



VIKALP SANGAM FACILITATION TEAM MEETING

1 - 2 JULY 2022
JE FARMS, PUNE





Facilitation Team meeting

Date: 1st and 2nd July 2022



Introduction

The Vikalp Sangam Facilitation Team (VSFT) was formed out of a discussion at the Vikalp Sangam Core Group meeting held in October 2021 in Dehradun with the goal to decentralise the varied functions of the network. This was the first physical meeting held with the aim of dialoguing over the different objectives and responsibilities of the VSFT. The different members who came bearing many gifts of local cheese, cookies and crackers from Auroville, Peanut Podi from Chennekothapalli, homemade Thepla, Jams and Marmalade, and some local snacks from Pune. The love of food was one of the many shared emotions that were felt along with hope, envisioning the future while being cognisant of the past, and re-energising ourselves. The meeting was facilitated by Kalpavriksh and members were present from Blue Ribbon Movement, India and Bharat Together, National Alliance of People's Movement, Social Entrepreneurship Association, Timbuktu Collective, Traveller's University, Youth Alliance, and Yugma Network.

The meeting was held in JE Farms, Pune and we would like to extend a special thanks to the Broome family for hosting the group graciously.

The minutes were noted collectively by Anjali Dalmia, Ashik Krishnan, Pankati Jain, Ritwika Patgiri, Urvi Shah, and Vasudha Varadarajan.

- For any queries email urvishxh@gmail.com and vasudha130395@gmail.com.
- The meeting was financially supported by [Heinrich Böll Stiftung](#), India Centre.
- *Please refer to the [Minutes of Meeting](#) for detailed notes of the meeting.*

Table of Contents

Sr.No.	Subject	Page.No.
1	History of Vikalp Sangam Process	3
2	Discussing Vikalp Framework note	4
3	Internal processes of Vikalp Sangam Core Group	5
4	Internal Governance	6
5	Governance of core group and Grievance Redressal Mechanisms	7
6	CG response to the political crisis and future envisioning	8
7	Action Points	9
	Annexure: List of Participants	11



[Vikalp Sangam \(@VikalpSangam\) / Twitter](https://twitter.com/VikalpSangam)



[Vikalp Sangam \(@vikalpsangam\) • Instagram photos and videos](https://www.instagram.com/vikalpsangam)



[Vikalp Sangam - Alternatives Confluence](https://www.alternativesconfluence.org/)



1. History of Vikalp Sangam Process

This dialogue aimed at telling the emergence story of the VS process and how people have engaged with it over the last 9 years to achieve a better understanding of the genesis of the Vikalp Sangam process and the fundamental changes it has gone through over the years. The session was moderated by Urvi and Vasudha who hosted this as an open-dialogue amongst the group.

It provided context for the 2 day meeting. The meeting was held amidst the greenery of the farms located as a little getaway from the city. In the same room sat together different members, some who had steered the process from the start, and others who had joined after. Many members shared anecdotes of how this process began. Suhas Tai had shared that the initiative was a space for creating a network amongst many diverse groups to come together and share their efforts. Ashish reflected on how several social activists had been fighting the systems of patriarchy, capitalism, statism, casteism, racism and other forms of power asymmetry and marginalisation that is ecologically devastating, economically iniquitous and socially disruptive. While we all were paying attention to the crisis, not many narratives were being told about the work done to counter them. There is a real need for addressing issues of deprivation and injustice, across the world, and that cannot come only from protest and resistance. Constructive, creative alternatives for meeting needs and aspirations have to be revived from the past and created anew. So the VS initiative started with the following and other myriad questions about the “yes” we are asserting: What is our vision of a better future? What are our answers to questions of poverty, hunger, energy insecurity, and other deprivations? How do we meet human aspirations, and can it be done in ways that do not destroy the earth or leave half of humanity behind? Are there truly

sustainable pathways of development or well-being? If we do not want patriarchy, capitalism, statism, casteism, racism, what do we want?¹

Reflections

- When we reflect on VS now, it represents a transition from being cynical to hopeful. It highlights not only the issues but the grassroots work done by communities, organisations, local institutions, groups, civil society, governments and individuals to tackle the ongoing crisis of statist, patriarchal, unecological and destructive ‘development’ paradigm while creating a space of bringing these movements and initiatives together to still continue evolving to a more just future.
- Certain concerns were discussed within the group reflecting on the past and discerning the future:
 - As a confluence of several different groups, we see that such spaces are political. Are we then responding to the political crisis which has heightened?
 - Many have fought back against the NGO-isation of the process. Keeping that this is not the way we see VS evolving, how do we make the process more robust? (Funding, one organization doing all the work)
 - How can we further democratize the VS process?
 - Are there groups coming up in the NorthEast region? Can there be a **NorthEast Region Sangam**?
 - How do we do the onboarding process of new members?
 - Can we **reach out to the right-leaning group**? How? (How do we bring in groups that go against the beliefs of social justice?) Also, it is important to note that many have not been inclined to this suggestion.
- There needs to be continued engagement with new members, first participating, and then organising, ensuring that the process continues
- There should be a series to connect people beyond the Sangams - a youth hub for shared responsibilities within the process.

2. Discussing VS Framework Note

Our next session focussed on reflecting on the Vikalp Sangam framework note which is a living document evolved through the various sangams. We discussed the Vikalp sangam, its progression, evolving nature, scope and limitations. The space was held by Rachit Sharma from Youth Alliance who helped facilitate critical enquiry. Some reflections are shared below. This

¹ For more information read the following article:

<https://www.epw.in/journal/2019/34/technology-and-society/collective-dreaming.html>

exercise helped the new members acquaint themselves with the [framework](#) and its nuances and also provided space for critique and dialogue.

Reflections

- The alt system presents a different imagination, a different way of living and a different way of knowing. We should all think about how the alternative is thought of in different languages.
 - 3 recurring suggested to be worked upon
 1. Digitisation: Can this be added to Alternatives Transformation Framework. Discussion on digitisation, its boon and bane. A full session is required on this. Connect with Nachiket who is already working on Digitisation and privatisation. (A possibility for a **Media Sangam**)
 2. What have we learnt from the pandemic? Also in the context of mental health and wellbeing
 3. Issue of scaling, how to upscale or outscale? Exploring the dimensions of scaling question.
 - We require different versions and iterations of the framework (audiovisual, etc) to share it more widely.
-



Neema, who hosted the FT meeting showed the team around the farm and introduced them to various other residents of the space!

3. Internal process of Vikalp Sangam Core Group

The processes of the VSCG were discussed in detail here and steps/changes required regarding its future actions were at the center of this conversation. These reflections will lay the foundation of discussions for the upcoming VSCG in November. The session was hosted by Gijs and Aadya who asked the members to break into different groups and envision Vikalp Sangam pictorially.

There were images flourishing of trees, ecosystems and landscapes giving an insight of how we all saw this organic process.

Reflections

- We need to rethink the naming of the different groups - core group sounds too anglicized, however, the names must reflect the functions of each of the teams.
- As a network, we need to have a proper reference/template for working groups, where we will see our operating functions and cross-learn amongst each group.
- We need to find the need to assemble interim working groups that function for a specific task required in the network which is initiative based.
- We need to establish a process to serve this structure. We are currently lacking an understanding of how to make VS's institutional process function. Maybe we need to strengthen, establish, autonomise, and empower the independent working groups more.
- There also needs to be an onboarding of more organizations facilitating VS outside Kalpavriksh, this can be achieved through the VSFT where we presently have 20 members and 11 organisations represented within us.
- For VS We can also discuss the alternate mode of moving funds with the key facilitating organisation with the funders if they are interested.
- We can try that for the next core group meeting
 1. Look at budgetary analysis
 2. 2-3 members of the FT look at funding reports
- Can we oversee the possibility of sharing the budget for each Sangam or collectively raising funds for them? (Keeping in mind that there are certain functions that sustain VS that need continuous funding like communications, and facilitation. Some key roles require central funding.)



Pankati, from Blue ribbon movement conducted fun mid-meeting energizers which were super helpful breathers between heavy discussions.

4. Internal Governance

This session created the space to dialogue on how we envisioned the role of VSFT as the driver of the network. In the session, we defined our roles as the facilitators of the process. In essence, to reactivate the network. We would focus on strengthening the initiatives with VS. We would work together on creating robust systems of communication, coordination, and management of the VS. The whole group came together to brainstorm on the structure of VS. Ashish suggested that we imagine the VS as a lake, and Gijs suggested we see the facilitation team as the ‘mycelium’ of Vikalp Sangam overseeing the tasks of following up and creating a space for more communication among the network. The core functions unanimously were seen to be that of collectively facilitating VS. The VSFT would be the first step towards decentralizing the network with the aim of then developing more independent and autonomous bodies with VSCG.

KV as a hub has so done the following tasks among others:

- Facilitating the VS CG
- Adding and inviting members
- Facilitating CG gatherings
- Documentation and research on alternatives
- Initiating and updating the alternatives framework note
- Generating funding and support for sangams
- Coordinating sangam follow-up actions
- Generating funding and support for VS website and communications work
- Connecting and participating with other networks in India and globally
- Supporting advocacy and statements
- Funding and reporting for various Vikalp Sangams
- Carrying and upkeep of communications, website work
- Planning, facilitating and organising of Sangams
- Participating in the different initiatives and activities of VS
- Follow ups on the different initiatives of the Sangam

Reflections

- How do we see VSFT evolving?
 - Do we keep shifting the members of the team?

- After 1 year we can redefine the team with the encouragement of some members being in the team.
- Hub for Vikalp gets rotated, and gets rotated either yearly or 3-5 years depending on all the factors of responsibility
- What can be immediately decentralised? and what can be centrally managed by a facilitating organisation?
- With regards to VSFT we can work on facilitation collaboratively on certain processes
 - Managing e-lists
 - Ideating on ways to raise funds for Sangams
 - Following up on proposed sangams
 - VS framework updating
 - Follow-ups for proposed sangams

5. Governance of core group and Grievance Redressal Mechanisms

This session, held by Gijis and Aadya, was a reflection on the processes of Vikalp Sangam. Based on the current conversation, the session demarcated what were some of the things we would like to see in the future, and what was the action that would lead to those visions. The very reason the facilitation team was meeting was in attempts to decentralise the work done by Kalpavriksh as the core facilitator of the process since 2014. For quite a while KV has been requesting CG organisations to take over the facilitation. This discussion since 2017 has led to some stimulating observations around the governance of the core group. In this meeting, we discussed how it would be moving forward with the facilitation team in place. Furthermore, as a part of that governance, in the view of some past experiences, the VS team felt the need to constitute a Grievance Redressal committee but importantly to think of the process and mechanisms to it which would later be discussed at the CG. Give below are the reflection on both

- To work on creating internal processes for CG in terms of communication, management and governance .
- To encourage organising of new diverse sangams which focus on inclusivity, and diversify the VS process.
- To collectively review what works and does not work from different Sangams, note these learnings and reflections to share for the upcoming meetings.
- With regards to the Core Group, we have strengthened processes to keep members active, work on bringing CG together, onboarding more diverse CG members, and working on stronger follow-ups on different Sangams.

- To strengthen the advocacy done by VS, starting by strengthening our Advocacy Team.
- To find ways of how the strength of members can contribute to different processes such as funding, skill sharing, VS visibility, communications, facilitation, organising sangams etc.
- Need to articulate the key functions of this hub, and accordingly decide the best-suited organisations to lead the process. Some key functions might remain central, for example, the funding cycle might be more stable with one organisation, but other functions such as following up, and keeping updated can be under another organisation.
- However, a limitation noted is that the organisation receiving funds you are the has legal liabilities to funders.
- Strengthening Grievance Redressal mechanisms for an unbiased and fair way of proceeding with difficult situations that arise.
- A weakness often discussed is bringing media coverage, which is very less. We need more CG members with expertise to support and offer guidance with writing and communicating for press releases and build a team for the same.

6. CG response to the political crisis and future envisioning

In the context of the current political crisis, rising polarization and communalisation, we tried to imagine what VS as an ecosystem's response could be through a session hosted by Ashik Krishnan from Traveller's University. In different groups we reflected on our personal, and organisation responses, and then discerned how VS as a network can channel and strengthen its response to the current ecosystem.



Reflections

- These were the pointers that were noted within the groups
 - The role of VS in the current context of polarisation could be to initiate , dialoguing with groups addressing the caste relations
 - Record more stories of inter-faith, inter-caste, community initiatives, queer community solidarity/love/initiative.
 - Use this a space of co-mentoring, solidarity and respite for the organisations

- Using the multitude perspectives to strengthen civil society
- Involve more communities and give them more decision making space within the network
- Strengthening the dialogues of alternatives in pedagogy
- Creating strong communications on alternatives through podcasts, webinars, films, posters etc.
- Strengthen the advocacy group to give more direct responses to the destructive development



Aanchal and Urvi, from the VS comms team facilitated an activity where each member was given a name from the FT. They were given the task to curate a small token/gift, and present it to the other member towards the end. We saw handpainted leaf bookmarks, fruits, poems and other creative gifts emerge through the process.

Conclusion

The two days were filled with deep reflection amongst intergenerational members who had come together to see where VS started from while also envisioning where it was going. Amongst the myriad of discussions were little moments of respite captured over shared cups of coffee and tea, laughs, food brought by different people, walks around our abundant greenery, painting banners, and playing games. The environment was filled with glimmers of hope, and reviving a collective goal with a whole lot of fun. This was a space of imagination, one that shared the very vision of collectively growing and sharing our responsibilities.

Key themes that were recurring through dialogues—the need to work on diversity and representation in VS, bringing in strong community voices, creating alternative ways of responding to the current political crisis, and autonomizing different VS initiatives. The

brainstorming led to action pointers that were the next milestones in efforts to achieve these goals while the discussions led to discerning what the role of the VSFT will be to endeavor diversifying the network, and strengthening its processes; that of being the drivers of VS. Overall, the emanating understanding was of taking more collective ownership and revitalizing Vikalp Sangam.

Action Points

Tasks	Who	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mapping of Active/Inactive Members - Talking to inactive members and invite them to VSCG - Reflect on members who have dropped out of the Sangam and understand why some of the important members/organizations have dropped out? - Can we understand the nature of this change of VS? - Reporting to CG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vasudha + KV members - Vasudha, Joy, Ritwika, Anjali, Gijs, and Pankati - Urvi and Vasudha 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 Weeks - The rest: 6 weeks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete Mapping of active members (Skills, Geography, Area etc based on Joyatri's Note] - Compile missing information on active members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sujatha, Joyatri and Anjali 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Before CG meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design onboarding process and form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aadya and Ashik - Working group + 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> working groups - Implement onboarding process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposer 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizing CG meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aravind, Urvi, Vasudha and Shrishtee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finalise Sangam Process Document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gijs and Sangeetha 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Following up on CG commitments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suhas Tai - Vasudha to send the mail 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a fundraising group and present ideas to CG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gijs, Aadya and Ashik 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updating VS framework - VS ambassadors should give ppt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rachit and Pankati - Rachit, Ashik, Vasudha, Anjali, Urvi, and Arnaz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sept 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a note on advocacy process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joy, Vasudha, Asmi, and Maansi 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborating with other groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ashish and Adil 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document institutional memory - Facilitating intergenerational (There are reports, videos, etc that can be explored for this.) knowledge transfer - Setting up system to document future processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KV+ Rachit and Ritwika 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating quarterly VS newsletter (For regularity of intra-network communication) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ritwika, Gijs, Rachit, Urvi, Aanchal 	

envisioned in both offline/online mode)		
- Facilitating the next VSFT	- Urvi	
- Create note on proposed grievance redressal system	- Asmi and Vasudha	
- Create list of working groups team and peg persons	- Shrishtee	
- VS Ambassadors group	- Anjali, Urvi, Vasudha, Rachit and Ashik	

Annexure: List of Participants

Serial Number	Name	Organisation
1	Aravind Nataraj	Blue Ribbon Movement
2	Pankati Jain	Blue Ribbon Movement
3	Aadya Singh	India and Bharat Together
4	Ritwika Patgiri	India and Bharat Together
5	Aanchal	Kalpavriksh
6	Ashish Kothari	Kalpavriksh
7	Shrishtee Bajpai	Kalpavriksh
8	Sujatha Padhmanabhan	Kalpavriksh

9	Urvi Shah	Kalpavriksh
10	Vasudha Varadarajan	Kalpavriksh
11	Suhas Kolhekar	National Alliance of People's Movement
12	Gijs Spoor	Social Entrepreneurship Association
13	K J Joy	SOPPECOM
14	Bablu Ganguly	Timbuktu Collective
15	Ashik Krishnan	Traveller's University
16	Rachit Sharma	Youth Alliance
17	Anjali Dalmia	Yugma Network

Thank you for reading