

## **Vikalp Sangam proposes alternative electricity pathway in the 'Bodhgaya Declaration- A Vision Statement towards Energy Democracy'**

**March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016:** Patna, Bodhgaya, Bihar - Participants from across the country were at Bodhgaya in Bihar to discuss ecologically sustainable and socio-economically equitable transitions for the electricity sector in the country. Bihar was chosen as the venue for the Vikalp Sangam, since while it is showing a keen interest and potential to embark on a different path to provide electricity to its people, it is also dangerously exploring nuclear and coal projects that would have adverse impacts and be a costly option.

The gathering included more than 70 people including representatives from NAPM, PMANE, CEED, SELCO, Prayas (Energy Group), Kalpavriksh, Greenpeace India and Oxfam India. These energy experts, practitioners and civil society groups engaged with the challenges of the current model of development and explored alternatives.

An organiser and founder member of Kalpavriksh, Ashish Kothari summed it up by saying "Coal, nuclear and large hydro based centralised systems have failed in providing sustainable and equitable energy solutions. In this context, alternatives like decentralised renewable energy, have huge potential to provide real and reliable energy choices. This was also evident from our visit to Dharnai, an example of a solar based micro grid project run by civil society and the community. "

To go beyond mere technology fixes being pushed as 'green and clean energy', the Sangam provided a framework that acknowledged that future electricity scenarios have to take into account limited natural resources, accelerated environmental degradation, growing populations, high energy poverty and climate change. It recommends an urgent paradigm shift based on principles of sustainability, equity and justice. (The full text of the Bodhgaya Declaration is enclosed)

The declaration will be sent to the Chief Minister of Bihar, who can play a role in showing a truly alternate model for the country. The participants also resolved to take this message to nationwide audiences and to constructively engage with decision making processes.

Issued on behalf of Sangam organisers:

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