



# Mains Notes for IAS and PCS

## GS-4 Case Studies

### Last year Question papers

1. A fresh engineering graduate gets a job in a prestigious chemical industry. She likes the work. The salary is also good. However, after a few months she accidentally discovers that a highly toxic waste is being secretly discharged into a river nearby. This is causing health problems to the villagers downstream who depend on the river for their water needs. She is perturbed and mentions her concern to her colleagues who have been with the company for longer periods. They advise her to keep quiet as anyone who mentions the topic is summarily dismissed. She cannot risk losing her job as she is the sole bread – winner for her family and has to support her ailing parents and siblings. At first, she thinks that if her seniors are keeping quiet, why should she stick out her neck. But her conscience pricks her to do something to save the river and the people who depend upon it. At heart she feels that the advice of silence given by her friends is not correct though she cannot give reasons for it. She thinks you are a wise person and seeks your advice.

(a) What arguments can you advance to show her that keeping quiet is not morally right?

(b) What course of action would you advise her to adopt and why? **(Civil Services Examination 2016)**

2. Land needed for mining, dams and other large – scale projects is acquired mostly from Adivasis, hill dwellers and rural communities. The displaced persons are paid monetary compensation as per the legal provisions. However, the payment is often tardy. In any case, it cannot sustain the displaced families for long. These people do not possess marketable skills to engage in some other occupation. They end up as low paid migrant labourers. Moreover, their development goes to industries, industrialists and urban communities whereas the costs are passed on to these poor helpless people. This unjust distribution of costs and benefits is unethical.

Suppose you have been entrusted with the task of drafting a better compensation – cum – rehabilitation policy for such displaced persons, how would you approach the problem and what would be the main elements of your suggested policy?

**(Civil Services Examination 2016)**

3. 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 a 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.

**(Civil Services Examination 2016)**

4. You are a young, aspiring and sincere employee in a government office working as an assistant to the director of your department. Since you have joined recently, you need to learn and progress. Luckily your superior is very kind and ready to train you for your job. He is a very intelligent and well – informed person having knowledge of various departments. In short, you respect your boss and are looking forward to learn a lot from him.

Since you have good rapport with the boss, he starts depending on you. One day due to ill health he invited you to his place for finishing some urgent work.



You reached his house and before you could ring the bell you heard shouting noises. You waited for a while. After entering the house the boss greeted you and explained the work. But you were constantly disturbed by the crying of a woman. At last, you inquired with the boss but his answer did not satisfy you.

Next day, you were compelled to inquire further in the office and found out that his behaviour is very bad at home with his wife. He also beats up his wife. His wife is not well educated and is a simple woman in comparison to her husband. You see that though your boss is a nice person in the office, he is engaged in domestic violence at home.

In such a situation, you are left with the following options. Analyse each option with its consequences.

(a) Just ignore thinking about it because it is their personal matter.

(b) Repost the case to the appropriate authority.

(c) Your own innovative approach towards situation.

**(Civil Services Examination 2016)**

5. ABC Ltd is a large transnational company having diversified business activities with a huge shareholder base. The company is continuously expanding and generating employment. The company, in its expansion and diversification programme, decides to establish a new plant at Vikaspuri, an area which is underdeveloped. The new plant is designed to use energy efficient technology that will help the company to save production cost by 20%. The company's decision goes well with the government policy of attracting investment to develop such underdeveloped regions. The government has also announced tax holiday for five years for the companies that invest in underdeveloped areas. However, the new plant may bring chaos for the inhabitants of Vikaspuri region, which is otherwise tranquil. The new plant may result in increased cost of living, aliens migrating to the region, disturbing the social and economic order. The company sensing the possible protest tried to educate the people of Vikaspuri region and public in general that how its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy would help overcome the likely difficulties of the residents of Vikaspuri region. In spite of this the protests begin and some of the residents decided to approach the judiciary as their plea before the government did not yield any result.

(a) Identify the issues involved in the case.

(b) What can be suggested to satisfy the company's goal and to address the resident's concern?

**(Civil Services Examination 2016)**

6. Saraswati was a successful IT professional in USA. Moved by the patriotic sense of doing something for the country she returned to India. Together with some other like – minded friends, she formed an NGO to build a school for a poor rural community.

The objective of the school was to provide the best quality modern education at a nominal cost. She soon discovered that she has to seek permission from a number of Government agencies. The rules and procedures were quite confusing and cumbersome. What frustrated her most was delays, callous attitude of officials and constant demand for bribes. Her experience and the experience of many others like her has deterred people from taking up social service projects.

A measure of Government control over voluntary social work is necessary. But it should not be exercised in a coercive or corrupt manner. What measures can you suggest to ensure that due control is exercised but well meaning, honest NGO efforts are not thwarted?

**(Civil Services Examination 2016)**

7. A private company is known for its efficiency, transparency and employee welfare. The company though owned by a private individual has a cooperative character where employees feel a sense of ownership. The company employs nearly 700 personnel and have they voluntarily decided not to form a union.

One day suddenly in the morning, about 40 men belonging to a political party gate – crashed into the factory demanding jobs in the factory. They threatened the management and employees and also used foul language. The employees feel demoralized. It was clear that those people, who gate crashed wanted to be on the payroll of the company as well as continue as the volunteers/ members of the party.



The company maintains high standards in integrity and does not extend favours to civil administration that also includes law enforcement agency. Such incidents occur in public sector also.

(a) Assume, you are the CEO of the company. What would you do to diffuse the volatile situation on the date of gate – crashing with the violent mob sitting inside the company premises?

(b) What could be the long – term solution to the issue discussed in the case?

(c) Every solution/ action that you suggest will have a positive and a negative impact on you (as CEO), the employees and the performance of the employees. Analyse the consequences of each of your suggested actions.

**(Civil Services Examination 2015)**

8. You are the Sarpanch of a Panchayat. There is a primary school run by the government in your area. Mid – day meals are provided to the children attending the school. The Headmaster has now appointed a new cook in the school to prepare the meals. However, when it is found that the cook is from Dalit community, almost half of the children belonging to higher castes are not allowed to take meals by their parents. Consequently, the attendance in the school falls sharply. This could result in the possibility of discontinuation of Mid – day Meal scheme, thereafter of teaching staff and subsequent closing down the school.

(a) Discuss some feasible strategies to overcome the conflict and to create right ambience.

(b) What should be the responsibilities of different social segments and agencies to create positive social ambience for accepting such changes?

**(Civil Services Examination 2015)**

9. One of the scientists working in the R & D laboratory of a major pharmaceutical company discovers that one of the company's best selling veterinary drugs, B has the potential to cure a currently incurable liver disease that is prevalent in tribal areas. However, developing a variant of the drug suitable for human beings entailed a lot of research and development having a huge expenditure to the extent of Rs. 50 crores. It was unlikely that the company would recover the costs as the disease was rampant only in poverty stricken area having very little market otherwise.

If you were the CEO, then

(a) Identify the various actions that you could take.

(b) Evaluate the pros and cons of each of your actions.

**(Civil Services Examination 2015)**

10. There is a disaster – prone state having frequent landslides, forest fires, cloudbursts, flash floods, earthquakes etc. Some of these are seasonal and often unpredictable. The magnitude of the disaster is always unanticipated. During one of the seasons, a cloudburst caused devastating floods and landslides leading to high casualties. There was major damage to infrastructure like roads, bridges and power generating units. This led to more than 100000 pilgrims, tourists and other locals trapped across different routes and locations. The people trapped in your area of responsibility included senior citizens, patients in hospitals, women and children, hikers, tourists, ruling party's regional President alongwith his family, additional Chief Secretary of the neighbouring state and prisoners in jail.

(a) As civil services officer of the state, what would be the order in which you would rescue these people and why? Give justifications.

**(Civil Services Examination 2015)**

11. You are heading a district administration in a particular department. Your senior officer calls you from the State Headquarters and tells you that a plot in Rampur village is to have a building constructed on it for a school. A visit is scheduled during which he will visit the site alongwith the Chief Engineer and the senior architect. He wants you to check out all the papers relating to it and to ensure that the visit is properly arranged. You examine the file, which relates to the period before you joined the department.

The land was acquired from the local Panchayat at a nominal cost and the papers show that clearance certificates are available from the two of the three authorities, who have to certify the site's suitability. There is no certification by the architect available on file. You decide to visit Rampur to ensure that all is in order as stated on file. When you visit Rampur, you find that the plot under reference is a part of Thakurgarh Fort and that the walls, ramparts, etc are running across it.



The fort is well away from the main village, therefore a school here will be a serious inconvenience for the children. However, the area near the village has potential to expand into a larger residential area. The development charges on the existing plot, as the fort, will be very high and the question of heritage site has not been addressed. Moreover, the Sarpanch at the time of acquisition of the land was a relative of your predecessor. The whole transaction appears to have been done with some vested interest.

(a) List the likely vested interests of the concerned parties.

(b) Some of the options for action available to you are listed below. Discuss the merits and demerits of each of the options:

(i) You can await the visit of the superior officer and let him take a decision.

(ii) You can seek his advice in writing or on phone.

(iii) You can consult your predecessor/ colleagues, etc and then decide what to do.

(iv) You can find out, if any alternate plot can be got in exchange and then send a comprehensive written report.

Can you suggest any other option with proper justification? **(Civil Services Examination 2015)**

12. You are recently posted as District Development Officer of a district. Shortly, thereafter, you found that there is considerable tension in the rural areas of your district on the issue of sending girls to schools. The elders of the village feel that many problems have come up because girls are being educated and they are stepping out of the safe environment of the household. They are of the view that the girls should quickly married off with minimum education. The girls are also competing for jobs after education, which have traditionally remained in boy's exclusive domain, adding to unemployment amongst male population.

The younger generation feels that in the present era, girls should have equal opportunities for education and employment and other means of livelihood. The entire locality is divided between sexes in both generations. You come to know that in Panchayat or in other local bodies or even in busy crossroads, the issue is being acrimoniously debated.

One day, you are informed that an unpleasant incident has taken place. Some girls were molested, when they were on route to schools.

The incident led to clashes between several groups and a law and order problem has arisen. The elders after heated discussion have taken a joint decision not to allow girls to go to school and to socially boycott all such families, which do not follow their dictate.

(a) What steps would you take to ensure girl's safety without disrupting their education?

(b) How would you manage and mould patriarchic attitude of the village elders to ensure harmony in the inter – generational relations?

**(Civil Services Examination 2015)**

13. Now – a – days, there is an increasing thrust on economic development all around the globe. At the same time, there is also an increasing concern about environmental degradation caused by development. Many a time, we face a direct conflict between developmental activity and environmental quality. It is neither feasible to stop or curtail the development process, nor it is advisable to keep degrading the environment, as it threatens our very survival.

Discuss some feasible strategies, which could be adopted to eliminate this conflict and which could lead to sustainable development.

**(Civil Services Examination 2014)**

14. Suppose one of your close friends, who is also aspiring for civil services, comes to you for discussing some of the issues related to ethical conduct in public service. He raises the following points

(i) In the present times, when unethical environment is quite prevalent, individual attempts to stick to ethical principles may cause a lot of problems in one's career. It may also cause hardship to the family members as well as risk to one's life. Why should we not be pragmatic and follow the path of least resistance and be happy with doing, whatever good we can?





(ii) When so many people are adopting wrong means and are grossly harming the system, what difference would it make if only a small minority tries to be ethical? They are going to be rather ineffective and are bound to get frustrated.

(iii) If we become fussy about ethical considerations, will it not hamper the economic progress of our country? After all, in the present age of high competition, we cannot afford to be left behind in the race of development.

(iv) It is understandable that we should not get involved in grossly unethical practices, but giving and accepting small gratifications and doing small favours increases everybody's motivation. It also makes the system more efficient. What is wrong in adopting such practices?

Critically analyse the above viewpoints. On the basis of this analysis, what will your advice to your friends?

**(Civil Services Examination 2014)**

15. You are a no – nonsense, honest officer. You have been transferred to a remote district to head a department that is notorious for its inefficiency and callousness. You find that the main cause of the poor state of affairs is the indiscipline of a section of employees. They do not work themselves and also disrupt the working of others. You first warned the troublemakers to mend their ways or else face disciplinary action. When the warning had little effect, you issued a show cause notice to the ringleaders. As a retaliatory measure these troublemakers instigated a woman employee amongst them to file a complaint of sexual harassment against you with the Women's Commission. The commission promptly seeks your explanation. The matter is also publicized in the media to embarrass you further. Some of the options to handle this situation could be as follows.

(i) Give your explanation to the commission and go soft on the disciplinary action.

(ii) Ignore the commission and proceed firmly with the disciplinary action.

(iii) Brief your higher – ups, seek directions from them and act accordingly.

Suggest any other possible option(s). Evaluate all of them and suggest the best course of action, giving your reason for it.

**(Civil Services Examination 2014)**

16. Suppose, you are the CEO of a company that manufactures specialized electronic equipment used by a government department. You have submitted your bid for the supply of this equipment to the department. Both the quality and cost of your offer are better than those of the competitors.

Yet the concerned officer is demanding a hefty bribe for approving the tender. Getting the order is important both for you and for your company. Not getting the order would mean closing a production line. It may also affect your own career. However, as a value – conscious person, you do not want to give bribe.

Valid arguments can be advanced both for giving the bribe and getting the order, and for refusing to pay the bribe and risking the loss of the order.

What those arguments could be? Could there be any better way to get out of this dilemma? If so, outline the main elements of this third way, pointing out its merits.

**(Civil Services Examination 2014)**

17. Rameshwar successfully cleared the prestigious civil services examination and was excited about the opportunity that he would get through the civil services to serve the country. However, soon after joining the services, he realized that things are not as rosy as he had imagined.

He found a number of malpractices prevailing in the department assigned to him. For example, funds under various schemes and grants were being misappropriated. The official facilities were frequently being used for personal needs by the officers and staff. After some time, he noticed that the process of recruiting the staff was also not upto the mark. Prospective candidates were required to write an examination in which a lot of cheating was going on. Some candidates were provided external help in the examination. Rameshwar brought these incidents to the notice of his seniors.

However, he was advised to keep his eyes, ears and mouth shut and ignore all these things, which were taking place with the connivance of the higher – ups. Rameshwar felt highly disillusioned and



uncomfortable. He comes to you seeking your advice. Indicate various options that you think are available in this situation.

How would you help him to evaluate these options and choose the most appropriate path to be adopted?  
**(Civil Services Examination 2014)**

18. In our country, the migration of rural people to towns and cities is increasing drastically. This is causing serious problems both in the rural as well as in the urban areas. In fact, things are becoming really unmanageable. Can you analyse this problem in detail and indicate not only the socio – economic, but also the emotional and additional factors responsible for this problem? Also, distinctly bring out why

- (i) Educated rural youth are trying to shift to urban areas
- (ii) Landless poor people are migrating to urban slums
- (iii) Even some farmers are selling off their land and trying to settle in urban areas taking up petty jobs.

What feasible steps can you suggest, which will be effective in controlling this serious problem of our country?  
**(Civil Services Examination 2014)**

19. A Public Information Officer (PIO) has received an application under RTI Act. Having gathered the information, the PIO discovers that the information pertains to some of the decisions taken by him, which were found to be not altogether right. There were other employees also, who were party to these decisions. Disclosure of the information is likely to lead to disciplinary action with possibility of punishment against him as well as some of his colleagues. Non – disclosure or part disclosure or camouflaged disclosure of information will result into lesser punishment or no punishment. The PIO is otherwise an honest and conscientious person but this particular decision on which the RTI application has been filed, turned out to be wrong. He comes to you for advice. The following are some suggested options. Please evaluate the merits and demerits of each of the options.

- (i) The PIO could refer the matter to his superior officer and seek his advice and act strictly in accordance with the advice, even though, he is not completely in agreement with the advice of the superior.
- (ii) The PIO could proceed on leave and leave the matter to be dealt by his successor in office or request for transfer of the application to another PIO.
- (iii) The PIO could weigh the consequences of disclosing the information truthfully, including the effect on his career, and reply in a manner that would not place him or his career in jeopardy, but at the same time, a little compromise can be made on the contents of the information.
- (iv) The PIO could consult his colleagues, who are party to the decision and take action as per their advice.

Also please indicate (without necessarily restricting to the above options) what you would like to advise, giving proper reasons.  
**(Civil Services Examination 2013)**

20. You are working as an Executive Engineer in the construction cell of a Municipal Corporation and are presently in – charge of the construction of a flyover. There are two Junior Engineers under you, who have the responsibility of day – to – day inspection of the site and are reporting to you, while you are finally reporting to the Chief Engineer who heads the cell. While, the construction is heading towards the completion, the Junior Engineers have been regularly reporting that all construction is taking place as per design specifications. However, in one of your surprise inspections, you have noticed some serious deviations and lacunae which, in your opinion, are likely to affect the safety of the flyover. Rectification of these lacunae at this stage would require a substantial amount of demolition and rework which will cause a tangible loss to the contractor and will also delay completion.

There is a lot of public pressure on the Corporation to get this construction completed because of heavy traffic congestion in the area. When you brought this matter to the notice of the Chief Engineer, he advised you that in his opinion, it is not a very serious lapse and may be ignored. He advised for further



expediting the project for completion in time. However, you are convinced that this was a serious matter which might affect public safety and should not be left unaddressed. What will you do in such a situation? Some of the opinions are given below.

Evaluate the merits and demerits of each of these options and finally suggest what course of action you would like to take, giving reasons.

**(Civil Services Examination 2013)**

- (i) Follow the advice of the Chief Engineer and go ahead.
- (ii) Make an exhaustive report of the situation bringing out all facts and analysis alongwith your own viewpoints stated clearly and seek for written orders from the Chief Engineer.
- (iii) Call for explanation from the Junior Engineers and issue orders to the contractor for necessary correction within targeted time.
- (iv) Highlight the issue, so that it reaches superiors above the Chief Engineer.
- (v) Considering the rigid attitude of the Chief Engineer, seek transfer from the project or report sick.

21. Sivakasi in Tamil Nadu is known for its manufacturing clusters on firecrackers and matches. The local economy of the area is largely dependent on firecrackers industry. It has led to tangible economic development and improved standard of living in the area. So far, as child labour norms for hazardous industries like firecrackers industry are concerned, International Labour Organisation (ILO) has set the minimum age as 18 years. In India, however this age is 14 years.

The units in industrial clusters of firecrackers can be classified into registered and non – registered entities. One typical unit is household – based work. Though the law is clear on the use of child labour employment norms in registered/ non – registered units, it does not include household – based works. Household – based work means children working under the supervision of their parents/ relatives. To evade child labour norms, several units project themselves as household – based works but employ children from outside. Needless to say that employing children saves the costs for these units leading to higher profits to the owners.

On your visit to one of the units at Sivakasi, the owner takes you around the unit, which has about 10 – 15 children below 14 years of age. The owner tells you that in his household – based unit, the children are all his relatives. You notice that several children smirk, when the owner tells you this. On deeper enquiry, you figure out that neither the owner nor the children are able to satisfactorily establish their relationship with each other.

(i) Bring out and discuss the ethical issues involved in the above case.

(ii) What would be your reaction after your above visit? **(Civil Services Examination 2013)**

22. You are heading a leading technical institute of the country. The institute is planning to convene an interview panel shortly under your chairmanship for selection of the post of professors. A few days before the interview, you get a call from the Personal Secretary (PS) of a senior government functionary seeking your intervention in favour of the selection of a close relative of the functionary for this post. The PS also informs you that he is aware of the long pending and urgent proposal of your institute for grant of funds for modernization, which are awaiting the functionary's approval. He assures you that he would get these proposals cleared.

(i) What are the options available to you?

(ii) Evaluate each of these options and choose the option, which you would adopt, giving reasons.

**(Civil Services Examination 2013)**

23. As a senior officer in the Finance Ministry, you have access to some confidential and crucial information about policy decisions that the Government is about to announce. These decisions are likely to have far – reaching impact on the housing and construction industry.

If the builders have access to this information beforehand, they can make huge profits. One of the builders has done a lot of quality work for the Government and is known to be close to your immediate superior, who asks you to disclose this information to the said builder.

(i) What are the options available to you?



(ii) Evaluate each of these options and choose the option which you would adopt, giving reasons.

**(Civil Services Examination 2013)**

24. You are the Executive Director of an upcoming Infotech Company, which is making a name for itself in the market. Mr. A, who is a star performer, is heading the marketing team. In a short period of one year, he has helped in doubling the revenues as well as creating a high brand equity for the Company so much so that you are thinking of promoting him.

However, you have been receiving information from many corners about his attitude towards the female colleagues, particularly his habit of making loose comments on women. In addition, he regularly sends indecent SMSs to all the team members including his female colleagues. One day, late in the evening Mrs. X, who is one of Mr. A's team members, comes to you visibly disturbed. She complains against the continued misconduct of Mr. A, who has been making undesirable advances towards her and has even tried to touch her inappropriately in his cabin. She tenders her resignation and leaves your office.

(i) What are the options available to you?

(ii) Evaluate each of these options and choose the option you would adopt, giving reasons.

**(Civil Services Examination 2013)**