



SPECIAL EDITION · OCTOBER 2026

A month to remember in Dakar

Received by Senegal's Minister of Justice, visited by Konstanze Ricken of SEA-T (GIZ), and heard at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement

Women Leaders Network for Development · 1,143 member organisations · 35+ African countries

rflgd.org

EDITORIAL

A letter from RFLD

Dear friends and partners,

October has been a full month for RFLD. Our delegation of 42 women human rights defenders from 15 African countries took part in the 89th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which runs in Dakar until 21 October 2026. They came from grassroots associations and national networks, and they brought the evidence of their communities into the room where African human rights standards are set.

Dakar gave us moments we will remember. Senegal's Minister of Justice, Maître Moussa Sarr, received our delegation together with Benin's Institut National de la Femme. Konstanze Ricken, Programme Director of SEA-T at GIZ, visited our Dakar office. We delivered our oral statement to the Commission under Observer Status N°553, moderated panels with Expertise France and with the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, and learned a great deal from the Association des Juristes Sénégalaises and from the Ministry of Family.

Behind these meetings sits one message. Forty years after the African Charter entered into force, our Maputo Barometer finds only 3 of 49 countries green on all three indicators for women's rights. Many laws exist on paper, yet women still wait for the budgets and the courts that would make them real. The briefs and data tools we published this month are there to help organisations close that gap.

RFLD is registered as an International Organisation in Senegal and as a non-governmental organisation in Benin, Ghana, Nigeria and The Gambia. Our network now brings together 1,143 member organisations in more than 35 African countries.

We thank our partners and every defender who travelled to Dakar. Your trust makes this work possible.

Here is everything we shared since 1 October.

*With gratitude,
The RFLD team*

THIS MONTH IN NUMBERS

42

women human rights
defenders in our
delegation

15

African countries
represented

1,143

member organisations
in the RFLD network

46 of 55

AU member states have
ratified the Maputo
Protocol

3 of 49

countries green on all
three Barometer
indicators

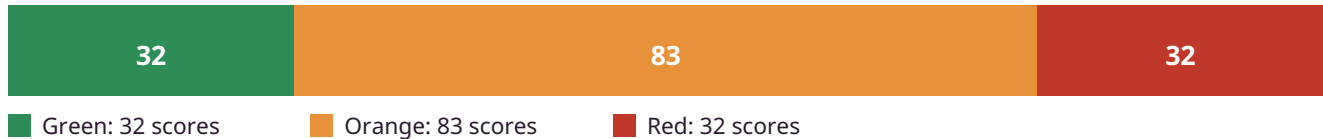
“ A treaty that is ratified and unfunded produces no change in the life of a single woman. ”

From RFLD's oral statement to the 89th Ordinary Session of the African Commission, Dakar, 13 October 2026

DATA

The Maputo Barometer at a glance

49 countries assessed on three indicators drawn from the Maputo Protocol: laws against gender-based violence, girls' education and women's political representation. That makes 147 scores.



3 of 49 countries are green on all three indicators: Cabo Verde, Namibia and Rwanda.

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MEETING IN DAKAR

Senegal's Minister of Justice receives RFLD and Benin's Institut National de la Femme

On 14 October 2026 in Dakar, Senegal's Minister of Justice and Keeper of the Seals, Maître Moussa Sarr, received a delegation from RFLD and Benin's Institut National de la Femme (INF) on the sidelines of the 89th Session of the African Commission. John GBENAGNON, RFLD Regional Director of Strategy and Development, led the RFLD delegation, and Flore DJINOUE, Executive Secretary of the INF, led the Beninese team. The Minister showed strong interest in the INF model and congratulated RFLD on its initiatives in Senegal and across the region.

[Read the full article online](#)



PARTNERS

SEA-T Programme Director Konstanze Ricken visits RFLD's office in Dakar

On 14 October 2026, Konstanze Ricken, Programme Director of SEA-T (Society Equality Africa Transformation) at GIZ, visited RFLD's Dakar office. Two days earlier she had spoken on the panel on women human rights defenders that RFLD facilitated at the African Commission. The team presented RFLD's work in Senegal and the impact of SEA-T support on women defenders and partner organisations in francophone West Africa, from training and safety support to sub-grants for grassroots groups.

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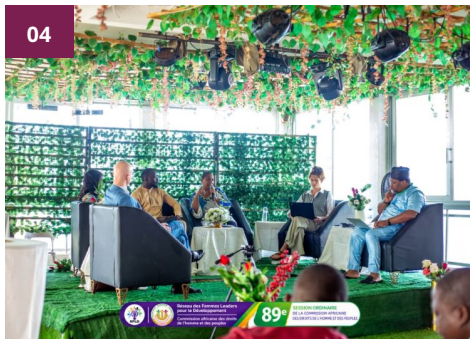


AFRICAN COMMISSION

RFLD oral statement at the 89th Ordinary Session of the African Commission

On 13 October 2026, RFLD delivered its oral statement to the 89th Ordinary Session of the African Commission in Dakar under its Observer Status N°553. Drawing on the Maputo Barometer and on reports from its focal points, the statement noted that only three of 49 countries score satisfactorily on women's rights. It closed with four recommendations to the Commission, its Special Rapporteurs and member states.

[Read the full article online](#)



AFRICAN COMMISSION

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence and human rights: what the Expertise France dialogue in Dakar discussed

On 13 October 2026, on the sidelines of the 89th Session of the African Commission, Expertise France convened a morning dialogue on technology-facilitated gender-based violence under the Team Europe WLICT initiative, funded by the European Union. Institutions, civil society organisations and United Nations partners discussed how to prevent online abuse and support survivors. RFLD moderated the panel and brought the experience of its network in Benin, Nigeria and Senegal.

[Read the full article online](#)



STATEMENT

40 years of the African Charter: RFLD statement on African Human Rights Day

Forty years after the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights entered into force on 21 October 1986, RFLD's Maputo Barometer 2026 finds only 3 of 49 countries green on all three indicators for women's rights. Forty-six African Union member states have ratified the Maputo Protocol and nine have not. Our statement calls on States to ratify, lift reservations, fund the laws they have adopted and protect women defenders.

[Read the full article online](#)



MEETING IN DAKAR

RFLD and Benin's INF visit the Association des Juristes Sénégalaises to learn from its law shops

On 14 October 2026, RFLD and Benin's Institut National de la Femme visited the Association des Juristes Sénégalaises in Dakar, where they were received by its President, Ms Aminata Fall Niang. The AJS presented its boutiques de droit, community law shops where women receive free legal advice. The INF shared the Benin experience of a public institution able to bring cases to court. RFLD also congratulated the AJS on its new observer status with the African Commission.

[Read the full article online](#)



AFRICAN COMMISSION

Defending without being exposed: what the panel on women human rights defenders at the 89th Session of the African Commission discussed

On 12 October 2026, Hon. Rémy Ngoy Lumbu, Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, chaired a panel on the main agenda of the 89th Session of the African Commission on the protection of women human rights defenders. RFLD facilitated the session with the support of SEA-T, implemented by GIZ on behalf of BMZ. Speakers from GIZ, WACSI, ACDHRS and RFLD Nigeria discussed recognition, reprisals and the funding of protection.

[Read the full article online](#)



NEW PUBLICATION

Lifting the Reservations: nine country briefs on the Maputo Protocol

RFLD publishes nine advocacy briefs on the States that still limit the Maputo Protocol through reservations or declarations: Algeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritius, Namibia, the Sahrawi Republic, South Africa and Uganda. The briefs build on the Advocacy Framework for Withdrawing Reservations adopted by the African Commission in March 2026, and turn it into a country-by-country agenda for civil society and Commissioners.

[Read the full article online](#)



MEETING IN DAKAR

RFLD and Benin's INF meet Senegal's Ministry of Family to share lessons on protecting women

On 14 October 2026, RFLD and Benin's Institut National de la Femme held a working meeting with Dr Rokhaya Diakhaté, Director of the Family at Senegal's Ministry of Family, Social Action and Solidarity. Dr Diakhaté had moderated the RFLD and INF side event the day before. The two countries compared how they protect women and families, and the Ministry learned in more detail how the INF follows cases from the first call to the courtroom.

[Read the full article online](#)

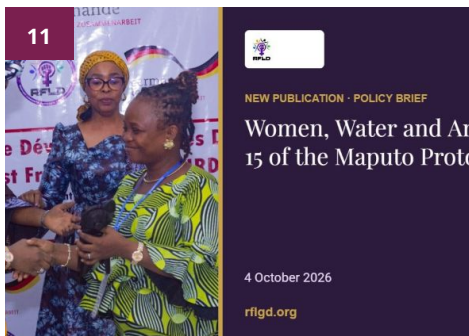


AFRICAN COMMISSION

A sentinel for women and girls: Benin's Institut National de la Femme and RFLD at the 89th Session of the African Commission

On 13 October 2026 in Dakar, RFLD and Benin's Institut National de la Femme held a joint side event at the 89th Session of the African Commission, moderated by Dr Rokhaya Diakhaté. In five years, the INF reports that its work has changed the lives of more than 118,000 women and girls. The panel gave this national institution a continental platform to explain how it works, what it has achieved and where it still meets resistance.

[Read the full article online](#)



NEW PUBLICATION

Women, Water and Article 15 of the Maputo Protocol

Ahead of the International Day of Rural Women, RFLD publishes a policy brief, in English and French, on how Article 15 of the Maputo Protocol can turn the African Union's 2026 theme on water and sanitation into rights for women and girls. In households without water on the premises, women and girls carry the main burden of collection in seven cases out of ten. The brief sets out what States must do on budgets, governance and reporting.

[Read the full article online](#)



NGOS FORUM

"The woman who fetches water belongs": RFLD's statement at the opening of the NGOs Forum in Dakar

At the opening ceremony of the NGOs Forum of the 89th Session of the African Commission in Dakar on 8 October, John GBENAGNON delivered RFLD's statement on behalf of Africa Director Dossi Sêkonnou Gloria AGUEH and the network's 1,143 member organisations. The statement linked the African Union's 2026 water theme to Article 15 of the Maputo Protocol and called for women's access to water to be examined in every State report.

[Read the full article online](#)



NEW PUBLICATION

A manual for shadow reports on the Maputo Protocol

RFLD publishes a step-by-step training manual, in English and French, to help women's organisations write shadow reports to the African Commission on the Maputo Protocol. Only 21 of 45 States Parties had submitted at least one report under the Protocol by October 2024. The manual explains the Commission's rules, such as the 15-page limit and the 30-day deadline, and guides organisations from planning to follow-up.

[Read the full article online](#)



NIGERIA

RFLD at the WLICT National Consultation on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Abuja

On 6 and 7 October 2026, RFLD, represented by Nigeria Country Representative Simbiat Bakare, joined the WLICT National Consultation and Planning Workshop on technology-facilitated gender-based violence in Abuja. The workshop brought together civil society, national institutions, media and technology practitioners to agree on priorities for prevention and response in Nigeria, and to strengthen women's leadership in the public ICT sector.

[Read the full article online](#)



NGOS FORUM

NGOs Forum: an Afrofeminist reading of shrinking civic space in Africa, RFLD panel with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women

On 8 October 2026, RFLD convened a panel at the NGOs Forum in Dakar with Hon. Commissioner Janet Ramatoulie Sallah-Njie, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, Omolara Balogun (WACSI), Naji Moulay Lahsen (CIDH Africa) and Bathor Seck (RFLD Senegal), moderated by John GBENAGNON. The panel asked what an Afrofeminist reading of shrinking civic space tells us about protecting freedom of expression, association and assembly in Africa.

[Read the full article online](#)



NEW PUBLICATION

Online violence against women in West and Central Africa 2026

Ahead of the 16 Days of Activism, RFLD publishes the first regional overview of evidence and laws on online violence against women in West and Central Africa, the least documented region of the continent on this issue. A 2026 review found only two West African studies out of seventeen in sub-Saharan Africa. The report looks at the laws that exist, the gaps that remain and what States, platforms and funders can do.

[Read the full article online](#)



MEETING IN DAKAR

RFLD at the Lawyers Without Borders regional workshop in Dakar: protecting women defenders from digital violence

On 5 and 6 October 2026, Bathor Seck, RFLD Country Director for Senegal, spoke on the panel of the Lawyers Without Borders regional workshop in Dakar on women human rights defenders, digital violence and protection in Africa. Her message was clear: women who defend rights are attacked for what they do and for who they are. The workshop was organised with the African Commission on the margins of its 89th Session.

[Read the full article online](#)



AFRICAN COMMISSION

From stories to evidence: what RFLD's Gender Mainstreaming Tool session in Dakar produced

On 10 October 2026, during the 89th Session of the ACHPR, RFLD held a closed session in Dakar on data protection and safeguarding under NAFASI, a programme funded by Sweden through Sida and implemented by Magamba Network, DefendDefenders and RFLD. Organisations from francophone and lusophone countries built threat-assessment matrices from their own work and adopted a first quarterly GESI dashboard to produce evidence the Commission can use.

[Read the full article online](#)



NEW PUBLICATION

Funding feminist movements in francophone West Africa: 2026 data

Ahead of GivingTuesday, RFLD publishes data on funding for feminist movements in francophone West Africa. Feminist organisations receive about 1 per cent of gender-related aid, and official development assistance fell by 23.1 per cent in 2025. The report brings together global data, the voices of francophone feminist leaders and RFLD's own grant-making: 27 grants worth US\$722,100 between June and September 2026.

[Read the full article online](#)

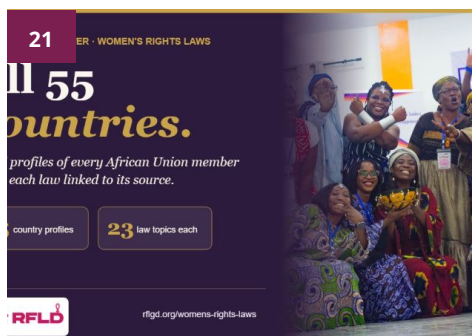


NGOS FORUM

NGOs Forum: the situation of human rights and democracy in Africa, region by region

At the NGOs Forum in Dakar on 8 October, the sub-regional focal points reported on the situation of human rights and democracy in Africa, in a session moderated by RFLD's John GBENAGNON at the invitation of ACDHRS. Over ninety minutes, they presented what civil society has documented in each region since the last session of the Commission, from restrictions on civic space to attacks on defenders.

[Read the full article online](#)



OPEN TOOLS

Women's rights laws now mapped in all 55 African Union member states

Every African Union member state now has a legal profile in RFLD's DONÜESÉ Data Center: treaty status, constitution and national laws on 23 topics, each linked to its source. Women's rights organisations no longer need to search scattered gazettes before a shadow report or a parliamentary brief. The article explains what you will find in each profile and how to use it in your advocacy.

[Read the full article online](#)

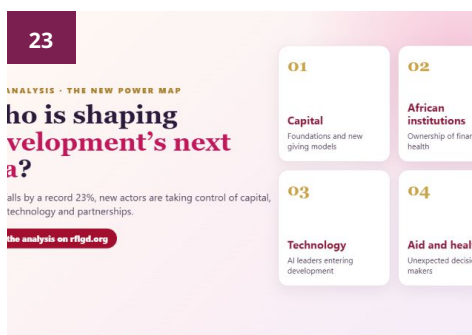


ANALYSIS

Financing Water and Sanitation in Africa: Resilience, Reuse, Ecosystems, Decentralised Services and Water Diplomacy

Dossi Sêkonou Gloria AGUEH, RFLD Africa Director, examines how financing for resilient infrastructure, wastewater reuse, ecosystem protection, decentralised systems and water diplomacy can close Africa's water and sanitation gap. Globally, 2.1 billion people still lacked safely managed drinking water in 2024. She argues that the women who make the first water decision of the day must also sit where water budgets are decided.

[Read the full article online](#)



ANALYSIS

Who is shaping development's next era? The new power map as aid falls

As aid falls by a record 23.1%, a small group of leaders now shapes development capital, African ownership, artificial intelligence, philanthropy and foreign assistance. RFLD maps who decides, from the Gates Foundation and the African Development Bank to Coefficient Giving and GiveWell, so that African women's organisations can understand the new rules before they are set.

[Read the full article online](#)

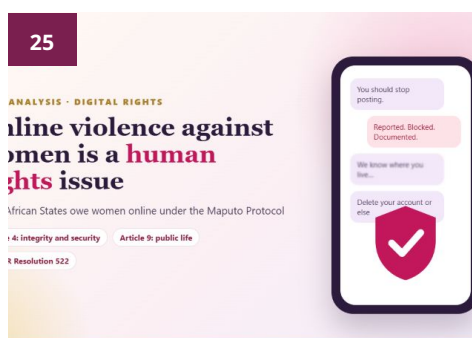


OPEN TOOLS

A management system on every desk: why RFLD built the RFLD Management Suite 5.0

RFLD wants a management system on the desk of every women's organisation in Africa. Version 5.0 of the RFLD Management Suite, online at suite.rflgd.org and as a download for Windows, macOS and Linux, brings the ten departments of an organisation into one bilingual tool. It adds full accounting, mobile data collection and encrypted teamwork online, so that a grassroots association can report to a donor like a large NGO.

[Read the full article online](#)



ANALYSIS

Why technology-facilitated violence against women is a human rights issue

Online harassment, threats and image-based abuse against women are often treated as a private problem or a matter for technology companies. RFLD sees them as a human rights issue that engages the responsibility of African States. The article sets out what States owe women online under the Maputo Protocol and ACHPR Resolution 522, and shares resources for organisations and survivors.

[Read the full article online](#)

OPEN RESOURCES

Resources this month

ADVOCACY BRIEFS

Lifting the Reservations: nine country briefs on the Maputo Protocol

TRAINING MANUAL

A manual for shadow reports on the Maputo Protocol

POLICY BRIEF

Women, Water and Article 15 of the Maputo Protocol

REPORT

Online violence against women in West and Central Africa 2026

DATA

Funding feminist movements in francophone West Africa: 2026 data

GUIDE

Responding to online violence: a survivor-centred guide in six steps

DATA TOOL

DONÙÈSÈ Data Center: women's rights laws in all 55 AU member states

FREE SOFTWARE

RFLD Management Suite 5.0

CALENDAR

Dates ahead

21 October 2026

40 years of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and closing of the 89th Session

25 November to 10 December

16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

1 December 2026

GivingTuesday, a day to support feminist movements in West Africa

PARTNERS

Thank you to our partners

This month's work was made possible by partners who stand with women's organisations in Africa: GIZ through the SEA-T programme on behalf of BMZ, the European Union and Team Europe WLICT, Expertise France, the Agence Française de Développement, Sida through the NAFASI programme, Magamba Network, DefendDefenders, Lawyers Without Borders, ACDHRS and Benin's Institut National de la Femme.



Work with RFLD

RFLD is a pan-African feminist network of 1,143 member organisations in more than 35 African countries, with Observer Status N°553 with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. RFLD is registered as an International Organisation in Senegal and as a non-governmental organisation in Benin, Ghana, Nigeria and The Gambia.

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