

## **New Paradigm of Business to Meet the Socio-Economic Challenges of Developing Countries: A Lesson from Bangladesh**

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**Abstract:** Though, the outbound literature of social organization charged with discord of its social and economical development, this study discuss three successful social business in Bangladesh, those are playing a vital role to develop the socio-economic and parade the downtrodden people into power by meeting their most expressing needs. This study mainly has designed with case studies of three social businesses in Bangladesh those are first social business operating with highly impact both socially and economically to reduce major challenges and social betterment. The selected three social businesses are operating in-between social and commercial system with target to better product and service for low income people within their afford that are ignored by traditional business. Nowadays, after the advancement of hybrid social enterprise concept, many social businesses in and outside of national boundary has been operating successfully with creating better social and economical impact. Mainly this study highlights how the social businesses contributing to ensure standard living of poorest communities in Bangladesh and how take off the poorest from their poverty twist by deducting major social challenges. So, the discussion of this study could assist the national and international policy maker to be more concern initiated for establish new social business with environmental, social and commercial objective.

**Key words:** Bangladesh, economy, social capital, social challenge, social development

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Owing to traditional business structures and unmet market characteristics the downtrodden people of developing countries have been facing many significant challenges. They cannot afford to meet their daily essential necessity to lead the minimum standard of living. Meanwhile, some of traditional business retrench the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) investment and less interested to produce social beneficiary goods. As a result the trampled people are twisting into poverty cycle and facing significantly malnutrition, health care and sanitation. Nowadays, more than one billion people affected by global poverty (Rametse and Shah, 2012). In Asia, all most all of the developing countries more or less have been suffering with poverty. Bangladesh economic survey on Asian poverty shows that people has been living under poverty line at 2012, 49% in Bangladesh, 51% Bolivia, 51% Mexico, 24% Israel, 48% in Gambia, 13% in China, 34% in Kyrgyzstan (2011), 25% in Nepal (2011) and 30% in India. As a result, services and basic needs of those countries like as hygiene and education are finite, incapable and imperfect (Seelos and Mair, 2005). In this

circumstance, many initiatives have taken to develop “Inclusive Market” to create economic opportunity (McKague *et al.*, 2011) and social investment policy to develop the participatory economy and living standard of last developed countries. A research of Vachani and Smith (2008) shows that low income communities are almost behind from the benefit of traditional commercial business and that is reason; those people cannot enter the market to change their socioeconomic condition. But the social investment policies give the market and commercial chance to the poor to develop their infrastructure, level of income and sustainability.

A study of 677 social enterprises in Africa and India shows that distribution of socially beneficial products to the low income community is potential to build a participatory market and economical development of poor country (McKague and Tinsley, 2012). Garrette and Karnani (2010) also quoted same and emphasis to innovation and distribution of socially beneficial product and service to successfully contribute to alleviating the social challenges and genuinely improve the living standard of poor community. It is true

that all most all of the social challenges could possible to remove from developing country by taking social beneficial initiative and ensuring financial sustainability. More research shows that the social enterprise has been giving financial sustainability by creating employment facilities where traditional commercial business failed to do. A study shows that last 15 years five hundred corporations have eliminated around a million of jobs as their retrenchment policy but interestingly social entrepreneurial sectors have incorporated six hundred thousand new businesses a year average and millions of job have generated.

With the advantage of social business, the policy maker's of Bangladesh has been practicing social business model since last couple of years as best alternative of traditional commercial business to support disadvantaged groups of Bangladesh where national budgets or traditional organization have failed to do. At present many social business of Bangladesh is model example to the world leader to remove the social challenges of developing countries and paraded the disadvantage people in to power. This study mainly discuss the success, opportunities and barriers of three social businesses in Bangladesh as case studies basis. So, the findings of this research will be highly referred to the world policy maker to take policy for new social business to develop the socio-economic condition of the developing countries. It also will be helpful to influence the young entrepreneur to be a social business entrepreneur rather than to be a job seeker.

**Significants of study:** Bangladesh is a third world's developing country with lot of challenges like substandard of living, less productivity, high population growth, dependency on primary product and substandard agriculture sector (Salman, 2009). It is a small landmass with around 160 million populations and on average 3000/km<sup>2</sup>. As for undeveloped economy and huge population, the unemployment and poverty are dominating the economical growth and sustainability. It is estimated that each year around 2.7 million youngling are becoming work eligible where merely 0.7 million of them receipt employment. According to International Labour Organization (ILO), Bangladesh footpaces 12th enter top 20 countries where employment facilities have been constricting. As a result food and nutrition, health care and sanitation are biting our economy badly. A study of UNESAP shows that >50% of populations live in around 8000 villages' or riverbanks and sandbars (popularly known as Chars) (UNESAP, 2009) and from 80% of people who live in village (around 2.6 billion) earn less than US\$ 2 per day (McKague and Tinsley, 2012). On

the top of that the market is individualized by unmet demands, reliance on informal livelihoods and towering worth for fundamental goods and services. As a result many people cannot afford to enter the existing market to meet their basic need and demand. At this circumstance, the alternative business and product with aim to social and economical betterment is necessary to meet their basic needs and demands and parade them in power. As realization of the social beneficiary business the policy maker of Bangladesh has started the hybrid social business with social and economical impact. This study basically focuses on three social businesses in Bangladesh that are empowering downtrodden people and meet the basic need of poor community.

### **Literature review**

**Background of social business:** The historical background of social work is very lengthy in private sector and lies with philanthropic works done by women (Dahle, 2012). Though, the informal social welfare activities have started in the United Kingdom at the mid of 1800s but formal shape has taken at 1900s after the entrepreneurship advancement. In 1894, the Royal Free Hospital has established first in London as formal social enterprise (Auslander, 2001) and hired some unpaid female worker for 1 year trial period to take care the patient (Dahle, 2012). In 1921, the Sweden is the first country who established education social enterprise that is known as Stockholm University which became under state financed policy since 1945. Though, the very beginning social enterprise lies with philanthropic works, the term of social enterprise or non-profit organization has first traced in 1978s (Auslander, 2001) by "Beechwood College" of England and it was developed by Freer Speckley in his publication by "Beechwood College" as title "Social Audit a Management Tool for Cooperative Working" (Kim, 2008). Speckley first used the "social accounting and audit" system in the social enterprise theory and established "UK Social Enterprise Partnership Ltd." at 1997 (Kim, 2008). In July 2005, the UK first introduce business model social enterprise as name "Community Interest Company" and established "Office of the Third Sector (OTS)" at May 2006 (Bull, 2008).

In spite of the history lays with UK, the mordant social enterprise (NGO) globally has spread from USA (Dahle, 2012). The "Goodwill Industries" is a well known social organization in USA has been working since 1902s and involved with repairing and reselling goods to the market. In 1960s, non-profit organization of USA has created job for disadvantage people and later at the period of 1970s to 1980s this type of business become more popular and cutbacks major spending of the USA government

(Doeringer, 2010). Later new type of enterprise that is hybrid or third sector social enterprise has been popular since last decade, especially after the contribution of professor Mohammad Yunus a Noble prize winner of 2006. Mainly professor Yunus at 2007 has given the organizational form of hybrid social business with dual mission object. Nowadays, the hybrid social business is a recognized business model to cut down the social challenges from developing countries. So, from the discussion of historical background and functional activities of social enterprise, it could be categorized with three categories:

- Philanthropic Social Enterprise
- Non Profit Social Enterprise (NGO)
- Hybrid Social Business or Third sector Social business

**Definitions of social business:** Social business is termed as a non-dividend social enterprise to target to solve a specific problem of developing country. It is mark as thriving pool of possible funding sources to solve social difficulties and must be difference from a charity and non-profit organization. The boundaries of social business in between non-profit and profit business (Dart, 2004) serving as like trading organization, closer to the private operation than the public and within the third system.

The definition of European social business focused on basic goods and service to social purpose for survive the poor with dignity (Turnbull, 1994). It says “A social enterprise is a business that trades for a social and/or environmental purpose. It will have a clear sense of its ‘social mission’: which means it will know what difference it is trying to make, who it aims to help and how it plans to do it”. The USA Social Enterprise Alliance defines the social enterprise from common goods and human justice perspective and says, “Social enterprises are businesses whose primary purpose is the common good. They use the methods and disciplines of business and the power of the marketplace to advance their social, environmental and human justice agendas”.

The UK social enterprise comprised between USA and European social enterprise and clearly mentions the hybrid concept in their definition. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) of UK defines social enterprise as “Social enterprise is a business whose primary objectives is social and whose surpluses will reinvested as capital and that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than shareholders and owners profit maximization” (Madill *et al.*, 2010). The Canadian Social Enterprise Council added marketing and production policy

in their definition and has given more priority on social, cultural and communities sector (Madill *et al.*, 2010). They believe social enterprise can take a successful change on specific field where state or other traditional business cannot meet (Madill *et al.*, 2010). The define of Canadian social enterprise is “Social enterprises are businesses owned by nonprofit organizations that are directly involved in the production and/or selling of goods and services for the blended purpose of generating income and achieving social, cultural and/or environmental aims. Social enterprises are one more tool for non-profits to use to meet their mission to contribute to healthy communities” (Madill *et al.*, 2010).

In Bangladesh, social enterprise defines as “non-dividend”, “non-loss” and “social goal” oriented social organization. Professor Yunus gives the organizational form of social business in Bangladesh and says ‘Social business’ is a non-loss, non-dividend enterprise dedicated entirely to achieving a social goal where an investor aims to help others without taking any financial gain him or herself” (Yunus *et al.*, 2010).

Despite of having geographical and economical differences, it is found a general objects across all explanation of social business over the world and that is business of social and environmental purpose for piety and welfare of underprivileged people and create community impacts with social values. It must be formed with a social target and generating profit by achieving its social objective.

**Social business in Bangladesh:** Like other developing countries Bangladesh has been suffering many social and economical challenges. The reason behind the challenges has identified the lack of social interest, commercial market policy, cut down social welfare and socio-environmental investments and less interest to produce the social beneficiary product. The policy maker and the scholars are agreed that to take over from that situation social investment and transforming of job seeker to the entrepreneur is immediately needed (Yunus *et al.*, 2010). As of realization, The Yunus Center (a social business center) has started to popularize the social business concept with dual objective that creating impacts both socially and commercially. The main deference of pure commercial business with social business is in it “Objective”. Say for example, a chock-let manufacturing company couldn’t be a social business because of its only commercials objective but a plastic recycling business must be considered as a social business as for its social or environmental and commercial both objectives.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research methodology of this study base on the case study of three existing hybrid (with social and economical impact) social business in Bangladesh that reflected by the practicing of Nobel Prize winner professor Muhammad Yunus. The selected cases are mostly special because of their quality product and service those are highly essential for low income communities of Bangladesh. Top of that, the selected case studies are the first social business initiative in Bangladesh with high social, economical and community impact. This study mainly compeer the operating success of social business with it objectives from social and economical view of point. On the base of secondary data, it also discoses the necessity and socioeconomic impact to betterment of developing economy. The main data source of this review base research is different case studies of social enterprise, official website of Yunus Center, Wikipedia of social enterprise, business survey report, various journals and research papers, research articles, textbook, conference papers presented in the international conference, seminar papers, diagnostic study reports, newspaper articles and from professional data collector.

## RESULTS

### Three case studies

**Case study 1 (Grameen Danone Foods (GDF)):** The GDF is first joint venture non dividend social business in Bangladesh has established at 2006 with investing equal capital share by Grameen group and Danone Company. At 2007, GDF officially announced their “Unique Proximity” social business model with Tk. 75 000 000 (US\$ 937 500) initial capital and established first factory in Bogra (a Northern district of Bangladesh), aimed to produce the daily health nutrition food that is known as yoghurt to provide the malnutrition of low income people within their buying afford (Rodrigues and Baker, 2012). With this aim, at February 2007 a small plant has designed by the Danone engineers with only 3,000 kg production capacity a day. But as for social responsibilities and rising market demand, the present production capacity has jumped to 10,000 kg day<sup>-1</sup>. The significant objective behind the established of GDF is basically to remove the malnutrition challenges of low income communities who are cannot afford traditional market products and ensuring economical sustainability with empowering the stampeded community (Rodrigues and Baker, 2012). So, the objective of GDF can be described with both social and economical perspective.

**Social success:** The social aim of GDF is to support the poorest community and under privileged children by providing them daily health essential nutrition with affordable price (Ghalib *et al.*, 2009). The main basic nutrition is considered the protein-energy and micronutrient that are help to grow up healthy. But, many rural mothers cannot afford to feed the complementary food and nutrition to their children due to their extremes poverty (Garrette and Karnani, 2010; Ghalib *et al.*, 2009). As a result poor eyesight, malnutrition, impaired mental development and many other challenges has to face them from the very beginning of their birth (Garrette and Karnani, 2010). With aim to solve that problem GDF has started to produce a multi-nutritious yoghurt namely “Shokti +” and marketing with a nominal profit only Tk. 5.00 of each 80 g cup at 2007 (Ghalib *et al.*, 2009). But, due to global food crisis, at 2012 price has adjusted to Tk. 8 in rural area and Tk. 15 in capital city area which is around 30% less compeer to traditional business competitor. The product of “Shokti+” is tested by the international nutritionist that is full of essential aliment. A research of DANONE experts group shows that the “Shokti +” are ensured 6 essential nutritious of children, i.e., iron, zinc, iodine, live cultures, vitamin a and calcium those are vital factor for healthy growth and mental development of a children. Researches of The John Hopkins University of USA at 2008 shows that a 60 g cup of yoghurt can covers 30% daily needs of a children and improve the nutrition level who eat at least one cup yoghurt twice a week. To keep the product in perches range of margin community the “Shokti+” is packing and marketing with three convenience sizes (80, 60 and 40 g) with difference price. As a result the under privileged community who are failed to provide essential food and nutrition to their children can pack that deficiency of nutrition by providing “Shokti +” within their buying afford. As upshot, doubtlessly it is a maximum social contribution to underprivileged community of a developing country.

**Economical success:** The prime economic aim of the Grameen Danone Foods (GDF) is to minimize the poverty and creating employment by settling the most expressing social demand. From the review study of GDF, it found that at December, 2012, the Grameen Danone directly has created 264 jobs and a large distribution channel where around 1500 saleswomen have been generating their regular income on average Tk. 70-100 per day. The shops owners are also benefited from selling “Shokti+”. As data of 2010, >8,000 shops owner getting advantage from regular selling of “Shokti+”. It is estimated that the number of distribution shops will be enhancement around

40,000 very soon. On the other hand, by supplying raw milk to the plant around 370 farmers getting fixed regular income and improves their income around 40%. Moreover, it is estimated that within 2020 the total number of factory will be reached >50 and a huge job opportunity will create at that time (Rodrigues and Baker, 2012). Except this direct and indirect depended employee, the GDF organized many workshop and training program target to build the skilled work team. So, from the operational graphs of GDF, it concluded that Grameen Danone project has been mass contributing to develop the social and economical condition of Bangladesh with a social business model.

**Case study 2 (Grameen Healthcare Service (GHS)):** The GHS is another successful social business in Bangladesh that has been providing the health related service and advocacy to the low income group to ensure their healthy and better life. It has established with the partnership investment of “Grameen Kalyan”, “Grameen Shakti” and “Grameen Telecom Trust” with aim to identify the health hazard challenges of low income community and provide them better service within their affords. With that aim, a flagship hospital the “Grameen Green Children (GC) eye hospital” has established with collaboration of GHS and Green Children Foundation at November 2007 in Bogra with object to provide the eye service of rural community (Yunus *et al.*, 2010). After the highly success and better service of the first hospital “Grameen GC eye hospital-2” and “Grameen GC eye hospital-3” has established in Barisal at May 2009 and in Thakurgaon at March 2013 respectably (Yunus *et al.*, 2010). Later to diversify the service and meet the other health related challenges, the GHS has established a nursing college in Dhaka at 2010 with the collaborations of NIKE Foundation and Glasgow Caledonian University and a water treatment plant “Grameen Veolia Water Limited” at 2008 with the collaboration of Veolia Water AMI French Company to meet the pure drinking water challenges of rural people. Moreover, day after day many health challenges has been identifying and GHS diversifying their service with creating social and economical success using social business model.

**Social success:** The social objective of GHS is to keep the health hazard challenges in sustainable level in rural community and provide health related service to the low income group with a nominal cost which is absence in conventional health organization. With this target, a survey has conducted by GHS and identified, eyesight, nursing and pure drinking water is most emphasizing problem in rural area especially in riverbank people. So, to meet those challenges, at 2007 GHS has established first

“Grameen GC eye hospital” as social business model to solve the eyesight problem of the low income people (Yunus *et al.*, 2010). Later, after the success of first eye hospital and to cover the huge population, “Grameen eye hospital-2” and “Grameen eye hospital-3” has established in Barisal and Thakurgaon respectably. Now three Grameen eye hospitals have been operating successfully in three different districts as social business model. A statistical report of GHS at 2014 shows that the three Grameen eye care hospital along served 7,55,108 patients with a nominal cost within their afford where 1,66868 of them are free of cost. That is a big success and huge contribution of social business in eye care sector of Bangladesh (Table 1).

Not only eye care but also in case of providing quality nursing, the HGS has sighted and facilitated better nursing institutional service. To meet the social demand and quality nursing the GHS has established the “Grameen Caledonian College of Nursing (GCCN)” in Dhaka at 2010 with the collaboration of NIKE Foundation and Glasgow Caledonian University of UK. The GCCN has started first academic batch with 40 students with allowed study loan where top three of them are funded fully scholarship. In term of arsenic free pure water challenge, the GHS has joined with Veolia Water AMI French Company and established “Grameen Veolia Water Ltd. (GVW)” in Goalmari at 2008. The GVW plant is purifying and supplying the river water as suitable to drinking and cooking. As a result arsenic free safe drinking water could provided to around 1,00,000 residents of 5 villages in Goalmari area. Recently “Water Jar” distribution system has added with a channel with aim to distribute arsenic free pure water to remote area. Other most, to provide easy and convenience pregnancy service of remote rural women, a monitoring and tracking software “Shumata” has invented by GHS that provide clinical and doctor support of pregnant women. Another vaccine tracking software “Dolna” are also working for rural service as like social business model.

Table 1: Performance of three social eye hospitals, Dec. 2014 (GHS Annual Report)

| Descriptions                     | Grameen G.C. eye hospital |         |            |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------|------------|
|                                  | Bogra                     | Barisal | Thakurgaon |
| Number of patient treated        | 429365                    | 273721  | 52022      |
| With charge                      | 324640                    | 231558  | 32042      |
| Without charge                   | 104725                    | 42163   | 19980      |
| Total number of camp organized   | 520                       | 273     | 88         |
| Total cataract surgery performed | 17815                     | 8520    | 1248       |
| Without charge                   | 2909                      | 2294    | 379        |
| Subsidized                       | 4672                      | 1169    | 528        |
| Other eye surgery performed      | 3985                      | 3323    | 324        |
| Total surgery performed          | 21800                     | 11843   | 1572       |

**Economical success:** The economical objective of GHS is to create employment and development of human resources by providing academic and professional training. To develop the human skilled GHS has organized many international standard workshop and seminar. To meet the demand of skill nurse the GHS has formatted joint venture nursing college in Bangladesh and has providing international quality diploma. Grameen Kalyan is another social business in Bangladesh that assures immediate job placement for nurse after completing their nursing diploma (Yunus *et al.*, 2010). As a result a skills nurse team has been placing in the different national and international hospital they are contributing to our economy. The eye care hospital and Grameen Veolia Water are two more important projects of GHS that are creating huge job opportunity and developing the rural infrastructure of rural economic. Moreover, many direct and indirect beneficiaries are now getting solvency from Grameen eye hospital and Grameen water plant. Finally is concluded that the GHS has stepped out the rural women from their house to workplace to contribute the rural economy. As a result the productive contribution of women workers develop the rural and national economy of Bangladesh.

**Case study 3 (Grameen Intel Social Business (GISB)):**

The GISB is an IT related social business launch with aim to improve the living standard of rural people and solve their social challenges using information technology. As that mission, at 2007, GISB has started journey with a partnership of Grameen Trust and Intel Corporation to providing IT service for rural entrepreneur using computing technology. The mission of that social business is to provide the technology facilities to the margin community with an affordable price and development of their socio-economic condition. As like other social business in Bangladesh, the GISB also has both social and economical success.

**Social success:** Bangladesh is agro based country with poor technology. Around 80 million of people are living on different subsector of agriculture (Ferdous and Hossain, 2015) where most of them are little learn about soil nutrient, qualities seed, market information and plant disease. As a result in-spite of having maximum afford the farmer's cannot harvest as they expects. At this circumstance to cut down such unexpected problem, GISB invents "Mrittika" and "Ankur" to agriculture software where "Mrittika" recommends and analysis the soil nutrient and "Ankur" selects and recommends the seed on base of season and land condition. With, the successful practice and implementation of "Mrittika" and

"Ankur" nowadays the farmer can get an estimation of necessary fertilizers and proper time to seed plant. As a result the farmers are getting their maximum harvest with a minimum expense. The "Protikar" and the "Vistar" are two another eAgro Software those are supporting to agriculture betterment. The "Protikar" advised to cure plant diseases and "Vistar" provides marketing information (seller and buyer) to the farmer. To make those services more convenience the GISB signed an agreement at 2015 with Rural Reconstruction Foundation (RRF) and share their experience, research and eAgro Software to train up and develop the rural farmer. Another telecom business expert "Win-Miaki" has signed with GISB at 2014 and has been providing mobile agriculture service to the rural community for their better farming.

**Economical success:** The financial condition of agro farmer in our country is unexpectedly bad. Most of them are living on hand to mouth. Though at 1970, so called golden period of farming, the agricultural sector has contributed around 60% of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but dramatically this contribution went down it to unsatisfactory level near about 16% at present (Ferdous and Hossain, 2015). The main reason behind the down worth has identified the lack of use modern technology in agriculture sector. At this circumstance, the GISB efficiently guided the farmer in term of fertilizers, seed selection, plant cure and marketing information. As a result, the farmer can reduce the over production cost and harvest the maximum crops. Moreover, by using the "Vistar" software the farmer getting the marketing (buyer and seller) information to make sales or buy with fair price. As data of 2015, around 1500 farmer in Jessore are economically benefited with using eAgro Software. Nowadays, this service of eAgro has designed very easy and with convenient. The farmer can get solution of any agro problem over phone call or Short Message Text (SMS). So that reason, a quick decision and action can possible to take with minimum expenses. Nowadays, with the advancement of GISB many farmers have been getting benefits both socially and economically.

## DISCUSSION

From the discussion of social business case studies of Bangladesh, it is found that social business is the best way to meet the social needs and economical challenges of developing countries where the national budget and the traditional business failed to do. It is proved that social business able to perform with doable standard objective and can generate personal income for entrepreneur and meet the social needs of disadvantage

peoples as well as. However, some private business organization in Bangladesh has been operating using social business concept but government organization should to boost this concept for social and economic betterment. But, fact is that most of policy maker and entrepreneurs of Bangladesh knows little about the social business success. Many of young entrepreneurs thought social business is only for social benefit not for their personal income. That is due to young entrepreneurs are not interested to be social entrepreneur. At this circumstance to boost the social business concept, promotional activities are must required from both government and private level.

Business capital has identified another most important barrier of social enterprise. It is found that, due to lack of capital many young entrepreneurs cannot form the social business in spite of having their strong willingness. As a result the young generation looking employment to traditional company in spite of having their entrepreneurship capacity. But due to global crisis and retrenchment policy, the employment facilities of traditional organization has been constricting day by day. As a result number of unemployment has been rising alarming way. A study of International Labor Organization (ILO) has shows that Bangladesh is twelfth alarming country of the world where unemployment is rising. At this circumstance to handle that problem the policy maker should to divert the job seeker to the entrepreneur and the government and donor organization should take positive initiative to funding for such type of business.

## CONCLUSION

From the analysis of social business case studies, it is signified that social business has been creating significantly social and economical values and meet the social challenges successfully. So success stories, described in this study would be stormed the policy maker to be more concern for develop new enterprise with social business model. This study also will be referable and endurable to the new generation to be social entrepreneur rather than job seeker which will reduce the unemployment rate of Bangladesh and boost up the economical growth as well as. It also could be preferable to the international policy maker, especially to the developing countries to resolve their country's social challenges and speed up their economical growth. Finally, it could be concluded that social business model is significantly potential to create social and economical value and remove the social challenges from developing economies.

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