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Q9

Case study. It is a State where prohibition is in force. You are recently appointed as the Superintendent of Police of a district notorious for illicit distillation of liquor. The illicit liquor leads to many death, reported and unreported, and causes a major problem for the district authorities. The approach till now had been to view it as a law and order problem and tackle it accordingly. Raids, arrests, police cases, and criminal trials - all these had only limited impact. The problem remains as serious as ever. Your inspections show that the parts of the district where the distillation flourishes are economically, industrially, and educationally backward. Agriculture is badly affected by poor irrigation facilities. Frequent clashes among communities gave a boost to illicit distillation. No major initiatives had taken place in the past either from the government's side or from social organizations to improve a lot of the people. Which new approach will you adopt to bring the problem under control? (250 words).

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · GS IV · 20 marks · Ethics Case Studies

Case Studies on above issues.

Core demand of the question

- You are the new Superintendent of Police in a prohibition State district where illicit distillation causes deaths. Raids and cases have failed. The distillation belt is poor, poorly irrigated, and torn by community clashes, with little government or social work. What new approach will you adopt?

Revision summary

Raids failed because the belt is poor, dry and feud-ridden.

A new SP should not unofficially legalise poison and should not only hit harder.

The approach is mapped health data, strikes on methanol supply, livelihood and irrigation with the Collector, de-addiction, and impartial policing.

Police integrity is part of the cure; protection money is part of the disease.

Success is fewer deaths, not more cases.

Introduction

Illicit liquor in this district is a public-health massacre wearing a law-and-order mask. Raids alone have already been tried. The new approach must dry the economic swamp, not only fill the lock-up.

Body

Stakeholders

- Drinkers, their families, and people who die from methanol and other poisons.
- Poor distillers, including women who may have no other cash.
- Communities in clash, who use liquor money and liquor gangs as muscle.
- Police, excise, health, agriculture and panchayat officers.
- Honest dry-law supporters and those who want a quiet bribe economy to continue.

Ethical issues and values

- **Sanctity of life:** unreported deaths are still deaths.
- **Justice:** punishing only the small cooker while the solvent supply lives is theatre.
- **Empathy:** a dry law that ignores hunger will be broken every night.
- **Impartiality:** raids that visit only one community will feed the next clash.
- **Integrity:** police who tax the still cannot lead a new approach.

Why the old approach failed

- Distillation here is livelihood, irrigation failure, and a feud economy, not only a hobby of crime.
- Cases without conviction, and convictions without an alternative wage, recycle the same families.
- Fear without services pushes the still further into the forest and the death rate stays.

Options

- **Option 1:** Harsher raids only.
- **Merit:** some fear.
- **Demerit:** already failed; invites fake encounters and communal targeting.
- **Option 2:** Ignore prohibition and unofficially "regulate" the stills.
- **Merit:** less police theatre.
- **Demerit:** you become a partner in poison and you break the law you swore to.
- **Option 3:** A whole-of-district plan: enforcement on supply of poison, livelihood and irrigation, health, and peace work.
- **Merit:** matches the causes named in the stem.
- **Demerit:** slower, needs other departments; still the right course.

Action: the new approach

- Map deaths, stills, solvent routes and community fault-lines with health data, not only FIR counts. Publish what can be published so the problem is not a police secret.
- **Split the crime:** hunt methanol and organised supply with excise and financial intelligence; treat the hungry small cooker as a person who needs an exit, not only a boot.
- **Clean the force:** rotate compromised posts, use independent raids, and invite complaints against protection money.
- **Sit with the Collector, agriculture, rural development and women-and-child officers:** irrigation repair, MGNREGA and skill work in the belt, so the still is not the only wage.
- **De-addiction and emergency medicine:** primary health centres stocked for poisoning, an ambulance that actually moves, and counselling that does not wait for a fatal batch.

- **Community peace:** liquor often funds feud. Use credible local peace committees, equal enforcement, and keep festivals from becoming revenge markets.
- Women's groups and youth clubs as monitors, not as unpaid spies of one caste.
- Schools and adult literacy so the next cohort is not trapped in the same cash-from-poison story.
- Ask the State, with evidence, whether prohibition without livelihood is producing methanol death; policy change is the legislature's, but the SP may not fake success.
- Measure success as fewer deaths and fewer hospitalised children, not as a taller pile of seized matkas.

Flow diagram

Illicit liquor deaths -> Raids only
 Raids only -> Problem unchanged
 Illicit liquor deaths -> Supply plus livelihood plus health
 Supply plus livelihood plus health -> Map poison and poverty
 Supply plus livelihood plus health -> Irrigation jobs de-addiction
 Supply plus livelihood plus health -> Clean police and equal raids

Conclusion

Keep the law, but stop pretending the still is only a lathi problem. Cut poison supply, exit poor distillers into wages and water, treat the dying, and police both communities without a protection racket.

Facts & figures

Prohibition and poison

Where legal alcohol is banned but demand remains, methanol and industrial solvents often enter illicit liquor and cause cluster deaths.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005

A lawful wage floor in a backward belt, which can compete with still-work if works actually open in that geography.

Excise and police coordination

Illicit distillation is not only a local IPC file; precursor chemicals and transport need excise and often multi-district work.

Disaster and public-health response

A hooch tragedy is a mass-casualty event: protocol, antidotes, and truthful counts matter as much as arrests.

Community clash and informal economies

Feud districts often fund muscle through illicit trades; equal enforcement is a peace policy, not softness.

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