Healthcare facilities violating bio-medical waste management in Delhi

New Delhi, 17th December, 2019: A new Toxics Link study titled ‘Spreading infections?’ finds government and private healthcare facilities are flouting the bio-medical waste management rules and spreading infections. The findings from the report, assessing the current status of bio-medical waste management in Delhi, were shared today in a meeting at The Hans New Delhi.

The study which covered 38 bedded healthcare facilities (25 private and 13 government) in all the 11 districts of Delhi, found that hospitals are still dumping their infectious waste along with municipal waste. The situation was found alarming in clinics, pathlabs and vet hospitals, as many of them were not segregating their waste and a large number of them were not even registered with the Pollution Board. Priti Banthia Mahesh, Chief Programme Coordinator, Toxics Link, pointed out, “It is shocking that facilities are operating in Delhi without proper authorisation and are allowed to continue to spread infection though mismanagement of their bio medical waste.”

A major concern found during the course of survey was on disposal of needles and syringes, as 27.85% of the facilities did not have needle cutters (which are mandated under Rules) and were throwing the needles without mandatory destruction of needles- thereby putting at risk the hospital staff as well as waste workers. According to WHO, 37.6% of Hepatitis B, 39% of Hepatitis C and 4.4% of HIV/AIDS in Health-Care Workers around the world are due to needlestick injuries. The report also raises concern over how this waste is stored in some of the facilities, in open areas which are accessible for animals and birds- again increasing the risk of spread of infection. The study also found that inspite of almost three years of the revised Rules in 2016 many facilities have not yet installed ETPs/STPs and were discarding liquid waste indiscriminately.

The roundtable to discuss the findings was attended by stakeholders from across institutions including district monitoring committees, govt. and private hospitals, medical councils and associations, CBWTF and related research and civil societies group. Of the several concerns identified during the discussion, Mr. Satish Sinha, Associate Director, Toxics Link, mentioned “Regulatory gap in capturing the data as to what is the ground reality from source to destination of bio-medical waste generation is of major concern. What are we monitoring if we do not have a list of facilities or inventory of waste in hand”. Other major challenges as discussed were, a) need for a state level register of healthcare facilities and doctors and bio-medical waste inventory, b) lack of clarity in many provisions of the rule including installation of ETPs/STPs and implementation of barcode, c) monitoring and transparency at the CBWTF d) management of household bio-medical waste, e) lack of information and awareness especially at
small healthcare facilities & clinics, f) lack of clarity over regulatory powers between Delhi Pollution Control Committee and District Magistrate etc.

**Some key findings:**

- 27.85% of the bedded HCFs did not have needle cutters (mandatory under the Rules) and were disposing it off without destroying the needles.
- Around 34% of HCFs did not have wheeled intramural transportation systems, and were transporting waste through patient areas- increasing the risk of infection to patients.
- Only 38.23% of the waste storage facilities have smoke detectors and fire extinguishers – crucial in the times when Delhi had so many fire incidents.
- An alarming 26.4% of the surveyed facilities were disposing the liquid waste in public sewers
- Only 57.89 % were found to have a dedicated BMWM committee, mandated under the Rules.
- Healthcare staffs were found to be handling bio medical waste without appropriate personal protective equipment.

**For interviews and further information, please contact:**

Ms Priti Mahesh  
priti@toxicslink.org  
9810815320

Ms Ruby Rani  
ruby@toxicslink.org  
7042579600

Ms Ipsita Baishya  
ipsita@toxicslink.org  
6900925569