

Festival for Social Justice

Feb 10, 2011 by Marcia Ishii-Eiteman



[This week in Dakar, Senegal](#), 75,000 people from 132 countries have converged for the 11th [World Social Forum](#)—an inspiring and energizing week of workshops, seminars, panels and celebratory cultural events. The forum is being held at Cheikh Anta Diop University, where [PAN Africa's](#) Dr. Abou Thiam teaches. This year, the theme of the World Social Forum, “Another World is Possible,” has been given new meaning to Africans, with the electrifying developments in Egypt and Tunisia uppermost in many participants' minds.

Speaking from PAN Africa's booth at the Forum, Dr. Thiam describes the scene:

The high number of participants and rich cultural diversity in Dakar this week has been truly extraordinary. Having the Forum here in Senegal has given many of us who have been fighting for social and environmental justice in Africa for decades the powerful experience of sharing both our struggles and victories with activists from around the world.

Describing the forum as a “festival for social justice,” [IATP's Shefali Sharma reports](#) on the rich exchange of experiences, ranging from the global challenges facing local communities (landgrabs, climate change, corporate threats to food sovereignty, etc) to strategies to force companies and governments to uphold human rights. As Shefali explains, “For Africa, anything above a one-degree global temperature rise will mean drastically reduced cropping seasons, much greater incidences of severe and unpredictable weather with dire consequences for food production and hence food sovereignty.”

With the next global climate conference scheduled to take place in November in Durban, South Africa, many participants including the [Pan African Climate Justice Alliance](#) are making plans in Dakar to engage national processes across the African continent. At the same time, thousands are taking the opportunity provided by this face-to-face meeting to prepare for the 20th anniversary of the [Rio Earth Summit](#) (“Rio+20”), which will return to Brazil in 2012.

One more day to go in Dakar. Don't miss the excitement of this amazing convergence: the U.K. Guardian is providing live updates from Dakar [here](#).

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