



Case Study - 18: Corruption nexus versus Call of duty

You are District Magistrate of a flood-prone district. The flood control department has allocated forty crore rupees for building embankments in the low lying area of the river bed. There have been various complaints from locals over the delay in project completion, violations of rules and misuse of funds by the nexus of politicians and contractors.

During monsoon, the embankment construction couldn't withstand a single season of flooding. This has led to the submergence of many villages in floodwater and thousands of people are trapped in the villages. The villages are completely cut off and there is a scarcity of food and drinking water. Due to water stagnation, there is also a risk of epidemic spread in the region.

There is huge discontent and protest over the allegation of corruption against the local politician. As he is a popular face of ruling political party in the state, there is severe pressure from political heads to cover the corruption issue. Defying the orders of political bosses will bring wrath towards you and may also lead to transfer.

1. As a District Magistrate what will be your course of action to manage the situation in the district. (200 words)
2. Identify the various dimensions of the crisis involved in the issue. Based on your understanding, suggest measures to deal with the crisis. (200 Words)

Solution

Facts of the case	Stakeholders involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Floods due to failure of recently constructed embankment.▪ Severe condition of people trapped in the submerged villages.▪ Protest over allegations of corruption.▪ Political pressure to cover up the issue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Villagers▪ Contractor▪ Politician▪ Self (District Magistrate) <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪▪▪▪▪▪▪

Course of action

	Step	Reason
1.	Initiate a rescue operation and ensuring the availability of food, medicines and drinking water.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preventing loss of lives should be of utmost priority. ▪ Children and women are the worst sufferers of any such disaster. They need to be immediately rescued. ▪ District Magistrate must have responsibility to ensure supply of all essential materials.
2.	Assessing the severity of the situation and reaching out to disaster response forces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ State Disaster Response Force (SDRF)/National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) have appropriate experience of handling flood situations.
3.	Persuading locals not to protest and cooperate with government officials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Making the locals understand that immediate need is to rescue the stranded people. ▪ Local youth can help in locating stranded people. ▪ They can even help in calming down others with no confidence on government due to corruption allegations.
4.	Forming a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to look into charges of corruption.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowing and understanding of the facts would help in pursuing the case further. ▪ SIT report can be used in subverting any political pressure.
5.	Taking strict action against wrongdoers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People involved must be identified and held accountable for failure of the embankment.
6.	Flood prevention, mitigation and adaptation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Since the area is in the flood-prone region, it is the administration's duty to make it safer for the people.

Dimensions of the crisis

Ethical dimensions:

- **Denial of justice:** Lives of people get completely devastated by the loss of their homes and livelihood due to floods. No monetary amount can compensate for the **sorrow and grief of their loss.**
- **Lack of compassion and respect for human lives:** The urge for monetary benefits and **profit motives** becomes so huge that a person (contractor/politician) can put lives of millions at risk by indulging in petty corruption.
- **Loss of faith in leaders:** People elect their leaders so that they can become their voice and address their grievances. Nexus between people's representatives and contractors render people helpless.

Legal dimensions:

- **Corruption:** Allegations of corruption and putting pressure on the District Magistrate is complete dereliction of duty by political leaders.
- **Governance failure:** It is not just a **failure of government** to take timely measures in preventing a disaster in flood prone area but also a **failure of civil society** which could not

initiate timely actions despite having knowledge of the delay in project completion, violations of rules and misuse of funds.

- **Politicization of bureaucracy:** The District Magistrate facing political pressure expecting him to cover up the issue indicates a defunct **culture of quid pro quo** in the country's governance system.

Measures to deal with the crisis

- The District Magistrate must show **spirit of service** and **conviction** to ensure **justice** to the people. He must work tirelessly for their rescue and rehabilitation and ensuring that strict action is taken against the culprits.
- **Ensuring legal justice** by ensuring that those guilty must be punished. Contractor and politicians involved must face trial in a court of law.
- Taking **confidence building measures** to regain the trust **of people** on the government. Special schemes should be initiated for creating livelihood opportunities and for the education of children affected by floods.
- Long term measures for **flood prevention, mitigation and adaptation** should be taken. Embankments and flood resistant structures must be built after scientific analysis.
- Local people must be made aware about their rights and sense of duty towards ensuring good governance. '**Citizen centric governance**' must be the way forward as recommended by **the 2nd ARC report**. Mechanisms like social audits should be made mandatory for such projects.

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