Ronak (left) and Hazer are 10-year-old girls from Kobane, Syria. They study even at break time in a host community school for Syrians in Sanliurfa, Turkey. UNICEF’s Child Friendly Spaces project is implemented in partnership with the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency of Turkey (AFAD) and the Turkish Red Crescent Society in all camps in Turkey to ensure that vulnerable Syrian children and youth have access to safe, participatory and inclusive education spaces and recreation activities.
Many countries moving from low- to middle-income status are seeing income and well-being gaps widen; a trend also clearly seen in wealthy countries. Growing urbanization sometimes hides poverty and marginalization from statistical view and can create new risks for the disenfranchised. Humanitarian crises of all kinds exacerbate pre-existing inequities and disparities.
1. Situational analysis/context

Social exclusion stands in the way of children’s well-being the world over. All children, like adults, have a right to an acceptable standard of living, access to social services and to a life free from bias and stigma. Discrimination creates and compounds inequity – funnelling care, resources and services away from the children with greatest need and creating emotional and psychological barriers to children’s development and well-being.

Poverty and discrimination are obstacles to better child outcomes. Poor and marginalized children are more malnourished, less healthy, have fewer opportunities to learn and are at greater risk of exploitation. Attempts to address poverty and discrimination with the provision of social services are necessary but rarely sufficient. If health care is free but a child’s family cannot afford transport, care seeking still suffers. If the school is ready to take a child with disability but the community does not believe in her right to go, she probably will not. An adolescent with few options will be more easily enticed into risky situations – from transactional sex to promises of work and wealth far from home. If use of public funds is concentrated in wealthier areas and for privileged groups, disadvantaged children will be further excluded.

While these often seem to be intractable problems, global recognition and efforts to address them continue to increase. Poverty has been at the heart of the global development agenda for many years, including as Goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals, and is slated to remain the headline goal of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Moreover, children are specifically included, helping to focus further attention on those for whom poverty’s impact will last the longest.

Global attention to discrimination is perhaps most obvious in the myriad human rights instruments created and regularly reported on by United Nations Member States. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by 153 countries so far is just one example of continued progress. Equally promising and important are the many local and global social movements which have gained traction – bringing attention to the harm caused when individuals or groups are marginalized or mistreated because of gender, age, disability, indigenous or other minority ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or for any other reason, and to the importance of galvanizing and empowering those affected to demand fulfilment of their rights.

These glimmers of hope and progress must nevertheless be viewed against a canvas of growing inequality and continuing tensions and conflicts which further exacerbate exclusion. Many countries moving from low- to middle-income status are seeing income and well-being gaps widen; a trend also clearly seen in wealthy countries. Growing urbanization sometimes hides poverty and marginalization from statistical view and can create new risks for the disenfranchised. Humanitarian crises of all kinds exacerbate pre-existing inequities and disparities. Protracted conflicts, often fuelled by inequitable distribution of resources and marginalization based on ethnicity or religious affiliation continue to perpetuate violence – misdirecting the energy and potential of adolescents and young people. The accelerating impact of climate change and humanitarian crises contributes further to these risks – with the greatest impact on those who already have the least resources.

2. Problem statement

Despite growing global consensus about its negative impact, child poverty remains alarmingly high. Over one third of the extremely poor are under 13 years of age, and in low-income countries, half of all children live in extreme poverty. In 2013, it is estimated that 47 per cent of those living on less than US$1.25 a day were aged 18 years or under, much greater than their share of the global population, which is 34 per cent. While these numbers capture the extent of monetary poverty affecting children, the issue of multi-dimensional poverty is equally relevant. Children experience poverty as a series of overlapping deprivations – whether due to low income, discrimination or lack of government investment – which result in insufficient nutrition, health care, education or
poor living conditions. These multiple deprivations in turn increase the risk of negative impact from humanitarian crises.

Data to understand the magnitude and extent of social exclusion on children remains scarce. Robust evidence is critical to be able to assess the situation of children and women in this area of work. High quality data provide UNICEF with the ability to make sound policy and programme decisions that ensure the best results for children and realization of their rights.

Well-designed social protection systems have a proven positive impact on child poverty and well-being, but coverage is still low. Integrated social protection systems have been shown to reduce the depth of poverty in South Africa by 48 per cent and in Mexico by 30 per cent. However, estimates suggest over 75 per cent of the world’s population continues to live without adequate social protection coverage. In many countries, fragmented programmes do not coordinate with services to maximize potential impacts for children. Inconsistent attention is given to addressing social vulnerability and inclusion of all, including children. Among social care and support services, child care and parenting support have an important role to play and are effective in reducing child poverty, but the families most in need remain underserved. These social protection systems can also be a critical lynchpin and time saver when mounting a humanitarian response, especially those that use cash-based modalities.

Children are rarely prioritized when decisions are made about the use of public funds – and investment in the poorest children is usually the lowest of all. A common factor driving multi-dimensional child poverty is the lack of adequate, equitable or effective allocation and utilization of public financial resources. While overall domestic financing has been increasing considerably in many countries, the latest data show declines in health and education per capita spending in a majority of the 66 countries for which data are available. Even where social spending has increased, socio-economically disadvantaged areas often do not benefit. Further

Progress in child outcomes, especially for disadvantaged children, requires greater efforts by governments to tackle public financial management-related barriers and bottlenecks for children in national and sub-national budgeting processes, including those which provide for responses to humanitarian crises.

**Governance practices – both local and national – have direct impact on child well-being, but this is rarely taken into account.** Decisions on how to regulate and cooperate with the private sector, for example, can impact directly on the environment in which children live and the quality and cost of essential services. In many countries, local governments, including urban municipalities, are increasingly responsible for service delivery, and yet lack capacity to consult their constituencies and plan, budget and monitor services in ways that respond to the needs of the most deprived children and women. At both national and local levels, strengthening governance in support of child rights requires promoting public accountability and supporting state and non-state actors, such as parliaments, civil society, social movements and communities, to access budgetary information, advocate, monitor and keep accountable.

**Fighting discrimination requires concerted efforts to translate commitments into action.** Despite widespread ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and continued adoption of other key international human rights instruments important for children, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, effective mechanisms are often lacking to translate commitments into effective action, promote accountability and monitor progress. The social movements and other initiatives with the potential to counter and eliminate discrimination and bias that children may face often lack the traction to ensure their message is widely heard.

**Attention to resilience and social inclusion in emergencies is rare, yet clearly needed both to prevent recurrences and to protect vulnerable populations in humanitarian situations.** Even where social protection systems are in place, they are rarely equipped to respond to new crises. Humanitarian crises and conflict are both more common and their impacts more severe in places where deprivation and exclusion are also high. Those worst affected and the last to be reached are often those who were already marginalized within their societies. When humanitarian responses fail to take their needs and voices into account, the prospects of the poorest children do not improve, and cycles of violence and poverty are perpetuated. Even the limited examples of feedback and complaint mechanisms are not always child-friendly.

### Proposed solutions

Social exclusion is neither inevitable nor immune to efforts to address it. Researchers, activists and committed governments, both local and national, have demonstrated concrete approaches to reduce poverty and its impacts and to prevent and reverse discrimination. These include:

- **Promoting routine government monitoring of child poverty to inform policy and programme response.** Collecting and analysing data on both monetary poverty and multi-dimensional deprivation models, and making use of the resulting findings to strengthen social policies and programmes.

- **Child-sensitive social protection.** Helping countries create or improve social protection systems which effectively address the financial and social barriers poor children and their families face to services and livelihoods; improving these systems in ways which result in measurably better outcomes for children, ranging from improved living standards to better health, nutrition, education and subjective well-being results.

- **Making public resources work better for children.** Improving the adequacy, equity, effectiveness and efficiency of public investments in children, so that such spending has a greater impact on children’s lives. This also includes supporting governments to develop, manage and monitor expenditure of public budgets to improve the quality and coverage of child-focused services, with special attention to reaching the most disadvantaged. Often the case can be made that investing in the poorest and most marginalized children is not only right in principle and cost effective in practice, but also has wide-ranging economic benefits for individuals and societies that are not immediately obvious.
• **Promoting quality child care.** The different components of early childhood development, both independently and collectively, have a proven impact on reducing child poverty and improving life chances. Quality child care merits further attention given its potential to both support child well-being and improve women’s economic participation with both immediate and long-term impacts on child poverty.

• **Promoting the meaningful participation of adolescents from community to national level to influence development agendas that affect them.** This includes interventions that support adolescents’ participation in consultative policy, budgeting and legislative development processes and institutionalizing platforms in which they can engage directly with decision makers, such as through national or sub-national surveys, low-cost SMS-based applications, online social networks, and formal and informal spaces such as clubs, schools, health facilities and community-level committees.

• **Strengthening national legal frameworks and justice systems to better respond to child rights and protect minorities from discrimination.** This includes promoting access to justice for children. Access to justice has long been seen as providing a tool to help the disenfranchised demand that their rights be respected, including for defending their economic interests and well-being. Children too deserve and can benefit from justice systems which are able to uphold their rights, and when free or low-cost and accessible legal services are available to them.

• **Addressing social-cultural practices and norms that impede social inclusion and perpetuate discrimination.** This includes creating spaces for voice and participation of children in communities as well as mobilizing media, opinion leaders, civil society organizations and children’s voices to change personal, community-level and public perceptions, attitudes and practices that contribute to discrimination or stigma.

• **Supporting governance and accountability measures.** This includes helping national and local authorities to take children into account in decentralization processes, as well as to plan, budget and monitor better to improve child outcomes. It is equally important to strengthen the capacity of children and adolescents, civil society groups and parliaments to monitor whether public policies, services and budgets and humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery plans intended to support children’s rights and inclusion have been meaningfully implemented.

• **Increasing attention paid to social inclusion and resilience measures in humanitarian situations and to address the impacts of climate change on children.** Local authorities must be able to plan for potential crises, factoring in attention to vulnerable community members in emergency response plans. Cash transfers implemented as part of humanitarian response can serve as stepping stones to building or strengthening social protection systems that are sustained through the recovery and development phases. Peacebuilding measures involving children and adolescents can contribute to social cohesion as can strengthened human rights monitoring and justice mechanisms that incorporate child rights. Relevant adaptation programmes can help children and their families reduce the negative impact of climate change on child poverty.

## UNICEF’s role

UNICEF has accumulated considerable experience in social inclusion and policy programming, in both development and humanitarian contexts. UNICEF’s comparative advantage in this area of work is defined by several factors, as outlined below.

Firstly, UNICEF’s mandate to assist countries in meeting their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child coupled with its extensive on-the-ground experience as both a technical partner and advisor for the best interests of children, position the organization well to address the wide range of challenges and possible solutions to social exclusion of children.

Secondly, UNICEF country offices have working relationships with a wide range of partners, from
UNICEF’s comparative advantages include:

- Mandate to assist countries in meeting their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Extensive on-the-ground experience as both a technical partner and adviser for the best interests of children;
- Partnerships that range from government ministries and planning departments to local authorities, religious leaders, youth and community organizations, parliamentarians, universities and think tanks;
- Information, knowledge and experience – i.e., working with different partners to generate data, research and analytical work around child poverty and exclusion, and translating the findings into practical policy and programme recommendations;
- A growing cohort of social policy staff that are equipped to help partners understand and address the policy and financing obstacles to better child outcomes.

Finally, UNICEF’s technical capacities and widespread global presence allow the organization both to make a strong advocacy impact and to provide practical support to put better policies into action. A growing cohort of social policy staff are equipped to help partners understand and address the policy and financing obstacles to better child outcomes and to make the needed changes. As the importance of social protection has grown around the world as an effective response to poverty and exclusion, UNICEF has helped countries to make sure this benefits children and worked collaboratively with other key actors, including the World Bank, International Labour Organization, European Union, African Union and others. UNICEF’s technical strength in the area of communication for development has made the organization an acknowledged leader in this field – and the organization to whom the world turns when looking to address harmful sociocultural practices. This skill set and experience helps UNICEF to play both a leadership and capacity-building role in fighting discrimination and stigma.

**Areas of focus and expected results**

**Child poverty and social protection**

UNICEF works to make child poverty visible at the country level and promotes programmatic responses to address it. This includes supporting countries to measure both monetary and multi-dimensional child poverty and address it through policies, programmes and budgets. Social protection is by far the most common response supported: UNICEF works in 104 countries to help strengthen social protection systems for greater impact on child well-being. Other emerging interventions include child care along with other early childhood development services, which have both immediate as well as long-term impact on
UNICEF’s work on public finance for children (PF4C) contributes to more transparent, efficient, equitable and adequate investments in children. Key goals of PF4C include influencing government decisions about spending on children and social services, reducing spending disparities among different population groups and applying value for money approaches so that children benefit optimally from the resources available. Success usually involves working with different actors, including budget departments of line ministries, the ministries of finance, planning and local government, parliament and civil society.

In the public finance for children programme area, UNICEF works to contribute to the following results:

- In 50 countries social spending on a per capita basis is being maintained or increasing (baseline: 24 countries);
- Seventy-nine countries have policy and/or budgetary frameworks that explicitly address child poverty and disparities (baseline: 15 countries).

poverty, and innovative work with adolescents on building skills for adult life.

Through the child poverty and social protection programme area, UNICEF aims to contribute to the following results in the 2014–2017 period:

- Number of children living in extreme poverty is reduced to 447 million (baseline: 550 million in 2010);
- In 53 countries, social protection systems have a positive impact on children’s well-being (baseline: 35 countries in 2013);
- Ninety countries have disaggregated national household survey data on birth registration collected within the preceding five years (baseline: 80 countries);
- Fifty-two countries expanded the number of children covered by social protection systems;
- Sixty countries have improved capacity to develop, implement and finance integrated social protection systems;
- Seventy-eight countries track effectiveness of social protection on at least one child outcome (baseline: 13 countries);
- Sixty countries with a national social protection strategy or plan that include elements focused on gender (baseline: 40 countries).

Human rights, non-discrimination and participation

Human rights, non-discrimination and participation includes UNICEF’s support to the practical implementation of human rights norms and standards related to social inclusion, which includes addressing the structural causes of exclusion and poverty. It also covers UNICEF’s support to both informal and formal systems for monitoring child
rights, as well as the promotion of children’s access to justice. UNICEF supports initiatives to promote public accountability, empowering state and non-state actors such as parliaments, civil society, social movements and communities as well as children and adolescents themselves to access information, advocate, monitor, and hold to account those charged with protecting and fulfilling child rights. A crucial component of this area is UNICEF’s cross-cutting and holistic efforts by country offices to counter discrimination and stigma.

In the area of human rights, non-discrimination and participation, UNICEF will work to achieve the following results:

- One hundred and ninety-three countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocols (OP), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) [baseline: CRC – 190 countries, CRC OP2 – 165, CRC OP3 – 10, CEDAW – 186, CRPD – 141];
- Increased number of countries have legal and paralegal services available to support children claiming redress for violations of their rights (baseline: 77 countries in 2013);
- Forty-seven countries have functional mechanisms for the participation of children in influencing development agendas in those local, sub-national or national plans that affect the most disadvantaged and marginalized (baseline: 92 countries);
- One hundred and fifty-seven countries have revised domestic legislation and administrative guidance in line with the concluding observations of the CRC, CEDAW and CRPD committees (baseline: CRC – 74; CEDAW – 55, CRPD – 23).

Public finance for children
UNICEF’s work on public finance for children (PF4C) contributes to more transparent, efficient, equitable and adequate investments in children. Key goals of PF4C include influencing government decisions about spending on children and social services, reducing spending disparities among different population groups and applying value for money approaches so that children benefit optimally from the resources available. Success usually involves working with different actors, including budget departments of line ministries, the ministries of finance, planning and local government, parliament and civil society.

In the public finance for children programme area, UNICEF works to contribute to the following results:

- In 50 countries social spending on a per capita basis is being maintained or increasing (baseline 24 countries);
- Seventy-nine countries have policy and/or budgetary frameworks that explicitly address child poverty and disparities (baseline: 15 countries).

Governance and decentralization
An additional area of work is around governance and decentralization. This includes support to improve local government capacity to plan consultatively, organize services, prepare for emergencies, budget equitably and monitor the impact of what they do on child outcomes. As part of this work, UNICEF supports local and national governments to strengthen accountability and active community participation in local decision making.

In the area of governance and decentralization, UNICEF aims to contribute to the following results:

- Increased number of countries with large urban populations (1 million or more) produce and utilize disaggregated data on the most excluded (e.g., urban poor/slums) (baseline: 44 countries);
- Forty countries incorporate children’s rights in the policy discourse on environmental sustainability, including climate change (baseline: 34 countries);
- One hundred per cent of countries have planning and monitoring systems that explicitly address risks both the national level and sub-national level.

Social inclusion in humanitarian settings
Social inclusion in humanitarian settings encompasses specific efforts related to each of the programme areas in fragile and emergency contexts as well as some additional elements. Interventions include (1) working with national and local governments to improve preparedness, prevention and response to shocks and cumulative stresses, taking account of the most marginalized children and families; (2) keeping vulnerable groups visible during...
On 3 October 2015, five-year-old Ang Dolker from Solukhumbu District, Nepal, looks into the camera. Solukhumbu was one of the districts affected by the earthquakes on 25 April and 12 May 2015. Ang’s widowed mother received 5,000 Nepali rupees (about US$50), including an emergency top-up of 3,000 rupees provided by UNICEF, as part of an emergency cash grant to an estimated 400,000 vulnerable people. This cash grant was provided under the Nepali Government’s social welfare scheme in 19 districts – the 14 most affected districts as well as an additional five districts identified by the Government’s Post Disaster Needs Assessment.

Through the social inclusion in humanitarian settings programme area UNICEF works to achieve the following results:

- Increased number of countries in humanitarian situations that systematically consult affected populations as part of humanitarian interventions (baseline: 59 countries);

- One hundred per cent of UNICEF country offices have an Early Warning/Early Action (EWEA) system updated in the past 12 months (baseline: 71 per cent of country offices);
Evidence generation, cross-cutting programming and advocacy:
Complementing the focused programme areas described above, UNICEF recognizes that progress in social inclusion also requires investment in relevant cross-cutting issues and systems. Robust evidence and data are critical to achieve the results outlined in this case for support. National statistics organizations require support from UNICEF in their data collection efforts including household surveys, as well as support in analysis and use of such data advancing the understanding of correlations between different outcomes and sectors. Some cross-cutting research and evaluation efforts to strengthen the evidence base for social inclusion programming are needed. Focusing on the critical stages of a child’s life – in early childhood and the adolescent period – and on cross-cutting issues such as gender, disability and social or ethnic origin emphasizes the need to work on a multi-sectoral basis to enhance results for the most excluded children. Most of the specific programme areas described above will include specific communication for development (C4D) and/or advocacy efforts, but progress in social inclusion also requires cross-cutting C4D and advocacy, such as efforts to strengthen community dialogue, catalyse child participation in community decision making or to increase the overall focus on children in national budgeting.

Key assumptions, risks and mitigation measures

Assumption 1: International and national leaders continue to embrace the concept of social inclusion. Associated risks are related to possible programmatic inefficiencies in addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups, as well as vested interests uniting to oppose the inclusion of these groups. To mitigate these risks, UNICEF works on generating evidence about the social and individual benefits of social inclusion, as well as on increasing participation by the most disadvantaged communities in policy dialogue, so they can advocate directly for the importance of focusing on social inclusion.

Assumption 2: Increasing the participation of children and communities increases their inclusion in society. The main risk associated with this assumption is that increased participation may lead to disillusionment and withdrawal, thereby reducing inclusion. In order to mitigate this risk, UNICEF emphasizes the importance of managing expectations of children and communities, including by preparing them well for the challenges and inevitable setbacks that occur in advocacy efforts. Additionally, the organization works to generate evidence about the benefits resulting from increased participation and document good practices related to it.

Assumption 3: Well-designed systems are better at identifying and addressing the needs of disadvantaged populations. Much of the work on social inclusion addresses systems of various kinds, particularly efforts to strengthen them and make them more responsive to the needs of disadvantaged groups. The key risk is that the strengthened systems will continue to have little focus on disadvantaged groups or fail to effectively address their needs. To address these issues, UNICEF works to generate evidence about the importance and benefits of focusing on disadvantaged populations.

Assumption 4: Partners remain willing to work in multi-sectoral ways required to successfully address social inclusion. The potential risk is related to the change in global trend from a multi-sectoral approach back to sectoral approaches. Addressing this risk, UNICEF works on building the evidence base for the multi-sectoral approach to show the ways in which addressing the needs of children holistically improves results.
### Resource requirements 2015–2017

#### Overall funding gap for social inclusion (in US$):

![Bar chart showing resource requirements, estimated funding, and estimated funding gap from 2014 to 2017.](chart)

#### Details of funding gap by programme area (in US$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome/programme areas</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social inclusion</td>
<td>153,788,408</td>
<td>384,471,020</td>
<td>384,471,020</td>
<td>922,730,447</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child poverty and social protection</td>
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<td>128,622,786</td>
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<td>(1) Social protection and child poverty</td>
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<td>254,831,375</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Social exclusion # data and evidence</td>
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<td>22,443,047</td>
<td>22,443,047</td>
<td>53,863,314</td>
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<td>181,995,888</td>
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<td>(1) Public finance and local governance</td>
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<td>(2) Policy advocacy # urban, civil society, parliament, environment</td>
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<td>(3) Economic and social policy – general</td>
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<td>56,364,462</td>
<td>56,364,462</td>
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<td>Human rights, non-discrimination and participation</td>
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<td>84,972,583</td>
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<td>Evidence, advocacy and cross-cutting</td>
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<td>38,447,102</td>
<td>38,447,102</td>
<td>92,273,045</td>
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</table>
On 5 May 2015, Chau Thi Tao, 15, attends the National Children’s Forum on behalf of the 200,000 children from her province. The Children’s Forum in Lao Cai, Viet Nam, offers children from various ethnic minority groups across the country the opportunity to come together and discuss various issues they face. Ethnic minority communities in Viet Nam are among the poorest in the country and the children face a variety of challenges such as early marriage, lack of education and child labour.

Background and additional information
A summary of the main technical guidance and tools, with hyperlinks for each document, is available below.

- UNICEF’s Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) website; open from <www.unicef-irc.org/MODA/>.


• Child Friendly Cities website; open at <childfriendlycities.org>.


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