



RFLD · RÉSEAU DES FEMMES LEADERS POUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT

CONCEPT NOTE · CONVENING DOCUMENT

West Africa Feminist Data Summit 2026

***Data as resistance.** Architecting feminist digital futures in West Africa.*

A three-day convening of feminist activists, data journalists, civic technologists, policy researchers, parliamentarians, and women human rights defenders, convened to turn fragmented data work into a coordinated continental advocacy infrastructure.

DATES	VENUE	CONVENER	WORKING LANGUAGES
28 – 30 July 2026 Three days: plenary, training, drafting	Porto-Novo, Benin Hôtel Les Oliviers · visa-free entry for all African nationals	RFLD ACHPR Observer Status No. 553 · US 501(c)(3) Equivalent	English & French Simultaneous interpretation across plenaries and main tracks

Ref. RFLD/WAFDS.2026/CN.2 (Rev.) · Porto-Novo · July 2026 · #FemDataSummit2026

1 Executive summary

The West Africa Feminist Data Summit 2026 is a three-day convening hosted by RFLD in Porto-Novo, Republic of Benin, from 28 to 30 July 2026.¹ The Summit brings together approximately 100 feminist activists, data journalists, civic technologists, policy researchers, parliamentarians, and women human rights defenders from across West Africa to translate fragmented data work into coordinated continental advocacy.

The Summit operationalizes three resolutions of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights²: Resolution 657 on access to environmental information, Resolution 620 on data access as a tool for human rights, and Resolution 522 on the protection of women against digital violence. It is structured around eight thematic tracks covering digital censorship, technology-facilitated gender-based violence, environmental defenders, decolonizing data and AI accountability, digital economic justice, bodily autonomy, feminist civic technology, and intersectional data.

The Summit's expected outputs are: a regional feminist data agenda identifying legislative gaps across the West African region; an encrypted data collective for cross-border peer support and rapid response; a fully trained delegate cohort of regional data practitioners; and a resource mobilization pipeline connecting donors with under-resourced grassroots initiatives.

Summit at a glance

~100 DELEGATES Activists · journalists · technologists	8 THEMATIC TRACKS Across the digital rights field	3 DAYS OF ACTION Plenary · training · drafting	4 PERSISTENT OUTPUTS Agenda · collective · cohort · pipeline
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¹The Summit was previously announced for 12–14 June 2026 in Accra, Ghana. Following a decision of the Organizing Committee, the convening was rescheduled to 28–30 July 2026 and relocated to Porto-Novo, Republic of Benin, a venue offering visa-free entry to all African nationals. Registrations received under the initial announcement remain valid.

²The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) is the African Union body mandated to promote and protect human and peoples' rights across the continent under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981). Its resolutions establish normative standards addressed to States Parties, AU organs, and civil society.



2 About the convener

The Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement (RFLD) is a pan-African feminist network founded in 2013, anchored in francophone West Africa and operating continent-wide. RFLD's mandate combines four functions most organisations keep separate: public policy infrastructure, grassroots regranting, open-data tools, and direct programme delivery. The Summit is convened from RFLD's continental data infrastructure, the D'ONÈSÈ Data Center,³ which brings together the Maputo Protocol Hub, the ACDEG Hub, the West Africa Legislative Platform, and continental data on civic space, harmful practices, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

RFLD operates from four offices: its headquarters in Porto-Novo/Cotonou (Benin), the Africa Regional Office in Accra (Ghana), the Regional Office in Dakar (Senegal, opened June 2026), and the ACHPR Liaison Office in Banjul (The Gambia). It coordinates a network of 670 member organisations across more than 35 African countries. RFLD holds Observer Status No. 553 before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights,⁴ is certified as a US 501(c)(3) Public Charity Equivalent,⁵ and serves as Co-Chair of the GIZ/BMZ SEA-T Programme Advisory Council.⁶

RFLD works across six integrated fields of intervention: sexual and reproductive health and rights; civic space and defenders' protection; gender equality and political participation; human rights; economic and climate justice; and the ending of harmful practices and gender-based violence. In 2025, the network delivered USD 1.77 million in programming, of which 85 per cent went directly to field activities and grassroots grantees.

3 Background and rationale

Across West Africa, a multitude of organisations collect statistics on women's rights, civic space, and digital harm. The resulting data, however, remains fragmented across institutions, formats, and languages, and rarely reaches the parliamentarians, courts, and policy-makers with the authority to act on it. What is missing is less the data itself than the infrastructure around it: the convening, the analytical capacity, the cross-border coordination, and the legislative routing required to turn statistics into outcomes.

The Summit responds to that gap. It brings together the actors who collect data alongside the actors who have the power to act on it, and dedicates three days to converting that proximity into structural collaboration. Rather than a research conference, the Summit is a working convening structured around training, drafting, and the formation of a cross-border collective.

The intersectional crises the Summit addresses are mutually reinforcing. Environmental degradation is hidden by access-to-information failures that disproportionately silence women journalists. Authoritarian crackdowns on civil society close the digital space on which feminist organizing depends. Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV)⁷ is deployed as a deliberate political tactic to silence women in public life, with documented spillover effects on female political candidacy, journalism, and human rights defense. Data, in the absence of strategic application across all three vectors, is insufficient to dismantle entrenched patriarchal systems.

³The D'ONÈSÈ Data Center is RFLD's continental open-data infrastructure. It integrates, among other platforms, the Maputo Protocol Hub, the ACDEG Hub, the West Africa Legislative Platform, the Digital Safety Compendium, and continental datasets on civic space, harmful practices, maternal health, and SRHR.

⁴RFLD holds Observer Status No. 553 before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and is a member of the Working Group of the ACHPR Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders.

⁵RFLD is certified as a United States 501(c)(3) Public Charity Equivalent through an Equivalency Determination issued by NGOsource, enabling direct, compliant, tax-deductible grantmaking from US foundations and donor-advised funds.

⁶RFLD currently serves as Co-Chair of the SEA-T Programme Advisory Council, mandated to ensure that the programme's direction, priorities, and resources are meaningfully aligned with the visions of Afro-feminist civil society. The SEA-T Programme is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

⁷Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) designates acts of violence committed, assisted, aggravated, or amplified by the use of information and communication technologies or other digital tools, and which result in or are likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological, social, political, or economic harm. The Summit's treatment of TFGBV is aligned with the Shared Research Agenda developed by the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) and UN Women.



THE SUMMIT'S CORE PROPOSITION

From statistics to legislation.

The West Africa Feminist Data Summit is a convening at which raw data is translated into legislative interventions, policy reforms, and life-saving emergency protocols. The Summit's outputs are designed to outlive the three-day convening: a permanent regional data agenda, a continuously operating encrypted collective, and direct funding pipelines from donors to the grassroots.

Normative foundation: three ACHPR resolutions

The urgency of this convening is anchored in three resolutions of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Union body whose mandate covers civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights across the continent. Each resolution establishes a normative framework that the Summit operationalizes.

RESOLUTION 657 · MARCH 2026

Access to information and the right to a healthy environment

Adopted on 9 March 2026, Resolution 657⁸ calls on African states to uphold access to climate and environmental information, including by safeguarding the rights of journalists reporting on environmental harm, climate impacts, and resource exploitation. The resolution underscores that access to environmental information is indispensable for the realization of the rights to health, natural resources, and a satisfactory environment, and explicitly recognizes the growing threats faced by environmental journalists and defenders across the continent. The Summit operationalizes Resolution 657 through Track 3 (Media Freedom & Environmental Defenders).

RESOLUTION 620 · NOVEMBER 2024

Data access as a tool for human rights and sustainable development

Resolution 620⁹ mandates the ACHPR Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information to develop normative standards for data collection, storage, and processing, focused on transparency, data justice, and AI accountability. It emphasizes public data access by default, the inclusion of marginalized groups in data systems, accountability mechanisms for AI and automated systems, and proactive disclosure of data held by private actors where the public interest is high. The Summit's Tracks 4 (Decolonizing Data & AI) and 8 (Intersectional Data) directly advance Resolution 620.

RESOLUTION 522 · 2022

Protecting women against digital violence in Africa

Resolution 522¹⁰ addresses the rise of gender-based violence, including cyber-harassment and sexist hate speech, calling on states to update legislation to protect women in digital spaces and to ensure accountability for perpetrators. The Summit's Tracks 2 (TFGBV) and 6 (Bodily Autonomy & Feminist Digital Privacy) advance Resolution 522 through evidence collection, platform accountability work, and the development of feminist data protection frameworks.

⁸ACHPR/Res. 657 (LXXXVI) 2026, Resolution on Upholding Access to Information on Climate Change and the Right to a Healthy Environment in Africa, adopted at the 86th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 9 March 2026.

⁹ACHPR/Res. 620 (LXXXI) 2024, Resolution on Access to Data as a Tool for Advancing Human Rights and Sustainable Development in Africa, adopted at the 81st Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Banjul, The Gambia, November 2024.

¹⁰ACHPR/Res. 522 (LXXII) 2022, Resolution on the Protection of Women Against Digital Violence in Africa, adopted at the 72nd Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2022.



4 Eight thematic tracks

The Summit's substantive programme is organized around eight thematic tracks. Each track is rooted in an intersectional, Afro-feminist analysis and connects directly to one or more of the ACHPR resolutions named above. Tracks combine plenary sessions, hands-on training using RFLD's data tools, and policy drafting work that feeds directly into the Summit's regional advocacy outputs.

01 Digital censorship & internet shutdowns

State-sponsored network disruptions deployed to conceal violence and silence defenders. Delegates train on real-time diagnostic data¹¹ to track telecommunications blackouts and to develop circumvention practice.

FOCUS *Network diagnostics · ECOWAS Court strategic litigation*

02 Combating Technology-Facilitated GBV

TFGBV systemically excludes African women from digital participation. Aligned with the SVRI and UN Women Shared Research Agenda, the track focuses on platform accountability and the mapping of cyber-misogyny across the region.

FOCUS *Online violence monitoring · Civic-tech intervention design*

03 Media freedom & environmental defenders

Ecofeminist defenders face escalating legal harassment. The track dissects national regulatory shifts and tracks how complex bills are deployed against journalists exposing extractive industries.

FOCUS *Extractive contract tracking · Corporate impunity monitoring*

04 Decolonizing data & AI accountability

Challenging extractive technology models and algorithmic bias. The track advances data sovereignty so that automated and algorithmic systems deployed in West Africa do not replicate structural hierarchies or patriarchal discrimination.

FOCUS *Algorithmic audit · African data sovereignty frameworks*

05 Digital economic justice & unpaid care

Quantifying the invisible labour of African women. The track examines how digital financial inclusion can produce predatory algorithmic lending, and how feminist data informs fair economic policy.

FOCUS *Mapping unpaid care · Predatory fintech accountability*

06 Bodily autonomy & feminist digital privacy

Protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) data. The track addresses biometric surveillance of marginalized bodies and the urgent need for feminist data-protection frameworks.

FOCUS *SRHR data security · Biometric overreach*

07 Feminist civic tech & grassroots innovation

Moving beyond tech-solutionism toward tools built by African women, for African women. Cultivating local engineering talent to create secure, accessible, and culturally relevant advocacy platforms.

FOCUS *Open-source movement-building · Scaling civic-tech alternatives*

08 Intersectional data: marginalized realities

Addressing the data gaps that render rural women, women with disabilities, and other marginalized and vulnerable groups invisible to policy-makers. Establishing inclusive methodologies that document the full spectrum of the regional experience.

FOCUS *Rural data inclusion · Disability and vulnerable-group indicators*

¹¹Delegates train on open network-measurement infrastructures, including the Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI) and NetBlocks, which document internet disruptions, platform blocking, and telecommunications blackouts in near real time.



5 Audience and outcomes

Target audience

The success of the Summit relies on a multi-stakeholder approach. RFLD is convening the actors who collect the data alongside the actors who have the power to act on it: feminist movements, the regional press, technologists, policy researchers, parliamentarians, and the donors and academic institutions whose resources and credibility shape the field.

AUDIENCE 01 Feminist activists Grassroots women's-rights defenders and movement leaders from across the West African region, with priority for francophone applicants.	AUDIENCE 02 Data journalists Investigative reporters covering civic space, environmental harm, GBV, and corporate accountability across the region.
AUDIENCE 03 Policy researchers Researchers whose work informs ECOWAS, AU, and national legislative processes, particularly on gender, digital rights, and access to information.	AUDIENCE 04 Civic technologists Engineers, designers, and product leads building accountability tools, secure-communications infrastructure, and feminist civic-tech platforms.
AUDIENCE 05 Parliamentarians Members of West African parliaments, particularly women parliamentarians and members of gender, ICT, and human-rights committees.	AUDIENCE 06 Environmental defenders Ecofeminist defenders, environmental journalists, and community-rights monitors working in extractive-industry contexts.
AUDIENCE 07 Academic researchers Faculty and graduate researchers from regional and international institutions working on digital rights, feminist methodologies, and African data sovereignty.	AUDIENCE 08 Donor representatives Programme officers from foundations, bilateral cooperation agencies, and pooled funds with mandates touching gender, digital rights, civic space, and the African region.

Expected outcomes

The Summit is designed to produce measurable, persistent outputs rather than communiqués that disappear into archives. Each of the four expected outcomes below has a designated owner within the RFLD team, a timeline for delivery, and a published artefact through which it can be tracked.

Regional feminist data agenda. A drafted and ratified document identifying legislative gaps across the West African region, covering access to environmental information, TFGBV legislation, data protection, and AI accountability, and designed for direct submission to ECOWAS and ACHPR mechanisms.

Cross-border data collective. The launch of an encrypted network connecting Summit delegates for ongoing peer support, rapid emergency response across borders, and continuous case-sharing, operated through RFLD's continental data infrastructure.

Trained delegate cohort. All delegates exit the Summit with full operational training on RFLD's data platforms (the DONUÈSÈ Data Center, the West Africa Legislative Platform, the ACDEG Hub, and the Maputo Protocol Hub) and on the practitioner tools introduced through each track.

Resource mobilization pipeline. Direct funding pathways established between donor representatives present at the Summit and under-resourced grassroots initiatives, facilitated where appropriate through RFLD's WAFF Fund regranting infrastructure.¹²

¹²The WAFF Fund is RFLD's regranting vehicle channeling flexible resources to grassroots women's-rights organisations across the region; together with the Africa Grant Portfolio, RFLD's regranting infrastructure has moved approximately USD 2 million to the field over its current multi-year grant cycle.



6 Logistics, key dates, and participation

Key dates

MILESTONE	DATE	NOTES
Early registration opens	10 May 2026	Priority window for grassroots and francophone applicants.
Call for sessions closes	26 May 2026	Workshop, panel, and policy-brief proposals welcomed.
Travel grant decisions	Mid-June 2026	Available for delegates from rural and conflict-affected contexts.
Final agenda published	Mid-July 2026	Track sessions, plenaries, and speaker confirmations.
Summit convenes	28–30 July 2026	Three full days at Hôtel Les Oliviers, Porto-Novo, Benin.
Summit outputs published	September–November 2026	Regional data agenda; cohort report; funding pipeline.

Call for sessions and speaker invitation

RFLD invites session proposals from feminist activists, data practitioners, journalists, parliamentarians, technologists, and academic researchers whose work aligns with one or more of the Summit's eight thematic tracks. The Summit's session formats are practitioner-oriented, not lecture-oriented.

Working sessions. 90-minute hands-on training on a specific data tool, methodology, or analytical practice that delegates can take into their own work.

Policy-brief sessions. 60-minute drafting sessions producing a one-page brief on a specific legislative, regulatory, or institutional issue identified in the regional data agenda.

Panel discussions. 60-minute moderated panels of three to four practitioners on a specific intersectional theme. Single-speaker keynote slots are limited.

Lightning sessions. 15-minute presentations on a specific tool, organisation, or framework, designed for high-density practitioner exchange.

Proposals are reviewed against three criteria: alignment with one or more thematic tracks; practitioner orientation (the Summit privileges working knowledge over keynote performance); and contribution to one of the four expected outcomes. Priority is given to grassroots organisations, francophone proposers, and proposers based in the West African region.

Practical information

The Summit's working languages are English and French, with simultaneous interpretation across all plenaries and main track sessions. RFLD will provide official invitation letters to delegates requiring visa support; ECOWAS citizens and other African nationals do not require a visa to enter Benin, though delegates should verify their specific status.¹³ Negotiated accommodation rates at Summit-affiliated hotels will be communicated upon registration confirmation. Travel grants covering airfare, accommodation, and per diem are available for delegates from rural and conflict-affected contexts; applications are reviewed on a rolling basis throughout the registration window.

FOR INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

Sponsorship and partnership

RFLD welcomes sponsorship and institutional partnership for the Summit. Sponsorship tiers cover delegate travel grants, French-language interpretation, regional press participation, and the publication of Summit outputs. Institutional partners (donors, foundations, multilateral agencies, academic institutions, and peer civil-society networks) are invited to participate as Summit collaborators, with framing of the proposal call and review of substantive outputs.

Partnership conversations: **John GBENAGNON**, Development Director | Resource Mobilization & Partnerships · gbenagnon.john@rflgd.org

¹³Under the ECOWAS Protocol relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment (A/P.1/5/79), citizens of ECOWAS Member States may enter the Republic of Benin without a visa. Nationals of other African states benefit from the Republic of Benin's visa-free regime for African nationals; delegates from outside the continent may apply for an electronic visa. RFLD issues official invitation letters on request.



7 Contacts and next steps

Detailed enquiries on the Summit programme, the call for sessions, registration, travel grants, partnership, or media access should be directed to the appropriate RFLD contact below. RFLD will respond to all enquiries within five business days throughout the Summit registration window.

GENERAL REGISTRATION & PROGRAMME Programmes team programs@rflgd.org	STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS & SPONSORSHIP John GBENAGNON Development Director Resource Mobilization & Partnerships gbenagnon.john@rflgd.org
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Online registration channels

Delegate registration. Open from 10 May 2026 through the RFLD Summit registration system, accessible at rflgd.org/west-africa-data-summit.

Call for sessions. Proposal submission open from 10 May 2026 through 26 May 2026.

Travel grant applications. Open throughout the Summit registration window for delegates from rural and conflict-affected contexts.

RFLD · RÉSEAU DES FEMMES LEADERS POUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT

The West Africa Feminist Data Summit 2026 exists because the data is already there, collected, often at significant personal risk, by the activists, journalists, technologists, and researchers who have given much of their professional lives to making the unseen visible. The work the Summit takes on is the next step: turning that data into policy, protection, and power. **Over three days, one hundred delegates working across eight tracks will produce a regional data agenda. We hope you will join us.**

Delegate registration opens on 10 May 2026 through the RFLD Summit registration system at rflgd.org/west-africa-data-summit. The call for sessions runs from 10 to 26 May 2026. Travel grant applications remain open throughout the registration window for delegates from rural and conflict-affected contexts.

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