CASES

For the

IIT IPRO ETHICS BOWL

October 30, 2010

Sponsored by the

Interprofessional Projects Program

and the

Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions

Case 1: Parklife

Desperate Kenyans, who, due to climate change, have seen a dramatic drop in their food and water supplies, are settling illegally in their country's national parks. Around 15,000 squatters currently live throughout Kenya's protected parks.[1] In order to make heavily forested areas apt for cultivation and cattle-grazing, settlers have deforested almost 1 million acres.

Food insecurity has been the main cause behind these settlements, yet the consequence of cutting down protected forests is to put Kenyan people in an even more precarious situation.
Because trees "promote the formation of clouds – cutting them down inevitably leads to lower rainfall."
In turn, lower rainfall adversely affects agriculture and food security. The indiscriminate clearing of many of Africa's forests has already caused the desertification of the African landscape. Mourning the recent disappearance of a local river, a Kenyan farmer worriedly complained: "My life will be completely ruined if I cannot get water for us and our livestock, our land will turn into a desert. We will all die."[2]

Thus far, the Kenyan government has responded to the so-called assault on its parks by vowing to add more armed guards and electric fences to prevent illegal settlements. However, the situation in Kenya defies easy solutions. While many squatters are hungry Kenyans in search of sustenance, allowing the poor to extract resources out of nature parks will not solve Kenya's problems. As the director of Kenya's Wildlife Service has argued, "Kenya is destroying itself. The population has reached an unsustainable level. We are killing ourselves slowly by destroying the forests and settling there." Complicating the issue still further, many of the current settlers belong to indigenous groups who claim to have lived in the forest for generations while allegedly harvesting its resources in a sustainable manner. Furthermore, the label "squatters" has even been called into question by those who claim to have land titles in the protected areas.

Electric fencing might prevent additional settlements in Kenyan parks, and the removal of current squatters may help prevent further destruction of Kenya's flora and fauna. However, these measures do little to address the underlying cause of these illegal settlements: food scarcity and climate change. It is unclear what the Kenya government can do to address climate change, given that global warming can be partly attributed to developed nations overuse of ecological resources.[3] Because the lifestyle in developing nations (in the form of copious carbon emissions) has unavoidably impacted the whole earth, the negative consequences of global warming experienced in the developing world constitute the "largest health inequity of our time."[4]

Adapted from the APPE Ethics Bowl Regional Case 6, 2009

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[1] Vidal, John, "Electric fences to stop invasion of Kenya nature parks," http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/may/10/kenya-climate-change-mau-park, *Guardian News and Media Ltd.* (May 10, 2009).

[2] Moody, Barry, "Destruction of Kenya forest is national emergency, http://ca.reuters.com/article/oddlyEnoughNews/idCAL246908720080903?sp=true, *Reuters* (Sept. 2, 2008).

[3] Baer, Paul, et al., "Equity and Greenhouse Gas Responsibility," *Science*, v. 289, i. 5488, p. 2287 (Sept. 29, 2000) http://www.climate-talks.net/2004-ENVRE130/PDF/20000929-Science-Equity.pdf; Srinivasan, U.T., et al., "The debt of nations and the distribution of ecological impacts from human activities," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, v. 105(5), p. 1768 (Oct. 19, 2007) http://www.pnas.org/content/105/5/1768.abstract; Singer, P.P., *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* (2nd ed.), Yale University Press (2004).

[4] Patz, J.A., et al., "Climate change and global health: Quantifying a growing ethical crisis," *EcoHealth*, v. 4(4), pp. 397-405 (Nov. 30, 2007) http://www.springerlink.com/content/212lw8m6466n645p/.

Case 2: Catalyst A or Catalyst B

Martha, a recent graduate of IIT, has been employed in the R & D Chemical Engineering Division of Larom for the past several months. The company is currently working on a method of improving the efficiency of catalysts that could eventually be used in the fuel cells of electric cars. Martha was hired because of the promising research she did with catalysts as a student at IIT as part of an IPRO project. Her Faculty Advisor, who was especially impressed with her work, was the one who recommended Martha for this position after graduation.

Alex Smith, the head of Martha's unit, showed immediate interest in her research on catalyst B when she arrived at Larom, asking to see the results of the research she did at IIT. Although he said he found Martha's work promising, her work assignments during the first several months at Larom have mainly been in other areas. She has had little time to pursue your research on catalyst B since her arrival at Larom.

Alex calls a meeting of engineers in Martha's unit and announces that it must make a recommendation within the next two days on what catalyst Larom should use in the construction of a new fuel cell prototype. The overwhelming consensus in the unit, based on many years of experience, is that catalyst A is best for the job. However, the research Martha has been conducting provides preliminary evidence that catalyst B may actually be better. So, she suggests that the recommendation be delayed another month to see if firmer evidence can be found. If B is the better catalyst, Larom will save a great deal of money if it opts for B over A.

Alex replies, "We don't have a month. We have two days." He then asks Martha to write up the report, leaving out the preliminary data she has gathered about catalyst B. He says, "It would be nice to do some more research on B, but we just don't have the time. Besides, I doubt if anything would show up in the next month to change our minds. This is one of those times we have to be decisive- and we have to look decisive. They're really getting impatient with us on this one. Anyway, we've had a lot of experience in this area."

After the meeting, upon returning to her office, Martha begins to think about the report Alex has asked her to write, and experiences a sense of unease. She finds his reasons for not mentioning Catalyst B in the report troubling. Alex's expressed concern that "we," by which he means clearly, the unit, has to look decisive doesn't seem to her to take into account adequately the company's overall interests. Furthermore, she reasons that although, as Alex said, the unit may "have had a lot of experience in this area.", this experience doesn't include her recent research.

Martha likes working for Larom and feels lucky to have landed such a good job right out of school. Although she would like to have more time to carry out her own research, she has enjoyed working on other projects in the division, and learned a lot from her colleagues in the few months she has worked with them. Martha realizes she's due for a significant pay raise soon if she plays her cards right. It looks like she has a bright future with Larom, Inc.

You're a good friend of Martha's. That evening she calls, relates the above concerns on her part to you, and asks for your advice and counsel on how she ought to proceed.

Based on the case "Catalyst B," developed by Michael Pritchard, Western Michigan University.

Case 3: Company Connections

It had been a long, often frustrating semester for David. The IPRO project had started out perfectly, he was in a team with three of his closest friends, and was interested in the problem his team was finding a solution for – working for the local company ValCor to try and speed up the manufacturing and shipping of industrial components.   David knew that involvement in this project would look great on his resume, and he even had an in with the company. David had called Bruce, a family friend who worked as an engineer at ValCor, as soon as he knew about the project, and Bruce had volunteered to answer any questions the IPRO team may have.

Things went smoothly for the first two months of the semester, with David and his team visiting the company to get a better idea of the different steps involved in manufacturing and shipping at ValCor, and with David acting as the main liaison with the company, emailing or calling Bruce a few times a week when his team had questions. However, as the weeks progressed, David had to wait longer and longer for Bruce to return his calls and answer his questions, questions that often needed an answer immediately for the IPRO project to move forward. When David tried to talk to Bruce about these delays, Bruce always responded with a long list of why he was so busy, and that he would try to get back to him will full answers to his questions in a day or two, but never did. Even when David tried to schedule a time he could come over to Bruce's house to talk the elements of the project over, Bruce never could find the time. Finally, after asking the advice of one of his IPRO faculty sponsors, David managed to make contact with another engineer at ValCor who was able to help the team out in a timelier manner, though earlier delays did mean that the team did not get as far along in the project as they originally had planned.

At IPRO day, the CEO of ValCor and David's parents sat through the team's presentation. Bruce, David noted thankfully, was not part of the audience. At the end of the presentation, Valcor's CEO came up to congratulate the team on the work they had done. "You have made really good progress," he said, shaking David's hand. "I was talking to Bruce last week, and he was telling me about how much time the two of you had spent these past few months working together on this." Behind him, David hears his parents chatting with other members of his team, obviously coming up to join in the conversation.

Case 4: Greening Golden Fields

The city council of Golden Fields, a small town in the Midwest, has set the goal of reducing carbon emissions for municipal operations and the community as a whole by 30% by 2012. To achieve this plan, the city government has formed a partnership with the Energy Dynamics Lab and the School of Business at Nebraska State University who assisted them in doing a feasibility study and adopting the "Roadmap to Sustainability for Golden Fields," an extensive plan for how the community will seek to reach their 30% reduction goal, as well as the goal of getting 50% of all new homes and businesses built in Golden Fields city limits to conform to LEED and other green building standards.

In August of 2010, the meeting agenda included a progress report by the Community Carbon Advisory Board on how Golden Fields was doing meeting these goals. Many of the recommendations made in the original report were in the process of being adopted, such as switching the city's fleet of buses to running on natural gas and installing solar panels on city buildings, but the Carbon Advisory Board reported that response to their public awareness campaign was sluggish. A survey done in 2010 showed that homeowners were recycling more but only 7% of respondents said they were interested in receiving information on how to make their homes more energy efficient. Even more depressing, no new homes or businesses built in Golden Fields since 2008 conformed with nationally- recognized green building standards, even when information packets were sent to contractors and new businesses applying for city building permits.

Breaking the silence after the conclusion of the report, one councilwoman suggested offering incentives, such as tax breaks for homeowners who could prove they made energy-saving improvements to their homes. A number of other suggestions were raised, but finally the chair of the Carbon Advisory Board stood up. "Unless we can get more participation in this program, we are not going to meet these goals," she said, holding up a copy of the *Roadmap* plan. "We can offer carrots, but we might also want to think about using the stick as well. So far, everything in the Roadmap Plan is voluntary. We can't make residents ride bikes to work, but we can *force* new buildings to be energy efficient. We should adopt building codes for the community that require new construction to meet energy efficient standards."

 A few voices approved this suggestion but others were less sure. A local businessman summed up these doubts. "Maybe rich communities can afford to worry about sustainability, but in these hard economic times, we can't force people to spend more money on building their homes and businesses. If it costs too much to build here, businesses and new residents will decide to go somewhere else."

Discussion continued, some council members agreeing that more stringent building standards would hurt Golden Fields' economy, others arguing that the city council has an obligation to consider Golden Fields' environmental impact. "Sustainability isn't something we should consider only in good economic times, like putting in more flowers around City Hall," A councilman added, "it should be something we consider in every decision we make."

Case 5: A Group Project Conflict

Roshni has just been assigned a semester-long group project in her business course. Their assignment is to create a marketing campaign for a new brand of ultralight lap tops, and she was elated when she was nominated as team leader. The project is part of an agreement her instructor has with the computer manufacturing company, and the team with the most innovative marketing campaign idea will actually be adopted by the company. Roshni came to the first meeting of her group full of ideas, and her fellow group members listened with attention and were happy when she assigned roles for all of the team members based on their expressed interests. Roshni and her friend Sylvia are in charge of coming up with possible ideas for the campaign, Steve and Lily are in charge of designing and administering a survey testing the effectiveness of the campaign, and all of them will help in developing the final presentation of their project and writing the final report. At the end of the meeting, it was agreed that they would try and get together at least once a week to check up on everyone's progress.

Roshni spent the first week or so working on a series of ideas for the marketing campaign and brought them to the second meeting, with only a little help from Sylvia, who was having a very busy week. After she presented her ideas, all of her team members responded enthusiastically, and the other group went on to present what they had accomplished. She was surprised at the small amount of progress they had made, but all of them said they were still figuring out their class schedules, they would catch up in the next few weeks.

As the due date for the final project drew closer, Roshni really began to worry about the progress her group was making. The survey group had finally managed to write the survey questions they would use, but Roshni felt as if she was doing all of the work herself on developing the final designs for the magazine advertisement they were going to use to test their marketing idea. She tried getting Sylvia to help her more, but Sylvia was really struggling with an advanced seminar class she was taking and was spending her time studying for the upcoming midterm exam. After having a discussion with Sylvia, Roshni agreed that the best thing to do was for her to work on the magazine advertisement herself, and that Sylvia would put in more time later helping the group prepare the final presentation of their project.

After spending two weeks finishing off the final version of the magazine advertisement and helping out her other group members administer the survey, Roshni is exhausted. She is behind in her work for other classes, and is not happy with how the project is developing. The entire team is at least two weeks behind schedule, and Roshni feels as if she is doing most of the work. Sylvia seems to think that they can finish everything during the last week before the deadline, but Roshni isn't so sure. She does not want to seem overbearing, but she is not sure how they can have a good presentation with Sylvia spending almost no time on the project, and everything being so far behind schedule.

Case 6: Facebook Privacy

In the last six years, Facebook.com has gone from being a relatively exclusive website for Ivy League students to the most popular social networking site on the web. With more than 400 million users and 25 billion items of content by its own count, [5] and a structure that allows people to choose their "friends," the website and the company running it can have dramatic effects on many lives.

Lately, though, some users have begun to wonder whether they have misjudged the company's dedication to user privacy. While Facebook has recently stated that it operates on a principle whereon "People have control over how their information is shared,"[6] its recent actions can seem to be in conflict with this principle.

The key decision that first concerned privacy advocates was Facebook's decision to change users' default privacy settings to publishing users' posts and photographs automatically unless they specifically opted-out. If someone wasn't keeping up with Facebook's announcements, previously private pictures were in many cases made visible to everyone on the Internet and so-called "status updates" were broadcast to everyone as well.[7] This prompted a warning from privacy advocates such as the Electronic Freedom Foundation not to use Facebook's default privacy settings[8] until users had easier control over their own information.

Facebook is a privately held company that has not bothered to hide its interest in using its massive user base to make money from advertising and other forms of marketing. Facebook users' decision to invest large amounts of time in social networking on the site is a result of the experience Facebook has created so far. No one is forced to use Facebook or its services, and if users strongly disagree with the company's privacy policies they can cease to use the site, deactivate their accounts, or delete their accounts (though Facebook doesn't make this option easy to find).

Some point out, however, that Facebook has a duty to respect the privacy of the users who began using its service before privacy became a secondary concern. Users became accustomed to the idea that their data was private unless they specifically allowed it to become public. They point out that users' previous experience with the service amounts to an agreement that Facebook cannot break lightly. Since the option to make one's profile public was always available without many people making use of it, one could surmise that many users did not want to make their profiles available for everyone to see.

Adapted from APPE Ethics Bowl Regional Case Study 9, 2010.

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[5] "Statistics | Facebook," Facebook Company Website, http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics.
[6] "Facebook Redesigns Privacy," Facebook Company Press Release, May 26, 2010, http://www.facebook.com/press/releases.php?p=164155.
[7] Ryan Singel, "Public Posting Now the Default on Facebook," *Epicenter* (weblog), Dec. 9, 2009, http://www.wired.com/epicenter/2009/12/facebook-privacy-update/.
[8] Kevin Bankston, "Facebook's New Privacy Changes: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," *The Electronic Freedom Foundation*, Dec. 9, 2009, http://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2009/12/facebooks-new-privacy-changes-good-bad-and-ugly.