



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

Dimension 4: Control of Corruption in the Public Sector

The 'Control of Corruption' dimension measures the performance of institutions and local governments in controlling corruption as well as the levels of tolerance 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. The trend of declining overall provincial performance in control of corruption in the public sector continued in 2016, with a lower national mean score than in 2015. The largest declines were seen in 'limits on public sector corruption' and 'willingness to fight corruption'. Compared to previous years, there were noticeable spikes in 2016 in the numbers of respondents saying citizens had to pay bribes for state employment, for land use right certificates (LURCs), and for teachers' favouritism, as well as cases of public officials diverting state funds at the local levels. On a more positive note, the sub-dimension 'limits on corruption in public service delivery' improved to the 2011 level after declining in 2015. Fewer respondents in 2016 said bribery was needed for accessing public health care at the district level compared to previous years.

The strong regional patterns in this dimension continued: central and southern provinces tend to do better in anti-corruption efforts than northern provinces. Among the top 16 best performers in 2016, eight are Mekong Delta provinces and five are from the central region. In all, 27 provinces significantly improved their performance in 2016 in this dimension compared to 2011. Cao Bang's score increased by 36% over six years, while Binh Duong continued to see a sharp drop, down 40% compared to 2011.

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 five years, the 2016 findings for all three sub-dimension indicators are less positive. Fewer citizens agreed that public officials did not divert public funds for private use, ask for bribes when handling LURCs, or ask for kickbacks when handling construction permits for citizens. Despite the concerted efforts made in 2016 by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment in setting up hotlines for citizens to report on bribery in public administrative services for LURCs (possibly in response to PAPI 2015 findings), only 46% of respondents across the country agreed with the statement that there was no need for bribes to obtain the certificates (the lowest percentage over the past six years).

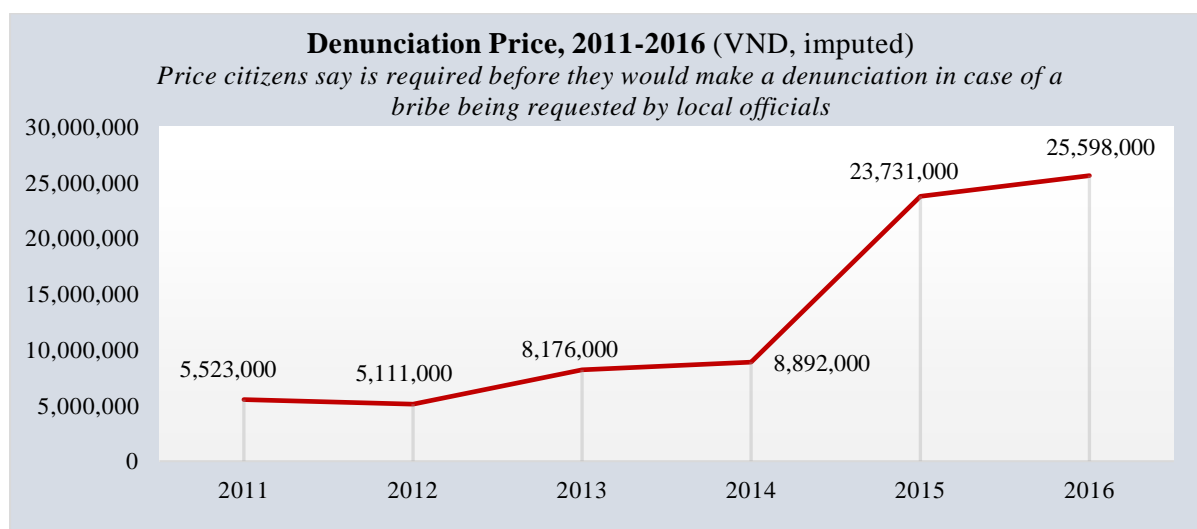
Limits on Corruption in Public Service Delivery. This sub-dimension measures the level of corruption experienced by citizens in public health care and primary schools. There was a slight increase in 2016 in the overall provincial performance, bringing it back to its 2011 level after falling in 2014 and 2015. The main contributor to the positive move in 2016 was a higher percentage of respondents who felt that public health care workers at district hospitals did not request bribes (51%) compared to 2015 (48%). However, in half of the provinces only 27% to

51% of respondents said that users did not have to pay bribes when accessing public health care at district hospitals, indicating that bribery in public hospitals is still widely prevalent.

Similarly, addressing bribery in public primary schools remains a challenge for almost every province. In half of the provinces, only 22% to 62% of respondents claim that bribery does not take place at primary schools. However, some provinces did score well. Bac Giang was again the best performer nationwide on this indicator in 2016, with 86% of respondents saying that parents did not have to pay bribes to ensure adequate attention by teachers.

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. PAPI findings over the past six years confirm that nepotism in public sector employment has become a systemic problem. The 2016 results reflect a downward trend over the past two years in the national average scores of the indicator. Tien Giang had the highest score on the indicator ‘no relationship is required for five commune-level public official posts’, but its score was only 2.04 points on the scale of 0-5. In Lao Cai, respondents believed that personal relationships are crucial when applying for state employment; respondents there said almost all of the five public sector posts at the commune level were not free from nepotism. In Thai Nguyen, only 15% of respondents in 2016 said no bribe is needed when seeking state employment. In Tra Vinh, the province with the highest score on this indicator, 66% had the same opinion.

Willingness to Fight Corruption. This sub-dimension reveals the willingness and efforts of local governments and citizens to combat corruption. In 2016, the percentage of respondents agreeing that their provincial leaders were serious about combating corruption was the lowest of the past six years, at 32.6%. In Quang Binh, 65% said their provincial authorities were serious about addressing corruption cases, while in Binh Duong the percentage was only 8.6%. A stable low trend in citizens’ willingness to denunciate public officials who collect bribes continued in 2016, with only about 3% of victims of bribery requests saying that would denunciate corrupt acts by local government officials. In terms of the bribe amount citizens are willing to tolerance, the level kept rising in 2016, with victims of corruption saying they would not make a denunciation in a case unless the bribe being asked reached around VND 25.6 million, higher than the reported figure in 2015.



Recommendations. In 2016, provincial performance in control of corruption in the public sector continued to fall to a level even lower than that seen in 2011. As reflected by responses from citizens across the country, nepotism in state employment, bribery in the public sector, and the lack of willingness to fight corruption from both local governments and citizens were the major drivers. The recent commitment by the Government of Viet Nam to battle nepotism in state employment gives some hope for a healthier and cleaner state apparatus in the future. For the time being, it is important that poorer performing provinces learn from better performing ones how to ensure better equity in state employment, reduce bribery for LURCs and for primary education, and achieve fewer incidences of public officials diverting state budget funds for private benefit. Stronger civic engagement in preventing corruption and denouncing corrupt acts can be achieved when both government and non-government actors, as well as the media, are encouraged to be involved and trust that whistleblowing is effective.

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.