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Review

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Risk: Perceptions, Management and Training

To some extent security advisors and managers make assumptions about risk and how threats in the operating environment are perceived by staff. But are these assumptions correct? In research carried out by Larissa Fast and Dawn Wiest they set out to ask how aid workers experience and perceive insecurity, and the effectiveness of security measures that are put in place. The researchers acknowledge that they did not have a fully representative sample on which to draw firm conclusions but nevertheless the research does give some indicators of how individuals perceive the threat environment and how they are influenced in their perceptions. The study findings give recommendations on security management strategies and areas for future research. A significant point to highlight from the research is that low-levels of insecurity are just as deserving of attention as higher profile threat environments.

Previous articles in this publication have explored the approach to security and risk management in the aid sector with a view to institutionalising or mainstreaming security management as part of overall programme management. How is that connection made in a meaningful and practical way? In his article in this issue, Paul Davies describes a concept developed with a colleague working in conflict transformation, Kathrin Lorenz, which attempts to pull together various strands of aid and development work in conflict situations. The holistic approach emphasises, again, the significance and importance of overall good management practice. Senior managers and staff all need to understand and be sensitive to the connections if the variety of agency activities are to complement each other.

The research by Fast and Weist on perceptions of insecurity recommended more research on the effectiveness of security training and its influence on perceptions and risk. Building on the theme of training, Catherine Russ describes experience in delivering security management training in Chad. It is clear that where training is provided it is well-received and generates a demand for further training. Security training for managers and staff who have not previously been exposed to concepts of risk management can be invaluable in enhancing competence and confidence.

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The previous issue of the *Security & Safety Review* highlighted the duty of care employers have towards their staff. What is not clear is how sufficient training is to be delivered within the aid sector such that not only the larger agencies are able to provide the necessary training for their staff but that all agencies and aid workers have access to appropriate, affordable safety and security training.

Aid worker
perceptions of insecurity

Larissa Fast is Assistant Professor at the Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame. She has written on and researched the topic of security and has worked for a number of relief and development agencies. **Dawn Wiest** is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Memphis.

Larissa Fast and Dawn Wiest summarise a research project they carried out to answer the above question.

This summary provides a brief snapshot of some of the findings of survey results from 180 respondents working in the relief and development sectors between March and November 2006 (for more about the full study see the end of this summary). The study itself is exploratory and identifies areas and priorities for future research as opposed to drawing broader conclusions about perceptions and experiences of security threats and measures for humanitarians. Nevertheless, it identifies nine major findings, which hold for the sample population of this study but not for the aid worker population more generally:

- **In general, survey respondents faced low-threat security incidents at a far greater rate than they faced incidents that are considered very dangerous.**
- **Work stress was the most commonly cited experience.**
- **Respondent scores indicate that vehicle accidents made them feel the most unsafe of all.**
- **Ambient insecurity alone did not explain security perceptions among respondents. In fact, higher perception of risk was consistently related to actual experience of incidents and not to country of posting.**
- **Respondents rated acceptance security measures much more favourably than they did deterrence or protective measures.**
- **Among respondents, a greater proportion of men than women received security training.**
- **Gender did not predict which respondents felt the most highly threatened by security incidents.**
- **Respondents posted in large cities experienced fewer threatening incidents and tended to feel safer than those posted elsewhere.**
- **International staff respondents experienced more medium-threat incidents than did national staff.**

The findings from this study generate a number of preliminary implications and recommendations for research and security management. Overall, the data suggests the need to pay attention to the full array of safety and security incidents, from safety threats, such as vehicle accidents and work stress, to the less severe security threats that aid workers face. The lesser types of security threats have been a neglected area of research, since most studies have focused primarily on fatalities or severe threats. Furthermore, security management strategies should ideally reflect the various identities (i.e. national vs. international, position within the organization, gender etc.) that influence the type(s) of threat they face.

Recommendation: Agencies (and research) should ensure a focus on and respond to the full range of security threats, not simply high-threat and high-impact incidents.

Second, not all demographic characteristics are related to the experience or perceptions of security threats and measures. There were no statistically significant relationships for a number of the demographic factors and the experience of incidents or perceptions of degree of security. Whether or not the individual had dependents, his/her marital status, age, and time spent in country generally did not prove significant for this sample. Moreover, the time in the profession

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Agencies should pay attention to security management in all their country programmes, not solely or primarily in those countries that have higher ambient levels of violence/ insecurity.

For more information

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and the amount of security training (i.e. whether the training lasted for one or multiple days) were not significant for this sample. On the other hand, those who self-reported working for organizations with a human rights mandate (which could include those working on rights-based development or advocacy issues) tended to report higher perceptions of threat and were significantly more likely to rank protective measures more favourably than were personnel in other sectors. Furthermore, irrespective of demographic categories and country of posting, respondents rated acceptance measures the most favourably of all.

Recommendation: Agencies that privilege protective and deterrent measures should revisit the importance of acceptance measures as a security management strategy that makes staff feel more secure.

Third, the data demonstrates the influence of actual experience of incidents in making people feel less safe. Even though individuals working in countries that are more dangerous experience significantly more incidents, these ambient levels of insecurity – meaning insecurity due to the environment more generally – alone do not explain higher perceptions of insecurity. Instead, an individual's actual experience of an incident better explains his or her perception of the degree of danger. This highlights the importance of not neglecting security management strategies in countries that have low ambient levels of insecurity.

Recommendation: Agencies should ensure appropriate and immediate responses to security incidents that are designed to address the physical, psychological, and security management impacts of the actual incident. In addition, responses should deal with the impact the experience of an incident may have on an individual's perceptions of insecurity and levels of fear.

Recommendation: Agencies should pay attention to security management in all their country programmes, not solely or primarily in those countries that have higher ambient levels of violence/insecurity.

Fourth, the study highlights the need for and limitations of research on this topic. The study and its limitations demonstrate the need to create research designs that more effectively solicit the participation and support of national staff and their experiences of security threats and measures, and the participation of staff from a greater variety of positions within an organization. The difficulty of identifying and sampling the total population of humanitarian and development workers continually handicaps our ability to generate findings that can be generalised across the population of aid workers. Other studies on this topic have signalled similar issues (e.g., Barnett 2004, Rowley 2005, Stoddard, Harmer, and Haver 2006).

Recommendation: Future research should implement research designs that more effectively solicit participation from national staff about their perceptions of and needs related to security issues.

In addition, the study findings emphasize the need for more research in a number of areas, especially gender differences among aid workers in relation to security, the prevalence and impact of the full range of security incidents, a comparative study of the effectiveness of specific security measures (or categories of measures) in reducing actual numbers of incidents, and the effectiveness of security training and its influence on perceptions and risk.

Recommendation: More research on the following topics: gender differences, the prevalence and impact of the full range of security incidents, the effectiveness of specific security measures in reducing risk, and the effectiveness of security training and its influence on perceptions and risk.

In summary, although researchers are making progress in identifying and analyzing humanitarian security issues, we still have a long way to go in achieving a better understanding of causes and perceptions of security and security incidents, as well as the effectiveness of security measures.

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Stoddard, Abby, Adele Harmer, and Katherine Haver. 2006. *Providing aid in insecure environments: Trends in policy and operations. HPG Report 23. London, UK: ODI.*
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There is a need for aid managers and senior executives to incorporate risk management into conflict sensitive programming and mainstream management.
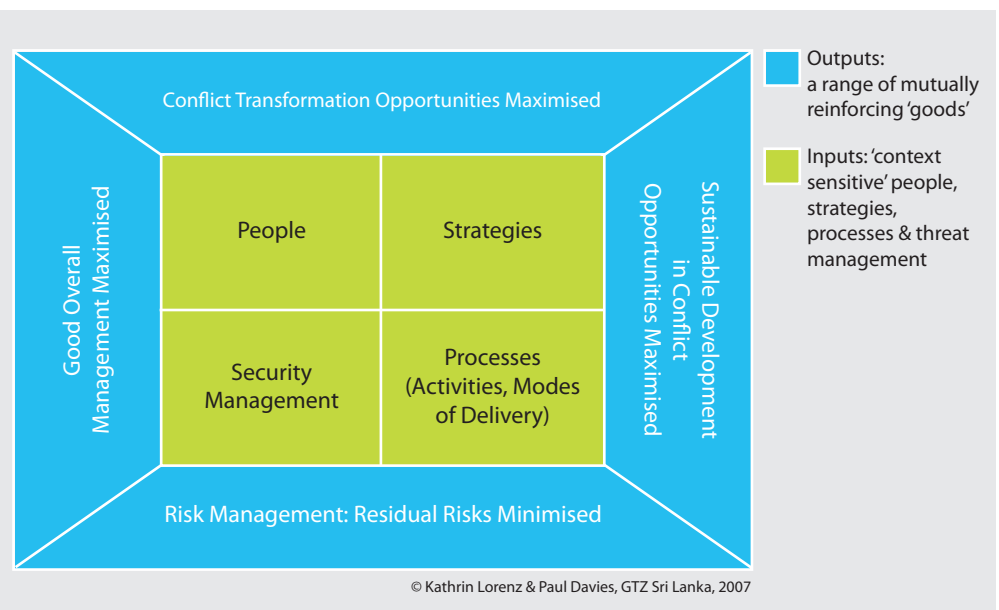
Management Model for Context Sensitive Operations: A holistic approach

Understand where you are and act accordingly

Paul Davies, former GTZ Risk Management Advisor, Sri Lanka, proposes a management model for context sensitive operations which integrates risk management, conflict transformation and sustainable development opportunities into a holistic management approach.

At the end of January 2007, Kathrin Lorenz, GTZ Sri Lanka's conflict advisor presented a model that she had been working on for some time which sought to explain that to achieve conflict sensitivity in aid programming it was necessary to adopt a 'mainstreamed approach' working on four organisational dimensions. These she originally listed as: People, Strategies, Activities and Risk Management. Our discussions took place at the Club Oceanic Hotel on the beach north of Trincomalee, in the troubled north east of Sri Lanka, where we were coming to the end of a security management field assessment for GTZ. The importance of incorporating risk management into conflict sensitive programming and mainstream management, was brought home to us in an abrupt fashion the following morning when a dead body, bound in tape and bearing the signs of torture was found on the beach. As a result the security forces undertook a 'round up' of civilians in the adjacent Alles Garten neighbourhood. Since the main GTZ residence was located in this area, several national staff were initially detained, but were subsequently extracted by a programme manager from the holding area.

As soon as she presented the model, I realised that Kathrin had developed something of real value, something that could help aid managers and senior executives understand far more clearly the need for a mainstreamed approach to security risk management. The need for greater conceptual clarity had been a concern for some time.

Conflict Transformation Opportunities Maximised

Good Overall Management Maximised

People | Strategies

Security Management | Processes (Activities, Modes of Delivery)

Sustainable Development in Conflict Opportunities Maximised

Risk Management: Residual Risks Minimised

Outputs: a range of mutually reinforcing 'goods'

Inputs: 'context sensitive' people, strategies, processes & threat management

© Kathrin Lorenz & Paul Davies, GTZ Sri Lanka, 2007

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In June 2006, for example, I had undertaken an appraisal of the joint DFID – GTZ Risk Management Office (RMO) in Nepal. In the course of its highly successful work over the previous three years, the RMO had developed a wide range of 'technical' risk management products and services (in-depth situation reports and analysis, risk assessments, standard operating procedures and incident/crisis management support etc.) as well as developing an innovative new programming concept that became known as, 'Safe and Effective Development in Conflict' (SEDC). SEDC succeeded in
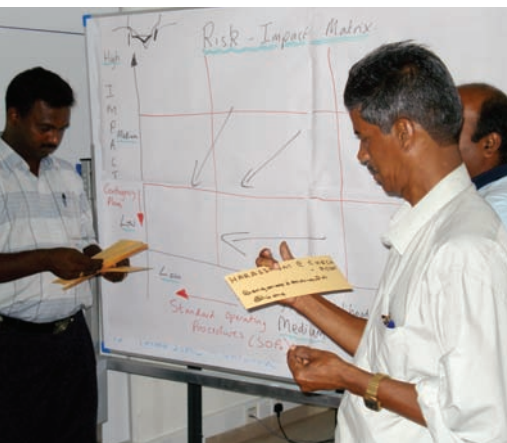
A risk assessment being undertaken by the staff of GTZ's Performance Improvement Project (PIP) in Trincomalee, April 2007
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Our operations should be characterized by enhanced overall management performance. They should also be more conflict sensitive and ultimately more sustainable and effective.

For more information

Paul Davies was, until recently, Risk Management Advisor for GTZ in Sri Lanka. Paul has worked extensively in aid agency security and risk management. He now runs his own consultancy, Ad Idem Consulting Limited (www.ad-idem.org), and is a RedR Associate Trainer. Paul can be contacted at:

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merging risk management good practice and 'Do No Harm' approaches all of which amounted to increasing the 'context sensitivity' of the work. By being more 'context sensitive' (and at this stage in Nepal this meant being more 'conflict-sensitive'), not only would the programming be more appropriate (and hence effective), it would also be more sustainable since it would minimise the implementation risks (and hence be 'safe').

Discussing with Kathrin I realized that the four dimensions of her model were really the inputs of the process. Rather than 'risk management' I suggested technical 'security management' as an input (meaning for example those elements described above as part of the RMO's 'technical' risk management). I saw risk management, the reduction of risks through management action, as being an output of a broader, mainstreamed process that should involve concerted action across all four dimensions of Kathrin's model, not just the technical security management activities. Whilst better security can be achieved merely by enhancing the security management capacity of an organisation, the ability to minimize risks as completely as possible could only be achieved by reviewing the organizational footprint in an insecure location across all four dimensions.

Such an approach is important for organizations aspiring to good practice risk management. Moreover, it also corresponds with a working definition of what it means for an employer to meet 'duty of care' to its employees in security risk management terms. Risk management will never deliver zero risk. But to be meeting duty of care it is important for the employer to demonstrate that everything 'reasonably practicable' has been done to reduce the security risks to which employees are exposed in the course of their work. In the context of overseas aid, the failure to act across all four dimensions might, therefore, leave employers open to legal actions in the event of security incidents resulting in harm to employees, something that becomes a distinct possibility with the future development of corporate manslaughter legislation.

But what does 'acting across all four dimensions of the model's inputs mean? In terms of security management, there has been enough written about good practice, for example in the comprehensive ECHO Security Review (see Issue 6 of the *Security Quarterly Review*), for practitioners and senior managers of aid agencies to have little doubt as to what systems, processes, documentation, staff and other resources need to be in place to meet duty of care. But in terms of the other three 'mainstream' elements – people, strategies and processes – the key is to make sure that all elements are consonant with, and appropriate for, the context or field reality. In insecure locations this means being consonant with, and appropriate for the conflict. So to take one element, arguably the single most important element, our people, we can ask some basic questions to evaluate how well we are doing, such as:

- **Are our people appropriately trained to work in an insecure location?**
- **Do they have the range of skills and qualities that make them not just technically competent to do their job but are they, in a broader sense 'field operators', including the physical stamina to operate in difficult conditions?**
- **Do they understand stress management issues and its impact on decision making and therefore security?**
- **Do they understand that they need to be responsible for their own security and that of their teams, and that they have a fundamental responsibility to share information on the context, emerging situation and / or security incidents?**
- **Does the organizational culture value people's security and empower them to evaluate and take only those risks which are acceptable in the implementation of work on the ground?**

By acting across all four dimensions it should be evident that since the 'good is indivisible' not only will risks be minimized as an output of the model, but that other mutually reinforcing outputs will be delivered. Our operations should be characterized by enhanced overall management performance. They should also be more conflict sensitive and ultimately more sustainable and effective. The key to bundling all these inputs together has to be the integrating effect of the right organizational culture. For an international development organization this can mean many things, but one simple definition which emerged with great clarity from the RMO Nepal evaluation was that the RMO had enhanced the degree to which both DFID and GTZ were 'field-first organisations'. 'Field first' means not only truly investing in understanding the complexity at the grass roots level, but understanding our beneficiaries, and their needs, from their perspective, from the bottom looking up. And surely this is what good aid practice is all about?

For previous articles by Paul Davies on organizational culture and mainstreaming security management see Issues 1 & 2 (2005) of the RedR *Security Quarterly Review*.

RedR delivered security training in Chad for the first time and found that for many agencies, this was their first introduction to security training...

Responding to mounting
training needs in Chad

Catherine Russ, RedR UK Learning & Development Programmes Director, writes about the need for regular and consistent security training in a range of languages open to all aid staff, national and international.

Less talked about than the Sudan emergency, less reported and less known but equally complex is the situation found in Chad. When the Darfur crisis started in 2003, Chad experienced a massive arrival of refugees from Darfur, only a few NGOs came to Chad and the majority of the initial emergency phase with the Sudanese refugees was managed by NGOs who were already present in the country, many of whom did not have an emergency profile. At this time, local NGOs made a clear difference and were able to access areas which remained largely inaccessible to International NGO's but this also made them more vulnerable in a variety of ways.

A second phase started in 2006 with an increasing focus of the international community on the Chadian emergency and a bigger financial commitment from donors. The second phase also saw NGOs both national and international facing an increasing number of security incidents, mainly carjacking and some robberies. In addition, new internally displaced Chadians movement came to add to the scene.

According to the United Nations the humanitarian situation in Chad can be characterised by:

1 **233,025 Sudanese Refugees in Eastern Chad.**

2 **48,400 Refugees from Central African Republic.**

3 **115,677 Internally Displaced Chadians, by end of January 2007**

(estimations)

The above combined with the additional menace of mines put growing numbers of staff under added security risk. Chad is in the top 10 countries for numbers of mines and unexploded ordinance (UXOs) present and at the last count there were over 1 millions mines and several million UXOs across the country.

Determining training needs

It was recognised by RedR and one of its Associate Trainers - Alex Carle, that many French speaking countries in West Africa were not receiving security and risk management training despite mounting need. To address this, an assessment visit was funded by OFDA to analyse the current operating environment for aid agencies in N'Djamena and Abeche in eastern Chad, and to define how RedR Security training could be best adapted to meet the needs of the most appropriate target group.

Following an intensive 2-week visit in April, hosted by CARE International in Chad, Alex determined there was a need and demand for training in context analysis and the building of local strategies, particularly image and acceptance; the humanitarian community is very much perceived by the local population as being a commercial opportunity. It is rare to find within the civil society people not linked to humanitarian actors in some way and all seem to know who they are and what they do.

The changes in Chad that took place during the last few months preceding his visit as well as the rebel attack on Abeche in November 2006 alerted some NGOs to the need for training at co-ordination level and there was added enthusiasm for the proposed training in June 07.

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Djabal camp in eastern Chad hosts over 15,000 refugees from Sudan's war-torn Darfur region. Among them are almost 5,000 children aged 6 to 14. The camp opened in March 2004.
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Determining training needs

The humanitarian community's major concerns included:

- **undefined measures to relocate staff to secure areas.**
- **The unpredictability of attacks by rebel groups as well as an increasing number of car robberies (63 recorded in April 07 since Dec 2005).**
- **UN security Phase IV still observed in the East and phase III in N'djamena.**
- **General difficulties to operate in the unpredictable Eastern area.**
- **Protection for civilian populations involved in inter-ethnic violence.**
- **Insecurity in Darfur and Northern Central African Republic adding to poor security conditions in Chadian border areas.**

The main consequence of the security situation was identified as an increasing difficulty to operate humanitarian programmes in Eastern Chad and to severely impede the ability of some NGOs to implement aid projects. It was also clearly expressed from local NGOs that the level of security consideration was focused less on them than on International NGOs. Therefore, there was a clear need to encourage high involvement of local NGOs so that they too had the opportunity of gaining tools and models for risk assessment. The situation in Abeche was seen as similar to N'Djamena, however the presence of Toroboro (Sudanese rebels) and their relative proximity to the refugee camps as well as areas where fighting occasionally broke out, highlighted how easily the situation could change rapidly.

Setting up the training

As it was the first time RedR was to deliver training in Chad, the two trainers Alex Carle from France and Christine Persaud from Canada, set about the demanding task of adapting the materials to the Chadian context as well as generating new training materials in French. Again hosted by CARE International in Chad, the whole operation was supported with administration, transport, logistics and local knowledge – an invaluable support to ensure timely and professional delivery of the training. Judging by some of the guests staying at the hotel where the training was being held, they could have used the training as well as they were seen going out for strolls and jogs unaccompanied – something strongly advised against in D'Jamena. Whilst Alex and Christine were in Abeche a week later, three agencies were carjacked and they witnessed them struggle through the crisis response.

Delivering the training

Approximately 35 participants received training in June 07 in D'Jamena and Abeche who were a good mix of local and international staff; local NGO representation was not as high as hoped and it was noted that work needed to be done to increase their participation. There were some interesting distinctions between what national and international staff found useful. Whilst national staff were impressed by and glad to learn tools and methods for analysis and the risk matrix, many international staff were glad to learn about different acceptance strategies and appreciating local contexts. Some of the participant comments included "Tools are above my expectations. Will be hard to set up and use all of them but very useful" and "I learnt the importance of circulating information and general behaviour in hot spots". No one was better at modelling acceptance strategies than the family of CARE International's country director who have lived and worked through a hibernation and evacuation. Knowing a large cross-section of people and being well integrated with the local population have helped them to manage in D'Jamena during difficult political times but also helped them to live in relative safety throughout their time there.

It was mentioned by participants themselves that although it was great to see RedR training in a French speaking country, much more was needed and in a systematic way. It is clear that this represents a drop in the ocean of what is needed to provide regular available training in Chad. RedR hopes to be able to continue delivering training in French not least returning to Chad to continue the work it has identified as critical for agencies working in the region.

A special thanks to Nicolas Palanque Country Director of CARE International in Chad for being RedR's host agency in supporting the delivery of workshops in N'djamena and Abeche.

Whilst Alex and Christine were in Abeche a week later, three agencies were carjacked and they witnessed them struggle through the crisis response.

For more information

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"I met a man working in Nepal who told me 'thanks to your course I am still alive'. This is the impact of the training we have been able to devise and deliver with RedR, using their methodology, skills and enormous practical experience."

Peter Lehmann,
Senior Security Adviser, Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation

Location/date	Course title	Contact
UK		**training@redr.org**
April (TBC) - 4 days	Personal Security in Emergencies	
April (TBC) - 4 days	HQ Security Management Workshop	
July (TBC) - 5 days	Field Logistics and Security in Emergencies	
September (TBC) - 4 days	Personal Security in Emergencies	
Sudan		**sudanadmin@redr.org**
	Courses in Sudan still to be finalised. Please email the Sudan team or check RedR's website for further details.	
Sri Lanka		**applySL@redr.org**
Feb (TBC) - 2 days	Security Training for Drivers (Kandy)	
Feb (TBC) - 3 days	Personal Safety and Human Security (Kandy)	
Feb (TBC) - 4 days	Safety and Human Security Management (Colombo)	
March (TBC) - 3 days	Personal Safety and Human Security (Colombo)	
March (TBC) - 2 days	Security Training for Drivers (Colombo)	

Consultancies

RedR provides tailored training and advice covering all aspects of humanitarian work. Our principal focus has been in the field of security management and personal security though we are able to cover the full range of subjects common to the humanitarian sector, such as Sphere Minimum Standards, logistics, health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

What we offer

Tailored training and advice in:

- **safety and security management**
- **personal security**
- **security consultancy – risk assessments, security audits, security management reviews**
- **crisis management training and simulations**
- **leadership and management**
- **humanitarian sector subjects (WASH, needs assessment, Sphere etc.)**

Contributions

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