

CGIAR Research Program on  
Aquatic Agricultural Systems

# Gender Strategy Brief

A Gender Transformative Approach to Research  
in Development in Aquatic Agricultural Systems

Making a difference in the lives of the poor. Making a difference in the lives of the poor.



Making a difference in the lives of the poor.



RESEARCH  
PROGRAM ON  
Aquatic  
Agricultural  
Systems





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## Gender Strategy Brief

### A Gender Transformative Approach to Research in Development in Aquatic Agricultural Systems

There is now widespread recognition of the importance of gender in development. This is reflected in the growing prominence of gender strategies for development organizations and their programs, the emergence of compelling approaches for gender integration, and the development of indicators for tracking performance. The agricultural research community has built on this progress to pursue increasingly more substantive approaches to gender as reflected recently in the USAID's Feed the Future program and in the new CGIAR research programs.

Yet despite this real progress there is growing concern that these recent achievements need to go much further if we are to be fully successful in integrating gender into development in ways that achieve the lasting impacts on poverty and hunger to which we aspire. This concern lies in recognition that unless development research and practice address the underlying causes of gender disparities in access to and control over agriculture resources, sustainable change is unlikely to be achieved.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In July 2011, the CGIAR approved the CGIAR Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems (AAS) in recognition of the potential of these systems for reducing poverty. Our goal is to reduce poverty and improve food security for people whose livelihoods depend on aquatic agricultural systems. We believe we can achieve this by adopting a new and innovative research approach that will overcome past constraints and result in a deeper understanding of the multidimensional nature of poverty, the diversified livelihoods of the women and men who depend on these systems, and therefore unlock multiple opportunities for improvement.

Getting gender integration 'right' is part of this new and innovative research approach. Decades of development research have generated considerable evidence of gender disparities in access to productive resources, technologies, markets, networks and business services, leading to development programs aimed at reducing them. These programs end up offering partial solutions by focusing only on the visible symptoms of gender inequality – the gender gaps - without addressing the gender norms and attitudes underlying them. This narrow perspective reduces the programs' potential to produce lasting changes in how poor women and men are able to participate in and benefit from agricultural development. The AAS Gender Strategy will take a broader perspective, integrating efforts to redress gender disparities in resources, technologies and services with complementary efforts to promote more gender equitable systems within which poor women and men can use them. This requires a significant investment in building context-specific knowledge of the dynamics of social inequality. Key to the Program's success therefore is to understand the systemic nature of gender inequality across program contexts in order to identify ways to create more enabling socio-economic environments for poor women and men alike.

For example, a preliminary gender analysis of the five Program countries reveals differences in the gender division of labor and in the use and maintenance of aquatic eco-systems services which have implications for the nature of poverty, marginalization and vulnerability. Women's disproportionate share in asset poverty is due to socio-cultural norms that restrict access to, ownership and control of natural, physical and financial resources. Equally significantly women's poverty is characterized by social exclusion and marginalization from social welfare services and safety nets, and from decision-making in the household, as well as in community and policy spheres that relate to livelihoods, resource management and the functioning of markets. Women's involvement in community-based aquatic resource management is often minimal due to customary power relations, as well as time and mobility constraints related to domestic tasks and reputation. Equally problematic can be how women are included within markets or household relations. Women's responsibility for domestic tasks may limit their participation in value chains to the lowest and least paid nodes that enable them to combine domestic and paid work. All of these factors may make women differentially vulnerable to seasonal and lifecycle risks and shocks as well as to natural disasters and climate change.

In gender analysis, as well as in designing development interventions in aquatic agricultural systems, it is important to take into account that neither women nor men are monolithic groups but are differentiated by poverty levels, class, ethnicity, caste and other social categories, which contribute to variations in preferences, opportunities, motivations and aspirations. A dynamic framework that analyses the linkages among agricultural production, poverty, vulnerability, food security, health, ecosystem services and social inequality within aquatic systems will provide an in-depth understanding of how these complex social relations influence the pursuit of livelihood security and lead to differential well-being outcomes.

### WHAT IS AN AQUATIC AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM?

A system where the annual production dynamics of freshwater and/or coastal ecosystems contribute significantly to total household income.

## WOMEN AT WORK

In the Zambesi-Niger (Zambia) fresh water system a strongly gendered approach in agriculture indicates that male farming systems concentrate on commercial crops and female farming systems focus on subsistence food crops. Farming and small-scale trading activities are dominated by women, while mining and large-scale trading are male activities.

In the Ganges (Bangladesh) and Mekong (Cambodia) flood plain systems, male and female household members pool resources, through supporting and complementary activities within the same farming system.

In Bangladesh, women's roles in productive activities in farming and fisheries/aquaculture is mostly restricted to care of seedlings and animals/fish, small-scale processing, and making/mending nets, while men engage in a wide range of production tasks, commercial processing and entirely dominate trading activities.

In Cambodia, women provide labor for most farming tasks, care of livestock and fish, engage in small-scale fishing and a wide range of processing and small-scale trading activities; men engage in land preparation in farming, in medium and large-scale fishing activities and large-scale trading.

In the Pacific coastal systems, women and men complement each other's activities, women more responsible for gardening and local trading and men more focused on fishing.

In the Philippines, women form the majority in the service, industrial and professional sectors and support, complement or subsidize men's agricultural and fishing activities. Farming, fishing and aquaculture production are predominantly male while processing and trading are predominantly female.

In all of these countries women's engagement in the agriculture sector is generally higher than men's but often invisible or under-estimated in official statistics.

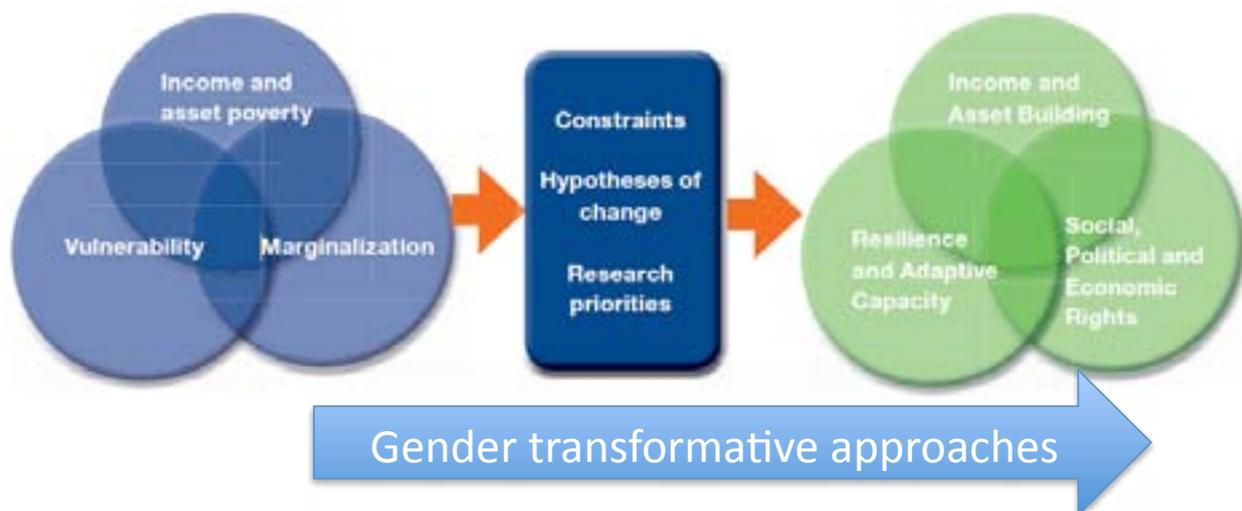
## 2. GENDER STRATEGY OF THE CGIAR RESEARCH PROGRAM ON AAS

The AAS Gender Strategy centers around an innovative gender transformative approach to overcoming the gender constraints that limit the capabilities and wellbeing of poor women and men dependent on AAS. The approach is innovative through its efforts to translate gender and development concepts into practice and; in developing creative means to understand and influence the way social norms and relations, and the power, interdependencies and inequalities associated with them, affect AAS outcomes for poor women and men across the CRP sites. It will generate an evidence base to inform replication and upscaling through systematically testing different AAS suites of interventions developed to marry 'technical' interventions delivering better access to assets, markets or new technologies, with those directly targeting the norms, values and attitudes identified as underlying the gender and wider social inequalities documented. This is the basis of the AAS CRP's gender transformative Research in Development (RinD) approach. The evidence resulting from these tests will define what works under what conditions to overcome persistent inequalities and will document the wider development benefits that result and how they came about.

The need for a gender transformative approach emerges from the gap between gender and development practice and the field's conceptual development, and from the focus within standard gender integration efforts on interventions that tend to address individualized demonstrations of gender inequality - gender resource gaps - but ignore their wider social causes.<sup>1</sup> Gender transformative strategies bring an additional focus on:

- gender relations and the importance of working with men on gender, acknowledging shared and conflicting interests within the home, and responding to the multiplicity of identities shaping women's and men's positions, motivations and opportunities;

<sup>1</sup> Eyben & Napier Moore 2009; Cornwall, Harrison & Whitehead 2007; Cornwall, Gideon & Wilson 2008; Okali 2011, 2012



**Figure 1:** Gender transformative approaches as an integral part of the AAS RinD strategy

- encouraging critical awareness among men and women of the consequences of the inequalities embedded within gender roles, norms and the resulting distribution of resources, and
- challenging and changing power relationships between women and others in the community such as service providers or traditional leaders.

Fig 1 illustrates the CRP’s intent to identify existing constraints in AAS, develop theories of change to address them, and use these to define RinD priorities in order to move AAS dependent people from positions of asset and income poverty, vulnerability and marginalization to conditions in which they can build income and assets, are resilient and adaptive, and assured of their social, political and economic rights. Gender transformative approaches cross cut all of these efforts, informing both a specific CRP research theme on gender equity as well as the work of five other themes (sustainable productivity; equitable market access; resilience and adaptive capacity; policies and institutions; and innovation and learning). This two-pronged approach responds to learning from past women in development (WID) and gender and development (GAD) practice which identified shortfalls in both relying on separate programs for women, which remained small scale and out of the mainstream of development, and in past efforts at gender mainstreaming which tended to scatter gender concerns and resources across a multitude of interventions, diluting their critical substance and making implementation as well as monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment difficult.<sup>2</sup>



Fresh fish reach Bamako from the Seligie reservoir thanks to access to ice for storage. These women fish traders benefit by getting better prices for their product, Mali, Africa

<sup>2</sup> Okali 2006; Razavi and Miller 1995

**Table 1:** Gender Strategy Objectives and 3. Working in Partnership

Objectives	Illustrative research questions
<p>1. To understand how gender norms and relations influence AAS and their outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do social norms limit the ‘horizon of possibilities’ for women and men? What openings are there for expanding these horizons?</li> <li>• How do the main drivers of change and their gendered impacts affect the productivity and poverty reduction potential of AAS?</li> <li>• How does gender influence risk perceptions, experiences and responses? How do these differences influence wellbeing outcomes for poor women and men dependent upon AAS?</li> </ul>
<p>2. To identify promising means of facilitating change in the norms, attitudes and practices underlying patterns of gender disparity in AAS dependent communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What communication, media-based and other strategies are effective in influencing gender norms and attitudes? How can they be effectively married with technical and institutional interventions providing access to technologies, markets and assets?</li> <li>• What role does collective action play in effecting social change? What types of coalitions drive change and what strategies are effective in sustaining diverse groups?</li> </ul>
<p>3. To design and test innovative ways to reduce gender inequalities in the range and quality of livelihood choices and resources available to AAS dependent women and men, and their abilities to act upon, use and benefit from them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What measures are most effective to support poor women and men to be able to aspire to and realize upgrading goals in AAS market systems?</li> <li>• How do gender-responsive approaches to the design and dissemination of new technologies improve adoption rates and associated AAS outcomes for women and men, their families and technology distributors/ developers?</li> <li>• What strategies and mechanisms (at macro, meso and micro levels) are most effective to reduce gender inequalities in access to and abilities to make valued use of resources in AAS?</li> <li>• What risk mitigation measures are most effective in enhancing adaptive capacities and resilience in AAS, in gender-equitable ways?</li> <li>• What are effective governance approaches and practices to safeguard and enhance the natural productivity and socio-ecological resilience of small-scale fisheries and other common property resources in AAS that benefit poor men and women?</li> </ul>
<p>4. To demonstrate how the equity, wellbeing and poverty reduction impacts of enhanced gender-responsiveness in AAS programming happen, in order to foster replication and scale up.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What M&amp;E tools facilitate process monitoring to understand how changes in gender norms and relations at community and household levels happen?</li> </ul>

### 3. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Forging strategic partnerships at local, hub, national and global levels is critical for working towards gender transformative change. The complex nature of the problem of gender inequality necessitates partnerships that bring together individuals and organizations with diverse views and experiences in order to illuminate as many aspects of the problem and its potential solutions as possible.<sup>3</sup> Partnerships also are important for implementing and testing solutions through the outreach and relationships partners provide to hub communities and; for outscaling and upscaling of proven strategies for effective integration of gender in agricultural programs and gender transformative change. The main partnership criteria are commitment to gender-responsiveness and learning. We will build on current partnerships and synergies with on-going and planned projects with a strong gender focus at the regional and national levels for implementation of the gender strategy and out-scaling.

### 4. IMPACT PATHWAYS AND MONITORING & EVALUATION

The Gender Strategy's theory of change rests on the need for social change to realize the full potential of AAS. It holds that pro-poor improvements in the productivity, profitability and adaptive capacities of AAS can only be achieved to their full potential and sustained if they occur jointly with changes in the social norms and attitudes that underlie inequalities in abilities to take advantage of new resources and opportunities. AAS users and their development partners need to design and test the effectiveness of innovative integrated strategies to address both technical AAS challenges and the social constraints impeding marginalized AAS users, and particularly poor women, from exerting their capacities to act individually and with others to make full use of available resources to improve their own and their families' wellbeing.

Implementing the Strategy is expected to achieve lasting poverty reduction, food security, nutrition and NRM impacts through applying gender and development analysis, methods and tools to AAS development challenges (see Figure 2). Dissemination and communication of these research outputs, informed by the results of gender transformative RinD interventions, will lead to a range of outcomes including changes in existing gender roles and norms; reduced gender disparities in access to resources, services, knowledge, skills and markets; improved adaptive capacity of poor women and men; and a more gender equitable enabling environment. These outcomes will support improved life choices and decision making power for poor women and men; better terms of engagement in markets and more options for the effective use of resources; and improved resilience, leading to the achievement of gender equitable economic opportunities, education and health outcomes, and intra-household food distributions as well as improved opportunities for women's leadership and meaningful participation in community initiatives.

An effective monitoring and evaluation system is being developed which is critical to learning and to establishing the success of gender transformative action within the program. On-going monitoring will focus on several process indicators, as well as output and outcome indicators on gender-related results of the program. Monitoring will be conducive to adaptive learning, improving program outcomes and steering the program to change its course, if objectives are not being met. The diagram below illustrates the strategy's anticipated impact pathways and preliminary outcome and impact indicators.

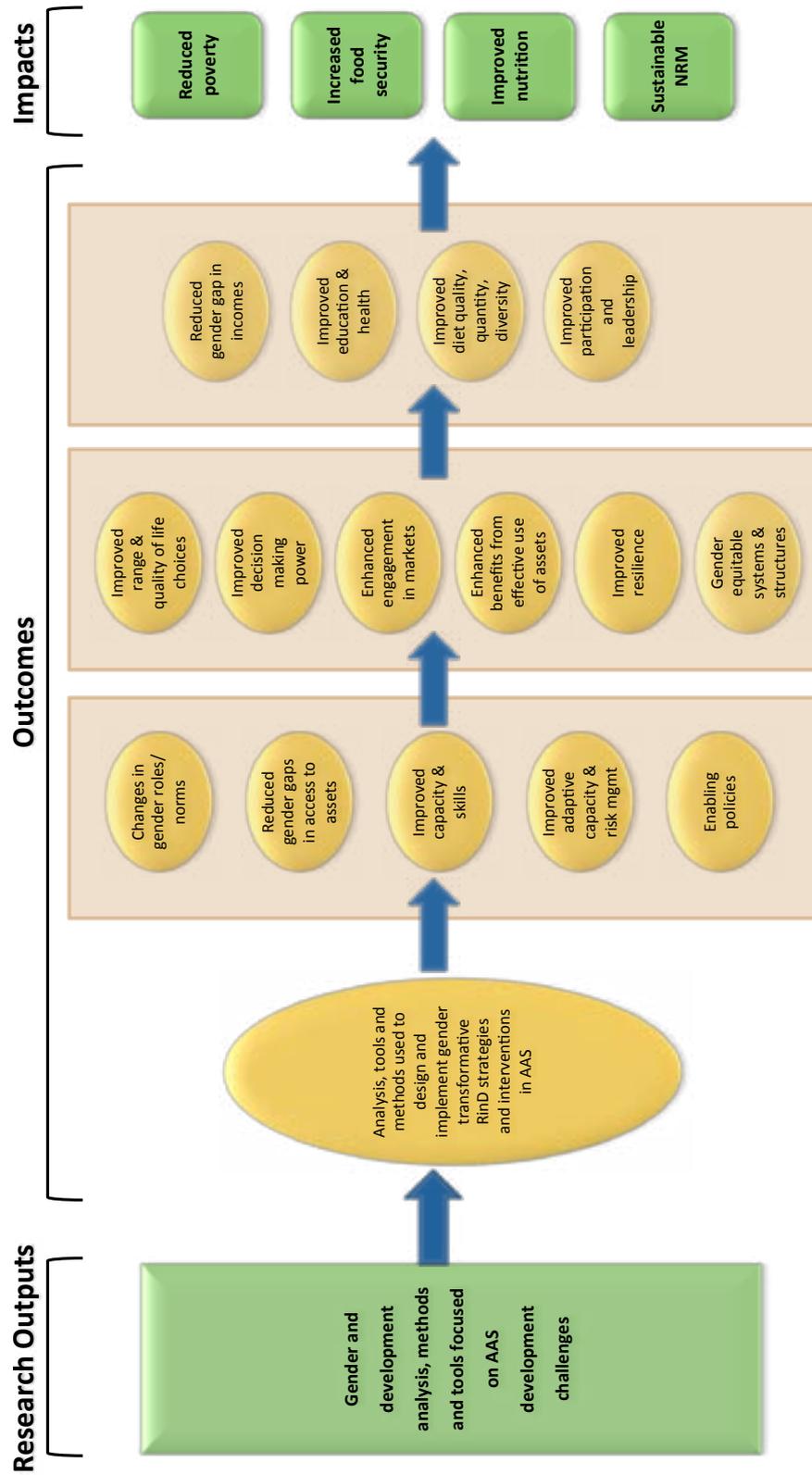


Figure 2: Impact Pathway

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## Partners

### **Mekong River Commission (MRC)**

We will collaborate with the Regional Network for promoting Gender in Fisheries Development (NGF) comprising coordinators from each MRC member country to address gender gaps in national policies and action plans to ensure equitable benefits for both women and men engaged in aquatic livelihoods.

### **Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)**

We will collaborate with the Scientific Support for Management of Coastal and Oceanic Fisheries in the Pacific Islands region project on gender equitable technology development and dissemination, asset-building and decision-making. Partnership with the Land Resources Division of SPC provides opportunities in sharing gender-disaggregated data and knowledge, disseminating best practices and building capacity in gender analysis and mainstreaming.

### **United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)**

We will collaborate with the African Center for Gender and Social Development with UNECA to incorporate gender issues in aquatic agricultural systems into their on-going initiatives in gender mainstreaming in relevant national policies, as well as share best practices.

### **Bangladesh**

We will work with the researchers, implementers, and policy makers working on gender and aquatic agricultural systems in Bangladesh to improve gender analysis and mainstreaming. Important members of the network will be gender focal points in agencies such as Fisheries, Agriculture, Livestock and Forestry; research organizations and academic institutions such as, ICDDR,B, Bangladesh Development Institute, Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies; and NGOs such as D.Net, Engender Health and Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC).

### **Cambodia**

The program will work with the network of gender focal points in agencies responsible for aquatic livelihoods such as Fisheries, Agriculture, Livestock and Forestry.

### **Philippines**

We will work with the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), a network of 120 research, advocacy and policy organizations committed to improving the lives of women and girls. The program will also collaborate with the University of Philippines in Visayas as well as the National Network on Women in Fisheries (WINFISH).

### **Solomon Islands**

The program will collaborate with the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs which coordinates the National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Development. The program will also collaborate with the New Zealand supported project on "Strengthening community-based fisheries towards gender equity in rural Solomon Islands communities" focusing on improving food security by creating an enabling environment for women and youth to engage in livelihood diversification activities and decision-making in adaptive management of aquatic resources.

### **Zambia**

The program will work with the Gender and Child Development Division (GCDD) of Cabinet Office in Zambia. GCDD networks with other government, non-governmental organizations and donors to ensure gender equality in the development processes at all levels, and GCDD is responsible for coordination, monitoring and evaluation of all gender activities and programs in Zambia. The program will also work with gender experts of key partner Catholic Relief Services (CRS) at both regional and national level, as well as with local organizations working to advance women's rights and gender issues in development.

### **Asian Institute of Technology (AIT)**

The program will collaborate with the Gender & Development Studies (GDS) of the School of Environment, Resources & Development in research and capacity-building. The program will collaborate with AIT to enhance the quality of gender analysis tools and capacity-building modules, as well as external monitoring and evaluation.

### **International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)**

The program had developed a strong link with the ICRW in translating research evidence and insights into a path of action that honors women's human rights, ensures gender equality and creates the conditions in which all women can thrive. The focus will be on helping development organizations, policymakers and others find practical ways to enhance women's roles in agricultural production and trade, thereby improving their incomes and livelihoods.

### **International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)**

We will collaborate with the gender research and interventions of the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Improved Nutrition and Health. IFPRI will contribute its long term expertise in gender analysis and mainstreaming in agricultural research to improve the quality of our overall interventions toward gender equity.

### **Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN)**

We already collaborate with MUN on a CIDA-supported project on governing small-scale fisheries for wellbeing and resilience and would build on this to enhance the quality of gender analysis and capacity-building modules, as well as external monitoring and evaluation.

### **University of East Anglia**

The program will work with the Gender and Development research group at the School of International Development on social change, specifically the social and gendered dimensions of poverty reduction, inequality and social injustice.

### **University of Manitoba (UOM)**

We are engaged in collaborative research with UOM's Anthropology department on the CIDA-supported project on governing small-scale fisheries for wellbeing and resilience. We will build on this partnership to generate innovations in our conceptual frameworks and tools for gender analysis in aquatic agricultural systems.



The CGIAR Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems is a multi-year research initiative launched in July 2011. It is designed to pursue community based approaches to agricultural research and development that target the poorest and most vulnerable rural households in aquatic agricultural systems. The Program is partnering with diverse organizations working at local, national and global levels to help achieve impacts at scale. The CGIAR Lead Center of the Program is the WorldFish Center in Penang, Malaysia. For more information, visit [aas.cgiar.org](http://aas.cgiar.org)

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