PRACTICE **PEACE**

PEACE PRACTICAL

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by Catholic Relief Services and Permanent Peace Movement

PERMANENT PEACE MOVEMENT
حركـــــة الســـــلام الـــدائم

CRS
CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

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PREFACE

With the support of the United States Institute of Peace, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), in partnership with Permanent Peace Movement (PPM), carried out a research project entitled "Conflict Resolution through Community-Level Case Studies." This project compared four Lebanese communities—Baalback, Beddawi, Minieh and Qumatieh—which were successful in preventing politically-generated violence with those that were not. Guided by a diverse national-level advisory board, and based on a series of focus groups and key informant interviews, the project aimed to share comparative community-level findings and key actions that were instrumental in preventing violence. The two main findings of this project are:

- While tension between individuals, families, and communities is natural and not necessarily destructive if it brings positive changes and does not result in violence, in Lebanon, confessional or political differences, or both, are sometimes seized upon by political actors who have something to gain from tension or violence.

- Violence at a community-level, when not addressed effectively (usually within a week, but most often before two days have passed), can escalate to a point of involving more communities and, in the worst case, can become national-level conflicts.

This guide is intended to provide local actors with practical and comprehensive suggestions for enhancing their efforts in violence prevention in the local context. It is designed for people involved locally in their communities. Local leaders can have a positive role in maintaining cordial inter-group relationships. They can be mayors, mukhtars, local religious leaders, party members, elders, family leaders, historians, journalists, school teachers, and school headmasters—virtually anyone who is respected by others. People need not be high-ranking government officials, politicians, religious superiors, or high-profile businesspersons, for instance, to be engaged in preventing violence within their own communities.

RECOMMENDED WAYS TO REDUCE TENSIONS AND PREVENT VIOLENCE

Conflict is a natural phenomenon that in itself is not destructive. A conflict is also an opportunity to clarify misunderstandings, to make life together better, and should not be seen as something necessarily negative. It is important, however, that it be effectively addressed when it comes up. This is mainly done by understanding the problem, listening to the different actors, and then finding a way to avoid future clashes. What follows are five ways to approach conflict within your community.

APPROACH # 1:
## DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF CONFLICT ESCALATION

Conflicts at a community level are typically triggered by a precipitating event. A precipitating event is something that is symbolically potent, often viewed as indicative that one group intends deliberately to offend another group. Precipitating events can evolve from trivial matters, as when a disagreement over a parking lot between two individuals is magnified to have wider connotations, such as one group feeling as if another group thinks they have entitlements due to a more privileged status. [1] Then, political, religious or civic leaders step into the situation, arguing, for instance, that one group is discriminated against. If tension escalates, the event becomes symbolic to the wider community—that is, it becomes a precipitating event. Precipitating events can serve as a trigger for community-level violence unless interventions are made in a timely fashion to reduce tensions.

Acute community-level tension and violence, when not addressed effectively, can result in increased tension and violence in other communities as well due to the perceived symbolic nature of the event. Tension starts when people have opposing goals—sometimes called positions. They solidify their stands, not seeking to identify common ground. Common ground is found when people clarify their interests and look beyond their positions. They then blame the other, which can result in "losing face." Such an affront to one's honor, or a group's honor, can lead to an outburst of violence. This is depicted in the graphic to the right. [2]
An example of people insisting on their positions is the story of the mother with two children fighting over an orange. The mother decides to cut the orange in half. But before doing so, she speaks with each child separately. She finds that one of them wants the peal for use in making a cake. The other wants a full glass of refreshing juice. Having a whole orange was the position which each took. Having the peal, or having

Best stage to defuse

Enter the Conflict Zone

Different Goals

Take a Stand

Blame Game

Loss of Face

Outburst explosion

Escalation
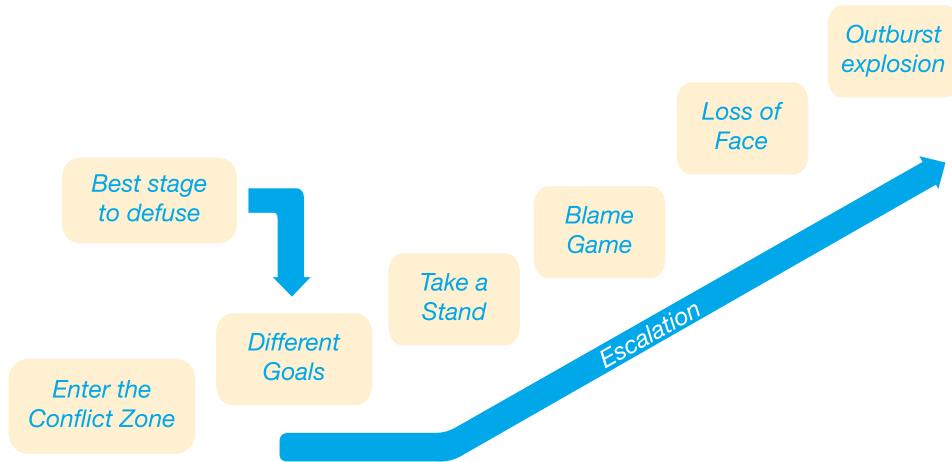
the juice, in contrast, constituted interests. Finding common ground results in both children getting what they want—getting their interests satisfied.

In a more in-depth analysis, the mother might have found that one child was angry that the other had gotten to watch her favorite television show earlier in the day—one the other child does not like. Arguing over the orange was how anger manifested itself. The interest of the child who felt slighted about the television show is fairness. In this case, the mother might announce a policy that each child will have a choice of the television program alternated every other day. The position of wanting the orange was thus clarified as an interest in "television viewing justice." The mother identified a fair solution.

[1] Other examples of relatively trivial matters that can escalate are inappropriate garbage-throwing, a fight over the location of a children's playground, a marriage outside the community's norms, fights over usage of water for irrigation, disagreements over land-ownership, or struggles over who can date whom.

[2] Taken from Resources from Adelphi Associates, found at http://www.adelphi-associates.co.uk/info/how-to-understand-and-defuse-conflict-situations/. Permission granted.

APPROACH # 2:
FORM A NETWORK OF PEACE PROMOTING LEADERS

Community leaders need to keep abreast of evolving events and should stay in contact with influential members of their community—both those who are inclined towards peaceful negotiation of differences and those who are more likely to increase tension and promote violence. They also need to be in contact with moderate leaders of other groups.

From our research, here are qualities of peace promoting leaders identified by workshop participants. They are:
- Believers in peace; they have conviction
- Willing to make sacrifices
- Trustworthy
- Sometimes have positional authority which gives them a platform; because of their position, a person is expected to play a peace promotion role, such as if they are a mukhtar or mayor
- Good listeners
- Inclined to set a plan for action before their intervention
- Ready to face obstacles and failure
- Persistent; they do not give up when they face obstacles
- Accepted by all parties
- Of a social status or are seen as neutral, or both, thereby conferring authority over conflicting parties while at the same time reassuring them
- Educated (at least somewhat)
- Over 35 years old
- Inclined to set deadlines to solve a conflict
- Able to determine if a conflict can be transformed or not
- Influential with the media and political parties
- Do not give personal opinions about the issue
- Able to select the right information with which to formulate an effective intervention
- Humble—they do not praise their own victories

Assertive communications by peace promoting leaders should primarily be with members of their own communities and with peace promoting leaders of other communities. It can be counterproductive for peace promoting leaders of one community to confront violence promoting leaders of another community.

Assume that tension is between three groups of different identities, based on religion, ethnicity, family ties or some other characteristic, denoted in the graphic below as identity group 1, 2, or 3. When identities are being exploited by those seeking power, prestige or profit by increasing tension or encouraging violence—namely, by violence promoting leaders, denoted VP, then it is usually more effective for someone from the same identity group to intervene to counteract escalation. In contrast, having someone from a different identity group intervene can lead to greater tension, rather than less.

Trace through the graphic. Assume there are three religious groups—let's say a Maronite group, a Sunni group, and an Alawi group. The peace promoting leaders, denoted PP, of group 1, the Maronite group, would be the best people to engage in dialogue with violence promoting Maronite leaders. At the same time, the peace promoting Maronite leaders should stay informed about any developments related to the other two groups that could prove to be an affront to Maronites. In other words, the peace promoting leaders should keep track of statements or any other offensive or threatening gesture made by both Sunnis and Alawis. If an aggressive or threatening communication is made, then the Maronite peace promoting leaders should contact the Sunni and Alawi peace promoting leaders expressing concern. It would then be left to the Sunni peace promoting leaders to engage with the Sunni violence promoting leaders. Similarly, the Alawi peace promoting leaders would need to take responsibility for engaging with Alawi violence promoting leaders.

This approach takes advantage of the knowledge that the peace promoting leaders have of their own faith, their ethnic traditions, their familial group, or of subtleties in political dynamics. If the tension relates to an interpretation of a sacred text (such as the Bible or the Quran), for instance, then an appeal can be made to reinterpret a specific passage or to identify another one so that religious rhetoric cannot be used to foment violence.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) like Permanent Peace Movement can be instrumental in facilitating communication between groups. Groups should know how to contact the headquarters of the NGO, denoted HQ, below. NGO leaders are often able to make contact with government officials, religious leaders, and prominent businesspersons who can bring their authority and influence to bear on a delicate situation.
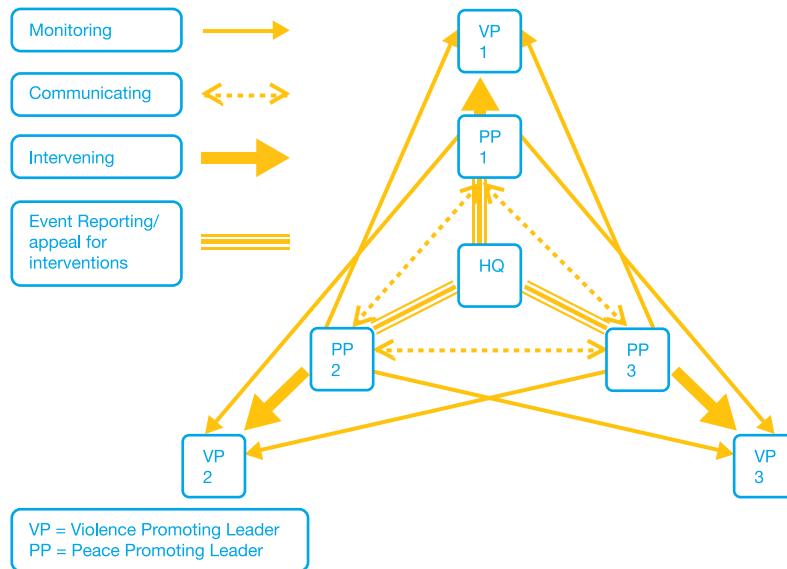
Keep in mind that the network should be inter-group, but the intervention should be intra-group. Inter-group conflicts are conflicts that happen between group 1 and group 2 or 3. Intra-group interventions happen all in one group, let's say group 3.

It is helpful to have people identified ahead of time who can help to intervene to prevent violence. The NGO headquarters can keep track of these people as well. They should be categorized by geographical location and their contact information (especially cell phone numbers) should be readily available.

In addition, to forming a network, it is important to identify important *stakeholders* with whom to engage. Stakeholders are community members or groups that are likely to affect or be affected by the conflict or by the proposed actions you want to initiate. If, for example, the conflict happens at schools, the stakeholders are the students, the teachers, the school-master, the parents of the students, and the people who live around the school.

It is often a good idea to form a *peace committee* comprised of people who take responsibility to maintain peace within their community. If there is no lijnet el solh present, create a peacecivic social and political groups residing in the community. Members should have credibility and respect. Elders can help identify who should be part of the peace committee, or they can potentially serve as members.

Examples of Peace Committees:
- Lijnet el Solh
- Municipal council
- Local committee with trustful and respected members of your community

APPROACH # 3:
DEVELOP A THEORY OF CHANGE

It is helpful to have an understanding of how to achieve the goal of preventing violence. Experts call this developing a theory of change. Here is an analytical framework with which to understand components of community-level violence.

UNDERLYING CONDITIONS
- Hostile relationship
- Precipitating event
- Widely accepted view that violence is "part of life"
- Poverty and local social "embedded-ness" where authorities cannot guarantee protection

TIME TO BUILD A CONSENSUS FOR VIOLENCE
Lull, with rumors occurring near the onset of violence (the lull usually lasts up to seven days after a precipitating event, but usually only lasts two days or less)

PROCESSES DURING LULL
- Acute emotional engagement
- Justification for violence
- Exaggeration of threat posed by the out-group
- Reduction of the risk of violence to the in-group
- A sense that there are no other options

On the basis of this framework, a theory of change as to how local leaders can prevent violence involves:(1) correcting underlying conditions; (2) intervening during a lull; and (3) counteracting the social psychological processes that occur during a lull. Below are examples of how to do this. Track these approaches with the analytical framework. Concentrate on identifying ways to counter conditions that lead to violence.

ADDRESS UNDERLYING CONDITIONS

Here are some ways to overcome a hostile relationship between communities which have been offered by workshop participants:

- Organize traditional festivals, including when those of one faith invite those of other faiths to celebrate with them
- Clean up a river or park with those of other groups
- Paint a public wall together, using positive symbols or recounting positive memories
- Help new-comers or displaced people, emphasizing the ethic of hospitality of your community
- Hold officials accountable
- Advocate for independence of the judicial system
- Improve the education system so teachers do not echo stories that reinforce societal division

In addition, it is important to speak with those involved in incidents that could escalate, allowing people to save face. Help people to move away from their positions and identify their common interests.

Organize campaigns that assert that violence is an unacceptable way to handle disagreements, emphasizing that people of all groups are Lebanese.

Work with your community to address poverty, including helping young people find jobs.
Engage with political, religious, and civic leaders to develop a civil society wherein the police and army are not partial to one group or another, emphasizing that everyone is part of Lebanon.

TAKE QUICK ACTION DURING A LULL.

If you detect signs of a lull it is necessary to take action quickly. According to our research, here are ways in Lebanon to identify when social psychological processes are evolving in the direction of violence during a lull:

- When there are rumors about a threat to a specific part of your community that suddenly appear which have not existed before

- When you notice that the behavior of citizens within your community change—they do not go to the market anymore where they usually shop, because there are differences in political views, or religious differences
- When you see that parents refuse to let their children play with those of another group
- When you observe children (as they reflect their parents' behavior) exhibiting new negative attitudes towards members of another community
- When social ceremonies are less attended than usual

COUNTERACT CONSENSUS BUILDING TOWARDS VIOLENCE DURING A LULL.
The typical ways to intervene to prevent violence is to facilitate communication or mediate between the different groups. In cases where there is a genuine threat and it is unlikely that facilitation or mediation will not work, then it is important to be ready to lead an evacuation or to facilitate hibernation (asking people to stay in their homes). Removing people from violence before it happens is an option to always keep in mind.

Mediation is defined as an "act of intervention for the purpose of bringing about a settlement." Mediators can propose a solution to the various groups. The mediator cannot judge.

Facilitation is a more neutral form of mediation. Facilitators simply try to make the two parties talk. They do not suggest any sort of solution.

Here some practical suggestions to consider when engaged in an intervention involving mediation:
- Let people in the group be active participants from the very beginning. Make sure they agree to be there to ensure their willingness to act after the meeting.
- Listen to what people say. Try to repeat in your words what a person in the meeting says, or ask different questions to the same person to make sure you understood and he or she feels understood.
- Do not insert your own answer. Let people speak openly so you have a higher chance of understanding the problem.
- Give people time to answer. Some people need time to open up. Others need to be supported emotionally to open up. Ask people about their feelings regarding this situation and give them the attention they need to build trust.

- Do not judge what they say. Create a safe space for expression of opinions. Transform your judgments into questions.
- If you disagree, do not say no. Say, rather: "I have another point of view…" This is a personal statement that is easier to accept. In general, use "I"-statements; do not speak for a group.
- Find ways to reduce the stress-level as much as possible. Offer something to drink and eat. Put the chairs in a circle.
- "How" is as important as "what." Maintain a constructive process marked with politeness, clarity, and structure. It is not only what you say, but also how you say it that has an influence the outcome.
- View disagreements and conflicts as opportunities for creative problem solving.
- Calm emotions by asking people to take some time to "cool off."
- Contact moderate political, religious and civic leaders who are capable and willing to question a sense that violence is justified.
- Listen for rumors and check the facts with those you trust in the other group (the group that is supposedly making the threat) and communicate about exaggerations (this is sometimes called myth busting).
- Contact authorities asking that they announce that people will be prosecuted if they become violent. Consider communicating this with text messages using social media.
- Meet with people you trust in your own group and the other group(s) to brainstorm about options other than violence and communicate those options persuasively to leaders who will listen.
- Take down aggressive posters and banners from the walls.
- Challenge armed civilians to not participate in the fighting.
- Move or walk through the different parts of the village/town or neighborhood to show your presence.

APPROACH # 4:
ENGAGE IN PRINCIPLE-CENTERED LEADERSHIP

Three principles are important to keep in mind as you seek to prevent violence. They are equality, participation, and accountability.

EQUALITY is treatment of people without discrimination towards one group (based on, for instance, religion, ethnicity, family, gender). This principle is also important to adhere to when it comes to engaging with violence promoting leaders. It is a mistake to ignore them. In fact, it is essential to engage with them. Meet with them. Learn why they are doing what they are doing. They must feel that what they are doing is their current best option, otherwise they would not be doing it. It is unhelpful to demonize them. Show them respect, listen, and empathize of you are so inclined. Identify their interests. Help them see other options. If you and others who are trying to promote peace are simply "singing to the choir." Communicating only among yourselves can lead to a self-righteous collective view and a condescending or even mean view of those promoting violence. Not reaching out to those promoting violence is a recipe for failure.

PARTICIPATION of everyone in public action, an action that is addressed to the whole community, ensures that everyone has an interest in its success. Participation with violence promoting leaders can be designed so they will have a stake in peace. This is sometimes referred to as *converting spoilers into stakeholders.*

ACCOUNTABILITY involves both transparency and responsibility. Transparency is when decisions are made and actions are taken openly and it is clear to everyone why they are as they are. This might avoid problems in the future. Taking responsibility means getting involved in preventing violence in your community, rather than waiting for the government or some other group to take action.

APPROACH # 5:
CONDUCT A GROUP MEETING

In some instances, pulling together people from different groups can be productive, especially in identifying options for reducing tension. When you are leading a group or having a conversation with one or two people (if they do not agree to meet together), explain that you are meeting because there is a conflict that endangers the peaceful common future of the community. Here are some items to cover:

1. Who is involved?
2. What has happened?
3. What was the reaction towards the conflict?
4. Why do you think this has happened?
5. How are you interacting? Neighborhood-life, work…
6. What do you think you have in common with those of the other community?
7. What do you think is difficult to overcome in maintaining harmonious relations?
8. What is important for the stakeholders? (resources, needs, values)
9. What kinds of behavior are people exhibiting now? For example, are people of different communities talking with each other? Are they buying from each other's shops? Do they let the children play together? Do they allow participation in each other's festivities like weddings and funerals?
10. In your opinion, what could be a solution? Keep in mind that a solution should be realistic—not impossible to be carried out. Solutions should address interests, not positions.

When people do not want to answer, just listen to what they have to tell you about the situation, how they experience the conflict.

Allow people to see that they can have a common future!

Call a meeting after the conflict. It can be called once time has elapsed to the point at which people are willing to talk about their troubled past. You can exchange views about what happened, how they managed the situation, and what has been learned from it. To meet when the conflict is over is important as a way to communicate negative feelings and bring about reconciliation. You might underline that reconsiliation is for the common future of peace in the community.

This is an essential step to make sure that the past situation will not repeat itself and that you and your community have learned how to adjust in these sensitive moments. Keep in mind that it is sometimes better to do common projects—such as forming a parent group for the school that involves all groups who were represented in a conflict—before hosting meetings to directly discuss the conflict. It can be counterproductive to try to force dialogue too early.
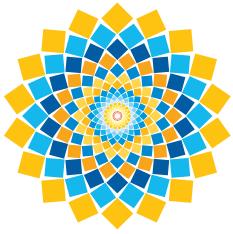
HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO ANALYZE A CONFLICT-SITUATION AND DEVELOP OPTIONS.

Halib, is a very poor village populated predominantly by those of the Haliby religion. It is near villages populated primarily of people with other religions: Halloum with the Halloumi religion, which has an average income; and Kashkawan with the Kashkawani religion, which is reputed to be the wealthiest of the three. The people in these three communities feel more attached to their respective villages than to the country in which they live.

Halib, Halloum and Kashkawan enjoy profitable and beneficial economic relations. Halib mainly produces vegetables; Halloum, fruit; and Kashkawan, meat. The products of the three villages are reputed to be of excellent quality.

There are intermarriages between the communities but, in the last few years, this is occurring with lower frequency. There is one common elementary school and one common high-school for the three villages.

Yesterday, a rumor emerged that a boy from Kashkawan wants to visit a very beautiful girl from Halib because he fell in love with her. The girl's family in Halib strongly opposes any contact with the boy because he is not Haliby. The father of the boy, who happens to be an influential merchant in his town, threatened to not sell and buy products from Halib. The mayor of Halib, in order to maintain trading-relations with Kashkawan, decides to support Kashkawan in siding with the boy to allow him to date the girl.

Several Haliby families are now concerned that they will lose their income. They feel threatened by the two neighboring villages. They are distressed there might be violent actions near the common schools.

The school-master does not want to let the situation get out of control. This is why he invites the stakeholders to a meeting in order to understand the situation more fully and to develop options for how to reduce tensions.
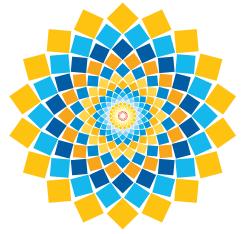
Try to answer the questions on the following page. Copy the next page and pass it out to others for discussion.

1. Who is involved?
2. What has happened?
3. What was the reaction towards the conflict?
4. Why do you think this has happened?
5. How are people interacting (neighborhood life, work, etc.)?
6. What do people have in common with those of the other communities?
7. What do you think is difficult to overcome in maintaining harmonious relations?
8. What is important for the stakeholders (resources, needs, values)?
9. What is their behavior now? For example, are people of different communities talking with each other? Are they buying from each other's shops? Do they let the children play together? Do they allow participation in each other's festivities like weddings and funerals?
10. In your opinion, what could be a solution? Keep in mind that a solution should be achievable.

Answers are on the next page.
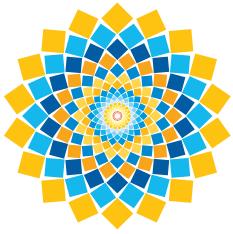
1. Who is involved?

The boy from Kashkawan and the girl of Halib and their respective families. The representatives of the three villages. The businesspeople involved in commerce between the three villages.

2. What has happened?

A boy fell in love with a girl but their contact has been prohibited because they belong to different communities. Influential personalities then used economic pressure.

3. What was the reaction towards the conflict?

The problem between families has been enlarged to an inter-community conflict.

4. Why do you think this has happened?

Because of different beliefs, identities and socio-economic status between the three communities.

5. How are people interacting?

There is common trade. Children of different identity groups grow up together. But lately, because the economic differences have increased, tensions are rising. In the last few years there has been less and less marriage between people of the three villages.

6. What people have in common with those of the other community?

The region, common childhood experience, and interdependent commercial relations.

7. What do you think is difficult to overcome in maintaining harmonious relations?

It is difficult that there are three religions present and such a specialization in economic livelihoods and trade-sectors.
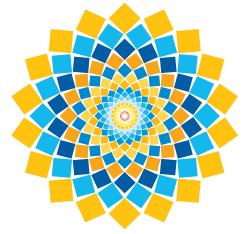
8. What is important for the stakeholders (resources, needs, values)?

It is important to live in peace, to live comfortably, and to be able to live in dignity with one's own religion and traditions.

9. What is their behavior now?

People are not talking to members of the other communities.

10. In your opinion, what could be a solution? Keep in mind that a solution should be achievable.

That there is mutual respect and that everyone can work together for improved relations and more robust commerce. Options to be explored include: (a) the boy and girl do not date; (b) the boy or the girl converts to the other religion, assuming that their relationship is a serious one; or (c) if the boy and girl are going to get married, there could be a Halloumi and a Kashkawan religious official presiding at the ceremony.
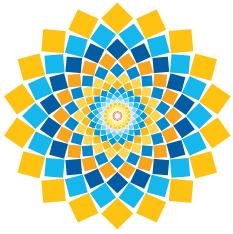
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