**Governance Dimensions: Participation, Transparency, Accountability, and Control of Corruption**

The 2017 PAPI findings reveal positive overall trends for provincial performance in the four dimensions that focus on governance. There was improvement, although at different rates, in three of these four dimensions compared to 2016: ‘Transparency,’ ‘Vertical Accountability,’ and ‘Control of Corruption in the Public Sector.’ Only ‘Participation at the Local Levels’ saw a slight decrease at the aggregate level compared to 2016.

There was notably greater optimism about government performance in ‘Control of Corruption in the Public Sector’ in 2017: of all four governance components, this dimension improved the most, with both perceptions among citizens and their actual experiences improving.

Geographically, Red River Delta provinces continue to score higher than provinces in other regions for the indicators related to political participation and engagement. Meanwhile, Mekong River Delta provinces keep their high scores in indicators related to control of corruption. In terms of citizen perspectives, different demographic groups perceived governance quality differently. Breakdowns of the PAPI dimensional scores by ethnicity and gender show that men and the Kinh majority held the most positive views across all four governance dimensions in 2017.

**Trends in Local Government Performance in First Two Years (2016-2017) of the 2016-2021 Government Term at the Indicator Level**

By comparing the results for indicators in 2017 with 2016, the findings reveal key areas of progress, as well as setbacks, in the first two years of the current government five-year term.

**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.

The 2017 findings reveal several positive trends in this area, including an increase in the proportion of citizens reporting that they had a second candidate to choose from in village head elections – up from 42% in 2016 to 49% in 2017. The largest increase, however, was in the proportion of citizens reporting that local projects were monitored by Community Investment Supervision Boards; the rate surged from 21% in 2016 to 34% in 2017.

On the other hand, the results show less knowledge of whether selected government posts are elected or appointed (down from 0.88 points in 2016 to 0.81 points in 2017); a slightly lower rate of citizens reporting having their voluntary contributions recorded in local records (a decrease from 73% in 2016 to 72% in 2017); and fewer contributors to local projects having opportunities to provide their comments in local project designs (down from 36% in 2016 to 33% in 2017).

**Dimension 2: Transparency in Local Decision-making.** This dimension measures citizens’ “rights to know” about state policies that affect their everyday lives and livelihoods. In particular, it looks at transparency in three key areas: poverty lists, commune budgets, and local land-use planning and compensation. Positive signs in 2017 for this dimension included a slight decrease in the proportion of citizens finding errors in local poverty lists: 36% reported that poor households were missed in poverty lists in 2017 compared to 39% in 2016. There was also a small increase in the proportion of citizens confirming that commune budgets and expenditures were made publicly available, up from 32% in 2016 to 36% in 2017. And the proportion of citizens who were aware of local land plans rose from 13.6% in 2016 to 15.2% in 2017.

On a less positive note, there was little improvement in citizens’ trust in the accuracy of disclosed budgetary information: about 70% believed the information was accurate in both 2016 and 2017, lower than in previous years. In addition, few citizens had opportunities to comment on land use plans – only around 4% in both 2016 and 2017, lower than in previous years. Lastly, a majority of the respondents living in localities where there were renewed land plans continued to say they have been negatively affected by the new plans (with mean scores of approximately 2 points over time).

**Dimension 3: Vertical Accountability towards Citizens.** This dimension is based on (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). In 2017 there was a slight increase in the proportion of citizens interacting with local authorities when facing problems; for example, 25% met with village heads in 2017, up from 22% in 2016, and 17% met with commune government officials in 2017, up from 14% in 2016. Provinces achieved a significant increase in the proportion of citizens submitting complaints who were satisfied with the complaint resolutions, up from 45% in 2016 to 53% in 2017. There was also a slight increase in the proportion of citizens with PIBs in the village – up from 34% in 2016 to 39% in 2017 – and in proportion saying the PIBs are effective, up from 77% in 2016 to 81% in 2017.

However, compared to 2016, the 2017 survey showed a slight decrease in the proportion of citizens who found interactions with local authorities successful: 83% of those who met with village heads were satisfied in 2017, down from 85% in 2016, and 81% of those who met with commune government officials were satisfied in 2017, down from 83% in 2016. There was also a much lower level of satisfaction reported by citizens who made denunciations with the resolution by local authorities; the rate decreased from 68% in 2016 to 33% in 2017. Lastly, the low level of satisfaction with local governments addressing of joint petitions remained the same at 41% in both 2016 and 2017.

**Dimension 4: Control of Corruption in the Public Sector.** This dimension measures the performance of institutions and local governments in controlling corruption as well as the levels of tolerance for corruption based on 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.

Reversing a worrying trend since 2013, citizens provided more positive feedback in 2017 on almost every indicator composing this dimension. A total of 33 provinces saw increases in their score on this dimension, and only six saw declines, as shown in the figure on the next page. Specifically, there was a 10% increase in the proportion of citizens agreeing that local officials do not divert public funds for personal use (up from 54% in 2016 to 64% in 2017), and a similar size increase in the proportion of citizens agreeing that no bribes are requested for land use rights certificates (up from 46% in 2016 to 55% in 2017). Provinces also achieved increases in the proportion of citizens agreeing that no bribes are requested at district hospitals and primary schools (rising from 51% and 55% in 2016, respectively, to 57% and 61% in 2017) and in the proportion of citizens agreeing that no bribes are requested for state employment (from 37% in 2016 to 43% in 2017). Although the scores are still not better than in 2011 and 2012, the reversal of the downward trend since 2013 is both noteworthy and welcome.

However, some setbacks occurred in this dimension. The survey showed a significant decrease in the proportion of citizens who are aware of the Anti-corruption Law (down from 45% in 2016 to 40% in 2017). Another negative sign was an incremental increase in tolerance of bribes: the mean bribe amount that would drive citizens to report it increased from 25.5 million VND in 2016 to 27.5 million VND in 2017. In addition, an extremely low proportion of victims of corruption said they denunciated bribe requests by public officials: the rate of about 3% in both 2016 and 2017 is much lower than the 9% rate in 2011 and 7% rate in 2012. Lastly, a low proportion of citizens agreed that local governments are serious about combating corruption – just 35% said this in 2017.

**Year-on-Year Change in Control of Corruption in the Public Sector, 2016–2017**

*Note:* Y = percentage of change in 2017 data from 2016 data, with a change of ±5% defined as statistically significant.

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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* *103,059 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 2017 PAPI Report,* *14,097 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), the Real-Time Analytics and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).*

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*The full 2017 PAPI Report and more in-depth analysis can be found at:* [*www.papi.org.vn*](http://www.papi.org.vn)*.*