



Youth-Led Adaptive Problem Solving in Nepal

Presented by:
Inclusive Development Partners and Aasaman Nepal

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Executive Summary

Introduction and Overview

Nepal's education system is characterized by persistent structural inequities that have proven resistant to policy-driven reform. In Lumbini Province, one of the country's lowest-performing provinces educationally, gaps in data quality, weak accountability mechanisms, and the exclusion of young people from education planning have compounded these challenges. The nationwide Gen Z protests of September 2025 underscored the extent to which youth disengagement is not a matter of apathy, but the reflection of a system that does not allow meaningful ways for participation.

The **Youth-Led Adaptive Problem-Solving for Inclusive Education** pilot project applied Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA), a framework developed by Harvard Kennedy School's Building State Capability program, to the challenge of inclusive education planning and implementation in Kapilvastu District. PDIA is premised on the recognition that complex development problems are rarely solved through top-down, pre-designed interventions and instead require designed efforts that can be tried and adjusted until a solution is found.

Aasaman Nepal, IDP's local implementing partner, recruited 24 youths from grade 11 and 12, 8 from each of three municipalities, to ensure representation across local government units: Kapilvastu Municipality, Mayadevi Rural Municipality, and Suddhodhan Rural Municipality. The group was evenly split by gender and included two participants with disabilities, one boy and one girl. Youth represented a range of caste (12 Dalit youths) and religious groups (2 Muslim youths), in keeping with the social composition of Kapilvastu District.

Identifying Problems and Root Causes

The first phase of the project was a five-day **youth workshop** held in Kapilvastu District from January 18–23, 2026, facilitated by IDP and Aasaman. Participants examined their individual educational journeys using art-based methods and identified problems in the local education system from their own experience. Youth demonstrated the problems through short dramas and helped local artists to create a painting to reflect the issues they identified. To find deeper root causes of problems identified, the youth used the “five whys” method, which was then rendered visually in fishbone diagrams.

Participants conducted stakeholder mapping followed by the Triple-A (Acceptance, Authority, Ability) analysis, in which youth voted individually on each dimension for each identified root cause to determine where there is sufficient space for change to happen. Youth, head teachers, local education officers and mayors came together to refine their problem and change space analyses and identified a list of potential actions.

A post-workshop survey indicated strong youth engagement with the process, 96% of youth participants reported that their voice mattered during workshop sessions and 92% reported feeling more confident to act.

A two-day **Provincial Education Summit** was held at Landmark Hotel, Bhairahawa, on January 26–27, 2026 and a one-day **National Policy Dialogue** was held at Landmark Hotel, Durbarmarg, Kathmandu, on February

16, 2026. These summits brought together a mixed group of participants: the nine youth representatives selected at the local workshop; three LEU officials, one from each municipality; a representative from the Provincial Education Training Centre (ETC); a representative from the Province Government Ministry of Social Development; two head teachers, representatives from the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST); and representatives from Development Partners

Adaptive Problem-Solving in Action

With a refined understanding of the problems and the authorizing environment, participants were introduced to the PDIA concept of *crawling the design space*, a structured approach to generating potential solutions that draws on four distinct sources: 1) existing practices; 2) latent practices 3) positive deviance, and 4) external best practices. Crawling the design space led to deciding on four action plans that could be taken in a short time period:

1. **Mobile phone use guidelines.** Participants came together to co-create the specific guidelines for their school, which would later be printed and posted in two locations: in the HT's office (where teachers gather between classes) and on a wall near the grade 11 and grade 12 classrooms.
2. **Teacher feedback app.** This action plan involved working with a software developer to develop a simple online app where students can give daily anonymous feedback about the teachers' behavior at their school, including their mobile phone use.
3. **Teacher practice sharing events.** The highest rated teacher (through the feedback app) in each of the six pilot schools was invited to be publicly recognized and facilitate a morning event to share and demonstrate their teaching practices for other teachers from the school. The teacher presented the school report card based on the students' feedback, followed by a robust discussion session among attending teachers.
4. **Convene parent-SMC meetings** to provide a platform for better engagement between parents and SMC.

Pause and Reflection

Because actions are designed to be small with quick implementation timelines, these check-ins must happen shortly after actions have commenced. In this case, the team planned to have weekly check-ins with the youth, guided by questions from the PDIA Toolkit: 1) What did we do? 2) What did we learn? 3) What are we struggling with? And 4) What's next?

Action 1 Learning: Mobile Phone Use Guideline

Youth-led monitoring teams at the schools shared photos showing where the guidelines had been posted around their schools. Youth observed that while mobile phone usage among teachers had noticeably reduced, students were generally more careless about following the guideline due to there being no punishment for violating the rules nor direct incentive for following them.

Action 2 Learning: Teacher Feedback App

Despite some schools announcing holidays and some schools having terminal exams, at the close of the pilot period, more than 560 completed entries had been received across the six schools via the app. The monitoring team noted that despite the plan for students with mobile phones to share access with those who do not, for the purpose of giving feedback in the app, there remained access barriers. Thus, the team recommended that each school also use a feedback box (sometimes called a “complaint” box), with paper-based forms matching the app content.

Action 3 Learning: Teacher Practice Sharing

Some teachers expressed the view that this kind of event would benefit all teachers, including lower grade teachers who were not formally invited as part of the sharing. A head teacher from the pilot school that scored lowest in the feedback app said that the report card based on the students’ feedback perfectly reflects the real situation in the school. Another said the results of the report card will be shared with all teachers in a formal meeting after school finishes exams and reopens for regular classes.

Action 4 Learning: Parent-SMC Meetings

Action 4 provides an example of rapid adaptation during implementation. The first three schools had negligible or zero attendance by parents at the meeting with the SMC. Realizing the need to address the issue of parents’ nonparticipation, the Aasaman team met with youth and HTs to discuss potential solutions. The meeting concluded that they would create a WhatsApp group to communicate the message to their parents. They also agreed that students should personally escort their parents to the parent-SMC meetings. This adaptation resulted in significantly better parental attendance.

Conclusion

The Youth-Led Adaptive Problem-Solving for Inclusive Education pilot showed that breaking complex problems into root causes enables youth to take practical actions and drive change in their own schools. Using a structured, iterative approach, students built confidence, leadership skills, and a belief that small actions matter.

The method was embraced by educators and officials and is especially relevant as global reductions in development funding increase the need for locally-driven solutions. While the short timeline limited repeated action cycles and deeper work on systemic barriers, the pilot achieved significant progress, highlighting the strong potential of youth-led, adaptive approaches to create meaningful and sustainable improvements in education systems.

There are several ways that the pilot actions can be extended. More broadly, this pilot served as a proof of concept that the adaptive problem-solving approach can work among youth, and within the education sector, in Kapilvastu District—and likely in other parts of Nepal.

List of Abbreviations

BEK	British Embassy, Kathmandu
BSC	Building State Capability
CEHRD	Center for Human Resource and Development
ETC	Education Training Center
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office
HT	Head Teacher
IDP	Inclusive Development Partners
LEU	Local Education Unit
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
OPD	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
PDIA	Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SMC	School Management Committee



Chapter 1

Introduction and Overview

This report documents the implementation of *Youth-Led Adaptive Problem-Solving for Inclusive Education*, a seed project designed to strengthen inclusive, evidence-based education planning in Lumbini Province, Nepal by centering the voices of young people. Facilitated by Inclusive Development Partners (IDP) and Aasaman Nepal, with support from the British Embassy Kathmandu (BEK) and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), the project created structured opportunities for youth, especially those from marginalized groups, including girls, students with disabilities and Muslim youths, and those with experience of being out of school, to actively shape education problem diagnosis and policy dialogue. Working across three levels of Nepal's educational system, the project brought together 24 youths from Kapilvastu District, provincial education officials, and national policymakers in a connected sequence of workshops, summits, and dialogues held between January and February 2026.

The project applied Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) as its guiding framework, moving through problem identification, root cause analysis, change space mapping, and action planning across local, provincial, and national levels. But this project did not stop at planning. Through a project extension, IDP and Aasaman Nepal returned to the district with youth to implement and test four pilot actions that emerged directly from the problem-solving process: (1) the development of mobile phone use guideline for schools, (2) a teacher feedback app to give students a structured and anonymous voice on classroom experience, (3) strengthened parent and School Management Committee (SMC) engagement, and (4) a teachers' experience workshop based on the feedback provided by the students through the feedback app. Each of these actions was small by design—implemented in six schools across two rural and one urban municipality in Kapilvastu district, and intended not as complete solutions, but as first iterations to be tested, learned from, and adapted. This report documents both the process and the action: how youth identified and analyzed the problems that shape their education, and what they did about it.

1.1 Context in Nepal

Although Nepal has made significant progress in the last decade in terms of improving access to basic level education (NER=94%), there remain significant disparities in already poor learning outcomes. For example, 60% of grade 10 students do not meet the minimum expected learning goals of the curriculum; learning outcomes in Lumbini, Karnali and Sudurpaschim provinces fall below average; girls perform significantly lower than boys¹. Access to secondary education is still insufficient for girls, children with disabilities and other marginalized groups of youth and adolescents (NER=56%).

A significant rise in remittance income has enhanced access to digital tools, and the increasing use of social media platforms and AI have outpaced schools' ability to prepare for the unintended consequences of such technology. On one hand, this has given opportunity and safe spaces for youth to raise their voices. On the other hand, its use (by teachers or students) has potential to negatively affect the learning environment inside classrooms.

A study revealed that 73% of adults use some form of social media. Youths rely on social media for communication, business and entertainment purpose.² Against the backdrop of a government-issued social media ban and youth raising a collective voice against corruption, Nepal went through a series of large Gen Z protests on October 23 and 24 that resulted in the ousting of the coalition

¹ https://giwmscdntwo.gov.np/media/pdf_upload/NASA%2010%20REport%20for%20press%20dec%2029_jfzz7ya.pdf

² https://www.presscouncilnepal.gov.np/en/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Nepali-Media_Year-Book-2082-inside-page.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

government and fresh elections for the parliament. Following the March 2026 elections, the new parliament has 104 (out of 275) members who are below 40 years of age, reflecting the mandate of the Gen Z protests.

1.2 Context in Lumbini Province and Kapilvastu district

Lumbini is geographically and demographically a diverse province with 8% Muslim population and 12% of the population speaking Awadhi as their mother tongue. Lumbini province alone accounts for 19% of all out of school children (age 5-12) in Nepal.

While access to secondary level (grades 9-12) for boys and girls in Nepal and Lumbini is almost equal (NER=56%), in Kapilvastu district access to secondary education for girls is significantly lower than for boys (NER=47% for girls vs NER=55% for boys). The gender gap in NER is 23% (43% for girls vs 55% for boys) in Suddhodhan rural municipality, one of the pilot project municipalities.

1.2.1 Kapilvastu Youth

Selection Process

The recruitment of youth participants was led by Aasaman Nepal (Aasaman), IDP's local implementing partner, which has established relationships with communities, schools, and local government across the district. Prior to recruitment, Aasaman obtained the necessary approvals and clearances from provincial and local authorities, and convened an Advisory Group, including a local secondary school head teacher, a primary school teacher, a youth leader, a person with a disability, a person from the LGBTQI community, a local musician, and a Local Education Unit officer from Kapilvastu Municipality, whose perspectives and insights about the state of education in the district informed the design and framing of the workshop before recruitment began.

Aasaman recruited 24 youth, 8 from each of three municipalities, to ensure representation across local government units: Kapilvastu Municipality, Mayadevi Rural Municipality, and Suddhodhan Rural Municipality. Selection criteria prioritized diversity and representativeness across multiple dimensions: gender, disability, caste, ethnicity, and lived experience with the public education system. The team specifically called for the inclusion of youth who had dropped out or experienced periods of being out of school, recognizing that those most affected by educational inequity often have the clearest analysis of its causes. However, such youth proved difficult to recruit; many had left the area for employment or were busy with jobs or other family responsibilities during the day. Nevertheless, nearly all youth who attended the workshop were able to share about friends and former school mates who had dropped out. For example, several said that 4 out of 5 of their school friends have already dropped out of the educational system.

To accommodate youth who were current students taking morning classes, the workshop schedule was designed to run in the afternoons and evenings. Aasaman staff built close contact with the parents of the youth and received their consent for their children's participation in the residential workshop. This proved to be more of a challenge for Muslim youths and girls. Only 2 out of 24 youths were from Muslim community and none of them participated in the provincial and national summits, which required travel farther from home.

Demographics of Youth

Ultimately, twenty-four youth participants attended the five-day provincial workshop in January 2026. All participants were from Grades 11 and 12. The group was evenly split by gender (12 girls and 12 boys) and included two participants with disabilities, one boy and one girl who were both overaged for their grade levels (21 and 24 years old respectively). Youth represented a range of caste (12 Dalit youths) and religious groups (2 Muslim youths), in keeping with the social composition of Kapilvastu District.

1.3 Overview of PDIA

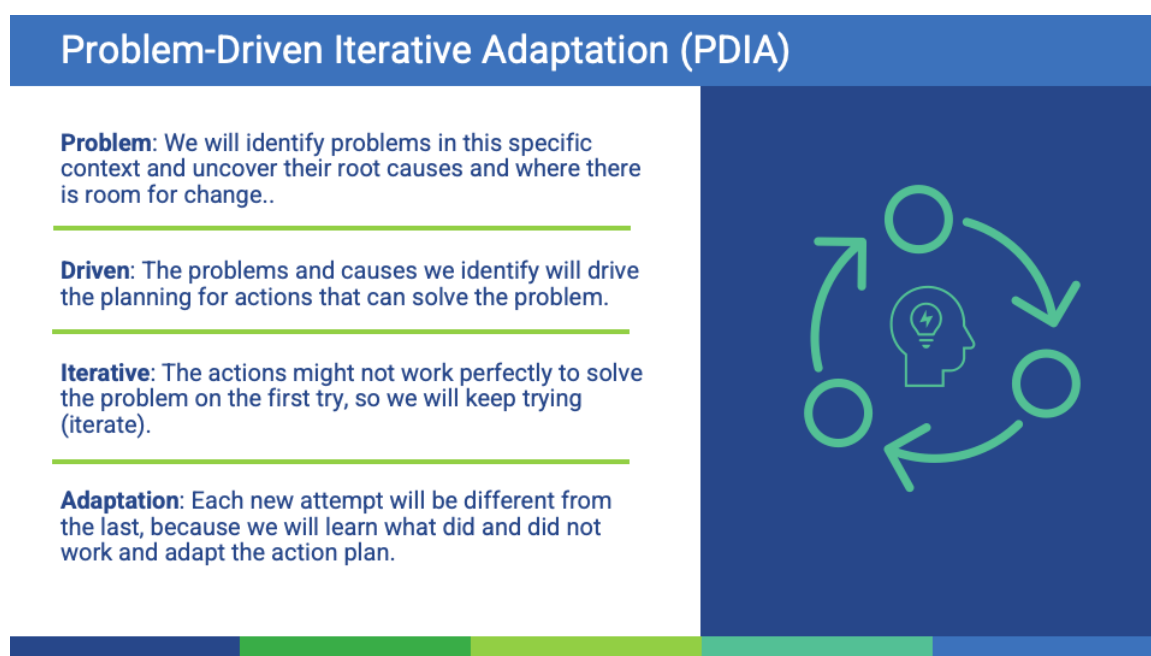
Nepal's education system is characterized by persistent structural inequities that have proven resistant to policy-driven reform. In Lumbini Province, one of the country's lowest-performing provinces educationally, gaps in data quality, weak accountability mechanisms, and the exclusion of young people from education planning have compounded these challenges. The nationwide Gen Z protests of September 2025 underscored the extent to which youth disengagement is not a matter of apathy, but the reflection of a system that does not allow meaningful ways for participation.

PDIA is grounded in the conviction that local solutions, built by the people closest to the problem, are most likely to last.

This project applied Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA), a framework developed by Harvard Kennedy School's Building State Capability program³, to the challenge of inclusive education planning in Kapilvastu District. PDIA is premised on the recognition that complex development problems are rarely solved through top-down, pre-designed interventions. Instead, PDIA emphasizes locally driven problem identification, iterative action, and structured reflection as the basis for sustainable and real change. Rather than introducing external solutions, the approach supported youth, educators, and government officials to identify the problems they considered most pressing, analyze their root causes, and design and test their own responses through a series of three workshops (local, provincial, national) and a resulting set of action plans.

³ Andrews, M., Pritchett, L., and Woolcock, M. (2017). *Building State Capability: Evidence, Analysis, Action*. Oxford University Press.

Figure 1: PDIA overview



1.4 Stakeholder Workshops

1.4.1 Local Youth Workshop – Kapilvastu District, January 18–23, 2026

The first phase of the project was a five-day youth workshop held in Kapilvastu District from January 18–23, 2026, facilitated by IDP and Aasaman Nepal. As noted above, twenty-four youth from Grades 11 and 12 participated, drawn equally from three municipalities (Kapilvastu Municipality, Mayadevi Rural Municipality, and Suddhodhan Rural Municipality) with eight participants from each. The workshop followed a problem-driven approach across five days, described in detail in the next chapter. We used PDIA guidance documents, worksheets and Building State Capability (BSC) videos to plan and facilitate the workshop. We also received advice from PDIA trained experts ⁴. Briefly, on Day 1, participants mapped their individual educational journeys using art-based methods and began identifying problems in the local education system from their own experience. On Day 2, each municipality group performed a short drama depicting a problem they had identified – covering gender discrimination, teacher behavior in classroom that inhibited learning, and early marriage – before engaging in root cause analysis using the "five whys" method, which was then rendered visually in fishbone diagrams. Day 3 introduced stakeholder mapping, through which participants analyzed the interests and relative power of actors in the education system, followed by the Triple-A (Acceptance, Authority, Ability) analysis, in which youth voted individually on each dimension for each identified root cause to determine where change space existed. In preparation for Day 4, youth collectively developed questions for a set of panel discussions with education system actors. Day 4 panels included a school headteacher, a basic-level teacher, a disability resource class teacher, and LEU officials from two municipalities; a scheduled panel with local government representatives was postponed due to unavailability and

⁴ <https://bsc.hks.harvard.edu/tools/toolkit/>

rescheduled for Day 5. On Day 5, the Mayors of Kapilvastu Municipality and Suddhodhan Rural Municipality participated as panelists. Following the completion of all panel discussions, youth revisited and refined their problem and change space analyses and identified a list of potential actions. At the close of the workshop, participants nominated nine youth representatives, three per municipality, by peer vote to represent the group at the subsequent provincial and national events.

Figure 2: Local workshop demographics



A post-workshop survey indicated strong participant engagement with the process: 96% of respondents reported that their voice mattered during workshop sessions; 88% said root cause activities helped them understand why problems exist; 92% reported feeling more confident to take action; and 79% reported that participatory methods (including games, art, and group discussion) helped them express their ideas.

Table 1 Stakeholder workshop participants

Local	Provincial	National
• 24 youth from three municipalities • Mayor of Kapilvastu Municipality • Mayor of Suddhodhan Rural Municipality • LEU officials	• 9 youth from three municipalities • Three Local Education Unit (LEU) officials, one from each municipality • One representative from the Provincial Education Training Centre (ETC) • One representative from the Province Government Ministry of Social Development • Two head teachers	• 9 youth from three municipalities • Three LEU officials; representatives from the Local Education Coordination Unit (LECU) • Representatives from the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) • Representatives from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) • Representatives from Development Partners

1.4.2 Provincial Education Summit – Bhairahawa, January 26–27, 2026

A two-day Provincial Education Summit was held at Landmark Hotel, Bhairahawa, on January 26–27, 2026. The summit brought together a mixed group of participants: the nine youth representatives selected at the local workshop; three LEU officials, one from each municipality; a representative from the Provincial Education Training Centre (ETC); a representative from the Province Government Ministry of Social Development; and two head teachers. The composition was intentional, designed to introduce the youth-generated analysis to actors with greater institutional authority and contextual knowledge of the provincial education system.

Day 1 opened with an Art Walk led by the youth representatives, in which participants shared the visual outputs produced during the local workshop, providing system-level actors with direct exposure to youth-generated evidence. Participants were then organized into mixed groups, combining youth from each municipality with education officials and head teachers, to review and revise the fishbone diagrams produced at the local level. Officials provided feedback and additional systemic context, and groups updated their analyses accordingly before presenting revised outputs in a plenary session. Groups then returned to the change space analysis, reassessing the extent of authority, acceptance, and ability in relation to the identified root causes, and developed plans to build or expand areas where change space was limited. Day 2 focused on solution development and action planning.

Groups identified potential solutions by drawing on existing but underutilized practices within the system, positive deviance examples, and externally documented practices that could be adapted locally. Each group subsequently structured a first action plan, specifying key stakeholders, proposed activities, underlying assumptions, expected outputs and outcomes, monitoring indicators, and proposed reflection check-in dates. Groups presented their plans in plenary for cross-group feedback and refinement. The summit concluded with closing remarks from a Ministry of Social Development representative, who affirmed the value of youth leadership and evidence-based planning in education reform, and participants contributed to agenda-setting for the upcoming national event.

"I greatly appreciated the two-day program. Although I have participated in several trainings organized by the Government of Nepal on Model Schools, I found this program to be more effective. It helped me realize that ground-level planning can truly be implemented, and the plans developed are the best. The youth participated in a five-day training... If the insights they gained during that program could be implemented in schools, it would solve nearly 75% of the basic problems... I feel that if this program were extended for a year in my municipality, it could transform the quality of education."

Head Teacher, January 2026

1.4.3 National Policy Dialogue – Kathmandu, February 16, 2026

A one-day National Policy Dialogue was held at Landmark Hotel, Durbarmarg, Kathmandu, on February 16, 2026. Participants included the nine youth representatives from Kapilvastu District; three LEU officials; representatives from the Local Education Coordination Unit (LECU); representatives from the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST); and representatives from Development Partners⁵. The event was structured to introduce the findings from local and provincial levels to national policymakers and to refine the change space analysis with respect to School Management Committee (SMC) engagement, the priority area that had emerged across the prior workshops.

The youth opened the event by performing the first part of a two-part skit depicting problems in the local education system that had been developed during the Kapilvastu workshop. Youth then facilitated a session titled "Mapping an Education Journey," in which all participants illustrated and shared their own educational experiences, providing national-level actors with grounded perspective on systemic challenges and an opportunity to see shared experiences. Participants

⁵ Street Child, UNICEF, Plan International, Good Neighbors International

subsequently reviewed the problems identified at the local level, with stakeholders providing questions, feedback, and discussion. Groups organized by municipality worked to refine the change space analysis, with a particular focus on identifying practical strategies to strengthen SMC functionality, accountability, and engagement. MoEST representative Mr. Sankar Adhikari and CEHRD representative Ms. Meena Regmi delivered formal remarks on the program before departing.

Youth then presented the solution ideas developed across the local and provincial workshops — all linked to sub-causes of the identified problem of teacher behavior — and performed the second part of the skit, depicting proposed solutions. The event concluded with a presentation of a tentative implementation timeline for the pilot action activities to be carried out in collaboration with youth in their home municipalities.



Chapter 2

Adaptive Problem-Solving in Action

While the previous section provides an overview of the agenda and participants for the workshops, the following section provides an overview of the content and process of working through PDIA as it unfolded across the three workshops: the problems identified, the analyses conducted, and the action steps that emerged.

2.1 Identifying and analyzing the problems with Kapilvastu youth

PDIA begins not with solutions but with problems. The framework asks those engaging in system change to resist the pull toward premature and prepackaged answers and instead to invest in deeply understanding the challenge at hand, its causes, its context, and the perspective of local actors who shape and are shaped by it (Andrews et al., 2017). This orientation is organized around four central principles, illustrated in Figure 3 below, which structured the work carried out across all three levels of this project.

Figure 3: Four central principles of PDIA



Step 1: Starting with the Problem

The first two days of the Kapilvastu workshop were devoted to getting to know each other and beginning problem identification, using participatory and arts-based methods designed to draw out youth experience. Participants mapped their individual educational journeys using art materials, surfacing personal experiences of the education system as a basis for collective problem identification. Each municipality group then developed and performed a short drama depicting a problem they had identified. The three dramas addressed **gender discrimination**, **teacher behaviors** that inhibit learning, and **early marriage**, reflecting the issues participants considered most salient in their own contexts. These performances served both as a communication method and as an analytical starting point: by dramatizing a problem, groups were required to articulate it concretely before subjecting it to further analysis.



Human bingo!!



Youths showing their educational journey

"We performed skits about gender discrimination and teacher behavior. That's how we explained the problems we live every day."

Youth participant, January 2026



A youth sharing the purpose of a workshop in his school

Following the drama performances, the second day turned to systematic root cause analysis. Using the **"five whys"** method, iteratively asking why a problem exists until an actionable underlying cause is reached, groups worked to deconstruct each identified problem into its contributing factors. This process reflected a core PDIA principle: *that complex, seemingly intractable problems often have more discrete and addressable root causes when subjected to structured analysis.*

This exercise required participants to move beyond surface-level descriptions and trace each problem back through successive layers of causation until a root cause emerged that someone, somewhere, could actually do something about. This is another of PDIA's central insights: *that problems which feel overwhelming at first often become less intimidating and more actionable when broken down.* In practice, this proved true across all groups. The problem of

poor teacher performance, for example, turned out to be less about individual teachers and more about a federal policy that prevents dismissal, School Management Committees (SMCs) that are too politicized or disengaged to hold educators accountable, and a public teaching workforce that views public schools as too low quality for their own children to attend (see an example in Figure 4 below). Gender inequality such as early marriage and imbalanced household duties traced back

through family attitudes and social norms to something more specific and actionable: the absence of trusted community leaders willing to model change within and across ethnic and class groups, weak local enforcement of existing laws ensuring gender equity, and a community culture in which reporting violations carried real social risk. In each case, drilling down through the whys moved the group from frustration toward focus.

Figure 4: 5 Whys Analysis of Problem 1: Government teachers perform poorly.

Group 1: My “5 Why” Thought Sheet

Your problem as a question:

Why are government schoolteachers in Kapilvastu district performing poorly (absent, distracted, undisciplined, and non-responsive to student needs)?

Cause 1: Lack of school management committee

Why does this happen?

Sub-cause: No strict rules apply

Why does this happen?

Sub-cause: Lack of coordination between the teacher, management committee, principal, and parents

Why does this happen?

Sub-cause: Lack of teacher monitoring from time to time.

Why does this happen?

Sub-cause: The village council does not do any kind of verification of the school.

The causes and sub-causes identified through this process were then rendered visually in **fishbone diagrams**, which mapped the relationships between surface-level symptoms and their underlying drivers. The three problems examined — too many holidays/school closures, poor teacher behavior, and insufficient use of technology in the classroom — each produced a diagram that would serve as the analytical foundation for the stakeholder mapping and change space analysis conducted in subsequent sessions.

[illegible]**Provincial Education Official, Bhairahawa**

Step 2 – Building an Authorizing Environment: The Change Space Analysis

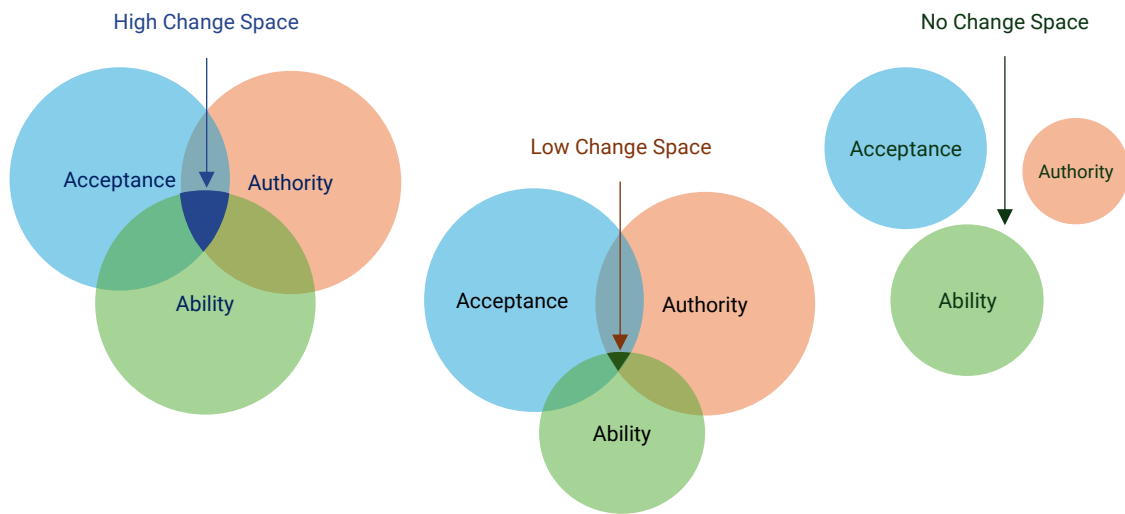
13

Figure 6. AAA Change Space Analysis Questions

Authority to engage:	Acceptance:	Ability:
- Who has the authority to engage: Legal? - Procedural? Informal? - Which of the authorizer(s) might support engagement now? - Which of them would probably not support engagement now?	- Which agents (person/organization) have an interest in this work? - For each agent, on a scale of 1-10, think about how much they are likely to support engagement? - On a scale of 1-10, think about how much influence each agent has over potential engagement? - What proportion of 'strong acceptance' agents do you have (with above 5 on both estimates)? - What proportion of 'low acceptance' agents do you have (with below 5 on both estimates)?	- What is your personnel ability? - Who are the key (smallest group of) agents you need to 'work' on any opening engagement? - How much time would you need from these agents? - What is your resource ability? - How much money would you need to engage? - What other resources do you need to engage?

Together, these three dimensions defined the "**change space**" available for each cause, not as a fixed condition, but as a starting point for understanding where to act first and where more groundwork was needed before action could be taken.

Figure 7. AAA High, Low, and No Change Space Diagram



Each youth group conducted their AAA analysis independently, voting individually on each dimension for each sub-cause identified in their fishbone diagram. The process surfaced two important insights. First, the same problem could have very different amounts of change space depending on the municipality – reflecting real differences in local political conditions, institutional capacity, and community attitudes. Second, high acceptance of a problem did not automatically translate into high authority or ability to act on it, a finding that consistently reinforced the value of the stakeholder mapping conducted in the prior session, which tended to show that the highest interest (acceptance) usually lies with those holding the least influence (authority).

Note: The problem of too many holidays was dropped due to lack of enough authority among municipality level authorities. The decisions about holidays were argued to need political and federal level decisions. School closures due to local events and private events (weddings) were considered acceptable by the local stakeholders.

Table 2 below illustrates this analysis for two of the causes identified under the problem of poor teacher performance, across all three municipalities. The variation across municipalities informed not only the sequencing of proposed actions but the design of the actions themselves – specifically, which actors needed to be engaged first and in which communities.

Table 2. AAA Change Space Analysis – Poor Teacher Performance (selected sub-causes)

Kapilvastu Municipality

Cause	Sub-cause	Acceptance	Ability	Authority
Poor SMC Leadership	SMCs are ineffective or inactive	High	High	Medium
Low teacher motivation to change	Teachers believe "no one can do anything to me"	High	High	High
Low teacher motivation to change	Teachers are not personally invested in school quality	High	Medium	High

Mayadevi Rural Municipality

Cause	Sub-cause	Acceptance	Ability	Authority
Poor SMC Leadership	SMCs are ineffective or inactive	Medium	Medium	Medium
Low teacher motivation to change	Teachers believe "no one can do anything to me"	Medium	High	Medium
Low teacher motivation to change	Teachers are not personally invested in school quality	Medium	Medium	Medium

Suddhodhan Rural Municipality

Cause	Sub-cause	Acceptance	Ability	Authority
Poor SMC Leadership	SMCs are ineffective or inactive	Medium	High	High
Low teacher motivation to change	Teachers believe "no one can do anything to me"	High	High	High
Low teacher motivation to change	Teachers are not personally invested in school quality	Low	Medium	High

These findings shaped the subsequent action planning directly. Rather than designing uniform interventions to be applied across all three municipalities, the change space analysis provided a basis for calibrating what was feasible where, concentrating initial action in areas of convergence across all three dimensions, and identifying the relationship-building and awareness work that would need to precede action in areas of smaller change space.

Step 3 – Take Small, Purposeful Steps: Determining Actions

The **change space analysis** provided the bridge between problem identification and action. Rather than attempting to address the full causal architecture of each problem at once, participants were guided to identify where the combined levels of acceptance, authority, and ability was sufficient to support a **first, concrete** step. This is a deliberate feature of PDIA: *the framework does not ask "what is the complete solution?" but rather "what is the smallest meaningful action we can take now, learn from, and build on?"* (Andrews et al., 2017).

This process started with gathering more information. It was important for youth to have a solid understanding of the problem and the roles and opinions of those in **authority** as they developed their action plans. Rather than moving directly from problem analysis to solutions, Days 4 and 5 of

the workshop introduced participants to the perspectives of the system actors whose decisions shape the conditions they had been analyzing. This served a dual purpose: it provided youth with firsthand information about existing policies, ongoing initiatives, and the practical constraints facing local government and it created an opportunity for those in positions of authority to hear directly from the young people most affected by the problems.

Some of the questions posed by the youth included:

For teachers:

- Why do government schoolteachers send their children to private schools instead of public schools?
- Why don't teachers come to class on time, even if they are at the school?
- Why is there no coordination between SMCs and teachers?
- Why are student learning outcomes so low?
- Why are there so many holidays?

For mayors:

- What kind of initiatives has the municipality taken to address unemployment and education?
- Why is there no investment in education infrastructure?
- Why does it seem that the political leaders do not prioritize education?
- Why is there no college in our municipality (Suddhodhan)?

For LEU officers:

- Why is there no regular monitoring of schools?
- Why are there not enough teachers in schools?
- What % of municipality budget is allocated to education?
- Why are there so many holidays (non-religious) and school closures?
- What are LEU's future plans to improve education?

While various topics and themes were discussed by panelists, one theme that emerged across all three was that, while most tended to agree with the problem diagnosis posed by the youth through their questions, many of their responses conveyed a sense that each system actor felt they lacked the authority or ability to address the problems raised by the youth.

Figure 8: A local artist rendering the problems identified by youths as an artistic expression



Following the panel discussions, youth returned to their analyses, refining both their problem statements and their assessments of change space in light of what they had heard, before identifying a consolidated list of actions to carry forward.

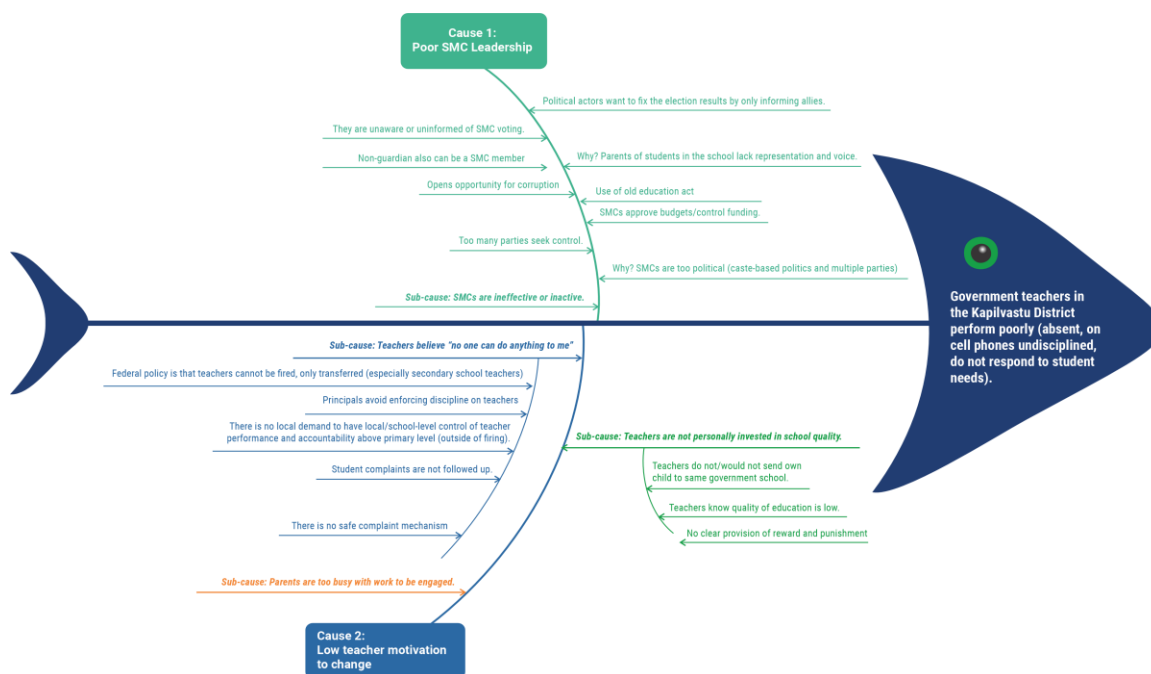
With a refined understanding of the problems and the authorizing environment, participants were introduced to the PDIA concept of **crawling the design space**, a structured approach to generating potential solutions that draws on four distinct sources: 1) **existing practices** already in use that could be improved; 2) **latent practices** not currently happening but feasible within the current system; 3) **positive deviance**, meaning unusual practices that have already worked in the local context and could be formalized or spread; and 4) **external best practices** from other contexts that could be adapted locally (Andrews et al., 2017). This framing was important because it pushed participants beyond the default choice between "what we already do" and "what is done elsewhere", expanding the range of options available for a first action step.

This process continued to be refined and iterated at the Provincial Education Summit in Bhairahawa, where the subset of nine youth representatives worked alongside LEU officials, head teachers, and provincial government representatives to refine the problem analyses from the local workshop and develop structured first action plans. The presence of system-level actors at this stage was significant: it meant that action ideas were tested not only against youth experience but against the institutional



knowledge of those with authority to enable or obstruct change. Groups were asked to identify solutions by looking first within the existing system, practices that were possible but not happening, before turning to external examples. The head teachers and LEU officials were able to share practices they had seen or heard about other schools within Nepal or Lumbini Province successfully applying, adding precisely the broader perspective that the youth were lacking. This grounding in what was already locally feasible, rather than what might theoretically work elsewhere, was central to ensuring the proposed actions were realistic rather than aspirational.

Figure 9 - Fishbone Diagram of Problem 1



Each action plan specified the key stakeholders involved, the proposed activities, the underlying assumptions, expected outputs and outcomes, monitoring indicators, and proposed check-in dates for reflection. Over the course of the two workshops, youth realized that the best opportunities for change within the limited timeframe available were related to Problem 1—poor teacher behavior. The levels of authority, acceptance, and ability were sufficiently large to plan and implement a few actions. Other problems, such as too many holidays and school closures, would need more work to expand the change space prior to taking action.

The first action was a **mobile phone use guideline**, to be developed through a youth-led participatory process with teachers and school management, building acceptance through co-design before moving to implementation, with the head teacher as primary responsible party and the SMC responsible for endorsement.

The second was a **teacher feedback app**: an anonymous mobile platform for students and parents to provide feedback on teacher behavior and school management, with the youths, in collaboration with Aasaman, for organizing an orientation for users, head teachers and the SMC responsible for acting on collected data, and an early check-in scheduled immediately after the app became

functional to assess uptake and usability. The assumption built into this plan was that both parents and students would be willing to use the app, an assumption the group flagged as one to test early.

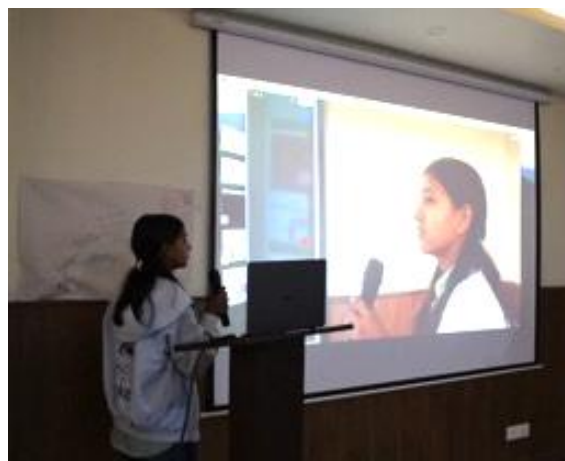
The third was **teacher practice sharing events**, a gathering of teachers at the school where the best performing teacher (based on the feedback app) would have an opportunity to share about their teaching practices and discuss challenges and solutions with their colleagues.

The fourth was **parent and SMC engagement**, operationalized through formal letter-writing to parents about SMC voting and school events, delivered through students, with door-to-door follow-up for key events; this action also included enforcing the provision for a student representative on the SMC, which participants noted existed in policy but was routinely not implemented because SMC meetings themselves rarely occurred.

Each action plan was presented in plenary at the close of the provincial summit for cross-group feedback and refinement before being carried forward to the national dialogue, where national-level actors would have the opportunity to affirm, question, and where possible authorize the path forward.

Step 4: Reflect, Learn, Adapt

In February, the same youth delegation arrived in Kathmandu for the **National Policy Dialogue**. Attendees included CEHRD, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), Local Education Coordination Unit (LECU) representatives, LEU officials, and Development Partners. The youth did not arrive as observers to a policy conversation, they **led it**. They opened with an ice-breaking bingo game, facilitated a shared “Mapping an Education Journey” exercise drawing on the experiences of all participants, and performed a two-part skit. Ms. Meena Regmi from CEHRD and Mr. Sankar Adhikari from MoEST delivered formal remarks affirming the importance of the process before departing.



“These youth came with problems AND solutions. That is rare. That is powerful.”

MoEST Representative, Kathmandu



Chapter 4

Taking Action

4.1 Taking Action

Following the series of stakeholder events, the youth were ready to take action to test their potential solutions back in Kapilvastu District. The team allocated the second half of March (following national elections) to quickly implement their plans across six schools (two schools per municipality, selected from among those that the youth currently attend). All actions were related to the broader problem of **poor teacher behavior**. More than one thousand participants took part in these activities across the six schools.

Before beginning the action plan implementation, youths outlined roles and responsibilities for stakeholders during the implementation period using a PDIA worksheet. This helped youths to think carefully about the details of what would be needed to carry out the work, including who will be responsible, what will be done, and what assumptions they have about the activity. For example, as shown in Figure 10, youth outlined the role and responsibility for the Head Teacher (HT), the students, the parents, and the SMC when planning the development and implementation of a mobile phone use guideline. These details included HTs using their authority to set a good example for others to follow as well as to enforce the rules; students working hard to study and learn, seeking help from teachers when needed and applying discipline to follow the rules; parents creating good learning environments at home (with support from schools) and preventing their children from bringing harmful materials to school; and the SMC fulfilling their duty to monitor learning and improving equal access to quality education.

The implementation details of each action plan are described below:

Action 1: Mobile Phone Use Guideline

Action 1 was intended to address one sub-cause of the poor teacher behavior, which indicated that mobile phones were a distraction from teaching and learning. After an initial discussion with each school's HT, two to three youth along with Aasaman and IDP staff gathered with the HT, selected teachers from the school, an LEU officer, parents, and other enrolled students to discuss and develop a Mobile Phone Use Guideline for that school. Table 2 shows the agenda for the event,

Figure 10: Roles and responsibilities

Youth-Led Problem Solving for Inclusive Education

Worksheet 10: Structuring your first iteration

Using all the analysis you have done in previous sections, identify a few ideas that you will act upon in your first iteration (a one-week period). The initial steps should be highly specified, with precise determination of what will be done by whom in relation to all chosen ideas, and predetermined start and end points that create time boundaries for the first step. We propose working with tight time boundaries at the start of this kind of work, so as to establish the foundation of an action-oriented work culture, and to build momentum.

Cause 1:

Idea: • कक्षाबाट कक्षा बाहिर बाउचरण गर्ने ।
• किमोबाइलको प्रयोग गर्ने गर्ने ।
• उक्तको साथ साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै ।

Action steps (what you will do in the next 5-7 days)

Who will be responsible?	What will be done?	Assumptions
1) प्रधानाचार्य	• कक्षाबाट कक्षा बाहिर बाउचरण गर्ने । • किमोबाइलको प्रयोग गर्ने गर्ने । • उक्तको साथ साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै ।	• प्रधानाचार्य कक्षाबाट कक्षा बाहिर बाउचरण गर्ने । • किमोबाइलको प्रयोग गर्ने गर्ने । • उक्तको साथ साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै ।
2) विद्यार्थी	• कक्षाबाट कक्षा बाहिर बाउचरण गर्ने । • किमोबाइलको प्रयोग गर्ने गर्ने । • उक्तको साथ साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै ।	• प्रधानाचार्य कक्षाबाट कक्षा बाहिर बाउचरण गर्ने । • किमोबाइलको प्रयोग गर्ने गर्ने । • उक्तको साथ साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै ।
3) अभिभावक	• कक्षाबाट कक्षा बाहिर बाउचरण गर्ने । • किमोबाइलको प्रयोग गर्ने गर्ने । • उक्तको साथ साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै ।	• प्रधानाचार्य कक्षाबाट कक्षा बाहिर बाउचरण गर्ने । • किमोबाइलको प्रयोग गर्ने गर्ने । • उक्तको साथ साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै ।
4) SMC	• कक्षाबाट कक्षा बाहिर बाउचरण गर्ने । • किमोबाइलको प्रयोग गर्ने गर्ने । • उक्तको साथ साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै ।	• प्रधानाचार्य कक्षाबाट कक्षा बाहिर बाउचरण गर्ने । • किमोबाइलको प्रयोग गर्ने गर्ने । • उक्तको साथ साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै ।

How will we know if aim is reached?

• किमोबाइलको प्रयोग गर्ने गर्ने ।
• उक्तको साथ साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै साथै ।

Date of iteration check (and who will be involved)

• 10th of March 2020
• 10th of March 2020
• 10th of March 2020

which spanned about four hours and included 20 participants in addition to the project team. As shown in the chapter photo above, youth took the lead as facilitators, giving the objectives for the workshop and explaining the reasons that a mobile phone use guideline is needed—or the problem they hope it will contribute to solving—based on their experiences.

Table 1: Action 1 Workshop Agenda

Time	Activity
9:30-10:00	Tea/snacks
10:00-10:15	Welcome remarks
10:15-10:30	Objectives of the workshop; Discussion points sharing
10:30-12:00	Discussion (4 min each for 20 participants)
12:00-1:00	Drafting and presenting the mobile use guideline
1:00-1:30	Monitoring team formation
1:30-1:45	Closing remarks
1:45-2:00	Tea/Khaja

Following this opening, participants were invited to share their own perspectives on the issue of mobile phone use. To varying degrees by school, these discussions were generally lively with a range of perspectives shared. People in the room sometimes differed in their views about the degree of the problem, who carried the most blame, and what solutions would work. Examples of some of the perspectives shared include:

- Head Teachers were supportive, but some were worried about securely storing mobile phones in their office if teachers or students were prohibited from bringing them into the classroom
- Some teachers admitted they could be distracted by their phone while others insisted it was not a problem
- Some teachers wanted the option of using their phone as an instructional support, but each school had a computer lab and they were also open to the idea of using the computer lab with big digital screens for any digital material they want to use for their teaching
- Parents who spent money to buy a phone for their child were concerned it would be stolen or that they would not be able to reach their child if needed
- Some teachers felt that students up to grade 10 should be fully banned from bringing a phone to school, while grades 11 and 12 could be allowed under restrictions for use

After consensus was reached, participants came together to co-create the specific guidelines for their school, which would later be printed and posted in two locations: in the HT's office (where teachers gather between classes) and on a wall near the grade 11 and grade 12 classrooms.

Table 3 - Mobile Phone Use Guideline workshop participation

School	Male	Female	SMC/PTA	Teacher/HT	Student	Parent
Nandanagar Secondary School	20	17	12	14	7	4
Rastriya Namuna Secondary School	13	19	7	9	14	2
Janata Secondary School	14	18	14	10	5	3
Muneshwor Secondary School	17	15	13	7	9	3
Buddha Padma Secondary School	26	11	3	16	16	2
Ratna Rajya Secondary School	19	22	3	12	25	1
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	109	102	52	68	76	15

The guideline was designed in a visually informative format rather than a list of rules in text format; some schools already had a list of rules in the form of simple bullets asking people to avoid using phones in class. The rules were neither context-specific nor did they address the specific needs of teachers, secondary students or students in lower grades. The new guidelines consisted of separate set of rules for lower grades, secondary grades and teachers as their needs and contexts differed. **No two workshop outcomes among the six were the same in terms of the resulting guideline, highlighting the importance of finding truly local solutions to local problems.** For example, secondary level students noted that they have to come to school early when it is still dark and need a phone for safety and light. Some of them have a part time job and need to maintain phone contact. Early grade students were easy to convince to completely avoid bringing phones into the classroom.

In some schools, teachers felt safe and/or the school had infrastructure (like a locker) in the HT's room for safe storage of their phone, so teachers agreed to leaving their phone behind before entering classrooms. One school had invested in a locker three years prior, but it had remained unused because they were unable to transport the locker to a different location where secondary level classrooms were located. Some schools lacked such confidence in safety and had a history of phones being lost. These schools agreed on a guideline to put phones on silent mode before going into classrooms. Each of the six schools agreed on one common rule (as it emerged from one school and was shared to other schools): that teachers and students share the school and HT phone number to their parents or family members in case of emergency when they are in the classroom.

An important part of the gathering was the formation of a monitoring team at the school. The monitoring team was comprised of one grade 11 or 12 teacher, 4 youth from the pilot team, and 1-2 child club members. They were responsible for making sure the guideline was displayed publicly

Figure 11 - Mobile Phone Use Guideline



inside the HT office as well as outside near grade 11-12 classrooms. The monitoring team also helped to spread the news about the newly approved guideline. They were also tasked with monitoring whether the displayed guideline became damaged or torn (as this was mentioned in the workshop to be a major problem). The role of this team was also to observe and take note of implementation over the two weeks following the guideline development and posting. All of this information was important for determining how well the plan worked as a solution to the identified problem.

Action 2: Teacher feedback app

Action 2 was intended to address at least two related sub-causes of the teacher behavior problem: schools lack a safe complaint mechanism and there is not enough accountability for teachers. The action plan involved working with a software developer, hired by Aasaman, to develop a simple online app where students can give anonymous feedback about the teachers at their school, including their mobile phone use. Together with the youth in the program, the team drafted a set of six closed ended questions and one open ended question (see Figure 12). This action is also linked to Action 1 as one of the requests from the students related to teacher compliance with the mobile phone use guideline. PDIA works on the assumption that multiple actions are necessary to address the root cause of problems.

Users of the app would first select their municipality, then the school, then the teacher's name from prepopulated lists. Then they entered their grade and sex, the subject taught and then marked their responses to the questions. An optional open field for comments at the end allowed students to add context or commentary to their ratings if they wanted to. Students were able to provide the feedback for every class they attended on each day after the app was launched.

Figure 12 - Feedback App

A. Teacher's Interaction with Students Today (आज विद्यार्थीहरूसँग शिक्षकको अन्तरक्रिया)

*QA1. Teacher responded calmly to students' questions without getting angry or frustrated.
शिक्षकले रिस वा निराश नभई विद्यार्थीहरूसँग प्रश्नको सानजसुकै जवाफ दिनुभयो।

☐ Most of the time/धेरैजसो

☐ Sometimes/कहिलेकाहिं

☐ Never/कहिले पनि गर्नु भएन

*QA2. Teacher used derogatory or discriminatory language in the classroom.
शिक्षकले कक्षाकोठामा अपमानजनक वा भेदभावपूर्ण भाषा प्रयोग गर्नुभयो।

☐ Most of the time/धेरैजसो

☐ Sometimes/कहिलेकाहिं

☐ Never/कहिले पनि गर्नु भएन

B. Mobile Phone Use in Classroom Today (आज कक्षाकोठामा मोबाइल फोनको प्रयोग)

*QB1. Teacher used a mobile phone in the classroom for personal or entertainment purposes.
शिक्षकले कक्षाकोठामा व्यक्तिगत वा मनोरञ्जन उद्देश्यका लागि मोबाइल फोन प्रयोग गर्नुभयो।

☐ Most of the time/धेरैजसो

☐ Sometimes/कहिलेकाहिं

☐ Never/कहिले पनि गर्नु भएन

*QB2. Teacher followed ICT guidelines while using digital devices
शिक्षकले डिजिटल उपकरणहरू प्रयोग गर्दा ICT दिशानिर्देशहरू पालना गर्नुभयो।

☐ Mostly/धेरैजसो पालना गर्नु भयो

☐ Some/केहिँको मात्र पालना गर्नु भयो

☐ None/केहिँको पनि पालना गर्नु भएन

C. Teacher Attendance and Punctuality Today (आज शिक्षकको उपस्थिति र कक्षामा समयको पालना)

*QC1. Teacher stayed in the classroom for the full class period.
शिक्षक पूरा कक्षा अवधि कक्षाकोठामा बस्नुभयो।

☐ Yes/बस्नु भयो

☐ No/बस्नु भएन

☐ Don't Know/थाह छैन

D. Teacher was within Curriculum (शिक्षक पाठ्यक्रमभित्र रहेर शिक्षण गरेका थिए)

*QD1. Teacher followed the curriculum and did not deviate from the lesson topic
शिक्षकले पाठ्यक्रम पालना गर्नुभयो र पाठको विषयबाट विचलित हुनुभएन।

☐ Most of the time/धेरैजसो पालना गर्नु भयो

☐ Sometimes/केहिँको मात्र पालना गर्नु भयो

☐ Never/केहिँको पनि पालना गर्नु भएन

During the orientation, strong emphasis was placed on the ethical use of the feedback system to ensure a safe and trustworthy environment for all participants. Students were made aware that their feedback would remain fully confidential and anonymous, with no personal identification recorded. They were encouraged to provide respectful and truthful feedback based on their real classroom experiences, avoiding any personal attacks or misleading information. It was also clarified that all collected data would be securely managed and used solely for school improvement purposes, and that misuse of the system for personal conflict or false reporting is strictly prohibited. These measures helped ensure that the feedback system remained reliable, responsible, and focused on continuous improvement. Only Aasaman and IDP had access to the raw data.

Youth-Led Adaptive Problem Solving for Inclusive Education

नन्दनगर माध्यमिक विद्यालय

शुद्धोधन, कपिलवस्तु

कक्षाकोठामा शिक्षकको व्यवहारबारे विद्यार्थीको प्रतिक्रिया

विद्यालयको रिपोर्ट कार्ड – मार्च २०२६

उत्कृष्ट शिक्षक: प्रद्विप केवल

कक्षाकोठामा शिक्षकको व्यवहार	विद्यार्थ्य	विद्यालयको उत्कृष्ट अंक	विद्यालयको सौम्यता स्तरमा अंक	शिक्षकको उत्कृष्ट अंक	प्रद्विप केवलको अंक
होच्याउने वा अपमानित गर्ने शब्दको प्रयोग	१८%	९%	२५%	११%	९%
व्यक्तिगत वा मनोरंजकको लागि कक्षामा फोकाको प्रयोग गर्ने	२०%	१३%	३१%	१८%	१३%
विद्यार्थीको प्रश्नलाई नरिवाडकन वा नद्वाकिउन समाधान गर्ने	८३%	९२%	९०%	९१%	९२%
विद्यार्थीसँग सामग्री प्रयोग गर्दा (टा निडो)शिक्षण मात्रै	७७%	८७%	९७%	७७%	८७%
कक्षाकोठामा घुम्न साथ पछाडि	८२%	९१%	१००%	८७%	९१%
पाठ्यक्रम मन्दा बहिर नजाने	७७%	८७%	१००%	८०%	८७%
कुल	८०%	९०%	९३%	८०%	९०%

व्यक्तिगत वा मनोरंजकको लागि शब्दको प्रयोग गर्ने	विद्यालयको औसत	शिक्षक केवल	विद्यालय
होच्याउने वा अपमानित गर्ने शब्दको प्रयोग गर्ने	१८%	९%	२५%
कक्षाकोठामा घुम्न साथ पछाडि	८२%	९१%	१००%
पाठ्यक्रम मन्दा बहिर नजाने	७७%	८७%	१००%
विद्यार्थीको प्रश्नलाई नरिवाडकन वा नद्वाकिउन समाधान गर्ने	८३%	९२%	९०%
विद्यार्थीसँग सामग्री प्रयोग गर्दा (टा निडो)शिक्षण मात्रै	७७%	८७%	९७%
व्यक्तिगत वा मनोरंजकको लागि शब्दको प्रयोग गर्ने	२०%	१३%	३१%

Action 3: Teacher practice sharing events

Action 3 also built on actions 1 and 2 and was intended to provide positive reinforcement for good teacher behaviors. Using the data collected from the feedback app, the highest rated teacher in each of the six pilot schools was invited to facilitate a morning event to share and demonstrate their teaching practices for other teachers from the school. In all but one school, where teacher ratings were all low, the event included public recognition of the teacher's high rating with a token of appreciation and the school report card with the teachers' name as the best teacher for the month, a presentation related their teaching practices on the high scoring areas, and a robust discussion session where attending teachers could share their challenges and collectively discuss strategies (Table 3).



"If a teacher does what a teacher should do, he can get this award"

A best teacher sharing his experience

Table 2 - Teacher Practice Sharing Event Agenda

Time	Activity
9:00-9:30	Tea snacks
9:30-9:45	Welcome remarks
9:45-10:00	Teacher is awarded
10:00-10:30	Awarded teacher shares
10:30-11:30	Q&A
11:30-11:45	Concluding remarks
11:45-12:00	Tea/Khaja

Highest rated teacher sharing about her practices with colleagues (Source: Aasaman Nepal)

Table 4 shows the attendance at each school's sharing event. In addition to teachers, other support staff at the schools were also invited to attend.

Table 4 - Teacher Practice Sharing Event attendance

School	Male	Female	Teacher/HT	Support staff
Nandanagar Secondary School	10	5	10	5
Rastriya Namuna Secondary School	15	7	16	6
Janata Secondary School	24	6	23	7
Muneshwor Secondary School	16	7	19	4
Buddha Padma Secondary School	20	5	22	3
Ratna Rajya Secondary School	14	7	13	8
Total Participants	99	37	103	33

"The students' feedback reflects the teachers' behavior in our school perfectly."

A head teacher

Action 4: Parent-SMC meetings

Action 4 was also intended to address the problem of teacher behavior as it relates to accountability but also had a broader aim. Every participant in the PDIA workshops, including youth, HTs, LEU officials, and other system actors agreed that SMCs were not functioning effectively, and the issue came up as a root cause of many other problems. All complained that they had become too political, were practically nonexistent in some schools, did not include or involve parents and students who are actively enrolled and attending the school, and tended to limit the HT's authority without benefitting the school.

This action involved convening six meetings (one per pilot school). HTs were enlisted to invite the SMC members and parents. A formal letter was sent home with grade 11 and 12 students, inviting their parents to the meeting with the SMC. The letter explained that the meeting was aimed at fostering open conversation between the two groups on various issues youths have identified that relates to SMCs. Parents said that they would come to the meeting if a formal invitation is sent with a clear purpose. A student in one school said that meeting notices are usually announced to them in class by the teacher, with the expectation that they will relay the message to their parents at home. Formal letters to parents are not the typical practice.

Although letters were sent home, parents did not appear for the meeting at the first three schools. The team updated their strategy and tried again, with much greater success (more on this in the next chapter). This adaptation and improvement based on continuous iteration and learning is the key value of PDIA. Table 5 shows the participation at each meeting, totaling nearly 600 people, including 372 parents. Some head teachers used this occasion to share the ongoing and completed school projects to the parents. Majority of the parents (60%-70%) said that this was their first visit to the school. In one of the school's meetings, there was a discussion about selecting a new SMC. Many parents complained about low quality mid-day meal, toilets, misuse of mobile phone and absent teachers. They said they knew about these issues from their children but never got to share with school.

Table 3 - Parent-SMC Meeting Attendance

School	Male	Female	SMC/PTA	Teacher/HT	Student	Parent
Rastriya Namuna Secondary School	42	50	6	10	21	50
Muneshwor Secondary School	40	46	7	16	2	70
Buddha Padma Secondary School	55	33	7	15	21	45
Janata Secondary School	61	40	6	15	16	60
Ratna Rajya Secondary School	64	49	13	27	14	59
Nandanagar Secondary School	76	31	7	7	5	88
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	338	249	46	90	79	372



Chapter 5

Checking in and reflecting

As noted, PDIA includes a process for frequent structured reflection. This is critical for learning and adapting actions in both big and small ways. Observations that come to light during these check-in sessions are forms of data that drive decision-making for what to do next. Because actions are designed to be small with quick implementation timelines, these check-ins must happen shortly after actions have commenced. In this case, the team planned to have weekly check-ins with the youth, guided by questions from the PDIA Toolkit. Figure 14 shows one such worksheet. This chapter provides a description of what the team learned through the process of implementing each action.

5.1 Pause and Reflection

The structured check-in questions suggested by the PDIA approach are as follows:

1. **What did we do?**
2. **What did we learn?**
 - ...about the problem we are addressing
 - ...about the ideas we are trying out
 - ...about our authorizing environment
 - ...about working as a team
 - ...any other lessons
3. **What are we struggling with?**
 - What are our biggest questions and concerns moving ahead?
4. **What's next?**
 - Activities we will focus on
 - Goals and deadlines for each activity
 - People responsible for each step

Figure 14: Weekly reflection

The image shows a handwritten worksheet titled "Worksheet 12: Iteration check-in tool". The worksheet is divided into three columns labeled "Week 1", "Week 2", and "Week 3". Each column contains handwritten text in Hindi, organized into sections corresponding to the four questions in the list above. The text is written in black ink on a white background. The worksheet also features logos at the top, including "Youth-Led Problem Solving for Inclusive Education" and "UK International Development".

Action 1 Learning: Mobile Phone Use Guideline

Monitoring teams at the schools shared photos showing where the guidelines had been posted around their schools. Youth observed that while mobile phone usage among teachers had noticeably reduced, students were generally more careless about following the guideline. Youth noted that this might be due to there being no punishment for violating the rules nor direct incentive for following them. Teachers, on the other hand, said that they are usually able to manage problems with student phone use on a case-by-case basis.



Mobile Phone Use Guidelines posted in a school (Source: Project Youth)

Action 2 Learning: Teacher feedback app

Despite some schools announcing holidays and some schools having terminal exams, at the time of this report, more than **560 completed entries** had been received across the six schools via the app. The feedback was used to score teachers' behavior during the two-week period for each of the schools. A report card for each school was prepared which included the average score at the school, the best score in the school, the worst score in the school and the best score in the district. It also included the name of the teacher whose behavior was ranked best by the students' feedback. A HT said that he wants the app to collect feedback from lower grades as well, beginning with grade 8.



Highest rated teacher receiving award from HT
(Source: Aasaman Nepal)

"This was a surprising thing for me. It's the first time I have ever heard about students evaluating teachers and this makes me very happy. We did not know about the project much. But the project gave our school a very good idea."

Kapilvastu District teacher, March 2026

The monitoring team noted that despite the plan for students with mobile phones to share access with those who do not, for the purpose of giving feedback in the app, there remained access barriers. Not all students were able to give their feedback using the app. Thus, the team recommended that each school also use a feedback box (sometimes called a "complaint" box), with paper-based forms matching the app content. Although all schools in Nepal are expected to have such boxes installed for anonymous complaints, some schools do not have one, or it is in disrepair, or remains largely unused due to its placement. For example, some complaint boxes are placed in the HT office, where teachers also gather. Students do not feel that their feedback will remain anonymous and thus, they do not use them.

Table 6: Students' feedback on teachers' behaviour

	Kapilvastu Municipality	Mayadevi Rural Municipality	Suddodhan Rural Municipality	Overall
Teacher responded calmly to students' questions without getting angry or frustrated.	73%	72%	70%	71%
Teacher used derogatory or discriminatory language in the classroom.	17%	29%	29%	26%
Teacher used a mobile phone in the classroom for personal or entertainment purposes.	26%	32%	32%	30%
Teacher followed ICT guidelines while using digital devices	76%	56%	57%	61%
Teacher stayed in the classroom for the full class period.	88%	75%	69%	74%
Teacher followed the curriculum and did not deviate from the lesson topic	61%	69%	64%	64%

Action 3 Learning: Teacher practice sharing events

Some teachers expressed the view that this kind of event would benefit all teachers, including lower grade teachers who were not formally invited as part of the sharing. Teachers noted that the feedback collection was conducted within a very short time period and recommended to collect feedback when there are no exams or holidays.

A HT from the pilot school that scored lowest in the feedback app (56%) said that the report card based on the students' feedback perfectly reflects the real situation in the school. Another HT said the results of the report card will be shared with all teachers in a formal meeting after school finishes exams and reopens for regular classes.

In one of the pilot schools, all teachers received low ratings from students giving feedback. For example, the highest rated teacher was only 63%, while in other schools the highest ratings were 70% and above, with most in the 87% to 98% range. This outcome was not considered or discussed during the initial action planning, but the team realized they did not wish to reward the highest rated teacher in a school context where all scores were so low. In this school, no teacher award was given, but the school still hosted a teacher practice sharing event. The HT of the school shared the feedback with teachers.

Action 4 Learning: Parent-SMC meetings

Action 4 provides an example of rapid adaptation during implementation. The first three schools had negligible or zero attendance by parents at the meeting with the SMC. These meetings had to be shifted to a new date. Realizing the need to address the issue of parents' nonparticipation, the Aasaman team met with youth and HTs to discuss potential solutions. The meeting concluded that they would create a WhatsApp group to communicate the message to their parents. They also agreed that students should personally escort their parents to the parent-SMC meetings. This adaptation resulted in significantly better parental attendance.

"Usually, invitation letters remain forgotten in the students' bag."

A parent



Parent-SMC Meeting (Source: Aasaman Nepal)

5.2 Monitoring Change

Given that the actions took place across six schools and events were spread over a few days, in some cases the team was able to immediately apply informal monitoring data (youth observations as well as those from Aasaman and IDP staff in the field) within the first iteration. Having a small and nimble team that was in constant contact with one another and the youth via WhatsApp, phone calls, and in-person events made it easy and natural to make adjustments in real time, such as the above example in Action 4, when the team realized they needed a new approach to bringing parents to the SMC meetings.

Some actions led to quick changes in student or teacher behavior (e.g. mobile phone use in school), while for others, it will take more time to detect whether the actions lead to change (parent's voice in SMCs). For example, after two weeks of implementation of the Mobile Phone Use Guideline, teachers and HTs reported to Aasaman about the impact they had observed. One HT said, "there has been a drastic reduction in the use of phones in school. Students have completely stopped bringing a phone and teachers never take their phone to their classrooms." In all cases, the sustainability of change will take more time to evaluate.



Chapter 6

Conclusion and Next Steps

Conclusion

The Youth-Led Adaptive Problem-Solving for Inclusive Education pilot project demonstrated that breaking down complex, long-standing problems into root causes, and asking why these exist, can inspire tangible and feasible actions that can lead to solutions. Furthermore, the project showed that by following a guided, step-by-step process, youth have the capacity to effect change in places that directly impact their day-to-day life—their schools. The natural curiosity, energy, and optimism embodied by young people is particularly conducive to taking quick actions, learning from them, adapting and adjusting, and trying again. The simplicity and logic of the PDIA approach was quickly embraced by Head Teachers and LEU officials as well because it was presented by youth themselves who are directly impacted by these issues.

In a rapidly changing global context, where countries are experiencing and adjusting to downward shifts in donor funding, it is especially important that local actors possess the skills to critically examine the problems they face, realistically assess the change space, and take action—however small—toward locally identified solutions. The reduction in large external investments, which often come with predetermined goals and targets and a lack of flexibility, creates room for system actors at all levels, but especially at the local level, to try a range of low-cost actions and learn from them.

The youth who participated in this pilot project are on the verge of adulthood and looking ahead. After the week-long workshop, nearly all said that the activities helped them to understand and define problems more clearly; that they are confident to act and even lead others; that they understand and can explain to others how change depends on the interplay of authority, acceptance and ability; and that they believe that small actions can lead to real change. Similarly, Head Teachers as well as District and Provincial Education officials shared their enthusiasm about the approach.

The nature of this pilot, and its short timeline, meant that it was not possible to implement multiple iterations of the actions planned by the team. Problems that were assessed to require more work to expand the change space before attempting an action (i.e., the authorizing environment was too limited, local acceptance of the problem was minimal, or local capacity needed strengthening) were tabled due to lack of time for the longer-term attention that such work requires. Nevertheless, an incredible amount of work and progress was achieved in just a few months, showing the potential for continued and deeper investment of a similar kind.

Next Steps

There are several ways that the pilot actions described in this report can be extended. Some ideas are described below. More broadly, this pilot served as a proof of concept that the adaptive problem-solving approach can work among youth, and within the education sector, in Kapilvastu District—and likely in other parts of Nepal. Expanding the work and the timeline into the remaining seven local governments of the district over a year or more would allow more iterations and learning from the current actions within the three pilot municipalities, and into the others as relevant.

Youth in the other seven municipalities need the opportunity and guidance to identify and examine their own local problems, learn about the change space specific to their context, engage with system actors, and plan and implement potential solutions, with time to try, fail, adapt, and try again. In addition, the team sees a need to engage certain demographic groups of youth in a more focused way, to bring out their voices and build capacity and confidence. These groups include Muslim youth, especially girls, and youth with

disabilities. While the pilot cohort included representatives from these groups, they were outnumbered and somewhat less engaged. Forming youth communities within demographic groups can help them to identify problems that are specific to them and their peers while also strengthening their capacity to fully engage and even lead the adaptive problem-solving process when in mixed demographic groups.

Possible next steps for the pilot actions include:

Action 1: Mobile Phone Use Guideline

- Continued monitoring of guidelines in schools to ensure that the posters remain visible and intact. Soft copies of the files were provided to HTs so they can print fresh posters as needed.
- Teachers wishing to incorporate online resources into their lessons were advised to use the computer lab and display screens instead of their phones. Monitoring teams can assess whether this is happening.
- There may be a need to update the guidelines based on learning from the first iteration. For example, adding incentives or consequences for inappropriate student phone use. Changes need to be documented and tested.
- Monitoring data on stakeholder (HT, teacher, student, and parent) perceptions about the guideline and outcomes can contribute to learning and refinement.

Action 2: Teacher feedback app

- The team handed over data access to HTs so that they can get a sense of which teachers are performing well or poorly day to day and use the data to support teaching staff, but they will need external support to calculate data and develop report cards on a monthly basis. This is a skill that can be transferred in time.
- Going forward, schools should determine a threshold for the minimum score required for a teacher to earn an award.
- Schools need new “complaint” boxes for paper-based feedback, with feedback forms aligned with the app. These boxes can be renamed feedback boxes to encourage positive feedback in addition to complaints and should be located in a safe place where students can maintain anonymity.
- Monitoring data on stakeholder (HT, teacher, student, and parent) perceptions about the feedback process and outcomes can contribute to learning and refinement.
- The app can easily be used in other municipalities or districts. For example, Aasaman plans to use the app in their other education projects around Nepal.

Action 3: Teacher practice sharing events

- These events can take place on a regular basis, such as monthly or quarterly, and various modalities can be explored, with feedback from teachers informing the process. The events can include teachers from other area schools, or schools can combine events at times.
- Monitoring data on teacher perceptions about the events and whether/how they helped can contribute to learning and refinement.
- A social network analysis (SNA) study to map teacher influence and impact could identify promising teaching practices as well as reveal new ways to effect positive behavior change.

Action 4: Parent-SMC meetings

- Much more engagement between parents and SMCs is needed, and SMCs need to be strengthened and held accountable. This problem did not have a very large change space as assessed during the pilot study, so more work is needed to understand and expand the authority of relevant stakeholders who can enforce SMC provisions.
- There was difficulty in some schools to get parents to attend the meetings with the SMC, despite parents being willing to register their complaints related to various issues. Methods of delivering invitations to the parents need to be further strengthened so that the purpose of the meeting is clearly communicated.

