



ENGLISH AND DIGITAL FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION (EDGE)

**EVERY GIRL DESERVES
A CHANCE**



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BRITISH COUNCIL – AN OVERVIEW

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. Our purpose is to build friendly understanding and trust in the countries we work in.

For over 80 years, we have been working in Education, English, and the Arts to improve the lives of millions across 110 countries. Each year, our programmes reach over 550 million people around the world and directly engage with over 10 million of them.

We are a globally trusted brand with access to an extensive network of partners and expertise in conducting community programmes. We are recognised as experts in education and skills, language teaching, and youth and community engagement.

We continually strive towards empowering young people from marginalised sections of society by developing their skills to become better qualified to help them achieve their aspirations and improve their socio-economic status.



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WHY IS GIRLS' EDUCATION A FOCUS?

The British Council sees issues of equality and diversity as a crucial part of cultural relations. Gender equality, therefore, forms an important aspect of our work. We believe that empowerment addresses the fundamental rights of women and girls, and achieving gender equality also has benefits for wider society.

Reducing gender disparities in economic life, in leadership and decision making, in education and in health improves the lives of men and boys as well as women and girls. Evidence shows that more gender-inclusive societies experience reduced levels of conflict, increased competitiveness and economic growth, and a more representative governance.

The British Council's commitment to girls' education builds on over 20 years' applied experience in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Wider Europe.

Our work in gender equality has also included civil society projects which support women and girls affected by domestic violence. This has strengthened the women's participation in public life; developing women and girls as peace builders. It also promotes non-violent conflict resolution; and empowers women and girls through sport on our Premier Skills programme.

In South Asia, we have identified a need to support learning, access to education and provision of safe spaces to address the needs and aspirations of girls. Our expertise in English language teaching and learning enables us to provide high-quality materials and training. We ensure this through our peer leader network and, as a result, potentially reach hundreds of thousands of girls through EDGE clubs.



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WHAT IS EDGE?

Launched in 2012 in partnership with BRAC Bangladesh, as English and ICT for Adolescent Girls (EITA), the project has now further developed into English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE), which aims to improve the life prospects of adolescent girls in socio-economically marginalised communities in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. The programme focusses on enhancing participants' English proficiency, digital and 21st-century skills, and awareness of social issues. As a result, they will be better able to make more informed and independent life choices, as is their right, in order to contribute more fully to the family, the economy and society. In addition, EDGE aims to improve the leadership skills of a smaller group of peer leaders drawn from the same communities of adolescent girls.

These goals will be achieved by six interlinked strands of activity:

- Providing adolescent girls with opportunities and resources to develop their English proficiency, digital skills and awareness of social issues in peer-led after-school clubs.
- Developing a cadre of Peer Group Leaders (PGLs), and building their leadership skills and confidence to facilitate English and digital training in these clubs.
- Developing the capacity of a cohort of trainers to train and support the peer leaders.
- Developing age and level-appropriate materials for the development of the target skills, and suitable materials for the training and support of the peer leaders and their trainers.
- Building trust within the communities to change and develop the perception of the value of girls in the community.
- Monitoring and evaluating all stages of the project, including independent baseline and endline studies.

WHY EDGE?

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights dictates the collective right to education. However, girls and women in South Asian countries have comparatively less access to education and digital skills than boys and men. This issue results in a gender-based digital divide, leading to future skills imbalance and unequal life chances for women¹.

We have established networks of non-formal, community-based EDGE clubs which are effective in reducing barriers, developing the girls' skills and increasing educational, social and economic opportunity.

Educational opportunity: The education systems in many areas of Bangladesh, India and Nepal are not sufficiently resourced or equipped. English language teaching and learning, along with other subjects, remains largely teacher-centred and focussed on written examination results as a measure of success. Learners largely participate in a passive role, limited to memorising facts and reciting them back to their teachers.

Employment opportunities: The development of digital skills and English language can have a positive impact on poverty reduction, by creating access to education and job opportunities. The ICT sector is well established in India and the governments of Bangladesh and Nepal have recognised ICT as one of the primary growth sectors.

Early marriage: The majority of girls from Bangladesh, India and Nepal are married before they reach the legal adulthood age, and despite many initiatives, gender parity in education has not yet been achieved. School dropout rates are strongly related to child marriage, a pervasive practice despite existing legislation.

Access to ICT: Public ICT facilities are often male-dominated and limited in numbers. Owing to domestic responsibilities, parental restrictions, and safety concerns - women often cannot visit such facilities. This project aims to address the challenges of improving education and employment opportunities for girls as well as access to ICT, contributing to enhanced life choices.

¹www.un.org, 2015



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HOW DOES EDGE WORK?

Learning is integrated and contextualised

The English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE) programme brings together, English, digital, 21st-century skills and social skills. The four strands are underpinned by a structured syllabus. EDGE materials are not affected by power cuts as they are loaded onto netbooks, phablets and mobile phones. They are available offline so internet access is not needed.

The programme adopts a peer-led model and provides safe spaces for girls to learn

Our clubs are led by peer leaders who are trained by British Council trainers and manage the clubs in their community. The clubs ensure that the girls do not have to commute in unsafe environments, and the peer-led model encourages free and fair expression.

The programme is underpinned and informed by our child safeguarding policies and practices. We have agreed policies and plans in place to keep all children safe from harm. Police clearance and training on child protection are mandatory for all project staff and trainers.

Progress is measured and evaluated

The EDGE programme has a clear framework for monitoring and evaluation, including baseline, midline and endline studies and ongoing process monitoring to ensure outputs and outcomes are achieved.

Parents and community members are actively involved

Girls get to demonstrate their acquired skills at community digital fairs where parents and community members are also invited. Local industry representatives are invited to provide career advice wherever possible.

There is clear alignment with the global and country development agenda

The theory of change for the EDGE programme is clearly aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and each country's plans for developing digital literacy and English skills.

Results are achieved in partnership

The EDGE programme works in partnership with funding and implementing agencies, drawing on local expertise to ensure maximum impact for beneficiaries.



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HOW WE WORK IN PARTNERSHIP

Working in partnership with other organisations is key to the success of EDGE and the longer term sustainability of the programme outcomes. We aim to work together with organisations, institutions and agencies which have common goals and with implementing partners that have an established presence on the ground, in the communities where this programme can make the most difference.

Operating through large partner networks allows for sharing of resources and operating costs, thus resulting in cost-effectiveness. To do this on the ground, we can work in three ways:

Existing clubs: where clubs for girls already exist and EDGE can be integrated into an existing educational programme

Existing venues: where suitable premises, equipment and outreach capacity are available to support rollout of the EDGE programme

Establishing clubs in partnership: where a partner works to establish a network of community linked clubs through sourcing premises and facilities in third party venues

In 2015, we focussed on developing contextualised and needs-based resources, a monitoring and evaluation framework and associated tools, and a research strategy for the project. We worked with partners on models of delivery appropriate to a variety of contexts, with an emphasis on developing a scalable and cost-effective approach.

We believe that the potential of this project is not limited to the countries in which we currently work, and that it could be replicated in any country where access to quality education for girls is limited.



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PARTNER WITH US

There are several advantages in partnering with us to empower adolescent girls from marginalised sections of the society.

Our expertise in language and education is recognised globally

British Council is a globally trusted brand with access to extensive networks and expertise in conducting community programmes. We are recognised as experts in education and skills, language teaching, and youth and community engagement.

We are known for trust and transparency

We are exemplars of good practice and the best of regional knowledge and partnerships. We work in close collaboration with local and national government departments and international organisations. We stand for trust, transparency, innovation, and commitment.

We ensure accountability

We take full responsibility for the money and resources that our funding partners entrust in us to carry out our programmes. We use stringent and transparent selection criteria to appoint agency partners.

We regularly coordinate with our agency partners and project beneficiaries to ensure the smooth operation of the project. We also prepare monitoring, evaluation and learning tools to collect data from the field for baseline, midline and end line surveys.

We keep our funding partners up to date on the progress of our programmes via regular formal and informal reports.

CONTACT US

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