

Street Elite

Annual
Evaluative
Report

Year 2: 2013

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PREFACE

In response to many of the key societal issues we face such as obesity, social deprivation and criminal behaviour, policy makers have turned to the power of sport (broadly defined) as a way of overcoming these barriers to social inclusion in order that we might develop a more equal, socially cohesive, physically active and peaceful society (Spaij, 2009). Whether this action has been encouraged by the need to 'divert' or 'develop' young people (Coalter, 2007) or as a blend of both of these there can be no doubt on the basis of this report that sport has been seen by *Street Elite* and the Berkeley Foundation as a vehicle for social change.

This is the second year that we have been charged with evaluating the *Street Elite* programme. We would like to place on record our sincere thanks to colleagues who have influenced our thinking, provided information pertaining to the programme and offered support to enable this report to be written. Firstly, gratitude goes to Si Ledwith and Perry Sophocleous at *Street Elite* and Matt Bell from the Berkeley Foundation for their willingness to be interviewed. Thanks also to those coaches who have contributed their diaries as part of the process and spoken at length to us in the past 24 months about their experiences 'in the field'. We are especially grateful to one of the participants for his honest and valuable comments about the year's experience.

It has been clearly evident that this 'sport for development' programme is driven by passionate and committed individuals who are making things happen in particular areas of London and providing valuable opportunities to a group of people who have long been deprived of such support. The authors hope that this report will contribute to the on-going development of the programme.

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INTRODUCTION

*'The Government in general, tend not to give a s*** about people of my age, people below my age, they don't care...they're not getting anyone in employment, they're not getting anyone in education, and they're doing nothing'.*

Anonymous, Street Elite Participant

'Amazing things can happen when you harness the power of sport'.

Andy Sellins, CEO, Change Foundation

There are two distinct rationales for utilizing sport within the context of supporting young people considered vulnerable, marginalized and disaffected. Coalter (2007) suggests that sports based interventions can be either *diversionary* or *developmental* and are concerned with either diverting young people from criminal or antisocial behaviour or working intensively to attract young people into a mentoring setting, using sport as a tool for development. Coalter (2007) refers to these interventions (developmental) as 'plus-sport' interventions wherein sport is the context and not the focus, which is clearly the case with *Street Elite*.

After the riots of the early 1980s it was considered by the Government of the day that the street leadership, which had coordinated the anti-social behaviour, could be converted into positive leadership using sport as the vehicle for change. The Change Foundation was originally set up in 1981 following the Brixton riots and the organization has been supporting disadvantaged communities in London for the last thirty two years with an emphasis on 'plus-sport' intervention into young people's lives. During that time it has pioneered some remarkable initiatives including the setting up of 'Street20' programmes on inner city housing estates, starting the England blind cricket team, working with refugees, ex-offenders and instigating development projects in Rwanda, Uganda, Cuba and the Caribbean. They also run the largest cricket disability programme in the United Kingdom called "Hit the Top".

The Berkeley Foundation, a partner with the Change Foundation on the *Street Elite* programme, is committed to helping young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and taking them on a journey through sports engagement to find pathways into these opportunities. The partnership takes the responsibility of understanding and reporting the impact of their work very seriously as young people today face a great deal of uncertainty regarding their education and career opportunities. They are one of the hardest hit of any age group for unemployment, increasing education costs and crime.

Street Elite attempts to provide a dynamic and unique environment for young people to develop in a positive way and this evaluative research attempts to illuminate the landscape within which the programme operates so that we might better understand the complexity of young people and their obstacles to success in employment, education and in their lives. The report consists of an analysis of existing statistics in relation to the plight of young people today, academic literature concerned with a better understanding of 'plus-sport' development interventions and critical reflections on the qualitative data collected as part of this evaluation.

The National Office for Statistics present figures for the period April to June 2013 that reveal the situation in which many of our young adults find themselves. There were 1.09 million

young people (aged from 16 to 24) in the United Kingdom (UK) who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in this period; a figure virtually unchanged from January to March 2013 but down 104,000 from a year earlier. The percentage of all young people in the UK who were in the NEET category was 15.1%, unchanged from January to March 2013 but down 1.3 percentage points from a year earlier.

Just over half (53.6%) of all young people in the UK who were NEET were looking for work and available for work and therefore classified as unemployed. The remainder was either not looking for work and/or not available for work and therefore classified as economically inactive. The programme does not target this latter group. From April to June 2013, there were 586,000 unemployed young people (aged from 16 to 24) who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), up 6,000 from January to March 2013 but down 58,000 from a year earlier. For April to June 2013 there were 357,000 unemployed men aged from 16 to 24 who were NEET, and there were 229,000 unemployed women aged from 16 to 24 who were NEET and whilst the figures are national and not regional – there is evidence that suggests that major cities carry much of this problem.

In any ‘sport for development’ intervention an effective strategy needs to deal with the complex and real nature of a wide range of individuals. It is required to communicate a persuasive rationale to all stakeholders as well as determining the programme’s specific strengths and how these can be utilized to seize upon opportunities. It should enable interested parties to determine current success whilst investigating new potential and accessing new resources.

It is pertinent to note at this point that one of the original partners, the Lord’s Taverners, has withdrawn as a partner member due to a change in its strategic objectives which provides some ‘space’ for other partners to be considered and given the range of governmental and non-governmental partners concerned with reengaging disadvantaged young people through sport and physical activity there are numerous opportunities to work collaboratively and still stay true to the philosophy of the programme. Given the weight of expectation on the shoulders of any programme of this nature, the choice of approach taken and the understanding and reporting of the outcomes and outputs achieved, is crucial.

This report is made up of four sections. This introduction provides a contextual overview of the role of the *Street Elite* programme as a ‘sport for development’ initiative, the research methodology outlines the background and delivery of the qualitative and quantitative research methods, the discussion section reflects upon the qualitative interviews undertaken within the context of relevant literature and finally the concluding comments summarize the value and impact of the programme.

THE EVALUATION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodologies that seek to examine complex and multifaceted phenomena such as the *Street Elite* programme, and better understand their impact, according to Greene (2007), should focus on a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data in order to attain a more in depth picture of the context, particularly in relation to such issues as social identities and the cultural practices of young people (Greene *et al.*, 2001).

Quantitative data includes information such as that found by the performance instruments of Sportworks and can provide indicative insights into choices of attendance, engagement, qualification and destination. Upon the paradigmatic presumptions of realism and objectivism the collection of quantitative data involves measuring or recording a phenomena against predefined indicators. Quantitative information can be found also in documents such as progress reports and performance records. The analysis consists of interpreting the information collected from such documents to answer research questions regarding value and impact.

In contrast, qualitative data consists of people's experiences of the social world. Qualitative data often takes the form of interviews with participants or observational records of the delivery environment. Qualitative data collection via interviewing methods involves open-ended and fluid questions within a semi-structured interview context, which seeks not to measure responses against predetermined measurement indicators, but rather to garner rich articulations of interviewees' experiences of a phenomena in their own words.

It can also involve observing participants at the sites of research, gathering documents from diaries or meetings, and viewing audiovisual materials such as news cuttings, film clips and other cultural artifacts. Analyzing qualitative data follows here a deductive path of aggregating participants' words, or the researcher's observations, into categories of information and presenting the diversity of ideas gathered during data collection, or an inductive process of analyzing the data using theoretical concepts to unpack the perceptions, feelings and thoughts of the participants.

The intention with the second annual report of the *Street Elite* project was to collect such a range of data that would provide a holistic picture of the programme's background, performance, value and impact. Reflecting on value creation and impact requires a series of key questions to be asked of those responsible for the provision and conduct of the inputs (funders, resources and coaches); of the participants in the form of outputs achieved during the process (skills and qualifications) and of the programme by evaluating the outcomes, intended or unanticipated, (reductions in the numbers of NEETs and a positive impact on involved communities).

In order to achieve these objectives, the researchers undertook the following tasks:

A review of documents – A review of various provided by *Street Elite* and an internet search for other research on this programme's intervention.

Data collections - Interviews carried out with participants and other stakeholders of *Street Elite*.

A review of literature – An analytical review of current and critical academic and policy literature pertaining to this area.

LITERATURE REVIEW: DISCUSSION

Recent research has found that sport for development projects have a consistently positive impact on all social policy areas. The sport for development sector was projected to reduce the risk of participants experiencing a range of social problems by between 4.5% and 19.2% (Crabbe, 2013). It found particularly strong impacts in the areas of crime and substance misuse reduction and improvements in the wellbeing of young people.

It also showed that these impacts can be monetized in terms of the financial savings to society, with the strongest savings per participant being achieved in relation to substance misuse reduction and prevention, followed by crime reduction and prevention, improvements in wellbeing and reductions in the number of young people falling into the NEET category. Overall it found that the projects included in their assessment were likely to generate a total societal cost saving of £4,174.12 per participant, per annum. In the context of a programme such as *Street Elite* we may be able to postulate that this initiative is saving the tax-payer in the region of £200k based on forty eight young people involved across London.

In 2009 Sir Keith Mills' Sported Foundation, part of the commitment to the legacy of the 2012 London Olympic Games to 'inspire a generation', commissioned the social research specialists Substance to carry out a three-year study to design a robust measurement of the impact of sports development programmes and their intervention. Substance produced a pioneering and sustainable measurement tool called 'Sportworks'. This software aims to demonstrate the value of the 'sport for development' sector and offer strategies to increase the effectiveness of delivery across a range of social policy areas.

Substance (2011) have produced data pertaining to *Street Elite* which offers insight that has yet to be explored and understood by the authors of this report and which may be an important part of evaluating the impact of *Street Elite* going forward. As well as informing Sported's guidance to their members and the wider community of sport for development projects, it has also assisted in the development of a sustainable forecasting and measuring model for sport for development projects, which can go some way to exposing limitations in existing delivery profiles.

Substance (2011) report with confidence to youth justice agencies that the work the Change Foundation are currently doing with three hundred and fifty young people will save the youth justice system £130,000 over the next twelve months and a further £77,000 by reducing the risk of these young people becoming NEET during this time. Moreover, Substance can now rate the effectiveness of each of the different programmes being delivered in London. For example, the *Street Elite* West London and *Street Elite* Hackney programmes were the most effective at reducing youth crime and anti-social behaviour. The *Street Elite* Ealing project was particularly effective at reducing the risk of obesity in teenage boys. Given this research exists; it is important that the various partners work towards communicating the different research findings to one another and combine to produce a more robust and insightful impact evaluation.

Recommendation: Access the data produced by Substance (2011) that pertains to the *Street Elite* programme for a more complete picture of the impact. Implement use of the 'Sportworks' measurement tool as part of the year three research process, combined with a qualitative monitoring and evaluative report. The movement towards payment-by-results models of public service commissioning means that funding streams are now inextricably tied to the ability to demonstrate the achievement of specified outputs and intended outcomes.

This is of importance to those working in the context of the Street Elite partnership, and magnifying the value of the Sportworks measurement tool. Sportworks could provide a method to deliver real-time monitoring of performance, to assess the impact of potential delivery partners and moreover can put a financial value on partner contributions. Professor Simon Shibli, Director, Sport Industry Research Centre, Sheffield Hallam University suggested: "[It] has the potential to bring about a Bob Beamon-like jump in how sport for development projects demonstrate their value" (Crabbe et al., 2006: 98).

Street Elite is a 'training for work' initiative using sport, mentoring and youth engagement to inspire and motivate young people to engage in education and training in order to gain the confidence, qualifications and self-esteem needed to get a job or go on to further education (Ledwith, 2013). There is a widespread belief that sport and physical activity have the power to bring about change in society, particularly regarding marginalized groups such as females, people with a disability, those living in areas of conflict and those disadvantaged social groups that are prevalent amongst the membership of those involved with *Street Elite*. Spaaij (2009) argues that sport is increasingly heralded as an agent of change or as 'a new engine for development' (Levermore, 2008); particularly social development through sport.

This proclamation (sport for good) by government, agencies and academics has not gone unchallenged, with many pointing to the overabundance of 'anecdotal' evidence (Levermore & Beacon, 2009; Coalter, 2006; Coalter, 2007; Green, 2008) that serves to weaken the argument that sport can change lives, rather than support this position. The call for those who run 'sport for development' projects to be more rigorous, produce hard evidence and to test whether or not these interventions are effective is increasingly vocal.

Aside from the methodological considerations of 'proving' these interventions work, there is also the recognition that these interventions are often imposed on disadvantaged communities in a top-down manner which means the interventions often lack partnership or ownership (Skinner et al., 2008) and are often the antithesis of what is called for; participation, ownership, self-reliance, design, local indigenous knowledge and ethically and morally located in terms of social development. It is clear from the research conducted as part of this annual evaluative report that *Street Elite* needs to consider two key and clear issues as it moves forwards:

- 1. Monitoring and Evaluation**
- 2. Social Inclusion and Communities**

Monitoring and Evaluation

Coakley (2011) has argued that sports-based interventions tend to lack conceptual clarity which manifests in unrealistic targets that are often not met. The assumption is made that

participation in sport alone (without appropriate guidance and mentoring) can have certain positive impacts on those participating (Coakley, 2011). Kelly (2012) argues that the value of such programmes in the qualitative sense; the so-called 'added-value' elements are often formulated in imprecise terms which makes success, and monitoring and evaluating success, very difficult.

An ill-defined intervention, however, is not a call for the introduction of overly bureaucratic or pre-defined interventions. Quite the opposite, in fact, as Haudenhuyse *et al.* (2012) suggest when calling for well-defined interventions and not pre-defined interventions. The move towards pre-defined performance indicators can be restrictive and pay a lack of attention to the emergent needs during the programme of the identified population.

Whilst there was a call to consider accreditation and qualifications in year one of the *Street Elite* project (Roberts & Abrahams, 2013) as a possible avenue (which has been seemingly addressed this year by the project manager) this was not a call for overly prescriptive outputs. In fact, pre-defined outputs (accreditation, personal and sporting skills) are by definition unlikely to provide the necessary conditions required for engaging and having meaningful interaction with socially vulnerable young people. Matt Bell (Berkeley Foundation) highlighted *Street Elite's* focus suggesting that accreditation and qualifications (outputs) '*hasn't (sic) been a primary concern for us...the outcome for us is that [they have developed and] they're in long term employment and that their personal development has put them in a confident and strong place as individuals*'. The notion of helping "*three hundred young people living on the edge of gangs and criminality transform their lives*" (Ledwith, 2013: 1) and facilitating an environment where their confidence and development is key offers the kind of open ended approach to coaching and sport for development that allows for the dynamic nature of young people's lives to be effectively responded to.

It is essential that setting an outcome target with regards to the reduction in the number of NEETs is maintained but specific outputs should not suffocate the dynamic, proactive and responsive (to individual needs) approach currently taken within the *Street Elite* family and perhaps adopting or researching flexible models of teaching and coaching such as Hellison's (2011) model of Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) through physical activity may be employed. Haudenhuyse *et al.* (2012) argue that pre-defining outputs of sports-based interventions may in itself be an excluding mechanism that reduces a very complex social issue (disassociated youths in this instance) that needs to be more reflective of those that are socially vulnerable.

Long term monitoring of the participants needs to incorporate the data available from Sportworks with more qualitative data that searches to support the development of a responsive attitude to the emergent needs of participants and to take place in relation to a more flexible framework of outputs while maintaining a sharp focus on increasing the number of participants in work, training or education. According to Smith (2003), fundamental to engaging with socially vulnerable young people is an open-ended philosophy. In this light, Coalter and Taylor (2009) have suggested that sports-based intervention programmes deliver their objectives of creating an added value through sports practices, more successfully when such an open-ended/youth worker approach is adopted because of the more in depth, intensive and extensive social relationships it affords. *Street Elite* are clearly engaged in these types of relationships; in fact the qualitative interviews provide clear evidence of the programme being effective and supporting the development of

young vulnerable people, but growing the evidence base of this will allow for a more systematic and robust presentation of *Street Elite* as a 'model of good practice' in line with the targets of the programme.

Recommendation: *Introduce an adaptive framework of outputs for long term 'modelling' in order to provide a flexible, person-centred approach (underpinned by research evidence) to working with vulnerable young people.*

Social Inclusion

Kelly (2012, citing DCMS, 1999; Sport England, 2005) argues that sports based interventions have been encouraged to target individuals and that the recent Labour Government spent £1.6 billion a year (Audit Commission, 2009) funding work to divert young people from anti-social behaviours and to encourage stronger communities and more responsible individuals (Respect Task Force, 2006). Crabbe (2013) suggests that these sports-based interventions continue to compete for funding effectively due to the apparent premise of sport as a vehicle for change despite the contemporary austerity measures of the coalition Government. Within the UK, sporting bodies (Central Council for Physical Recreation [CCPR], 2002; Sport England, 2005) and government departments (Department for Culture, Media and Sport [DCMS], 1999; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister [ODPM], 2004) have built 'youth crime reduction' and 'social inclusion' strategies based on the assumption that sport can contribute to these policy agendas.

Sport as an interventionist mechanism has become increasingly common within youth programmes (such as *Street Elite*) targeting deprived areas or 'at risk' individuals and guidance should be drawn from the Positive Futures programme in this regard. However, 'social inclusion' and 'social exclusion' are contested and the processes through which these 'sport for development interventions' might promote social inclusion or address social exclusion require further investigation.

One important aspect of the evaluation strategy over the last two years has been a noticeable increase in the routes back into work and education (changing NEETS to EETS) as well as the qualitative research that has taken place in 'giving a voice' to otherwise marginalized groups. There clearly needs to be further research done to understand the context and motivations of young people in London and to calculate how *Street Elite* can provide an intervention that has social inclusion and personal development at its heart but the initial signs are encouraging in these contexts.

Increasingly, social inclusion is seen as both an individual and a community consideration with key indicators such as health, crime, employment and education being central to any consideration of successful inclusion. Because of the promotion of sport as a vehicle for change, government agencies have increasingly promoted the notion of sport for development interventions working in partnership with local communities, asserting that "increased sports participation in deprived areas could lead to improved local outcomes, including 'better health, lower crime, less worklessness, improved environment [and] enhanced skills (ODPM, 2004: 7)" (Kelly, 2011: 128).

As *Street Elite* focuses on personal development outcomes through coaching, there is a clear argument that this addresses key concerns related to inclusion across a range of government agendas. Interpreting the qualitative data from the last twenty four months it is

clear that the focus on the individual is a key success of the programme. Interviews of the *Street Elite* manager, coaches, participants and partners all reveal that the development of the individual and community is key and that the sport is a secondary or tertiary consideration. Kelly (2011; 2012) cites a number of government documentations when reinforcing the notion that;

...engagement in sporting activity is believed to 'open up a channel for young people to obtain advice and information on a wide range of health, social, education and employment issues' (Sport England, 2005: 9). Meanwhile, sports-based youth programmes are presented as a means of 'tackling crime' and engaging young people who are 'resistant to other approaches' (ODPM, 2004: 5) (Kelly, 2011: 128)

The key consideration for *Street Elite* in this context (of sport being a vehicle for change) is the content of the programme as mentioned in the previous recommendation as well as considering the partners that might form a more coherent and comprehensive intervention. It is essential that *Street Elite* considers the work of government agencies in pursuing and developing the 'social inclusion' agenda. Partnership work is key to this notion and partners mentioned in the document (Sport England, Youth Offending Teams, DCMS, ODPM, Respect Task Force amongst others) are key partners in meeting some of the objectives that relate to developing the programme as a standout national programme. The data available from the Positive Futures project and from Sportworks document (Crabbe, 2013) may be key to developing fluid partnership work as the *Street Elite* programme does the support work in an exemplary fashion.

Recommendation: *Review the potential partners at governmental and non-governmental level in order to further enhance the work of Street Elite.*

One further consideration that may need to be addressed by *Street Elite* moving forwards is the contradictions within social in/exclusion strategies. The review of research undertaken as part of this evaluative report offered clear insight to the potentially stigmatizing and excluding nature of sport if not handled correctly. Welshman (2008) highlights some critical concerns about how continually emphasising the plight of young people can serve to pathologize them based on anti-social behaviour, worklessness, education and problem families. The Social Exclusion Taskforce focused on these persistent individual and community exclusions and drew reference to the fact that these issues are often inter-generational (Cabinet Office, 2006).

However, assumptions and policy making patterns focused on the 'moral inadequacies' of those socially excluded can serve to perpetuate the exclusions that *Street Elite* is attempting to combat. In relation to young people in vulnerable situations, it has been suggested by Haudenhuyse *et al.* (2012) that a major factor in young people's rejection of mainstream and organized sporting provision is because such settings elicit the characteristics of the environments that they have previous had difficulties in resolving. These characteristics are usually articulated as; adherence to formal rules, achievement of externally defined goals or testing situations in formal educational settings for example (Andrews and Andrews, 2003). Whilst this may seem overly critical, we think that it is important to consider that the potentially exclusionary processes of sport and the dangers that stigmatizing young vulnerable people can produce are worthy of caution. Opening up the programme to more young people may be difficult given the focus

on small group, intensive interventions. However, removing the stigmas currently attached to vulnerable youth may serve to better include those excluded young people.

Recommendation: *The selection process of individuals on the Street Elite programme (those living on the edges of criminality) could be reviewed in order to achieve a level of inclusion for individuals and communities that goes beyond typical sport for development interventions.*

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In this report the authors draw on qualitative and quantitative data and argue that the *Street Elite* programme can, and clearly does, benefit the participants. There is some persuasive evidence as to the measuring of outputs and outcomes that may be seen in 'sport for development' interventions. We would suggest a more flexible approach is taken to the imposition of output targets but the evidence is compelling that sport and the coaching of sport through *Street Elite* can be a rehabilitative tool, specifically in relation to its desired educational and employment outcomes.

However, whilst we recognize that the programme is a learning and motivational tool for NEETs who may be otherwise difficult to engage, there must be caution added regarding over-stating the ability of the programme to re-engage young people fully in society over a number of years. Further work regarding longer term tracking and the sustainable supporting of individuals beyond the realm of their involvement with *Street Elite* is essential in order to see how they are integrated and motivated upwardly to be able to achieve their ambitions. The role of social media and on-going mentoring opportunities for past participants may be considered to meet this imperative of sustainability.

The authors reveal the strong motivations for NEETs who experience especially disrupted and negative educational experiences to engage in sports coaching. The research has also excavated a common enthusiasm for employment in the sport and leisure industry by NEETs with a history of unemployment and lack of career aspirations. Such motivation requires support and guidance in order to be nurtured into life-transforming opportunities and the authors argue that the funding bodies, *Street Elite* and their coaches hold a responsibility that is met with vigour, for making such aspirations possible.

Haudenhuyse *et al.* (2012) and Mintzberg and Waters (1998) offer insight into the pre-defined and deliberate strategies that can often be restrictive and act as exclusionary mechanisms in programme interventions and instead call for well-defined and emergent measures to be considered as well. Whilst *Street Elite* continues to offer straight forward, carefully articulated and clearly communicated outcomes and outputs widely throughout the organization and its partners. It is important to note that much of the research undertaken as part of this evaluative report espouses the need to look to other, more emergent measures where achievement is realized despite, or in the absence of, intentions.

In such instances the voice of the participants can be particularly valuable in determining future action and such an open-ended coaching/guidance approach was described by Haudenhuyse *et al.* (2012) as a coaching practice that places the emotional, social and physical well-being of young people at the core of the programme. By adopting this

approach the programme can be built upon the concrete needs and life situations of young people, rather than predicating provision based on the assumptions made about the power of sport for positive social development.

The report outlines the continued need for long term monitoring and evaluation through mixed methods research including data produced by Sportsworks to maintain successful programme outcomes. It stresses the need to address the notions of social inclusion clearly by giving voice to the marginalized youth highlighted in this document. Consideration of emergent (bottom up) measures of success might better define the programme's outputs while conserving the reduction in NEET status as the overall outcome and therefore set a more flexible and democratic direction of travel for all concerned in the programme.

In addition, the report recommends demonstrating the cost-benefit of the programme for alternative funding partners. Consideration of the criteria for access to *Street Elite* might be key to ensuring inclusion of more individuals and communities. Partnership work with other agencies is also key to long term sustainability and success. There is government funding available to the programme for each participant engaged in some form of accreditation of learning and *Street Elite* is to be congratulated on gaining the award of AQA accreditation status to begin working towards exploiting this funding stream. It will encourage further enhancement of the activity and provide a sustainable economic future for an already successful programme. There is, therefore, a clear rationale for the continuation of this programme.

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