

## **An Evaluation of Partnerships That Exist Between Statutory and Voluntary Organizations: The Case Study of CRS and Caritas Zimbabwe**

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**Abstract:** *Despite the vast amount of work done by many organizations worldwide, particularly in Third World countries like Zimbabwe, the effectiveness of their partnerships in programming is still marginal. The major focus of this study was to evaluate the partnership that exists between International Non Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and their local implementing Partner Non-Governmental Organizations in order to establish areas that need improvement and strengthening. This study revealed that some of the partnerships that exist between these agencies are marred by challenges such as funding, implementing strategy, capacity building/training, strategic networking, consultative and joint initiatives. An analysis of interviews established that most partnerships existed in the area of implementation where local organizations are funded and this accounted for 30%. This is an area where NGOs obtain financial assistance to implement programmes. The other areas; capacity building/training shows 25% while strategic networking and consultative show 15%. The area showing the least was joint initiatives which had only 10% of the existing partnerships. This reflects the situation in most African countries where joint partnerships with NGOs are new phenomena and that the founding members of such NGOs embark on the programmes/projects for philanthropic reasons with very little knowledge of professional expertise needed to carry out these projects jointly. They outsource/consult or apply for people to help them beef up their expertise or train their staff to do so. The paper concludes by determining areas that need strengthening and proposes relevant policy recommendations which will contribute to future research on the effectiveness of partnerships. The need for partnerships to strengthen projects and programmes that are sustainable and which do not reinforce dependence was observed. The study further observed that conflict and misunderstandings within the partnering groups as another barrier which led to local organizations being reluctant to assume equal part in partnerships and to share information about the programme preferring to maintain confidentiality or protect their sovereignty. The study adds knowledge to our understanding of partnerships that exist between International Organizations and Local Organizations in Zimbabwe.*

**Key Words:** *Partnerships, International Non Governmental Organizations, Local Non Governmental organizations, Commercial Agencies, Statutory Agencies, Voluntary Agencies, Not for Profit Organizations.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Robbins and Coulter {2007} define an organization as a “deliberate arrangement of people to accomplish some specific purposes”. An organization is expected to have an identity of its own which makes it independent of its founder members and is characterized by regulations and roles {Potter 2000}. Simon {1976} says organizations are systems of behaviours designed for human beings and maybe similar to machines as they are expected to accomplish certain goals. It follows from these definitions that there are many organizations which are labelled as being statutory, voluntary or private organizations that provide services to the civic society. Hence, it is pertinent to understand some of the makeup of these organizations.

### **II. Types Of Social Service Organizations**

Social services are provided by statutory, voluntary organizations or private enterprises with funding. That source of funding can be Government or nongovernmental organizations. For example, there are three types of agencies making up social service agencies in Zimbabwe. Statutory agencies provide social services usually on an international and national basis. These can be UN agencies, local authorities or Government Social Service Departments. All these organizations operate under the direction of government. Government Departments such as the Department of Social Welfare assist individuals, groups, and communities to meet their basic needs and promote adequate social functioning through the provision of social services to the people.

Voluntary agencies and/or NGOs are non-profit making agencies and non statutory organizations can be international or local and aim to complement government efforts. They help improve and shape the lives of the people they render services to and have to be registered under Private Voluntary Organization {PVO} of

1976. They are motivated by altruistic and humanitarian orientation and come into existence by reason or action of groups.

Commercial agencies are those providing services to civic society on a cost recovery basis and often provide services as part of their social responsibility. One such commercial agencies in Zimbabwe is CONNECT a voluntary organization providing counselling services on a commercial and cost recovery basis.

Zimbabwe is characterized by the availability of the above mentioned statutory and non-statutory organizations. There are operational and monitoring policies that guide the operations of these organizations such as PVO Act of 1976. This PVO Act stipulates that “every NGO that would like to operate at any level in the provision of humanitarian and development assistance in the country should be duly registered with the Ministry of Public and Social Services”. Hence all statutory and non-statutory agencies or organizations wanting to work in Zimbabwe in the humanitarian and development assistance programmes have to be registered if they are to be allowed to operate. This Act repealed the Private Voluntary Organizations Act {1976} and established an enabling environment for the operations, monitoring and regulation of all nongovernmental organizations operating in the country. According to this Act, any agency not adhering or complying with the specifications of this Act will be stopped from providing services.

### **III. Characteristics Of Statutory And Voluntary Social Welfare Organizations**

Aubrey {1997} says Non- Governmental organizations or not for profit making organizations are of different sizes and are also involved in development activities {to meet the needs of the local people}. Aubrey, {1997} names some organizations of these being the UN with its various agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, WHO, to name a few. These agencies operate in many countries with the mandate of providing development and humanitarian assistance programmes. Aubrey {1997} also identifies some of these organizations to be in the form of International Non-Governmental Organizations {INGOs} such as World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, USAID, German Technical Agency {GTZ}, Save the Children Alliance etc. which are international in nature and operate on a non –commercial basis. These organizations can be established through bi-lateral or multilateral agreements between and among governments. Some other agencies like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund {IMF} work hand in hand with the UN and other western donor countries to provide financial and other monetary relief programmes to countries in distress.

In Zimbabwe, local agencies such as government social services departments and local NGOs operate at different levels such as; National, provincial, district, ward and village level. Community Based Organizations {CBO} working at the lowest operational level are often supported by government and/or International Non-Governmental Organizations {INGO}. The legal status of statutory agencies like the Department of Social Services are quite different from non-statutory agencies. Statutory agencies have state control, while non-statutory agencies are controlled by Boards with state regulations.

### **IV. Partnerships In Programming**

These statutory and voluntary agencies often form partnerships directed at streamlining services and promoting efficiency in their activities. In realization of this, International, local organizations and implementing partners engage in what Aubrey {1997} termed "joined up thinking and joined up working or partnerships which is a form of collaboration or working together in a form of partnership". The Collins Dictionary {1991} defines partnerships as an equal commitment or the state of being partners. The Concise Oxford Dictionary {1992} defines partnerships in commercial terms as a person who shares or takes part with another, especially in a business firm with shared risks and profits. In line with this also, the web defines partnerships as a type of business entity in which partners share with each other the profits or losses of the business undertaking in which all have invested interest. {see:en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partnership{2007}. Another Web definition refers to a contract between two or more persons who agree to pool talents and money and share profits or losses {see:wordnet.princeton.edu/perll/webwn {2007}. On the other hand, Cornwell and Carson {[www.mcgraw-hill.co.uk/openup/chapters/9780335229116.pdf](http://www.mcgraw-hill.co.uk/openup/chapters/9780335229116.pdf)} define partnerships as “a shared commitment, where all partners have a right and an obligation to participate and will be affected equally by the benefits and disadvantages arising from the partnership and what a commitment amounts to may vary from one context to another”.

Cornell and Carson and UNHCR, {2001-2013}, explain different types of partnerships between international donor agency, service providers and service users. These include implementing partnerships, operational partnerships, ideological partnerships, ethical partnerships and problem oriented partnerships. According to UNHCR {2001-2013}, an international agency provides financial support to an NGO to perform specific services for the civil society. In this type of co-operation arrangement, an implementing agency is regulated in a formal project agreement subject to the supporting international agency financial rules and regulations.

The other type of partnership can be in the form of operational responsibilities which involves voluntary close coordination between an international agency and NGOs. According to UNHCR, this does not include financial support by the international agency but support of the agency's work procedures in development and humanitarian assistance such as emergency relief, HIV and AIDS programming, education programs, and many other related development programs.

Cornwell and Carson (2007), say other forms of partnerships such as ideological partnership arises from a shared outlook or point of view. A typical example would be those organizations which share the same point of view in their cultural or religious beliefs.

Ethical partnerships on the other hand have an ethical agenda that seeks to promote a particular type of life. There are problem oriented partnerships which are formed to meet specific problems or challenges such as drug addicts, neighbourhood watch etc.

The last type of partnerships refers to project and programme partnerships that are determined by the signing of a project or program contract spelling out the implementation of an agreed activity. Often, this type of partnership ends when the project has been implemented and evaluated. Once the funding ceases and the aims have been achieved, then the partnership could cease to exist {Cornwell and Carson in [www.mcgraw-hill.co.uk](http://www.mcgraw-hill.co.uk)}. For that reason, effective partnerships between NGOs and/or businesses and government remain necessary if social problems which require concerted efforts are to become and remain accountable, transparent, inclusive and to be able to draw upon the knowledge, experience and skills of professionals {Building on the Best 2003}.

## **V. Third World Countries**

Many Third World countries are affected by poverty and hence require assistance programmes provided by social service organizations. Zimbabwe is no exception because of its unique economic and natural problems. Under these circumstances, Zimbabwe or any other countries have resorted to partnerships between local and INGOs in order to address the natural development and humanitarian problems that affect their population such as - civil wars, corruption, divisions, crimes, disasters, poverty, HIV and AIDS, unemployment, high cost of living and problems which continue to affect the marginalized who are living in poverty. The World Bank defines poverty in absolute terms and extreme poverty as living on less than US\$1, 25 per day, and moderate poverty as less than US\$2 a day. See: <http://www.theZimbabwean.co.uk?business/65141?poverty-datum-line-increases-by.html#comments>. As a result, international, regional and local organizations are providing humanitarian and development services on a large scale in Zimbabwe. These western organizations continue to increase in number with different mandates and agendas and at the same time engaging local partnerships in their efforts to provide development and humanitarian assistance. This study was commissioned in order to evaluate the quality of partnerships between INGOs and local voluntary organizations operating in Zimbabwe.

## **VI. Theoretical Considerations**

The theoretical considerations for this study hinged on the classic academic explanations by Parsons {1902-1979, a Harvard Sociologist} who stipulates that a social system in this regard is made up of an organization and individuals working together to pursue common and interdependent goals in society {[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talcott\\_Parsons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talcott_Parsons)}. Chadwick {2001} observes that the explanation by Parsons that all social systems or societies perform certain functions around which they develop specialized subsystems which have different functions is very important. Some of these functions include; adaptation to the environment, goal attainment, integration and latent-tension management. Chadwick goes on to say if an organization fails to meet the expected goals, their reason to exist is questioned by the society.

Parson's theory confirms that individual organizations have expectations of the other's action and reaction to their behaviours, and that these expectations would be "derived" from the accepted norms and values of the society they are operating in {Chadwick, 2001}. As Parsons himself discovered, there would never exist any perfect "fit" between behaviours and norms of the organizations.

Contrary to prevailing myth, Parsons never spoke about a society where there was no conflict or some kind of "perfect" equilibrium {[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talcott\\_Parsons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talcott_Parsons)}. According to Parsons, these tensions are often a source of their strength rather than the opposite. He further recognizes this, stating that he treats "the structure of the system as problematic and subject to change," and that his concept of the tendency towards equilibrium "does not imply the empirical dominance of stability over change." He does, however, believe that these changes occur in a relatively smooth way. In such a scenario, individual organizations interact in their partnership in most environments that are ever changing through what Parsons called role bargaining. He also explains that, in their partnerships, they create norms that guide their partnerships and creating stability across social interactions. Where quality of partnership is not smooth and adaptation process cannot adjust, due to sharp shocks or immediate radical change, structural dissolution occurs and either new structures or partnerships

are formed, or a partnership is terminated. Hence Parson's theory becomes relevant and appropriate for this study.

## **VII. The Problem**

The study observed that at one time, Zimbabwe experienced severe socio - economic problems such as natural disasters, persistent droughts and violence. Other current problems include greed for money, power, corruption, divisions, and crimes against human life and against nature. Zimbabwe's unique economic and social problems according to Malaba {2006} were complicated by the economic climate which prevailed between 2000 and 2008. She says that the economy has shrunk cumulatively by about 40 % since 1999, poverty levels are increasingly worse for female-headed households and rural areas, the quality of education is declining, water and sanitation is worsening, de-industrialization with informal sector is increasing by 30%, hyper-inflation, lack of gender mainstreaming in policy formulation and households/persons per capita monthly expenditure is below the Poverty datum line. According to the Zimbabwe Statistical Office (Zimstats), the National Food Poverty Line for March 2013 as measured stood at US\$34, 84 per person, an increase of 1 percent from US\$34, 5 {Moyo 2013}. This has a high toll on the general populace. Malaba (2006) says this led to the rapid immigration of NGOs from the north and the west to address Zimbabwe's humanitarian and development programs. Although these organizations formed different partnerships, they continue to register mixed successes. The magnitude of the humanitarian programs does not seem to subside. Every year, sees new types of programs and clientele emerging in communities. This therefore leaves a lot to be desired in terms of the effectiveness of these partnerships in fighting social problems through development and humanitarian assistance programs.

## **VIII. Justification**

This study focused on Zimbabwe which is currently facing economic and social problems that necessitate the intervention of NGOs and government engaging in various partnerships. The study was an attempt to evaluate and recommend ways to address the problems on the ground in an effort to allow for fair service delivery by NGOs and government alike. The overall aim of the study was to show the strengths and weaknesses of partnerships in the hope of helping the government, NGOs and implementing partners to work towards a common goal. It is also hoped that the study will help researchers, scholars, development workers and indeed anyone who is interested in partnerships and development to grow academically and practically.

## **IX. Purpose**

The main purpose of this paper was to evaluate the output of partnerships that exist between statutory and voluntary organizations in Zimbabwe. The immediate objectives were;

- To identify the number of partnerships existing between the researched international organizations and local implementing partners.
- To examine the areas of their past and present partnership activities.
- To identify the quality of partnerships that exist between international local organizations
- To establish the challenges and constraints encountered in the execution of partnerships
- To determine areas that needs strengthening.
- To propose relevant policy recommendations.

## **X. The Methodology**

The study was based on qualitative research and field observations methodologies done in order to evaluate partnerships that exist between statutory and voluntary organizations in four provinces, namely; Masvingo, Mutare, Bulawayo and Harare in Zimbabwe. These areas are among the current provincial capitals of Zimbabwe and are made up of various urban and peri-urban areas that house many national, provincial district and village community events. Secondary data sources were also employed.

## **XI. The Target Population**

The target population was taken from two international NGOs namely Catholic Relief Services {CRS} and CARITAS National networks in development and humanitarian assistance programming. CARITAS National has a total number of twelve local NGOs implementing partners while CRS has a target population of 10 local NGOs as implementing partners. Therefore the total target population of local implementing partners for the two NGOs was 22 and directional officers were targeted as key informant respondents. These Key informants were obtained from twelve members of staff responsible for NGOs Partnership programmes at CRS, CARITAS National and local implementing partners of both INGOs. Other key informants were identified from 22 beneficiaries from 22 local implementing agencies.

## **XII. Sample**

A sample of 10 local NGOs was identified for the research as respondents out of the 22 of the target population. This figure represents 45% of the target population. Stratified random sampling was used to identify 5 local NGOs each from CRS and CARITAS respectively. Only one director and one programme officer were interviewed from each organization. All 100% of the identified key informants were included in the samples using purposive sampling. Two focused groups comprising 11 members each were formed.

## **XIII. Data Collection Methods**

Both primary and secondary methods of data collection were used. Interviews were carried out with member organizations and individuals. The methods used to gather data were questionnaires by e-mail. Data were obtained using in-depth interviews with key informants such as the Roman Catholic Missionaries, Heads of Organizations, Programme managers and beneficiaries using interview schedules. Data was also added from secondary data sources such as the School of Social Work at University of Zimbabwe's library. Focused Group Discussions were also held with some of the beneficiaries of the implementing programmes during a workshop.

## **XIV. Findings, Discussion And Analysis Of Data**

**Table 1: Existing Partnerships**

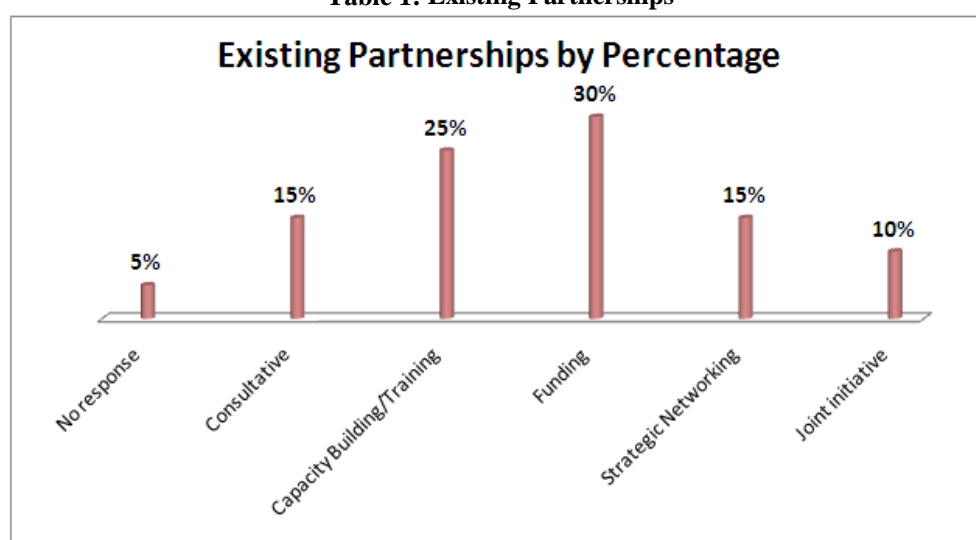


Table 1 above shows that more partnerships {30%} existed in the area of funding than in other areas because this is an area where NGOs obtain financial assistance to implement programmes. The other areas such as; capacity building/training occupied 25% of partnerships while strategic networking and consultative had 15% each of the partnerships. The area showing the least number of partnerships was the area of joint initiatives which had only 10% of the existing partnerships. The other 5% was not clearly defined or specified. These results reflect the situation in most African countries where joint partnerships with NGOs are new phenomena and are made in an effort to obtain professional expertise to carry out projects jointly.

## **XV. Partnerships In Training And Community Technology**

Partnerships in training and community technology were fairly limited probably because of the limited number of skilled trainers. Most implementing partners relied on trainers from NGOs and also those from fellow local NGOs. This was mostly because of the limited financial support that local NGOs were getting from INGOs which was not enough to support the hiring of skilled local trainers.

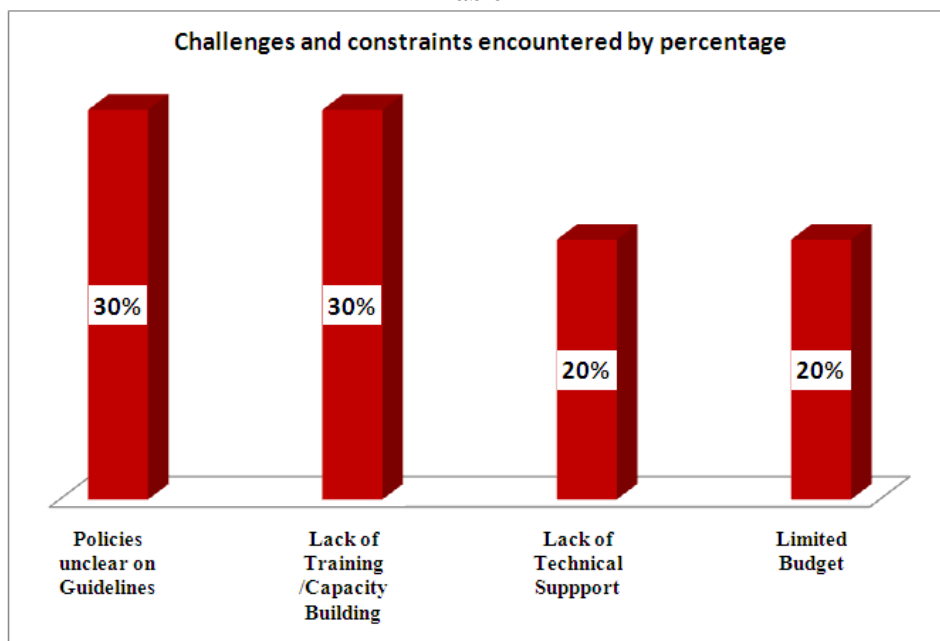
## **XVI. Status Of Present Partnerships**

Some implementing partners advised that the project funding was in distress. Most projects were closing down, a situation which threatened the existing relationship/ partnership. Most implementing partners expressed pessimism with the future. Local NGOs expressed the need for more technical support if they were going to continue with their activities.

The study also showed that the majority of implementing partners were facing many challenges in their implementation programmes. Most of the challenges were affecting the execution of partnerships related to policies and unclear guidelines in the implementation of programmes and lack of capacity building and training

of implementing partners coupled with limited budgets and lack of technical support. Table: 2 below shows the other challenges and constraints encountered by NGOs in the execution of their partnerships with INGOs. Unclear policies and guidelines and the lack of trainers in the area of capacity building topped the list of challenges after lack of sustainable budget and limited technical support.

Table 2



### XVII. Areas Needing Strengthening

**Case 1:** One staff member from INGOs observed that “Local NGOs have mastered the art of drafting fundable project proposals; as a result INGOs are finding it very difficult to select projects to fund because almost all the project proposals will be meeting the required criteria. We are now providing funding for few projects that advance empowerment of beneficiaries; after all there is donor fatigue out there”.

The above case observation highlights the need for partnerships to strengthen projects and programmes that are sustainable and which do not reinforce dependence on the part of recipients-as INGOs were finding it increasingly difficult to acquire funding for projects that are outside these criteria. INGOs also observed that project management is another area that needs attention.

### XVIII. Current Benefits Realised By Partnerships

The following areas brought the most benefits to the partnership; public participation in the process of design, implementation and evaluation of programmes and exposure to global implementation methodologies.

The study observed that partnerships have brought about the spirit of alarming knowledge and expertise among stakeholders. And as one director of an NGO put it;

**Case 2:** “We are sharing information that would otherwise remain in our files or knowledge. This alarming support has enhanced our global and local functioning to such an extent that the clients we serve are beginning to realise the benefits of this exchange”.

### XIX. Barriers To Quality Partnerships

The study identified the barriers or constraints which Cornwell and Carson {2007} call “inter-professional differences of perspectives among inter-governmental organizations, services providers and the service users at grass root level”. This often occurs in Third World countries like Zimbabwe where some organizations are international in nature while others are grassroots organizations.

**Case 3:** The study also identified barriers or constraints to quality. One local NGO identified these barriers as follows; “INGOs send their monitors to us who are not even able to express themselves. They are in most cases unable to understand our cultural and local circumstances. Their requirements from us are often unclear and responses to our requests are often delayed or none at all. INGOs have basic mistrust on us. And we are

*sometimes treated as beggars. This sought of approach by INGOs needs to stop; they need to start appreciating that they are coming to compliment our efforts not the other way round."*

The study further revealed the conflict and misunderstandings within the partnering groups as another barrier which led to local organizations being reluctant to assume an equal part in partnerships and to share information about the programme preferring to maintain confidentiality or protect their sovereignty. This confirms Parson's theory, that there can be conflict between state, nongovernmental organizations and service users. The theory further stipulates that equilibrium can never be achieved in a society which is affected by many social and political problems.

**Case 4:** One client from the local NGOs put her understanding of the partnerships in the following dejected manner; *"We come here to get assistance because we are poor, we do not care who gives it. What we do care for is that the assistance should be relevant to us, enough and should be given in time. Empowerment only comes when people have a starting point not out of a vacuum. How do you empower a hungry person, -give them food and then empower them later"*

## **XX. Areas Needing Strengthening**

### **The Social Worker's Role in Partnerships**

The study revealed that the role of social workers as planners, trainers, facilitators, advocates, mediators needed to be strengthened in order to ensure that quality standards are maintained within the partnerships. The INGOs and local NGOs reported that the challenges professional social workers faced when they work with agency/implementing partnerships were because the role of social work in certain instances is not well defined and social workers face problems of exclusion in certain matters that affect the multi-sectorial approach. Lymbrey, {2005} notes that an appropriate role for social work in the context of partnership working has yet to be defined and proposes specific tasks and values that distinguish the social worker from other related professionals. At the same time, all NGOs interviewed reported the need for social workers to exert themselves in their areas of professional competence especially when they are in their primary setting.

## **XXI. Conclusions**

The study concluded that if International and National Organizations are to continue providing social services to the people in society, there is need to evaluate, improve and strengthen their partnerships if poor service and the marginalisation of the clients are to be addressed. Evaluation of their partnerships may help to identify areas of weaknesses and conflict of interest that need to be improved, if statutory and voluntary organizations are to improve their efficiency.

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