SILENT KILLER

Son! I don't mean to brag, but I am a very brilliant engineer.

I trust you totally!
SILENT KILLER
“Silent Killer” is a title of Tiri for the Aga Khan Development Network Civil Society Programme. It includes a series of other comic strip booklets that challenge the reader on the role of ethics and integrity as contributors to success in the conduct of business.

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Fred Apoto is an ambitious chief engineer at “Wandaplast” a profitable plastics company, but toxic waste is costing the company a lot of money.

Fred Apoto is deep in thought.

Wandaplast is doing well. The profits are wonderful, but we could have done better if we did not have the challenge of toxic waste. Is this delaying my pay rise and a promotion?

How will I finish building that house, and meet the requirements for my doctorate at Oxford?... Of all places Oxford! I need that pay rise.

Oh - yes! We can create our own landfill site on the company’s extensive property. The land is unoccupied and of no immediate use, we have been wasting a lot of money!

I am going to fight to push this idea through as soon as possible. Who can resist this?
Ladies and Gentlemen! We have targets to meet but waste disposal is frustrating us! That is why I have called this meeting to show you this plan.

Why should we continue throwing away money?

I see Wandaplast hitting two birds with one stone. The toxic waste will not eat into our profits anymore. Remember, that affects your salaries directly! Two - Wandaplast will save that piece of land from encroachment by squatters!

I think the boss has a point!

I see your point, but my concern is contaminating such a beautiful piece of land. Don't we need permission from the government to start such a dangerous project?
Well! It is our land and we owe no one an explanation or permission as long as it helps Wandaplast to save money. We are in business to make money, aren't we? Anyone who strays on our land will be to blame.

Sir, this site is excellent, your wise leadership has helped us to save valuable time and money.

Son! I don’t mean to brag, but I am a very brilliant engineer.

I trust you totally!
Later the engineer learns that poor people have begun building shacks in the unused lands near the landfill site, but he takes no action.

The Wandaplast Landfill

Where have all these come from?

Eh! Shacks everywhere!

Engineer Apoto! I noticed as I surveyed the company land that there are some poor people who are putting up shacks on the unused land near the site.

Yes, it is near the landfill and this can be dangerous to their health.

Wilson! Wilson! Anything wrong with that?

Who invited them? Are we here for them?
I understand that even the neighbouring lands are affected.

Young man! Limit yourself to what concerns you!

Wilson, do you value your job? Why don’t you get busy on something else?

But we could do something to forestall a calamity!

We took a conscious good decision and we are sticking to it!

Wilson, do you value your job? Why don’t you get busy on something else?

I said your concern is the duty of the MD. Have you heard? Are you the MD?
LATER, ENGINEER APOTO LEARNS THAT THE POOR PEOPLE NEAR THE LANDFILL ARE BECOMING ILL AND ACTUALLY SOME HAVE DIED. THE CAUSE IS LABELLED THE “SILENT KILLER”

APOTO IS IN PANIC

Wilson was right! My God!

...Analysts say there could be some connection between these deaths and the Wandaplast landfill site. The government chemist investigations links the killer toxins to compounds used in manufacturing plastics.

Engineer Apoto, I have heard from the village chief that quite a number of the poor people are becoming sick and dying in the village near the...

Wilson! What are you up to today?

Mr. Apoto, I am in shock!

Alright! I will see what to do! Confirm that it is the landfill site that is the cause of the deaths and report back immediately.

OK! But won't the villagers recognise me?
Questions

While there are several potentially legal liability issues involved, did the Chief Engineer Apoto lack ethical awareness or sensitivity?

He claims that he did nothing that broke any of the company’s rules or regulations. What are the ethical implications, such as:

a) The Engineer’s professional ethical obligations as an engineer?

b) Allowing poor people to squat (illegally reside) on the company land near the landfill site?

c) Who in the company is supposed to oversee the ethical and technical decisions of the engineer?

What ethical obligations, if any, does the company have to the affected squatters?

What ethical obligations, if any, did Engineer Apoto have to these people?