

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

Dimension 3: Vertical Accountability

This dimension of the 2016 PAPI was constructed based on three revised and new sub-dimensions: (i) the frequency and effectiveness of citizen interactions with local authorities, (ii) the proactiveness of local governments in response to citizen proposals or complaints, and (iii) the coverage and effectiveness of People's Inspection Boards (PIBs).

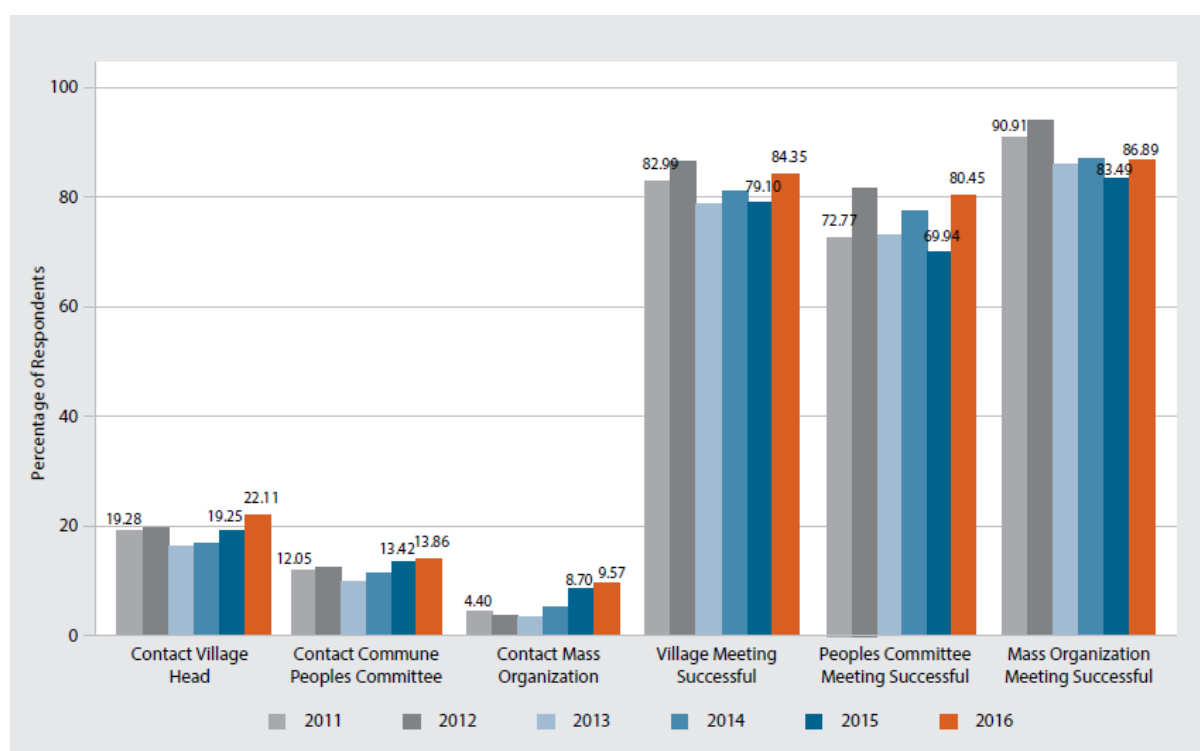
Overall Provincial Performance. The 2016 PAPI results indicate that vertical accountability remains limited at the provincial level. There is a convergence of best performers in the northern and central regions in this dimension: among the 16 best performers in 2016, six are northern provinces and four are central ones. Quang Ngai scored the highest, and Kien Giang the lowest.

On the effectiveness of interactions between local authorities and citizens, Can Tho scored the highest in 2016 while Ha Giang was the poorest performer. In terms of local governments' response to citizen actions, Quang Ngai was the best performer and Khanh Hoa the worst. And on the effectiveness of the People's Inspection Boards, Hai Duong was the top performer while Ho Chi Minh City scored the lowest.

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, periodic meetings with public officials, and voter meetings with People's Council members and National Assembly delegates. In 2016, about 22% of respondents across the country said they met village heads to discuss a problem with their family members, neighbours, or local authorities. The percentages range from 4% in Thai Binh to 51% in Quang Nam. For those who met with village heads, about 85% rated the meeting as successful.

The least frequently encountered officials were commune People's Council members, with only 4.7% of all respondents in 2016 indicating that they approached these elected members to discuss a problem. In Tay Ninh, nearly 14% of respondents went to meet with commune People's Council members, while in Thai Binh barely anyone did.

Whom Do Citizens Meet First When in Need? (2011-2016)



Response to citizen actions. This sub-dimension focuses on the frequency of citizen proposals, denunciations, complaints, or petitions and how local governments respond to these citizen actions. It shows the proactiveness of local governments in being accountable to their citizens and the effects of the Law on Denunciation and the Law on Complaints.

Findings from the 2016 survey reveal that very few citizens want to take actions when they have a frustration or discontent with everyday governance matters. The most common civic action was making proposals to local governments to demand improvement. However, the percentage of citizens across all provinces engaging in this action was still low at 22.7%. Of those who made proposals, about 89% said theirs were heard. The other three forms of civic actions were rarely used, and when used, not everyone was satisfied with the results. Only 1.2% of respondents said they lodged complaints, 0.26% denounced a public official, and 1% signed a petition against local governments. Petitions and complaints also saw the lowest response rate by local governments; about 40-45% of those making petitions or complaints said that their actions received some sort of response from officials.

People's Inspection Boards (PIBs). This sub-dimension measures the coverage and effectiveness of PIBs, a grassroots mechanism made up of elected officials that aims to keep local public officials accountable to citizens. In theory, PIBs should be established in every commune across the country. The 2016 PAPI findings reveal an increase in the rate of citizens' reporting the presence of PIBs, but a lower level of appreciation of their operation compared to 2015. In 2016, about 34% of all respondents said there was a PIB in their locality, while about 77% said they were effective, similar to findings in previous years. In Hai Duong, 75% of respondents said they had PIBs in their localities, while in Quang Ninh only 17% said this was the case. Among those respondents in Hung Yen who said PIBs were in place, about 94% said PIBs were effective.

Recommendations. Despite the political support for social feedback and citizen oversight, and the existence of legislation on citizen reception, complaints, and denunciations, not much has been done to encourage citizen actions and to illuminate local governments' responsiveness to citizen actions. It is important that local authorities interact more frequently with citizens through regular and ad-hoc meetings. The 2014 Law on Citizen Reception provides the legal framework for better government-citizen interactions. It is expected that with this law, local governments now have concrete interaction mechanisms in place to improve this aspect of governance and local officials will provide timely responses to citizen concerns and requests.

It is also recommended that the Viet Nam Fatherland Front, other mass organizations, and civil society at large play a more central role in reviewing and reviving available mechanisms, including PIBs, to call local governments into account. To ensure more effective PIBs, these institutions should be better equipped with technical skills and be provided more resources so they can 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. 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.