



 **natün**

**2024 STRATEGIC
& IMPACT REPORT**



Becoming Natün

Over the past 4 years, since publishing our Strategic Plan 2020 - 2025, the organization has continued to evolve. In 2022, we changed our name from Mayan Families to Natün, a change which reflects our growth and commitment to community voices, systemic change and sustainable development.

Our work equips local change agents and catalyzes existing local resources to sustainably build healthy, economically vibrant Maya communities in Guatemala. Natün's strategy centers on preserving and elevating Maya ancestral knowledge, language, and culture. Designed closely with community members and leaders, all our programs holistically incorporate Indigenous practices, knowledge, techniques, and languages grounded by data-driven international best practices.

In Kaqchikel, Natün means to unite or come together, to stand for a common cause. In Latin, Natün relates to being born, growing, and becoming as intended. And that is the work and future of the organization, to come together for the community, to grow, learn and become our best together.



Strategic Planning

In 2020, we carried out a strategic planning process, under the following principles:

Maya Leadership

Led by our Indigenous staff, in both the direction of the programmatic work and leadership at the organizational level.

Collaboration

Staff, Board, donors and community came together to incorporate a mixture of perspectives, expertise, communities and stakeholders.

Community Approach

Community-focused - every step had community voices at its core to ensure that all the work we are doing and the long-term vision are based on community strengths, needs, and self-identified goals.



Contextualizing Our Work: Together with the Communities

Also known as the Land of Eternal Spring, Guatemala, with a population of approximately 18 million, is a country praised for its wealth of natural landscapes, flora, fauna and its diverse, welcoming people. Amidst the beauty, the country has been painfully taxed with the consequences of a 36-year civil war characterized by a high level of violence, genocide and human rights violations directed, principally, towards the Indigenous population. Over many years and many dictatorships, the living conditions of the Maya people have deteriorated significantly.

Since the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996, the country continues to struggle with inequity, poverty and some of the highest malnutrition rates in the world. As a result of discrimination against the Indigenous intersected by the violence of warfare, many families were forced to flee to remote territory, wherein public services were either insufficient or non-existent. Hence, Indigenous communities are severely and systemically under-sourced. Despite the implementation of some government programs and laws to recognize and support the Maya people, the Indigenous population of 11 million (according to Indigenous groups), equivalent to around 60% of

the total population, continue to suffer from deeply unequal access to health, education, and economic development opportunities.

Its painful history notwithstanding, Guatemala is immensely blessed by the cultural strength, knowledge and resilience of the Maya: a jeweled weave enriching both country and community. Natün works by elevating and centering that same cultural strength and knowledge. Our work is community-led, mirrored within the organization in staff composition and our leadership team, and externally, with our community partners. By complementing the resources and knowledge already existing in rural communities, we create a lasting impact in which the main actors are the communities.

We focus on providing programs which address the critical development opportunities catalyzed by increased access to quality education, building economic opportunities, and reducing malnutrition, all the while enhancing community leadership and collaboration.



Overall Strategy





Vision

Vision

Maya communities in the Lake Atitlán region of Guatemala are strong, vibrant, and self-sufficient.

Mission

Advancing education, nutrition & health, and economic development, through culturally relevant, community-led initiatives that build on existing resources and knowledge.

General Objectives

- Promote long-term sustainable development in the communities of intervention through strategic programs.
- Foster community leadership, strengthening local capacities to address priority needs.

Our Core Values

Cooperation | Integrity | Transparency | Respect | Humility | Accountability | Reciprocity





Cooperation

We work as a kind, effective and supportive team in collaboration with our communities.

Integrity

We act honestly and ethically, thereby earning the trust and confidence of both communities and supporters.

Transparency

Our processes and use of resources are reasonable, justified and clearly communicated.

Respect

We treat all people kindly and fairly, with dignity and empathy.

Humility

We recognize our role as facilitators, centering and valuing local expertise. We evolve based on constant learning and self-improvement.

Accountability

We thoughtfully and responsibly manage our resources to ensure both efficient use and intentional impact.

Reciprocity

We believe in dignified, equitable relationships with our community, fostering agency, active participation and service to others.

Our values are at the core of everything we do. We believe that all of our work is necessarily and infinitely strengthened by being:

- 1 Led by local Indigenous staff.
- 2 Oriented towards community-led solutions by listening to community voices.
- 3 Focused on long-term, holistic and sustainable programs.

Natün's Shared Threads





Natün's Shared Threads

**Human Rights | Leadership | Cultural Relevance | Gender Equality
Environment | Partnerships for Systemic Change**

Natün's commitment to holistic community development is rooted in Indigenous communities and guided by six shared threads: Human Rights, Leadership, Cultural Relevance, Gender Equality, Environment, and Partnerships for Systemic Change. These threads reflect Natün's commitment to partner communities and center Indigenous voices in every program.

Natün's programs seamlessly integrate the six threads into each initiative, ensuring an innovative and impactful approach. This approach, which has been a core part of our strategy, ensures that all our programs are developed within a tapestry of shared threads.

CULTURAL RELEVANCE

Definition for Natün:

Respect for the cultural and social context of Indigenous communities - language, food, customs and traditions, and organizational structure.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Definition for Natün:

We complement the rights of people in the areas of intervention, contributing to almost all essential human and Indigenous rights.

GENDER EQUALITY

Definition for Natün:

Gender equity and social inclusion of women in all domestic and community spheres, and decision-making spaces.

LEADERSHIP

Definition for Natün:

Skills to guide and attract committed people, providing the necessary resources to achieve objectives that generate changes in communities. Strengthen internal Indigenous leadership to transmit to communities.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Definition for Natün:

Generate coordination spaces with the actors identified within the system to define joint actions and community for a common good.

ENVIRONMENT

Definition for Natün:

Take into account the network made by various ecological systems including climate, water cycle, land, flora, and fauna, in all our actions.

Community Alliances





Community Alliances

We strongly believe that listening to a diverse array of voices and working collaboratively with communities makes our work more impactful.

We collaborate with Indigenous communities in Sololá to strengthen community development. We base this on the three traditional stones that are used to form the cooking fire in a traditional Maya household, reflecting efforts coming together and the center of the household.



The Community Alliances department intertwines and connects communities, institutions and local leaders to strengthen the development of Indigenous communities in Sololá.

We achieve this by:

- Establishing **alliances with community leaders** from each of Natün's partner communities, to unify efforts toward community development, with an emphasis on bilateral communication.
 - ◆ Our outreach to community leaders is fundamental to establishing an entry point in each of the communities, encouraging active and communicative participation among those involved.
- Coordinating **community projects** that benefit local populations, rooted in cultural relevance of Indigenous communities.
 - ◆ Community context allows us to establish and prioritize needed community projects, working closely with the community every step of the way.
- Facilitating **inter-institutional connections** (governmental and non-governmental),

to coordinate efforts which enhance local community development.

- ◆ Identifying other institutions which share our vision allows us to unify efforts for holistic development.
- Promoting spaces for community and institutional participation within the **strengthening of local leadership**.
 - ◆ As part of the cultivation of skills of local leadership, we carry out capacity building with local leaders depending on the needs of each of the communities.

We actively collaborate with and listen to community members, community leaders, local authorities, governmental and non-governmental organizations, donors and institutions that share our values and help us advance our community mission.

HOLISTIC PROGRAMS SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

Brandon's journey began with a challenging start as he spent his first month in the neonatal intensive care unit due to his premature birth and low birth weight. His mother, Silvia, faced significant financial strain as she accumulated debt to cover his extensive medical treatments, which included incubation, feeding support, infection care, and monitoring for breathing and heart rate difficulties.

Upon his release, doctors recommended Silvia to Natün's Growing Healthy Program, a support offered to families combating malnutrition and related health issues in rural Indigenous areas of Guatemala. The program, supported by the Guatemalan Ministry of Public Health, partner NGOs, and a network of local Maya healthcare providers, ensures that families have access to important support.

Despite not having the opportunity to study beyond elementary school herself, Silvia is determined to ensure her children receive an education. "I do everything I can to make sure my children attend school because I know it will make their future better," she says.

Now 4 years old, Brandon attends Natün's local Preschool Nutrition Center, the only early childhood educational institution in their community. The high-impact preschool prioritizes enrollment for children combating malnutrition and those from low-income families. Brandon's teacher, Miss Rosa, uses a





play-based learning model to develop essential skills such as motor skills, bilingual communication in Spanish and Kaqchikel (the local Mayan language), and hygiene practices.

The preschool also provides daily nutritious meals and access to high-quality medical care, focusing on malnutrition prevention. Miss Rosa proudly notes, “Brandon has made significant advances both cognitively and physically.”

When Silvia discovered she was pregnant with her third child, she enrolled in Natün’s Women’s Health Program. Attending monthly meetings, she learned about pre- and post-natal care and received essential medical services to prevent prenatal malnutrition. Silvia gave birth to a healthy baby girl in 2023. “I tell all the

mothers in the community that come to the meetings...the benefit is for the whole community’s future.”

As Silvia’s family grows, Natün continues supporting them through holistically-designed programs. Silvia plans to sign up for Natün’s sewing and entrepreneurship classes and enroll her youngest daughter in the preschool program as soon as she is old enough.



Programs





Education



EDUCATION

General Objective

Strengthen children and adolescents' education, through skills development and family involvement in comprehensive training processes with cultural relevance.

Preschool Nutrition Centers

Contribute to physical, emotional, intellectual, and social early childhood development, with an emphasis on cultural relevance, to facilitate entry into elementary school and solidify skills for their future education.

Seeds of Education Scholarship Program

Provides access to educational formation for children and youth, developing skills for personal, family, and community growth.

Learning Communities

Creates spaces for educational support and participation, based on the community context, to develop future community leaders.



Education Programs Impact 2023 | Results

5,407 **nutritious meals provided** to preschool students, allowing for a balanced diet and improved nutrition.

56% **female students.**

208 **young people participated in workshops on critical topics** such as local development, leadership, irregular migration, and Maya art.

137 **participants in tutoring learning communities** in Panajachel, San Antonio Palopó, and Tierra Linda.

6 **teacher training sessions** (including best practices, evaluation instruments, and Montessori methodology) where 100% of teachers reported improved classroom management skills.



Education Programs Impact 2023 | Impact

90% **participation rate of parents** in family educational support workshops, showing a strong commitment to supporting children's development.

84% **of preschool students successfully graduated.**

83% **graduation rate of scholarship students across primary, secondary, and university** levels demonstrates the program's ability to support students in overcoming educational barriers.

55% **of children and youth in the Scholarship Program achieved an academic performance above 75%,** indicating the program's effectiveness in promoting academic achievement during critical educational points.

51% **of Youth Leadership participants attend community meetings** where they learn more about the situations and problems of their community.

100% **of the youth participants acquired various skills for personal empowerment** during workshops given, resulting in pertinent information for their daily lives.

Objectives, Activities, and Results

Short Term

Medium Term

Long Term



(2020 - 2021)

(2022 - 2023)

(2024 - 2025)

Objectives, Activities, and Results



Short Term (2020 - 2021)

- Create programs that contribute to the importance of all schooling levels in the communities.
- Partnerships with educational centers and community leaders to identify educational needs and promote quality education.
- Capacity building and training with a focus on pedagogy for educational staff.
- 3 Preschool Nutrition Centers for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years old, and more than 1,000 students with an educational scholarship.
- Academic reinforcement and tutoring focusing on subjects such as mathematics, communication, and language.

Objectives, Activities, and Results

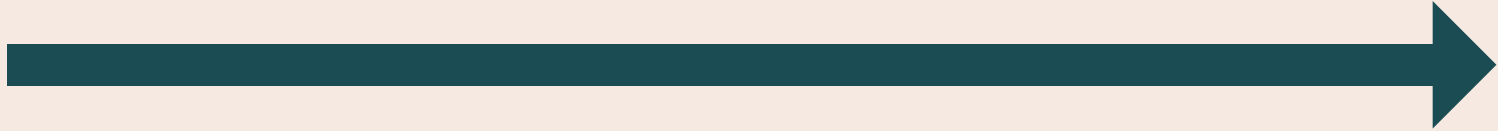


Medium Term (2022 - 2023)

- Strengthen children and adolescents' education, through skills development and family involvement in comprehensive training processes with cultural relevance.
- Meetings to share experiences which contribute to improving the quality of education for students, families and the community, highlighting the importance of education.
- Mutual knowledge exchanges and new alliances with organizations that share similar teaching methodologies.
- Implementation of a community service model, where students strengthen their leadership skills and learn reciprocity as they volunteer and give their time, knowledge and talent to their communities.
- Strengthen children's cognitive, social, and linguistic abilities, with emphasis on cultural relevance, so all children can accomplish self-guided learning.



Objectives, Activities, and Results



Long Term (2024 - 2025)

- Counteract the educational deficiencies of partner communities.
- Incentivize a culture of mutual and collective support within youth, to become agents of change in their communities.
- Integration of local, departmental, and national networks for youth advocacy and inclusion.
- Training in entrepreneurship for youth who do not have access to formal higher education, including alliances with local businesses and other organizations for mentorship.
- Develop holistic university scholarships, including international university options.



Nutrition & Health



NUTRITION & HEALTH

General Objective

Promote access to medical and nutritional services with cultural relevance, to improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable populations in the communities of Sololá.

Community Health

Promotes strategies for support and capacity building in healthcare to prevent malnutrition and generate community development with cultural relevance.

- 1 **Healthy Nutrition** Facilitates food security at the community level.
- 2 **Elderly** Promotes the integral development of the elderly, facilitating access to nutritional food and mental and physical health activities.
- 3 **Community Health Promoters** Strengthens local female capacities to drive community-led health initiatives and women's participation in leadership spaces.



Holistic Malnutrition Prevention

Promotes health, good nutrition, and prevention of malnutrition risk in children and pregnant women through comprehensive nutritional health and education services.

- 1 **Growing Healthy** Provides comprehensive nutritional education and healthcare to reduce the risk of child malnutrition.
- 2 **Women's Health** Promotes health and nutrition education and healthcare to prevent obstetric and newborn risks.
- 3 **Maya Midwives** Strengthens the skills and capacities of Maya midwives and healers so that they can provide a comprehensive health service with cultural relevance in their communities.

Community and Family Agriculture

Facilitates food production, availability, and access, contributing to the reduction of malnutrition and income creation.



Nutrition & Health Impact 2023 | Results

170 **family gardens implemented** across 4 communities.

6 **community demonstration gardens implemented across 3 communities** serve as learning hubs, where 170 community members have participated in hands-on training sessions on sustainable agriculture practices.

398 **food support packages delivered to families at high risk of malnutrition**, improving their access to a diet of high nutritional value.

55 **hygiene kit packages delivered to community members** identified as high-risk, promoting improved hygiene practices and reducing the risk of communicable diseases.

102 **children under 5 years old received medical/nutritional check-ups** and treatment follow-ups.

30 **elderly adults supported** with medical and nutritional check-ups, food, and workshops on spiritual strengthening, recreational activities, crafts, and physiotherapy.

40 **Maya midwives and healers trained in topics of childbirth care and complications**, with the purpose of providing a quality service at the community level.



Nutrition & Health Impact 2023 | Impact

65% of children in Creciendo Sano (Growing Healthy) are now in a normal nutritional status after 6 months of nutritional support.

71% after 2 years, 71% of the children suffering from malnutrition showed improvements in their weight and height, and 31% continue to improve gradually.

95% of preschool students maintain correct nutritional status for their height and age.

90% of Maya midwives had an active participation in the training on Pre and Post Natal topics.

55% of families met the ecological standards for the implementation of their family gardens.

Cristina, a comadrona (traditional Maya midwife) and mother of four, is a beacon of hope in her community. After experiencing three miscarriages as a young woman, she deeply understands the importance of high-quality pre-and post-natal care for women and children in rural Guatemala. Guided by a vivid dream in which a mother called out to her for help, Cristina embraced her calling to support pregnant women in her community.

As a participant in Natün's Maya Midwife Training Workshops, Cristina joins other midwives to enhance their traditional knowledge of modern health practices. These workshops, led by Natün's Nutrition & Health Department collaborating with a team of Ministry of Health professionals, provide training and essential equipment to empower midwives to become agents of change in their communities.

Cristina's family has also benefited from Natün's programs. Her youngest child, Angélica, who





suffered from low birth weight and chronic malnutrition, was referred to Natün's Growing Healthy Program. Through specialized medical care, nutritional support, and health education, Angélica transformed from a low-energy child to a healthy, bright girl now attending kindergarten.

The Maya Midwives and Growing Healthy Program combine international best practices with Indigenous knowledge to create culturally relevant solutions. Cristina's sister and her 2-year-old niece, who also battles malnutrition, are now enrolled in the program, taking proactive steps to improve their family's health.

Through her dedication and partnership with Natün, Cristina is driving positive change within her community, ensuring that future generations of Indigenous women can thrive.

Objectives, Activities, and Results

Short Term

Medium Term

Long Term



(2020 - 2021)

(2022 - 2023)

(2024 - 2025)

Objectives, Activities, and Results



Short Term (2020 - 2021)

- Promote access to medical and nutritional services with cultural relevance, to improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable populations in the communities of Sololá.
- Preventive medical and nutritional care in the communities through comprehensive services.
- Alliances with Maya healthcare practitioners to provide medical care in the communities, with culturally relevant health services and sexual and reproductive health for women in rural areas.
- Early detection and care of childhood malnutrition, in coordination with key institutions and actors in the communities.
- Access to food to alleviate hunger, in response to health and economic emergencies at the community level.communication, and language.

Objectives, Activities, and Results

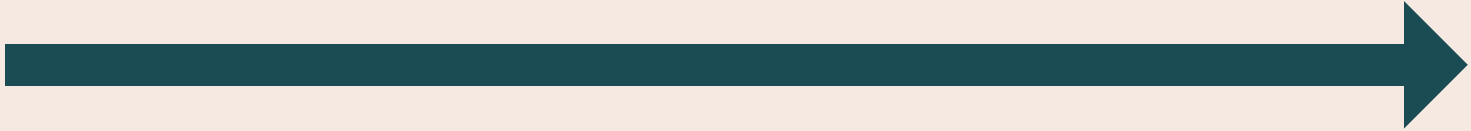


Medium Term (2022 - 2023)

- Empower vulnerable communities in health and nutrition through the availability and access to food, promoting preventive health.
- Generating access and availability of food at the community level, through the implementation of family gardens and the provision of food relief to vulnerable families.
- Coordinating and forming alliances in the area of Water and Sanitation, facilitating community management of access to safe drinking water.
- Medical services that integrate traditional Maya medicine into nutrition and health practices.
- Nutritional and health education in communities for the prevention of malnutrition.



Objectives, Activities, and Results



Long Term (2024 - 2025)

- Ensure access to medical and nutritional services to improve the quality of life of communities through the acceptance of preventive health, with a focus on cultural relevance and the environment.
- Ensure access and availability of food at the community level through Community Gardens.
- Comprehensive maternal and child health service through medical referrals with specialties in gynecology, pediatrics, and nutrition.
- Comprehensive health and sexuality education for youth, adolescents, and women in rural areas.
- Comprehensive health services that promote the active participation of Maya healthcare practitioners in the community medical system.



Economic Development



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

General Objective

Generate opportunities that contribute to household income through strengthening skills and knowledge.

Trade Schools

Offer innovative and competitive technical training opportunities, including ancestral knowledge and practices for the generation of income for the participants in the communities of Sololá.

Entrepreneurship

Promotes socio-economic opportunities through training in business skills, leadership, and family entrepreneurship to contribute to improving families' economic situation.

Artisan

Facilitates the commercialization of artisanal and innovative products to generate fair and sustainable economic income.



Economic Development Impact 2023 | Results

207 total participants.

7 community agreements signed and 43 meetings held with community leaders and partners, resulting in programs implemented in Peña Blanca, Tierra Linda, Santa María el Tablón, Cooperativa, Los Morales, Panimatzalam, and Tucaché.

130 women in 9 savings groups, 38 with access to microcredit to implement their small businesses.

108 graduates in technical skills and 178 in entrepreneurial skills.



Economic Development Impact 2023 | Impact

100% of Trade School participants indicated that previously they did not generate income, indicating a lack of necessary technical skills.

89% of Trade School graduates indicate that their newly acquired knowledge will save them an average of \$2,400 per year in family expenses.

14 new businesses started through microcredits, in sectors such as food service, artisan goods, and agriculture, dedicating an average of 144 hours per month to their entrepreneurial activities.

After graduating from Natün's entrepreneurship course, Maria used her recently developed business skills to apply for a Natün microloan.

Maria and 22 other women from her rural community attended the nine-month entrepreneurship training course and received 60 hours of instruction on launching small businesses.

The workshops teach participants how to create a successful business model, finance and accounting, and business administration. As with all Natün programs, the entrepreneurship workshops are carried out in the local Indigenous language of Kaqchikel, and Spanish, so that it is accessible to all individuals to enroll, participate, and learn.

Maria explains, "when I was a girl, it was not common for girls to go to school. I only completed fourth grade. My father told me that school was a waste of time and money."





Maria's passion for learning has led her to attend various Natün educational workshops. We are proud to provide women like Maria with a space where they can learn and facilitate the steps to change their lives.

Maria says that her family's economic situation and her husband's health were greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and that she was out of work for two years. Today, Maria has successfully launched her small business, a small convenience store, and continues reinvesting earnings into her store. "I can provide for my children again, and now I can purchase my husband's medicine," explains Maria.



With her family's help, Maria constructed the store from scratch, using repurposed wood and metal, alongside the dirt road in front of her home. She is now the owner of a fully operational store complete with a corn grinder -to which her customers bring cooked corn to make the local staple of tortillas-, three well-stocked refrigerators, and all of the essential amenities for life in rural Guatemala.

Objectives, Activities, and Results

Short Term

Medium Term

Long Term



(2020 - 2021)

(2022 - 2023)

(2024 - 2025)

Objectives, Activities, and Results



Short Term (2020 - 2021)

- Identify and organize program participants for training in technical and business skills that contribute to the development of family economic activities.
- Assessment of community existing skills and knowledge, in addition to verifying the courses they need and are interested in.
- Workshops for strengthening business skills such as finance, economic planning, administration, design, and marketing, including advice for starting small businesses.
- Training in entrepreneurial skills (life plan, from need to opportunity, how to start a business, business models, and entrepreneurial projects) and the process of preparing business plans.
- Expanding markets for products, including new and improved designs, made by graduates of our Trade Schools and artisan partners.

Objectives, Activities, and Results



Medium Term (2022 - 2023)

- Strengthen the productive capacity of program participants to generate economic activity, and participate in commercial opportunities.
- Formalizing and sustaining business ventures through business mentorship and offering microloans to start up and develop businesses.
- Strategically creating partnerships with local leaders to create savings groups in the communities.
- Partnership with the Ministry of Education in order to certify all courses in the Trade Schools.
- Work alongside organic family gardens, ensuring that its main priority is the household consumption, with extra production being able to be commercialized in local markets.

Objectives, Activities, and Results



Long Term (2024 - 2025)

- Promote formalizing businesses, and generate economic independence through the commercialization of products and services at the local, regional, and international level.
- Work within a formal business framework, from product production to commercialization, following legalization and taxation processes.
- Promote access and use of technology in courses, in order to improve impact and look for investors to implement more specialized technologies.
- Strengthen business ventures to position them well in the local market, connecting them to other entrepreneurs and markets to sell their products.
- Capacity building in design and adaptation to trends in artisan markets.



ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHENING

In order to uphold and successfully carry out our ambitious strategic plan, we must continuously look to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations, finances and fundraising efforts.

As a nonprofit, we have developed strong and transparent institutional processes that allow the organization to operate smoothly and credibly.

We invest efficiently in fundraising to obtain long-term grants, establishing relationships with groups and foundations that will increase our funds and allow us increased flexibility with their implementation.

We work to optimize and strengthen our administrative, financial and human resources processes, through transparent and responsible recordkeeping, supervision and accountability for all areas.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are proud of our evolution and direction as an organization, and we hope that you will walk with us to achieve our mission and vision in the Lake Atitlán region of Guatemala. Through these strategies, Natün has continued to deepen our community reach and focus on long-term systemic changes to reduce poverty and malnutrition, and increase access to quality education for all children in the communities where we work.

Natün acknowledges the invaluable efforts of our program participants & families, donors, partner organizations, community leadership, Boards of Directors and staff, all of whom make it possible for our work to continue, evolve, and create lasting impact.

We could not be more grateful for your support!





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