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Q13

Case study. Suppose you are an officer in charge of implementing a social service scheme to provide support to old and destitute women. An old and illiterate woman comes to you to avail the benefits of the scheme. However, she has no documents to show that she fulfils the eligibility criteria. But after meeting her and listening to her you feel that she certainly needs support. Your enquiries also show that she is really destitute and living in a pitiable condition. You are in a dilemma as to what to do. Putting her under the scheme without necessary documents would clearly be violation of rules. But denying her the support would be cruel and inhuman. (a) Can you think of a rational way to resolve this dilemma? (b) Give your reasons for it. 24. You are a young, aspiring.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · GS IV · 20 marks · Ethics Case Studies

Case Studies on above issues.

Core demand of the question

- You implement a scheme for old and destitute women. An illiterate woman has no papers but is clearly destitute. Enrolling her without documents breaks the rules; refusing her is cruel
- (a) Can you think of a rational way to resolve this dilemma?
- (b) Give your reasons for it

Revision summary

The clash is leakage control versus a paper-poor woman who is clearly destitute.

Enrolling with a blank file, or sending her away, both fail.

Read the scheme's inquiry and certificate substitutes; verify neighbours and revenue facts this week.

Use separate interim humanitarian funds, food and shelter so she is not hungry during the process.

Help her obtain Aadhaar and simplified KYC, record a **speaking order**, and make the route public so it is not a private favour.

Introduction

The scheme exists for women like her. The file asks for papers she does not have. Blind enrolment is lawlessness. Blind refusal is cruelty. A rational officer uses the purpose of the rule, not a photocopy as a god.

Body

Stakeholders

- The old, illiterate, destitute woman in front of you.
- Other eligible women who waited in the queue with papers, and ineligible claimants who would copy a back door.
- The government that funded the scheme and wrote eligibility rules against leakage.
- **Local verification machinery:** panchayat, anganwadi, police station, revenue inspector.
- You as the implementing officer, bound by both Conduct Rules and **Article 21** dignity.

Values and the dilemma

- Compassion and non-maleficence versus integrity, equality and the rule of law.
- **The dilemma is real:** Section-and-form versus a person who will otherwise sleep hungry.
- It is not a licence to invent a private scheme. It is a duty to use every lawful door the scheme already hides in footnotes: inquiry, provisional relief, and help to obtain documents.

Options

- **Option 1:** Enrol her today with a blank file.
- **Merit:** immediate relief.
- **Demerit:** you break the rule, invite a raid of false cases, and may later see her struck off with recovery she cannot pay.
- **Option 2:** Send her away until she brings papers.
- **Merit:** literal compliance.
- **Demerit:** an illiterate destitute woman cannot conjure a birth certificate; this is cruelty dressed as regularity.
- **Option 3:** Temporary humane support plus a time-bound, recorded local inquiry that creates the missing proof under the scheme's own verification clause, then regular enrolment.

(a)-(b) Rational resolution and reasons

- Read the scheme. Most old-age and destitute-women schemes allow local inquiry, a certificate from a gazetted officer or sarpanch, and self-declaration with witnesses, precisely because the poorest are paper-poor. Use that clause; do not wait for a passport.
- **Order a same-week field verification:** neighbours, anganwadi, ration dealer, and revenue records of "no land". Put photographs and signed witness statements on the file.
- **Meanwhile, do not leave her on the road. Use lawful interim doors:** the Chief Minister's or District Red Cross / poor-patient / contingency relief fund; a one-time assistance order with reasons; food through the **National Food Security Act, 2013** if a household can be constituted; night shelter. This is not "the scheme without papers"; it is a different, recorded humanitarian window.
- **Help her get documents:** Aadhaar enrolment camp, age certificate by medical board if the scheme allows, residence certificate, and opening of a bank or post-office account with simplified KYC for the low-risk poor.
- If the scheme is **National Social Assistance Programme** / State widow or destitute pension, follow its "no rejection for want of a document that the State can itself create" spirit. Many State orders already say inquiry can substitute.
- **Equality:** publish that this inquiry route exists, so that the next woman is not a secret favour. A private exception is unfair to the queue; a public procedure is justice.

- **Integrity:** you never ask a tout's fee; you never enrol a person whom inquiry shows is not destitute.
- **Record reasons:** "literal documents absent; statutory purpose met by verification dated ...; interim relief from ... until pension port opens." A **speaking order** protects you and her.
- If higher rules truly forbid any substitute, send a written proposal for a government order creating an "undocumented destitute" category, and still use interim relief today. You do not sit on the woman while Delhi answers.
- **Reasons this is rational:** it honours the object of the scheme (support the destitute old woman), honours anti-leakage (inquiry, not a wink), honours equality (a replicable process), and honours humanity (no empty-handed refusal).

What you will not do

- Forge her age or borrow another woman's Aadhaar.
- Make her a bonded client of a middleman.

Flow diagram

Destitute woman no papers -> Rules versus cruelty
 Rules versus cruelty -> Same-week field inquiry
 Rules versus cruelty -> Interim food shelter fund
 Same-week field inquiry -> Create lawful proof
 Create lawful proof -> Enrol in scheme
 Interim food shelter fund -> Enrol in scheme

Conclusion

The rational path is not fake papers and not a slammed window. Verify her destitution on the ground, open every lawful interim relief, help her obtain identity, and enrol through the scheme's inquiry substitute. Compassion with a file is still the rule of law.

Facts & figures

National Social Assistance Programme

The Union umbrella for pensions for the old, widows and persons with disability; States often allow local certification when civil documents are missing.

National Food Security Act, 2013

A food-entitlement statute that can cover a destitute woman while a pension file is built, if the household can be identified.

Aadhaar as proof of identity

Enrolment camps can create identity for a person who never had a birth certificate; it is a tool, not a wall, if the officer organises the camp.

Article 21, Constitution of India

A mechanical refusal that leaves a destitute woman to die of process sits badly with the right to life with dignity.

Speaking order

Recorded reasons that show you used verification, not a wink; the administrative-law habit that makes compassion reviewable and honest.

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