

Voices from the EDGE:

Case studies on girls' clubs in Myanmar 2025



About the British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. We do this through our work in arts and culture, education and the English language. We work with people in over 200 countries and territories and are on the ground in more than 100 countries. In 2024–25 we reached 599 million people.

Contents

Introduction	4
1. Becoming a peer group leader: From self-doubt to confidence	5
2. Thet Mon: A young learner finding voice and confidence	7
3. Understanding diversity and bridging differences	8
4. From an introvert to a group leader: A story of a Peer Group Leader	9
5. A mother's story: Witnessing my daughter grow	10
6. Education amid hardship: A mother's hope for her daughter	11
7. Breaking age barriers to become a leader	13
8. How EDGE's influence permeates wider communities	14
9. A mother's journey from struggle to support through EDGE	15
10. A mother's perspective: Wishing for continuation of Voices from the EDGE	16
11. Reshaping gender norms and helping to overcome social struggles	17
12. Young women leaders seeking patience, planning and growth	19
13. EDGE through the eyes of a rural girl	20
14. Wai's journey: A story of confidence, empathy, and growth	21
15. Empowered to become a leader	22
16. A religious minority girl's journey of leadership and connection	23
17. Empowering girls in a camp-based setting	25
18. A mother's story: EDGE's spillover effect beyond the girls' club	26
19. From difficult to gentle: a journey of behavioural change	27
20. Aspiration for learning and growth: A case of a displaced girl	28

Introduction

This collection of case studies explores the experiences and voices of adolescent girls participating in the English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE) programme in Myanmar, a country currently classified as a Fragile and Conflict-Affected State (FCAS). The EDGE programme, implemented by the British Council, has been active for nearly fifteen years across Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, offering safe learning spaces where girls can build digital literacy, conversational English, and social awareness through structured discussions on locally relevant topics.

Since December 2023, the British Council in Myanmar has partnered with four Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to operate 58 EDGE girls' clubs across five regions (though one CSO later relocated due to escalating conflict). These clubs have reached 773 adolescent girls, with 136 girls trained as club leaders. A central component of the clubs involves introducing girls to laptops and digital software, addressing the significant digital access gap highlighted by UNESCO's 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report, which found that only 8% of children in Myanmar have access to a personal computer in their classrooms.

Operating within one of the world's most volatile environments – Myanmar was ranked by Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) in 2024 as the second most violent and fractured crisis globally – the EDGE clubs have nonetheless provided a

platform for girls to learn, connect, and express themselves. Between April and June 2025, MDF, the organisation which the British Council had commissioned to collect case studies, conducted approximately thirty-five semi-structured interviews with club leaders and members and thirty interviews with their family members, community leaders and non-members across four regions. The participants interviewed represent a hard-to-reach demographic: adolescent girls navigating displacement, insecurity, and linguistic diversity, with home languages including Mon, Rakhine, Bamar, Tavoyan, Jingphaw, Lhaovo, and Lacid (Lashi and Lachik). Respondents' names in the case studies are pseudonymised to align with research ethics guidelines.

The case studies featured in this collection illustrate not only the impact of the EDGE girls' clubs on participants' skills, confidence, and aspirations, but also the power of locally grounded, community-led approaches in fragile contexts. Furthermore, it provides critical evidence of what matters to advance gender equity and inclusion in education under conditions of instability. As the British Council and its partners continue to adapt and sustain these initiatives, the insights from Myanmar underscore a broader lesson for the global education community: even in the most challenging environments, creating safe, supportive, and digitally enabled learning spaces for girls can generate meaningful and lasting change.



1. Becoming a peer group leader: From self-doubt to confidence

Meet Thi Thi

Thi Thi is a 19-year-old university student from a small town in southeastern Myanmar who has lived with her mother since the passing of her father. She was selected and trained as a peer group leader (PGL), providing her with the opportunity to support and guide her peers. Thi Thi identifies as part of the LGBT community and has faced societal discrimination and isolation because of her identity.

Thi Thi's journey with EDGE

Thi Thi joined EDGE shortly after completing high school and she recalled feeling nervous: *On the first day as a PGL, I was so anxious I couldn't even sleep. I*

felt I lacked enough experience for that. Her worries eased when she realised that EDGE provided a safe and welcoming environment: *The trainers and friends were so kind, and it really gave a sense of being with a family.* Despite initial discomfort, she eventually embraced her leadership role and began guiding younger girls.

Thi Thi's transformation

EDGE became supportive in Thi Thi's life. The social component of the course for clubs helped her regulate emotions, manage conflict, and stay composed during difficult situations: *I used to get frustrated easily, but facilitating the girls guided me to be more patient and to manage my emotions.*



During the club sessions, she tried hard to engage and support her peers who were shy. She often adapted her communication style to be more patient while showing empathy. She faced a challenge in facilitating English due to her own limited fluency, but despite this, she showed dedication by practising pronunciation in advance to guide lessons. The skills she developed even empowered her to participate in a youth knowledge sharing event organised within her local community.

The programme's inclusive setting allowed Thi Thi, as an LGBT individual, to be socially accepted, an experience she found very empowering: *Unlike other places, I was never judged here. I was given the same opportunities and respect. That meant everything to me.* EDGE not only boosted her self-confidence but also influenced how her family perceived her, shifting from rejection to admiration. She now describes herself as more confident, emotionally balanced, and capable of opening up about her beliefs and identity: *My mom, who once wouldn't let me go out alone and was used to doubting me, now gives full support to me, even asks me what I need for the club.*

Thi Thi's aspirations

Thi Thi dreams of becoming a trainer or working in the social development sector. Her goal is to go abroad on her own. Before joining EDGE, her family was hesitant to support her ambition because they doubted her ability: *I used to live with the words that said, 'you can't do it'. Now my family trusts me more and my dream of going abroad thrives.*

Summary

Thi Thi's story's portrays EDGE's transformative impact. Through EDGE, she has developed confidence, emotional maturity, and the belief that her voice matters. Her story is a testament to how the programme not only builds skills but restores self-dignity and empowers young women to pursue their dreams.

2. Thet Mon: A young learner finding voice and confidence

Meet Thet Mon

Thet Mon is only 13 years old, and one of the youngest girl club members in EDGE. She relocated from her hometown in the coastal region of Myanmar last year due to the conflict, which had become increasingly intense. She currently lives with her family in her new home. Despite her young age, she actively participates in EDGE, which she describes as an enjoyable and safe space for young women like her to share emotions and thoughts without fear of teachers.

Thet Mon's journey with EDGE

Since relocating, Thet Mon has been part of EDGE for the past nine months. Although she used to be very shy to speak in front of others, being in a peer-to-peer learning environment has helped her feel comfortable and motivated to become an active member of the club: *EDGE is unlike a normal classroom. It feels like sharing among girls of the same age, which I really like. This setup gives me the freedom to participate without worry.*

Thet Mon's transformation

Joining EDGE has improved Thet Mon's English: *EDGE helped me a lot with speaking because the vocabularies I learned are really in line with my age and skill level.* EDGE has also given her exposure to using a computer, something she had never used or even touched before. Through EDGE, she has also gained a stronger understanding of digital safety and how to use social media responsibly. As a regular user of TikTok and Telegram, she shared: *I'm now aware of how to keep my private data safe when using social media.* She believes these skills will be useful in her future career. As a young girl, EDGE

also equipped her with important life skills, such as how to avoid danger and protect herself from risks like human trafficking: *I had never heard of topics like human trafficking before, but now I'm aware of them, something I discovered only through EDGE.*

Thet Mon's aspirations

For young girls like Thet Mon who are still in the early stages of learning, EDGE offers an environment where girls can exchange stories and ideas without pressure. Thet Mon said she now has more confidence in speaking in front of her peers, thanks to more frequent social interactions.

Summary

Thet Mon's story illustrates how, through peer-led dialogue, young learners like her, who face the harsh realities of relocation and uncertainty due to conflict, can find a ray of hope through EDGE. The programme encourages them to continue their learning journey, grow emotionally, and gain practical life skills that will benefit them far beyond the club.

3. Understanding diversity and bridging differences

Meet Nandar

Nandar is a young woman who was forced to relocate with her family due to instability in her home state. She was a second-year university student, but she suspended her formal education a year ago due to the armed conflicts back home. When she joined the EDGE programme as a peer group leader, she encountered a club environment very different from her own background: *I am an ethnic girl and Buddhist, but the girls I facilitated were from other ethnic backgrounds who spoke different languages and were Christian. At first, I worried whether I could lead them.*

Nandar's journey in EDGE

Stepping into her role as a club leader was a significant personal leap. Nandar had doubts about whether her age, ethnic identity or communication style would be accepted: *The girls spoke different languages, and I thought maybe they wouldn't understand me.* But gradually, through club sessions and training, she grew more confident: *I felt responsible to guide them. I started reading communication books outside of EDGE just to build myself up.* One of her key challenges was the digital component: *The girls were afraid to even touch a keyboard. Their hands were shaking.* Knowing she needed to lead by example, she began self-studying and practising computer skills outside club hours: *I wanted to be able to lead them properly, so I practised a lot on my own.*

Nandar's transformation and growth

Through EDGE, Nandar has developed empathy towards the girls. Initially, she feared that differences in religion or language would create barriers, but she quickly realised that she learned so much about spiritual beliefs of the girls just by listening to them. Her own communication skills developed as she took time to connect individually with girls experiencing personal or emotional challenges: *Some were shy. Others were going through trauma.* I tried to comfort them during our club activities. She became not only a PGL, but also an emotional support: *I never imagined I could speak in front of a group like this or be someone they relied on. But I saw that I could.*

Nandar's aspirations

Nandar envisions herself volunteering to provide English, digital and social skills to young learners – both girls and boys: *Even when I am going back to my home state, I can share my knowledge, and skills I developed through EDGE, not just with girls but also with boys who are currently under stress with conflicts.* She plans to pursue further studies while staying active in youth leadership and community engagement.

Summary

Nandar's journey from a conflict-affected area to a diverse community highlights the resilience fostered by EDGE. Through EDGE, she not only became a bridge between cultures, faiths and learning levels, but also developed skills which she can take back to her local community. Her story exemplifies how EDGE serves as a bridge between different cultures and religions, while also equipping girls with transferrable skills.

4. From an introvert to a group leader: A story of a Peer Group Leader

Meet Khaing

Khaing is an 18-year-old girl from a hilly region of Myanmar. She lives with her parents and a younger brother and is currently preparing for her Grade 12 exams. Coming from a mixed ethnic background, she initially described herself as an introvert who found social interactions challenging. Her family was protective, especially her mother, who hesitated to let her go outside alone.

Khaing's journey with EDGE

Khaing initiated her EDGE journey by participating in volunteering and community activities at an EDGE partner organisation. She then decided to join the club and take on the role of peer group leader. At first, she was very nervous, but later she gained confidence to lead the club through conversations with her fellow PGLs and self-motivation. She recalled how taking up the role of PGL not only led her to transform into an extrovert, but also how it eased her stress: *When I used to be an introvert, I felt stress. But turning into an extrovert allowed me to share my feelings with others, which helped reduce my stress.*

Khaing's transformation

Through EDGE, Khaing experienced a great leap in her social and emotional development. She was transformed from someone who preferred solitude into an active young woman: *I used to be alone at school. Now my friends remarked that I become very active.* As a PGL, she mainly led social group activities, which developed her communication skills. She also improved her digital skills, going from someone who had never used a computer to someone who now practises PowerPoint and Word at home with her younger brother. Her communication skills and growing sense of independence also became visible at home: *My mom said, 'You've become more communicative.'* She also

trusts me more as I've become more independent. Now, when my parents are away, I lead home activities including planning for my younger brother.

Khaing's aspirations

Khaing developed new ambitions through EDGE. She now dreams of continuing her education abroad and gaining further exposure. EDGE has made her realise that digital and social skills are essential in today's world, which she needs to develop further. She hopes to pursue volunteer work and continue developing her skills in English and digital literacy, with an eye towards sitting for the IELTS exam and preparing herself for future opportunities.

Summary

Khaing's story shows how inclusive learning spaces like EDGE can enhance a young woman's confidence and aspirations. She emerged from her comfort zone to become a proactive leader, earning the respect of her friends and family. EDGE not only provided her with technical and social-emotional skills but also offered her a vision of what she could become. Her journey highlights the role of EDGE in unlocking the potential of girls from all backgrounds, including those in more conservative or less connected communities.

5. A mother's story: Witnessing my daughter grow

Meet Hla Hla

Hla Hla is university-educated and lives in northern Myanmar, where she is raising her children in a modest neighbourhood. She is a Muslim mother in a religious minority community. Her daughter joined the EDGE programme as a peer group leader, and through this engagement, Hla Hla began witnessing positive transformations that marked both her daughter's education trajectory and her emotional balance.

Hla Hla's daughter's journey

Hla Hla was initially unsure of what to expect when her daughter joined EDGE: *At first, I worried about her joining EDGE because I did not know what to expect. But once I saw her progress, especially in English, I stopped worrying.* Her daughter not only committed to the club facilitation with joy but also began to share her learning experiences at home: *Every time she came back from the club, she would tell us what she had done. She would even explain what she learned to her little brother.* Hla Hla is particularly delighted that there is no religious discrimination in EDGE: *Every girl seems kind-hearted and enjoys the club, and there is no religious or any form of discrimination, which makes my daughter happy.*

Hla Hla's daughter's transformation

Hla Hla observed how her daughter became more confident and emotionally resilient: *When I'm struggling or upset, she comforts me now. She tells me, 'Don't worry, Mom. We're here, we're working hard, and this will pass.'* This level of maturity and empathy deeply moved her, and she even learned some knowledge from her daughter.

Her daughter's passion for English blossomed as she progressed through intermediate levels and began seeking more advanced studies. Hla Hla also noticed her daughter's improvement in communication skills through social emotional learning when talking with her friends and relatives, and how she is becoming more independent: *She is more self-reliant and can manage her own schedule well, like she prays on her own without us having to remind or pressure her to do so.*

Hla Hla's daughter's aspirations

Hla Hla believes her daughter dreams of studying abroad in the future: *She has a dream that she wants to go abroad.* And, because of the skills that she learned from EDGE, particularly in English, she is even looking for further opportunities to study: *She discussed everything with us, what she wanted to study next for her English. I could see her excitement.*

Summary

This story highlights that EDGE is more than an education initiative, it can bring light, purpose and emotional growth for the girls, while also positively impacting their families. For a religious minority family, EDGE creates a safe and inclusive environment where girls can share openly and confidently without fear of discrimination due to their identity. In this case, the mother testified that her daughter, who is leading the club, found her passion for English, shedding light on her future.

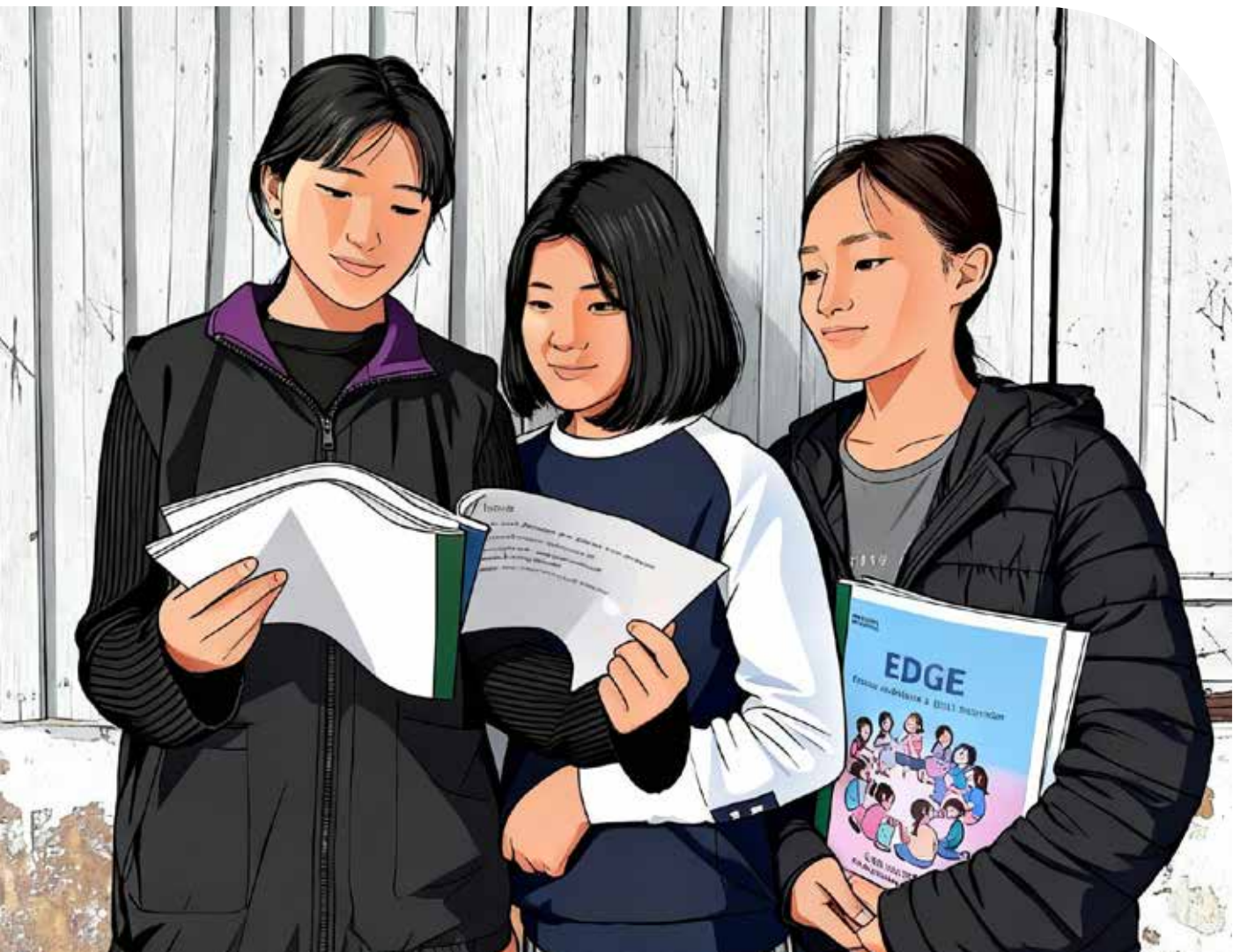
6. Education amid hardship: A mother's hope for her daughter

Meet Kyi Kyi

Kyi Kyi, a mother of three from a town in northern Myanmar, belongs to an ethnic minority. Living on subsistence on the outskirts of town in a small house and as a breadwinner, she bears the burden of raising and educating her children with limited resources. Yet, as a person who holds a university degree and who used to work as an interpreter in China for many years, she believes in the value of education: *Even if we don't have money, if my children are educated, they can stand on their own.*

Kyi Kyi's daughter's journey with EDGE

The hope came when her daughter joined EDGE as a girl club member. With little income to afford high-cost education services, she found hope in the low-cost, high-impact opportunities EDGE offered: *We couldn't afford private tuition like others, but EDGE made it possible for my daughter to learn English without financial pressure.*



Kyi Kyi and her daughter's transformation

Kyi Kyi recalled the emotional burden she carried before her daughter joined EDGE: *Before joining the club, there were a lot of negative emotions at home. I even shed tears because I could not properly support my children.* EDGE not only brought light into her family, but also helped her daughter take initiative, self-studying and confidently engaging in decision making: *She now knows how to separate right from wrong when communicating with her friends.*

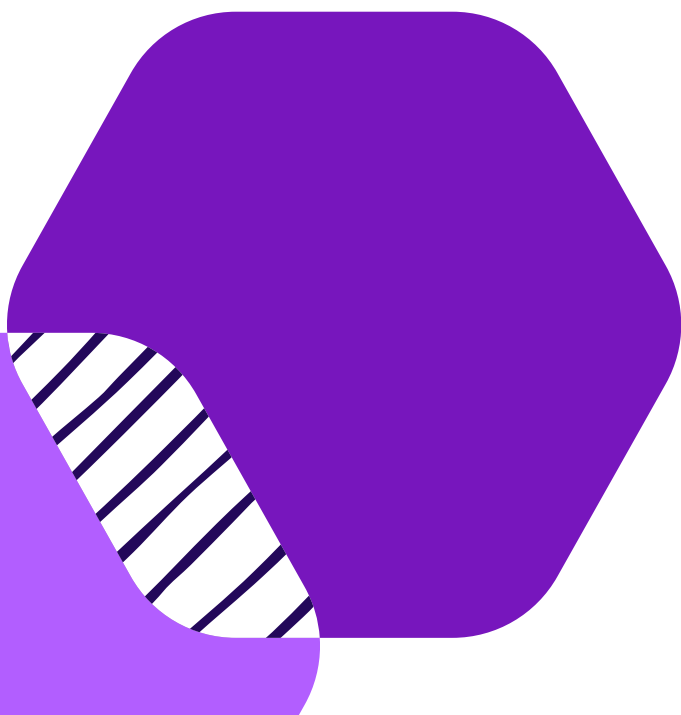
Her daughter's commitment to environmental awareness and communication skills also flourished: *She tells me bicycles are more environmentally friendly than motorised vehicles. She also insisted that I avoid blowing out candles by mouth as it could produce a lot of smoke. She even educates me now.* EDGE even sparked family-wide changes. Kyi Kyi began reviving her own skills: *I hadn't used my interpreting skills in years. But after seeing my daughter joining EDGE, and after attending training programmes myself, I found ways to apply what I knew and contribute again.*

Kyi Kyi's aspirations

After seeing her daughter join EDGE, Kyi Kyi dreams of opening a language centre: *I told my daughter that I want to open a language centre, and she said she can lead it.* Her daughter also has a dream of her own, which is to open a sports centre and to earn international certification in sport abroad. Kyi Kyi spoke about how her daughter has opened up about her ambition after EDGE: *I now know of her ambition to open a sports centre. She said that she is eager to go abroad and earn certificates in sport.*

Summary

Kyi Kyi's story highlights how EDGE empowers not only girls but also transforms families. By creating access to education for underserved girls, the programme strengthens confidence, resilience and aspirations. Kyi Kyi's story is a powerful reminder that even amid financial and social hardship, targeted educational support can pave the way for opening up opportunities for those living in minimal conditions.



7. Breaking age barriers to become a leader

Meet Ni Ni

Ni Ni, a mother of a peer group leader, is an internally displaced person who migrated from her native town due to severe armed conflicts. She used to work as a teacher in the government education sector back home; however, the conflicts forced her to suspend her career. She is now living with her family in a new location. Her daughter, only 13 years old, is one of the youngest PGLs in EDGE and also one of the brightest. She started as a regular girl club member, but because the EDGE partner saw potential in her, after about six months, she was invited to join the club as a group leader. Ni Ni recalled that when the family first relocated, she insisted her daughter, who then was facing a break from her studies, take up some activities. During that time, they found the EDGE club, which marked a new beginning in her daughter's life.

Ni Ni's daughter's journey with EDGE

As a migrant family from another location, Ni Ni faced financial barriers to continuing her daughter's education. But EDGE allowed her daughter to continue learning during this difficult period for the family. Being a teacher herself, Ni Ni recounted how her daughter consulted with her on her role as group leader: *My daughter sought my ideas on how to develop a lesson plan for club facilitation. I also advised her on how to control her vocal tone while speaking in front of her peers.* Initially, her daughter was not confident in herself because she was much younger than the peers she had to facilitate. But gradually, she gained confidence with the support of her mother and her own dedication.

Ni Ni's daughter's transformation

Ni Ni shared that her daughter's transformation has been remarkable. Being a smart and active girl already, EDGE further enhanced her skills, knowledge and expertise: *Before EDGE, my daughter spoke English only to herself, but now she can converse in English with others.* She also shared that her daughter has made astounding progress in digital skills: *She is always exploring new things in Google. She even established her own profiles on social media, where she shared her learning from EDGE, such as environmental conservation, which once got nearly a million views!* Ni Ni proudly noted that her daughter is becoming more mature and independent compared to other girls her age: *My daughter said to me, 'Trust me, mother. I'll keep walking towards my goals without deviating from them. As women, we must show our capabilities.'* EDGE, according to Ni Ni, has instilled a true leadership attitude in young girls like her daughter. Witnessing this transformation, Ni Ni also encouraged her friends' daughters to join EDGE.

Ni Ni's daughter's aspirations

Ni Ni's daughter has already set a goal to study abroad with a scholarship: *Because of EDGE, my daughter's ambition to study abroad has become stronger. Her confidence, resilience, self-independence and intellect have all grown. I believe she can now set her own life objectives.*

Summary

Ni Ni's testimony about her daughter's experience as a PGL illustrates that EDGE is a catalyst that can transform smart girls into even smarter ones. EDGE breaks the barrier of age, where even very young girls can become leaders who inspire others. As Ni Ni put it: *I even want to join EDGE if I were younger.*

8. How EDGE's influence permeates wider communities

Meet Ei Ei

Ei Ei is the founder of a youth learning centre in the southern part of Myanmar. Her centre helps girls to access education and vocational training courses. These girls are underprivileged and from church-based backgrounds, who come from various parts of Myanmar. Most of the girls are under 18 and some are orphans. They face various financial and personal challenges and cannot access formal education on their own. A CSO introduced Ei Ei to EDGE to support the girls at the learning centre.

Ei Ei's students' journey with EDGE

When she was first introduced to EDGE, Ei Ei was very eager for her girls to join EDGE clubs. She recalled: *When EDGE was introduced to me, I felt very pleased as it could offer something that I cannot provide to my girls, such as guidance on how to use computers.* Ei Ei admitted that she normally does not allow the children to interact with others, in line with the rules of her learning centre. She also does not allow her girls to use digital devices like smartphones, fearing that they would have a negative impact. However, letting her girls attend EDGE allowed social interaction and exposure to digital skills.

Ei Ei's students' transformation

Ei Ei acknowledged how her girls developed after joining EDGE. She often observed the club and noticed how the unique learning model differed from traditional classrooms: *I really like the way the club is organised through games. This approach enabled the girls to be fully interactive. Many girls are from ethnic*

minorities from mountainous regions and were very shy to speak in a new environment at the centre. Through the games, even the most silent girls became engaged in club activities. Ei Ei also observed that allowing girls of the same age group to facilitate club activities helped stimulate sharing among them; the girls felt more confident sharing with others of a similar age.

Ei Ei's reflections

The transformation of the girls through EDGE has been significant. Ei Ei shared what she had heard from the girls: *They said to me that if they had not joined EDGE, they would not be able to speak confidently like this.* As a church-based organisation, Ei Ei regularly submits reports to her faith-based network: *I reported about EDGE to my religious network regularly, and when other people from my network heard about EDGE, they also felt very pleased and showed their support.*

Summary

This case of the youth education centre's founder strongly illustrates the widespread impact of EDGE, both in terms of upscaling complex social and critical thinking skills among girls at the individual level, and its broader influence beyond the EDGE clubs themselves. Through the programme, girls who were once isolated have become confident, digitally skilled, and socially engaged individuals. The case also underscores that the reputation of EDGE is not limited to only those it directly supports; it can permeate wider communities, attracting broader support from stakeholders who witness its

9. A mother's journey from struggle to support through EDGE

Meet Yin Yin

Yin Yin used to live in a deprived situation due to widespread instability, but she is currently running a small local business in her hometown and her daughter is a peer group leader in EDGE. Yin Yin said: *I willingly support my daughter to participate in EDGE. It was a time when educational opportunities were scarce, and it was the right time my daughter was introduced to the young girls' EDGE club.*

Yin Yin's journey with EDGE

Yin Yin recalled her conversation with her daughter: *I told my daughter to work hard and pave her own path for her future.* After serving time for her own beliefs, Yin Yin discovered EDGE, which she believes to be a trusted network that provides access to education for her daughter, something very important to someone like her. She believes EDGE offers a safe space for young learners. Yin Yin shared that she gave advice to her daughter about facilitating the club: *When she first joined as a club leader, I helped out with her projects. I'd guide her, saying things like, 'You should do it this way, try it like this.' I'd help her organise her thoughts and walk her through what to do.*

Yin Yin's transformation

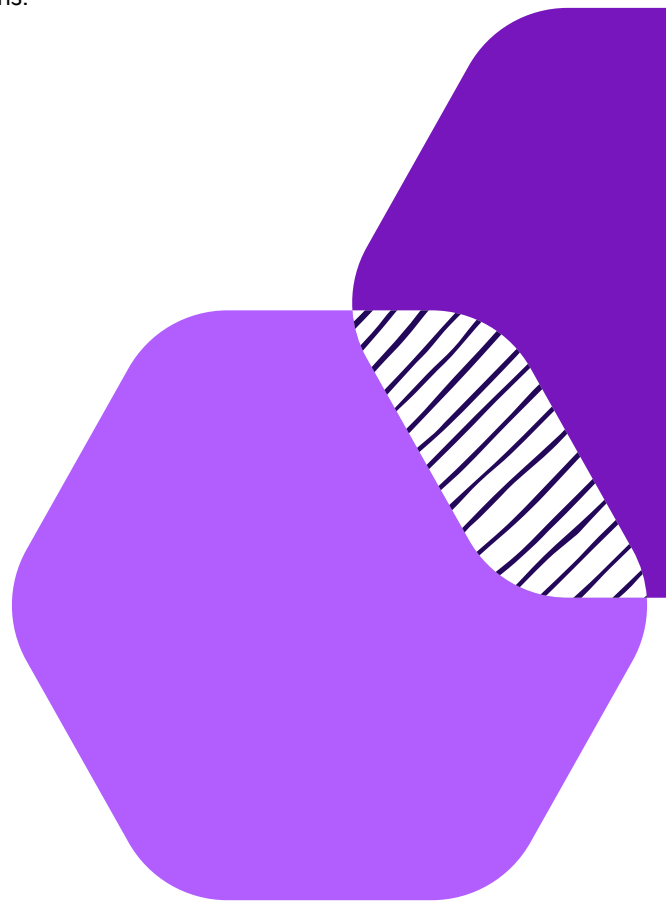
Yin Yin noted that she did not receive much education when she was young but hoped EDGE could provide this valuable opportunity for her daughter, and EDGE did not fail her. She was very pleased when she saw her daughter demonstrating the skills and knowledge she acquired through EDGE and sharing her learning with her peers. Yin Yin now trusts her daughter more, as she has shown greater maturity, leadership and confidence.

Yin Yin and her daughter's impressions

Yin Yin's daughter's growth is not limited to the EDGE club. She went beyond, guiding her younger brother at home using the expertise she gained from EDGE. Yin Yin enthusiastically shared that she has encouraged other young individuals to join EDGE after witnessing its transformative power: *My daughter's emotional maturity has improved a lot, and I want others to experience such change.*

Summary

Yin Yin's story is a powerful testament to the significant impact of EDGE. As a mother who once faced deprivation and lived with oppression, she found in EDGE a vehicle of hope, not only for her daughter but for other young girls in the community. Her daughter's transformation reflects how accessible, nurturing spaces like EDGE can break cycles of hardship and unlock the potential of future generations.



10. A mother's perspective: Wishing for continuation of Voices from the EDGE

Meet Loon Loon

Loon Loon is the mother of an EDGE peer group leader. She is a businesswoman who runs a small fishery business in the coastal area of Myanmar. With only a Grade 4 education, she is not very familiar with formal education systems.

Loon Loon's daughter's journey with EDGE

Loon Loon's daughter has been participating as a club leader in EDGE for one year now. Loon Loon shared that she let her daughter join EDGE because she wanted her to be educated: *Although I don't have much educational background, I want my children to be educated, which is why I wanted my daughter to join EDGE.* Loon Loon said her daughter seemed very happy and enjoyed going to the club: *I heard from her that everything is going very well in EDGE. Every arrangement in the club is convenient for my daughter to join. She said she is very pleased with the EDGE club.*

Loon Loon's daughter's transformation

Although Loon Loon herself did not come from a high educational background, she noticed clear improvements in her daughter: *I noticed how my daughter changed. She has become a more responsible person, doing household chores on her own. She also told me to throw away garbage systematically, which she also practises herself – especially throwing away plastics and keeping other household items clean.* She also noticed how her daughter is becoming more interactive and confident, and showing more care and respect to her parents while becoming very gentle.

Loon Loon's daughter's aspirations

Loon Loon shared that her daughter's ambition is to study abroad. In fact, she has already planned to travel to another country on a scholarship, something that only became possible after joining EDGE. Loon Loon believes EDGE contributed to making her daughter's dream of studying abroad a reality. She has also requested the continued operation of EDGE in her area, as many other children cannot access proper education due to the ongoing intense situation: *There are no other classes or education activities in my area. There are many children who dropped out of school due to the conflicts. So many had to leave for foreign countries to work, as they could not continue their education here. I wish EDGE to continue its support.*

Summary

Loon Loon's account highlights that despite her limited education, she recognises the value of learning and leadership opportunities offered by EDGE. Her daughter's journey from a small coastal town to aspiring to study abroad is a powerful example of how EDGE can nurture ambition in young girls. This case also underscores the importance of sustaining such initiatives in underserved and crisis-affected areas to ensure that more girls can access education, realise their potential, and materialise their goals.

11. Reshaping gender norms and helping to overcome social struggles

Meet Shun Lei

I have a dream of going abroad to pursue my career, and EDGE helped me a lot to get closer to my dream, said Shun Lei, a 16-year-old girl club member, as she reflected on her life and her aspirations for a career abroad. Shun Lei's parents are divorced, and she has been striving hard to achieve her goal of building a better future. It was during this journey that she found EDGE, which brought her closer to her dream.

Shun Lei's journey with EDGE

Shun Lei has been part of EDGE for six months now. Coming from a family affected by an unhappy marriage, EDGE gave her new hope: *I would describe EDGE in three words – friends, happiness, and*

growth. I believe that having so many friends is very supportive in helping me get out of isolation, she said. She mentioned that happiness came from being able to chat freely with her friends without pressure or burden.

Shun Lei's transformation

After joining EDGE, Shun Lei's traditional beliefs about the capabilities of girls like her began to change: *Now, I believe that girls like us can also take leadership roles like boys. EDGE engraved a can-do attitude in me.* She testified that she improved in English, digital and social skills: *My friends told me, 'You are not like before – you look smarter.' My friends also want to join EDGE after seeing me change.*



Shun Lei's aspirations

Shun Lei's improvements have not only impacted her own life but also changed how her younger sisters see her: *My sisters now envy me, that I can now guide them using my lessons from EDGE at home.* She is also confident about taking leadership roles in the future and believes she can support younger girls with the knowledge she gained from EDGE.

Each component of EDGE, English, digital, and social, has become a stepping stone for her to pursue her dream of working abroad: *As a person who has a plan to go abroad, I must know English and EDGE provided me with foundational English skills.* She also recognises that it was EDGE that gave her the opportunity to use a computer for the first time, and skills which will be valuable for job hunting.

Summary

Despite coming from a broken family and facing emotional challenges, EDGE empowered Shun Lei with not only the tools to dream big, but also the skills and confidence to act on those dreams. EDGE redefined her identity, from a girl unsure of her future to being a confident girl who now inspires her peers and siblings. Because of EDGE, the dreams of girls like Shun Lei live on and grow stronger.



12. Young women leaders seeking patience, planning and growth

Meet Htet

Htet is a young woman from the southern coastal region of Myanmar who had to suspend her education due to instability in her hometown. Before joining EDGE, she described herself as short-tempered and easily frustrated whenever she faced disagreements or challenges. However, her journey as a peer group leader under EDGE became a critical point in how she viewed herself and interacted with those around her.

Htet's journey with EDGE

Htet joined EDGE at its pilot phase in 2023. While she was initially scared of leading other girls, through coordination with her fellow PGLs, she gradually built her confidence. The peer-to-peer structure of the club allowed her to build sisterly relationships with the girls she facilitated: *EDGE is unique because it brought us closer together, giving us the freedom to connect, which is unlike in formal schools.* She believes it offers true opportunities for girls like her who had to suspend their education: *I think EDGE is 'Gold' because it truly supports girls in need, without any discrimination based on social class.*

Htet's transformation

One of Htet's most significant areas of growth was emotional regulation. She reflected on how her temper had often affected her interactions with others: *Before EDGE, I got angry very quickly. But after becoming a PGL, I learned to be more patient and to think before I react.* Through social sessions, she developed the ability to listen more, consider

others' perspectives, and provide encouragement rather than criticism. This change was evident not only within the club but also in her family dynamics. She now communicates more calmly with her younger siblings and offers guidance rather than scolding them. EDGE also strengthened her planning and self-reflection skills: *Before I joined EDGE, I had no plans. But now, I've learned how to plan ahead.* She has also become more open to receiving feedback, something she once disliked: *I used to hate feedback, but now I actively seek it from others because it helps me improve. I've come to understand that different people can have different perspectives.*

Htet's aspirations

Htet hopes to apply the skills and experiences gained from EDGE to her future education and career: *Because of EDGE, I now understand the value of time management, which I believe will help in both my studies and future job. EDGE also guided me in becoming a leader, something that will be valuable in taking on leadership roles where others may hesitate.*

Summary

Htet's journey from frustration to patience and from hesitation to leadership shows how EDGE empowers girls not only with skills but with a new sense of identity and purpose. Her metaphor of EDGE as 'Gold' captures the programme's value in her life, a rare and transformative opportunity that reshaped how she leads, listens and lives.

13. EDGE through the eyes of a rural girl

Meet Wint

Wint is a 14-year-old girl who is living with her grandmother. Her mother is a labourer working away in rubber plantations. Wint is a young ethnic minority girl from a small village. She described life in her village: *In our village everything is peaceful, but some areas close to our village are not in peace due to armed conflicts. As our parents need to work elsewhere to earn a living for the family, most children like me live with their grandparents.* This highlights the subsistence living conditions of Wint.

Wint's journey with EDGE

Wint cannot join EDGE as she has to travel a long distance to attend her formal school, where she is currently studying in Grade 8. In addition to the formal education, she also learns her own ethnic language in summer. She expressed how much she wanted to join EDGE when she heard about it from her friends who were joining: *I seriously wanted to join, as I heard from my friends how enjoyable and relaxing it is. There are also many others like me who wanted to join EDGE.*

Wint's transformation

From her friends who are club members of EDGE, Wint understands that EDGE is different from the traditional classroom setting: *My friends told me that they learned English, computer, and mainly social skills. I think EDGE is unique because in schools we cannot learn social skills. Also in normal schools, we don't get to make our own decisions – instead, are forced to concentrate only on what is instructed. I heard EDGE also has computers and develops computer skills, something that is not available in our schools.*

Wint's aspirations

Wint perceives that EDGE could support girls with a safe space where they can share their emotions, thus making life less stressful. She also thinks that it could help build networks between girls and that this approach could help them solve each other's problems when needed: *I heard from my friends that EDGE also raises girls' awareness about how they should behave and make sound judgments about whether others are good or bad people.*

Summary

Wint's story illustrates how the reputation and impact of EDGE can cascade down to rural areas. Even though she is not yet a member, her strong desire to join stems from the positive experiences shared by her peers. EDGE is seen by rural girls not only as a place for learning but also as a supportive and inclusive space where girls can grow emotionally, build networks and feel empowered.

14. Wai's journey: A story of confidence, empathy, and growth

Meet Wai

Wai is an ethnic minority girl from a hilly region of Myanmar. Both of her parents are members of ethnic minority groups. Currently attending Grade 10 in formal education, Wai joined EDGE as a girl club member. Being part of an ethnic minority, she was concerned about encountering differences in social norms and standards, as the girls she attended the club with were from other ethnic backgrounds. She feared that her peers would be so different from her. However, such scepticism faded as she gained momentum in EDGE.

Wai's journey with EDGE

Wai has been with EDGE for nine months. She described EDGE in three words: interesting, empathy, and happiness. She recalled her early days in the club: *I was very weak in digital skills and didn't know how to use a computer. But my peers, not just PGLs but also other girls, were very supportive. They helped me even before I had to ask for help. Soon, I no longer saw my digital skill as a weakness as I gained confidence.* She affirmed that in EDGE, everyone shows compassion and respect for each other through mutual understanding of challenges.

Wai's transformation

EDGE made an impact not only on the girls currently involved in the club but also had a ripple effect on others: *My friends at school witnessed my improvement in English and interpersonal skills, and they told me they also wanted to join EDGE. There are so many girls who want to join, and I think EDGE should be promoted on social media for more publicity.*

Wai's transformation through EDGE is remarkable. As a club member, she has gained more confidence in using computers and speaking English: *I noticed that I've become more fluent in English – I can now speak without much thinking to spill out words.* Unlike in a normal classroom setting, she appreciates how girls got to know each other without competing in test scores while offering help when needed. EDGE's influence extends beyond the club and shapes girls' day-to-day social interactions.

Wai shared a personal incident: *One day, my dog accidentally bit a neighbour's child. My neighbour angrily complained to my mother. Normally, I wouldn't get involved in such arguments, but because of the skills I learned from EDGE, I stepped in to resolve the situation. My mother was very surprised by my action.*

Wai's aspirations

EDGE also awakened Wai's ambition to pursue scholarship opportunities for her studies. She had long dreamed of achieving a scholarship, and because of EDGE, she feels this goal is now within reach: *I want to have a scholarship so much – it's part of why I joined EDGE. I hope my dream will come true through EDGE. I can't wait to re-join EDGE when it reopens.*

Summary

Wai's case exemplifies how EDGE fosters a cohesive environment where girls can truly feel a sense of social harmony. Differences in race, colour and social background do not matter in EDGE. The true meaning of EDGE, as Wai puts it, lies in the embodiment of empathy and happiness.

15. Empowered to become a leader

Meet Nu Nu

I joined the EDGE club because I really wanted to join it, not because someone pressured me to join, said Nu Nu, a 15-year-old ethnic minority girl from a coastal region of Myanmar. Nu Nu talked about why she joined the EDGE club as a girl club member – she is in Grade 4 but has opted out of formal government schooling. Instead, she is now studying online classes while also participating in the EDGE club. She said, *EDGE is a real opportunity for those who cannot continue their education. It also offers a lot of things that we could practically apply in real life.*

received from EDGE has been very supportive for her. For digital skills, she has even practised using her cousin's laptop outside of the EDGE club. She has also shared her learning with her younger sister. Although she used to be afraid of speaking English, she has developed confidence by practising English with others. She has also learnt about how to raise awareness about environmental conservation: *With the environmental education I received from EDGE, I now know the impact that can be caused by throwing plastic bottles. So, I now recycle my water bottle instead of throwing it away.*

Nu Nu's journey with EDGE

Nu Nu has been a member of EDGE for over a year now. She genuinely enjoys the EDGE environment: *I really like how EDGE is designed. The peer group leaders are mostly older than me. But, unlike in a normal classroom, they never force us to do things a certain way. They are very flexible, which is good for us to be collaborative.* Nu Nu mentioned that the peer group leaders are very supportive and always engage in group discussions.

Nu Nu's aspirations

Nu Nu enthusiastically stated her improvement in leadership potential, saying EDGE has supported her in learning how to coordinate effectively through teamwork. EDGE has reshaped her confidence and perception through topics related to life skills: *I believe that I could empower my community and encourage other girls not to tolerate it if they experience domestic violence. I want to be a leader in the future to raise such awareness.*

Nu Nu's transformation

Nu Nu acknowledges that this flexible approach has empowered her to be more transparent and to discuss ideas she previously felt afraid to share. EDGE has opened up her speaking and communication skills. All the learning she has

Summary

Nu Nu's case illustrates EDGE's significant role in shaping and empowering young girls. EDGE not only fosters the appetite to learn and grow, but also elevates girls' self-esteem and leadership potential, encouraging them to see themselves as agents of change within their communities.

16. A religious minority girl's journey of leadership and connection

Meet Fatima

Fatima is a 17-year-old girl living on the outskirts of the capital city in northern Myanmar. She is from a Muslim family, and she described herself as being confined to a small social network, making friends only within her religious group. However, her life took a turn when she joined as peer group leader in the EDGE programme.

on the role of PGL with curiosity and dedication, learning how to facilitate sessions and support younger girls. She observed that EDGE is formed with girls from multiple ethnicities and religions, encouraging mutual understanding and appreciation of diversity among them: *We often explained to each other how to pronounce our names. As a Muslim, I noticed others found my name difficult to pronounce, and likewise, I tried to learn the names of girls from different religions and backgrounds.*

Fatima's journey with EDGE

At first, Fatima was uncertain about her ability to lead others as she did not have to take up a leadership role in her family. But she gradually took



Fatima's transformation

Fatima has not only improved her ability to speak and manage group discussions but also relationships with her family members. She recalled evolving relationships with her younger brother: *Before, I did not have a good relationship with my brother and would get very angry easily. But EDGE helped transform my mindset, helping me to be more patient, building a better relationship with my brother.*

Her leadership has also become evident at the club. A girl who was once reluctant to take the lead in her family has now become confident in speaking and leading group activities, enhancing her ability to clearly present her thoughts. She reflected that the stories shared through EDGE were powerful in shaping the girls' values, helping them not to discriminate and boosting their confidence: *The stories are a great medium to show how social discrimination is harmful to the community and to encourage girls to be braver.*

Fatima aspires to take on a further role in supporting her community, by helping young people. EDGE has sparked her ambition to further develop her digital literacy as she aims to pursue opportunities at the international level. It has also deepened her awareness of environmental issues through facilitating the related topics in the club. This experience has helped her form a stronger connection to environmental responsibility: *EDGE engraved that sense in me 'I feel like a good person to the world' which is a wonderful feeling. I've come to realise that I also have a responsibility to help sustain the environment.*

Summary

As a young woman from a religious minority group, Fatima has overcome social hesitations and internal doubt to emerge as a confident leader, a caring sister and an empowered individual. Her story highlights how EDGE's diverse environment can steer greater awareness of differences and promote mutual understanding and respect – a shared space where all girls feel included and valued.

17. Empowering girls in a camp-based setting

Meet Yati

Yati is living in a camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) because the village she came from experienced heavy armed conflict. She is an ethnic minority and a Christian. She has been working as an education focal person at her church, supporting and coordinating educational services for the children at the IDP camp.

Journey of Yati's community with EDGE

When EDGE was first introduced, Yati was involved in organising the parents at the camp to explain what EDGE is about. She shared that her community is one where males are perceived as the leaders: *In my community, even when children are born, parents prefer to have boys, as they think that boys bring luck, as a tradition.* The majority of people in the camp are ethnic minorities, and some have low education levels without much regard for education of their children. However, when EDGE was introduced in the camp, most parents showed interest in it: *EDGE representatives came here to explain EDGE, and they did it very well. Most parents accepted EDGE.*

Transformation of Yati's community

Yati acknowledged that EDGE was the first programme that focused on girls. Many other programmes had focused on males. The changes in community perception towards girls are noticeable. Previous community customs of having girls stay at home and not letting them take leadership roles have shifted after EDGE. Yati also stressed that parents felt very satisfied with the improvements of their girls: *Whenever the parents meet me, they (especially mothers) admit the positive transformation brought by EDGE. They say the programme is very*

good. One of Yati's relatives also joined EDGE as a club member, and she was very surprised to see her using a computer. She shared: *In the camp, it was not possible to use a computer before. But because of EDGE, the children in the camp are now familiar with computers.*

Yati's aspirations

Yati has also witnessed improved social interaction among the girls due to EDGE's model of allowing girls of similar age to facilitate each other: *I am very pleased to see that the girls have opened up about their feelings and thoughts. They feel more confident to speak to each other, as they would not have had that much confidence to share with teachers in a traditional classroom.* Yati commented that EDGE has led the girls to be on the right track and to pursue a positive direction for their future. She wishes for continued EDGE support for the girls living in marginalised communities like her camp. She suggested that much wider EDGE support to involve more girls would be beneficial.

Summary

The case portrays EDGE's endeavour to persevere in giving support to the most marginalised girls amid armed crises. Despite deep-rooted gender biases and limited access to education in her community, Yati observed a significant shift in both attitudes and outcomes for girls. This case highlights the critical importance of inclusive, girl-focused programmes in marginalised settings, and calls for the continued expansion of EDGE to reach more girls in need of empowerment and opportunity.

18. A mother's story: EDGE's spillover effect beyond the girls' club

Meet Lwin Lwin

Lwin Lwin is a mother of a girl club member, and she used to live in a remote and mountainous region when she was young. She only completed Grade 9 in formal education and could not continue due to challenges she experienced as a young girl: *I had to discontinue school as my mother was unwell. The place where I grew up was harsh and remote; it would take two days to travel to school from my home. I am also the eldest daughter, so I had to resign myself to taking care of my mother.* She developed empathy towards other children who experienced the same challenges as her. Thus, she established an education centre to support children: *As a person who did not complete formal education, I feel empathetic for those. So, I opened a learning centre for underserved children.* She understands the value of education and appreciates EDGE's support for girls with limited access to learning.

Lwin Lwin's daughter's journey with EDGE

As someone who is very enthusiastic about education and who runs an education centre on her own, Lwin Lwin views EDGE very positively. She genuinely believes in the cascading effect of EDGE, impacting not just members, but also the wider population. Her daughter, who joined EDGE, shares what she has learned with the children at her mother's learning centre: *For example, my daughter guided the children on how to paint and type using computers.* The children who attend Lwin Lwin's centre are orphans and from multiple ethnic minority backgrounds, and boys. This showcases the influence of EDGE that reaches beyond the club, making an impact on the wider community.

Lwin Lwin's daughter's transformation

Talking about her daughter, Lwin Lwin has noticed changes. Her daughter used to be very shy and scared to talk to others. But after EDGE, her communication skills flourished: *She used to be a girl with worries and fear, but she is willing to lead now. She has developed courage and now believes in herself. There are children even older than my daughter, but she can persuade them to get interested in what she shares.* Lwin Lwin was surprised by her daughter's ability to take the initiative at home, becoming more responsible and skilled in planning and managing tasks herself.

Lwin Lwin's daughter's aspirations

After seeing her daughter's growth and sharing, Lwin Lwin was enthusiastic to recommend EDGE: *I can't wait to recommend EDGE to my friends and neighbours. I told them they could get quality education there without any cost.* Lwin Lwin even suggested EDGE should expand to include boys.

Summary

This case highlights the spillover effect of EDGE, as its impact extends far beyond the girls' clubs. Learning, skills and knowledge, and even its reputation for inclusiveness, can spread to those around it. EDGE may be a small initiative, but it generates large-scale impact, flowing from one to another, uplifting entire communities in the process.

19. From difficult to gentle: a journey of behavioural change

Meet War War

War War is a 14-year-old girl who used to view herself as stubborn, aggressive and difficult to communicate with, preferring to live in isolation without any friends. Understanding her difficult nature, her family insisted she join EDGE with the hope of transforming her. With encouragement from her family, she eventually joined EDGE as a girls' club member, where she experienced social and behavioural transformations.

War War's journey with EDGE

War War recounted her early days in EDGE when she would respond very negatively to her peers in the club. She recalled, *I was very intense and assertive. I would not communicate with friends from the club very well.* But over time, her behaviour became gentler, and she started making friends. With the patience, dedication and empathy shown by the peer group leaders and her fellow club members, she showed more understanding toward others, which in turn changed her difficult personality: *Whenever I felt upset, the girls would play little games with me. They tried to make me smile and feel happy again. They would do whatever they could to make me feel better.*

War War's transformation

EDGE has totally transformed War War's character, from being a very challenging and isolated girl to becoming more respectful and softer. She now has many friends in the club, where she has found her happiness. Her social perception of diversity has also changed, from a discriminative perception to

accepting diversity: *I didn't want to play with those who were different in skin colour from me. Now I accept more of those differences, and I would play with anyone.* Her behavioural change has also had a ripple effect on her relationship with her family. She now shows more patience and listens well to her family members: *I didn't listen to my father well and would always talk back to him. But after EDGE, I listen to him more, as I can show more understanding and patience.* As an elder sister, she now transfers her skills and knowledge to her younger sister at home. She shared, *EDGE is a place where I can find joy. Whenever I feel angry, EDGE helps me get rid of it.*

War War's aspirations

Through EDGE, War War has also found a passion for teaching, although she was not aware of it before joining: *Watching the peer group leaders who guided me sparked a real passion for teaching, which I wasn't serious about before. But over time, it grew into something I truly care about.* She said she is determined to make that ambition real.

Summary

EDGE is a platform that goes far beyond just developing girls' English, computer and social skills. War War's case shows that EDGE is also a behaviour-changing agent that fosters transformation from negative to positive. It not only delivers skills girls need but also guides them toward regulating their behaviour and promoting emotional intelligence – benefiting them for the rest of their lives.

20. Aspiration for learning and growth: A case of a displaced girl

Meet Thu Thu

Thu Thu, an 18-year-old ethnic minority girl, is an internally displaced person. She has been living in an IDP camp for one year now due to heavy conflict that forced her family to relocate from their town. She talked about the minimal conditions she has been living in: *We face many challenges as IDPs. In summer, we experience shortages of water and electricity.*

Thu Thu's aspiration to join EDGE

Thu Thu wasn't able to join EDGE because she was not in the location when EDGE was first introduced. However, she shared her enthusiasm to be part of the programme. She talked about her opinion of EDGE: *I think the collective learning environment like the EDGE club is very desirable. I am very eager to share my thoughts and feelings with other girls in such a setting – which I think could reduce my feelings of depression and concerns. I believe it will be very supportive for girls like me living in difficult conditions.*

Thu Thu's observations of friends in EDGE

Thu Thu noticed that her friends who had joined EDGE showed significant improvements – especially in their digital skills: *I am really inspired by my friends' improvements in their digital skills. Compared to those who did not join EDGE, the ones in EDGE know how to use PowerPoint very well whenever there are school projects.*

Thu Thu's impressions of EDGE

Thu Thu thinks that her friends who participate in EDGE do better in many aspects. She has noticed the positive changes in her friends and heard good things about EDGE from them. She is truly compelled by the fact that EDGE has no teachers: *I think that the lack of teachers allows the girls to share and learn more freely. I truly believe that the programme enables the girls to lead each other, which enables them to build trust and sisterly relationships. Girls like us are more confident to open up our feelings and emotions in such a setting, something we cannot access in traditional schools.*

Summary

Thu Thu's admiration of EDGE, based on her friends' experiences, demonstrates that EDGE is a platform that inspires girls living in harsh conditions. This residual effect of EDGE can motivate and empower underprivileged girls to become eager learners. EDGE serves as a hope for girls in displacement and hardship, showing that a supportive and empowering environment can inspire aspirations for learning and growth, even for girls living in the most challenging conditions.

