WFP Evaluations concerning the Targeting of Operations

Introduction

These lessons are based on a review of 32 evaluation reports. Starting with the Full Report of the Thematic Evaluation of Targeting in WFP Relief Operations (OEDE/2006/001), it also included lessons from thematic evaluations on WFP’s commitment to women, food aid for mother and child nutrition, and the country programme approach. Finally, it analysed evaluation reports of specific national and regional operations of all types. Although there is clearly a difference in how to approach targeting when faced with a sudden crisis, compared to when planning a long-term Country programme, the fundamentals are similar.

Lesson 1: Recipients of food aid must be selected on the basis of food needs and/or vulnerability to local food insecurity, and they must receive adequate food to satisfy dietary needs.

Summary: All available instruments must be mobilized to produce an accurate picture of needs and delivery options, in coordination with national and local authorities, female and male representatives of the affected population, and implementing partners. Both the quality and the quantity of assistance must be adequate for beneficiary needs.

Experiences from the field: The principle of assistance as defined above is contained in the WFP policy paper on targeting, and reflects the Sphere Standards (Sphere Project, Sphere Handbook, revised edition, Geneva 2004) adopted by the international community. In the Indian Ocean tsunami emergency these standards were carefully reviewed to check that everyone entitled to food assistance was targeted. The evaluation concludes that some elements of assistance were missing, such as components of the food basket, therapeutic feeding to complement general food distributions, and fortified foods and/or food fortification. Initial assessment was not quick and accurate enough, which resulted in some isolated areas being poorly served with what was meant to be a complete “return” package.
Lesson 2: Official documents bearing on vulnerability and food insecurity provide basic information for targeting, but must be backed by other more specific assessments.

Summary: Targeting depends on good-quality assessments: national, regional and sub-regional food insecurity and vulnerability analysis. Other macro-level analytical documents are also important, including the United Nations’ common country assessment (CCA) and Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). However, these must be supported by early-warning system information and area-specific and/or household surveys, including vulnerability analysis by the WFP office or partners.

Experiences from the field: It is important to start with the data contained in the national development plan or other surveys by the United Nations and humanitarian partners, such as the Famine Early-Warning System (FEWS) and the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS). The thematic evaluation of the WFP country programme (CP) approach concludes that a factor for effective programming was the inclusion of national and sub-regional vulnerability and food insecurity analysis in the database. A similar comment is made in the Malawi CP evaluation, which states that an important determinant of the relevance of the Country Strategy Outline (CSO) and CP was an accurate analysis of national and sub-regional food insecurity and vulnerability.

For relief operations, national and regional plans have to be backed by alert systems, such as the inter-State drought warning system in the Sahel, operated by CILSS. This covers all nine countries in the region, and is managed from a central office in Ouagadougou. In Mali, the local early-warning system provides national-level warning of potential crop risks. There are similar national alert systems in Ethiopia and countries in the Southern Africa region. These are all now backed by vulnerability analysis and mapping at the area level, to obtain a more accurate picture of the population at risk. In Mali, owing to the perennial risk of drought, the early-warning system incorporates food security stocks, market price information and sub-regional data on crop development. Any serious risk of crop failure is followed up by an FAO/CILSS crop and food supply assessment mission, normally joined by WFP. A good description of the targeting mechanism for cases of crop failure is contained in the report on the regional Sahel emergency. A somewhat different approach is described in the Southern Africa food crisis real-time evaluation, where a string of combined assessments determined the level of needs, stressing that chronic food insecurity is often confused with crop failure.

Lesson 3: The standard approach to targeting is to focus on a geographical area, but this may allow food-secure people to benefit alongside the food-insecure – inclusion error. The alternative is to target households and individuals, but this may overlook some food-insecure people – exclusion error. The ideal is to combine the two approaches.

Summary: The targeting of individuals and households is preferred to geographical targeting, as it focuses on households and individuals who are food-insecure. However, for practical reasons, most targeting is geographical, involving assessment of the aggregate needs of the food-insecure population in a specified area. If there are significant differences in the levels of needs among groups in the area, household-level surveys and targeting are conducted to ensure that all vulnerable and food-insecure people have access to assistance. However, no survey, especially on a large scale, is perfect, and if there is a risk that some vulnerable people will be excluded by the household exercise, it is recommended that the inclusion error solution – geographical targeting – be adopted.
Experiences from the field: The question of inclusion versus exclusion error is often decided by cost and the availability of human resources to conduct household vulnerability surveys. Accurate household targeting is sometimes impossible. In Bolivia, geographical targeting was followed by community selection of households, and in Uganda it was impossible to identify the most vulnerable of the internally displaced people (IDPs) in camps. In the West Africa coastal regional protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO), it was necessary to target chronically food-insecure areas in addition to refugee and IDP settlements. In both the Sahel regional operation and all the country programmes (CPs) and emergency operations (EMOPs) in that region, there is a strong case for considering chronic food-deficit areas alongside drought-affected ones. A similar situation was highlighted in the Great Lakes PRRO, where it was impossible to distinguish among different income groups in refugee camps. In Kenya, area-based targeting combined with community-based targeting and distribution brought excellent results, with communities identifying which households should receive food aid. Even here however, there was no assurance that all vulnerable people received their due. When in doubt, area-based targeting would appear to be the best option.

An example of good targeting practice in a CP comes from Ethiopia, where the WFP country office vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) unit proposed candidate areas for a rural rehabilitation project, while local agricultural field staff selected the individual project areas. The work programme was then developed by the local community, with technical assistance from the agricultural bureau and WFP technical staff. This approach enables farmers to identify and rank their most pressing agricultural problems and determine possible solutions and courses of action. Another approach was used in Angola, where the post-war rehabilitation programme was designed around individual targeting through programming options such as school feeding, supplementary feeding, therapeutic feeding and food for work (FFW).

Lesson 4: In a major emergency, inter-agency assessment of needs is essential.

Summary: In the vast majority of relief operations, food is only one – albeit the most important – of the items required to prevent famine and malnutrition. The United Nations system, donors and WFP itself encourage cooperation in assessing needs. Among WFP’s partners in needs assessments are FAO for crop failures, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for refugee operations, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) for targeting children, and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in most natural disaster cases; government normally participates, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also sometimes included. Such joint exercises improve credibility and help mobilize support.

Experiences from the field: The real-time evaluations of the WFP responses to the Indian Ocean tsunami and the Southern Africa crisis stress the importance of joint assessment missions for emergency needs assessment (ENA). In the first case, an inter-agency team used helicopters when estimating the number of displaced people; in Sri Lanka, which was one of the countries badly affected by the tsunami, there was joint assessment with the International Labour Organization (ILO), as household reconstruction needs were also surveyed. A follow-up ENA was conducted four months after the first, to review the assumptions of the first exercise. The Southern Africa evaluation suggests that a neutral ENA could be useful, as food could be substituted by cash in some cases. The Sudan ENA took account of seasonal needs, and in Kenya seasonal assessment missions followed crop and pasture development to ensure a more accurate picture of needs. The Nicaragua Hurricane Felix response was based on an ENA that allowed pin-point targeting of both general food distributions and food for work (FFW), with supplementary feeding through the existing network of mother-and-child health (MCH).
centres. Kenya’s strong and permanent government support for the assessment mechanism, managed jointly with WFP and other agencies, demonstrates good coordination and cooperation at the central level, followed by measures to ensure equitable distributions in the affected areas.

**Lesson 5:** A relief operation always starts with general food distribution (GFD), while other modalities are being considered, often based on household and individual vulnerability surveys. Pay attention to redistribution practices within the community, which may dilute allocated rations.

**Summary:** GFD is an accepted first option in an emergency, especially if the operation covers a large area, where household and individual targeting would be impossible. However, the nutrition situation of the affected population must be considered, and the introduction of supplementary and therapeutic feeding may have to be envisaged. Channeling through mother-and-child health (MCH) centres or school feeding networks are two options. Additional options in PRROs may include food for work (FFW), food for training (FFT) and food for assets (FFA). The effectiveness of GFD is undermined by the widespread traditional practice of redistribution within a community, which is organized by clan leaders and community structures according to their own eligibility criteria. The solution is either to increase GFD to cover all, or to set up supplementary and therapeutic feeding to cater to the most vulnerable.

**Experiences from the field:** GFD on its own may not be adequate, and additional modalities to cater to the most vulnerable may need to be introduced after nutrition and vulnerability surveys. The tsunami evaluation stresses this, and the issue is also highlighted in Uganda, Great Lakes and Ethiopia. In all cases, supplementary feeding and other modalities were introduced to deal with malnutrition issues. Traditional community redistribution mechanisms may even exclude some vulnerable groups altogether. The solution may be to increase food allocations or to target specific groups of the vulnerable. For the latter, community agreement to the selection process must be obtained. Kenya provides an excellent example of a community-based targeted distribution system (EMOP 10374.0), where communities were given the power to decide who among them most needed to receive food aid. Specially established local relief commissions selected the households entitled to food aid. Criteria for the selection of commission members and beneficiary identification were discussed and agreed with the potential beneficiaries. The Sudan case (EMOP 10048) provides another example of the problems encountered with redistribution within the community, but here there was a suggestion of abuse and the evaluation called for decentralization and the removal of power from community leaders. The Sahel regional emergency also demonstrates how even when a system claims that the number of families to be assisted has been agreed beforehand, the final distribution is still made by village elders. The Ethiopia protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) evaluation pointed out that the practice of using group leaders has led to significant diversions of food, and argued for direct distribution to identified heads of household. Thus, although there is no consistent approach, the lesson is not to ignore traditional customs, and to provide safety net solutions to guarantee assistance to the most vulnerable.
Lesson 6: Although there is no standard set of criteria applicable to targeting in all situations, some criteria are clearly essential. These include socio-economic status, level of food insecurity, cooperation with authorities, and access to beneficiaries.

Summary: Criteria for targeting depend on the situation and the intervention modality. In a country programme (CP), the object of the proposed activities will dictate how beneficiaries are to be selected, for example, the areas where school feeding is to be introduced, or the schools to be selected to encourage female participation. In relief operations, food insecurity may be short-term and of totally uncertain duration, while the differences in vulnerability among potential beneficiaries demand judgment and additional scrutiny. The most significant criteria are poverty index; level of food insecurity; cooperation with government and local authorities; access; scope for partnerships; implementing partners’ experience; low development indices; high gender disparities; nutrition state – wasting, stunting and underweight; growth – height-for-age, arm circumference; loss of assets; children at risk, especially those under 3 years and orphans; physiological status – pregnant and lactating mothers; elderly; disabled; and women-headed households. The presence of other projects is also important for achieving convergence. When planning emergency school feeding in affected areas, the focus should still be on education factors, such as school enrolment and attendance, rather than exclusively on community food security.

Experiences from the field: Perhaps the best example of targeting criteria is contained in the Ethiopia CP evaluation, where WFP’s vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) unit developed a package of data requirements to determine vulnerability, including differentiating between chronic and emergency food insecurity. The Southern Africa crisis evaluation gives another extensive list of criteria used in assessing needs, which can be very helpful in planning crop failure relief interventions. The mother-and-child nutrition (MCN) evaluation of food aid for nutrition focuses on a specific set of criteria related to MCN programmes, but could be useful for other interventions, be they relief, recovery or development. The Great Lakes protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) evaluation focuses on the criteria relating to physiological state and availability of household resources, and refers to specific activities that are identified as suitable for beneficiaries to engage in. The Cambodia PRRO evaluation contains a very extensive annex providing details of the criteria used for commune-level targeting. While highly appreciating the methodology used, the evaluation suggests that cross-referencing data with information about other inter-agency activities in neighboring communes that were not necessarily targeted could have been helpful in identifying production patterns and crop calendars relevant to WFP’s assistance programme.

Lesson 7: The choice of reliable partners often determines the success of an operation, but beneficiary targeting must not be dictated by the reliability and presence of partners more than by the real needs of the affected population.

Summary: Implementing partners have important roles in all WFP operations, and their selection is a great responsibility. It has often been claimed that targeting depends more on the presence of a good and reliable implementing partner than on accurate assessment of the real needs of food-insecure populations. A trade-off is needed between targeting effectively and ensuring that there is a good implementing partner. Partners sometimes have their own targeting criteria, which need to be compared and matched with those of WFP.
**Experiences from the field:** There are many examples of problems relating to the choice of partners, which are often selected because they offer complementary services to WFP, such as in its development and recovery activities for Uganda. The thematic evaluation of the protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) modality goes into this issue in depth, suggesting a more extensive joint assessment of needs with potential partners, to guarantee a common agenda when implementing an operation. The same report uses Cambodia as an example in which an implementing partner for the CP’s social sector component was selected on the basis of the partner’s perceived implementation capacity, rather than of beneficiary needs. The mother-and-child nutrition (MCN) evaluation stresses the synergy element in partnerships, and the Ethiopia country programme (CP) evaluation confirms that WFP partners did the initial targeting, which WFP accepted. The Kenya emergency relied fully on government partners to establish the beneficiary selection and distribution system, confirming that the choice of partner is principally a question of judicious decision, where the needs of affected people are taken into account by the partners.

**Lesson 8:** Emergencies tend to drag on. It is essential to build a continuous monitoring system to measure changes in the size, composition or nature of needs.

**Summary:** All interventions, be they CPs or relief operations, undergo changes over time. Constant monitoring is necessary with adjustments to delivery modalities, rations and distributions as required. This continuum must be built into the operation’s programming and financial module. Monitoring, especially of nutrition status and food insecurity, should extend to communities in the vicinity of feeding operations, especially those hosting refugees and displaced people, which may be equally in need.

**Experiences from the field:** The Kenya relief operation provides an interesting example of a built-in monitoring system with periodic reassessments that guarantee readjustments as the situation evolves. However, although the intention and final result were positive, much concern and confusion were caused by the late production of reassessment results. So the process needs to be rapid and delivery should not be changed until all data are available. The tsunami evaluation describes the problems resulting from a lack of continued monitoring of the impacts of the disaster and the response. It calls for beneficiary participation in continuing assessment after the initial targeting. In this case, supplementary and therapeutic feeding and reconstruction were the obvious targets for a complementary assistance programme.

**Lesson 9:** Involving women in food management and distributions has led to more equitable distributions and has enhanced women’s position in society.

**Summary:** The collection of gender-disaggregated data – from initial assessment to targeting, registration and distribution – is essential for the planning, implementation and evaluation of WFP programmes. Specific targeting of women in programmes enhances their status within the community, especially when they are put in charge, or participate directly in relief and distribution commissions. In relief food management operations, women appear able to cope better with ethnic differences than men, who tend to act according to ethnic divides. However, cultural habits must be respected, which sometimes make it difficult to engage women in food management alongside men.
**Experiences from the field:** The thematic evaluation of WFP commitments to women provides a good account of issues relating to women's role and the advantages of involving women as much as possible in all aspects of food aid operations. It concludes that recruiting female food aid monitors and supporting their mobility and physical safety contributes to more effective targeting and the reaching of female target groups. Positive impacts were observed when women of different ethnic origins participated in food management and distribution committees – also in the Uganda PRRO. They worked well together, in contrast to male-dominated committees, which tend to operate on ethnic divides. The evaluation also draws attention to cultural differences, which may inhibit the involvement of women alongside men. The Sudan emergency evaluation stresses that accepting customary systems makes it easier to address their weaknesses, such as poor regard for women's role in decision-making.

In refugee and internally displaced people (IDP) operations, women and children represent the majority of beneficiaries, and specific gender targeting is unnecessary. However, beneficiaries are often required to come personally to collect their food rations, which can present a security risk for women. The solution is either to move the distribution centre nearer home, or to allow proxies to collect the ration. Food can also sometimes be pre-packaged to take account of women's physical capacity to transport it. Gender targeting is a function of the attitude and gender sensitivity of implementing staff.

Elevation of women's role in food management may result in sustained improvement of their status within the community (see thematic evaluation of the PRRO approach). Women’s appointment to monitoring tasks and distribution duties and their involvement in initial targeting have helped them to gain position in their communities, both at the feeding centres and on return to their homes.

**Lesson 10:** Balance the pressure to discontinue an assistance operation - or to replace it with modalities that save resources - with an assessment of the beneficiary population’s capacity to cope once aid is withdrawn or targeting changed.

**Summary:** After a long period of emergency food deliveries, it may be tempting to switch to supplementary feeding, food for work (FFW) and other modalities, or even to withdraw assistance altogether, often owing to resource constraints. Recourse to special modalities and precipitate withdrawals of assistance are claimed to have led to negative effects on the nutrition status of affected populations. Care must therefore be taken when such decisions are made, and appropriate assessment must be conducted beforehand. Similar problems arise when a feeding operation ends without adequate provision for rehabilitation and the guarantee that returning refugees and displaced people are self-sufficient.

**Experiences from the field:** The thematic evaluation of the PRRO approach contains several references to the risks associated with shifting the emphasis from general food distribution (GFD) to more targeted approaches, as this can threaten the health and nutrition status of beneficiaries. Country offices often set unrealistic and sometimes inappropriate recovery targets, with reduced rations and resettlement deadlines. It recommends increased involvement of vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM), inter-agency joint (re-)assessment missions and in-depth household economy and coping mechanism studies. It particularly points to FFW activities being imposed before the preconditions for their successful implementation have been met. Closer cooperation with partners, such as the World Bank, in post-conflict reconstruction and development, and more skills training may help. For post-war recovery in Angola, particular attention was needed to skills development and assets creation. Community participation in planning is essential and preferred over partners’ solutions.
Evaluation reports reviewed

Thematic

Full report of the thematic review of targeting in WFP relief operations OEDE/2006/1

Thematic review of WFP food aid for nutrition: mother-and-child nutrition interventions OEDE/2006/4

Full report of the thematic evaluation of the protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) category OEDE/2004/01

Full report of the thematic evaluation of the WFP commitments to women OEDE/2002/08

Full report of the thematic evaluation of the WFP country programme approach OEDE/2002/09

Regional


Full report of the Great Lakes regional PRRO 6077 and 6077.1 OEDE/2002/17

Full report of the real-time evaluation of WFP’s response to the Indian Ocean tsunami OEDE/2005/3

Full report of the evaluation of the WFP West Africa coastal regional protracted relief and recovery operation OEDE/2004/6

Rapport complet d’évaluation de l’opération d’urgence régionale au Sahel OEDE/2004/4

Country programmes


Full report of the mid-term evaluation of the Lesotho country programme OEDE/2002/11


Full report of the mid-term evaluation of the Yemen country programme (1998–2001)

Full report of the evaluation of WFP’s operations in East Timor OEDE/2001/12


Rapport complet de l’évaluation a mi-parcours du programme de pays – Burkina Faso OEDE/2003/02

1 All reports are available at www.wfp.org/about/evaluation/list.
Evaluation Top 10 Lessons – Targeting, May 2010

Rapport complet de l’evaluation a mi-parcours du programme de pays – Madagascar OEDE/2002/12


Full report of the evaluation of the Yemen country programme 1998–2001 OEDE/2001/02


**Protracted relief and recovery operations**

Full report of the evaluation of the of Cambodia PRRO 6038

Full report of the evaluation of the Uganda PRRO 6176 OEDE/2002/02

Full report of the evaluation of Ethiopia PRRO 6180 OEDE/2002/03

Full report of the evaluation of Islamic Republic of Iran PRRO 6126 OEDE/2002/16

Full report of the joint WFP/UNHCR evaluation of the Sudan PRRO 4168.5 and PRRO 6189.0 OEDE/2001/09

Full report of the evaluation of Azerbaijan PRRO OEDE/2002/06

Full report of the evaluation of the Afghanistan PRRO 10233

**Emergency operations**

Evaluation of WFP response to Hurricane Felix in Nicaragua OEDE/2009/02

Full report of the evaluation of WFP emergency operations in the Sudan OEDE/2004/5

Full report of the evaluation of Indonesia EMOP 6006.00

Full report of the evaluation of DPRK EMOP 5959.00 and 5959.01 OEDE/2000/10

**Recent Portfolios**

Full report of the evaluation of WFP Eritrea relief portfolio OEDE/2004/07

Full report of the evaluation of the WFP Angola portfolio OEDE/2002/05
### Acronyms

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>CCA</td>
<td>Common Country Assessment</td>
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<td>CILSS</td>
<td>Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel</td>
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<td>CP</td>
<td>Country Programme</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Country Strategy Outline</td>
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<td>EMOP</td>
<td>Emergency Operation</td>
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<td>ENA</td>
<td>Emergency Needs Assessment</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<td>FEWS</td>
<td>Famine Early-Warning System</td>
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<td>FFA</td>
<td>Food For Assets</td>
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<td>FFT</td>
<td>Food For Training</td>
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<td>FFW</td>
<td>Food For Work</td>
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<td>GFD</td>
<td>General Food Distribution</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Person</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>MCH</td>
<td>Mother-And-Child Health</td>
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<td>MCN</td>
<td>Mother-And-Child Nutrition</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>OCHA</td>
<td>Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs</td>
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<td>PRRO</td>
<td>Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation</td>
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<td>UNDAF</td>
<td>United Nations Development Assistance Framework</td>
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<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>VAM</td>
<td>Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping</td>
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**Reference:**
Full and summary evaluation reports and corresponding Management Responses can be found at:

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