



POLICY BRIEF

Quality Challenges in Primary Education

November 2025

Lessons from School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP)

Global experience suggests that quality improvement in primary education depends on clarity of goals, evidence-based strategies, professional development, equity, stakeholder engagement, and continuous adaptation. While Bangladesh's primary education system has achieved near-universal access, learning outcomes remain uneven. The School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP) was conceived to respond to this challenge by empowering schools to plan and finance locally relevant improvements. After more than a decade of implementation, evidence and lessons from SLIP highlight underperformance relative to potential and the opportunities for reset as the transition to PEDP5 looms amidst a context of democratic transition and renewed reform momentum.

KEY POLICY REFORM

Advance Payment of SLIP Funds

The reimbursement model is the key constraint undermining SLIP effectiveness. Evidence from head teachers shows it delays implementation and shifts financial risk onto schools. Advance payment, supported by phased release, audits, and IPEDIS-based tracking, offers a high-impact, low-risk reform and a clear decision point for government to enable real decentralisation and timely school improvement.

Performance-Linked Formula Disbursement

Introduce a formula-based SLIP grant disbursement combining enrolment, poverty, climate risk, and performance indicators. Link a portion of funds to timely plan submission, implementation quality, and learning progress to incentivise results, accountability, and efficient use of public resources.

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1 THE QUEST FOR QUALITY IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

There is an emerging realisation that while the primary education sector has done a commendable job in creating access, quality learning outcomes continue to remain elusive. Insights from global experiences show the importance of several factors critical to the success of programmes aiming for quality improvement in primary education. These include clarity of vision and goals, evidence-based strategies, stakeholder engagement, professional development of teachers, equity and inclusion, sustainable implementation, continuous improvement and adaptation, leveraging perspectives of key ground-level actors - head teachers, teachers, school management committees, etc.

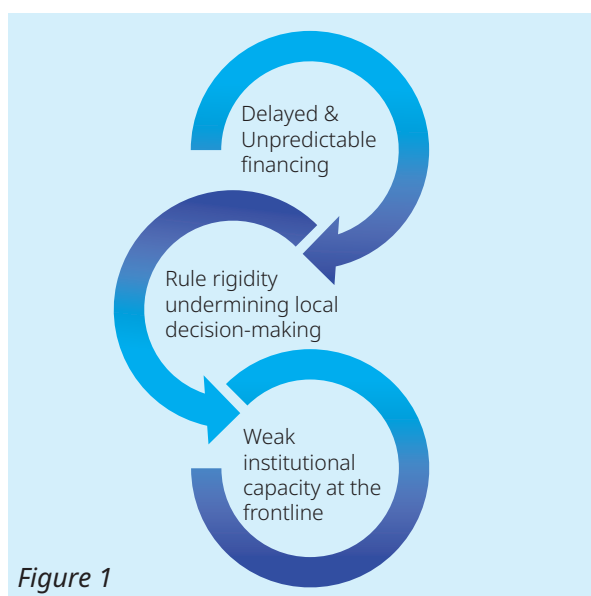
The School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP) was conceived to contribute to the quality goal in primary education through a distinct financial package with well-delineated operational guidelines. A key initiative introduced under PEDP3, SLIP aimed to decentralise school-level decision-making, enhance financial autonomy, strengthen participatory planning and

community engagement towards the larger goal of improving school-level learning outcomes. Operational for over a decade now, an evaluation of SLIP implementation in 2015 showed that though there were some positive impacts on learning outcomes, SLIP implementation was significantly below its potential. A new effectiveness assessment of SLIP has thus been a timely exercise as SLIP reform is essential for the success of the forthcoming PEDP-5.

Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) was commissioned by UNICEF through a competitive process and supported by the Department of Primary Education (DPE) to assess SLIP's effectiveness in terms of policy design, financial management, institutional capacity, and stakeholder engagement, and thus provide the key insights and recommendations on the reform and repositioning of SLIP as a PEDP5 priority. Achieving these objectives will depend not only on policy direction but also on the effectiveness of implementation mechanisms at the school level.

2 THE CORE POLICY PROBLEM

The core policy problem this policy brief addresses is that SLIP's decentralisation promise is undermined by delayed funds, rigid rules, and weak capacity, thus reducing its impact on learning. These interlocking constraints (Figure 1) stand at the heart of SLIP's under-performance and provide a unifying lens for the evidence presented throughout this paper.



3 A MIXED-METHOD APPROACH TO ASSESSING EFFECTIVENESS OF SLIP

PPRC employed a holistic methodology combining quantitative and innovative qualitative approaches to ensure a comprehensive evaluation. The research design included:

- Document Review: Analysis of SLIP guidelines, financial reports, policy documents, and previous evaluation studies.
- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Consultations with officials from DPE, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME), and development partners.
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Engagement with headteachers, teachers, SMC members, PTA representatives, and parents across multiple schools.
- Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) Surveys: Surveys conducted with school

governance stakeholders and parents to assess awareness and perceptions of SLIP.

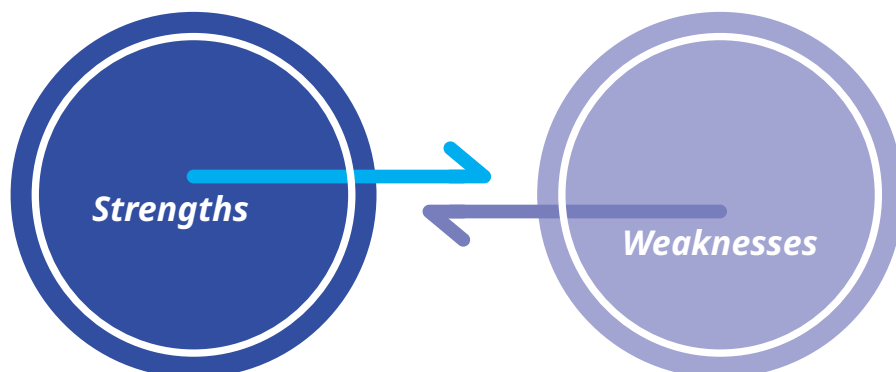
- Financial Data Analysis: Examination of budget allocation and expenditure patterns across divisions to identify trends, inefficiencies, and best practices.

By triangulating these methodologies, the study provides an evidence-based assessment of SLIP, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and actionable recommendations to enhance the programme's impact on school governance and primary education quality in Bangladesh. A total of 100 schools in 42 upazilas in 21 districts across all 8 divisions in the country were studied in 2024. Summary of consultations, FGDs, KIIs and knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) surveys of parents and management is shown in Matrix 1.

Matrix 1: Survey Summary

Tool	Events	Participants
Institutional consultations	31	555
FGD	112	1142
KAP Survey – Parents		1200
KAP Survey – School management		600
KIIs		29
Total		3526

4 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF SLIP GOVERNANCE



- The multi-layered approval system ensures financial accountability and alignment with national priorities.
- Joint signatory bank accounts enhance transparency and safeguard against unilateral fund misuse.
- Community involvement through SLIP committees and SMCs reinforces grassroots accountability.

- The bureaucratic complexity and long chain of approvals can result in significant delays.
- The return process between finance offices and education offices often lacks real-time tracking, leading to repetitive follow-ups and resource inefficiency.
- Manual documentation and the absence of integrated digital systems slow down fund disbursement.
- Schools often experience cash flow interruptions, affecting the timely implementation of their improvement activities.
- In practice, the capacity of UEO/TEO offices to vet and summarise bills can vary, particularly in under-resourced or overburdened upazilas.

5 SLIP EXPENDITURE ANALYSIS

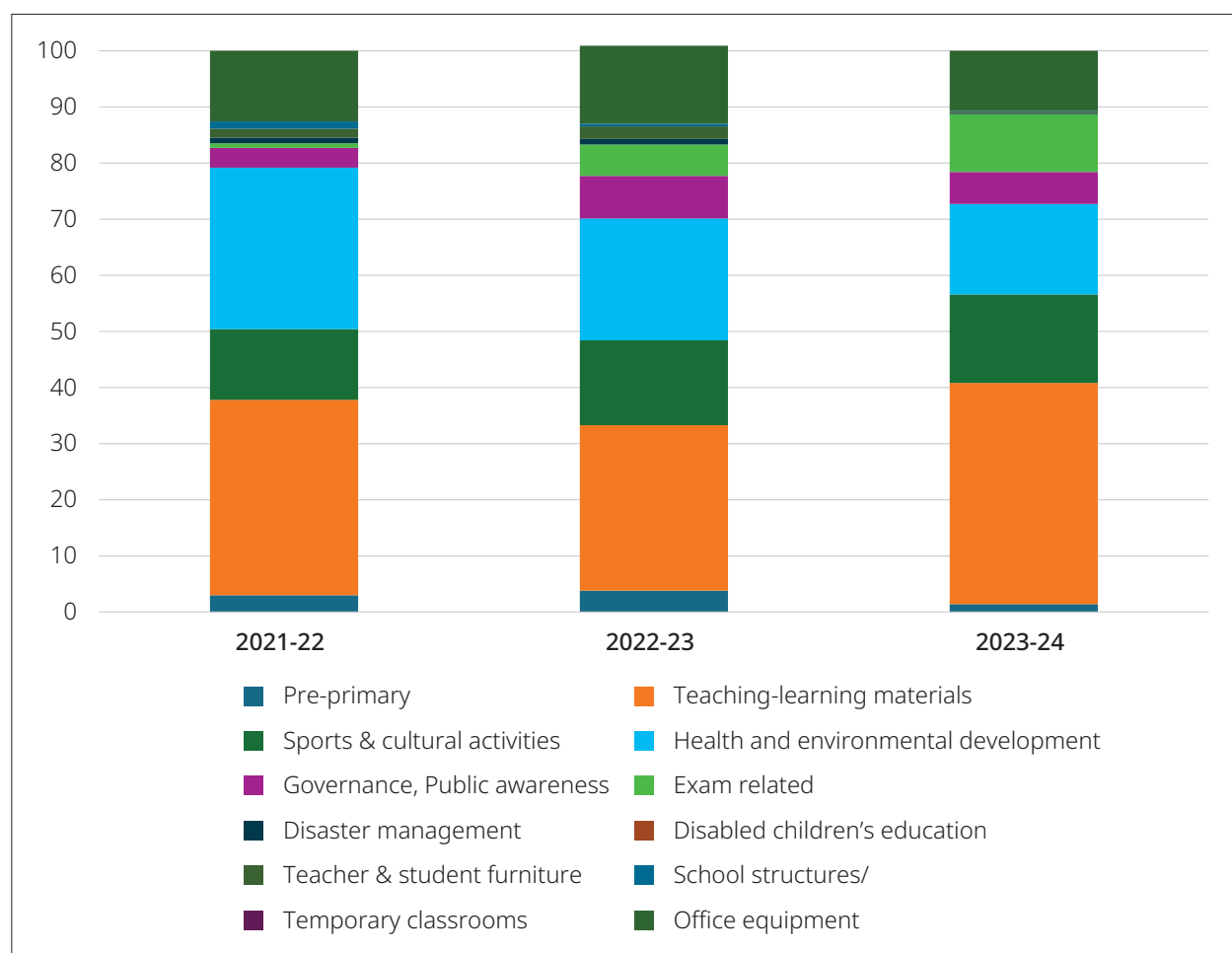
There are mandated items on which SLIP funds can be utilised at school level. Figure 2 describes fund utilisation patterns from 2020-21 to 2023-24.

The three highest SLIP expenditure items are teaching/learning equipment, health and environmental development, and sports & cultural activities. Governance & Awareness, Office Equipment, and Examination-related costs are also considerable.

Four insights stand out:

- **Shift in Priorities:** A major shift is evident from pre-primary and environmental health to examination systems and governance.
- **Equity Concerns:** The decline in disaster management and furniture-related spending may negatively affect underserved schools.
- **Strategic Implication:** The emphasis on assessments and teaching-learning materials suggests a more performance-oriented approach, but risks underfunding enabling environments (health, early learning, infrastructure).
- **Sustainability Question:** Declining investment in foundational and environmental aspects may have long-term repercussions for quality and inclusive education.

Figure 2: SLIP Fund Utilisation



While the overall SLIP (or related) expenditure framework reflects an effort to support multiple facets of school-level development, the data reveals strategic inconsistency, equity issues, and a persistent neglect of inclusive and disaster-resilient education. Strengthening financial planning, monitoring, and prioritisation - especially in underfunded and underserved areas - is critical for achieving equitable, quality education outcomes nationwide.

The effectiveness of School Level Improvement Plans (SLIP) hinges on a well-structured, transparent, and inclusive approach to school development. The discussions highlight several critical dimensions—financial accountability, student engagement, governance, and student welfare—all of which must work in harmony to achieve meaningful educational progress.

A strategic financial management system is essential to ensure that allocated budgets are used efficiently and transparently. Strengthening audit mechanisms, implementing real-time expenditure tracking, and involving local stakeholders in financial oversight can significantly reduce fund mismanagement. Similarly, a need-based budgeting approach that aligns procurement decisions with learning priorities will ensure that resources contribute directly to student outcomes.

Addressing student attendance and engagement remains a crucial challenge, especially in the

post-COVID era. Schools must move beyond passive attendance monitoring and adopt proactive strategies such as home visits, parental engagement programmes, and student incentives. By integrating data-driven attendance tracking with targeted interventions, schools can foster a more inclusive and responsive learning environment.

Administrative efficiency and decision-making processes require further reinforcement through capacity-building initiatives. Training SLIP committees in project planning and financial oversight, ensuring regular and transparent PTA meetings, and maintaining structured follow-ups will create a governance model that supports long-term sustainability. Encouraging democratic participation in school elections and SLIP decision-making further enhances institutional accountability.

Furthermore, student welfare and social integration must be embedded into SLIP planning. Prioritising the most underprivileged students through timely distribution of learning materials, uniforms, and hygiene programs will help bridge educational inequalities. Schools should also actively promote cultural and national events, using these platforms to strengthen social cohesion and national identity among students. Documenting the impact of these activities through structured reporting will enhance their long-term effectiveness.

6 INSIGHTS FROM QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

6.1 The View From DPE

Achievements

- Empowerment & Autonomy
- Improved Learning Environment
- Community Participation & Local Accountability
- Leadership Development
- Responsiveness to Local Needs

Needed enablers

- Training & Orientation
- Strong Local Leadership
- Community Involvement

6.2 The View From UEO/AUEO

Concerns

- School submission of SLIP proposal must follow standardised format. Local education office has no scope to modify if seen as necessary.
- School gets no advance payment and is constrained by the principle of reimbursement being followed. This puts unfair burden on school and head teacher to initiate activities out of personal resources.
- Overlapping responsibilities of SMC and SAC affects transparency and monitoring.
- Sporadic and lack of updated training for key stakeholders such as headteachers, assistant teachers, PTA, SAC, and SMC members is a serious hindrance to effective SLIP implementation.
- There is noticeable lack of awareness among stakeholders, including parents and community members, about SLIP's guidelines and objectives.
- Effective collaboration between school-level stakeholders and local education officials varies widely.

6.3 The View from Development Partners

Insights

- **Procedural Complexities** are affecting the disbursement and effective use of SLIP funds in particular requirements related to advance payments, VAT registration, and adherence to complex procurement protocols.
- **Robust monitoring** is hampered by poor documentation, inadequate contract management, and insufficient training among staff on financial management.
- **Capacity-building** approach must focus on the need for more responsive and context-specific strategies.
- **Community engagement** remains limited or symbolic.
- **Positive incentives** - such as recognition awards for transparent financial management or public reporting of best-performing schools - can motivate better compliance and create a ripple effect of good governance practices.
- Clearer role delineation among school-level stakeholders and **credible awareness** of key SLIP operational documents is essential to strengthen outcomes.
- **Decentralisation and local autonomy** are sometimes curtailed by rigid central directives and limited flexibility in decision-making leading to demotivation school and community-level stakeholders to adapt interventions to their unique challenges and opportunities.

Way Forward

- **Capacity Development:** Establish ongoing, hands-on training and mentoring programmes for school-level stakeholders, using both face-to-face and digital platforms.
- **Accountability and Oversight:** Integrate financial and procedural compliance metrics into routine school inspections and provide positive reinforcement for good practices.
- **Community Empowerment:** Support active community engagement through participatory tools, awareness campaigns, and clear governance guidelines.
- **Technology Use:** Leverage technology to create dashboards for real-time monitoring, facilitate e-reporting, and encourage feedback from beneficiaries.
- **Policy Flexibility:** Promote adaptive planning by granting schools reasonable autonomy within a results-based framework, encouraging innovative local solutions.

6.4 The View from School-level Stakeholders

Insights from SMCs

- Engagement with local stakeholders – LGIs, NGOs, CSOs – important for better outcomes.
- Enhancing usable budget – VAT, transportation and lack of advance payment – reduce the actual scope of the SLIP fund which in any case is insufficient to meet other needs such as recruitment of temporary teachers and awareness

sessions beyond the three major expenditure items of exam fees, materials and classroom supplies.

- Inactive members in SMCs.
- Inadequate attention to improving understanding and awareness of SLIP guideline.
- Scope for mid-year revision may improve implementation but fund sufficiency issue will remain.

Insights from PTAs

- PTA formation process remains very informal
- Knowledge gaps are severe about SLIP implementation

- Marginalised parents are under-represented.
- Tailored region-specific approaches may be conducive to creating examples of good practices which can have ripple effects.

Insights from SACs

- New members in SACs lack any training or orientation support for SLIP implementation.

- Frequent changes which displace experienced members hamper operational efficiency.

Insights from Students

- Students appreciate innovative experiences such as practical grammar lessons, learning about the solar system and fractions. They particularly prioritise extracurricular activities such as sports, debates, poetry recitations, and cultural programmes which contribute to a holistic educational experience. Enjoyable and educational.
- Students emphasised need for expanded learning resources, including libraries stocked with storybooks, and magazines.

- Inadequate infrastructure remains a pressing concern.
- Health and hygiene Initiatives including student-led health teams, or 'mini-doctors,' are commended. However, sanitation infrastructure remains inadequate.
- Students have strong interest in formalising their involvement in school development initiatives through councils or committees.

Insights from Parents

High informal engagement: Parents are more engaged in informal ways like talking to teachers and helping with homework than in structured forums like PTA or SMC.

Dependence on private tuition: A majority rely on private tutoring, especially in key subjects, suggesting gaps in classroom delivery.

Financial commitment is substantial:

Parents make noteworthy financial investments in education, with notable variability.

SLIP participation is promising: Widespread planning-level engagement offers a foundation to strengthen institutional participation.

7 PERSPECTIVES OF POLICY CONSTITUENCIES

7.1 Head Teachers' Conclaves

The Head Teachers' Conclaves underscored the transformative potential of SLIP in improving primary education. Despite persistent challenges such as limited resources, delayed funds, and stakeholder inconsistencies, the programme has demonstrated significant progress through collaborative efforts and innovative practices. Addressing gaps in training, transparency, and resource allocation will be critical to sustaining and enhancing these improvements.

Difficulties in forming SLIP teams and limited financial allocations constrain progress. Delays in fund disbursement, coupled with procedural requirements, often compel headteachers to use personal finances, placing an unfair burden on educators, which is further aggravated by VAT and tax deductions that reduce available funds. Stakeholder engagement also poses challenges, including inconsistent support from SMC members, divergent mindsets among stakeholders, and internal conflicts within committees that hinder coordination. Moreover, externally imposed plans from influential individuals often prove impractical and misaligned with local needs. On the operational side, the absence of clear quality assessment mechanisms and centralised decision-making create bottlenecks. Non-transparent procurement practices and fiscal year misalignments further delay implementation. Despite visible enthusiasm among educators and stakeholders, the cumulative effect of these financial, procedural, and institutional barriers frequently prevents SLIP initiatives from achieving their intended outcomes.

7.2 Insights from multi-stakeholder consultations

Absence of structured capacity-building programmes has left administrators and teachers struggling to navigate procedural complexities, limiting the impact of SLIP initiatives.

While SLIP provides a structured approach to fund management, deductions for VAT and taxes often create confusion regarding the actual amount available for schools. This financial ambiguity leads to tension among stakeholders, particularly when administrators and teachers are compelled to use personal funds to bridge delays in disbursement. Moreover, rigid procurement protocols restrict flexibility, making it difficult to adjust spending based on the evolving needs of schools.

Participation disparities in SLIP-related committees exist, with financially stable families and local elites being more actively involved, while underprivileged parents require greater awareness and encouragement to engage meaningfully. Building a stronger sense of community ownership is essential to fostering sustained involvement.

Integration of technology into classrooms, with multimedia tools and interactive learning approaches being identified as effective methods to enhance student engagement. Hands-on learning activities, such as practical exercises in geography lessons, were noted for their ability to improve comprehension. Additionally, extracurricular activities, including music and physical education, were emphasised as critical components of a well-rounded education. However, overcrowded classrooms and a high student-teacher ratio continue to limit the effectiveness of these initiatives. To address this, employing Para Teachers under SLIP was suggested as a temporary solution, along with flexible school hours to improve student focus and nutrition.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education was both disruptive and a learning opportunity. The pandemic underscored the need for adaptability and resilience in educational planning and implementation.

7.3 Learning workshop with national and field-level education administrators

SLIP policy and its associated guidelines face significant challenges that hinder their effectiveness. The lack of local fund collection mechanisms, combined with high VAT and tax rates on necessary items, poses a substantial financial burden. Standardising VAT rates, ensuring that SLIP funds can be allocated for emergency infrastructure development, and directing these funds into the Head Teachers' official account to prevent misuse is a priority. Stricter oversight and pre-service teacher training programmes are also recommended to enhance the overall efficiency of SLIP.

Training programmes for SLIP implementation are often insufficient, leading to ineffective execution. Incentivising schools to mobilise additional local resources, ensuring disbursing SLIP funds in advance, removing IT deductions from SLIP allocations and establishing alumni committees to engage communities can also foster improved planning. Transparency measures, such as displaying donor names on SLIP-funded projects, are suggested to encourage greater accountability. Inclusion of specific provisions for students with disabilities within SLIP planning is essential to ensure inclusive education.

8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Why the findings matter for the government

	Finding	Why it matters
1	Reimbursement-Based Financing Creates Systemic Bottlenecks	● <i>Teacher motivation & leadership stability</i>: Expecting educators to carry financial burden and risk undermines professional morale, discourages initiative, and increases resistance to taking on reform responsibilities. ● <i>Learning continuity & recovery</i>: Delayed procurement of learning materials, repairs, and support services disrupts school calendars and weakens the pace of post-pandemic learning recovery. ● <i>Public financial management efficiency</i>: The reimbursement cycle produces high volumes of complaints, and audit queries placing sustained administrative pressure on MoPME and DPE systems.
2	Fiscal Deductions - VAT, tax deductions, and transport costs - substantially reduce real value of the SLIP grant	● <i>Workforce confidence & trust</i>: Shrinking operational budgets fuel frustration among school leaders and weaken confidence in public financing mechanisms. ● <i>Classroom-level service delivery</i>: Fewer usable resources reach teaching and learning processes, limiting the effectiveness of government investment in learning recovery. ● <i>Fiscal oversight burden</i>: Persistent disputes over net fund availability complicate financial reporting, reconciliation, and audit processes at district and national levels.

	Finding	Why it matters
3	Centralised Controls - rigid templates, fixed budget ceilings, and centralised approvals - dilute Decentralisation Benefits	● <i>Professional agency & reform ownership</i>: School leaders experience autonomy as symbolic rather than real, weakening motivation to engage seriously with reform objectives. ● <i>Responsiveness of learning interventions</i>: Inflexible rules prevent schools from addressing context-specific learning gaps and student needs, reducing the impact of government spending. ● <i>Compliance management costs</i>: The system generates heavy documentation and approval workloads, diverting MoPME and DPE resources from strategic oversight to procedural policing.
4	Insufficient Frontline Capacity Weakens Delivery Quality Finding	● <i>Confidence of frontline leaders</i>: Limited technical capacity produces uncertainty, risk aversion, and declining confidence among school leaders tasked with executing reforms. ● <i>Quality of learning investments</i>: Weak planning and monitoring capacity results in suboptimal use of resources and diminished returns on learning investments. ● <i>Supervisory workload escalation</i>: Inadequate capacity at school level increases dependency on higher tiers, intensifying supervision, troubleshooting, and corrective interventions.
5	Community Engagement Fails to Generate Broad Ownership	● <i>Teacher-community partnership strength</i>: Limited community ownership weakens collaboration and reduces teacher support in managing attendance, discipline, and learning engagement. ● <i>Household contribution to learning</i>: Weak parental engagement reduces reinforcement of learning at home, slowing progress in foundational skills. ● <i>Social mobilisation demands</i>: Low grassroots participation requires sustained government outreach, awareness campaigns, and facilitation efforts.

Finding		Why it matters
6	Expenditure Patterns Create Equity and Sustainability Risks	● <i>Alignment between needs and resources</i>: Teachers face persistent frustration when funding allocations fail to reflect actual classroom and community priorities. ● <i>Early learning & resilience outcomes</i>: Underinvestment in foundational and resilience domains increases future remediation needs and learning vulnerability. ● <i>Long-term fiscal exposure</i>: Weak early investment raises future costs for remediation, disaster recovery, and learning recovery programmes.
7	Monitoring Emphasises Compliance Over Learning Impact	● <i>Professional recognition & motivation</i>: Teachers receive little feedback or recognition for improving learning, reducing intrinsic motivation for instructional improvement. ● <i>Pace of learning recovery</i>: Absence of outcome-focused feedback loops slows the correction of ineffective interventions. ● <i>Return on public investment</i>: Government lacks reliable evidence on what works, weakening strategic resource allocation and value-for-money oversight.
8	Innovation remains isolated and underutilised	● <i>Motivation for innovation</i>: Lack of recognition and scaling discourages experimentation and professional initiative. ● <i>System-wide learning improvement</i>: Successful local solutions remain isolated, limiting national learning gains. ● <i>Reform acceleration constraints</i>: Absence of institutional learning systems slows overall reform momentum and impact.

8.2 Decision Matrix: Reforming and repositioning SLIP for PEDP5 delivery

A. Short-Term Reforms (0-6 Months)

Actions that remove binding constraints on learning improvements in schools

<i>Decision Area</i>	<i>Decisions</i>	<i>Expected System Benefits</i>	<i>Expected Learning Outcomes Improvements</i>
SLIP Financing	Advance Payments	● Eliminates liquidity stress ● Restores planning discipline ● Accelerates implementation	● Faster delivery of learning inputs (TLM, minor repairs, support activities) ● Improved FLN progress ● Reduced disruption to class routines
Guideline	Revise Guideline	● Simplify procedures, ● Reduce rigid compliance and allow limited contextual flexibility	● Reduces procedural delays ● Improves usability for HTs ● Lowers admin load across tiers
Fiscal deductions	Rationalise VAT/tax deductions and clarify 'net usable fund' rules in the guideline	● Increases resources reaching classrooms ● Reduces disputes ● Stabilises school budgets	● More usable funds for learning and enabling conditions (materials, WASH/health, learning support) ● Improved attendance and learning readiness
Results link	Issue a one-page SLIP Results Annex	● Link spending heads to FLN, attendance, WASH, Co-curricular engagement ● Reorients spending from 'activities' to 'learning results'	● Improves coherence with PEDP-5 priorities ● Clear line-of-sight from spending to outcomes ● Better FLN-focused planning, improved attendance drivers, stronger engagement strategies
Capacity as compliance support	Provide rapid induction/orientation package (standard slides + checklist + sample documents) for HT/SMC/PTA/ SAC before next SLIP cycle	● Reduces documentation errors ● Improves execution quality ● Eases verification workload	● Faster approvals and fewer implementation errors ● More time and resources reach classrooms ● Improved learning continuity and teacher instructional focus

B. Medium-Term Reforms (6–18 Months)

Structural improvements to efficiency, equity, and results orientation

Decision Area	Decisions	Expected System Benefits	Expected Learning Outcomes Improvements
Allocation principle	Replace uniform slab allocation with a differentiated, needs-based formula (poverty, remoteness, climate risk, enrollment)	● Improves equity for disadvantaged/ climate-vulnerable schools ● Aligns resourcing with need	● More resources to high-need school ● Stronger FLN gains among disadvantaged learners ● Reduced equity gaps in learning outcomes
Digital Systems	Digital tracking of SLIP funds, plans, and reporting (dashboard + e-submission + status tracking)	● Reduces delays ● Improves transparency ● Strengthens audit & oversight	● Faster fund flow and fewer disruptions ● Improved attendance ● Stability and continuity of learning activities across the year
Monitoring	Outcome Indicators (Simple & Mandatory) Attach 3–5 simple indicators to each SLIP plan and require reporting (e.g., Grade 2/3 FLN check, attendance rate, # learners supported, engagement log)	● Creates measurable results linkage ● Strengthens accountability beyond compliance	● Routine measurement enables timely correction ● Improved FLN progress ● Reduced learning loss ● Better engagement and participation trends

C. System Reforms (18–36 Months)

Institutional changes to lock in sustainability and make capacity/results systemic

<i>Decision Area</i>	<i>Decisions</i>	<i>Expected System Benefits</i>	<i>Expected Learning Outcomes Improvements</i>
Planning & Budgeting	Integrate SLIP fully into the MoPME/DPE Annual Operational Plan (AOP)	● Converts SLIP into core PEDP-5 delivery instrument ● Strengthens coherence/predictability	● Predictable financing ● Alignment with national priorities ● Sustained investment in FLN, inclusion and resilience ● Steady improvement in learning outcomes
Decentralisation	Redesign approval and budget authority to strengthen real school-level autonomy within a results framework	● Restores genuine decentralisation and ownership ● Enables local problem-solving	● Stronger remedial support ● Improved attendance response ● Increased student engagement
Outcome Monitoring (System Shift)	Shift monitoring from compliance to outcome-based monitoring, using SLIP indicators + periodic verification (sample-based)	● Improved ROI ● Enables learning-focused supervision	● Measurable gains in FLN ● Reduced inequity, ● Stronger accountability for learning results
Capacity Building as a System Enabler	Establish a national SLIP Capability System: (i) mandatory induction for new HTs/SMCs, (ii) digital micro-learning tied to SLIP cycle milestones, (iii) certification/incentives for compliant/high-performing schools	● Institutionalises capacity ● Reduces errors ● Motivates compliance/performance at scale	● Higher-quality learning interventions ● Improved FLN outcomes, ● Improved teacher effectiveness, ● Sustained learning gains
Institutional Learning	Create a mechanism to document, validate, and scale successful SLIP innovations (repository + peer-learning + recognition)	● Accelerate system-wide improvement ● Prevents isolated good practices	● Proven approaches spread faster ● System-wide improvement in learning engagement, classroom practice, and localised FLN acceleration

9 FIVE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

Payment Reform: Advance Payment of SLIP Funds to Schools

One of the major operational challenges identified in the study is the delay in fund utilisation caused by the reimbursement-based model of SLIP disbursement. Head teachers and School Management Committees (SMCs) often face liquidity constraints, forcing them to ‘manage’ expenses in advance while waiting for reimbursement, which discourages timely and effective implementation. Moving towards an advance payment system would reduce cash-flow bottlenecks, empower schools to plan and implement activities without financial stress, and ensure smoother alignment between planning cycles and school calendars. This reform would also improve documentation and audit practices, as expenditure could be tracked more systematically once funds are already available at the school level.

Recommendation 2

Revision of the Rigid Formula-based Allocation Principle

The current uniform slab-based formula for SLIP allocations does not adequately support the diverse needs of schools across Bangladesh. Schools in geographically disadvantaged, poverty-affected, or climate-vulnerable areas often require additional resources to maintain even basic standards. The findings in this report strongly recommend a differentiated, needs-based allocation model.

This could include tiered funding based on student enrollment, socio-economic context, and geographic hardship, with provisions for additional allocations in special cases (e.g., very large schools or those in disaster-prone areas). Such revisions would promote equity and allow SLIP to more directly address learning gaps and infrastructure challenges.

Recommendation 3

Align SLIP Funding with Foundational Literacy & Numeracy, Green Schooling, and Climate Resilience

Current SLIP expenditure is concentrated on teaching-learning materials, health/environmental

activities, and cultural programmes, while areas such as disaster management, early childhood education, and inclusive education remain underfunded. To meet emerging priorities, SLIP funding should be strategically aligned with national and global agendas—particularly foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN), climate resilience, and green schooling initiatives. This means allocating specific budget lines for FLN-focused learning materials, eco-friendly infrastructure, and disaster-preparedness activities. Such realignment would ensure that SLIP becomes a tool not only for school improvement but also for advancing Bangladesh’s commitments under SDG-4 and climate adaptation strategies.

Recommendation 4

Reposition Capacity Building as a System Enabler

The effectiveness of SLIP depends heavily on the capacity of head teachers, SMCs, PTAs, and Social Audit Committees (SACs). However, the study found that many of these stakeholders lack adequate training on planning, financial oversight, and participatory school governance. Three specific capacity-building measures that need to be prioritised: i) mandatory SLIP induction for new HTs/SMCs, ii) digital micro-learning linked to SLIP cycles iii) certification or incentives for compliant schools.

Recommendation 5

Institutional Integration of SLIP with the AOP (annual operational plan) of MoPME and DPE

The study highlights that despite SLIP’s intent, the process remains largely ‘decentralised’ rather than fully decentralised, with excessive central control over planning and budgeting. To transform SLIP into a genuine decentralisation tool, it must be institutionally integrated with the Annual Operational Plan (AOP) of MoPME and DPE. By embedding SLIP directly into AOP processes, schools and upazilas would gain greater autonomy in planning and resource allocation, while retaining alignment with national priorities. This would create a coherent framework where local-level plans feed into strategies, ensuring both bottom-up empowerment and top-down accountability.

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