



## The Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) 2016

### Dimension 1: Participation at Local Levels

Participation in political, social and economic life is a constitutional right, enshrined in Viet Nam's 2007 Grassroots Democracy Ordinance. The PAPI dimension 'Participation at Local Levels' measures citizens' knowledge of their participation rights, their opportunities for participation, the quality of village head elections, and the extent to which citizens participate in and voluntarily contribute to local infrastructure projects.

**Overall Provincial Performance.** The 2016 results show a continuation in the trend since 2011 of average performance in citizen participation based on virtually all measures. There were some improvements: voter turnout for both National Assembly elections was 69%, a 2% increase from 2011, and citizen participation in making decisions on starting and implementing local infrastructure projects slightly increased compared to the previous five years. However, scores in 'civic knowledge of participation' and in 'opportunities for participation' were lower than reported after the election year of 2011.

Consistent with previous years, there were strong regional patterns. Among the 16 best performing provinces, 13 were in the Red River Delta and North Central sub-regions, while 11 out of the poorest performing provinces were in the Southeast and Mekong Delta sub-regions.

**Civic Knowledge.** The sub-dimension on civic knowledge looks at what citizens know about their political and civic rights, including elections and term limits of elected representatives. In 2016 Hai Duong scored highest on awareness of which government posts were elected and which were nominated, although the score was only half of the maximum. In response to the question about term limits for village heads and National Assembly delegates, about 61% of Bac Giang respondents provided correct answers while in Tra Vinh only 6% could do so.

**Opportunities for Participation.** This sub-dimension focuses on citizens' personal experiences with elections of representatives to the National Assembly and People's Councils. It also shows how active local governments are in facilitating citizen political participation. Overall, voters' direct experiences with the 2016 elections were similar to those in the 2011 elections. In the National Assembly election, nearly 69% of respondents reported voting in 2016, a 2% increase from the reported rate in 2011. The highest turnout was reported in Can Tho at 91%, while in Vinh Phuc only 41.2% said they personally voted. Although elections for the National Assembly delegates and People's Council members were convened on the same day in 2016, the percentage of respondents who said they went to elect their commune-level People's Council members was 65%, about 5% lower than the rate in 2011. In Dak Lak, 94% personally went to elect their commune People's Council members, while in Binh Duong, only about 37% did so.

**Quality of Village Elections.** The quality of village elections is assessed by indicators measuring citizens' free choice of candidates, the way the elections are conducted to ensure fair selection and transparency, and whether winners are properly announced to the public. Although the Grassroots Democracy Ordinance requires at least two candidates in village elections, fewer respondents confirmed this was the case in 2016 than in previous years. Competition was

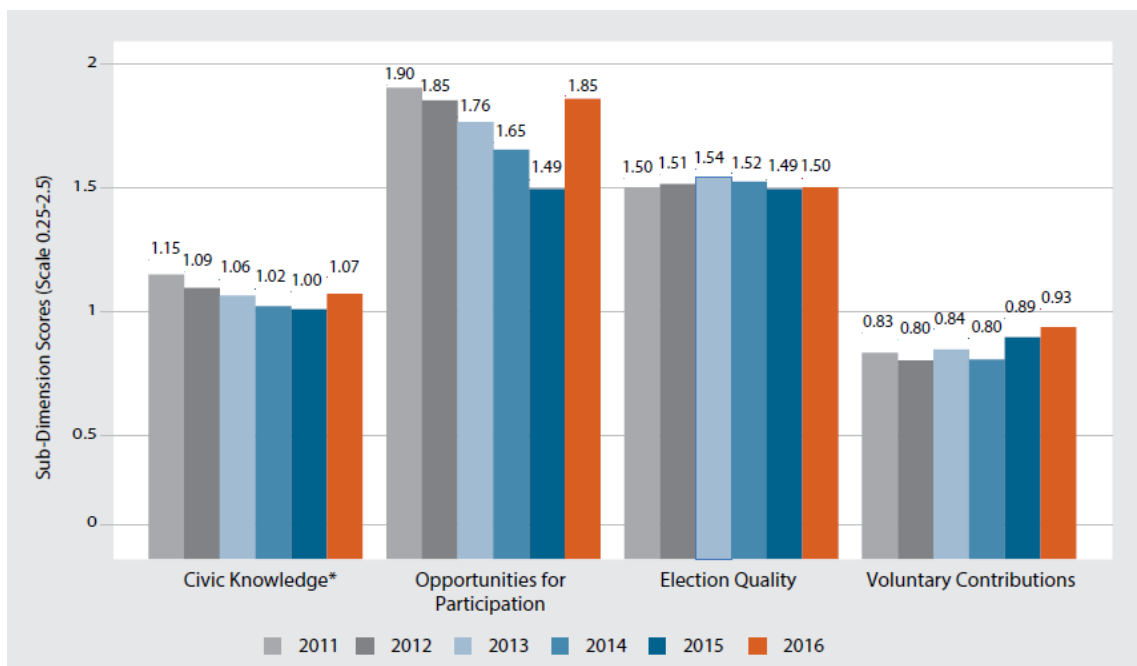
poorest in Ho Chi Minh City, where only 20% of respondents said there were two candidates to choose between.

In terms of village head voting, only 60% of respondents nationwide said they participated in the most recent village head elections, a lower rate than in the previous five years. At the provincial level, citizens in Kien Giang were the most actively engaged in village head elections in 2016 compared to citizens in other provinces. Ho Chi Minh City also saw the fewest voters invited to village head elections in 2016, whereas 91% of voters in Bac Ninh said they were invited to village elections. Lastly, it seems that fewer paper ballots were used in village head elections in 2016 across the country. The range was significant, however: almost 100% of Tien Giang citizens said paper ballots were used in their province, while the percentage in Phu Tho was about 23%.

**Voluntary Contributions.** Voluntary, rather than forced, contributions to buildings and/or remodelling of community infrastructure – such as cultural houses, roads, or schools – is a form of active citizen participation. Once citizens contribute voluntarily, they tend to participate more actively in different project processes, from participatory to oversight roles. Positive change continued in this area, with more citizens in 2016 reporting that voluntary contributions were monitored by Community Investment Supervision Boards (CISBs) and/or People’s Inspection Boards (PIBs) compared to the previous five years. However, the role of CISBs and PIBs in oversight of public investment projects continues to be very limited: an average of only 21% of respondents in localities with infrastructure projects reported that CISBs and/or PIBs carried out some form of supervision. Ha Tinh maintained its position as the top performer with 61% of respondents reporting that CISBs and PIBs provided supervision.

Citizen participation in decision-making in project design and implementation at the national level also improved, with more respondents saying they took part in decision-making to start an infrastructure project (59%) and provided inputs during project design (36%) in 2016 than in prior years. However, provincial variations were large. Only 10% of respondents in Hai Phong provided their comments on project designs, while in Son La about 64% gave their comments.

**Scores for Change in Citizen Participation at Local Levels, 2011-2016**



**Recommendations.** Despite some improvements, citizen participation in local political life and decision-making remained the weakest governance aspect compared to the other five dimensions in 2016, similar to previous years' findings. Therefore, innovative approaches for engaging voters in future national and grassroots elections, and in local decision-making, are needed to ensure their legitimate civic right to political participation.

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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. Since its pilot in 2009, PAPI has directly interviewed 88,962 Vietnamese citizens nationwide.

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 2016 PAPI Report, 14,063 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 Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC) has generously funded PAPI since 2011, together with funds from UNDP.

The full 2016 PAPI Report and more in-depth analysis can be found at: [www.papi.org.vn](http://www.papi.org.vn).