

From Insight to Impact: First Year of LEAS



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1. Introduction

Learning to Empower Adolescent Girls at Scale (LEAS) - launched in October 2024 - is a global and multi-sectoral learning platform geared towards showcasing evidence, knowledge, and best practices on what works to empower adolescent girls at scale and sharing guidance on how to effectively integrate adolescent girls' initiatives (AGI) into World Bank programming. LEAS, co-led by the Global Gender Group and the Education Global Department, envisages to:



Inspire, connect and support teams to develop evidence-based policy actions and interventions to equip girls with skills, support school-to-work transition, and expand their economic opportunities at scale.



Share and promote practical solutions to test, scale and replicate.



Foster a community of practice and task force for continued learning and collaboration and promote better outcomes for girls through WBG engagement in the education sector.

2. LEAS at a Glance

In its first year, LEAS conducted **6 technical sessions, including an operations clinic**. The sessions engaged key technical staff and practice managers from the Bank as well as thought leaders from external partners, including UN agencies, other development partners, civil society organizations and the private sector. The sessions were tailored in format and duration depending on the thematic focus. Key themes and topics varied from *inclusion of girls in STEM to empowering girls through access to sexual and reproductive health, and from leveraging AI to empower girls to addressing barriers to adolescent boys' academic success*. Several sessions were especially tailored to commemorate international observances, including International Day of Women and Girls in Science, International Day of Education, International Day of Menstrual Health and Hygiene.

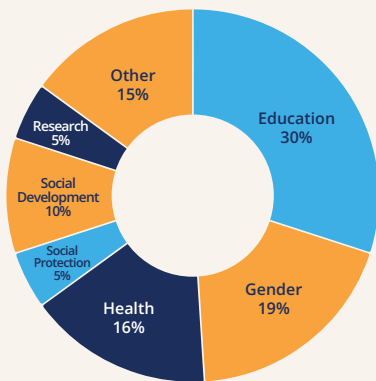


In its first year of delivery, LEAS reached over **550 participants** with strong representation from both World Bank staff and external stakeholders. While LEAS was initially envisioned as an internal knowledge platform, it soon became a strong vehicle to foster and deepen external partnerships, helping connect the dots across ongoing global initiatives. External participants made up 45 percent of overall attendance and included UN agencies such as UNICEF, UNGEI, and UNFPA, civil society organizations like CAMFED and BeGirl, and private sector representatives such as Beshram, Soronko Academy, and Laboratoria—reflecting the series’

emphasis on cross-sectoral learning and collaboration (Figure 1). One notable collaboration was with UNICEF, as part of our joint commitment to prioritize adolescent girls and advance gender equality through 2030. This partnership gained additional momentum through the LEAS series, particularly with a session on *inclusion of women and girls in STEM leadership*. More broadly, LEAS has helped align and reinforce engagements across key areas such as adolescent health, girls’ education, and digital inclusion, offering a platform to integrate shared priorities in ongoing World Bank operations.

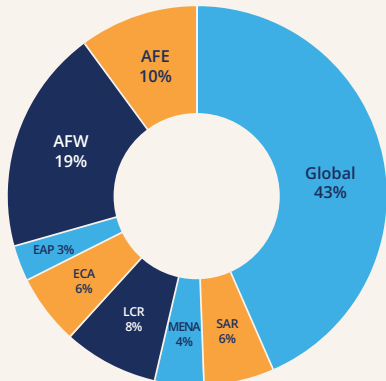
Figure 1: Distribution of LEAS participants across sectors and regions

Share of Participants by Sector



Other sectors include water, digital, energy, transport, and urban development

Share of Participants by Region



SESSION #1 | OCTOBER, 2024

Empowering Adolescent Girls through Sexual and Reproductive Health



SESSION #2 | JANUARY, 2025

Empowering Adolescent Girls: the Agency to Navigate Digital Technologies



SESSION #3 | FEBRUARY, 2025

Reimagining STEM Leadership: Shaping the Future of Adolescent Girls through STEM



SESSION #4 | MARCH, 2025

Educational Equity for All: Addressing Barriers to Adolescent Boys' Academic Success



SESSION #5 | APRIL, 2025

Operations Clinic on Supporting Adolescent Girls



SESSION #6 | MAY, 2025

Menstrual Health and Hygiene: A Catalyst to Elevate Human Capital



Deep Dive: Operations Clinic on Supporting Adolescent Girls

The operations clinic supported World Bank teams designing projects for adolescent girls, with a focus on gender-transformative, evidence-based approaches. It brought together mentors and project teams from education, health, social protection and social development. Most teams sought guidance on improving girls' education and skills for better labor market integration, while tackling harmful norms around school dropout, early marriage, and gender-based violence. Using a demand-driven approach, the clinic helped teams diagnose challenges, identify solutions and develop an action plan, as delineated below:

Diagnosing Challenges

- What are the structural and systemic **obstacles** encountered by adolescent girls in your project setting?
- Can you identify the **influencers and gatekeepers** of girls in your project-context?
- Which **components and domains** from the anchoring framework will your project influence? What are the key outcomes you would like to move the needle on?
- What **specific challenge(s)** do you foresee in your project? Are you aware of the **most pressing challenges**?

Identifying Solutions

- Which evidence-based **interventions** could address the diagnosed challenges?
- How can the project **adapt** these solutions to the local context?
- How can you **reach and target** beneficiaries effectively?
- What **indicators** will you use to measure success?
- What are some of the **core enablers** required, particularly those from other sectors, to address the challenges?

Developing Action Plan

- Which **stakeholders does the project need** to engage with and what's their role?
- What **additional information and resources** [including data, knowledge resources] do you need to tweak/refine the challenges and solutions?
- What do you need to know about the **implementation and technical capacity of the client** to deliver at scale?
- What are the specific **next steps and timelines**?

Testimonials



Thanks very much for a very well and thoughtfully organized session! It was interesting to learn about the projects, problems, potential solutions, and priorities."



The interactive sessions were particularly effective, and the sharing of real project experiences enriched the discussion. What was missing was more hands-on activities and case studies relevant to the participants' projects."

4. Measurable Progress and Early Impacts

A series of post-session polls revealed that the LEAS seminar series significantly strengthened **participant knowledge and awareness** across key dimensions of adolescent girls' empowerment. Participants demonstrated an understanding of key facts discussed, a grasp of the systemic barriers faced by adolescents, and a strong awareness of actionable solutions. The LEAS series equipped participants not only with the facts, but also with the conceptual tools to understand and act on complex, cross-sectoral issues.

In addition, LEAS provided **access to key resources** - including PowerPoint presentations, session recordings, links to best-practice projects/case-studies and key takeaways - through the [LEAS Intranet](#) and [LEAS External webpage](#). On the external website, over **809 unique visitors** accessed LEAS event content, generating more than **2,000 page views**. Visitors came from **31 countries**, including top client countries such as India, Kenya, and Ghana, alongside donor countries like the U.S., France, and the U.K.—highlighting the series' broad global relevance. On the internal platform, LEAS content generated an additional 585 page views and 122 unique visitors. The highest engagement came from the People Vertical, followed by the regions Africa East, Africa West, South Asia and the unit DEC. While engagement with the website was relatively limited in other Verticals, the breadth of interest across operational and regional units shows strong internal relevance. Notably, 18 percent of visitors accessed the content from **country offices**, highlighting a primarily headquarters-driven but globally distributed interest.

Figure 3: Participant Learning Outcomes Across the LEAS Seminar Series

Knowledge of facts

% correct: Share of women among STEM graduates is 35%

98

% correct: Share of women in global STEM jobs is 28%

91

% correct: Estimated 400M weekly ChatGPT users

48

Reported challenges

% identifying social norms and systemic biases

85

% identifying education system barriers

77

Awareness of solutions

% recognizing STEM and digital inclusion as key enablers

93

% citing system-level investments for equity and safety

69

Note: Excerpts from responses to LEAS seminar polls

5. Lessons & Looking Ahead

The first year of LEAS implementation has highlighted key areas for improvement. First, there is a need to explore more frontier topics in alignment with World Bank's first-order priorities—particularly how to **equip adolescents for the jobs of the future** through education, **skills development** and seamless school-to-work transition. While acknowledging the criticality of **addressing norms**, the LEAS team will also aim to integrate strategies to foster positive attitudes and address harmful social norms that may hinder girls' holistic development. This will entail identifying gender-transformative approaches to promote gender-sensitive pedagogy, teaching materials, strengthening support for inclusive school systems, and engaging parents and communities. Second, while many examples featured Sub-Saharan Africa given the region's high burden of educational challenges, future LEAS sessions in FY26 will **broaden regional representation** by drawing on lessons from countries that have made measurable progress in advancing girls' empowerment. Third, in the coming fiscal year, the LEAS team will further **strengthen its operational focus** to support task teams upstream in embedding effective adolescent girls' initiatives into WBG operations from the outset. Fourth, the team will also expand its focus on **adolescent boys**, recognizing the growing interest, particularly in regions like MENA and LCR, where lagging educational outcomes among boys have become a pressing challenge.



Lastly, acknowledging that the adolescent girls' agenda is intrinsically multi-sectoral, LEAS has aimed to showcase key evidence and examples from across sectors and regions while fostering strong collaborations with internal and external partners. In FY26, LEAS will aim to further **extend its collaborations** across global departments in the Planet and Prosperity verticals and the new *Unified Knowledge Bank* alongside cultivating partnerships with IFC and MIGA, in alignment with a One WBG approach. These adjustments are strongly geared towards disseminating operationally relevant analytical work and replicating successful models at scale across sectors to **create jobs and prepare the future workforce of women and girls**.

LEAS core team includes Abhilasha Sahay, Ekua Bentil, Chiara Broccolini, Alice Amegah, Mame Niasse, Junya Yuan, Haddijatou Ceesay, and Raiden Dillard. LEAS team thanks Ana Maria Munoz, Aditi Kadam, Uraidah Hassani, Subhashini Rajasekaran, and Cynthia Abidin-Saurman for their contributions in delivering select LEAS Sessions. The team is grateful for invaluable guidance and support from Hana Bixi, Luis Benveniste, Emanuela Di Gropello and Halil Dunder.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT OUR WEBSITES



INTRANET



EXTERNAL WEBSITE

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ADOLESCENT GIRLS AT SCALE