



Case study

The Philippines

Ease of Doing Business Act

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Overview

The Philippines has embarked on a long-term effort to transform its regulatory environment and public service delivery through the adoption of GRPs. These efforts are rooted in the recognition that efficient, transparent and predictable regulation is essential to fostering economic growth, improving citizen experience and enhancing national competitiveness, particularly in an increasingly services-driven economy.

This study presents the Philippines' journey in embedding GRP elements across licensing authorities, emphasizing their importance for businesses and investment, where complex licensing and administrative procedures often affect market entry and operational efficiency. It focuses on the implementation of two major pieces of legislation: the *Anti-Red Tape Act* of 2007 (RA 9485) and the *Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act* of 2018 (RA 11032). Together, these pieces of legislation provide the legal and institutional foundation for regulatory simplification, digital transformation and improved service delivery at both national and local levels.

The purpose of this study is to highlight how GRP elements have been introduced and operationalized in the Philippine context. It draws lessons from implementation, identifies continuing challenges, and outlines the next steps. Through this lens, the study seeks to offer a practical reference for understanding how GRP elements can support broader public sector reform and economic development.

The Philippine economy and the importance of the services sector

The Philippines has established itself as one of the most dynamic economies in the Asia-Pacific region.¹ Its economic dynamism is underpinned by rapid urbanization, a large and young population, and high consumer demand, supported by a vibrant labour market and robust remittance inflows.² In 2024, the country's GDP reached US\$ 461.62 billion³ and expanded by 5.6 per cent, making it one of the region's top performers.⁴

The services sector plays a pivotal role in the Philippine economy, serving as a key engine of growth, employment and international competitiveness. In 2024, services value added represented about 63.2 per cent of the Philippines' GDP, making it the largest contributor among all economic sectors.⁵

The Philippines' commercial services trade expanded significantly between 2015 and 2024. Exports rose from US\$ 29.05 billion to US\$ 51.95 billion over the period.⁶ In 2024, other commercial services accounted for the largest share at US\$ 33.66 billion, followed by travel services at US\$ 9.71 billion and goods-related services at US\$ 5.02 billion.⁷ On the import side, commercial services increased from US\$ 23.36 billion in 2015 to US\$ 37.02 billion in 2024.⁸ Of this total, other commercial services represented US\$ 16.60 billion, while travel services and transport services amounted to US\$ 12.75 billion and US\$ 7.44 billion, respectively.⁹ Figure 1 illustrates the growth of the Philippines' commercial services trade between 2015 and 2024 and its sectoral composition in 2024.

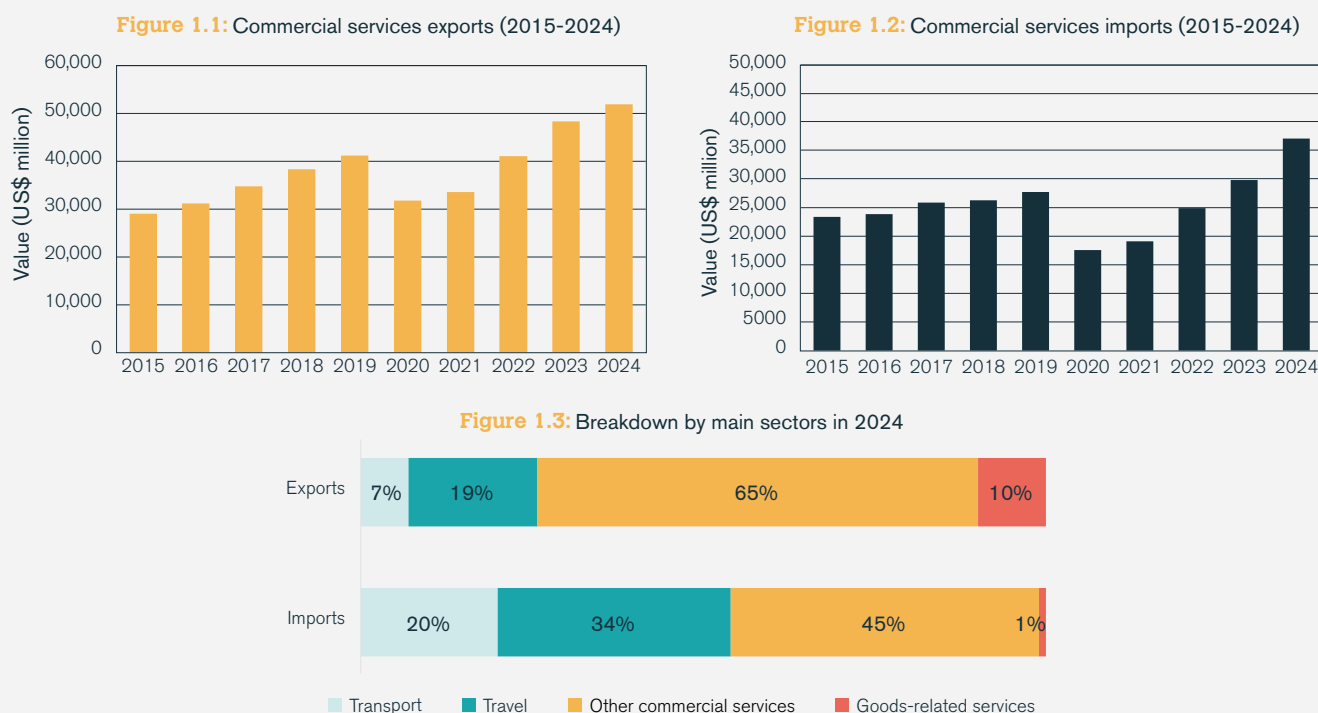
Digitally delivered services also form a substantial and growing component of the Philippines' services trade. Exports nearly doubled from US\$ 11.63 billion in 2015 to US\$ 22.97 billion in 2024.¹⁰ In 2024, this category was led by other business services, valued at US\$ 14.47 billion, followed by computer services at US\$ 7.24 billion, telecommunications services at US\$ 0.46 billion and financial services at US\$ 0.44 billion.¹¹ Imports increased from US\$ 6.82 billion in 2015 to US\$ 15.78 billion in 2024, with other business services comprising the largest share at US\$ 8.64 billion. This was followed by financial services at US\$ 2.45 billion and insurance and pension services at US\$ 2.03 billion.¹² Figure 2 provides an overview of the growth of digitally delivered services trade between 2015 and 2024 and its sectoral composition in 2024.

As of July 2024, the services sector continued to be the top sector in terms of the number of employed persons with a share of 60.8 per cent of the 47.7 million employed persons.¹³ In 2018, among the major economic sectors, services accounted for the overwhelming majority, with 298,021 establishments, comprising 89.1 per cent of the total.¹⁴

GRP commitments in the Philippines' services trade agreements

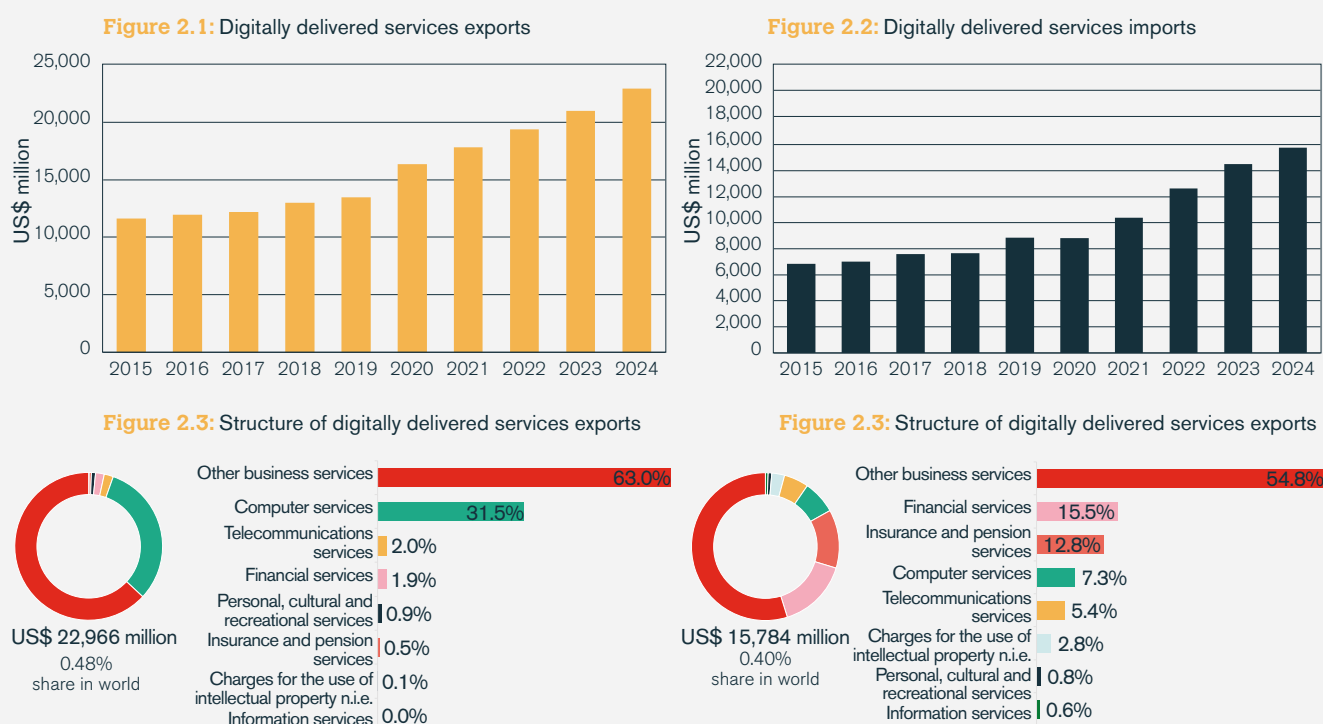
Since becoming a member of the WTO in 1995, the Philippines has entered into multiple trade agreements that liberalize trade in services. These agreements not only facilitate cross-border services trade but also increasingly incorporate commitments to adopt and implement GRPs.

Figure 1: Commercial services trade between 2015 and 2024, and sectoral composition in 2024



Source: WTO, Statistics – Trade in commercial services.

Figure 2: Digitally delivered services trade between 2015 and 2024, and its sectoral composition in 2024



Source: WTO, Statistics – Digitally delivered services trade dataset.

Through its membership in the ASEAN, the Philippines is party to trade agreements with China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand. In November 2020, the Philippines, together with 14 other economies, signed the RCEP – the world's largest free trade agreement.¹⁵ The Philippines also engages as a founding and active participant of APEC.¹⁶ Earlier commitments under these agreements typically incorporated basic GRPs, such as publishing authorization requirements and procedures¹⁷; providing updates on application status and decisions¹⁸; allowing applicants to correct minor deficiencies¹⁹; and ensuring that authorization measures are based on objective and transparent criteria.²⁰ More recently, the Philippines adopted in its trade agreements more ambitious GRP commitments, such as specifying time frames for processing applications²¹; accepting applications in electronic format and authenticated copies of documents²²; establishing mechanisms to respond to inquiries from interested parties²³; and providing opportunities for public comment on proposed regulations.²⁴ Additionally, in 2018, APEC economies endorsed the *Non-binding Principles for Domestic Regulation of the Services Sector*, which aim to promote transparent, open and efficient regulatory environments for services authorizations.²⁵

Further strengthening its commitment to regulatory reforms, the Philippines formally announced its participation in the WTO Joint Initiative on Services Domestic Regulation in November 2021.²⁶ This engagement aligns with the country's domestic reform efforts and the existing commitments under its PTAs.

Ease of Doing Business reform in the Philippines

In the early 2000s, Filipinos encountered widespread challenges in accessing timely and efficient government services. To start a business, entrepreneurs were required to navigate at least 11 separate procedures with a waiting period of 48 days for approval.²⁷ These numbers were reflected in the *Doing Business 2007* report of the World Bank, which ranked the Philippines 126th out of 175 economies in terms of the ease of doing business.²⁸

Recognizing the urgent need for institutional reform, the Philippine government initiated many legislative and administrative reforms to modernize public sector processes, enhance transparency and reduce red tape. Among these, the *Anti-Red Tape Act* of

2007 (RA 9485)²⁹ and the *Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act* of 2018 (RA 11032)³⁰ were enacted to more closely align the Philippines' regulatory system with GRPs for business facilitation and public service delivery.

Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 (RA 9485)

Signed into law by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on 2 June 2007, RA 9485 was the country's first major legislative step towards reducing bureaucratic inefficiency and improving public service delivery. At its core, the law sought to promote greater transparency by simplifying procedures for frontline services³¹, developing clear service standards for every transaction (i.e. "the step-by-step procedure for availing a particular service, and the guaranteed performance level that are to be expected for that service")³² and communicating these standards to clients, who may be individuals or entities.³³

The law applied to government offices and agencies, including local government units (LGUs) and government-owned or -controlled corporations (GOCCs) providing frontline services, excluding those performing judicial, quasi-judicial and legislative functions.³⁴ The agencies responsible for issuing the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of RA 9485 were the Civil Service Commission (CSC), Office of the Ombudsman (OMB), Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC), and the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP).³⁵

GRP elements in RA 9485

RA 9485 sought to implement several GRP elements. These include provisions on the Citizen's Charter, application processing, automatic approval mechanism, Report Card Survey and penalties for non-compliance. The key provisions are outlined below.

a. Citizen's Charter³⁶

The Citizen's Charter is an official document, a service standard, or a pledge, used by government agencies to communicate government service delivery standards to their citizens.³⁷ Under RA 9485, it was mandatory for all government agencies to implement the Charter in the form of information billboards and published materials. The Charter had to be posted at the main entrance or in a conspicuous area of the government office and written in English, Filipino or the local dialect.

The purpose of the Charter was to guide clients seeking frontline services from government offices by providing information on (1) the procedures for accessing government services, (2) identifying the officials responsible for each step, (3) stating the maximum processing time for applications, (4) listing the required documents and (5) applicable fees, and (6) explaining the procedure for lodging complaints on decisions.

b. Application processing³⁸

RA 9485 required government officers to accept applications and acknowledge receipt of such applications by clearly indicating their full name, working unit and the time of receipt. In addition, the assigned officer was required to perform a preliminary assessment of the application to facilitate processing.

The law set clear deadlines for processing applications. Government offices and agencies were required to act on simple transactions within five working days and on complex transactions within 10 working days from the date of application. The maximum processing time for frontline services could be extended, particularly when the nature of the requested service or the specific mandate of the office or agency would require it under exceptional circumstances. When such extensions were necessary, the adjusted time frame for delivery of a specific frontline service needed to be indicated in the Citizen's Charter. The agency then had to notify the applicant in writing, on a case-by-case basis, of the reason for the extension and the final date of release of the requested service.

Furthermore, no application could be returned to the applicant without any action. In case of rejection (i.e. typically due to failure to meet requirements), the competent office making the decision was required to issue a written notice within five days, state the reason for the rejection and specify any missing requirements. Likewise, any denial of a request for access to a government service (for example, if an application is deemed ineligible or outside the scope of the agency's mandate) had to be fully explained in writing, indicating the name of the officer issuing the denial and the grounds on which the decision was based. To streamline internal procedures, the law also limited the number of required signatories on any document to a maximum of five.

Offices providing frontline services were required to adopt appropriate working schedules to ensure that all clients within their premises would be attended

to and served, including during lunch breaks and beyond regular office hours. The law also required the establishment of a public assistance/complaints desk in each office.

c. Automatic extension of existing authorization³⁹

In the case of a government agency's failure to act within the prescribed period on an application for renewal of a permit, licence or other form of authorization, the law mandated that the existing authorization be automatically extended until a decision is made. This provision, however, excluded applications related to activities that would pose risks to public health, safety, moral order or public policy.

d. Report Card Survey⁴⁰

To monitor performance of government agencies and ensure their compliance with the provisions of the Citizen's Charter, RA 9485 introduced the Report Card Survey (RCS). The survey was designed to gather public feedback on the actual implementation of the Citizen's Charter and assess how well agencies would deliver the government services. It also aimed to capture information on hidden costs experienced by clients, such as bribes or payments to fixers. The results of these surveys were required to be included in the agencies' annual performance reports.

Implementation of RA 9485

One year after the enactment of RA 9485, the CSC promulgated the IRR of the said law through *Resolution No. 081471*.⁴¹ The promulgation was carried out in collaboration with the DAP, the OMB, and PAGC⁴², following a series of consultative meetings with various stakeholders to gather comments and recommendations on the implementation of the law.⁴³

Under RA 9485, the CSC, in coordination with DAP, was responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Citizen's Charter across government agencies through the Report Card Survey.⁴⁴ In its 2017 report, the CSC found that more than 80 per cent of the offices assessed met the required standards for service delivery.⁴⁵ According to the CSC Chairperson, compliance steadily improved over time, with the percentage of offices meeting the required standard increasing from 78 per cent in 2010 to 81.65 per cent in 2017.⁴⁶

Several studies were conducted to examine successes and challenges from the implementation of the Citizen's Charter. For example, one study found that the Bureau of Customs and the Development Corporation in the Clark Freeport Zone – a special economic zone of the Philippines – failed to comply with the requirements to provide information on the procedure for lodging complaints and contact details for submitting feedback.⁴⁷

The overall impact of RA 9485 after a decade of implementation reflected both progress and areas for further improvement. According to the World Bank's *Doing Business* reports, the Philippines improved its ranking from 126th out of 175 economies in 2007 to 99th out of 190 in 2017.⁴⁸ Furthermore, while the time required to start a new business was reduced from 48 to 28 days⁴⁹, the number of procedures increased from 11 to 16.⁵⁰ This indicates that, although processing times improved, the procedures did not necessarily get simpler and less bureaucratic. This may be attributed to the narrow scope of RA 9485, which focused mainly on mandating fixed processing times for frontline services rather than evaluating the appropriateness of the underlying regulatory requirements themselves.⁵¹

Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018

In response to public demand for an even more efficient, accessible and transparent system for business registrations and other public service transactions, President Rodrigo Roa Duterte signed the *Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act* (RA 11032) into law on 28 May 2018. This landmark legislation was also seen as a necessary step towards boosting the Philippines' competitiveness within the Southeast Asian region by creating a more business-friendly environment conducive to attracting foreign suppliers and investors.⁵²

Strengthened GRP elements in RA 11032

RA 11032 significantly expanded and deepened the integration of GRP elements into the legal framework established by RA 9485. The new law is broader in terms of scope and applies to all government offices and agencies, including LGUs, GOCCs and other government instrumentalities, whether in the Philippines or abroad.⁵³ At the core of the law is the creation of the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA), which serves as the oversight body responsible for ensuring effective

implementation of the law. In addition to updating the key provisions of RA 9485, RA 11032 introduces several new and important legal requirements. These key provisions are presented in the following sections (see Figure 4 for a summary of these provisions).

The Anti-Red Tape Authority

The creation of ARTA is perhaps the most salient feature of RA 11032, particularly given that earlier efforts to establish an oversight body for regulatory reform in the Philippines had not been successful.⁵⁴ According to Section 17 of the law, the Authority is attached to the Office of the President and mandated to ensure that the law's objectives are attained.⁵⁵ ARTA has 13 formal powers and functions⁵⁶, which can be grouped into two main categories: empowerment and enforcement (Figure 3).⁵⁷

ARTA's empowerment functions focus on simplifying procedures, removing unnecessary requirements and promoting transparent, efficient and inclusive service delivery.⁵⁸ ARTA works closely with NGAs, LGUs and stakeholders to implement reform initiatives, conduct RIAs and support digital transformation.⁵⁹

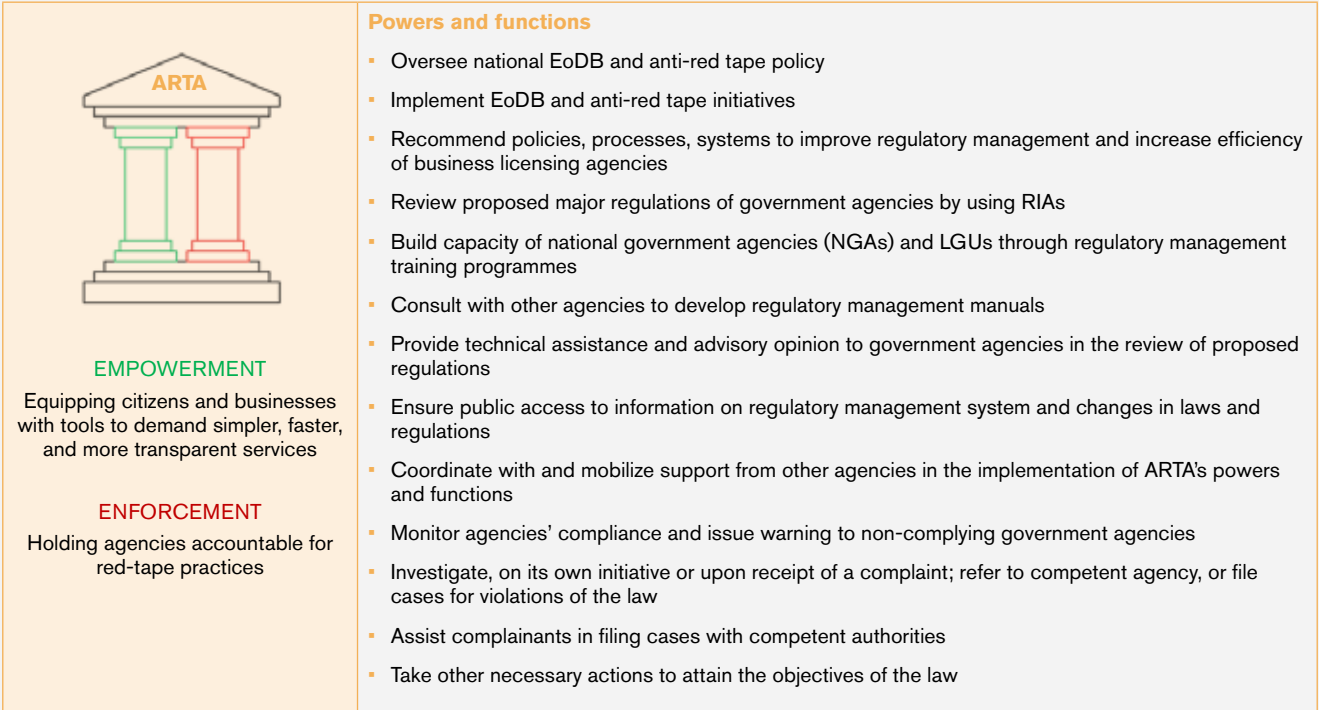
At the same time, ARTA exercises a strong enforcement mandate to uphold compliance with RA 11032. It monitors government agency performance, handles public complaints about red tape and inefficiencies and recommends sanctions for officials who fail to meet service standards.⁶⁰ By facilitating accountability through investigations and case referrals to the CSC and the OMB, ARTA ensures that government institutions are held responsible for delivering timely and effective services.⁶¹

Enhanced Citizen's Charter⁶²

The requirements of the Citizen's Charter are enhanced in RA 11032. All government agencies are mandated not only to set up the Charter in physical form and display it in the most conspicuous area of the office, but also to publish the most current and updated version of the Charter on the agency's respective website.

Furthermore, RA 11032 requires that the Charter include a comprehensive and uniform checklist of requirements for each type of application or request. This is in addition to the pieces of information on procedures, responsible personnel, maximum processing time, required documents, applicable fees and the procedure for filing complaints, which were already required under RA 9485.

Figure 3: ARTA's powers and functions



Source: WTO/World Bank, based on Section 17 of RA 9485 (amended by RA 11032).

Beyond being a transparency tool, the Citizen's Charter also serves as a basis for holding government offices accountable for imposing additional requirements or costs not explicitly indicated therein.

Application processing⁶³

In addition to the mandatory acknowledgement of receipt and preliminary assessment of application upon receipt provided under RA 9485, RA 11032 requires the receiving officer to assign a unique identification number to each application, which serves as a permanent identifier for the transaction. It also enables both the agency and the applicant to track progress through every stage of the application process.

RA 11032 also introduces stricter time frames for processing applications. Simple transactions are now to be completed within three working days, while complex ones are to be resolved within seven working days. Applications involving highly technical evaluations or issues of public health, safety, or policy shall be completed within a maximum of 20 working days.

Unlike the previous law, RA 11032 allows for only one extension of processing time, which is of equal duration to the original period and indicated in the Citizen's Charter. The competent agency is required to notify the applicant if such an extension applies to the specific case in writing, prior to the expiration of the first deadline. The written notice shall also include the reason for the delay and a definitive date for the release of the requested service.

Furthermore, all agencies are encouraged to produce electronic versions of authorizations, which are considered equivalent to hard-copy versions. The maximum number of signatures of responsible officers is reduced from five to three and the use of electronic signatures is permissible, provided that appropriate security and control mechanisms are in place.

Extended automatic approval⁶⁴

While the automatic approval mechanism only applied to requests for extension of authorization under RA 9485, under RA 11032 this mechanism extends to also cover

original applications. Accordingly, if an agency fails to decide on an application for authorization within the set processing time and the applicant has submitted all required documents and paid all fees, the application is deemed approved. In such a case, the receipt of acknowledgement together with the receipt of payment issued to the applicant serve as valid proof of authorization.

Zero-contact policy⁶⁵

A new feature introduced in RA 11032 is the implementation of the zero-contact policy. Accordingly, no government officer is permitted to communicate with an applicant once the initial assessment and validation of submitted requirements have been completed, unless such contact is deemed strictly necessary. All related transactions shall be carried out through a web-based software-enabled business registration system developed by the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT).

Single unified business application form⁶⁶

The requirement of a single or unified business application form, which was not present in RA 9485, is introduced under RA 11032. Pursuant to this provision, LGUs are mandated to use a single or unified business application form for both new applications and renewals. This form is intended to consolidate all information required by various local departments, including information relating to taxation, zoning, sanitation and fire safety, into one application form to reduce the need for multiple submissions. The law further provides that the unified form must be made available both in physical form in designated office areas as well as online, through technology-neutral platforms, such as the central business portal or LGUs' websites.

Business One-Stop Shop (BOSS)⁶⁷

In line with the new provision on a single unified business application form, RA 11032 mandates LGUs to establish a BOSS. This mechanism is designed to streamline the processing of local business authorizations by consolidating the functions of various LGU offices, such as those handling treasury, zoning, building, sanitation and fire safety, into a single location. For example, a bank would be required to submit its application for a banking licence directly to the Central Bank, but it would act through the BOSS to request any required local branch office authorization. Through the BOSS, applicants may submit the application

form either manually or electronically, and the necessary authorizations are processed collectively by co-located offices.

The law further requires LGUs to automate their business permitting and licensing system or set up an electronic BOSS (eBOSS) within 3 years from the entry into force of the law. The detailed operational requirements for eBOSS are provided in the *ARTA-DILG-DICT-DTI Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1, Series of 2021*.⁶⁸ Pursuant to Section 8.3.1 of the Circular, the gold standard for a one-step, end-to-end digital authorization process through an eBOSS requires the system to accept electronic submission of applications using a unified application form, support digital payments, issue authorizations electronically, and provide a gateway facility linked to courier services for applicants who prefer to receive hard copies. It must also ensure that a customer support system is available, at a minimum, during working hours.

Central business portal⁶⁹

RA 11032 mandates the establishment of a central business portal (CBP), which functions as a central system for receiving and capturing application data of business-related transactions, including primary authorizations handled at the national level and secondary authorizations issued by LGUs. The CBP may also provide links to the NGA's online registration systems.

In June 2022, the CBP was relaunched as the Philippine Business Hub (PBH).⁷⁰ Currently, the PBH platform allows new enterprises to register, obtain a tax identification number, and register as an employer with the social-insurance agencies.⁷¹ After these national registrations are completed via the PBH, businesses can then proceed to obtain the permits required at the local level through the LGU's BOSS or, where available, the eBOSS.

The functionality of the eBOSS will be significantly enhanced when it is integrated with the CBP/PBH, as local business-permitting processes and national-level registrations will be able to be carried out in a unified, end-to-end system.⁷² DICT is mandated to develop rules and guidelines for the operation of the portal in consultation with the National Privacy Commission, NGAs and LGUs. DICT is also tasked with developing interconnectivity infrastructure among NGAs and LGUs and leading public awareness campaigns about the CBP to promote its use and benefits.

Philippine Business Databank⁷³

Another feature introduced in RA 11032 is the establishment of the Philippine Business Databank (PBD), which is a government-managed database providing NGAs and LGUs with access to verified information on legal existence, registration status and other relevant details of businesses. Government agencies with access to the PBD must not require applicants to resubmit documents that are already available in the system. Instead, required information must be retrieved and crosschecked directly through the PBD.

At the local level, business process and licensing offices are prohibited from requiring previously submitted documents, such as tax clearances, occupancy permits, or neighbourhood clearances, if these have already been presented to other

departments in connection with other business-related authorizations. Within one year from the entry into force of the law, DICT is mandated, in collaboration with other agencies, to develop, maintain, and operate the PBD.

Report Card Survey⁷⁴

The provision on Report Card Survey has been upgraded in RA 11032. Now conducted by ARTA in collaboration with the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the survey's scope is expanded to assess not only agencies' compliance with the Citizen's Charter but also their adherence to the broader requirements of the law. Furthermore, it also serves as a tool for recognizing high-performing agencies: the survey's results can indeed be used as a basis for granting awards, incentives and recognition for excellent service delivery, which adds a motivational element to compliance and performance improvement.

Figure 4: GRP elements embedded in RA 11032

 Citizen's Charter A publicly available service standard detailing: - Complete checklist of requirements for each type of application. - Steps to obtain a particular service. - Responsible person(s) for each step. - Maximum time to complete an application. - Document(s) required. - Fee(s) required. - Procedure for filing complaints.	 Application processing - Preliminary assessment and acknowledgement of receipt required upon submission. - Application deficiencies must be communicated to applicant during preliminary assessment. - Rejections must be justified and notified to the applicant.	 Processing time limit - Three working days for simple transactions. - Seven working days for complex transactions. - Twenty business days for highly technical transactions. One-time extension is allowed if indicated in the Citizen's Charter and notified in writing with reason for delay and release date.	 Automatic approval Original application or request for extension of authorization is deemed approved if the competent authority fails to process within the time limit.
 Electronic business one-stop shop (eBOSS) Streamlining the processing of local business authorizations by consolidating the functions of various LGU offices, including those dealing with business licensing, treasury, fire safety and construction.		 Central Business Portal (CBP) and Philippines Business Data Bank (PBD) - CBP serves as a central system to receive and capture data for business transactions, including authorizations from LGUs, and may link to online application systems of NGAs. - PBD serves as a repository of data on registered businesses, which can be used by NGAs and LGUs for verification purposes.	
 Single unified application form A streamlined form for business authorization applications that consolidates all required information required by various LGU departments, including those dealing with treasury, zoning, sanitary and fire safety.	 ARTA Anti-Red Tape Authority - Empowers agencies to improve efficiency in services delivery. - Enforces compliance with the provisions of RA 11032.		 Electronic authorization and signature - Issuance of electronic authorization is encouraged. - Maximum of three signatories per authorization document. - Electronic signatures are allowed.
 Public assistance/complaints desk Each government agency must set up a public assistance/complaints desk in their offices.		 Zero-contact policy No contact between government personnel and applicants allowed after preliminary assessment, unless strictly necessary.	

Source: WTO/World Bank, based on relevant provisions of RA 11032.

Implementation of RA 11032

To translate the broad mandate of RA 11032 into concrete actions, a series of memorandum circulars were issued to provide detailed guidance on the implementation of specific provisions of the law. The implementation of RA 11032 embraces a whole-of-government approach, which requires close collaboration among government agencies.⁷⁵ The implementation of the GRP elements embedded in RA 11032 will be discussed in the subsections that follow.

a. Implementation of the Citizen's Charter

In accordance with *ARTA Memorandum Circular No. 2019-002*⁷⁶, the Compliance Monitoring and Evaluation Office (CMEO) of ARTA provides a handbook template to guide agencies in preparing complete, accurate and standardized Citizen's Charters.⁷⁷ As of 31 December 2023, 10,724 out of 11,286 government agencies and LGUs had completed and submitted their Citizen's Charters.⁷⁸ This translates to a 95.02 per cent compliance rate and exceeds ARTA's target of 9,456 submissions for 2023.⁷⁹

To ensure agencies' compliance with the law's requirement, the CMEO regularly conducts inspections to evaluate completeness and proper display of the Citizen's Charters in the form of information billboards, handbooks and online copies.⁸⁰ The CMEO also facilitates orientation sessions for government agencies to deepen their understanding of RA 11032's requirements.⁸¹

b. Implementation of the Report Card Survey

The implementing guidelines for the Report Card Survey are provided through Memorandum Circulars No. 2022-04⁸² and 2023-04.⁸³ To ensure objectivity and credibility of the survey, ARTA contracted People Dynamics, Inc. as a third-party provider to develop and implement the survey instruments across participating offices.⁸⁴

Initially piloted in September 2022 with 50 participating agencies⁸⁵, the Report Card Survey 2.0 moved into first cycle implementation in November 2023.⁸⁶ During this phase, the survey attempted to expand its reach to 860 government offices nationwide. Despite the large-scale rollout, only 740 offices, i.e. 86 per cent of the total agencies, were successfully surveyed. The remaining 120 agencies, accounting for 14 per cent of the targeted pool, were not assessed due to lack

of data.⁸⁷ To complete the first cycle, 904 agencies were subjected to the 2024 Report Card Survey 2.0 implementation.⁸⁸ Out of these 904 agencies, 868 agencies successfully surveyed and 36 agencies did not obtain complete scores due to incomplete data.⁸⁹

ARTA's report on the 2024 implementation of Survey 2.0 presents a mixed landscape of government service delivery. Only 227 agencies (around 26 per cent) were rated at least "compliant", meaning they met the minimum standards set under RA 11032. Within this group, 99 agencies obtained a "compliant" rating, 69 achieved a "satisfactory" rating (reflecting basic service delivery that nonetheless leaves room for improvement), 49 were rated "very satisfactory", and 10 agencies distinguished themselves by earning the highest classification of "excellent". By contrast, 641 agencies (around 74 per cent) fell below the minimum standard: 106 agencies were marked "needs improvement", and 535 were categorized as "requires thorough review of RA 11032 requirements", indicating significant shortcomings in service quality and legal compliance. Compared with 2023, when 96 agencies were rated "very satisfactory," 64 "excellent", 83 "needs improvement", and 311 "requires thorough review", the 2024 results reflect a deterioration in both service quality and compliance under RA 11032.

c. Implementation of the eBOSS

As mentioned above, all LGUs were required to set up eBOSS within three years from the date the law took effect – a deadline that lapsed on 17 June 2021.⁹⁰ However, as of 31 December 2023, progress towards full implementation remained limited, with only 19 LGUs (1 per cent of all 1,634 LGUs nationwide) having established fully automated eBOSS systems, and an additional 611 LGUs (37.45 per cent) achieving partial automation.⁹¹ According to ARTA, by end-2024, 112 LGUs had fully implemented end-to-end eBOSS systems⁹², and this figure rose to 115 LGUs by May 2025.⁹³

It has been noted that one major reason for the delay in compliance was the issue of connectivity.⁹⁴ Smaller LGUs, particularly those in remote areas or those separated from business centres by seas, mountains or rugged terrain, often lacked the basic digital infrastructure necessary to support automation.⁹⁵ Recognizing this challenge, ARTA engaged with telecommunications companies and tower providers to develop a collaborative solution.⁹⁶ The resulting

arrangement encouraged LGUs to streamline their internal permitting processes to hasten the construction of telecom infrastructure in return for the prioritized delivery of connectivity services to their localities.⁹⁷

d. Implementation of CBP/PBH

As already mentioned, in June 2022, the CBP was relaunched under the new banner of the PBH.⁹⁸ The latter was further improved through ARTA's Business Process Mapping (BPM) project, which involved mapping all permits and licences throughout the business lifecycle for integration into the PBH.⁹⁹ According to ARTA, the implementation of the PBH shortened the time required to register a business to just three days and six procedural steps.¹⁰⁰

By December 2022, the PBH had facilitated the registration of 13,237 corporations and 9,994 sole proprietorships. The momentum continued into the following year.¹⁰¹ By 15 December 2023, the PBH had recorded a substantial increase, with 37,395 corporate registrations and 15,403 sole proprietorship registrations processed through the system.¹⁰² In addition, the PBH also processed 8,658 registrations for the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, 9,704 for the Home Development Mutual Fund, and 10,127 for the Social Security System, as well as 11,381 tax identification numbers. These figures reflect the growing reliance on the PBH as a central hub for business-related transactions in the Philippines.

e. Complaint resolution

With a dedicated team of approximately 70 personnel, including the Contact of Service in ARTA's Legal Department, the Office of the Deputy Director General for Legal is tasked with addressing all complaints received. As of 31 December 2023, ARTA had received a total of 16,099 initial complaints. Of these, 15,898 were either resolved or referred to the appropriate government agencies for further action. Notably, four cases resulted in convictions for violating provisions of RA 11032. This translates to a remarkable complaint closure rate of 98.75 per cent.¹⁰³

However, ARTA encountered certain challenges in its complaint resolution efforts. In its 2022 report, the Commission on Audit (COA) noted areas where improvements could be made, particularly in the timeliness of resolving cases. While ARTA's procedures were designed to ensure prompt action, a few cases

took ARTA over 100 days to resolve.¹⁰⁴ COA also pointed out opportunities to strengthen documentation practices¹⁰⁵ and suggested ARTA review its current guidelines.¹⁰⁶ ARTA explained that some delays were related to the deferment of its electronic complaints management system, an initiative introduced in 2022 by the previous administration.¹⁰⁷ Due to budgetary constraints, full implementation of the system had to be postponed, which affected efforts to streamline and monitor complaints handling more effectively.¹⁰⁸

Other highlighted reform initiatives

The Philippine government has undertaken various initiatives to further embed GRP elements across public institutions. One of the flagship initiatives in this respect is the National Effort for the Harmonization of Efficient Measures of Inter-Related Agencies (NEHEMIA) programme, which seeks to promote a whole-of-government approach to regulatory simplification and efficiency. The programme targets critical sectors such as common towers in telecommunications infrastructure and interconnectivity, housing, food and pharmaceuticals, logistics, and energy.¹⁰⁹ The goal of the programme was to reduce by at least 52 per cent the time, cost, requirements and procedures associated with securing government approvals within a 52-week period.¹¹⁰

Parallel to sectoral streamlining efforts, ARTA issued several policy frameworks and manuals to institutionalize regulatory best practices. Notably, the *Philippine Good Regulatory Principles* (PGRP) were issued to provide a foundational guide on how government agencies should regulate.¹¹¹ Ten core principles have been identified: clarity in policy rationale; legal and empirical basis; benefits versus costs; assessment of alternative options through RIA; stakeholder engagement; policy coherence; whole-of-government approach; continuous evaluation of regulations' relevance, efficiency and effectiveness; regulations' compatibility with competition, trade and investment-facilitation; and risk management at every stage of the decision-making process.

Alongside the PGRP, ARTA released the *RIA Manual*, which provides government agencies with a structured methodology for conducting RIA to ensure the quality of existing and proposed regulations.¹¹² Additionally, the *National Policy on Regulatory Management System* (NPRMS) was issued to promote the adoption of a systematized approach to managing regulations in the Philippines. It provides a common framework on

GRPs, as well as establishing institutional arrangements and coordinating all regulatory activities across government.¹¹³ The NPRMS aims to ensure that all proposed and existing regulations are rational, fit-for-purpose and do not impose undue regulatory burden and cost on stakeholders.

Further to the strong political commitment to regulatory reform, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. proclaimed the month of May as the official EoDB Month through a presidential declaration issued in March 2025.¹¹⁴ EoDB Month serves as a platform to raise public awareness, showcase reform achievements and renew inter-agency collaboration under the whole-of-government approach mandated by RA 11032.

During the first EoDB Month, ARTA launched the first *Philippine EoDB Reform Guidebook*, which was developed in collaboration with government agencies and private sector stakeholders.¹¹⁵ The Guidebook sets out priority reform areas and provides an implementation road map aligned with the EODB agenda. It is designed to serve as a reference document for policymakers, government offices and industry actors involved in efforts to improve the country's business environment.

Public impact

Over the course of approximately six years, the implementation of RA 11032 has produced measurable public impacts as reflected in the World Bank's first *Business Ready (B-Ready)* report, issued in 2024.¹¹⁶ The Philippines achieved a ranking within the top 20 of 50 assessed economies. The evaluation covered three principal areas critical to the ease of doing business: the quality of regulatory framework and public services, and operational efficiency within the business environment. In these areas, the Philippines ranked 16th, 24th and 46th respectively.¹¹⁷

These results highlight both progress and areas that require further attention. The country's strong performance in its regulatory framework underscores the impact that initiatives such as streamlined licensing procedures, the establishment of one-stop shops and the digitalization of business-related services make. Meanwhile, the mid-range ranking in public services and the relatively lower performance in operational efficiency point to ongoing challenges in service delivery and institutional coordination that need to be addressed to fully realize the goals of RA 11032.

Technical assistance

The rollout and implementation of RA 11032 have been bolstered by the support of the Philippines' development partners and international organizations. Among these, New Zealand emerged as a key partner in the country's EoDB reform¹¹⁸ that eventually led to a formal partnership with ARTA in 2021.¹¹⁹ The partnership aimed to advance EoDB initiatives on e-governance, capacity building, regulatory management, data-sharing across government agencies and public awareness campaigns in the Philippines.¹²⁰

Through the Improving Business Environment for Prosperity programme, the World Bank Group advised the Philippines on the implementation of RA 11032 and produced benchmarking reports that analysed the legal powers and organizational structure of ARTA against those of 13 regulatory oversight bodies from various other countries.¹²¹ The programme also contributed to the implementation of several key provisions of the Act, particularly those related to the Citizens' Charter, process reengineering, report card surveys, and the establishment of complaints referral and feedback mechanisms.¹²² The World Bank also supported the development of the *Philippine EoDB Reform Guidebook*.¹²³

Furthermore, in partnership with the UK¹²⁴, ARTA developed the PGRP through the review and adoption of established principles from the 2012 OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Regulatory Policy and Governance*¹²⁵, the *ASEAN Guidelines on Good Regulatory Practices*¹²⁶ and the *UK Regulators' Code*.¹²⁷ The formulation of the *RIA Manual* also benefited from the technical assistance provided by USAID.¹²⁸

Next steps in strengthening the EoDB reform

Building on its initial successes, the Philippine government is committed to making even greater strides towards a more efficient, transparent and responsive public services delivery. Several key next steps for advancing the EoDB reform in the country have been identified in ARTA's Accomplishment Reports¹²⁹ and the National Economic and Development Authority's *Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028*.¹³⁰

Expediting automation and streamlining for business authorization processes

NGAs and LGUs will fully operationalize existing initiatives aimed at automating and streamlining government services.¹³¹ Central to this effort is the integration of LGU

and NGA processes into the PBH and the PBD, enabling information-sharing among agencies, digital payment of fees, and the issuance of electronic certificates, permits and licences.¹³² The PBH is expected not only to ease compliance with regulatory and licensing requirements throughout the entire life cycle of a business – from initial registration to eventual closure – but also to support business in making necessary changes to their purposes or re-aligning their operations in response to evolving market opportunities and challenges.¹³³

In parallel, ARTA is scaling up its efforts to onboard additional LGUs into the eBOSS system; ARTA has set an ambitious target to bring more than 200 new LGUs into the eBOSS network, aiming to surpass 300 fully compliant LGUs nationwide by the end of 2025.¹³⁴

Continuing to eliminate redundant requirements and increasing regulation quality

Under the stewardship of ARTA and DICT, both NGAs and LGUs will intensify efforts to eliminate redundant, duplicative and unnecessary permits and licensing requirements.¹³⁵ ARTA will remain steadfast in promoting a whole-of-government approach to regulatory reform and will continue the NEHEMIA programme to streamline regulatory processes in priority sectors, including transportation, telecommunications infrastructure and financial technology.¹³⁶

This work will be complemented by the Modernizing Government Regulations Program led by DAP, NEDA and the Department of Budget and Management, which reviews and streamlines existing regulations with the goal of reducing compliance costs and improving GRPs across NGAs and LGUs.¹³⁷

To reinforce regulatory efficiency and coherence, the government will also implement the NPRMS. Building capacity for NPRMS implementation will be prioritized across NGAs and LGUs.¹³⁸ As part of this effort, the Philippine Business Regulations Information System, a web-based platform that ensures the dissemination of and access to information on regulatory management and changes in laws and regulations, will likewise be rolled out.¹³⁹

Strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

The Philippine Ease of Doing Business (PH EoDB) Reporting System is to be established.¹⁴⁰ This system

will adopt localized methodologies and criteria for evaluating the quality of regulatory practices in relation to their adherence to the PGRP and the compliance of government agencies with RA 11032.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, the system will provide a baseline for identifying and reporting EoDB reform initiatives and introduce incentive mechanisms linked to agency performance.¹⁴² In February 2025, the PSA granted clearance for the conduct of the PH EoDB Reporting System. Data will be collected from six NGAs and 321 LGUs, on all officially required procedures, as well as those commonly practised, along with the time and cost necessary for an entrepreneur to start and formally operate a business in the country. Findings are expected in late 2025.¹⁴³

Enhancing engagement with domestic and international stakeholders

Recognizing that meaningful reform requires active collaboration with a broad network of partners, ARTA will strengthen its engagement with stakeholders across the country and around the world to promote shared learning, build consensus and advance regulatory improvements.¹⁴⁴ Through various initiatives, ARTA aims to create inclusive platforms for dialogue, encourage the exchange of best practices and foster stronger partnerships in support of the EoDB agenda.¹⁴⁵

Lessons learned

The journey of the Philippines' EoDB reform through the implementation of RA 9485 to RA 11032 offers valuable insights on successes and challenges of regulatory reform. It demonstrates the incremental nature of institutional change, the central role of GRPs, and the enduring efforts of building a responsive, efficient and citizen-centred bureaucracy. Several key lessons emerge from this experience:

1. A progressive and evolving legal framework is essential

RA 9485 laid the groundwork for service standardization and transparency but was limited in scope. RA 11032 built on this foundation by embedding broader regulatory principles and creating a more holistic reform architecture. This progression underscores the importance of continuously updating legal frameworks to deepen and institutionalize reform.

2. Central oversight must be matched with operational capacity

The establishment of ARTA under RA 11032 was a major advancement, providing centralized leadership for reform. However, challenges in complaint resolution and monitoring capacity revealed that strong legal mandates must be supported by sufficient resources, staffing and operational readiness to be fully effective.

3. Digital tools transform service delivery, but infrastructure gaps must be addressed

The rollout of digital platforms such as the PBH and eBOSS accelerated reform implementation and improved service delivery. Yet, many rural and remote LGUs struggled due to limited connectivity and technological readiness, highlighting the need for parallel investment in digital infrastructure and capacity-building.

4. Standardization must be balanced with flexibility

While national standards ensure uniformity and predictability, the diversity in local government capacity calls for adaptable approaches. Effective reform must allow for localized implementation strategies while upholding core service delivery principles.

5. Feedback mechanisms are critical for adaptive reform

Tools such as the RCS have provided essential data on performance, bottlenecks and public satisfaction. These mechanisms have helped calibrate interventions and build public trust, demonstrating the value of continuous, institutionalized feedback loops in maintaining reform momentum.

6. International partnerships can accelerate change

Technical assistance from partners such as New Zealand, the World Bank and the United Kingdom played a catalytic role in supporting regulatory management, capacity development and the adoption of international best practices. Strategic collaboration with

development partners can significantly enhance reform impact and sustainability in the long run.

7. Reform is most effective when pursued collaboratively across sectors and levels of society

Fragmented efforts yield limited results, while broad, coordinated initiatives are more likely to produce lasting, system-wide change. The Philippines' experience underscores the importance of collective action across government institutions, local authorities and the wider public in driving meaningful and sustainable reform.

Conclusion

The evolution of the Philippines towards regulatory reform tells a story of steady, deliberate progress in building a government that is more responsive, transparent and effective. Through the *Anti-Red Tape Act* of 2007 and the *Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act* of 2018, the government has made tangible strides in reducing administrative burdens and enhancing the accessibility of public services. These reforms, rooted in GRPs, reflect a vision of regulation not as an obstacle, but as an instrument for inclusion, innovation and progress.

Key innovations, such as the establishment of the ARTA, the rollout of digital platforms, and the use of performance monitoring tools, have contributed to a gradual shift in government culture towards greater transparency and accountability. Yet, like any long-term reform effort, the path has not been without its challenges. Variations in implementation across local governments, gaps in digital infrastructure, and the need for stronger coordination highlight the complexities of systemic change.

Still, the Philippine experience offers a hopeful and grounded lesson: that meaningful reform is possible when driven by clear purpose, inclusive engagement and a willingness to learn and adapt. The government's ongoing efforts to strengthen regulatory governance may serve as a valuable reference for others on similar paths. As reforms continue to take root and evolve, they hold the potential to shape a more equitable, dynamic and citizen-centred future for the Philippines.

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