

**Press Release**

**2023 PAPI shows progress in citizen perceptions on local anti-corruption efforts and e-governance amid concerns on transparency and the economy**

***15 years’ putting citizen voices at the heart of local governance***

**Ha Noi 02 April 2024** – The 15th edition of the Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) report capturing citizen perceptions of local governance in 2023 shows progress in anti-corruption and e-governance but a backsliding in transparency. The state of the economy and household prosperity were the top concern for citizens.

The 2023 PAPI report was launched at an event in Ha Noi on 2 April in the presence of representatives from the Party, State, National Assembly, Fatherland Front, central and local governments, diplomatic corps, UN agencies, other international organizations, non-government organizations, academia, and the media.

Since its inception 15 years ago, PAPI has collected the voices of 197,779 citizens from all demographic backgrounds on the state of governance and public service provision at the local level. With its wealth of quantitative data, PAPI has emerged as a trusted, citizen-centric tool to inform the country’s legislative and policy agendas and the action plans of all 63 provincial governments.

In his opening remarks, Associate Professor, Dr. **Duong Trung Y**, Vice President of Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics (HCMA), reflected on the important results that HCMA and UNDP have achieved together during the 15 years’ formulating and developing the PAPI Indicators. These have consistently contributed to positive and systematic changes in Viet Nam's public administration.

“*Reflecting on the achievements of the HCMA – UNDP partnership over the past 15 years, we can see that we are on the right track. The research results have exerted positive, direct impacts on the guidelines and policies of the Party and the State as well as in the practice of public administration in Viet Nam's localities*," said Associate Professor, Dr. Duong Trung Y. “*Objective metrics such as PAPI, PCI, or the Public Administration Reform Index (PAR Index), serve as important benchmarks for evaluating the effectiveness of public service delivery by ministries and local governments. Furthermore, they offer important suggestions for Viet Nam to advance its national development policy, implement the National Digital Transformation Strategy, and foster a people-centered, inclusive state, ensuring that no one is left behind*."

***Key 2023 trends***

A record 19,536 respondents from across the country participated in the 2023 PAPI survey. Based on their responses, Control of Corruption in the Public Sector and E-Governance were the key PAPI dimensions to register progress relative to 2021 and 2022. Transparency in Local Decision-Making, conversely, saw a drop. The remaining five dimensions on local governance, public administration and service delivery saw little change relative to the preceding two years.

With corruption high on the agenda for both the Party and citizens, the results on Control of Corruption in the Public Sector and Transparency in Local Decision-making are significant, even if they paint contrasting pictures.

The improvement in citizen perceptions on control of corruption at the local level rose only modestly, from 6.71 points in 2022 to 6.77 in 2023. The slight improvement, however, also aligned with citizen rankings of national issues of greatest concern. Corruption dropped from being the fifth national issue of greatest anxiety for citizens in 2022 to the sixth in 2023.

Citizens reported a perceived decline in five out of the eight types of corruption measured by PAPI. These are diversion of state funds, bribes for land use rights certificates, bribes to avoid environmental regulations, bribes for teachers' favoritism, and bribes for better public health service. Despite this progress, more respondents believed that informal payments were needed to secure State employment in 2023 compared to 2021.

The results suggest that certain types of corrupt practices are seen to persist in the local public sector, negatively impacting citizen trust. Interestingly, despite a downtrend since 2016 in the number of respondents believing that State connections are key to securing public office positions, concern about nepotism to secure these jobs remains high. Across provinces, 56 to 62 percent of 2023 respondents expressed this concern. It merits emphasizing that year after year, Control of Corruption in the Public Sector is the PAPI dimension most prominently correlated with overall citizen satisfaction with local governance and public administration.

Adding further complexity to the corruption panorama, transparency in governance saw the biggest drop in 2023. Transparency is important to prevent corruption in the public sector, as citizens can only hold local officials accountable if they have access to accurate information. Concerningly, 23 provinces in 2023 saw significant year-on-year declines in scores compared to 2021, especially in transparency around commune budgets and expenditure. While between 43 and 46 percent of respondents across provinces confirmed that commune budget and expenditure worksheets were publicly available between 2018 and 2022, this dropped to 39 percent in 2023, the lowest since 2016. Similarly, transparency in poverty lists also dropped, part of a decline evident since 2019.

“*With PAPI’s wealth of data providing evidence for policymaking, we encourage all provinces to engage stakeholders and take action to increase citizen satisfaction with their performance in 2024 and beyond. While bright spots were evident in 2023, especially in combatting corruption and unlocking the potential of e-governance, they contrast with a slightly gloomier picture elsewhere – particularly around transparency*,” said United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative**Ramla Khalidi**.

Another key PAPI focus in 2023 wase-governance, following the Government’s push to expand digital citizenship. E-governance is a force multiplier for better governance. It can help provinces streamline administrative procedures while helping citizens interact with the government in a more transparent manner. Around the world, the introduction of e-governance has also reduced opportunities for corruption, especially corrupt practices most directly affecting the average citizen, like the request of bribes in exchange of public services.

It is thus positive to note that, in 2023, access to the internet and access to provincial e-governance portals both rose relative to 2020. At the same time, while nearly 80 percent of PAPI survey respondents in 2023 had internet access at home, the results also highlighted digital divides. Access to the internet varies across gender, living areas, ethnicity and migrant status. A persistent 5-10 percent gap has favoured men over the years, while ethnic minorities have 10-20 percent less access than the Kinh majority.

Findings also revealed that citizens are slow to switch to e-governance, with just 8.3 and 7.6 percent of respondents using the umbrella National E-Service Portal (NESP) or Provincial E-Service Portals (PESP) available in all 63 provinces, respectively. A reason for the limited users is privacy concerns, as stated by one-third of users.

These findings underline the need for substantial improvements to make services more accessible, user-friendly, convenient and inclusive for all citizen users. A practical measure is to design a single-device approach to online public service portals, so users can access them from anywhere with smartphones. Addressing citizens’ privacy concerns is also important.

“*Australia and Vietnam have ambitious plans for expanding our cooperation under our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. During his recent visit to Australia, Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh met with government and business leaders to explore new ways of continuing Vietnam’s remarkable economic growth by ensuring it is green, inclusive and innovative. PAPI’s data helps Vietnam to understand where changes in public administration are needed to achieve this vision. In particular, I am pleased to see in this year’s results progress in closing the digital divide and real progress in everyone, especially women, people with disability and ethnic minorities, exercises their rights as digital citizens,*” said Australian Ambassador to Viet Nam **Andrew Goledzinowski**.

***Issues of greatest concern in 2023***

The top three issues of greatest concern to citizens in 2023 were poverty/hunger (22.39 percent), followed by jobs/employment (12.79 percent) and economic growth (9.2 percent). These results suggest widespread economic anxiety among citizens.

*“Poverty, hunger and employment remain key issues of concern for citizens under the latest PAPI survey. It is more important than ever that all members of society – especially ethnic minorities and rural communities – benefit from Viet Nam’s rapid socio-economic development, to ensure no one is left behind,”* said Irish Ambassador to Viet Nam **Deirdre Ní Fhallúin**.

Compared to 2022, concerns over jobs and employment saw the biggest rise (+2.7 percent), followed by income (+1.3 percent). This continues a trend evident since 2017 of economic issues figuring as the most prominent cluster of citizen concerns demanding State attention.

This trend is further reflected by the highest ever percentage of PAPI respondents (26 percent) reporting their household economic situation is worse today than five years ago, except for the COVID-19 impacted year of 2021. Citizens applied the same pessimism to Viet Nam’s overall economic situation, with 54.4 percent of respondents - nearly 12 percent less than in 2022 - appraising the national economy as “good.” A prominent economic concern was electricity grid pressures with respondents reporting an increase in power outages from 63.5 percent in 2022 to 70.1 percent in 2023. Provinces surrounding Ha Noi and the Mekong Delta were particularly impacted.

Economic considerations were also a prominent factor driving migration within Viet Nam, with the search for better jobs (21.8 percent) being the second biggest motivation to migrate in 2023 following reuniting with family (40.68 percent). The third most cited reason for migration is deteriorating environmental conditions; an important result given that Viet Nam is one of the world’s most vulnerable countries to climate change. This concern was particularly prominent among respondents from the Mekong River Delta, a hotspot of migration, especially to Ho Chi Minh City. More than twice as many respondents from these provinces reported that their agricultural fields experienced salinization. As Viet Nam moves forward in its ambitious energy transition and efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change on society, it will be vital to pay increasing attention to citizen concerns related to the environment, climate change and access to affordable energy./.

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| *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 2023 PAPI Report, 19,536**randomly selected citizens were surveyed. In total, 197,779 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), Real-Time Analytics and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with the support for fieldwork coordination from the Vietnam Fatherland Front’s central agencies and their provincial to grassroots chapters since 2009.*  *During its 15 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 2025; and the United Nations and UNDP in Viet Nam since 2009.*  *The full 2023 PAPI Report and more in-depth analysis of the findings are available at:* [*www.papi.org.vn*](http://www.papi.org.vn)  *Scan the QR code to download the 2023 PAPI Report to your smartphone:*  **#PAPIvn #PAPI2023**  For more information, contact:  Nguyen Viet Lan UNDP Communications Lead  Mob: (+84) 91 4436 769 Email: nguyen.viet.lan@undp.org |