



Mains Practice Question

Case Study

You are an experienced civil servant working in a government department responsible for infrastructure development. Your department has recently received a proposal from a well-known construction company to build a major highway that would greatly improve connectivity in a remote region. However, you have discovered through reliable sources that the company has a history of engaging in corrupt practices and bribing government officials to secure contracts. Furthermore, there are concerns about the environmental impact of the proposed highway, as it would pass through ecologically sensitive areas. As a public servant, you are faced with an ethical dilemma regarding whether to support or oppose the project.

Discuss the ethical issues involved in this case and outline the possible courses of action you could take. Evaluate each course of action in terms of its ethical implications and the impact on public administration.

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Approach:

- **Introduction:** Start your answer with introducing the case
- **Body:** Mention ethical issues involved, and Course of action as asked in the Question.
- **Conclusion:** Summarize and conclude your answer.

Introduction:

In this case, I am faced with an ethical dilemma of how to deal with the proposal of a construction company that has a history of corruption and environmental violations. The proposal involves building a major highway that would benefit a remote region in terms of connectivity and development. However, it would also entail compromising on ethical values and principles, as well as risking environmental damage and public trust. Therefore, I have to weigh the pros and cons of supporting or opposing the project, while also considering the legal and moral obligations of my role as a public servant.

- **Ethical Issues Involved:**
 - **Corruption:**
 - Whether it is ethical to support a project that is proposed by a company that has a history of engaging in corrupt practices and bribing government officials.
 - **Issue of Development:**
 - Whether it is ethical to oppose a project that would improve connectivity and development in a remote region.
 - **Environment Ethics:**
 - Whether it is ethical to support a project that would have adverse environmental impact on ecologically sensitive areas.
 - **Accountability:**
 - Whether it is ethical to ignore or conceal the information about the company's corruption and environmental violations.
 - **Transparency:**
 - Whether it is ethical to disclose or withhold the information about the company's corruption and environmental violations.

- **Justice:**
 - Whether it is ethical to ensure that justice is done to all the stakeholders involved.
- **Ethical Principles that can Guide:**
 - **Public interest:**
 - As a public servant, I have a duty to act in the best interest of the public and safeguard their welfare.
 - **Honesty and integrity:**
 - As a public servant, I have a duty to be honest and uphold integrity in my work and conduct.
 - **Transparency and accountability:**
 - As a public servant, I have a duty to be transparent and accountable for my actions and decisions.
 - **Rule of law:**
 - As a public servant, I have a duty to follow the rule of law and ensure that no one is above or below it
 - **Sustainable development:**
 - As a public servant, I have a duty to promote sustainable development that balances economic, social and environmental aspects.

Course of Action: Based on these ethical principles, I could take the following possible courses of action:

- **Support the project:**
 - I could support the project on the grounds that it would bring connectivity and development to a remote region that needs it.
 - The benefits of the project outweigh its costs and risks. The company's corruption and environmental violations are not relevant to the current proposal and that they can be dealt with separately.
 - However, this course of action would violate the ethical principles of honesty, integrity, transparency, accountability, rule of law and sustainable development.
 - It would also undermine my credibility and reputation as a public servant.
 - It would also expose me to legal and moral liabilities if the company's corruption and environmental violations are exposed or challenged later.
- **Oppose the project:**
 - I could oppose the project on the grounds that it would involve supporting a corrupt and unethical company that has violated environmental norms.
 - The project would cause irreversible damage to the ecology and biodiversity of the region.
 - There are alternative ways of improving connectivity and development in the region without compromising on ethical values and principles.
 - However, this course of action would violate the ethical principle of public interest.
 - It would also invite criticism and opposition from various stakeholders who may favour the project for economic or political reasons.
 - It would also require me to provide strong evidence and justification for rejecting the project.
- **Seek more information:**
 - I could seek more information about the project before making a decision. I could ask for an independent feasibility study, an environmental impact assessment, a social cost-benefit analysis, etc.
 - I could also consult with various stakeholders such as local communities, NGOs, experts, etc. to get their views and feedback on the project.
 - I could also verify the credentials and track record of the company from other sources.
 - However, this course of action would require time and resources that may not be available or feasible.
 - It would also delay the decision-making process and create uncertainty and confusion among various stakeholders.

Evaluation: Based on these courses of action, I would evaluate them in terms of their ethical implications and impact on public administration as follows:

- **Support the Project:**

- This course of action would have negative ethical implications and impact on public administration.
- It would compromise on ethical values and principles such as honesty, integrity, transparency, accountability, rule of law and sustainable development.
- It would also erode public trust and confidence in public service delivery.
- It would also expose me to legal and moral risks if the company's corruption and environmental violations are exposed or challenged later.
- **Oppose the Project:**
 - This course of action would have positive ethical implications but a negative impact on public administration.
 - It would uphold ethical values and principles such as honesty, integrity, transparency, accountability, rule of law and sustainable development. It would also enhance public trust and confidence in public service delivery.
 - However, it would also ignore the public interest of connectivity and development in a remote region.
 - It would also face criticism and opposition from various stakeholders who may favour the project for economic or political reasons.
 - It would also require me to provide strong evidence and justification for rejecting the project.
- **Seek more Information:**
 - This course of action would have mixed ethical implications and impact on public administration.
 - It would reflect ethical values and principles such as honesty, integrity, transparency, accountability, rule of law and sustainable development.
 - It would also enable me to make an informed and rational decision based on facts and data.
 - However, it would also require time and resources that may not be available or feasible.
 - It would also delay the decision-making process and create uncertainty and confusion among various stakeholders.

Conclusion:

Based on this evaluation, I would choose the third course of action of seeking more information about the project before making a decision. I think this course of action would be the most ethical and prudent one, as it would allow me to balance the various ethical principles and stakeholder interests involved in this case. It would also enable me to make a decision that is based on facts and data, rather than on emotions or biases. It would also demonstrate my commitment to ethical values and principles, as well as to public interest and welfare.