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Monthly Newsletter

August 2024

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CEO'S MESSAGE

Dear Members, Donors, Mentors, and Partners,

Greetings from the Indian Social Responsibility Network (ISRN)!

As we embrace another month, I am filled with pride reflecting on our journey and the impactful strides we are making together. This August, our initiatives continue to resonate deeply within the communities we serve, showcasing the commitment and resilience that define ISRN.

I am thrilled to highlight the remarkable progress of our flagship programs, notably the Uttam School Initiative, which has revitalized **53 educational institutions across Delhi,**



Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. By modernizing classrooms and promoting menstrual hygiene management, we are not only enhancing educational quality but also fostering **an inclusive environment for over 12,000 students.** Our recent expansion into Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand is a testament to our ongoing commitment to sustainable change.

In agriculture, our partnership with SFAC and NAFED is transforming farming communities through initiatives like the Shri Mahasu Devta Chakrata Farmer Producer Company Limited. By uniting local farmers and promoting sustainable practices, we are paving the way for collective growth. Additionally, the recognition of the Invanayan Nagari Farmer Producer Company Limited as the first all-female FPO to receive a Mandi License in Lakhimpur Kheri underscores our dedication to women's empowerment in agriculture.

In collaboration with USAID, our MOMENTUM Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity project has achieved significant outreach, administering over **1.75 lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccines** and supporting numerous immunization sessions. Our participation in events like the "Advancing Localization" marketplace reflects our commitment to local ownership and sustainable development.

This month, we successfully conducted a series of satellite workshops in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand in partnership with the **Social Stock Exchange**. These workshops provided vital information to over 300 NPO representatives, enabling **72 organizations to register on the SSE platform.** This marks a significant achievement, demonstrating the power of collective effort in mobilizing grassroots organizations. In our **NGO Clinic Podcast**, we explored the crucial role of communication in NGO outreach with insights from industry leaders. This dialogue underscores the importance of effective communication strategies in elevating our collective impact.

As we continue to navigate challenges and embrace opportunities, I extend my deepest gratitude to each member of our ISRN family, our dedicated partners, and our supportive donors. Together, we are not only achieving milestones but also fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation.

Thank you for being an integral part of our mission to create a more equitable and sustainable future.

Warm regards,
Santosh Gupta,
CEO, ISRN

Empowering Futures: The Uttam Schools Initiative – Beyond Education



With over eight years of transformative impact in the education sector, ISRN's flagship program, the **Uttam School Initiative**, has become a beacon of hope for underserved regions. Through the revitalization of **53 educational institutions**, professional training for **over 500 teachers**, and direct improvement in the lives of **12,000+ students**, this initiative spans across Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. Recently, the program has extended its reach to **9 additional schools in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand**, aiming for long-lasting, sustainable change.



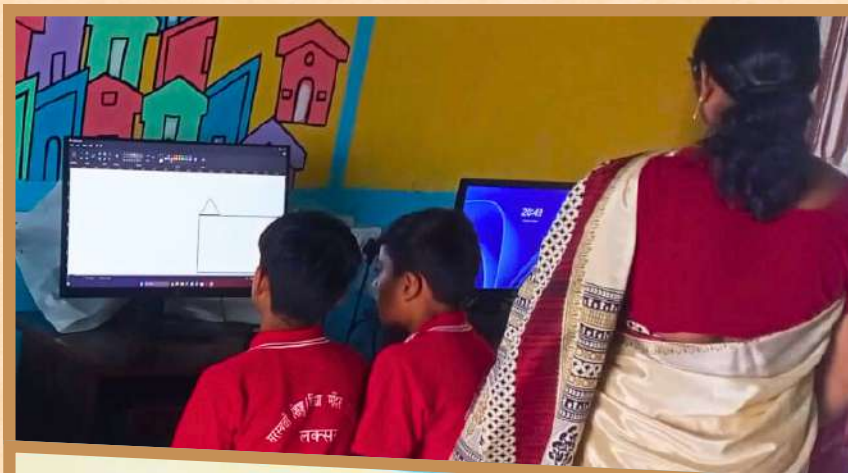
Key Highlights of the Uttam Schools Initiative:

- **Revitalizing Education** : Shifting from conventional teaching methods to modern approaches, this initiative enhances the overall quality of education.
- **Upgraded Infrastructure** : Modernized classrooms and facilities promotes a promising learning environment, significantly boosting student engagement.
- **Health & Hygiene** : The provision of toilets and safe drinking water ensures that students health needs are met, leading to reduced absenteeism.
- **Tech Integration** : Installation of smart Interactive Panels and digital libraries empowers students with essential digital literacy, preparing them for a tech-driven future.

- **Menstrual Hygiene Management** : With the introduction of sanitary vending machines and incinerators, the program addresses the critical needs of female students, promoting dignity and comfort.
- **Cultural Enrichment** : Through Bala paintings, local art and culture are preserved, instilling pride and identity among students.
- **Skills Development** : Modern infrastructure equips students with competitive skills, enhancing their academic and career readiness.
- **Community Empowerment & Gender Equality** : The improved facilities benefit not only the students but also the surrounding community, promoting inclusivity, ownership, and gender equality.



This holistic approach has laid the foundation for a more inclusive, equitable, and prosperous future, ensuring that the students and communities we serve thrive beyond the classroom.



Formation & Promotion of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs under the Central Sector Scheme for Formation & Promotion of 10,000 FPOs

ISRN, in collaboration with SFAC and NAFED, is making significant strides in revolutionizing India's agricultural landscape through the promotion and support of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs).

One such initiative, the Shri Mahasu Devta Chakrata Farmer Producer Company Limited in Chakrata, Dehradun, is transforming the farming community by uniting local farmers, opening new markets, and embracing sustainable farming practices. With equity grants and capacity-building efforts, this FPO is paving the way for collective growth and prosperity.



Similarly, in Bahria Block, Uttar Pradesh, the ISRN-promoted and NAFED-supported Gangapar Fed Farmer Producer Company Limited was recently commended during a surprise inspection by NAFED senior officials. Their review of key documents, field activities, and overall progress earned praise and guidance, bolstering the FPO's commitment to agricultural excellence.



In another significant achievement, the Hon'ble Cabinet Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Ashish Singh Patel, awarded the Mandi License to Mrs. Babita Devi, Director of the ISRN-promoted Invanayan Nagari Farmer Producer Company Limited, making it the first FPO in Lakhimpur Kheri to receive this license. This all-female FPO, comprising 300 members, is a beacon of women's empowerment in agriculture, allowing registered traders and processing centers to enhance trade opportunities within designated APMCs.



These initiatives reflect ISRN's ongoing efforts to empower rural communities, promote sustainable farming, and foster economic growth through innovative agricultural practices.



MOMENTUM Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity Project

Indian Social Responsibility Network is working with USAID on MOMENTUM Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity project, to amplify the immunization coverage and government's immunization drive in Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Despite prevalent misconceptions and myths, the team achieved significant outreach by **engaging 3,933 individuals** through various community mobilization and awareness initiatives, such as Community/Group meetings, house-to-house visits, IPC, Miking, FGD meeting, to name a few. So far, the team has successfully **administered over 1.75 lakh doses of the COVID-19 vaccines** to eligible beneficiaries. The project also supported 93 RI session sites in the month of August'24, **administering 3,427 doses** and ensuring that **94 children** received full immunization.

Meeting with Faith Based Organizations

On 2nd August 2024, a collaborative effort to strengthen Routine Immunization was done with Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in the East Khasi Hills districts of Meghalaya. A focused discussion was held at the Community Hall in Mawprem, East Khasi Hills, bringing together 14 prominent leaders and heads from various religious denominations. The ISRN team introduced the session, welcoming the participants and outlining the meeting's agenda, which centered on the expectations from FBOs in supporting Routine Immunization.



The primary objective of the activity was to sensitize and educate religious leaders about vaccines and immunization, address the challenges encountered in Routine Immunization, and foster collaboration with faith leaders to extend the reach to hesitant beneficiaries through their influence.

The discussion emphasized the significance of vaccines, the diseases they prevent, and the obstacles faced in Routine Immunization efforts. Leaders were encouraged to become ambassadors for Routine

Immunization within their communities. As a result of the discussion, the leaders committed to spreading awareness about the importance of immunization during church services and within their communities. They also planned to organize further awareness programs in collaboration with healthcare workers and to engage Headmen and Village Council Members in following up with hesitant or dropout beneficiaries.

The activity was marked by the enthusiasm of faith-based leaders, who expressed a strong willingness to collaborate with healthcare workers to strengthen immunization efforts in their communities.

Celebration of World Hepatitis Days

D. Block Colony, located next to the main town of Kohima, is home to residents who are deeply engaged in their professional lives, making it challenging to coordinate events. After weeks of effort to find a suitable date and time, the ISRN Team successfully observed World Hepatitis Day at the Panchayat Hall with 40 participants. Despite the challenges posed by the busy schedules of the residents, who are largely involved in businesses, the team persevered, scheduling the event in the evening to accommodate the community's preferences.



Prior to the event, the team met with the colony's ward chairman and women leaders, who thoroughly vetted the program. The program featured Dr. Kekhrievor Suohu, MO DRTB Khuzama, who spoke on viral hepatitis, Mr. Egumsing Nsarangbe, SPM JSI, who discussed the benefits of immunization, and Mrs. Alice Kamei, who highlighted the importance of Vitamin A and deworming for children under five.

Additionally, a hepatitis screening services was also provided to the participants, which many took advantage of. The colony's Woman President expressed her appreciation for the team's efforts in organizing this special event and assured better cooperation for future activities.



Focus Group Discussion Meeting on Routine Immunization



Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) serve as a crucial platform for individuals in the community to voice their opinions and concerns about immunization. These discussions help identify and address misconceptions, fears, and cultural beliefs that may hinder vaccine uptake. Through these interactions, specific barriers, such as issues with accessibility, lack of information, or mistrust in healthcare systems, are uncovered. FGDs also shed light on factors that facilitate vaccination, such as strong community support or effective communication strategies.

The insights gathered from FGDs reveal what drives individuals to choose vaccination or avoid it, guiding the creation of targeted educational campaigns and interventions that are tailored to the community's unique needs. This understanding helps in developing more persuasive and culturally sensitive communication strategies by recognizing which messages resonate most with different groups. Furthermore, engaging community members in FGDs fosters a sense of involvement and ownership in the immunization program, leading to increased community support and participation in vaccination efforts.



In Agartala, Tripura, a total of three FGDs were conducted in Project Phase 5.0, with 100 participants comprising mothers, children, community members, and grandparents. As the team conducted door-to-door visits throughout the village, they discovered that some children had not been vaccinated. The discussions focused on the types of vaccines, the diseases they prevent, the importance of the MCP card, and the significance of timely vaccination.



It was emphasized that delayed vaccination could leave children vulnerable to 12 vaccine-preventable diseases, underscoring the necessity of adhering to the vaccination schedule. Mothers actively participated in the discussions, sought clarification on their concerns, and committed to ensuring their children receive timely vaccinations. The success of these FGDs in Agartala highlights the importance of these discussions in fostering informed decision-making and supporting routine immunization efforts.



Observation of World Breastfeeding Week

On Wednesday, August 7, 2024, the ISRN team, in collaboration with the Raj Bhawan Dispensary Staff, observed World Breastfeeding Week by organizing a comprehensive program focused on breastfeeding. Prior to the event, on August 5, the team visited Birup Colony to meet the ASHA and discussed the upcoming program and its objectives, ensuring that the necessary preparations were in place.



The program on August 7 saw the participation of over 30 individuals who came together to celebrate the importance of breastfeeding. The session included detailed education on various aspects of breastfeeding, such as the crucial benefits of breast milk for infants, the significance of breastfeeding for both maternal and child health, and proper breastfeeding techniques. Participants were informed about the importance of initiating breastfeeding as soon as possible after birth, the role of colostrum, and the recommendation for exclusive breastfeeding up to six months of age.

Additionally, the program covered the introduction of weaning foods, the importance of Routine Immunization (RI) vaccinations, and guidance on where, when, and how to access child vaccinations. The session also addressed the potential side effects of not providing breast milk to both babies and mothers. Overall, the event was successfully executed, achieving its goal of enhancing breastfeeding awareness and practices.

Baby Show Program

On August 1st, ISRN, in collaboration with the UPHC staff, organized a vibrant baby show at the UPHC Sagolband premises, commencing at 11 am. The event aimed to enhance the visibility and branding of UPHC Sagolband. The gathering saw enthusiastic participation from the UPHC staff, ASHA workers, ISRN team members, and mothers, totaling 30 participants. The highlight of the program was a speech by the Medical Officer in Charge (MOIC), who addressed the significance of breastfeeding, in alignment with Breastfeeding Week.



alignment with Breastfeeding Week. day and expressed appreciation for the ASHAs' efforts in boosting the footfall at UPHC Sagolband. During the event, four children who met the Full Immunization Criteria (FIC) were honored by the MOIC, Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), and ASHAs. The mothers of these children expressed their gratitude through heartfelt testimonials, acknowledging the dedication of the staff and ASHAs in ensuring their children received timely vaccinations. They also urged other mothers across the state to be diligent about vaccination schedules.



The MOIC conveyed deep appreciation to the ISRN team for orchestrating such a successful program, which significantly contributed to increasing UPHC Sagolband's reach and visibility.

'Advancing Localization: Adapt, Enable and Empower' – A convening organized by JSI

The ISRN National project team attended the "Advancing Localization: Adapt, Enable, Empower!" event organized by John Snow India as part of the Momentum Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity project on August 21, 2024, in New Delhi. The event was rich with compelling narratives on the significance of localization, featuring engaging deliberations, panel discussions, strategic product launches, champion talks, and a dynamic marketplace highlighting locally-led approaches and innovations.



This emphasis on local ownership and the sustainability of development initiatives was a central theme. The ISRN team actively participated in the event, specifically marketplace, showcasing the project's progress and impact in the targeted regions. ISRN was also provided a token an appreciation for their work under the project in the assigned geographies.



Capacity Building Initiative



ISRN and NSE Partner for Social Stock Exchange Awareness Workshops Across Three States

In a significant collaboration between the Indian Social Responsibility Network (ISRN) and the Social Stock Exchange (SSE) under the National Stock Exchange (NSE), a series of satellite workshops were successfully conducted in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Jharkhand in August 2024. This initiative was part of the larger strategy to raise awareness and increase registrations for the Social Stock Exchange platform, which offers non-profit organizations (NPOs) an opportunity to leverage the capital markets for funding their social impact work.

The workshops were planned in preparation for the forthcoming Varanasi NSE-SSE Awareness Seminar, aimed at mobilizing eligible NPOs to participate in the seminar and explore the benefits of listing on the NSE-SSE platform. These satellite workshops took place in Lucknow on August 20th, Ranchi on August 25th, and Patna on August 27th, with the goal of encouraging grassroots organizations across the region to register on the SSE.



OBJECTIVES & PLANNED ACTIVITIES

The primary objectives were to conduct three satellite workshops before August 31st, 2024, in Lucknow, Ranchi, and Patna, attracting registrations for the NSE-SSE platform. ISRN also focused on mobilizing relevant NPOs to participate in the main awareness seminar in Varanasi. The workshops provided critical information on the Social Stock Exchange and its registration process, alongside demonstrating the long-term benefits of SSE registration for eligible non-profit organizations.

To achieve this, ISRN collaborated closely with NSE's Investor Service Team and local partners in all three states to plan logistics, venues, and trainers for the workshops. Communication was established with NPOs in these states, and the eligibility criteria for SSE registration were disseminated widely.





Workshop Agenda and Key Outcomes

Each workshop followed a structured agenda that introduced participants to the Social Stock Exchange and its function within the NSE. The sessions covered key topics, including:

- An introduction to the SSE and NSE
- An overview of social impact audits
- A step-by-step guide to the SSE registration process (both offline and online)
- A live demo by the NSE team
- A Q&A session for NPOs to address specific queries
- Connecting eligible NPOs with the NSE team for final registration

These workshops, held in Lucknow (covering 20 districts of Uttar Pradesh), Ranchi (covering 10 districts of Jharkhand), and Patna (covering 18 districts of Bihar), attracted over 300 NPO representatives. Out of these, 72 organizations met the eligibility criteria and were successfully registered for SSE, marking a significant achievement for the initiative.





Impact and Future Steps

The collaboration between ISRN and NSE, supported by local partner organizations, demonstrated the power of collective efforts in mobilizing grassroots organizations. By leveraging ISRN's 800+ strong NPO network, the workshops provided essential support to organizations aiming to scale their impact through formal SSE registration.

As a knowledge partner, ISRN will continue to engage with NPOs and guide them through the registration process. The successful completion of these workshops marks the beginning of a long-term collaboration aimed at empowering NPOs and enhancing their ability to attract sustainable funding for social impact.

These efforts culminated in the main NSE-SSE Seminar in Varanasi, further strengthening the presence of grassroots organizations on the SSE platform and opening new opportunities for social impact financing in India.



ISRN's NGO Clinic Podcast- Episode 7



Mastering Communication: Strategies for Effective NGO Outreach

In Episode 7 of the ISRN NGO Clinic Podcast, we dove deep into the critical role of communication in the success of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Communication is not just about exchanging information—it's the backbone of organizational development, resource mobilization, program implementation, and branding. Through this episode, we explore the different types of communication, their impact on organizational effectiveness, and how NGOs can craft and execute robust communication strategies to elevate their outreach efforts.

The key speaker, Mr. Mukesh Sharma, Executive Director of PSI India, brings over 20 years of expertise in program management, organizational development, and urban health. He shares valuable insights on how NGOs can leverage communication to overcome challenges, engage stakeholders, and enhance team collaboration. Whether it's through social media, IEC materials, or internal communications, Mr. Sharma provides practical advice on how to tailor communication strategies to different audiences and measure their effectiveness. This episode is packed with actionable tips, real-world examples, and emerging trends in NGO communication. From branding to social media marketing, and from resource mobilization to documentation, this discussion will equip NGOs with the tools they need to amplify their impact and achieve their mission.

In a special rapid-fire round, Mr. Sharma answers quick-fire questions on key communication elements that can transform an NGO's outreach and effectiveness. Key Discussion Points: - Understanding the fundamental role of communication in NGO success - Exploring different types of communication and their organizational impact - Best practices for internal and external communications - The role of communication in resource mobilization and fundraising - Effective strategies for program implementation and stakeholder engagement - The importance of documenting communication efforts for accountability and transparency - Leveraging social media for advocacy and outreach - Innovations in communication tools and strategies for NGOs.

[Watch the full episode here!](#)

PERSONAL BULLETIN

by Ashish Mansharamani, Associate Director, ISRN

Empowering Change: How NGOs and Civil Society should drive ESG and SDG Capacity Building

Over the past few decades, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and voluntary organizations (VOs) have become pivotal players in the development landscape. From participating in global forums like those sponsored by the United Nations to empowering the poor at the grassroots level, NGOs have cemented their role in fostering change. Whether by offering immediate assistance in disaster management or championing sustainable development, their contributions have grown significant enough to earn them the titles of the "Independent Sector", "Third Sector" or "Social Impact Sector"

India's Expanding NGO Sector

Currently, India boasts an impressive 3.4 million registered NGOs working across a variety of issues. Statistics from the Central Statistical Organization reveal a staggering presence, with approximately four NGOs for every 1,000 people in urban areas and two per 1,000 in rural regions. Despite this large number, only 7 - 9% of these NGOs regularly file returns or maintain proper records. This low compliance rate indicates a broader problem - a lack of capacity in key areas such as documentation, compliance, and the understanding of emerging concepts like Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). During a recent visit to India's heartland, where I met over 300 NGOs, it became evident that many organizations are still unaware of the importance of ESG and SDG initiatives. Despite the growing emphasis on the Social Stock Exchange and corporate social responsibility (CSR) funding across the country, few NGOs are equipped to engage in the audits and certifications required for ESG compliance. The lack of training, documentation skills, and awareness has left a gap between grassroots efforts and the expectations of corporate and governmental bodies.

Bridging the Capacity Gap

This disconnect presents an urgent need for capacity building within the NGO sector. Many organizations lack the trained personnel and knowledge to implement ESG practices effectively. As a result, many NGOs cannot participate in ESG audits, impact assessments, and the certifications needed to validate their work. Bridging this gap requires a concerted effort to build the skills of NGO leaders and workers, ensuring they can meet the expected professional standards.

Understanding ESG and SDGs

ESG as a formal concept gained traction in the mid-2000s, following a United Nations report, although many organizations were already dealing with environmental and social issues. The 2015 formalization of the UN's SDGs further aligned global efforts towards sustainable development. For NGOs, ESG and SDGs offer frameworks for achieving long-term social and environmental impact.

The concept of ESG is built around three core components:

1. Environmental Criteria assess an organization's performance as a steward of the natural environment, focusing on challenges like climate change, resource depletion, and pollution management. NGOs working in this area must consider:

- Climate change mitigation strategies
- Energy usage and sustainability practices -
- Waste and pollution management

2. Social Criteria examine how an organization manages its relationships with employees, suppliers, consumers, and communities. This includes:

- Corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives
- Employee rights and working conditions
- Community engagement and development

3. Governance Criteria focus on leadership, audits, internal controls, and transparency. Strong governance is essential for preventing fraud, corruption, and mismanagement, which can damage an organization's reputation and stability. Key aspects include:

- Board composition and structure
- Executive remuneration policies
- Transparency and disclosure regulations



NGOs as Catalysts for Sustainable Change

Non-profit organizations play a crucial role in shaping corporate ethics and responsibility. They are key actors in advocating for human rights, environmental stewardship, and social equity. By promoting openness and accountability, NGOs ensure that corporations adhere to sustainable and ethical practices. Their involvement in governance structures, environmental advocacy, and community engagement underscores their vital role in driving ESG and SDG agendas. The collaboration between NGOs and corporations is becoming increasingly important as businesses seek to improve their ESG performance. Corporations are looking for NGOs with strong governance, clear strategies, and demonstrable impact to partner with. A well-defined ESG strategy allows for better alignment between NGOs and corporate entities, increasing the potential for impactful collaborations.

The Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

While NGOs may feel that ESG is not directly relevant to their core missions, it is important to recognize that ESG extends beyond an organization's purpose—it encompasses how that mission is carried out. A more holistic approach to operations ensures that NGOs not only advance their causes but also align with broader sustainability and governance goals. A recent study of 203 Indian and 41 international NGOs found that 53% of NGO leaders did not believe their organizations were capable of developing effective sustainability audit mechanisms. This highlights the need for leadership development and capacity building in order to meet ESG standards and take full advantage of the opportunities they present.

Leading the Way Forward

As ESG advocacy grows, NGOs and civil society organizations must lead by example, strengthening not only their actions but also their documentation of best practices. Building stronger networks and fostering national collaboration will be essential as ESG becomes an integral part of organizational operations. NGOs must embrace the challenges and opportunities that ESG and SDGs present, ensuring that they continue to play a central role in shaping a sustainable and equitable future. The road ahead is not without its hurdles, but the potential rewards are immense. By enhancing their capacity and aligning their practices with ESG and SDG goals, NGOs can help create a more sustainable and just world for all.

ISRN believes that having a right to live in equality is something each human deserves and with support from people like you, we are transforming the lives of thousands of fellow citizens. We have held workshops and training sessions for more than 800 member organisations, fostering a symbolic growth system

We genuinely appreciate all of your help, love, and support for ISRN.

We humbly ask that you continue to provide us with support, advice, and invaluable assistance that will enable us to ensure that each and everyone is empowered to grow and flourish in their own unique way.

Please scan the QR code to donate towards these causes, as your small contribution will help maintain smiles on million faces.



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Thank you for reading!



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