

Case Study

Given below are few examples of mining disasters in India, which exposes a series of administrative lapses-

First case, the recent Ksan mine was allowed to function in violation of safety norms, even after a complete prohibition issued by the National Green Tribunal. Unscientific mining led to a collapse of the chamber and deadly flooding followed. The Meghalaya government could not launch an immediate rescue effort because of the lack of required equipment, intensifying the gravity of the issue.

In the second case, a few years ago, a landslide at an open cast mine in Goda, Jharkhand, killed 23 people, where the questions were raised about the technical assessment done prior to expansion of extraction activity.

In the third case of Chasnala near Dhanbad some decades ago, more than 370 people were killed, due to various shortcomings in safety management.

In the context of the above case, answer the following questions:

- a) What are the common ethical issues involved in the above cases?
- b) What are the reasons for such man-made disasters in India? Analyse through the prism of human values and administrative ethics.
- c) What steps would you suggest to prevent such accidents in future?

Approach

- **Introduce your answer.**
- **Identify the stakeholders.**
- **Identify the ethical issues involved in the case.**
- **Analyse the reasons for such accidents.**
- **Suggest measures to prevent them.**

Answer

The case involves balancing the profit of the private mine owners, environment and rights of the mine workers.

Stakeholders

- The labours and their families.
- The Mining owners.
- The Government.
- Nature.

a) Ethical issues involved in the given cases

- **Indifference of the mine owners** towards the safety of the workers.
- **Death of mine workers in violation of their right to life.**

- **Lack of sense of responsibility** in mine owners.
- **Absence of accountability and responsibility**, leading to unethical governance.

b) Reasons

From the perspective of human values

- Labourers are treated as a means to an end by the corporates and not as an end in itself.
- Greediness for profit motivates the mine owners to avoid cost incurred in labour Safety.
- Lack of values like empathy and compassion towards labourers, temperance, responsibility and sense of trusteeship.

From the perspective of administrative ethics

- Standard Safe Operating Procedures are underdeveloped and ignored, which leads to unsafe operations.
- Lack of alternative remunerative employment opportunities for labourers.
- Lack of awareness in workers to report about administrative lapses in mines.
- Strengthening/reinforcement of such behavior of mine owners in the absence of strict punishment (operant conditioning).

c) Measures

For labourers

- Awareness generation among workers for their basic rights and channels for reporting of exploitation.
- Training of workers in Standard Safe Operating Procedures.

For Mine owners

- The mining corporations should put forward safety and health procedures beyond the minimum regulatory requirements.
- They should treat labours as an end in itself and not as a means.
- Adequate investment to ensure safe and effective technology suitable for operations in Indian conditions.

For the government

- Make it compulsory for the mine owners to following the safety regulations and should ensure stricter punishment for not doing so.
- Periodic safety audits and adopting certifications like ISO 9000 or 14000 will help in preventing mishaps.
- The rights, responsibilities, and accountability in case of such incidents must be strictly enforced to ensure justice to the victims and punishment to the guilty.
- Provide alternative employment opportunities.

The corporates should understand that “commerce without morality” is a deadly sin, as suggested by Mahatma Gandhi.