

Baseline study on

## English and Digital for Girls' Education



Educating girls can bring tremendous socioeconomic dividends in developing countries. According to UNICEF's Global Partnership for Education, "educating girls...tackles the root causes of poverty." Several other studies have found that children of educated mothers are likely to have a higher performance in school and earn more in the future.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) put a great emphasis on reducing gender disparity and improving access to and quality of education. Having successfully achieved several targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015, the Government of Bangladesh is now fully committed to achieving the SDGs by 2030, especially to-



SDG  
goal  
4  
Quality  
education

ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning, and



SDG  
goal  
5  
Gender  
equality

achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



### English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE)

British Council while keeping in mind these SDG's EDGE programme aims to contribute to reducing gender disparity. The programme has been designed with the objective of improving girls' English and digital skills in marginalised communities; and enhancing girls' agency and autonomy within the family and community.

BRAC's Kishori Clubs – a sort of informal school for girls – serve as the location for implementing the EDGE programme. The Kishori Club has previously implemented a similar British Council programme called English and ICT for Adolescents (EITA). The success of this programme inspired the idea for EDGE, which is focused on girls' education.



### Baseline study

This baseline study measures the initial status of the peer group leader's (PGLs) and participants of the Kishori Clubs of target areas before the implementation of the EDGE programme. This study serves as a benchmark against which the programme evaluators can compare the results of the midline and endline status (post-intervention) of this programme.

Comparison between baseline and endline data may not necessarily indicate the effects of the programme on its beneficiaries as external factors may be influencing the girls. Therefore, two groups from the target population: participants and PGLs from the EDGE programme (treatment group) and other girls not receiving the programme intervention (control group) were assessed. This helps to assess the extent to which the project implementation did or did not influence the project beneficiaries' skills.

Institute of Informatics and Development (IID) has conducted the baseline survey and prepared this policy brief based on the survey.

# English Language Skills

Hello



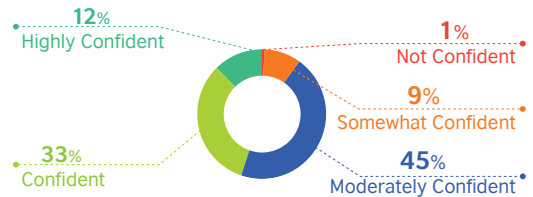
English plays a major role in today's world as it is the most common language spoken globally. Moreover, English is used as a common medium for exchanging knowledge in the global arena.

## Identifying things



Most of the respondents answered favourably on their ability to use English to name places, things used daily and activities performed at school. About 90 per cent of the respondents demonstrated moderate to high levels of confidence in naming places and things around their home.

*I can name the places and things I see around my home*

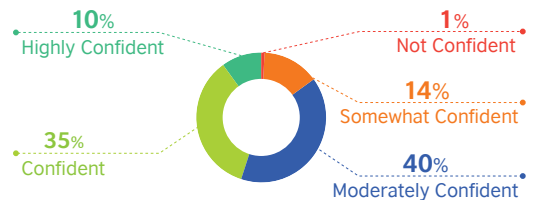


## Talking about familiar topics



The respondents were moderately confident in their vocabulary and ability to describe where they lived; describe their friends and family, name the jobs and hobbies of their acquaintances, describe school subjects and activities, and give a short presentation on themselves. Almost half of them felt that they would be able to describe their home and the place where they live in without much or any difficulty.

*I can give a short description of my home and where I live*

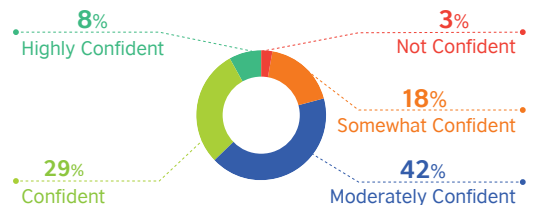


## Expressing feelings and ideas



Respondents mostly expressed a favourable degree of confidence regarding whether or not they could express themselves with ease. Forty-two per cent of the respondents were moderately confident, while 3 per cent replied that they could not use English to express themselves.

*I can express my opinion clearly*

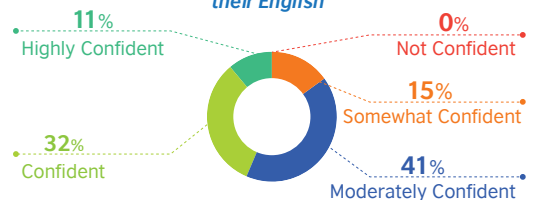


## Academic purposes



Regarding the use of English at school and whether they can help their classmates with their English, 41 per cent respondents stated a moderate level of confidence in their ability to accurately communicate in English at school.

*I can help myself classmates with their English*



## Speaking Test



The English language test results revealed that over 25 per cent of Peer Group Leaders were at A1 or A1+ with the majority being at A1 (42 per cent) or at pre-A1 (32 per cent). No Peer Leaders were either in the A0 or A2 ranges. Of the participants group, 19 per cent girls scored an A0, with only just over 17 per cent scoring in the A1 / A1+ bands. Of the participants, 83 per cent are pre-A1 or below at the baseline level.

# Digital Skills

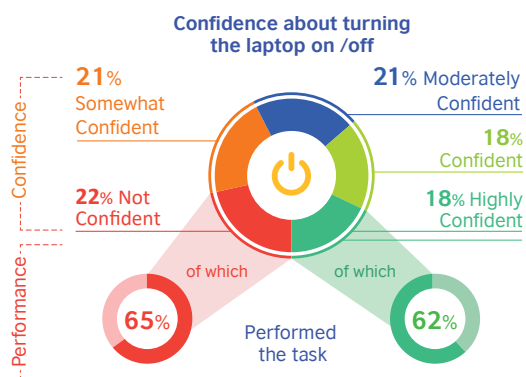


A competent workforce in the 21st century must possess what are called “transversal skills”, of which digital skills are a crucial component. The female youth has yet to penetrate the ICT sector as they lack the basic skills and knowledge of computer applications. Digital skills are measured in two parts in this study: a self-assessed survey of digital use/skills, and a practical test.

## Turning on/off a laptop



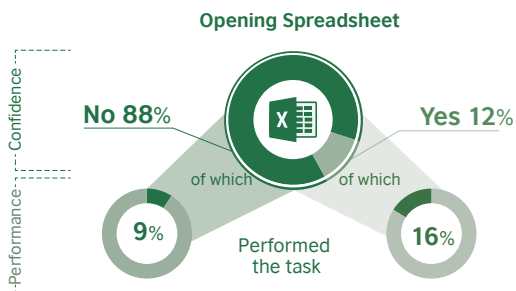
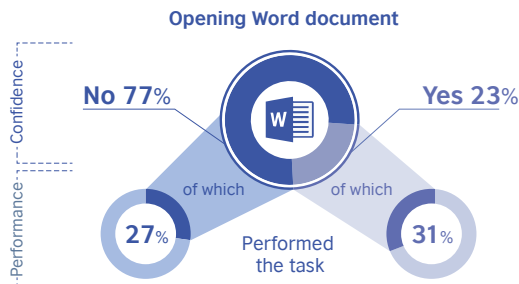
Twenty-two per cent of the respondents were not confident about turning on/off a laptop, whereas 18 per cent were highly confident about doing it. Interestingly, 65 per cent of the girls who were not confident about turning on/off a laptop did perform the task, while 38 per cent of the highly confident respondents could not perform the task in the practical test. This validates integrating practical tests with opinion survey for comprehensiveness of the assessment.



## Opening office suite

The respondents, mostly the girls from marginalised communities, are lagging behind in terms of knowledge about the applications of office suits.

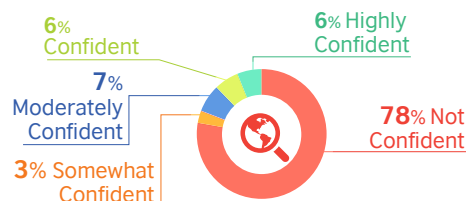
Seventy-seven per cent respondents said they do not know how to open a Word document (MS Word). Among these respondents, interestingly, 27 per cent were able to perform the task in the practical test, whereas 69 per cent of the highly confident respondents were unable to execute the task. The findings were quite similar for Spreadsheet use. Only 12 per cent claimed to know how to open a Spreadsheet (MS Excel). However, 88 per cent of them could not perform the task in the practical test. In the case of Presentation (PowerPoint) use, only 8 per cent of the respondents claimed they could open a new presentation. Almost all of the respondents were unable to perform the task in the practical test.



## Internet searching



The respondents felt they could not browse the internet for information as 78 per cent had no confidence in their ability.



# Social Skills



Social skills and awareness of social issues are receiving attention worldwide as these issues are critical for the development of an empowered society.

The job market rewards individuals with social skills. The young marginalised girls understand the growing importance of social skills.

## Confidence in social skills



Almost all the respondents had favourable levels of confidence about their social skills such as expressing opinions, things that affect their role in their community and working effectively in a team. Nearly one-third of the girls were highly confident about expressing and providing supporting reasons for their views.

Furthermore, the girls also understood the importance of working effectively in a team. They considered themselves to be hardworking at varying levels of confidence when it comes to solving problems at their clubs, schools or homes.

## Awareness of social issues

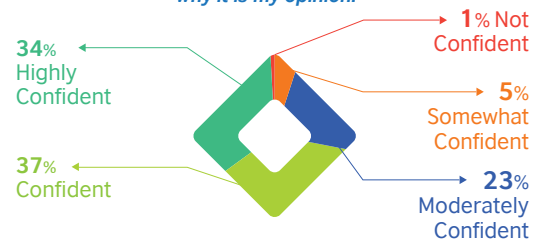


Awareness regarding social issues such as child marriage, bullying, dowry, hygiene, etc. is important for individuals' development as well as bringing qualitative changes in the structure of the society.

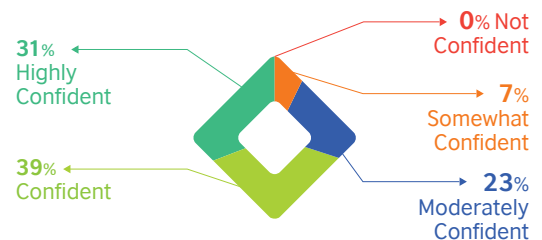
The marginalised girls probably understood these issues as 42 per cent were highly confident that they could explain the importance of going to school.

In addition to this, most of them, except 2 per cent, believed they were able to explain the harmful effects of bullying and 100 per cent with moderate to high confidence believed they could explain the ill-effects of child marriage on the girl, family and society.

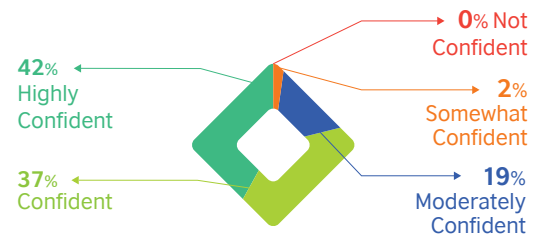
*I can give my opinion and provide reasons for why it is my opinion.*



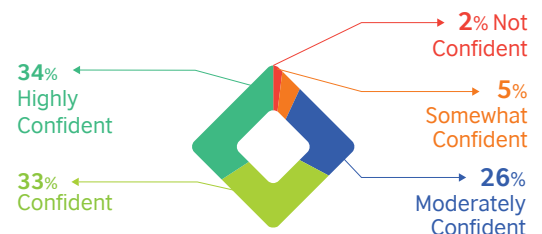
*I can work hard to solve any problem at my club, home or school.*



*I can explain why it is important to go to school.*



*I can explain the harmful effects of bullying*





## What to keep in mind?

Some of the questions posed to respondents were leading in nature. Take for instance a statement such as “I can explain the problems of children working in jobs” that inquired about the respondents’ confidence in such matters. Wording a statement like this can lead to a bias in answering as the respondents tend to agree with the statements. In reality, the respondents’ themselves might have been unaware of any harmful effect until the questions were asked.

Interpretation has also proved to be an issue. Some questions had inquired about the respondents’ confidence in acquired knowledge and usage of office suits such as Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint); some respondents were perplexed as they had never heard of such tools, but soon identified them correctly when they were shown pictures. This may have happened because they might have a different local name for these applications.

Similarly, regarding social media use and safe internet issues, some respondents were unaware of the complementary relationship of the internet and social media (Facebook, Viber, WhatsApp, etc.). Hence, many respondents would think that although they cannot use the internet, they can use Facebook or other social media applications.



## How to read this report

The answers given on the confidence issues were based on a scale of 0-10 where 0 means the respondents do not have any confidence at all, 5 being moderately confident and 10 being highly confident about the concerned issue.

Interestingly, respondents have a central tendency as their responses often gravitated around the score of 5 in order to avoid using extreme response categories. They displayed a tendency to consider any score below (above) 5 to be a negative (positive) connotation of inability (ability) of doing a task.

There is a possibility that the high levels of confidence in this survey demonstrate the Dunning-Kruger effect, which refers to the observation that high ability people tend to underestimate their own abilities while low ability people often suffer from an illusory superiority, making them overestimate their own abilities. If it is indeed true that respondents were displaying a biased and inflated level of confidence in their English, digital skills, and social skills and awareness, then this poses a challenge for the baseline-endline comparison as it will undermine the effects of the intervention.

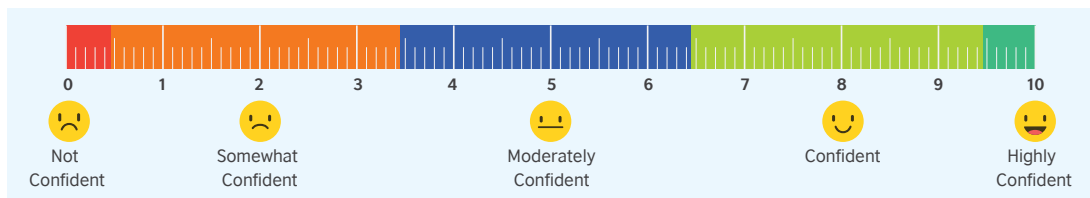
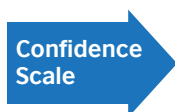


## How to use this report: The way forward

Through lessons learnt, this study can aid in developing and fine tuning the tools of advance courses before going for endline.

During baseline, English and digital tests were conducted after asking the respondents about their confidence on knowledge and skills on the two aforementioned areas. Although the confidence questions were administered prior to practical tests, repeating the confidence questions right after the tests could have revealed the respondents’ real confidence to some extent. This procedure could be followed in the endline.

In order to evoke the respondents’ real confidence, the British Council can administer personality traits questions and role playing games.



# Methodology



**Desk research:** Extensive desk research was conducted to identify gaps in literature and to aid in preparing the questionnaires.

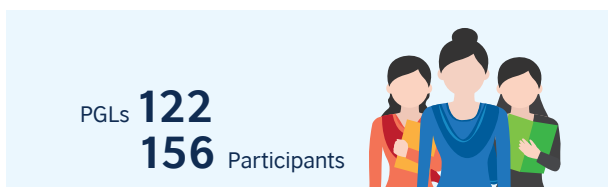
**Survey:** A survey consisting of female respondents was conducted to explore and assess their English and digital skills, agency and autonomy within the family as well as the community.

## Key facts about the field survey

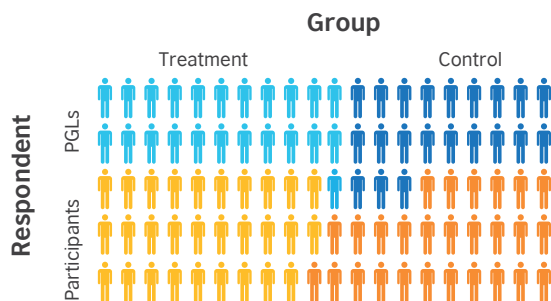
A total of **278** people were surveyed; out of which **122** were PGLs and **156** were participants.

**146** respondents were from the treatment group and **132** were from the control group.

This study was conducted in the outskirts of urban areas in the districts of Tangail, Mymensingh and Narsingdi.



## Respondent distribution

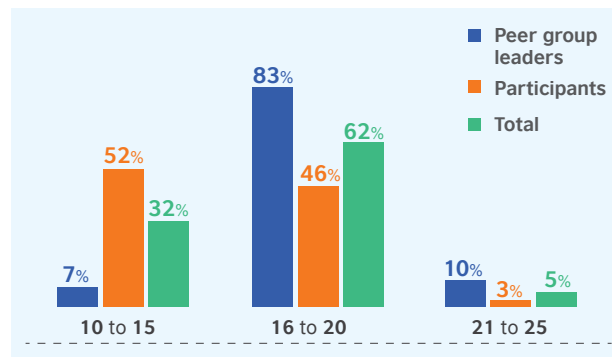


Around 50 per cent of each of PGLs and participant groups are from the control group and the rest are from the treatment group.



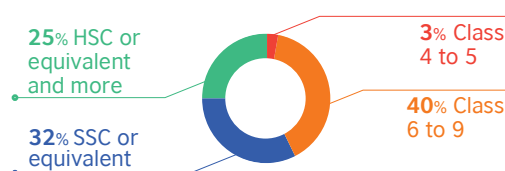
## Demographic profile of respondents

### Age distribution



Most of the respondents' (62 per cent) fall in the age group of 16 to 20 years. The number of PGLs (83 per cent) is twice that of the number of participants (46 per cent) in this age group.

### Education qualification



Almost 40 per cent of the total respondents fall in the education qualification group of class 6 to 9, while 25 per cent of the respondents fall in the higher band of education (HSC, equivalent or more).

### Marital status

