The questionnaire and the coding system included certain protections against potential biases in the data that might lead to over- or underestimation of program effort. For example, many questions, such as the formal position title of the program director or the list of ministries involved in the program, are objective in nature. In addition, the questionnaire contains some 120 items, and neither the respondents nor the interviewers knew which items would be grouped to produce each index. Moreover, neither interviewers nor respondents knew the coding rules for converting responses to scores. Finally, we discounted responses that departed significantly from the mean. While these protections cannot provide a full guarantee against bias, they proved useful in assuring accuracy in the international studies.

### Results

The overall mean program effort score for the 15 selected provinces was 2.5 (Table 1, page 6). Mean effort scores for the selected provinces ranged from 1.9 for Dac Lac province to 3.1 for Dong Thap. In comparison, the mean program effort score for Thai Binh province was 3.6.

Some provinces were more erratic in their efforts than others: The standard deviation of the program effort scores for each of the 15 provinces ranged from 0.7 in Lam Dong to 1.4 in Thanh Hoa. In contrast, the standard deviation of the effort score for Thai Binh province was 0.6, indicating greater uniformity in the generally high level of functioning of this program.

### Program Features

Among all provinces, family planning program effort varied considerably from one program feature to another (see Figure 1). In general, the provincial programs scored highest on measures of policy and administrative support such as leadership support, ministry involvement, adequacy of administrative structure and use of the civil bureaucracy (mean program area score, 3.3). Provincial programs varied more in outreach: Most programs scored moderately high in community-based distribution and the provision of postabortion contraception (mean scores, 3.1 and 3.0, respectively), moderately low on the provision of postpartum contraceptive information and services (2.5) and poorly on social marketing and the use of incentives* (2.0 and 1.6, respectively).

The provincial programs scored moderately high on freedom to advertise (3.2), but quite low on use of the private sector

*Several types of incentives exist in much of the Vietnam family planning program, but the wording of the questionnaire may not have led respondents to report on these specific types.