CHILD TRAFFICKING

The ILO’s response through IPEC

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)
All children in the world should enjoy an education, have time to play, and live their lives in freedom. Unfortunately, this is not the case for millions of children who are victims of child labour. Many of these children, particularly those in the worst forms of child labour, are trafficked from one place to another to work for others.

Child trafficking is a crime under international law and a violation of children’s rights. It reduces victims to mere “commodities” to be bought, sold, transported and resold. Trafficked children may end up working as domestic servants, street beggars, agricultural labourers, miners, or may be sent to work on construction sites, in sweat-shops or entertainment places. In some cases, these children are forced into truly reprehensible forms of child labour such as prostitution, pornography, armed conflict, bonded labour, or other illicit activities. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that one in seven of the children who are victims of these latter types of exploitation is also a victim of trafficking.

Girls are affected disproportionately, and are trafficked in particular for commercial sexual exploitation and child domestic labour; boys are believed to be trafficked in particular for work in agriculture, plantations, mining and armed conflict.

Isolation and separation from families and communities, sometimes in places where they have no legal status or do not speak the language, make trafficked children especially vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous employers. Trafficked children are more vulnerable than other child workers to severe physical and psychological abuse. Long working hours, heavy loads, exposure to dangerous tools and toxic substances, fear and intimidation, violent punishment and sexual abuse expose them to severe physical and psychological harm. Any attempt to refuse demands made on them, disobey, protest or escape, may result in being punished or even killed. Trafficked children may be treated as criminals instead of victims, denounced to the authorities, arrested, and detained.

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1 According to *Every child counts: New global estimates on child labour* (ILO, 2002) of an estimated 8.4 million girls and boys in “unconditional worst forms of child labour” in 2000, an estimated 1.2 million children under the age of 18 were trafficked. Unconditional worst forms of child labour includes: forced and bonded labour, armed conflict, prostitution and pornography, and illicit activities.
Child trafficking is a combination or series of events that may take place in the child's home community, at transit points and at final destinations. The recruitment and movement may appear voluntary initially but then take on aspects of coercion by a third person or a group. The relocation may be across borders or within a country. Exploitation may occur at the beginning, middle or end of the trafficking process or indeed at several points. Those who contribute to it with the intent to exploit – recruiters, intermediaries, document providers, transporters, corrupt officials, service providers and employers – are traffickers, even when they take part only in a small fragment of the whole process.

Child trafficking is difficult to stop because of its clandestine and dynamic nature. Those who engage in it may operate independently or in networks, following trafficking routes that change to evade law enforcement. Sometimes corrupt law enforcement officials facilitate trafficking or may be involved themselves. Trafficked children frequently find themselves shifted from one form of work into another depending on the will of the traffickers.

For many years, trafficking was thought of in the narrow sense of kidnapping, abduction and selling of children. Experience gained from numerous projects to combat child trafficking carried out by the ILO and other organizations has demonstrated that the issue is considerably more complex and has multiple causes, risk factors and manifestations. Poverty usually plays a principal role, but poverty alone does not explain why certain poor families fall victim to trafficking and others not. There are often a number of risk factors at source, transit and destination points that, if combined, make children more likely to be trafficked. Additional risk factors include, for example, parent illiteracy, illness or death of one of the main family breadwinners, unemployment, early school drop-out of the concerned children, absence of workplace inspection or policing, and a specific demand for child labour. The following table shows the many risk factors in the trafficking process that can make a child more vulnerable to being trafficked, exploited and re-trafficked. Effective solutions to stop trafficking include recognizing which risk factors are present in a given situation and finding ways to minimize them. Without addressing these, trafficking is likely to continue.

### Individual Risk Factors

#### General
- Age & Sex (i.e. young girls);
- Marginalized ethnic minority – little access to services;
- No birth registration / Lack of citizenship;
- Orphans and runaways;
- Lack of education & skills;
- Low self-esteem;
- Innocence / naivety / lack of awareness;
- Consumerism, negative peer pressure.

#### In source/sending areas
- Difficulties in school – drop-out;
- Experience of family abuse or violence;
- Feeling bored with village/rural life;
- City attraction / perception of a better life.

#### In transit
- Travelling alone rather than in a group;
- Travelling without money;
- Travelling unprepared & uninformed;
- Travelling without destination address or job;
- Emotionally upset, drugged, threatened, constrained;
- Travelling without ID & registration;
- Travelling illegally;
- Go through non-registered agency or smuggler;
- Travelling at night.

#### At destination
- Isolation;
- No social network;
- Inability to speak the language;
- Inability to understand system in which they live/work;
- Illegal status;
- Dependency on drugs, alcohol;
- No contact with family;
- Work in bad conditions – may result in WFCL;
- Inability to recognize exploitation/bondage.

### Family Risk Factors

- Marginalized ethnic group or subservient caste;
- Poor single parent families;
- Large family in poverty;
- Serious illness (HIV-AIDS) & death in poor family;
- Power relations within HH – often patriarchal – fathers decide (e.g. LA, Africa, South Asia);
- Son/male preference;
- Domestic violence & sexual abuse;
- Alcohol & drugs in family;
- Past debt / bondage relations of the family;
- Traditional attitudes & practices (e.g. send daughter to extended family);
- History of irregular migration & migration network.

### External and Institutional Risk Factors

- War/armed conflict;
- Large youth population vs. low labour market absorption capacity;
- Natural disaster (e.g. draught, flooding, earthquakes);
- Globalization & improved communication systems;
- Absence of cheap, fast & transparent migration/job placement services for youth (i.e. youth may go illegally);
- Strict migration controls contribute to pushing movement underground, with large profits for traffickers;
- Weak legal framework & enforcement;
- Corruption;
- Weak education not relevant to labour market;
- (Gender) discrimination in education & labour market;
- Shifting social mores, ambiguity in teens’ roles.
Communities at Risk Factors

- Youth unemployment;
- Location – i.e. close to border with more prosperous country;
- Distance to secondary school & training centres;
- Road connection, exposure to city;
- Quality of village leadership & community network;
- Lack of policing, trained railway staff, border guards;
- Lack of community entertainment;
- History of migration.

Workplace Risk Factors

- Unsupervised hiring of workers (e.g. in border areas);
- Limited reach of labour law;
- Poor labour protection & enforcement;
- Unregulated informal economy and 3D jobs (dangerous, dirty, demanding) with poor working conditions;
- Lack of law enforcement, labour inspection & protection;
- Inability to change employer;
- Male demand for sex with girls & sex tourism;
- Undercover entertainment (hairdresser, KTV, massage);
- Public tolerance of prostitution, begging, sweatshops;
- Lack of organization and representation of workers.

How Trafficking is Defined in International Law

International instruments on trafficking of human beings provide the underlying concepts for defining child trafficking. The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2000), also known as the “Palermo Protocol”1 defines trafficking of human beings as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation”. In the case of children (i.e. under 18 years of age) the Protocol further specifies, “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in the definition”.

The ILO’s Legal and Policy Framework

The ILO’s main concern is the “labour exploitation” aspect of trafficking. The organization is the one of the oldest bodies of the UN family, and the only one that is tripartite (governments, workers’ and employers’ organizations). It sets international standards for work and assists countries in attaining them. It works towards the effective elimination of trafficking in children into labour, sexual and other exploitations, guided by the ILO’s Forced Labour Convention (No. 29), Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) and Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182) and in the broader framework of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the “Palermo Protocol”.

Initiatives by the member States of the organization, and technical assistance through the ILO’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child labour (IPEC), is furthermore guided by the ILO’s Global Action Plan that was a formally endorsed by the Governing Body on 7 November 2006. This plan commits all ILO member States (181 in July 2007) – in accordance with the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182)2 – to design and put in place appropriate time-bound measures by the end of 2008, and eliminate the worst forms of child labour, including trafficking, by 2016.

Child Trafficking

Elements defined for the purpose of IPEC operations

- A child - a person under the age of 18 years;
- Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt, whether by force or not, by a third person or group;
- The third person or group organizes the recruitment and/or these other acts for exploitative purposes;
- Movement may not be a constituent element for trafficking in so far as law enforcement and prosecution is concerned. However, an element of movement within a country or across borders is needed - even if minimal - in order to distinguish trafficking from other forms of slavery and slave-like practices enumerated in Art 3 (a) of ILO Convention 182, and ensure that trafficking victims separated from their families do get needed assistance;
- Exploitation includes:
  a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, debt bondage and servdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict (Convention 182, Art. 3(a));
  b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances (Convention No. 182, Art. 3(b));
  c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties (Convention No. 182, Art. 3(c));
  d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children (Convention No. 182, Art. 3(d) and Convention No. 138, Art 3);
  e) work done by children below the minimum age for admission to employment (Convention No. 138, Art. 2 & 7);
- Threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud or deception, or the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability at any point of the recruitment and movement do not need to be present in case of children (other than with adults), but are nevertheless strong indications of child trafficking.

Notes:

1 The “Palermo Protocol” supplements the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.
2 Ratified by 163 Member States as at 19 April 2007.
The IPEC assists governments and other partners to understand the problem, to develop the necessary legal framework and commitment, and then to take direct action on the ground to prevent child trafficking and to find and rehabilitate the victims.

On the global level, the IPEC undertakes the following:

- **Raising awareness about the labour “exploitation”** dimension of child trafficking, and the special vulnerabilities of boys and girls of and below the minimum working age, its manifestations, impact and costs to society, and effective responses;
- **Building the knowledge base** through research, documentation and sharing of learning, e.g. on the cause and concomitants of trafficking, the extent of the problem and analysis of what measures are effective in combating it;
- **Mobilizing a wide network of partners** to both implement and sustain the work;
- **Training and capacity building** of government officials, social partners, NGOs and civil society; and
- **Promoting participation of children** at all stages of interventions and ensuring outreach to children that need it most.

On the country level, IPEC and its partners carry out comprehensive intervention packages to address root causes, risk factors, and vulnerabilities (including gender discrimination) at source, transit and destination (including workplace risks and demand for labour exploitation). These may be within a given country or across borders. The intervention packages include:

- **direct action** at various points in the process:
  - prevention of trafficking of children at risk, intercepting those in transit, and withdrawing and reintegrating victims through age-specific assistance – i.e. promotion of education for children under the minimum working age (i.e. 15 years) and (life) skills training, youth employment, safe migration and decent work for parents, and boys and girls of minimum working age;
  - providing **policy advice** on:
    - legislation and law enforcement of those who exploit children in the process of trafficking while advocating for punishment of convicted exploiters, including recruiters, intermediaries, document providers, transporters, corrupt officials, service providers and employers;
    - planning and monitoring;
    - employment related responses – i.e. licensing and monitoring recruitment and contract labour; monitoring conditions of work & outreach to informal economy; promoting safe labour migration; employers’ action against trafficking; action by trade unions and associations (e.g. in transport sector and judiciary) and organizing migrant workers.

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**IPEC INITIATIVES TO COMBAT CHILD TRAFFICKING**

Together with a broad network of local partner organizations, IPEC has operated a range of regional and national programmes against child trafficking over the past 10 years. These programmes show how various elements of the package described above are put into practice. Specific highlights of the various initiatives include the following:

**West and Central Africa**

In October 1999 IPEC launched a major 12-country project (LUTRENA) in West and Central Africa to combat cross-border trafficking. The project is operational in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Cote d’Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. By March 2007 it had rescued 13,000 children from trafficking and prevented 23,300 from being trafficked. Direct assistance (including health services, nutrition, formal and non formal education, vocational and skills training, legal assistance and/or counselling services) and awareness raising campaigns have reached tens of thousands of people in areas of origin, transit and destination in each country. Other highlights include the provision of training to more than 7,500 social workers, judges and prosecutors, law enforcement and border personnel, journalists, and NGO staff; the establishment of local vigilance committees which mobilize communities, monitor the well-being of children and migrant labour, identify and intercept children at risk of trafficking and victims, and participate in the offering of direct assistance services to children in need; the mobilization of a transport union to fight trafficking through an alert system; the Abuja Agreement on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, adopted by 24 of 26 member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the adoption of national legislation and a series of bilateral cooperation agreements among sending and receiving countries.

**Eastern and Southern Africa**

Attention to trafficking in children is in its infancy in East and Southern Africa. Through engagement with national research organizations, capacity has been built and information has been gathered in Swaziland, Uganda and Zambia. Research is about to start in Malawi. The results of these studies are expected to support focused dialogue to address child trafficking through policy and outreach initiatives.

**Europe**

A full-fledged project to combat trafficking of children and young people has been operational in the Balkans (Albania, Romania, Moldova) and Ukraine since 2004. In its three-year first phase, the project prevented/withdrew 4,400 children from trafficking in the region through education, job counselling, youth employment, and peer education (through child participation) in youth centres. A comprehensive Child Labour Monitoring System has been set up, and the psychosocial rehabilitation capacity of professionals has been enhanced through development of training packages and delivery of training, indirectly benefiting thousands of children. Work to date has been documented in *Steps to the Elimination of Child Labour in Central and Eastern Europe – Emerging Good Practices and Lessons Learned* (2007). In its second phase, which runs until 2009, another 4,500 children have been targeted for prevention/withdrawal from

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Children at risk of trafficking in Fishermen communities in Ga District (GHANA) back in school. (Photo: ILO/J.Heitz, November 2005).
WFCL. The focus of the project is on country-wide scaling-up of IPEC models of prevention, identification, referral, rehabilitation and tracking, and increasing the outreach of institutions for the elimination of child labour.

Central America

A multi-year programme has been operational since February 2002 to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children in eight countries of Central America: Belize, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. The Programme aims to create synergies among the national initiatives in the region, to facilitate cross-sectoral cooperation among the countries and to strengthen the capacities of major actors through training, technical support and the sharing of good practice and pilot models for action. Pioneering research and advocacy work has, amongst others, focused on men and masculinity and their contribution to trafficking, and potential solutions. Mobilization and training of a range of judges and prosecutors has contributed to law enforcement and punishment of offenders. In collaboration with other international organizations, the project contributed to the development of regional guidelines for the repatriation of children and adolescent victims of trafficking in persons. These were approved in April 2007 during a Regional Conference on Migration for Central America, Mexico, Canada, the United States and the Dominican Republic.

South America

In Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, IPEC’s three-border project has been active from 2001 to 2005 to map the incidence of exploitation in the border areas of the three countries, and build institutional capacity. This included training of police, judges, prosecutors, journalists and teachers associations; awareness raising initiatives; and mobilization of community-based prevention, protection and care for exploited children. Local referral centres have furthermore been established to care for sexually exploited children. The “Weaving Networks” project in Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru – operational since 2004 – is strengthening local capacity, raising awareness and mobilizing community-based protection and care for sexually exploited children and children in domestic labour. The project uses a holistic approach where children receive gender and child friendly rehabilitation services along with education and vocational training.

Brazil

Following a series of small projects on child trafficking in Brazil since 2002, a large project started in 2006 focusing on increasing the knowledge base, building the capacity of institutions including associations of judges, prosecutors and attorneys, and sensitizing the media and the population about trafficking in persons for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labour exploitation. The project also contributed to the development of a national policy against trafficking in persons that was enacted in October 2006.

South Asia

A sub-regional project to combat trafficking in children in South Asia began in 1998 with research, consultation and analysis, which led to a two-year project covering Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Anti-trafficking units have been supported within government structures, and surveillance units have been set up with computerized monitoring of rescued victims. Youth groups have been mobilized and supported and a strategy for effective rehabilitation has been developed, along with child-friendly standards and guidelines for the recovery and reintegration of trafficked children.

Mekong sub-region

A five-country project to combat trafficking in Cambodia, China (Yunnan Province), Laos, Thailand and Viet Nam has been in operation since 2000. It is one of the largest anti-trafficking initiatives in the sub-region. The project works through a combination of grass-roots interventions and capacity building of Governments at all levels, offering education and skills training, alternative livelihoods and improved income prospects, legal literacy and awareness raising through local partners, and helping governments to better manage labour migration and avoid trafficking-related exploitation. The project also offers cross-cutting public advocacy for better treatment of cross-border migrants, especially migrant children. An emphasis is placed on the promotion of safe migration for decent work for youth of working age, and engagement of workers’ and employers’ organizations to address the demand side of trafficking at destination, covering both internal and international movements. Together with Save the Children – UK, the project launched the “Voices of Children” initiative to show the value of children’s meaningful participation in the development of policies that affect the lives of young people. The project also supports the close collaboration of women’s organizations, as illustrated in the Mekong Women’s Forum (held in July 2007). The forum highlighted the value of sub-regional cooperation, networking and consultations in work against trafficking.

China

The project to prevent trafficking in girls and young women within China (CP-TING) was launched in 2004. CP-TING is implemented in close collaboration with the All-China Women’s Federation and carries out activities at the national level and in five pilot provinces. For at-risk girls under the age of 16, the project promotes a prolonged education and training; and for girls and young women aged 16-24, the project focuses on reducing vulnerability by promoting safe migration for decent work. More specifically, the project is working with local education departments to deliver life skills training to over 17,000 boys and girls in 70 middle schools in rural areas. Over 100 Women’s Homes have been established to provide information, training and referral services for young female migrants and potential migrants. To enhance the capacity of the young migrants and the institutions providing them with services, the project is developing a comprehensive set of safe migration guidelines. A public awareness campaign carried out with the Ministry of Railways at the time of the Chinese Spring Festival reached nearly a million migrants travelling through 22 major train and bus stations. Children affected by trafficking have participated in provincial forums and representatives will come together for the first ever National Children’s Forum on anti-trafficking organised jointly with UNICEF, UN Inter-Agency Project on Trafficking (UNIAP), and Save the Children China. The children’s Statement of Recommendations will feed into a sub-regional ministers’ meeting to be held in Beijing in December 2007.
This includes indifference to such activities as child begging and exploitation of vulnerabilities and determine age-specific remedial action that includes education for children under 15 and school/work solutions for children of minimum working age.

State policy must provide protection and this policy must be enforced. Law enforcement and policy initiatives should include restrictive and preventive steps to stop the recruiters, traffickers and exploiters from causing more harm. It should also focus on the creation of decent work alternatives for families whose children are at risk of trafficking.

Recruiters and middle men are only half of the equation. Programmes must also address the responsibility of clients and employers who take advantage of vulnerability for special gain.

Public indifference must also be fought. This includes indifference to such activities as child begging and exploitation of children in domestic work.

Focusing on preventing migration pushes trafficking further underground. It is better to emphasize reducing vulnerability to trafficking in the process of movement. This implies an understanding of risk factors and cause-effect relations.

Some of the lessons we have learned from interventions in recent years

Responses to the problem of child trafficking for a long time addressed only poverty as the primary cause rather than some of the more specific vulnerabilities; addressed the supply side in sending communities rather than interventions all along the way, including demand at destination points; and focused on assistance to victims rather than prevention. We now know that these represent only a partial response and that other aspects of intervention are just as important. The following are some of these lessons learned.

The most cost-effective way to fight child trafficking is to stop it before it happens. But effective prevention requires an understanding of the problem at its root, including risk factors that interplay and combine in different ways in different sectors at source, transit and destination, and in different cultural contexts, communities and families.

Learning from former victims is instrumental in determining these risk factors and their interplay. It is also crucial in targeting the children that are most vulnerable to (re)trafficking. Local communities at source and destination points need to be empowered to understand what creates these vulnerabilities and determine age-specific remedial action that includes education for children under 15 and school/work solutions for children of minimum working age.

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Child participation is crucial. Individual children can be helpful in identifying children that are most in need, as well as in finding meaningful ways to assist them.

Partnerships and partnerships

UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT). Together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), United Arab Emirates (UAE), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the ILO is part of the Steering Committee of UN.GIFT which aims at mobilizing state and non-state actors to eradicate human trafficking by (i) reducing both the vulnerability of potential victims and the demand for exploitation in all its forms; (ii) ensuring adequate protection and support to those who fall victim, and (iii) supporting the efficient prosecution of the criminals involved, while respecting the fundamental human rights of all persons. In carrying out its mission UN.GIFT will increase knowledge and awareness on human trafficking; promote effective rights based responses; build capacity of state and non-state actors; and foster partnerships for joint action against human trafficking.

ILO International Training Centre/Turin (ITC). IPEC works with the ITC to offer regular training courses on trafficking in children and adults.

Understanding Children’s Work (UCW) initiative. CUW is a joint initiative by ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank, based in Rome, which conducts research on child labour, including child trafficking.

International Agricultural Partnership for Agriculture without Child Labour (IAP). The partnership includes ILO, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) and International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Associations (IUF). The partnership, amongst others, points at the need for research on trafficking of children into agricultural work, including on plantations.

Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education For All (GTF). Core members of the GTF partnership are the ILO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Education International (EI), the Global March against Child Labour, and the governments of Norway and Brazil. The GTF reflects international concern that child labour, including child trafficking, is an obstacle to the achievement of EFA goals. It also recognizes that fighting child trafficking contributes to achievement of the EFA goals.
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USEFUL WEB SITES

International Labour Organization
www.ilo.org

ILO Mekong anti-trafficking project
www.childtrafficking.net

ILO China anti-trafficking project
www.preventtraffickingchina.org

Anti-Slavery International
www.antislavery.org

Web resource for human trafficking
www.humantrafficking.org

Child trafficking digital library
www.childtrafficking.com

United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking
www.ungift.org

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
www.ohchr.com

International Organization for Migration
www.iom.int

United Nations Children’s Fund
www.unicef.org

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
www.unodc.org

Organization for Security & Cooperation in Europe
www.osce.org/cthb

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