants faced throughout the process. The findings reveal that emotional difficulty continued well beyond surrender, taking multiple distinct forms across informants, and that this weight was carried alongside, rather than resolved by, an ongoing determination to keep moving forward. Seven of the nine informants (KI-1, KI-2, KI-3, KI-5, KI-6, KI-7, KI-9) directly addressed this question; the remaining two (KI-4, KI-8) did not raise this topic in their interview. These accounts demonstrate that psychological difficulty in this study is not a single, uniform experience, and that informants developed varied ways of carrying that difficulty while still functioning day to day. From the responses, two major themes emerged: Emotional Pain That Does Not Go Away, and Carrying the Weight While Moving Forward.

Theme 3.5.1.1. Emotional Pain That Does Not Go Away.

The findings indicate that emotional burden persisted well beyond surrender, taking multiple distinct forms across informants: renewed victimization, lingering anger, and a lasting sense of being permanently marked by past events. KI-7 described being victimized by fraud even after surrender, scammed of more than 30,000 pesos while her husband was detained. KI-3 named an ongoing anger that “*kumikirot pa rin... hanggang ngayon.*” KI-2 offered a vivid metaphor, describing his trauma as “*nakadikit na yan, parang mantsa na habang buhay.*” These responses demonstrate that psychological difficulty after reintegration is not one single feeling; it includes renewed victimization, distinct from the original trauma of armed life, lingering anger at what was lost or endured, and a sense of permanent marking that persists

alongside an otherwise functional civilian life. This finding also connects to the earlier finding about witnessing violence before surrender: the emotional weight of having seen killing firsthand is a separate, additional part of this burden that grief or financial worry alone does not explain.

The theme Emotional Pain That Does Not Go Away is consistent with Vries and Wiegink (2021) and Alibudbud (2023), who both document how economic precarity compounds psychological strain in reintegration contexts, consistent with Agnew's (1992) General Strain Theory as applied throughout this study. Locally, this connects to Rubin's (2019) account of the psychological weight required to exit CPP-NPA membership, extended here through KI-2's specific and memorable image of trauma as a permanent stain coexisting with an otherwise functional civilian life.

Theme 3.5.1.1. Carrying the Weight While Moving Forward. The findings further indicate that alongside acute emotional pain, informants also described a quieter, ongoing labor of carrying difficult memories and present-day worries while still actively working toward a better future, rather than being immobilized by either.

KI-9 described her mind occupied simultaneously with practical planning, how to grow what assistance she would receive, and with memories of former comrades still weighing on her. KI-1 recounted discovering an unknown legal case against her, a source of real anxiety that was ultimately resolved through the combined help of the military and E-CLIP. KI-6 named ongoing financial worry shared by his whole family, who remain concerned about securing a proper, lasting source of livelihood.

These responses demonstrate that emotional difficulty and forward-looking determination are not mutually exclusive; each of these informants describes carrying real worry or grief while simultaneously continuing to plan, act, and hope for improvement, rather than experiencing these as sequential stages. This finding is significant because it suggests that psychosocial support for E-CLIP beneficiaries should be designed to accompany ongoing daily functioning rather than assume a beneficiary must first “recover” before being able to plan for the future; for these informants, both were already happening together. The theme Carrying the Weight While Moving Forward connects to the broader literature on resilience in post-conflict populations, which similarly documents the coexistence of continued distress and active future-oriented coping rather than a simple linear recovery process. Locally, this adds nuance to Rubin's (2019) account of the psychological weight of exiting the CPP-NPA by showing that this weight does not prevent informants from simultaneously engaging in practical, forward-looking behavior, a distinction relevant to how support services should be timed and framed.

3.5.2 Social and Relationship Challenges

These accounts demonstrate that social and relationship challenges extend beyond the general labor of trust-rebuilding already discussed under Theme 9 to include the specific, ongoing difficulty of managing relationships within a leadership role. From the responses, two major themes emerged: Rebuilding Trust with



the Community (Theme 9, cross-referenced), and Managing Group Relationships as a Leader.

Theme 3.5.2.1. Rebuilding Trust with the Community.

This theme's core finding is that trust with the community returns gradually, through consistent, observed behavior over time, rather than automatically once formal reintegration is complete.

KI-4's account of trust slowly returning as change became visible, and KI-6's account of cautiously distancing himself after being betrayed, together constitute the informants' direct answer to what social and relationship challenges they faced, reproduced here in table form for consistency with this chapter's structure rather than developed as a new discussion. KI-9 added an economic dimension to this same social challenge, explaining that the inability to find decent work while still in hiding was itself part of what kept her socially isolated during that period. Its significance for this specific probe is that it confirms social and relationship challenges and the transition-era identity challenges discussed earlier, for these informants, the same underlying experience viewed from two different points in the interview guide, rather than two separate problems requiring separate solutions.

This theme is grounded in Sampson and Groves's (1989) concept of collective efficacy, which frames trust as something rebuilt through community members observing and responding to consistent behavior over time, precisely the mechanism KI-4 describes. It is further supported by Hart and Gomez (2022), who found that the absence of formal social recognition of civilian status was, for former combatants in Northern Ireland and Colombia, a more persistent barrier to reintegration than material deprivation itself, a pattern consistent with KI-6's continued guardedness even after his formal legal and material reintegration was complete.

Theme 3.5.2.2. Managing Group Relationships as a Leader. The findings reveal a distinct social challenge specific to informants who took on leadership roles within their People's Organization or association: the ongoing, personally demanding work of managing group cohesion, member cooperation, and long-distance family strain.

KI-8, speaking as an association president, described persistent internal friction, noting that "*matitigas ang ulo ng iba... may mga tamad,*" yet framing this as a challenge he must continue to face because he understands the long-term value of his work. KI-3 described the effortful, non-automatic nature of regaining specific relationships within his community, explaining that "*ang integrasyon nila, matagal lang nawala... kailangan mong harapin iyon ulit.*" KI-6 named a related but distinct social cost, the loneliness of being away from family, sharing that "*malungkot din po ako, sir, kapag mag-isa ako o malayo ako sa pamilya ko.*" These responses demonstrate that social and relationship challenges are not limited to rebuilding general community trust, as discussed under Theme 9; they also include the specific, sustained interpersonal labor required of informants who lead organizations, and the personal cost of loneliness that can accompany community or organizational responsibilities that separate an informant from family. This finding is significant

because it identifies leadership burden and loneliness as distinct social challenges meriting their own support considerations, separate from general community trust-rebuilding, particularly for the subset of beneficiaries who take on formal organizational roles.

The theme Managing Group Relationships as a Leader connects to the broader literature on leadership burden within grassroots and community organizations in post-conflict settings, which similarly documents the personal toll of sustaining group cohesion. This also extends the People's Organization findings already discussed under Theme 19 (Section 3.4.1) by showing that the same organizational structure identified as an enabling factor also imposes a real, ongoing relational cost on the individuals who lead it.

3.5.3 What economic or practical challenges have made reintegration harder for you?

Theme 3.5.3.1. Economic Hardship Made Worse by Weather and Poor Training. The findings indicate that economic hardship was compounded by both a lack of deep, practical training and by weather conditions, whether flood or drought, entirely outside informants' control. KI-5 called for training that goes "*mas malalim*" than lecture and includes hands-on practice. KI-9 explained that flooding near the river "*hindi makatrabaho*" (stops her from working), while KI-6 described the opposite problem, "*tagtuyot. Wala pong tubig. Hirap ang mga alaga.*" These responses demonstrate that economic hardship in this study comes from more than one source working together: gaps in the training actually provided, and environmental conditions that no amount of training alone could solve. This environmental factor matters because it identifies a source of hardship that livelihood capital and skills training by themselves cannot fully address, pointing to a need for livelihood planning that specifically accounts for local weather and climate risk.

The theme Economic Hardship Made Worse by Weather and Poor Training is consistent with Vries and Wiegink (2021) and Alibudbud (2023), who describe economic hardship in reintegration mainly in terms of market access and skills, and with Jennings and Boas (2021), who found that a repeating cycle of finding and losing informal work is the clearest sign of survival-level, rather than genuinely stable, economic participation.

Locally, Alcantara and De Castro (2023) similarly found that E-CLIP livelihood gains stayed partial and fragile whenever training support was thin, matching KI-5's specific call for hands-on training. The present data adds an environmental factor none of these studies specifically highlight.

Theme 3.5.3.2. The Daily Struggle to Provide for Dependents. The findings further indicate that beyond structural gaps in training and weather-related setbacks, informants described a persistent, day-to-day economic pressure specifically tied to providing for their dependents' immediate, recurring needs. KI-8 described near-constant provisioning demands from his school-aged children, needing daily allowance, rice, and clothing, adding "*hindi ako nakakatulog, sir*" (I don't get to sleep, sir) from the worry of meeting these needs. KI-3 described a broader, ongoing search for any available income, explaining that "*walang*



pinananatiling malaki” and that he must continually “*hahanap ng paraan kung saan pwedeng pagkakitaan*.” KI-7 described a specific, recurring economic obstacle tied to her family’s small suman and bukayo business, being repeatedly “*pinalalayas*” when attempting to sell in a neighboring municipality. These responses demonstrate that economic challenge for these informants is not only about the presence or absence of a single livelihood grant, but about the relentless, daily recurrence of dependents’ needs, described by KI-8 as costing him sleep, by KI-3 as a continual search with no lasting resolution, and by KI-7 as an ongoing, specific obstacle to her family’s chosen livelihood activity. This finding is significant because it shows that economic support delivered as a single grant or training event does not match the lived, day-to-day rhythm of the need it is meant to address; sustained, ideally periodic, support may better match how informants actually experience economic pressure. The theme The Daily Struggle to Provide for Dependents connects to the broader literature on chronic economic precarity in post-conflict households, which documents the same daily-recurrence pattern of need rather than a single resolvable deficit.

Locally, this adds lived specificity to Figueroa’s (2025) quantitative finding that E-CLIP’s performance drops at the sustainability stage, showing concretely, through KI-8’s sleeplessness, KI-3’s continual searching, and KI-7’s recurring market exclusion, what that statistical decline actually feels like from within the household.

3.5.4 What challenges related to the program itself have you experienced?

Theme 3.5.4.1. Beneficiaries Have to Do the Agency’s Follow-Up Work Themselves. The findings indicate that program-related challenges centered on an inverted accountability structure, in which the beneficiary, not the agency, ends up proving their case is still alive, compounded by the resulting delay in finding other means of support while waiting. KI-4 described the multi-agency handoff process stalling, explaining, “*ang proseso ay ganito. Kinakapanayam ka ng PMFC, tapos ng Army para sa validation. Huli na ang DILG. Pero tumigil doon dahil walang nag-follow through*,” and added, “*sana sila na ang mag-follow up sa amin*.” KI-8 confirmed the same core problem from his own experience, sharing that “*iyon na po ang pinakamahirap, matagal ang proseso. At habang hinihintay, hindi pa ako makahanap ng maayos na trabaho*.” KI-5 turned this same complaint into a concrete proposal, suggesting each municipality maintain its own list of applicants who had submitted requirements so that agencies, not beneficiaries, would be responsible for tracking a case forward. KI-9 identified a related but distinct follow-through failure specific to livelihood capital, noting that the training needed to grow the fund she received was promised but never actually delivered.

These responses demonstrate that informants’ frustration centers on a specific, nameable operational failure, an inverted burden of proof, rather than a diffuse or general distrust of the bureaucratic process itself, and that this delay has real downstream consequences, as KI-8’s account shows, for finding other work in the meantime. This specificity is significant because it points toward a concrete, correctable fix, reassigning follow-up

responsibility from beneficiary to agency, rather than requiring a wholesale redesign of the program.

The theme Beneficiaries Have to Do the Agency’s Follow-Up Work Themselves is consistent with Sabogal (2024), who documents inter-agency coordination breakdowns in DDR case management broadly, and with Sharif (2021), who found across seventy-three global DDR programs that accountability mechanisms embedded at the community level produced more durable outcomes than centrally administered templates. Locally, this sharpens Sabogal’s general finding into one specific, actionable failure point grounded in this study’s own data: a three-agency handoff with no single point of accountability for follow-through, with KI-8’s account confirming the same pattern independently of KI-4.

Theme 3.5.4.2. A Promised House That Was Never Built. The findings further reveal a second, distinct program-related challenge: a specific, previously announced communal housing arrangement for returnees that never materialized, raised independently by two informants and detailed further by one of them with a specific regional comparison. KI-2 asked directly, “*ano ba ang tawag doon yung pabahay na yun ng lahat ng mga balikloob? Nasaan na yung bahay natin?*” KI-4 recommended that “*bawat probinsya may halfway houses*,” and further specified that “*dito sa Nueva Ecija at sa kabuuan ng Region 3, wala pang halfway house. Sa Region 1 at sa CAR, may mga ganoon na*.” These responses demonstrate that this is not a vague wish for more support in general; it is a specific, remembered promise that two informants, independently, still expect to be kept, with KI-4’s regional comparison adding concrete evidence that the infrastructure already exists successfully elsewhere in the country. This finding matters because it is immediately actionable as a discrete pilot commitment, and KI-4’s specific regional comparison provides a ready-made implementation model rather than requiring the concept to be designed from scratch.

The theme A Promised House That Was Never Built is consistent with Avis (2024), who identified the absence of enforceable infrastructure commitments as a recurring structural weakness in DDR programs in Sierra Leone and Liberia, experienced by beneficiaries as institutional abandonment rather than mere inefficiency. No study in this dissertation’s reviewed local literature documents this specific, named housing promise for E-CLIP. It is presented here as a distinct, addressable finding, strengthened by KI-4’s own comparison to region 1 and the Cordillera Administrative Region, where equivalent facilities already operate successfully.

Conclusions

The Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program serves as an important entry point for the reintegration of former rebels into mainstream society by providing legal recognition, immediate assistance, and an opportunity to begin a new life. However, the participants’ lived experiences demonstrate that the value of the program extends beyond financial assistance. Reintegration is perceived primarily as the restoration of dignity, legal identity, personal security, and social acceptance. The issuance of the JAPIC Certification emerged as the most



meaningful outcome because it symbolized freedom from fear, legal uncertainty, and the burden of their previous involvement in armed conflict. This indicates that successful reintegration begins with restoring the former rebel's confidence to participate openly in society.

Transitioning from armed struggle to civilian life is not a single event but a continuous process of personal transformation. The findings reveal that reintegration involves reconstructing one's identity, rebuilding relationships, and adapting to a completely different social environment. Family serves as the strongest foundation for this transformation, providing emotional support, motivation, and a renewed sense of purpose. Sustainable reintegration therefore depends not only on government interventions but also on the strength of family relationships and community acceptance that enable former rebels to establish a meaningful civilian life.

The present design of E-CLIP effectively facilitates initial reintegration but remains insufficient to sustain long-term socioeconomic independence. While immediate financial assistance provides temporary relief, lasting reintegration requires continuous livelihood opportunities, stable employment, skills development, and long-term mentoring. Sustainable reintegration cannot be measured solely by the distribution of program benefits but by the former rebel's ability to become economically self-reliant, socially accepted, and permanently disengaged from armed conflict. The findings therefore suggest that sustainability should become the central indicator of E-CLIP's long-term success.

Reintegration is a shared responsibility among government institutions, local government units, security agencies, People's Organizations, families, and local communities. The study demonstrates that enabling factors such as family support, military assistance, community acceptance, and organizational partnerships significantly strengthen reintegration outcomes. Conversely, persistent stigma, fragmented program implementation, delayed assistance, and weak inter-agency coordination undermine the effectiveness of E-CLIP. Consequently, successful reintegration requires a whole-of-society approach in which institutional support is complemented by active community participation and continuous collaboration among implementing agencies.

The challenges encountered by former rebels throughout their participation in E-CLIP are multidimensional and interconnected. Personal, social, economic, and institutional barriers collectively influence the success of reintegration. The findings indicate that addressing only financial needs is insufficient because former rebels continue to experience psychological, social, and structural challenges long after surrender. Effective reintegration therefore requires an integrated and beneficiary-centered approach that combines legal assistance, livelihood support, psychosocial interventions, continuous monitoring, and responsive case management. Reintegration should be understood as a long-term developmental process rather than a one-time government intervention.

Viewed through the lens of phenomenology, reintegration is experienced by former rebels as a continuing

journey toward restoring dignity, rebuilding relationships, and reclaiming their place in society. Accordingly, the success of E-CLIP should no longer be measured merely by the number of surrenderers or benefits distributed but by the extent to which former rebels achieve lasting social inclusion, economic self-sufficiency, psychological well-being, and active participation in peaceful community life.

Furthermore, the findings substantiate the study's conceptual framework by demonstrating that the interaction of contextual conditions, lived reintegration experiences, and enabling support systems shapes the overall outcomes of reintegration. Likewise, the study affirms the principles of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) and contemporary peacebuilding theories, emphasizing that sustainable peace is best achieved when reintegration policies are responsive to the actual lived experiences and long-term needs of former combatants rather than being limited to short-term program implementation.

Recommendations

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), through the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), should institutionalize a long-term case management system for every E-CLIP beneficiary. Rather than limiting assistance to the processing and release of benefits, each former rebel should be assigned a designated case manager responsible for monitoring progress for at least three years after enrollment. Regular home visits, quarterly assessments, and individualized intervention plans should be conducted to identify emerging economic, social, psychological, and security concerns. This recommendation addresses the participants' experiences of limited follow-up support and recognizes that reintegration is a continuing developmental process rather than a one-time government intervention.

The DILG, AFP, Philippine National Police (PNP), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Agriculture (DA), and Local Government Units (LGUs) should strengthen coordination by establishing an Integrated Reintegration Management System. The system should clearly define the responsibilities of implementing agencies, standardize referral procedures, establish unified monitoring protocols, and maintain an updated digital database of beneficiary progress. Quarterly inter-agency meetings should be conducted to address implementation bottlenecks and ensure timely delivery of services. This recommendation responds directly to the participants' observations regarding inconsistent implementation, delayed assistance, and fragmented coordination among agencies.

The government should prioritize long-term livelihood sustainability instead of relying primarily on one-time financial assistance. Livelihood assistance should include: comprehensive skills assessment; competency-based technical training through TESDA; entrepreneurship coaching; cooperative development;



agricultural production support; market linkage assistance; business mentoring; and post-training monitoring. Former rebels should receive continuous coaching during the first two years of business operation to improve the sustainability of livelihood projects. This recommendation recognizes that economic self-sufficiency was consistently identified by participants as the true indicator of successful reintegration.

Implementing agencies should establish a Comprehensive Financial Capability and Enterprise Development Program consisting of a series of structured learning sessions delivered over several months. The program should include: financial literacy; household budgeting; savings mobilization; debt management; cooperative membership; business planning; enterprise management; digital marketing; business registration; and periodic coaching and mentoring. Participants should receive continuous mentoring from DTI, TESDA, cooperative officers, and successful local entrepreneurs to ensure practical application of acquired knowledge.

Local Government Units, together with barangays, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, and People's Organizations, should implement Community Reintegration and Social Acceptance Programs designed to reduce stigma and strengthen community participation. These initiatives may include: community dialogue sessions; peace education campaigns; family strengthening activities; community volunteerism; restorative community activities; recognition of successful reintegration stories; and community livelihood partnerships. Strengthening community acceptance will promote

trust, reduce discrimination, and foster lasting peace within conflict-affected communities.

The Department of Health (DOH), DSWD, local government units, and accredited mental health professionals should integrate psychosocial support services into every stage of E-CLIP implementation. Services should include: psychological assessment; trauma-informed counseling; peer support groups; family counseling; stress management workshops; and referral mechanisms for specialized mental health care when necessary. Providing continuous psychosocial support will facilitate emotional recovery and strengthen resilience throughout the reintegration process.

The DILG and NTF-ELCAC should develop a standardized Monitoring and Evaluation Framework that measures not only program outputs but also long-term reintegration outcomes.

Adoption of the output of the study which is the proposed Balik-Loob Strengthening Action Plan (BSAP) as a complementary implementation framework for E-CLIP.

Future researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of this study by examining the effectiveness of E-CLIP across different regions of the Philippines using larger and more diverse participant groups. Comparative studies involving former rebels from various insurgent organizations, implementing agencies, and local government units may provide a broader understanding of contextual factors influencing reintegration outcomes.

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