

PAPI 2021

THE VIETNAM PROVINCIAL GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PERFORMANCE INDEX

Press Release

Latest study sheds light on COVID-19 impacts on quality of governance and public services

*Dramatic spike in health and economic concerns as public governance challenges intensify in
second year of COVID-19 pandemic*

Ha Noi, 10 May 2022 – The 2021 Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) Report, released today, shows improvements in basic infrastructure as citizens experienced better roads, water supply and sanitation, while many respondents reported less crime as lockdowns and travel restrictions may have helped improve law- and- order. There were, however, gaps in the national pandemic response with increasing governance challenges, concerning shifts in indicators tied to COVID-19, and a deterioration in household economic confidence.

Indicative of a year when Viet Nam was hit hardest by the pandemic, PAPI has detected a spike in concern regarding health – jumping from 2 to 23 percent in just two years to the top the list of citizens’ greatest worries together with national economic growth and jobs, with correspondingly diminished concerns about the environment. Survey results also reveal a further deterioration in household economic confidence with an 11 percent decline from 2020 – the year that first saw a reversal in steady optimism in nearly a decade. This is compounded by a 10 percent rise in respondents reporting job and income losses in 2021 from 2020.

At the same time, there was a decline in public approval of the government’s response to the pandemic to 84 percent from 89 percent in 2020 and more critical attitudes towards the health sector, with declining levels of satisfaction with services provided by public district hospitals. With a slight increase in the number of citizens who revealed that bribes were necessary to realize better care at hospitals, it is also noteworthy that the dimension Control of Corruption in the Public Sector saw the first decline since the anti-corruption campaign initiated by the Communist Party of Viet Nam since 2016.

Meanwhile, the Vertical Accountability Towards Citizens dimension witnessed a sharp fall in performance compared to 2019 and 2020 – potentially a result of local governments’ being overwhelmed by the numbers of citizen requests for pandemic-related response and support policies in 2021. While lockdowns necessitated many aspects of citizens’ lives to move online, a large divide in access to e-government portals for e-services was evident and reflected in poor performances in e-government services during 2021.

On the brighter side, improvements were reported in infrastructure, water supply and sanitation, and less criminality. Other positive developments included the sub-dimension on public primary education bouncing back after an anomalous dip in 2020 when schools were not ready to cope with new COVID-19 challenges. During the second year of the pandemic, more than 60 percent of respondents in all provinces said their children’s schools were equipped with information and communication technology to facilitate online studies. Lower percentages, however, were found in mountainous or poorer provinces.

“These findings are important for deepening our understanding of the impacts of the pandemic on democratic governance, that in turn can help support the government - at both central and provincial levels - in preparing for future economic and health crises,” said UNDP Resident Representative in Viet Nam Ms. **Caitlin Wiesen**. *“We*

hope that the data shared today will also provide insights for the 2022 legislative agenda which encompasses important areas of law measured by PAPI, in particular the Law on Grassroots Democracy Implementation and the Land Law amendment.”

Since 2018, PAPI has been co-funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia, the Embassy of Ireland, and UNDP in Viet Nam.

Ms. **Cherie Russell**, Development Counsellor, Australian Embassy in Viet Nam, said: *“The PAPI survey plays a crucial role in Viet Nam by allowing government at all levels to improve its decision making, policies, and service delivery to communities based on credible data from citizens. As Viet Nam seeks to move towards upper middle income and then high-income status, it will be vital that governments have the ability to understand their citizens’ experiences and adapt and improve their policy approaches based on real-time feedback.”*

PAPI has the record number of one-on-one interviews conducted with 15,833 respondents from across 63 provinces in 2021. Building on its successful pilot study from the previous year, PAPI further explored migrants’ access to good governance and quality public services. The 1,042 non-permanent residents from 12 provinces with the highest net ratios of internal migrants revealed that the pandemic had exacerbated governance challenges for migrants and residents in receiving provinces.

Migrant equality was a matter of concern as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, with clear differences also visible between the demographics of migrants and permanent residents. However, interestingly, fewer residents in all provinces expressed a desire to migrate in 2021 amid the sharp economic contraction resulting in large-scale losses of income and jobs. Three key reasons for wanting to move in 2021 were family reunions (to move to Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City), better jobs (Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi and Da Nang) and a better natural environment (Da Nang and Lam Dong).

Mr. **John McCullagh**, the Ambassador of Ireland to Viet Nam, noted: *“Ireland’s partnership in Viet Nam and our development cooperation work globally is guided by the principle of the ‘furthest behind first’ and the need to support disadvantaged groups. We welcome the conclusion in the 2021 Report that there were ‘clear signs of progress’ on gender equality in last year’s elections. We also welcome the increased participation of migrants in the 2021 survey. In 2022, Ireland is allocating some of its funding for PAPI to initiatives targeting groups that are further behind, including ethnic minority communities, people with disabilities and migrants.”*

In 2021, PAPI also turned the spotlight on the recent elections of citizen representatives to the National Assembly and People’s Councils, which revealed reduced electoral participation with the percentage of voters, particularly women, who showed up and voted in person for National Assembly and People’s Council representatives lower than in the previous two elections in 2011 and 2016. While the pandemic may be behind the lower voter turnout, a more systemic change may be possibly taking place in village elections due to reduced competitiveness. This is evidenced by the lowest proportion of respondents since 2011 reporting they had more than one candidate to select from at village elections.

Speaking at the report launch, Dr **Nguyễn Hữu Dũng**, Vice President of the Central Committee of the Viet Nam Fatherland Front said: *“PAPI has helped to promote vertical accountability towards citizens, and contributed to innovation in the public sector to meet the Communist Party of Viet Nam’s recently set goal that “people benefit”, aside from the conventional aims of “people know, people discuss, people do and people verify” in grassroots democracy implementation. This is in line with the spirit of the proposed Law on Implementation of Grassroots Democracy at the Commune Level to be discussed at the National Assembly this year.”*

Similar to previous years, the 2021 PAPI Report presents detailed findings on how provinces performed across the eight PAPI dimensions (Participation at Local Levels, Transparency in Local Decision-making, Vertical

Accountability, Control of Corruption in the Public Sector, Public Administrative Procedures, Public Service Delivery, Environmental Governance, and E-Government), as well as in the aggregate PAPI scores.

Compared to 2020's findings, 30 provinces made improvements to their performances in Public Service Delivery, Environmental Governance, and E-governance. However, 30 provinces also saw declines in dimensional scores of Participation at Local Levels, Transparency in Local Decision-making, Vertical Accountability and Control of Corruption in the Public Sector. More better-performing provinces are found in the northern regions, while most Central Highlands, Southcentral coastal and Mekong Delta provinces saw dips in performances. Among the five centrally-governed municipalities, Ho Chi Minh City was in the low-performing quartile, perhaps a result of long-term pandemic lockdowns.

Note for Editors

The Vietnam 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 2021 PAPI Report, 15,833 randomly selected citizens were surveyed. In total, 162,066 Vietnamese citizens nationwide have been directly interviewed for PAPI since 2009.

PAPI measures 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 the result of 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), Real-Time Analytics and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

During its 13 years in existence, PAPI has been generously funded by the Government of Spain from 2009 to 2010; the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC) from 2011 to 2017; the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of Australia from 2018 to 2025; the Embassy of Ireland from 2018 to 2022; and the United Nations and UNDP in Viet Nam since 2009.

The full 2021 PAPI Report and more in-depth analysis of the findings are available at:
www.papi.org.vn

Scan the QR code to download the 2021 PAPI Report to your smartphone:

#PAPIvn

#PAPI2021



For more information, contact:

Nguyen Viet Lan
UN Communications Team
304 Kim Ma, Ha Noi
Mob: (+84) 91 4436 769
Email: nguyen.viet.lan@undp.org

Dang Hoang Giang
CECODES
F 904, Gelex Building, 52 Le Dai Hanh, Ha Noi
Tel: (024) 66523846 / (024) 66523849
Email: giang.dang@gmail.com