

*In 2017, Paraguay made a significant advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The government approved a regulation to strengthen enforcement of labor laws and standards, including on child labor, and established a fund with the International Organization for Migration to provide immediate assistance to victims of child labor and human trafficking. The Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security also established a regional office in Villarrica, released labor law enforcement statistics, and law enforcement officials attended training on labor trafficking. In addition, the government increased child and forced labor investigations in the remote Chaco region, where labor exploitation in Paraguay is most prevalent. However, children in Paraguay are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, including cattle raising and domestic servitude. Limited funding for law enforcement agencies and social programs hamper the government's ability to fully address the worst forms of child labor, particularly in rural areas.*



### I. PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Children in Paraguay engage in the worst forms of child labor, including in cattle raising and domestic servitude, sometimes as a result of human trafficking. (1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9) The 2011 National Survey of Child and Adolescent Activities found that 21 percent of all Paraguayan children were engaged in hazardous work. (2) The 2015 Survey of Activities of Rural Area Children and Adolescents, published in 2016, identified 384,677 children engaged in child labor in agriculture. (1) Table 1 provides key indicators on children's work and education in Paraguay.

**Table 1. Statistics on Children's Work and Education**

Children	Age	Percent
Working (% and population)	10 to 14	8.2 (56,492)
Attending School (%)	5 to 14	94.8
Combining Work and School (%)	10 to 14	7.1
Primary Completion Rate (%)		89.1

Source for primary completion rate: Data from 2012, published by UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018. (10)

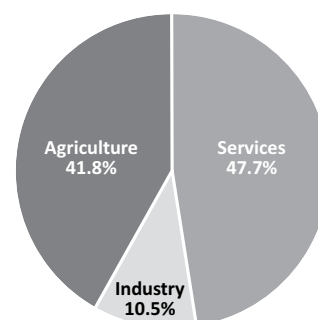
Source for all other data: Understanding Children's Work Project's analysis of statistics from Encuesta Permanente de Hogares (EPH), 2016. (11)

Based on a review of available information, Table 2 provides an overview of children's work by sector and activity.

**Table 2. Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity**

Sector/Industry	Activity
Agriculture	Production of manioc/cassava, corn, beans, peanuts, sesame, sugarcane, tomato, lettuce, melons, sweet potato, peppers, onion, carrots, cabbage, yerba mate (stimulant plant), soy, wheat, stevia, and charcoal (1; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16; 5)
	Raising poultry, pigs, cattle,† sheep, and goats and producing milk (2; 13; 14)
	Fishing, including using hooks and harpoons,† preparing bait, and cleaning fish† (1)
Industry	Construction, activities unknown, and production of bricks (2; 12; 14; 5)
	Limestone quarrying† and gold mining† (2; 12; 14; 5; 17)

**Figure 1. Working Children by Sector, Ages 10-14**



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**Table 2. Overview of Children’s Work by Sector and Activity (cont)**

Sector/Industry	Activity
Services	Domestic work† (2; 18; 14; 19; 4; 7; 8; 20; 6)
	Street work,† including vending, shoe shining, and begging (2; 12; 19; 21; 5; 9)
	Horse jockeying (5)
	Garbage dump scavenging† (2; 3; 22)
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor‡	Debt bondage in cattle raising, dairy farms, and charcoal factories (12; 5; 23; 24)
	Commercial sexual exploitation and domestic servitude, each sometimes as a result of human trafficking (3; 25; 5; 24; 6; 9)
	Use in the production of child pornography (12; 26; 27; 28; 29; 5)
	Use in illicit activities, including smuggling and drug trafficking (3; 12; 30; 5)

† Determined by national law or regulation as hazardous and, as such, relevant to Article 3(d) of ILO C. 182.

‡ Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.




*Criadazgo*, a practice in which middle-class and wealthy families informally employ and house child domestic workers from impoverished families, is pervasive in Paraguay; the 2011 National Survey of Child and Adolescent Activities estimated that more than 46,000 children were engaged in *criadazgo*. Many of these children are in situations of domestic servitude, subjected to violence and abuse, and highly vulnerable to sex trafficking. (2; 12; 8; 15; 29; 5; 24; 9) Children are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in Ciudad del Este; in the Tri-Border area between Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil; and along commercial shipping routes on the Paraguay River. (24; 5) Children work alongside their parents in debt bondage on cattle ranches, dairy farms, and charcoal factories in the remote Chaco region. (12; 5; 23; 24) Children shine shoes on the street and in the Palace of Justice, the Supreme Court building. (12)

Children from rural and indigenous communities face difficulties accessing and completing their education, including language barriers. (31; 32) The 2011 National Survey of Child and Adolescent Activities indicated that children who speak Guaraní exclusively are more likely to be involved in child labor and have higher rates of school absence compared to other working children; poverty is pervasive in rural Paraguay, where Guaraní is the predominant language. (2; 33) School buses or other forms of public transportation are limited in rural areas, and school infrastructure is often inadequate in rural and indigenous communities. The government has noted that girls from rural areas leave school at an earlier age than boys and estimated that more than 50 percent of children with disabilities could not attend school due to lack of access to public transportation. (12; 5) Such challenges may leave these children more vulnerable to child labor. Approximately 13 percent of children engaged in child labor in agriculture do not attend school and 11.8 percent of working children ages 14 to 17 have not completed primary school. (1; 34)

## II. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Paraguay has ratified all key international conventions concerning child labor (Table 3).

**Table 3. Ratification of International Conventions on Child Labor**

	Convention	Ratification
	ILO C. 138, Minimum Age	✓
	ILO C. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
	UN CRC	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
	UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography	✓
	Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

The government has established laws and regulations related to child labor (Table 4). However, gaps exist in Paraguay’s legal framework to adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the lack of prohibition of child recruitment by non-state armed groups.

**Table 4. Laws and Regulations on Child Labor**

Standard	Meets International Standards: Yes/No	Age	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	Yes	14	Article 1 of Law No. 2332; Article 58 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (35; 36)
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	Yes	18	Article 54 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code; Article 3 of Decree No. 4951; Articles 122 and 125 of the Labor Code; Article 15 of the First Employment Law; Article 5 of Law No. 5407 on Domestic Work (35; 37; 38; 39; 40; 41)
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children	Yes		Article 54 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code; Article 2 of Decree No. 4951; Article 15 of the First Employment Law; Articles 122, 125, and 389 of the Labor Code; Article 5 of Law No. 5407 on Domestic Work (35; 37; 38; 39; 40; 41)
Prohibition of Forced Labor	Yes		Articles 5-7 of the Comprehensive Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 125, 129, 223, and 320 of the Penal Code; Articles 10 and 54 of the Constitution (42; 43; 44; 45)
Prohibition of Child Trafficking	Yes		Articles 6 and 7 of the Comprehensive Law Against Trafficking in Persons; Articles 125, 129, and 223 of the Penal Code; Article 54 of the Constitution (42; 43; 44; 45)
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Yes		Articles 135 and 223 of the Penal Code; Article 2.19 of Decree No. 4951; Article 31 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (35; 37; 43; 45)
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities	Yes		Article 1 of Law No. 1657; Article 32 of the Childhood and Adolescence Code (35; 46)
Prohibition of Military Recruitment			
State Compulsory	Yes	18	Articles 3 and 5 of the Obligatory Military Service Law (47; 48)
State Voluntary	Yes	18	Articles 3 and 5 of the Obligatory Military Service Law (47; 48)
Non-State	No		
Compulsory Education Age	Yes	15	Article 2 of Law No. 4088; Article 32 of the General Education Law No. 1264 (49; 50)
Free Public Education	Yes		Article 76 of the Constitution; Article 32 of the General Education Law No. 1264 (42; 49)

In January 2017, the government approved a regulation to strengthen enforcement of labor laws and standards, including on child labor. (51)

### III. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labor (Table 5). However, gaps exist within the operations of the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security (MTESS) that may hinder adequate enforcement of their child labor laws.

**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement**

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security (MTESS)	Enforce laws related to child labor, inspect workplaces for child labor, and fine companies found in violation of labor laws. Refer cases involving criminal violation of child labor to the Public Ministry or the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents (SNNA). (13; 14)
National Police	Maintain a special unit of 33 police officers who handle complaints regarding trafficking in persons, including children, with offices in five cities. (13; 14)
Public Ministry (Prosecutor's Office)	Enforce criminal laws related to the worst forms of child labor by investigating and prosecuting violators and providing support to local prosecutors throughout Paraguay. (14)
SNNA	Maintain a unit dedicated to fighting child trafficking and a hotline to report cases of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Provide social services to victims referred by law enforcement agencies. (13; 14; 30; 23)
Public Defender's Office	Maintain the Specialized Unit to Combat Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. (52)

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**Table 5. Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement (cont)**

Organization/Agency	Role
Attorney General's Office	Investigate and prosecute cases of child labor involving human trafficking through the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit. Comprises 3 specialized prosecutors based in Asunción and 35 assistants. (13)
Ministry of Women's Affairs	Provide social services to female victims of human trafficking, half of whom are estimated to be children. House an office staffed with five personnel dedicated to combating trafficking of children. (13; 14; 30)

### *Labor Law Enforcement*

In 2017, labor law enforcement agencies in Paraguay took actions to combat child labor (Table 6). However, gaps exist within the operations of the MTESS that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including with regard to financial resource allocation.

**Table 6. Labor Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Labor Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Labor Inspectorate Funding	\$1.1 million (12)	\$1.1 million (5)
Number of Labor Inspectors	30 (12)	35 (5)
Inspectorate Authorized to Assess Penalties	No (12)	No (5)
Training for Labor Inspectors		
Initial Training for New Employees	N/A	Yes (5)
Training on New Laws Related to Child Labor	Yes (12)	Yes (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (12)	Yes (5)
Number of Labor Inspections Conducted	4,800 (12)	667 (5)
Number Conducted at Worksites	4,800 (12)	275 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations Found	17 (12)	27 (5)
Number of Child Labor Violations for Which Penalties were Imposed	Unknown	27 (5)
Number of Child Labor Penalties Imposed That were Collected	Unknown	27 (5)
Routine Inspections Conducted	Yes (12)	Yes (5)
Routine Inspections Targeted	Yes (12)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes (12)	Yes (5)
Unannounced Inspections Conducted	Yes (12)	Yes (5)
Complaint Mechanism Exists	Yes (12)	Yes (5)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Labor Authorities and Social Services	Yes (12)	Yes (5)

In 2017, the MTESS opened a regional office in Villarrica and signed letters of intent with two Fair Trade sugarcane producer associations to promote efforts to address child labor. (53) During the year, labor inspectors received training on agricultural labor inspections, which included field work and pilot exercises. The MTESS also coordinated with the Prosecutor's Office to streamline the labor violation complaint process to avoid duplicative complaints triggering multiple inspections of the same worksite, resulting in fewer labor inspections in 2017 than in 2016. (53; 54)

Although Paraguay has ratified ILO C. 81, its labor inspectors are contractors rather than public officials. Due to the instability of contract employment, the authority and training of these labor inspectors may be called into question. The number of labor inspectors is likely insufficient for the size of Paraguay's workforce, which includes over 3 million workers. According to the ILO's technical advice of a ratio approaching 1 inspector for every 15,000 workers in developing economies, Paraguay would employ roughly 229 inspectors. (55; 56; 57) Government agencies, international organizations, NGOs, and labor organizations agree that inadequate funding and the insufficient number of labor inspectors hamper the labor inspectorate's capacity to enforce child labor laws, especially in the informal sector, including in agriculture and domestic work. (5; 9) The inspectorate is particularly limited by the lack of dedicated vehicles or travel funds. (5) An additional constraint to labor law enforcement is the lack of efficient and timely cooperation by judicial authorities in granting workplace inspection search warrants to the Public Ministry and the MTESS when an employer does not permit an inspector to enter a workplace to conduct an inspection. The system is paper-based and orders routinely take more than 3 months to arrive. (12; 13; 14; 15; 58) During the year, the MTESS provided training to labor inspectors to implement the 2016 agreement with judicial and law enforcement authorities, intended to go into effect in 2017, to accelerate the authorization of search warrants. (12; 5)

***Criminal Law Enforcement***

In 2017, criminal law enforcement agencies in Paraguay took actions to combat child labor (Table 7). However, gaps exist within the operations of the criminal enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate criminal law enforcement, including with regard to the lack of a referral mechanism between criminal authorities and social services.

**Table 7. Criminal Law Enforcement Efforts Related to Child Labor**

Overview of Criminal Law Enforcement	2016	2017
Training for Investigators		
Initial Training for New Employees	Unknown	Yes (5)
Training on New Laws Related to the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Yes (12)	Yes (5)
Refresher Courses Provided	Yes (12)	Yes (5)
Number of Investigations	77 (12)	15 (5)
Number of Violations Found	Unknown (54)	15 (54)
Number of Prosecutions Initiated	Unknown (54)	15 (54)
Number of Convictions	Unknown (54)	14 (54)
Reciprocal Referral Mechanism Exists Between Criminal Authorities and Social Services	No (12)	No (5)

During the reporting period, the Special Directorate to Fight the Trafficking of Persons and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children increased child and forced labor investigations conducted in the Chaco region, where the worst forms of child labor, human trafficking, and debt bondage are most prevalent. In addition, 150 prosecutors, investigators, judges, migration officials, and labor inspectors attended training sessions on labor trafficking. (5) However, government agencies, international organizations, NGOs, and labor organizations have observed a need for more specialized prosecutors to support local prosecutors nationwide and increase the Public Ministry's ability to investigate and prosecute cases involving human trafficking. (12; 13; 15; 6) In addition, investigations were limited by insufficient resources, including vehicles, fuel, and logistical support. Overall, Paraguay's criminal law enforcement agencies lack resources, including staff and training, to sufficiently identify, investigate, and prosecute cases of the worst forms of child labor. As a result, the number of convictions of crimes related to the worst forms of child labor is insufficient and existing penalties are inadequate deterrents. (12; 13; 14; 15; 59; 5; 6)

**IV. COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ON CHILD LABOR**

The government has established mechanisms to coordinate its efforts to address child labor (Table 8). However, gaps exist that hinder the effective coordination of efforts to address child labor, including with regard to the coordination among agencies.

**Table 8. Key Mechanisms to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor**

Coordinating Body	Role and Description
National Commission to Prevent and Eradicate the Exploitation of Children (CONAETI)	Lead government efforts against child labor and include representatives from the MTESS, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the SNNA, and other government agencies, as well as labor union representatives, industry associations, and NGOs. (14; 60) In 2017, celebrated its 15 year anniversary by launching a commemorative postage stamp to raise awareness on child labor and government efforts to address it. (61)
Inter-Institutional Working Group on Preventing and Combating Human Trafficking	Coordinate interagency efforts to combat all forms of trafficking in persons, including child trafficking. Headed by the Ministry of Foreign Relations. (14; 20; 60)
Defense Councils for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (CODENIs)	Coordinate efforts to protect children's rights at the municipal level, including by maintaining a registry of adolescent workers and coordinating with vocational training programs for adolescents. (14; 35) In 2017, the CODENI of Paso Yobai piloted new computer and smartphone platforms for the adolescent worker registry. (53) In response to a televised report from May 2017 on children engaged in informal gold mining in Paso Yobai, the CODENI of Paso Yobai and the SNNA held several workshops for families, teachers, and representatives of Paso Yobai's miners association in June 2017 to raise awareness on the risks of child labor in mining. (53)

During the reporting period, the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit of the Attorney General's office coordinated with the SNNA and other government agencies to conduct community outreach on human trafficking in low-income areas. (5) Government

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agencies responsible for addressing child labor share information and coordinate efforts informally, but coordination between the MTESS and the Ministries of Education and Health remains insufficient to combat the worst forms of child labor. In addition, the CODENIs require additional financial and human resources to fulfill their mission to address child labor. (12; 13; 18; 14; 62)

## V. GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON CHILD LABOR

The government has established policies that are consistent with relevant international standards on child labor (Table 9).

**Table 9. Key Policies Related to Child Labor**

Policy	Description
National Strategy for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor and Protection of Working Adolescents (2016–2020)	Aims to raise awareness and strengthen enforcement of child labor laws. Provides child laborers with access to free quality education and offers livelihood alternatives for their families. (12; 14; 60)
National Strategy to Prevent Forced Labor	Aims to prevent and eradicate forced labor and care for victims. (63)
National Plan for Development (2014–2030)	Aims to reduce social exclusion and poverty, including by preventing and eliminating child labor. (64)
National Plan on Human Rights	Promotes human rights, including the prevention and elimination of child labor and forced labor. (65)
Inter-Institutional Agreement on Government Procurement	Prohibits government procurement of goods or services involving child labor. Established between the SNNA and the National Bureau for Public Contracts. (66)

## VI. SOCIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

In 2017, the government funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor (Table 10). However, gaps exist in these social programs, including coverage and funding to fully address the problem in all sectors.

**Table 10. Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor**

Program	Description
USDOL-Funded Projects	USDOL projects that aim to eliminate child labor, including its worst forms, through research, improved monitoring and enforcement, policy development, and awareness-raising. These projects include Country Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labor (CLEAR), implemented by the ILO in 11 countries; Global Research on Child Labor Measurement and Policy Development, implemented by the ILO in 10 countries; Global Action Program on Child Labor Issues, implemented by the ILO in approximately 40 countries; and Paraguay <i>Okakuaa</i> (Paraguay Progresses), \$6 million project implemented by Partners of the Americas. (67; 68; 69) For additional information about USDOL's work, please visit our website.
Immediate Assistance Fund*	Provides immediate, temporary assistance to victims of child labor and human trafficking. Established by the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit of the Attorney General's office with support from the IOM.
Embrace Program ( <i>Programa Abrazo</i> )†	SNNA program to assist children engaged in exploitative work by providing them and their families with health and education services, food deliveries, and cash transfers conditioned on children's school attendance and withdrawal from work. (58) Works closely with the NGO Fortalecer in the implementation of ILO-IPEC programs and with the Sugarcane Growers' Association, Ministry of Education and Culture, and CONAETI to set up programs tailored to at-risk children who work during the sugarcane harvesting season. (14) In 2017, received \$6.7 million in funding and targeted children at risk of child labor in garbage dumps, brick factories, lumber harvesting, and sugarcane. (5)
Combating Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Girls, Boys and Adolescents in Trips and Tourism†	National campaign of the National Secretariat for Tourism and the Association of Female Tourism Executives to raise awareness on protecting children from commercial sexual exploitation. (18)
Promotion of Decent Work in the Cotton Supply Chain (2016-2018)	Government of Brazil-funded project implemented by the ILO to promote decent work in cotton through exchanges on combatting poverty and discrimination, preventing and eradicating child labor and forced labor, formalizing employment, and promoting youth employment and equality. (70; 71)
Well-Being Conditional Cash Transfer Program ( <i>Tekoporã</i> )†	Government-administered program through the Secretariat for Social Action. Provides conditional cash transfers to families in rural communities. (13) Incorporates aspects of the Embrace Program, such as the family monitoring methodology, to ensure participant children do not engage in child labor. (14) In 2017, received \$60 million and assisted approximately 335,000 children. (5)

\* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Paraguay.



The 2012 Law Against Trafficking in Persons requires the Ministry of Women's Affairs to provide compensation and financial assistance to victims of sexual and labor trafficking, including minors. However, the government has not allocated funding for the Ministry of Women's Affairs to implement such a program, and most victims did not have access to comprehensive care. (13; 15; 44; 72; 6) Although Paraguay has programs that target child labor, the coverage and funding of these programs is insufficient to fully address the extent of the problem, and programs are limited by the absence of government education and health services in rural areas. Additional programs are needed to reach the large numbers of working children, especially in agriculture, including cattle herding, and domestic work. (13; 15; 5; 6)

## VII. SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

Based on the reporting above, suggested actions are identified that would advance the elimination of child labor in Paraguay (Table 11).

**Table 11. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor**

Area	Suggested Action	Year(s) Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.	2016 - 2017
Enforcement	Strengthen the Labor Inspectorate by permitting inspectors to determine and assess penalties for child labor violations.	2016 - 2017
	Strengthen the Labor Inspectorate by making labor inspectors public officials rather than contractors.	2017
	Increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO's technical advice and increase the funding and resources available to the labor inspectorate, including dedicated vehicles and travel funds.	2009 – 2017
	Build enforcement capacity to address child labor in the informal sector, including in agriculture and domestic work.	2014 – 2017
	Implement the agreement to accelerate authorization of workplace inspection search warrants to improve the cooperation mechanisms among judicial authorities and labor enforcement officials.	2013 – 2017
	Establish a referral mechanism between criminal authorities and social services to ensure that victims of the worst forms of child labor receive appropriate services.	2016 - 2017
	Increase efforts to prosecute crimes related to the exploitation of children in the worst forms of child labor, including by hiring and training more specialized prosecutors; providing resources, such as vehicles and fuel, to enable investigations in remote areas, such as the Chaco; developing coordination and referral mechanisms for government agencies to refer relevant cases to the Public Ministry; and increasing penalties for crimes.	2012 – 2017
	Discontinue the practice of allowing children to shine shoes in government buildings, including the Palace of Justice.	2017
Coordination	Strengthen interagency coordinating mechanisms, with particular focus on the communication between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, to combat child labor, including its worst forms.	2013 – 2017
	Provide additional financial and human resources to the CODENIs to strengthen their ability to address child labor at the municipal level.	2017
Social Programs	Increase access to education for children vulnerable to child labor, particularly children living in rural and indigenous communities, including in the Chaco, and children with disabilities.	2014 – 2017
	Further expand government programs to assist more families and children affected by child labor, including in agriculture and domestic work.	2010 – 2017

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