

## FROM CSW69 TO LASTING CHANGE: WOMEN, YOUTH, AND CLIMATE JUSTICE LEADING LIBERIA'S FUTURE – NOW!



*Left: Elizabeth G. Johnson addressing the challenges faced by women in Liberia at the CSW69 Conference on March 12, 2025.*

**O**n March 12, 2025, ActionAid Liberia's Country Director, Elizabeth G. Johnson, took the stage as a distinguished panelist at the 5th Liberia-Diaspora Dialogue Women and Youth Forum held in Manhattan, New York. This pivotal event was part of the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) 'Summit of the Future' and commemorated the 30th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. The forum aimed to foster collaboration among Liberian and diaspora leaders to drive meaningful change in the realms of gender equality, youth empowerment, and climate justice.

Simultaneously, a parallel event organized by Liberia's Gender Ministry at YWCA Congo Town, Liberia, themed "Drawing Lessons from the Past, Reimagining the Future, and Recalibrating for Enhanced Engagement and Impact," emphasized bold dialogue and actionable strategies for achieving gender equality. This dual focus on advocacy and collaboration highlights the urgent need for inclusive policymaking at all levels.

In her insightful remarks, Ms. Johnson underscored the critical role of women in policymaking, especially when addressing climate change—an existential crisis that disproportionately impacts women and girls globally. "Women understand their challenges best and hold the keys to sustainable solutions that truly serve their communities," she asserted. Her message emphasized the urgent need to center women's voices in policy design to drive equitable and resilient futures.

In Liberia, where women make up a significant portion of the agricultural workforce, their insights are invaluable for creating policies that effectively address food security and



*Above: Women in Liberia attentively engaging during the CSW69 Conference session led by Liberian women in New York*

climate adaptation. Yet, despite their contributions, women continue to face significant barriers in accessing decision-making roles.

Liberia has made significant strides in recognizing women's leadership, particularly in rural areas where young women are stepping into decision-making roles. Johnson noted,

*“When you visit rural areas, you can now see progress, especially among young people particularly young women - who are taking action.”*

This shift is a direct result of years of advocacy and empowerment initiatives that equip women with the confidence and resources to lead.

However, Johnson cautioned against complacency, urging stakeholders to ensure that laws and policies are accompanied by genuine efforts toward inclusion. "When discussing laws and policies, we must go beyond their existence and focus on intentional and genuine efforts... We must actively push for meaningful inclusion," she emphasized.

The inclusion of young people, especially young women, in leadership and decision-making spaces is not merely a checkbox for diversity; it is essential for sustainable development. Johnson pointed out the need for broader accessibility in the SBGN review, as rigid selection criteria often exclude youth. To truly harness the potential of young leaders, it is vital to create mentorship programs and platforms for youth voices to be heard and valued.

Moreover, she addressed the intersection of gender equality and climate resilience, highlighting that women and young people in rural communities are at the forefront of the

fight against climate change. Yet, their efforts remain limited without adequate financing and support. Johnson called for a more accountable and accessible climate finance system, urging corporations and powerful nations to fulfill their obligations under the Paris Agreement.

*“Climate financing must be structured in a way that benefits women and young people, removing restrictive criteria that limit access,” she insisted.*

The challenges faced by women and young people in Liberia—and globally—are entrenched in power structures. Johnson emphasized that tackling these issues requires collective action rather than isolated efforts. Movement-building creates an ecosystem where diverse voices and strategies can converge to drive real change.

Liberia stands at a crucial crossroads where the momentum for women’s leadership, youth participation, and climate resilience must be sustained and amplified. The work does not stop at policy formulation; it extends to advocacy, grassroots mobilization, and holding governments accountable for real implementation.

*“We do not want policies on gender responsibility to be imposed without our input; we want them to reflect our lived realities and aspirations,” Johnson stated.*

In her address, Johnson also highlighted the importance of intersectionality in the fight for gender equality and climate justice. Marginalized groups, including women with disabilities and those from indigenous communities, face compounded challenges that require tailored approaches. Ensuring that these voices are included in discussions and policy frameworks is essential for creating a truly inclusive agenda. She further



Above: Group photo of the Women’s Consortium after the CSW69 parallel event at YWCA in Congo Town, Monrovia, Liberia.

emphasized the need for accountability measures to track the implementation of policies aimed at promoting gender equality and climate resilience. Establishing transparent mechanisms can ensure that commitments translate into tangible outcomes, thereby reinforcing trust among communities and stakeholders.

## **Call to Action: Building a Just and Equal Liberia**

As we push for women's leadership, youth representation, and climate resilience, we must commit to sustained advocacy, policy engagement, and grassroots movement-building. This effort requires collective action from civil society, policymakers, and communities.

ActionAid Liberia calls on all stakeholders - government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector-to:

- Amplify women's leadership by ensuring that women, especially young women, have access to leadership spaces and decision-making roles.
- Strengthen youth participation by creating policies and mechanisms that genuinely include young people in governance and development processes.
- Advance climate justice by advocating for accessible and equitable climate financing, holding corporations and governments accountable for their commitments.
- Adopt a movement-building approach that fosters collaboration and systemic change rather than isolated efforts.
- Embrace intersectionality to ensure that marginalized voices are included in the conversation and policy frameworks.

Now is the time to act - to transform policies into action, empower communities, and demand accountability. Together, we can build a Liberia that is just, equal, and resilient for generations to come.