

Empowering girls through education

A long-term impact evaluation of the English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE) project



Goal: Enhance life prospects for girls in marginalised communities.

About EDGE

Since 2016, the British Council and its partners have implemented the EDGE project across South and East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa and have reached **20,000+** adolescent girls.



For more on EDGE, scan this QR code.

EDGE supports girls' empowerment by:



improving **English**, **digital skills** and **social awareness**.



building **confidence** and **agency**.



developing **leadership** through local Peer Group Leaders (PGLs).

About the evaluation

The British Council commissioned The Social Investment Consultancy (TSIC) to evaluate the long-term impact of EDGE. The evaluation aimed to assess impact across four countries: Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan.

Using a mixed-methods approach, the evaluation included primary data collection and secondary document review across the four locations.

Research questions included:

1

What is the long-term impact of EDGE on former participants' lives?

2

What conditions have led to long-term impact being achieved?

3

How can EDGE be improved?

Findings

EDGE has contributed towards impact in **four** areas:

1

Empowerment



2

Educational attainment



3

Skills and employment



4

Changes in family attitudes and well-being



1. Empowerment (confidence, agency, awareness)

The EDGE programme helped empower former participants to **build fulfilling lives** and **contribute positively** to society. Some evidence of how EDGE has done this includes:

Educating others

Many participants now tutor their siblings and others in their community.

“My daughter has become comfortable with using a mobile and even guides others on its uses. She has also started teaching her younger brother English. **Parent from India**

Advocating against social issues

Some participants have raised their voices on critical issues like child marriage, harassment and access to education.

“My siblings look up to me and feel inspired. I encourage others in the community to go to school, showing them that education is more valuable than staying at home. Two children have started school thanks to my encouragement. **Participant from India**

Supporting community businesses

Some participants have provided guidance in the community.

“I helped a woman start her business, offering financial support as well as suggestions and guidance. My digital skills enabled me to do this, and she successfully opened a new pharmacy. **Participant from Bangladesh**

“The EDGE programme was the first thing that taught me to dream. It gave me confidence. **Participant from Bangladesh**



90%

of participants felt that their participation **empowered** them to make their own decisions.



98%

of participants reported that their engagement in the programme has **enabled** them to be more confident in themselves.



2. Educational attainment

EDGE motivated participants to **pursue higher education** by highlighting its value and equipping them with digital tools for self-paced learning. It also contributed to **improved academic performance** through enhanced English and digital skills, supported by private tutoring.

“Due to the EDGE programme I learnt about the internet and social life. I feel due to my learnings [during the programme] I can pursue higher education. **Participant from Pakistan**



88%

of participants felt that EDGE **empowered** them to pursue higher education.



87%

of participants reported that the programme helped them **achieve** better grades during their education.

3. Skills and employment

- ✓ Performing the role of a PGL, combined with the skills acquired, further supported former participants in obtaining jobs.
- ✓ Participants who were PGLs seemed to be more likely to be employed.

“The employment at [an NGO in Nepal] was made possible by my professional experience, skills and knowledge gained during my time working as a PGL at the EDGE programme. Participant from Nepal

4. Changes in family attitudes and well-being

- ✓ EDGE provided girls with knowledge about nutrition, health and personal well-being.
- ✓ They continue to apply this knowledge, feeling confident in their ability to care for themselves and their families.
- ✓ In some cases, girls who had to drop out of formal education utilised the health and well-being skills learned during EDGE club meetings to create healthier lifestyles for themselves and their families.



86%

of participants surveyed believe their families' **attitudes changed** after they participated in the EDGE programme.

Most impactful activities

The most impactful activities of the EDGE programme according to participants, N= 91

- 22% Development of digital literacy and computer skills
- 16% Confidence building
- 18% Social skills and collaboration
- 14% Awareness of social issues
- 30% English language skills



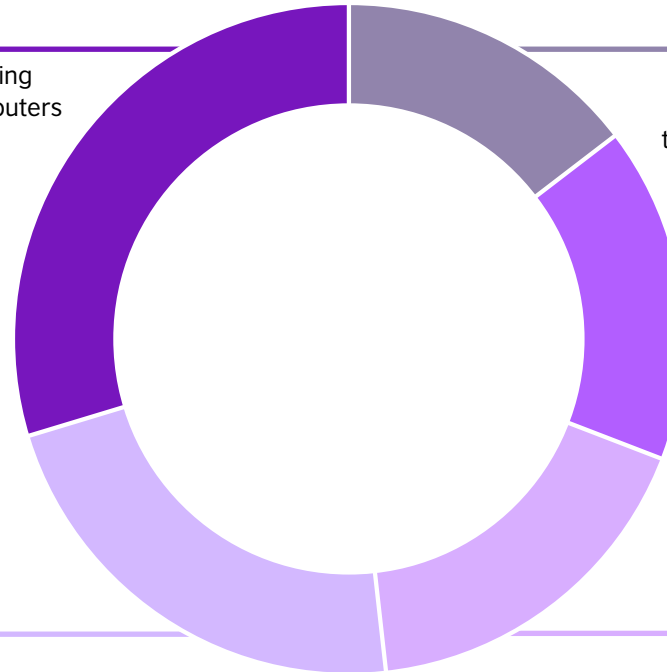
22%

mentioned learning how to use computers and the internet.



16%

highlighted a marked increase in self-confidence.



18%

cited the peer-led programme and how it fostered social skills through group work, collaborative activities and working as a team.



14%

cited the component on social awareness of issues like child marriage and the dowry system.



30%

noted changes in their English speaking and comprehension abilities.



What worked well

1 

Peer-led format

The peer-led format was thought to be highly effective, as it created an environment where participants felt comfortable and at ease, allowing them to actively engage in various activities and discussions without the fear of judgement.

Community engagement

Parental and community involvement helped shift perceptions about the value of education, especially English and digital skills, creating a more supportive environment for participants.

2 

3 

Approach to learning

The activity-based approach was useful in facilitating the learning process, as it encouraged participants to engage hands-on with the content.

1 

Marriage

Marriage influenced the educational journeys of participants, often creating barriers to continued learning and personal development, and often leading to a shift in priorities and responsibilities.

Family attitudes

The attitudes of families towards girls' employment had an impact on their professional journeys. Lack of family support meant that girls faced significant barriers to pursuing employment opportunities.

2 

3 

Limited infrastructure and support

Limited infrastructure and lack of ongoing support hindered participants' ability to apply and develop their English and digital skills. Inadequate access to devices and internet connectivity led to reduced practice and a decline in proficiency.

Financial constraints

Inability to afford tuition and essentials forced some to drop out of or skip higher education.

4 

Challenges to long-term impact

Enablers to long-term impact

Summary

EDGE demonstrated long-term impact by improving girls' English and digital skills, and increasing confidence and agency. While family support and need for financial independence were enablers, cultural factors and limited resources remained challenges.

1 

Family support

Encouragement and support from family played a key role in motivating participants to pursue education and careers.

Formal education

Formal education and teacher guidance positively influenced participants' views on health, well-being, child marriage, education and leadership.

2 

3 

Drive for financial independence

Economic hardship inspired participants to seek education and jobs to support their families. Motivation to be financially independent encouraged participants to set and pursue personal and professional goals.

To explore the findings of the evaluation, use this QR code.

