



Mains Practice Question

Q. Rampura, a remote district inhabited by a tribal population, is marked by extreme backwardness and abject poverty. Agriculture is the mainstay of the local population, though it is primarily subsistence due to the very small land holdings. There is insignificant industrial or mining activity. Even the targeted welfare programs have inadequately benefited the tribal population. In this restrictive scenario, the youth has begun to migrate to other states to supplement the family income. Plight of minor girls is that their parents are persuaded by labour contractors to send them to work in the Bt Cotton farms of a nearby state. The soft fingers of the minor girls are well suited for plucking the cotton. The inadequate living and working conditions in these farms have caused serious health issues for the minor girls. NGOs in the districts of domicile and the cotton farms appear to be compromised and have not effectively espoused the twin issues of child labour and development of the area.

You are appointed as the District Collector of Rampura. Identify the ethical issues involved. Which specific steps will you initiate to ameliorate the conditions of minor girls of your district and to improve the over-all economic scenario in the district? (UPSC GS-4 Mains 2020)

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Ethical Issues Involved

- The given case can be described as an ethical dilemma in which two basic necessities of minor girls are in conflict i.e. their socio-economic rights of getting an education and good health vs. survival, and the livelihood of their families.
- Moreover, the case study highlights the issue of minor girls employed in Bt Cotton farms which is a violation of the Child Labour (prevention) Act, 2016 and the Right to Education Act, 2009. This warrants punishing the parents and owner of the Bt cotton farm.
 - However, this step will amount to the blind observance of law ignoring the circumstances in which crime has happened.
- Further, the case study highlights the lack of development, and failure of governance to provide welfare services to the remotest corners of the country.

Steps to Ameliorate the Conditions of Minor Girls

- Apart from contraction to Child Labor law and Right to Education Act, working in Bt. cotton farms is hazardous as they might inhale micro cotton fibers and develop respiratory ailments.
 - Therefore, direct supervision of the District Collector is needed to immediately stop the employment of minor girls in Bt. Cotton farms.
- The available funds should be directed to provide nutritional needs and education to children.
- Further, the local communities and civil society need to be involved to increase citizen participation, avoid a manpower crunch in welfare initiatives.

Steps to Improve the Overall Economic Scenario in the District

- The respective governments – state and center should be intimidated about the gravity of the situation for their immediate support.

- In order to discourage the migration of youth, there is a need to generate employment opportunities in the region.
 - For example, with proper training youth to work in Bt.cotton farms can be equipped with proper skills. This provides a livelihood to families without engaging people in child labor.
- Local people can be persuaded to collect minor forest produce with an assured MSP.
- Adherence to the provisions of the Panchayati Raj Act of 1992 and the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act of 1996 in planning and implementation of various welfare schemes, should be ensured in letter and spirit.

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