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UNITED NATIONS
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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

EXECUTIVE BOARD

SPECIAL MEETING ON THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN
IN ASIA WITH EMPHASIS ON BASIC SERVICES

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5TH MEETING

Held at the International Convention Center, Manila,
on Thursday, 19 May 1977, at 2:30 p.m.

Chairman: Mrs. ALDABA-LIM (Philippines)

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Area development approach to delivery of basic services for children

- (a) "Development in West Sumatra, Indonesia" (E/ICEF/ASIA/7)
by Governor Harun Zain (Indonesia)
- (b) "The Need for an Integrated Approach to Social Development in
Under-developed Countries -- A Look at Project Compassion"
(E/ICEF/ASIA/2) by Mr. Ramon P. Binamira (Philippines)
- (c) Case Study by the Comité Central de Protection de la Mere et
l'Enfant (Socialist Republic of Viet Nam)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages, preferably in the same language as the text to which they refer. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also, if possible, incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent as soon as possible to Miss S. Barry, Meeting Room 7, International Convention Center.

Any corrections to the records of the Special Meeting will be consolidated in a single corrigendum to be issued shortly after the end of the Meeting.

(d) Analytical comments by Mr. Shoab Sultan Khan and Mr. Ralph Diaz

(e) General discussion by participants

Closure of the Meeting

The Meeting was called to order at 2.40 p.m.

AREA DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO DELIVERY OF BASIC SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

- (a) "DEVELOPMENT IN WEST SUMATRA, INDONESIA" (E/ICEF/ASIA/7) BY GOVERNOR HARUN ZAIN (INDONESIA)
- (b) "THE NEED FOR AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN UNDER-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES -- A LOOK AT PROJECT COMPASSION" (E/ICEF/ASIA/2) BY MR. RAMON P. BINAMIRA (PHILIPPINES)
- (c) CASE STUDY BY THE COMITÉ CENTRAL DE PROTECTION DE LA MÈRE ET L'ENFANT (SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM)
- (d) ANALYTICAL COMMENTS BY MR. SHOALB SULTAN KHAN AND MR. RALPH DIAZ
- (e) GENERAL DISCUSSION BY PARTICIPANTS

1. Mr. BINAMIRA, introducing his study (E/ICEF/ASIA/2), explained that the purpose of "Project Compassion" was to enable people to help themselves and that the Philippine Government believed that it was fully in line with UNICEF's strategy for basic services for children. It should be understood that some problems were more important than others, namely, the so-called "breeder problems" which, if removed, would eliminate several other problems.
2. In helping itself, the Philippines appealed to other countries wishing to provide assistance to ensure that their assistance was in line with its development goals: in other words, under-developed nations could not afford structures that were taken for granted in the West. The experience of the Philippines in that connexion had produced electrifying results.
3. Slides were projected with a commentary by Mr. Binamira.
4. Dr. HIRSHMAN (World Health Organization) drew attention to an error in paragraph 5 of document E/ICEF/ASIA/2. The paragraph should have stated that half of all deaths in the Philippines were of children below the age of 6.
5. Mr. BINAMIRA agreed, explaining that in the Philippines the mortality rate of children below age 6 was indeed 15 per cent and not 50 per cent.
6. Mr. HOAN (Socialist Republic of Viet Nam) said that Viet Nam, which had just emerged from a devastating war, attached great importance in its development goals to basic services for children and had so far achieved encouraging results. Children were the future of the country and required special care because of their fragility. The entire population supported that position and assisted the Government in overcoming the difficulties involved.

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(Mr. Hoan)

7. Basic services were the responsibility of several institutions and organizations had been established at various levels for the protection of children. In 1960, a council had been established for the protection of children in the 3-6 age group. In 1963, the Central Council for the Protection of Mother and Child had been formed for children in the 0-3 age group and it was with that age group that the study (E/ICEF/ASIA/12) was concerned.

8. Mrs. TAM (Socialist Republic of Viet Nam), introducing the working paper of the Central Committee (E/ICEF/ASIA/12), said that Viet Nam had, over the last decades, undergone many profound changes. The establishment of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam in July 1976 had ushered in a new era which had enabled the Vietnamese to focus all their strength, minds and talent on the reconstruction of their country and on the development of the economy in order to overcome poverty and backwardness.

9. Her country attached great importance to the protection of children, which was a major policy of the State and a task for the entire population. She then drew attention to the various projects and schemes undertaken by the Government for the protection of the mother and child as set forth in the paper.

10. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh), noting that infant mortality in Viet Nam had, in twenty years, been reduced from 300 to 31.2 per thousand, asked to which age group those figures referred and how the children were immunized against infection.

11. Mrs. TAM (Socialist Republic of Viet Nam) replied that the figures referred to the 0-3 age group which was divided into three sub-groups: 2-10 months, 11-16 months and 17-36 months.

12. With respect to immunization, before a baby was admitted to a crèche, its entire home area was surveyed in order to ensure that the health criteria set by the authorities were met. Once admitted to a crèche, the baby was vaccinated in accordance with the basic requirements established by the health authorities.

13. Dr. del MUNDO (Philippines) asked what type of personnel attended to the delivery of babies, how many were delivered at home as compared to hospital deliveries, and whether the stay in crèches affected the incidence of breast feeding?

14. Mrs. TAM (Socialist Republic of Viet Nam) said that the personnel of the crèches were trained at several levels in various activities to detect symptoms and provide treatment. A sick child was assured of treatment by special nurses. Furthermore, all crèches had the services of a doctor.

15. There were national centres for the delivery of babies both in the towns and in rural areas. In the towns, all births took place in the centres. In the rural areas and mountainous regions, the figures were 80-90 per cent and 70-90 per cent respectively.

16. The Government had established rules whereby mothers with babies aged 6-12 months were given two rest periods per day for breast feeding. If the crèche was far from the mother's place of work, it had the responsibility of feeding the baby. The attendance of babies in crèches was co-ordinated with the working hours of their mothers.

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17. Dr. SANTOS HERNANDEZ (Cuba) said that the project just described was a State project which clearly indicated the priority given to mothers and children and her delegation congratulated the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam on its achievement in that connexion. She wished to know what the relationship was between the State and women's organizations in the programme and what the experiences had been over the years.
18. Mrs. TAM (Socialist Republic of Viet Nam) replied that the Central Committee for the Protection of Mother and Child was the chief State body responsible for maternal and child welfare. It had harmonious relations with other State bodies such as the Ministry of Health, with which it co-operated in immunization programmes for children, and with women's and other organizations.
19. In reply to a question from Mr. Zahra (World Health Organization) she indicated that one of the activities of the family health workers in her country was to train parents to take proper care of their children.

20. Mr. DIAZ (Chief, Training and Advisory Services, United Nations Centre for Regional Development) said that the paper prepared by Governor Harun Zain of West Sumatra emphasized planning practice and the importance of present and future informal leaders. Objectively measured, progress in the development of West Sumatra was impressive; Governor Zain's statement that planning there was still at the "trial and error stage" should be interpreted as meaning that he viewed the planning not as a mere technical exercise involving allocations of scarce resources by planners recruited from universities but rather as a dynamic political process in which the Governor played a central role and which involved a wide range of leaders from all groups and levels. West Sumatra's Regional Development Planning Board (BAPEDA) was one of the strongest in Indonesia. Thus, the problem for West Sumatra was not the use of planning technique but the promotion of planning-mindedness at the local level in order to ensure greater success in the implementation of plans. Planning was part of a dialectical process of dialogue through appropriate institutional channels. Governor Zain had unduly played down the role of the local level in the formulation of plans. The experience of a group of Indonesian planners in Yogyakarta province indicated that the participation of Kabupaten staff in devising a planning framework for their own area was essential and it was only a matter of time before that staff would have their own regular and appropriate planning groups. The conditions for more effective planning at the local level existed in Indonesia, especially in the form of direct budget allocations to local governmental levels. Without appropriate delegation of authority to the local levels, however, the inputs of the central Government would fail to improve the welfare of village and urban communities. UNICEF policy-makers for their part, had come to the realization in recent years that supporting and initiating projects directly benefiting children without taking into account the governing apparatus resulted in isolated sectoral approaches, even in those projects described as "integrated". That apparatus served to co-ordinate the activities of sectoral agencies and, hence, any attempt to provide basic services in an integrated manner must involve the local government apparatus directly. Thus, serious consideration needed to be given to strengthening the development administration capabilities of local government.

21. Political development at the community level was a prerequisite for the effective provision of basic services, particularly to the younger age groups, and could be accelerated through a system of supporting inputs at the higher levels of government. However, no plan was perfect and it was necessary to proceed, as Governor Zain had written, on a trial-and-error basis, although it was to be hoped that errors of the past could be converted meaningfully into lessons providing a sound basis for improving provincial

(Mr. Diaz)

administration activities. In that connexion, the role of local leaders was crucial. A closed administrative system had no capacity for improvement, while an administrative system which elicited the opinions of local leaders would be better able to reflect the needs of the people. Governor Zain had taken the initiative in establishing and institutionalizing a dialogue with local leaders by creating, inter-alia, the Association of Minangkabau-Clan Chiefs. Through such organizations, potential misunderstandings of Governments policies could be clarified and potential conflicts of interests avoided. Furthermore, unless local leaders were involved in development projects, they would most likely be disinclined to maintain them. That had been proved by the attitude of villagers in a number of Asian countries who viewed schools, for example, as government-sponsored institutions alien to their culture and community, and who, as a result, failed to support them.

22. The striking feature of "Project Compassion" described in document E/ICEF/ASIA/SR.2 was the central role played by the volunteer unit leader, backed up by a doorstep delivery system. The vital importance of fostering a development-oriented local leadership, effectively supported both technically and, where necessary, materially by a higher-level structure capable of mobilizing the needed inputs and integrating sectoral approaches, had been convincingly illustrated by the activities of the Project. Mr. Binamira was not a newcomer to community work and his past experience was an asset in guiding the development-oriented force of government and private leaders mobilized in the Project. However, the implementation of integrated projects was an uncharted journey in which patience was the most valuable asset of a project manager and his staff. How could an integrated project with objectives attainable only in the long run effectively work with budget appropriations made on a yearly basis? How could a project achieve long-range objectives unless it was converted into a permanent programme? Those were some of the questions suggested by Mr. Binamira's paper.

23. In focusing on delivering services to the "doorstep" of the poor sight should not be lost of the centres of decision-making at the various levels of government. The shift from project to programme required the strengthening of local institutions to sustain permanently the gains made in project-based development efforts. It was precisely in attempting to effect the transition from project to programme that complications arose; to neglect family and community institutions in favour of administrative institutions in plan formulation and implementation would result in neglecting the real needs of the target community. Involving family and community institutions, however, was not the same as involving sectoral and local government institutions. Hence, the strategic importance of the volunteer unit leader. It was interesting to note that "Project Compassion"

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(Mr. Diaz)

had settled on a ratio of volunteer leaders to households which was virtually identical to that chosen in Thailand for village health-care volunteers. In Thailand, the experience of health-care workers had been that health could not be narrowly defined and they had consequently expanded their activities to include family and community development aspects; in so doing they had paved the way for an integrated village development approach. The success of several health volunteers' projects in Thailand had led the Government to establish a nation-wide programme providing for the training of over 24,000 health volunteers between 1977 and 1981.

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(Mr. Diaz)

24. It was somewhat contradictory, however, to adopt a rigid target for the number of rural health workers to be trained in a given period if such workers were truly to be "volunteers". To the extent that leaders were volunteers it was they who should set the targets. In some projects little more than lip service was paid to the notion of popular participation. The blame for the lack of that participation should be placed primarily on the shortcomings, both structural and behavioural, of sectoral agencies and local authorities and not on the people themselves.

25. Development consisted in effecting changes in a people's quality of life, with quantitative changes being instrumental in bringing about the change in quality. As to qualitative changes, it was particularly important to spread integrated approaches through villagers and urban dwellers themselves. A training strategy was needed, therefore, through which the volunteer unit leaders gradually became trainers at the local level with a view to encouraging self-sustaining improvements in the community's capacity for self-development.

26. The test of community development was whether there was a difference between those communities affected by the project and those that were not, and whether other surrounding communities could see changes in the project areas and then proceed to adopt the examples set as viable means of improving their own conditions. The first test, therefore, was that of impact and the second that of replicability. An approach entailing the channelling of development inputs through local institutions and leaders to the fullest extent possible differed from a nationally conceived strategy of rate of coverage. In the former approach, the timing of the diffusion of new ideas was set by the communities themselves, whereas in the latter that determination was made at the top with strong emphasis placed on budget limitations in terms of the kind and amount of technical and material assistance to be provided per time unit, usually a fiscal year. In that respect, UNICEF would have to continue to set the pace in project development through longer-term commitments, avoiding the fallacy of measuring success in terms of quick results and enabling local leadership and technical competence to play a central role in the formulation and implementation of projects. Furthermore, such an approach provided a challenge to UNICEF to maximize the use of indigenous materials in its projects.

27. Document E/ICEF/ASIA/12 illustrated the experience of a different ideological and political system. Viet Nam had suffered much in the course of a long war and was currently engaged in physical, economic and social rehabilitation. The work of saving the country's children, however, could not wait and the Central Committee had been given a major role for that purpose. In providing basic services to mothers and children the Central Committee made full use of indigenous materials and talents. Provincial units were given full authority to implement their own programmes with clear guidelines and support from the Central Committee. In the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam centralization need not lead to a weakening of local initiative if what it entailed was aggregating and synthesizing local demands, interests and conditions within a national framework.

(Mr. Diaz)

28. One of the interesting items mentioned in the paper was the establishment of centres for supplying and distributing mother's milk for the feeding of young children when their mothers were absent. That was a novel idea regarding which further information would be welcomed.

29. Another interesting point was the organization and management of the crèche in Viet Nam, which represented a radical departure from the traditional baby-sitting approach to the care of pre-school children. There was ample evidence that the pre-school years were formative and the Vietnamese approach to pre-school care was a pace-setter for Asian countries. UNICEF should, therefore, assist in disseminating the Vietnamese experience in that area to other developing countries. Viet Nam had been following basic services approach for many years before the concept had been discussed in international conference circles.

30. MR. KHAN said that, as a rural development specialist, he did not view the situation of children in isolation but rather as an important facet of the over-all poverty problem. Thus, until UNICEF became part of a comprehensive strategy for the eradication of poverty, its activities would have no significant impact. It was a well-known fact that many aid programmes did not succeed in reaching the poorest sectors. To remedy that situation it would be necessary to devise suitable strategies. If the poor were to make proper use of the necessary services provided, their ability to take advantage of them must be improved. It was necessary, furthermore, to organize the poor, for without organization development activities could never be more than sporadic. Experience indicated that the poor did not organize effectively around such institutions as schools or dispensaries but around productive, income-producing activities. It was an error for Governments to think that they could reach the poor and promote rural development with an army of functionaries; such government officials, even low-level experts, were generally unwilling to live in the rural areas and were remote from the people's concerns. There was a need, therefore, to create rural cadres of local inhabitants whose skills and expertise had been upgraded.

31. Greater emphasis should be placed on productive services at the local level, particularly since needs differed considerably from village to village, which made it virtually impossible for outside planners to assess and appreciate the genuine needs of villagers. Thus, until Government began to allocate sufficient resources to activities aimed at ascertaining the wishes of local populations, all their development plans would come to nought. Governments must choose between implementing large-scale projects in a few places or small-scale projects in a great many places. The latter alternative was obviously preferable.

32. Finally, the total commitment of the Government to its development programmes was absolutely essential to their success.

33. Each of the three papers considered under item 5 indicated how a successful project could have a catalytic effect. The Vietnamese model was, of course, unique and he hoped that the Vietnamese Government's courage would be rewarded by success in achieving all the goals it had set.

34. MR. THOM (United Kingdom) said that, as the Meeting was essentially an Asian occasion, delegations from other continents had left it to their Asian friends to take the lead in the discussion of the various papers. No two Asian countries had identical problems. The radical approach of Bangladesh might not be suited to a country like Nepal and the authorities in West Sumatra did not have to face up to the appalling difficulties encountered in the slums of Bangkok. Nevertheless, there were common factors in the problems of Asian countries and it would not be surprising if delegations returned to their capitals to urge trying one or another of the novel approaches described at the Special Meeting. His delegation was gratified to participate in the Meeting and was convinced that, when the Executive Board met the following week to discuss essentially technical and administrative matters, the situation of Asian children, which the Special Meeting had served to highlight, would not be far from the minds of the participants.

35. Mr. LEADWICH (United Kingdom) said that, despite all that had been done since the Second World War, the situation of children in the world had not improved, and attempts to solve existing problems had often created new ones. Accordingly, even greater efforts must be made if children were to enjoy a better life. The task was Herculean, but many of the proposals made at the Special Meeting had been extremely practical and represented steps in the right direction. Emphasis had rightly been placed on the appropriate use of know-how and available resources, on education at the village level and on self-help. On the other hand, little had been said about funds, and it should be noted that the projects discussed required resources not available in Asia. It was to be hoped, therefore, that more funds would be forthcoming from private sources in the developed world, and he would encourage his National Committee to make greater efforts to that end. Government contributions would also have to be increased, and the Governments of developed countries and OPEC countries might be able to help in that regard. UNICEF, which had proved that it could manage its funds usefully and prudently, both needed and deserved more, and it was to be hoped that the recommendations made at the Special Meeting would be implemented. Greater efforts must be made if the situation of Asian children was not to become more difficult, and UNICEF should spend more in Asia. Particular emphasis should be placed on micro projects.

36. Mr. SOEBEKTI (Indonesia), clarifying a point made earlier, said that, in Indonesia, services to rural communities, including services for children, were planned and financed on a sectoral basis. That system led to confusion among consumers and to wasteful duplication. The establishment of a regional development system and regional plans would help to prevent both confusion and duplication. Regional development planning had successfully highlighted the needs of children in underserved areas, and had led to a growing awareness of the advantages of a multi-sectoral approach.

37. Mrs. OGATA (Japan) said that her delegation had been encouraged by the fact that important initiatives had been taken with respect to adapting services to local needs and by the fact that the basic services concept had already been put into practice in many parts of Asia. An integrated approach was desirable, but the papers submitted to the Meeting showed that account must be taken of local conditions. The overall conclusion to be drawn from the discussion was that the effectiveness of services for children depended on community participation.

38. Japan had concentrated its assistance in Asia and had placed particular emphasis on family planning, since it felt that population control was a necessary pre-condition for the promotion of children's welfare. It had provided ESCAP countries with both experts and equipment and wished to know whether such assistance was really appropriate to existing needs. Her delegation had been impressed by the importance of grass-roots co-operation, and hoped that the Executive Board would decide to place greater emphasis on field operations.

39. Mr. TILAKARATNA (Sri Lanka) said that the most important question at issue was the cleavage between developing and developed countries. While slum clearance was an urgent matter requiring immediate solution, it was nevertheless only part of a much larger problem. Developing countries depended for their income on the sale of basic commodities, and when earnings fell behind expenditure, scarce resources had to be diverted from social programmes to more crucial areas. Accordingly, in discussing slum clearance and other related issues, it was important not to lose sight of the basic problems.

(Mr. Tilakaratna)

40. Assistance programmes involved many organizations and institutions, and there was often a lack of communication. International organizations must therefore play an increasingly important role and help recipient countries to identify the most urgent problems. In that connection, Sri Lanka had been designed at a most seriously affected country, and it was to be hoped that donor countries and organizations would recognize that fact.

41. It was important to pay due attention to the poorest sectors, since such groups, which included a large proportion of children, were often unable to gain access to basic services for financial reasons or because of bureaucratic obstacles and local animosity.

42. Mr. OYONO (United Republic of Cameroon) said that there were many similarities between the African and Asian regions, but there were also differences which must be taken into account. For example, some delegations had advocated population control, but in Africa there was a shortage of manpower and, in any case, a child was considered a gift of God. Although the developing countries were faced with a Herculean task, it would be wrong to despair. Priorities must be established, and more funds should be channelled into micro projects. The situation was tragic. Millions of poor people in Africa, Asia and Latin America had no access to health centres or drinking water. In tackling such problems, dogmatism must be avoided, and a dialogue must be established between donors and recipients. His country placed great emphasis on community participation and, while the situation was not perfect, grass-roots consultations had led to an effective dialogue between the Government and the communities.

43. Implementation of the basic services concept would require substantial funds, and countries owed it to themselves to increase their contributions to assistance programmes. It was also important to co-ordinate the activities of all donor agencies, since competition among such agencies merely hindered progress.

44. Mr. CRELLIN (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said it had become clear that the starting point for a socially responsible education system must be the child in the family and in society. It was vital to change attitudes towards life and work, and delegations must exert pressure on national educational systems, which were often conservative. The case studies submitted to the Meeting had been inspiring, and such efforts must be encouraged, but it should be noted that attempts to duplicate such projects might lead to disappointment if the organizers ignored the human factors involved. UNICEF and UNESCO were preparing a dossier on innovative educational programmes, particularly programmes related to integrated urban and rural developments. It was to be hoped that the cases covered in the documents submitted to the Meeting would be included in the dossier and receive wide distribution.

45. Mr. GONDWE (World Food Programme) said that while many problems had been discussed in detail, there had been little mention of constraints, and future meetings should pay more attention to that aspect of the matter. The impression had been given that there was little co-operation between specialized agencies at the national level. In fact, that was not true, and in the Philippines, for example, there was close co-operation between the agencies on the one hand and between the agencies and the Government on the other.

CLOSURE OF THE MEETING.

46. Mr. ESGUERRA BARRY (Secretary General of the Special Meeting) said that plans for the provision of basic services must take account of local differences, and the most important factor was the will of the community concerned. The main dangers facing any basic services programme were a lack of real participation in the initial planning stages, a lack of political will at any level, or a lack of expected support services. The Meeting had succeeded in mobilizing the international community. It had also demonstrated that the situation of children could give rise to both hope and bitterness; hope, because children represented the future, and bitterness because of the poverty and lack of services which were all too evident. It was to be hoped that those attending the Meeting had been convinced of the need for revolutionary ideas and aggressive action.

47. Mr. LABOUISSSE (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund) said that everyone supported the concept of basic services with community participation, but that approach required government support. It should be noted that UNICEF dealt with Governments and not with individual groups, but it would make every effort to encourage Governments to support projects like those discussed. He fully agreed that it was important to make maximum use of local resources, and UNICEF was trying to buy more equipment and employ more staff from the developing countries themselves. It had been suggested that UNICEF should publicize the basic services programmes of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and it would certainly do so. It had also been suggested that UNICEF activities should be centred around productive enterprises. While it was extremely difficult to move away from the traditional ideas of development, progress was nevertheless being made in that respect. Policy changes introduced by the World Bank, ILO and UNESCO, as well as recent declarations by the non-aligned countries, had demonstrated that social development was beginning to receive high priority. It had been suggested that UNICEF should integrate the various agencies. While that was not possible, it would make every effort to promote co-operation among the agencies concerned. In the final analysis, however, responsibility for co-ordinating programmes lay with Governments.

48. Mr. ORDONEZ-PLAJA (Chairman of the Executive Board) said that the Special Meeting had shown that, in a computerized and technology-oriented world, it was possible for men to do things for men and to make technology the servant of mankind and not the reverse.

49. The CHAIRMAN said that the Special Meeting had achieved its objective. While some of the views put forward had seemed heretical, the heresy of today was the truth of tomorrow. History would judge the work done at the Special Meeting by the programmes and policy changes put into effect as a result of its work. She then declared the Special Meeting closed.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.

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