



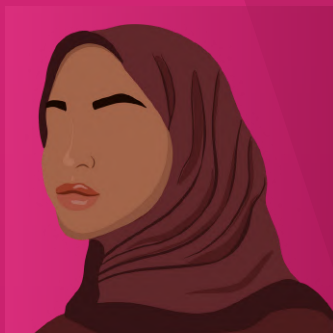
# 4<sup>th</sup> nalafem SUMMIT

1st-2nd July 2025 | Freetown, Sierra Leone



# REPORT

**FROM REPRESENTATION TO POWER**  
WOMEN LEADING IN CRISIS & PEACE



Since its inception in 2022, the Nalafem Summit has evolved into a leading multi-track diplomacy space and one of the largest multigenerational platforms for Women Who Lead. It offers a vital opportunity for women in politics, activism and civil society to exchange best practices and build transformative collaborations between public institutions and grassroots movements. Anchored in advocacy, accountability, innovation and partnerships, the Summit plays a critical role in accelerating the realization of gender equality commitments across the African continent.

On 1-2 July 2025, former presidents, government officials, parliamentarians, diplomats & UN Officials, policymakers, survivors, grassroots organizers and activists gathered in Freetown, Sierra Leone, under the theme: **From Representation to Power: Women Leading in Crisis & Peace.**



**Co-hosted by the Mayor of Freetown and Nalafem**

The 2025 Nalafem Summit was a bold political home for African women leaders. This historic gathering brought together over 120 delegates from 25 countries to chart a future beyond representation toward feminist governance, intergenerational solidarity and collective power. We honored the emotional labor and invisible care work through Nala Notes, a feminist currency. We held space for survivors through the Power of the Vagina Exhibition. The Summit became a living manifesto where 35 bold pledges culminated in the Freetown Declaration.



**INAUGURAL NALAFEM SUMMIT & AWARDS**

• Abuja, Nigeria | 1 July 2022  
**153** Delegates  
**27** speakers from **21** Countries



**2ND NALAFEM SUMMIT & AWARDS**

• Nairobi, Kenya | 1-2 July 2023  
**219** Delegates  
**52** speakers from **37** Countries

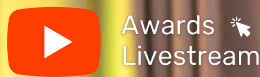


**3RD NALAFEM SUMMIT & AWARDS**

• Windhoek, Namibia | 1 July 2024  
**113** Delegates  
**32** speakers from **35** Countries



Full Summit Livestream



Awards Livestream

**120**  
Delegates

**42**  
Speakers

**16-62yrs**  
Age Range

**25**  
Countries

**54** Pledges to the Nalafem Manifesto



**93** Online Delegates

**11** Partners





THE  
N

E SMITH  
AYFORD

LIBERATION  
inist, defender  
frican girlhood



# OPENING

**FROM REPRESENTATION TO POWER  
WOMEN LEADING IN CRISIS & PEACE**





# WELCOME



In a powerful opening session, **Aya Chebbi**, Founder and President of Nalafem, and **Rose Wachuka**, Board Chair of Nalafem and Chief of Staff to the Chief Justice of Kenya set the tone for a summit grounded in truth-telling, resistance and radical imagination. Chebbi affirmed resilience of women who continue to resist systemic oppression in parliament chambers, in protest lines, and digital spaces. She called out the violence of policing women's leadership and declared that solidarity must replace pity, stating, "You cannot support women in leadership by policing their bodies. Power must not be punished."

Wachuka emphasized on institutional change, reminding us that representation alone is a trap unless it translates into redistribution of power. She noted, "Parity is not generosity; it is good governance" citing Namibia's gender-balanced Cabinet as evidence that feminist political will can reshape systems.



**Over the years, Nalafem summit has become a political home for women who dare to lead. Women who dare to shift culture, governance and history. And so when we see a woman rising, we show up!**



**AYA CHEBBI**



**We are saying, we must get to a point where we no longer 'make history. Where we are no longer 'the first woman', but one of many.**



**ROSE WACHUKA**



# KEYNOTE DIALOGUE & GUEST OF HONOR

MADAME ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF, FORMER PRESIDENT OF LIBERIA & MEMBER OF CLUB DE MADRID

● MODERATOR: AYA CHEBBI

## POWER WITH PURPOSE: LEADERSHIP AS LEGACY

In a historic keynote dialogue, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first elected female head of state reminded us that true power lies not in titles but in purpose. She emphasized that authentic leadership must be rooted in values, humility, vision, and the unwavering commitment to uplift others. Progress, she noted, has been hard-won and slow, but it is real, and the next generation must carry it further.

## LESSONS FROM A LEGACY

- **Leadership is learning:** Great leaders never stop growing. They stay curious and grounded. They prepare others to lead not cling to power.
- **Communities sustain leadership:** No leader succeeds alone. Power must be shared with those who carry the same values to ensure continuity and impact.
- **Africa's future is in the hands of its youth:** Not because they are young but because they are innovative, fearless, and ready. Africa's rise demands both wisdom and reinvention.
- **Self-reliance is political:** From resources to decision-making, African nations must chart their own course and trust their own power.



“

**Power is not for its own sake. Power is service. Your power is not yours alone. It must lift others. That is legacy. Stand your ground. Be a woman and don't change for others**



**MADAME ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF**



# KEYNOTE

## PATRON OF 4TH NALAFEM SUMMIT - YVONNE-AKI SAWYERR

### MODERATOR: STELLA BANGURA

As Patron of the 4th Nalafem Summit, Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyers delivered a deeply personal and politically charged keynote. With grace and conviction, she shared the story of her leadership, a journey sparked by love, fueled by frustration and anchored in service. When working with the President's Delivery Team, Yvonne's discontent with the status quo wasn't paralyzing, it became her launchpad. She ran for Mayor. Twice. Winning with increasing public confidence 60% in her first term, 66% in her second. Now, as she prepares to run for President of Sierra Leone, she is modeling a different kind of politics, from Hope to Reality, one rooted in care, courage and collaboration.



### PLEDGE

I commit to intergenerational co-leadership through mentorship. I pledge to increase my work with YAS Girls Foundation. I pledge to ensure we reach every district in Sierra Leone. I pledge to reach over 2000 girls in my capacity as the founder of YAS Girls Leadership Foundation.



**When a woman wins, it's a nation that wins. Women in leadership do not take away, they add. That's why when a woman is excelling, we should be supportive of her.**



**YVONNE-AKI SAWYERR**

# CLOSING KEYNOTE

JUSTICE GLENNA THOMPSON, JUDICIARY OF SIERRA LEONE

## WHAT'S NEXT FOR WOMEN IN POWER?

In a resounding closing to the Summit, Justice Glenna Thompson with over 32 years in law and public service, shared a clear message: representation is not the destination, power is. She encouraged the room to break quotas and build systems. Appointed to Sierra Leone's Supreme Court in 2017, Justice Thompson has stood at the intersection of justice and gender for decades. She knows that when young women see themselves on the bench, they begin to understand that they are not just subjects of the law, they are shapers of it. Because justice, when rooted in lived experience and feminist values, becomes more than legal outcomes, it becomes transformation.

## FROM SYMBOLS TO SYSTEMS

- **Quotas without support are insufficient.** Women must have tools, networks and mentorship to succeed especially in rural and underserved areas.
- **Feminist spaces like Nalafem are essential;** they allow for radical learning, cross-movement connection, and shared political power.
- **Justice must be holistically** built not just in courtrooms, but in communities, care work and the quiet acts of showing up.



“

When justice wears a young woman's face, girls begin to see themselves as leaders. True leadership is intergenerational, inclusive, and rooted in lifting others.



JUSTICE GLENNA THOMPSON



### PLEDGE

I pledge my time and professional skills to mentor in my capacity as Judge.



# VIDEO ADDRESSES



“

This year's theme, *From Representation to Power: Women Leading in Crisis and Peace*, speaks to the urgency of our time. As we mark 30 years since the Beijing Platform for Action, 25 years of UNSCR 1325, and 80 years of the UN, women's full, equal, and meaningful participation is more critical than ever. In an era of complex crises and tested multilateralism, Nalafem leads the way mobilizing across generations, amplifying youth voices, and creating new, inclusive spaces. As we open this summit, stay bold, united, and focused on the transformation our world urgently needs.

**H.E. AMINA J. MOHAMMED**  
Deputy Secretary General, United Nations

“

This is a climate of growing opposition to women's fundamental rights and choices, and it needs an answer. We want intergenerational forces such as Nalafem to propel us forward, that's the antidote to the forces that are seeking to undermine women's work.



UNFPA commit to amplifying your power, we will scale up our youth leadership training and the peace process link to this because last in peace is not possible without the contribution of young people, peace building sorely need the leadership of young Africa women.

**DR. NATALIA KANEM**  
UNFPA Executive Director



“

I believe that the future of justice is shaped by those who lived throughout its absence. We must move with them, not ahead of them and ensure at the same time that institutions serve their needs, not just their roots

**HIND ABOUZAHIR**  
Associate Professor of Forensic Medicine,  
Forensic Specialist Doctor



“

For those who are entrepreneurs, this is the time where the boardroom is your dancing place, with your best and excellent ideas. For those who lead in civil society, continue to inspire the world, show us what solidarity is and for those who are destined to become the leaders of countries, make sure you change the definition of politics. Politics has to be about how we cared for the people, not how politicians care for themselves.

**DR. PHUMZILE MLAMBO-NGCUKA**  
Former Deputy President of South Africa & Nalafem Champion



“

What you are building here in Freetown is more than a Summit, it is a legacy work. 10 years from now, 20 years from now, history will look at gatherings like this one as a turning point where women did not ask for power but claimed it and used it and changed the world with it

**DR DJIBRIL DIALLO**  
President and Chief Executive Officer of the African Renaissance and Diaspora Network (ARDN)



# RESIST AND RISE: FEMINIST STRATEGIES IN HOSTILE POLITICAL AND DIGITAL SPACES



As digital platforms become critical tools for campaigning and visibility, online violence has emerged as a new frontline. From coordinated smear campaigns to gendered disinformation and cyber harassment, women leaders across Africa are being targeted simply for stepping into public life. This session explored how feminist leaders are resisting online attacks and hostile political landscape while pushing for bold governance reforms.

## TAKEAWAYS

- Female leaders must ask themselves if they are truly prepared to pay the price for their convictions and decisions.
- Culture can be used as a tool of resistance and activism.
- Choosing political leadership involves sacrificing friendships, relationships, and enduring personal attacks.
- The greatest opposition may not come from outside but from within one's own political party.
- Be willing to serve those who embarrass you, oppose you.

## MODERATOR



“IPU released a report that only 27% of Women in Parliament are Women and half of them have faced online harassment, cyber bullying. This should get us angry as women.”

**HON. JOANAH MAMOMBE (ZIMBABWE)**

Nalafem Champion and Member of Parliament



“We need to implement legislation that enables women to improve their lives. Our agenda includes urging many African countries to commit to the Maputo Protocol, giving women access to affirmative action

**HON. WINNIE KIIZA (UGANDA)**

Leader of Opposition Emeritus of the 10th Parliament of Uganda

## PLEDGE

Commit to Demand 3 on Ending Gender Discrimination Pledges to work with others to amplify the voices calling for an end to gender discrimination in my capacity as global adviser to Better Politics.

“Look at the places in the world where things hurt you the most. Find something you are willing to die for and commit. Commit to the work, the tears, the heartbreak, and your health. Human beings are worth it. Africa is worth it.

**CAMILLA BANDA (ZAMBIA)**

National Youth Chairperson for the Party of National Unity and Progress & Member of Club de Madrid

## PLEDGE

I commit to Demand 6 on Mental Health and Wellbeing, pledge to launch an app that will provide counselling services to young African professionals



“Even with a 30% quota representation, the trauma with which women political leaders get to office is huge

**MARCELLA SAMBA-SESAY (SIERRA LEONE)**

Executive Director, Campaign for Good Governance and Chairperson National Election Watch

## PLEDGE

Commit to demand on 2 on Criminalizing GBV to promote the safety & security of women as they compete for political space and run for office, pledge to be a support system in my capacity as director of campaign for good governance.



# FROM THE MARGINS TO LEADERSHIP, SURVIVORS CONFRONT SYSTEMS OF POWER AND ANTI-RIGHTS MOVEMENTS



The panel sparked an urgent dialogue between survivors, government officials, and civil society on advancing survivor-centered governance in Sierra Leone. It challenged the government on stalled legislative reforms around FGM and the Safe Motherhood Bill. While the Minister of Justice affirmed cabinet support, he cited parliamentary resistance rooted in conservative constituencies. A parliamentarian echoed this, linking resistance to community views. However, the Mayor of Freetown and civil society leaders pushed back, calling for political will to be matched by real investment in public education. The panel concluded with a call for government-funded awareness campaigns, sustained parliamentary engagement, and survivor-centered justice.

## TAKEAWAYS

- It's essential to ask if the justice being pursued aligns with what the survivor truly needs or wants.
- Justice occurs outside formal legal systems and should influence how services are designed.
- True progress means understanding accountability as a holistic and ongoing responsibility.
- Survivors hold those in power accountable, including individuals and systems that enable harm.

### MODERATOR



**In 2020, Cameroon was in full blown war, I come from one of the 2 marginalized regions and I was pregnant. I promised my baby that we would go to the hospital, but I could not step out because the war happening outside my house was far more threatening than what was happening within my uterus. I lost that baby, and I would always wonder, "who do I hold accountable"?**

**KONDA DELPHINE (CAMEROON)**

Nalafem Laureate and Founder of Girls Excel



**In a conversation were i came into my activism, I realized that my silence was complicit to the misunderstanding of what FGM was. There were words being thrown around such as 'harmful traditional practices' as opposed to what FGM really is, a systematic, organized crime against gender and women**

**NIMCO ALI OBE (SOMALILAND/UK)**

CEO of The Five Foundation



### PLEDGE

**Commit to Demand 5 on Sexual & Reproductive Health Rights, pledge to work with the G7 countries to make more liquidity available for African women because when our pockets are full, our bodies are protected.**



**Not everyone has a seat at the table. We have to create space for those who are marginalised or have someone speak for them**

**SIBESO MULULUMA (ZAMBIA)**

UNFPA Officer in Charge

### PLEDGE

**Pledge on behalf of UNFPA to contribute to the mama save when women wont die during labor and no girl should die just so that culture can be appealing.**



**Progress is not the same as completion. Survivors have different justice needs, and that should inform the range of justice services that we provide**

**HONOURABLE ALPHA SESAY (SIERRA LEONE)**

Attorney General and Minister of Justice



### PLEDGE

**I endorse the African Young Women's Beijing+25 Manifesto. I commit to lead on gender justice in Sierra Leone. I pledge to be a leading voice and an ally in survivor advocacy with gender-inclusive or sensitive budgeting within the justice sector in my capacity as Attorney General and Minister of Justice.**



# A NEW INTERGENERATIONAL PACT: SHAKING THE OLD HOUSE, BEYOND THE SEAT AT THE TABLE



The panel was an intergenerational dialogue, reckoning with the limitations of symbolic inclusion and a call to reimagine power itself. As young women across Africa continue to enter formal politics, the question is not just about gender representation, but intergenerational co-leadership. The panel expressed a shared commitment to go beyond the seat at the table, to a new political imagination across generations and peaceful transfer of power.

## TAKEAWAYS

- It is important to set your agenda, which distinguishes you from people who do not share your vision.
- Women are born as leaders. It is important to be still, listen to your intuition, and allow flow and ease in leadership.
- Intergenerational leadership is supported by mentorship.
- Dialogue between young and older leaders is important to ensure that there is an understanding of what can be done to ensure that leadership is transitional.

### MODERATOR



“  
My journey to being a political leader in Nigeria spans over 10 years, from university days where I would talk about politics so much, my roommate would tell me to shut up because it wasn't a thing for a young woman to be that involved in civic education

**NAFISA ATIKU-ADEJUWON (NIGERIA)**

Nalafem Envoy to the African Union and Politician



“  
In Uganda, when we talk about issues affecting women, we usually get reminders that the president who has been in power for the past 40 years 'got us out of the kitchen', so at the table, as women we are seen as invited guests and expected to clap at whatever is being said.

**DOREEN NYANJURA (UGANDA)**

Deputy Lord Mayor of Kampala Capital City & Member of Club de Madrid

### PLEDGE

I pledge to be at the front of advocating for equitable and equality education and I will start in my constituency by contributing sanitary towels to girls that drop out of school. Distribute scholastic materials and I pledge in my capacity as a gender scholar, feminist and human rights activists and a leader.

“  
I was told that politics is not for young women, it was for the old, the aggressive, and for men. I was doubted not because of my competence, but because I am a woman. I was told that young women could not make informed choices or control resources. I stood my ground, campaigned and emerged as the first female president of Magistrate student association

**FATMATA SHERIFF (SIERRA LEONE)**

Student leader & Y-ACT SRHR Coalition member

### PLEDGE

Commit to Demand 5 on SRHR to ensure that every young girl and women have access to information on SRHR, pledge to work in collaboration with YACT and other members to promote this



“  
What we should do is to take into consideration quality representation. We say we should go from representation to power, this power I think we should give it to women

**AMBASSADOR OSMAN FODAY YANSANEH (SIERRA LEONE)**

National Deputy Chairman of All People's Congress Party

### PLEDGE

Commit to Demand 10 on Intergenerational Co-Leadership and an allocation of a significant budget in my capacity as the chairman of the opposition party-APC

“  
My immediate instinct is that women in leadership is not a thing, but women and leadership is a thing because we are born leaders in so many ways

**SEN. CRYSTAL ASIGE (KENYA),**

4th Senate in the 13th Parliament of Kenya



# WHAT IF WOMEN RAN THE PEACE PROCESS?



The panel unpacked the role of women in peacebuilding, emphasizing that while women are often the primary victims of conflict, they remain excluded from formal peace processes. Panelists highlighted the significant role women played in Sierra Leone's post-war recovery. A strong call was made to establish memorial days for remembrance and broader psychosocial support for survivors. The UN's role was questioned, acknowledging limitations in enforcement and the need for grassroots inclusion. A key tension emerged around the reality that women are not only victims but sometimes become enablers of violence, raising concerns about internalized systems of oppression. The conversation concluded with reflections on the emotional toll of witnessing conflict and the urgency of meaningful global solidarity.

## TAKEAWAYS

- If women ran the peace process, it would be a lived reality where you have care, equity, and accountability.
- It is important to have systems and mechanisms in place that offer psychosocial support to those who have suffered from conflict and those who support survivors of conflict.
- Conversations around conflict will be much softer and empathic if women ran the peace process because women lead with a transformational style.
- Peacebuilding processes should happen before a crisis happens and women should be part of it.

### MODERATOR



**ROSE WACHUKA MACHARIA**  
Board Chair, Nalafem



**It was women who went to Butimani 1 and 2, declaring that we want peace in Sierra Leone**

**DR. ISATA MAHOI (SIERRA LEONE)**  
Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs

### PLEDGE

**Commit to Demand 9 on Silencing the Guns, pledge to support women peace and security agenda, to establish structural law and policy that generate spaces for women and girls investment in their work by breaking the old rules that have kept them away for too long with a protective lance.**



**Representation is necessary, but it is not enough. We must ensure that women at the table have the capacity to contribute meaningfully. True inclusion involves empowering women**

**SERAPHINE WAKANA (BURUNDI)**  
UN Resident Coordinator in Sierra Leone



**When men lead, they often prioritize transactional approaches. When women lead, they focus on transformation.**

**ISHMEAL ALFRED CHARLES (SIERRA LEONE)**  
Author of From A Child Soldier to a Humanitarian

### PLEDGE

**Commit to demand to criminalized gender base violence specifically on increasing education and empowering women and girls because when women and girl have more education on SDV issues then they can demand their right, pledge to promote educate women and girls so they can prevent SDV across community as my capacity as the program manager of Freetown.**



# I AM NALA SPOTLIGHT



“

At the age of 7, in Conakry Guinea, I suffered unacceptable trauma. Along with eleven others, I was abducted and excised, a victim of FGM. During my first childbirth in Paris, the doctor reminded me of my condition, and showed me different types of FGM, and for the first time, the movie of my life began to unfold before me.



**MARTHE DÉDÉ KOÏVOGUI (GUINEA)**

“

In Togo, a law states that abortion is allowed under three extreme cases. Women have to go under the certification of three medical doctors & unfortunately it can take up to three months until the woman can give up on the process. As a result, many survivors are giving up and retraumatized.”



**LANGUIE BÉLÉYI KOUTCHOUKA (TOGO)**



“

I am every woman seated here today. I am every unmanned woman, whose name should have filled textbooks, whose tears watered the roots of democracy, whose body bore the scars of a nation's rebirth. And now I do not ask for a seat, I build the table, I do not beg for peace, I protect it. I AM NALA!



**JUGU MAUREEN LAWSON (SIERRA LEONE)**

“

We had a conference on Strengthening Families at which state officials participated. Who will want to question the motive of a conference titled strengthening families and empowering women? Not many, but we should because encouraging women to revert to gender roles and norms that make them subordinate to men, and being against comprehensive sexual education in school, is not about empowerment but about extending patriarchal power and control. I expected that the government that prides itself on championing women's rights to proudly claim the Safe Motherhood bill that is also being held at ransom in Parliament”



**PROF AISHA FOFANA IBRAHIM (SIERRA LEONE)**



“

Women do not bring wars but often they are expected to clean up after it. So I ask, what if women, adults & girls lead the peace process? We harness the insight girls and front line women, into policies rather than causing harm. Let us plead that every ceasefire heals a community. That every negotiation table sits a woman who has survived war and refused to accept it as destiny.



**AMEN BINIYAM (ETHIOPIA)**





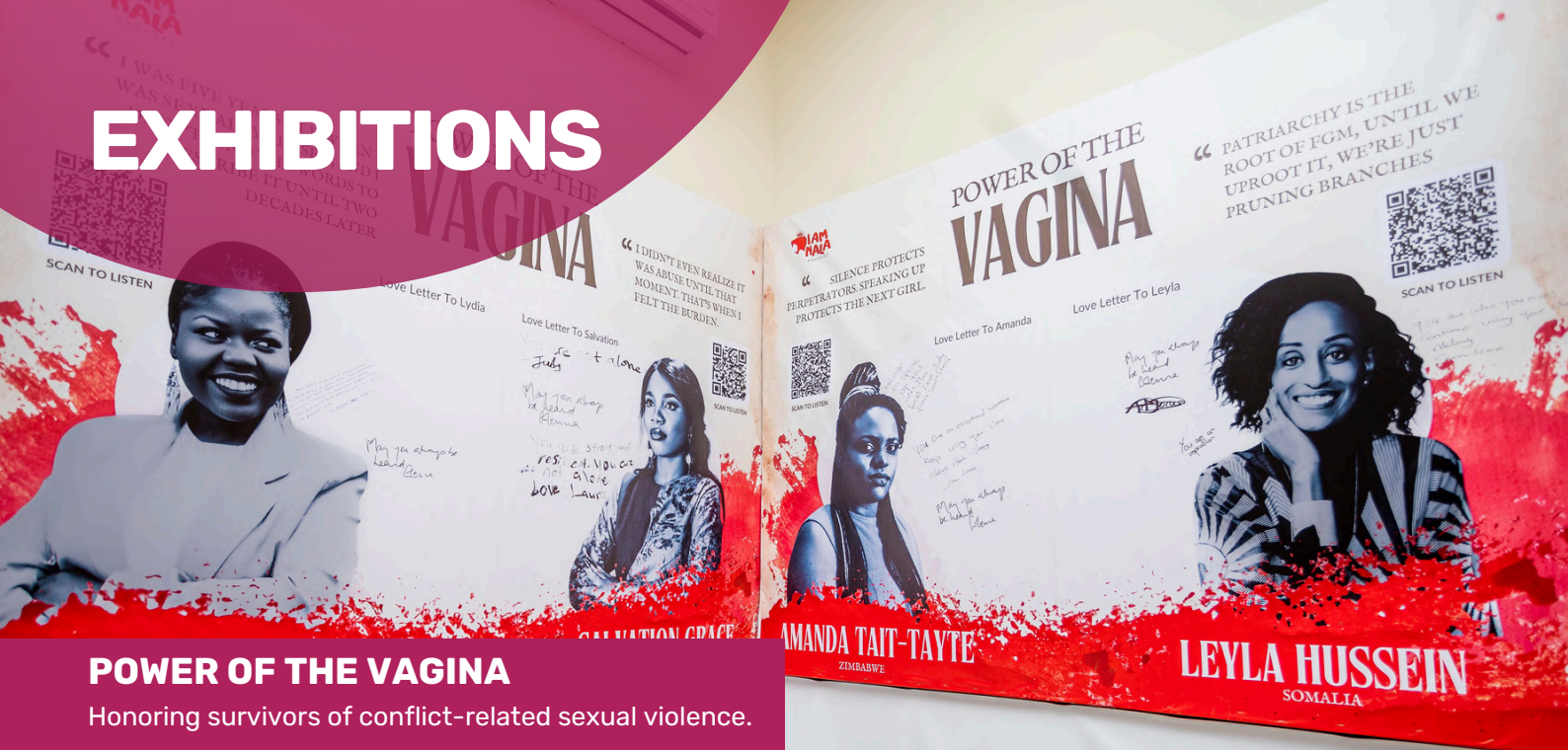


# NALAFEM ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

CELEBRATING SISTERHOOD



# EXHIBITIONS



## POWER OF THE VAGINA

Honoring survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.



## WOMEN LEADING IN CRISIS AND PEACE

Tribute to grassroots women from Sierra Leone or across Africa.



## NALA NOTES

A symbolic feminist currency, used during the summit, earned through acts of emotional labor to represent the unseen labor, care and contributions women make.

# FREETOWN DECLARATION

## THE FREETOWN DECLARATION FOR WOMEN IN POWER

A Pan-African Call to Action for Feminist Leadership, Institutional Courage and Transformative Justice

### Preamble

We, 120 women leaders from 25 African countries gathered in Freetown, Sierra Leone on 1st-2nd July 2025, united by a shared purpose: to shift the tide from mere representation to real power, hereby commit to the principles and actions outlined in the Freetown Declaration for Women in Power.

**Acknowledging** the enduring violent barriers to women's full participation in leadership especially young, grassroots, disabled and displaced.

**Affirming** our responsibility to lead with courage, uphold feminist values, and dismantle the systems that have long thrived on our exclusion.

**Recognising** that patriarchal violence against women and gatekeeping is not just personal, it is political, institutional and digital.

**Aware** that women in public life face disproportionate scrutiny, mental health burdens and attacks that threaten their safety and silence their voices.

**Asserting** that meaningful gender equality cannot be achieved without intentional investment, shared accountability and systems change.

Therefore, we rise and we declare to:

**Build** and sustain a digital "army of women" who will mobilize online and offline to defend women leaders facing disinformation, cyberbullying and online violence.

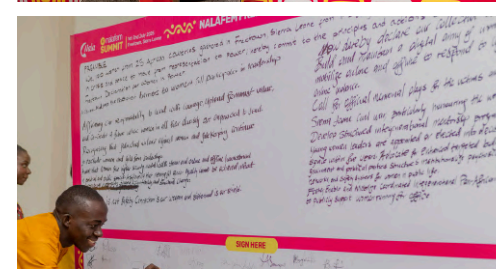
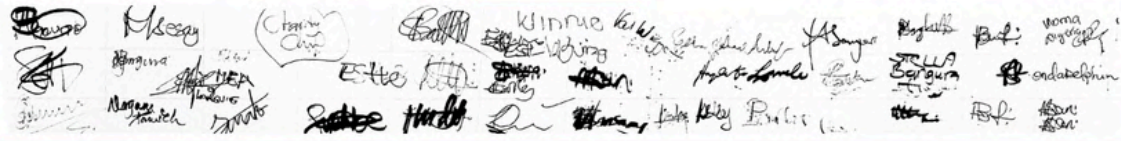
**Call** for national memorialization of Official Days of Remembrance to honor the victims and survivors of Sierra Leone's civil war, particularly honoring the women affected.

**Commit to design and enforce** structured intergenerational mentorship pipelines with a clear five year target to appoint, elect or elevate young women into national and regional leadership positions.

**Advocate** for institutionalized and resourced care systems including mandatory budget lines within government ministries, parliaments and political parties for psychosocial support, healing justice and safety infrastructure for women in public life.

**Foster, Enable and Mobilize** coordinated Intergenerational Solidarity Missions across Africa with cross country delegations to visibly back women running for office. **Silence is not safety. Connection is our weapon and sisterhood is our shield.**

SIGN HERE



# NALAFEM LEARNING VILLAGE



## MENTORSHIP & SPONSORSHIP: BUILDING A PIPELINE OF WOMEN LEADERS

**MODERATOR: DR. SYEDA RE'EM HUSSAIN, ADVOCACY & PROGRAMS LEAD, NALAFEM**

This panel opened the learning village by exploring practical leadership programs, funding frameworks, and relational mentoring as strategies for sustaining feminist movements long beyond individual tenures. The panel closed with the announcement of the 2025 cohort for the I AM NALA Fellowship on Women in Peace and Security comprised of 26 young women refugees, IDPs, and stateless from 11 countries

## TAKEAWAYS

- Power must have purpose. It's not just about holding resources but using them to serve others and shift systems .
- Mentorship must shift from instruction to accompaniment, where the adults should walk with girls, not be ahead of them.
- Co leadership must be real not decorative, but embedded in decision making structures.
- Collaboration is greater than competition in that the problems we face are too big for solo heroes.
- Urban centered programming leaves girls behind but real equity means reaching all regions especially rural ones.
- Young women are not leaders of tomorrow , they are leaders now, and systems must reflect that urgency .
- African philanthropy is critical, we need to fund ourselves in our own way, with shared community values.
- Funding must align with values- African organizations must be bold enough to reject money that derails their mission.
- Young people need tools, not just talk. Skills, networks and exposure are what turn potential into leadership.



**When we build peer networks we only seek to place people in positions of power or proximity to power, but we do not think that, even building the networks around who they are as young as people and how they are co-creating on important issues within the African continent is important**

**LESEGO OTLHABANYE (BOTSWANA)**

AL for Governance Program Manager, African Leadership Academy

### PLEDGE

**To Create opportunities and accelerate the path of political leadership for women. Create the spaces and pathways to women who are already in leadership**



**Whether the funding is there or not, the important part is that we are building the capacity of the girls by giving them the tools, skills and the knowledge they need. When you give them the tools to be able to go into their communities and become change agents, then you are sustainably allowing them to continuously change**

**DALREE DE LANGE (SOUTH AFRICA)**

Senior Programme Officer, Graca Machel Trust

### PLEDGE

**To build the capacity of 10 million girls by 2030.**



**One of the moments that we are in is such a blessing of a moment, where ODA, which is the external funding has been cut. It's a forcing function for us to look within. It's a blessing that was given to us and we never waste a blessing**

**SERAH MAKKA (NIGERIA)**

Executive Director for Africa, ONE Campaign

### PLEDGE

**To train geopolitically aware young African Leaders.**



**Power means inclusion. We are all doing the same work so how can we better collaborate? Where can we fill in the gaps, where is the need, where can we map out the country? So it is more than partnership, it's about moving from the space that we are comfortable with ,it's more about seeking new ground"**

**BAINDU MASSAQUOI (SIERRA LEONE)**

Programme Specialist, UN Women

### PLEDGE

**To commit to mentoring young women leaders.**



# LAUNCH OF 2ND COHORT OF I AM NALA FELLOWSHIP 2025/2026

## WOMEN IN PEACE AND SECURITY



Akem Aurelia Njang



Alaa Abdalla Ismail  
Abdelkreem



Arwa Tarig Mehyeldin Sabir



Benite Cishugi



Dorcus Adich Alier  
Malony



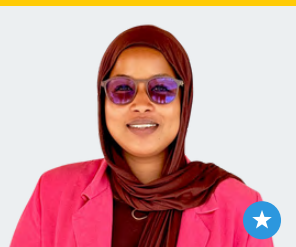
Gehan Abdalla  
Mohammed Adam



Hanim Nasur



Isra Yahya Ibrahim



Kaltun Osman



Kefaya Ahmed Adam  
Suliman



Mache Ngassing  
Darcise Dolorès



Maida Mubarak



Mangong Bongbunri  
Berinyuy



Miriam Hamed Ahmed



Monique Kabanza  
Sebiguri



Mwantumu  
Said Masoud



Nalova Nancy



Nihada Suleiman  
Burinyuy



Nosizi Dube



Nyatora Bang



Rashid Ayub  
Resala



Rayada Gaitano  
Thomas Candiri



Tesfamariam Leah  
Burhane



Tuyishime Diane



Zainab Abdulfattah



Zurah Asanda

# MENTORSHIP CIRCLES

## SEEDS OF SANKOFA EXERCISE

Dr. Re'em Syeda Hussain, Director of Advocacy & Programs at Nalafem led an exercise that nurtured mutual planting of ideas, wisdom, and care between generations. Drawing upon the wisdom of the Akan people from Ghana it centered on the Sankofa symbol which means "go back and fetch it" a powerful symbol of retrieving ancestral wisdom to inform and transform the present and future. The exercise paired mentors and mentees across generations.



# NALAFEM LEARNING CIRCLES



## **RECLAIMING MENOPAUSE AS POWER, WISDOM & WHOLENESS HOSTED BY NALAFEM**

This session broke cultural silence around menopause, sparking rare intergenerational dialogue with insights from H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Madame Aki-Sawyerr. Women aged 41-70 shared personal stories, ancestral wisdom, and holistic care practices. The circle called for ending stigma, investing in women-centered health systems, and integrating menopause into national health policies as a feminist justice issue.



## **AFRICAN REGIONAL SOLIDARITY ALLIANCE HOSTED BY BETTERPOLITICS**

Young women politicians from across Africa convened to crowdsource insights, build connections, and begin shaping a pan-African Solidarity Alliance. The session laid the groundwork for a unified platform to advance women's political leadership and collective action.



## **CENTERING YOUNG FEMINIST POWER IN COUNTERING ANTI-RIGHTS PUSHBACK HOSTED BY ATHENA NETWORK & RCWG**

This session spotlighted the political courage of young feminist leaders confronting anti-rights backlash across Africa. Testimonies and research underscored the urgent need for real decision-making power, digital resilience, and regional solidarity to safeguard young feminist leadership in conflict and recovery contexts.



## **FINANCING AND CREATING A SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEM FOR WOMEN ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP HOSTED BY DALAH VENTURES**

This learning circle explored strategies to build long-term financial and structural support for women-led enterprises. The discussion unpacked the importance of gender-responsive financing, access to capital, and policies that enable women to thrive as entrepreneurs and economic leaders.



## **RESOURCING FEMINIST LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY POWER HOSTED BY ELEVATE SISTERS**

Grassroots feminist leaders from Sierra Leone and the region shared how mutual care, informal leadership, and traditional giving sustain movements amid systemic underfunding and backlash. Speakers from Purposeful, IWEPP, and WOFHRAD critiqued extractive donor practices and called for flexible, trust-based funding and emphasized that resourcing must go beyond money to include time, knowledge, and relationships.

# AWARDS



The Nalafem Awards celebrate the tremendous work that women have played along the manifesto demands. The Awards are an intergenerational ceremony which celebrates the power of generations coming together. It acknowledges elders who present awards and acknowledge young feminists who receive seed grants. Through this ceremony we come together as a Pan-African feminist family and shine a light on our collective power.



**Senator Crystal Asige**

4th Senate in the 13th Parliament of Kenya  
2025 Nalafem Award on Ending Gender Discrimination



**This song was a song I wrote in Frankfurt airport. I remember I was sitting at the airport because I had missed a flight because of my disability; I could not get to the connecting flight quickly enough. So I sat down in the waiting halls, with my backpack as my pillow, and I remember writing this song, and I ended up titling it Better (unreleased).**

*What are we waiting for, when all we have is time? Why should the day be grey, so much colour left to find? Why go through this alone, when you and I make two? Let me be the one you reach your hand out to. I know it's hard sometimes, it happened to me too. You're trying everything, but nothing seems to move. There are two types of pain: the kind that crushes you, and then the other one that comes and changes you. You are now better."*



**When I was cut at the age of seven, it was meant to silence me. It was meant to break me, but it has made me the strongest and the loudest woman in the room. And I will continue to tell people to be embarrassed about cutting girls instead of being embarrassed about being cut**



**Nimco Ali**

CEO of the Five Foundation (Somaliland/UK)  
2025 Nalafem Award on Criminalizing Gender Based Violence



**Hon. Winnie Kiiza**

Former Leader of Opposition, Uganda  
2025 Nalafem Award on Intergenerational Co-leadership



**So I encourage you ladies, let's be each other's keepers. Let's give each other opportunities to lead because you and I can make the world a better place for all of us to stay in, safely and happily. Together we can create a forest of leaders, a forest of friends, a forest of sisters and then every African will find shelter under our leadership**



**When I walked into the room tonight, I could feel the stirrings of parlour. I was subdued by you and all that you have achieved. I could only say 'My Goodness! Its working! The progress is real, its unstoppable'. I will just say three words that I live by, my mother always told me, and I call them the three Hs: Hard work; Honesty; Humility. I will close by repeating that which you already know: your dreams will always exceed your capacity to deliver them. If your dreams do not scare you, they are not good enough. May your dreams scare you, and may you rise to the powers of your dreams**



**H.E Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**

Former President of Liberia & Member of Club de Madrid  
2025 Nalafem Award on Intergenerational Co-leadership



**Demand 5**

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS



**Girls Advocacy Development Network**

Sierra Leone

2025 Nalafem Award on advancing Sexual & Reproductive Health and Rights



I want to make the commitment to you all as a young woman. I know the distractions are there, the challenges will be more louder as I grow. I promise you all that I will not stop. And the organisers of this Summit, you will be proud of me in the next two years because this fierce woman you awarded today will continue to create the impact not only in Sierra Leone, not only in Africa but the globe



And today, as I receive this award for the role that by God's grace I am playing in the lives of the women, I see what others have said; it's because I am standing on the shoulders of a giant (Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf). Indeed, giants because I must acknowledge at this point my parents., my siblings, my husband and my children, who have been an enormous support and who give me the space to serve in whatever capacity I can. I am humbled today because this award means so much because of the heart from which it comes from. There is so much emotion, there is so much feeling.



**Demand 10**

INTERGENERATIONAL CO-LEADERSHIP



**Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyer**

Mayor of Freetown

2025 Nalafem Award on Intergenerational Co-leadership



I have three key takeaways from the summit:

- Service is power but also power is service.
- Intergenerational wisdom which is a fusion of ancestral and present wisdom. Young and old, we must take it further.
- Mentorship is about learning. One of the things about mentorship is that leadership goes both ways. But it also means sometimes the mentor pushes you to the deep end and you have to take those opportunities.

**Viola Morgan**

Former Country Director for UNDP

**TOAST**



**LIVE PERFORMANCES**

**The-Afrocentricks**



**Lala Bayani Sidibe**





# Foster. Enable. Mobilize



# PRESS

# 4<sup>th</sup>

# nalafem

# SUMMIT



**Mayor Aki-Sawyers Launches 4th Nalafem Summit in Freetown, Advocates for Women Leadership**



**UNFPA joins African Feminist Leaders at the 4th NALAFEM Summit**



**Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Graces Nalafem Summit in Freetown, Urges Women to Lead with Purpose and Courage**



**Freetown to Host Groundbreaking Nalafem Summit on Women's Political Leadership**



**African Women Claim Power at Nalafem Summit in Freetown**



**Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Urges Women to Lead with Purpose & Courage**



**Mayor Aki-Sawyers Inspires Action at 4th Nalafem Summit for Female Empowerment**



**UNFPA Director Advocates for Women's Safety**



**Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to Keynote Nalafem Summit On Women's Leadership in Crisis**



**Nalafem Summit Kicks Off in Freetown with Powerful Voices Leading Change Across Africa**



**Mayor Aki-Sawyers Hosts 4th Nalafem Summit to Champion Women's Leadership in Crisis and Peace**



**True Power Lies in Service and Legacy- H.E Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**



**"I have the capacity, courage and competence to lead": Mayor Aki-Sawyers signals presidential ambition**



**Liberia: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to Keynote Nalafem Summit On Women's Leadership in Crisis**



**Ellen Johnson Sirleaf: True Power Lies in Service and Legacy**



**AYV MEDIA EMPIRE PROGRAM WAKEUP SIERRA LEONE**

# Testimonials



Grateful to have been part of the Nalafem Summit 2025. It challenged me, inspired me, and reminded me that real change takes unity. Looking forward to applying what I've learned, especially in advocating for vulnerable children in my community. I would definitely recommend the Nalafem Summit to others. It's more than just a summit it's a powerful space for growth, learning, and connection. The discussions challenged my mindset, built my confidence, and reminded me of the importance of collaborative leadership, especially in advocating for vulnerable groups. If you're passionate about making impact, Nalafem is a place to be.

**Graca Machel Trust, Zambia**

**Joyce Brummelman** · 3rd+  
Advisor International Advocacy bij Plan International Nede...  
4d · 🌐

Congratulations **Nalafem** on hosting the 4th Nalafem Summit! 🎉  
This year's theme — "From Representation to Power: Women Leading in Crises & Peace" — highlights the critical role women play in shaping resilient, inclusive futures. 🌟 Young leaders, like the members of the She-Empowerment League were able to contribute with their knowledge and ideas at this impactful Summit in Freetown. 🎉 A big congratulations to the Girls Advocacy Development Network (GADNet) for receiving an award for their meaningful work advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Sierra Leone. 🌟

#NalafemSummit2025 #SRHR #GenderEquality  
Defence for Children International Sierra Leone (DCI-SL)  
Plan International Sierra Leone (PISL)  
#SheLeads# 🟢  
Plan International NL

**Yasmine Bilkis Ibrahim** · 3rd+  
Storyteller: at the intersection of Gender, Tech & Health [...]  
2w · Edited · 🌐

Yesterday marked the close of the two-day **Nalafem** Summit. A feminist convening that brought together women from across the continent. And as always, I have thoughts.

This was a space like no other, and that is open to interpretation. Amidst the optics and high-profile pizzazz were deep, soul-nourishing conversations. I had the privilege of connecting with sisters doing important, groundbreaking work to chip away at patriarchy, often in the face of immense resistance.

Feminist spaces like these uplift me. They remind me that this work, while heavy, is collective. Over the two days, we questioned, learned, and held space for one another. On day two, I had the honor of speaking on the panel "Centering Young Feminist Power in Countering Anti-Rights Pushback", alongside sister friend **Nyawira Wahito** where I shared insights on the state of digital rights in Africa in respect to digital justice and how activists can protect themselves and their communities in increasingly complex and hostile environments.

**Cacilia Riederer** · 2nd  
Project Manager Representation in Politics @Better Politic...  
1w · 🌐

What is good political leadership? What is power?

- ✦ Politics is service, power is service.
- ✦ To rebuild trust in politics, we need to refocus on servant leadership.

This was the sentiment shared by many of the incredible speakers at last week's **Nalafem** summit in Freetown, Sierra Leone, including President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former MP & Leader of the Opposition of Uganda **Winnie Kiiza**, and **Yvonne Aki-Sawyer OBE**, Mayor of Freetown.

At **Better Politics Foundation**, rebuilding trust in political leaders and politics is a cornerstone of our work. I recently shared my thoughts on how political leadership norms can help us rethink trust in politics. You can read the article here: <https://lnkd.in/eVatRqg>

I had the honor and pleasure to attend the summit on behalf of **Better Politics Foundation** and to speak and listen to so many incredible women leaders from across the continent, including **Joanah Mamombe**, **Senator Crystal Asige**, **Camilla Banda**, **Rose Wachuka Macharia**, **EBS**, **MBS**, **FCI Arb**, **CSA**, **Amisa Rashid**, **Doreen Nyanjura**, and many more.

Congratulations to **Aya Chebbi**, **Syeda Re'em Hussain, PhD**, and the whole **Nalafem** team for such a successful event.

**Better Politics Foundation Colmena Fund Lucinda van den Heever (she/her)**

**Nafisa Atiku-Adejuwon** · 1st  
Empowering the Next Generation of African Women | MW...  
2w · 🌐

At the Nalafem Summit in Sierra Leone, I had the immense honor of meeting and hearing from Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first democratically elected female President.

To be in the presence of a living legend, a woman whose leadership has redefined possibility for so many of us, was nothing short of inspiring. She generously shared her wisdom, reminding us that:

- 🌐 "Power is responsibility. Power is service. And power without purpose is nothing."

**Joanah Mamombe** · 1st  
Member Of Parliament, Zimbabwe  
2w · 🌐

It was a tremendous honour to pay tribute to Africa's FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT, Mama Ellen Johnson Sirleaf 🇳🇬 as her mentee at the just-ended **#NalafemSummit2025**. A woman who didn't just walk through the doors of **POWER** but kicked them open for generations to follow. A true African Powerhouse!

"If your DREAMS do not scare you, they are not big enough."  
~ President Sirleaf

Over 2 powerful days in Sierra Leone 🇳🇬, we gathered under the theme "From Representation to Power: Women Leading in Crisis & Peace", a timely call to action in a world shaped by conflict, climate upheaval, and complex geopolitics.

Being in the company of women who dream boldly, lead courageously and push boundaries is always soul-stirring. Thank you my dear sister, the Founder and President of **Nalafem**, **Aya Chebbi** for convening such a meaningful, intergenerational space for African women leaders to connect, reflect and rise. Thank you for giving us a voice, the opportunity to be heard!

So energising to connect with sisters doing incredible work across the continent, including my **Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford** sister **Rose** (Chair of Nalafem Board), Hon **Winnie Kiiza** of Uganda 🇺🇬, my **Club de Madrid** sisters **Camilla Banda** 🇳🇬 and **Doreen Nyanjura** 🇰🇪 and so many more phenomenal women driving change across Africa. Thank you, Her Worship the Mayor of Freetown, **Yvonne Aki-Sawyer OBE** for being a wonderful host.

The future is undeniably female and exciting 🌟

# SOCIAL MEDIA TESTIMONIALS



**menengageafrica** · 1/4

13 likes

menengageafrica Our Youth Chair, Languie Emilienne, participated during the 4th @nalafem Summit in Freetown-Sierra Leone, which concluded yesterday. Emilienne was a panelist and engaged in discussions on survivors' experiences, power systems, and anti-rights movements. She highlighted MenEngage Africa's work on survivor-centered governance. The summit featured discussions with politicians, ministers, and youth activists.

**Adama Borway** · 2nd  
US Department of State's CEE program 23' Alumni (She L...

Power is Service." – H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

I had the honor of being in a room filled with bold, brilliant, and purpose-driven women from across Africa at the Nalafem Summit in Freetown. For two days, we didn't just talk, we shifted narratives. We unpacked what it truly means for women to lead in crisis and peace, in politics, in boardrooms, and in every space we've historically been told wasn't ours.

This year's theme, "From Representation to Power: Women Leading in Crisis and Peace," wasn't just a headline, it was a call. A declaration. A fire.

To the Mayor of Freetown **Yvonne Aki-Sawyer OBE** and the incredible Nalafem team, thank you. You didn't just host an event; you created a movement. One that echoed across the continent and reminded us that we, as women, don't need permission to lead. We have the power, we plant the seeds, and we will grow the future.

Women will lead and we already are.



**John Baimba Sesay** · 3rd+  
Senior Manager, Communications, C40 Cities Freetown C...

The 4th Nalafem Summit kicks off in Freetown, uniting 100+ leaders from across Africa under the theme "From Representation to Power: Women Leading in Crisis & Peace." Freetown Mayor **Yvonne Aki-Sawyer OBE** opens with powerful reflections and calls for transformative change.

#NalafemSummit2025 #WomenInLeadership



30 likes

shunfrick It's an honor to be part of the 4th @nalafem Summit held right here in my city, Freetown, Sierra Leone. Africa's boldest political feminist gathering and the political home for women who dare to lead. A powerful space where courageous women are shaping the future of politics and feminism on the continent.

Day One was impactful. Many thanks to Amref Africa for sponsoring my attendance as a member of the Y-Act SRH Coalition in Sierra Leone. Super excited for what tomorrow holds. 💕💕



Liked by rosewachuka and 56 others

thefivefoundation Our CEO @nimkoali is at the 4th @nalafem summit in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Africa's most powerful gathering of feminist thought leaders, politicians, funders, activists and change makers shaping the future of women's leadership in crisis and peace.

Our commitment is to continue shifting power to women and girls on the African Continent by resourcing African women and their organisations leading work in countries and communities with high prevalence of violence against women and girls through long-term, flexible and core funding.



48 likes

maryann.kaikai "Power. Presence. Legacy" In the room with Africa's First Female President at @nalafem summit Day 2

**Fatmata Sheriff** · 3rd+  
Gender and Rights Intern at UNFPA-SL, Western Region F...

I had the distinct honor of attending the 4th Nalafem Feminist Summit 2025, hosted by the Mayor of Freetown, **Yvonne Aki-Sawyer OBE**. As the first female President of Kenema District Students Association-FBC (KenDSA-FBC), Field Officer at Pleasant Foundation Sierra Leone-PFS Foundation (PFS), and a member of the Y-ACT Youth In Action SRHR Coalition, I had the privilege of speaking on the theme 'A New Intergenerational Pact: Shaking the Old House, Beyond the Seat at the Table.'

This discussion, moderated under the broader theme 'From Representation into Power,' brought together esteemed panelists, including Ambassador Osmam Foday Yansaneh, Deputy Chairman of the APC; **Doreen Nyanjira**, Deputy Lord Mayor of Kampala, Uganda; and Senator Crystal Asige, 4th Senate in the 13th Parliament of Kenya.

The summit provided a critical platform for intergenerational dialogue and collaboration, focusing on advancing feminist leadership and ensuring meaningful participation in decision-making spaces.

Nalafem  
Amref Health Africa



View likes

\_maryeee\_ Year 18 has so far been a journey I'll never forget. From starting university to speaking on an pan African program in Freetown alongside former president, parliament members and incredible leaders it still feels a bit surreal.

I had the chance to speak about Adolescent Girls in Peace, and while it felt a little unreal at first, the younger me would be proud but not surprised because she worked hard to stand where I'm standing now.

I've led and managed programs, traveled, learned, and grown so much in just one year. Grateful for the people, the moments, and everything in between. I really love it here.

#Year18 #NALAFEM #YouthVoices #GirlsLead @nalafem



65 likes

camilla\_banda In the last few days I had the trip of a lifetime to Sierra Leone for the #nalafemsummit it was nothing short of phenomenal. I got to learn and share my journey with so many African women and giants who are taking a stand to see a better world. The sisterhood, intergenerational wisdom and support was next level. It felt like therapy for the trenches of this political journey. I met my women crushes and got to be coached by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. This was all thanks to @club\_de\_madrid and @nalafem

# 4<sup>th</sup> nalafem SUMMIT



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PLATFORM FOR **WOMEN WHO LEAD!**

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