



Facing patriarchy and coercive control in Shinyanga District

A participatory action research process in 18 wards with over 2,000 citizens

Informing the NPA-VAWC



CITIZENS 4 CHANGE

Research



WOMEN FUND TANZANIA

Empowering Local Women Heroes

Describing findings and recommendations from a 2 year participatory action research project in 18 wards, conducted in partnership with Shinyanga District Council



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In collaboration with

Women Fund Tanzania - Trust,
Tanzania's first feminist trust fund

@WomenFund_TZ <https://wft.or.tz/>



and

Dr Senga at the
University of Dar es
Salaam

An inter-sectional approach to ending violence against women and children



Our intent is to understand the complex system in which violence against women and children arises in Shinyanga District, and to create the conditions for citizens to promote protective norms.

In doing so we aim to:

- build a critical mass of citizen protectors
- advocate for an investment in community based protection
- enrich the National Plan of Action to End Violence and
- inform the feminist and child rights movements



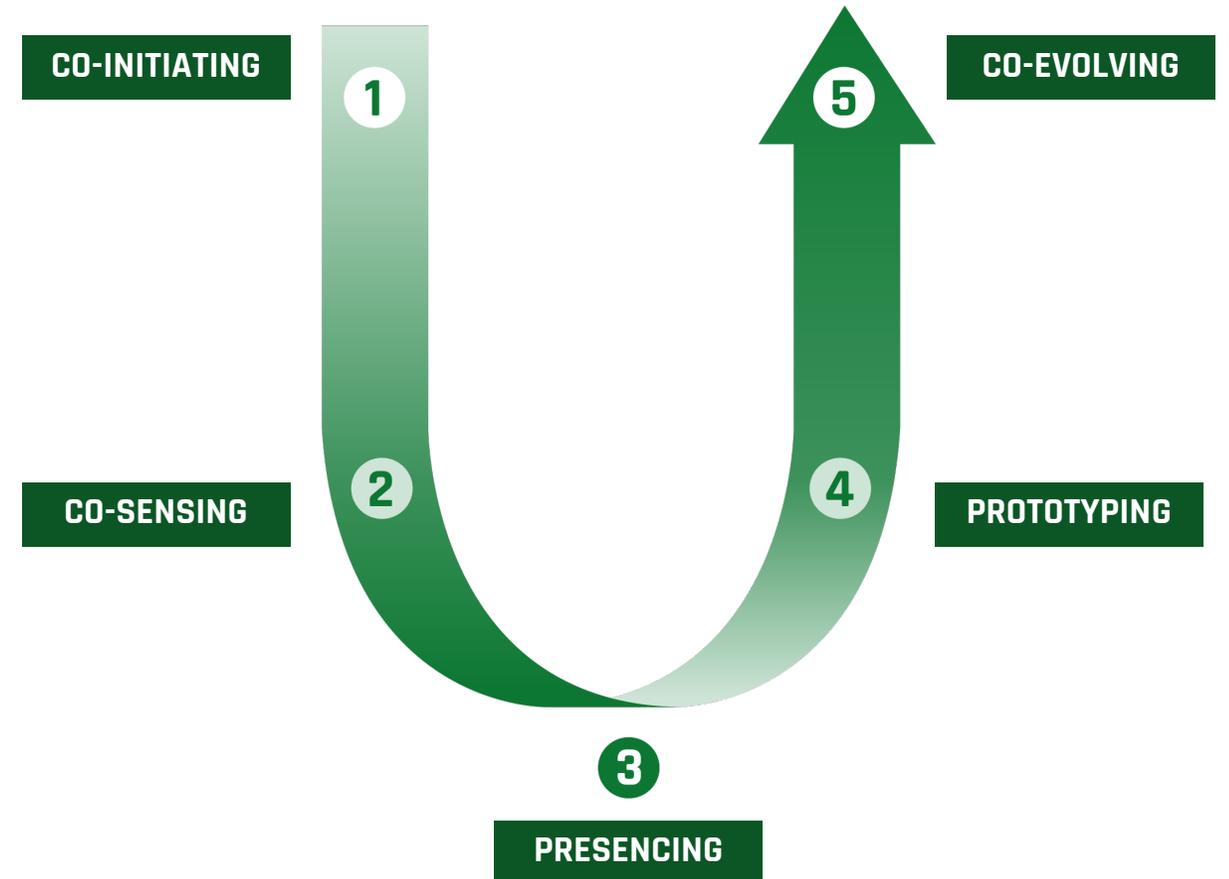


The intervention uses the Theory U process (Scharmer, 2007)

Theory U is a process whereby people explain their own lived experience, develop a shared intention to end violence against women and children, and undertake reinforcing collective action towards enacting that vision.

This process enables groups to shift patterns of behavior by helping them to:

- see the system in which they operate
- envision their desired future
- embody new behaviors and
- then to explore that future through action



A transformative participatory action research process



1. CO-INITIATING

A household survey asked residents to name 3 people who they go to for advice, for information, whose opinions are important to them, who they trust & who they report violence to. The analysis focused on degree centrality; identifying 1,264 connected citizens in 18 wards. The 54 most connected citizens invited to form the "backbone" of the research. [SNA dashboard](#)

Survey 128 Government representatives to understand their urgency for change. Asked them about their personal beliefs in relation to violence, their beliefs about others, their anticipation of social approval / disapproval, their own sense of responsibility and their ideas for action. [U4C dashboard](#)

2. CO-SENSING

Group dialogue with over 900 public servants, leaders, women, men, & children about the form that patriarchy and violence takes in their lives, & the intersection between the two. Generating 86 transcripts and 6,184 rows of qualitative data.

3. PRESENCING

Reconvene with the 84 members of the Backbone, representatives from SDC, Junior Council and a group of teachers - using a [World Cafe](#) approach to further explore the dilemmas that arise in the data

1. Men are expected to be fierce but not excessively so. How do they manage their feelings so they can be both caring and fierce?
2. What freedoms do men, women, male children and female children have in the family and society? Who controls each groups' access to these freedoms?
3. In the moment when men are violent what are the catalysts?
4. How does "mwenye maendeleo" behave?
5. Why is being a secret-keeper "Awe msiri" valued? What costs do people incur if they disclose abuse and ask for help?
6. Culture is really valued. What are the consequences for people who do not follow tradition?
7. Men are the decision makers. How do they go about making the right decisions?
8. Respect is really valued. What happens when people disrespect women and children?
9. What interest do representatives of the Government have in challenging patriarchy?
10. What is the effect on the community when so many women and children live in fear?
11. Fines and social exclusion are used to punish wrongdoers. How effective are these as ways of preventing misbehaviour and criminal activity?
12. Peace, cooperation and harmony is really valued. Why then is violence permitted?

Group meditation to get out of our heads and what we think needs to be done, and into our hearts and intuition.

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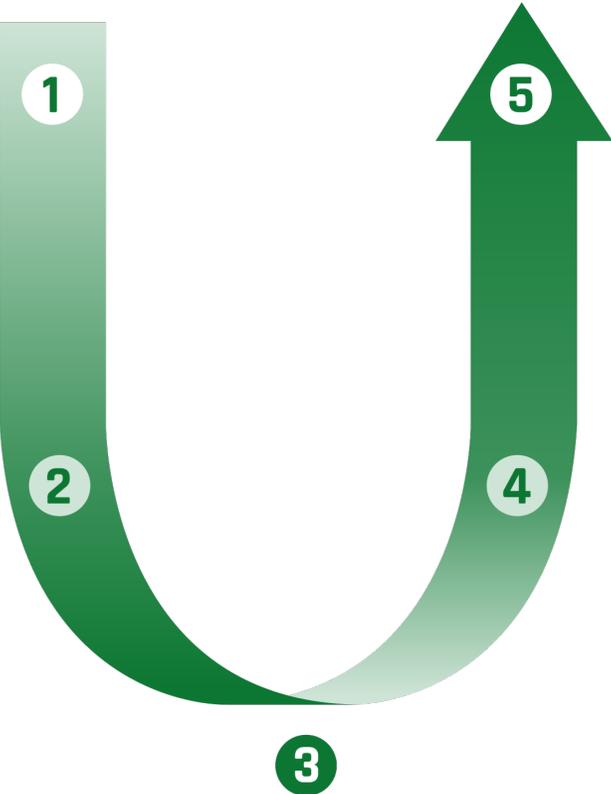
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3

SENSING



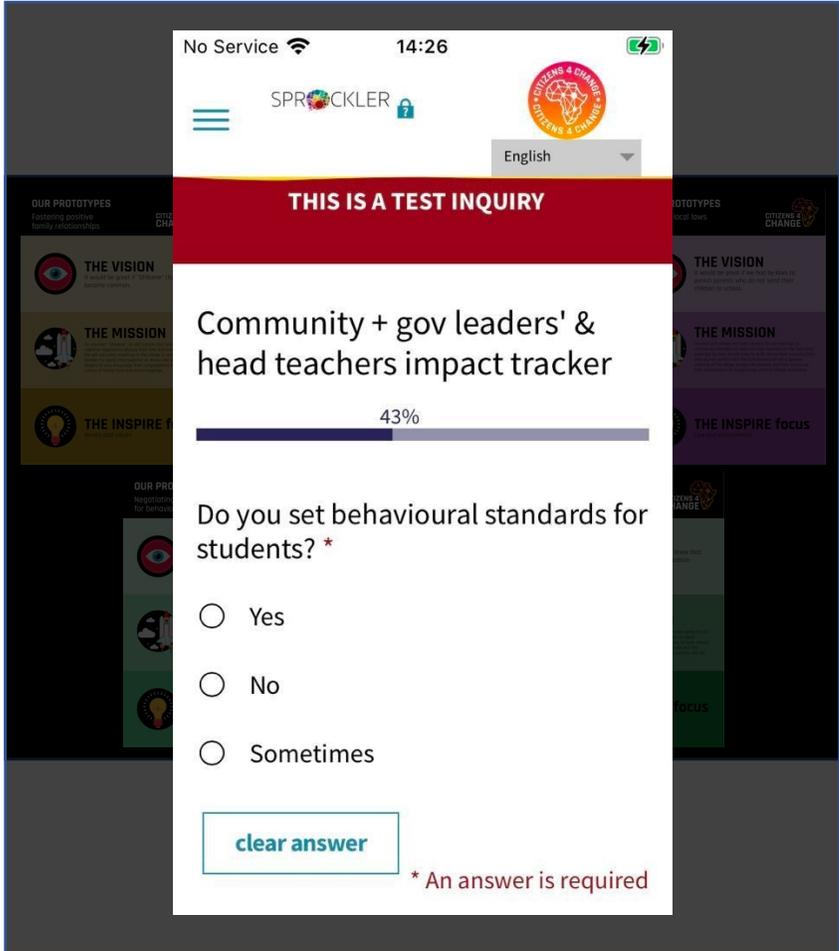
A transformative participatory action research process



5. CO-EVOLVING
A Solution Summit scheduled for February to share insights about the social value that each prototype generated.

4. PROTOTYPING
Working together consider customs and to think if we were to create customs for the future what form would they take? Co-create 7 prototypes that will be run in the wards by the backbone.

Monitoring of those prototypes via bi-weekly check in meetings with the backbone and continual survey of parents, community leaders, children, women and men to track the changes they have experienced.

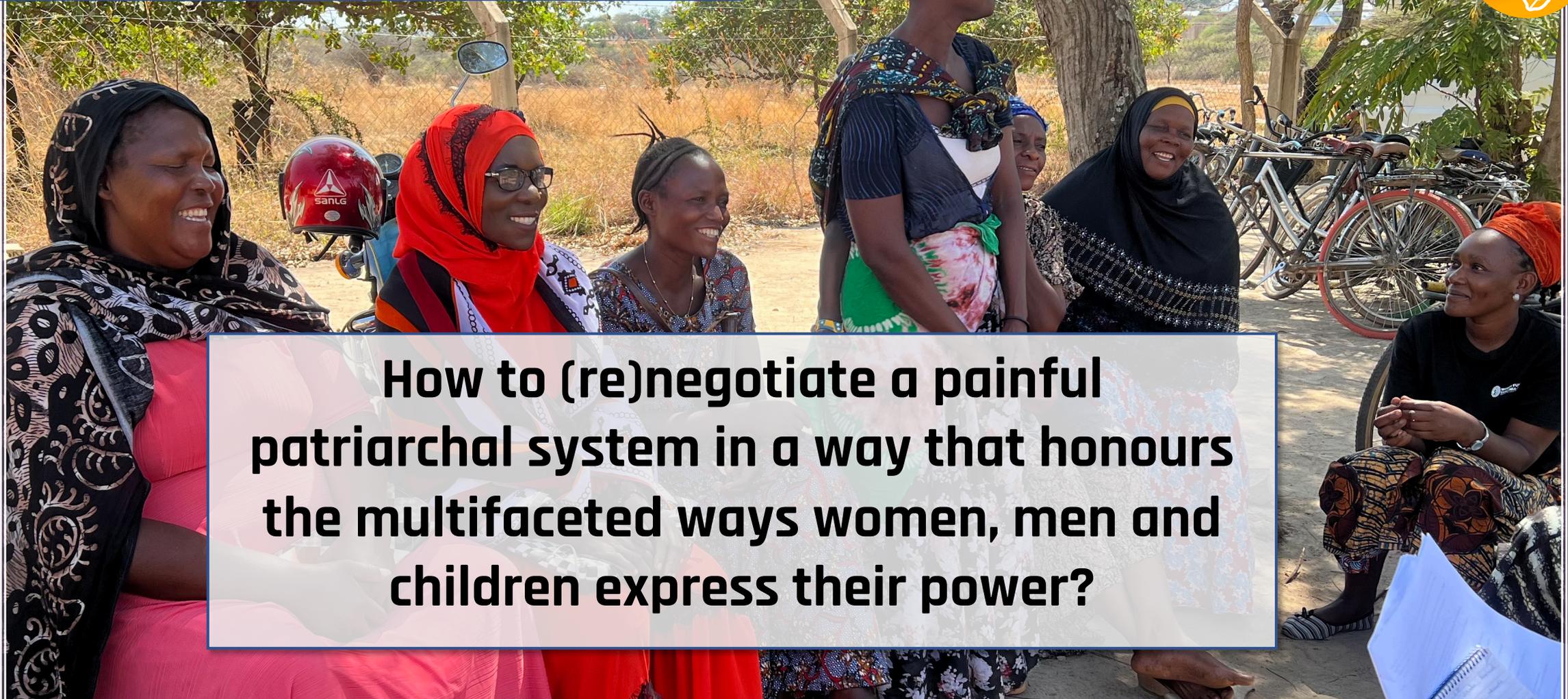


The research innovation is a transformative power analysis that:

- Gets the system in the room - representatives of everyone affected by the problem of violence come together to understand the deeper dynamics - "involvement of all"
- Explores violence without asking about violence - changing the conversation to focus on power so as to better appreciate the underlying drivers of social relations
- Taps into the power of deliberative dialogue where citizens cultivate a deep and shared appreciation of their situation. This builds new insights that generate an urgency for change - "shared ambitions"
- Decentralises action by co-creating with citizens the new social practices that they want to embed in their communities - "reinforcing actions"



Participants main concern:



How to (re)negotiate a painful patriarchal system in a way that honours the multifaceted ways women, men and children express their power?



The evidence – a patriarchal context



- Patriarchy is a hangover from the past that has a hold on the present
- Unquestioned male strength & authority "just is"
- Male status and privilege is unchecked
- Women and children's agency is constrained by their lack of freedom to make decisions
- The male experience is "I am in control of my life" versus the women and child experience which is "I feel out of control"
- The internal logic of patriarchy is that it is a coercive system where the rules are based on mens' stereotyped view of how women and children should behave, rules about their familial roles, who and what they can talk about outside of the home, and how they dress





The evidence - a patriarchal performance



- In Shinyanga the claimed values of most men, many women and 95% of the representatives of Government involved in this study is to adhere to patriarchal norms
- The values in action - what people actually do - is a patriarchal performance
 - For example, people defer to male leadership even if they do not buy-into it
- This performance requires women and children to be tactical in how they deploy the power they do have and how they influence others





The evidence - People live with high levels of fear



- Citizens who live in a patriarchal system experience high levels of fear
- Fear of being found out as someone subverting patriarchal norms and challenging the status quo
- Fear of being a victim of intimate partner violence because domestic violence is a tool for maintaining the patriarchal system
- Fear of being seen as socially deviant - for example, if a woman is seen as "ruling" their husbands
- Fear of social exclusion, which is the way in which the status quo is maintained





The evidence - Patriarchal norms are maintained by:



- Prevailing beliefs that patriarchy is in everyone's best interest and that questioning it means you are questioning your whole culture and history as Msukuma
- Prevailing beliefs that everyone adheres to a highly stratified social and familial hierarchy that is founded on gendered beliefs that place little value on women and children
- Social expectations that one should behave conventionally and conservatively
- Social expectations that there will be a social, familial and economic price to pay for subverting the patriarchal system





The evidence - The blindspot for efforts to prevent violence



- Lie in our collective failure to see patriarchal norms as creating an inherently violent and coercive system that we are all complicit in
- The result is that
 - We do not see or name everyday violences - rape, murder are seen as violence, but the day to day control of women and children is not considered an abuse
 - If we do not name abuses we do not problematise them as a violence
 - You cannot change what you do not problematise





The evidence - The patriarchal system is fragile



- There are signs that the patriarchal system is fragile and this creates an opportunity for social change
- It is fragile because everyone experiences the pain of patriarchy
 - Women and children feel the absence of agency - that they have no control - because they do not have freedom to make decisions
 - Men are also victims of patriarchy - they bear a cognitive load from believing that they are the head of the family
- It is fragile because there is evidence that the coercive patriarchal system and domestic violence go hand in hand. And this counters the value that communities put on cooperation, respect and effort
- We have identified over 1,000 highly connected and respected citizens who have an appetite to challenge the status quo by reframing patriarchal customs in a way that is in everyone's best interests





The evidence - Opportunities where we can intervene



Deference inhibits honest conversations between men, women and children, but well facilitated dialogues bring different perspectives together in a place of psychological safety and enable people to make sense of the system in which they live. This is a precondition for any social change efforts



Patriarchy creates barriers between different ages and genders. Focussing on how we differ rather than what we share results in us othering people - it reduces our scope for empathy and compassion. One of the prototypes being developed brings people together to share decision-making in the community to transcend those barriers.



Violence is a social construct, particularly in communities where it is highly embedded in social structures and roles. One prototype engages community members to collectively agree what behaviors they consider to be abusive & unacceptable, and consequences for perpetrators. This co-creation builds on values of being community minded and experience of taking collective action.

Recommendations for Inclusion in the NPA-VAWC



Defining coercive control



Coercive control refers to a pattern of controlling behaviors that create an unequal power dynamic in a relationship. These behaviors give the perpetrator power over their partner, making it difficult for them to leave



Abusers use coercive control to subjugate their partners through a web of threats, humiliation, isolation, and demands



The presence of coercive control is highly predictive of future physical violence and is, in and of itself, also a violation of the victim's liberty and dignity



Research into coercive control suggests that this type of abuse often predicts future physical violence

Proposing a formulation for the NPA-VAWC



Thematic area: Norms and values

Strategy: A national conversation about coercive control as an unacceptable form of violence

Strategic Objective: A society that respects gender equality, equity and protection of women and children where citizens take action against all forms of violence

ISSUE	TARGET INTERVENTION	PRIORITY ACTION	EXPECTED OUTPUTS	EXPECTED OUTCOME
The normalisation of coercive control	Prevention	1/ Build a community of practice of CSO & local government actors who are able to adapt & use the Theory U process 2/ Facilitate community conversations where they co-create their solutions for VAWC 3/ Roll out a grassroots, phone based M&E system to track impact on the ground	1/ Investment in community based protection 2/ A critical mass of citizens take action to prevent violence against women & children	Protective norms spread



Proposing a formulation for the NPA-VAWC



Thematic area: Implementation and enforcement of laws

Strategy: Legal recognition that the day to day control of women and children is an abuse

Strategic Objective: To amend laws that protect women and children to include a provision that coercive control is a criminal offense

ISSUE	TARGET INTERVENTION	PRIORITY ACTION	EXPECTED OUTPUTS	EXPECTED OUTCOME
Coercive control is not recognised in law as a criminal act	Response	1/ Review the literature & legislation globally on criminalising coercive control 2/ Review current Tanzanian legislation to integrate the criminalisation of coercive control 3/ Produce statutory guidance for the police and criminal justice agencies, that may also assist the work of non-governmental organisations and voluntary organisations	Coercive control is recognised in law as an illegal form of violence.	Women & children can access legal redress for





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