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Mobilising broad anti-corruption coalitions

Query

Please provide examples of successful efforts to advance anti-corruption reforms through the mobilisation of broad coalitions across civil society, the private sector and government. Specific examples from the Asia-Pacific region would be appreciated.

Purpose

Noting that the effectiveness of anti-corruption reforms relies upon local ownership and coalition building amongst stakeholders, we are particularly interested in any advice or success stories that may be available.

Content

1. Examples of multi-stakeholder anti-corruption coalitions
2. Challenges involved in mobilising anti-corruption coalitions
3. Lessons learnt in mobilising broad-based anti-corruption coalitions
4. References

Summary

Building multi-stakeholder coalitions against corruption is emerging as a very promising approach to mobilise broad-based political will, strengthen civil society and support citizens demand for accountability. A number of lessons can be drawn from the experience of Transparency International, Coalition 2000 in Bulgaria, the National Anti-Corruption Forum in South Africa, as well as from sectoral multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI), the Medicine Transparency Alliance (MeTA) or the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST).

At the country level, there is no blueprint for stetting up broad-based anti-corruption coalitions, as the building process strongly depends on the local circumstances, including the political context and the space available for civil society. Besides political and operational challenges, initiatives in all countries face major obstacles of sustainability, including the need to secure the long term collaboration of stakeholders with very different and at times irreconcilable agendas, operating logics and patterns of incentives.

Successful coalitions have managed to address some of these challenges by adopting a non-confrontational/non-partisan approach, promoting clarity of purpose, mission and agenda and providing a diverse and comprehensive set of incentives to the various stakeholders. Careful planning with strong leadership and effective operating and management structures also contribute to building consensus on internal and programmatic issues. Four stages of the coalition building process - formation, credibility, expansion and transformation - emerge.

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Date: 1 November 2010 Number: 262

1 Examples of multi-stakeholder anti-corruption coalitions

Fighting corruption requires the mobilisation of broad-based political will, drawing on a sense of collective responsibility and on the genuine commitment of all stakeholders. While not a guarantee for successful reforms, coalition-building is widely recognised as a strategic approach in this regard, with the potential to enhance political will, strengthen civil society and support citizens demand for accountability. There is still little evidence so far of the long term impact of such interventions. Donors are increasingly supporting multi-stakeholder efforts to fight corruption and encourage non-state actors to become more involved in activities such as budget processes, poverty reduction strategies, etc. Evidence of the long term impact of such interventions is still limited, but there are many examples of coalition building initiatives one can draw lessons from in the field of anti-corruption:

Civil society based anti-corruption coalitions

Transparency International (TI)

TI is a good example of promoting a broad coalition building approach to anti-corruption. Since its foundation in 1993, the organisation's strategy has been to build broad coalitions, bringing together all stakeholders both at the global and national levels, to work together to fight corruption and promote integrity and accountability. As such, TI has positioned itself as an opinion-influencing organisation, using a combination of soft diplomacy and constructive engagement with multiple stakeholders to mobilise support for reform. This approach has proven successful in raising awareness, advocating for change and lobbying governments to implement anti-corruption reforms: in its short history, Transparency International has contributed to breaking the taboo that often surrounds corruption and put the issue on the global agenda.

At the country level, TI relies on the contribution of more than 90 national chapters, including 20 in Asia and the Pacific[1]. Using a similar coalition building approach to the one used at the global level, these national chapters bring together relevant players from government, civil society, business and the media to promote transparency and accountability in elections, public administration, procurement, business and a wide range of other areas.

An example of how TI's national chapters have managed to create a momentum for multi-stakeholder mobilisation at country level is the National Integrity System (NIS) assessment approach. NIS country studies provide a framework which stakeholders can use to analyse both the extent and drivers of corruption in a given country, as well as the strength of national anti-corruption safeguards. This analysis is undertaken via a consultative approach, involving the key integrity actors in government, civil society, the business community and other relevant sectors to build momentum, political will and civic pressure for relevant reform initiatives. In many countries, due to its focus on wide consultation and debate, the NIS assessment has helped national chapters build their public profile and identify potential partners for advocacy campaigns and other follow-up activities.

Coalition 2000

Officially launched in 1998, Coalition 2000 is an initiative of a number of Bulgarian non-governmental organisations aimed at combating corruption through consensus and coalition building among governmental institutions, NGOs and individuals. The Coalition 2000's strategy is based on consensus building through convening a policy forum and drafting an action plan for anti-corruption reform. The overall process starts at the expert level with problem identification, is followed by a public forum involving representatives of all relevant institutions and organisations and culminates with the endorsement of a policy document (the anti-corruption action plan). More specifically, the consensus building approach draws on the following key elements:

- Obtaining relevant knowledge through a series of corruption assessment panels to identify the scope and extent of corruption in the public sector;

[1] For an overview of national chapters in Asia and the Pacific, please see TI's list of contacts in the region.

- Designing an action plan based on research findings and best practice documentation, as a consensus document approved by the main players of the Bulgarian society;

- Bringing about effective and behaviour change through dissemination and advocacy;

- Reinforcing the cognitive component and tracking progress through process monitoring. This monitoring phase serves as a "watchdog tool" of the public policy process.

Some authors have assessed this approach as a mutually beneficial partnership between the government, civil society and the private sector, and a very successful model for public-private partnership in the fight against corruption (Dimitrova, N. P., 2009). By contrast, an assessment of anti-corruption coalition building in Southern Europe argues that such anti-corruption coalitions ultimately failed to gain broad backing from the public in the long run, as they have been perceived as being too close to the government (referred to in Chêne, M., 2008).

Philippines' Transparency and Accountability Network

In Asia and the Pacific, one of the best known civil society based anti-corruption coalitions is the Transparency and Accountability Network (TAN) in the Philippines. Founded in 2000, TAN is a growing coalition of multi-sectoral organisations, which seeks to contribute significantly to the reduction of corruption in the country.

Government hosted coalitions: the example of the South African National Anti-Corruption Forum (NACF)

South Africa's approach to fighting corruption is believed to be rather unique in its effort to systematically engage all sectors of society in national anti-corruption efforts starting with the first dialogue on corruption held by government in 1998 (Ramsingh, O., Dobie, K., No date). In 1999, the government invited business and civil society to join the fight against corruption which was recognised as a societal problem that needs to be addressed collaboratively by all sectors of society.

Within this framework, the NACF was founded in 2001 as a coalition of three sectors to contribute to the establishment of a national anti-corruption strategy and advise the government on anti-corruption matters. Beyond this role, all players acknowledge that civil society and business also have a responsibility to address corruption in their own sectors.

In terms of structure, each sector is represented by 10 members in the NACF. The Public Sector Commission (PSC), which is an independent body providing oversight over the public administration, hosts the secretariat of the NACF. In its early days, the initiative faced a number of constraints that hampered its ability to deliver and illustrate the challenges involved in bringing together actors with very different incentives, interests and ways of operating (Ramsingh, O., Dobie, K., No date):

- It proved very challenging to coordinate the input and activities of such heterogeneous stakeholders. Coordination and formal structures for collaboration were not adequate, especially for helping business and civil society to find ways of coordinating. The forum itself had to streamline its structures to speed up decision making and enable a focus on tangible projects.

- According to some participants, all actors did not contribute to the forum to the extent/in the manner they were expected to. While civil society was expected to contribute with its time, network and expertise, many players expected business to contribute financially to the forum's activities, which in practice only happened to a limited extent.

- Some actors – civil society in particular - felt that the forum should be more vocal on current incidents of corruption.

- NACF is also still perceived as having a prominent government face, especially as it is hosted by the PSC. In contrast, some key government players such as the Deputy Minister of Justice or the Minister of Safety and Security (under which jurisdiction the police forces fall) remain largely inactive.

Despite these various challenges and after an initial period of adjustment, there are indications that the NACF has managed to gain credibility and is starting to deliver in line with initial expectations. Recent and current activities of the NACF include the development

of case studies, integrity pledges, awareness raising campaigns, and round tables. The NACF also developed a guide to explain the key points and implications of the "South Africa Preventions and Combating of Corruption Activities Act".

Sectoral multi-stakeholder initiatives

Under the impetus of the donor community, there is also a growing number of multi-stakeholder initiatives that have emerged in sectors that are traditionally considered as particularly vulnerable to corruption.

Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI)

EITI, for example, was launched in 2002 to promote transparency and accountability in the extractive industries. For this purpose, it sets a global standard for oil, gas and mining companies to publish the tax and royalty payments they make and for host governments to disclose the revenues they receive.

EITI builds on a coalition of governments, companies, civil society organisations and international organisations that are involved at all stages of the EITI implementation process. Its coalition approach is also reflected by its governance structure, with an executive board composed of members of supporting governments, civil society and companies. Around 50 of the world's largest oil, gas and mining companies support and actively participate in the EITI. Civil Society Organisations participate in the EITI directly and through the Publish What You Pay campaign, which is supported by over 300 NGOs worldwide.

EITI has a flexible mechanism in place to monitor and reconcile the reported revenues and payment at country level. The process is overseen by a local multi-stakeholder group composed of participants from the government, companies and national civil society. In Asia and the Pacific for example, Timor-Leste has been one of the first three countries – together with Azerbaijan and Liberia - to become an EITI Compliant country, while Mongolia has achieved EITI Candidate status (ADB/OECD, 2009).

Medicines Transparency Alliance (MeTA)

MeTA is a multi-stakeholder alliance working to improve access and affordability of medicines for the one-third of the world's population unable to access essential medicines due to high cost or local unavailability. Inspired by the EITI approach and supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the World Bank and the World Health Organisation (WHO), MeTA consists of an alliance of governments, pharmaceutical companies, civil society and other stakeholders. The overarching goal of the initiative is to improve information flows and increase transparency and accountability about the selection, procurement, sale, distribution and use of medicines in developing countries. At the country level, META relies on the establishment of functioning multi-stakeholder groups to plan and implement the generation and disclosure of robust policy relevant information on the price, quality, availability and/or promotion of medicines.

A recent evaluation of the first phase of the initiative provides indications of initial success in terms of civil society and private sector engagement (Ollier, E., 2010). While governance frameworks for country level multi-sectoral bodies vary across countries, probably due to the variations in the strength of the sectors, all seven MeTA pilot countries - Ghana, Uganda, Zambia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, the Philippines and Peru - have now established multi- stakeholder groups in the form of councils. These councils have developed agreed workplans which include proposals to generate and disclose information relating to price, quality, availability and promotion of medicines. While not all councils have equal involvement from all three sectors, there is regular multi-sectoral attendance at council meetings in all countries.

The benefits of multi-sectoral dialogue are also becoming apparent in some of the pilot countries. In Uganda for example, for the first time, representatives of both civil society and the private sector were fully involved in the Ministry of Health strategic planning process for pharmaceuticals in 2009 and were able to present relevant material. Peruvian regulations were amended specifically in early 2010 in response to a request from a private sector MeTA council member. In the Philippines, the Coalition for Health Advocacy and Transparency (CHAT) was formed in 2009 during the second CSO workshop of MeTA-Philippines, gathering a coalition of 22 civil society organisations, concerned with issues on access to medicines, public health and good governance.

Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST)

Based on a similar model to EITI and MeTA, CoST is an international multi-stakeholder initiative designed to

increase transparency and accountability in the construction sector. The initiative aims to engage the main groups of stakeholders that are typically involved in publicly financed construction projects including procuring bodies, public financial management bodies, construction companies and associations, civil society, external (i.e. non-governmental) providers of finance or loan guarantees and other international partners.

Officially launched in May 2008, CoST provides for the disclosure of project information to a wide audience in a publicly accessible, comprehensive, and comprehensible manner. CoST is supported by DFID and the World Bank and piloted in seven countries, including Ethiopia, Malawi, Philippines, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, Vietnam and Zambia.

The initiative aims at enhancing the accountability of procurement bodies and construction companies for the cost and quality of public-sector construction projects by ensuring greater disclosure of information relating to public construction projects.

The Philippines is one of the first countries to start piloting CoST. CoST Philippines was officially launched on 27 January 2010 and produced a study of the country's experience in fighting corruption in the construction sector (Procurement Watch, 2010). In Vietnam, the Multi-Stakeholder Group has established its own website:
http://www.minhbachxaydung.org.vn/CoST/

2 Challenges involved in mobilising anti-corruption coalitions

The various examples mentioned above illustrate some of the challenges involved in building strong and sustainable coalitions against corruption.

Sustainability

Experience shows that past the initial momentum gained at the launch of the coalition, it is often extremely difficult to move towards long term viability. Coalition building implies coordinating a wide range of actors, with very different and at times irreconcilable agendas, logics and patterns of incentives, around a common set of goals and values. This can prove a very challenging task. Various stakeholders may have conflicting agendas, compete for funding - especially in a context where resources are scarce - and have limited incentives for long term collaboration. The challenge is therefore to find ways in which different groups in societies can be mobilised to act against corruption in a sustainable manner despite their different agendas, mandates and incentives.

In addition, in its initial development stage, coalition building is often achieved under the impulse of a strong and charismatic individual with coalition-building skills. The challenge is to manage the shift from leader-driven initiatives to self sustaining social forces that can act as drivers of change in the longer term. This implies identifying drivers of mobilisation that support the various' groups own lasting interests, and provide potential partners with incentives that outweigh the costs and risks involved in joining the coalition (Johnston; Kpundeh, 2004).

Political challenges

Corruption related issues are political in nature, which generates a set of specific challenges for building anti-corruption coalitions. For example, a key question is to determine the nature of the relationship the coalition should have with the government in power. A confrontational approach may be counterproductive or dangerous, while too little independence may undermine the credibility of the initiative. In some contexts, cooperation may be impossible without compromising the goal of the initiative and the coalition may be forced into an opposition role. However, wherever possible, a collaborative stance is generally recommended (Johnston; Kpundeh, 2004).

The collaborative and non-confrontational approach has also its own set of challenges and entails the risk of jeopardising the credibility and independence of non-state actors in the eyes of the public they are supposed to represent. Some authors therefore argue that civil society organisations like Transparency International risk compromising their independence, mission, and objectives by not ensuring an arm-length distance from decision makers and the corporate world (de Souza, L., 2008). As coalition building requires the development of strategic relationships between partners, the various actors can also be forced to re-align or even compromise on their interests and positions, which may ultimately undermine their respective independence. Some politicians may also use the coalition as a political instrument or scapegoat and make it responsible for the success or lack of anti-corruption policies.

Country specific challenges

There is no one-size-fits-all solution for building anti-corruption coalitions, as the approach to social mobilisation for anti-corruption greatly varies according to the country's social and political circumstances and the nature of the corruption challenges each society faces. For example, conditions for non-state actors to engage in key processes such as budgeting or poverty reduction strategies may considerably vary from country to country, depending on the political space available for civil society in a given context.

At country level, there are a number of facilitating factors that are likely to create an enabling environment for the mobilisation of anti-corruption coalitions, including (Johnston; Kpundeh, 2004):

- A functioning state, with leaders who have a genuine intent to govern well;
- Meaningful boundaries and legitimate linkages between state and society setting limits for both official power and private influence;
- A certain level of order, in other words an environment free of pervasive violence, famine, disease, etc;
- Basic civil liberties (freedom to organise, assemble and voice) and a reasonably free media;
- A "crisis of opportunity" making action imperative;
- Outside support providing essential resources, expertise and moral support.

Recruiting coalition members

Another important and strategic issue to consider at the onset is the selection of potential coalition members. At country level, there is a wide range of stakeholders that may have an interest in joining the coalition, but not all of them can/should be involved for both practical and strategic reasons. For example, the credibility and legitimacy of the initiative can be compromised by partners whose integrity is questionable. Constituencies may also be fragmented or divided along ideological/political lines, making coalition building a subtle and complicated exercise of striking a balance between the political interests of the various actors.

Stakeholders should therefore be carefully recruited, especially in the early stages of coalition building, for their strategic contribution to the initiative in terms of resources, expertise, access to strategic networks and standards of integrity. Some authors recommend that in the early stages, recruitment of potential members "should focus on stakeholders who suffer immediate and tangible costs of corruption and have resources they can mobilise against it" (Johnston; Kpundeh, 2004:6).

Key potential partners may also need to be persuaded to join the coalition. For organisations there are some risks involved in embarking on an anti-corruption agenda. Engaging on anti-corruption may have a political cost, as it means taking on powerful vested interests. Participation may also draw upon scarce resources, compromise an organisation's identity or political stand and even jeopardise its long standing relationships with government. Coalition builders therefore need to convince potential partners that the benefits from future reform outweigh the risks and costs involved in joining the movement. In the early stages, identifying a few prominent "champions" in both the public and the private sectors to lead the fight can contribute to overcome resistance (Johnston; Kpundeh, 2004).

Securing adequate resources and capacity

Last but not least, anti-corruption coalitions need sufficient resources, capacity and funding to implement their mandate. Coalition building requires financial and human resources, skill transfer and capacity development in a number of areas, including organisational, managerial and technical capacity. While in the early stage voluntary staff can make an important contribution, coalitions relatively quickly need their own paid staff to be truly independent. Where resources are scarce, as it is the case in many developing countries, securing adequate and sustainable funding – without compromising the goals of the coalition – is therefore a prerequisite to ensure the long term sustainability of the initiative.

3 Lessons learnt in mobilising broad based anti-corruption coalitions

Stages of coalition building

Michael Johnston and Sahr Kpundeh outline four general stages in the coalition building process that can help set priorities and sequence the nature of the tasks and activities that need to be undertaken at each stage of the development process (Johnston; Kpundeh, 2004):

- Formation: At this stage, the core of the coalition is organised, prominent "champions" are identified and an agenda is developed.

- Credibility: The coalition now needs to demonstrate that it can act effectively to secure support from the various stakeholders and constituencies. To achieve this, the coalition should avoid addressing large scale challenges and concentrate on "quick wins" and manageable achievements, especially at the beginning.

- Expansion: At this critical stage of its development, the coalition reaches out to other networks, with the view to building a broader social and resource base while striving to preserve its coherence and effectiveness.

- Transformation: Once the coalition has established its reputation and base, it can mobilise the necessary broad-based political backing to address broader issues. At this stage, the organisation becomes polycentric, building on broad-based political will, engaging on many fronts and drawing from many sources.

System of incentives

As mentioned above, coalition builders need to provide a diverse set of incentives to secure the various stakeholders' long term collaboration and engagement in the fight against corruption. At societal level and in very broad terms, the coalition's incentive system involves rewarding political will by crediting the various stakeholders for successes in the fight against corruption, while ensuring that failures do not go unnoticed. At the organisational level, a comprehensive repertoire of incentives needs to be created and offered to the various stakeholders at the various stages of the coalition building process to motivate and reward organisational participation. As the coalition matures and reaches out to new constituencies, the incentive system may evolve and become more elaborate with the view to attracting new supporters (Johnston; Kpundeh, 2004):

Purposive incentives

These relate to the accomplishment of a significant goal, in this case, anti-corruption and better governance. In the anti-corruption arena, organisations tend to rely heavily on these types of incentives and offer relatively few other rewards, especially in their early stage of development. However, while derived from the formal purpose of the coalition, purposive incentives are unlikely to secure alone the long term collaboration of the partners. In addition, they are fragile and can be affected by changes in political and economic circumstances, public opinion and policy agendas. Therefore, they need to be complemented by other kinds of incentives to ensure the long term viability of the initiative.

Intangible rewards arising from joining the coalition

This kind of incentives can be offered to targeted coalition members in the form of offices, honours, citations, exclusive access to information etc. On a more collective level, joining the coalition can also grant prestige as well as a sense of fellowship and mutual support which can be especially important in countries where civil society is weak.

Technical expertise

Providing training, technical expertise and access to corruption relevant information may be of great value to coalition members. Stakeholders may value advice on how to avoid corruption or how to report acts of misconducts. This can also take the form of corruption vulnerability assessments, training programmes, advice on auditing requirements and internal controls, compilation of best practices, etc.

Recognition

Giving credit can also help mobilise support for the coalition. This involves giving awards, citations and favourable publicity to anti-corruption "champions" in the public or private sector. The prestige and credibility of the coalition itself are important in this regard.

Offsetting the costs of corruption

This can involve offering members a wide range of tools and services to address the specific corruption concerns they face. Such type of incentives can include pooling funds for legal assistance, providing active support to whistle blowers, creating islands of integrity, etc.

Effective coalition-building strategies

Impediments to sustainable anti-corruption coalition building

Experience from Latin America indicates that a number of pitfalls at the various stages of the social mobilisation process can hamper the building of sustainable anti-corruption coalitions (USAID, 2005):

- Dependence on external funding: While external assistance can help kick-start the coalition building process, excessive, long-term dependence on external sources of funding may jeopardise the long term development and sustainability of the organisation. Clear, coherent and diversified funding strategies should be developed, including for example creating one's own base of funding by offering value-added services to other organisations.

- Lack of defined and inclusive decision making structure: Some organisations in Latin America failed to systematically include targeted beneficiaries in the planning and decision making processes of the coalition, missing an important opportunity to mobilise key stakeholders in the process. This can be especially harmful to the goal of the organisation when the coalition building efforts are driven by an individual, as there is a risk that the leader's personnel interests becomes too closely intertwined with those of the organisation.

- Politicisation: The politicisation of anti-corruption coalitions can undermine the credibility of the initiative. This often occurs when coalitions are co-opted by individuals or organisations wishing to advance their own political agenda or conduct crusades against specific public officials.

- Personalisation: Individuals can use the coalition to advance personal issues and interests, especially in its early stages of development, when the organisation's structures are still informal and can be easily captured.

- Poorly defined communication strategies: The wide variety of incentives, political objectives and interests of the different coalition members can create confusing and conflicting messages. For both visibility and credibility reasons, coalitions should achieve consistency in messaging and have clarity of purpose. Coalitions should therefore have a coherent communication strategy, clearly communicate their objectives, purpose and approaches and speak with one voice to the outside word.

Guiding principles for anti-corruption coalition building

The literature has identified a few lessons emerging from the experience of setting up broad based anti-corruption coalitions (USAID, 2005 and Johnston; Kpundeh, 2004):

- Differentiation: To avoid competing with similar initiatives, the coalition should demonstrate its added value and differentiate itself from similar coalitions in terms of mandate, focus, and approaches. In Peru, Paraguay and El Salvador for example, the coalitions have achieved this by focussing on targeted interventions such as promoting integrity pacts in procurement processes, municipal budget oversight or monitoring compliance with anti-corruption conventions.

- Technical skills and specialisation: As corruption is a complex and multi-faceted issue to address, coalitions can fail to deliver on overambitious and all-encompassing goals and objectives. Related to the above, successful coalitions have often identified selected areas of specialisation such as measuring corruption, monitoring, advocacy, etc. This approach can help the coalition to gain a clear focus, and sustain clarity of purpose, mission and agenda

- Building strategic alliances: At the same time, the organisation can build strategic alliances outside the organisation with other coalitions, research institutes, donors, etc. This approach can help respond to specific demands beyond the scope of the organisation.

- Mandate and approach: It is usually recommended to favour a non-confrontational, non-partisan approach to build consensus among the various stakeholders, avoid official reprisals and address the political challenges mentioned above. However, while keeping a collaborative stance, it is important that the coalition remains forthright about opposing corruption firmly wherever/whenever it occurs. According to the authors, the coalition should also resist becoming a certification body, which entails capacity challenges and creates large risks and offers few rewards. The organisation would be seriously damaged should those being "certified" turn out to be corrupt.

- Establishing effective operating and management structures: Coalitions should establish early in the formative process adequate internal structures to manage their programmes

and activities. Decision making as well as key governance processes should be clearly defined to coordinate members' contributions, help build consensus on internal issues and deal with programmatic issues. Internal structures and practices should be consistent with the goals and values of the organisation (e.g. transparency, integrity, participation, etc.).

- Reaching out to the community/beneficiaries: Coalitions must also clearly define their target audience and create strong links to the community. Reaching out to the intended beneficiaries is important in order to integrate their concerns and priorities in the coalition goals and strategies. This will help mobilise support for reform and strengthen the coalition's legitimacy when speaking on behalf of its constituency.

- Quick wins: As already mentioned, a coalition will be in a better position to enhance its credibility and demonstrate its added value, if it can display early successes. For this, it is important to set reasonable and achievable objectives, easily recognisable and attributable to the organisation. For example, *Proetica* in Peru shortly after its creation conducted a very successful campaign to monitor a public procurement of police uniforms.

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