

BRIEF

Measuring the impact of male engagement on women's economic empowerment

Background

Interventions designed to address gender inequality and advance women's economic empowerment (WEE) have increasingly recognized the need to engage both women and men in efforts to transform gendered norms in households, communities, and policies. Male engagement programming (MEP) is thought to contribute to positive changes in gender norms, increased gender equity, and better economic outcomes for both women and men, and to mitigate unintended consequences of WEE, including added time burden for women and increased levels of gender-based violence.¹

However, previous MEP has not successfully transformed entrenched social and gender norms to improve WEE women.² Moreover,

1. ICRW. (2019). Women's Economic Empowerment: The Unintended Consequences. Washington, D.C.

2. Glinski, A., Schwenke, C., O'Brien-Milne, L., & Farley, K. (2018). Gender Equity and Male Engagement: It only works when everyone plays. Washington, D.C.: International Center for Research on Women.

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prior studies evaluating the impacts of such programming have largely focused on outcomes for men. The lack of focus on women makes it difficult to assess and fully understand the true added benefit of male engagement for WEE.

The research reported here contributes to a small but growing body of evidence that seeks to understand whether and to what extent

male engagement in WEE programming can foster an environment that supports women who are currently entrepreneurs and removes barriers for those that aspire to be. It specifically investigates whether male engagement improves key WEE outcomes by comparing the impacts of women-only programming with programming that engages both women and their male partners.

Box 1 - Key concepts defined (as used in this study)

Attitudinal change: Shifts in what participants think or believe about a given idea or concept, often in the hypothetical, such as whether women should work outside the home and whether a man would be justified in perpetrating violence against his wife in a given situation. We expect attitudinal change to precede behavioral change.

Behavioral change: Shifts in what participants actually do, such as whether women do work outside the home and whether women have experienced violence. We expect behavioral change to follow attitudinal change.

Gender-equitable decision-making: Decision-making patterns in which the woman makes most decisions on her own or jointly with her partner. We asked about decisions such as whether a woman can work outside the home and whether to use contraception.

Gender Equitable Men's Scale (GEMS) scores: A tool for measuring gender attitudes through participants' levels of agreement with statements such as "A man should have the final word at home," and "Caring for children is a woman's responsibility." A higher score indicates more gender-equitable attitudes.

Gender norms: Beliefs about gender roles, power dynamics and expectations that govern what women and men are "supposed" to do in their communities.

Intimate partner violence (IPV): Any form of violence (physical, emotional, or sexual) perpetrated against one's romantic or marital partner. IPV may be perpetrated in a way to assert or maintain power, and/or intended as "discipline" to correct an undesired behavior.

Male Engagement Programming (MEP): Meaningful and intentional involvement of men in activities designed to foster and catalyze changes in deeply held gender norms to elicit their support for women's economic empowerment.

Self-efficacy: Belief in one's capacity to perform and meet challenges, measured through agreement with statements such as "I can handle whatever comes my way," and "If someone opposes me, I can find the means to get what I want."

Statistical significance: The measure that indicates if a finding is a result of programming. Findings that had greater than 95% probability were considered statistically significant.

Time use gap: The difference between the hours per day that a woman spends on a given activity, such as childcare, and the hours per day that a man spends on that activity. Time gaps here are calculated as: women's time – men's time.

Summary of Key Findings

The study found evidence that male engagement positively impacted men's and women's attitudes toward gender roles and rights. The impact on certain behavioral outcomes was less pronounced. As attitudinal change is expected to precede behavior change, these findings suggest that male engagement was critical to shifting attitudes and norms, and that related behavior change may follow. This brief outlines our findings related to the impact of male engagement programming:

- Male engagement encouraged more equitable sharing of domestic tasks.
- Male engagement improved Gender Equitable Men's Scale (GEMS) scores of both women and men.
- Male engagement reduced acceptance of intimate partner violence (IPV) as a norm among both women and men, but not the experience of victimization or perpetration of IPV.
- Male engagement improved women's participation in decision-making.
- Male engagement did not have a

Box 2 - Engagement Programming Details

The programming occurred over 10 months and engaged single-sex training with both men and women, as well as couples sessions.

- Single-sex training with women had 22 sessions total, hosting sessions every 2 weeks with 20 women per group.
- Single-sex training for men had 4 sessions total, hosting sessions every 3-4 weeks with 50-60 men per group.
- Couples' training for mixed gender groups had 2 sessions total, hosting sessions every 3-4 weeks with 40 couples per group.

statistically significant impact on women's work and income.

- Male engagement did not have a statistically significant impact on the frequency of women's communication with their partners.
- Male engagement did not have a statistically significant impact on women's self-confidence and self-efficacy.
- Program participants report an overall positive experience, despite some hesitation from the community to concepts being disseminated related to gender norms.

Methods

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and Hand in Hand International (HiHI) designed, implemented, and tested a gender-transformative program to understand the role of male engagement in WEE efforts in two regions in Tanzania – Mlangarini and Nduruma. Three hundred rural women were trained using HiHI's proven enterprise development curriculum, enhanced with an additional set of gender-transformative

> modules. The male partners of half of the women (the treatment group), were also trained using the newly developed men's curriculum. Couples in the treatment group also participated in complementary couples' sessions. Mlangarini was selected as the treatment community and Nduruma was selected as the control community.

This mixed-methods,

quasi-experimental study was designed to test whether women whose male partners also received training would experience greater gains related to key aspects of social and economic empowerment than women whose partners did not receive training. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to measure changes in key attitudinal and behavioral outcomes related to women's empowerment, and, where possible, attribute those changes to the engagement of male partners.

Our assessment is based on a model of progress that begins with knowledge acquisition, leading first to attitudinal change, and then to behavior change.³ We argue that desirable shifts in both women's and men's attitudes toward gender roles and gender equality, including participants' scores on the Gender Equitable Men's Scale (GEMS) and toward IPV, will lead to meaningful behavioral outcomes that will support gains in WEE. We implemented a quantitative baseline (March-April 2020) and endline (August-September 2021) survey with female and male program participants in Mlangarini and female program participants and their male partners in Nduruma. Through two rounds of surveys, 182 couples were fully engaged and participated in both. At endline in December 2021, in Mlangarini we also conducted qualitative in-depth interviews (IDI) with purposively selected couples, purposively selected focus group discussions (FGD), and key informant interviews (KII) with targeted local stakeholders.

The primary goal of the quantitative analysis was to understand if the male engagement component improved attitudes and behaviors related to WEE, including couples' distribution of domestic work, gender norms, IPV, patterns

Box 3 - Domestic chores; different perspectives

Waukuru^{*} spends most of her days preparing meals, washing dishes and clothes, bathing and caring for her three children and tending to the other chores that are necessary for maintaining her household, but she's now trying to start a business too. Waukuru's husband Hassan spends his days at work as a driver and arrives home in the evenings to the dinner Waukuru has prepared. From Waukuru's point of view, this hasn't changed much in their fifteen years of marriage, and she is satisfied with the way things are. "This is how things are done in my community," she says. "My mother did it like that and my daughters will do it like that. It is our culture." But Hassan sees things differently. After participating in the HiHI training, he is trying to help out more with cooking and washing clothes when he can. He knows this will make Waukuru happy. He is no longer embarrassed to be seen doing domestic work. He knows that Waukuru works hard managing the household and wants to be supportive of her efforts to start her business.

*All names have been changed to maintain participants' confidentiality.

of decision-making, women's engagement in economic activity, couples' communication, and women's self-efficacy. To do this, we compared the extent to which participants in the treatment and control groups changed between baseline and endline.⁴ We used qualitative findings to help us understand and interpret the results of the quantitative study.

^{3.} Glinski, A., Schwenke, C., O'Brien-Milne, L., & Farley, K. (2018). Gender Equity and Male Engagement: It only works when everyone plays. Washington, D.C.: International Center for Research on Women.

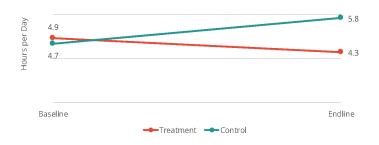
^{4.} We used generalized estimating equations (GEE) to estimate odds ratios comparing changes in the treatment and control groups GEE analysis was selected because the observations were not independent – meaning they repeated at two points in time at baseline and endline - and therefore the data did not meet the assumptions of classical regression techniques. (See: Homish, G. G., Edwards, E. P., Eiden, R. D. & Leonard, K. E. (2010). Analyzing family data: A GEE approach for substance use researchers. Addictive Behaviors, 35(6), 558-563).

Study Findings

Male engagement encouraged more equitable sharing of domestic tasks.

On average, men in the treatment group reported spending approximately one hour more per day on domestic work – including household chores and care for children and others – after participating in the program, while men in the control group reported spending about one hour less per day. This contributed to a decrease in the average time use gap in the treatment group, and an increase in the control group (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Difference between time reported by women and their male partners on domestic chores



In interviews, men in the treatment group describe ways in which they have begun participating in domestic work, including naming specific chores they perform on a regular basis.

While it is promising that these men have taken on some domestic work, it is notable that this is primarily expressed as men "helping" their wives, and they had not yet taken ownership of that work. Further, while men in the treatment group reported spending more time on domestic tasks, women in neither the treatment nor control group

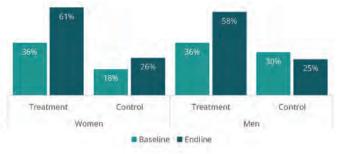
reported significant differences in how they spend their time at endline. This, together with the finding that men are "helpers," suggests that rather than redistributing domestic chores, the "help" men provided did not meaningfully reduce women's domestic work burden. It may be that women are now performing more household management, or simply that they do not perceive their husbands as having taken on a significant amount of work. This points to a need for further norm change to foster the perception of men as leaders of domestic work and facilitate men doing these activities on their own in order to achieve the desired outcome: relieving women's time burden.

"In the beginning, I never used to do a thing as far as domestic work is concerned. But for the last two years, things have changed. She has a lot on her table and I chip in to help her out." ~ Male IDI Participant

Male engagement improved GEMS scores of both women and men.

Adding a male engagement component had a significant impact on women's and men's attitudes, as measured through GEMS scores, (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Percentage of participants reporting high GEMS scores at baseline and endline⁵



5. Note that women's and men's GEMS scores are calculated independently and should therefore not be compared to each other.

This refers to participants' agreement with statements about women's and men's roles and responsibilities, such as "A man should have the final word at home," and "Caring for children is a woman's responsibility. Women in both groups earned higher GEMS scores at endline compared to baseline, suggesting an improvement in gender attitudes over the time of the programming. However, the improvement was greatest for women in the treatment group, indicating that while women's programming alone can improve gender attitudes, programming for male partners can have a meaningful additional effect. Men who were not trained reported, on average, less equitable attitudes at endline compared to baseline, while gender-equitable attitudes among men in the treatment group improved substantially (women: aOR=2.23, p<0.001; men: aOR=2.39, p<0.001).

Though not originally a key component of the curriculum, participants and community members expressed a desire to learn about the rights of women and girls, including topics related to land ownership and marriage. At endline compared to baseline, women in both groups had improved knowledge and attitudes around rights, including agreement with statements such as "Women should have a fair share of family inheritance," and "It is important for a woman to know about her marital rights."

Male engagement reduced acceptance of IPV as a norm among both women and men, but not the experience of victimization or perpetration of IPV.

The engagement of male partners significantly changed both women's and men's perceptions of IPV as acceptable or justified in any circumstance, suggesting that MEP was crucial for shifting mindsets – for both women and men – around behavior considered a

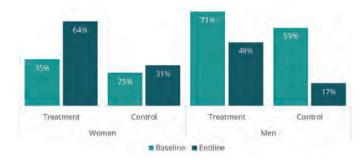
Box 4- Decision-making: a step in the right direction

For Liliani and Juma*, decision-making was a man's right. As the head of the household, it was Juma's responsibility to provide for his family, and so there was little need to engage his wife in decisions about how to spend or save money. Liliani's realm was domestic chores, not household finance. But with time, and after joining HiHI's training, Liliani and Juma started to think about a new way of sharing responsibilities – and working together. Today, when there is a decision to be made, they sit down together to talk over the issue and think about options. Even though he still has the final say, Juma looks to Liliani to provide guidance and suggestions when making decisions. He considers her opinion when making decisions that will affect her and their family. They both see the benefits of this new pattern of decision-making – their marriage has begun to feel more like a partnership, in which both Liliani and Juma are more equally involved, and they fight and argue less.

*All names have been changed to maintain participants' confidentiality.

"normal" part of intimate relationships (women: aOR=2.33, p<0.001; men: aOR=2.27, p<0.001). More women in both groups reported that IPV was never justified at endline compared to baseline, but while the improvement was modest in the control group, it was very large in the treatment group. While men in both groups were actually more likely to justify IPV in some scenarios, men in the treatment group experienced a more modest decline (see Figure 3). The increase in justification in the treatment group may be the result of men thinking more critically about their behaviors and responding more accurately at endline.

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents reporting that IPV is never justified, at baseline and endline



However, qualitative findings reveal that power dynamics still largely favor men, who have the "final say" in disagreements. The intervention did not have a statistically significant impact on the likelihood of women experiencing IPV or on the likelihood of men perpetrating IPV. In fact, the incidence of IPV was much higher across both groups – as reported by both women and men - at endline than at baseline. This may be related to the global increase in incidence of IPV with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it may also be evidence that both men and women came to characterize certain acts as "violence" by endline that they may not have reported as such at baseline. We are optimistic that the attitudinal shifts, including the increased recognition of marital rape and other acts as forms of violence, are crucial first steps toward meaningful behavior change.

Male engagement improved women's participation in decision-making.

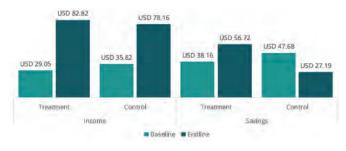
"Things have changed. We started our marriage well then things did not work. We started having conflict because he wanted to make all the major decisions about our lives. But now we make decisions differently, there's more consultation between us." ~ Female IDI Participant The addition of programming for male partners had a positive and statistically significant impact on gender-equitable decision-making (defined here as women making decisions either alone or jointly with their partner), as reported by both women and men (women: aOR=1.95, p<0.01; men: aOR=1.69, p<0.05). However, even among the couples that said they discuss things together, the man still had the final say because of his position as the head of household. Decisions about women's reproductive rights were generally equitable at baseline and improved further among women in the treatment group (women: aOR=3.14, p<0.001).

Male engagement did not have a statistically significant impact on women's work and income.

The differences in employment and income between groups were not statistically significant, indicating that the male engagement component did not significantly increase women's likelihood to work outside the home, or their average earnings, compared to women-only empowerment programming.

In fact, women in both groups were more likely to report working outside the home, and average net income also rose dramatically (see Figure 4), from USD 29.05 to USD 82.82 in the treatment group and from USD 35.82 to USD 78.16 in the control group.

Figure 4: Women's average reported net monthly income and savings, at baseline and endline



This represents an increase of 185 percent for the treatment group and 118 percent for the control group.⁶

"[Women's] businesses are doing well...and have been a great help to our families." ~ Male FGD Participant

Though this appears to be a meaningful difference, we know that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic profoundly affected livelihood dynamics in households. Due to these and other contextual factors it is difficult to attribute these outcomes to the intervention with certainty.

The added male engagement programming does appear to have significantly increased women's average savings, which increased by 49 percent **from USD 38.16 to USD 56.72** in the treatment group but decreased by 43 percent in the control group.⁷ It may be that as male engagement encouraged couples to make purchases and financial decisions more equitably, it allowed women to save more of their earned income. In general, however, lack of capital still appears to be a significant barrier to women's economic aspirations in these communities, though it appears that HiHI programming has mitigated this.

Male engagement did not have a statistically significant impact on the frequency of women's communication with their partners.

"Before it was very hard for me as I did not know how to save, but when I was trained on saving, it became very easy. I used to depend on my husband for everything." ~ Female FGD Participant

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Women in both groups reported more frequent communication with their partner after participating in the program, with no statistically significant difference between them. On the other hand, men in both groups reported less frequent communication with their partner at endline than at baseline, though the measure among male participants dropped less precipitously than for those in the control community (men: aOR=2.56, p<0.001).

In qualitative interviews, participants reported spending limited time in the day sharing things with each other, but nearly every couple did discuss the program at home, suggesting that while it may be infrequent, the program did create a new opportunity for couples to communicate.

Male engagement did not have a statistically significant impact on women's self-confidence and self-efficacy.

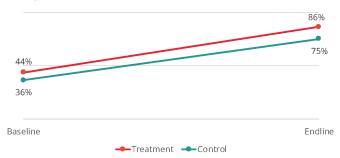
Women in both the treatment and control groups reported meaningful improvements in their confidence and ability to handle challenges and reach their goals between baseline and endline, but we did not observe

^{6.} Estimated net monthly incomes ranged dramatically, from -USD 6.46 (expenses exceeded earnings) to USD 835.39 across both groups at baseline (SD=75.77) and from -USD 21.01 to USD 1,016.85 at endline (SD=134.89). Moreover, 98 and 53 women reported net monthly incomes of USD 0 or less at baseline and at endline, respectively.

^{7.} Total reported savings had a huge range, between USD 0 and USD 1,162.66 at baseline (SD=127.61), and between USD 0 and USD 1,076.54 at endline (SD=112.83). 100 and 116 women reported savings of USD 0 at baseline and endline.

statistically significant impacts of the added male engagement programming (see Figure 5). This indicates that programming for women alone was enough to improve their perceptions on this variable.

Figure 5: Percentage of women reporting high self-efficacy scores, at baseline and endline



Program participants report an overall positive experience, despite some hesitation from the community to concepts being disseminated related to gender norms.

"The first day men felt like they were being insulted by HiHI, that they were being told nonsense. But eventually they became convinced that this is good for them. Now they do not want the program to phase out." ~ Female IDI Participant

Overall, participants were satisfied with the programming they received. Women noted that the curriculum improved their access to income and work opportunities, and that they learned key financial skills, such as saving. Men reported that they had adopted more gender-equitable behaviors and attitudes since the program's start, notably taking on more domestic chores and involving their partners in household decisions. Participants were aware of some community pushback, particularly against men doing domestic work, but noted that, in general, most community members welcomed the program. Several people suggested that participants should be separated by age to facilitate comfort discussing topics like sex, but overall suggested that the program be continued and expanded.

Limitations

The majority of participants – both men and women in both treatment and control groups – reported strong and negative impacts on their lives as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the onset of which delayed the start of programming and took place between baseline and endline data collection. Fear of getting sick, increased prices for non-food goods, and job and income loss were cited as the most common impacts of the pandemic. We did not find any statistically significant differences between groups related to COVID-19, suggesting that the pandemic affected both communities in more or less the same way.

We do note that the pandemic is likely to have colored many of our findings, particularly around employment outside the home, income, savings, and use of financial services. We describe this in all relevant sections throughout this brief, and it is critical to keep in mind the context of the pandemic when interpreting the results presented here.

Sustained changes in behavior, particularly behaviors that are entrenched in, and reinforced by, broader social structures and norms such as gender, typically require long-term and sustained effort over many years, if not decades. It is not surprising, therefore, that this study did not capture more profound behavioral changes. However, the significant shifts in attitudes that we did observe are important and signal the strong potential for associated behavioral changes to follow in time.

Box 6 - Findings from Cohort 2

In 2021, HiHI implemented the same program with a second cohort of women and their partners in the same communities. In order to compare and validate findings from Cohort 1, the second cohort was evaluated by MAJIK Investment Company Ltd., who conducted the quantitative study, and by ICRW, who led the qualitative study. Data collection methods, tools, and outcomes were similar to those used for Cohort 1. Cohort 2 data were analyzed using a difference-in-difference methodology.

Findings from Cohort 2 largely validated those from Cohort 1, in both quantitative and qualitative results. They re-emphasized the value of engaging men in WEE programming, and the impact that the support of male partners can have on women entrepreneurs and their families, but also highlighted the need for further engagement to fully reap the benefits.

Like Cohort 1, findings from Cohort 2 suggested that male engagement had a statistically significant impact on GEMS scores and

gender-equitable decision-making. Women and men in both groups became less likely to justify IPV in given scenarios, and at both baseline and endline, participants in the treatment group were less willing to justify IPV. Experience of IPV was not evaluated as an impact of participation in Cohort 2, but, like Cohort 1, participants qualitatively reported that the program had led to a decrease in IPV. In Cohort 2, we did not find that the program

significantly influenced men to participate in domestic chores. Like Cohort 1, while men in the treatment group may have taken on some household chores, this was largely in the form of "helping," and women are still the owners of these tasks.

Male engagement in Cohort 1 did not have statistically significant findings related to income, but in Cohort 2 did significantly increase women's average net earnings from USD 85.34 to USD 202.32. Evidence from both quantitative and qualitative research further suggests that at endline, couples in the treatment community saw women entrepreneurs as key contributors to household income and valued the resilience that their additional earnings provided. Similarly, while we did not find evidence in Cohort 1 of impact on couples' communication, women in the treatment group of Cohort 2 were more likely than their counterparts in the control group to experience improved communication. These differences between cohorts may be the result of inherent differences between participants, or the result of impacts of COVID-19 subsiding between rounds of implementation.



Conclusions

ICRW's assessment of the effects of male engagement programming on women's empowerment showed that the program elicited strong positive shifts in attitudes among both male and female participants. These include more gender-equitable beliefs about the roles that women and men can and should play in their households and in economic spaces. They also include decreases in women's and men's justification and normalization of IPV, an increase in women's participation in decision-making, and a more equitable sharing of domestic tasks between partners. These attitudinal and normative shifts are significant and signal the potential for meaningful long-term social change.

The assessment did not, however, show significant shifts in behavior among participants. For example, we did not measure significant differences between treatment and control groups in women's engagement in income-generation or increased earnings, their likelihood of experiencing IPV victimization, nor their domestic chore time burden. We believe that the largely attitudinal shifts we do see are preliminary to behavioral changes that, with time, we are optimistic will occur. Changing behaviors that are rooted in gender norms takes time, and the strongly positive impacts that we observe are evidence that the added male engagement is effectively achieving change for both women and men. Additional research over a long time period could illuminate additional changes, including in key behaviors that support the economic empowerment of women.

Recommendations for Program Implementation

Continue, maintain and scale male engagement programming to enhance and support women's economic empowerment.

The positive attitudinal changes that arose among program participants are encouraging and meaningful and suggest the potential for long-term social norm and behavioral changes to follow. In order to maintain the shifts observed, and to cultivate concomitant changes in social practice, male engagement programming should be continued, including in the present communities, and brought to scale in a broader context.

Engage the broader community and expand programming to reach a broader audience.

Several participants, particularly men, mentioned community pushback against some of the goals of the program, especially men taking on domestic chores and women prioritizing business and entrepreneurship over raising children and caring for their families. Even when male partners are supportive, community reactions remain a barrier to norm and behavior change. Social and behavior change communication strategies could help reach a larger audience, which could facilitate both women and men engaging in new roles. Programming could also expand to include additional groups, including young and unmarried women and men. This will need to be done carefully, of course, to ensure that groups are appropriate for age and subject matter.

Create opportunities for participants to "practice" desired behaviors and have discussions about concepts at home.

Many qualitative research participants stated that they had never formally discussed topics like division of labor or decision-making with their partner prior to involvement in the program, and that they had "always done it that way." Moreover, participants reported valuing opportunities to discuss things they learned and practice new behaviors. These opportunities allowed couples to put into action the key learnings received as part of the intervention - including "homework" activities that encouraged couples to practice new learnings at home with each other. This in turn forced them to think critically about certain behavior patterns, why they had adopted them in the first place, and how they might change them to better suit their families.

Add and expand curriculum activities and lessons on women's and girls' rights, including land ownership and marital rights.

Both women and men would benefit from improved knowledge towards the rights of women and girls, and participants expressed interest in developing their knowledge around these concepts. Additional programming focused specifically on this issue could have added benefits, including translating attitude shifts into behavioral changes.

Identify opportunities to support women's businesses through access to capital.

Lack or shortage of capital is still a barrier to the growth of many women-owned businesses, and to their ability to take advantage of new financial learnings, skills, and products. Savings remains difficult for some women, even as they engage in entrepreneurship. Recognizing this challenge, and, when possible, connecting women with sources of capital, is critical to ensure that women do not feel trapped or unable to reap the benefits of WEE programming.

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