

Church World Service Cambodia
Kampong Thom Locality De-mining Report
and Recommendations for De-mining in Malai District
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Section 1: Introduction

Section 1.1 Background

Church World Service, founded in 1946, is a relief and development organization funded by Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican congregations in the First World and active around the globe.¹ CWS works in cooperation with local communities in more than 80 countries to create more prosperous, self-sufficient communities around the world.² After the collapse of the Khmer Rouge government in 1979, CWS was one of the first foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) allowed to enter and respond to the crisis in Cambodia. Ultimately, it is the hope of CWS that Cambodians “will develop the capacity to meet their basic needs in a sustainable manner, and participate in an emerging democracy.”³

Today, Cambodia is, in many ways, a nation still recovering from its war wounds. Although the first elections were held in 1993 and the Khmer Rouge laid down the last of their arms in 1998, the nation is struggling to rebuild. One of the most significant barriers to development in Cambodia is the landmines and unexploded ordinances (UXOs) scattered across the country. These landmines were planted by both Khmer Rouge and government armies, leaving Cambodia one of the most mine-affected countries in the world.⁴ Largely as a result of landmines, the country has the “highest rate of amputees per capita in the world.”⁵ Landmines and UXOs are problematic not only because of the casualties they cause, but also because they prevent development in regions where people are unable to use land for growing food, collecting

¹ “About Church World Service,” <<http://www.churchworldservice.org/aboutcws.htm>>, 18 October 2006, (accessed 5 March 2007).

² “About Church World Service,” <<http://www.churchworldservice.org/aboutcws.htm>>, 18 October 2006, (accessed 5 March 2007).

³ Michael Wild, editor. “Church World Service Cambodia: Annual Report 2002,” p.2.

⁴ “International Campaign to Ban Landmines,” <<http://www.icbl.org/problem/what>>, International Campaign to Ban Landmines, 2006. (accessed 5 March 2007).

⁵ Gary Littlejohn and Rebecca Roberts. “Maximizing the Impact: Tailoring Mine Action to Development Needs.” PRIO Report, 2005, p.8.

firewood, and transporting goods. The problem is so extensive that in some areas, it is difficult to implement any development programs without first de-mining the area where the program will be.⁶ This is one reason CWS has invested a great deal of time and energy into de-mining efforts in Cambodia.

CWS has worked in partnership with de-mining agencies in a dozen countries, and has been aiding de-mining efforts in Cambodia for more than a decade.⁷ In 1994, CWS partnered with Mines Advisory Group (MAG), a British NGO dedicated to removing explosives while promoting development in mine-affected countries around the world.⁸ In 1997, MAG was a co-laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize for its role in the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.⁹

As partners, CWS and MAG have done de-mining work in Kampong Thom province. Kampong Thom is one of the poorest provinces in Cambodia, and has the highest level of food insecurity.¹⁰ Social problems such as lack of education, domestic violence, overexploitation of natural resources, and landlessness continue to plague communities in this region.¹¹ Additionally, Kampong Thom was further devastated by internal conflict in Cambodia between 1979 and 1993. In the early 1990s, many villagers fled their homes where fighting was taking place.¹² When they returned, just after the first elections, many residents discovered mines on their land, and could not travel, farm, or even subsist as they had before.

CWS and MAG have a warm relationship, and always strive to maximize their effectiveness in local communities. In 2004, CWS and MAG restructured the de-mining efforts in Kampong Thom to create a more holistic approach to development and de-mining efforts. Instead of deploying a well-trained team of mobile de-miners from elsewhere in the country, MAG selected local villagers to de-mine an area near their homes. A special effort was made to recruit the poorest and most vulnerable as workers, with the hope that a temporary, steady source of income would allow the de-miners to invest and develop themselves. This strategy, called “locality de-mining,” is “based on an assumption that de-mining will bring improvements when local villagers are clearing their community land.”¹³ In this model, a team of 12 local de-miners (called a Locality De-mining Team, or LDMT) are trained to the same standard as all other MAG staff, and work for a few years to de-mine land close to their village.¹⁴

⁶ “International Campaign to Ban Landmines,” <<http://www.icbl.org/problem/what>>, International Campaign to Ban Landmines, 2006. (accessed 5 March 2007).

⁷ “What we do—Landmines,” Church World Service, <http://www.churchworldservice.org/Educ_Advo/landminesCWS.html> 28 September 2007. (accessed 5 March 2007).

⁸ Baseline Survey Team, Church World Service Cambodia, “Locality De-miner Baseline Survey 2005,” Church World Service Cambodia, Unpublished Document, 2005, p.i.

⁹ “What is MAG?” Mines Advisory Group, 2006, <<http://www.mag.org.uk/page.php?p=606&s=4>> (accessed 5 March 2007).

¹⁰ Wild, “Church World Service Cambodia: Annual Report 2002,” p.22.

¹¹ Wild, “Church World Service Cambodia: Annual Report 2002,” p.22.

¹² Wild, “Church World Service Cambodia: Annual Report 2002,” p.22.

¹³ Baseline Survey Team, Church World Service Cambodia, “Locality De-miner Baseline Survey 2005,” Church World Service Cambodia, Unpublished Document, 2005, p.1.

¹⁴ Church World Service, author unknown, “Locality Demining Malai District, Banteay Meanchey Province: Three Year Proposal,” Church World Service Cambodia, unpublished document, written 26 November 2006.

Section 1.2 Objectives of the 2007 De-mining Survey

This report builds on previous de-mining work CWS and MAG have done. With an attitude of informed reflection and thoughtful critique, this report confirms the value of the LDMT program and suggests several changes to be made when CWS and MAG launch a similar program in the Malai district in Banteay Meanchey province in July 2007.

There are many benefits to the LDMT model, and in some cases, it has proved wildly successful. LDMTs are cost-effective, because local teams receive half the salary of a more experienced (but equally capable) Mine Action Team (MAT).¹⁵ Reducing cost is crucial, as some speculate that funds for de-mining have begun drying up.¹⁶ Others argue that it is important to pay individuals equally for the cost of their work, especially when the performance is the same. This is one of the most controversial issues surrounding LDMTs, and will be discussed in more detail later. Locality de-miners are also able to continue their lives in their own community and return home each night, rather than moving from place to place as the MATs do. This reduces the incidents of alcoholism, drug addiction, and increase in prostitution and sexually transmitted diseases often associated with the MATs who are farther from home.¹⁷ LDMTs also feed more of their money into the local economy, stimulating local growth in rural communities.¹⁸ Additionally, LDMTs have a deeper connection to and investment in the land that they clear. Some might worry that LDMTs are not as thorough or cautious as the more experienced MATs, but when interviewed in February, Pheap Mono, Regional Manager for MAG in Kampong Thom, stated that LDMTs were “very disciplined, very industrious, [and] very hardworking,” and that there had been no accidents among these teams thus far.¹⁹

However, the LDMT strategy used in Kampong Thom is not a perfect solution, and there are several ideas to consider as CWS looks to create a similar program in Banteay Meanchey.

Section 2: Methodology

Section 2.1 Purpose of the Survey

In Kampong Thom, the LDMT model was incredibly successful. As CWS and MAG prepare to launch another de-mining program in Banteay Meanchey province, they must first take some time to reflect on how to improve their relationship with each other and local residents. Recognizing that there are many lessons to be learned from work in Kampong Thom, CWS appointed two volunteers to research the LDMT program there and determine how it could be improved. This report is one result of that exhaustive research. It is an attempt to summarize the information collected from interviews with individuals in Kampong Thom who were affected by the de-mining work of CWS and MAG. All interviews were conducted between March 1 and 3, 2007, by these two CWS volunteer interns from the United States, working through a Khmer translator.

¹⁵ Littlejohn and Roberts, “Maximizing the Impact: Tailoring Mine Action to Development Needs,” p.14.

¹⁶ Littlejohn and Roberts, “Maximizing the Impact: Tailoring Mine Action to Development Needs,” p.9.

¹⁷ Littlejohn and Roberts, “Maximizing the Impact: Tailoring Mine Action to Development Needs,” p.13.

¹⁸ Littlejohn and Roberts, “Maximizing the Impact: Tailoring Mine Action to Development Needs,” p.14.

¹⁹ Pheap Mono, interview by Hillary Watson and Kelli Yoder, 28 Feb. 2007, notes. Nationwide, locality de-miners have been involved in accidents. One can assume he is referring to LDMTs in Kompong Thom.

Section 2.2 Sample Population

Interviewees came from four villages in the Kampong Svay district of Kampong Thom: Nipich Khor, Nipich Kor, Doun Chhouk, and O'Ambaeng. There were two male and four female locality de-miners interviewed. All the men had families, and all but one of the women were single at the time they were de-miners. Their ages ranged from 24 to 35. Each de-miner owned between $\frac{1}{2}$ and 1 hectare of land. Both before and after de-mining, all respondents made a living as farmers, and very few cultivated rice for profit. Among the beneficiaries interviewed, five were female and one was male. However, it is important to consider that beneficiaries include all the members of each interviewee's household as well as many others.

Section 2.3 Data Collection

In order to gather information from a variety of sources, the interviewers used four separate questionnaires (see appendix). The first was used to speak to village chiefs, and learn about the background of the village and the work CWS had done there. Specific questions asked about the history and the involvement of CWS and the other NGOs in the area. Another form asked questions to locality de-miners themselves, in order to hear how the work they had done affected their lives. De-miners answered questions about their livelihoods, assets, and food security before, during, and after serving as de-miners. A third form had questions about how cleared land had been developed, and was used to speak to employees at schools that were built after an area was de-mined. School directors and teachers explained the importance of de-mining and how it affected students and their families. The final form had questions for villagers who had benefited when CWS and MAG cleared their land. These individuals were asked about land use, food security, and assets before and after de-mining, as well as how their families had benefited from de-mining. Recorded data was both qualitative and quantitative, and all respondents had the opportunity to add their own questions or comments.

The two interns created all the questionnaires, aided by the CWS office in Phnom Penh. They also conducted a thorough analysis of data for this report in the week following their interviews.

Section 2.4 Assumptions

When doing this survey, it was necessary to make a variety of assumptions. Some assumptions were based on general information about Kampong Thom and rural Cambodia. For example, when villagers stated that they were farmers, the assumption was usually made that they grew for their own families rather than selling their rice for a profit. Other assumptions were based on answers received in previous interviews, which was the case in a question asking villagers who had originally planted mines on their land.

Section 2.5 Scope and Limitations

These surveys focused on the de-mining efforts of CWS within a small area of Kampong Thom. This allowed the interviewers to study in depth the locality de-mining program from the perspective of de-miners and beneficiaries. As with any translated information, there is a high chance something was lost or misunderstood between the parties involved.

Although the primary focus of the survey was the locality de-mining which occurred from 2004-2006, the interviewers cannot guarantee all the beneficiaries had their land de-mined in this

period. There was also some confusion because both schools received funding from CWS and other sources, including the government and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). At times, it was difficult to understand which organization had funded each part of the de-mining and school building.

Many interviewees expressed unease because they were not used to interacting with foreigners. The interviewers tried to assure people that they were not employees of CWS to help the people feel more comfortable, and the translator engaged interviewees in casual conversation before starting the survey. When other CWS staff were nearby, it was sometimes difficult to tell if individuals were changing their answers to be less critical of CWS. Sometimes, the interviewers or translator requested that staff leave the area so that the people answered more honestly.

Furthermore, the entire process took place over just a few weeks, and all interviews were completed in three days. For this reason, the data is limited. It was easy to identify broad patterns, but some answers may not be representative of the many de-miners who worked with CWS and MAG.

Section 3 Overview of Locality De-mining in Kampong Thom from October 2004 to 2005²⁰

As the 10th anniversary of the Mine Ban Treaty approaches, funding for de-mining is expected to decrease.²¹ At the same time, the amount of available land in Cambodia continues to decrease and the number of Cambodians in need of land increases.²² For these reasons, as well as those previously mentioned, MAG developed the locality de-mining program and invited organizations, including CWS, to take part. With the help of CWS, MAG hoped to use this form of de-mining to, as one report put it, “support development at the same time as being a cost-effective and efficient method of de-mining” in Kampong Thom province.²³ The two organizations collaborated in this way in 2004 with the aim of clearing high priority land in CWS Kampong Thom (CWS/KPT) target areas over the course of two years, using members of the involved villages to de-mine. **Though there had been de-mining in Kampong Thom by these two organizations since 1993, the information here focuses only on the Baseline Survey conducted midway through the 2004 collaboration, as it was the most detailed information accessible.**

The process of this locality de-mining initiative was modeled after one of MAG’s earlier programs. CWS/KPT and MAG worked together to discuss how the program would be implemented. Leaders from the communes that would be de-mined (Damrey Slab, Tbeng and Nipich), were alerted and able to take part in planning and decision-making. Villagers were encouraged to apply for the position of de-miner. Members of MAG and CWS/KPT interviewed each applicant and chose de-miners with the intent of picking villagers in the most vulnerable

²⁰ Unless otherwise noted, the information in this section comes from: Baseline Survey Team, Church World Service Cambodia, “Locality De-miner Baseline Survey 2005,” Church World Service Cambodia, Unpublished Document, 2005.

²¹ Littlejohn and Roberts, “Maximizing the Impact: Tailoring Mine Action to Development Needs,” p. 4

²² Littlejohn and Roberts, “Maximizing the Impact: Tailoring Mine Action to Development Needs,” p. 6

²³ Littlejohn and Roberts, “Maximizing the Impact: Tailoring Mine Action to Development Needs,” p. 5

positions. MAG then spent four weeks training the de-miners and measured workers by the same standards as their mobile de-mining teams. These de-miners were divided into groups in order to de-mine the land that had been designated high priority for de-mining.

In 2005, midway through the process of de-mining, a baseline survey was conducted to gather data in order to determine what effects the initiative had on the locality de-miners. A sample of 48 de-miners from 12 villages was interviewed. Their findings were largely indicative of positive change. In nearly every case, the food shortages the families had experienced some time before crop cultivation were completely eliminated. The study showed that beyond that, the salary from de-mining allowed families to buy land, tools, animals, bicycles, rice mills, and repair their houses.

In order to improve any similar de-mining initiatives in the future, the study suggested a few things. First, there was found to be some controversy over whether the de-miner selection process was conducted fairly. Some of the de-miners had more land or wealth than what should have qualified them as vulnerable. This, the study suggested, should be dealt with more carefully by improving the collaboration and communication between CWS/KPT, MAG, and the villages. Second, CWS/KPT staff involvement with the villages was suggested to be lacking. The study indicates key opportunities that weren't taken advantage of and should be paid more attention the next time around. This involves training new land owners, building relationships with CWS/KPT staff and villagers while working in the area, urging villagers to join Self-Help Groups (SHG), educating them about health care, and emphasizing the benefits of literacy classes.

Section 4 Findings

Section 4.1 Lives of Locality De-miners

Six former locality de-miners were asked questions to determine how their lives had been affected by locality de-mining. Previously gathered information was found in 2005, so interviewers were specifically interested in finding out how life had changed since their job as de-miners ended.

1. Food and Assets

Significantly, none of the de-miners have had to sell any assets since the job ended. And they made on average three major purchases while they were receiving a salary. Four of the six said life was better now than before they were de-miners, one said it was the same and the de-miner who said it was worse was struggling to pay a sick relative's hospital bills. Of the five who answered the question, three were hopeful about the future.

Based on how often hunger was and is still experienced, every one of the six can be said to be doing at least somewhat better at this point than before beginning the de-mining job. However, nearly all agreed that life was better while de-mining.

2. Process of Selection

Everyone felt the selection process for de-miners was fair. Two people spoke of hearing that other people were jealous of their job, but said nothing about the selection process.

3. De-miners' Feelings about Work and CWS

For all three of the de-miners who answered these questions, the job was scary for the first few days, but after awhile they began to enjoy it and two stated feeling proud.

De-miners were not very aware of the presence and role of CWS in de-mining. Most knew it was CWS and MAG who gave them the job, but all said they hadn't worked with CWS before. One had her land cleared by CWS, so the fact that she didn't acknowledge that made obvious the possibility that others had received aid from CWS and just weren't aware of it.

Of the four who were asked, no one paid anyone to get the de-mining job.

4. Job Outlook

Based on the fact that only one person held a job other than farming after having de-mined, it is reasonable to conclude that having held a job which required skilled training has not aided the de-miners in getting other jobs. When the de-mining finished, all returned to the same jobs they had before de-mining.

Section 4.2 Villager Beneficiaries

The effects of the locality de-mining program had on the other parts of the village were evaluated as well. Most obviously, this was through interviews with villagers who had their land cleared.

1. Food

Being newly able to plant a larger amount of rice allowed for beneficiaries to experience less hunger and be somewhat better able to save in other ways. However, the beneficiaries still reported that they experienced some hunger during the year. Because food insecurity is as high as 90% in Kampong Thom, it is still possible that de-mining had a large impact.²⁴

Having land cleared decreased the amount of hunger people experienced before cultivation in 100% of the cases. In the cases (there were three) where exact months of hunger experienced before land was cleared and hunger experienced now were given the average of decrease was $1 \frac{1}{3} - 1 \frac{2}{3}$ less months in which hunger was experienced now than before their land was cleared.

2. Assets

Amount of assets increased in $\frac{2}{3}$ of the households, with the other third maintaining the same amount of assets. Notably, it was observed that the group of beneficiaries, based on the collectively smaller amount of assets, was poorer than the de-miners. For example, all of the beneficiaries owned one or less buffalos while five of the six de-miners owned at least a cow and a buffalo, four of the six owned two buffalos.

²⁴ Wild, "Church World Service Cambodia: Annual Report 2002," p.22.

3. CWS Involvement

Of the three who were asked how CWS had helped them only one mentioned CWS by name, and even then said she was unsure.

Section 4.3 Community Beneficiaries

The community beneficiaries interviewed were two school directors and a clergyman at the village pagoda. Clearing the mines in these public places made a difference in all cases in terms of allowing people to walk around without fear of injury or death.

1. Effects on Lifestyle

In the case of the Nipich Kor School, nearly three times as many students were attending school than before the land had been cleared around the school. While school was being held on un-mined land, the director of the school attributed lack of attendance to fear from students, as well as parents, of injury or death.

2. CWS Involvement

In two cases, the person in charge at the public ground knew the contribution that CWS had made in getting the land cleared or supporting the building of a building. In the other case, the land clearing was only attributed to MAG.

Section 5 Recommendations

Based on the collaboration of all the information already mentioned, it is possible to make several deductions about how to implement this program again in Malai.

The majority of the findings showed there were significant positive changes in the livelihood of those involved in the de-mining initiatives in Kampong Thom province. There was little if any evidence of negative changes taking place. Hunger was reduced for beneficiaries and sometimes eliminated completely for de-miners. With the extra salary or extra land to farm, the majority of villagers were able to add to their assets. For these reasons, it is recommended that the program be continued. However, the findings allowed for the making of a few recommendations for changes in the future, which have been given in this section while acknowledging the hope that the information presented in this report will also be evaluated by those more skilled in the areas relating to this work.

Section 5.1 Selection Process

We were unable to gather much data about the selection process, as all of the de-miners we talked to found it fair. This was to be expected. However, a few mentioned that they were aware of other villagers feeling jealous of those who were picked as de-miners. Still, based on the original survey report, there was miscommunication between MAG and CWS/KPT and applications were handed out before CWS/KPT had determined who they wanted to target for the job.²⁵ Because of this, the de-miners were not all from the lowest end of the impoverished families, in contrast to the previous intentions of CWS. If CWS wishes to recruit the poorest

²⁵ Baseline Survey Team, Church World Service Cambodia, "Locality De-miner Baseline Survey 2005," Church World Service Cambodia, Unpublished Document, 2005, p. 28

villagers for future projects, it will be necessary to reassess the methods for accomplishing this and find ways to ensure constant, clear communication between MAG and CWS.

Section 5.2 Gender

As the initial baseline survey reported, the amount of women used appeared to be a very positive choice.²⁶ In three of the four cases, the women added many assets to their names and eliminated hunger in their families, while originally coming from a very vulnerable position (single, raising orphaned siblings or nieces). In the fourth case, the woman interviewed noted that she saved money while de-mining, but was currently using it all to pay her sister's hospital bills. It is clear that these women greatly benefited from the action of CWS. This report recommends that CWS continue aiding women in vulnerable positions so that they can support their families, in greater numbers if possible.

Section 5.3 CWS Influence

In the original findings of 2005, the involvement of CWS was sparser than desired.²⁷ This further study confirmed that research. Of those interviewed, only the de-miners consistently were aware that CWS had helped them. A few beneficiaries had been helped by CWS but weren't able to name CWS as the source of that aid. This indicates that CWS must be conscious in building relationships with villagers in the future.

Locality de-mining offers many opportunities for aiding community development. CWS/KPT effectively realized some of those, but many were ignored. There were many additional development opportunities in Kampong Thom, especially in areas such as health education, SHG attendance, literacy classes, and crop planting education. A relationship could be built with de-miners and beneficiaries so that they are aware of CWS in a positive way. A suggestion is to begin community development by using the locality de-miners as a starting point for community development classes and initiatives for everyone in the village.

Section 5.4 Land Cleared

The beneficiaries of de-mining are perhaps the group who received the most long-term help from the initiative. The individuals spoken to were already experiencing less hunger and will continue to grow more food than before for presumably years to come, as they have gained safe farmland without losing anything.

The public areas that were cleared allowed for very positive changes to take place. This is one of the most successful results of the LDMT because it allows the entire community to benefit and thus, the resulting growth in morale successfully contributes to community development.

Section 5.5 Long-Term Sustainability

After listening to a few appeals from villagers for more work from CWS and carefully considering the living standards of de-miners after their job ended, it is our assessment that locality de-mining will never satisfy villagers completely due to the short length of time they

²⁶ Baseline Survey Team, Church World Service Cambodia, "Locality De-miner Baseline Survey 2005," Church World Service Cambodia, Unpublished Document, 2005, p. 27

²⁷ Baseline Survey Team, Church World Service Cambodia, "Locality De-miner Baseline Survey 2005," Church World Service Cambodia, Unpublished Document, 2005, p. 28

receive a regular salary. When the job ends, they are only slightly better off than where they started. While some standards of living improved, it can be concluded that villagers would receive more long-term benefits if they were given a job for a few more years and were required to take money management classes, or were in some way prepared for the period of time when they would return to subsistence farming. CWS partially counteracts the temporary nature of the employment by continuing development work in that village after de-mining. However, giving people a taste of employment and then taking it away could be problematic, and contribute to urban migration and distrust in foreign organizations. CWS could assist villagers by helping them find another skilled job. Perhaps CWS could use its partnership with MAG to help trained villagers find work as MAT de-miners, if the villagers were willing.

It should also be noted that for those who don't want to leave home, locality de-mining might be the only job option available. It is simply urged to contribute support for an initiative either to create other longer-term jobs inside the villages or to put the same effort into teaching more effective farming techniques, so that people's livelihoods will continue to increase when the mines are gone.

One final suggestion for creating more long-term sustainability is to consider carefully the salary of locality de-miners. As they do make about half the amount of mobile teams, it seems one way of reducing this arguably unfair difference would be to raise the salary of locality de-miners.²⁸ This would create more potential for long-term change. There are several other arguments for an increase in wages such as that "they should be paid as much as the mobile de-miners because the work is the same," or, that "de-mining is dangerous so wages should be large enough to compensate the risk to life."²⁹ It should also be noted that none of the de-miners mentioned receiving too little pay. Regional Manager Pheap Mono of MAG Kampong Thom said in an interview that he feels locality teams are better because they help villages and local people more than MATs. The villagers work to feed their families but "the pay is not good," he said, adding, "It's not fair."³⁰

Section 6 Conclusion

Overall, these findings support the recommendation that this program be continued because of the economic boost, however short-term, that it appeared to have been in Doun Chhouk, O'Ambaeng, Nipich Kor and Nipich Khor, creating short-term hunger relief for locality-de-miners, and long-term help for those having their land cleared, with the suggestion that even more good can be accomplished if more strategic steps are engaged to take advantage of the opportunities for development that arise from the locality de-mining initiative.

²⁸ Since February 2005, the Locality De-miners have been paid \$70 a month in comparison with a mobile de-miner's wage of \$170-\$200 depending on the individual's level of skill. Littlejohn and Roberts, "Maximizing the Impact: Tailoring Mine Action to Development Needs," p.14

²⁹ Littlejohn and Roberts, "Maximizing the Impact: Tailoring Mine Action to Development Needs," p.145

³⁰ Pheap Mono, interview by Hillary Watson and Kelli Yoder, 28 Feb. 2007, notes.

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