We believe that the survival and sustainability of this planet lies in the adoption of values of dignity, equality and justice for all species, genders and social categories. This should reflect in the rejection of all policies and practices that cause destruction, exploitation and discrimination and injustice against any living being. National strategies and frameworks in all sectors must be focused on human and environmental health. In particular, we urge consideration of the following:

- Promote ecological design and sensitivity in all development and livelihoods

A clear policy and programmatic direction is needed for ecologically sustainable and equitable ways of generating livelihoods and jobs, infrastructure, communications, etc. There are hundreds of examples of people meeting their food, water, energy, housing, education, health and other basic needs, and securing dignified livelihoods, through such ways, which can be learnt from (see for instance www.vikalpsangam.org). Orienting existing schemes like MNREGS, housing, agriculture, and others towards this is eminently possible. 4. Support farmers to shift to organic, biodiverse farming.

Given the clear connections of industrial-scale, chemical-intensive agriculture with ecological disruption creating the conditions for such disease related disasters[vii], urgent measures are needed to support all farmers to shift to organic, biologically diverse farming (including by transferring the chemical fertilizer subsidy), with special assistance to small farmers, pastoralists, fishers, and forest-dwellers. GMO trials and releases, with their great potential for ecological disruption, must be stopped immediately.

- Strengthen self-governance through gram sabhas, area/ward sabhas

Implementation of local self-governance to its fullest extent, a true people's democracy is crucial. Gram sabhas, area/ward sabhas, and other local governance institutions will need help to build capacity and generate resources, so that they can govern their lands and ecosystems, their economic and community lives, and to do this in a manner that ensures representation and participation of marginalised sections to ensure social justice.
Strengthen local, self-reliant economies

It is now evident that a global economy, with resources, labour and products moving across the globe, is an extremely vulnerable system that is prone to collapse. Institutions of local self-governance must be provided with the resources, technical assistance and other forms of cooperation in order to grow their own local, self-reliant economies, using local and new skills and resources, catering first and foremost to local needs. Larger trade should build on this, and not undermine it. Through this, the necessity of mass mobility and trade could be reduced significantly. This could even help reduce and reverse rural-urban migration that is caused by economic and social distress, and leads to very high urban densities that are ripe for epidemics.

Redesign urban and semi-urban settlements

We must redesign urban and semi-urban settlements in such ways that workplace and residence for most people are close by, self-governance through area sabhas is empowered, and urban natural ecosystems are regenerated and protected through citizens’ forums. These and other related measures have been laid out in more detail in the People’s Manifesto for a Just, Equitable and Sustainable India, issued by the Vikalp Sangam process in early 2019 (http://www.vikalpsangam.org/article/peoples-manifesto-for-a-just-equitable-and-sustainable-india-2019/). We urge its full consideration as a context for the above recommendations. Ashish Kothari On behalf of the underlisted organizational members of the Vikalp Sangam Core Group (listed alphabetically). The Vikalp Sangam process is a platform to bring together movements, groups and individuals working on just, equitable and sustainable pathways to human and ecological well-being. It rejects the current model of development and the structures of inequality and injustice underlying it and searches for alternatives in practice and vision. Over 50 movements and organisations around the country are involved. For more information, pl. see http://www.vikalpsangam.org/about/

ACCORD (Tamil Nadu)
Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture (national)
Alternative Law Forum (Bengaluru)
Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (Bengaluru)
BHASHA (Gujarat)
Bhoomi College (Bengaluru)
Blue Ribbon Movement (Mumbai)
Centre for Education and Documentation (Mumbai)
Centre for Environment Education (Gujarat)
Centre for Environment Education (Gujarat)
Centre for Equity Studies (Delhi)
CGNetSwara (Chhattisgarh)
Chalakudypuzha Samrakshana Samithi / River Research Centre (Kerala)
ComMutiny: The Youth Collective (Delhi)
Deccan Development Society (Telangana)
Deer Park (Himachal Pradesh)
Development Alternatives (Delhi)
Dharamitra (Maharashtra)
Ekta Parishad (several states)
Ektha (Chennai)
EQUATIONS (Bengaluru)
Gene Campaign (Delhi)
Greenpeace India (Bengaluru)
Health Swaraaj Samvaad (national)
Ideosync (Delhi)
Jagori Rural (Himachal Pradesh)
Kalpavriksh (Maharashtra)
Knowledge in Civil Society (national)
Kriti Team (Delhi)
Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation (Ladakh)
Local Futures (Ladakh)
Maati (Uttarakhand)
Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch (national)
Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (Rajasthan)
National Alliance of Peoples’ Movements (national)
North East Slow Food and Agrobiodiversity Society (Meghalaya)
Peoples’ Science Institute (Uttarakhand)
Revitalising Rainfed Agriculture Network (national)
reStore (Chennai)
Sahjeevan (Kachchh)
Sambhaavnaa (Himachal Pradesh)
Samvedana (Maharashtra)
Sangama (Bengaluru)
Sangat (Delhi)
School for Democracy (Rajasthan)
School for Rural Development and Environment (Kashmir)
Shikshantar (Rajasthan)
Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust (Ladakh)
Social Entrepreneurship Association (Tamil Nadu)
SOPPECOM (Maharashtra)
South Asian Dialogue on Ecological Democracy (Delhi)
Students’ Environmental and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (Ladakh)
Thanal (Kerala)
Timbaktu Collective (Andhra Pradesh)
Titli Trust (Uttarakhand)
Tribal Health Initiative (Tamil Nadu)
URMUL (Rajasthan)
Vrikshamitra (Maharashtra)
Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (Andhra Pradesh/Telangana)

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[ii] Which has been welcomed, but pointed out as being late and very inadequate, see https://amitbasole.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/response-to-covid19-relief-package.pdf


Note that we are not here supporting either the fake claims being made by many in the name of traditional medicine, nor the indiscriminate exploitation or slaughter of wild animals that some parts of TCM contain. [vii]  