

Panjsher Shows the Way for All-Women District Development Assemblies

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Women's issues form a cross-cutting priority for the National Area-based Development Programme (NABDP), an initiative of UNDP that supports the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). As part of its gender strategy, NABDP is working to create avenues for women's involvement in the establishment of District Development Assemblies (DDAs) throughout Afghanistan.

NABDP is piloting an all-women DDA in Panjsher province, adapting the participatory planning and decision-making methodology used successfully in the men's DDAs for the particular circumstances of rural women, including their limited availability for such meetings. The goal is to identify development projects that benefit women, and to build their capacities for actively participating, organizing and leading community meetings and activities.

Women in Panjsher were invited by the facilitators of the Community Development Councils (CDCs), established under the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), by

women's line departments and government organizations, agencies serving the area, or through local *shuras*, to participate in the all-women's DDA for their district. The first meetings were held in November and December 2006 in each of the seven districts of Panjsher. Participation of women in some dis-



Afghan women at an ANDS consultation (MRRD/NABDP photo)

tricts was so high that the group had to be reduced to a more manageable size for a DDA. The group decided on final membership in the DDA by consensus.

Early in 2007, women were taken through a participatory process, by the NABDP Afghan women facilitators, to learn about and engage in community resource mapping, problem analy-

sis and objective setting. Prioritized projects were tied to the objectives of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). In these initial DDA gatherings, it was emphasized that for the women's development needs to be prioritised, they would need to identify the resources they themselves could con-

tribute to such assemblies. The results from the women's DDAs have been shared with the men's DDAs, and will be integrated into the comprehensive District Development Plans or DDPs for the districts.

DDAs are made up of local district members and provide a participatory and consultative

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mechanism for local development mobilisation and decision making, in the form of DDPs. Over 40 per cent of Afghanistan is represented by DDAs, and the establishment and support of these assemblies has been at the heart of NABDP's community empowerment process.

As a part of the project support, future Panjsher DDA gatherings will continue to build women's capacities for project identification and development, proposal preparation, budgets and business plans.

NABDP is piloting an all-women DDA in Panjsher province, adapting the participatory planning and decision-making methodology used successfully in the men's DDAs for the particular circumstances of rural women

NABDP staff will use the lessons learned from the establishment and operation of the all-women DDAs to support the creation of similar assemblies in other provinces as additional funding becomes available. The goal is the development of a realistic, systematic policy approach for improving women's participation, as well as for full integration of women's projects into DDPs.

The focus on gender is in line with the

implementation of the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA), a high level benchmark of the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghan National Development Strategy. Under the 'Principles of Cooperation' in the Afghanistan Compact, it is noted that the Afghan Government and the international community will "recognise in all policies and programmes that men and women have equal rights and responsibilities."



Afghan women speak out at an ANDS (Afghanistan National Development Strategy) consultation in Parwan, June 2007. These consultations were facilitated by MRRD/NABDP. Photo provided by the National Area-Based Development Programme (NABDP), part of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and UNDP.

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Consultations on for 5-Year Development Plans for All Provinces

As part of the support to the National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) are facilitating the provincial consultations process aimed at developing the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). The process was launched on June 4 in Kapisa, and all provincial consultations must be completed by the end of August 2007.

This ambitious program is aimed at developing provincial plans for every Afghanistan province for the coming five years, in line with the ANDS.

The consultation process involves every province of Afghanistan: members of District Development Assemblies (DDAs), key local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and line departments at government offices of a province gather for a streamlined, intensive session to align the urgent needs and priorities of the area (education, security, health, infrastructure, economic regeneration, judicial needs and oth-

ers) with the ANDS.

At least a quarter of participants in the process are women, and their particular concerns and needs, as well as those of other socially-excluded people such as minority groups (Kuchis) and people with disabilities, are mandated to be a part of every resulting plan.

The consultations use the participatory methods developed and refined by NABDP in its work with DDAs to develop District Development Plans. These sub-national consultations ensure that the needs of communities, districts and provinces are harmonious with the national strategy (ANDS), and that this strategy is, in turn, in line with the realities in the provinces.

These sub-national consultations will, it is hoped, encourage better coordination of ministry activities at the national and provincial level, improved institutional clarity, better formulation of Provincial Development Plans (PDPs), and new budgetary mechanism to address provincial needs.

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Deepening Democratic Governance in Afghanistan

More countries than ever before are working to build democratic governance. Afghanistan is no exception. Democratic governance is central to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as it provides the enabling environment for the realization of the MDGs and, in particular, the elimination of poverty. The Government of Afghanistan endorsed the MDGs in March 2004. In addition to committing itself to the eight MDGs, the Government has defined for itself a ninth overarching goal of Enhancing Security. However, for meeting the goals the Government has set for itself a deadline of 2020, using baselines of 2002-2005 for each goal.

The country has come a long way since December 2001 when the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan came into existence. After 23 year of war, Afghanistan has now entered a period of stabilization conducive to the design and implementation of a new development vision. The Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy (I-ANDS) and the Afghanistan Compact provide the cornerstone of the development vision of the Government of Afghanistan.

UNDP is now working in close collaboration with the Government of Afghanistan to develop national capacity and systems to support effective implementation of the governance strategies as outlined in the I-ANDS and the Afghanistan Compact. It has supported the establishment of the Constitution of Afghanistan and played a role in putting in place an electoral and legislative system for the country.

The reconstruction and development efforts in Afghanistan require a strong, legitimate and effective public administration at both central and sub-national level and the presence of efficient and legitimate public administration structures.

UNDP's core services to support national processes of democratic transitions focus on policy advice and technical support; strengthening capacity of institutions and individuals; advocacy, communications, and public information; promoting and brokering dialogue; and, knowledge networking and sharing of good practices. UNDP is assisting Afghanistan to build and deepen democracy by focusing on some of these critical aspects of democratic governance.

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International donors, representatives of United Nations agencies, including UNDP, and representatives from Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are invited to the opening of consultations, to express their sup-

port; later, they will have the opportunity to review the results and express their support through investments in identified projects.

A major output of the Sub-national Consultation and Provincial De-

velopment Planning processes will be the completion of 34 PDPs for endorsement by ANDS and the Ministry of Economy, and accepted by the Ministry of Finance.

These sub-national consultations ensure that the needs of communities, districts and provinces are harmonious with the national strategy

Youth 'Parliamentarians' Show the Way towards Democratic Dialogue

Over 100 young participants were a part of Afghanistan's first Youth Parliament, held in Kabul from June 10 - 14, 2007. A total of 49 boys and 52 girls were elected by class 12 students from over 80 of Kabul's schools to represent them in the Youth Parliament. The elections were conducted by the Independent Election Commission (IEC).

The Youth Parliament was conducted in the Meshrano Jirga or the House of Elders during its recess. The initiative is implemented jointly by the National Assembly, the IEC, the office of the Deputy Minister of Youth Affairs and the UNDP.

The process began with the young leaders – most of them between 16 and 20 years, electing their office bearers. Divided into six commissions they were tasked with analysing one aspect of develop-

ment and to come up with resolutions suggesting steps or policies the government could adopt. Over the next few days the students learnt to talk, discuss issues, listen to each other, negotiate and work together as a team to produce solutions to their issues by consensus.

The youth 'Parliamentarians' have spent the first years ten to 15 years of their

'youth problems' as the reflected on wider issues confronting citizens at the national level. Students offered sophisticated analyses of the problems and institutional problems underlying them.

The participants demonstrated an overriding desire to rebuild their country and it was their firm conviction that the youth had a central role to play in the all-round reconstruction of Af-

ghan culture of collaboration, debate and tolerance.

The Youth Parliament showed that it was possible to channel this sense of responsibility into concrete results in a short span of time, showing an alternative way of harnessing the emotions and frustrations of the youth. In a country devoid of a long tradition of democratic dialogue, the exercise in conducting a Youth Parliament showed how a proactive approach could help create this capacity in the Afghan youth, the future leaders of tomorrow.

The joint partnership that helped implement this program has plans to expand the program, not just geographically by involving students throughout the country but also by increasing the number of activities involving the Youth Parliament and the youth in general.

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lives, often in violent and disturbed circumstances, sometimes displaced from their home and country. The concerns of these students went beyond

Afghanistan. The Youth Parliament brought together for the first time students from different ethnic and social backgrounds, exposing them to learning a new

ELECT Supports Review of Lessons Learned From Last Elections

Parliamentarians and development partners met in Kabul from 27 May to 29 May 2007 to review voter registration systems and other features of the presidential and parliamentary elections conducted in 2004 and 2005 with a view to identify lessons for the future.

Over 8 million voters, of whom 42 per cent were women, turned out to cast their ballots for the presidential elections held on 9 October 2004. One year later, 6.4 million voters including an estimated 41 per cent women turned out for the Parliament and Provincial Council Elections.

The elections were organized at high costs and faced major implementation challenges in procurement and security. As the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) prepares for the 2009 presidential elections, it was necessary to identify the lessons learned from past experience in order to be able to conduct the future elections in a more cost effective manner and improve the election preparation and the

process in general.

"This seminar is a forward looking exercise, intended to identify best practices and key lessons in preparing for the next elections. Clearly, a consultative approach is essential to



Election staff examining ballot papers

ensure that key issues are tabled so that all relevant parties can reach a consensus on the realities of the challenges and the concrete elements we must incorporate into the IEC's plan for the coming elections" observed Anita Nirody, UNDP Country Director.

The Seminar, an initiative under the ELECT project, was designed to ensure a broad spectrum of participation covering government, civil society groups, and international stakeholders. The objective of the ELECT project is

to strengthen national ownership and put in place mechanisms and institutional capacity for long term viability and sustainability of the electoral process.

The next election cycle is less than two years

away. Collaboration will be at the core of electoral support in the coming months. In particular, cooperation between the government agencies (the Independent Electoral Commission, the Ministry of Interior, and other) and civil society groups, as well as with the international community, needs to be systematized and strengthened so to sustain momentum and move forward in addressing the priorities which will be identified over the next 2 and a half days.

In his opening remarks, the chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission acknowledged the work of the IEC and international institutions, noting that in the coming years of 1388 (2009) and 1389 (2010) when the next elections fall due, the IEC would endeavour to put into effect the lessons learned from the previous period to ensure transparent, free and fair elections. The Chairman noted that elections are a joint responsibility of the IEC in cooperation with other stakeholders including ministries, media and the political parties.

The next election cycle is less than two years away. Collaboration will be at the core of electoral support

The seminar was attended by representatives of political parties, members of Parliament, civil society organizations, international NGOs as representatives of diplomatic missions.

Reintegration of Afghan Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) USD 7.3 m Support from Australia for AliceGhan Initiative

As part of the observance of the World Refugee Day today, on 21st June 2007, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) held an official on-site inauguration ceremony of the AliceGhan initiative in support of Afghan returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

The AliceGhan project aims to provide housing and sustainable livelihood support to 1,400 eligible returnees and IDPs with funding of USD 7.3 million from the Government of Australia.

The name "AliceGhan" derives from the combination of "Alice Spring" – a place in Australia which has strong linkage with Afghan migrants to Australia – and "Afghanistan", symbolising the partnership and commitment between these two countries.

"The Australian Government is proud to support the work of the Afghan Government and the United Nations in assisting Afghan refugees and displaced persons to return home. The AliceGhan project is a partnership which will provide housing and sustain-

able reintegration support for many returnees to Afghanistan and should serve as a model for similar projects elsewhere in Afghanistan in the future" said H.E. Brett Hackett, Ambassador of Australia to Afghanistan.

The target site is Barikab, Qarabagh District in the north of Kabul Province, where the project aims at supporting the construction of 1,400 earthquake resistant houses in addition to provision of basic infrastructure and livelihood support.

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It is one in a number of plots allocated by the Government of Afghanistan to accommodate returned refugees and IDPs across the country. Beneficiary participation, building of sustainable commu-



Kabul Governor Haji Din Mohammad addressing the ceremony

nity and the creation of a replicable model for the future returnee/ IDP settlement construction are the principles that guide the implementation.

AliceGhan is directly implemented by UNDP in close partnership with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations, the Ministry of Urban Development and Kabul Governor's Office who play a lead role in the planning process. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) also provided support and advice during the project formulation and implementation stages.

AliceGhan aims to support community-built mud brick housing based on labour intensive construction meth-

ods – upon the principle of maximum good for a maximum number of beneficiaries. Beneficiaries will be selected by the project's Beneficiary Selection Committee, with priority given to female headed households, the disabled, the vulnerable and highly impoverished families. They will be provided with housing construction materials to build their own houses and necessary training, skills and oversight from the project. Deep wells, access roads, community centre, clinic and school are part of the site plan, designed by the Ministry of Urban Development.

The on-site inauguration is scheduled on 21st June 2007 at the Barikab site, and the construction of wells and a carpentry workshop will follow immediately.

Norway contributes USD 2.2 m for Afghan Civil Service Institute

The Royal Government of Norway has donated USD 2.2 million to support of the operation and set-up of the Afghan Civil Service Institute. It is expected that the Afghan Civil Service Institute will become the centerpiece for capacity development of the Afghan Civil Service.

The Norwegian contribution will be critical to provide the needed technical assistance in support of setting up and operation of the

Institute. UNDP will support the Afghan Civil Service Institute by closely twinning international experts and Afghan counterparts to promote transfer of knowledge and exchange of experience. UNDP will provide technical support in human resources development, policy and evaluation.

UNDP will support the setting up of an Operations and Administration Department of the Institute.

UNDP will support the establishment of a Design and Production Unit for learning and training material. The Training Management Group will ensure the outreach to central and provincial administrations. A core support facility of the Institute will be the library. UNDP will support the Institute to set up the library in the area of Public Administration and Governance. This will include the purchase of up to 3000

books, journal and newspapers, the implementation of a library management system by a small team of library staff supported by an international advisor.

In 2005, the IARCSC entered into a partnership with the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) to design and build the physical structure for an Afghan Civil Service Training Institute. The Afghan Civil Service Institute was inaugurated in January 2007.

New USD 12.5 m Netherlands Support to LOTFA

The Government of Netherlands has committed a further assistance of USD 12.5 million to the Government of Afghanistan-UNDP supported "Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA)". An agreement to this effect was signed by the UNDP Country Director, Ms. Anita Nirody and the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Royal Netherlands Embassy, Ms. Yvonne Stassen. The hand-over ceremony took place in the Ministry of Interior in presence of the First Deputy Interior Minister, Mr. Abdul Hadi Khalid.

Rebuilding the national civilian police force for national security and recovery represents one of the highest priorities for the

Government of Afghanistan.

The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) envisions a professional, disciplined and reinvigorated police, widely visible to the public, creating a sense of comfort among the population.

At the request of the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations Assistance Mission

for Afghanistan (UNAMA), UNDP established the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) in May 2002 to cover the Government's police-related costs. The European Commission, United States, Canada, Netherlands, Germany, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Finland, Australia and Japan are the major contributors to LOTFA.

The Netherlands has

been a contributor to LOTFA for the last four years, with a total contribution of USD 30, 8 million in that period. The latest contribution will be used for police salaries and food allowances in all provinces of the country.

LOTFA reimbursed the Ministry of Finance (MoF) for police remuneration in all 34 provinces. (For details, visit www.undp.org.af)

USAID USD 8 m For 'Poppy Free Provinces'

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is providing an initial \$8 million contribution to the Good Performers' Initiative as part of the Government of Afghanistan's Counter Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF).

This new grant will be administered by the United Nations Development Programme. The Ministry of Counter Narcotics will coordinate and manage the initiative.

The objective of the USAID contribution to the Counter Narcotics

Trust Fund through the Good Performers' Initiative is to support continued progress towards poppy elimination and maintenance of poppy free provinces through the provision of financial support for priority development projects.

(For details, visit www.undp.org.af)

Afghanistan Green Initiative (GAIN)

Where Women and Children Show the Way to Save Environment

In March 2006, UNDP launched an environmental awareness raising project in Afghanistan, to mobilise the population and strengthen institutional capacity for environment protection. This was in response to the UNEP post-conflict environmental assessment, which had indicated that the country faced an environmental crisis of unprecedented proportions. The project is UNDP's contribution to the Green Afghanistan Initiative (GAIN); a joint pro-

marginalised categories and use them as a fulcrum for wider community engagement in environment protection. Women and children are often the hardest to reach and work. In Afghanistan, cultural sensitivities forbid women and girls from interacting with men or indeed freely engaging in public events.

The project, recognising the many constraints, set about to design innovative strategies that would

bring. The project's unique approach successfully brought women and girls to sit along side men, to harmoniously and jointly reflect on options for environmental protection in their respective villages.

Last Word

The project's focus on children is grounded in the conviction that creating environmental awareness among the young creates a new generation of people who are sensitive towards, and motivated to conserve the environment. Children form a sizeable proportion of the country's population structure. Moreover, there is a likelihood that they will directly or inadvertently influence their family members with their newly acquired environmental skills, knowledge and

poems, debates, drawings, etc) and microenvironment projects.

To create a sustainable framework for environmental management, the project has facilitated formation of Village Environment Committees, which are sub-committees of the already existing Village Development Councils (formed under the National Solidarity Programme). The role of Village Environment Committees is to articulate their respective environmental priorities during the provincial development planning process, and to mobilise community members for collective environmental action. The project will ensure that the committees access appropriate training to enable them undertake their mandate. The project will also train government extension workers, NGOs and schoolteachers, to empower them to carry forward the environmental awareness programme after the expiry of the project.

UNDP/GAIN has demonstrated that rural women can, with appropriate facilitation methodologies, actively participate and contribute to public good enterprises.

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Green Generation Clubs offer a platform for both boys and girls to work together for environment protection

gramme of various UN agencies who share a common concern of arresting environmental degradation in Afghanistan.

Owing to the strategic importance of rural women and children in relation to natural resource use, the project opted to target these

secure community confidence in the initiative. A series of confidence building sessions with community groups, local elders and religious leaders were organised. A participatory community visioning approach was used to foster village-level collective analysis and environmental plan-

behaviour. With support from provincial departments of education and heads of schools, the project has implemented an innovative, children-led environment campaign in schools; characterised by formation of Green Generation Clubs, facilitated competitions (environmental essays,

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With GAIN support, 400 rural women have established tree nurseries in which they are collectively raising nearly 800,000 tree saplings. The project, in collaboration with its institutional partners, will provide specialised training to those women, to ensure they succeed with their nursery enterprise and become model farmers capable of guiding and motivating other community members. Village Environment Committees, which the project has established in 40 villages, will assist the women nursery operators to mobilise other community members to plant and raise trees on a bigger scale.

The project has worked with nearly 100,000

more knowledgeable, motivated and skilled about environment protection and have

With GAIN support, 400 rural women have established tree nurseries in which they are collectively raising nearly 800,000 tree saplings. Village Environment Committees, which the project has established in 40 villages, will assist the women nursery operators to mobilise other community members.



UNDP/GAIN has boosted community demand for tree planting

children and catalysed the formation of Green Generation Clubs in 40 schools so far. Children have become

since taken on an active role in broader community mobilisation. For instance during the World Environment Day

celebrations held in Mazar-i-Sharif (on 6th the price, and suppressed the availability



Appropriate facilitation methodologies have enhanced rural women's participation in environment management planning

June 2007), children confidently moderated all sessions and educated the public with environmental poems, songs, and drama. Feedback from many parents also indicate that their children have been, since joining the school environment programme, advocating for some household-level environment standards – such as responsible waste disposal, efficient water use, greener homesteads, etc. During the last spring, schoolchildren who are members of the Green Generation Clubs planted almost 38,000 tree saplings, both in their respective school compounds and their homesteads.

Over the last planting season, the project noted increased demand for tree planting compared with previous years; this elevated

of planting material. Given this improving community attitude the environment, it is anticipated that shortage of tree saplings might be a severe constraint to community tree planting efforts in future. UNDP/GAIN will, through its microenvironment project approach, diversify sources of planting material by supporting small scale farmer- or school-managed tree nurseries.

UNDP/GAIN anticipates additional methodological and output level successes, and is committed to ensuring that rural women and children perfect their skills, knowledge and understanding to make them champions of environmental management in Afghanistan.

—By Denis Mutabazi
(Capacity Building Specialist, UNDP/GAIN)



Afghanistan

UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life.

Overview of UNDP in Afghanistan

UNDP has been present in Afghanistan since 1956, providing development assistance to the country and helping build the capacity of national institutions. During the Taliban regime, UNDP continued to provide assistance to communities throughout the country from its relocated offices in Islamabad. During that decade, UNDP delivered US\$200 million of assistance to Afghanistan. In early 2002, UNDP inaugurated its new office in Kabul.

The human development challenge for Afghanistan is enormous. According to Afghanistan's National Human Development Report (NHDR) 2004, the Human Development Index ranks Afghanistan at 173 out of 178 countries worldwide and its MDG indicators place it below the majority of Sub-Saharan African countries. The depth of poverty in Afghanistan is reflected consistently in all human development indicators, revealing a mosaic of a nation in need of sustained assistance. Not surprisingly, therefore, Afghanistan has been identified as a global priority for addressing the Millennium Development Goals.

UNDP operates within the framework of the integrated United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) and within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). In December 2005, UNDP signed a three-year Country Programme Action Plan with the Government of Afghanistan focusing on three development areas: state-building, democracy and civil society empowerment and sustainable livelihoods. UNDP new Country Programme focuses on capacity development, national ownership and policy dialogue. UNDP aims to enhance government institutional capacity to deliver public services in an equitable and sustainable manner and to create an enabling environment for legitimate livelihoods.

The expected results are pursued in line with the Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) objectives and benchmarks. In particular, UNDP supports the Government in achieving a number of development benchmarks in the field of security and the rule of law, administrative reform, transparency and accountability, local governance, political processes (elections and parliament), civil society empowerment, gender equality, human rights, environment and rural energy, the reintegration of former combatants into society, the implementation of the national counter-narcotics strategy, as well as rural development planning and private sector development.

All UNDP activities are undertaken in close collaboration with the Government of Afghanistan, sister UN agencies and other development stakeholders.

UNDP has built strategic partnerships with a number of government institutions such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the Ministry of Interior, the Civil Service Commission, the Independent Election Commission, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Women's Affairs. UNDP's top ten donor partners in Afghanistan are the US, the EC, Japan, CIDA, UK, Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Norway and the World Bank.

UNDP is thankful for the support and confidence lent by its national and international development partners.

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