



Mains Practice Question

Case Studies

You are a district collector in a drought-prone area. You have been entrusted with the responsibility of implementing the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in your district. The scheme aims to provide 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. However, you find that there is a large-scale corruption and leakage of funds in the implementation of the scheme. Some of the common malpractices are:

1. Fake job cards and muster rolls
2. Inflated wage payments and material costs
3. Substandard work quality and measurement
4. Collusion between local officials, contractors and politicians

You have to take appropriate steps to curb the corruption and ensure the effective implementation of the scheme.

- A. What are the ethical issues involved in this case?
- B. What are the measures that you can take to prevent and punish the corrupt practices?
- C. How can you use technology and innovation to improve the transparency and accountability of the scheme?

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Approach

- Start your answer with a brief introduction to the case.
- Discuss ethical issues involved in the case along with the measures that can be taken to prevent the corrupt practices and use of technology and innovation to improve the transparency.
- You can conclude by summarizing the key points of the answer.

Introduction

In this case, I serve as a District Collector in a drought-prone area entrusted with implementing the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). However, widespread corruption, including fake job cards and collusion, hinders the scheme's objectives.

Body

A. The ethical issues involved in this case:

- **Violation of the rights** and dignity of the rural poor who are entitled to guaranteed employment and fair wages under the NREGS.
- **Misuse of public funds** and resources that are meant for the welfare and development of the rural areas.
- **Erosion of trust and confidence** in the government and its institutions that are supposed to serve the public interest.
- **Damage to the environment** and natural resources due to substandard work quality and measurement.

B. Some of the measures that I can take to prevent and punish the corrupt practices:

- **Strengthening the social audit mechanism** by involving the local communities, civil society organizations, media and independent observers in monitoring and verifying the implementation of the NREGS.
- **Ensuring timely payment of wages** and material costs through direct benefit transfer to the bank accounts or post office accounts of the beneficiaries.
- **Taking strict disciplinary and legal action** against the officials, contractors and politicians who are found guilty of corruption, fraud or collusion.
- **Creating awareness and sensitization** among the rural workers and households about their rights and entitlements under the NREGS and how to report any grievances or complaints.

C. Some of the ways that I can use technology and innovation to improve the transparency and accountability:

- **Using biometric authentication and geo-tagging** to verify the identity and location of the workers and the worksites.
- **Using mobile applications such as NMMS, Jaldoot and Ombudsperson** to facilitate online registration, demand, allocation, attendance, measurement, payment and grievance redressal of the NREGS works.
- **Using data analytics and artificial intelligence** to detect anomalies, discrepancies and patterns in the NREGS data and generate alerts, reports and recommendations for corrective actions.
- **Using blockchain technology** to create a secure, decentralized and immutable ledger of transactions and records related to the NREGS works.

Conclusion

Fighting corruption in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is vital for success. Through anti-corruption measures, public engagement, and technology, we can achieve its goals of creating jobs and reducing rural poverty, building trust in government programs for a better future.