CONCEPT NOTE AND DRAFT AGENDA

Regional Workshop on MSME Investment Facilitation Reform

Manila | 22–24 September 2026

Background

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) account for the overwhelming majority of businesses and employment across the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), yet they attract a disproportionately small share of investment. Much of the gap is not a shortage of opportunity, but a set of practical legal, regulatory, and institutional obstacles that make investing in MSMEs harder than it needs to be.

This workshop is part of an ADB regional activity that is developing practical policy, legal, regulatory, and institutional reform guides for MSME investment facilitation across eleven ASEAN developing member countries. The activity follows a simple logic: identify the sectors where MSMEs hold the greatest potential, pinpoint the specific constraints that hold back investment in those sectors, and design targeted, achievable reform programming that unlock it. The analysis is tailored to each country's own circumstances and market maturity. It is explicitly not a ranking or a comparison between countries.

Ahead of the workshop, the activity team has prepared a regional sector screening, draft Country Sector Selection Briefs for each participating country, a Regulatory Mapping Framework and Analytical Toolkit, and early regulatory diagnostic material for ADB's Developing Member Countries (DMCs) that are members of the ASEAN[1]. These products form the working material for the three-day regional workshop: participants will test them against their own knowledge, correct and enrich them, and use them to begin shaping reform priorities.

Pre-workshop preparation

Participants will receive a pre-read package approximately three weeks before the workshop, comprising:

- their country's draft Country Sector Selection Brief (the central pre-read — delegations should arrive ready to challenge and refine it);
- a short plain-language summary of the Regulatory Mapping Framework and Analytical Toolkit;
- early regulatory diagnostic material for their country, where available; and
- a one-page briefing note on workshop logistics and expectations.

Delegations will also be asked to complete a short pre-workshop form identifying, in their own view, the two or three most significant obstacles to MSME investment in their country. These responses are used to seed the Day 2 breakout work and to check the draft analysis against practitioner perceptions.

[1] The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) comprises 11 member states. The current members are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and Timor-Leste

Agenda

Day 1 — Tuesday 22 September: Sectors — where the opportunity lies

Goal: a validated, delegation-endorsed sector shortlist for every country.

Time	Session	Format	Lead
08:30–09:00	Registration and welcome coffee	—	Secretariat
09:00–09:20	Opening remarks	*Plenary*	Senior ADB official (TBD)
09:20–09:50	Workshop objectives, ways of working, and introductions — what we will produce together by Day 3	*Plenary*	Lead facilitator
09:50–10:30	Framing: the theory of change — sector opportunity → regulatory constraint → targeted reform → investment; overview of the analytical work to date	*Presentation + Q&A*	Presenter (TBD) with lead facilitator
10:30–11:00	Coffee break	—	—
11:00–11:30	How the sector screening was done: the regional Screening Note and the Country Sector Selection Briefs	*Presentation + Q&A*	Presenter (TBD)
11:30–12:30	Breakout 1 (part 1) — Validating the sector picture: delegations review their Country Sector Selection Brief against on-the-ground knowledge	*Country teams*	Table facilitators
12:30–13:30	Lunch	—	—
13:30–14:45	Breakout 1 (part 2) — Refining and endorsing the sector shortlist; completing the sector worksheet and preparing a short report-back	*Country teams*	Table facilitators
14:45–15:15	Coffee break	—	—
15:15–16:30	Country report-backs: each delegation presents its refined shortlist (approx. 5 minutes each); clarifying questions only — no cross-country comparison	*Plenary*	Delegations; lead facilitator moderating
16:30–17:00	Day 1 synthesis and preview of Day 2	*Plenary*	Lead facilitator

Day 2 — Wednesday 23 September: Constraints — what stands in the way

Goal: a structured, prioritized long-list of obstacles for each country's priority sectors.

Time	Session	Format	Lead
08:30–09:00	Arrival coffee	—	—
09:00–09:15	Recap of Day 1 and outstanding questions	*Plenary*	Workshop rapporteur
09:15–10:00	How constraints are identified: the Regulatory Mapping Framework and Analytical Toolkit, illustrated with an anonymized country example	*Presentation + Q&A*	Presenter (TBD) with lead facilitator
10:00–10:30	Coffee break	—	—
10:30–12:30	Breakout 2 — Constraint mapping: delegations build a structured long-list of legal, regulatory,	*Country teams*	Table facilitators

Time	Session	Format	Lead
	and institutional obstacles for their priority sectors, using the toolkit worksheets		
12:30–13:30	Lunch	—	—
13:30–14:30	Breakout 3 — Peer exchange: mixed groups compare experience with common constraint types (e.g., licensing, access to finance, land, inspections) and how they manifest differently by context	*Mixed groups*	Group facilitators
14:30–15:00	Coffee break	—	—
15:00–16:15	Breakout 4 — Prioritization: delegations assess constraints by investment impact and feasibility of reform, distinguishing quick wins from longer-term priorities	*Country teams*	Table facilitators
16:15–17:00	Plenary harvest: emerging priorities across the room (patterns, not rankings); Day 2 wrap	*Plenary*	Lead facilitator

Day 3 — Thursday 24 September: Reform — from constraints to practical action

Goal: draft reform concepts and an agreed roadmap to Workshop 2 for every delegation.

Time	Session	Format	Lead
08:30–09:00	Arrival coffee	—	—
09:00–09:15	Recap of Day 2	*Plenary*	Workshop rapporteur
09:15–09:45	What makes reform practical: design principles, sequencing, and identifying who needs to be involved	*Presentation + Q&A*	Lead facilitator
09:45–10:15	Coffee break	—	—
10:15–12:30	Breakout 5 — Reform design: delegations draft two to three reform concepts for their top-priority constraints, including objective, mechanism, stakeholders, and indicative sequencing	*Country teams*	Table facilitators
12:30–13:30	Lunch	—	—
13:30–14:30	Breakout 6 — Peer stress-test: mixed groups review one another's reform concepts for realism, gaps, and implementation risks	*Mixed groups*	Group facilitators
14:30–15:00	Coffee break	—	—
15:00–15:45	Breakout 7 — Next steps: delegations agree a roadmap of actions between now and the second workshop, with focal points and indicative timing	*Country teams*	Table facilitators
15:45–16:45	Closing plenary: delegation commitments; how the outputs feed the next phase of the work; the road to Workshop 2; closing remarks	*Plenary*	Lead facilitator; ADB
16:45–17:00	Close of workshop	—	—