

Follow-Up Roundtable
on
Chemicals in Textile Sector

July 24, 2025 | Surat, Gujarat



Follow-Up Roundtable on Chemicals in the Textile Sector

Nonylphenol (NP) and its ethoxylates (NPEs) are commonly used in industrial applications like textiles and detergents. However, NP is a toxic, endocrine-disrupting chemical that persists in water, is bioaccumulative, and harmful to aquatic life and human health. Its widespread use has raised environmental and health concerns globally. In response, countries are taking regulatory action. The European Union and the United States have imposed strict limits on NP/NPE use, while China has listed NP as a priority pollutant.

Studies by Toxics Link have confirmed the presence of NP in textiles and environmental matrices across the country, and the availability of safer alternatives in the Indian market.



Concerned over use of NP and other harmful chemicals in the textile products, Toxics Link had organised a multi-stakeholder consultation in collaboration with Surat Pollution Control Board, Gujarat Clear Production Centre (GCPC), Confederation of Indian Textile Industries (CITI), and Paryavaran Mitra on March 27, 2025. Organised in Surat, the meeting was attended by representatives from key textile manufacturing units, dye and processing units, academia and CSOs.

The consultation discussed issues such as current practices and sustainability challenges, harmful chemicals and their health and environmental impacts, obstacles in shifting to safer alternatives, and supply chain concerns within the textile industry. Participants called for more investment in R&D, data transparency, and industry-academia collaboration to support innovation in greener alternatives. During the meeting, it was jointly decided to organise a follow-up roundtable to keep up the momentum and move towards actionable outcomes.

The “follow-up Roundtable discussion with the industry representatives on the use of chemical (Nonylphenol) in the Textile Sector” was held in collaboration with Manmade Textile Research Association (MANTRA) on July 24, 2025 at the MANTRA office near Millennium Textile Market, Ring Road, Surat from 10:30 am to 2:00 pm. The roundtable aimed to understand the current concerns on the use of Nonylphenol and other chemicals and the bottlenecks in transitioning to safer alternatives in the country. The discussion helped develop a blueprint for safer chemical use in the textile sector.

Inaugural Session

The session started with opening remarks by **Mr Piyush Mohapatra**, Senior Programme Coordinator, Toxics Link followed by a welcome address by **Mr Satish Sinha**, Associate Director, Toxics Link.

Mr Sinha emphasised the urgent need for collaborative efforts to reduce chemical pollution in the textile industry, highlighting the widespread presence of harmful substances such as Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs), Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS), Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), and other hazardous substances like lead, mercury, and Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs). He pointed out that while several countries have banned or strictly regulated NP and NPEs due to serious health and environmental concerns, these substances continue to be used in regions where there are no regulations on its use. He said companies that have phased out NP and NPEs from products sold in regulated markets, continue to use them elsewhere, and that shows their double standards. Mr Sinha said the purpose behind organising the roundtable is to engage the textile industry in discussions about the impacts, challenges, and possible pathways to phase out these chemicals.

Dr Jigna Ozha, Regional Head, Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB), emphasised on regulatory commitment to sustainable practices and compliance, highlighting the harmful effects of substances like lead, mercury and NP on human health, aquatic life, and the food chain. Stressing on the fact that these chemicals persist and accumulate in the environment posing serious risks to health and environment, she called for proactive participation from the industry. She also acknowledged the contributions of organisations such as the World Resources Institute (WRI), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Centre for Environment Education (CEE) and Toxics Link for their ongoing work for tackling these challenges. She noted that as the textile sector remains largely unorganised, focused efforts towards safer alternatives are essential.

Dr Arup Rakshit, Director, MANTRA, highlighted the crucial role of research, innovation, and industry support in reducing the use of hazardous chemicals and promoting eco-friendly alternatives, encouraging participants to collaborate towards adoption of sustainable practices.

Discussions

During the discussions, **Mr Dharmesh C. Kachiwala**, Managing Director of J.P. Kachiwala Textiles Pvt. Ltd, asked about the specific stages in textile processing when NP and NPEs are used. Responding to him, **Mr Sinha** explained that they are mainly used as surfactants in dyeing units and as lubricants during processing, being part of surfactant-based formulations across various stages, while **Mr Jagdish Shah**, consultant, J.P. Kachiwala Textiles Pvt. Ltd, informed that NP and NPEs belong to the alkylphenol ethoxylate category. Mr Shah stressed on the need to explore safer alternatives aligned with Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC) standards, while also asking about possible substitutes that ensure regulatory compliance.

Dr Deepak Marathe, Senior Programme Officer, Toxics Link, gave a presentation on the use of NP in the textile sector, explaining its widespread use, environmental and health impacts, global regulatory restrictions, and the safer alternatives available.

Mr Shribansh Pandey from Bindal Silk Mills Pvt Ltd. emphasised on the need for specific Indian standards to regulate NP and NPEs, stating that although alternatives exist, NP and NPEs are still being used because they are cheaper and more efficient. Responding to him, Mr Mohapatra said that as NP and NPEs are EDCs, safer practices must be adopted by chemical dealers to ensure products are contamination-free, while **Mr Jagdish Shah** added that strict national standards are essential to phase out NP and NPEs and that chemical manufacturers supplying those to the B2B market must also be held responsible. While **Mr Kachiwala** highlighted that industries face higher operational costs to comply with environmental norms and suggested that harmful chemicals should be phased out completely, Mr Mohapatra informed that NP- and NPE-containing products are being continuously imported into India. **Mr Kachiwala** reiterated that although alternatives are available in India, they remain expensive as they are mostly imported.

Summarising the discussions, **Mr Sinha** pointed at the serious health and environmental hazards posed by these chemicals, and the threat from their high concentrations found in children's clothing and women's innerwear. He explained about their endocrine-disrupting properties and links to reproductive health issues, miscarriages, and diseases like diabetes and hypertension in humans, and also their harmful effects on aquatic life. He added that though Toxics Link has tested some samples, large-scale monitoring is not possible without broader collaboration. He urged all

stakeholders to come together. **Mr Pandey** highlighted the need to promote procurement of NP/NPE-free products and build the capacity of chemical industries to produce safer alternatives, supported by continuous testing and monitoring. **Mr Kachiwala** emphasised educating chemical manufacturers and involving textile industries, associations, processors, and other stakeholders in this effort, while **Mr Shehbar Mansuri** from the textile association mentioned that, despite many products being labelled as NPE-free, contamination is still being detected.

Mr Sinha proposed a stepwise approach to address this issue: Acknowledging the harm caused by these chemicals, mapping their use among exporters and non-exporters, assessing the cost and efficiency of alternatives, and finally reviewing the outcome after implementation. Industry representatives also agreed with this approach. **Mr Sunil Shah** from the South Gujarat Textile Processors Association offered support to initiatives for phase out of nonylphenol and transition to safer alternatives, while **Mr Kachiwala** stated that although NP is cheap and widely used, it brings no real benefit and should be replaced, calling for capacity building among chemical manufacturers and the development of alternatives. **Mr Pandey** suggested creating a formal policy framework for NP and NPE management involving NGOs, industry associations, government agencies, chemical manufacturers, and recyclers. **Dr Rakshit** observed that exporters are already using alternatives and that a cumulative shift by small and medium enterprises would reduce their cost. He requested GPCB to take the lead in promoting their adoption. Both **Dr Rakshit** and **Mr Himanshu Desai** proposed that the industry sign a formal letter of commitment to adopt these initiatives.

The roundtable concluded with a collective understanding that collaborative action, policy development, and industry commitment are essential to phase out NP and NPEs from the textile sector and move towards safer and more sustainable production practices. Mr Sinha urged industries to voluntarily shift away from NP and NPEs use, setting an example for others, and calling for regulatory support, research, and the promotion of alternatives to make this transition possible.