

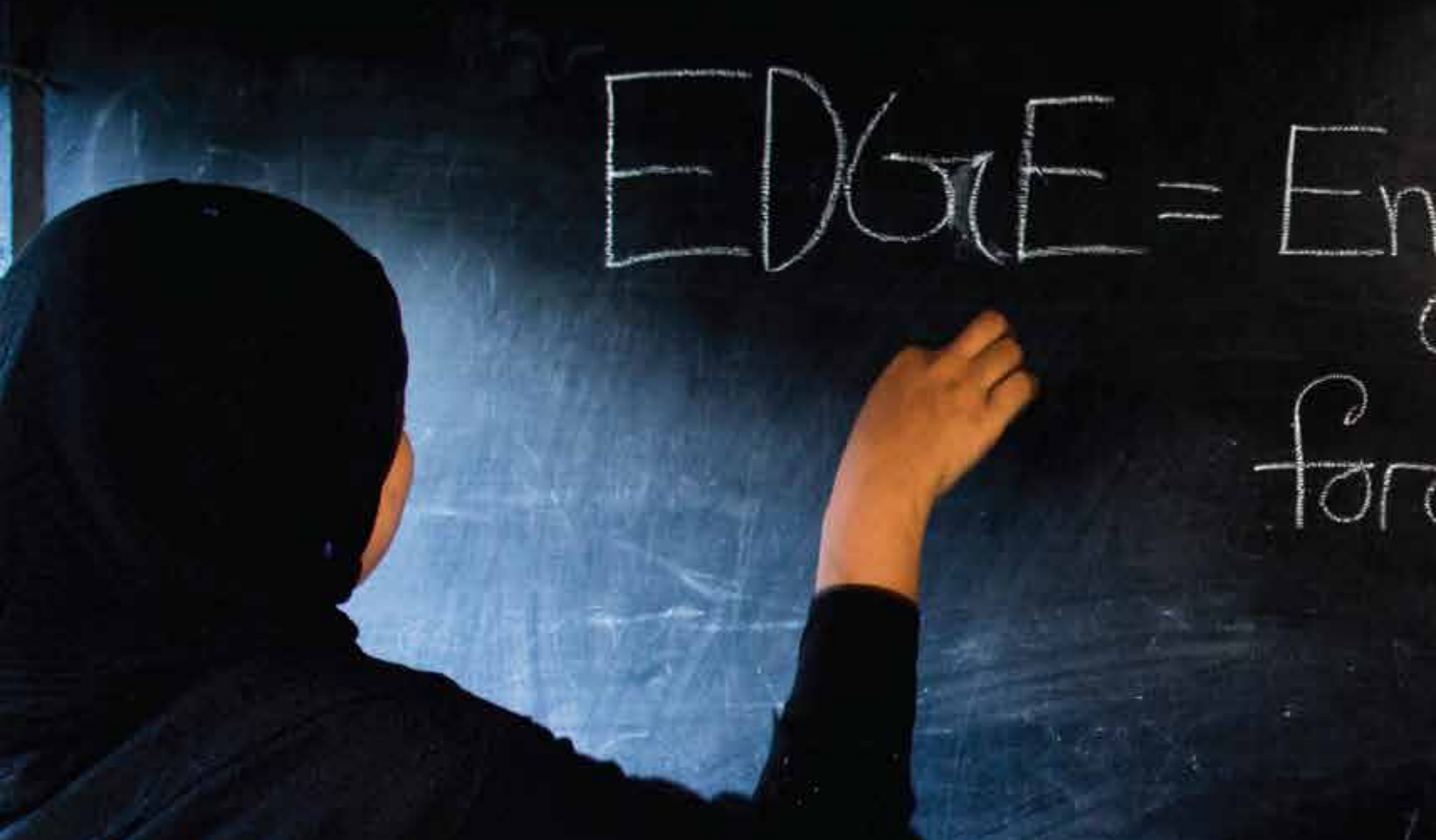
STORIES OF CHANGE

Empowering girls through
'English and Digital for Girls' Education'



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'English and Digital for Girls' Education'



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English and Digital for Girls' Education

Preface

'Stories of change' consists of the experiences of the beneficiaries of English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE) program.

The EDGE program of British Council aims to improve the life prospects of adolescent girls in socioeconomically marginalized communities in Bangladesh. It focuses on enhancing girls' English proficiency, digital skills and awareness of social issues. Thereby, the program enables these girls to make informed and independent life choices. It also initiated to improve the leadership skills of a smaller group of peer leaders drawn from the same communities of adolescent girls.

Through EDGE, a network of non-formal, community-based clubs for girls have also been established. These clubs/ 'Kishori Clubs' have been playing an effective role in reducing barriers, developing the girls' skills, boosting their confidence and increasing educational, social and economic opportunity for them.

As 2600 girls have already finished two stages (foundation and consolidation) of EDGE phase 5, a series of case studies were conducted in December 2018 to measure the impact of the on-going intervention in the Kishori Clubs in the three districts- Tangail, Mymensingh and Narsingdi.

While conducting the case study, some highly motivating and life-changing stories of some of the beneficiaries came up where these girls have used their acquired skills from the program into their lives and made a difference in the society. This book is an initiative to bring up few of such stories.



Riya Moni
Narsingdi, Radhagonj

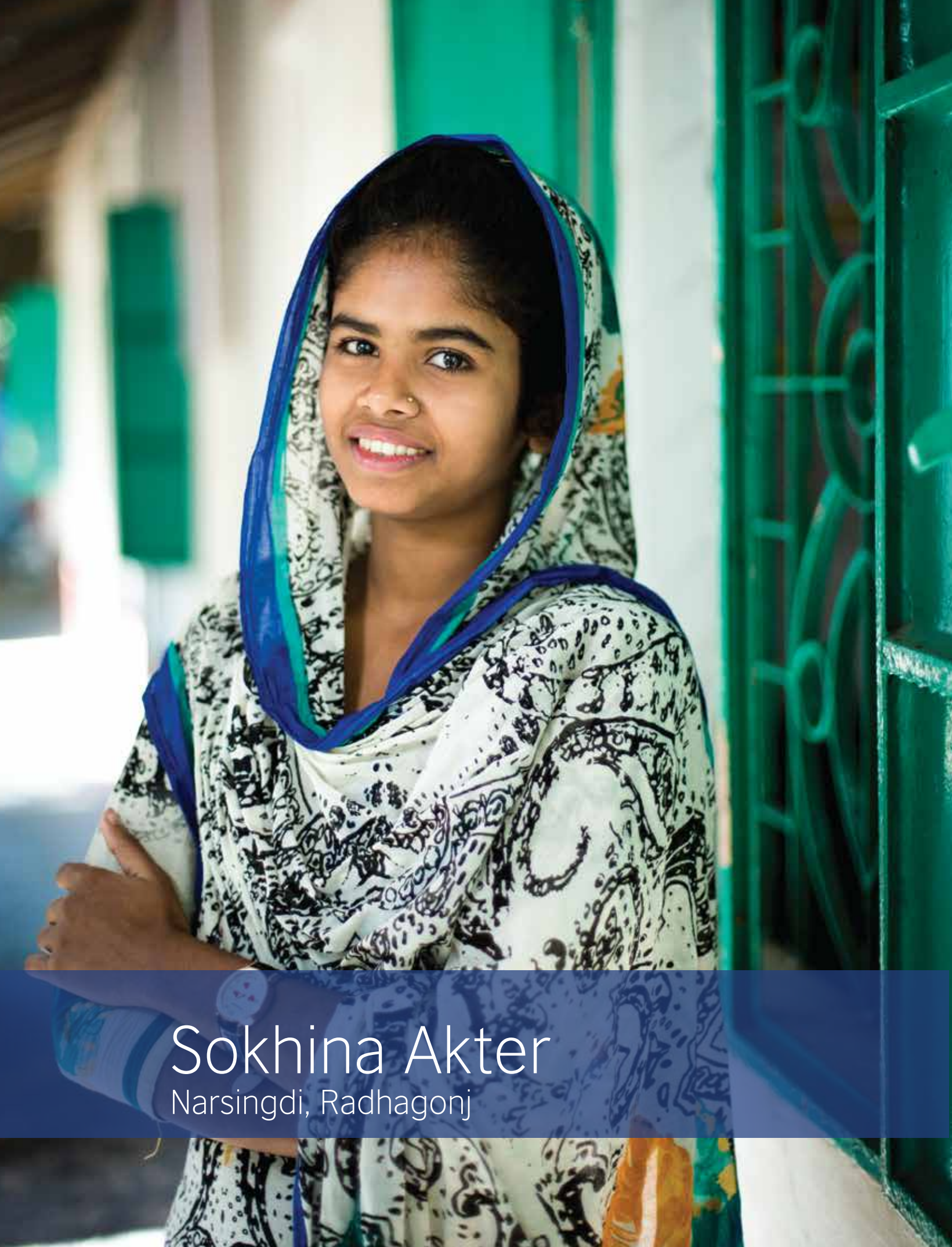
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I was able to become a nursing student because I am now more capable of making my own decisions. EDGE programme gave me just the confidence boost I needed.

After the training, my confidence level has increased substantially. I can feel that this has already started reflecting in everything in my life. I have also gained skills in interpersonal communication and leadership.

Before attending EDGE, my family would not permit me to go outside by myself. However, after the training I've gained much personal growth. As a result, I now have more freedom to roam around by myself when necessary. More importantly, in addition to gaining the capacity to think critically about any issues, I now possess the confidence of taking major life decisions. For example, my family would not allow me to study nursing at a government institution at first. But, having an improved capacity for reasoning, I was able to convince my family how the training would benefit my future as well as theirs.

As a result, I took the admission test and now I am a nursing student. I would give the major credit to EDGE for the confidence, vision and career aim I have now.



Sokhina Akter

Narsingdi, Radhagonj

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People believe women are only supposed to raise families. But I now have the confidence to speak up and negotiate against early marriage. I convinced my parents not to marry me off so early.

There is a common belief that the primary role of women should be raising their families. My family was no exception. My uncle and cousins wanted me to discontinue my education and forced me to think about getting married while at primary school. I, however, did not want to get married at such an early age. I wanted to continue my education at all cost. I realized from the EDGE training I undergone that the world of education is so enlightening. However, I could have never gone against my family's will without the capacity of reasoning. The skills that I have gained from the EDGE training programme helped me a great deal to think independently and critically. I learned to make logical and persuasive arguments. This ability enabled me to successfully convince my parents to stop my marriage. As a result, I am now able to continue my education. I also take pride in the fact that I am not only learning myself but also, I have gained the ability to teach other members of the club and actively contributing to my community by doing so.



Ritu Akter

Narsingdi, Putia

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I am confident about teaching others. I want to teach my club members exactly in the way I have learnt ICT and English from EDGE training.

Before receiving training from EDGE, I have never spoken to anyone in English. I used to avoid my friends if I had seen them with their laptop because I knew nothing about ICT. If there were a cultural event in an English-speaking institute I would never participate. I would also avoid participating in competitions, which were held in English. I didn't know how to introduce and talk about myself in English. Now I am confident enough to do all these things in English.

EDGE training is the first training I have ever received. In the beginning my parents didn't agree with my decision to participate in this. Later on they were convinced. ICT and English were the main themes of the training. I have used laptop during training and learned English through fun games. I have learned a lot from both of the process and it contributed in my confidence. I want to teach my club members exactly in the way I have learned ICT and English from EDGE training.

I am confident about teaching others. I have taught everyone in the club. Seeing the development of English-speaking skills of the club members, their parents and people from our community has started respecting and encouraging me.



Swarnali Das

Narsingdi, Amdia

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Nowadays it is almost impossible to secure decent work without the knowledge of English and the skills of ICT. I have acquired these skills from EDGE program which will help me get a better job in future.

I used to be really shy. Usually, I would avoid engaging in any discussions among peers. I was not even aware of my rights and my capabilities as a woman in my community. I used to have difficulties organizing my thoughts and making any decisions on my own. However, after attending the EDGE program, I am now more aware of my capabilities. I have now become a lot better at independent thinking and confident at communicating. I am now more respected among my peers and my opinions are more valued in the community I live in. Moreover, the skills that I have gained in English and ICT from the training will benefit me the most, especially, in terms of job opportunity. Because, nowadays it is very difficult to get a good job without the working knowledge of these two. I now have acquired adequate knowledge of operating a computer as well as confidently communicating in English with anyone.



Runa Akter

Tangail, Dhanbari

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I succeeded in preventing my 14 year old friend's early marriage. Now my friend is studying with me.

Most of my life, I have been facing the crucial After receiving the training from EDGE I have gained the belief that I can do something for the society.

I have learnt about the demerits of child marriage, dowry and other issues. I came to know about my own rights and can defend the rights of those who cannot stand up for themselves. I have a friend. She is fourteen years old. One day my friend called me and told me know that her family decided to marry her off. After hearing this, I discussed about the adverse effect of child marriage with my parents, uncle, aunty and a grandfather. On the day of her wedding all of them went to my friend's home. They tried to convince the parents to not to marry her off at such a young age. Her parents were convinced and they stopped her wedding. Now my friend is studying with me. I succeeded in preventing her early marriage.



Sonia Khatun

Tangail, Dhanbari

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I, who knew nothing about computers, is teaching others after receiving training from EDGE.

In EDGE training I came to know about violence against women and gender discrimination through 'Mina cartoon'. There was another video where we saw how women feel insecure on the street and how we can be aware of this and prevent this problem. I used to feel uncomfortable seeing a lot of boys on the street on my way to and from school. But I am more confident now. I believe wherever I go, if I am brave I can do anything.

I have learnt a lot of things from the EDGE training. This will contribute in my education and employment. Everyone in the society regards me with respect now because I teach in the Kishori club. Teaching in Kishori Club has increased my confidence. It has created a new scope for my career. Now I can earn some money. Before this training I have never touched a computer. Through this training I learnt a lot about computers. I have conducted a three-day computer knowledge training in a school. I, who knew nothing about computers, is teaching others after receiving training from EDGE.



Runa Akter
Narsingdi, Radhagonj

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I used to be self-conscious and hesitant most of the time. But the communication skills that I have acquired from the training have given me the confidence to speak for myself.

Most of my life, I have been facing the crucial challenge of not being able to speak up for myself. Before, I could not stand up for myself and for what I wanted. However, now I am equipped with strong communication techniques and knowledge, which enable me to approach people, talk and even resolve issues.

Many seniors in our village showed cynicism about the Kishori Club and they did not like the fact that teenage boys and girls were attending the club together. They would pass comments like ‘free mixing and gossiping place’ about the club. However, we managed to convince the seniors of our village that a co-educational system is not harmful for the youth, rather it helps in developing mutual respect and understanding for each other and promote gender equality and opportunity. Once they understood, they too became very supportive of the initiative.

I am proud that I not only can speak up for myself, I can now utilize my skills to sensitize my community about the important issues as well. Beside getting better at communication, I am now more aware of my capacity and my rights as a member of community I live in. Also, after becoming a Peer Leader at the club, my leadership skills have also improved significantly.



Salma Akter

Tangail, Sagardighi

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Everyone in my family considered my education as a waste of money and wanted me to get married instead. I, however, decided to bear the cost of my education on my own and continue education by all means.

My uncle's family decided to marry their daughter off, who was only a 7th grader at the time. Although I tried my best to convince my uncle and my parents, I was not successful to abort the marriage at first. As I was too young, my opinion regarding the matter was neglected. I could not succeed initially. Like my family, I too was not well-informed about the harmful consequences of early marriage and the legal issues surrounding it. But, I was able to develop my knowledge and understanding about a variety of social issues from EDGE training such as, early marriage, dowry and child abuse among others. This helped me to make more persuasive arguments against my cousin's early marriage to my family and finally, to stop the marriage.

The confidence and the capacity of independent thinking that I have acquired from the EDGE programme helped me make the right decision for myself as well. Everyone in my family considered my education as a waste of money and wanted me to get married instead. I, however, decided to bear the cost of my education on my own and continue education by all means.

My capacity to communicate successfully is not limited to the boundary of my family. I am now well capable of public speaking about social issues. I became a Peer Leader at the Kishori Club, which boosted my confidence level significantly. As a peer leader, I am now also teaching other members at the club.



Marium Akter

Tangail, Sagardighi

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I prevented my 14-year-old nephew from becoming a child labour and made sure he continues his schooling. I too am currently studying, and I dream of obtaining higher degrees and sit for BCS examination in future. I am thankful to EDGE training for teaching me to challenge social practices and dream higher.

My cousin was planning to send his 14-year-old son to work as a supporting bread earner. I was well aware of my young nephew's merit. He was doing very well at school and I knew that discontinuation of his education would ruin his future. I also came to know a lot about the impacts and the harmful consequences of child labour following the EDGE training. The training equipped me with negotiation skills and encouraged engagement in logical arguments. As a result, I was able to sensitize my cousin by explaining how working at this age would damage his son's mental and physical development and ensure my nephew stays in school.

While my training at the Kishori Club, I learnt a lot about the value of education. I have also heard a lot of success stories of women getting empowered through education. This inspired me to continue my own education as well. In my family, even my elder sisters had to discontinue their studies and get married at a very young age. This would have happened to me too unless I resisted and convinced my family. I was able to convince my family that if I stay in school, I would be able to change the course of my life. I now aspire to achieve higher degrees and sit for the BCS examination in future.



Mst Marufa
Mymensingh, Nandail

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I used to remain quiet if I had faced any problem or I used to seek my brothers help. Now if I face ever teasing on the streets I can solve the problem myself.

I have gained a lot of confidence through EDGE training. Women should have the faith that they can participate in everything. I used to feel shy to talk to people but now I can easily talk to and convince other people. For instance only a few days ago one of the teachers from BRAC announced a training program. My mother refused to let me go as soon as she heard it. I convinced my mother that this training can be very useful for me in the future and it will be for girls only. Finally I got my mother's approval to join the training.

I used to remain quiet if I had faced any problem or sought help from my brother. Now if I face eve teasing on the streets I can solve the problem myself. I can convince them that it is wrong and it is a wrong deed. I have become a more confident person. I feel I can do something for the society.



Sonia Akter Ritu

Mymensingh, Nandail

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I told my parents to convince my friend's parents that they should not marry her off. Finally they understood and cancelled her marriage.

EDGE trainings has helped me a lot. We have heard many stories about successful women. These women are the kind of women who have tremendous self-belief and have done brave things. From their life stories we have learnt the significance of reading books. We have also learnt how to be successful and self-confident.

I have gained confidence and belief in myself. For instance, after passing the SSC exam my parents wanted me to get admitted in Shahid Sriti College but I wanted to study in Khurrom Khan Chowdhury College. I convinced my parents to get me admitted in Khurrom Khan College. It was my decision and I convinced them in support of my decision.

One of my friends was about to be married off by the family members. I have stopped that. My friend wanted to continue studying. I along with seven club members went to her home. We spoke to her mother and tried to convince her that she wants to continue studying. I also told my parents to convince my friend's parents about the adversity of early marriage. Finally they understood and cancelled her marriage.



Modina

Narsingdi, Radhagonj

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Only a few days ago my marriage was fixed but I convinced my parents and called off the marriage until I complete my studies and become financially independent. My parents also have faith in me and this is why they agreed to my decision.

EDGE training have made me aware about social issues like adverse effect of child marriage, child labour, dowry and similar other issues. Now I can protest any such incidents taking place in my locality. Once I came to know about a girl who was about to be married of from my locality. She is 13 years old. I along with my cousins went to that girl's house and spoke to her parents. They didn't listen to us. Then I spoke to an official from BRAC and we went to that girl's house again. We spoke to her family about the demerits of child marriage. We also discussed about the legal implications of child marriage and threatened them that we will lodge a complaint with the police. Then the parents understood the consequence of child marriage and out of fear stopped the child marriage.

I have been also practicing my learning from the EDGE program in my own life. Now I take my own decision and solve my problems on my own. My family members were willing to marry me off as they were receiving many marriage proposals for me. But it was my decision not to marry right now as I want to continue studying.

Only a few days ago my marriage was fixed but I convinced my parents and called off the marriage. I convinced them that I want to study and be self-reliant and then get married. I have received training and gained self-confidence. I believe that my parents also have faith in me and this is why they agreed to my decision.



Mst. Nahida Akter

Tangail, Ghatail

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I am supporting my own education by giving tuition to younger students. Getting educated was my decision and I had a belief that I can do it.

I took my own decision of continuing my study. I used to study in general education. At one point I wanted to do medical diploma but my parents didn't agree. It is because of the expenses of medical diploma. I decided on my own to get admitted in the diploma program. I support my education by giving tuition to younger students. This was my decision and I had a belief that I can do it. EDGE program was a major contributor in developing such confidence and skills in me. The English and Computer skills I gained from the program have helped me become financially independent as well as to support my own life decisions.



Shahinur Akter Lima

Narsingdi, Shibpur

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I am proud that I am supporting a kid from my neighbourhood by providing him with tuition while continuing my own education.

When I came to know that a family next door wanted to send their young son off to work, I immediately reached out and tried to stop them from doing this. I explained that in recent years, the government has been providing extensive support to ensure primary education for all. Also, I was aware of the problematic issues surrounding child labour. As a result, I was also able to sensitize the parents about the negative effects of child labour. This finally enabled me to convince the child's parents. Now, instead of working, the kid is going to school regularly. In addition, it gives me great pleasure that I am now personally giving the kid tuition and supporting him continue his education.

The knowledge of English and ICT skills that I have gained from the training helped me to achieve economic independence. Many parents are sending their children to me for private tuition for their children in English. I am proud that I am financially independent through these tutoring.

I have also become a Peer Leader at the Kishori Club. It gives me great joy that I am now able to help other people in my community, so they too can become more efficient and independent through my contribution.

Research support

