

PHILIPPINES

Open Government Journey



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Philippines' Open Government Journey

March 2025

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Cover: A man drives on a road in Siargao Island (Photo credit: Alejandro Luengo via Unsplash)

People in Cebu celebrating the annual festival of Sinulog (Photo credit: Hitoshi Namura via Unsplash)

A photograph of a tropical road at sunrise. The road is paved and lined with lush green trees and foliage. In the foreground, a person is riding a motorcycle with a passenger. Further down the road, other motorcycles and a vehicle are visible. The sky is bright and hazy, suggesting early morning light. The image is framed by a white border and overlaid with a dark grey rectangle containing the title.

INTRODUCTION

Sunrise in Siargao Island (Photo credit:
Alejandro Luengo via Unsplash)



Attendees of the 2025 Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting, hosted by the Philippines in Manila (Photo credit: OGP)

The Philippines was one of the co-founding members of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2011. Since then, it has embarked on a complex journey of reform—navigating political transitions and evolving governance challenges. Spearheading open government reforms at both national and local levels, the Philippines has [developed](#) 75 commitments across six national action plans and 17 commitments by local governments. Stakeholders are currently implementing the country’s first four-year national action plan for [2023–2027](#).

The Philippines has driven important reforms through its OGP action plans. Compared to its regional peers, the Philippines has introduced some of the most ambitious open government commitments, delivering exceptionally strong early results. These commitments have [spread citizen participatory audits](#), [enhanced good governance at the local level](#), and [boosted transparency in the extractives sector](#).

However, progress has not been without setbacks. Shifting political priorities, stalled legislative reforms, and fluctuating civic space have slowed or derailed some efforts—underscoring the challenges of sustaining ambitious open government initiatives in a dynamic political landscape. For example, [efforts](#) to pass national freedom of information legislation are still ongoing, hampered by misalignment with the personal interests of legislators, lack of prioritization on legislative agendas, and missed opportunities during political transitions. Commitments introducing digital portals meant to open government did not always center on users’ needs or had problems with resourcing. The relaunch of the

Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System had been delayed by [difficulties](#) with third-party contracting and service delivery issues.

Despite these setbacks, committed institutions, career service officials, and civil society have cultivated a resilient and diverse ecosystem. For over 13 years, the OGP platform has provided a safe space to foster collaboration, explore innovation, and implement reform in the Philippines.



Listening session on climate action at the 2025 Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting in the Philippines (Photo credit: OGP)

As the Philippines begins its first term on the OGP Steering Committee, reformers can learn from previous experience to tackle future open government challenges. The Philippines' adaptability across different governing administrations offers a valuable case study for both OGP and other countries navigating complex political contexts in the years ahead.

This Open Government Journey spotlights efforts to advance fiscal openness through innovative practices, alternative approaches to ensuring access to information, and actions that have opened up the extractives sector. It looks at efforts to promote open government at both national and local levels as well as how government and civil society have sustained and even strengthened their relationship through the OGP process.

A SNAPSHOT OF OGP IN THE PHILIPPINES



75 commitments across six national action plans

Co-founded OGP in 2011

32 government institutions and independent agencies as commitment leads

Latest action plan cycle: 2023-2027

17 commitments from five OGP Local members

The Philippines performs above the global average of OGP members.

55%

of all commitments in its six action plans to date are ambitious.

60%

of commitments in its first five action plans were completed.

28%

of commitments in its first five action plans had strong early results.



PHILIPPINES' OPEN GOVERNMENT JOURNEY

A mountain road in Dingalan, Aurora Province
(Photo credit: Mary Rose Relente via Unsplash)



A weaver at work in Argao, Cebu Province (Photo credit: Ralph Labay via Unsplash)

Sustaining and Strengthening an Open Government Ecosystem

The evolution of the OGP process in the Philippines underscores the commitment of government and civil society stakeholders to develop a resilient ecosystem, adapting to political shifts while fostering diversity and dialogue.

The PH-OGP Steering Committee, one of the first multi-stakeholder forums within OGP, has grown to include diverse representatives from civil society, national agencies, local governments, the Senate, and the Supreme Court. It is anchored by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and the Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE-NGO).

The Philippines' open government ecosystem has diversified since its first OGP process. There was little active collaboration in developing or implementing the first OGP action plan (2012–2013) despite active civil society engagement with public institutions on open government issues before OGP. It was not well known outside of the executive branch. Since then, the variety of engaged institutions and civil society organizations has diversified. On the government side, the institutional clout of DBM

has been key to ensuring the engagement of a variety of government departments and independent agencies. Regular commitment holders include the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), the Presidential Communications Office (PCO), and the Commission on Audit (COA). Overall, 32 unique government institutions have now led the development and implementation of at least one OGP commitment. Civil society involvement has also expanded from the early years, despite some high-profile withdrawals such as the Right to Know Right Now coalition in 2015. It was not until 2016 that civil society organizations established a non-government secretariat to support the work of PH-OGP, giving them a stronger voice. This was key to moving open government forward in the Philippines despite the new and challenging political context.

Government and civil society reformers have demonstrated resilience and adapted their approach to collaboration and developing OGP action plans against the [backdrop of democratic backsliding and declining civic freedoms](#). This has come with trade-offs. PH-OGP shifted focus from the ambitious reforms of President Benigno

Aquino's administration to pragmatic and more technical opportunities under President Rodrigo Duterte. While some civil society organizations saw this as a step back in ambition, PH-OGP remained one of the few "[safe spaces](#)" for dialogue to work on reforms while civic liberties had started to deteriorate, including a crackdown on free media and harassment of civil society organizations in the country. Yet it was during this time that the PH-OGP steering committee was able to widen civil society membership, expanding its geographic and sectoral representation.

There have been some improvements to civic space following the election of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in 2022, though [concerns](#) such as red-tagging in mining communities remain. During his time in office, [Executive Order No. 31](#) in June 2023 mandated the expansion of the PH-OGP Steering Committee, formal terms of reference for both government and non-government members, and dedicated financial resources and staffing through a PH-OGP Program Management Office. This institutionalization gives the OGP platform a permanent regulatory basis in the Philippines, somewhat shielding it from future changes in administration.

Furthermore, civil society has continued to strengthen its voice in OGP. Most recently, CODE-NGO introduced an "OGP Citizen's Agenda" which outlines civil society priorities for government commitments. Over half of the commitments in the current action plan include civil society partners. Notably,

efforts to engage youth, women, and underrepresented sectors in the steering committee have ensured their voices are reflected in commitments. The Public Services Labor Independent Confederation has ensured that unions could participate in OGP, with support ranging from providing internet access to capacity building on use of dialogue platforms. Additionally, government agencies have conducted communication efforts, including public campaigns and outreach programs, to encourage broader participation in the OGP process. In 2023, DBM launched the nationwide "OGPinas!" awareness raising campaign to widen public interest in open government.

At the heart of PH-OGP's success are the individuals who have ensured the survival of open government during these political transitions, often to support reforms they deeply believed in. Despite the challenges, CSO networks have repeatedly been rebuilt and strengthened, demonstrating resilience and dedication to the OGP process. Civil society reformers and career service officials have championed open government, successfully securing buy-in for OGP across key ministries. Government officials and civil society reformers have formed lasting relationships, sustaining their efforts despite "reform fatigue." Over time, friendly conversations have extended beyond formal committee meetings. These friendships became a foundation for trust, enabling more productive dialogue and collaboration, and helping the OGP platform to endure, even under difficult circumstances.

OGPinas!

OGPinas! was a nationwide campaign launched in 2023. It was led by the Department of Budget and Management, the Department of the Interior and Local Government, and Philippine Information Agency. Along with *Dagyaw* town hall meetings, OGPinas! helped widen interest in open government across national, regional, city, and municipal levels. The campaign **engaged** almost 4,000 stakeholders from national and local governments, civil society, and universities. In the words of former civil society PH-OGP co-chair: "*You can never discount the value of bringing together people in one place.*"



An artist at work in Baguio (Photo credit: Joshua Kyle via Unsplash)

The OGP-ification of Local Governance

The Philippines has proactively expanded its engagement in open government to the local level, which plays a key role in delivering services to citizens. Of the country's 75 national OGP action plan commitments, 18 include activities implemented at the subnational level. About half of the commitments in its fifth (2019–2022) and sixth (2023–2027) national action plans feature local-level components. Additionally, the country now has 17 commitments from its five OGP Local members: South Cotabato Province, Baguio City, Larena Municipality, Quezon City, and Tagbilaran City.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) has been central to pushing many of these reforms, viewing OGP as a vehicle to support and strengthen local government's capacities and services. DILG spearheaded the Seal of Good Local Governance during the [second national action plan](#) (2013–2015), incentivizing local governments to disclose budget information and pass freedom of information ordinances. The seal was enacted into law in 2019. In the [fifth plan](#) (2019–2022), a training program for civil society participants in local governance structures bolstered citizen involvement in decision-making processes.

Even before OGP launched its program for local governments, the Philippines was an [early innovator](#) in encouraging locally-led open government initiatives. In 2018, South Cotabato joined the OGP Local program. Its two action plans prioritized introducing a freedom of information ordinance, public monitoring of infrastructure projects, legislative transparency, open procurement, transparency in the extractives sector, and youth empowerment. Local officials noted that the OGP process ensured marginalized communities, such as indigenous peoples and women, were brought into designing open government reforms. While these have yet to yield strong early results, South Cotabato's CSO Academy has become a hub for coaching and sharpening the skills of civil society leaders in the province.

In 2024 and 2025, Baguio City, Larena Municipality, Quezon City, and Tagbilaran City all started implementing their first OGP action plans. Three commitments from these OGP Local members - [establishing procurement transparency](#), [strengthening civic engagement](#), and [institutionalizing participation mechanisms](#) - are part of the [Open Gov Challenge](#).

This extension of open government to the local level has been amplified by legal and policy changes. In 2021, the [devolution of powers from the national level](#) and [increased fiscal autonomy](#) magnified participatory mechanisms that had been gaining ground among local governments. Supported by OGP commitments, DILG had trained over 24,000 civil society organizations by 2024, preparing them to formally participate as members of local special bodies. Simultaneously, 1,451 local governments established desk officers to facilitate CSO participation, and 464 formed local people's councils to institutionalize citizen participation.

Inspired by the [2023 OGP Global Summit](#) and the growing success of its OGP Local members, DILG began developing its first OGP localization strategy. It envisions municipalities and *barangays* in Philippine OGP Local members to establish their own OGP processes, fostering a culture of transparency, citizen engagement, and accountability at the grassroots level.

Despite these examples of trailblazing local governments in the OGP space, many other local governments still [face limitations](#). These include questions around local leadership, staff expertise, resources for local civil society, and public awareness and participation. Further concerns around local-level corruption and patronage also limit some local governments' capacity and ability to implement open government reforms.

While challenges remain, DILG aims to further strengthen civil society's capacity to monitor and participate in local governance and activate more local people's councils as counterparts to their local governments. The enthusiasm that has embedded open government reforms in early local adopters will be essential to ensuring the circles of open government continue to widen.



A woman working in a field in Baguio (Photo credit: Nathaniel Sison via Unsplash)



Skyline of Quezon City (Photo credit: Rey Melvin Caraan via Unsplash)

LOCAL OPEN GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

BAGUIO CITY

The four commitments in Baguio's 2024-2025 action plan seek to [encourage](#) public participation in monitoring of waste reduction efforts, [engaging](#) local school communities in developing traffic reduction and safety measures, [enhance](#) awareness and understanding of urban sustainability issues, and [institutionalize](#) the Baguio City People's Council.

QUEZON CITY

Quezon City is implementing its 2025-2028 OGP action plan. Its five commitments seek to [enhance](#) participation in budgeting, expand open justice measures, [increase](#) transparency and accountability in public services, as well as strengthen and expand [capacity](#) for civic engagement and [opportunities](#) for participation.

TAGBILARAN CITY

Tagbilaran aims to make participatory governance and financial transparency more effective. Its 2025 action plan [commits](#) to conducting a series of webinar sessions and forums to foster greater civic participation and leverage the Tagbilaran City People's Council to ensure resources are effectively used for projects, programs, and activities that align with the community needs.

LARENA MUNICIPALITY

Larena's 2025 action plan commits to [establish](#) a transparent and open procurement procedure. A newly-established procurement team would oversee and assess the procurement process to collaboratively identify improvements and implement them.

SOUTH COTABATO

The province's 2021-2022 OGP action plan [committed](#) to engaging young people in open government by providing opportunities and encouraging involvement in relevant consultations and local actions. Its 2018-2020 OGP action plan included commitments on [access to information](#), [monitoring infrastructure projects](#), [procurement transparency](#), [access to extractives information](#), and [publishing legislation](#).



Sarah Pacayra stands in front of the Unang Hakbang Foundation in Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila. Sarah took part in the citizen participatory audit program in the Philippines, working with public schools in Metro Manila. (Photo credit: OGP)

Pushing Fiscal Openness through Innovative Practices

Over the past two decades, the Philippines has emerged as a leader in fiscal openness. This progress has been driven by political will, adherence to global benchmarks, strategic transparency reforms, and actions to strengthen public oversight.

Fiscal openness has been the most frequently addressed topic in Philippine OGP action plans, albeit with mixed results. Efforts to expand participatory budgeting have been tailored to align with the priorities of different administrations, while the reintroduction of citizen participatory audits has endured such political changes.

This section examines the strides made in fiscal openness in the Philippines, highlighting how administrations have prioritized different reforms consistently pursuing the overarching goal of greater fiscal openness.

The Initial Push for Fiscal Openness

In 2010, Filipinos elected President Aquino with a “*kung walang corrupt, walang mahirap*” (no corruption, no poverty) slogan following a series of corruption scandals. His administration initiated a series of [public financial](#)

[management reforms](#) under DBM, which successive administrations largely maintained. These reforms were not only a reaction to domestic concerns but also aligned with international commitments as a co-founder of both OGP and the [Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency](#).

Improving the country’s ranking in the [Open Budget Survey](#) helped to focus minds on enhancing fiscal openness reforms. Recognizing the importance of such global benchmarks, the Philippine government viewed a decline in the Open Budget Survey score as a reputational risk incompatible with its leadership role in global transparency initiatives. By 2015, reforms had propelled the country into the top quarter of global rankings and highest in Southeast Asia, [where it has remained](#).

OGP action plans have supported these efforts to embed budget transparency—21 out of 75 commitments have addressed fiscal openness. Some have directly addressed recommendations from the Open Budget Survey, while others have sought to improve information accessibility and participation throughout the budget cycle. Reformers have tailored commitments to align with the priorities of different administrations. Building on previous efforts

to encourage full disclosure of local-level financial documents, commitments introducing the [Seal of Good Local Governance](#) further incentivized local governments to disclose budget information. At the national level, reformers published measurable performance targets and outcomes to ensure efficient allocation of government resources. These budgeting reforms have embedded transparency as standard practice as opposed to ad hoc measures.

Participatory Budgeting

Public participation through participatory budgeting emerged as a cornerstone of early efforts to improve the Philippines' fiscal openness. However, directly engaging citizens in government-led initiatives revealed the tension between the design of these initiatives and the priorities of different administrations.

Initiatives such as [Bottom-up-Budgeting](#) (BuB) during the Aquino administration activated local participatory mechanisms, [growing](#) to PHP 24.7 billion (USD 525 million) of the 2016 national budget. Although supported by civil society, BuB was eventually discontinued under the Duterte administration, which considered it a [political tool](#). Its successor, the Assistance to Disadvantaged Municipalities program, sought to address local resource disparities through [successful access to information measures](#). However, there were [fewer opportunities](#) for meaningful citizen and civil society engagement compared to BuB.

Yet while BuB as a project may have ended, its principles have lived on. Regional governments continue to hold budgeting consultations, although participation opportunities are not always consistent. To strengthen participatory budgeting, DBM and DILG have included guidelines outlining principles to support assistance funds to participatory budgeting in 2024 and 2025. In its [first year](#), 75 municipalities benefited from this fund having been identified with the help of civil society organizations.

(Re)introducing Citizen Participatory Audits

Despite broader participation challenges, a standout element of the Philippines' approach to public financial management has been the citizen participatory audit (CPA). These audits have highlighted the potential of participatory oversight mechanisms to shift governance practices. For example, CPAs have led to improvements in health centers in Marikina City, public schools in Metro Manila, and residential water supply services in Quezon City.

CPAs involve citizens directly in auditing government spending, emphasizing transparency and accountability. The Commission on Audit (COA) leads these processes by [selecting](#) relevant civil society partners who, in turn, select volunteer citizens of good standing. Special audit teams of the COA and citizen auditors then conduct audits of government programs, selected through multi-stakeholder dialogues made up of the COA, civil society organizations, and citizens.



Representatives of the Supreme Audit Institution of Nepal visited Quezon City to learn about its successful implementation of citizen participatory audits, inspiring them to create their own program. (Photo credit: @daylightstalker via Instagram)

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Through [OGP commitments](#), the Philippines has pledged to enhance procurement transparency. Efforts have **included** making procurement data more accessible via the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System and **aligning with international standards** like the Open Contracting Data Standard. The current action plan (2023–2027) aims to establish a **Procurement Diagnostic Hub**. However, challenges such as inconsistent data quality and limited civil society participation in monitoring procurement activities remain.

In 2024, the government introduced the Public Financial Management Reforms Roadmap 2024–2028, which outlines steps to modernize financial processes, including procurement. This plan emphasizes the use of digital tools to streamline transactions and improve oversight. For example, the Budget and Treasury Management System is set to provide real-time tracking of government spending, helping officials make informed decisions.

Most recently, the Philippines has committed via the Open Gov Challenge to **improve its public procurement portal**, making it easier for the public to share feedback on high-risk areas, publicly disclosing beneficial ownership information, and focusing on interoperability.

CPAs were first [piloted](#) more than a decade before OGP. One of the initial audits looked at the Abra-Kalinga and Abra-Ilocos roads, which played a critical role in community development. The citizen auditors found irregularities in the contracting process, incomplete road work, and concerns about the quality of construction materials. While that participatory audit project was later terminated, it was not forgotten.

When the Aquino administration came into office and the Philippines joined OGP, the COA saw an opportunity to reintroduce CPAs through the call for open government commitments. As part of the Philippines' [first action plan](#) (2011–2013), reformers conducted a series of citizen participatory audits. One such audit investigated a [flood control project](#) in Metro Manila, finding it ineffective against flooding, as well as having inadequate personnel and resources to operate it. State auditors valued the participation of civil society partners in gathering evidence, as they were able to have more candid conversations with project beneficiaries.

Through successive action plans, the government has [created a dedicated management unit](#), published several citizen participatory audit reports, [expanded them](#) to cover more government departments, and secured regular funding. During the [fourth action plan](#) (2017–2019), the COA increased citizen involvement to help focus on priority issues and formally adopted [a policy](#) to make CPAs a part of its regular audits.

A core team at the COA has been integral to mainstreaming and institutionalizing CPAs, joined by former commissioners and state auditors who continue to advocate for them. The OGP platform has also validated the importance of CPAs, both through successfully-implemented commitments and global recognition from OGP awards in [2013](#) and [2021](#). While CPAs were previously donor-driven and funded, the COA [allocated resources from its national budget](#) to pursue CPAs further following the 2013 awards.

CPAs have thus continued beyond the OGP framework. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, the COA pursued a CPA on whether public bodies complied with the publication requirements of the Philippines' Procurement Law through the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System. In November 2024, a [bill recognizing CPAs](#) had been referred to the Senate.

The spread and implementation of CPAs have also faced [roadblocks](#). Civil society organizations' ability to participate was sometimes constrained, due to funding issues or loss of interest when they found the audit structure too rigid to meet their objectives. Changes in political leadership at the COA have also challenged buy-in. In parallel, successive administrations have progressively selected less impactful projects for audits, and government agencies have not always been willing to receive CPAs.

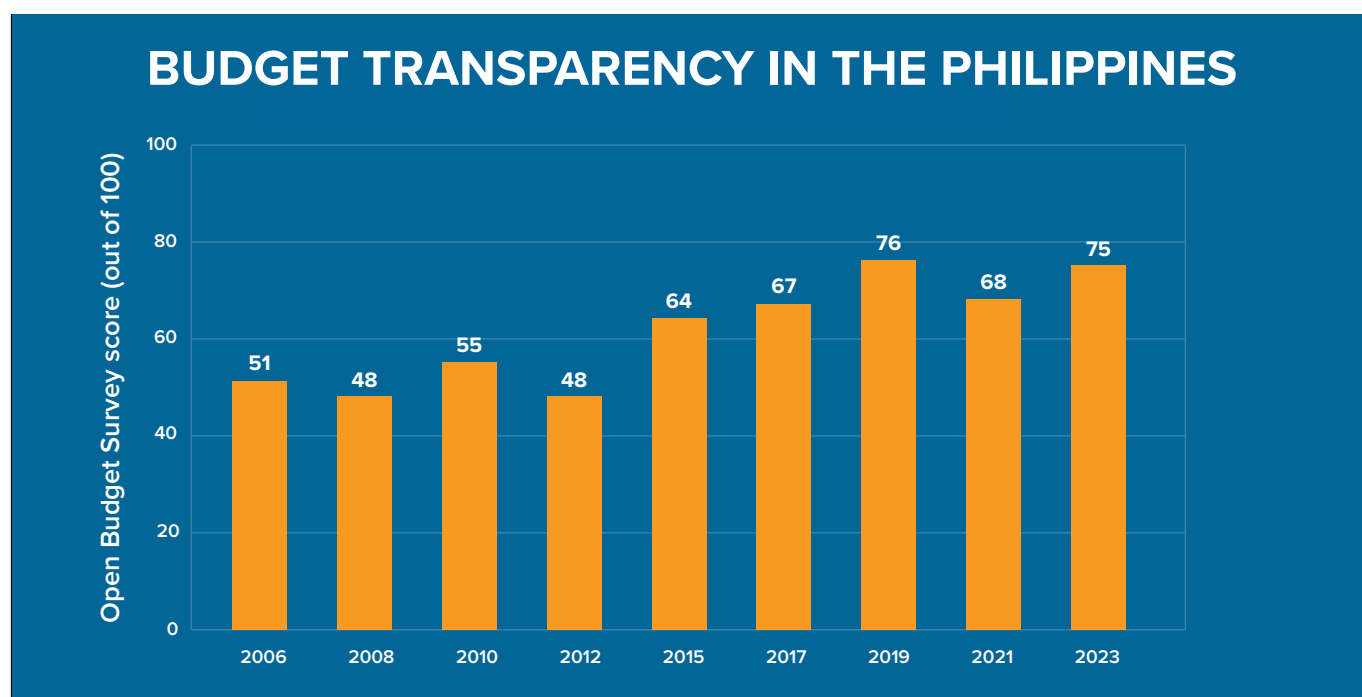
Overall, CPAs have positively influenced open government in the Philippines. With over 80 partnerships with civil society organizations since 2012, CPAs have [built more collaborative relationships](#) between state auditors and civil society organizations and empowered citizen partners. The audits bring accountability to government services in areas prioritized by citizens. Meeting face-to-face with citizen auditors brings home the reality of how service gaps harm those in need. In Marikina City, citizen auditors made providers realize the need to proactively address shortages of high-demand medicines in health centers. Previously, they had simply listed medicines received and dispensed without analytics or recommendations. The COA has reflected that with citizen auditors, audits have focused on public users' satisfaction

with government services, and audit findings have generated immediate remedial attention from government actors.

Sustaining Fiscal Openness into the Future

Looking forward, the Philippines can continue to build on its legacy of fiscal openness. Sustaining political interest in fiscal openness through collaborative engagement with civil society is key to preserving progress and adapting to new challenges. Initiatives like CPAs highlight the potential of participatory oversight mechanisms to enhance government processes and services. The COA, civil society, and other interested parties could consider a more comprehensive analysis of how CPAs have contributed to more accountable public resources and services across the country.

As the Philippines' national budget [faces legal challenges](#) in the Supreme Court, embedding openness into broader public financial management reforms remains essential. As new technologies and methodologies emerge, leveraging these tools to improve participation and oversight will ensure that fiscal openness remains a cornerstone of open government in the Philippines for years to come.



Source: [Open Budget Survey](#)



Skyline of Pasig City, which has received over a thousand access to information requests (Photo credit: Lawrence Aritao via Unsplash)

Exploring Alternative Approaches to Access to Information

The struggle to adopt a national freedom of information (FOI) law is a notable disappointment in the Philippines' open government journey, especially as a co-founding member of OGP. Since 1987, attempts to pass a national FOI law have stalled in Congress, largely due to fears among legislators that increased transparency could be weaponized against them. However, the situation has also spurred innovative, albeit fragmented, approaches to improving public access to information.

Limited Success for Access to Government-held Information

Since the start of the Philippines' participation in OGP, civil society and reform-minded government actors have used OGP action plans to advocate for the passage of a national FOI law. In the early days, stakeholders viewed OGP as a public-facing platform to maintain pressure on elected officials. However, during the [third action plan](#) (2015–2017), the Right to Know Right Now! Coalition withdrew from the Philippine OGP multi-stakeholder forum, blaming then-President Aquino and the House of Representatives' leadership for not fulfilling campaign pledges to pass FOI legislation.

Yet, President Duterte signed an executive order on FOI just weeks after taking office in 2016. While not a law, he also established the FOI Program Management Office with dedicated staffing under the Presidential Communications Office (PCO). The FOI Program Management Office has since conducted significant outreach and onboarded hundreds of national government institutions and agencies onto the Philippines' eFOI portal. By [2024](#), in a remarkable increase, citizens had made over 240,000 requests processed through the eFOI portal.

However, efforts are undermined by the limitations set out in recent executive orders in 2021 and 2023. Some civil society groups have argued that the limitations of the executive orders can be too broadly interpreted, which reduce public access to information.

Furthermore, the lack of national FOI legislation reinforces the piecemeal nature of the Philippines' transparency framework, with non-executive branches of government largely untouched. Such fragmented progress demonstrates that the OGP process also requires broad political prioritisation to secure legislative change.

A Pragmatic Shift to Embedding Access to Information at the Local Level

In response to these national-level limitations, reformers have focused efforts on local governments in the Philippines' fifth (2019–2022) and sixth (2023–2027) OGP action plans, aligning with broader decentralization trends in the country. By 2024, 84 local governments had adopted FOI ordinances, with targets to expand this number in the coming years. IRM recommendations have influenced commitments in the sixth action plan to establish a framework for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of these local ordinances. There has been increasing demand for local information including data on local government budgets, infrastructure, healthcare, education, and even local government operations.

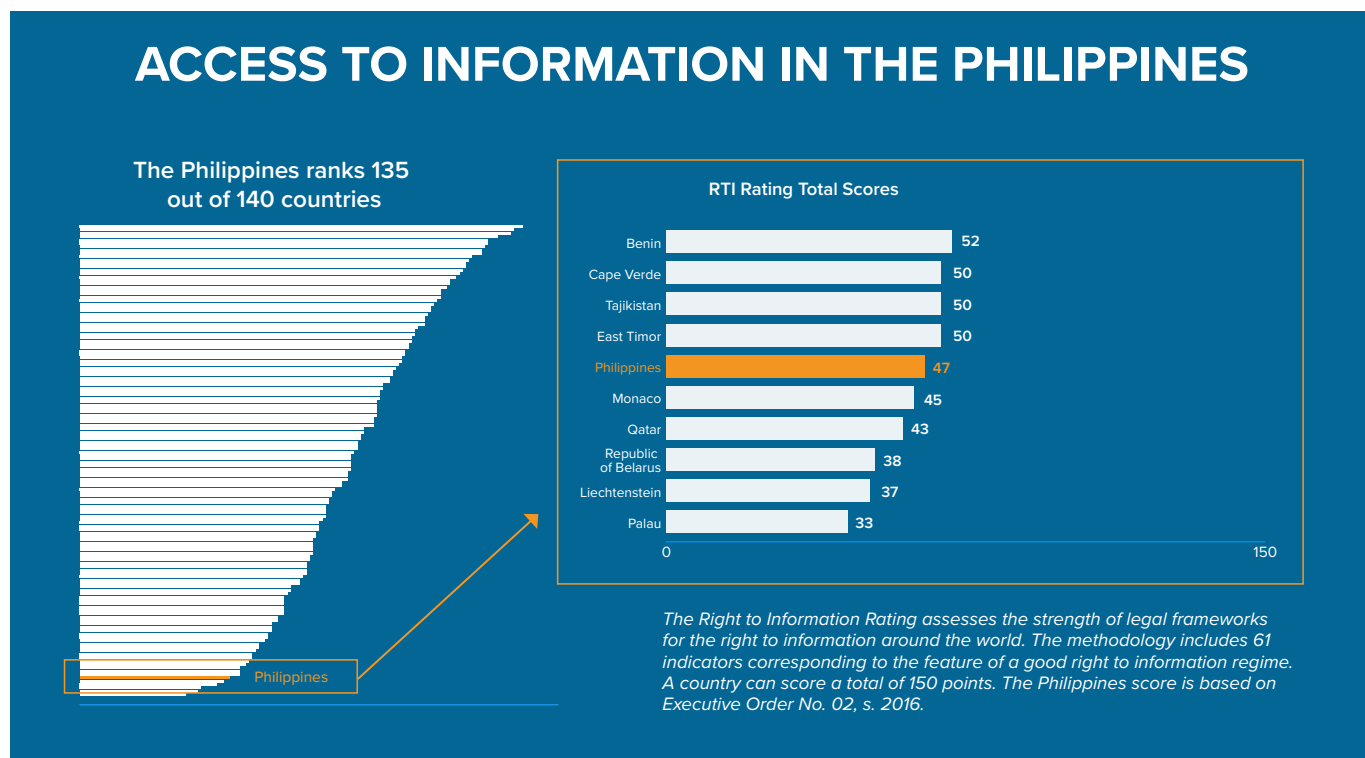
National government-led outreach events, FOI awards, and the incorporation of FOI metrics and performance-based reviews into the Seal of Good Local Governance have encouraged the adoption of these local ordinances. A Laoag City Councilor noted that missing city funds were a major motivator for adopting an FOI ordinance. Some of these local initiatives have [shown potential](#) to transform transparency practices, particularly in areas like public spending, contracting, and infrastructure projects.

However, uneven implementation, digital access disparities, and varying political interest at the local level present significant barriers. For instance, while Pasig City has received over 1,000 FOI requests, other local governments have [struggled](#) to respond effectively or implement their ordinances at all. Sometimes officials lack guidance on releasing information, have competing priorities, or misunderstood documents as personal information.

A Pragmatic Response to an Ongoing Challenge

Despite these challenges, using the OGP platform to push for local FOI reforms demonstrates a pragmatic response to the lack of progress at the national level. The Philippines has also co-founded the [Asian Access to Information Alliance](#) to drive policy development and capacity building on transparency at a regional level. These local and international efforts show the commitment and creativity of reformers in advocating for access to government information, even in the absence of a national FOI law.

The expansion of access to information in the Philippines reveals the complexities of legislative reform. On the one hand, progress has been uneven and often constrained by political barriers, even when [there is a public commitment](#) to adopt a national law. On the other hand, using the OGP platform to pivot towards more practical actions has shown success.



Source: [RTI Rating](#)



A miner takes a break from working on a tunnel in South Cotabato, a province in southern Philippines that has established best practices in the governance of the small-scale mining sector (Photo credit: Joylin A Saquing, PH-EITI via Flickr)

Bolstering Extractives Sector Transparency with OGP

Through engagement with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), the Philippines has made significant progress in opening its extractive industries. The sector produces and exports nickel, gold, and copper, as well as other metals, oil, and gas.

The Philippines Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (PH-EITI) implements EITI nationally. It is administered by a multi-stakeholder group chaired by the Department of Finance (DOF). Despite some setbacks, this group has been key to pushing transparency efforts in the sector. The multi-stakeholder platforms of PH-EITI and OGP have supported collaboration, with stakeholders creatively focusing attention at the local level to further embed transparency in the extractives sector.

This section examines the Philippines' journey enhancing transparency in the extractives sector through PH-EITI and OGP. Highlighting major milestones, it explains how the relationship built between the government and civil society has driven reforms, helped overcome a temporary withdrawal from EITI, and readied the Philippines for continued progress.

The Early Gains in Opening Up the Extractives Sector

In 2013, the Philippines joined EITI, embracing global standards for transparent governance of its extractive industries. In 2014, as part of its [second OGP action plan](#) (2013–2015), the country published its first EITI report, disclosing revenues from resources like nickel, gold, and copper for the first time. During the [third action plan](#) (2015–2017), the creation of an EITI multi-stakeholder group and wider engagement efforts meant civil society coalition Bantay Kita could tailor the published data to community needs, empowering local advocacy.

The OGP platform helped kickstart collaboration among government, private entities, and civil society on extractive industries transparency. It also served as a channel to encourage the government to implement recommendations from EITI reports. As such, OGP action plans have [helped reinforce activities](#) to expand transparency in the extractives sector. The Philippines was the first country to have achieved satisfactory progress complying with the EITI



Students in a nickel mining area, including the children of indigenous community residents and company employees, in a school created by a mining company that regularly participates in EITI (Photo credit: Joylin A Saquing, PH-EITI via Flickr)

standard in 2016, among the 52 implementing countries at the time. The [EITI International Chair Award](#) for the Philippines in 2016 recognised and celebrated this success in turning transparency into actionable oversight.

Under the [fourth](#) (2017–2019), [fifth](#) (2019–2022) and [sixth](#) (2023–2027) OGP action plans, the Philippines has embedded EITI mechanisms and enhanced public engagement, including at the local level. They introduced an online portal for contracts, revenues, and social programs, alongside capacity building for civil society to use data for advocacy. Efforts also enabled indigenous people to directly question the extractive industry about the impact on their communities through participation in the PH-EITI multi-stakeholder forum.

Local-level engagement expanded through [initiatives](#) such as the first provincial extractive industries transparency forum in Cebu, which brought together local governments, CSOs, and communities. [Roadshows](#) in places like the cities of Baguio, Naga, and Butuan, and the provinces of Zambales, Cebu, and Palawan discussed how to implement extractive transparency efforts at the local level. These conversations engaged government, extractive companies, civil society organizations, indigenous peoples, and communities affected by mining operations.

However, the [passage of a new procurement law](#) in 2024 mandating a comprehensive beneficial ownership registry marks a turning point which could serve as a foundation for broader transparency reforms in the extractives sector. The new law comes on top of a commitment in the current OGP action plan to improve the capacity of subnational bodies to report extractive data, strengthen stakeholder support, and establish monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Furthermore, discussions in the Senate on simplifying the mining fiscal regime include a provision to institutionalize a mechanism for the public disclosure and scrutiny of all extractive industry-related data, which would be expected to significantly enhance transparency in the extractives sector in the Philippines.

Overcoming Setbacks in Extractives Transparency

Progress was tested during the Duterte administration. There were reports of rising [restrictions](#) on civic space broadly across the Philippines, along with intimidation, violence, and extrajudicial killings targeting activists and journalists, including those working on extractive industries transparency. A breaking point came in 2022 when the Philippines withdrew from EITI, following the initiative's [assessment highlighting gaps](#) in civil society engagement. This [withdrawal](#) underscored domestic political sensitivities,

with civil society groups [raising alarms](#) over threats to transparency and community engagement. Despite this formal withdrawal, the resilience of members from the multi-stakeholder group during this period led them to address the corrective actions, establishing a stakeholder engagement committee and grievance mechanism.

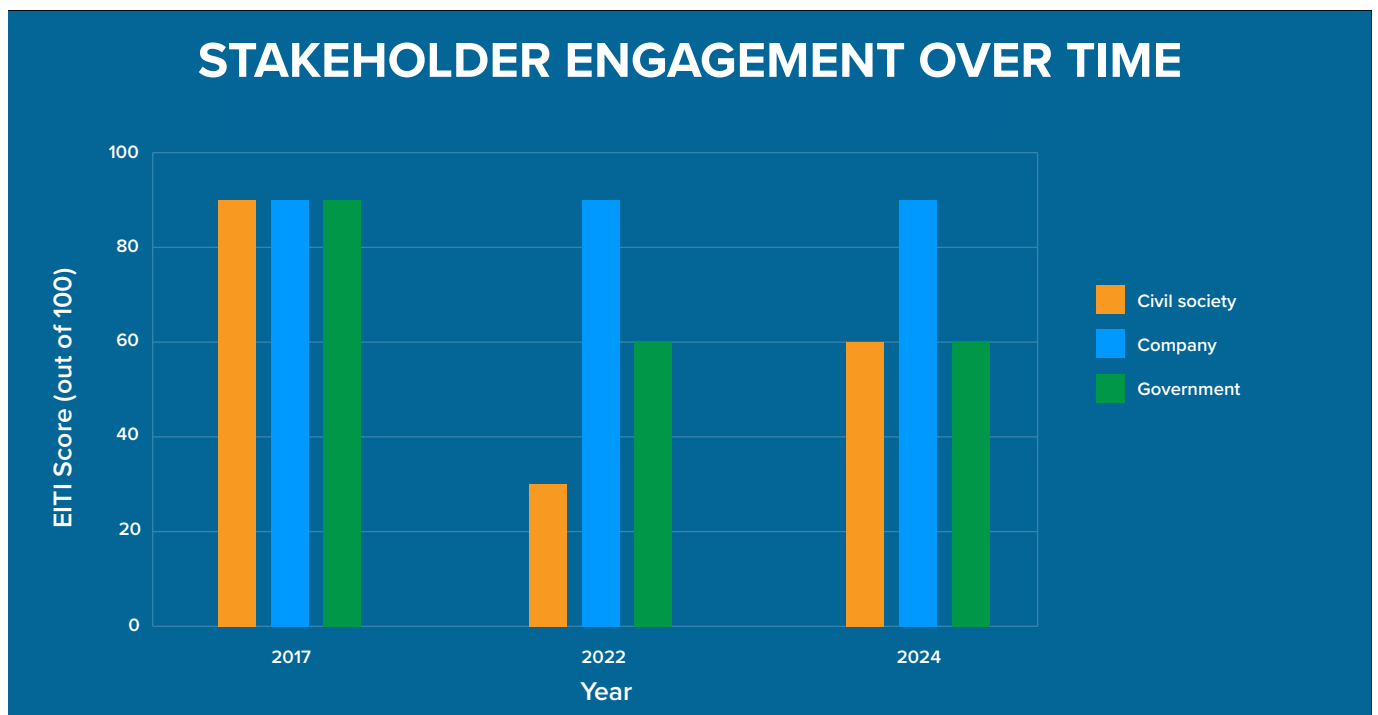
The Philippines [rejoined](#) EITI just two months later, signaling renewed dedication to transparency under the newly-elected Marcos Jr. administration. The current OGP action plan (2023–2027) has reaffirmed the Philippines’ commitment to EITI, re-establishing a collaborative push for transparency in the extractive sector. In June 2024, EITI reassessed progress on civic society engagement from “partly met” to “mostly met,” with recommendations for continuous monitoring.

The Strength of the Multistakeholder Approach

The multistakeholder approach supported by EITI and OGP have been key to ensuring progress on extractives transparency. Previously, civil society had difficulty engaging extractive companies effectively. PH-EITI reflected that government officials, company representatives, and civil society actors now better understand the value of sharing information, engaging in dialogue, and working collaboratively to solve complex issues. The multistakeholder approach has improved government policymaking by bringing forward concerns of all affected groups, particularly on resource management as well as social and environmental impacts.

Since 2012, PH-EITI country reports have reconciled over PHP 525 billion (USD 9 billion) in government revenues from over 100 extractive projects nationwide, a significant milestone. Citizens can use PH-EITI’s online portal to track how revenue is used locally and nationally, empowering advocacy to change policies. Information on the effective tax rate of mining companies has allowed civil society to make a case to the legislature for a new fiscal policy that governs the sector. Meanwhile, disclosure of companies’ social development programs has shifted funding from subsidizing local officials to supporting activities relevant to Sustainable Development Goals.

The Philippines’ journey in extractive transparency has shown steady progress over the years, despite occasional setbacks. Government and civil society stakeholders have consistently advanced reforms, identified through EITI and facilitated by platforms like OGP to keep reforms on track, even when faced with political challenges. As the Philippines undergoes an energy transition, prioritizing the development of minerals and the renewable energy sector, the government has a significant opportunity to use EITI and OGP platforms to inform their ongoing reforms in mining and climate action. Success in developing good governance norms requires the government to address deficiencies in the working environment for civil society, particularly at the local level, and ensure implementation of EITI recommendations, such as efforts to facilitate robust civil society participation. While more resources may be required to support these efforts, ensuring good governance is essential so that ultimately these industries benefit the affected local communities.



Source: [EITI](#)



A PATH FORWARD FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

Sunset in Baguio (Photo credit: Cornermonkey
via Unsplash)

The Philippines' journey as a pioneer and steadfast OGP member reflects the Philippine stakeholders' commitment to fostering government transparency, civic participation, and public accountability. Over 13 years, it has harnessed civil society collaboration and embraced innovative practices, making strides through challenging political transitions.

The enduring collaboration between government institutions and civil society has built a resilient Philippine open government ecosystem, even as civic freedoms have been challenged. The recent institutionalization of the PH-OGP Steering Committee signals a step toward permanence, ensuring that the open government agenda remains robust beyond the current administration.

The localization of open government principles has been another success. From the Seal of Good Local Governance to expanded access to information at the local level, the Philippines has championed local-level transparency. With five OGP Local members and a new localization strategy, a path for the "OGP-ification" of local governance is set to spread nationwide beyond early adopters. Moving forward, national-local coordination may be further strengthened through an upcoming government program with the goal of developing more local action plans by July 2026.

While challenges remain in sustaining political interest in some areas of fiscal transparency and securing impactful projects, the Philippines has shown its leadership in fiscal openness. Innovative initiatives like citizen participatory audits have empowered communities, improved public services, and demonstrated the transformative potential of citizen oversight. The Philippines' Open Gov Challenge submission on open contracting and beneficial ownership data interoperability, which would largely implement much of the recently passed 2024 Procurement Law (regarded as a key anti-corruption legislation with wide-ranging implications), further cements this progress.

Efforts towards greater access to information have underscored the power of adaptive and creative approaches in the face of legislative stagnation. While the absence of national freedom of information legislation is a notable gap, stakeholders have approached local governments to fill this void—passing FOI ordinances that ensure transparency at the local level. Looking ahead, the push for a national FOI law remains a priority, with the aim of positioning the Philippines as a global leader in transparency reforms.

The Philippines' work in the extractives sector highlights the importance of global partnerships like EITI and OGP. The challenges faced during the Duterte administration

demonstrated the fragility of progress, but the nation's swift return to EITI reaffirmed its dedication to reform. The ongoing commitment to transparency in extractive industries reflects the broader resilience and adaptability of the Philippine open government movement, although concerns for activists working in the sector remain. Additionally, the inclusion of climate and environmental commitments in future action plans is expected, with the National Adaptation Plan serving as a crucial guide for integrating climate action into OGP initiatives.

Reformers are also exploring other new sectors for open government reform. Over the past year, the Supreme Court has expanded free legal aid services to qualified beneficiaries and established four new justice zones. Further mainstreaming of these principles across regional development councils, as well as at both the local and national levels, will be key to sustaining momentum. Elections have also emerged as a new area in the current action plan, signaling a recognition of the role electoral processes play in governance transparency.

The Philippines has shown that open government thrives on collaboration, adaptability, and the unwavering commitment of individuals and institutions to shared values. The country's journey in OGP shows that even in the face of complex political and social challenges, progress towards open government is achievable. Looking forward, it is imperative to expand commitments and ensure long-term sustainability. The upcoming open government strategy and the country's first four-year plan provide a roadmap for continued progress. Moreover, the next generation of OGP advocates must be actively engaged to sustain momentum. As a member of the OGP Steering Committee, the Philippines is ready to inspire the global community, demonstrating how open government remains a powerful force for positive change.



A fishing boat at sunrise in El Nido, Palawan province (Photo credit: Bas van Wylick via Unsplash)



APPENDIX

A street scene in El Nido, Palawan province
(Photo credit: John Mayer via Unsplash)



Validation session of the Philippines' Open Government Journey report at the 2025 Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting in the Philippines (Photo credit: OGP)

About this report

As the Open Government Partnership implements its [2023–2028 Strategy](#), changes in approaches, ways of working, and learning are key in achieving the organization's strategic goals. The Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) continues to contribute towards this through its vital role in producing and disseminating evidence-based research.

The scope of IRM reports have focused on the activities during an action plan cycle. This research has created useful data and provided valuable information to OGP and its community. However, since the analysis is largely restricted to developments within an action plan cycle, IRM reports are less able to answer some of the longer-term questions which OGP wishes to learn from, as part of this new strategy.

In 2025, the IRM committed to producing a report reflecting on the Philippines' 13 years of participation in OGP. This Open Government Journey report explores the Philippines' open government evolution and achievements across action plans, government, and civil society to distill learnings from the work of reformers, the OGP Support Unit, and partners.

Methodology

This report was researched and written by Sarah Jacobs, Andreas Pavlou, and Grace Santos.

It was reviewed by Dewi Barnas, Renzo Falla, Maha Jweied, Jose Maria Marin, Shreya Basu, and Tinatin Ninua. It was reviewed by key stakeholders in government and civil society in the Philippines through a three week online comment period and in-person validation meeting in Manila. Many thanks go out to others who have contributed towards the report.

To produce this report, the IRM interviewed and received written feedback from 14 individuals from government and civil society in the Philippines. These included: Raizsa Mae Anayatin (Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs), Jennifer De Belen (Department of the Interior and Local Government), Mary Ann Dizon-Rodolfo (Philippine Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative), Marianne Fabian (Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency), Ryan Lita (Department of Budget and Management), Monette Jimenez (Commission on Audit), Cielo Magno (Bantay Kita), Ivy Ong (former OGP Acting Regional Lead - Asia and the Pacific), Hennesy D. Ozawa (Freedom of Information Program Management Office), Catherine Ruiz (Kaabag sa Sugbo Foundation, Inc.), Patricia Sarenas (Mindanao Coalition of Development NGOs), Sandino Soliman (Caucus of Development NGO Networks), Vivien Suerte-Cortez (United Nations Development Program), and Rolando Toledo (Department of Budget and Management).

Previous IRM products and reports covering all six of the Philippines' action plans were also used, as well as information sourced from desk research.



A road in Siargao Island (Photo credit: Alejandro Luengo via Unsplash)

About OGP

In 2011, government leaders and civil society advocates came together to create a unique partnership—one that combines these powerful forces to promote transparent, participatory, inclusive, and accountable governance.

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) includes 77 countries and 106 local governments—representing more than two billion people—and thousands of civil society organizations. OGP is based on the idea that an open government is more accessible, more responsive, and more accountable to citizens, and that improving the relationship between people and their government has long-term, exponential benefits for everyone.

Through the Partnership, governments and civil society work together to co-create action plans with concrete steps—commitments—across a broad range of issues. All OGP governments sign on to the Open Government Declaration and are required to work with civil society organizations to co-create reforms as part of an action plan that can deliver real benefits to citizens.

About the IRM

The Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) is OGP's accountability arm and the main means of tracking progress in participating countries.

Since 2011, the IRM has provided independent, evidence-based, and objective reporting to hold OGP members accountable and support their open government efforts. This is done through reports and timely recommendations during key moments in the action plan cycle.

The IRM is a valuable resource to OGP members. It contributes to building the credibility of the partnership and enables learning across members of the open government community.

Engage with Us

If you have any questions about this report, please reach out to: irm@opengovpartnership.org

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