



Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index - PAPI 2019



PRESS RELEASE

POVERTY, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND ENVIRONMENT AS TOP CONCERNS FOR CITIZENS, EVEN BEFORE THE COUNTRY BECAME AFFECTED BY COVID-19: 2019 PAPI REPORT

Ha Noi, 28 April 2020 – The **2019 PAPI Report**, released today, reveals that even before Viet Nam became affected by Covid-19, poverty, economic growth and the environment were top concerns of citizens in Viet Nam. The Report also highlights that the country made encouraging progress in governance and public administration performance to address citizens' needs in the past year and delivers key insights into a broad spectrum of reform areas across nearly a decade. This stock taking will help inform decision-makers in 2020 - a pivotal year that will shape Viet Nam's future development agenda.

14,138 citizens randomly selected from all 63 provinces nationwide were interviewed for the 2019 Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI). Since 2009, the voices of 131,501 citizens have been reflected in annual PAPI reports. These collective voices inform the nation's sustainable development agenda and provide a rich reservoir of findings for decision-makers at a crucial time when they are defining the Socio-Economic Development Strategy for the coming decade and are now addressing the recent global health and economic twin crises caused by COVID-19.

In this context, **Caitlin Wiesen, UNDP Resident Representative in Viet Nam** stressed at the launch of the report that *"the 2019 report highlights PAPI's value in assessing governance and public administration reforms across a decade and benchmarking governance performance towards national development targets and the Sustainable Development Goals with improvements across most dimensions. Importantly, nationally representative findings on top citizen greatest concerns, including poverty and job loss, and evaluation of recent reform priorities regarding control of corruption and e-governance, provide valuable insights for policy makers as Vietnam enters the recovery phase of COVID-19"*.

Looking at the issues of greatest concern, **poverty** has topped the list of most important issues facing Viet Nam in the past five years and 2019 was no exception: nearly one-quarter of respondents stated that it was their main concern. **Jobs and employment** have also remained in the top four of greatest concerns since 2015, despite the country's rapid growth and job creation.

These concerns are likely to be amplified in the coming months with large groups of citizens having been hit hard by the current COVID-19 crisis. The PAPI results indicate that more citizens without social insurance consider poverty to be a pressing issue. They seem to be mainly concerned about the lack of certainty that they will have sufficient resources for the future. The [unprecedented US\\$2.6 billion](#) social protection package adopted by the National Assembly that is expected to benefit over [10 percent](#) of the population should help address some of these concerns.

The state of the **environment has remained a significant public concern**, the third most serious in 2019. This suggests that the environment has become a mainstream issue among Vietnamese citizens. This finding also underlines the importance of a prioritized public policy response to poor air and water quality. In the majority of provinces, citizens have reported that air quality has remained the same or degraded.

This year's PAPI report contains a special chapter on **gender and leadership**. With elections for the National Assembly and People's Councils in 2021, the 2019 PAPI report explored whether voter bias was behind the low numbers of women elected relative to candidates nominated in past elections. It found

that voters exhibited a strong bias against women in leadership roles, especially at village level – which is considered to be one of the most important levels of governance by citizens. This bias was nearly three times greater than that faced by female National Assembly candidates.

Robyn Mudie, Australian Ambassador in Viet Nam, highlighted that *“the 2021 National Assembly and People’s Council elections provide an opportunity for more women to be elected to legislative and leadership positions. Improving gender equality and women’s empowerment is a key focus for Australia in Vietnam. The important findings on gender, leadership and the 2021 elections in the 2019 report underline that more work needs to be done to address bias against women being elected to leadership positions and ensuring electable female candidates are nominated to have an equal voice in the political arena and in shaping the nation’s development”*.

Looking on governance and public administration performance across nearly a decade, the 2019 report shows a largely positive trend over the past five years with improvements in five out of the six initial dimensions of government performance measured by PAPI. This steady growth in average provincial scores from 34 points in 2015 to 37.4 points in 2019 underlines improvements in provincial governance during the current government term (2016-2021).

In 2019, the greatest progress was made in the dimension on enhancing **Control of Corruption in the Public Sector** (which is most strongly correlated with overall citizen satisfaction) and increasing **Transparency in Local Decision-making**. This matches well-documented reform efforts spearheaded by the high-profile anti-corruption campaign.

Tackling corruption has been a centrepiece of Party and government efforts, with numerous high-profile investigations over the last few years. Consequently, the 2019 PAPI report reflects the clear impact of this anti-corruption campaign on perceptions of grand and petty corruption. This dimension saw the strongest improvements in 2019 at commune and national levels - with 5 percent more respondents than in 2018 reporting that corruption was decreasing. While the anti-corruption drive is changing perceptions, there is continued evidence of significant declines in petty corruption, as experienced by citizens in district level public hospitals and when applying for Land Use Right Certificates (LURCs). While control of corruption scores has improved, a substantial number of respondents (from 20 to 45 percent) continue to perceive corruption as prevalent in the public sector. This suggests that further efforts are needed to address this problem in the coming years.

Surprisingly, the scores in the dimension on **Public Administrative Procedures** remain relatively flat and even dipped in 2019, despite improved assessment of this area for businesses and roll-out of e-governance reforms designed to streamline procedures for citizens. Provincial scores on **E-governance** are still relatively low, despite the continued increase in citizens’ access to the internet. Efforts to improve this dimension must be further promoted and citizens encouraged to access and benefit from online government services to the same degree as businesses. The recent launch of the [National Public Services Portal](#) in December 2019 is an important step in the right direction. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been renewed interest in the use of e-government portals, both on the part of the authorities and citizens. It will be interesting to see whether PAPI scores in the e-governance dimension will increase accordingly.

As recalled by **Mr. Nguyen Huu Dung, Vice President of the Viet Nam Fatherland Front Central Committee**, *“the analysis and assessment of public administration and governance performance at the provincial level from citizen perspectives is a very important channel of information which not only reflects the citizen perception and expectations at the grassroots level but also serve as an indication of provincial public administration and governance performance helping the policy makers introduce timely policy adjustment and improvements to respond to actual circumstances”*.

Looking ahead, PAPI will continue to examine the critical issues which Viet Nam needs to address to increase its responsiveness and accountability to citizens, as well as achieve national progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. In the meanwhile, questions to capture the impact of Covid-19 on citizens will be included in the 2020 PAPI survey to reflect citizen concerns and guide effective policy responses.

Notes for editors:

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. Following the initial pilot in 2009 and a larger survey in 2010, the PAPI survey has been implemented nationwide each year since 2011. For the 2019 PAPI Report, 14,138 randomly selected citizens were surveyed. In total, 131,501 Vietnamese citizens nationwide have been directly interviewed for PAPI since 2009.

In 2019, PAPI measured eight dimensions: participation at local levels, transparency, vertical accountability, control of corruption, public administrative procedures, public service delivery, environmental governance, and e-government.

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).

In the first 10 years of its development, PAPI has been generously funded by the Government of Spain for 2009-2010, the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC) for 2011-2017; by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia for 2018-2021; by the Embassy of Ireland for 2018-2021; and by the United Nations and UNDP in Viet Nam since 2009.

The full 2019 PAPI Report and more in-depth analysis of the findings are available at: www.papi.org.vn. Or, scan the QR Code to download the 2019 PAPI Report to your smartphone.



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