



Project Information Document (PID)

Appraisal Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 20-Dec-2021 | Report No: PIDA32572



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country Sierra Leone	Project ID P176789	Project Name Productive Social Safety Nets and Youth Employment	Parent Project ID (if any)
Region AFRICA WEST	Estimated Appraisal Date 14-Dec-2021	Estimated Board Date 21-Mar-2022	Practice Area (Lead) Social Protection & Jobs
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) The Republic of Sierra Leone	Implementing Agency National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA)	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The objective is to improve access to social safety nets and income generating opportunities for targeted beneficiaries.

Components

SSN Cash Transfers and Provision of Economic Inclusion Support
 Productive Labor-Intensive Public Works and Life Skills Support for Youth
 Employment and Entrepreneurship Support for Youth
 Systems Development, Institutional Strengthening and Project Management Support
 Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC)

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	40.00
Total Financing	40.00
of which IBRD/IDA	40.00
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS

World Bank Group Financing



International Development Association (IDA)	40.00
IDA Grant	40.00

Environmental and Social Risk Classification

Moderate

Decision

The review did authorize the team to appraise and negotiate

Other Decision (as needed)

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

1. Despite having an advantageous geography and abundant mineral resources and going through a period of sustained economic growth since the end of the civil war in 2002 until 2014, Sierra Leone’s economy remains poor and vulnerable to economic shocks. With a population of about 7.8 million in 2019, Sierra Leone is classified as a low-income country. The country had a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of US\$1,794 in 2019 (in 2017 Purchasing Power Parity - PPP dollars) placing it among the lowest income countries in the world.¹ Since the country’s civil war ended in 2002, Sierra Leone’s GDP grew at a rate of 7.6 percent per annum between 2003 and 2014. In 2014, however, the onset of the Ebola (EVD) epidemic and the global drop in iron ore prices caused the GDP to fall by 21 percent, with sharp job losses and decline in agriculture and manufacturing activities.² Throughout the last two decades, the country’s reliance on commodity exports has caused economic growth to be highly volatile. In 2020, prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sierra Leone’s economy was projected to grow at a rate of 5.4 percent, the highest since 2016. However, with COVID-19, the economy contracted by 2.2 percent.³

2. Sierra Leone’s economic growth over the last two decades has not translated into marked poverty reduction, with poverty expected to further increase as a result of the economic slowdown caused by COVID-19. Poverty rate, measured using the national poverty line, fell from 66.4 percent in 2003 to 53.8 percent in 2011.⁴ Since 2011, however, the fall in poverty has largely stagnated and the poverty rate in 2018 stood at 56.8 percent using the national poverty line and 43 percent using the international poverty line of US\$1.90/day.⁵ Poverty in Sierra Leone largely remains a rural phenomenon

¹ World Bank, World Development Indicators

² Gonzalez, Alvaro S.; Michel Gutierrez, Veronica. 2017. Sierra Leone: Jobs Diagnostic. Job Series, no.11; World Bank, Washington, DC.

³ World Bank. 2021. Sierra Leone: Macro Poverty Outlook. Available at: <https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/885471492188170236/mpo-sle.pdf>

⁴ World Bank. 2019. *Sierra Leone - Systematic Country Diagnostic: Priorities for Sustainable Growth and Poverty Reduction*. Calculations from the 2018 SLIHS place the food poverty line (the amount needed to buy a sufficient amount of food following the local diet) at Le 2,125,000 annually per adult equivalent, and the total poverty line (accounting for both food and non-food expenditure) at Le 3,921,000 per adult equivalent.

⁵ World Bank. 2020a. *Sierra Leone - Country Partnership Framework for the Period FY21 - FY26*



with close to 74 percent of the population in rural areas living below the national poverty line compared to 35 percent in urban areas. Extreme poverty rate, defined based on the national poverty line, is higher for households with persons with disabilities (17 percent) compared to the overall population (12 percent). With the economic contraction caused by COVID-19 in 2020, poverty using the international poverty line is expected to increase from 40.5 percent in 2019 to 43 percent in 2021, reversing the limited progress made to reduce poverty in recent years.⁶

3. Poor households in Sierra Leone largely reside in rural areas and are disproportionately affected by climate-induced disasters due to overexposure, vulnerability, and lower ability to cope and recover, with investments in social protection interventions presenting among the largest potentials for impact.

Future climate related shocks pose the risk of pushing poor and vulnerable households further into poverty. Using a multi-country study of past natural disasters and shocks, a World Bank study in 2016 found that poor households were more likely to be affected by disasters and lost more in terms of economic value compared to non-poor households, pushing them deeper into poverty.⁷ Although Sierra Leone is not considered drought-prone, delayed onset and reduction in quantity of rainfall, and dry periods extending into the rainy season can all have significant consequences for production levels and economic activity, especially for the poorest households who rely on subsistence agriculture.⁸ A 2012 assessment by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) seeking to identify investment opportunities for promoting climate-smart agriculture in Africa found that rural financial services and social protection represent two of the three best categories of programs with strongest adaptation synergies for promoting climate-smart agriculture in Sierra Leone.⁹ In addition to fostering adaptation to climate change among the poorest communities, social protection interventions can promote resilience to climate variability.

4. Sierra Leone's overwhelmingly young population provide the country with the one-time opportunity to experience rapid economic development, as the largest cohort of working age population enters the labor market. However, the pace of job creation in the country has not kept up with the number of youths entering the labor market every year, with COVID-19 further compounding this challenge.

75 percent of the population in Sierra Leone is below the age of 35, across both rural and urban areas, and across men and women. Sierra Leoneans aged between 15 and 35 is set to increase from 2.8 million in 2020 to 4.5 million in 2050 as the largest cohort of Sierra Leoneans under the age of 15 enter the working-age population in the next 30 years.¹⁰ This age structure allows Sierra Leone an opportunity to reap the “demographic dividend”. But in order to realize this, the youth need to be well-equipped with proper education and skills, and opportunities need to exist in the labor market to absorb the youth bulge. On the supply side, high rates of inactivity and low levels of educational attainment among youth currently hampers their prospects in the labor market. The secondary school completion rate among youth is just 12 percent.¹¹ Similarly, on the demand side, Sierra Leone's growth episodes have not been accompanied by an increase in diversification or an expansion of employment opportunities. The youth bulge is therefore associated, in part, with low skills and frustration around unmet expectations, both potential sources of fragility. These issues are further complicated by the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic as youth

⁶ World Bank. 2021. Sierra Leone: Macro Poverty Outlook. Available at: <https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/885471492188170236/mpo-sle.pdf>

⁷ World Bank. 2016. Shock Waves: Managing the Impacts of Climate Change on Poverty

⁸ All of the statistics in this paragraph up to this point are cited from: Sandford et al. 2020. *Safety Nets, Health Crises and Natural Disasters: Lessons from Sierra Leone*. Social Protection and Jobs Discussion Paper; No. 2010. World Bank, Washington, DC.

⁹ FAO (2012): Identifying opportunities for climate-smart agriculture in Africa. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/8319e40c-5c43-5a83-9778-3fd9bdc7edd7/>

¹⁰ Data from United Nations, World Population Prospects

¹¹ Data based on Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey (SLIHS), 2018



already grappling with limited opportunities will be further hard pressed to find employment opportunities under the current environment.

5. The GoSL, through the Medium-Term National Development Plan (MTNDP),¹² recognizes the need to protect the poor and generate critical and sustainable jobs for youth by driving economic growth. The MTNDP includes eight policy clusters including clusters on human capital development; diversifying the economy and promoting growth; empowering women, children, adolescents, and PWDs; and youth employment, sports, and migration. In order to realize the ambitious goals – set in the MTNDP – of creating a green and resilient economy and helping every Sierra Leonean achieve their full potential, the government needs to invest in the human capital of its citizens and provide economic opportunities to youth in the country. The government has prioritized several areas for propelling economic growth and creating jobs, which include: (i) enhancing human capital, (ii) improving agricultural productivity by encouraging commercial farming and upgrading agricultural value chains; (iii) modernizing fisheries production by introducing new technology; (iv) upskilling in the tourism and hospitality sector to increase the contribution of services to GDP from 36 to 45 percent; (v) upgrading industrial production outside the mining sector by creating special economic and export processing zones; and (vi) investing in renewable energy to harness abundant hydropower, solar, and wind energy from within the country.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

6. In 2014, the GoSL launched its flagship cash transfer program - called the *Ep Fet Po*, meaning “Help to Fight Poverty” - also known as the Social Safety Nets cash transfer program, with the aim of providing consumption support to extreme-poor households. The *Ep Fet Po* is financed by the International Development Association (IDA) – through the Social Safety Nets (SSN) project (P143588), which became effective in August 2014 with a closing date of June 2023. Since its inception, the SSN Project has benefitted three additional financing (AF) grants of US\$47 million in total (IDA Grants D0920, H9250, and D4900) with counterpart financing of US\$3.4 million.¹³ The project aims to establish the key building blocks for a basic national safety net system and to provide income support to extreme-poor households in Sierra Leone. Initially launched in 2014 with the aim of benefitting 12,000 households (72,000 individuals) in four districts in the country, the *Ep Fet Po* has been scaled up in subsequent years to benefit 238,142 extreme-poor individuals from all 16 districts and through the second and the third AF will extend benefits to additional 508,300 beneficiaries,¹⁴ putting the project on track to meet its development objectives. In recent years, the GoSL has amassed a rich history of implementing Labor-Intensive Public Works programs (LIPW) to provide temporary employment opportunities for youth but coverage and sustainability remain critical issues.

7. Despite the efforts by the government in recent years, gaps in coverage of SP programs remain a concern, with COVID-19 further leading to stagnation in poverty reduction. The first phase of the *Ep*

¹² Government of Sierra Leone. 2019, “Sierra Leone’s Medium Term- National Development Plan 2019-2023, Volume 1”, IMF Country Report 19/218, International Monetary Fund, Washington DC. Retrieved from: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2019/07/09/Sierra-Leone-Economic-Development-Documents-National-Development-Plan-2019-23-47099>

¹³ The SSN Project is co-financed by the Ebola Recovery and Reconstruction Trust Fund (US\$4.3 million, TFA0806), the Global Risk Financing Facility (US\$1.0 million, TFOB1670), and the European Union (EUR\$ 4.7 million, TFOB4427).

¹⁴ The first phase of the SSNP covered 30,452 households. Based on estimates from the Sierra Leone Integrated Households Survey (SLIHS) data, the average household size among the extreme-poor is 7.82. Multiplying 30,452 by 7.82 gives 238,142 individuals covered by the first phase. The second and the third additional financing of the SSNP is slated to cover 65,000 *additional* households. Multiplied by 7.82, the SSNP is expected to cover around 508,300 *additional* individuals.



Fet Po reached 18 percent of the extreme-poor households in the country, while through the scale up, the program will reach an additional 38 percent of the extreme-poor households.¹⁵ This still leaves more than 40 percent of the extreme-poor households without any support. In the absence of COVID-19, poverty was on a declining trend in the country. But data from December 2020 suggests that there has been a slight increase in poverty, with poverty having increased more in urban areas, including in Freetown.¹⁶ Over 70 percent of the households in rural areas, however, remain poor as per national definitions, and are vulnerable to further falling deeper into poverty, with climate and health related disasters increasingly frequent in recent years. These households need support to supplement their income from subsistence farming, including by diversifying into non-farm activities. SP programming in Sierra Leone has so far focused on immediate consumption support and emergency response such as in the scale up of the *Ep Fet Po* during the EVD and recent COVID-19 outbreaks. Even though the *Ep Fet Po* program has so far not piloted a livelihood support component, the previously mentioned qualitative assessment found that about 12 percent of *Ep Fet Po* beneficiaries reported starting/expanding a household enterprise and/or agricultural activity as the main achievement reached through *Ep Fet Po* cash transfer payments. Most of them are engaged in non-farming household enterprise (71 percent) and/or agricultural activities (62 percent).¹⁷

8. Another critical area where there is a gap and where GoSL's objectives can be further supported using the systems established under the SP programs is on providing employment opportunities to youth. As highlighted earlier, Sierra Leone's burgeoning youth population need access to better and more productive jobs. More than three-quarters of the population in Sierra Leone is below the age of 35. At current rates of population growth, the economy will need to create approximately 100,000 new jobs per year to maintain employment rates to keep up with population growth and take advantage of the demographic dividend.¹⁸ Realizing this, the MTNDP, includes a Youth Employment Cluster that aims to promote productive and adequately remunerative employment opportunities to youth. However, there are few programs currently that aim to boost productivity and facilitate sustainable labor market insertion, especially for the growing youth population.

9. The GoSL has also taken important steps to improve the coordination of the SP sector and improve employment outcomes for youth. The National Social Protection Secretariat (NSPS) was established within NaCSA to lead the development of common SP systems and enhance policy coordination. National coordination mechanisms have since been established, are functioning regularly, and include: (a) the National Social Protection Inter-Agency Forum (IAF), chaired by the Office of the Vice President and composed of ministers; and (b) the Social Protection Technical Steering Committee (TSC), composed of technical directors from key sector ministries. Both the IAF and TSC play a central role in coordinating programs and initiatives related to the SP sector in the country. Increasingly, the SSN has been a common platform that is able to bring together donor partners, including the UNICEF, ILO, AfDB, WFP, and EU for critical discussions around social protection programming in the country. This was evident during the QAERP discussions to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 pandemic where quick information sharing, and coordination allowed for the scale up of cash transfers to urban areas. The

¹⁵ According to the SLHS data, the extreme poverty rate in Sierra Leone in 2018 was 12.8 percent. There were an estimated 1,341,620 households in Sierra Leone in 2018, which means that 171,727 households lived in extreme poverty. The first phase of SSNP covered 30,452 households, i.e., 17.7 percent of extreme-poor households, and the new phase is expected to cover *additional* 65,000 households, i.e., 37.8 percent of extreme-poor households.

¹⁶ World Bank. 2021. Sierra Leone 2021 Economic Update: Welfare and Poverty Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic. World Bank, Washington, DC. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/35784>

¹⁷ World Bank, 2019. *Ep Fet Po: Sierra Leone Social Safety Nets Program – Rapid Assessment*. March 2019.

¹⁸ World Bank. 2020a. *Sierra Leone - Country Partnership Framework for the Period FY21 - FY26*



country has also taken important strides toward improving youth employment outcomes in recent years and has established the Ministry of Youth Affairs (MoYA) and the National Youth Commission (NaYCOM) to implement policies on youth empowerment. In 2014, the Government, with the support of the World Bank adopted a National Youth Policy, which outlines the GoSL's priority areas of intervention and key strategies for youth empowerment.

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Development Objective(s) (From PAD)

10. The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to improve access to social safety nets and income generating opportunities for targeted beneficiaries.

11. For the purpose of this project, social safety nets are defined as cash transfers and public work activities (in combination referred to as “social safety net programs” in PDO Indicator #a) supported under Components 1 and 2 of the PSSNYE project, income generating opportunities are defined as entrepreneurship and employment activities supported under Components 3 of the project (in combination referred as “labor market programs” in PDO Indicator #c), and targeted beneficiaries are defined as extreme-poor households and youth (aged 18-35) with a focus on women and persons with disabilities.

Key Results

- 12.** The PDO will be measured by the following five PDO level indicators:
- a.** Beneficiaries of social safety net programs
 - i.** Beneficiaries of social safety net programs, female
 - b.** Cash transfers delivered within 90 calendar days of government request to disburse the emergency cash transfer subcomponent (No/Yes)
 - c.** SP programs utilizing the SPRINT/Social Registry
 - d.** Beneficiaries of labor market programs
 - i.** Beneficiaries of labor market programs, female
 - e.** Share of extreme-poor household enterprises with support from the EI package that are operational at least 6 months upon completion of the program (Percentage)
 - i.** Share of female-led extreme-poor household enterprises with support from the EI package that are operational at least 6 months upon completion of the program (Percentage)
 - f.** Share of youth-led enterprises with support from the project that are operational at least 6 months upon completion of the program (Percentage)

D. Project Description

13. The project will comprise of five main components:

14. Component 1 will provide cash transfers, including during emergencies, and a set of economic inclusion related services to extreme-poor households in the country. With extreme-poor households more likely to reside in areas disproportionately affected by climate-induced disasters due to



overexposure, vulnerability, and lower ability to cope and recover, this component in its entirety aims to foster adaptation to climate change among communities most likely to face the largest negative consequences of climate change. Component 1 of the PSSNYE will comprise of three subcomponents:

- a. Subcomponent 1A: Continuation of SSN Cash Transfers to Extreme-Poor Households
- b. Subcomponent 1B: Provision of Economic Inclusion Support
- c. Subcomponent 1C: Provision of Emergency Cash Transfers

15. Component 2 will provide vulnerable youth (aged 18-35) in rural and urban areas with short-term employment opportunities through productive public works and life skills training. The component will adopt community-driven participatory planning approaches to engage youth in labor-intensive public works activities. The interventions will focus on activities related to climate change mitigation and adaptation in both urban and rural areas. Similar to Component 1, implementation of this component activities will be sequenced in multiple phases to allow for learning and adaption during a one-year project cycle. Component 2 will consist of two subcomponents:

- a. Subcomponent 2A: Sustainable Cash for Work (SCfW) in Rural Areas
- b. Subcomponent 2B: Green Public Works (GPW) in Urban Areas.

16. Component 3 will provide youth in urban areas with support related to entrepreneurship through business grants and training and will help establish a platform where youth can access information related to employment, empowerment, and training opportunities. Component 3 will comprise of the following subcomponents:

- a. Subcomponent 3A: Support to Youth-led Household Enterprises; and
- b. Subcomponent 3B: Establishment of a Platform to Support Youth Employment.

17. Component 4 will support institutional strengthening, coordination, and project management. This component will finance capacity building activities to improve implementation capacity in all participating implementation agencies.

18. Component 5 is a provisional zero allocation Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC) to allow for rapid disbursement and reallocation of uncommitted funds from other project components during an emergency for cash transfers in response to shocks to respond to and mitigate climate induced vulnerabilities.

Legal Operational Policies

	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No

Summary of Assessment of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts



19. The Project environmental risks and impacts are anticipated to be *Moderate* due to the low level of mechanization involved in the civil works. The main environmental concerns are associated with (i) civil works which include rehabilitation of feeder roads, improvement of basic drainage structures; GPW in urban areas (e.g., Improvement of sanitary infrastructure and environmental upgradation, planting trees, and construction of safe havens.) and (ii) agricultural environmental concerns associated with rehabilitation and maintenance of rural feeder roads, and cultivation of short duration crops. While the project activities are beneficial to the borrower, there are Environmental and Social risks related to the construction works. Occupational health and safety (Environmental and Social Standard 2, or ESS2), community health and safety (ESS4), air pollution from dust emission from exposed surfaces, and water pollution from loose sediments (ESS3) are some of the risks can be managed by established mitigation measures that will be described in the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), and detailed in the site-specific Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs), when project details (nature of intervention, beneficiaries and sites) become available. At this stage in project development, no activity (as described) is expected to be of high risk or requires an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA).

20. The Project social risk rating is *Moderate*. The project builds on experiences and lessons from the ongoing SSN Project (P143588) and the YESP (P121052) which was implemented between 2010 to 2015. While the project activities are expected to have positive social impacts, some social risks are also envisaged. Project activities under component 1 could lead to elite capture, tensions, and misunderstanding if the selection criteria of beneficiaries is not transparent. The project design includes measures to prevent elite capture and exclusion of the vulnerable by adopting a robust beneficiary selection criterion established under the SSN Project and clearly communicating its objectives and eligibility criteria to target beneficiaries; and allowing strong community participation during implementation.

21. Further, activities proposed under component 2: SCfW in Rural Areas (e.g. rehabilitation and maintenance of rural feeder roads, cultivation of short duration crops, and construction of basic drainage improvement structures); and GPW in urban areas (e.g., improvement of sanitary infrastructure and environmental upgradation, planting trees, and construction of safe havens, etc.) could lead to exclusion of vulnerable women and persons with disabilities as they seek to participate in these labor intensive activities. The proposed activities may also require temporary occupation or permanent land acquisition and could lead to economic and physical displacement of people in beneficiary communities. Voluntary Land donations are anticipated during the implementation of project component 2. Road safety concerns are also anticipated in project communities under the feeder road rehabilitation works. Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEA/SH), occupational health and safety risks, use of child labor and forced labor especially from poor households to register for employment opportunities under this project, flooding and exposure to water borne diseases and other communicable diseases including COVID-19 are anticipated. The design of the subcomponent includes measures to ensure adequate inclusion of women and persons with disabilities in the LIPW activities. Social risks and impacts associated with project component 3 include potential exclusion of vulnerable people if opportunities are not made accessible to, for example, youth with disabilities, and selection criteria are not transparent.

22. To address these potential environmental and social risks and impacts, the project has undertaken adequate consultations and preparation of an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), and Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF). Labor Management Procedure (LMP), GBV prevention



measures, Chance Finds Procedures, and CERC requirements have been included in the ESMF. Voluntary land donations shall be subject to the Banks's prior approval as required by ESS 5. NaCSA shall demonstrate that: (i) the potential donor or donors have been appropriately informed and consulted about the project and the choices available to them; (ii) potential donors are aware that refusal is an option, and have confirmed in writing their willingness to proceed with the donation; (iii) the amount of land being donated is minor and will not reduce the donor's remaining land area below that required to maintain the donor's livelihood at current levels; (iv) no household relocation is involved; (v) the donor is expected to benefit directly from the project; and (vi) for community or collective land, donation can only occur with the consent of individuals using or occupying the land. The Project will maintain a transparent record of all consultations and agreements reached.

23. NaCSA is in a hiring process to recruit a Social specialist to monitor and supervise safeguards implementation by ensuring adequate risks identification, management, and reporting. In addition, under the PSSNYE, NaCSA will be required to appoint a dedicated environmental specialist to support Environmental risk management for the labor-intensive public works. Finally, NaCSA will train district level NaCSA staff to support the monitoring and supervision of the implementation in line with social and environmental standards outlined in the ESF instruments.

24. The Project has also prepared a SEP and will harness the existing GRM under the ongoing SSN to address project related complaints. The ESCP outlines the client's commitment to screen all sub-projects further during implementation once sub-projects' specific locations are clearly identified to identify potential environmental and social risks and impacts and subsequently prepare any associated Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs), ESMPs, Resettlement Action Plans (RAPs), Abbreviated Resettlement Action Plans (ARAPs), as may be required to mitigate the identified risks and impacts. The screening criteria have been included in the ESMF and RPF. The TORs for the preparation of RAPs and site-specific ESMPs will be developed during implementation for review and clearance by the Bank when sub-project sites and designs have been identified. The appropriate instrument will be prepared and disclosed prior to commencement of civil works

E. Implementation

Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

25. NaCSA will lead the overall implementation of the project, supported by four implementing agencies/partners. Responsibilities of each agencies are as follows: (a) NaCSA will implement the Cash Transfers and Provision of EI Support, Productive LIPW and Life Skills Support for Youth, Program Management Support, Contingent Emergency Response, and Fiduciary Management; (b) NaYCOM will implement the youth-led household enterprises; (c) MoYA will implement the establishment of the platform to support youth employment; (d) NSPS will be responsible for systems strengthening; (e) ACC will implement the citizens engagement, GRM, and anti-corruption measures; and (f) Stats SL will support data collection and targeting activities. Overall project coordination will be facilitated through the IAF.



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APPROVAL

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