



25 Organisations across the Western Himalayas Resolve to Work Together for Social and Ecological Issues

(Western Himalaya Vikalp Sangam (WHVS), 27-30 October, 2024)

The Western Himalaya Vikalp Sangam (WHVS), a network that brings together people and organisations from Ladakh, Jammu, Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, hosted a three-day gathering in collaboration with MOOL Sustainability Research and Training Center and the School of Rural Development and Environment, Kashmir. Its main theme was: **Learning, Collaboration, and Sustainability.**

From October 27 to 30, 2024, this event brought together 35 participants from across the western Himalayas and other parts of India, representing nearly 25 organisations focused on

ecological regeneration, sustainable livelihoods, climate action, entrepreneurship, community wellbeing, and empowering education. This was the first such gathering held in Kashmir.

Background

Since 2016, WHVS has been part of the larger Vikalp Sangam initiative (www.vikalpsangam.org), which goes beyond critiquing current systems of economic and social disruption to explore viable alternatives and find solutions to the various problems Indian people face. Through Sangams or “Confluences on Alternatives,” WHVS encourages discussions on sustainable development models that address local and regional challenges in the Himalayas.

Objectives and Activities

The gathering’s objectives were to foster knowledge sharing, strengthen collaboration within regional networks, promote ecological awareness, and cultural exchange. The conversation and discussion included sharing examples of ‘alternatives’ including sustainable development models, community conserved areas, and the challenges common in the Western Himalayas including human-wildlife conflict, gender inclusion, land laws, and tourism.

The participants then also came together to work on a ‘Flower of Transformation’ based on a comprehensive Framework developed through the national Vikalp Sangam process. This helps to understand and assess initiatives on radical alternatives utilising key elements or spheres, including ecological integrity and resilience, social well-being and justice, direct and delegated democracy, economic democracy, and cultural diversity and knowledge democracy.

The participants also interacted with renowned Kashmiri poet, writer, and historian Zareef Ahmad Zareef, hearing about the celebrated author’s life and learnings, his poems, and his perspectives on ecology, nature, and communities.

The group visited the Wular lake in Zurimanz, led by Naseer Ahmad Dar of Wular Fisherfolk Union. The group met with local unions to hear about their journey, challenges, successes, and needs and wants.

Such gatherings serve as a platform for diverse organisations to come together, reflect on the values that drive their work, and chart pathways for collective transformational change in the Himalayas. Apart from organisations already part of the Vikalp Sangam process, this gathering also introduced other organisations from Kashmir to the process.

The gathering also led to the start of collaborative activities such as creating a people’s charter including a list of demands, meeting physically and on virtual webinars, increased cultural exchanges, documenting stories, and bridging gaps between Himalayan regions.

For more information on WHVS, please visit

[The Himalaya Collective](#)

[Vikalp Sangam](#)
[MOOL Sustainability Research and Training Center](#)
[SRDE](#)

Contact

moolsustainability@gmail.com

9622565003