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Q11

**Case study. You are heading the rescue operations in an area affected by severe natural calamity. Thousands of people are rendered homeless and deprived of food, drinking water, and other basic amenities. Rescue work has been disrupted by heavy rainfall and damage to supply routes. The local people are seething with anger against the delayed limited rescue operations. When your team reaches the affected area, the people there heckle and even assault some of the team members. One of your team members is even severely injured. Faced with this crisis, some team members plead with you to call off the operations fearing threats to their life. In such trying circumstances, what will be your response? Examine the qualities of a public servant which will be required to manage the situation.**

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · GS IV · 20 marks · Ethics Case Studies

Case Studies on above issues.

**Core demand of the question**

- You head rescue after a severe calamity. Thousands lack shelter, food and water; rain and broken routes delay work; local people heckle and assault the team; one member is severely injured; some plead to call off operations for fear of their lives
- What will be your response? Examine the qualities of a public servant required to manage the situation

**Revision summary**

Calling off rescue after an assault would abandon thousands and confirm State flight.

The response is to treat the injured, add protection and local faces, speak honestly, and restart relief.

Lawful doors are the **Disaster Management Act, 2005**, NDRF/SDRF, SDRF money and PDS grain on written order.

Assault can be prosecuted later; mass revenge on survivors is wrong.

- **Needed qualities:** compassion, courage, EQ, impartiality, communication and care for the team.

## Introduction

You lead rescue in a disaster where homes, food and water are gone, rain has cut the roads, and angry survivors have beaten your team, one of them badly. Some colleagues want to stop. The duty is still the living; the method must also keep the rescuers alive.

## Body

### Stakeholders

- Survivors without shelter, food, and drinking water.
- Your team, including the severely injured member and those who want to withdraw.
- Local leaders, rumour-spreaders, and the people whose anger is real because delay was real.
- **The State disaster machinery:** District Magistrate, NDRF, SDRF, police, and health.
- You as incident commander under the **Disaster Management Act, 2005**.

### Ethical issues

- Duty to rescue versus duty of care to one's own team.
- Public anger that is understandable after delay, and violence that is still a crime.
- Fair allocation of scarce food and water when every hand pulls.
- **Values:** compassion, courage, perseverance, impartiality, selflessness, and emotional intelligence.

### Options

- **Option 1:** Call off operations and pull everyone out.
- **Merit:** stops further injury to the team today.
- **Demerit:** abandons thousands; confirms the rumour that the State fled; more deaths by night.
- **Option 2:** Order the team to march in without protection or explanation, matching anger with force.
- **Merit:** looks tough.
- **Demerit:** more lathis, more injured staff, and a riot on a floodplain.
- **Option 3:** Freeze until the rain stops and the road is perfect.
- **Merit:** textbook logistics.
- **Demerit:** the stem already says delay is the wound; waiting is a second abandonment.
- **Option 4:** Stay, reconfigure, and continue rescue with security, communication, and care for the injured - the chosen path.
- **Merit:** both lives: survivors and staff.
- **Demerit:** residual risk that must be named and mitigated, not denied.

### Response (reasoned action)

- Do not call off the operation. Evacuate the severely injured to the nearest working hospital with an escort, and record the assault for later criminal process; do not start a revenge round now.
- Pause only the exposed cluster that was beaten. Pull the team to a defensible edge, not out of the district.
- Ask the District Magistrate and police for a protection ring and for local respected persons - a teacher, a sarpanch, a faith leader - to walk with the next column so the crowd sees neighbours, not only uniforms.

- **Speak to the crowd in their language:** admit the delay, name the rain and the broken road, announce the next water and food drop time, and ask them to name the sick first. Anger often falls when a list appears.
- **Restart supply by whatever lawful means the Disaster Management Act, 2005 allows:** air-drop if the State can, porters, boats, and opening PDS or mid-day-meal grain with a written order so that feeding is not a loot.
- **Lawful doors:** National Disaster Response Force and State Disaster Response Force; the State Disaster Response Fund; the National Disaster Management Authority's incident-response system; Aapda Mitra volunteers if trained locally; and the public distribution system as emergency food.
- Separate criminal assault from hungry grief. A few who beat rescuers can be identified on video later; mass punishment of the camp is unethical and stupid.
- Rotate exhausted staff; do not shame those who felt fear. Fear named is EQ; fear that empties the field is failure of command, not of the constable who spoke.
- Keep a public board of who got tents and water so that impartiality is visible.

### Qualities of a public servant required

- **Compassion that stays:** the crowd's anger is data about suffering, not a licence to hate them.
- **Courage that is not theatre:** walk back in with a plan, not with a speech alone.
- Perseverance when rain and rumour both continue.
- **Emotional intelligence:** hold one's own anger after a colleague is hurt; do not let it become a massacre of a camp.
- **Decisiveness:** a clear order - we continue, with these changes - so the team is not a debate club in a flood.
- Integrity and impartiality in relief lists, including for groups the crowd dislikes.
- **Communication:** truth about what will arrive at 4 p.m., not a comfort lie.
- **Team care:** a leader who treats the injured as a duty, not as a nuisance to the mission.
- **Coordination:** the humility to use NDRF, health, and local volunteers rather than a solo hero file.
- **Accountability:** a night log that a later inquiry can read, because disasters attract blame as surely as they attract cameras.

### Flow diagram

Calamity and assault -> Do not abandon  
 Do not abandon -> Evacuate injured  
 Do not abandon -> Protection and local leaders  
 Protection and local leaders -> Food water shelter  
 Food water shelter -> PDS NDRF SDRF NDRF SDRF  
 Crowd anger -> Truth and relief list

## Conclusion

Do not abandon the field. Protect and treat the injured, add a security and local-leader ring, tell the truth about delay, and restart food, water and shelter through NDRF, SDRF, SDRF funds and PDS. The qualities required are compassion, courage, EQ, impartiality and perseverance - duty to survivors without sacrificing the team as a second casualty.

## Facts & figures

### Disaster Management Act, 2005

The statutory frame for disaster authorities, rescue, relief and coordination in India.

### National Disaster Response Force

A specialised Union force for disaster rescue that a district incident commander should call when routes and rain defeat a local team.

### State Disaster Response Fund

The primary State fund for relief expenditure in a notified calamity, so that feeding and shelter have a lawful budget line.

### Public Distribution System

Fair-price grain that can be released on a written emergency order when markets and roads have failed.

### Incident Response System (NDMA)

The National Disaster Management Authority's command structure that names roles so a rescue is not a crowd of equal bosses.

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