

## Indigenous Communication Systems and Rural Development Projects' Variables in Selected Rural Communities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

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**Abstract.** This study focused on indigenous communication systems and rural development projects' variables in Ogun state, Nigeria. It adopted descriptive survey design of the ex-post facto type. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the 813 participants. Indigenous Communication Systems and Rural Development Projects' Variables Questionnaire with 0.79 Reliability and FGD were used to generate data. Analysis revealed that the four predictor variables jointly predicted positive outcome of the dependent variables. Furthermore, the results show that each of the independent variables has positive significant relationship with development projects' variables; hence the two null hypotheses were rejected. It is concluded that indigenous communications systems are important determinant of project outcome in rural communities.

**Keywords:** Indigenous communication systems; rural development; projects' variables; rural communities.

### 1. Introduction

Huge investment has been committed to rural development in Nigeria over time, however, majority of the projects have failed because of the poor process of implementation which usually exclude the beneficiaries. These projects

failed to achieve their objectives by their inability to meet the socio-economic and quality of life needs of the people thereby resulting to inefficient project delivery. Nwosu (2013, p.122) state that the lapses bedeviling rural development projects in Nigeria are linked to the fact that projects designs are based on top-bottom approach which exclude the beneficiaries' persisting traditional communication systems and their attendant customs and beliefs as well as general socio-political perceptions toward implantation of development programs It is pertinent to note that this inefficiency in rural development projects implementation is also reflected in their lack of improper community mobilisation strategies, neglect of traditional knowledge of project recipients, inappropriate communication channels, poor development information dissemination and poor project outcome.

Several rural development projects in Nigeria regard the people as mere recipients instead of the actual creators of change and progress therefore they usually fail (Nwosu, 2013, p.123). This has been linked to various gaps in development planning in Nigeria like inability to communicate with the people to determine what their needs are, and non-adoption of locally based platform for communication and sharing of indigenous knowledge and poor mobilisation for participation in development projects. The dependence on exogenous media and the

relegation of indigenous communication systems in development programs reduces the communication coverage and participation of the people. These make development programs, especially in rural communities to be seen as mere growth and not development, whereby people do not feel the benefits that should accrue to them (Nwosu, 2013, p.123).

Consequently, projects delivered fail to meet the people's needs thus, causing low income, poverty and poor quality of life which pervade the rural communities. Because of the rate of failure of development projects in rural communities as a result of communication gap with local beneficiaries, several studies have been conducted to find solutions to the problem. In the study conducted by FAO (2010, p.1-5) on indigenous peoples' communication for development, the results show that series of initiatives implemented by indigenous peoples' organizations, development agencies and FAO were to position indigenous communication systems for development as a key element in achieving social change and guaranteeing indigenous people the opportunity to benefit from their rights. Kwame, Tham-Agyekum and Loggoh (2011, p.2682) conducted a review of the use of indigenous communication systems in development work: the case of drama, theatre and puppet shows. This study revealed the importance of indigenous communication systems in achieving stronger grass roots participation in development work, and empowerment of the local people to achieve positive change and involvement in community development. Further, the study conducted by Edet, Akpan and Okeme (2015, p.93) on indigenous communication media and utilization of development information in rural communities revealed that relationship exist between the use of indigenous communication media and successful implementation of development projects.

However, not much has been done on the relationship between indigenous communication systems and rural development projects variables; therefore, this study focuses on indigenous communication systems and rural development projects' variables like productive

asset, rural income and rural infrastructure in Ogun state. This study has three objectives. First, to determine the indigenous communication systems adopted for the provision of rural development projects in the communities. Second, to determine the effectiveness of indigenous communication systems in rural development project provision. Finally, to examine whether there is any significant relationship between indigenous communication systems and the provision of productive asset, rural income and rural infrastructure in the rural communities. The study has two null hypotheses. There is no significant relationship between indigenous communication systems and rural development projects' variables. There is no significant relationship between each of the indigenous communication systems and rural development projects' variables.

## 2. Literature Review

Indigenous communication systems are made up of combination of different media peculiar to the culture of different society. It has also been defined by several authors using different parameters. Mundy and Laney (1992, p.104) identifies it as an aspect of culture and the means by which cultures and the indigenous knowledge are embedded, preserved, handed down, and shared. N'gombe (2000) identifies that ICS has media and functions as "the vehicle the common people or rural farmers employ for the delivery of their messages." It is a means by which local people communicated with one another in the primitive era which functions were effectively performed through several media or channels that convey information and knowledge across all the population. These systems of communication are passed from one generation to another. Such communication systems are derived from society's experience and thoughts over a long period of years (Adesoji and Ogunjimi, 2015, p.406).

Indigenous communication systems are composed of several media/channels through which it functions in different culture. Although, these media are indigenous to each culture, they have been identified as channels of information

dissemination from generation to generation. These media/channels are but not limited to folk, observation, interaction, oramedia, informal media, story-telling, visual arts, concerts, gong beating, dirges, drumming and dancing, interpersonal channels and plays, use of proverbs, songs and dances, use of indigenous language and cultural resources (Mundy and Laney, 1992, p.105; Edet, Akpan and Okeme, 2015, p.93). The importance of indigenous communication systems lie in the fact that it is an aspect of culture which has been part of the people's lives and their ways of making a living over several generations. As part of the people's ways of making a living, it covers all aspects of rural life facilitating progress and positive change among the people at the local level (Mundy and Laney, 1992, p.103; Adesoji and Ogunjimi, 2015, p.406).

Several authors have described rural development as a process that seeks social change and sustainable economic development for the rural community's ongoing progress. Moseley (2003) states that it is the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas, often relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. The ultimate goal of rural development is to improve the quality of life and well being of the inhabitants and preserve the environment. Moseley (2003) identifies that the characteristics of rural development is based on its emphasis on local and indigenous strategies that promote quality of life and well being of inhabitants. Unlike the urban communities, which have many similarities, rural communities are highly distinctive from one another. Therefore, there is a large variety of rural development approaches used globally to make life better for the people (Van Assche and Hornidge, 2015). In this regard, indigenous communication systems emerged as endogenous traditional ways of communicating development information in the language and cultural view understood by the people in the total cycle of rural development.

Rural development projects are supposed to improve people's quality of life especially in underdeveloped and developing countries. To

this end, the determination of the success or failure of rural development projects is done through assessment of identified variables that signify the attainment of the desired outcome of the projects. An important tool to calculate development indicators, rural development project variables are assessed in the context of necessary spatial, territorial and socio-cultural components of rural development policies. Therefore, socio-cultural concept like indigenous communication systems have been identified as the important independent variables that affect rural development projects' variables in rural and indigenous communities (Terres, Allen, Britz, Bulgheroni, Dwyer and Paracchini, 2012, p.6). The importance of indigenous communication systems in dissemination of development information and messages cannot be over-emphasized. Harande (2009) states that access to knowledge and information required for rural development can only be guaranteed through a system of information dissemination that is indigenous to the people. These types of communication systems have been able to sustain the rural dwellers before the introduction of modern means of communication. It provides identity among communities that uses them and also guides unruly behaviors in the society. It must be noted that the expression indigenous communication in this context is not a substitute for archaic, barbaric or rudimentary communication systems; rather it represents traditional and ancient communication systems.

Kwame, Tham-Agyekum and Loggoh (2011, p.2680) state that Africans, together with their development partners, have often tended to extrapolate communication models from the developed world and apply them wholesale in local environments. But most of these foreign communication strategies often do not impact on the rural masses for which they are meant because they are not "contextualized" to the local settings, their cultural dialects and their world view. In the view of Warren (1990, p.1), indigenous communication of knowledge can be used to facilitate communication in rural development programs. Communication between project personnel and farmers is often very poor, particularly in projects with a structure that favours literacy, top-down

message flows and innovations developed elsewhere. This often results in a serious comprehension gap. Frequently, incompatible of an innovation with local cultural values results in no adoption. In one agro-forestry project in western Nigeria, farmers perceived planting trees on their farm fields as incompatible with their socio-cultural values and beliefs. Nigerian farmers, like industrialised country farmers, also strongly favour increasing production, but soil conservation innovations are perceived as conflicting with this desire. In consequence, these technologies were adopted very slowly.

According to Van den Ban and Hawkins (1996), interest in the use of indigenous media is now increasing in less developed countries as a credible and acceptable source of information because mass media have been less successful in promoting rural development. They note that communication planners should not overlook the significant role of indigenous forms such as theatre, drama, puppet shows, drumming, village criers, storytellers, orators and songs. Using bell, folk tales, proverbs and announcements have played and will continue to play a pivotal role in communication among rural and poor communities. These indigenous communication systems are peculiar to specific societies, borne out of the peoples' culture, religion and experiences; and so its interpretation may vary from one society to another. From the opinions of Van den Ban and Hawkins (1996), Kwame, Tham-Agyekum and Loggoh (2011, p.2680), it is inferred that indigenous media is any form of endogenous communication systems which by virtue of its origin from/and integration into a specific culture, serves as a channel for messages in a way and manner that requires the utilization of the values, symbols, institutions and ethos of the host culture through its unique qualities and attributes. In the opinion of FAO (1994, p.2) indigenous communication systems that have enhanced the process of rural development include media types like traditional and popular folk theatre, dances, puppet shows and popular poetry, as well as rural press linked to literacy programs, and audiovisual materials. These media can be highly effective channels for disseminating development information and for stimulating community action. Ansu-Kyeremeh

(1998, p.68) also argues that these media types are useful in community organization for development providing communication and information which form the basis upon which the communities, the rural communities progress.

Indigenous communication systems have been identified as key to the attainment of people oriented development objectives. FAO (2006, p.3) notes that the process of development activities nowadays focuses on improving quality of life and people's well being and this requires the integration of the indigenous communication systems as the conduit of increasing knowledge and information sharing to disseminate the innovations desired by the people. Therefore, in the application of projects to satisfy people's needs, rural people are at the centre of any given development initiative and view planners, development workers, local authorities, farmers and rural people as "communication equals" with the understanding of the importance of the indigenous communication systems as equally crucial to facilitating mutual understanding, concerted action and achieving the desired outcomes. Communication for development is used for people's participation and community mobilisation, decision-making and action, confidence building, for raising awareness, sharing knowledge and changing attitudes, behaviour and lifestyles, for improving learning and training and rapidly spreading information, assisting with programme planning and formulation cum fostering the support of decision-makers essential to development activities in the rural communities. All rural communities and their institutions have well-developed indigenous communication systems and information networks. With this, many people still trust what they can hear and see above other information when the indigenous communication network is utilised by governments and development agencies to eliminate poverty and increase food security in developing countries (Moseley, 2003; FAO, 2006, p.5; Mefalopulos, 2008, p.10).

Information and communication systems are critical determinants of projects' variables

because they supply the information required by the rural inhabitants in order to make decisions on how projects affect their productive activities, and to supply information required by institutions responsible for making decisions about the policies and processes to support those activities. Improved communication and information alone, however, are not sufficient for improved rural communities. Stakeholder participation in decision-making processes, and building multi-sectoral collaboration and partnerships between them are also crucial. This wide range of stakeholders, from farmer to international support agency, all have their own specific information needs and delivery preferences. Sustainable development and the elimination of poverty also demand attention to national political economic and social processes. Chapman, Slaymaker and Young (2004, p.4) argue that information and communication systems are most likely to improve projects' variables that influence productive activities and income in rural areas if they:

*share costs appropriately, between government for public goods information services and social protection, and users for private goods, and work in partnership with the private sector to ensure effective coverage in remote rural areas, ensure equitable access to all, especially women, the poor, the disabled, people living in remote areas and otherwise disadvantaged communities, contain a high proportion of local or appropriately localised content, both to maximise local usefulness and uptake, and to enrich local, national and international knowledge, build on existing systems, including information content (indigenous knowledge, local sources)... (p.21).*

Also, extant literature confirmed the importance of indigenous communication systems in the attainment of rural development objectives. Findings show that it led to sharing of costs between government for public goods and services, social protection, and users for private goods, worked in partnership with the private sector to ensure effective coverage in remote rural areas.

### 3. Method and Data Analysis

This study adopted the descriptive survey design of the ex-post facto type because the independent variable had already taken place. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the sample. First, Ogun state was divided along three senatorial districts. Second, rural communities with recent or ongoing rural community projects were purposively identified which amounted to ten constituting the population. Afterwards, simple random sampling technique was used to select eight hundred and thirteen (813) sample elements for the study from the population in the ten purposively selected rural communities. A modified self-designed instrument that is "Indigenous Communication Systems and Rural Development Projects' Variables Questionnaire" was subjected to reliability test using test-retest method with Cronbach Alpha test of internal consistency, which yielded 0.79. Furthermore, Focus group discussion (FGD Guide Schedule) generated additional data from participants that were carefully selected in conjunction with the contact persons in the study areas. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics like frequency counts, percentage, mean score and content analysis while further analyses was done using inferential statistics of Regression analysis and Pearson product moment correlation multiple correlation matrix at 0.05 level of significance.

### 4. Results and Discussions

#### 4.1 Demographic data

Table 1 below indicates that among the respondents 513(63.1%) were male and 300(36.9%) were female. It also states that 231(28.4%) respondents were between 20-30 years, 211(26%) were between 31-40 years, 197(24.2) were between 41-50 years and 174(21.4%) were 50 years and above. The result indicates majority of the respondents were between 41-50 years. The result also shows that the age groups recorded significant number of respondents that took part in the study. This means that the entire respondents that were involved in the rural development projects in the

communities were adults. This Table shows that 565(69.5%) of the respondents were farmers, 107(13.2%) were fishermen, 51(6.3%) were engaged in animal husbandry, 53(6.5%) were public servants, 31(3.8%) were traders and 6 (0.7%) were others. This means that the participants were from diverse occupational backgrounds. Also, it shows that rural communities are not only inhabited by crop farmers, fishermen and those involved in animal husbandry, this environment is also inhabited by people with diverse occupations. Consequently, the findings actually depict that all of them were interested in the provision of rural infrastructure

and they are provided. This Table also shows that majority of the respondents that is 456(56%) cannot read, 130(16%) can only read but could not write while 227(28%) can both read and write. This is an indication that rural inhabitants involved in rural development were not restricted to non-literates. Furthermore, this indicates that the different forms of literacy ability would have influenced the use of indigenous communication systems and indeed utilisation of different information, knowledge and strategies disseminated for the various activities of rural development.

**Table 1: Demographic Data**

S/N	Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender		
	Male	513	63.1
2	Female	300	36.9
	Total	813	100
1	Age		
	20-30	231	28.4
2	31-40	211	26
3	41-50	197	24.2
4	50 above	174	21.4
	Total	813	100
1	Occupation		
	Farmers	565	69.5
2	Fishermen	107	13.2
3	Animal husbandry	51	6.3
4	Public servants	53	6.5
5	Traders	31	3.8
6	others	6	0.7
	Total	813	100
1	Literacy level		
	Cannot read	456	56
2	Can only read	130	16
3	Can read and write	227	28
	Total	813	100

Source: Field Survey 2019

#### 4.2 Effectiveness of Indigenous Communication Systems

Table 2 below reveals that the participants were aware of the use of indigenous communications systems in the provision of rural development projects and their effectiveness. Out of a total of 813 participants, 637(78%) reported interpersonal channel as effective and 176(22%) not effective. Story telling/play/drama/songs/dance was reported as effective by 521(64%) participants and 292(36%) considered it not effective. Indigenous language/proverb was reported by 457(56%) as effective and 356(44%) stated it was not effective. 419(52%) of the participants reported gong beating/drumming as effective and 394(48%) considered it not effective in the provision of rural development projects. Furthermore, interpersonal channel was reported as the most effective indigenous communication systems. Storytelling/play/drama/songs/dance was reported as the second most effective. Indigenous language/proverb was rated as the third most effective while gong beating/drumming was reported as the fourth and least effective indigenous communication systems.

**Table 2:** Effectiveness of Indigenous Communication Systems

Community Education Variables	Effectiveness			
	Effective	Not Effective	Total	Rating
Interpersonal Channel	637(78%)	176(22%)	813	1st
Story telling/Play/Drama/Songs/Dance	521(64%)	292(36%)	813	2nd
Indigenous language/Proverb	457(56%)	356(44%)	813	3rd
Gong beating/Drumming	419(52%)	394(48%)	813	4th

Source: Field Survey 2019

**4.3 Joint effect of independent variables on dependent variables**

Table 3a shows the joint contribution of the four independent variables to the prediction of the dependent variable, which are rural development variables. The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlation ( $R = .484$  and a multiple  $R^2$  of .234. This means that 23.4% of the variance was accounted for by four predictor variables when taken together; while the remaining might have been accounted for by other variables not captured by this study. The significance of the composite contribution was tested at  $P < .05$ . The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded a F-ratio of 48.245 (significant at 0.05 level). This confirms that the joint contributions of the independent variables to the dependent variable were significant and that other variables not included in this model might have accounted for the remaining variance. Hence null hypothesis two was rejected.

Table 3b reveals the relative contribution of the four independent variables to the dependent variables, expressed as beta weights, viz: story-telling/play/drama/songs/dance ( $\beta = .077$ ), interpersonal channel ( $\beta=.216$ ), indigenous language/proverb ( $\beta=.416$ ) and gong beating/drumming ( $\beta=.207$ ) respectively. Hence, interpersonal channel, story-telling/play/drama/songs/dance, indigenous language/proverb, gong beating/drumming all had significant effects on the dependent variables. Also, considering the relative contribution of each of the four independent variables to the dependent variable, indigenous language/proverb reported the highest Beta weight of ( $\beta=.416$ ) followed interpersonal channel by Beta weight of ( $\beta=.216$ ), gong beating/drumming had Beta weight of ( $\beta=.207$ ), story-telling/play/drama/songs/dance had a Beta weight of ( $\beta=.077$ ) and in that order. With this, it is observed that among the independent variables that were significantly related to the dependent variable, indigenous language/proverb had the highest t-ratio ( $T=5.770$ ) constituting the highest individual relevance and the most important with the strongest influence on the attainment of the dependent variable. This result is further confirmed by a participant during a FGD session that:

*indigenous communication systems have proven to be the saving grace in decision making and resource utilisation because it improved the level of participation in decision making activities of members thereby making everybody to have his say in the project activities...*

The importance of indigenous communication systems to attainment of infrastructure has been observed by Mefalopulos (2008, p.14); that it promoted sharing of local knowledge that especially facilitated significant impacts on the successful implementation and needs’ satisfaction of beneficiaries of a community project. Also, Shukla (2009) finds that indigenous communication systems utilisation improved productive activities/income quality and performance in the study area. Also, the assertion of a participant at a FGD session further corroborated this result:

*sharing of information, knowledge and other resources using indigenous communication systems complemented the information offered by the development agencies and led to improved productivity levels and income of our members.*

Table 3a: Joint effect of the independent variables on rural development variables in rural Communities in Ogun State

<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Adjusted R Square</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>Std. Error of the Estimate</b>		
.484	.234	.229		2.4266		
<b>A N O V A</b>						
<b>Model</b>	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>DF</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Remark</b>
<b>Regression</b>	1420.381	4	284.076	48.245	.000	Sig.
<b>Residual</b>	4645.832	789	5.888			
<b>Total</b>	6066.214	794				

Level of Significance .05

Table 3b: Relative contribution of the independent variables to Rural Development Variables in rural communities in Ogun State

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Stand. Coefficient	T	Sig.	Remark
	B	Std. Error	Beta Contribution			
(Constant)	4.146	2.159		1.921	.055	sig.
Storytelling/Play/Drama/Songs/Dance	.313	.155	.077	2.021		sig.
Interpersonal Channel	.193	.038	.216	5.140	.000	sig.
Indigenous language/Proverb	.558	.097	.416	5.770	.000	sig.
Gong beating/Drumming	.269	.094	.207	2.867	.004	sig.

Level of Significance .05

Table 4 shows that there was a positive significant relationship between indigenous communication systems and improvement in productive asset ( $r=.056$ ), productive activities/income ( $r=.069$ ), rural infrastructure ( $r=.123$ ), participation/decision making ( $r=.165$ ) respectively. Based on this, it could be inferred that indigenous communication systems has positively predicted rural development projects' variables in this study; hence the null hypothesis two was rejected. This emanated from responses of the participants indicating that 750(92.2%) strongly agreed, 47(5.8%) agreed, 9(1.1%) disagreed and 7(0.9%) strongly disagreed with the item that the use of indigenous communication systems conveyed local knowledge which influenced rural development projects' variables. On the extent to which indigenous communication influenced interpersonal relations for the attainment of rural development projects' variables, the responses indicated that 735(90.4%) strongly agreed, 63(7.75%) agreed, 6(0.74%) disagreed and 9(1.11%) strongly disagreed. The responses of participants on the extent to which indigenous information sharing influenced rural development projects' variables show that 727(89.4%) strongly agreed, 77(9.5%) agreed, 7(0.9%) disagreed and 2(0.2%) strongly disagreed. The opinions of the respondents on the extent to which indigenous communication systems of productive activities influenced rural development projects' variables show that 733(90.1%) strongly agreed, 59 (7.3%) agreed, 12 (1.5%) disagreed and 9 (1.1%) strongly disagreed. The responses on the extent to which indigenous communication systems influenced the adoption of participatory decision making approach for better rural development projects' variables showed that 747(91.9%) strongly agreed, 57 (7%) agreed, 6 (0.73%) disagreed and 3(0.37%) strongly disagreed.

Mefalopulos (2008, p.8) stresses the importance of indigenous communication systems because it is known to facilitate acquisition of local knowledge which contributes to enhanced productive activities, income and better quality of life in rural areas. The assertion of Shukla (2009) is also in agreement with the findings of this study, that indigenous communication systems facilitate information sharing, allowing community participation in project decisions, ensuring a fair and equal distribution of project benefits; and, therefore, leading to improved rural development variables. This result was supported by the assertion of one of the participants at an FGD session:

the community members do pass information and share knowledge on rural development which is different from the previous projects and how the approach would work considering the local situation and

resources available in order to achieve expected results. In doing this, we mention these at all gatherings, during house visitation and during meetings of community members. We are happy to see the results in the infrastructure like borehole, roads, milling machine, pumping machine, increased farm production and income of all our members.

**Table 4:** Correlation Matrix of the Relationship between Indigenous Communication Systems and Rural Development Variables

	Indigenous Communication Systems	Improvement in Productive Assets	Productive Activities / Income	Rural infrastructure	Decision-Participation/ making	Mean	S.D
<b>1.Indigenous Communication Systems</b>	1					30.3119	4.8132
<b>2. Improvement in Productive Assets</b>	.056**	1				29.4164	3.0929
<b>3.Productive Activities/Income</b>	.069**	.558**	1			25.4465	2.8976
<b>4. Rural infrastructure</b>	.123**	.661**	.759**	1		22.1057	2.3275
<b>5.Participation/ Decision Making</b>	.165**	.624**	.793**	.853**	1	18.4566	2.0618

\*\* Significant at .05 level

This study further revealed that inhabitants of rural communities are familiar with indigenous communication systems as part of their culture and as strategies of information and knowledge sharing in development projects. This confirms the assertion by authors like FAO (2010, p.12) and Edet, Akpan and Okeme (2015, p.91) that use of indigenous language of a group lead to greater understanding and better mobilizes the people for greater participation and project outcomes.

This is corroborated by the findings of Solomon, Maud, Samuel and Nana (2001, p.1562) that use of indigenous communication systems provide adequate knowledge and information which mobilize the people to get participate in projects that have a positive change in their living conditions.

**5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study concludes that the past failures of rural development projects was because development communication systems adopted do not use indigenous systems thereby are ineffective and lead to poor delivery of projects’ variables. It has shown that rural inhabitants are aware of the importance of indigenous communication systems in project delivery and differences in their effectiveness. It also notes

that when all the indigenous communication systems are used they positively influence the provision of rural development projects’ variables and project outcomes will be more effective. Therefore, indigenous communication systems are important determinant of project outcome in rural communities.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

- Indigenous communication systems should be properly documented and preserved by relevant agencies to prevent interferences by modern communication media.
- Government and international development agencies should intensify efforts in properly integrating indigenous communication systems as critical elements of development policy formulation and implementation.

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