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Dr. Joselito R. Basilio

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Budget Policy and Strategy Group

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THE ECONOMISTS

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THE ECONOMISTS

NAVIGATORS OF THE NATION'S FISCAL FUTURE

by Kenneth Gerard Mallari, ACTS


In the complex realm of public financial management, where strategic decisions help navigate the nation's fiscal future, the Department of Budget and Management's (DBM) Budget Policy and Strategy Group (BPSG) serves as a vital cornerstone. At the heart of the BPSG are two key figures: Principal Economist Dr. Joselito R. Basilio, and Assistant Secretary Dr. Romeo Matthew T. Balanquit, head of the BPSG.

These two economists play a pivotal role in ensuring the nation's fiscal discipline, proper resource allocation, and sustained national development. Their work involves not just managing the present, but meticulously planning for a future where economic stability and growth uplift every Filipino. As the country navigates an evolving global landscape, their insights and initiatives become indispensable in forging a path toward a more prosperous and resilient Philippines.

Discover the strategic approaches and the vision driving these economic stewards as they help steer the nation's economic future.



**PRINCIPAL ECONOMIST
DR. JOSELITO R. BASILIO**



**ASSISTANT SECRETARY
ROMEO MATTHEW T.
BALANQUIT**



Dr. Joselito R. Basilio, Assistant Secretary Romeo Matthew T. Balanquit, and staff

Dr. Joselito R. Basilio serves as the Principal Economist at the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and an adviser to the Budget Policy and Strategy Group (BPSG). His life reflects discipline, compassion, and a deep devotion to public service.

A graduate of Philosophy Studies at San Carlos Seminary, his educational training not only allowed him to think critically, but also to listen deeply, reflect wisely, and act ethically. Philosophy gave him a lens to see the world not just as it is—but as it should be. Motivated to improve society, he pursued a Diploma in Development Economics, and later a Master's degree in the same field, from the University of the Philippines. He further expanded his knowledge through development economics studies in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Shenzhen, China, and earned his Doctorate in Economics from the University of Michigan. Today, he leads efforts at the DBM to align national budget priorities with long-term development goals, shaping the nation's fiscal direction.

As a key figure in strategizing fiscal policy at the DBM, Dr. Basilio discussed the challenges and future of government reforms. He identified the primary hurdle in implementing reforms as the lack of willingness of stakeholders to embrace the objectives of reforms and frameworks, and the hesitancy in accommodating change. Dr. Basilio was also keen in emphasizing that policymakers must be trained not just to formulate reforms but also to present the impact of these reforms to stakeholders, and to eventually encourage them to participate in governance. The global economic and political climate also influenced their strategy to decrease fiscal deficit while ensuring adequate fiscal space for priority programs. He emphasized, "Policy work does not end in planning – it also requires responsiveness to contingencies."

Dr. Basilio takes pride in being part of the development and launch in 2024 of the "Philippine Public Financial Management (PFM) Reforms Roadmap 2024-2028". Another significant initiative he proudly shared is advocating for the institutionalization of the cash budgeting system and the Integrated Financial Management Information System through the Progressive Budgeting for Better and Modernized (PBBM) Governance Bill. This bill, he stated, is intended to promote discipline in government spending and enable greater financial management.

**"NOT EVERYONE IS GIVEN
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DR. JOSELITO R. BASILIO

"We also support the enactment of efficiency measures such as the Government Optimization Program to enhance the government's organizational capacity and productivity, and the pension system reform for our military and uniformed personnel (MUP) to establish a MUP pension scheme that is sustainable and with minimal fiscal risks," Dr. Basilio shared. "These reforms are expected to enhance DBM's capacity to make crucial fiscal policy decisions that are technology-driven, data-informed, and results-oriented," he added.

To ensure the longevity of fiscal policies across administrations, Dr. Basilio imparted that reforms should be sustained through "alignment, consistency, and institutionalization". He affirmed that the reforms are aligned with the existing

development frameworks, such as the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028, the Medium-Term Fiscal Framework, AmBisyon Natin 2040, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Goals).

Dr. Basilio aims to institutionalize these reforms through legislation or executive issuance, and with the support of partners in national development. In tandem with these initiatives, there is also a need to promote public literacy through Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials that provide a simplified overview of the national budget and the PFM reforms. Such materials will help address hindrances to policy support such as misinformation and disinformation.

Reflecting on his time at the DBM, Dr. Basilio considers it "a privilege to serve in DBM with the brightest minds". He emphasized the importance of ensuring that staff are equipped with complete information and references when it comes to the presentation of policy recommendations and research findings. Dr. Basilio, likewise, described his DBM journey as "never routinary", and highlighted the collaborative approach taken by the DBM to address fiscal policy concerns, always focusing on data and the ultimate objective of improving the lives of Filipinos.

"It is always a proud moment working with the BPSG and with everyone in DBM as we, as a team, address budget and management concerns and implement budget reforms," he confidently stated.

His vision for the DBM is for it to be a department known for innovation in expenditure management and fiscal policymaking by expanding its capabilities in digitalization and data science, and extending its reach to every Filipino. "Because the public has the right to participate in how its money should be spent," he concluded.

Despite the weight of his responsibilities, Dr. Basilio remains deeply grounded. He leads not from a podium, but from a place of quiet strength—valuing collaboration, mentorship, and the belief that government must always work for the most vulnerable. His life reminds us that true leadership is not found in the spotlight—but in every choice made for the common good, in every policy rooted in justice, and in every person who dares to serve with both brilliance and heart.



OPENGOW WEEK



L-R: NAPC's Mr. Ronaldo J. Mateo, PH-OGP Co-Chair Aurora Reyes Chavez, PH-OGP Chair and DBM Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman, and OPAPRU Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr.



PH-OGP Co-Chair Aurora Reyes Chavez brainstorming with fellow CSO and government representatives during the session on Co-creating the OGP Localization Program



DILG Undersecretary Marlo L. Iringan and DBM Undersecretary Wilford Will Wong conversing with PH-OGP Co-Chair Aurora Reyes Chavez



L-R: Secretary Pangandaman, DILG Secretary Juanito Victor Remulla, Undersecretary Wilford Will Wong, and PH-OGP PMO Acting Director Jose Miguel Solis

by Kenneth Gerard Mallari, ACTS

with inputs from Carlo N. Vergara and Emil Christian B. Magdurulan, PH-OGP PMO; Hazel Intia and Cedric Katigbak, ACTS; and Vinzon Manansala, OCIO-Project DIME

The Philippine Open Government Partnership (PH-OGP) recently hosted the Open Gov Week (OGW) 2025 from May 19 to 23, 2025, at the Luxent Hotel in Quezon City. This significant initiative for good governance brought together a wide array of stakeholders, including government leaders, civil society organizations (CSOs), and various advocates, all united in the commitment to advancing transparency, accountability, and inclusive, participatory policymaking.

The week-long celebration was designed to address key governance challenges, with a particular focus on the Open Government Challenge, and also served as a vital platform to reaffirm commitments and accelerate progress toward more open, responsive, and citizen-centric governance.

A central aim was to strengthen the link between global open government initiatives and local action, ensuring that policies translate into real-world improvements for communities. Other objectives also included providing an avenue for stakeholders to raise reform ambitions, engaging diverse participants in dialogue and problem-solving, and encouraging concrete commitments and multi-sector partnerships to advance open government reforms.

During the opening ceremony, the event highlighted both the country's commitments under the Open Gov Challenge and the ceremonial launch of the Philippines' OGP Localization Plan. It also recognized local government units (LGUs) for their successful local action plans.

The rest of the week featured numerous partner-led sessions, organized by the

Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and other partners. These sessions focused on various critical themes within the Open Gov Challenge such as protecting the right to information, fighting corruption, guarding civic space, combating climate change, improving digital governance, opening up budgets, including all voices, expanding access to justice, ensuring media freedom, and enhancing public participation.

The week culminated with the PH-OGP Partners and Stakeholders Reception on May 23, celebrating the collective achievements and commitment of the open government community in the Philippines. It also served as a tribute to partners and champions, providing a platform to reflect on milestones, strengthen collaborations, and inspire continued action towards a more inclusive and participatory government.

As DBM Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman aptly stated during the high-level reception to capping the week-long activities, "More than a culmination, the night is a reaffirmation of our shared belief that when governance is transparent, participatory, and inclusive, it becomes truly transformative." The unprecedented scale and energy of this year's celebration are a testament to that transformation in motion. From a modest observance seven years ago to a national movement that commands attention and action, OGW 2025 reflects how far the Philippine open government community has come and how much farther it can still go, together.



Secretary Pangandaman together with the youth participants from the session on "Making Spaces: Children Driving Change for Open Governments"



L-R (seated): DPWH Undersecretary Ador G. Canlas, DPWH Secretary Manuel M. Bonoan, DBM Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman, DBM Undersecretary Maria Francesca M. Del Rosario, UP AVP for Digital Transformation Peter A. Sy, and UP-NOAH Director Dr. Alfredo Mahar Francisco A. Lagmay

UNICEF, DBM ADVOCATE FOR CHILD PARTICIPATION IN OPEN GOV WEEK

As part of Open Gov Week 2025, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Philippines, in collaboration with the Council for the Welfare of Children and the Positive Youth Development Network, Inc., hosted a pivotal session at the Luxent Hotel on May 22, 2025. The session, titled "Making Spaces: Children Driving Change for Open Governments," aimed to foster a transformative shift in governance by redefining children not merely as passive recipients of services but as rights-holders and active agents of change.

The discussion underscored the crucial role of children's voices in governance. The young participants actively engaged in the discussions, asking how government resources are allocated for their welfare and how their input can shape policy. They also stressed that children are not only beneficiaries but essential stakeholders, empowered through platforms like the Katipunan ng Kabataan, local child councils, and youth-led consultations.

The session also highlighted transparency and accountability, with a focus on transparent budget allocation for children's welfare and the use of mechanisms like a proposed joint monitoring system and the Child-Friendly Local Governance Audit (CFLGA) to track child-related funds. It likewise discussed inclusive and equitable access, pinpointing disparities faced by children from remote or marginalized communities and those with disabilities, with initiatives like Inclusive Learning Resource Centers, and community-based health services, as solutions. Furthermore, the importance of sustainability and interagency collaboration for lasting impact was stressed, ensuring programs are integrated across government levels. Lastly, child-friendly communication and legal awareness were recognized as crucial for children to understand their rights and government programs.

The session concluded with several key recommendations and agreements aimed at making governance more responsive and inclusive for children:

1. Institutionalize child participation
2. Enhance budget literacy and communication
3. Expand monitoring tools Like CFLGA
4. Leverage Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)
5. Establish strong feedback mechanisms
6. Use disaggregated data for policy planning
7. Build continuity across political transitions

These agreements highlight a collective commitment to embedding children's voices into policy processes and ensuring that government information is accessible and age-appropriate. The session marked a significant step towards a more inclusive, participatory, and sustainable open government for the younger population.

STRENGTHENING INFRASTRUCTURE MONITORING WITH PROJECT DIME

On May 20, 2025, Project DIME (Digital Information for Monitoring and Evaluation Project) marked a significant step as DBM Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman formally inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University of the Philippines - Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards (UP-NOAH). UP President Atty. Angelo A. Jimenez signed on behalf of the university, with Executive Director Dr. Alfredo Mahar Francisco A. Lagmay and DBM Undersecretary Maria Francesca M. Del Rosario witnessing the event. This pivotal collaboration aims to integrate disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies into the monitoring and evaluation of government infrastructure projects, ensuring they are not only effective but also resilient against natural hazards.

Further strengthening the core functions of Project DIME, a parallel MOU was signed between the DBM and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH). DPWH Secretary Manuel M. Bonoan joined Secretary Pangandaman in signing the agreement, witnessed by Usec. Del Rosario and DPWH Undersecretary Ador G. Canlas. This partnership is particularly critical as the DPWH, being the primary agency for planning and implementing infrastructure, has been designated as the pilot implementing agency for Project DIME. This direct collaboration will ensure seamless integration and application of DIME's advanced monitoring capabilities.

The revitalization of Project DIME is pushing forward with its groundbreaking initiative to elevate the transparency and efficiency of key infrastructure projects across the Philippines. This program, which leverages advanced digital technologies like satellites, drones, geotagging, and imaging tools, is being further institutionalized with crucial partnerships through these MOU signings with partner agencies.

The latest agreements with UP-NOAH and DPWH build upon existing MOUs with the Philippine Space Agency in August 2023, and the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority and non-governmental organization—Government Data Initiatives (GDI) — in April 2025. Each MOU serves as a written framework that outlines mutual roles and objectives to enhance cooperation.



Asec. Romeo Matthew Balanquit, BSP Deputy General Zeno Ronald Abenoja, and Secretary Pangandaman during the session on Microeconomic Insights for National Action, moderated by Usec. Margaux Salcedo

DBM LEADS FIRST-EVER ECONOMIC CONSULTATION WITH CSOs

In a significant stride towards strengthening participatory governance, the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) Chairperson and Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman led the first ever economic dialogue with civil society organizations (CSOs). Titled "Macroeconomic Insights for National Action: An Economic Dialogue with Civil Society", the landmark consultation took place on May 21, 2025, at the Luxent Hotel, Quezon City, as part of the Open Gov Week 2025.

Sec. Pangandaman emphasized the pioneering nature of the event, stating, "This is a first and hopefully will also become a regular consultation with CSOs." She further explained that it was a "pioneer discussion wherein the country's Economic Team opened the doors for CSOs to directly engage with members of the DBCC in a dedicated roundtable to discuss the government's medium-term macroeconomic and fiscal priorities."

The dialogue aimed to identify opportunities for civil society to contribute to macroeconomic and fiscal goals, explore diverse perspectives on economic challenges, and gather feedback and policy recommendations for the DBCC. Target participants included representatives from key government economic agencies such as DBM, Department of Finance, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, and the Office of the Special Assistant to the President for Investment and Economic Affairs, as well as various CSOs, business groups, and NGOs.

During the dialogue, Sec. Pangandaman presented significant government reforms, including the New Government Procurement Act (NGPA) and the Public Financial Management (PFM) Reforms Roadmap 2024-2028. The subsequent roundtable discussion, moderated by DBM Undersecretary Margaux Salcedo, saw engagement from representatives of 17 CSOs.

Dr. Robert Siy Jr. of the Move As One Coalition lauded the DBM and Sec. Pangandaman for "convening and listening to the voice of the civil society," calling it a "breakthrough session." Mr. Kenneth Isaiah Abante of the People's Budget Coalition thanked the panelists for "opening this very important space" and recommended that the DBCC establish expenditure targets, particularly for education. Other participating CSOs included G-Watch, Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines (FINEX), and Action for Economic Reform, among others. This consultation underscored the government's commitment to inclusive governance and leveraging citizen engagement in critical economic planning.



"That's what we do at the Open Government Partnership. We listen, we include, we make sure our lines are open. Because the best way to move forward is together."

Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman
Department of Budget and Management



"I'd like to commend Secretary Pangandaman and the DBM for taking a concrete step in that direction by holding a civil society consultation on the national budget earlier this week. It's a strong signal that more inclusive and participatory budgeting is possible and that the perspectives of citizens, reform advocates, and the private sector are being welcomed at the table."

Rafael Alfonso "Apa" Ongpin
Makati Business Club Executive Director



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Dr. Romeo Matthew T. Balanquit is currently the Assistant Secretary and Functional Group Head of the DBM's BPSG. ASec. Romy to his DBM peers, he plays a pivotal role in developing and evaluating the country's fiscal and budgeting frameworks.

Prior to his government service, ASec. Romy was an Adjunct Professor at the University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P) and a faculty member of the University of the Philippines School of Economics, specializing in Game Theory and Auction Theory. Currently, he serves as Program Director of the Applied Business Economics Program of the UA&P.

Coming from the academe, he views his leadership position in the DBM as both a teaching and learning experience that goes beyond the theories found in books. A key figure in the DBM, ASec. Romy is instrumental in shedding light on the complexities of fiscal policy, which he views as a constant learning experience. For instance, a significant challenge has been striking the right balance between fiscal discipline and the urgent need for long-term investment.

Following the pandemic, there was great pressure to restore economic stability and boost economic growth through infrastructure spending while simultaneously meeting ongoing demands for social services. But the Medium Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF), aligned with the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023 to 2028, has served as an effective roadmap to restore macroeconomic stability, reduce fiscal deficit, and achieve economic growth while investing in infrastructure and social services.

Furthermore, navigating an unpredictable environment marked by global inflation, elevated interest rates, rising geopolitical tensions, and even climate shocks, the necessity to revise the Medium-Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF) targets in May 2025 was an eye-opening lesson in adaptability and strategic timing. Despite these challenges, ASec. Romy lauded the fact that the Philippines maintained steady growth in 2024, positioning the country among the fastest-growing economies in the Asia-Pacific region.

Currently, ASec. Romy and his team are focused on several key initiatives to reinforce the country's fiscal strategy. One major reform is the "PFM Reforms Roadmap for 2024 to 2028" which outlines interventions across strategic focus areas. These areas will allow for a more harmonized and efficient PFM system, as well as ensure a transparent, accountable, and equitable allocation of public funds for achieving socioeconomic goals.

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**ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROMEO
MATTHEW T. BALANQUIT**

Another priority on ASec. Romy's docket is the Government Optimization Bill, which aims to improve the government's institutional capacity by strengthening the entire government structure for an agile, efficient, responsive, and technology-driven workforce. Lastly, he is also advocating for agencies to apply Program Convergence Budgeting (PCB) in their proposals, a budgeting approach that aims to focus government resources on key programs and projects that contribute to the country's growth and development objectives. Solidifying this initiative was the release of a Joint Memorandum Circular issued in March 2025 by the DBM and NEDA, along with the establishment of a PCB Steering Committee, to strengthen its implementation and foster coordinated planning among agencies.

These reforms, according to ASec. Romy, are part of a deliberate effort to build a government that is fiscally responsible, more agile in responding to people's needs, and accountable in how it uses

public funds. "For the DBM, it provides a clear direction for how our role as 'keeper of the purse' must evolve. We are moving toward a system where decisions are based not just on available resources, but on solid data, real-time information, and measurable outcomes," he said.

He also underscored the critical role of digitalization and a fully Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) to streamline processes, enhance the efficiency of our response to crises and risks, and build public trust. He added that this paradigm shift demands newer platforms, and an intelligent workforce trained to analyze data, assess risks, and evaluate results.

To promote public literacy and support for PFM reforms, ASec. Romy fully supports initiatives like the Open Government Partnership which champions transparency and citizen engagement, and the PFM Reforms Roadmap which embodies the government's vision for a modernized PFM system. Emphasizing the need for consistent communication with stakeholders, ASec. Romy states that "through a series of high-level workshops, we hope to achieve and ensure cohesive and effective collaboration throughout the bureaucracy."

As head of the BPSG, Dr. Balanquit relies on facts and evidence to make the right decisions. He ensures that every policy the DBM puts out is carefully studied and grounded on data. When facing complex situations, he reminds himself and his team of their duty as public servants, understanding that the numbers and data they see are never just numbers, but a representation of every Filipino we proudly serve.

His experience as a professor allowed him, in a way, to translate economic principles into strategies that help address real-life government problems. His DBM journey paved the way for him to truly appreciate how the decisions made at the executive level—guided by those principles—ripple across families, workers, and entire communities. Wearing both hats of an educator and a learner, his work in the DBM is akin to a masterful chess play, applying tried and tested strategies but also adjusting to the sudden demands on the fly.

He admits his transition to government service was not easy. "You are given the time to reflect and study issues in depth in academia. On the other hand, no two days are ever the same in government work. It is fast-paced and high-stakes," he said. Nonetheless, ASec. Romy is grateful to have found his purpose in public service.



President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. signs into law the New Government Procurement Act (RA 12009), hailed as the biggest anti-corruption measure in recent history.

CHANGING THE LANDSCAPE OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

by Christian John Calimbas, ACTS

A new era of government procurement reform has finally arrived with the passage of the New Government Procurement Act (NGPA). Replacing the decades-old Republic Act (RA) 9184 or the Government Procurement Reform Act of 2002, the NGPA or RA 12009 was enacted into law on July 20, 2024.

But before this landmark measure came into force, a series of consultations were held to get insights from various stakeholders on procurement concerns so that all areas are considered and included in this effort.

Recounting their experience, the DBM Legal and Legislative Group—comprised of the Legal Service (LS) and the Budget Information Legislative Group (BILS)—worked alongside the Government Procurement Policy Board—Technical Support Office (GPPB-TSO) and the Procurement Service-DBM in the initial stages of law making.

LS Director Andrea Celene M. Magtalas shared her experiences in contributing to this game-changing reform—from drafting to signing. “The value of having DBM there is to provide additional points of view because procurement does not happen in a vacuum—it has to be linked to budgeting [and] planning,” she shared.

One of the priority bills of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC), the NGPA garnered full support from both the executive and legislative branches of the government.

According to Director Magtalas, as part of the legal team, balancing the requests of the different lawmakers is the hardest part of the process. “For us—the DBM team *kasama sina* PS [and] GPPB-TSO—we were very clear on what we wanted, *meron tayong* admin stance, however, lawmaking is ultimately with the legislators,” the Director shared.

Acknowledging the Secretary’s extensive background in the Senate to advance DBM and LEDAC’s legislative priorities, Director Magtalas said “*Isa ako sa bilib sa capability of Sec. Mina to push for legislative reform*”. After its enactment, LS held consultations to draft the NGPAs implementing rules and regulations through writeshops participated in by procurement specialists from the DBM Central and Regional Offices.

DBM Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman proudly commended the DBM Legal and Legislative Group for achieving another feat.

“I am happy that the DBM is still spearheading reforms—*ang dami na po nating napasang batas!* We were in the Senate and House for three months, *mula umaga hanggang gabi*, and then after that, we are also helping with the crafting of the IRR which is equally important...we go home at 6 AM just to be able to beat the deadline”, Secretary Pangandaman expressed during the Orientation on DBM’s Actions on Proposed Legislative Measures held at the DBM Multipurpose Hall last April 11, 2025.

HARMONIZING ACCOUNTABLE PROCUREMENT REFORMS ON A GLOBAL SCALE

by Christian John Calimbas and Kenneth Gerard Mallari, ACTS

Aiming to showcase best practices in public procurement in the region, the GPPB-TSO, with the World Bank, organized the 2025 East Asia and the Pacific International Public Procurement Conference (EAP-IIPC), a three-day conference held from April 28-30, 2025 at Hilton Manila. Over 150 participants from procurement agencies, civil society, academia, and development partners attended the event.

This year's EAP-IIPC recognized procurement as a powerful tool for inclusive growth and building public trust. The conference also underscored the Philippines' leadership and initiative in procurement reform, including the recent passage of the New Government Procurement Act (NGPA) in July 2024.

The conference focused on three strategic pillars¹:

- **Innovation:** Exploring innovative procurement to enhance governmental responsiveness, improve service delivery, generate jobs, and foster adaptable and accountable systems.
- **Value for Money:** Emphasizing wise spending to deliver optimal outcomes, including quality, sustainability, and long-term benefits, beyond mere cost savings.
- **Accountability:** Strengthening transparency, citizen oversight, and integrity to restore and maintain public confidence in procurement systems.

The three-day conference was divided into nine intensive panels². The discussions delved into critical areas such as using procurement to achieve socio-economic goals, delivering value for future generations, professionalizing the procurement workforce, measuring environmental impact through sustainable procurement, empowering women-led enterprises, leveraging AI and data analytics using sandbox environments, and driving transparency and public participation via digital tools and open data. Beneficial ownership transparency was also a key topic, aiming to prevent corruption and ensure fair competition.

One of the highlights of the conference is the ceremonial signing of the first-ever Statement of Cooperation on public procurement which affirmed the commitment of the 20 participating countries towards a transparent, resilient, inclusive and innovative procurement process.

"As we sign the first-ever Statement of Cooperation on public procurement in the East Asia Pacific, we are expressing our shared commitment to fostering sustained partnerships and continued knowledge exchange among our countries," Secretary Pangandaman said.

By exchanging insights and building robust partnerships, the EAP-IIPC serves as a crucial platform in fostering a shared commitment among diverse stakeholders to advance public procurement.



L-R: PS-DBM Executive Director Genmaries S. Entredicho-Caong, DBM Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman, and GPPB-TSO Executive Director Maria Dionesia A. Rivera-Guillermo



One of the panels during the three-day conference

"My hope is that through our collective resolve, our procurement reforms translate into triumph for our people—from farmers who can sooner provide food for school feeding programs, to small businesses that can sooner win government contracts, to women-led enterprises that are given the opportunity to compete and thereby uplift their communities."

Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman

ACCELERATING PFM REFORMS THROUGH COLLABORATION

by Cedric Katigbak, ACTS



FPRB Director Mary Joy De Leon (left) and Undersecretary Maria Francesca M. Del Rosario (right) consulting the attendees during the breakout sessions on the PFM strategic focus areas

Over 200 government and development partners built and sustained momentum in turning strategies into action during the four-day workshop on the operationalization of the Public Financial Management (PFM) Reforms Roadmap 2024-2028. The workshop series, titled ‘Philippines PFM Reforms: From Strategy to Action’, was held at the Asian Development Bank Headquarters in Mandaluyong City, on May 6-9, 2025.

Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman kicked off the workshop with an opening message that highlighted the country’s milestones in PFM reforms—including the landmark enactment of the New Government Procurement Act, the launch of the Budget and Treasury Management System, and enhancement of the Agency Performance Review.

Checking the rear-view mirror

PFM Committee Secretariat Lead and Fiscal Planning and Reforms Bureau (FPRB) Director Mary Joy O. De Leon provided an overview of the progress made thus far in the implementation of the roadmap. She likewise presented the adoption of a two-way approach to mobilizing inter-agency groups, which includes the following:

Partner with Existing TWGs	Create New Teams
Cash Management	Planning and Budgeting Linkage
Public Asset Management	Accounting and Auditing
Public Procurement	Capacity Development
PFM for LGUs	Digital PFM
Monitoring and Evaluation	PFM Policy and Legal Framework
	Disaster Risk Reduction and Management

To strengthen the roadmap’s progress monitoring, TWGs and Task Teams shall also be responsible for regularly updating the developments of the reform initiatives and submitting quarterly reports to the PFM Committee, which will be published on the PFM Website. These will be consolidated and integrated into the annual reports to be submitted to the Office of the President, pursuant to Executive Order 29.

Zy-za Nadine Suzara, National Consultant of Basic Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA), presented a synthesis of the 2024 PEFA Assessment and related assessments (Gender Responsive PFM, Climate Responsive PFM, Disaster Resilient and Responsive PFM, and Child Responsive PFM).

Findings and recommendations were presented vis-à-vis the four phases of the budget cycle, providing a holistic and comprehensive evaluation of the country’s PFM performance. The PEFA++ results are set to be launched and made available to the public on June 10, 2025.

Shifting gears together

The second and third days were allotted to the deep dive workshops of the TWGs and Task Teams, providing them an opportunity to discuss ways forward for all activities within their respective Strategic Focus Areas through breakout sessions. The PEFA++ recommendations were thoughtfully considered in fine-tuning workplans, specifically aligning future efforts to bridge identified gaps.

The accomplished workplans, which detail the prioritization of activities, enabling policies, and responsible agencies, were presented during the plenary session. This activity provided other teams the opportunity to give feedback. Accomplished workplans shall

also serve as a basis for the midterm review and updating of the roadmap, to be completed and published by the end of 2026.

Keeping the wheels turning

Development partners and their sustained commitments took center of the fourth day of the workshop, which featured a roundtable discussion on potential areas for collaboration on PFM, facilitated by DBM Chief Information Officer and Undersecretary Maria Francesca M. Del Rosario.

The roundtable discussion provided a platform for discussion among government and development partners to ensure harmonized efforts, adequate resources, and traceable progress. TWGs and Task Teams likewise presented aspects of their respective workplans that are potential areas for collaboration, thereby accelerating the pace of each focus area’s collective impact.

During his remarks, Department of Finance OIC Undersecretary and PFM Committee Member Niño Raymond B. Alvina thanked partners for reaffirming their commitments to aligned reform initiatives, highlighting technical and financial support as fuel for the implementation of the roadmap.

All systems go

With the respective workplans in place, the implementation of the PFM Reforms Roadmap 2024-2028 is set for success. Members shall convene to carry out the next action steps toward a strengthened and inclusive PFM system that fulfills the government’s promise of good and accountable service delivery to the Filipino people.





Department of Budget and Management 89th Anniversary Celebration



1. Usec. Margaux Salcedo at the launch of the Bagong Pilipinas Hymn video, created by ACTS-Strategic Communications Division



2. Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman congratulates the DBM for reaching its 89th anniversary.



3. Hernando Hernando, Annabel Gonzales, Norman Aboy, Russell Henrick Del Rosario, Jimmy Atanacio, and Lloyd John Paquiado, winners of the Palarong 90s event



4. L-R: Usec. Rolando U. Toledo, Assistant Secretary Ramon Vicente B. Asuncion, and Atty. Mario D. Santos at the ribbon cutting ceremony of the DBM anniversary bazaar



5. Participants of the DBM Game KNB? pose for a group photo.



6. Retro Runway King Glenn Macunat and Queen Ara Joy Cruz were awarded by Usec. Janet B. Abuel, Usec. Wilford Will L. Wong, Usec. Rolando U. Toledo, and Usec. Goddess Hope O. Libiran.



7. DBM Hataw Na! dance competition winner, Bayanihan Beats, celebrates their win.



8. Participants of the saranggola making event craft their competing pieces.

SCHOLARS' CORNER

BRIDGING THEORY AND PRACTICE: OPCCB'S HANDY GUIDEBOOK

by Rey Angelo Gonzaga, ACTS

When Jessica “Jeje” P. Ulanday (*pictured right*) from the Organization, Position Classification and Compensation Bureau (OPCCB) embarked on her graduate studies at the Seoul National University (SNU) during the COVID-19 pandemic, she carried more than just academic aspirations. She was driven by the goal to further enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the OPCCB in performing its mandate.

This goal took shape through her Re-Entry Action Plan (REAP). She developed a guidebook that focuses on mapping and documenting the OPCCB's budget preparation processes and activities. Two years after earning her degree, the guidebook continues to serve as a tool for efficiency and institutional learning at the OPCCB.

The OPCCB Guidebook: A practical tool

With her REAP, titled “Process Mapping and Development of the OPCCB Budget Preparation Activities Guidebook,” Jeje aimed to create a reference material for the annual budget preparation activities of the OPCCB to ensure continuity, especially amid personnel changes and new team assignments.

“My mentors and I saw the guidebook as a timely intervention to enhance how we go about the annual budget preparation process internally,” she shares. The guidebook reinforces the OPCCB's strategy of forming a Budget Preparation Team (BPT), composed of several sub-teams, to handle budget preparation-related activities. Through the guidebook, the assignment to the BPT may be rotated among the different personnel, since the members will be properly guided in the activities, deliverables, and timelines.

“Having this guidebook will allow smoother transition between assigned specialists, ensuring continuity and consistency in the application of policies and overall process improvement within the OPCCB,” Jeje explains.

The guidebook has been formally adopted through an internal office order at OPCCB. It is currently being used by the current BPT and has helped orient new

employees of the OPCCB, serving as a practical resource.

Facing challenges beyond borders

From conceptualization to implementation, the path to completing her REAP was not without challenges. “The first challenge was coming up with the project itself,” Jeje admits. However, according to her, the most daunting challenge was balancing regular deliverables, special assignments, and the demands of the REAP.

Continuing the momentum, Jeje realized she needed a mindset shift to move forward with the implementation of her REAP. “I treated writing the guidebook as a major part of my role in the BPT rather than auxiliary,” she explains.

This commitment meant dedicating time and drawing from her firsthand experiences to enrich the content with practical notes, reminders, and checkpoints.

More importantly, Jeje attributes the completion of her REAP to her support team from the OPCCB. “They provided me with much needed encouragement, support, and input in finalizing the guidebook in a meaningful way,” she said, recalling moments when she almost forfeited her REAP due to pressure and overwhelming deadlines.

“The pandemic situation in 2021 also posed one of the biggest challenges,” Jeje recounts, from shifting border restrictions



to mandatory quarantine protocols upon arrival. Language also proved another barrier, especially outside of the campus.

Despite these difficulties, she embraced the experience fully and deepened her understanding of both global and local challenges.

Overcoming adversity

During her stint at the SNU, she presented Philippine case studies to her international cohort and learned from the experiences of peers from other nations. One of her most meaningful moments was participating in the Peace Camp, where she honored valiant soldiers who served in the Korean War and felt the deep historical ties between the Philippines and South Korea.

Through dedication, collaboration, and application of her newly acquired knowledge, Jeje was able to produce the guidebook by bridging theory and practice. After returning to the DBM with a renewed sense of purpose and a clear vision of reform, she feels immense pride that her efforts have benefited her home institution.



Ms. Jessica Ulanday and her fellow graduates

AUTOMATION IN MOTION: THE STANDARDIZATION OF DBM'S CONTRACT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

by Lance Adrian Cayabyab, ACTS

Abegail “Abie” D. Igna, Supervising Administrative Officer from the Administrative Service (AS), graduated with a Master's degree in Business Process Management from Queensland University of Technology.

Her Re-Entry Action Plan (REAP) aims to streamline and address a recurring issue in one of the most crucial processes of the Department—managing procurement contracts.

She observed that only one division (General Services Division) in AS has a documented business process for contract management, while other divisions follow inconsistent manual practices. “This lack of standardization leads to inefficiencies, human error, compliance issues, limited oversight, and poor performance evaluation, as highlighted in the FY 2023 Internal Quality Audit (IQA) Report,” Abie explains.

To address these concerns and improve accuracy, transparency, and operational efficiency, she introduced the Automated Administrative Service Contract Management Tool to standardize and automate the AS contract management process. Abie advocates standardizing process workflows before automation, ensuring that technology reinforces rather than worsens existing practices. Through this approach and her tool, she aims to ensure a clear, consistent, and optimized structure for each phase of the contract management cycle.

Understanding the challenges

Knowing that true transformation begins with breaking away from old patterns, Abie embraces the challenge ahead. One major hurdle will be understanding the existing contract management processes across the AS, which differ from one division to another. Striking a balance between competing priorities while crafting a standardized solution that works across the board is expected to be particularly challenging at the outset.

As with any process improvement initiative, there is the possibility of resistance to change among some end-

users. Abie aims to mitigate this by ensuring clear and open communication, conducting user training, and helping stakeholders understand the long-term value of her REAP.

Despite these potential challenges, Abie is all set to implement her REAP. She is confident that the following key factors will contribute to her REAP's smooth and successful implementation:

1. *Stakeholders buy-in.* By involving the stakeholders in the planning and development stages, process owners become more open in sharing and addressing their actual needs, increase their acceptance of the product, and develop a sense of shared ownership.
2. *User feedback.* During the early stages of implementation, user feedback will be essential for timely adjustments and continuous improvements. This responsive iterative approach will help keep the tool effective, practical, and aligned with user needs.
3. *Leadership support.* This will play a key role in providing not just the necessary resources, but also the authority to align the project with broader policies and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the revamped process.

Keeping it close to home

During her studies in Australia, Abie had to learn and adjust given the cultural differences and the different classroom dynamics and communication styles.

One of the most significant challenges Abie faced was transitioning from a non-IT background to pursuing a Master's program focused on IT. Subjects like programming, data analytics, and process automation were entirely new to her. “I felt overwhelmed and underprepared, especially when surrounded by classmates with strong technical backgrounds. What made it even more challenging was the expectation that, as a Master's student, I would already have a solid grasp of IT fundamentals. Yet there I was, learning the basics from scratch - which felt quite ironic at times,” she recalled.



Despite these hurdles, Abie embraced the learning curve and grew through the experience. She built a support network with fellow Filipinos and other international students who were experiencing similar challenges. To keep her grounded, Abie also maintained regular communication with her family and friends back home. Her perseverance and dedication led to notable achievements—she received the Best Paper Award at the 4th Annual Conference on Research in IT for her study on Robotic Process Automation projects in the Public Sector, and she was also commended for her outstanding academic performance in the Master of BPM program.

Lessons and realizations

Abie acknowledges the personal and professional growth she gained during her studies abroad. Working on her REAP taught her that success goes beyond academic accomplishments; it is about creating meaningful impact, driving change, and growing through the process.

She takes great pride in representing our country, viewing it as a chance to bring home new perspectives. Studying abroad broadened her outlook, but also reinforced the importance of local, context-specific solutions and holistic government reforms where people, processes, policies, and technology work together and reminded her that true progress begins with understanding her country's unique needs.

“Being a scholar is a privilege that comes with a responsibility to give back. Whether it's through small improvements in systems, sharing knowledge with peers, or mentoring others, we all have the capacity to make a positive impact. I'm deeply grateful for the support I received and look forward to paying it forward in every way I can,” Abie shares.



The AS-HRDD Team with BJMP staff and PDLs

GAD CORNER

CHARITY BEYOND DUTY: THE ABOT-KAMAY PROGRAM

by Christian John Calimbas, ACTS, with input from AS-HRDD

Developing its first Corporate Social Responsibility initiative, the Administrative Service-Human Resource Development Division (AS-HRDD) introduced the Abot-Kamay program—an avenue for the DBM community to give back and promote charity beyond our usual day-to-day duty.

For its initial outreach program, the AS-HRDD visited the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) Mandaluyong City Jail Female Dormitory last May 30, 2025, to interact, connect, and give in-kind goods, purchased items, and cash donations to 67 Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs).

Addressing the DBM Community, the AS-HRDD wrote, “This program truly embodies the spirit of community and selfless service—bringing hope, compassion, and meaningful connection to those in need. Your unwavering commitment and generous hearts have touched lives profoundly, reminding us of the power of empathy and shared humanity.”

Prior to this visit, a donation drive was conducted at the DBM Central Office from May 19-29, 2025, for the essential needs of women PDLs such as sanitary pads, soap bars, toothpaste, shampoo, powder detergent, and toothbrushes. Meanwhile, cash contributions reached Php 18,122.00, which was later used to purchase the above-mentioned items.

Empathy and Support

During the activity, 21 volunteers and organizers from the DBM community participated and interacted with the PDLs—learning stories from each other and sharing a glimpse of their everyday lives.

One of the volunteers, Marie Mae Mislang from the Office of the Secretary-Department Liaison Unit, shared that “visiting the PDLs was a meaningful and eye-opening experience for me. It provided me with a deeper understanding of the challenges they face, not only in terms of their legal circumstances but also in their emotional and psychological well-being.”

The half-day visit focused on gift-giving and fun-filled activities. The BJMP also organized a tour to showcase the livelihood

products of PDLs, their skill-building program, and the institution's health facilities.

“My biggest takeaway is the powerful role that empathy and consistent support can play in rehabilitation. Engaging with PDLs isn’t just about fulfilling a duty. It’s about helping, restoring hope and aiding in their reintegration into society,” Mislang said.

‘You are seen and heard’

Aiming to empower PDLs, DBM Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman made a visit to the BJMP Correctional Institution for Women (CIW) in Mandaluyong City last May 14, 2025.

Together with SPARK! Philippines and other DBM Senior Officials, Secretary Pangandaman distributed 10,000 sanitary pads and took time to learn about the everyday realities of these women—assuring them that they matter and that sustainable and inclusive reforms include PDLs.

“To every woman, in and outside those prison gates, I want you to know that you are seen, heard, and realize that you matter,” Secretary Pangandaman wrote in her official Facebook page.



The AS-HRDD team handing out donations to PDLs

LS NOOK

EFFECT OF DISMISSAL FROM SERVICE WITH FORFEITURE OF RETIREMENT BENEFITS OF A GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE IN RELATION TO THE ENTITLEMENT TO TERMINAL LEAVE BENEFITS

by The Legal Service

A certain government employee was held guilty of an administrative offense for serious dishonesty and was meted with the penalty of dismissal from service with accessory penalties of perpetual disqualification from reemployment in government service, forfeiture of retirement benefits, and cancellation of eligibility, among others. Notwithstanding the decision, said personnel requested for the release of her terminal leave benefits (TLB). She sought clarification on whether the TLB falls within the retirement benefits forfeited in the decision.

Section 65, Civil Service Commission (CSC) Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 41, s. 1998,¹ as amended by CSC MC No. 14, s. 1999,² states: "[a]n official or employee who has been penalized with dismissal from the service is likewise not barred from entitlement to his terminal leave benefits." Moreover, Section 57(a) of the 2017 Revised Rules on Administrative Cases in the Civil Service provides that "[t]he penalty of dismissal shall carry with it cancellation of eligibility, perpetual disqualification from holding public office, bar from taking civil service examinations, and forfeiture of retirement benefits. Terminal leave benefits and personal contributions to Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), Retirement and Benefits Administration Service (RBAS) or other equivalent retirement benefits system shall not be subject to forfeiture."

¹ Amendments to Rules I and XVI of the Omnibus Rules Implementing Book V of the Administrative Code of 1987 (Executive Order 292)

² Additional Provisions and Amendments to CSC Memorandum Circular No. 41, 1998



NEWS BRIEFS



Sec. Pangandaman and Sec. Balisacan discuss the government's reform initiatives.

PH Economic Team holds first international economic dialogue for 2025 in Milan

Aimed at promoting a more robust investment landscape, the Philippine Economic Team, headed by Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman and Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev) Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan, discussed the government's reform initiatives and policy directions with business leaders and investors in Milan, Italy on May 6, 2025. This was the first economic dialogue held in 2025, and was moderated by Undersecretary Margaux Salcedo.

DBM approves 10,000 non-teaching positions in May

To fortify the education sector, the DBM approved 10,000 non-teaching positions for the Department of Education in May 2025. These positions will be allocated across elementary, junior high, and senior high schools nationwide. This is in addition to the 16,000 newly created teaching positions recently approved by the DBM for the 2025-2026 school year.

Bicam greenlights Government Optimization Bill

The Bicameral Conference Committee ratified the reconciled version of House Bill No. 7240 and Senate Bill (SB) No. 890 on June 4, 2025, just two days after the Senate approved on third and final reading SB No. 890 or the Government Optimization Act on June 2.

This legislative measure is one of the priority measures of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) under the administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.

This reform initiative aims to enhance the government's institutional capacity to improve bureaucratic efficiency and public service delivery, optimizing the roles, functions, processes, and organizational structures of agencies in the Executive Branch using a sectoral and whole-of-government approach.

DBM orients employees on proposed legislative measures and executive issuances

The DBM's Budget Information Legislative Service (BILS) led the Orientation on the DBM's Actions on Proposed Legislative Measures and Executive Issuances held on April 11, 2025 at the DBM Central Office. The session collected valuable feedback and suggestions from DBM personnel regarding the department's stance on the proposed measures and issuances with budgetary or organizational implications. It also highlighted the significance of collaboration among the DBM offices.

BARMM benchmarks with DBM on communication strategies



Sec. Pangandaman chatting with representatives from the MFBM Information and Communications Division

The DBM's Advocacy, Communications and Training Service-Capacity Development Division (ACTS-CDD) facilitated the benchmarking of the Ministry of Finance, and Budget and Management (MFBM) of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) on April 11, 2025 at the DBM Central Office in Manila.

Speakers from ACTS briefed representatives from MFBM-Information and Communications Division-Budget Information and Training Service on the DBM's various communication strategies to enhance fiscal transparency and effectively communicate the national budget to the public. The briefing session also covered discussions on photography and videography, as well as the DBM Library services.

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