

SPIRIT IN EDUCATION MOVEMENT



ANNUAL REPORT 2012





Spirit in Education Movement

Annual Report 2012

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Our close friend and partner in the GLT Lao programme, Sombath Somphone, has been missing and his whereabouts unknown since he was last seen at a police checkpoint in Vientiane in December 2012. Shui Meng, his wife, is also a long time consultant and mentor on our projects in Myanmar. We remain hopeful for a positive resolution to this distressing situation, and continue to send kindness and compassion to both Shui Meng and Sombath at this time.

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Overview



SEM began the year with the annual ‘Sem Pringprakaew’ Lecture, held in Bangkok. This annual lecture since 1995 has included inspirational socially engaged speakers such as Satish Kumar (founder of Schumacher College), Venerable Samdhong Rinpoche and Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo. This year’s lecture was graciously given by Dhammachari Lokamitra, ordained under Sangharakshita, and whose mission is dedicated to the teachings of Ambedkar. His work with Jambudvipa and the Nagarjuna Institute in India focuses on capacity building for scheduled castes and newly converted Buddhists. The topic of the lecture, ‘The transformation of self and the world in Sangharakshita’s approach to engaged Buddhism’ was an inspiring insight into the diversity of approaches of engaged Buddhism, and especially informative within the context of India, which is experiencing huge numbers of scheduled castes converting to Buddhism in order to subvert discrimination and endemic cycles of poverty.

SEM also hosted the second George Mason University (USA) exposure visit to Cambodia, held as part of the university’s innovative Study Abroad programme on Community Development, Post-Conflict Reconstruction & Spirituality. The exposure visit

is credited, and provides students with an opportunity to explore lived realities of post conflict Cambodia through direct exposure and dialogue across a wide spectrum of Cambodian society. SEM collaborated with CPCS (Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies) and CYA (Cambodia Youth Action) in Cambodia to host the visit. Two further visits for students are planned to take place in 2013.

‘Cambodia offered me a new perspective on life, priorities, and people I never would have had if I had gone to the local mall. I encourage everyone to push yourself to move beyond your comfort zone, to explore new worlds, and take an active role in the future of our community that is the world’.

Reflection from participant Chris from 2011 GMU visit

SEM’s has also continued pilot activities in Cambodia, as a preparatory exploration for partnership building and project strategy development. Activities have included research, co-coordinating a cross-border Dhammayatra near the disputed Preah Vihar heritage site, and an exposure for Khmer monks to Laos and Thailand. This exposure utilised the same approach as the Myanmar monastic education and Lao grassroot leaders programmes, whereby monastics are encouraged to build understandings

of Buddhism alongside addressing social problems, and utilise their position of respect in society to strengthen participation of people, towards a more sustainable transformation of society.

A highlight from SEM’s work in Myanmar this year has been the CPME project (see page 12), which has gone from strength to strength over its 3 years of implementation. The project aims to support the development of monastic schools into community-based learning centres which promote child-centred learning, democratic management systems, and the integration of life skills into curriculum.

Over the past year, a second educational ‘hub’ was set up, helping to multiply the project’s training and support model to a wider number of monastic schools across the country. The end of phase evaluation at the end of 2012 showed that the project succeeded beyond expectation in partnering with 60 monastic schools over the past 3 years. Almost 300 teachers and Abbots have been trained through various activities, which is benefitting to approximately 20,000 children. Two prizes were also awarded to the CPME project for excellence in its social contribution to Myanmar society. The 7 News ‘Social Hero’ Award, and the President’s Choice Award were awarded to founding partners U

Nayaka and Ko Tar, both of whom have been instrumental in envisioning, planning and implementing the project.

Another highlight is the implicit empowerment strategy across SEM’s work for individuals, groups, organisations and networks to take forward their own actions, leading to long-term sustainability.

Since last year, the post-Nargis Capacity Building and Networking project in Myanmar has evolved to a stage whereby local partners are able to independently work side-by-side with affected communities, facilitating and nurturing them to work together to envision and rebuild their lives.

The community organising approach used by local partners has been successful, with some communities becoming resources for capacity building of other CBO’s and LDO’s, by sharing directly their experiences. Local partners have also built capacities and are able to share their knowledge and skills as experienced resource persons in community organising approaches. Therefore, while SEM’s role in the post-Nargis project isn’t reported in this year, it represents an important success of the project, with ownership and activities being taken forward by local partners and their partner communities.

This is also the last year for SEM to involve in the SECSM programme in Myanmar (see page 10), as localisation processes have resulted in the local team becoming independent project holders. With a strong and committed staffing team, they are in a position as a local organisation to continue taking forward the vision of empowerment, participation and sustainability, which SEM has been working with over the past 16 years. SEM's Myanmar project will continue, and will focus more on advocacy and foreign investment into big development projects, which are rapidly expanding as a result of the relaxing of sanctions and political transition.

The local SEM team – Semsikkha - have continued to offer alternative and spiritually engaged training courses to the public, as well as longer-term projects with universities, public agencies and businesses. Their popularity is evidenced by the extension to another training team in order to meet demands. This highlights the growing openness of Thai society to look beyond existing educational models and even religious institutions, to find alternative means to grow, build relationships, and be happy in life.

Our vision is for all our initiatives support people to learn and grow together with compassion and happiness.

Our Vision and Philosophy

Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) is a transformative learning organisation providing education in Thailand and wider Southeast Asia that is based on ecology, engaged spirituality and local wisdom. SEM was founded in 1995 on the auspicious Makha Bucha Day. SEM's holistic approach is built upon engaged spirituality which focuses on transformation of the self along with transformation of society. We work for a change in worldviews and values that uphold unsustainable and violent structures of society through critical analysis, self-awareness and creative thinking in combination with learning from experience, or praxis of reflection and action. This leads to changes in behaviour, helping us to live happily, work effectively and understand and respect each other. At a wider level, this participatory and inclusive approach has been effective in creating platforms for growing peoples' participation and building networks for resilient social change.

The scope of SEM's educational courses mainly go to the roots of happiness and wellbeing in life without emphasizing on materialism and achievements. They combine knowledge and spirituality to help participants to develop values which are significant foundations to love and understand oneself and others, to respect nature and all living things, to deepen awareness around social justice and to be encouraged to make a

better society.

The philosophy underlying our work is that true education should bring about an awareness and understanding of ourselves and wider society, that can enable us to be able to act with compassion and skillful means to transform destructive patterns of living that are so prevalent in the world today. SEM's facilitation methodology is based on our philosophy and experience of socially engaged spiritual work, according to the following five principles:

- Participatory: The facilitation process should model mutual respect and equality, encouraging open communication and self-reliant learning.
- Experiential: Learning by doing, using practical exercises, exposure visits, study tours and field-based work in order to connect knowledge with felt experience.
- Holistic: Appreciating the relations between ecological, social, political, economic and psychological processes, and the connections between inner and outer development.
- Promoting Cultural Empowerment: Giving confidence to the role of tradition and culture in modern life.
- Spiritually Grounded: Encouraging self-knowledge and spiritual growth as a foundation for acquiring and applying knowledge.



SEM PROJECTS	
Thailand	SEM (Semsikkha)
Myanmar	Buddhist Youth Empowerment
	Sustainable Empowerment of Civil Society in Myanmar
	Coalition for the Promotion of Monastic Education
Laos	Lao Grassroot Leaders Training and Action



Buddhist Youth Empowerment Programme

This is the sixth year of the Buddhist Youth Empowerment programme, which is now running through the Kalyana Mitta Foundation (KMF). The Foundation also aims to become a representative body for the programmes' alumni core groups that have set up across the country, as a result of youth capacity building.

Over the past year, the programme has continued with capacity building among new target youth, but will cut back this area next year in order to focus more resources on building capacity of existing alumni core groups. There are now 13 active youth groups across the country, who are facilitating initiatives in their local areas. KMF were able to support small grants for 23 alumni core group activities, mostly comprised of extension awareness raising trainings in their own communities. Apart from extension trainings, campaigns and exhibitions were also held for public awareness raising on a variety of issues, such as consumer education, environmental sustainability, health, and land rights. KMF supports these activities also as a process of capacity building for the alumni core groups, whereby they gain experience in managing project activities, which helps to develop their organisational and project management abilities.

Promotion of leadership among youth was provided through extension trainings, which provides greater skills and perspectives in facilitation and participatory learning, and

broadening the concept of leadership to be inclusive and empowering for all. Skill-based trainings were also given on a variety of topics such as PRA, Human Rights, Peacebuilding and Conflict Management, and Disaster Risk Preparedness. These skills will contribute to the strengthening and evolution of core alumni groups, towards becoming effective community-based organisations, and agents of change.

Interfaith and peace-building trainings were held for the second time as new and increasingly important thematic area. This is a long term strategy of the programme; to build capacities among Buddhist youth in social engagement as a foundation towards a greater integration of faiths and ethnicities in working together with a common vision for society. With the development of alumni core groups across ethnicities with increasing capacities to engage in society, the next step of inter-faith collaboration is a major success of the long-term vision of the programme. Over the next years, this will take an increasing priority in programme implementation.

Youth and volunteer spirit is strong, but this often ignores the reality of many youth coming from impoverished families, whose livelihoods are a household priority. KMF will feed this lesson learned into the next phase of the programme to ensure that there is financial security for youth alumni willing to commit themselves to long term social engagement.



Sustainable Empowerment of Civil Society in Myanmar

SEM has been involved in civil society empowerment in Myanmar since 1996. Testament to SEM's empowerment and sustainability approach, this is the final year of SEM's involvement in the programme, as the local team – Gaia Sustainable Management Institute – will run it independently from 2013. This itself is an important outcome of the programme's 16 years of implementation, that has been moving towards localisation since 2007.

Over the past year there has been an increase in advocacy-based activities, especially regarding the devastating ongoing Civil War in Kachin State, and natural resource issues in the planned Dawei SEZ.

In Kachin State, the local coordination team have been actively involved in collaborating with other civil society groups to provide relief and volunteer support for IDP camps, including management support for camp committees.

In order to involve Kachin society in upholding their rights, they have provided awareness raising for 1,840 Kachin through 34 trainings on Human Rights and Democracy. Advocacy initiatives and awareness raising initiatives through the Kachin Peace Network were also supported, which has included in press releases, lobbying to visiting International delegations, as well as national MP's and political actors. Legal assistance and welfare support has also been provided to affected families.

These peacebuilding efforts have also been coupled with support for civil society ceasefire monitoring mechanisms in Kayah State, and Karen State/Bago Division – the result of the recent signing of ceasefire agreements between the Myanmar government and ethnic minority

armed groups. Local staff in these areas have collaborated in providing capacity support for these civil society initiatives, to ensure that civil society is able to participate in the peace process, and conflict-affected communities are supported in rebuilding their lives.

Citizen media initiatives have also sprung up as the result of improvements in media freedom and rights to expression. This is helping provide alternative perspectives to issues, creating a 'watchdog' mechanism for civil society, and highlighting experiences from ethnic minority areas, which have been under-represented in mainstream media.

In Kachin State, the Kachinwaves media initiative was set up after a citizen journalism training, and is providing regular reports which are being published in national media. In Chin State, the set-up of the Chin journalist network has brought together representatives from 17 media initiatives, and is providing a mechanism to share issues and information across the area and at a national level.

With increasing initiatives to strengthen voices and uphold rights of ethnic minority communities, SEM has also been involving in initiatives at broader national and regional levels, bringing together a variety of inter-ethnic actors to work together on issues, especially on large-scale resource extraction, as a result of the suspension of sanctions and influx of foreign investment into the country. This is threatening communities whose livelihoods are reliant on natural resources, and is leading to rapid environmental degradation. Collaborative efforts are helping to build a new generation of advocates, through knowledge on public policy, Health and Social Impact Assessments, and cross-border experience sharing on large-scale industrial impacts – especially from the Map Tha Phut experience in Thailand. National media have also joined in order to ensure the wider public are able to access information on planned investment projects and their expected impacts.

Despite the political and social changes

since elections, the lived reality of the majority of the population has changed little. Livelihoods continue to be an area of focus, and local coordinators have worked closely with CBO's over this year, building their capacities to facilitate sustainable and participatory development processes in their own communities. Youth have been increasingly active as change agents, working and learning together with volunteer spirit, initiating activities in their communities that help to build participation and begin a process of working together to find sustainable solutions to family and community issues. In Shan State, the local coordination team is supporting the modelling of pilot communities by bridging local organic production with mindful markets. In Kayah State local partners are being supported to strengthen Community Forest initiatives in an area that will be vulnerable to resource extraction as more proposed land borders open along the Thai border.

Issue-based networking has also continued to be a successful approach for building collaboration among civil society groups. Rural and urban-based groups, writers, media and a wide array of community and local organisations have been working together to build a greater public awareness on issues, and integrate a change of practices into everyday life. As part of the Ecological network, the Green Bike initiative has gained attention for bringing together youth to explore sustainable ways of living, while at the same time, exposing to initiatives that can help them to build more holistic understanding of linkages between worldviews, practices in everyday life, and impacts at community, regional and national levels.

Over the next year, GSMI will continue to facilitate this work, promoting locally-led initiatives to build capacities of civil society, promote sustainability models among grassroot communities, and drive synergistic collaboration across multi-levels of Myanmar society towards building a movement for sustainable and participatory social change.



Coalition for the Promotion of Monastic Education

The CPME programme began working with Monastery Schools 3 years ago, to transform attitudes of abbots, principals, and teachers, in order to facilitate mind (analytical and thinking skills), heart (self awareness and compassion) and hands (practical life and livelihood skills) learning among children; to promote more open and democratic processes of school management; to mobilize increased participation of parents; and break the “walls” that separate monastery, school, and community.

Since its inception, 60 monastic schools have partnered with the programme from across the country, which has been managed through the set-up of a training centre in Mandalay where teacher training and management of the programmes activities take place.

Over the past year, a second ‘hub’ in Yangon has developed, and has partnered with 20 schools, expanding the overall reach of the programme. The main centre in Mandalay run through partner Phaung Daw Oo Monastic School, is a fully functional space for training, as well as providing facilities for training by other NGO’s and civil society groups. The centre produces fruits and vegetables, which partially meets the needs of participants during trainings. Children from Phaung Daw Oo also contribute through helping gardening, and along with teachers and abbots, have all helped in the construction of the centres’ main buildings, which have been made from natural materials.

Abbots (including nuns) of partner schools have participated in exposure visits to alternative education centres and participatory community projects in Thailand in Laos, with the intention of giving them opportunities to see and experience for themselves new ways in leading and managing monastery schools, and exploring how schools and monastic institutions can play a key role in community development. On their return, Abbots have been instrumental in

supporting changes in their schools and wider communities. They are supportive of their teachers who undergo training as part of the programme, and who begin to change the way the teach and interact with students.

Importantly, Teachers training is focusing not only on pedagogical methods in child-centred learning approaches, but is also integrating self awareness practices, in order for teachers to explore underlying attitudes and values that can support a change in their roles as teachers. This has resulted in increased participatory learning methods used in classrooms, and an expansion of schooling beyond the classroom to the community through the integration of livelihood skills into curriculum, and positioning learning within the context of the community. Parents are also involving, and the schools are becoming a lively centre of the community, helping to build joint participation in a variety of activities within the community such as aged care, environmental conservation and savings groups.

There has been an overall increase in the democratic management of the schools through participatory decision making. Abbots have become more consultative, and many schools have now instituted regular abbot-teacher meetings, student councils, and parent-teacher associations. This process has helped everybody learn how to accept new ideas, listen to others, and share knowledge and responsibilities.

It is hoped over the next 3 years that at least another 6 hubs can be set up and running, thereby scaling up the impact of the programme, in order to bring about a transformation in the Monastic Education system, which includes approximately 1,500 schools across the country.

Check out the story of CPME, ‘A Journey of Social Transformation from Within’ available at www.sem-edu.org/publications/

Promoting democratic and participatory processes in learning and management

“ I learnt that in many places the leaders consult with the people, and that a participatory process in decision-making is more effective. Actually it is quite difficult to do things in a participatory way; it is time-consuming and takes a lot of patience. But I kept trying and established teachers’ meetings every week, students council meetings every two months, and a village/parents council meeting at least twice a year. Now the school operates better and I get energy from the meetings, because teachers and parents are more cooperative, and the children are doing much better. We now have less problems with discipline, not like before.”

Abbot U Gunadaza of Thamaing Thit Monastic School, Mandalay Region.

“Over the past 3 years I have made many changes; the key changes I made included firstly changing myself. I learnt to become more open-minded, more receptive to new ideas. I understand why the CPME programme wants to target Abbots first, because the Abbot as head must lead the way and then others will follow. If the Abbot does not change or support the change, the others will be afraid to do things differently.

We have improved the way the student council works. Now the teachers and students set up and agree on rules on how to handle discipline, how to help with the cleaning of the school, and how to help children who have difficulties in learning and so on. This way, the children learn how to follow the school and class rules, understand their responsibilities, and help each other. Since the children are the ones who help set up the regulations themselves, they are more willing to follow them. All these changes meant that teachers have more time to concentrate on improving their teaching.”

Abbot U Wayama of Shwe Kyaung Monastic School, Mandalay Region.



Lao Grassroot Leaders Training and Action

The GLT-Laos programme is a collaboration between Lao Buddhism for Development (LBFD), PADETC of Lao PDR, and SEM. The programme has been extended over two phases, the first in 2007-2009, and the second phase starting from 2010 was completed this year.

The programme was initially created to provide members of the Lao Sangha with skills and knowledge to work in the community. Its aim has been to promote social justice, ecological sustainability, cultural integrity, holistic education, and self-reliant development through training and cooperation with Buddhist monks, community leaders and civil society actors, who work on grassroot projects with a focus on youth empowerment and education.

Over the past year, almost 10,000 people have participated in spiritual development trainings in six meditation centres which have been set up in order to strengthen the participation of lay people in spiritual practice. A total of twenty six trainings were given, which was unable to accommodate the large demand from the public. In future, more meditation masters will be trained in order to accommodate the needs of the public for spiritual practice.

The Dhamma Sanchorn for Education (mobile Dhamma) led by trained monks and nuns, has been providing spiritual and moral awareness education, as well as activities relating to ecology, culture and organic farming for students and teachers. They implemented several

different activities this year, including volunteer monks and nuns teaching in schools and organizing activities for patients at a drug treatment center. Two schools participated in the Green Campaign where monks and students collaboratively planted over 2000 seedlings across Vientiane throughout the year. A tree ordination was also carried out, with over 800 people attending the ritual.

A drug addiction awareness training co-organised by UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) for Dhamma Sanchorn monks and youth alumni from previous trainings, followed up by a Training of Trainer on drug abuse prevention, so that monks and youth will be able to work directly to support the rising number of people struggling with drug addiction across the country. These activities culminated in a conference on the role of faith-based actors in drug abuse prevention, in collaboration with the Lao National Committee on Drug Control, highlighting the government's acceptance of the Sangha to engage in wider social issues.

The programme continues to offer informative and socially engaged books, and introduce innovative and inspiring ideas to the Lao people. GLT-Laos has also played a big role in organizing workshops and events to promote public awareness of cultural and social challenges in Laos. One radio programme continues to be broadcasted on engaged spirituality in Vientiane Capital every Sunday evening by monk volunteers, but another was cancelled because of political pressure.

Beyond Dhamma Sanchorn activities, community-led development activities have also continued as part of the programme's support for the Sangha to involve in wider social and environmental issues. Sangha have been supporting two local community initiatives which are building an integrated approach towards community sustainability. Community exchanges for sharing knowledge and sustainability skills among villagers took place, alongside small grants for community initiatives. A highlight of this second phase has been the strengthening of women in Muangkhai to continue their skills in traditional and mat weaving. Trainings were provided to help them improve their skills as well as to learn about micro credit and marketing which has led to these women now playing an important role in generating income for the family. Youth engagement has also been strengthened, for example six young people were supported to establish their own experimental farm for organic agriculture.

Overall the programme has met its expectations and many of the Sangha and lay alumni continue to play key roles at structural levels, and local partners continue to support and engage in project activities. All stakeholders have agreed to continue the programme into the next phase to enhance its quality and continuity.



SEM (Semsikkha) Thailand

Semsikkha is SEM's local office in Thailand, and works separately from the regional projects. They focus on sustainability and empowerment through workshops and trainings for the public on a wide variety of topics. The main approach is to work holistically in a way that nurtures the heart and spirit through a multiplicity of learning styles. Learning processes lead to a transformation in understanding oneself and society, an approach which can be expanded across all sectors of society. Most trainings are open to the public but Semsikkha also facilitate trainings and workshops requested by agencies, organizations, institutions, and designed for specific groups.

Several project activities over the past year focused on communication and how to attain knowledge, critical thinking, and a better understanding in the participants daily lives. There was also a special focus on public health agencies and the educational sector because these agencies are engaged with the general public and have good opportunities to reach out, share their knowledge, ideas and experiences with local people. Some trainings were also open for donations, in order to serve people with less income, especially on personal transformation themes.

Under the Knowledge Market project, trainings aimed towards the general public with a focus on understanding transformation in life, and building relationships. Throughout the year 18 training sessions were organized, the most popular being Learning How to Die led by

Venerable Paisan Visalo, Satir: Transformation and Inner Growth, and Contemplation on Simplicity and Beauty. Other trainings also included Compassionate Communication, and Seeking Knowledge and Truth by Critical Thinking. The results showed that the content could be related and applied to the participants daily lives. Semsikkha also generated new trainings including Work, Group Power and Happiness, and Being a Friend to Yourself, both with good responses from the public.

In order to reach out to a wider group of people, Semsikkha also provided trainings for public health agencies and universities, who have a large interface with people and meeting their needs. Through the year a total of almost 2,500 people participated in 172 trainings. Participatory Facilitator trainings were also organized for government agencies and the business sector. Trainings were organized in different parts of Thailand such as Nakhon Ratchasima, Petchabun and included Mahidol University and Rangsit University. Semsikkha continually organized these trainings for sustainable organizational transformation by working at an individual level, which encourages personal transformation and relationship transformation among colleagues; as well as modifying organizational structures with the aim of creating happiness in the workplace.

The outcomes of the Participatory Facilitators trainings was that participants were able to make use of their skills within their own

organizations and communities, they were also able to share their knowledge, skills and experiences with other people through facilitating trainings or workshops themselves. One of Semsikkha's goals is to create change agents for society, which has been achieved through these facilitators.

An outcome of the organizational transformation trainings for strategic planning and structural modification was that changes could be seen in the working structures and systems of the participating agencies. This included improved relationships among the people, which impacted on the effectiveness and happiness of the organization as a whole. Not all agencies showed major progress, but slight changes were towards a positive direction. These agencies set a good example of modifying organizational structures towards creating a better and happier working environment.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

January - December 2012

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

INCOME	Thai Baht
SEM – Thailand	5,473,265.15
Sustainable Empowerment of Civil Society in Myanmar	11,924,990.83
Lao Grassroot Leadership Training and Action	3,944,849.45
Buddhist Youth Empowerment Programme	4,351,286.70
TOTAL INCOME	25,694,392.13
EXPENDITURE	
SEM – Thailand	4,469,051.20
Sustainable Empowerment of Civil Society in Myanmar	13,254,841.14
Lao Grassroot Leadership Training and Action	4,018,748.23
Buddhist Youth Empowerment Programme - Myanmar	4,360,943.80
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	26,103,584.37
GAIN (LOSS) ON EXCHANGE RATE	(48,107.84)
SURPLUS OF INCOME OVER (LESS THAN) EXPENDITURE	(457,300.08)

NOTE: The project 'Coalition for the Promotion of Monastic Education' was not included in the statement. The financial function of the project is jointly managed through the CPME management team.

SEM would like to thank our partners :



CAFOD: Catholic Fund for Overseas Development
England and Wales



CCFD: Comité Catholique contre la Faim et
pour le Développement
France



Diakonia
Sweden



NCA: Norwegian Church Aid
Norway



Terre Des Hommes
Germany



Fastenopfer
Switzerland



Paung Ku
Myanmar



AJWS: American Jewish World Service
USA



**American Friends
Service Committee**
Quaker values in action

AFSC: American Friends Service Committee
USA



PYOE PIN Programme

Pyoe Pin: DFID
UK



Norwegian People's Aid

Norwegian People's Aid
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SCIAF: Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund
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