

Growth & Sustainability



Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

First Female President of Liberia & Nobel Peace Laureate

Internationally known as “Africa’s Iron Lady,” Nobel Laureate Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, is a leading promoter of freedom, peace, justice, women’s empowerment and democratic rule. As Africa’s first democratically-elected female head of state, she has led Liberia through reconciliation and recovery following the nation’s decade-long civil war, as well as the Ebola Crisis, winning international acclaim for achieving economic, social, and political change.

Recognized as a global leader for women’s empowerment, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize for Peace in 2011. She is the recipient of The Presidential Medal of Freedom—the United States’ highest civilian award and the Grand Croix of the Légion d’Honneur, France’s highest public distinction—for her personal courage and unwavering commitment to expanding freedom and improving the lives of Africans. President Sirleaf has been named one of *Forbes’s* “100 Most Powerful Women in the World,” the most powerful woman in Africa (*Forbes Africa*, 2011), one of six “Women of the Year” (*Glamour*, 2010), among the 10 best leaders in the world (*Newsweek*, 2010) and top 10 female leaders (*TIME*, 2010). In 2010, *The Economist* called her “the best President the country has ever had.”

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected President of the Republic of Liberia in 2005, two years after the nation’s bloody civil war ended. Her historic inauguration as Africa’s first democratically elected head of state took place on January 16, 2006.. She was reelected in November 2011. During her two terms as President, she focused on rebuilding the country, mobilizing over \$16 billion in foreign direct investment. She also attracted more than \$5 million in private resources to rebuild schools, clinics and markets, and fund scholarships for capacity building. She successfully negotiated relief from \$4.6 billion in external debt and succeeded in lifting of UN trade sanctions, which allowed Liberia to once again access international markets. She increased the national budget from \$80 million in 2006 to over \$672 million in 2012, with an average annual GDP growth rate of more than 7%.

In June 2016, President Sirleaf was elected the first female Chairperson of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for a twelve-month term. In May 2012, she was appointed co-chair of the United Nations Secretary General’s High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, tasked with crafting a roadmap for global recovery and sustainable development - The Sustainable Development Goals.

Prior to her Presidency, Johnson Sirleaf served as Assistant Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and as Director of its Regional Bureau of Africa, with the rank of Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, a post she resigned to contest the 1997 presidential elections. She was the first African woman Vice President of Citibank assigned to the Nairobi Kenya office.

President Sirleaf has been awarded honorary doctorates by more than 15 institutions, including: Tilburg University (Netherlands), the Nigerian Defence Academy, the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Harvard University, Rutgers University, Yale University, Georgetown University, the University of Abeokuta (Nigeria), the University of Minnesota, Furman University of South Carolina, Brown University, Indiana University, Dartmouth College, Concordia University, Langston University, Spelman College and Marquette University.

Born Ellen Eugenia Johnson, President Sirleaf is the granddaughter of a traditional chief renown in western Liberia and a market woman from the southeast. She holds a Master’s in Public Administration (MPA) from Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. She also earned a degree in accounting at Madison Business College in Wisconsin and received a diploma from the

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University of Colorado's Economics Institute.

President Sirleaf has written widely on financial, development and human rights issues, and in 2008 she published her critically acclaimed memoir, *This Child Will Be Great*. She is the proud mother of four sons and grandmother of 12.

LIST OF AWARDS

In addition to her Nobel Prize, President Sirleaf is the recipient of numerous honors, including:

Roosevelt Institute Freedom of Speech Award (USA)	1988
Ralph Bunche International Leadership Award (USA)	1995/6
Commandeur de l'Ordre du Mono (Togo)	1996
International Republican Institute Freedom Award (USA)	2006
Africa Prize for Leadership for the Sustainable End of Hunger, the Hunger Project	2006
David Rockefeller Bridging Leadership Award from Synergos	2006
National Civil Rights Museum Annual Freedom Award	2007
Bishop John T. Walker Humanitarian Award (USA)	2007
National Democratic Institute Harriman Award (USA)	2007
The Presidential Medal of Freedom (USA)	2007
International Crisis Group Fred Cuny Award for the Prevention of Deadly Crisis	2008
Grand Croix of the Légion d'Honneur (France)	2008
Orders of the White Rose and the Lion of Finland (Finland)	2009
Fuech Grand Cross of Merit	2009
Friend of the Media in Africa Award	2010
Alpha Kappa Alpha International Service Award (USA)	2010
The Nobel Prize for Peace (Norway)	2011
The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace Disarmament and Development (India)	2013
The Mo Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership (London)	2018
Order of the Champions of Oliver Tambo (South Africa)	2018
Order of the Most Ancient Welwitschia Mirabilis (Namibia)	2018