

A Guide to Values Building Education

by CRS Jerusalem,
West Bank and Gaza





How-to Guide Series

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A Guide to Values Building Education

by CRS Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza

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Written by Ghaida Rahil

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Letter from CRS Education Technical Advisors

Dear friends and colleagues,

We are pleased to present this latest edition in our CRS education ‘How-to’ series, *A Guide to Values Building Education*, which was produced by CRS Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza (JWBG).

The ‘How-to’ guide series was created as an opportunity for CRS country programs and their local implementing partners to highlight and share an aspect of their work that has been particularly successful. Instead of presenting a detailed description of their history and accomplishments, however, the focus of the guides is on the practical steps that CRS country programs and partner organizations can take to adopt similar activities.

The recommendations will need to be interpreted for each particular context, but the topics addressed in each guide are ones that would strengthen and improve any existing program: how to prepare teachers for inclusive education; how to establish child-led school health education programs; how to develop effective school improvement plans.

This guide from CRS JWBG addresses Values Building Education. This is a two-year curriculum that guides students through a process of civic engagement and reflection on their relationships with their peers, families, schools and communities. It was designed specifically to counter the feeling among many Palestinian youth that they have little or no control over their environment or their future. In this guide, you will see how numerous actors – communities, parents, teachers, administrators and youth themselves – have been mobilized to implement and support this curriculum.

We hope that the approaches and strategies presented here will assist you in your efforts to meet the learning needs of the populations you serve in a participatory manner.

Best wishes,

Anne Sellers

Education Technical Advisor

Michael Pozniak

Education Consultant

Letter from CRS JWBG Country Representative

Dear friends and colleagues,

CRS JWBG is pleased to present this How-to Guide on Values Building Education. The guide captures the experiences of a project implemented in the Palestinian territories from 2005 to 2008. During this time, CRS worked with parent councils, school administrators, teachers and students in private secondary schools to strengthen the role of these schools in building civic and democratic values among students and the broader community.

Through the Values Building Education curriculum, students explore citizen engagement — a key to improving civil society — within a structured context. By linking experiential learning activities with the existing school curriculum, the project promoted positive social concepts such as volunteering and values of social justice, reconciliation and peace among students.

This guide is divided into two sections. The first section presents an overview of the project, including the process of selecting schools, putting in place project structures (such as parent councils), and implementing the curriculum. The second section presents the curriculum itself, highlighting the objectives, key skills, methodologies and outcomes.

The guide is intended for individuals and organizations interested in civil society programming targeting youth. This may include staff and local implementing partners of CRS in other countries, teachers and school administrators, and other local and international organizations serving youth through educational programs focused on civic education, peace and democracy. Although the project was developed within the Palestinian context, it is our hope that its methodology of engagement and reflection will be useful in many other contexts as well.

Sincerely,

Matthew Davis

Part One: Values Building Education

“...youth can be an active and positive force in their communities...”

1. Introduction

Decades of occupation have taken a profound toll on Palestinian society and have led to fraying of the social fabric. Many Palestinians today prioritize sub-national or sub-societal group identities, weakening the foundation of community values and shared ethics upon which democratic culture, concern for the common good, and pro-social behaviors are built.

Violence is prevalent, and the chaotic environment results in high levels of stress-related disorders in children. A study commissioned by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) as part of the Values Building Education project showed that students feel little control over their environment and their future.

The Palestinian education system — in public and private schools — can at times both reflect and reinforce these crises in Palestinian society. In many schools, there is a pedagogical approach that is primarily focused on dictation and content memorization with little attention to active learning methodologies that develop skills in analysis, critical thinking, problem solving, group work and collaboration. Although there are many reasons for this — an overloaded curriculum, inadequate teaching skills, poorly equipped classrooms — the result is often students who are ill-prepared for the labor market and lack the life skills to deal with challenges proactively and positively. This approach to teaching and learning is reinforced by relatively hierarchical and authoritarian structures in some schools as well as homes.

Similar dynamics characterize the relationships between the school administration and students and parents. Schools are often removed from the communities they serve, offering little engagement on substantive issues of quality or relevance that impact student learning outcomes. Parent and student councils are rarely utilized as effective mechanisms for school improvement. School directors often appoint council members without consultation and use the councils only as fundraisers for school renovations. Membership is usually not gender balanced and councils fail to adequately represent the full range of parent and student opinion. The result has often been schools where academic and social life is limited and the concept of democracy taught in the civic education curriculum has no venue for practical application.

CRS initiated the Values Building Education project to counteract and reverse these trends in both the school and the larger society. Our belief has been that, given the opportunity, youth can be an active and positive force in their communities and that their engagement can make a positive difference.

2. What is Values Building Education?

The Values Building Education project in the Palestinian territories included two main strategies:

- the development of a two-year curriculum to guide students in grades 6 through 11 (ages 12 – 18) through a process of civic engagement and reflection on their relationships with their peers, families, schools and communities; and
- the implementation of a methodology for empowering parent councils and student councils to lead this process in their schools.

What Values?

The project sought to develop a set of values and skills that were identified through a consultative process with parents, children, community youth workers, teachers, and school principals. An illustrative example of some of these values and skills is listed below.

Values:

- Civic responsibility and engagement
- Tolerance and respect for diversity
- Peace and social justice
- Freedom of expression
- Volunteerism

Skills:

- Critical and analytical thinking
- Constructive dialogue
- Nonviolent conflict resolution
- Active listening



Students learn tolerance and respect for diversity

- Problem solving
- Community mobilization
- Advocacy
- Leadership
- Research, planning and organization

These values and skills were determined based on the assessed needs of young people in the Palestinian territories. When adapting to other contexts, a similar assessment of the needs of youth should be undertaken. This list can then be amended as needed and the curriculum modified to reflect any significant differences among the values and skills prioritized here and those in other contexts.

Two guiding questions that the Values Building Education project used to stimulate discussion on this topic were:

- What values and skills do you feel children/youth are missing?
- What do you feel children/youth need to make a positive contribution to this community?

Why Schools?

In the Palestinian context, schools are a relevant venue for implementing Values Building Education. They are viewed as institutions reaching all youth in the community and their families. This is because there are almost universal rates of enrollment through secondary school in the Palestinian territories. Additionally, schools are responsible for teaching concepts of citizenship and democracy as well as values of peace and social justice among students.

In other places where many children do not attend secondary school, or where schools do not have a social studies curriculum promoting these values, implementing organizations may choose to work with youth clubs or diocesan youth groups where youth participate in educational and extracurricular activities.

3. Implementing a Values Building Education Project

3.1 Step One: Selecting Schools

In the Palestinian territories, once schools were chosen as the focus of the project, the following criteria were used to select participating schools:

- The school should have an existing parent council (or comparable body).
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- The school administration should be open to working with a more active parent council.
 - The existing parent council members should show interest in the project goals.
 - The school should include students from different ethnic, religious, economic or residential backgrounds.
 - The school, or combination of schools selected for the project, should have a balanced population of boys and girls.
 - The school should be receiving little or no support from local or international organizations, especially support for similar projects.

Selection into the project should be competitive and include only those schools that demonstrate that they are committed to actively participating. Outreach to select schools can take place either by directly visiting schools, or by promoting the program through a local partner, such as the Ministry of Education. However it is conducted, it is important that schools in marginalized areas with limited opportunities for students to participate in these kinds of activities be prioritized.

In the Palestinian territories, CRS staff began the process of selecting schools by meeting with the administrations of potential schools. Schools that expressed interest were asked to submit an application according to a format created for the project. CRS staff then visited all interested schools to verify the information in their application and judge their suitability for the project. Final selection of participating schools was made by CRS. If working with public schools, the selection process should include appropriate representatives from the Ministry of Education as well.

Special Cases

In some cases, it may be worthwhile to select a school for strategic reasons. For example, a school with students from minority religious or ethnic backgrounds who have suffered discrimination or a school that was involved in a previous project may be excellent candidates for inclusion. In such cases, it is possible to go directly to these schools or to ask the Ministry of Education to nominate these schools for the project once they meet the project criteria. Remember, however, it is extremely important that school selection criteria are clear and that the school selection process is transparent, credible and conducted with a high degree of professionalism in order to prevent any suspicion of bias.

Signing a Memorandum of Understanding

Selected schools should sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the

“...it was important to put the parent council in a leading role...”

project. In private schools, the MoU should be signed with the school directly; in public schools, it should be the Ministry of Education that signs. This document is essential to formalize expectations for both the school and the project regarding the administrative and professional relationship and financial matters. It should state what each party is expected to bring to the project in terms of resources — time, human and financial — and set up a mechanism to address any conflicts or disagreements.

In the Palestinian territories, CRS found that it was particularly important that the MoU outlined reporting and procurement requirements for the parent councils and schools in order to ensure compliance with donor requirements.

3.2 Step Two: Putting Project Structures in Place

The Values Building Education project used a number of coordinating mechanisms to ensure that project activities were designed, implemented and evaluated by project participants themselves. This was done to make sure that activities addressed the actual needs of participants and that participants would be committed to sustaining the activities after the project was completed.

The following coordinating mechanisms were key to the project’s success: Project Management Team, Parent Councils and Project Committees, and Project Coordinators. Each is described below.

Project Management Team

The Project Management Team was formed early in order to guide initial project steps such as the school selection process. The group was originally comprised of CRS staff, but later expanded to include key representatives of the schools selected (members of the administration, parent councils, student councils, and project coordinators). Typically, Ministry of Education officials would also be included on this team, however in this particular project CRS worked only with private schools. The Project Management Team served as a board for the project and held regular meetings to review progress and guide the project as it developed. Having such a team in place and functioning well is extremely important, particularly in a new project, because many adjustments may need to be made quickly based on feedback from the various project constituents.

Parent Councils and Project Committees

A main objective of the project was to empower parents, teachers and students to take an active role in making positive changes in their schools. Parent councils represent a formal structure with the responsibility to lead in this regard. Parent councils have different names, are made up of different stakeholders, and have different functions and responsibilities depending on the country context. For CRS JWBG, it was important to put the parent council in a leading role in the project as a way to build its experience and capacity for bringing about change in the school.



Members of an active Parent Council during one of their meetings

It was also important that teachers be included in directing the project, as they represent the link with the formal curriculum that the project tried to strengthen. CRS JWBG found that the goal of incorporating teachers may be accomplished in one of two ways:

- In some cases, it may be possible to incorporate teachers directly into the parent council and create a parent-teacher council.
- In other cases, a separate *project committee* may be created. This committee would include parents from the parent council and teachers from the school and would report to the parent council.

Whether it is a parent council or a project committee, these groups drive the various phases of the project. They lead the planning, implementation and monitoring of project-sponsored activities at the school.

The first step in establishing the parent council or project committee as a key coordinating mechanism for the project is to identify and assess the capacity of any existing parent council, parent-teacher association or similar body at the school. If there is no such body, or if one exists but is inactive, a good deal of work may be required to get it up and running. If such a body already exists and is active, then the project may simply need to provide some supplementary training in areas relevant to the project, such as project management.

CRS JWBG found that in most schools, parent councils existed but were inactive, or that their roles had been limited to following-up on school fees and minor administrative matters. CRS, therefore, began by re-forming parent councils, using the Values Building Education project as an organizing tool. This was done by asking principals to organize a meeting with all the parents at the school. During this

meeting, CRS staff presented the project to the parents and identified parents who were interested in serving on the parent council and volunteering with the project.

Once interested parents were identified, the next step was to incorporate teachers into the council or project committee. Given the focus of a values building education, and to promote integration with the school curriculum, it is preferable to identify social studies, civics or history teachers to participate in the project.

Although the Values Building Education project focused on educating *youth* about civic engagement, CRS JWBG chose to first organize and train parent councils. There were several important reasons for this.

- First, CRS believed that it was important to obtain the buy-in and support of parents and teachers from the beginning of the project. In order to have an impact on the attitudes and behaviors of youth it was important to promote a supportive environment both at home and in school.
- Second, CRS also believed that the leadership of parents and teachers in the early stages of the project would help open doors and leverage resources that would otherwise not be available to the project.
- Finally, since the project saw the school as the key to reaching youth in large numbers, CRS believed it was important to locate and utilize the key structures within the school.

This is not to say that youth did not play an active role in the project – as will be seen in part two of this guide, student councils were formed in year two and students played leadership roles in planning, conducting and reflecting on the activities in each unit of the Values Building Education curriculum.

Lessons Learned

It is essential that individuals selected to be a part of the parent council are able to commit the necessary amount of time to the project implementation and that CRS staff make this clear throughout the process of selecting council members. CRS found it useful for parent council members to be available to participate in meetings two to three times per week, especially when planning activities to supplement the curriculum. It was also important that members have free time during the day since most activities that supported the curriculum were carried out in the morning, a period that is inconvenient to parents employed full-time. For this reason, CRS found that women who did not work outside the home were some of the best participants in the project, as they appreciated an opportunity to receive training and temporarily leave their homes to serve their community.

CRS also found that problems can arise if school principals try to control the process by selecting parent council members who are public figures or influential members of the community and local educational institutions. These individuals were often unable to allocate sufficient time for the management and implementation of project activities. As a result, project activities were delayed at those schools and CRS was ultimately forced to replace some or all of the members of these councils.

Project Coordinators

It is helpful for each participating school to also select a project coordinator. This person can be a member of the parent council, a teacher, or an administrator. The coordinator has the following roles:

- Serve as a liaison and coordinator of activities among all project groups – the sponsoring organization (in this case, CRS), the parent council, the school administration, and other participating schools.
- Serve as the secretary of the project at the school – drafting an action plan of extracurricular activities, monitoring the collection of data on project activities, writing narrative and financial reports, and recording the minutes of the parent council meetings.

In the Palestinian territories, CRS paid the project coordinators a small monthly stipend to recognize the work they contributed to the project in addition to their other responsibilities.

Since project coordinators held such a key role in the project, CRS organized regular meetings for all the coordinators. These meetings were centered around each theme within the curriculum. They were scheduled before and after the schools implemented each theme, in order to plan activities that corresponded to the theme and to share experiences about what was successful and what was not.

These meetings were very successful and created an atmosphere of positive competition among the participating schools, inspiring less-involved schools to become more engaged. The following outlines the specific meetings held with project coordinators.

- *Pre-plan development meeting*: CRS shared the main objectives and the expected results of each curriculum theme with the coordinators in order to build a shared vision with all schools.
 - *Post-plan development meeting*: Coordinators exchanged ideas on the activities developed by each school in order to learn from each other and enrich their school's plan with additional activities. This meeting also provided an opportunity for schools to have a chance to plan joint activities.
 - *Conclusion of theme meeting*: Coordinators assessed the theme once it was completed, exchanged experiences, and collected lessons learned for upcoming themes.
 - *Collaborative activities meeting*: When joint activities were planned, an additional meeting was scheduled to coordinate roles and responsibilities.
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Characteristics of a Good Project Coordinator

The selection of an appropriate project coordinator is key to project success. Conversely, the choice of a weak coordinator may jeopardize the project in a school. CRS JWBG found that the most effective coordinators were teachers who had good ties with the parent council, the school administration, and the students.

Key characteristics of a good coordinator include:

1. Planning and project management skills
2. Respected by students; ability to start and support a student council
3. Good relations with the school administration; ability to advocate with the administration on behalf of the project
4. Ability to allocate adequate time to the project
5. Commitment to attend all parent council and coordinators' meetings
6. Excellent communication skills
7. Spirit of teamwork and experience in community-based work

Training

Once the parent councils have been formed and the project coordinators selected, it is important to train the council members and coordinators to be effective project managers.

Gender should be considered when selecting members for training to ensure an equal representation of women and men. The training should cover the following topics:

- Project Management Cycle
 - Networking
 - Advocacy
 - Developing an Action Plan
 - Monitoring and Evaluation
 - Reporting
-

During training sessions, parents and teachers should be made aware of their ethical obligations with regard to the project. All participants should commit to:¹

- Building the students' sense of belonging to their community through the provision of an educational environment that promotes community affiliation and respect for different social classes.
- Being models and good examples in their behavior, support and positive attitude toward issues being discussed with students.
- Respecting the students' diverse cultural and social heritages.
- Promoting the students' self-confidence and encouraging them to become responsible members of their communities by building positive community values.
- Encouraging the students' sense of achievement.
- Facilitating the students' learning process and their sense of independence by giving them an opportunity to express themselves and put forward new ideas.
- Strengthening the students' sense of self-efficacy by promoting their use of problem-solving skills.
- Fostering the students' educational initiatives to encourage them to take responsibility for their learning and to create a sense of ownership of their achievements.

In the Palestinian territories, CRS offered the parent councils and project coordinators a total of 20 hours of training in the topics listed above. The trainings were facilitated by consultants on consecutive weekends to allow for maximum participation. Bringing parents, teachers and coordinators from the participating schools together early on in the project also allowed the groups to get to know each other and develop a sense of community. This familiarity helped in the coordination of future activities.

3.3 Step Three: Implementing the Curriculum

Once the parent councils and project coordinators have been trained, the curriculum can be introduced in detail. The Values Building Education curriculum presented here covers six themes over the course of two years. Work on each theme is structured around a process of student-led exploration, action and reflection for students at the school. An overview of the curriculum is presented on the next page, while the full curriculum is outlined in detail in part two of this guide.

¹ These recommendations are based on the work of the Peace Education Foundation (www.peace-ed.org).

Overview of the Values Building Education Curriculum

Year 1

THEME 1: Enriching Citizenship

THEME 2: Expressing Interests and Needs

THEME 3: Planning the Future

Year 2

THEME 1: Participating in Democratic Concepts and Processes

THEME 2: Becoming an Actor for Social Justice and Change

THEME 3: Becoming an Agent for Peace in My Community

For the parent councils and project coordinators, there are three main responsibilities associated with implementing the curriculum:

1. Reviewing and adapting the curriculum to the local context.
2. Creating an action plan and budget to support the curriculum.
3. Planning and implementing project activities that supplement the curriculum.

Reviewing and Adapting the Curriculum to the Local Context

The themes within the curriculum were identified and developed for the overall project area by the various stakeholders: parent councils, student councils, teachers and school administrations. It is therefore important that the project coordinators work closely with their respective parent councils to review the basic curriculum and propose adaptations that fit the local context and each targeted school.

The following issues in particular should be considered in adapting the curriculum:

- Project coordinators and parent councils should review the findings of the initial needs assessment. This assessment should help determine to what extent the values and skills presented in the Values Building Education curriculum are relevant or may need to be adapted. Once the values and skills to be addressed have been identified, the themes of the curriculum can be modified accordingly.
- Project coordinators should also work with teachers to understand how well the topics presented in the Values Building Education curriculum correspond to topics

already covered in the school's civic education, history and social studies curricula. To the greatest extent possible, the project should align the values building curriculum and activities with the lesson plans of these classes in order to provide experiential learning opportunities that reinforce classroom objectives.

- Finally, the Values Building Education project was created in an urban context rich in civic, cultural and historical opportunities that could supplement the curriculum. Project coordinators and parent councils should review each theme in the curriculum and look for similar opportunities within their own local communities.

Creating an Action Plan and Budget to Support the Curriculum

Once the themes and sequencing of the curriculum have been set, the parent council should begin to identify experiential learning opportunities for each theme that will generate interest in the topic and reinforce learning objectives in both the Values Building Education and official school curriculum. The proposed learning opportunities for each theme should then be developed into an action plan. (*See Annex 1 for a blank action plan form.*)

The following points should be considered when creating the action plan:

- The learning opportunities should be kept at a general level and not be too prescriptive. For example, describing a learning opportunity as “visits to historical places” leaves the creative work of identifying specific destinations to the students themselves.
- Parent councils should work on identifying learning opportunities one theme at a time. This will limit the amount of work required of the council at the start of the project. It will also allow the council to apply lessons learned during the initial themes to the themes later in the project.
- The school administration should review and comment on the action plan as part of its advisory capacity.
- The plan should include recreational activities to stimulate interest in the project. Recreational activities will draw students into other activities that develop their thinking and community values. CRS JWBG found that once students began to appreciate the community-based activities, the recreational activities could be gradually diminished.

Parent councils should also develop an annual budget to complement the activity plan. Based on the total funding for the project, the sponsoring organization (in this case, CRS) should specify both the total funding available to each school as well as the

amount allocated to each theme (e.g., \$2,000 allocated for the citizenship theme). By breaking the budget down this way, the project avoids the risk of schools spending too much on one theme at the expense of other themes or activities.

CRS JWBG provided parent councils with a budget form divided into four parts:

PART I: Administrative expenses such as stationery, hospitality, transportation, communications and the coordinator's stipend. This section should not exceed 25% of the total budget amount.

PART II: Activity expenses such as visits to organizations, guest speakers, workshops, learning materials, etc.

PART III: Infrastructure improvements at the school that are directly related to the curriculum (e.g., civic engagement).

PART IV: School contributions. CRS JWBG required schools to contribute at least 10% of the total budget to the project. This can be done in two ways:

1. In-kind contributions such as a teacher's time or a parent's supervision.
2. Small student fees for participating in activities.

Private Sector Contributions

One of the objectives of the Values Building Education project was to broaden the array of stakeholders engaged with schools. This extended to engaging the private sector in supporting community-based school activities. For example, one of the parent councils found a restaurant to provide lunch for free for one of the project activities. Another parent council found a gas station owner willing to fully sponsor an activity. Provided this engagement is done ethically, these private sector actors can be valuable assets to schools.

Once the action plan has been developed, the project coordinator at each school should submit it to the sponsoring organization for review. The plan should be reviewed to ensure for:

- Appropriateness of the activities to the curriculum objectives
- Availability of detailed budget plans
- Efficient spending

- Participation of the largest number of students possible
- Involvement of students in the coordination of activities
- Clear and active role for the parent council

Attention should be paid to the quantity and quality of activities. CRS' experience in the Palestinian territories has shown that some schools implemented a few activities using a considerable portion of the budget, while other schools carried out a larger number of activities with the same allocation. Certain schools spent money on less important matters, such as hospitality and gifts, while other schools directed budgets toward activities that more directly benefited the students.

Experience has also shown that students who participate in the largest number of activities within the same theme gained a deeper understanding of the topic and benefited more than those who participated in a smaller number of activities.

Planning and Implementing Project Activities that Support the Curriculum

Once the action plan is approved, funds can be released to the schools and activities can begin. In part two of this guide, you will be introduced to the full curriculum and the activities that were implemented under each specific objective. This section provides concrete ideas for how to carry out similar programming.



Student participants in Values Building Education project

Part Two:

The Values Building Education Curriculum

In this section, the Values Building Education curriculum is presented in its entirety. As noted in part one of this guide, each school adapted the curriculum below to its own local context. Readers are therefore encouraged to view this curriculum as a framework or guide to be modified as appropriate.

1. First Year Project Curriculum

Three curriculum themes guide the project in year one. Each is outlined below:

THEME 1: ENRICHING CITIZENSHIP

THEME 2: EXPRESSING INTERESTS AND NEEDS

THEME 3: PLANNING THE FUTURE

Year 1 – Theme 1: Enriching Citizenship

OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 1: Raise students' awareness of local history.

OBJECTIVE 2: Raise students' awareness of the diverse communities and cultures within their own district.

OBJECTIVE 3: Raise students' awareness of local civil society and non-governmental organizations working to make a difference in their communities.

OBJECTIVE 4: Raise students' awareness of local government institutions and the roles and responsibilities the students have as citizens.

TIME

Four months

KEY VALUES AND SKILLS

- Research, planning and organization
- Tolerance and respect for diversity
- Constructive dialogue
- Civic responsibility
- Volunteerism
- Freedom of expression
- Self-confidence
- Interpersonal relations

OBJECTIVE 1

Raise students' awareness of local history.

METHODOLOGY

Visits to local historical sites

Note: All of the steps below are led by the students. However, each group should coordinate its work with the parent council.

Divide the participating students into the following four organizing teams: exploration group, organizing group, media group, and workshop group. Each should have a distinct responsibility:

The **Exploration Group** researches and identifies local areas of historical interest to visit, and produces a short guide for the visit. The guide can include what to look for while on the trip, or what to think about while they are there. This group should learn as much as possible about the sites to be visited in order to act as tour guides for the rest of the students.

The **Organizing Group** makes all the logistical arrangements for the trip: scheduling arrival/departure times, communicating with the site, registering students, preparing permission papers, organizing transportation, arranging meals, etc.

The **Media Group** documents the visit by taking pictures and videos, conducting

interviews, writing articles to local newspapers, creating power point presentations about the trip, and promoting and sharing the trip with the school and broader community.

The **Workshop Group** organizes a workshop for all participating students to reflect on the trip, share what they learned, and discuss any possible next steps.

OUTCOME

CRS JWBG found that many students had never visited the historical places near their homes and schools. They had often learned about them through their textbooks, but had never had the opportunity to visit in person. Teachers noted it was obvious that the students' understanding of these historical sites and their importance improved significantly by visiting them. As a result, some schools now make it a point to provide similar experiential learning opportunities to complement the curriculum.



Student lights candle while visiting historical site

OBJECTIVE 2

Raise students' awareness of the diverse communities and cultures within their own district.

METHODOLOGY

Visits to other Palestinian communities (villages, cities, refugee camps) within the students' district

The same methodology of dividing students into four organized teams (exploration group, organizing group, media group, and workshop group as described in objective 1) should be used. However, instead of visiting historical sites, the students visit nearby Palestinian communities and meet with local government representatives, community activists, and youth leaders to learn about each community. Students then discuss the similarities and differences between their own lives and the lives of those in the communities visited.

“This project had a positive impact on the students’ ability to accept those from different backgrounds.”

OUTCOME

The participating students noted that it was their first time visiting refugee camps and villages in their district, although they had heard about these places and learned about refugee issues in textbooks. This project had a positive impact on the students’ ability to accept those from different backgrounds. Initially, many students from cities were reluctant to visit refugee camps and meet young people who lived there. After the visit and meeting the young people in the camps, students began to change their perceptions about others. When the students who participated in

the activity talked about their visit to friends who did not participate, the latter group requested a visit to the refugee camps.

“The Values Building Education project has given us an opportunity to identify the different groups in our society and build social ties with them, especially with young people from neighboring villages and refugee camps. Following our visit and getting to know these villages and camps, we have changed false preconceptions and we were able to quickly break all the barriers between us. Now, I have friends from Dheisheh camp and Nahalin village, and we are in constant contact with each other.”

George, 8th grader
Latin School, Beit Sahour

OBJECTIVE 3

Raise students’ awareness of local civil society and non-governmental organizations working to make a difference in their communities.

METHODOLOGY

Visits to local civil society and non-governmental organizations

The same methodology of organizing groups (described in objective 1) should be used. The only difference is that instead of visiting historical sites, the students visit civil

society and non-governmental organizations that serve the elderly, orphans, mentally disabled, children with special needs, women, youth, etc. If working with multiple grade levels or classes, each grade or class can visit a different site.

Another difference is that the exploration group would need to conduct research on the target groups to be visited and the specific problems they encounter, as well as the organizations to find out about the services they provide. Likewise, the media group may want to prepare articles or videos that raise awareness of a particular group or organization visited, while the workshop group (after organizing a forum for all groups to share their experiences) may want to arrange follow-up volunteer days during which the students spend time working in one of the places visited.

OUTCOME

The students demonstrated greater knowledge and understanding of the numerous civil society and non-governmental organizations in their community and the populations they serve. The students also became more accepting of segments of the population they had not encountered as frequently. For instance, many students initially expressed fear as to how to interact with children with disabilities. However, after the participating students spent time with the disabled children, dancing with them and helping to feed them, many have continued to volunteer with children with special needs.

“After visiting the organizations that work with children with special needs and learning about this marginalized group in our society, I realized how lucky I am to be in good health. I learned the importance of giving to others, and decided to volunteer with one of the organizations that works with children with special needs. At first, I did not know how to interact with the children, but later I succeeded in building a good relationship with them. This made me very happy because I was able to bring joy to these children’s faces.”

Iman, 7th grader
St. Joseph School, Bethlehem

OBJECTIVE 4

Raise students’ awareness of local government institutions and the roles and responsibilities the students have as citizens.

“Students...
became more aware
of their own roles
and responsibilities
as citizens.”

METHODOLOGY

Visits to local government institutions

The same methodology of organizing groups (described in objective 1) should be used. The only difference is that instead of visiting historical sites, the students visit the legislative, executive and judicial branches of local government, meet with representatives of these branches, and learn about the specific roles and responsibilities of each. In the Values Building Education project, the places visited

included the Legislative Council, Interior Affairs, Social Affairs, municipality, police department and courts. As in objective 3 above, each grade visited a different place and shared their findings during the workshop phase.

OUTCOME

During the visits, the students participated in the civic process by presenting their own local concerns to the authorities, such as city cleanliness or the problem of taxis parking in front of their school and negatively affecting the educational process. After the visit, the students were able, for the first time, to identify the three branches of government and their respective roles. Students also became more aware of their own roles and responsibilities as citizens.

Year 1 – Theme 2: Expressing Interests and Needs

OBJECTIVE

Increase students' ability to identify problems (at home, at school and in the community) and develop solutions to these problems.

TIME

Two months

KEY VALUES AND SKILLS

- Constructive dialogue
- Problem solving
- Research, planning and organization
- Media skills

METHODOLOGY

STEP 1: Train students in media skills.

Train a select group of students from each school participating in the project on written and visual media in order to provide them with skills that help them convey their messages to decision-makers and the public. The training is specifically designed to help students produce a film about an issue relevant to youth. Note: If the project involves more than one school, it is preferable to conduct a joint training to encourage relationship building, cooperation and friendship among students from different schools.

STEP 2: Foster a dialogue between students and their families.

- The student schedules an appointment with a parent, or both parents, outside the home. This might involve inviting parents to a restaurant or café at a specified day and time.
 - During the meeting, the student asks the parent three questions: What makes you proud of me as your child? What do I do that upsets you? What are some possible solutions? This trains the student and parent to be solution oriented.
-

- After the meeting, the student documents the discussion and records what he/she learned, and what he/she wants to change.
- The students then conduct panel discussions in their class on the importance of dialogue in the family. What hinders dialogue? What can be done to build better dialogue in the family? The class then identifies a set of recommendations. Through this process, the students learn the importance of collective thinking on issues.
- Finally, all schools participating in the project hold a collective festival, entitled “My Parents and Me.” This provides students the opportunity to present plays, paintings, films, poetry that they created. Their presentations represent their views on their relationships with their families and how they would like to improve these relationships. Parents, teachers, and school administrators are invited to participate in the festival.

STEP 3: Have students identify problems they see at school, at home, and in their community.

- Students break into groups to research the reality of youth in the community. Based on the information collected, each group identifies one issue that is a problem experienced by young people and collects information on the topic through meetings with relevant stakeholders (the Ministry of Education, youth organizations, municipalities, universities and youth themselves).
- The students then prioritize one issue and produce a film about the issue which is then presented to other schools in a joint workshop. The film is also used as an advocacy tool and presented to local decision-makers and youth organizations.

STEP 4: Have students identify solutions to a problem identified in Step 3.

- Organize a joint workshop where students from different schools present the results of their work (the films developed in Step 3).
 - After the presentations, the entire group votes for one of the issues presented and agrees to develop a plan to solve the problem.
 - All participating schools work together to solve the identified problem (with each school focusing on one component of the solution).
 - Students begin to implement their solutions.
-

Year 1 – Theme 3: Planning the Future

OBJECTIVE

Increase the capacity of students to build a clear vision about their future careers.

TIME

Two months

KEY VALUES AND SKILLS

- Decision-making
- Critical and analytical thinking
- Research, planning and organization

METHODOLOGY

STEP 1: Students become acquainted with a parent's profession by accompanying the parent to the workplace.

- Students note the responsibilities faced by their parents at work, particularly for working mothers. This allows them to observe the challenge of balancing housework and work outside the home.
- Students hold a panel discussion where each student presents his/her parents' professions, skills associated with the work, and challenges faced at the work place. This activity raises students' awareness of different professions.

STEP 2: Students visit the type of institution they wish to attend in the future: university or vocational school.

- During the visits, students tour the institution and meet with administrators, instructors, and students to gain a better understanding of the curriculum and environment.

STEP 3: Students host a "graduate return day."

- Graduates from various occupations are invited back to the school to share their experiences and provide guidance to students who are in the process of making decisions about their future.
 - Students participate in follow-up visits with graduates at their workplaces to gain additional insight into particular professions.
-

STEP 4: Students volunteer at public and private sector workplaces to gain firsthand experience of the professional work environment.

- Students record their experiences at their respective workplaces and share these experiences during a workshop.

STEP 5: Students identify potential career paths and develop a plan of action to follow this path.

- Students develop a vision about their future career path and how to achieve it. Plans include identifying which university or vocational school to attend, which subject/discipline to study, and which profession to pursue.

OUTCOME

A number of students, especially females, noted the limited specializations offered in the universities they visited. These girls stated that many of the disciplines they are interested in are not offered at home country institutions, and their parents are unwilling to send them abroad to pursue their education. This leads them to study a subject they do not enjoy just to obtain a degree. After discussing this issue with the parent council, the students at one school sent a letter to the local universities requesting that a greater variety of disciplines be offered to students. This was considered an achievement because the students learned how to express their concerns through proper channels.

2. Second Year Project Curriculum

Three curriculum themes guide the project in year two. Each is outlined below:

THEME 1: PARTICIPATING IN DEMOCRATIC CONCEPTS AND PROCESSES

THEME 2: BECOMING AN ACTOR FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CHANGE

THEME 3: BECOMING AN AGENT FOR PEACE IN MY COMMUNITY

Year 2 – Theme 1: Participating in Democratic Concepts and Processes

OBJECTIVE

Raise students' knowledge of democratic concepts and processes

TIME

Two months

KEY VALUES AND SKILLS

- Leadership
- Public speaking
- Debating
- Constructive dialogue
- Civic engagement
- Planning and organization

METHODOLOGY

Formation of democratically elected student councils that take an active role in the schools' educational process

In the Values Building Education project, student councils were formed using the following steps:

- The parent council introduced the idea of the student council to the student body
-

by explaining its objectives and the election steps.

- Each grade at the school then held an internal election to select two representatives — a boy and a girl in co-ed schools — to the council.
- Nominations were then taken for the leadership of the student council — president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer. All students who accepted their nominations became official candidates in the election.
- Candidates were each given a small amount of money to support their campaign, which lasted three days. Campaign materials included brochures and t-shirts bearing the candidate's name. On the final day of the campaign there was an open debate between the candidates for president of the student council.
- The election was held in one day and winners were announced at the end of the day. The parent council and student council members not participating as candidates in the election certified the final results. Students who did not win accepted the results and congratulated their winning peers.
- All candidates met with local government officials to debrief their experience with the student council elections and to learn about the municipal and legislative election process.
- Finally, a meeting was held for all election winners from the schools participating in the project to exchange experiences.

“...the newly elected student councils have taken an active role in their schools.”

OUTCOME

- School administrators noted that the newly elected student councils have taken an active role in their schools and begun the implementation of their election programs. The student councils have launched and organized many artistic, sports and community-based events in the school on their own. One of the schools has included a number of students from the student council into its School Advisory Committee (made up of parents, teachers and administrators).

Year 2 – Theme 2: Becoming an Actor for Social Justice and Change

OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 1: Educate students on women’s rights and gender issues.

OBJECTIVE 2: Educate students on children’s rights.

OBJECTIVE 3: Educate students on the importance of conserving the environment.

TIME

Three months

KEY VALUES AND SKILLS

- Advocacy on issues related to human rights and the environment
- Community mobilization
- Freedom of expression
- Critical and analytical thinking
- Research, planning and organization



A student learns about the role of women from an elder in the community

OBJECTIVE 1

Educate students on women’s rights and gender issues.

METHODOLOGY

STEP 1: Students conduct research in schools to identify how their peers accept the different roles of women. This research can be done through surveys, questionnaires, focus group interviews, etc. The results of this research will serve as baseline data. (See Annex 2 for sample questionnaire.)

STEP 2: Students participate in various awareness raising activities to broaden their view of the role of women in society. Examples of activities undertaken in the Values Building Education project include:

1. Observing the roles of both women and men in society and at home and recording these observations.

2. Meeting with women in different professions, and learning about the roles and challenges they face in society and at home.
3. Visiting women's shelters to learn why some women suffer from problems such as domestic violence, lack of rights for divorce and inheritance, etc.
4. Inviting religious leaders to talk about the role of women in religion.
5. Holding debates on what is permissible for men and what is forbidden for women in society and why.
6. Conducting simulations where girls and boys switch roles and debrief their experiences.
7. Producing videos or reports on women's issues that are shared with the school or broader community.
8. Analyzing traditional proverbs about women and girls and modifying them to reflect a more positive image.
9. Critiquing school curricula and materials for evidence of gender bias and suggesting modifications to educational authorities.



Students display poster on women's rights

STEP 3: Students conduct follow-up research in schools to determine whether there has been a change in how their peers accept the different roles of women. Compare the results of the research with the baseline data to determine the degree of change.

OUTCOME

After discussing the issue of violence against women in society, many schools noted an increase in the number of female students who consulted their school social worker to discuss their own exposure to violence. In one case, a student went to a “safe house” institution to ask for protection as a result of exposure to domestic violence.

“As a result of the gender-related project, female students now have the ability to defend their rights in a positive way.”

— A headmistress at one of the participating schools

OBJECTIVE 2

Educate students on children's rights.

METHODOLOGY

STEP 1: Students conduct research in schools to identify the extent of their peers' knowledge of their own rights as children. This research can be done through surveys, questionnaires, focus group interviews, etc. The results of this research will serve as baseline data. (See Annex 3 for sample questionnaire.)

STEP 2: Students explore the concept of rights.

First, the student council collects all students' views regarding what a child needs to be happy and healthy. Next, the top five responses are recorded. Finally, students host or visit an organization working for children's rights. The organization provides an overview of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and facilitates a discussion comparing the internationally recognized rights of the child to the top five responses that the students had gathered in their research.

STEP 3: Students visit local government institutions and non-governmental organizations to identify actions to protect the rights of Palestinian children.

During the visits, students record the specific rights being addressed by these institutions/organizations as well as those rights not being addressed.

STEP 4: Students document rights that are denied to Palestinian children.

A competition is held where students are divided into groups and must document a particular right denied to Palestinian children. Each group is provided a camera and/or painting supplies to document its work. An exhibition is held to give all groups the opportunity to share their work. A calendar or poster that showcases the best twelve pictures/images could be produced from the exhibition.

STEP 5: Students take action on behalf of children's rights.



A student's drawing on the violation of children's rights

Students join together to identify and participate in an activity that demonstrates their support for children’s rights. Activities might include: organizing a march, coordinating a letter writing campaign to the government, providing a forum for children to speak out for their rights, or holding a festival to showcase students’ expressions of their rights.

STEP 6: Students conduct follow-up research in schools to determine whether there has been a change in their peers’ knowledge of their own rights. Compare the results of the research with the baseline data to determine the degree of change.

OUTCOME

As part of an exercise to educate children about their rights, students were asked to identify three rights they felt were unfulfilled. The right to live in a safe and peaceful environment received the highest number of votes. The students then decided to voice their concerns by participating in a peaceful demonstration to raise awareness of children’s rights.

“We want to live in a peaceful environment without fear, worry or exposure to killing. But the children of Bethlehem do not feel peace and safety.” These were the words of one St. Joseph student after parent council members and social workers, trained in the area of children’s rights, introduced students at the school to their rights.

OBJECTIVE 3

Educate students on the importance of conserving the environment.

METHODOLOGY

STEP 1: Students conduct research in schools to identify the level of environmental consciousness among their peers. This research can be done through surveys, questionnaires, focus group interviews, etc. The results of this research will serve as baseline data. (See Annex 4 for sample questionnaire.)

STEP 2: Students identify and implement a project to make their school a place where the environment is actively protected.

When designing the project, students might ask the following questions:

- How can we create a cleaner school?

- How can we save water?
- How can we save energy?
- How can we save trees?
- How can we raise awareness?

STEP 3: Students identify and implement a project to improve and protect the environment of their community.

This can be done in collaboration with other schools in the community, private sector businesses, media, and local government.

STEP 4: Students host an environmental festival.

This festival could include all members of the community and showcase the results of the projects undertaken in steps 2 and 3.

STEP 5: Students conduct follow-up research in schools to determine whether there has been a change in the level of environmental consciousness among their peers. Compare the results of the research with the baseline data to determine the degree of change.



Students work on environmental awareness projects

Year 2 – Theme 3: Becoming an Agent for Peace in My Community

OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 1: Establish a foundation for a culture of peace in schools.

OBJECTIVE 2: Build tolerance for diversity among students.

TIME

Three months

KEY VALUES AND SKILLS

- Nonviolent conflict resolution
- Active listening
- Problem solving
- Respect for diversity
- Communication
- Mediation



Students work together on poster promoting non-violence

OBJECTIVE 1

Establish a foundation for a culture of peace in schools.

METHODOLOGY

Implementation of a student-led non-violence project in schools

STEP 1: Students conduct research in schools to identify non-violent conflict resolution skills among their peers. This research can be done through surveys, questionnaires, focus group interviews, etc. The results of this research will serve as baseline data. (See Annex 5 for sample questionnaire.)



Student creates image to raise awareness of non-violence

STEP 2: Students, parents and teachers receive 20 hours of training on nonviolence, active listening, communication, conflict resolution and mediation skills.

It is best if students participate in training sessions separately from parents and teachers.

STEP 3: Students put their newly learned skills into practice.

Some suggestions for practical activities implemented in the Palestinian territories :

- Visit a community conflict resolution organization to learn about its work.
- Monitor violent behavior at home, in school, and in the community and make recommendations for decreasing violence.
- Form peer mediation groups that mediate between their friends in conflict.
- Form a traditional reconciliation committee (*Sulha*) with representatives from each class that develops non-violent laws for the school.
- Produce plays, songs, artwork, photos or videos to express the problem of violence and its effects. Share these expressions with parents, other schools, and the broader community.

STEP 4: Students conduct follow-up research in schools to determine whether there has been a change in the non-violent conflict resolution skills among their peers. Compare the results of the research with the baseline data to determine the degree of change.

OUTCOME

The traditional reconciliation committees (*Sulhas*) formed in several of the project schools during step 3 of this theme established a set of non-violence laws that were signed by all students in the schools. The students pledged to resolve their problems peacefully without any disputes. The following are examples of two posters developed by a *Sulha* committee and posted throughout the schools.

Anger Control Methods

Dear student;

When you feel outraged, follow the steps below to control your anger:

- Be calm. We do not think rationally when we are angry.
- Avoid the group that angered you until you become calm.
- Listen to the other person once you are calm. What does he/she want to tell you?
- Refrain from using bad words when talking about people. Talk about your own feelings and not about other people.
- Ask for assistance. Speak to or consult your school reconciliation committee or someone you trust.

Fair Problem Solving Approach²

1. Identify the problem.
2. Focus on the problem.
3. Attack the problem NOT the person.
4. Listen with an open mind.
5. Respect other people's feelings.
6. Bear the responsibility of your acts.

Unacceptable behavior:

Yelling, beating, pushing, making excuses, not listening, blaming, talking about the past, and escaping responsibility.

² Based on the work of the Peace Education Foundation (www.peace-ed.org).

OBJECTIVE 2

Build tolerance for diversity among students.

METHODOLOGY

STEP 1: Students gather information on the backgrounds of their fellow students through interviews and prepare a report documenting the diverse backgrounds within the school.

In the Values Building Education project, the interviews included questions about students' perceptions of different groups: refugees and non-refugees, Muslims and Christians, rural and urban dwellers, those living under Israeli rule and those under the Palestinian Authority. This was done in order to capture the stereotypes that students have about different groups.

STEP 2: Students get to know their peers from different backgrounds in order to eliminate stereotypes and misconceptions.

After being paired with a peer from a different background, students learn about their partner's background and then present this background at a larger gathering (school



Learning about diversity breeds new friendships

assembly, workshop, conference) to break down stereotypes. During this process, students are reminded to steer clear of political views.

STEP 3: Students from diverse backgrounds identify a common concern in their school or community and plan a joint activity to address this concern.

STEP 4: Students hold a reflection session to discuss how their perceptions of different groups changed.

OUTCOME

After meeting with Palestinian students from different backgrounds, a 12-year-old Muslim girl in the sixth-grade reflected on her experience: “Before I participated in this project, I felt that I was unwelcome because I am Muslim (note that most students in the school are Christian). But after I participated in the project activities, I realized things were completely the other way around. Now I have many friends, and I feel that we are all equal. I am grateful for this opportunity to be accepted by others.”

Lesson Learned

When carrying out joint activities between students from different backgrounds, it is advisable to begin with fun recreational activities that build trust and familiarity. Only once this has been established and friendships have started to emerge should discussions about the views of students from different backgrounds be attempted. Even then, such discussions need to be moderated by a specialist trained in conflict resolution.

Annex 2: Baseline for Women's Rights and Gender Issues

FORM NO.: _____

SCHOOL: _____

CLASS: _____

AGE: _____

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: City Camp Village Other

SEX: M F

1. Do you believe that women should be able to work outside the home?

Yes No

Why? _____

2. Do you believe women should assist with household expenses?

Yes No

Why? _____

3. Do you believe that women should be able to occupy a high political post such as president or a minister?

Yes No

Why? _____

4. Do you believe that women should be able to occupy a high municipality post such as mayor or a municipality member?

Yes No

Why? _____

5. Do you believe that women should make household affairs and child care their main priority?

Yes No

Why? _____

6. For female students: Rank the following items in terms of preference to you (number 1 being the most preferred, number 4 the least preferred):

___ A working woman

___ A politician

___ A social activist

___ A housewife

7. In your opinion, what should a woman's primary role be?

Acting as a housewife taking care of her children

Acting in a political position

Acting as a social activist

Acting as a working woman

Other: _____

8. Is your mother a working woman?

Yes No

9. Do you or would you support the idea of your mother working outside the home?

Yes No

10. Do you think that Palestinian women enjoy the same rights as men?

Yes No

Annex 3: Baseline for Children's Rights

FORM NO.: _____

SCHOOL: _____

CLASS: _____

AGE: _____

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: City Camp Village Other

SEX: M F

1. Are you familiar with the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

Yes No

2. Do you think that Palestinian children enjoy all the rights stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

Yes No

3. If not, what do you think Palestinian children are most deprived of?

The right to live in a secure environment

The right to play

The right of protection from physical and psychological abuse

The right of expression of opinion

Other: _____

4. In your opinion, what should Palestinian children do to advocate for their rights?

- They should defend their rights before anyone trying to deprive them of these rights
- They should form a coalition to work together to lobby for their rights at the national and international levels
- They should seek local legal channels to highlight the situation of Palestinian children
- They should highlight the situation of Palestinian children

Other: _____

Annex 4: Baseline for Environmental Consciousness

FORM NO.: _____

SCHOOL: _____

CLASS: _____

AGE: _____

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: City Camp Village Other

SEX: M F

1. Do environmental problems concern you?

Yes No

2. Does the school have a role to play in protecting the environment?

Yes No

If yes, how: _____

3. Would you like to be an environmental advocate at your school and/or in your community?

Yes No

If yes, how? If no, why not? _____

4. Have you ever launched any environmental initiatives at your school or in your community?

Yes No

If yes, how? If no, why not? _____

Annex 5: Baseline for a Culture of Peace

FORM NO.: _____

SCHOOL: _____

CLASS: _____

AGE: _____

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: City Camp Village Other

SEX: M F

1. Most of my peers know how to deal with conflict non-violently.

Agree Disagree

2. I am satisfied with my approach to dealing with conflict that I have been exposed to.

Agree Disagree

3. I would like to know how to deal with conflict more effectively.

Agree Disagree

4. When I am outraged, I usually express my anger by:

Beating

Speaking

Threatening

Keeping silent

Other: _____

5. When I get annoyed by a peer, I usually express my annoyance by:

- Expressing my feelings and listening to him/her
- Drifting away from the peer without giving any explanation
- Encouraging other peers to abandon him/her
- Trying to understand and solve the problem
- Other: _____

6. When I get into a problem, I usually seek problem-solving assistance from:

- A friend or classmate
- Family
- My school principal or a teacher I trust
- I solve the problem myself
- Other: _____

7. When I am angry with someone, I ask the person to explain why they did what they did.

Agree Disagree

Explain: _____

8. When I am angry with someone, I listen to that person so that I can try to understand the problem.

Agree Disagree

Explain: _____

9. When I have a problem with a peer, we should equally share the responsibility of solving the problem.

Agree Disagree

Explain: _____

Acknowledgments

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