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Q11

Case study. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Program, MGNREGA was earlier known as National Rural Employment Scheme, NREGA. It is an Indian Social Welfare Program that aimed at fulfilling the 'Right to Work' provisions made in the Constitution. MGNREGA was launched in 2006 under Rural Employment Sector by the Ministry of Rural Development. Main objective of the program is to give legal guarantee of wage employment to the adult members of rural households who are willing to do unskilled manual labour work subject to a maximum of 100 days per year for every household. Every rural household has the right to register under the scheme, job card is issued to the registered, Job Card holder can seek employment; State Government shall pay 25% of minimum wage for the first 30 days as compensatory daily unemployment allowance to the families and of wage for remaining period of the year. MGNREGA work was undertaken by various Gram Panchayats. You have been appointed as an Administrator Incharge of the District. You have been given the responsibility of monitoring MGNREGA work undertaken by various Gram Panchayats. You are also given the authority to give technical sanctions to all MGNREGA works. In one of the Panchayats in your jurisdiction, you notice that your predecessor has mismanaged the Program in terms of: (i) Money not disbursed to actual job-seekers.(ii) Muster Rolls of the Labourers not properly maintained.(iii) Mismatch between the work done and payments made.(iv) Payments made to fictitious persons.(v) Job Cards were given without looking into the need of person.(vi) Mismanagement of funds and to the extent of siphoning of funds.(vii) Approved works that never existed. (a) What is your reaction to the above situation and how do you restore the proper functioning of MGNREGA Program in this regard?(b) What actions would you initiate, to solve the various issues listed above?(c) How would you deal with the above situation?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · GS IV · 20 marks · Ethics Case Studies

Case Studies on above issues.

Core demand of the question

- **MGNREGA fraud by predecessor:** reaction, restore, actions on each listed wrong
- Due process plus **social audit**; no vendetta, no cover

Revision summary

The first duty is to protect records, tell workers the truth, and stop further theft.

Arrears must reach real job-seekers while ghosts, fake works and siphoned funds go to vigilance and the police.

Job cards should be re-verified without stripping genuine households.

The predecessor deserves due process, not a media hanging or a cover-up.

Social audit, **geotagging** and a public dashboard keep the repair from rotting again.

Introduction

You take charge of a district and find that **MGNREGA**, a **right to work**, has been **turned into a trough**: money not paid to workers, **ghost names**, **fake works**, **job cards as favours**. Your **predecessor** built that trough. Your ethics are **justice for labour**, **due process for the accused**, and **restoration of a law that is the rural poor's floor**.

Body

(a) Reaction and restoration

The right reaction is **neither a press conference of rage nor a quiet burial**. It is **shock that becomes a plan**. Freeze **doubtful payments**, **protect records**, **inform the State rural-development secretary and the CVO/Vigilance**, **do not destroy the predecessor's laptop**, and **tell workers the truth in a jan sunwai: the scheme is yours by law**, this office **failed you**, we will **rebuild**. Restoration means **fresh job-card verification**, **DBT that actually hits Aadhaar-seeded accounts of living workers**, **works that exist on the ground** (geotag), and a **helpdesk** for those who were **never paid**.

(b) Actions on the listed issues

(i) Money not disbursed to job-seekers: trace PFMS, pay arrears with **priority**, fix the block officer. **(ii) Muster rolls:** reconstruct from attendance apps, photos, and village memory; **end paper ghosts**. **(iii) Mismatch of work and pay:** measurement books versus site; recover from **implementing agency**. **(iv) Fictitious persons:** **FIR**, Aadhaar de-duplication, **social audit**. **(v) Job cards without need:** re-verify households; a job card is a **right of a rural household willing to work**, not a **caste gift**, but it is also **not a trader's pad**. **(vi) Siphoning:** **criminal case**, attachment, **departmental inquiry**. **(vii) Non-existent works:** **site inspection**, **black-list**, **recovery**. Technical sanction from you now must be **earned by a visit**, not a signature culture.

(c) How to deal with the whole situation

Use **law**, **not vendetta**. The predecessor gets a **charge sheet and a chance to reply**. Staff who **cooperated** get a **path to turn approver**. Do **not** punish genuine workers for a **sarpanch's crime** by closing the panchayat's entire shelf. Bring **Ombudsperson**, **social audit unit**, and **geo-MGNREGA** to stay. Publish a **monthly dashboard**. Your **personal integrity is the message: this scheme is Gandhi's employment as right**, not a **MLA's**

cash. Aristotle's justice is **giving each their due** - wages to the worker, punishment to the thief, and a **functioning office** to the village.

Flow diagram

Fraud list -> Freeze records
Freeze records -> Pay real workers
Freeze records -> Vigilance FIR
Social audit geotag -> Restore right to work

Conclusion

Name the fraud, freeze the leak, pay the real worker, and prosecute with due process. Restore MGNREGA as a right, not as a revenge play against a predecessor and not as a silence that protects him.

Facts & figures

MGNREGA as right

A statutory guarantee of wage work, not a gift; unpaid genuine labour is a rights violation.

Social audit

A legally envisaged public reading of records in the gram sabha, meant to catch exactly this class of fraud.

Geotagging

Photographs and location stamps of works so a 'pond' cannot exist only on paper.

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