Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

Rampura, a remote district inhabited by a tribal population, is marked by extreme backwardness and abject poverty. Agriculture is the mainstay of the local population, though it is primarily subsistence due to the very small land holdings. There is insignificant industrial or mining activity. Even the targeted welfare programs have inadequately benefited the tribal population. In this restrictive scenario, the youth has begun to migrate to other states to supplement the family income. Plight of minor girls is that their parents are persuaded by labour contractors to send them to work in the Bt Cotton farms of a nearby state. The soft fingers of the minor girls are well suited for plucking the cotton. The inadequate living and working conditions in these farms have caused serious health issues for the minor girls. NGOS in the districts of domicile and the cotton farms appear to be compromised and have not effectively espoused the twin issues of child labour and development of the area.

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You are appointed as the District Collector of Rampura. Identify the ethical issues involved.

Which specific steps will you initiate to ameliorate the conditions of minor girls of your district and to improve the over-all economic scenario in the district?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2020	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

Child labour, tribal rights, human dignity, poverty and exploitation, gender justice, administrative accountability, rescue and rehabilitation, education, livelihood generation, inter-state coordination, NGO accountability, inclusive development

Model Answer

Introduction

The case reflects the intersection of tribal deprivation, gender discrimination, child labour and institutional failure. As District Collector, my priority would be to protect the girls, hold exploiters accountable and address the structural poverty driving migration.

1. Ethical issues involved

- **Violation of child rights:** Employing minors in exploitative conditions threatens their health, education and development.
- **Human dignity and gender justice:** Girls are treated as cheap labour rather than individuals entitled to protection and opportunity.
- **Exploitation of poverty:** Contractors profit from the economic vulnerability and limited bargaining power of tribal families.
- **Administrative failure:** Welfare schemes have not adequately reached their intended beneficiaries.
- **Institutional complicity:** Compromised NGOs and weak inter-state coordination undermine accountability.
- **Social justice:** Persistent deprivation denies tribal communities equal opportunities and meaningful participation in development.

2. Immediate steps for minor girls

- **Rescue and protection:** Coordinate with the destination state's administration, labour department, police and child-protection authorities to identify and rescue affected girls.
- **Legal action:** Investigate contractors, employers and other responsible parties under applicable child-labour and child-protection laws.
- **Rehabilitation:** Arrange medical care, counselling, safe accommodation, compensation where applicable and family support.

- **Educational reintegration:** Facilitate school admission, bridge courses, scholarships and prevention of school dropouts.
- **Family support:** Connect vulnerable households with eligible food security, social protection and livelihood schemes.
- **Monitoring:** Establish confidential helplines, village-level child-protection committees and periodic inspections.

3. Improving the district economy

- Strengthen irrigation, watershed development, agricultural extension and farmer-producer organisations.
- Promote tribal crafts, forest-based livelihoods, livestock and small-scale food processing.
- Expand skill training linked to local employment and market demand.
- Improve roads, healthcare, schools and digital connectivity.
- Audit welfare delivery and involve tribal communities in local planning.

Conclusion

A sustainable solution must combine immediate protection with long-term empowerment. Development should create dignified local livelihoods so that poverty never forces children into exploitative work.

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