

# New Liberia leader hails children [LR] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

Liberia's new President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, has ended official festivities for her inauguration with a massive childrens' party in the garden of her official residence.

Children poured up the hill to the executive mansion, clutching their invitations to come and see the president.

With two meet-the-people events booked for the same day, President Johnson Sirleaf addressed chiefs and tribal elders at the top of the grounds, while thousands of children rampaged about on the lower lawn.

But even this speech was largely about the needs of the young.

"Don't let your children go in the market," she told them.

"Don't let them on the farm. Let them go to school."

Again and again the new president has talked about Liberia's children.

In her inaugural address she painted a picture of children waiting each evening for their father to come home, waiting to see whether he would bring them home some supper or come back tired and empty handed.

She pledged to try and build a country where fathers could find work, and earn enough to feed their children and send them to school.

For the children in her garden, a plate of rice was a bigger attraction than the games.

Long, patient queues formed for plates of rice, a small piece of chicken and a cake for the lucky ones.

At the end of four days of celebrations an impressive number of people have been able see their new president.

There was a free rock concert for the young on Saturday evening, a church service for the devout on Sunday morning, a womens' rally at the football stadium in the afternoon and finally the party for the children.

- reprinted from BBC News

**Region:** Africa <sup>[2]</sup>

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