

**PARENTS AND CHILDREN AGAINST TRAFFICKING
AND HARM**

PACT

PILOT PHASE MARCH-MAY 2014



What is PACT?

PACT brings community adults together to build safe communities for children. Through PACT, adults become alert and responsive to child protection issues and work to activate formal and informal mechanisms that ensure children's safety and well being.

PACT does this by identifying vulnerable communities and children and building the capacity of adults to recognise child protection risks, understand their consequences (risk of being trafficked, early marriage, abuse, etc.), and respond by linking children to protective services, and activating formal child protection systems.



At a PACT community meeting in Bhopal, adults come together to learn about and share their common concerns regarding children's safety and well-being.

Why Work With Adults?

Aangan has been working closely with high-risk children imperilled by their exposure to isolation, violence, hazardous or exploitative work, early marriage, juvenile offending, trafficking and abuse through our community centres, peer led initiatives and in childcare institutions.

While building children's resilience individually and in groups is important and powerful, the responsibility of preventing harm and creating responsive mechanisms rests with adults. Unless the wider community is involved in understanding the impact that insecurity has on children, and commits to addressing these issues, by responding to individual children, as well as demanding government action and accountability, positive change for children will be piecemeal and unsustainable.

IDENTIFYING VULNERABLE CHILDREN

The PACT pilot was conducted in 11 communities in 6 states

SI No.	Name of the State	Urban (Community, City)	Rural (Village, District)
1	Bihar	Adalatganj, Patna	Raghunathpur, Muzaffarpur
2	Madhya Pradesh	Indira Nagar, Bhopal	Jahangirpura, Sehore
3	Maharashtra	Reay Road and Govandi, Mumbai	-
4	Odisha	-	Baauri Sahi and Chunokoli, Khurda
5	Uttar Pradesh	Kazzakpura, Varanasi	Dulahipur, Chandauli
6	West Bengal	-	Purbo Nilambarpur, South 24 Parganas

What makes children in these communities vulnerable?

According to a study by the International Labour Organization (2005, cited in Huda, 2006:376) on trafficking in South Asia, '43% of all victims are trafficked for sexual exploitation, another 32% are victims of economic exploitation, the rest being undetermined.' Huda (2006:376) goes on to add that while trafficking is largely associated with sexual exploitation, a large number of women and children are also trafficked into 'abusive factory labour, street-begging, domestic work and forced marriages/bride-buying.'

In India, 1.2 million children have been identified as trafficking victims, prostituted and enslaved throughout the country, including via child sex tourism, according to a UNICEF report (cited in U.S. Department of State Report on Human Rights, 2013).

Risk Factors for Minor Sex Trafficking Victims

- Loss of a parent or caregiver
- Runaways
- Children with disabilities
- Lack of support systems
- Living in institutions away from family
- Living in slums or on the street
- Families with a history of substance abuse or physical abuse
- Marital violence
- Children with addiction
- Pursuit of romantic adventure

*Sources: Bandyopadhyay (2008), IDLO (2011), Clawson et al. (2009)

The International Development Law Organisation (IDLO, 2011) and Clawson et al. (2009) highlight some of the risk factors for minor sex trafficking victims. These include the loss of a parent or caregiver, runaways, children with disabilities, those lacking support systems, living in institutions away from the family, living in slums or on the street, living with families with a history of substance abuse or physical abuse and children with addiction. Common to all these factors is how each exacerbates the isolation of a child and increases their vulnerability to exploitation.

The pursuit of romantic adventure is another factor which increases the vulnerability of minor girls. The strictures imposed by social norms often lead to young girls running away from home in the hope of marital bliss with their lover. Bandyopadhyay (2008) states that 'it was their boyfriends they absconded with who introduced them to the sex industry – sometimes after a brief and half-hearted attempt at conjugality but more often directly.'

Contrary to the dominant discourse of the organised network of traffickers, studies have shown that ‘much of it is really a cottage industry involving small-time profiteers,’ (UN Interagency Project on Combating Trafficking in Women and Children in the Mekong Sub-region). A string of individuals carrying out different functions—relatives, friends, boyfriends and associates—were often facilitators in recruitment and transportation. Thus, their relationship with the victim was also qualitatively different from the stereotypical predator that uses deception and force to lure (Weitzer, 2007).

The States in which the pilot has been conducted have been chosen based on available data highlighting the high incidence of trafficking through illegal marriage, child labour, and large scale migration. These regions also report alarming statistics on other child protection violations - physical violence and sexual abuse.

Uttar Pradesh

The state reported the highest incidence of physical violence of children—82 percent—according to a study by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (2007:45). In addition, a 2010 NCPCR report (cited in UNODC, 2013), found that Uttar Pradesh accounts for the highest number of child labourers in India at 15 percent.

Our experience of working in **Kazzakpura in Varanasi** reiterates these findings. The majority of children are employed in operating looms used to produce fabric. Many start as early as the age of six, sticking *sitaras* on cloth, and operating looms by eight or nine. Sorting through garbage is the other source of employment for children, who go to a dumping ground bordering the community. In addition to the harm and abuse children are susceptible to through work, community adults have also reported girls being trafficked under the guise of early marriage.

The rural district, **Chandauli**, is a high-risk area for trafficking by virtue of its location. Easy access to a major railway junction (Mughal Sarai), connecting it to the north-east and to the Nepal border has made it an important transit destination (UNICEF, 2012).

Bihar

The geographical proximity of this State to Nepal and Bangladesh, coupled with unemployment and poverty makes it highly vulnerable to trafficking. Bihar also ranks third in having the highest number of child labourers with 8.9 percent of children in the age group of 5-14 years engaged as “main workers”, according to the Census of 2001 (cited in UNODC, 2013:72). A survey conducted by the Bihar Education Project Council (BEP), 2005, found that there were 2.3 million out-of-school children in Bihar, of which 0.56 million children said they left school to work (ibid). In addition, 33 percent of children in Bihar reported having experienced one or more forms of sexual abuse—the fourth highest in the country, according to a study by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (2007:45).

Through our work in **Adalatganj, Patna**, we have found that a large number of children are employed in the catering industry and local businesses. Young children, from the age of 9 or 10 are employed to wash dishes, graduating to serving as waiters by the age of 13 or to set up scaffolding. Many reported having experienced physical violence and verbal abuse at work.

The district of **Muzaffarpur** has been identified as high risk for trafficking. An industrial area, it has a high migrant population. Through our work in **Raghunathpur**, we learnt from members of the community that there is also a high incidence of early marriage. This is supported by statistics cited in a UNICEF (2012) report: ‘The northern state of Bihar has the highest incidence of child marriage at 68%.’

West Bengal

The location of this State has made it prone not just to intra and interstate trafficking, but also to international trafficking, serving as a source, destination and transit point for victims (UNODC, 2013). Almost all districts have been identified as vulnerable to trafficking. The district of **South 24 Parganas** shares an international border with Bangladesh and has been identified as one of the main source areas of trafficking.

Odisha

With a large tribal population, displacement due to natural disasters, and migration across state borders to West Bengal and Chhattisgarh, Odisha has been identified as a source area for trafficking. In addition, the state has reported a high number of cases of bonded labour according to the Ministry of Labour, Government of India (UNODC, 2013). Traditional practices such as that of the *devadasi* are also prevalent wherein girls from economically weak backgrounds are presented as religious offerings for prostitution. The report adds that forced marriages under the guise of being voluntary, are also prevailing with Odisha ranking fifth (ibid).

Madhya Pradesh

The state has been identified as vulnerable to trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, bonded labour and forced marriages (UNODC, 2013). Findings of the National Crime Records Bureau are also alarming: ‘from 2006-10, a total of 3,484 children are found to be untraced as per the Madhya Pradesh missing children data, out of which a total of 2,172 girls are missing’ (ibid). In addition, the state has a high incidence of physical violence against children—63 percent—according to a study by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (2007:45).

The economy of the district of **Sehore** is based on seasonal agricultural. Through our work in the area, we have found that this results in children migrating to cities such as Bhopal for employment in industries like brick kiln work, during the off-season. 4.9 % of children were registered to be working in the district, according to the Annual Health Survey (2010-11), Ministry of Home Affairs, Gol.

A UNICEF (2012) report goes on to add that ‘an east-west corridor spanning six States—including Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal—have the highest incidence of child marriage ranging from 51.9% to 68.2%.’ This is reiterated through our work in Jahangirpura, Sehore, and through findings of the Annual Health Survey (2010-11) which state that 51.9 percent of currently married women between the age group of 20-24 years were married before the age of 18.

Maharashtra

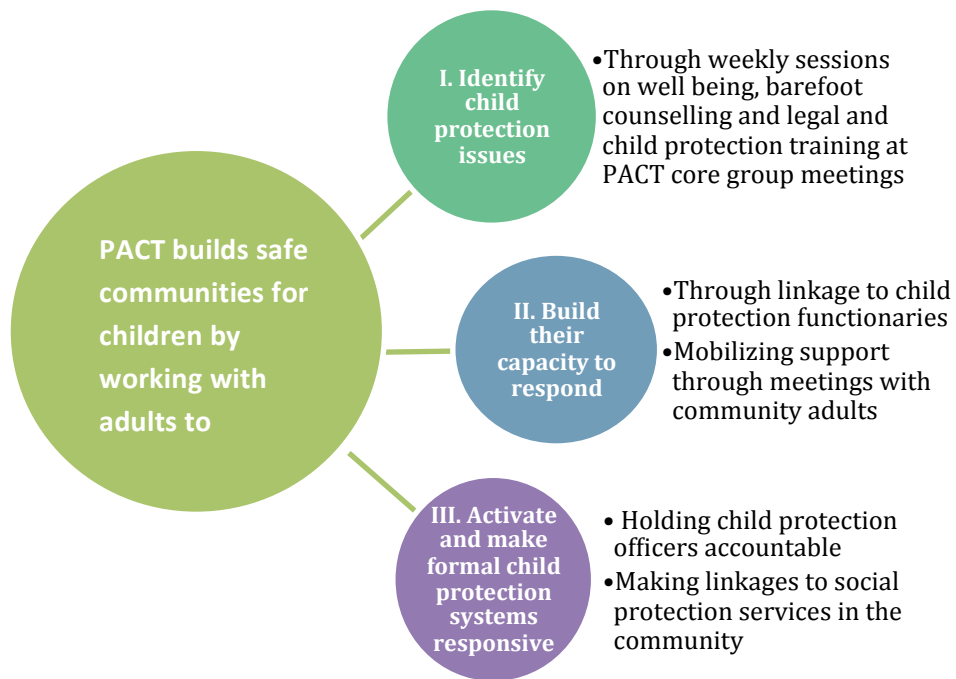
With a high migrant population, particularly in **Mumbai** and its neighbouring districts, Maharashtra is a source, transit and destination for trafficking. Poor rainfall, recurring drought and the lack of employment opportunities have spurred migration from rural districts to Mumbai. The State also recorded a high number of missing children, 28,625, from 2001-2010 of which 1,959 continue to remain untraced, according to a UNODC (2013) report.

Through our work in slums in **Reay Road** and **Govandi** in Mumbai, we have found that children are highly susceptible to harm, abuse, isolation, and trafficking. The non-notified status of Reay Road affects the access its residents have to basic infrastructural and health services. A ship breaking yard borders one side of the urban slum, and a truckers' stop is located in another part of the community. Both pose a risk not just in terms of hazardous work but also to abuse and violence children are subjected to. The Govandi slum borders one of the biggest dumping grounds in Mumbai that also serves as the main source of employment for its residents. Children as young as six years old begin going to sort through garbage—work that is life threatening and puts them at risk of being abused.

HOW PACT WORKS

In order to create safe communities for children, PACT works at multiple levels:

- Vulnerable **communities are identified** based on the protection risks they pose for children
- A **core group of 5-8 adults are then chosen** from each community as PACT members, who volunteer to work together for the safety and development of children
- **Weekly sessions** on wellbeing, barefoot counselling, and legal rights and training are held with members
- PACT members host **bi-monthly meetings with community adults** on protection issues and to mobilize support
- The **community is linked to child protection functionalities** (such as *aanganwadi* workers, the police, local government providers like the block education officer) through these bi-monthly meetings, one-on-one meetings with PACT members, and monthly community help desks
- **Child protection officers are held accountable** by creating pressure through group mobilisation, to foster access to rights and services, thus making formal systems responsive



Identifying children’s vulnerability: Training through weekly meetings

What is the purpose of a PACT weekly meeting?

Weekly meetings are designed to *build the capacity of the core group of 5-8 adults to learn about child protection risks, understand children’s vulnerability and take necessary steps to address these through formal and informal mechanisms.* Curriculum at each meeting includes:

- a. **child protection risks** (such as early marriage, hazardous work, violence and abuse, drug abuse in the family, lack of support systems in the community, etc.) and how it increases the vulnerability of the child,
- b. information about existing **laws and policies** (such as the legal age of marriage, provisions under the Right to Education Act, child labour laws and what constitutes hazardous work, helpline numbers to contact in the event of a violation of rights, POCSO, etc.), and
- c. plans are made to **spread awareness, find allies and activate existing services**

Between March and May 2014, 99 PACT members meetings have been held across

The rationale behind working intensively with PACT members is to enable them to act as child protection advocates and child protectors. As residents of the community, they are repositories of

local knowledge and often best placed to broaden the conversation on child protection and activate key social protection mechanisms.

Who is a PACT member?

Members were identified based on their commitment to shaping a safer future for children in the community. They have been active in *mahila mandals*, been part of SHG groups, and worked as ASHA workers and teachers in local schools. Personal experiences—early marriage, working in hazardous conditions, being exposed to violence—have also motivated members to join the group to craft a different narrative from their own, for children in the community.

For PACT members, weekly meetings are not just a place to learn and engage with new ideas, but also to access a space where they can unburden themselves.

‘I started sorting through rubbish as an 8-year old with my father. I have seen children being buried under garbage, some maimed for life. It is life threatening work and puts you at risk every day.’

Khatija, 23, PACT member, Govandi, Mumbai and mother of three

Aarti, 24, and mother-of-two says, ‘I have endured many hardships but there is no pressure on me here, I feel a weight lifting off my mind. I get knowledge, advice and strength on how to do something for my children and other children in the community’. A single mother living in Adalatganj, Patna, Aarti lost her husband in an accident and decided to leave the residence of her in-laws who used to beat her.

For others like Seema in Sehore, Madhya Pradesh, a former school teacher and an active community member, the motivation is different. Seema has worked with women’s groups in the past, but states that this is the first time she has had an opportunity to respond to the needs of children in the community. ‘There is no one to listen to the voice of the children. Our children are the future and if they are safe and healthy, it will strengthen our village and lead to its development),’ she says.



Through weekly 3-hour sessions, women come together to reflect on different child protection issues. The conversations are guided through role plays, stories shared by the facilitator on the power of group mobilisation and reflective exercises.

What happens in the PACT Trainings?

Talking about Trafficking: In Indiranagar, Bhopal, the group performed a role play to explore



PACT members meeting on forms of trafficking, Bhopal

informal ways in which trafficking occurs. They were given a situation in which a 16-year old girl, Sonu, is being sent to the city with her “Uncle” to work because of strained financial circumstances in the family. The mother is assured that her daughter will only have to cook in someone’s house and is convinced of the merit of the idea. Through the role play, the possibility of Sonu’s being sexually exploited and denied

basic rights, is examined. ‘Before, I just thought of girls being kidnapped and sold. I never even thought about the hidden ways in which girls are trafficked,’ says Rubina, 27, a PACT member.

Discussing Sexual Harrassment: In a session in Reay Road, Mumbai, the group was divided into two and each sub-group was asked to brainstorm on reasons why girls are subjected to sexual harassment, presenting the perspective of boys and girls, respectively. Members representing the position of boys shared that parental neglect and lack of concern for their whereabouts vis-à-vis the daughters of the house, results in boys spending time outside the home, unsupervised. As a result, peers become the support system and their influence often supersedes parental authority. Boys are commonly not perceived as being in need of protection, subjecting them to a series of risks different from girls.

Weekly meetings thus act as a space for members to engage with issues of child protection while reflecting on their own knowledge and experiences of the community. The meetings serve to question everyday experiences of the normalisation of violence, abuse and harm and help adults strategise on how to address these challenges by accessing rights and planning for change.

Identifying risks through a door-to-door survey: In addition to classroom learning, PACT members conducted a door-to-door survey with questions designed to capture information that would help them flag specific protection risks that children and families faced, such as whether needed to access social protection schemes, if the child is going to school, etc.



PACT members, Khurda, Odisha

Using a Risk Assessment Tool: In individual meetings with Aangan staff, PACT members identified - through personal observations and local (informal) knowledge - specific children who they believed were particularly vulnerable to harm and in need of an intervention. The purpose of this is to encourage them to start to recognize the risks posed to children around them.

A risk assessment tool is filled out, based on the members' analysis of the situation of the child. The tool is divided into six sections—family background, education, peers, work, substance abuse and individual factors. It includes criteria such as whether it is a child-headed household, if the child is a victim of domestic violence, has lost a close family member, has gang affiliations, etc. Based on issues raised, plans are made to link the child to appropriate protection systems—a local CBO, a protection officer, ward officer for registration of birth certificates, etc.

The goal is for community members to be able to develop care plans to address these vulnerabilities, with support from the facilitator.

Unraveling the connection between child marriage and trafficking:

'The agents target very young girls from very poor families – those who are burdened. They make an offer for marriage with some man in another state. They create an illusion for the (girl's) family that they are well-off with a big house, fields, cars. The parents think that at least there is no pressure on them to pay for the wedding as all expenses are taken care of, and they are also paid an extra Rs. 25,000-50,000. They believe their daughter will go to a big house and live well. But after the girl is taken away, she is made to do a lot of work and is sexually exploited by 2 or 3 men. Many girls never return, but some manage to escape and have returned to narrate what happened to them. This is how we know about this.

The people who arrange the wedding are paid—the ones who act as dalals or middlemen. They pretend to be merely advising parents about how to plan for the future of their daughter. But that is not advice—they are making deals to buy the girls. They are paid off and so are the parents of the girl. The wedding is wrapped up in one day. Even the neighbours don't find out. When they do, it's too late to do anything. They also never have a full baarat. They will call you to the temple in another village, never their own. After taking the girl there, if she resists or doesn't follow instructions, she is sold to someone else. There was a girl who used to live in the house next door. This is what happened with her. She was sold. Somehow, she managed to escape and came back.

What is this, if not trafficking?'

-Anita, 30, Kazzakpura, Varanasi, PACT Member

Building the capacity to respond: Engaging with stakeholders

What is the purpose of an activation meeting?

Holding state mechanisms responsible for child protection is a crucial aspect of creating safe communities. The purpose of activation meetings is to hold authorities answerable for the development and protection of children. Community adults advocate with local government providers (like a child protection officer, ward officer, school principal, etc.) to:

- i. raise awareness on child protection issues,
- ii. lobby for service delivery, and
- iii. pressurize authorities to implement existing laws and policies

Over the past three months, 107 meetings have been held across states with the aim to access rights and services.

Starting a Creche in Chunakoli, Khurda:

In Chunakoli in Khurda, Odisha, PACT members identified the absence of a crèche in the community as a challenge to the safety and well being of children. In the majority of families, with both parents working, older children were staying home to care for their younger siblings. The group felt that it was important for a crèche to start not only for young children to be cared for, but also to allow older children in the family to go to school, and access their right to education. A meeting was held with Social Development Foundation, an organization that runs crèche services in Odisha, who agreed to start one in the community.

A representative from this organization was invited to attend a community meeting to talk to parents about facilities they could avail.

Members not only identified the need for this service in the community, but also engaged with families in the community to encourage them to not leave their children unattended and to consider the growth and development of all their children. One group

member is now responsible for ensuring that the crèche is functioning and accessible to everyone in the community. The service started from June 5 and on the first day, 13 children have been enrolled.



Inauguration of the crèche centre, Chunakoli, Khurda, Odisha

Making the Right to Education a Reality for Children in Adalatganj, Patna:

In Adalatganj in Patna, following a discussion on the Right to Education (RTE) Act at one of the weekly PACT meetings, members identified 13 children who were working as child labourers or had dropped out of school and staying at home. PACT members then met with the families of the

children to urge them to send their children to school. Many parents said that they didn't have the time to enrol their children—a responsibility the group decided to take on. The Principal of the government-run Tara Mandal School was approached to discuss the enrolment of children. 'When we learnt about our rights and said it front of the school principal, she was not able to refuse us. Today, without any money, children have been enrolled in school,' says Aarti, one of the group members, proudly.

Parents circle: Raising awareness on child protection in the community

To raise awareness about child protection issues, and to foster a more alert and responsive community, larger bi-monthly meetings are held with groups of adults. These meetings are facilitated by PACT members along with Aangan staff. These groups comprise 20-30 adults and serve as a forum to identify issues in the community, share and disseminate knowledge (often learnt at weekly meetings), and mobilize people to create solutions. Key service delivery authorities are invited to share how adults can access services and to foster a direct relationship between the community and functionaries.

- In **Khurda, Odisha**, the **Block Education Officer** was invited to a meeting to respond to questions from parents about enrolling children in school;
- In **Adalatganj, Patna**, the **ward officer** clarified the procedure on applying for a birth certificate;
- In **Indiranagar in Bhopal**, **community adults** discussed the merits of forming *mohalla samitis* which act as constitutional bodies under the *Nagar Nigams*, an interface between the community and local government.
- **PACT members in Bhopal** have also been invited for training and capacity building on the provisions for children under the ICPS such as the foster care scheme, and for a knowledge building session at the local police station on the Protection Of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) conducted by a member of the Child Welfare Committee. These interactions serve to build the confidence of community members in knowing their rights and learning how to access them by interfacing directly with formal systems.



Core group members at a POCSO training, Bhopal

In addition to linking the community to protection mechanisms, monthly meetings are spaces for discussion on protection issues like domestic violence and child sexual abuse. In Reay Road in Mumbai, an LGBT activist was invited to talk to community members about child sexual abuse. Sharing his personal experience as a victim of abuse, he was able to get parents to understand the severity and extent of the problem.

Other organisations like Pratham and SNEHA in Mumbai, Asha Niketan in Madhya Pradesh and the Sankalp Deaddiction Centre in Odisha have also been involved in different ways to strengthen informal protection systems in the community.

Activating formal systems

PACT seeks to activate formal child protection systems, to hold functionaries accountable for the safety of children and increase their responsiveness to the community. This pressure is created through a combination of:

- a. building knowledge amongst community adults about rights and entitlements,
- b. raising awareness of the processes involved in accessing these rights, and
- c. approaching officials as a group to demand action or the provision of services

Making the Anganwadi Center Work: In Chunakoli in Khurda, Odisha, the *aanganwadi* centre was inactive as the *aanganwadi* worker (AWW) was coming to the centre erratically, as a result of which families were unable to access any services. The *aanganwadi* has a powerful role to play in the community in that it provides non-formal pre-school education and health and nutrition services such as immunizations and regular medical check-ups for children and women. PACT members felt it was imperative to activate this service. In addition to garnering support from community members, meetings were held with the *aanganwadi* supervisor and one group member, Manjulata, began going to the centre every morning and sitting in the premises from 6 to 9am. With pressure being created on multiple fronts, the worker has started coming to the centre regularly.

Activating systems through group mobilisation not only serves to access entitlements but also increases answerability from functionaries and the level of engagement with these structures. In the long term, this works to strengthen protection mechanisms in the community.

Monthly Community Help Desks: As part of efforts to create a direct interface between the community and formal systems, community help desks are also set up once a month. The aim is to



A community help desk to apply for birth certificates, Patna

provide community members with information related to applying for key documentation such as birth certificates, ration cards, etc. and specific schemes so as to access their entitlements. The rationale is to strengthen the resilience of families by ensuring that they are aware of and accessing social protection schemes. Key functionaries from

government departments are invited to engage with adults, respond to their queries and facilitate the provision of services.

In Adalatganj in Patna, the community centre saw 500 footfalls and 200 birth certificate application forms were filled out in a day. **In Kazzakpura, Varanasi**, a help desk for applying for birth certificates, ration cards, school enrolment and disability services was set up in the community and government officials were invited to respond to questions on each issue. 20 children and adults with disabilities were identified to avail of schemes and benefits, 100 application forms on birth certificate and ration cards distributed, and 6 children were identified to apply for entitlements under the foster care scheme.

While the onus is on the state to create protective mechanisms for children in the community, this responsive system can only be realized when community members together pressurize authorities and act on behalf of children. By raising awareness, lobbying with authorities, and creating supportive networks, PACT hopes to build safe communities for children.

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