

Communities manage their assets

lessons learnt from experience



Timely maintenance of Community buildings is vital.

Maintenance and management of these assets through the community is cheaper than through external contractors.

The community, where everyone knows everybody else, is more open to accounting than remote state or district budgets.

Awareness of faults, damage and maintenance in the building is immediate to the user.

The sooner these are identified, then, with appropriate technical advice, the more cheaply they can be remedied through community action.

Efficient asset management relies on understanding and co-operation between the community and local government.

Notes on the management and maintenance of community buildings by the users, based on practical experience in India. A DFID funded research project on building capacity for Community Asset Management (CAM)

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Community Asset Management' or CAM is the management of physical assets in collective use by rural or urban communities. In the broadest sense, such assets enable members of communities to pursue their economic, social, cultural, spiritual and psychological well-being. In the scenario where the people are poor, the immediate interest is in livelihood assets, those that ensure basic economic needs can be met. Community Asset Management envisages improved capacity of low-income communities for the management, life-cycle planning, regular care and construction work for new and existing community buildings.

Management and maintenance of existing community assets needs no less attention than building new ones.

Huge resources of both effort and money have gone into ensuring universal local access to basic services in new infrastructure throughout the world. This drive for more and better-suited buildings has tended to overlook the existing stock of buildings. The problem of lack of maintenance and consequent under-use has cancelled out many of the apparent infrastructural gains that have been made in recent years. Lack of timely investment on maintenance has endangered the utility and life of community buildings.

Users can manage and maintain community assets in an efficient and cost-effective way.

So what is the best way to provide, manage and maintain new and existing physical assets for the foreseeable future? The present external aid, national and grant sponsored system, whereby the government takes full responsibility, has, in too many cases, failed. It is much more likely that a community asset will serve its purpose for its full designed life when users take responsibility for the management, life-time planning, construction and physical maintenance of a community building on their own or in partnership where appropriate, with local government, local businesses, NGOs, state and national government.

Local inventories of community assets and their condition need to be established.

People in each settlement are served by a unique set of community buildings and infrastructure. Making local inventories of the community assets and observing their condition regularly is essential. Community assets can imply a multitude of buildings and infrastructure provided through a variety of agencies, government, non-government and community based. An inventory of such facilities will vary from place to place and their users or stakeholders are likely to vary as well. Local observation will also show the current involvement of users in the management and maintenance of community assets.

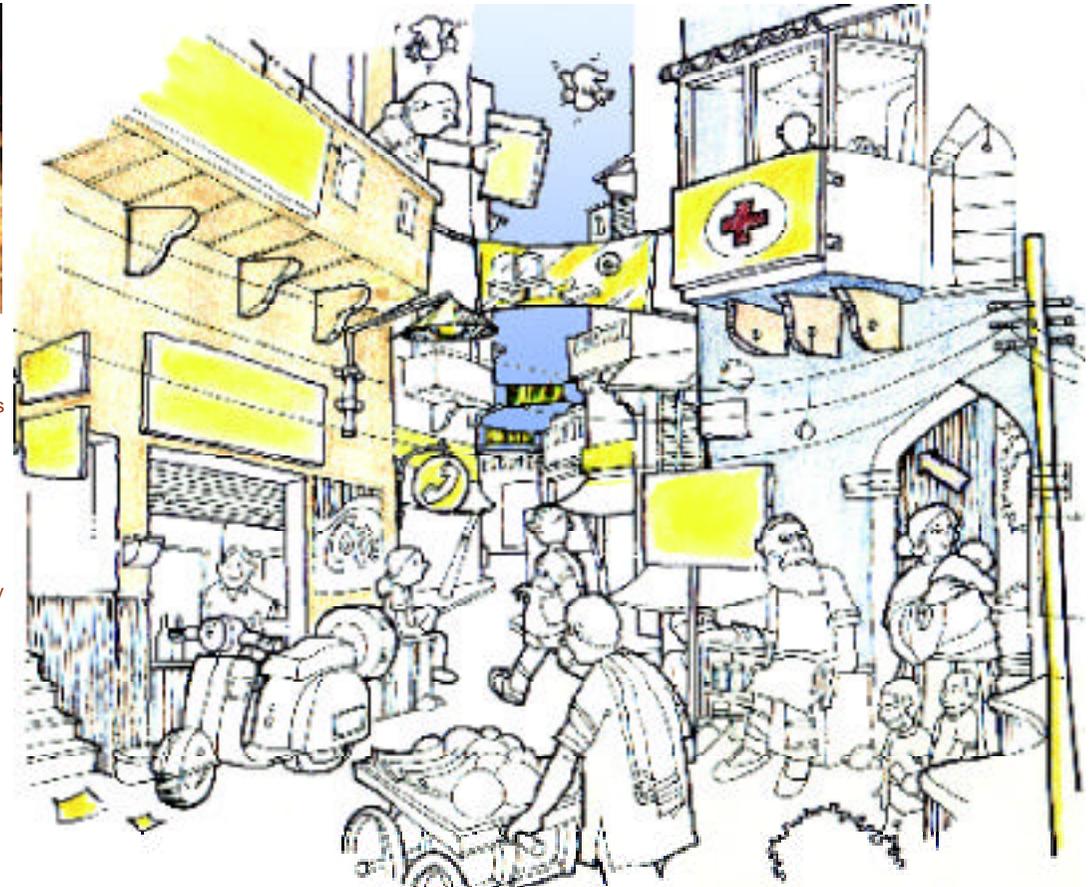
What is Community Asset Management (CAM)?



The poor condition of buildings results from bad design and workmanship as well as the lack of resources and planning to detect problems and make repairs in time.

For poor communities, once assets become unusable, they can only be replaced with great difficulty.

Preparing local inventories of community assets and their condition is the first step towards community asset management.



Contents

This booklet presents the emerging experience of CAM in India. The rise of CAM practice from a place and its people, through practitioners to policy, is recent and much of the work that has led to such policy is ongoing. There is a current opportunity for people to interact with this living experience. Many practitioners are actively engaged in Africa, Asia and Europe. Much of the awareness and drive for this Indian experience was inspired by earlier Village Polytechnic work in Africa.

1 User led CAM is sustainable....page 5

Critics argue that low-income communities lacking security of work, financial resources and basic education and training cannot afford the time or the money to manage and maintain their community buildings. Practical experience tells a different story. Community Asset Management is a sustainable approach to provision of infrastructure and maintenance. The users of individual facilities are best placed to make the routine observations necessary for this work gaining a sense of ownership in the process and sustaining the local economy through the involvement of local craftsmen. Money spent **through** the community rather than **for** them is effective, cost-efficient and most of it remains in the community.

2 Recognising the current role of the users in CAM and their limitations....page 7

Our research shows that communities are able and willing to continue to contribute to the maintenance and management of the common assets. The capacity of local authorities to manage infrastructure is evidently low even when they supplied it in the first place. Technical and financial help for improving infrastructure is rarely provided at the appropriate time. At present the contribution of users to CAM is an informal activity that operates outside the realm of public provision and largely without appropriate technical expertise and/ or with minimal financial resources. A more understanding and co-operative approach is needed that is able to promote this activity and underpin it with the technical knowledge and resources to ensure quality.

3 A strategy for CAM....page 11

CAM can be structured around a set of well-defined yet complex set of tasks that need the co-operation of several partners. We draw on actual working experience that we have observed and documented.

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A visual journey through the various factors that influence the well-being of Community Buildings.

4 Putting the strategy for CAM into practice....page 21

The preparedness for CAM will vary from place to place. Policymakers need to recognise the capabilities of individual low-income groups and to put into place the means for proving their accountability along with the necessary level of technical assistance in order to ensure an appropriate standard of work.

5 Capacity building needs for CAM....page 25

Users and local community groups can be trained to conduct CAM related tasks to the required standard and deliver CAM plans.

User led CAM is sustainable

1

As seen in the following statement, policymakers in India are encouraging the use of local skills in community asset management. This will ensure timely, cost-efficient maintenance and will help to retain external funding in the community.

Section VII Improvement of school facilities and other civil works

SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN(Education for everyone programme)
Department of Education
Government of India
(Source:
<http://education.nic.in>)

'Community participation should be the only means of undertaking any civil works in improvement of school facilities. Experiments in community participation under Lok-Jumbish and under DPEP in many States have been very encouraging and such experiments will be further carried out. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan would first of all try to mobilise resources under Rural Employment Programme and other developmental schemes for constructing school buildings. The community would have to come forward to maintain school facilities if any investment is proposed in a village. An annual support to the community for repair and maintenance is envisaged under the SSA. The upper ceiling is Rs. 5000 per year, based on the actual need and the willingness of the community to contribute.

'...SSA will encourage use of local construction materials and low-cost technologies. This would require a large amount of capacity building, including training of engineers and masons in these technologies. Apart from the Technical Resource Group of DPEP, assistance of resource institutions like HUDCO may also be sought for this purpose.....Each State must formulate a strategy for repair. The Rupees five thousand per year available to a school for regular maintenance and repair could be used to create a maintenance corpus in a school. The money will be credited to the VEC and the VEC could decide to use only part of the funds and use the rest to create a corpus. Community involvement is a must if the school infrastructure has to be well maintained.'



Lok-Jumbish
Programme for the provision of primary education infrastructure in Rajasthan(India) with an emphasis on community participation.

DPEP District Primary Education Programme aimed at the delivery of Universal access to primary education.

HUDCO Housing and Urban Development Corporation, Government of India.

VEC Village Education Committee

Rs 5000 equals 110 US Dollars

Characteristics of community involvement in asset management

Approaches to construction management involving the community have generally proved successful. A case in the point is the Village Education Committees in India being entrusted with disbursing construction funds. The approach included maintenance.

Building maintenance is known to be amongst the most labour intensive of all construction activities. Much of it is physical, but non-specialised. So it is possible for the poorest and least skilled members of the society to be engaged in it. It is a year round activity that can be organised around the social, cultural and livelihood calendar of the community.

An appropriately funded programme for the maintenance of social infrastructure through the community is ideal for poverty reduction at the community level in rural and urban areas. It can also contribute significantly to the wider objectives for sustainable livelihoods and improving the ability of people to withstand short-term adversity such as unemployment, poor harvest or natural disasters. In practice, it is characterised by the following:

- 1 The needs of the community are taken into account at the planning stage. Community gains a sense of ownership of the facilities and services available to them.
- 2 There are savings in cost through the involvement of community, both as workers and supervisors. Community is able to negotiate costs with the artisans that they employ.
- 3 The buildings remain in constant and cost-effective use.
- 4 The community understands maintenance as a vital element for improved development.
- 5 Local buildings become a centre of awareness on development issues and discussion.
- 6 More of any external funding remains in the community as local artisans are employed for building works and not external contractors.
- 7 Transparency is achieved in financial transaction of public funds.
- 8 Low-cost and local material are more likely to be used.
- 9 There is capacity building of the community and grassroots engineers in the tools and techniques for quality control.
- 10 Accurate rates for maintenance related works are developed.
- 11 Community understands the value of pre-emptive maintenance.
- 12 The community becomes the alternative implementation agency for maintenance.

“The headmaster, the head of the village, the women’s savings group, the engineer from block office are members of the Village Education Committee. We agree that the local mason is reliable and capable to do the building repairs. This way he will also have some income. The headmaster will keep accounts and the engineer will provide technical advice.”



Recognising the current role of users in CAM and their limitations

2



Users are involved in regular housekeeping of many community buildings. They are well aware of problems in the buildings and any formal barriers to timely maintenance. However they have a limited technical and financial capacity to diagnose problems and repair damages in community buildings provided by external agencies.

Overview of contribution by users of community buildings

People in-charge of community buildings are well informed about the maintenance problems and the immediate needs. They tend to take the initiative to collect resources for priority maintenance tasks if the formal processes are too long. They are aware of the formal processes (both the good and the bad bits) and the barriers to timely maintenance. Where building committees have been formed to involve the *in-charge* of the building and members of the community, the *in-charge* has made positive contribution to the condition of the building through their empowered status.

Research in the three study sites in India found that users even in low-income communities, contribute financially to their community buildings, and not just through physical effort. The community makes some kind of contribution towards the upkeep of most community buildings Irrespective of the provider of that facility. Where the local community are involved in the management of a building, either as landlord or as an organised committee, the use of the building is likely to be more adaptable and there is a better chance of a building being looked after for its significance in community life.

People are ready to contribute and even initiate those community works that they perceive to provide a better service as well as improve opportunity for themselves and particularly for their children.

Community networks have gained the most confidence from having resources in their own hands to create physical infrastructure, clear information and easy access to the local authorities. However, their continued involvement and enthusiasm is inter-linked with the availability of further livelihood opportunities for their community as well as themselves.



The headmaster gave his detailed account of the common maintenance related works required at the school and how it is being managed. The use of abbreviations by respondents to describe processes is common. Details of the abbreviations have been added at the end of the notes.

'The main maintenance tasks include white washing, repairing asbestos on the roof and the batons. Whitewashing should be done every year and batons should be cleaned every year....'

'... If any damage is there, the school committee reports it to the Block Office. The villagers gather to discuss their plans and difficulties ...It last happened on the 18th April at 1130 hrs. It takes place 3-4 times in a year and everyone meets at the school building here. I discuss with VCE and report it to the BDO immediately. Then JE enquires the facts and reports back at the BDO for the necessary improvements to be done. The BDO then discusses it at the Panchayat meeting and sanctions some amount. MLA, Sarpanch are all present at this meeting. They discuss all problems. Sometimes DRDA grants and MLA fund grants are also available.'

Upto expenditures of Rs 500-1000 the headmaster can do the work from the VEC funds available to him. VEC collects funds from villagers as donations if required. When the BDO sanctioned money for repairs after cyclone the Sarpanch was given the money and he arranged for a contractor who brought the material and labour...People of the village also provide labour and help for the school. Every week people visit the school and talk to him about its development. They also talk about mid-day meal and come during leisure time.

'I then tell them, if any help is required from their side. The parents of the school children give furniture, books and wood for furniture. It is always good to keep in touch with the public here and have a consensus with them. This is a rural institution so I always want to keep contact with the villagers. Government aids are not sufficient and do not arrive at time of need. It takes long to get work done in the government system. Teachers and staff and VEC take care of the cleanliness and plantation at school. School has no assistant or peon so the students clean daily. In cyclone most trees broken and two rooms were damaged. The roof and rooms have been repaired to some extent from funds from the block office...'

The headmaster also mentioned that he was aware of the technical help available from the local Building Centre. However the first point of contact for advice on any major damage to the building was the BDO as the school building is under the department of education.



'The library is for the unrestricted use of all people. We encourage people to come and read here. Rooms have recently been added to expand the space to host community meetings.'

'Some private sponsors have been running training on sewing for local girls. MECON Welfare society has funded an adult education programme that runs here. The same society has also funded a Saheli Centre that trains women in sewing. This space is also used for Government run programmes such as eye care centre and polio vaccination.'

'There was only a shed here before 1982. The permanent structure was built after that. People had donated money, material as well as labour for this room that was built in 1982. The Urdu Library had a committee and all office bearers went to ask for donations. The MLA has given sums of Rs 25000 and Rs 37000 and Rs 1 lakh to construct boundary walls and toilets and a couple of new rooms respectively.'

'Most repair work is done by our own resources such as whitewashing every year. The money is collected from the people of the basti and it is spent at the discretion of the library committee. We have also hired a librarian who also takes care of the building and encourages people in the locality to come and use the library.'

VCE Village Education Committee
BDO Block Development Office
JE Junior Engineer
Panchayat A five member village council
MLA Member of Legislative Assembly
Sarpanch Head of the Panchayat
DRDA District Rural Development Authority
MLA fund A local development fund administered at the discretion of the MLA.
In-Charge An Indian expression for the person responsible to run the facility within a building or to take care of the building itself.
Building Centre A facility envisaged by HUDCO in every district of India to provide and promote cost-effective construction technologies (CECT). Artisans are also trained at these centres in cost-effective construction techniques.

The contribution of users to their community buildings:

Case study 1

Notes from an interview with Mr. Dhrendhara Jaisingh, Headmaster at the Narangarh Central Primary School, Narangarh, District Khurda, State of Orissa. April 2001.

The contribution of users to their community buildings:

Case study 2

Interview with Mr. Mazhar Ali, President of the Library Committee, Urdu library and community hall in Doranda, Ranchi City, State of Jharkhand. May 2001.

MECON Welfare society A charity administered by MECON, an industrial group in Ranchi, Jharkhand.
Saheli Centre Name for women's training centre.
One Lakh A sum of 100,000
Basti Settlement

The contribution of users to their community buildings:

Case study 3

Interview with members of the *Basti Vikas Manch Mahila Samithi* (Settlement development forum women's group), Community Development Society, Ranchi city, State of Jharkhand. May 2001.

Women volunteers called Resident Community Volunteers have been trained and organised in groups through programmes initiated by the national government. These groups aim to provide resources to members for maintenance of collective and private buildings through regular collections from credit and thrift schemes as well as small-scale enterprise such as the sale of merchandise produced by women and token rent from community space hired for private use.

'Our agenda is to promote awareness and savings for every woman in the sector. Maps are available for all CDS and some time ago a house-to-house survey has been conducted to understand the need for the Polio vaccine. There are several agencies with several schemes working in the slums. When the women volunteers come to these meetings they find out about these schemes and the administrators help them to find out more about these schemes and then they take this information back to the villages and the houses.



Due to CDS, funds and schemes have become

more accessible to the poor. The women have also proposed stalls to sell things made by us in Delhi, Patna and Ranchi. Many kinds of work is being sold. In order to do this work we have received training from several sources.

We get no Rangdaari, no commission. We are delivering a social benefit and we do not get paid. We have asked for a retail shop in Ranchi so that we can sell some of our goods that the women make. Now we are hoping for shops in every CDS. Since as social workers we have to spend some money we also have to arrange a livelihood on our own.

We try to find out the information about where to access funds for buildings and training. Dr Iqbal, the main co-ordinator, gave us ideas. Our biggest role is to find out from administration what new opportunities are available and through the CDS network every piece of information is spread and people use the information in their works. There was a task force meeting in 1995 and animators gave the description of their activities. So funding was given to build co-ordination. Women are saving everywhere and have saved from Rs 5000-25000. We are trying to learn to do business from our savings. We give small money for a small business and get small returns. Then we report this in the meeting with officials and ask them to give us matching grants. Now many NGOs come to use us as ice breakers with the rest of the community. We have established ourselves. We are members of the VEC as well now...'

CDS Community Development Society. Each part of the city has its own CDS. All CDS are in touch through their office bearers.

A strategy for CAM

3

CAM requires several tasks to be performed at regular intervals. Existing community based groups can perform these tasks with the support of local authorities.

Notes from interview with Dr Iqbal, Ranchi Regional Development Authority, Ranchi City, State of Jharkhand. May 2001.

Women's groups in Ranchi have their origins in community development programmes initiated by the national government to gather health information and promote health related activity. They have successfully taken over the tasks of construction and management of community halls. Dr. Iqbal (see picture) has led the programme for community development within Ranchi city. He is a medical officer who was deputed to the slum development programme seven years ago. In 1994 he came here and started to look after immunisation. Women's groups were trained to collect door-to-door information on immunisation and create discussion groups in communities to raise awareness on public health. **The Urban Basic Services programme was launched in Ranchi and effort was made to utilize existing potential so that communities could be involved in the implementation of various state and national level infrastructure programmes.**



He went on to explain further that in a group of 20 women, the leader is called the animator. They meet fortnightly. Now there are similar 458 Self Help Groups (SHG). According to the national policy and the 74th amendment these groups fall into 12 Community Development Societies. These CDS are empowered by District Administration to implement their programmes. CDS helped to conduct several programmes and have now been given construction works of roads and Community halls and work sheds worth Rs 56 lakhs. *'They have provided good quality work. The basic aim to develop a sense of leadership has been successful.'*

Task force meetings are held at regular intervals of 4 months and the District Commissioner organises a meeting of all line department heads. They all assemble in a central place and the CDS women present their problems directly to the administration.

A community asset management plan

User-led CAM requires some key actions to ensure the access to information and technical skills that will help the community to perform more efficiently as managers of their own assets.

Good communication between local authorities and community groups can ensure that such actions are manageable through sharing of responsibility and performed on a continuing basis.

1 Knowing what you have already: a register or inventory of existing assets. Understanding the budgets available for new assets and upkeep of existing assets.

2 Knowing what condition it is in: record the condition of existing assets. List preparations for the upkeep of these assets such as user interest, empowerment, skills and budget.

3 Taking decisions on keeping the existing or building a new structure: understand practical life of assets, including maintenance schedules.

4 Understanding the demand for new assets: record and cross-reference user needs and strategic predictions.

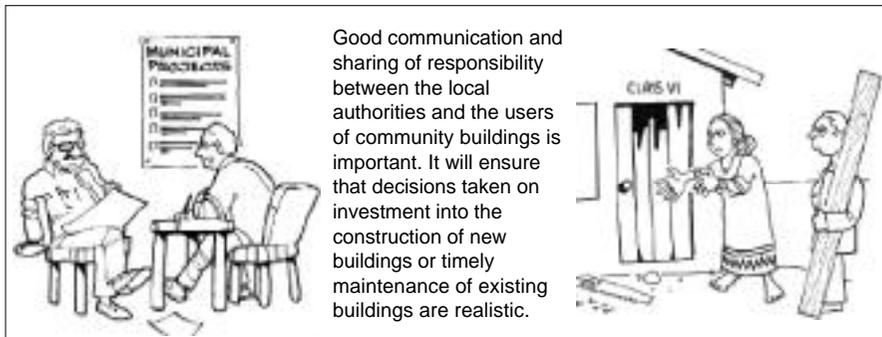
5 Articulating the requirements for new assets: Develop building plans, detailing the actual requirements with the expectation of users and spending departments.

6 Mapping resources: assess the capacity of local skills, materials and building traditions.

7 Knowing the building skills: assess the professional capacity of supervising engineers, site architects, artisans and contractors.

8 Knowing the standards required: assess the level of quality required, bearing in mind cost of maintenance, and practical and legal Codes of Practice.

9 Programming the process: embed the approach and practice into all stakeholders' agendas including the monitoring of the progress. Record the process and outcomes



The current state of CAM



Here is a visual and factual journey through three regions of India to look at factors that influence the well-being of buildings. The researchers observed the state of community buildings as well as individual houses and simultaneously consulted the users about their interest and capacity in the management and maintenance of these buildings.

The examples have been taken from six low-income settlements in India. Three from urban and three from the peri-urban areas. The settlements are:
City of Hyderabad, State of Andhra Pradesh (Chacha Nehru Nagar; Wadar Basti)
City of Bhubaneswar, State of Orissa (Gyannagar; Bharatpur)
City of Ranchi, State of Jharkhand (Doranda; Edalhatu)
HUDCO funded Building Centres offering specialist advice, materials or training on cost effective building technology in the vicinity of these settlements were also studied.

Community buildings and their community

Type of Building

Overall educational buildings were in a poor state of repair, particularly those provided by government agencies. Cultural buildings are generally in good repair. Majority of social buildings needed minor repair.

Creation of Infrastructure

Most buildings were purpose built to serve a particular function. There is little evidence that this has any effect on its condition.

Delivery system

Buildings built using resources provided by community only, are in the best condition overall. Most buildings built with combined government and community resources are also in good condition. The high-risk buildings are those where resources are provided by government only, without community involvement.

Age of the structure and technology used

New buildings with inappropriate design and workmanship or those that use technology not widely practiced locally have developed problems.

Person in-charge

Buildings are in better condition overall where the in charge is a volunteer. Where the 'in-charge' is paid, more than half the case study buildings needed major repair.

Appointment of in-charge

Overall the appointment of an 'in-charge' from the community shows some success in keeping the building in moderate shape. The appointment of an 'in-charge' from an outside agency makes the building vulnerable, particularly in urban areas.

Continuing use of building

More buildings in use, as originally intended, need major repair. Buildings with another use combined with the original intended use needed minor repair only.

Tenure

In some cases tenants are able to keep buildings in good and moderate condition. Buildings are kept better if the owner is resident. Buildings suffer where there is dependency on landlords, engineering departments and NGOs for their maintenance.

Location of landlord

External NGO and local administration are able to keep buildings in moderate condition only. Buildings in good condition have resident landlords.

State of maintenance (Opinion of user)

Of the buildings that the researchers judged as needing major repair, the users were aware that they had a problem.

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The capacity of local authorities to manage infrastructure is evidently low even when they supplied it in the first place. Technical and financial help for improving infrastructure is rarely provided at the appropriate time. As a result many buildings become unusable.



Children and women play an important part in cleaning and upkeep of assets. In most cases school children also clean their schools and community centres.



Buildings such as this community centre in Ranchi is maintained by volunteers. The building was built with resources from the local government but users are free to use the space as they like. It is well maintained through small financial contributions from the users. People make sure it is left clean after use.

Users awareness of problems

A majority of people rely on their own knowledge and judgement to identify problems in the condition of the building.

Regularity of maintenance

In the buildings judged to be in good condition, the users reported routine or regular maintenance. More than half the buildings needing minor repair were reported to have not had regular maintenance.

Community involvement in management

The community is formally or informally involved in the management of community buildings with only a few exceptions.

Contribution from users

Overall the proportion of good buildings having a contribution from the community was less than average. All the good buildings in two out of three case study sites had a contribution from the community.

Nature of contribution

Overall, financial or combined financial and physical contribution were responsible for good condition of buildings. The buildings most vulnerable still received both kinds of contribution.

Maintenance last year

A majority of buildings had maintenance done last year. Overall all the good buildings reported maintenance last year.

Amount spent

The amount spent were variable at each site. Buildings affected by natural disasters required financial resources beyond the financial capacity of its users.

Availability of sound technical advice such as a Building Centre

Out of the four good buildings in Bhubaneswar, three had building centre involvement. Most respondents were unaware of Building Centres or their involvement.

Households and their houses

Household composition

Only two-fifths of nuclear families and only one fifth of extended families were living in houses classed as in good condition. All the single person, single parent and husband and wife only households were living in houses needing minor or major repair.

Employment

Houses may need repair or be in good condition irrespective of the employment status of the household head. The group least likely to live in a house requiring major repair is self-employed with income security such as small businessmen. Apart from the

Maintenance of traditional structures is better understood by all members of the community and tends to be more affordable and easily conducted using locally available skills.





In every settlement there is a limited range of materials and building technologies. As a result the design, workmanship and maintenance problems are similar in nature, across a settlement. Leaking roofs and damp in walls due to broken roof tiles are common in Ranchi. A good solution to such common problems is likely to spread fast among the local people.



Most people get their knowledge of building material and technologies from friends, local artisans and building material shops or even by observing other people build.

unemployed people working with or without income security have equal likelihood of living in a good condition house as they tend to build a house that is possible to maintain within their means.

Tenure

The houses of the owners are in better condition than the houses occupied by tenants.

Location of landlord

All tenanted houses in good condition had resident landlords. Houses in need of major repair had resident or absentee landlords. Where tenanted houses needed minor repair, the majority of such landlords lived in the community.

House structure

Structures that require seasonal maintenance were in good condition. Only one quarter of structures that require annual maintenance were in good condition. One in six needed major repair and well over half needed minor repair. More permanent structures fared better in only one out of three sites. This can be attributed to the inability of people to understand timely maintenance in some building technologies. Permanent structures perform well.

Size of household

Smaller households did not live in houses in good condition. The majority needed minor repair, and two needed major repair.

Responsibility for maintenance

Houses needing major repairs were those where the respondent stated they were not responsible for repairs.

Repairs last done

The relationship between house condition and repairs in the previous year was different in each of the three sites. In Hyderabad half the house in good condition and those needing minor repair did not have repairs done last year as a majority of structures do not require seasonal maintenance. In Bhubaneswar all the good buildings had repairs done in the past year but in the case of those needing minor repair it was less than two-thirds as most structures require seasonal maintenance. In Ranchi all the good houses and nine out of ten of those needing minor repair had repairs done in the past year. Of those houses needing major repair all those in Hyderabad and four out of five in both Bhubaneswar and Ranchi had repairs done last year. People fail to understand maintenance requirements of some technologies until serious problems emerge.

Repairs done by

Tenants do their own repairs and do not rely on landlords.

Amount spent Rupees

There was no consistent relationship between the amounts spent and whether the house needed major or minor repair.



Most people contribute only when asked. When asked they try to contribute. People negotiate prices with local artisans and save money by contributing labour where they are interested in managing an asset. Many people make regular financial contributions to cultural, social and religious community activities throughout the year.



Recent initiatives to create and manage assets through community based organisations have met with some success in every case. Even where people have not contributed money or time, the levels of awareness have been raised about the work of CBOs such as building committees. Here a women's group in Ranchi explains their success in the construction and continuing care of a community centre. They are confident, well informed and articulate.

Maintenance activity is present in one form or another in local cultures and festivals. This temple at HUDA Bhoi Sahi is painted each year in April to celebrate a local festival. The local children participate in the cleaning and painting work.



Household contribution to their community buildings

Household composition

The group that had the maximum number of no contribution was extended families although these were almost one in ten households.

Employment

The not employed and self-employed without income security significantly contributed in a higher proportion than the employed and self employed with the secure income.

Tenure

Overall a higher proportion of owners as against tenants said that they contributed to community buildings. Tenants contribute less to community activities for two evident reasons. They are more likely to be a minority ethnic group and thus excluded from certain community activities and they may also feel a lesser stake in the community activity.

Size of household

The group that made the least number of contributions was households of 3-4 people.

Contribution to Maintenance of Community Buildings

The link between condition of building and contribution to community buildings was most pronounced in Bhubaneswar where all the households living in houses needing repair contributed and one third of those living in good houses did not.

Individually the household accommodation is only marginally better than the condition of the community buildings with the exception of places affected by a natural disaster. People are likely to spend consistently on repair where the users better understand maintenance tasks relevant to the building technology. In any given context, an inventory of common problems and solutions builds up quickly. The analysis of the problem and its solution is often shaped by the most commonly available skills in the local area.

A high proportion of people are repairing their houses irrespective of income security because of awareness and access to the technology in use. Even among these, it is clear that people with income security and/or surplus labour, such as large families, tend to put more resources into maintenance. Small households are the most vulnerable where maintenance is concerned. They find it difficult to contribute labour as well as financial resources. Although tenants depend by and large on landlords for repair activity, where the local culture makes the tenant agree to take responsibility, the houses are better maintained. The proximity of the landlord to the house does improve the quality and consistency of the maintenance and upkeep.

The repair of some building technologies is beyond the technical and financial capacity of low-income communities. This staircase in Ranchi was 'repaired' by the owner of the house with the help of a local artisan. This is evidence that access to sound technical advice is required at community level.



Putting the strategy for CAM into practice

4



The availability of finances for maintenance, clear rules and guidelines based on ground realities, timely availability of technical assistance and a responsive attitude from the people is vital for CAM to be implemented.

**Making CAM practical:
1. The provision of
Finances for
maintenance**

Lack of funds at national level is the major constraint to community asset management.

Budgetary funding for maintenance is too often 'unplanned' and seen as variable and unpredictable as against other recurring budget items such as salaries. Any chances of predicting maintenance budgets is unlikely since generally there is no inventory of buildings and their conditions. Many states in India already find themselves with insufficient funding to pay due salaries.

Asset management budgets are easier to curtail when money is scarce. The problem is compounded with bad management and poor building design and technology that requires heavy investment in maintenance.

The way forward is to plan for reducing wasteful expenditure and improving the collection and efficient spending of resources. Contributions from the community should be encouraged.

**Making CAM practical:
2. Rules and
guidelines based on
ground realities.
Community clearly
understands the
rules**

Cost of mobilisation and overheads for repair is higher than the standard schedule of rates for similar items in new construction. However, the present system does not have any provision to allow different rates in repair works.

Volume of repair work is small but requires intensive supervision. Often a fast reaction time is needed and, because there is no inventory of existing assets, their current condition and their periodic maintenance needs, it is almost always unpredictable. The state govt. engineers are already overloaded with the regular and programmed departmental jobs.

Frameworks to deliver programmes such as, 'Community Management Groups' are often not fully and clearly explained to the concerned community. People are present out of curiosity but are reluctant to contribute to activity that they do not understand.

Lack of clarity can also lead to dependence on community leaders, middlemen or agents.

The way forward is to negotiate and establish clearly, the roles and responsibilities of the community and the local authorities. It must be ensured that these are fully understood by all members of the community.

I am willing to contribute money, where I can see that a good service is given. Often a private school charges much more but we can demand a good service. I also contribute small amounts of money regularly to the social, religious and cultural events in the community. However within the community it can be difficult to ask people to account on expenditures as it can be seen as dis-respectful or against the spirit of the event. I like the way of the school headmaster. He writes down any money recieved or spent by the school on a blackboard outside the school for everyone to see.



Expert knowledge is required to diagnose problems in buildings - needs capacity building so users can identify problems.

It is difficult to estimate the repair items unless work has started.

Most maintenance problems arise from improper design and poor workmanship during construction.

The way forward is to plan any new infrastructure according to the technical capability of its user community to maintain it easily, without too much expense and detect and report problems at an early stage. Sound technical advice should be accessible to the community so that repairs are made economically and correctly.

Lack of political interest in maintenance - New projects are easy to implement - they have more visual impact and hence, politically are more attractive.

Lack of interest of engineers - they get no sense of achievement from repairing existing buildings.

Lack of interest of artisans - they see maintenance as cumbersome and unprofitable.

Inability of all concerned to understand that maintenance prolongs the life of buildings. Sometimes, revitalization of existing buildings is more cost effective than creating new infrastructure. Existing strengths of community are not understood and incorporated into development programmes.

The way forward is to record and disseminate the experience of local authorities and communities involved in asset management.

The following notes are from a discussion with Mr. L N Barik, former Chief Engineer, State of Orissa. They highlights the need for communities to value their right to better infrastructure.

'The source of money for maintenance is not known and thought about. In the villages in future the village council will get a lump sum for conducting all the various works including maintenance. Budgeting is always less than demand for the amount of maintenance works required.

'There is also the problem of the numerous line departments in the local administration and the co-ordination between them. If the money is given to the end user such as the village council the users are likely to carry out their responsibility well and let the line departments deal with them as clients.

'Community members have little public awareness. They are not keen on valuing the works done from scarce public money and using it well. They do not see it as money meant for their own development. The villagers have always got used to having so little that they do not protest too much. In city slums the people were not sure of their permanence and so the community input into common facilities suffered. People in slums have many skills. The women are also good community leaders.'

**Making CAM practical:
3. The availability of
sound technical
advice**

**Making CAM practical:
4. A responsive
attitude from the
people**

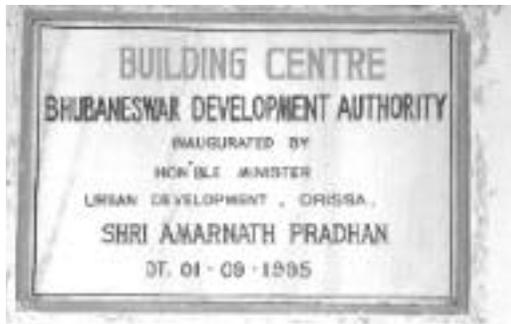
**Making CAM practical:
opinion of an
experienced engineer**

**Making CAM practical:
The potential of
Building Centres in
India, in providing
sound technical
advice to
communities**

In India, a nation-wide network of 600 building centres, supported by the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO), is a logical starting point for access to technical information. The Government of India has recognised the potential of these centres for training, and has actively sought international development assistance to improve this service. Artisans trained in the tasks of maintenance and repair can provide sound technical advice to communities involved in asset management. The building centres can also train personnel within local authorities or small businesses to run *one-stop-shops* for building and construction advice to communities.

Most Building Centres do not interact at present with the local communities. They focus on the production of materials for local government projects and are short of resources to conduct training in construction skills. Often local communities themselves are not aware of the presence of Building Centres and its technical service. For local communities a friend, a local artisan or a building materials shop is the main source of advice on construction. Such advice is not always reliable.

However some Building Centres have made a conscious effort to integrate with the life of the local community. This has resulted in higher standards of building construction in the surrounding settlements. Local skilled and unskilled people have been employed and trained in cost-effective construction technology thus improving their economic and social status. The Narangarh Building Centre near Bhubaneswar is a good example.



- Up to 80 women and men from the local community have been trained and these now work at the Narangarh building centre to produce cost-effective construction material.
- Many of these trainees have used the material from the building centre to improve the quality of their own houses.
- Several trained artisans from this Building Centre have been hired by local people to build their houses and improve the community buildings using the material from the Building Centre.
- The Building Centre provides material and trained artisans for the construction of new assets for various government schemes.
- The trained artisans from this Building Centre travel to other parts of the state to train more artisans in cost-effective construction techniques.
- Until now the artisans were not given any specific training related to maintenance and repair of assets. The building centre is currently involved in a demonstration project in Bhubaneswar (see next page) for repair and maintenance. It is envisaged that they will convince the artisans of the earning potential of maintenance and the other building centres to develop similar work in their localities.

Capacity building for CAM



Village and neighbourhood based groups can be encouraged and trained to conduct CAM related tasks to the required standard and deliver CAM plans. The picture above shows a primary school building in Bhubaneswar (May 2002) that is being repaired with the full involvement of the local community.

Capacity building: Training needs

The practice of CAM requires the involvement of various actors. The following table summaries the roles and training needs of some of the key actors and decision-makers.

Community and community groups



Community development programmes are most successful where the intent and the practice has been fully and clearly explained to all members of the community. The combination (as in Ranchi city) is favourable. There is a knowledgeable person co-ordinating the community leaders and a manageable size of the community network, that can be in direct communication with the local administration. Community networks have gained the most confidence from having resources in their own hands to create physical infrastructure. However, their continued involvement and enthusiasm is inter-linked with the livelihoods of their community as well as their own members. **As part of an overall policy for local administration to interact with communities the participation of people in the design and creation of infrastructure and training in technical, accounting and management aspects of maintenance will be of benefit to the community.**

Municipal Corporations



Municipal Corporations are unable to keep in constant contact with the developments on the ground primarily because their community level municipal workers have huge work loads. Municipal work is more manageable where there is better direct contact with community networks. Municipalities, like other local authorities, work within the national policy framework although the attitude of the workers shapes the quality of their involvement in local development. **Within an overall policy of interaction with community networks municipal workers may benefit from awareness training in community asset management, skills in outreach to community networks and technical training to engineers on conducting maintenance works and technical training to community liaison workers to identify community needs and assist them to monitor community assets.**

Development Authorities



Development Authorities are mostly involved in the design and building of a project beyond which point, the responsibility of upkeep and maintenance is passed on to another agency. They may not realise their role in asset management and are often not fully informed about the latest developments in government programmes of community development and thus unable to implement programmes accordingly. Development Authorities need to create plans keeping in mind the community development targets. **They may benefit from training in understanding their role in asset management, design of buildings based on the capacity of local communities to manage and maintain them and making development plans that encourage community asset management and incorporate life-cycle costs of infrastructure.**

The artisans do not see work related to maintenance as a means of a secure livelihood. They may not have knowledge to carry out maintenance works. They prefer to build new buildings as a way to earn money and regard maintenance or repair related work as cumbersome. Those trained in Cost Effective Construction Technology (CECT) have learnt from experience that the knowledge of CECT gives them an upper hand among peers. **Considering all these factors, training in technical aspect of maintenance is mandatory. Training to clarify livelihoods related benefits of maintenance related work within an overall policy to create an environment where artisans trained in maintenance works are actively sought and rewarded.**

Local artisans



In most cases NGOs implement a programme or project. NGO work is more successful where they have not made the target community dependent on external help. **NGOs may benefit from awareness training about maintenance and its technical aspects.** People in charge of community buildings are well informed about the maintenance problems and the immediate needs. Most of the people take the initiative to collect resources if the formal processes are too long. They are aware of the formal processes and the barriers to timely maintenance. Where building committees have been formed, the 'in charge' has benefited from their empowered status. **An overall policy of empowering people in charge of community buildings and providing them training in technical aspects identifying and supervising maintenance works, resources management and working with the community would be of benefit.**

Non Government Organisations (NGOs)

and

Any external people in-charge of a community building such as headmasters in schools or health workers in health centres.

None of the Building Centres sustain themselves by selling to the general public. In fact, those within government departments survive on the work provided by the parent departments. The more successful Building Centres have made an effort to market their products to the general public and their best tool for publicity is the artisans that were working in these communities and have now been trained in Cost Effective Construction Technology (CECT). Some initiatives are taken by the centre managers to demonstrate the CECT products in buildings of community interest. Overall, technical knowledge of maintenance work is low and is not an important part of their training programme. **Building Centre managers can best learn from each other. Training for them must have technical aspects of maintenance and training in community outreach and building a profile of an efficient and quality centre for supply of building products and advice. Financial viability of phasing out material production and increasing training related work to fill the gap in trained manpower for maintenance work would be the main question to solve. Specific funding for this type of training will be necessary.**

Building Centres, vocational training centres, advice services for construction or building material yards.

Other significant trainings would include the design of cost-effective buildings and improved detailing and supervision to minimise costs over the life cycle of the building.

Significant related audience

Capacity building:

Case study of demonstration project and pilot training in India.



The demonstration project at Gyananagar, Bhubaneswar is being managed by the Bhubaneswar office of HUDCO (Housing and Urban Development Corporation, Government of India)

The Narangarh Building Centre involved in the project is also funded by HUDCO.

The entire experience will become part of a training programme targeted at policy makers and Building Centre managers. This training is being developed by Human Settlement Management Institute (HSMI), New Delhi, India. HSMI is the training wing of HUDCO.

A programme is being conducted at the primary school building in Gyananagar, Bhubaneswar city, state of Orissa, India to demonstrate community asset management. The local community of Gyananagar and artisans from a nearby building centre are working together on the repair of this building. The experience of conducting repair related tasks in a systematic manner such as maintaining accounts and records will become the basis of a training programme to build capacity in other communities for community asset management.

1 Identification of assets and their condition:

- Listing the experiences and analysing the capabilities of the community to manage and implement any repair and maintenance programme.
- Generating awareness and capacity building regarding asset management in the community as well as local authorities.
- Physical survey and identification of community assets to be repaired and upgraded through discussion with local community.

2 Orientation Programme: Presenting the aims and objectives of the CAM programme to different target audiences from Bhubaneswar such as Policy Makers, Administrators, Accountants, Community, Masons, Engineers and Building Centre managers and supervisors.

3 Capacity building for technical group: Specialist training programmes conducted for Engineers, Building Centre managers and supervisors. The training programme discussed methods of completing condition survey and distress analysis, basic housekeeping and minor repairs, book-keeping, site management, quality control, procurement of materials and man power management.

4 Condition survey of assets:

- Physical inspection of the community assets to explore various options for their repair and upgrading.
- Making an inventory and determining priorities through community participation.
- Analysis of the distress and recommendations,
- Preparing estimates for works,
- Planning for the procurement of materials and labour

5 Implementation: Actual implementation of the On - Site demonstration commenced when community agreed with themselves for which part to be repaired and prepared a priority list for the expenses to be made. They also agreed to contribute labour.

6. Documentation: Throughout the period of conceptualization of On-site programme a systematic documentation of the entire process is planned. The details of resources spent, as well the contribution and reactions of various people involved will be recorded. This record will be used to spread further awareness about the Community Asset Management approach. It is envisaged that trained personnel in local authorities and Building Centres will attempt this approach in their individual contexts.

Notes on methodology



As a first step towards community asset management a rapid appraisal can be done using qualitative interview techniques. Here are some notes on the methodology.

The purpose of the appraisal

(from concept notes on CAM related research in India by P K Das. January 2001)

The experience gathered from the community-based repair and upgrading in India has provided sufficient indication on the sustainability of the process. Three major components have emerged:

1. The demand

Implies, understanding the willingness of communities to participate in the community asset management.

2. The supply

Implies, providing knowledge and materials to the community for asset management. Building awareness and capacity (e.g. training programmes at different levels) on housekeeping, identification and rectification of building distress, process of management and quality control is important for the success of asset management. The stakeholders of such capacity building and awareness are the administrators, engineers, supervisors, masons and most importantly the end users, i.e. the community.

3. The preparedness

There may be a few public buildings in the urban and rural poor settlements under the jurisdiction of the Municipalities and Development Authorities. The existing organisational structure of the Municipalities/ Development Authorities for asset management of such buildings should be studied. Also, there may be a few buildings (such as assembly hall, temple/mosque/church) which are owned by the community. Studies on the maintenance of such buildings by the community, if any, will be of special importance.

The Appraisal

The study will identify the preparedness of the community and various authorities with respect to handling community assets. The aim is to discover which factors promote the most successful management of buildings by communities. This requires three different types of interviews to be carried out in sufficient quantities. The following three groups of people need to be interviewed.

Notes on conducting interviews (from notes for field researchers in India by Hilary Byrne. February 2001)

1 Interviews with administrative officers

The members of this group are busy people. Your introduction to the topic should stress the nationwide usefulness of the outcome of the research and the potential for reducing budgets within the administration. You need to get pointers as to who is responsible for what before you speak to them. Ask questions around the following topics:

Who has the legal responsibility for building construction and maintenance? Who is in charge of which relevant department? How much money is allocated, how is that channelled, what permissions have to be sought? How long does it take to release expenditure? How easy is it for community managers to access this system? What is the procedure for *discovery* and reporting of maintenance needs, assessing works and implementation? Do they have experience of community management – subjective assessments of efficacy, difficulties, advantages and disadvantages? Most importantly, is there an inventory of community assets and their condition?

2. Interviews with key Local Informants

The aim of the interviews in this section is to get a description of the community factors which affect how the community interacts with their buildings, their administration and the role of the community in their maintenance. You will have to talk widely on these topics to discover how the community works.

Start by talking about who lives in the community and uses the facilities; are there any people not using any building, why not? Find out lots of background data on population size, number of households, household size, average no. of children (may have to go to the local administration for this), materials of local housing and buildings, religious affiliation and social structure. Who are the other people who know about this community or who can speak about them? Who knows these people and works with them in the community? Ask each interviewee who does what in the community, why do they do it? Historical connections? Habit? Custom? Ask which NGOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) work or have worked in the area. What did they do? Especially useful to know if they have been doing some kind of community empowerment/ training activities. If yes, go and interview them about the community and its activities as well. Ask about the presence of women's groups, savings clubs and other small-scale groups within the community. You should be able to build up a good picture of the linkages within the community and know who is responsible for which activity. Specifically about building maintenance, ask who does what and why, what difficulties are encountered, what are the successes and why it worked. These are very important issues about which is needed very clear and detailed information.

3. Households

You need to talk to a representative cross-section of the community. You need to talk to men and women, older people, parents of children between 5 and 15 and younger people under 18. You may also find it useful to talk to school age children. You need to talk to members of each major social group (male/female) whether users or non-users of community buildings. You must talk to those people identified with doing most of the work. They will be most helpful to the enquiry. The aim is to discover what participation they have in the building and maintenance programme, how it is organised and their attitudes to the work and their participation. Discussion should include:

Use of the building. Involvement in the maintenance programme. Who does what, how have they been involved? How successful has it been? What is their attitude to the maintenance programme and their involvement? What in their opinion has been the most successful aspects of the programme, what has been the source of difficulties – how could the difficulties be overcome? What improvements generally could be implemented?

You may need to undertake about 5-8 interviews in the first group, up to 10 in the second and 10-20 in the third group for each building in the programme. For this type of rapid appraisal, semi-structured interviewing techniques should be utilised, asking questions phrased to get information about a series of topics but which allow for further exploration about topics of interest. Do not hurry, always appear interested in the information being offered to you and record it without prejudice or judgement.

Communities are dynamic, living objects with internal stresses and strains that affect, very importantly, how the community works. You must understand these dynamics before you can tell why something worked in each situation, let alone look for replicability.





Communities manage their assets

Acknowledgements

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Interviewees in the three cities of **Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar and Ranchi** contributed their time and effort to the research.

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Building Capacity for Community Asset Management

This research project aims to reduce urban poverty through promoting community-based management of shared assets. The project is funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and being undertaken with a number of international partners.

Strategies for good practice in enabling local communities to develop, maintain and manage their buildings and infrastructure

Promoting better community-based management by providing buildings and infrastructure that will last and are appropriate to local conditions.

This research draws on community-based development projects as well as field research, mostly in India.

The project is now expanding to include experience in Africa

Research funded by UK
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DFID

Max Lock Centre

The Max Lock Centre is a multi-disciplinary research and consultancy group based in the School of Architecture and the Built Environment at the University of Westminster, London. Based on the ideals of Civic Diagnosis, Community Participation and Urban Design the Centre continues the tradition of multi-disciplinary grass-roots planning, developed over the last 50 years by the Max Lock Group both in the UK and overseas.

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