



## World NGO Day

**For Prelims:** World NGO Day, Non-Governmental Organisations.

**For Mains:** Role of Non-Governmental Organisations in the Indian Democracy, Issues associated with NGOs, Challenges faced by NGOs and way ahead

### Why in News?

Every year, **27<sup>th</sup> February** is observed as the **World NGO day** all over the world.

- India has over **three million** [Non-Governmental Organisations \(NGO\)](#) that work across a range of arenas and play important roles of facilitator, catalyst or partner in bringing social transformation.

### What is the History of World NGO Day?

- The day assumed its official status when **12-member countries of the IX [Baltic Sea NGO Forum](#)** on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2010 formally recognised it.
  - In 2012, the forum's Final Statement Resolution adopted the day.
- Although the day was recognised officially in 2010, it was only in 2014, that for the **first time World NGO Day was observed** by the [United Nations](#).
- The main man behind this day was **Marcis Liors Skadmanis**, an UK-based social entrepreneur, who inaugurated the **2014 World NGO Day**.
- The day was **conceived to spread awareness of the tremendous contributions** of NGOs all around the world and honour the relentless efforts of the social workers both in the public and private sectors.

### What is the Role of NGOs in Indian Democracy?

- Bridging the Gap:**
  - NGOs endeavour to **plug gaps in the government's programmes** and reach out to sections of people often left untouched by state projects. For example, **providing aid to migrant workers in Covid-19 crisis**.
  - In the present scenario, when **India is still combating [Covid-19](#)**, non-profits have been **on the ground, working tirelessly to directly supplement the government's efforts** to bring relief and actively engage in vaccination drives to the most vulnerable communities.
  - These NGOs also look into **accelerating activities** like
    - Issues dealing with [poverty alleviation](#), water, environment, women's rights and literacy.
    - They have been **dynamic in almost all sectors:** Health, education, livelihood in rural and urban areas etc.
- Role of an Enabler:**
  - Community-level outfits and [self-help groups](#) are critical for bringing any change in the ground.

- In the past, **such grass roots organisations have been enabled by collaborations with bigger NGOs** and research agencies that have access to foreign funding.
- **Acting as a Pressure Group:**
  - There are **political NGOs that mobilise public opinion** against government's policies and actions.
    - To the extent such **NGOs are able to educate the public** and put pressure on public policy, they act as important **pressure groups** in a democracy.
- **Role in Participative Governance:**
  - Many civil society initiatives have contributed to some of the path-breaking laws in the country, including the **Environmental Protection Act-1986, Right to Education Act-2009, Forests Rights Act-2006 and Right to Information Act-2005, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) Juvenile Justice, Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS).**
  - NGOs also partnered with the government to successfully implement major campaigns like **Swachh Bharat Abiyaan** and **Sarva Siksha Abiyaan.**
- **Acting as a Social Mediator:**
  - **Social inter-mediation** is an intervention of different levels of society by various agents to change social and behavioural attitudes within the prevailing social environment for achieving desired results of change in society.
    - In Indian context wherein people are still steeped in superstition, faith, belief and custom, **NGOs act as catalysts and create awareness among people.**

## What are the issues Emanating from NGOs?

- **Lack of Credibility:**
  - During the last few years, **numerous organisations have mushroomed** which claim to work for the cause of helping the poor.
    - Under the garb of being an NGO, **these NGOs often mint money from donors** and are also involved in money laundering activities.
- **Lack of Transparency:**
  - India's disproportionate number of NGOs and the **sector's lack of transparency and accountability is clearly an issue that needs reforms.**
    - Further the **allegations of corruption against NGOs are ignored.** In the past many NGOs were blacklisted after being found to have indulged in misappropriation of funds.

## What are the main Challenges NGOs Face?

- **Lack of Funds:**
  - Many NGOs find it difficult to **garner sufficient and continuous funding** for their work. Gaining access to appropriate donors is a major component of this challenge.
  - Earlier, **the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** cancelled the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010** registration of various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).
    - Suspension of FCRA licence **means that the NGO can no longer receive fresh foreign funds** from donors pending a probe by the Home Ministry. The FCRA is **mandatory for associations and NGOs to receive foreign funds.**
- **Absence of Strategic Planning:**
  - Many NGOs suffer from the **lack of a cohesive, strategic plan** that would facilitate success in their activities and mission, rendering them unable to effectively raise and capitalize on financial support.
- **Poor Governance and Networking:**
  - Many NGOs have a **deficit of understanding** as to why they must have a Board and how to set one up.
  - **Poor or disorganized networking** is another major challenge, as it can cause duplicated efforts, time inefficiencies, conflicting strategies and an inability to learn from experience.
  - Many NGOs **do not maximize the use of current technologies** that could facilitate better communication and networking.
- **Limited Capacity:**

- NGOs often **lack the technical and organizational capacity** to implement and fulfill their mission, and few are willing or able to invest in training for capacity building.
- Weak capacity **affects fundraising ability, governance, leadership and technical areas.**
- **Development Approaches:**
  - Many NGOs favor a **“hardware” approach to development through building infrastructure** and providing services instead of empowering people and institutions locally.

## Way Forward

- India is committed to **SDGs till 2030 and a long-term strategy is important** to keep the focus while also pursuing sustainable growth and development.
- It is, however, important to note that **success of a long-term strategy depends not only on the lessons learnt** from implementing the short- or medium-term development strategies, but also **cooperation and coordination from various sectors – the government, India Inc and NGOs.**
- **Capacity building and training can help to provide crucial new skills.** NGOs can then more readily train staff and cultivate the necessary skills within the organization to address challenges going forward.
- It is necessary to regulate corrupt NGOs, however excessive regulation on foreign contribution may affect working of the NGOs which are helpful in implementing government schemes at the grassroots.

**Source: DTE**

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