WORLD ORGAN DONATION DAY

World Organ Donation Day, observed annually on 13 August, serves as a global reminder of the life-saving potential of organ and tissue donation.

World Organ Donation Day

Annual Observation

World Organ Donation Day is observed every year to spread awareness about the *life-saving potential of organ and tissue donation* and to encourage individuals to pledge for voluntary donations.

Purpose

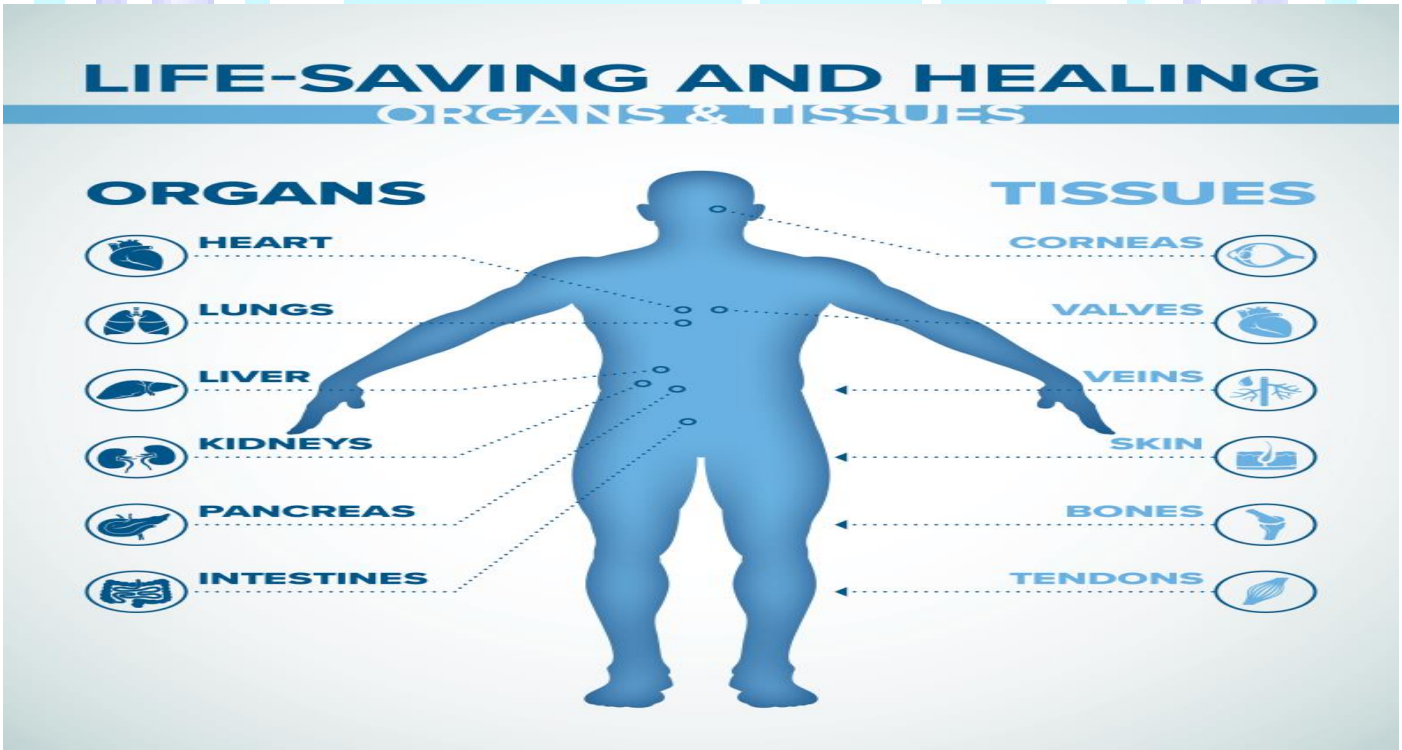
The day emphasizes *dispelling myths, addressing social stigma, and fostering informed dialogue* around organ donation in order to increase both living and deceased donor participation.

Tribute to Donors

It is also an occasion to *honour organ donors and their families* for their selfless decision that often saves multiple lives.

Theme 2025

"Answering the Call" — highlighting not only the moral responsibility of individuals to pledge organs, but also the systemic readiness required to ensure ethical, transparent, and timely transplants.



History of Organ Donation and Transplantation

First Successful Transplant (1954)

The first successful human organ transplant took place on 23 December 1954, when a kidney was transplanted from one identical twin to another.

Pioneer Donor

Ronald Lee Herrick became the *world's first living organ donor*, donating a kidney to his brother Richard Herrick.

Medical Milestone

The procedure was led by Dr. Joseph Murray, who was later awarded the 1990 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his pioneering contributions to the field of transplantation.

Institutionalization of Awareness

World Organ Donation Day began to be observed in the early 2000s, spearheaded by bodies like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Society for Organ Donation (ISOD) to spread awareness at a global level.

Understanding Organ Donation

Organ donation refers to the process of *removing healthy organs or tissues* from living or deceased donors and transplanting them into patients suffering from organ failure.

Organs Eligible for Donation

Heart, kidneys, liver, lungs, pancreas, and intestines.

Tissues Eligible for Donation

Corneas, skin, bone marrow, tendons, and heart valves.

Types of Donation

1. *Living Donation*: A healthy person donates one kidney, or a part of liver/lung, while continuing to live a normal life.
2. *Deceased Donation*: Organs are retrieved after an individual has been declared *brain dead* or after *cardiac death*.

Eligibility for Organ Donation in India

Living Donors

1. Age criteria usually between 18–65 years.
2. Donor must be in *sound health*, free from active cancer, infections, or uncontrolled diabetes.
3. Close relatives (parents, siblings, children, grandparents) are primary eligible donors; non-relatives require approval from the *Transplant Authorization Committee* to prevent exploitation.

Deceased Donors

1. Organ donation possible only if *brain death* has been certified by a competent medical board.
2. Earlier restrictions like the 65-year upper age limit for recipients have been removed — *any age group can now receive organs*.

Current Scenario – Global and Indian Context

Global Demand

According to UNOS data, more than 1,06,000 people globally are currently awaiting life-saving organ transplants.

India's Waiting List

Nearly 63,000 patients for kidney transplants and 22,000 for liver transplants remain on the waiting list.

India's Progress

In 2024, India performed ~18,900 transplants, the highest ever, ranking 3rd globally after the US and China.

Special Achievement

India has become a global leader in hand transplants.

State-Level Performance

Telangana leads in deceased donations, followed by Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Gap in Demand vs Supply

Despite lakhs of patients requiring transplants every year, only a small fraction receive them due to *low awareness, myths, inadequate infrastructure, and systemic inefficiencies*.

Historical Evolution of Organ Transplantation in India

Pre-1994

Organ donations were mostly from *living relatives*. Brain death was not legally recognized, leading to unethical practices and rampant *organ trade in the 1980s–90s*.

1994 (THOA)

The Transplantation of Human Organs Act (THOA) was enacted, legally recognizing *brain death*, banning *commercial trade in organs*, and introducing *authorization committees* for oversight.

2014 onwards

Establishment of NOTTO (National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation), ROTTOs, and SOTTOs streamlined national, regional, and state-level organ allocation systems.

Green Corridors

Special traffic routes were institutionalized for rapid, uninterrupted organ transport to preserve viability.

2020s

Digital integration — *online donor pledge portals*, Aadhaar-linked donor IDs, and *Digital Health IDs* for transparent matching of donors and recipients.

Significance of Organ Donation

Life-Saving Impact

A single deceased donor can save up to 8 lives and improve the quality of life for many more through tissue donation.

Reducing Waiting Lists

Example: Tamil Nadu's cadaver programme significantly cut *waiting times for kidney patients* by ~40% in certain districts.

Promoting Altruism & Social Responsibility

Donors and their families are recognized for contributing to society, offering them a sense of dignity and closure.

Healthcare Equity

Through *state schemes* (e.g., Kerala reserving 50% of cadaver kidneys for BPL families), organ donation supports equitable healthcare access.

Medical Advancement

Ethical transplant systems reduce illegal trade and encourage innovations such as robotic-assisted kidney transplants (first successful one in India at PGIMER, Chandigarh in 2025).

Challenges in India's Organ Donation Ecosystem

Low Awareness & Myths

Many still wrongly believe that organ donation leads to *body disfigurement* or interferes with funeral rites.

Infrastructure Gaps

Only ~300 of India's 1,600 registered hospitals are fully equipped for multi-organ retrieval. Bureaucratic Delays: Certification of brain death often takes 6–8 hours, leading to organ wastage.

Financial Burden

High costs of *immunosuppressive drugs* post-transplant deter poor patients from long-term treatment adherence.

Geographic Inequality

Majority of transplants occur in *southern and western India*, while northern and northeastern states lag behind.

Low Deceased Donor Rate

India's rate stands at ~1 per million population, far below Spain's 30–50 per million, resulting in nearly 2 lakh viable organs wasted annually.

Gender Disparity

Women contribute the majority as *living donors* (~63%) but remain underrepresented as *recipients* (24–47%).

Key Indian Initiatives

Legal Reforms

1. *THOA 1994*: Recognized brain death, banned commercial organ trade.
2. *THOTA Amendment 2011*: Included tissues and stricter penalties for illegal trade.
3. *THOTA Rules 2014*: Streamlined protocols for consent, brain-death certification, and allocation norms.

Institutional Mechanisms

NOTTO (national), ROTTO (regional), and SOTTO (state-level coordination).

Digital Platforms

Aadhaar-linked pledge portals, national transplant registries, and online tracking systems.

Awareness Campaigns

Angdaan Jeevan Sanjeevani Abhiyan, *National Organ Donation Day* (13 August).

Financial Support

Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi (₹15 lakh aid + ₹10,000/month for medicines), Ayushman Bharat kidney transplant packages.

Best Practices in States

1. *Tamil Nadu*: Transparent cadaver transplant programme.
2. *Telangana*: India's highest deceased donation rate.
3. *Kerala*: Integrated hospital readiness with community awareness.

Global Initiatives & Innovations

WHO Guiding Principles (2010)

Ethical donation framework ensuring consent, transparency, and fairness.

Madrid Resolution (2010)

Called for expansion of deceased donor programmes worldwide.

IRODaT

International registry monitoring donation and transplant data.

Innovations

Portable *Organ Care Systems (OCS)* ("heart in a box"), *Paired Kidney Exchanges*, and *Digital Donor Cards*.

Way Forward

Mass Awareness

Engage local influencers, school curricula, and religious leaders to counter myths.

Policy Refinements

Mandatory brain-death audits, subsidized medicines, gender-sensitive organ allocation rules.

Infrastructure Expansion

Equip district-level hospitals for retrieval and transplantation.

Digital Integration

Real-time donor-recipient databases, GPS-enabled green corridors for transport.

Global Cooperation

Share best practices and collaborate with WHO/International registries for rare matches.

Source: https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/walkathon-organised-to-mark-world-organ-donation-day/article69929485.ece