

# Passion For Sudan

*Fifteen Canadians travelled to south Sudan with CASS representatives Jane Roy and Glen Pearson. Learn how the Canadian influence represented hope for the people of Aweil East county and an exciting opportunity for Canadians.*

CASS Newsletter

Winter 2007

## Canadian Women Get Down to Business

Thirteen Canadian businesswomen make their impact felt in south Sudan and come away with a renewed sense of purpose for the struggling people of the region.

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## Abuk's Herd

This program's effectiveness became readily apparent on the most recent trip.

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## A Future in Sewing

By partnering with another non-governmental organization, CASS's sewing micro-enterprise project showed some surprising results. Women entrepreneurs are moving forward.

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## A New Darfur Initiative



A sudden revelation leads to a committed effort.

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## Smart Aid Takes Off

Developing businesses that directly profit local communities is a cornerstone of CASS's "Smart Aid" initiative. Its success holds out great hope for the future.

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## The Future of CASS

Where to from here? In light of recent successes, CASS re-evaluates its role in the Aweil East region of south Sudan.

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# Opening the Canada School

ronment. The government of south Sudan is also ensuring the salary of teachers for the school, guaranteeing a consistent school term.

Twelve months ago it was determined that 600 students would attend the school but that number has already swelled to 1,100. The eight classrooms built will be filled to absolute capacity.

The buildings themselves were constructed to last, with the cement bricks (unique to south Sudan) being formed by rehabilitated former child soldiers.

The team of 15 Canadians who journeyed to the region this past January rejoiced with the community as the school was turned over to local officials. A flag signed by former Prime Minister Paul Martin (instrumental in acquiring funds for the school two years ago) was presented to local leaders and the Canadians sang "O Canada" to the assembled group. It was a wonderful celebration that pointed to a more productive future for the Aweil East region.

## A Second School

CASS and the Government of Canada also cooperated on the building of a second primary school in the region. This school will reach its completion by the time term begins in April. All this means that Canadians will have constructed two schools in a region in dire need of educational facilities. This is a remarkable accomplishment for a region that only two years ago suffered the severe effects of Africa's longest running civil war.

This particular school will be operated by the Roman Catholic church in south Sudan - an organization that remained in the community through the worst years of conflict and retains high loyalty from the community for their solidarity.

For the first time in their memory, the people of Aweil East will have permanent and staffed educational facilities that will see them through these next pivotal years. Many thanks to you, our faithful supporters, and the Government of Canada for turning this possibility into a reality. Whenever the students looked at the school as we walked past they continued to cry out "Canada!" - a wonderful thing for all of us.



**Following three years of effort, CASS has completed the Canada School, in cooperation with the Government of Canada. Students now meet in secure classrooms as opposed to gathering under trees.**

The Canada School began construction one year ago in January 2006 and has finally reached a conclusion. Beginning with the new school season in April, students will now learn in a protected envi-

**Metal doors and windows help with longevity and security. The buildings are made to last and will be a permanent reminder to people of the region of Canada's commitment to the rebuilding of their communities.**



## MOVING AHEAD

*In the nine years Canadian Aid for Southern Sudan has been involved in the region we have seen some remarkable transformations. Efforts that began at freeing slaves and fighting that inhuman practice at various venues are now being consummated in the construction of schools, assisting former slaves in starting their own small businesses and ultimately assisting the southern Sudanese in recovering all the years lost due to a brutal civil war.*

*The changes have been increasingly dramatic. Each visit sees the people happier, communities more secure, both people and livestock fatter than at any other time we can recall. The biggest change, however, has been in the attitude of the community in which we have been working. The knowledge that Canadians have been with them during both times of war and peace has permitted the people of the region to realize they have key partners from half a world away. A clear consequence of this has been their desire to plan their community's life for well into the future.*

*There have been significant changes back here in Canada, too. CASS's executive director recently became a Member of Parliament. The popularity of Abuk's Herd has exceeded all expectations. And dozens of Canadians are requesting to be part of future CASS teams to the region.*

*All in all, this has been a remarkably transformative year and we look forward to cooperating with you and our Sudanese friends as we seek to rebuild the lives of those who only three years ago were caught in the grips of a terrible civil war. Many thanks to all of you for your ongoing support.*



Jane Roy

CASS President

## Abuk's Herd - Up Close and Personal

*This initiative was named after Abuk - a young child formerly held in slavery and who now resides in Canada. CASS purchases goats from local markets and distributes them to families at risk - returned slaves or exiles, elderly individuals, widows and families caring for orphans.*

It has been clear for the last three years that the initiative of Abuk's Herd has become hugely popular in Canada. This is due, in part, to its practical effects and ability of at-risk individuals and families to grow their own herds and become economically self-sufficient.

As a key CASS program, Abuk's Herd is fairly easy to understand. But what is little known are the personal effects acquiring goats has on local families. As mentioned earlier, a large number of Canadian businesswomen accompanied CASS on a trip this past January and some of them were charged with the responsibility of interviewing these families and examining the effects Abuk's Herd had in their lives.

What we discovered, and in fact surprised us, was the clear success of the program itself. Families were not only deeply grateful for the goats, they had used them prudently in a way that brought increasing success for their families. As the following stories will recount, your support of Abuk's Herd has had some heartfelt responses.

***Alek Akot Dut is a mother of three, living just outside of Malualkon. She returned to the south 18 months previous.***



Alek worked in north Sudan as a servant as she sought to provide for her family. She currently works in the homes of relatives and neighbours and they give her sorghum and sometimes people give her money so that she can feed her children. She is desperately trying to get her children to school and their education is her greatest hope.

She received a female goat during the January trip and Alek was ecstatic, stating that she is going to use the goat for milk and to produce other goats. It turns out that the goat she received was already pregnant - an unexpected surprise that filled her with delight.

***Ajok Deng Kenyang has struggled to do what any mother would - feed her family and attempt to provide them a decent chance at a future. She is a mother of five and was interviewed in January.***



Ajok had a good marriage until her husband died 10 years ago. Her life has been a challenge since then. During the war her family survived on tree leaves and she lost many relatives to the conflict. They would run at night to the forest to hide and stay for about 10

days without coming back home to find food. Currently for income she collects water at a bore hole and sells it in the market - a 30-minute walk. She does this five times a day. But after all this labour she still doesn't have enough food for her family.

She received one female goat from Abuk's Herd in 2006. This goat has had two babies. She sold one female goat and has two goats at present - male and female - which she uses for milk for her children. She sold the one goat to get seeds for a crop, but disease set in and the crop was ruined.

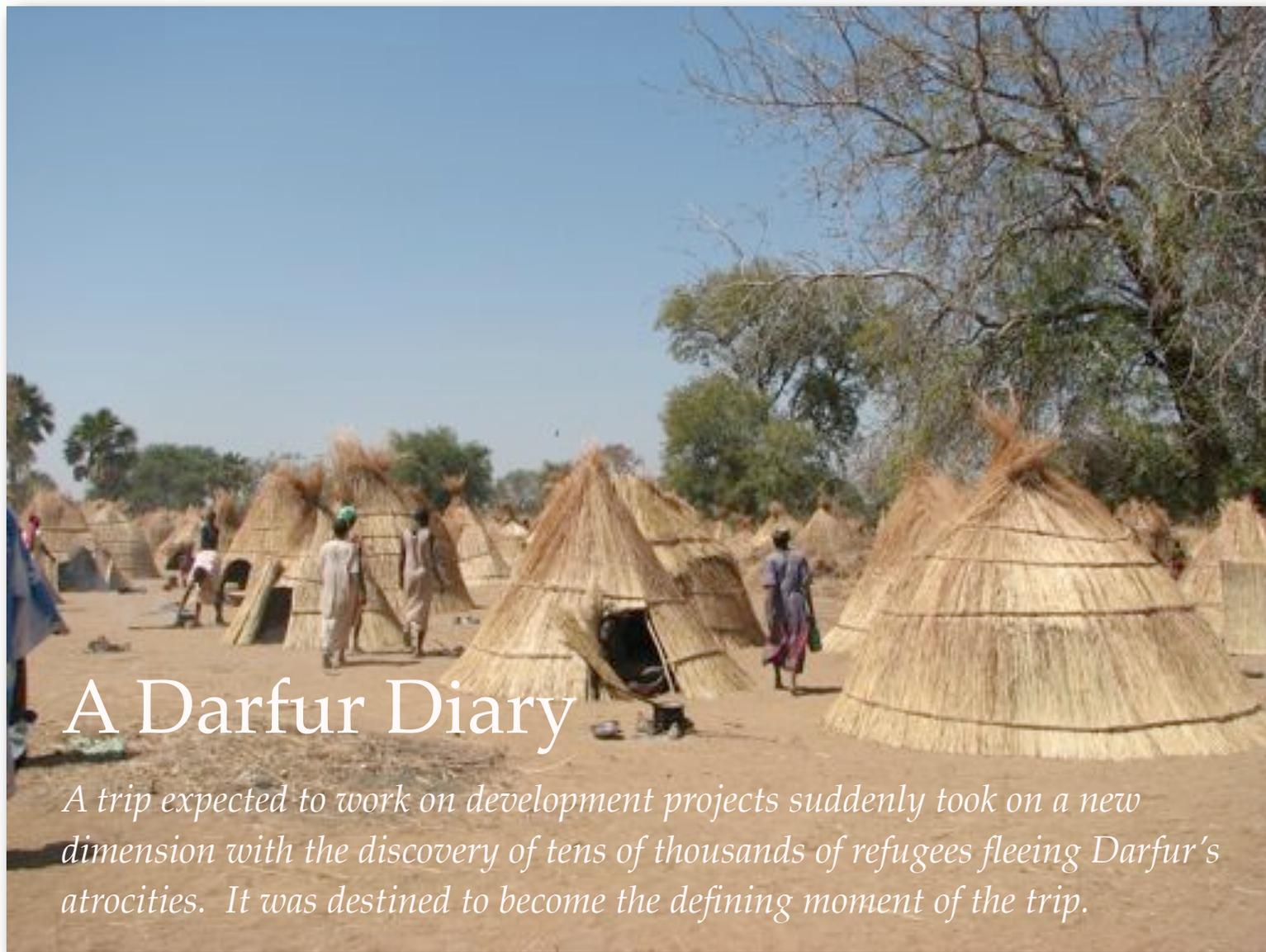
She hopes Canadians will help and that her children will be able to gain an education. "It will give them life," she believes, as well as a better future. Her sons hope to go to secondary school to learn business skills and she wants her children to marry and help others. Her daughter will finish school and then marry, she hopes.

Ajok hopes that the future will bring more food. She hopes the north and the south join together to be one country and if this happens peace will remain, she believes. If they separate, all hope will be gone.

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***CASS's future plan is to continue expanding Abuk's Herd as a direct result of recent successes. Community leaders have also concluded that the program greatly assists them in re-establishing former slaves and exiles into more productive lives within their respective communities. As the southern economy continues to grow, the price of goats has naturally increased from \$30 to \$60 - still a remarkably affordable way to provide a future.***

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# A Darfur Diary

*A trip expected to work on development projects suddenly took on a new dimension with the discovery of tens of thousands of refugees fleeing Darfur's atrocities. It was destined to become the defining moment of the trip.*

*Darfur is a region holding 6,000,000 million people and has been suffering violent conflict for the last three years. Over 400,000 have perished and those displaced number almost a million. The conflict has consumed massive amounts of international energy with no solution.*

The recent January trip was specifically designed to assist in our projects in Aweil East, but things took a dramatic turn part way through our journey. News had come through that tens of thousands of displaced people from Darfur had flooded into an area close to where we were. The majority of our team opted to locate these people and document their stories.

What we saw upon arrival shocked us. Temporary grass shelters, pictured above, had been erected by local communities to house the influx of refugees, with each being a few feet apart from the other. So many were now camped in these areas that the host communities were quickly saturated and short of the necessities of life.

All this left the team with the clear desire to assist in anyway they could. Immediately, the decision was made to purchase goats and other supplies that might assist some of the at-risk families.

Clearly, something more long-term was required and as the team deliberated a plan began to emerge. Working in partnership with the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), it was determined to seek emergency funds from the Government of Canada based on a budget submitted by the IOM. A press conference was subsequently held in Parliament, and a growing consensus is emerging with the support of the three opposition parties. At the time of this writing, however, the government has not responded to the request.

By the time the rainy season arrives in south Sudan (late-April) hundreds of these refugees will have perished. In fact when we arrived at one of the camps, two children had already perished with meningitis.

Clearly CASS must pursue a practical response and we are encouraging anyone interested in donating emergency funds for water, food and medicines to send your gifts to CASS and mark clearly that it is for "Darfur Relief."

The Darfur saga continue to unfold in a particularly devastating fashion. However, with this new emerging front on Darfur's eastern border we have a chance to provide direct relief in a secure area.



**Darfur refugees in Aweil East have challenged the ability of local communities to respond to the emerging crisis.**

## A Time for Action on Darfur

*The CASS Darfur press conference recently held in Parliament placed primary focus on moving some 50,000 Darfur refugees into safer areas of south Sudan. Following is an excerpt from the report released at the press conference.*

**This is an emerging new front emanating from eastern Darfur - one that has been little documented and received no attention from the media.**

Assessments have already been completed and it's clear what is required.

- the drilling of bore holes for water (the UN has maintained that 20,000 such bore holes are required in south Sudan but do date only 1200 have been drilled).
- improve sanitation conditions in host communities to avert disease;
- make small and medium infrastructure investments to buttress host communities to deal with the emerging needs. These include construction of schools, generators for power, medical treatments and construction of temporary shelters.
- trucks are provided for transportation of at-risk individuals and families to return them to their home communities.
- emergency kits are provided which include mosquito nets, basic medicines, utensils for cooking and drinkable water.
- transportation kits are provided, which include tents, shoes, clothing and small amounts of food.

All these provisions have unfortunately fallen short, leaving the IOM looking for funding partners to assist in expanding their services.

## A Unique Opportunity for Canada

Upon leaving south Sudan, we were asked to brief IOM officials, International Rescue Committee, the International Crisis Group and UN officials on the emerging crisis. All of these groups remained dubious about the unfolding situation in Western Darfur due to a lack of political will and troubling insecurity. Nevertheless, they felt that the opportunity to address the humanitarian needs on

the emerging Eastern Darfur region could have achievable results. There are key advantages to insuring that a Canadian intervention on this front can be effective.

- **Security** - the region of Aweil East, south Sudan, where these refugees/returnees now reside, has remained remarkably peaceful since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between north and south Sudan. Part of this is due to a Canadian presence in the region since 1999 that has resulted in the building of schools (including the Canada School this past January), establishing of YM/YWCA programs in the region, building micro-enterprises, rehabilitation programs for former slaves and child soldiers - all of these have enhanced stability. While there has been little international monitoring of this border region, both sides of the previous conflict have respected the terms of the CPA. This is totally unlike the Western region of Darfur, where insecurity has, and will remain, the most troubling aspect of the crisis. Any humanitarian effort by Canada on this emerging front will take place in a relatively safe environment.
- **Mobility** - in part due to a reasonably secure environment, the ability to move at-risk families to their final destinations is good. A new road has been constructed that runs from the present refugee/returnee communities to many of the ultimate destinations in other regions of south Sudan. Availability of fuel and vehicles throughout the region can lead to greater mobility.
- **Receptive communities** - interviewing numerous tribal leaders and chiefs in prospective destination communities revealed a clear willingness to accept at-risk families into their respective home communities. South Sudanese leaders have lobbied repeatedly for the right of these individuals to travel to the destination of their choice and were in fact successful in ensuring some provisions for this in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the northern Government of Sudan. Provisions

have been agreed to between these destination communities and those groups like the IOM who are charged with overseeing these returns.

- **Measurable outcomes** - given the relative stability of the area, the chances for assessing and documenting the success of any intervention are high. The IOM already has such abilities, but lacks the program resources to get the job done.
- **Developed programs** - the IOM has already undertaken assessments of what is required in this region and requires only the resources to implement them. This saves precious time in dealing with what could soon be an emergency situation.

## Conclusion

It is crucial to understand that both of these streams of humanity - from Khartoum and Darfur - embrace as their ultimate goal the return to their historic homes. In other words, both groups have no desire to remain in refugee camps but are in fact stuck in their present situation because of an inability to move on. The IOM has been charged with returning these individuals to their homes in south Sudan and expresses confidence this can be done if the pressure of a lack of resources is relieved.

By being the first nation to respond to this new front, Canada can show the rest of the world that it has found a new and innovative way to relieve some of the humanitarian pressure in Darfur. As the situation in western Darfur continues to remain intractable, a quick and effective response on the eastern front, accomplished in conjunction with a solid international partner (IOM), permits the international community to act when the opportunity presents itself. Concurrently, an effective transportation of these at-risk families provides support for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between north and south Sudan by keeping communities in the border regions from being overrun with internally displaced peoples as they were during the war.

While more intensive international pressure needs to be placed on the Government of Sudan to solve this ever-deepening crisis, our chance to act on this new emerging eastern front is now.



**Sewing**



Over the years CASS has partnered with numerous organizations as our programs expanded in the border region between north and south Sudan. When it came time to locate an “on the ground” partner to oversee our new initiative on developing sewing micro-enterprises we naturally looked to AMURT - a Swiss-based NGO with a great track record on the ground in the region.

The Passion for Sudan team moved out into the area to assess the effectiveness of the program which was developed in the past year, under the capable leadership of CASS’s Alex Lau. What they found was encouraging and bodes well for future investment.

The sewing school, pictured above, continues to train girls in the art of sewing and provided us with some wonderful demonstrations during our visit. Over 25 girls have graduated from sewing training and received machines from CASS in partnership with AMURT. These women have now gone on to establish their own businesses in markets all across Aweil East County.

But the success goes further. Each graduate was provided a loan to get them started and to-date 98% have paid these loans off and continue to expand their businesses in local markets. It is proof once again that by providing key resources CASS is witnessing economic growth and development.

**Grinding Mill**



For those of you who read any of our previous newsletters you will recall how it takes a southern Sudanese woman roughly six hours to grind grain daily for her family needs. That left them precious little time to advance their own lives.

Well, all that is now changing with the installation of a new mechanical grinding mill like the one pictured above. A permanent structure has now been erected to house the mill and it will be in operation soon.

Overseen by AMURT, the mill will be managed by a cooperative of local businesswomen. The ability to grind and sell their grain in a timely manner will significantly assist women to go to school, attend YWCA programs and participate in women’s leadership initiatives.

But it goes further. By forming their own co-op these women are becoming the entrepreneurs of the future, successful leaders in their own right. Their recent success bodes well for CASS’s *Smart Aid* program.

Further mills will be provided when women have completed their one-year course. AMURT will continue monitoring the situation on the ground and will inform us when more resources are required for the continued development of the program.

**Woman to Woman**



As you are no doubt aware, from its very earliest days CASS has placed primary focus on the fate of the women of south Sudan and this has led us into various initiatives, from recovering women out of slavery, with subsequent rehabilitation programs, to assisting in the establishing of micro-enterprises for future women business leaders.

The repeated presence of CASS’s own president, Jane Roy, in the region has heartened the Sudanese as to our organization’s commitment to the future of the women and girls of Aweil East. But we have been blessed in recent trips to have a significant number of Canadian women apply their own energies and talents to our women’s programs.

Yet this past trip, more than any other, has increased this women-to-women dimension to an entirely new and effective level. Not only did the Canadians assist with the development of initiatives such as Abuk’s Herd and Smart Aid, they brought letters from women in Canada who were in at-risk situations themselves.

My Sister’s Place is a London, Ontario-based social agency that provides comfort to women struggling to make ends meet. Yet the women from that agency looked past their own difficult circumstances to connect with those half a world away through a letter exchange program - a truly remarkable show of solidarity.

# In Appreciation of Some Remarkable Women

*The Passion for Sudan team that accompanied CASS on the most recent journey left their mark on both the people of the Aweil East region and on CASS itself.*

Leaving the comforts of Canada to journey to a devastated region half a world away is hardly a common occurrence, but that's exactly what a group of remarkable women did in January 2007. Months earlier, they came together to raise funds for needed projects required by the women of Aweil East, in the process calling themselves "Passion for Sudan" - a phrase that captured the essence of their spirit and dedication as caring Canadians. During the course of their trip they distributed goats, brought supplies to the local medical clinic, assisted local women entrepreneurs and visited Darfur refugees who had virtually gone unnoticed. In addition, they assisted with the opening of the Canada School and held a music workshop. Added to this impressive list is their key contribution - solidarity with the women of south Sudan.



Wherever they journeyed, people marvelled that so many Canadians had come at one time to empathize with their struggles and revel in their accomplishments. The impression they left in Sudan will stay in Sudanese memory for some time to come.

But there is more. To Canadian Aid for Southern Sudan these remarkable individuals brought a new dimension of fundraising, organization and, yes, passion. And these women are not yet done. They are already organizing for expanding the projects they helped establish and are also assisting with opening new areas that will ultimately expand CASS's *Smart Aid* work in the region.

All of us at Canadian Aid for Southern Sudan thank Denise Pelley, Lucy Ogletree, Kim and Nicole Spriet, Lynn Blumas, Hayley McKinnon, Jacquie Lau, Krista Pawley, Samira El-Hindi and Anna Pacifico for lives well-lived and for an influence that will be long felt.

## Want to Help?

*CASS's programs can only remain effective with your ongoing support. Here are some practical ways you can assist. And remember, because we are a fully volunteer organization, 100% of all money donated goes directly to the programs in Sudan.*

### Canadian Aid for Southern Sudan

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web: [www.casscanada.net](http://www.casscanada.net)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Brick for secondary school</i>	-	\$10
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Baby goat</i>	-	\$30
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Goat for Abuk's Herd</i>	-	\$60
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Salary for a teacher</i>	-	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Operation of grinding mill</i>	-	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Starts a sewing business</i>	-	\$500



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