



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

### Dimension 2: Transparency

PAPI measures citizens' "rights to know" about state policies that affect their everyday life and livelihoods. In particular, the transparency dimension looks at transparency in three key areas: poverty lists, commune budgets, and local land-use planning and compensation. Information relating to these three sub-dimensions is required by the Grassroots Democracy Ordinance and other recent legislation to be made publicly available in a transparent manner so that citizens across the country can "know, discuss, do and verify".

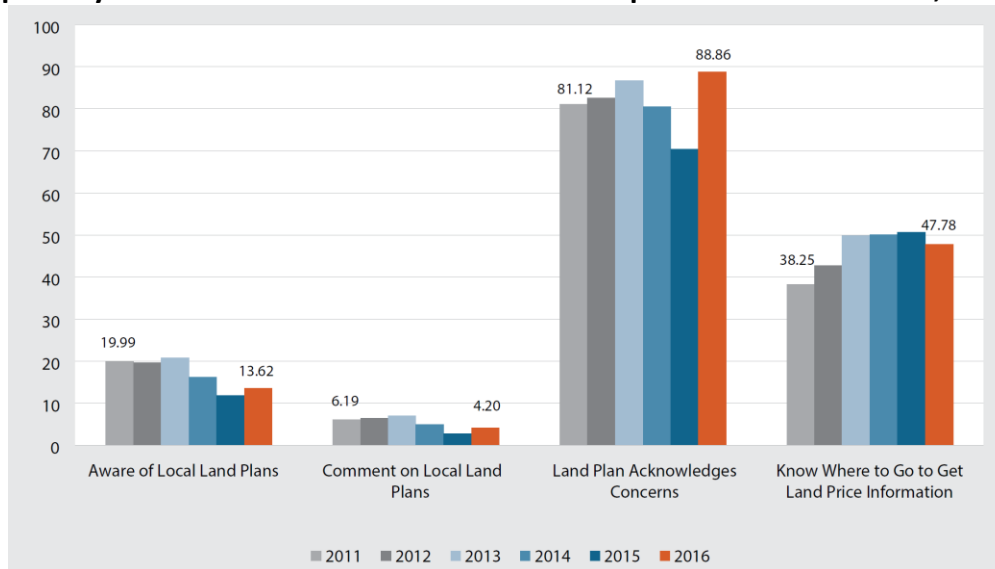
**Overall Provincial Performance.** There was a slight overall improvement in this area in 2016 compared to 2015. The largest contribution was the increase in transparency of land use plans and local governments' land compensation frameworks. Nonetheless, the stark regional variation in the level of performance in transparency observed in the 2011-2015 period was repeated in 2016: of the 16 best performers, 14 were northern and central provinces. Even among best performers though, the provincial mean scores ranged from 5.95 points to 6.49 points on the 10-point scale, suggesting there is still much provinces can do to improve this important aspect of governance. The provinces with lower scores are found more often in the South, with the four poorest performing provinces being Soc Trang, Tra Vinh, Ca Mau, and Bac Lieu, with mean scores at around 4.8 points. Looking at scores on the three sub-dimensions in 2016, Da Nang was the best performer on land transparency, Bac Ninh on transparency of poverty lists, and Binh Phuoc on transparency of commune budget and expenditure lists. The largest improvement was seen in Phu Tho (+29%) while the steepest drop was again seen in Ba Ria-Vung Tau (-19.5%).

**Transparency in Lists of Poor Households.** This sub-dimension measures the proportion of citizens who are aware of the publication of lists of poor households in their commune and reflects how citizens experience the quality of these lists. Findings from the 2016 survey show that the share of citizens who are aware of these lists in their communes remained stable at 53%. The best performing province was Thai Binh where almost 97% of respondents agreed with the statement that poverty lists were made publically available in 2016, whereas in Binh Duong only about 28% of respondents were in agreement. An average of about 39% of respondents nationwide felt that there were no errors in their localities' poverty lists in 2016.

**Transparency in Commune Budgets.** Knowing how commune budgets are used is an important part of keeping local public officials under check and preventing diversion of public funds for private use. This sub-dimension reveals the level of transparency in commune budgets and expenditure, an important Grassroots Democracy Ordinance requirement that communes must comply with. There were improvements in 2016 compared to 2015 in two of the three sub-dimension indicators: share of citizens reading budget and expenditure lists, and the share of citizens believing in the accuracy of these lists - though the scores were still below the level of earlier years. On the third sub-dimension of whether or not commune budget and expenditure lists were made publicly available, there was a slight decrease in the average score within a wide

range: in Thai Binh about 87% of respondents agreed that commune budget and expenditure lists were made publicly available, while in Tra Vinh only about 8% agreed. The most positive change in 2016 was found in the indicator about citizens' confidence in the accuracy of the publicised budget information: of the 32% of respondents nationwide who read the commune budget, about 69% believed the information provided was accurate. The best performing province was Lai Chau, where over 90% of respondents who read the budget and expenditure lists believed in the accuracy of the information.

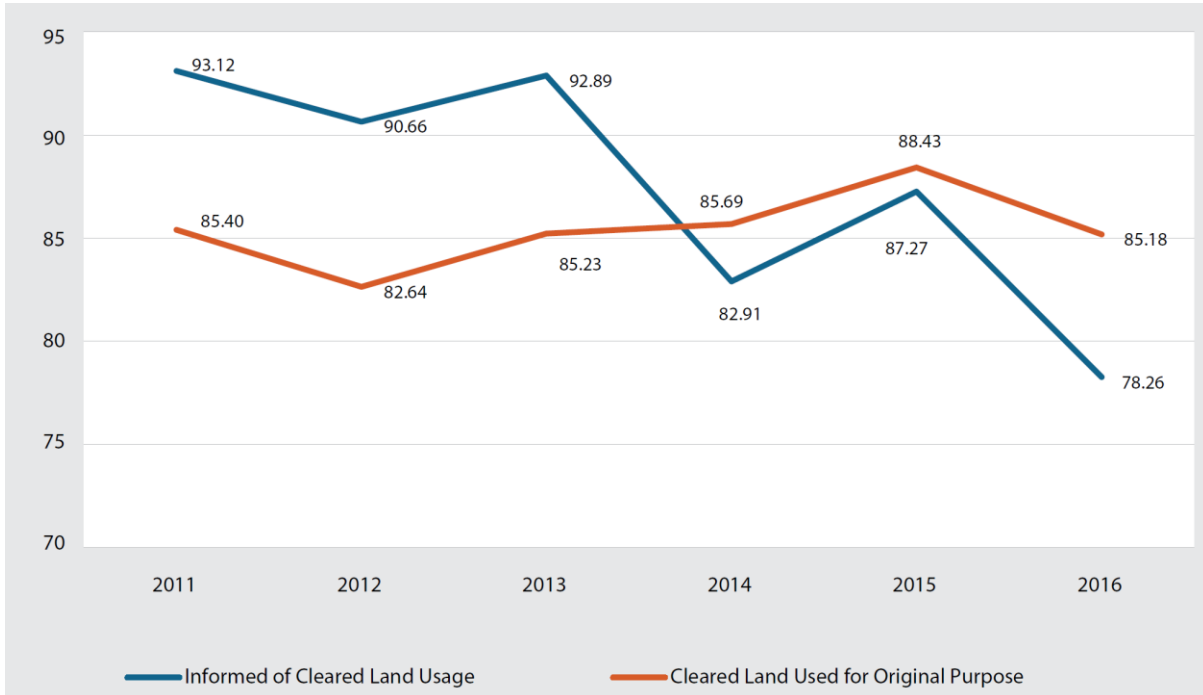
**Transparency of Commune Land Plans and Land Compensation Frameworks, 2011-2016**



**Transparency of Local Land-Use Planning and Compensation Frameworks.** Measuring transparency in land-use planning and compensation helps to encourage local governments to publicize land plans and compensation schemes. Findings from the 2016 survey show that transparency in these areas returned to the level of 2014 after falling slightly in 2015. This may be owing to the effect of the 2013 Land Law, which requires local governments to publicise land use plans and land compensation frameworks. While there was a small improvement, the national mean score in 2016 fell far short of the possible maximum for this sub-dimension. In terms of specific provinces, Da Nang was the best performer in 2016 with the mean score of 2.11 points out of a maximum of 3.33, with Binh Phuoc the worst performer at 1.43 points.

The percentage of respondents nationwide who said they were aware of local land plans in 2016 was only 13.6%, with a large variation between provinces: in Bac Ninh 42.8% said they were aware of their local land plans, while in Bac Giang only 3.4% of respondents said they were aware. Of those informed of local land plans, only a tiny share, about 4.2%, had an opportunity to comment on them, an even lower rate than in 2011. In general, citizens felt that the impact of local land plans had been detrimental for their households and other local residents over the past six years. But among those who had land seized by local governments in 2016, fewer were aware of the new purposes for the land than in past years.

**Respondents Who Lost Land and Were Informed of Land Clearance Purposes, 2011-2016**



**Recommendations.** Transparency in poverty lists, commune budget and expenditure lists, and land use plans at the provincial level remained the second weakest governance aspect among the six dimensions in 2016, similar to previous years. To improve transparency in a sustainable way, it is important for local governments to find and adapt various means of disclosing trustworthy information to citizens of different demographic backgrounds. As they advance to digital “e-government”, local authorities should do more at the grassroots level. Having poverty lists and commune budget and expenditure reports posted on notice boards at commune People’s Committees, handed over to village heads, or announced on loudspeakers would help to disseminate this information to citizens.

To improve transparency of government land use plans and land compensation frameworks, districts and communes should share more with citizens by publicising land planning maps and land pricing lists in accessible venues rather than posting them inside office premises. Regular communication and consultation about changes to land use plans and compensation frameworks through different means will help, such as at meetings with village heads.

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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).