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# Organ donation up three-fold in nine years as government, agencies, NGOs steer drive

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MUMBAI: A rising graph prominently put up on the website of the National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) effectively captures India's heartening organ donation story: If the country registered 900 donations of liver, kidney and heart in 2009, the total rose to 3,038 in 2018.

In 2019, Mumbai has already registered over 60 deceased donors, and Pune—it emerged on the organ donation scene with a bang a couple of years back—saw four donations on August 14 alone.

So, what has brought about this surge? Various experts whom TOI spoke to listed governmental will, setting up of regional and state-level transplant authority as well as the role of NGOs for the increase.

“No activity, particularly of this scale, can be purely executed by the government or a non-governmental agency. It has to be a concerted effort and NGOs have played a great role in spreading awareness about organ donation as the government worked towards strengthening the rules,” says NOTTO director Dr Vasanthi Ramesh. The involvement of multi-agencies has also brought about transparency in the processes, she adds.

In Mumbai, the quasi-governmental Zonal Transplant Coordination Centre (ZTCC) held special sessions with intensivists at the

start of the year to improve brain death detection, which could pave the way for organ donation. The move paid rich dividends as the city registered 10 deceased donations in the first three months of 2019.

ZTCC and the Regional Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisation (ROTTTO) headquartered in Mumbai have been working with NGOs to create awareness about organ donations over the last two years. ROTTO director Dr Astrid Lobo says they have tied up with 20 NGOs to create awareness about the concept. ZTCC president Dr S Mathur says, “NGOs in India have shouldered the main responsibility of creating awareness among general population. It’s easier to get consent from families if they have heard of organ donation before.”

Nowadays, NGOs have begun roping in CSR funds to train or pay salaries of transplant coordinators in public hospitals across Maharashtra. Good counselling, they say, helps grief-stricken families make up their minds about donation. “We have noted that wherever there was a good system of counselling in hospitals, the success rate of conversion is 70-80%,” says Lalitha Raghuraman from Mohan Foundation’s Hyderabad office. She lists good infrastructure, trained manpower and an increase in the number of transplant centres for the increased donations.

Jaya Jairam from Mohan Foundation’s Mumbai office says her centre has held over 100 awareness talks in the last 12 months. “We are invited to talk during festivals, birthday parties by families or even housing complexes and corporate houses.”

The central health ministry is now taking a step further in this direction. “Our next step is to perfect a robust national registry that will streamline organ sharing,” says Dr Ramesh, adding that it would also improve organ sharing between and within states. The Centre has allocated funds to hire transplant coordinators for trauma centres, she says, adding: “Money has also been allocated for setting up of more state and regional chapters of NOTTO.”