



Bericht: **Weltsozialforum Teil 3: Selbstkritischer Abschluss des 7. Weltsozialforums**

Ein Artikel auf Englisch zum diesjehrigen Weltsozialforum, zur weiterverwendung unter Angabe der Quelle.

**Another world is possible! The World Social Forum 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya: Marketplace for alternative ideas, solidarity, souvenirs and criticism.**

„What I like about the World Social Forum, is that it brings the world to me as a poor Kenyan women – and not just the world but the best of the world.“

That is how Rangoy Matia from the People’s Parliament in Kenya described the World Social Forum (WSF). She was among the many Kenyans who were excluded from the forum because they could not afford to pay the 7 USD entrance fee.

66,000 women and men attended this year WSF that took place from January 20 to 25 2007 in Nairobi. 1400 organisations from 110 countries were represented, 750 journalists accredited and 1130 volunteers contributed to the success of the forum. Participants had a choice between 1200 different activities, seminars, plenary discussions and workshops on the issue such as water, women’s rights, land rights, economic alternatives, workers rights, communication rights, human rights, armed conflict and peace building, sexual diversity, poverty reduction, female genital mutilation, civil society building and many, many more.

The idle sport stadium in which the WSF took place became a space for sharing experiences, learning from each other and about the effects of neoliberalism, imperialism, patriarchy and fundamentalisms on people in other countries. It was a place where people realised that they were not alone in their struggle against unfair treaties such as GATT, in most countries women’s rights are being violated, community radios are struggling for survival and against repressive laws that restrict the freedom of expression. It was a space where solidarity was expressed and networks were formed to work together in the struggle against common enemies. Two new international networks were launched: The Tax Justice Network for Africa, which is struggling about illicit capital flight and tax evasion and the African Water Network, which is opposing the privatisation of water.

AMARC, the World Association of Community Broadcasters was present with a team of 20 activists from Asia, Africa, Europe, North- and Latin America. They reported from the WSF in 10 different languages among them English, Gujarat, Nepali and Bahasa Indonesia. Their reports can be downloaded at [www.amarc.org](http://www.amarc.org). Rebroadcast is encouraged.

Compared to previous WSF in Mumbai 2003 or in Puerto Alegre 2005, there were only half as many participants this year. The forum was much less vibrant, militant and energetic. While the WSF in Mumbai was marked by permanent rallies on the ground of the forum by mostly local participants from India, the WSF in Puerto Alegre was marked by huge rallies in the city (over 100,000) with lots of local participants. In Nairobi the women’s rally around the stadium was one of the biggest rallies

during the whole forum. This year forum turned more and more into a marketplace for Kenyan souvenirs at exorbitant prices and safaris for international participants. The prices for water, snacks and food went up to two to four times of the usual prices in Nairobi.

Every WSF is marked by culture of political struggle of its local participants. This local influence was missing in Nairobi. The Kenyan grassroots organisations were not present. As one excluded participant expressed it: „This WSF is taking place in Kenya but less than 10 % of the participants are Kenyans. It should not be like this.“

At the Assembly of the Social Movements on January 24 the unrest and criticism was loudly expressed and there was lots of protest. A proposal for an official statement from the WSF 2007 was presented in which the tendencies of commercialisation, privatisation and militarization of the WSF were condemned. The presence of organisations that work against women's rights and marginalized people, that fight against sexual rights and diversity in contradiction to the principles of the Charter of the WSF was criticised. It was reaffirmed that the WSF is a space open to all people and social movements independent of their ability to pay.

Every morning Kenyan grassroots people from the slums in Nairobi blocked the gates to the forum, asking for free entry. They received a lot of support from international participants. But it was a struggle every day to get some of them in. In the morning of January 24 the most expensive tent restaurant at the WSF was taken over by urban poor people from Nairobi with the support of international participants. The staff of the restaurant was forced to distribute the food to the children of the urban poor community who were lining up. The restaurant prices belonged to the Minister for Internal Security. He offered the security forces to the forum for free and in exchange he got the licence for the restaurant. A young man who was part of the taking over of the restaurant said: "It should be poor Kenyans selling food here at affordable prices and not commercial enterprises. This is a win-win situation for the Minister and a loss-loss situation for the poor!"

At the WSF in Mumbai most products sold were from fair trade organisations. In Nairobi just any one sold local handicrafts with no guarantee if the working conditions were fair. At the same time armoured cars and armed soldiers patrolled on the ground of the WSF. Especially the youth camp was permanently under surveillance. For the first time a WSF was sponsored by a cell phone operator that is part of a multinational company.

The Kasarani stadium where the WSF took place was outside the city and most poor people could not even afford the transportation to the stadium not to talk about the entrance fee. The Peoples Parliament of Kenya held a forum in the city centre, which was accessible to the urban poor communities, where they discussed the same issues as at the WSF. At the Assembly of the Social Movements they presented the results of their discussions: "The Peoples Parliament represents the poorest of Kenya, those who cannot afford visa to migrate to other countries, those who are too poor to travel to other WSFs. For most of us this was the first WSF to attend and they were excluded." One of the most important demands from the People's Parliament was that the struggle for decent housing must become an integral part of the WSF and this struggle must be fought together with the people who do not have decent living environment.

The WSF is far from being perfect but what is great about it, is that it offers the space to speak out all this criticism loudly and debate it. It became clear that fundamental changes have to be undertaken by the organizing committee to bring the WSF back to the grassroots. Next year there will be an international day of action instead of a WSF and in 2009 there will be another WSF, where has not yet been defined. Lets hope that by then the WSF is again determined by the people's organisations and less a meeting place for NGOs. Some tendencies in this direction could already be observed on

the last day in Nairobi, when water and snacks were sold by street vendors at usual prices, which also poorer people could afford.

By Bianca Miglioretto, Isis International-Manila and AMARC WIN Asia Pacific