

The Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index

Dimension 3: Vertical Accountability

The 'Vertical Accountability' dimension of the PAPI survey measures interactions with local authorities and the coverage and effectiveness of People's Inspection Boards (PIBs) and Community Investment Supervision Boards (CISBs).

Overall Provincial Performance. At the provincial level, vertical accountability has declined after a steady improvement since 2011. The largest drops in 2015 relate to the presence and effectiveness of CISBs and PIBs, which are set up to represent citizens on oversight at the grassroots level. The effectiveness of interactions between local authorities and citizens also seems to be on a downward trend, although only slightly.

Overall, the north-central provinces have remained among the top and high average performers in this dimension during the past five years, with Da Nang, Quang Binh, Ha Tinh and Quang Tri being more greatly appreciated by citizens in their interactions with local authorities than other provinces. There is also a new promising trend in the north-western and south-western regions, with more provinces here appearing in the top performing groups.

On provincial performance over time, there have been positive and significant changes in one third of provinces, with Bac Ninh's score increasing by 23% over five years. The steepest drop, nearly 15%, is seen in Ha Nam.

Interactions with Local Authorities. This sub-dimension features the frequency and effectiveness of interactions between citizens and local authorities and of citizen proposals to local governments. These interactions include ad-hoc inquiries to village heads, periodical meetings with public officials and voter meetings with People's Council members and National Assembly delegates. Over the past five years, the interaction between local authorities and citizens has been irregular. In 2015, nearly 20% of citizens contacted their village head and about 14% contacted commune officials. Despite higher interaction frequencies nationwide, the effectiveness was lower than in previous years. Since 2011, the proportion of citizens making suggestions to their local government has hovered around one in four. However, in 2015 only 82% of those who submitted proposals said their suggestions were acknowledged, lower than previously reported (90% in 2014).

People's Inspection Boards. This sub-dimension measures the coverage and effectiveness of PIBs, a grassroots and people-elected mechanism to keep local public officials accountable to citizens. In theory, PIBs should be established in all communes. The 2015 findings reveal a reduction in citizens' confidence in the presence and effectiveness of PIBs and a lower level of understanding of how they are established. Only 30% of respondents said there is a PIB in their locality. Among those who were aware of the existence of PIBs, only about one third (33%) said PIBs are established by citizen voting (which is correct), while nearly 79% noted they were effective. In Nam Dinh, more than 78% of respondents said PIBs existed, while in Binh Duong only 7% agreed this was the case. Among those respondents in Binh Duong who said PIBs were in place, just 17% found them effective.

Community Investment Supervision Boards. This sub-dimension looks at the coverage and effectiveness of CISBs, another grassroots mechanism for citizens to supervise local development projects. Similar to findings in previous years, in 2015 only 19% of respondents across the country said there were CISBs in their communities. Of these, about 81% said the boards work effectively, the lowest proportion during the past five years. Less than 1% of respondents in Binh Duong said that there were CISBs in their locality. Of those in Yen Bai who saw CISBs operate in their commune, about half (53%) said they were effective.

Recommendations. Despite the political support for social feedback and citizen oversight in recent years, not much seems to have been done to actively encourage this. The 2015 PAPI Report recommends that local authorities interact more with citizens through regular and ad-hoc meetings. The Law on Citizen Reception, effective from July 2014, provides the legal framework for better government-citizen interactions and will help local governments to have concrete interaction mechanisms in place.

Another recommendation is that the Viet Nam Fatherland Front, mass organizations and civil society should play a key role in reviewing the interaction mechanisms and finding ways to improve their effectiveness. To ensure more effective PIBs and CISBs these institutions should be combined, have better technical skills, be better resourced and more actively engage with citizens and civil society organizations.

The Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) is a policy monitoring tool that assesses citizen experiences and satisfaction with government performance at the national and sub-national levels in governance, public administration and public service delivery.

PAPI measures six dimensions: participation at local levels, transparency, vertical accountability, control of corruption, public administrative procedures and public service delivery. The survey has been implemented nationwide each year since 2011. For the 2015 PAPI Report, 13,955 randomly selected citizens were surveyed.

PAPI is a collaboration between the Centre for Community Support and Development Studies (CECODES), the Centre for Research and Training of the Viet Nam Fatherland Front (VFF-CRT) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The full 2015 PAPI Report and more in-depth analysis can be found at: www.papi.vn.