

## **INTERVIEW WITH WAHU KAARA ON THE JUST CONCLUDED WORLD SOCIAL FORUM.**

Ms Wahu Kaara the Coordinator of the Kenya Debt Relief Network (KENDREN) was one of the participants in this year's World Social Forum held in Dakar, Senegal from 6<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> February 2011. She shared her experiences with KENDREN's Program Associate:

**Q: Another world is truly possible was the theme of this year's WSF. With this year's WSF being held amid the uprisings of Tunisia and Egypt, do you believe this vision is coming true?**

**A:** Certainly yes. The uprisings are a symbol that the current status quo cannot hold. The status quo based on the western civilization based on the market paradigm which is very exclusive and builds enclosures between and among people. These unequal relationships that have created lots of injustices that now actually threaten our existence and life needs to be addressed and with some urgency. The spirit of the WSF that has been speaking for the last ten years that another world is possible, I am convinced that the revolutionary spirit we are now seeing is an expression of it.

**Q: Are African Governments as strongly committed to the cause as are for instance Latin American Governments?**

**A:** Support to the WSF has the dynamic of the history of the specific regions. Like in Latin America it is on record that the WSF was the expression of a moment where the Latin Americans felt that their struggles were bearing fruit when President Lula Inacio Da'Silva of Brazil was elected as the president from a Worker's Party. Therefore the celebration included looking for other people in struggles also and encourage them and that's why the WSF found it necessary to happen when the Economic World Forum (EWF) is also ongoing to send the message that the beneficiaries of the status quo as it is today in the world of unequal political, economic and social relations there is emerging another mindset and another vision of building a world to overcome the inequalities. When it comes to Africa, we also have a history of struggle but African leadership is still beholden on the parasitic arrangement that ushered in our independence whereby majority of our leaders are just but puppets of the former colonial rulers. It has taken many African people to realize that there is disconnect between the aspirations of the people and the leadership because the leadership is still very much beholden to the interest of the colonizer where they only ceded political power but continued to enjoy the economic privilege of very unequal access to resources, creation of and distribution of wealth.

**Q: How has the WSF tied with your work on debt as the coordinator of the Kenya Debt Relief Network?**

**A:** Issues of debt are very important in the WSF. The WSF is an expression and a critique to the status of our world today. Debt is an instrument that sustains the current unequal international relations. Debt has a genesis of a very historical process from slavery. Today we don't only talk about debt cancellation but also about its liquidation. It is a very profound concern for the WSF. Unless we resolve the issue of debt, then another world is not possible. The WSF came out very clearly in threading out the issues of debt. Ecological debt is important therefore we need ecological justice, economic debt is important therefore we need economic justice, climate debt is important therefore we need climate justice. At KENDREN we are already thinking of how we can incorporate issues of climate debt advocacy especially as in Kenya there is a ongoing pilot project in forcing our leaders who never work as a united front to actually pilot carbon trading as a remedy to climate change issues.

**Q: On leading the opening march hand in hand with Bolivia's President Evo Morales how was the feeling like?**

**A:** One participation that is very close to my heart is when people express in action that they know about this other world, that they believe in this other world, and actually live in this other world because of the ongoing everyday experiences of keeping their struggles going qualitatively and being determined that at least finally victory will be theirs. Participation in the opening march is one of those occasions where there is that expression. It was a great moment walking hand in hand with Evo Morales, especially for me from Africa who cannot imagine marching with my president let alone to have an occasion to discuss issues that are concerning us as Kenyans. I have been in many marches and having a South-American President on the African soil – remember that Senegal is not just another country. It is on record that millions of slaves were moved from Dakar as they were taken to slavery. Goree Island is a very emotional place to visit. – To have the President of Bolivia coming to march with me was a moment to actually celebrate the victory of resistance and struggle because that was a connectedness of the two continents. As you know there are many Africans in Latin America, next to Nigeria, Brazil has the highest number of Africans. We have more Africans in Brazil than in Kenya. The connectedness of our struggles, expressed by a Latin American president who comes to show that we are in solidarity and we can make it and it is possible to have people sovereignty trusted with leadership that cares and works, for us Africans that's a big experience. As an activist it was a historical moment for me because I have gone to these many marches but this one was unique for

me as the other participant very close to me was a president and I'm not a president. Maybe I should become one.

**Q: Did this year's WSF live up to its expectations and objectives?**

**A:** It did. As Kenya Social Forum (KSF) and African Social Forum (ASF), our greatest concern has been to create and build a critical mass of Africans in this process in making this connectedness with other actors in other parts of the world who are seeking this other world so that we share our imaginations and connect with our visionary ideas that we have and build this confidence and demonstrate that there are people in the world who belong to this new thinking, new in the sense that they have refused to be beholden to the enclosures and the divisions that make our world look like it is not unified. The world of struggle is one. We had more African participants than in any other WSF. We commend the work that was done by the hosting fraternity. We even had vernacular languages being translated.

**Q: Were there any challenges?**

**A:** Yes. The logistics were not in place. The government (Senegalese) support was withdrawn in the last few days building up to the event. There was sort of no support system. There were no rooms to hold the forum or for accommodation. The program was not readily available. But the determination was there and people were quick to adapt.

**Q: Events you participated in?**

**A:** The opening march, and almost every other forum.