

## 25 Organisations Meet to Discuss Development Alternatives in India

Shoranur, Kerala, 6 November 2023

About 40 members of 25 organisations from 12 states of India met at Farmer's Share, Shoranur, as the General Assembly of the Vikalp Sangam. The Vikalp Sangam (VS) is a 10-year old process to bring together people's movements and organisations working on solutions to the ecological and climate crises, food insecurity, social conflict, violence against women, Dalits, adivasis and other marginalized sections, and other such problems that millions of people in India are suffering from. It challenges the forces that exploit people and nature, including authoritarian states, capitalist corporations, and communal organisations. It promotes alternatives like organic, small-farmer based agriculture, sustainable building, decentralized water and energy production, women's empowerment, rights of LGBTQ+, public health, alternative education, traditional and new people's art forms, craft-based livelihoods, and others.

The VS General Assembly was held at Farmer's Share because this initiative is an inspiring example of how localized, ecologically sustainable food production, architecture and livelihoods like crafts and pottery can be promoted. Several other Kerala-based groups also participated.

At the meeting, a 'People's Manifesto for a Just, Equitable and Sustainable India' was finalized, to be released by early December. This Manifesto will be used for advocacy relating to the 2024 General Elections, as also in relevant state elections, and with local to national governments. It contains detailed suggestions on steps for generating dignified livelihoods, moving towards ecologically sensitive economic policies, tackling social exploitation and discrimination including casteism and patriarchy, ensuring that everyone has access to basic needs, securing rights of marginalized groups including gender and sexual minorities, enhancing budgetary support for health and education, and other such actions.

The meeting also discussed a revised framework 'In Search of Radical Alternatives', which lays out the principles and strategies that Vikalp Sangam has been using. It reviewed activities undertaken over the last year, and made plans for 2024. These include the organizing of a celebration of alternative solutions from across India at a National Vikalp Sangam, in late 2024, as also a series of other events, yatras, and gatherings in several parts of the country.

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