

# **Engaging Men for Women's Empowerment**

Interview with PRIO Researcher Hilde Wallacher

PRIO Gender, Peace and Security Update Issue 2/2012

The PRIO Gender Peace and Security Update is an electronic newsletter launched by PRIO's Gender Team in response to growing interest among the public for information about women, peace and security issues. The newsletter will keep readers informed of the latest developments both internationally and in Norway in relation to **UN Security Council** Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security and subsequent resolutions.

On the occasion of the new PRIO Paper "Engaging Men. The Abatangamuco and Women's Empowerment in Burundi", Jenny Lorentzen has interviewed Hilde Wallacher, PRIO researcher and author of the report.

## This report is a result of collaboration with CARE. How did this partnership arise?

About one year ago, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) announced a tender for projects that would bring together researchers and the aid industry to evaluate aid projects, particularly projects from the Great Lakes region and those focused on women's empowerment issues. CARE approached PRIO, and we found a project that we deemed very interesting and applied for funding. In the end we didn't get the funding from NORAD, but CARE was still interested in carrying out the project. So we got funding through CARE to do a smaller project, and this report is the result of that.

## You did fieldwork for your research for this report. What were your experiences?

I spent three weeks in Burundi in September and October last year working in close collaboration with CARE Burundi, who organized the field stay, including scheduling interviews. Staff from CARE Burundi also accompanied me to the interviews, which posed certain challenges. I was afraid that it could affect the answers I would get, but I experienced the informants as open and unafraid of stating their opinions. I did in-depth interviews with the men to gain insights into their under-



PRIO Researcher Hilde Wallacher. Photo: Zlata Turkanovic, PRIO.

standings of their own masculinity. Our hypothesis was that if this project was to be sustainable, they would have to retain their masculine selfunderstanding even while breaking with certain elements of it.

## The report deals with "the Abatangamuco." What is that?

The Abatangamuco is both a grassroots organization and a movement consisting of men who have made substantive changes to their lives. Abatangamuco literally means "those who shine light." These men have changed their views on elements of the fundamental gender roles. There is still room for conservative views about gender, but they have changed their views on how family life should be organized. Apparently, it started with one man who decided to make this change after attending several capacity building meetings. He then told his story and convinced others to follow. It got the formal structure of an organization with CARE's involvement, and CARE's role is that of a facilitator, offering support for travel and holding meetings.

### What kind of changes do these men make?

In Burundi there is a large problem of domestic violence. The man is considered the head of the household, while the woman is expected to carry out a large proportion of the workload, not only taking care of the children and house chores, but also the incomegenerating activities which for most of these families consist of agricultural activities such as plowing, sowing, and herding livestock. The man has control of the family's financial resources, and he can use these at his own discretion. It is expected that he beats his wife to get his way and establish his dominance. The Abatangamuco promotes change consisting of the man apologizing to his wife, and making a promise not to beat her anymore. The man must also start sharing the financial resources with his wife and taking part in the household's tasks. For most of the men, this change meant that their social group would reject them, and no longer consider them "real men."

However, enacting these changes means that if he does not beat his wife, she can better carry out her work, and when he can contribute to the household income as well, their resources increase and their financial situation improves. The results of this improvement are visible when they materialize in being able to buy a goat, new clothes, or repair the roof. Being perceived as prosperous and successful, as a man of honor who can be trusted, are elements of masculinity already present in society, and the men experience increased status as a result of the changes they make.

### So how does this organization work?

The Abatangamuco operate on two levels, on the one hand recruiting members, and on the other reaching and affecting as many as possible with their message. The members hold their own meetings or participate in meetings organized by the church or local authorities. Here they give testimonies of their previous lives, about how they used to be poor and beat their wives, but after receiving guidance and couning before was completely acceptable in their society, but they have arrived at a realization that the way they live their lives now is better.

The Abatangamuco practice a quite strong internal discipline. In order to be a member, the man is counseled by other members in his area for several months. This process consists of talking and guiding the man, and may take time. Once a member, there is little room for falling back into old practices.



PRIO Researcher Hilde Wallacher during her fieldwork in Burundi for the CARE/PRIO study. Photo: Private.

seling their lives have improved. Their methods have an almost religious character; it is as if they have "seen the light". It is notable that the stories they tell of their previous lives reflect how most people live, but they make it seem like an absolutely unbearable situation. My impression is that those who have been recruited are those who can actually see a clear connection between something they experience as negative, and the change they are making. But I think there must be some kind of threshold; not everybody experiences that they have a problem. What is interesting is that the way they were liv-

The fact that they live up to their promises is the only legitimacy they have, so it becomes very important to ensure that they do so.

### Why is this approach so successful?

The advantage of the approach of the Abatangamuco is that the benefits are real and visible, which appears to be a key to sustainability. Letting the woman contribute with her knowledge and insights, and sitting down and planning the organization of tomorrow's work has in itself contributed to an increase in prosperity and well-being. They experience that this causes them to exploit their resources better, and prosper more in the long run.

I believe that the success and sustainability of the Abatangamuco can be found in the way they function. The men tell stories in which other men recognize their own lives, and the advice they give is based on personal experiences, so there is a strong sense of relevance and ownership. Also, the reward is a direct result of the change, instead of being externally provided. The nature of the movement implies that the members take on the Abatangamuco identity and are active in spreading the organization's values in their communities, causing it to appear self-sustainable even without any interaction with a central organizational structure.

There is a large sense of ownership to the project and the solutions, to the whole reasoning behind it, which erupted from local thought processes and actual experiences. And every time a new member enters, the hypothesis is tested. New members are often recruited by neighbors, and they are given time to think and process these new perspectives. In this process, the Abatangamuco remain persistent and focus on sharing experiences. Each new member is given the opportunity to reach the conclusion on his own, which creates large sense of ownership on the individual level and a greater chance of success. It works because it is coming from those who need it: it was the men who came up with the solution and created a system for it. In another setting someone else must find their own solutions and system.

What fascinated me the most was how convinced the men seemed to be about the rightness of the changes they had made, and I got the impression that a fundamental change had occurred. They were very pragmatic, and expressed recognition of having acted in a stupid or self-destructive way. They also drew lines between the problems many people have in their families and the overall development of the country. They expressed that if they could just convince everybody of their message, it would benefit the overall development and future of their country.

CARE is doing a lot of work directed at women in Burundi, but experienced that the women reported that they were not allowed to use their newly gained knowledge by their husbands. Since leaving the family is not an option for the majority of the women, the Abatangamuco is a necessary counter weight in order to provide the room for women's empowerment within the structure of the family. This is why I think there is something to learn from this project; it was never a precondition to change the culture, but the starting point was "how can we be better off?" The men who started this did so after attending capacity building sessions and putting together two and two. The approach is very pragmatic; it is about efficiency, and maximizing the resources available.

### It seems to be a very pragmatic approach, but what about the awareness of women's rights?

Many also had reflections about women's rights, but this did not appear to have been a motivation for change, rather something that arose in the aftermath. One of the respondents made a large impression on me when he explained how he had realized that what he had been doing to his wife was in fact rape. I think the order of things here is very interesting. I do not think that this is sufficient for women's empowerment, but it is an important part of it that often has been forgotten. It often seems counter-intuitive to take a step away from the moral aspect and become very pragmatic. But in this case the pragmatic approach brought along the moral aspect in the process. I believe that it is possible to identify such pragmatic solutions in most situations;

it is very rarely effective to hold 50% of the population down. That doesn't mean that we should lay off the moral issues, but it may not be what convinces people in the first place.

### What about future research in this field?

I wish there was more research on how to engage men for women's empowerment. We are interested in doing a larger project, but for the time being there are no concrete plans. We chose to focus on understanding it in the context of masculinity for this project, and found that you need to understand what it is in the masculine understanding in the local context that oppresses women, and what is there that can counter those elements. In this report I found that there were large elements of masculinity in status, trust, and progress. Much of the success lies in that you have an approach that challenges elements of local masculinity with other elements from local masculinity. I think there is great room for more research on this topic, which can provide knowledge on how to engage men, on their terms. We need to do research on the men, talking to them, and do it in the local context.

Documenting Abatangamuco's practices and projects has great value for the organization itself. For CARE it provides guidance on how to spend their resources and how to proceed if they are to continue supporting this project. For those who are financing these projects it is good to get an assessment from outside the organization as well. I have the impression that CARE sees great value in getting an "outsider" perspective on their work. However, what was great about this project was that my mandate was relatively open. There is a lot of documentation of aid practice and projects, but it is not always documenting or measuring the right things. There is a lot of quantitative documentation, but like this report shows, qualitative research can also be very useful. The cooperation with

CARE on this project was very good, and I think there is space for much more of this type of collaboration between researchers and practitioners. It also provides researchers with unique opportunities for accessing local communities, so there is great potential for mutual benefits.

You can download the report here.

### Conciliation Resources dialogue event at PRIO

**On Wednesday, May 16**, PRIO in collaboration with the Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF) and the Forum for Women and Development (FOKUS) hosted the Oslo leg of the Conciliation Resources (CR) European Tour. Conciliation Resources is an organization working exclusively through local partners in their countries of engagement to provide resources and be a facilitator for actors working for solutions to violent conflict. Among their activities is the facili-

tation of dialogue and exchange between actors with different experiences or working in different conflict scenarios. In 2011, CR organized an exchange between ten women each from Colombia and the Philippines with the purpose of learning from the differing approaches to conflict situations with a number of similarities, and the women's experiences of relative successes, failures and lessons learned. Four of these women make up the current CR European Tour, and served as panellists at the PRIO-hosted event: Rosa Emilia Salamanca, Director of Corporación para la Investigación y la Acción Social y Económica (CIASE) in Colombia; Ana Paola Tinoco, a university law professor in Bogotá, Colombia; Joeven Reyes, Executive Director of Sulong CARHRIHL (Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law) in the Philippines; and Maria Lourdes Veneracion-Rallonza, Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science of the Ateneo de Manila University. During the tour, they have been speaking to interested audiences about their experiences as peace builders and of dialogue with other women peace builders with very different identities,



Participants at the Conciliation Resources event at PRIO. Photo: Nerea Bilbatua, Conciliation Resources.

statuses and priorities.

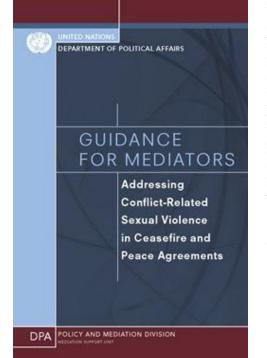
An audience comprising researchers, peace activists, and women's rights activists listened to a self-reflective, nuanced and interesting set of accounts from the panel, and participated in a further exchange of views, arguments and experiences drawing on the vast experience present in the room. Researcher Hilde Wallacher hosted the event on behalf of PRIO, and the discussion was chaired by Kristian Herbolzheimer from CR. ■

Mediating Ceasefires and Peace Agreements: How to address conflict-related sexual violence

**The production and publication** of the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) recent "Guidance for Mediators: Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements" was the topic of a seminar hosted by PRIO on April 23. Principal author of the guidelines, Gina Torry gave a presentation, and Kai Eide from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs commented based on his long experience with peace processes. PRIO Researcher Torunn L. Tryggestad chaired the event.

**Torry described the challenges** and successes following from engaging with this topic in DPA, and pointed out that only three previous ceasefire agreements included references to conflict-related sexual violence.

The guidelines are designed to assist mediators in how to include references to conflict-related sexual violence in ceasefire and peace agreements. Torry stated that it is important that these



references are included in central parts of the documents such as the preamble, the definitional principles, and sections on command responsibility. She further emphasized the importance of specifying these references in sections on monitoring, and treating conflict-related sexual violence as a method and tactic of warfare, thus as a weapon in line with other weapons of war that are addressed in ceasefire and peace agreements.

The need to rethink the standard format of agreements was pointed out, because ceasefire and peace agreements are often recycled based on previous agreements. But as Torry stated, "wars have changed, so we need to change the agreements as well." Even though mediators are bound by their neutrality, and thus not in a position to dictate the contents of agreements, they can bring points from women's groups to the peace table, meaning that the coordination and mobilization of civil society to articulate their concerns is of great importance and value.

Torry noted that the guidelines were partly the result of a 2009 United Na-

tions Inter-Agency High-Level Colloquium on conflict-related sexual violence, bringing together mediators and researchers in order to draw from their experience. She also stated that the intended audience of mediators is largely male, and they are hoping to train more female mediators and experts. An issue that was raised by the audience concerned the lack of preceding guidelines on broader issues of women, peace and security.

### Women in Politics: New Book by Torild Skard

Women of Power. The World's Women Presidents and Prime Ministers 1960-2010 (editor's translation) is the name of a new book by Norwegian researcher, feminist and former politician Torild Skard, published by Universitetsforlaget. The book is currently available in Norwegian only, but we are pleased to report that Skard has started the work of finding a publisher for the English translation of the book.

In December, Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. She is part of a tradition of women who have gained the highest positions of authority in their national governments, starting with Sirimavo Bandaranaike (1916-2000) who was appointed Prime Minister of Sri Lanka in 1960. The latest contribution to the tradition is represented by Joyce Banda, President of Malawi since April this year. In Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland served as Prime Minister for three periods, first appointed in 1981. Skard was herself elected to the Norwegian Storting (Parliament) in 1973. As the first woman to hold a range of positions nationally and internationally, she has positioned herself as a strong advocate for women and children's rights. She has a background as a politician, writer, and researcher, and is currently the head of the Norwegian Association for Women's Rights (Norsk kvinnesaksforening, NKF).

The background, life, and political career of 73 women from 53 countries are described in the book, which explores whether there are any common features that led to these countries appointing female heads of state. The book is the first Norwegian publication that gives a full overview of the historical tradition of women as heads of state. Political leadership has traditionally been dominated by men, and the book explores what has happened when this pattern is broken and a woman is appointed or elected head of state. Important questions such as whether norms, living standards, or politics have changed to make this shift possible, and whether having a woman as head of state affects decisions or politics, are among the issues dealt with in the book.

Skard's account of the different common features of these women's rise to power highlight how a third of the women assumed power under highly demanding circumstances, such as economic hardship and decline. She explains their way to power through three characteristics or strategies -"substitutes", "insiders", or "outsiders" - and outlines how there are clear regional tendencies in the use of these strategies. The number of women reaching powerful positions has increased sharply over the last 30 years, which among other things can be related to democratization and secularization processes. There is also a tendency toward women being more able to reach these positions in countries with more than one head of state. Interestingly, the book shows that women do not necessarily perform politics that differ from that of men. However, it is largely women politicians who promote women's issues or causes.

In connection with the launch of the book, a seminar on "Women in Power" was hosted by The Norwegian Association for Women's Rights (Norsk kvinnesaksforening, NKF) and Universitetsforlaget on May 22. Two women who both feature in Skard's new book, Gro Harlem Brundtland and Vigdis Finnbogadòttir, president of Island from 1980 to 1996, attended the seminar to share their experiences. Skard herself also attended, presenting the research findings that underpin this important publication. ■

### Aung San Suu Kyi delivered her Nobel Lecture

21 years after being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, Aung San Suu Kyi finally delivered her much-awaited Nobel Lecture in the Oslo City Hall on Saturday 16 June. In a ceremony resembling a 'proper' Nobel award ceremony she gave a lecture that touched all those present in the City Hall and all those watching the broadcast of the event. In her lecture she spoke about how improbable it seemed to her to ever be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. She spoke about how important the Nobel Peace Prize had been during her days and years in house arrest to remind her that she was still part of a wider human community. More importantly, she emphasized how the Nobel Prize had drawn the attention of the world to the struggle for democracy and human rights in Burma, reminding her that "We were not going to be forgotten". The importance for human beings, and particularly refugees, of not being forgotten was a key theme in her speech, along with her undying passion for democratic governance and human rights as instruments for ending human suffering and creating lasting peace.



Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi finally visiting Oslo, 21 years after being awarded the prize. Photo: Sara Johannessen / Nobel Peace Center.

In the afternoon she was greeted by a crowd of 12 000 people at a public rally outside the City Hall. Speeches and appeals were given and some of Norway's most popular artists performed in her honor.

You can read the full Nobel lecture here. ■

### Meeting of the 1325 Research Network

**On Thursday 21 June**, the 1325 Research Network had its first of two meetings in 2012, held at PRIO. The network comprises approximately 50 researchers based in Norwegian universities, colleges and research institutes (both women and men), who in various ways conduct research on Resolution 1325/the Women, Peace and Security agenda, broadly defined. The main purpose of the network is to facilitate a flow of information about ongoing and planned research activities and to encourage collaboration across institutions.

**Presentations on new**, ongoing or finalized research projects were given by six individual network members. Among the topics covered were the gendering of the UN security agenda, men's engagement in fighting violence against women, a database on sexual violence against women in armed conflict, women's empowerment for conflict prevention/resolution, the reliability of data on women in NATO forces, and men's attitudes towards women in the Norwegian and US armed forces.

**Further, the members decided** that the name of the network should be changed in order to better reflect a research agenda that encompasses a broader understanding of gender, i.e. beyond 'women'. The name of the research network will thus be changed to the 'Gender, Peace and Security Research Network'.

The meeting was chaired by network coordinator Torunn L. Tryggestad, PRIO. ■

## International News

**Michelle Bachelet**, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, briefed the Security Council on Women, Peace and Security on April 24.

http://www.unwomen.org/2012/04/sta tement-by-under-secretary-generalmichelle-bachelet-to-the-un-securitycouncil-on-women-peace-and-security/

**The NATO Chicago Summit** on May 20 endorsed a Strategic Progress Report on mainstreaming UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions into NATO-led operations and missions, and welcomed Norway's offer to provide a NATO Special Representative for these important issues.

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/of fi-

cial\_texts\_87593.htm?mode=pressrelea se

The ACUNS Annual Meeting 2012 titled "New Norms, New Actors, a New United Nations? Continuity and Change, ACUNS at 25" was held in New York on June 13 to 15. PRIO Researcher Torunn L. Tryggestad organized a panel on "Women, Peace and Security: Evaluating the SC1325 Agenda". In addition to Tryggestad, panelists included Louise Olsson, researcher at the Folke Bernadotte Academy, Niels Nagelhus Schia, researcher at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Randi Solhjell, researcher and PhD Candidate at NUPI. Rob Jenkins. Professor of Political Science at Hunter College, the City University of New York, acted as chair.

# News from Norway

**Hillary Clinton** visited Norway from May 31 to June 2. During her stay she attended a conference on global health, met with survivors from the Utøya massacre last summer, and visited the High North Research Centre for Climate and the Environment (Fram Centre).

**Aung San Suu Kyi** visited Norway from June 15 to 18. The famous Burmese opposition politician remained under house arrest most of the time between 1989 and 2010, prevented from collecting the Nobel Peace Prize she was awarded in 1991. Aung San Suu Kyi finally held her Nobel Lecture on Saturday June 16 at Oslo City Hall, and visited Bergen the following day.

A seminar on Delivering Services to Women in Fragile States was held at the Information Center at NORAD on June 12. The seminar was hosted by the UNDP Oslo Governance Center, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UN Women, FOKUS, and NORAD.

**The Inter-departmental Working Group on Resolution 1325** held a meeting on June 15, hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On the agenda was a discussion with Secretary of State Gry Larsen on central questions on the 1325 agenda, and a dialogue on sexual violence in conflict: What can Norway contribute to prevent sexual violence in conflict?

**The I325 Research Network** held its first meeting in 2012 on June 21.

# News from PRIO

**Inger Skjelsbæk's** new book, *The Political Psychology of War Rape: Studies From Bosnia and Herzegovina* (London: Routledge), was successfully launched at PRIO on April 11.

**"Mediating Ceasefires and Peace Agreements**: How to address conflictrelated sexual violence?", seminar held on April 23. Gina Torry visited PRIO to present the new DPA Guidance for Mediators on Addressing Conflictrelated Sexual Violence in Ceasefires and Peace Agreements.

**"Women Peace and Security**: Moving from Policy to Practice. A dialogue on reflections from conflict-affected contexts" was held at PRIO on May 16, hosted by PRIO, FOKUS and NOREF.

**Niels Nagelhus Schia** presented his work on peacebuilding and Resolution 1325 at a brownbag seminar at PRIO on May 24. The work is part of his forthcoming PhD dissertation.

#### **Ragnhild Nordås**

Presented the Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (SVAC) project at two events:

June 6: International Peace Institute, New York. The International Expert Forum (IEF) "Mitigating the Consequences of Violent Conflict: What Works and What Does Not?", Cosponsored by the Folke Bernadotte Academy, the International Peace Institute (IPI), the SecDev Group, and the Social Science Research Council (SSRC). The project was presented in a panel titled "Mapping the Challenges of Organized Violence in Contemporary Conflict: Data and Trends".

June 7: Briefing on the SVAC database

for the Policy and Mediation Division, Department of Political Affairs, United Nations, New York.

#### Inger Skjelsbæk

Participated in a radio broadcast on sexual violence in war on the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation on April 23. "En såret soldat".

Skjelsbæk is currently on a research stay at the UC Berkeley Human Rights Center to finalize publications on perpetrators of sexual violence in war.

#### **Helga Hernes**

Held a lecture on May 7 on "Engendering democracy: regional and global perspectives" for the Sociology of the Middle East Conference, University of Oslo.

Has become member of the International Advisory Board of the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF).

### Torunn L. Tryggestad

Organized a panel workshop on "Women, Peace and Security: Evaluating the SC1325 Agenda" at the Annual Meeting of the Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS), 14-15 June, New York. Tryggestad also presented a paper titled "Collaborative Governance: Gendering the UN Security Agenda".

## Recent PRIO Publications

**Skjelsbæk, Inger** (2012). Conceptualizing Sexual Violence Perpetrators in War, in Bergsmo, Morten, Alf Butenschøn Skre and Elisabeth J. Wood (Eds.) (2012) *Understanding and Proving International Sex Crimes*. Torkel Opsahl Academic EPublisher.

**Skjelsbæk, Inger** (2012). Responsibility to Protect or Prevent? Victims and Perpetrators of Sexual Violence Crimes in Armed Conflicts, *Global Responsibility to Protect* 4(2): 154–171.

**Skjelsbæk, Inger and Kristian Berg Harpviken** (2012). Kvinner skaper endring [Women bring about change], in *Flyktningregnskapet*. Oslo: Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

Wallacher, Hilde (2012). Engaging Men. The Abatangamuco and Women's Empowerment in Burundi. *PRIO Paper*. Oslo: PRIO. ■

## Other Recent Publications

**Aslam, Maleeha** (2012) Gender-Based Explosions. The Nexus Between Muslim Masculinities, Jihadist Islamism and Terrorism. Tokyo: United Nations University Press. Bergsmo, Morten, Alf Butenschøn Skre and Elisabeth J. Wood (Eds.) (2012) Understanding and Proving International Sex Crimes. Torkel Opsahl Academic EPublisher.

**Gaanderse, Miranda and Kristin Valasek** (2012). The Security Sector and Gender in West Africa: A Survey of Police, Defence, Justice and Penal Services in ECOWAS States. Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF).

**Skard, Torild** (2012). Maktens Kvinner. Verdens Kvinnelige Presidenter og Statsministre 1960-2010. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Latin American Security and Defence Network (RESDAL) (April 2012). Final report of the International Conference: Promoting Gender to build a lasting peace: Reflecting on the Latin American Experience. Buenos Aires: RESDAL.

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) (2012). *Flyktningregnskapet*. Oslo: NRC.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (June 2012). Global Report 2011. Geneva: UNHCR.

Værnø, Grete (2012) Kvinnenes forsvarshistorie bind II. Oslo: Kvinners frivillige beredskap. ■



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