Government Peace Building Strategies in Mitigation of Natural Resource Induced Conflicts Between Communities of West Pokot and Turkana Counties, Kenya

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Abstract- Natural resource-based conflicts are not new phenomena in the world and water is a leading natural resource causing conflict between communities living in water-stressed areas. West Pokot and Turkana counties are two neighboring regions known for perennial conflicts caused by competition over water, pasture and land disputes. The government of Kenya has been using various peace-building strategies to mitigate the conflict but their effectiveness is in doubt. This study is justified by the fact that research carried out in the various fields of natural resource induced conflicts in West Pokot and Turkana counties reveal that through peace-building strategies, the government has implemented initiatives aimed at improving the natural resource management, community engagement and security measures in West Pokot and Turkana Counties but the conflicts between the two communities persist. As a result of this development, this study establishes evaluation of the government's peace-building strategies in mitigation of natural resource induced conflicts between the communities of West Pokot and Turkana counties. The study is guided by the following specific objectives: Examine the nature of natural resource induced conflicts between communities of West Pokot and Turkana counties, evaluate effectiveness of government's employed peace-building strategies in mitigation of conflicts over natural resources between communities of West Pokot and Turkana counties, examine the challenges faced by the government in its peace-building mission between the communities of West Pokot and Turkana counties.

Keywords: Natural resource induced conflict, Peace building strategies, communities

I. Introduction /background

Natural resource-based conflict is not new phenomenon in the world and water is a leading natural resource that causes conflicts between communities. In Africa, water is a scarce commodity and its competition has led to conflicts between communities living in water-stressed areas. West Pokot and Turkana counties are the two neighboring regions in Kenya known for their perennial conflicts caused by competition over water and pasture (Adano, Dietz, and Witsenburg, 2014). The government of Kenya has been using various peace-building strategies to mitigate conflict between the two communities but their effectiveness is in doubt. This study explores the various studies' contributions to the knowledge of natural resource induced conflicts in West Pokot and Turkana counties and their relations to the study.

The communities of West Pokot and Turkana Counties have a long history of natural resource induced conflicts and the main resources at the Centre of this conflict is water, pasture and land. (Kameri-mbote and Khisa, 2008).

The competition for water resource, especially during dry season, often results in conflicts. Pastoralists from both communities move with their livestock to areas with available water sources, leading to resource depletion and conflicts. Similarly, competition for pasture is a cause of conflict in the region (Institute for security studies, 2008). During dry season, both communities migrate to the same areas in search of water leading to overgrazing and conflicts. Land ownership is also a contentious issue between the communities of West Pokot and Turkana Counties (Kamuren, 2018).

The Turkana people who are traditionally pastoralists claim ownership of land in West Pokot that is predominantly inhabited by farmers. This has resulted in frequent land-related conflicts between the two communities (International Land Coalition, 2015). In general, the natural resource induced conflicts in West Pokot and Turkana Counties, is complex and intricate involving historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors. Addressing these conflicts require a comprehensive approach that considers the underlying causes that involves the affected communities and the stakeholders trying to bring peace to the region (Shalom-SCCRR, 2020). Studies carried out in West Pokot and Turkana

Counties have investigated the challenges faced by the government in its peace building mission but have not explored these challenges within the context of specific conflict over natural resources.

Some of the studies have concluded that conflicts are mainly caused by competition over scarce resources, others have pointed out the role of ethnic politics and identity in fueling conflicts. For example, Alier (2012) argues that natural resources are often used as a pretext for mobilizing support and gaining political power. Murithi (2013) emphasizes the role of identity politics in natural resource-based conflicts. In the case of West Pokot and Turkana Counties, the conflict is mainly caused by competition for water and pasture, but ethnicity and identity politics play a significant role in fueling the conflict. The Turkana people are traditionally pastoralists but they claim land in West Pokot, which predominantly, is inhabited by farmers, and this has resulted in frequent water, pasture and land- related conflicts between the two communities (Ibreck & Carmody, 2011). The Pokot harbour historical, and political grievances over grazing land and water points with the Turkana. The Turkana derive their livelihood from livestock, which depend on pasture and water. Reduced access to these resources particularly pasture and water, put these communities under intense pressure often leading to conflicts (Oxfam, 2017). The West Pokot County ranks as one of the most conflict-prone Counties in Kenya owing to the insecurity occasioned by the inter-community theft of livestock-a vice that has taken a regional dimension. The locational peace communities believe that the catalysts behind these intra and inter-community conflicts are the opinion leaders and traditional seers who give inciting information to their communities, as they scramble to outdo each other for territorial identity and clan supremacy (Kratli & Jeremy, 2001).

The government of Kenya has implemented various peace-building strategies in mitigation of conflict over natural resources between the two communities. However, the government faces the challenges of political influence, inadequate funding, mistrust and suspicion between communities. The poor infrastructure in the region is another challenge.

The Turkana County for instance, has a total road of 9,000kms out of which only 504.5kms is bitumen and the rest is made up of dirt or gravel roads. Several studies have documented these studies and their impact on the government's peace-building efforts. Ngetich et. al (2015) argues that political interference often undermines the government's peace-building efforts and leads to mistrust between communities. In addition, inadequate funding and poor infrastructure limits the government's ability to provide social amenities and conflict resolution mechanism. Mistrust and suspicion between the communities makes it challenging to promote peace co-existence and reconciliation. In spite of these challenges the government of Kenya has been using various peace-building strategies to mitigate the conflict in West Pokot and Turkana Counties. These strategies include; conflict resolution through traditional dispute mechanisms, provision of social amenities, disarmament and promotion of peaceful co-existence amongst the communities.

However, the effectiveness of this strategies is not well documented and therefore is in doubt. Some studies have concluded that the government's peace-building efforts are often inadequate. The conflict resolution mechanisms employed in the region are often biased towards one group or the other. Kamungi

(2014) argues that the government's disarmament programs often target one community thus leading to resentment and distrust. On the other hand, other studies have praised the government's effort in promoting peaceful co-existence amongst the communities. For example, Opiyo and Ambenje (2016) argue that the government has been successful in building peace through social amenities provision and conflict resolution mechanisms.

The bigger challenge is that almost all the literature on previous studies on natural resource-based conflict in West Pokot and Turkana counties have mainly focused on the causes and consequences of the conflict as opposed to prevention. Little has been given to the effectiveness of the government's peace-building strategies in mitigation of the conflict. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap in the literature by evaluating the effectiveness of the government's peace-building strategies in mitigating conflicts of natural resource between the communities of West Pokot and Turkana Counties, Kenya.

The peace building strategies in this proposed study is focused on prevention, management and resolution through inclusive participatory approaches. This involves establishing mechanisms for peaceful co-existence such as joined resource management committees, community dialogues and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. Despite the government's intervention efforts in West Pokot and Turkana Counties, conflicts between the two communities persist.

This study hypothesizes that failure to evaluate government's peace-building strategies employed in West Pokot and Turkana counties in order to know exactly how government's peace building strategies are organized, planned and executed, the strength and weaknesses of each strategy, the priorities of the strategies and how the government has overcome the challenges and opportunities of all the peace-building strategies in the region, have contributed to the persistent natural resource induced conflicts in West Pokot and Turkana Counties, Kenya.

II.   THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

From the literature reviewed for this study, a conflict is a situation where two recognizable groups are in conscious opposition to each other as they pursue discordant goals arising mainly from the societal structural conditions (Jeong, 2017).

The conflict that occurs as a result of water accessibility is known as water induced conflict. According to Petersen-Perlman, Veilleux and Wolf, (2017), Water induced conflict is a term that describes a conflict between nations, regions, states, groups, over accessibility to water resources. The United Nations (UN) identifies that disputes over water are as a result of a consequence of opposing interests over water users, public or private.

There is a wide range of water disputes in history, although traditional conflicts and wars are rarely contacted on water alone rather, water was a source of tension of conflict that started for other reasons (Naff, 2020). According to Gleick (2014), although a few conflicts over water have become violent, most have arisen in areas in which violence is widely spread and most of these conflicts could have become violent. Violent conflict over water, like other armed conflict, can have disastrous death consequences for individuals and population. Water conflict can

also lead to injuries, illness and long-term physical and mental impairment and it can affect the health-supporting infrastructure of society and systems that provide fresh water (Sidel et. al, 2011). Peace- building occurs either before a conflict is violent (preventive measure) or when a violent conflict is over. There is therefore need for cultural values in building constructive relationships between people and their environment so that people can learn skills about how to relate to each other during crisis such as water crisis.

Peace building may take a form or tolerance enhancing cohabitation activities or may address institutional sources of wrong doing or conflict (Croker, Hamson & Aall, 2020). Mitigation of conflicts goes hand in hand with government's peace building strategies. For successful mitigation of a conflict, there is need to have effective peace building strategies designed and driven by the government through community engagement (Makindi, et. al 2014). Peace building is a length process that entices people to talk, interactions and institutions to be reformed. According to Sanliturk (2019), peace building is the development beneficial person, group, and political associations, across ethics religion, class, national, and racial boundaries. The purpose of the government's peace building strategies is to resolve injustices in non-violent ways and transform the structural conditions which generate deadly conflicts Jeong, (2018). The above enhances transformation of the conflict to prevent its escalation.

Contradictions identified

While there are numerous contributions to the study, some contradictions exist in the literature. For example, while some studies argue that natural resources such as water are the primary cause of conflicts in West Pokot and Turkana Counties, others suggest that political and economic factors also play a significant role. For instance, some scholars point out that the Kenyan government has historically marginalized and neglected the region, resulting in poverty, unemployment and social inequality and economic stratification. This intern has contributed to a sense of injustice, which is the source of conflict among the different communities in the region. Similarly, some scholars argue that the government-led peace-building initiative are essential for resolving conflicts over natural resources while others suggest that such initiatives are ineffective and may even intensify the conflict. Some studies point out that the government-led strategies often fail to address the root cause of the conflict and instead focus on the symptoms, such as violence and displacement.

Furthermore, some studies reveal that government-led strategies may be biased towards certain communities particularly those that are politically powerful, and neglect the interest of the marginalized groups. Other studies argue that traditional conflict resolutions such as mediation by the elders are more effective than the government-led strategies. The argument is that traditional mechanism for resolving communal conflicts is more accessible, culturally appropriate, and sustainable in the long term. On the other hand, some scholars suggest that traditional mechanism may reinforce harmful practices, such as patriarchy and exclusion of certain groups hence may not adequately

address the complex dynamic of conflicts of a natural resource between the communities of West Pokot and Turkana Counties.

Study knowledge gap

Some of the studies conducted in relation to conflicts mitigation include Conflict Resolution and Crime Surveillance based on Local Peace Committees and Nyumba Kumi (Kioko 2017), the factors influencing the implementation of ethnic conflict management strategies in Moyale District (Nzioka, 2012) and Factors influencing sustainable conflict resolution among warring pastoralist communities in West Pokot County (Umuro, 2017). Opiyo, Wasonga, Schilling and Mureithi (2012) examined resource-based conflicts in drought-prone Northwestern Kenya based on the drivers and mitigation mechanisms. However, none of the studies focused on government's peace building strategies in mitigation of water and pasture induced conflicts in West Pokot and Turkana counties and therefore, it is important to examine the government's peace building strategies in mitigation of natural resource induced conflicts between communities of West Pokot and Turkana counties.

Since there is a lack of research specifically examining the role of government peace building strategies in addressing water and pasture-induced conflicts in West Pokot and Turkana counties, this study fills this particular important gap in the literature. The study will contribute to a better understanding of the effectiveness of the government's peace building strategies in addressing natural resource-based conflicts, as well as the challenges and opportunities of implementing such strategies in a context of water and pasture resource scarcities and conflicts in West Pokot and Turkana counties.

This study will be useful in considering the perspectives and experiences of both the communities affected by the natural resource induced conflicts and the government officials responsible for implementing the peace building strategies. This could involve conducting interviews or focus groups with community members and government officials as well as reviewing relevant policy documents and reports. Additionally, the study will examine any existing partnerships or collaborations between the government and other actors to understand how different stakeholders are working together to address natural resource-based conflicts in the region.

The nature of natural resource induced conflicts

Many researchers have studied the causes, dynamics and consequences of natural resource-based conflict in Africa. Some have argued that conflicts are mainly caused by competition over scarce resources while others have pointed the role of ethnic politics and identity in fueling conflicts. For example, Alier, (2012) argues that natural resources are often used as a pretext for mobilizing support and gaining political power, while Muriithi (2013) emphasizes the role of identity politics in natural resource-based conflicts. He argues that conflicts arise due to differences in ethnicity, which is intensified by political manipulation and competition for resources. In the case of West Pokot and Turkana counties, the conflict is mainly caused by

competition for water and pasture, but ethnicity and identity politics play a significant role in fueling the conflict (Mwiturubani, 2017)

Effectiveness of Government Employed Peace Building Strategies:

The Government of Kenya has been using various peace-building strategies to mitigate the conflict in West Pokot and Turkana counties. These strategies include conflict resolution through traditional dispute mechanism, provision of social amenities, disarmament and promotion of peaceful coexistence among communities (Okal & Mibei, 2017). However, the effectiveness of these strategies is not well documented. Some studies have concluded that the government's peace-building efforts are often inadequate, and conflict resolution mechanisms are based towards one group or the other. For example, Kamungi (2014) argues that the government's disarmament programs often target one community, leading to resentment and distrust. On the other hand, other studies have praised the government's effort in promoting peaceful coexistence among communities. For instance, Opiyo and Ambenje (2016) argue that the government has been successful in building peace through social amenities provision and conflict resolution mechanisms in West Pokot and Turkana Counties.
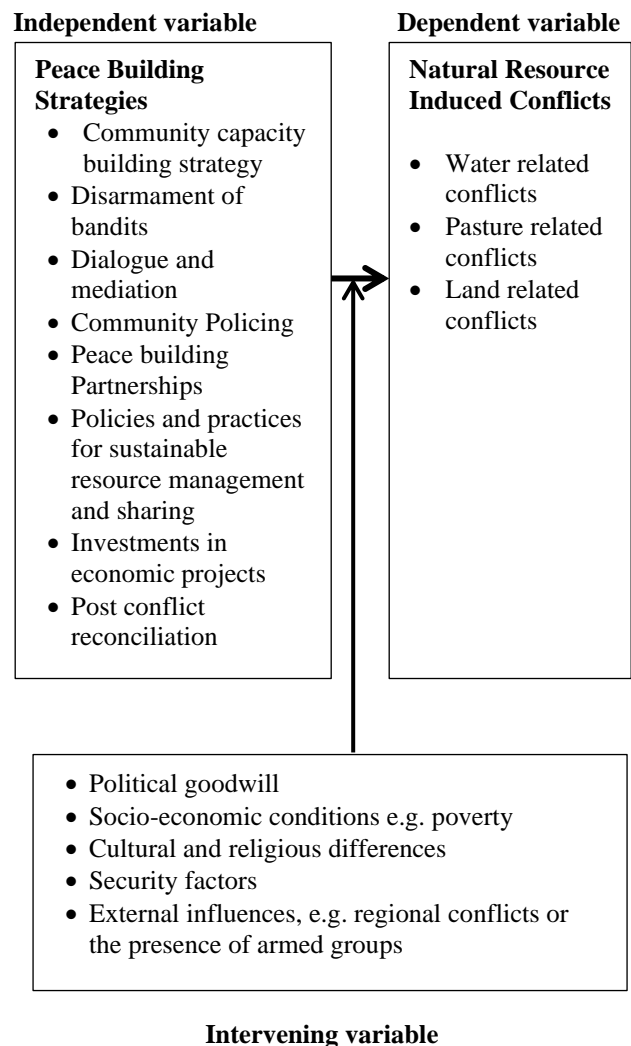
Challenges faced by the Government in its Peace Building Mission:

The government's peace-building mission in West Pokot and Turkana counties faces many challenges. These challenges include political interference, inadequate funding, mistrust and suspicion between communities, in addition to poor infrastructure. Several studies have documented these challenges and their impact on the government's peace-building efforts. Ngetich et al. (2015) argue that political interference often undermines the government's peace-building efforts and leads to mistrust between communities. He adds that inadequate funding and poor infrastructure limit the government's ability to provide social amenities and conflict resolution mechanisms. Furthermore, mistrust and suspicion between communities make it challenging to promote peaceful coexistence and reconciliation.

Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is a hypothesized model identifying the concepts under study and their relationships. According to Mugenda and Mugenda, a concept helps the reader to quickly see the proposed relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Amasava, 2017). Conceptual framework provides a clear concept of the areas in which meaningful relationships of variables are likely to exist. The independent variable in this study is: Government's peace-building strategies whose elements include community capacity building, disarmaments of bandits, dialogue and mediation, community policing, peace-building partnerships, policies and practices for sustainable resource management and sharing, investment in economic development projects. The dependent variable is the

Natural resource-induced conflict whose elements include water related conflict, pasture and land related conflicts.

Fig 2.1 Conceptual model on government peace-building strategies in mitigation of natural resource induced conflicts in Kenya.

Source: Author 2023

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Area:

The area of study will be West Pokot and Turkana. West Pokot is a county in north rift region of Kenya. The county covers an area of approximately 9,169.4 square kilometers and stretches a distance of 132 kilometers from North to South. The county has a population of 621,241 (KNBS, 2019). Its coordinates are Latitude (1° 13' 59.99" N) and Longitude (35° 07' 0.12" E). The West Pokot County economy is principally driven by agriculture and livestock rearing. The main water sources in the county include boreholes and pans.

Turkana County is a county in the former Rift Valley Province of Kenya. Turkana is the largest County, by land area, followed by West Pokot County and also the northwestern most county in Kenya. It is bordered by the countries of Uganda to the west; South Sudan and Ethiopia, including the disputed Ilemi Triangle, to the north and northeast; and Lake Turkana to the east. The total area of the county is 68,680.3 Km² and lies between Longitudes 340 30' and 360 40'East and between Latitudes 10 30' and 50 30' North. Turkana County has a population size of 926,976.

Research Design

This study employs evaluative and descriptive research designs. These particular designs are ideal since the researcher will collect and compare data from the phenomenon at the same time of study. According to Wang (2015) descriptive survey designs are appropriate where the overall objective is to establish whether significant associations among variables existed at some point in time. The descriptive design will be ideal since it seeks to describe the characteristics of certain groups, estimate the proportion with certain characteristics and make predictions.

According to Rahi (2017), a descriptive research design is a scientific method which involves observing and describing the behavior or subject without influencing it in any way. Gravetter and Forzano (2018) observed that a descriptive research design is used when information is gathered to describe people, associations, settings or phenomenon. As indicated by Mohajan (2018), a research design is the arrangement and structure of investigation so imagined as to get answers to research questions. Descriptive research design will be ideal in establishing the government mitigation of water and pasture induced conflicts between communities of West Pokot and Turkana Counties, Kenya.

On the other hand, evaluative research design will be used to assess the effectiveness or impact of the peace building strategies. The main purpose will be to assess the impact of the peace building strategies on the desired outcomes and determine whether the strategies had achieved intended goal or not. An evaluative research design is specifically designed to assess the effectiveness of an intervention program such as government's peace building strategies in mitigation of natural resource induced conflict. In the case of the government's peace-building strategies in the mitigation of natural resource induced conflicts between communities of West Pokot and Turkana Counties in Kenya, evaluative research design will be used to assess the impact of these strategies on reducing conflicts.

A pre and post intervention study design will be prepared to compare the situation before and after the implementation of the peace building strategies. This will involve collecting data on the number and severity of conflicts before and after the program, as well as the attitudes and behaviors of community leaders towards conflict resolution. This data will be analyzed using statistical methods to determine the effectiveness of the government's peace-building strategies in mitigating the conflict.

Since the goal of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the government's employed peace building strategies in mitigation of conflicts over natural resources, an evaluative research design would help to determine whether the peace building strategies that have been implemented by the government have had the desired impact on reducing the conflict and promoting peaceful coexistence between the two communities. This will involve collecting data on the implementation of the peace building strategies and the outcomes that have been achieved. The data will be collected through various methods such as surveys, interviews, focus group discussions and observations. This data would then be analyzed using the statistical technique to determine the effectiveness of the government's peace building strategies.

Target Population

The target population is drawn from West Pokot and Turkana counties. In West Pokot, the target population is 1261 respondents who included 105 household heads, 65 chiefs, 20 MCAs, 4 MPs, 1 county commissioner, 4 sub county commissioners, 1050 village elders, and 12 senior police officers (OCPD and OCS). In Turkana County, the target population is 1814 respondents who included 156 household heads, 56 chiefs, 6 sub county commissioners, 18 MCAs, 6 MPs, 1560 village elders, and 11 senior police officers (OCPD and OCS). The total target population for the study is 3075 as summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Proportional allocation of population

Target population	West Pokot	Turkana
Household heads	105	156
Chiefs	65	56
MCAs	20	18
MPs	4	6
County Commissioners	1	1

Sub county commissioners	4	6
Village elders	1050	1560
Senior police officers (OCPD and OCS)	12	11
Total	**1261**	**1814**

Source: Researcher 2023

3.4.1 Sample size determination

The study uses stratified random sampling to arrive at a sample of 355 respondents, which is similar to the sampling method used by Okumu and Nyongesa (2019) in their study of natural resource management in Baringo county Kenya. The sample size of 355 is attained by using (Yamane, 1967) simplified formula. This formula is used to compute the size of the sample as shown in the formula below;

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N\,(e)^2} \qquad \text{(Yamane, 1967)}$$

Where; n is the sample size. N is the population size and e is the margin of error taken as 0.05 n= 3075 / (1+3075*0.05*0.05) n=355

The sample size for this study is 355 respondents. Therefore to get the sample determination we get 12% of Households head, 30% of Chiefs, 30% of MCAs, 30% of MPs, 30% of sub county commissioners, 100% of county commissioners, 10% of village elders and 30% of senior police officers (OCPD and OCS). This gives total population sample size of 355 respondents.

3.5 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Data collection is both interactive (interviews and focus group discussions) and non-interactive (questionnaires). This enables the researcher obtain a variety of information on government peace building strategies in mitigation of water and pasture induced conflicts in West Pokot and Turkana Counties. For the household heads, data collection is done using questionnaire/focus group discussion against its allocated sample size. For MCAs, MPs, Sub-county commissioners, County commissioners, village elders and senior polices officers will be subjected to interview against their respective population sizes. The study collects both secondary and primary data, including structured questionnaires in-depth interview guides, and focus group discussions. This approach is similar to the data collection method used by Adano et al (2012) and Zaal et al (2013) in their studies on climate change, land-used conflict, and violent conflict in Kenya's drylands.

The study uses descriptive statistics to analyze the qualitative data with the help of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS 25.0). This approach is consistent with the data analysis method used by Leposo and Sanga (2020) in their comparative analysis

conflicts over natural resources in pastoralists communities in Tanzania and Kenya.

This study is built upon the previous researches by adopting a multi-method approach to data collection analysis, which allows for a more comprehensive understanding of natural resource-induced conflict between communities in West Pokot and Turkana Counties

3.5.1 Secondary Data

The secondary data is collected from journals, articles and dissertations related to government peace building strategies in mitigation of natural resource induced conflicts between communities.

3.5.2 Primary data

Primary data is collected using questionnaires, key informant interviews and focused group discussions.

Table 3.2: Summary of Study Population, Sampling and Data Collection

Target population category	Population size	Sample Determination	Sampling Method & Technique	Sample size	Data collection
Household heads	261	12%	Random	31	Questionnaire/ Focus Group Discussion
Chiefs	121	30%	Random	36	Interview
MCAs	38	30%	Random	11	Interview
MPs	10	30%	Random	3	Interview
Sub county commissioners	10	30%	Random	3	Interview
County commissioners	2	100%	Census	2	Interview
Village elders	2610	10%	Random	261	Questionnaire
Senior police officers (OCS and OCPD)	23	30%	Random	7	Interview
Total	**3075**			**355**	

Source: Author 2023

IV. CONCLUSION

While there is considerable body of literature on the causes and management of conflict over natural resources in West Pokot and Turkana Counties, there are some contradictions in the literature. These contradictions relate to the role of natural resources, the effectiveness of government-led peace-building strategies, and the relative merits of traditional conflicts resolution mechanisms. The proposed study aims to contribute to this literature by examining the nature of conflict over natural resources in these regions and evaluating the effectiveness of the government-led peace-building strategies.

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