



Mains Practice Question

Case Study

Q. Industrial chemicals are produced on a big scale by a conglomerate. It suggested establishing a second unit. Due to its negative impact on the environment, many states rejected this proposal. But one state government acceded to the request and permitted the unit close to a city, brushing aside all opposition. Further, the unit was set up 10 years ago and was in full swing till recently. The pollution caused by the industrial effluents was affecting the land, water, and crops in the area. It was also causing serious health problems to human beings and animals. This gave rise to a series of agitations demanding the closure of the plant. In a recent agitation, thousands of people took part, creating a law-and-order problem necessitating stern police action. Following the public outcry, the State government ordered the closure of the factory. The closure of the factory resulted in the unemployment of not only those workers who were engaged in the factory but also those who were working in the ancillary units. It also very badly affected those industries which depended on the chemicals manufactured by it.

As a senior officer entrusted with the responsibility of handling these issues, how are you going to address it?

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Approach

- Briefly introduce the ethical issue involved in the above case.
- Discuss about various stakeholders and ethical dilemmas involved in the case.
- Discuss your course of action as a senior officer.
- In conclusion, choose a way forward to resolve the issue.

Introduction

- **The case involves the conflict** between public health and environment safety v/s livelihood of people. It requires proper balance between environmental ethics and developmental ethics.

Body

- **Stakeholders involved in the case are as under:**
 - Me as a senior officer who is responsible to solve this case,
 - People living in the area,
 - Employee of the closed factory,
 - Ancillary units,
 - State government which gave permission to set up industrial unit,
 - MLA/MP of the area
- **Ethical issues involved:**
 - **Emotional Intelligence:** It would help senior officer in handling the difficult situation arising from the above case.
 - **Empathy:** It is an awareness of the needs and feelings of others both individually and in groups and being able to see things from the point of view of others.
- **Ethical dilemmas involved:**

- **Environmental responsibility v/s development:** There is a conflict between development and saving nature from degradation due to setting up of industrial unit.
- **Course of action:**
 - **My course of action:**
 - My plan would be to look for solution that will keep the factory running under better environmental conditions as well as keep the jobs of the people.
 - I would firstly visit the factory to analyze what were the issues that led to the factory closure. I would try to see if the factory could be modified with advance equipment that does not harm the nearby environment.
 - If the conditions are good for modification, I would request for a special group of experts who can look for solutions for developing the factory under acceptable conditions.
 - When the plans of modification worked well and environmental degradation is reduced, then I would need to convince the people for their approval for this project to go ahead. I would then provide them with proof so that they trust the administration.
 - The factory administration would need to make the changes according to the environmental standards. If the factory does not have any funds, I would consider providing them with necessary resources in short term as a loan so that they can go ahead with the approved plan.
 - In a scenario where no modification can be undertaken, then I would brainstorm alternative plans, so that people do not suffer. This can be done through setting up of another industry that is less polluting.
 - If no such industry is set up, I would have to take steps that can allow the job losers to attain financial security. This can be done through transferring them to other industries as per their requirements and further, supporting them with self-employment opportunities by providing them with loans to set up small cooperative industries or small business.
 - I would be conducting an investigation to find out whether environmental rules were flouted while giving permission to set up factory ten years back or there are any loopholes in the state's Environmental Impact Assessment norms which were used by company. At the same time the inspection should be done to find out that other companies are not flouting norms and polluting the environment.
 - Alternatively, I may order the shutdown of the industrial unit due to public outcry, then it would be short sighted solution as, it would shift the problem to some other place and consequently putting the health of people there at risk rather than providing a sustainable solution for the existing problem.
 - However, this option is not viable and best course for action.

Conclusion

Thus, my final course of action would be combination of the first and second option where both people's employment and environmental pollution are given focus. Further, if both the issues are addressed then I would consider this a successful operation.