



GLOBAL STRATEGY

Faith in Action



NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID

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Together with refugees, Norwegian Church Aid has drilled wells in Darfur. Photo: Paul Jeffrey/ACT Alliance

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FOREWORD

Norwegian Church Aid is operating in a world that is constantly and rapidly changing. Since our founding in 1947, we have developed an understanding of who we are and what we do best – and we demonstrate the link between the two in this strategy. As a church-based diaconal organisation, Norwegian Church Aid is mandated to uphold and protect human dignity for all people, acknowledging that people are active participants in their own development. This strategy outlines two main strategic directions for Norwegian Church Aid in the coming years: an increased focus on humanitarian response and a renewed emphasis on faith-based actors as agents of change within the wider civil society. In many ways, we have chosen to go back to our roots.

Due to the rising number of humanitarian crises, Norwegian Church Aid will increase its response to emergencies. Humanitarian effectiveness is essential, and therefore greater coordination with the ACT Alliance and UN agencies is necessary. In addition, Norwegian Church Aid is renewing its commitment to working with faith-based actors. We have a firm conviction that religion is a powerful source for good. Our diaconal identity lies at the root of this belief. As we witness the rise of religiously motivated violence and extremism, we know that there are many more forces at work

within all religious traditions that can be mobilised, organised and strengthened to create a counter-balancing culture of justice and peace.

Norwegian Church Aid is part of a global church network and a worldwide family of diverse faiths. This interdependence requires us to approach our partners in a manner that is different from a donor-recipient relationship. We will continue to strengthen our own capacities to deepen mutual relationships with faith-based actors. In order to achieve greater results and make tangible changes in people's lives, we will further focus our work geographically and programmatically. By concentrating our efforts, we will enable our partners to scale up their activities and have a greater impact in society.

Norwegian Church Aid's identity as a partner-based organisation first took shape in South Sudan. Our experience throughout 40 years working in this region has inspired us in many ways. Churches and mosques are an integral part of even the smallest and most remote villages there. Not only do people gather for prayer each week, but they come together in times of happiness and grief, both when life starts and ends.

Throughout 30 years of civil war, and now more recently at the birth of a new and fragile nation, South Sudanese people have congregated to celebrate, to give thanks, and to seek comfort in times of desperation and fear. Religious leaders have given hope to people when everything else seemed hopeless. Faith-based actors have distributed food rations, run schools and health clinics, and fostered peace and reconciliation. During this time, Norwegian Church Aid has partnered with faith-based actors and accompanied them in their endeavours.

Long before we arrived in South Sudan, faith-based actors were already there. They will be there long after the international humanitarian community has pulled out. Norwegian Church Aid supports churches to seek justice by holding the conflicting parties accountable for their actions. Currently, all major Christian denominations as well as the Muslim community are present at the peace negotiations as part of a joint interfaith delegation. The future of this young nation lies in the hands of the South Sudanese people and faith-based actors are well-placed institutions to accompany them on this journey to create peace. On the ground, faith-based actors in partnership with Norwegian Church Aid are saving lives. Together we are not

only providing emergency assistance, but we are contributing to the long-term development of safe and resilient communities.

To save lives and seek justice is, for us, faith in action.

Oslo, March 2015


Anne-Marie Helland
General Secretary





When the civil war flared up in South-Sudan, Cecilie found safety for her five children outside the church in Don Bosco. Awe Andrea was born on the move.

Photo: Erik Thallaug/Norwegian Church Aid

1. WHO WE ARE

Norwegian Church Aid is a diaconal organisation mandated by churches and Christian organisations in Norway to work with people around the world to eradicate poverty and injustice. Diakonia is, according to our statement of principles, Christian faith translated into action and is expressed through compassion, inclusive communities, responsible stewardship of creation, and the struggle for justice.

Our vision is **Together for a Just World.**

Norwegian Church Aid provides humanitarian assistance and works for long-term development. In order to address the root causes of poverty, we advocate for just decisions by public authorities, businesses, and religious leaders. Our support is provided unconditionally, with no intention of influencing anyone's religious affiliation. Most of our work is undertaken together with local civil society partners — many of whom are faith-based actors.

Committed to international ecumenical cooperation and development effectiveness, Norwegian Church Aid is affiliated with the World Council of Churches and is a member of the ACT Alliance. The ACT Alliance is a coalition of churches and affiliated organisations working together in over 140 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalised people.

Our distinctiveness as a professional humanitarian and development actor is present in our work when we affirm the values and mobilise the resources of faith that lie in our diaconal identity and ecumenical networks. In addition, through decades of work in varying contexts, Norwegian Church Aid has developed valued partnerships and positive experiences together with people and organisations rooted in diverse religions and beliefs. This enables us to:

- Support the most marginalised people in local communities and with a trusted entry point address sensitive cultural issues, stigma and discrimination, power and gender relations, as well as corruption;
- Engage religious leaders and their constituencies to address the root causes of poverty, violence, and injustice in their own societies through dialogue and cooperation;
- Motivate and enable women, men, and youth to engage in voluntary service, act in solidarity with others, and advocate for change in their lives and communities;
- Compel people with power and privilege to respond to the needs of their communities;
- Strengthen faith-based institutions' competence on human rights and challenge norms, attitudes and behaviours that have the potential for harm; and
- Facilitate cooperation between faith communities and the wider civil society.



The war in Syria forces many civilians to flee their homes. Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. Photo: Paul Jeffrey/ACT Alliance

2. THE WORLD WE SEEK TO CHANGE

The world is undergoing dramatic change. Power is shifting to the growing economies of the global east and south. We see weakened international governance and the relative power of non-state actors is increasing. It is too simplistic to talk about a rich global north and a poor global south.

The world map of poverty is shifting. Extreme poverty has been halved. People are living longer and healthier lives. Some nations that once were aid recipients are now self-sufficient. In the context of a changing landscape of poverty and inequality, international development cooperation is undergoing a significant shift. Norwegian Church Aid is facing a future with more competition for funding, higher technical standards, and an increased focus on results and value for money.

Advocating for fair distribution of power and wealth

Despite progress in reducing extreme poverty, there are considerable gaps in the degree of human development between and within countries. One billion of the world's population lives in extreme poverty. The poorest in many developing countries have not benefitted from achievements made in poverty reduction and social welfare and those who live with privilege too often do not want to relinquish their power. The rapidly-growing disparities between rich and poor lead to increased instability and conflict. Freedom from poverty and oppression happen primarily through people's own efforts. Norwegian Church Aid and its partners will work together with those who live in poverty towards this goal. Religious actors have

the moral capital to advocate for fair distribution of power and wealth. Through our global faith-based networks, we will advocate for just policies and practices.

Religion plays a major role in society

There is an increased recognition of the crucial role of religion in development and the way it shapes political arenas and influences leaders. At the same time, harmful religious and cultural traditions fuel intolerance and discrimination, especially for women, girls, and sexual minorities. In extreme cases, religion is misused to promote violence and contributes to further polarization between and within faiths. Through its long history of effective collaboration with religious actors and faith-based institutions, Norwegian Church Aid will leverage its knowledge and experience to challenge harmful traditions and practices. We will identify and strengthen the forces and resources within different religious traditions to affirm justice, protect nature, and safeguard the human rights of those who are oppressed.

Responding to the increase in humanitarian crises

There is a major rise in humanitarian crises around the world due to violent conflicts and the effects of climate change. The capacity of the global humanitarian system to reach people in need is challenged by the increasing number of large-scale disasters. In addition, there is diminished respect for humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law.

Norwegian Church Aid will scale up its humanitarian response capacity, and together with the ACT Alliance and UN agencies contribute to life saving services. Whereas the humanitarian system is primarily response-driven, there is an urgent need to invest in emergency preparedness and to strengthen the resilience of communities to cope with future disasters. The rise in urbanisation and increased migration requires humanitarian actors to adapt their interventions according to changes in global demographics.

A majority of countries where we operates are fragile states that experience protracted violent conflicts or dysfunctional relationships between different actors in society, including state and non-state actors. Norwegian Church Aid with partners will address the structural drivers of conflict and non-violently prevent, reduce, or transform conflicts between and within groups.

Mitigating the impact of climate change on poor communities

Climate change leads to extreme and unpredictable weather patterns, where those who live in poverty are disproportionately impacted. Those who have contributed the least to climate change suffer the most from its effects. More frequent disasters, combined with global economic and population growth, will exert enormous pressure on natural resources. Norwegian Church Aid will continue to address the proper management and preservation of natural resources in order to mitigate the impacts of climate change on the world's poorest people.

Youth make a difference as agents of change

Nearly 90 per cent of the world's youth aged 15-30 currently live in the global south, and almost 50 per cent of the world's unemployed are young people. Their underrepresentation in decision-making processes is compounded by a lack of job opportunities. They must be acknowledged as agents of change and their voices must be heard. We will partner with youth so that they can acquire the skills needed to influence decision makers and contribute to society. In order to achieve this, youth need the space, resources and leadership opportunities where they can exercise their rights and fulfil their responsibilities. Through the ACT Alliance and in dialogue with its own youth movement, Changemaker, Norwegian Church Aid will seek to facilitate the establishment of youth-led development networks.

Protecting the space for civil society

In many countries, civil society space is diminishing due to pressure from the government, opposition groups, and the corporate sector. Human rights are threatened. This includes civil and political rights related to freedom of information and freedom of association. Based on the belief that a robust and free civil society is a prerequisite for social justice, development of democracy, and good governance, we will support and cooperate with civil society, including faith-based actors. Norwegian Church Aid and partners will in mutual cooperation, protect and enhance the political space for civil society.

We have faith - Act Now for Climate Justice. Across Africa, youth drawing attention to climate change and mobilising people up to COP17 in Durban, South Africa. Photo: Bergit Sønsteby Svendseid/Norwegian Church





Bishop Jo Seoka and his colleagues standing up for the rights of the workers in the Marikana mine at the Alternative Mining Indaba 2013.
Photo: Jens Aas Hansen/Norwegian Church Aid

3. WHO WE WORK WITH

As a global community, we are faced with rapid changes in the world that bind us together. As part of the wider civil society, faith-based actors must respond and adapt to these global trends. We will deepen our mutual relationships with faith-based actors so that we together can contribute to positive change.

Norwegian Church Aid is committed to working with faith-based actors

Religious beliefs shape the way people think and act. These beliefs play a role in preserving or altering social norms and traditions. Although religion can be used destructively to justify violence, harassment, and inequality, we have a firm conviction that it can be a powerful source for good.

Norwegian Church Aid defines faith-based actors as groups, institutions and organisations that draw inspiration and guidance from their own religious tradition. These may be congregations and other faith-based structures, religious leaders, faith-based humanitarian agencies or development organisations involved in social service delivery and advocacy. We have a natural entry point for working side-by-side with these actors in Norway, in the countries where we operate, as well as at regional and global levels. Furthermore, we will continue to partner with value-based organisations that share our vision and values, because they are also strategically well-suited to contribute to change.

Faith-based actors add value to development

Faith-based actors are firmly rooted in poor communities where they have well-established networks. Their capacity to reach out to the most marginalised cannot be overlooked due to their ability to foster deep connections with these communities. By making use of their tangible and intangible assets, faith-based actors can meaningfully contribute to positive change. For example, religious leaders are in many contexts listened to and, for this reason, the institutions they represent have the potential to challenge and counter-balance injustice in society. Faith-based actors exercise leadership at all levels of society and can therefore influence decision-makers through advocacy, and motivate people to engage with their communities and claim their rights.

Faith-based actors are often the first responders to disasters at the local and national levels. Their deeply rooted social and community networks, as well as their material and social assets, enable them to provide evacuation centres, mobilise volunteers and reinforce infrastructure for humanitarian relief and communications. Faith-based actors have the potential to address the human side of crisis management and trauma healing.

Engaging and challenging faith-based actors

Faith-based institutions have often patriarchal and hierarchical structures that can be counterproductive to social change. We will therefore challenge religious leaders and faith-based institutions to play a more consistent and positive role in society. Norwegian Church Aid, being rooted in faith, has common language and shared references with other faith-based actors from diverse religious backgrounds. This enables us to enter into dialogue with them and challenge practices that threaten human dignity. We will support and challenge faith-based actors to work from a rights-based perspective.

Norwegian Church Aid is committed to gender justice as an integral part of all its work. We will inspire constituents and partners to actively promote just power relations between women and men. By placing gender justice at the centre of our analysis and programming, faith-based partners are more likely to safeguard the equal rights of women and men.

Strengthening the work of faith-based actors

Our partnerships go beyond financial and contractual relationships; they are also about belonging and identity. Some of our partners face institutional challenges in terms of organisational capacities. Norwegian Church Aid works to develop them into sustainable institutions capable of fulfilling their role in civil society. In coordination and collaboration with the ACT Alliance, we will adopt a systematic approach to organisational development and capacity building of partners.

There is a need for better coordination and cooperation between different actors in order to make progress to end poverty. Norwegian Church Aid has developed relationships with specialised professional organisations and institutions in relevant fields who can act as resource organisations for faith-based partners. This way they can contribute with a wide range of knowledge, competencies and skills that might not be readily available within faith-based institutions. Resource organisations complement faith-based actors' ability to reach and mobilise all segments of society and strengthen their competence and networks.



Arrival of water treatment unit in Bangula, Malawi. The equipment will provide clean water to thousands of people. Photo: Reza Ali Mohammadi/Norwegian Church Aid

Midwife students Janet and Thembisa practice on labour ward in the skills lab in Ekwendeni College of Nursing in Malawi. Photo: Greg Rødland Buick/ Norwegian Church Aid



4. OUR LONG-TERM GOALS

Norwegian Church Aid has two long-term goals: to save lives and to seek justice, which together define our work towards a more just world. Through our programmes, we translate these long-term goals into action. The goals build on our distinctive identity and reflect our efforts to effect change, both locally and globally. They will enable us to respond to the challenges and opportunities arising in the 21st century. Faith-based actors have a particular responsibility and potential to contribute towards these long-term goals.

Together with its partners, Norwegian Church Aid will promote and uphold human dignity through efforts to ensure human development, human rights and human security. When human dignity is at stake, we will alleviate suffering and save lives. When insecurity and inequality threaten our common existence, we will seek justice through collective action. Acting alone, we cannot reach our goals. Yet in collaboration with a wide range of actors, we can contribute to a world where people may enjoy life in all its fullness.

Save Lives

We will work to create safe and resilient communities to protect and save the lives of people living in extreme poverty, fragility, and emergencies. We envision communities where people are active participants in their own development and organise themselves to claim their rights. In order to achieve this goal, communities must develop the capacity to cope with and minimise the impact of disasters.

Seek Justice

We will work to create inclusive and just societies to secure and fulfil the human rights of people living with inequality, insecurity, and oppression. We envision communities where people are active participants in their own development and organise themselves to claim their rights. In order to achieve this goal, communities must develop the skills to engage leaders for responsible and accountable governance.

5. HOW WE WORK

Norwegian Church Aid is mandated to uphold and protect human dignity for all people. From the local to the global level the interaction between active citizens, a vibrant civil society, and accountable states is fundamental to achieve our goals.

Supporting people to act as agents of change

People have inherent capacities to contribute to their own development. In conditions of poverty, however, many are denied fundamental freedoms and deprived of resources. To address this, Norwegian Church Aid accompanies people to realise their potential as agents of change. In this role, people act in solidarity with others, participate in the transformation of their communities and seek just decisions from their leaders. We define this as active citizenship.

When people organise themselves within their communities to realise their rights, civil society organisations can transform their quest into social and political power. This can ultimately lead to positive societal change. Therefore, Norwegian Church Aid will continue to work with partners who have a strong legitimacy and representation in their communities. We will systematise and document efforts to strengthen civil society in order to learn and continuously improve.

Working for accountable governance

We are all rights-holders, irrespective of our religion, culture, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, ethnicity or political affiliation. In partnering with civil society organisations, Norwegian Church Aid amplifies the voices of rights holders and works to ensure their active participation in the decisions that affect them. Through a rights-based approach, states are the principal and legal duty-bearers and are obligated to respect, protect and fulfil human rights. For this reason, they are essential actors in our rights-based work.

Accountability is the responsible use of power and a key principle in rights-based strategies. Norwegian Church Aid and its partners work for accountable governance and strive to strengthen positive engagement between citizens and governments at all levels. However in contexts of fragility, states may not be able to fully play their role in ensuring security for their citizens, nor in providing vital public services, like health, education, water and sanitation. In those contexts we believe that civil society has an important role to play as a development actor and service provider in alliance with the state. Furthermore, civil society works to diminish violence between groups and supports the state in establishing peacebuilding mechanisms.

Advocating nationally and internationally

Citizens have the legitimacy to carry out advocacy and lobby their respective national governments. We will build the capacities of partners to advocate strategically so they can participate in different national and international arenas. While partners carry out advocacy efforts towards their own governments, Norwegian Church Aid as a Norwegian development actor will seek to influence Norwegian decision-makers at home and abroad. In order to achieve our goals, we will continue to prioritise advocacy towards Norwegian decision-makers and will conduct solid and systematic global advocacy on a few but key strategic issues. Global advocacy efforts will be aligned, where possible, with the ACT Alliance.

Bringing constituencies together for global justice

Norwegian Church Aid is part of several influential networks of faith-based actors, including the ACT Alliance. We are grounded in our Norwegian constituency and in the global faith-based community. This gives us legitimacy when challenging authorities, churches, and the public in Norway. Our local and national partners are equally rooted in their home communities. Norwegian Church Aid connects people in the global south with their counterparts in Norway, constituency-to-constituency. The constituencies' shared struggle for justice informs our advocacy efforts. It is our role to translate and transmit the

messages from partners and their constituencies to decision-makers in Norway and at a global level.

Norwegian Church Aid will build on the experience of harnessing the energy of volunteers and congregations committed to justice. We will invest in and create meaningful ways and strategic opportunities for sustained engagement by our constituents. In addition, we will continue to broaden and strengthen relationships with other important stakeholders in the Norwegian public.

Exploring new ways to cooperate with the private sector

As a Norwegian organisation, Norwegian Church Aid is rooted in a tradition where cooperation and dialogue between the state, private sector, and civil society is valued for contributing to stability and sustainability. In addition to influencing policies and practices of governments, we advocate for just decisions by businesses. They must also be held accountable to those affected by their decisions or actions. The private sector is a central actor in development, and civil society partnerships with the private sector are seen as an important way to address poverty. Norwegian Church Aid will strengthen its focus on developing innovative, strategic, and mutually beneficial relationships with the private sector. Nonetheless, we will continue to challenge unfettered corporate behaviour and amplify the voices of those who are affected by the negative impact of their activities.



In crises, water is critical. In South Sudan Norwegian Church Aid provides clean drinking water to thousands of people. Photo: Paul Jeffrey/ACT Alliance

6. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Norwegian Church Aid will scale up its humanitarian work with an increased capacity to respond to large-scale humanitarian crises with high quality services in order to save lives, alleviate suffering and protect human dignity. In consortia with local partners, ACT Alliance, and international stakeholders, Norwegian Church Aid can have a greater impact through effective and timely coordination.

Expertise on water, sanitation and hygiene

Although we provide various types of emergency relief, depending on the context in order to meet needs and fill gaps, our global expertise is providing water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services. Access to water and sanitation is a fundamental human right and is essential for life, health and dignity. Timely and adequate provision of clean water and sanitation services is therefore crucial. Norwegian Church Aid's competence in providing WASH services in emergencies is based on its long-term WASH experience. Central to long-term WASH activities is supporting communities in claiming their rights to water and sanitation and in practicing good hygiene.

Putting people at the centre

Local communities must to a greater extent own and lead disaster response efforts, and Norwegian Church Aid will invest in building the resilience of communities affected by disasters. We will incorporate disaster risk reduction into our programmes and strengthen emergency preparedness in countries facing recurrent disasters. Wherever possible, we will link our response to ongoing development activities. We will also work towards greater accountability to vulnerable and disaster-affected populations. In addition, we will work for the protection of women and girls against gender-based violence in humanitarian responses.

Greater coordination with the ACT Alliance

With its long history in responding to emergencies and through membership in the ACT Alliance, Norwegian Church Aid has become a global humanitarian actor demonstrating commitment to quality and accountability standards. National ACT forums ensure the sustainability of humanitarian aid by engaging with communities, promoting local ownership, and transitioning to early recovery. Through the reach of faith-based partners and the trust of their networks, Norwegian Church Aid and ACT Alliance will raise awareness of disaster risk reduction at the grassroots level, including in hard-to-reach locations.

7. WHERE WE WORK

We will work in areas — regions, countries or within countries — where, together with partners and other actors, we can contribute to change by using resources effectively. Norwegian Church Aid will maintain country programmes in different regional and development contexts. This will require tailored programmes and approaches based on context analyses with partners. Our geographic priorities will be based on the following set of criteria:

- Potential for achieving results;
- Robust and diverse funding;
- Political relevance;
- Opportunities for cooperation within the ACT Alliance;
- Churches and/or other religious actors' role in society;
- Relationships built over time with partners
- Proven added value; and
- Risk assessment.

Norwegian Church Aid will also respond to acute emergencies outside of its geographic priority areas.

Our presence adds value to the work of partners

Norwegian Church Aid's role is to accompany partners and sustain their work. To this end, we broker links to networks and provides access to new skills that support the engagement of communities and civil society actors with

governments and other stakeholders. In addition, Norwegian Church Aid provides funding and capacity building for partners and assists them with strategic service delivery and humanitarian work. With our partners, we further strengthen established mechanisms that hold ourselves accountable towards rights holders and other stakeholders.

Focusing on a limited number of well-resourced programmes makes it possible for Norwegian Church Aid to have a greater impact in each country. We will develop programmes that can demonstrate a distinct added value through cooperation with faith-based actors. We will enhance their contribution to development as members of civil society with a gender-inclusive rights-based approach.

Sound exit strategies

When local or national authorities gain enough momentum to take ownership of results related to the policies and programmes to which we have contributed, we see this as an indicator of success. At that point, Norwegian Church Aid will gradually and systematically transfer all responsibility to civil society partners and national governments. We will strive for governments to become increasingly accountable to their citizens. Developing countries' aid dependency undercuts their ability to chart their own development strategies, which is required for development to take root.



Training in bee keeping is part of the NCA Empowering Women project in Daikundi province in Afghanistan.
Photo: Saber Erfani/Norwegian Church Aid

8. ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITIES

Norwegian Church Aid will continue to strengthen its core capacities and adjust to new realities in order to effectively implement this strategy. Through past achievements, we have established a solid foundation for our future work and must continuously evolve in order to respond to new challenges and opportunities. We will be:

Accountable and able to learn

We will be accountable to the communities where we are present, and to our partners, supporters and donors. Accountability is essential for nurturing our relationships with them. We will continue to learn from past experiences in order to increase the quality and impact of our work and that of our partners.

Flexible and competent

We will remain flexible due to the diverse contexts in which we operate and adapt to rapidly changing environments. Norwegian Church Aid will attract and inspire dedicated employees with relevant competencies and interpersonal skills and enable them to contribute to this strategy.

Lean and effective

Norwegian Church Aid is facing a future with more competition and an increased focus on results. We will continue to strive for effectiveness and efficiency and use resources where they are best suited to achieve organisational goals.

Solid with diversified income

In order to respond to emerging needs and scale up our activities, we will prioritise seeking a more diverse revenue base and increased unrestricted and flexible funding. Norwegian Church Aid will leverage existing funding sources and invest in programme development and innovation to appeal to new donors.

In close cooperation with the ACT Alliance

Norwegian Church Aid will coordinate its activities with and seek greater cooperation between ACT Alliance members. We will continue to ensure that resources are shared within the Alliance. We will be actively involved in national ACT forums and strengthen programmatic cooperation with ACT members.

A bold voice for justice

We will enhance our capacity to communicate effectively with different target groups in order to inform, inspire and engage them. We will communicate the work we do and results we achieve with partners, be a strong voice on issues of global injustice and mobilise people to bring about change.

Able to manage security and risks

Norwegian Church Aid and its partners are working in many demanding environments. We will strengthen our own capacity and that of partners to manage risks and minimise security threats.

Together for a Just World

Norwegian Church Aid works to save lives and seek justice. Our support is provided unconditionally with no intention of influencing anyone's religious affiliation.

Norwegian Church Aid is a member of the ACT Alliance, one of the world's largest humanitarian coalitions. Together, we work throughout the world to create positive and sustainable change.

To save lives and seek justice is, for us, faith in action.

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