

The Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index

Dimension 4: Control of Corruption

The 'Control of Corruption' dimension measures the performance of institutions and local governments in controlling corruption as well as the tolerance levels for corruption. It is comprised of four sub-dimensions: (i) limits on public sector corruption, (ii) limits on corruption in public service delivery, (iii) equity in state employment and (iv) willingness to fight corruption.

Overall Provincial Performance. At the national level the corruption dimension fell by 3% in 2015, with all four sub-dimensions witnessing declines. The biggest reduction is in the 'limits on public sector corruption' sub-dimension, which has now dropped to the 2011 level after having risen for a couple of years.

Tra Vinh was the best performing province in 2015 thanks to its highest scores in the 'limits on corruption in public service delivery' and 'equity in state employment' sub-dimensions. Since 2011 Tra Vinh has managed to improve its overall performance by nearly 48%. Nam Dinh was the best performer in terms of the willingness of local authorities and citizens to fight corruption.

Regional patterns have been strong in this dimension over the last five years, with central and southern provinces tending to do better than northern provinces. Among the top 16 best performers, 11 are southern provinces and four are from the central region. Long An and Soc Trang have been in the best performing group for five years in a row, while Ha Noi has been in the poorest performing group for the same period.

Limits on Public Sector Corruption. This sub-dimension looks at diversion of public funds by local officials, bribes for land titles and kickbacks for construction permits. Compared to the previous two years, the 2015 findings are less optimistic as fewer citizens agreed that public officials did not divert public funds for private use (54% compared to 59% in 2014), ask for bribes when handling land use rights certificates (48% compared to 54% in 2014) or ask for kickbacks when handling construction permits (49% compared to 58% in 2014). Quang Tri, Can Tho and Tra Vinh topped the rating in the three respective indicators, while Ha Giang, Binh Duong and Ho Chi Minh City were the worst performers in each of the three indicators.

Limits on Corruption in Public Service Delivery. This sub-dimension measures the level of corruption experienced by citizens in public health care and primary schools. Similar to findings in the first sub-dimension, there has been a decline in the number of respondents who feel that public health-care workers and primary teachers say no to bribes. In half of

the provinces, just 28% to 47% of respondents said that they did not have to pay bribes when accessing public health care at district hospitals, indicating that bribery is still widely prevalent. Similarly, addressing bribery at public primary schools remains a challenge for almost every province. In half of the country, only between 36% and 59% of respondents claim that bribery does not take place at primary schools.

Equity in State Employment. Equity in state employment contributes significantly to a strong and non-corrupt state apparatus. However, it seems difficult to reach this goal when personal relationships and informal payments still play an important role for those who wish to pursue public sector careers. As seen in PAPI findings over the past five years, nepotism and corruption in public sector employment have become a systemic problem. For example, in Ha Noi only about 14% of respondents believe that they do not need to pay a bribe when seeking state employment. In Ha Giang, for the second year in a row, citizens believe that personal relationships are crucial when applying for state employment, with almost no one saying that the five public sector posts that were asked about in the survey are free from nepotism.

Willingness to Fight Corruption. This sub-dimension reveals the willingness and efforts of local governments and citizens to combat corruption. In 2015, fewer respondents agreed that corruption has no effect on them and a much lower percentage of respondents (34% compared to 40% in 2014) agreed that provincial leaders are serious about combating corruption. There is also a declining willingness to denunciate public officials who collect bribes. In 2015, very few victims of bribery requests (less than 3%) would denunciate corrupt acts by local government officials. At the same time the tolerance of bribe amounts surged, with victims of corruption saying they would not denunciate the case unless the bribe being asked for reached about VND24 million.

Recommendations. As the 2015 PAPI findings show, provincial performance in control of corruption is on a downward trend, especially when compared to some promising signs in 2013. Citizens across the country witnessed more nepotism in state employment, bribery in the public sector and a lack of willingness to fight corruption from both the local government and citizens themselves. To overcome systematic and widespread corruption it is important for poorer performing provinces to learn from better performing ones about their experience of ensuring equity in state employment, less bribery for public services and fewer incidences of public officials using their power to obtain informal payments.

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.