



**4th CG GPD Meeting – Rome
17 - 18 February 2026**

**South African Qualifications Authority
(SAQA): Projects and Initiatives Developed at the
National Level to foster the Social Impact of LLL**

**Microcredentials - RPL & Entrepreneurship -
UNIICO Create**

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17 February 2026



SAQA
SOUTH AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

Overview

- Facts about the African Continent
- Objectives of the NQF
- RPL and Entrepreneurship
- Microcredentials
- UNIICo Create
- How Africa embrace Technology?
- The impact of the 3 projects

Facts about the African Continent

Facts about the African Continent (The Numbers' Game)

There are 54 countries in Africa.

Population of almost 1.6 billion

3000 languages spoken.

60% of youth will reside in Africa by 2050

30 years ago, 75% of Africans never had a phone ring. (only 5 million telephone lines

There were only 5 million telephone lines in Africa in 1990's.

There were more telephone lines in New York City than the whole of Sub-Sahara Africa

The Numbers' Game – Fast Track 30 years Today

Currently Africa has 1 billion mobile phone connections.

1.1 billion mobile money accounts

That is up from 300 million 10 years ago.

This is driving financial inclusion at unprecedented scale (Mpesa & EcoCash)

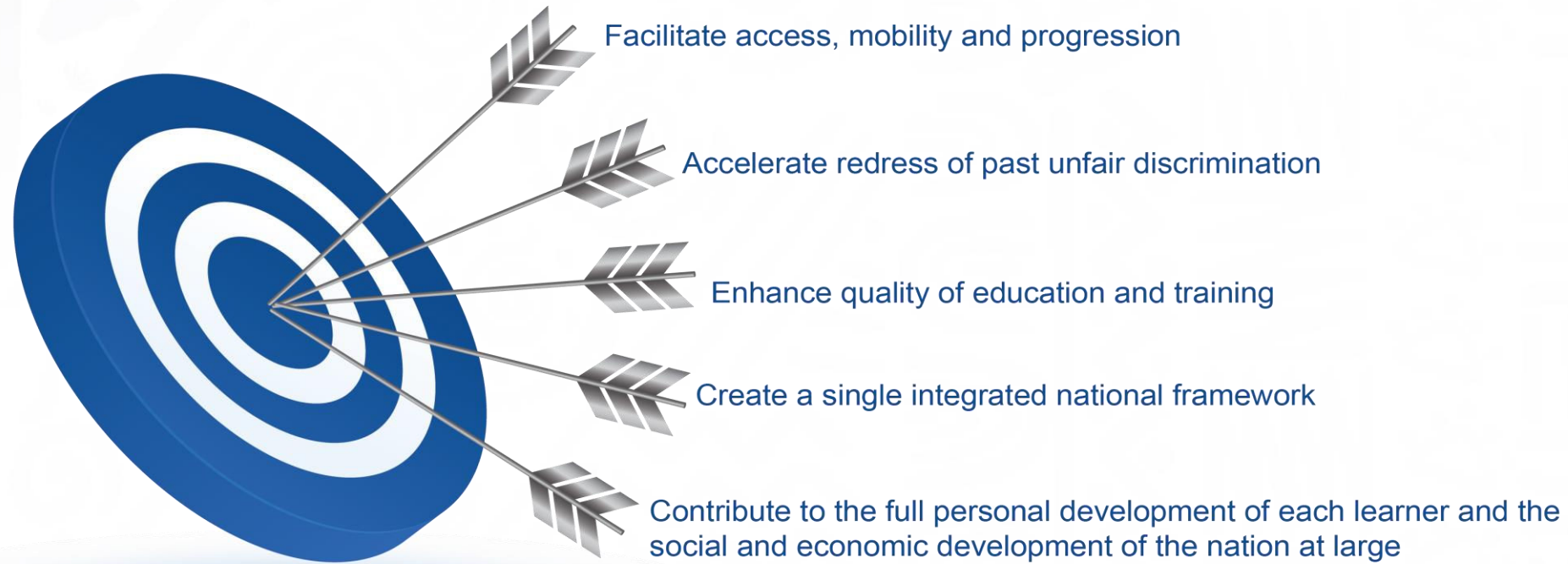
Africa's demographic dividend is also one of its biggest challenges

When the word Africa crosses people's minds they think poverty, diseases, and wars.

Our challenge is youth unemployment. but we have embraced technology at unprecedented scale.

Objectives of the NQF

OBJECTIVES OF THE NQF



Structure of the South African NQF

National Qualifications Framework



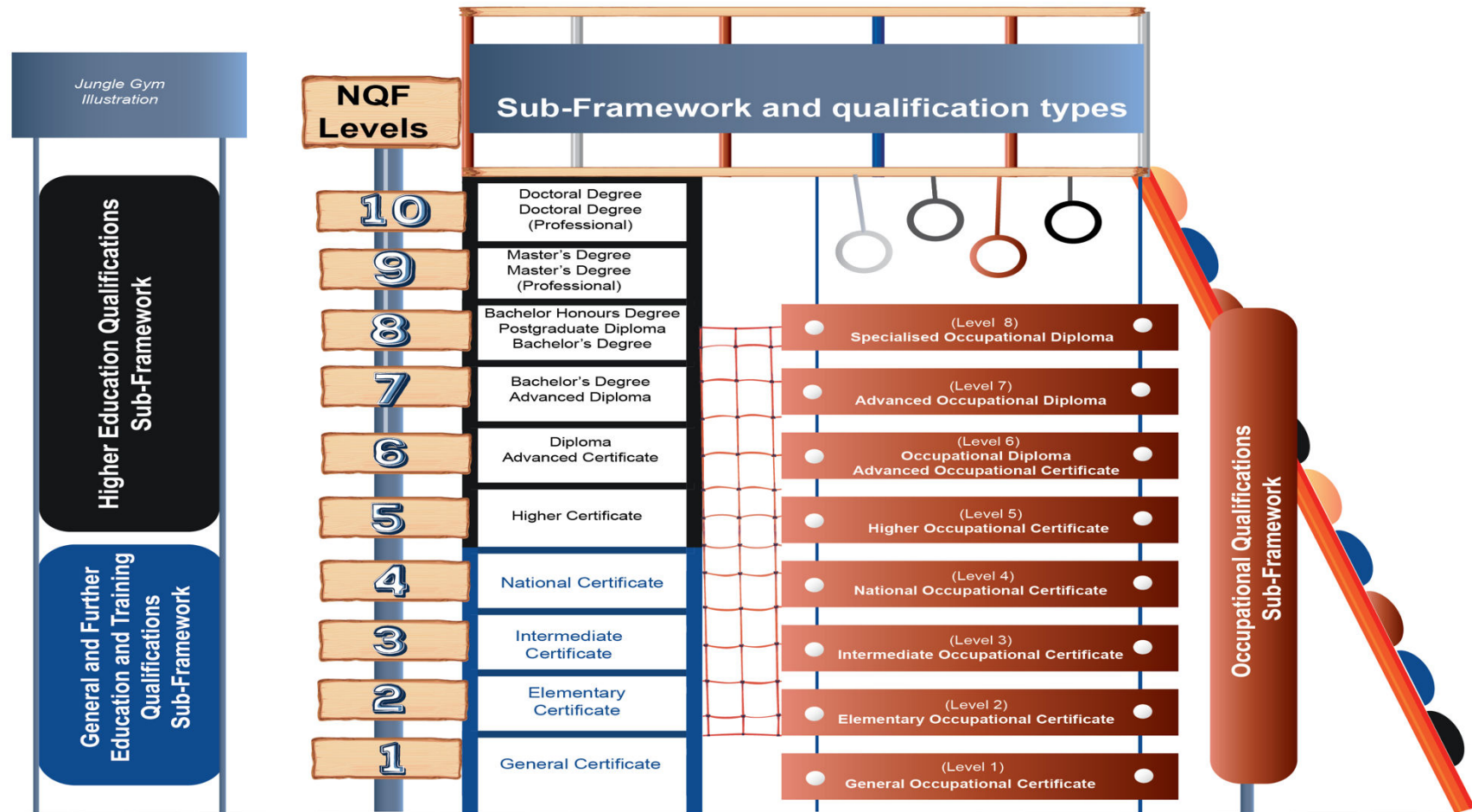
Council on Higher Education (CHE): CHE oversees qualifications from NQF level 5 to NQF level 10.



Quality Council for Trades and Occupation (QCTO): Accredits providers to offer trade related qualifications such as the N4 to N6 Diplomas. It has also delegated the accrediting authority to the SETAs who offer qualifications and part qualifications registered on NQF level 1 to 8 of the NQF.



Umalusi: Accredits private providers of education and training as well as private assessment bodies to offer tuition and/or assessment for qualification(s) on the General and Further Education and Training (GET) Qualification Framework for qualifications registered on NQF level 1- 4 Umalusi accredits institutions such as independent schools/private schools, private colleges (former private FET colleges and private adult learning centres).



RPL & Entrepreneurship

Background

The Project was established in April 2024

Aim: To collaborate with the TVET colleges

- Advocate RPL and Entrepreneurship to communities/ villages, and townships.
- Support them to obtain a recognizable skills & qualification and entrepreneurial empowerment through a RPL processes

The Role of SAQA



To improve the articulation in the PSET system



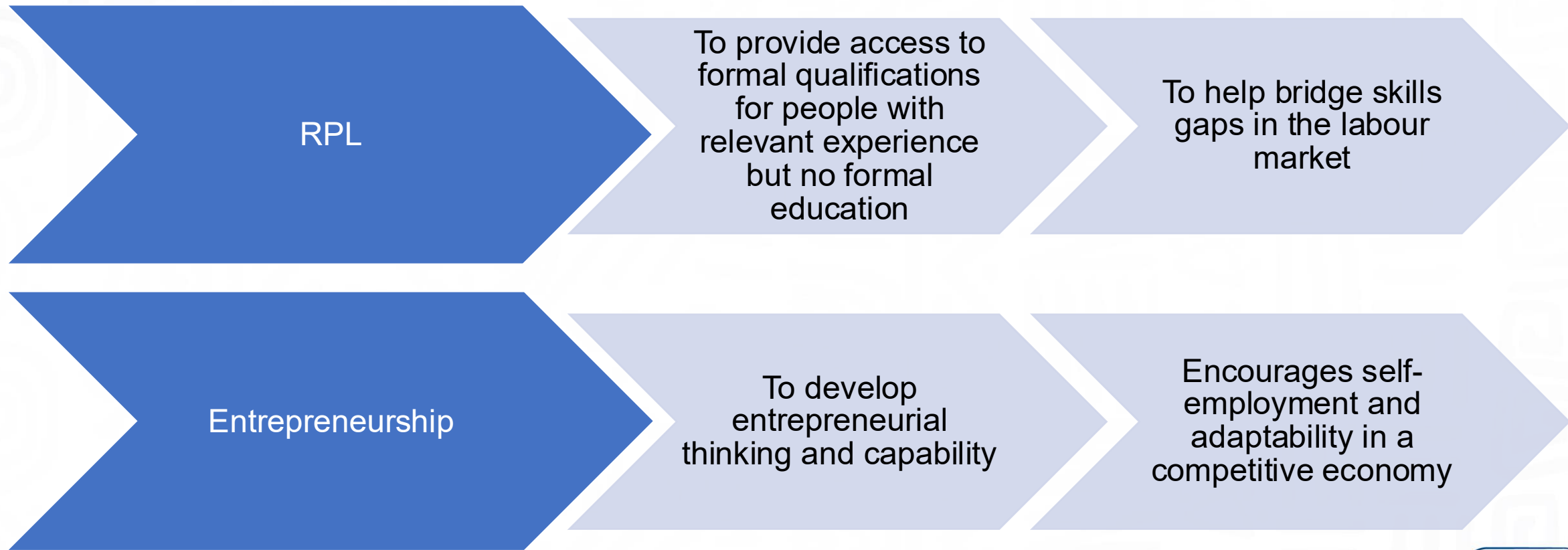
To support communities to gain access to the TVET colleges through the RPL process

Our communities/ villages have a lot of people who are very skilled but lack qualifications



Supporting RPL and promoting entrepreneurship within the TVET sector is essential to benefit both students and entrepreneurs in townships and rural areas.

Purpose of RPL and Entrepreneurship Project



Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is a tool to break cycles of poverty and unemployment

The Task Team highlights SAQA's role in advancing social justice and promoting inclusive growth.



Lifelong Learning as the Solution	Role of the Task Team	Impact of the RPL and Entrepreneurship Task Team Approach
Learning happens throughout life, not only in classrooms	Provide information about the NQF, as it provides clear learning and career pathways	Reduces inequality in access to information
Recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning	Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) values experience and skills	Empowers unemployed and marginalised individuals
Supporting upskilling, reskilling and continuous development	Enables progression into further learning and employment	Promotes inclusion, mobility and lifelong learning

Microcredentials

Why do Micro-credentials Matter?

Address the skills gap/ mismatch in South Africa.

Bridge the gap between formal education and the evolving demands of technological advancements and innovation

Micro-credentials offer a mechanism for rapid upskilling and reskilling of the workforce by:

- ❖ Responsive to labour market needs rapidly, than traditional qualifications.
- ❖ Widening access for all learners.
- ❖ Supporting lifelong learning
- ❖ Supporting the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) by building a sustainable and inclusive economy.
- ❖ Aligning with the National Development Plan, (2030)
- ❖ Enhance learner and worker mobility

Introduction & Background

Recommendations from the research paper and discussion

- ❖ Establish a naming convention for small units of learning in the South African context
- ❖ Address the form, status, quality assurance, standards, issuing, recording, ownership, and sharing of small credit-bearing units of learning on the NQF and
- ❖ Clarify the roles of NQF entities and digital platform solutions for managing small units of learning within the NQF

2021:

Formal discussions on Micro-credentials started at SAQA.

- ❖ In-depth review of the literature on 'micro-credentials' / small units of learning
- ❖ Over 35 peer reviewed and related articles considered

2022/23:

Research paper and discussion document developed:

- ❖ **Research Paper:** *The Recognition and Registration of Small Units of Credit and Non-Credit Bearing Learning Programmes and Other Achievements and Attributes*
- ❖ **Discussion Document:** *Recognising Small Units of Credit and Non-Credit Bearing Learning in the South African NQF Context.*

2024:

Task Team on Micro-credentials established:

- ❖ To formulate SAQA's strategic position on micro-credentials.
- ❖ Draft position paper developed and shared with NQF partners for comments.

2025

SAQA participated in an Erasmus + funded project called PoMiSA – "Potential of Micro-credentials in Southern Africa"

- ❖ Seeks to develop and implement micro-credentials in Southern Africa.
- ❖ SAQA is one of 19 participating entities from various countries in the SADC region.

2025/2026:

SA National Working Group on Micro-credentials (NWG) established:

- ❖ A multi-sectoral collaboration aimed at developing a National Framework for Micro-credentials in SA., led and coordinated by SAQA.
- ❖ Stakeholder consultations & piloting MCs.

Context

- ❖ Small units of learning have long existed in the South African system, although they are not referred to as “micro-credentials”.
 - Designed to equip the learner with relevant skills, knowledge and competences necessary to succeed in the workplace.
- ❖ In the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework, small units of learning currently registered on the NQF are **unit standards** and **part-qualifications**.
- ❖ In the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework, terms like ‘**short courses**’ and ‘**short learning programmes**’ are more common.

Concepts	GFTQSF	OQSF	HEQSF
Apprenticeship	X	✓	X
Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	X	✓	✓
Learnership	✓	✓	✓
Learning Programme	X	✓	✓
<u>Part-Qualification</u>	X	✓	X
Short Course/ Short Learning Programme	X	✓	✓
<u>Skills Programme</u>	X	✓	X
<u>Unit Standard</u>	X	✓	X
Micro-credential	?	?	?

Preliminary Recommendation-SAQA Position

- ❖ **National Policy Framework:** SAQA in collaboration with the QCs should develop a comprehensive National Policy Framework to guide the recognition, integration and quality assurance of micro-credentials.
- ❖ **Design and Delivery:** The design must align with national standards and meet the needs of learners and the labour market.
- ❖ **Credit Allocation:** Micro-credentials should carry at least 1 to 8 credits and should be less than the credits of a part-qualification. However, an alternative would be to have a single definition of a micro-credential with a credit value of 1 to 60 credits.
- ❖ **Records of Achievement:** Establish systems for recording learning achievements on the NQF Management Information System, ensuring that learner progress is properly documented.

UNIICO Co-Create Project

Project Summary

- UNIICo-create is a multi-country EU-funded project designed to build entrepreneurial universities in the SADC region.
- Birthed by Higher Education Reform Experts Africa – a network of higher education experts dedicated to modernising curricula on the continent through strategic interventions, co-created with EU partners.
- **Key features of the UNIICo-create project:**
 - **Focus:** Redefining university-industry collaboration in the SADC region.
 - **Goal:** To integrate entrepreneurship into higher education institutions in SADC, update curricula, promote innovation, and produce more employable and entrepreneurial graduates.
 - **Partnerships:** A collaboration including Ministries of Education from participating SADC nations, EU partners, and higher education bodies like OBREAL, SARUA, and SAQA.
 - **Activities:** Involves training academic leaders to develop entrepreneurial curricula with industry, establishing Co-creation Units in universities, and creating a network of change agents.
 - **Theory of Change:** To address challenges such as job creation, start-ups, and graduate unemployment in the region through the creation of entrepreneurial universities.

Expected Outcomes



Co-created (joint) entrepreneurship micro-credential that will be piloted at the partner institutions.



Online Toolkit for establishing and operating university-industry co-creation units.



Policy Briefs on enhancing the delivery of joint entrepreneurship qualifications in the SADC and fostering university-industry collaboration.



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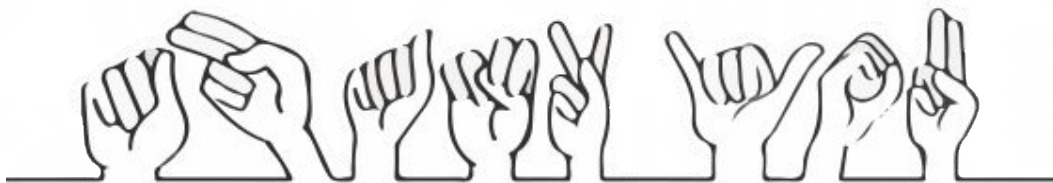
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*Thank you
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Enkosi
Dankie
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Ndza khensa
Ndo livhuwa*



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