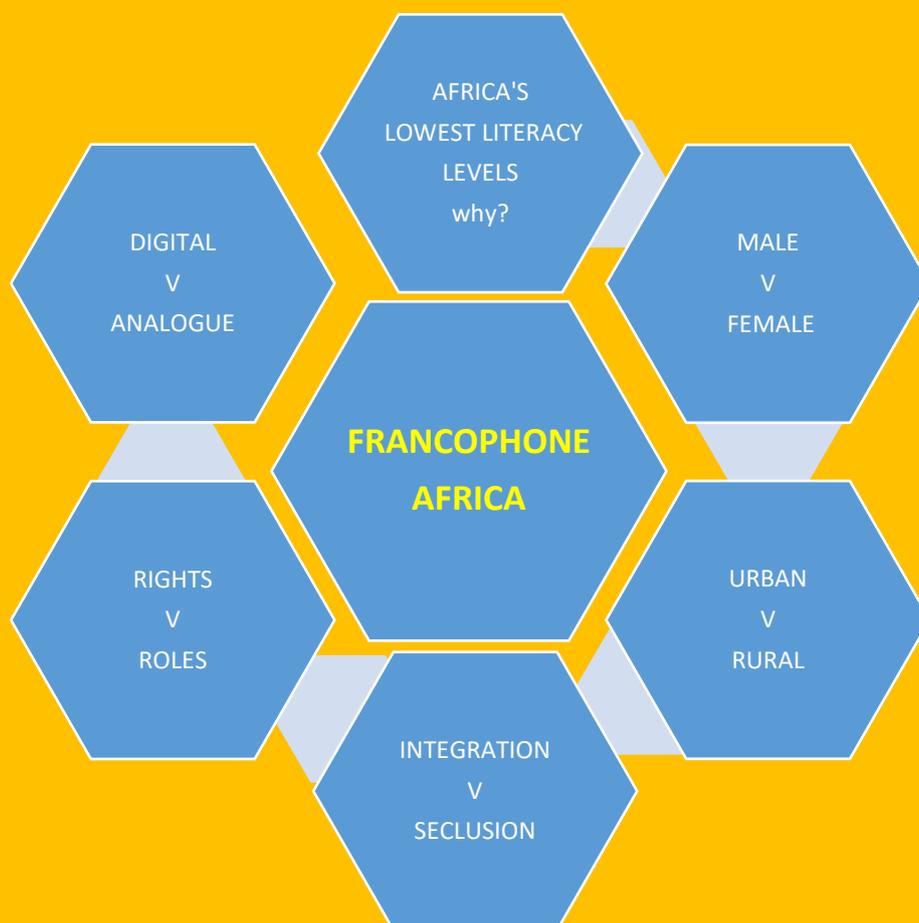


Francophone Africa and the Equality Challenge

Is a literate world still a man's world?

PILOT PROJECT REPORT

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REPORT OF PILOT STAGE

FRANCOPHONE AFRICA AND THE EQUALITY CHALLENGE: Is a literate world still a man's world?

Project summary

According to current data, literacy levels in Francophone West and central Africa are among the lowest in the world.

These already critically low levels drop significantly when disaggregated for gender.

In brief, young women living in these regions have become – according to the most widely-used statistical sources of the UN system – the least literate population in the world.

While countries in French-speaking Africa have been presenting the lowest levels of literacy in the world for a number of decades, particular efforts were made during the fifteen year period of work that followed the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals to reverse that situation.

Unfortunately, as evidenced in 2015, goals set at the Millennium Development Summit in 2000 that aimed at rectifying gender imbalances in access to education, literacy, and skills, and thereby empower current generations of girls, were missed by a significant margin.

Now, the international community has reviewed and revised its targets setting a new set of Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by the year 2030. However, historic trends in female disadvantage remain prevalent throughout the Francophone African regions, and without a change in policy there is a strong risk that the Sustainable Development Goals related to gender and education will also fail to meet their targets in Francophone Africa.

Destabilisation caused by war and conflict appears to be exacerbating the situation in these vulnerable communities, and the equality challenge is at serious risk of failing to secure sustainable futures for a generation of young people in these regions.

The pilot stage of the project has focused on the five countries of the strategic theatre of global operations against Islamic extremist movements in Africa led by France and the USA. Preliminary findings indicate significant educational losses are being experienced by young female populations residing in this region.

The project is collating digital data on literacy in the region produced in both French and English comparing national and international values and checking for consistencies, or lack of, in the data.

Benefits of the project

The project targets the most economically challenged nations of the world, and within these countries directs its focus towards those citizens located economically, culturally and digitally on the social margins. In addition the project targets decision-makers in the donor nations by responding to areas of concern identified by these nations and their international organisations.

Over the past three years since the conclusion of the Millennium Development Goals, the donor nations have expressed concerns around deepening divisions opening up in vulnerable regions.

These concerns had previously been raised in the UN through its Human Development Office annual report, most notably in the 2016 edition. This report addressed in particular the failure of the MDGs to reach marginalised communities. The project *Francophone Africa and the Equality Challenge* engages with these communities directly, through collaboration with partners on the ground and

through the generation of new research findings. In addition it responds directly to issues raised concerning financing of international gender and development policies going forward. Regarding the future benefits, the donor community, represented by the DAC, has committed itself to achieving better value for money and improving the focus of gender and development initiatives. The pressing need for improving the international community's record in sub-Saharan Africa, as in other unstable and volatile regions, has been highlighted in the OECD's DAC development assistance report of February 2018 where two priorities are addressed: improving gender equality results in the current round of Sustainable Development Goals and increasing the focus on measurable and meaningful gender targets. All OECD donor nations are evaluated in the DAC February 2018 report against these criteria with some, including France, the main bilateral donor in the countries of the project, displaying significant potential for improvements in both fields.

In brief, the project engages with the concern being articulated in the international donor community for a clearer focus on equality outcomes and is producing findings that meet the demand for measureable and meaningful objectives in this field. These findings are destined for dissemination internationally through industry-facing reports.

Benefits of the project to recipient countries

The project engages with populations identified by the UN as increasingly disadvantaged and marginalised from human development experienced across the globe.

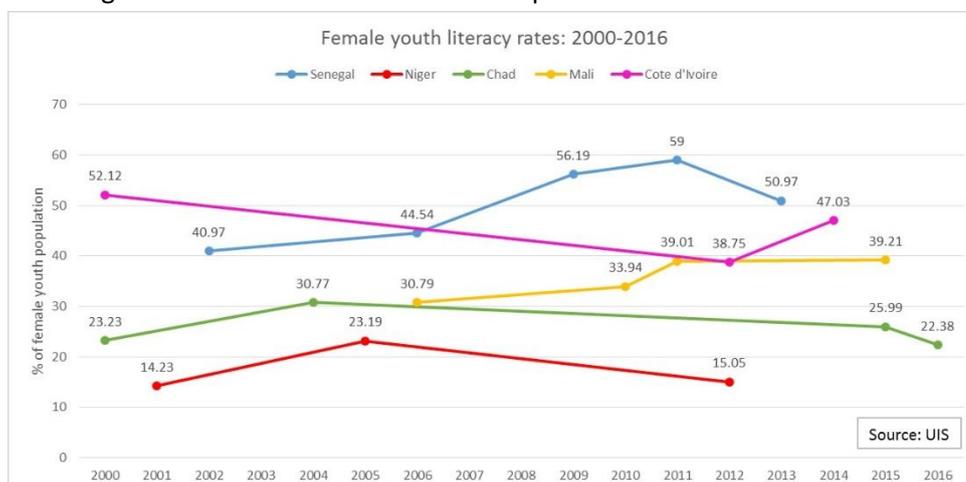
By focusing on identifying and analysing the state of literacy among 15-24 year old African girls and young women living in Francophone African countries the project is providing evidence that the general trend towards higher literacy levels around the world is not universal. Indeed it is producing the first clear statistical evidence of falling literacy levels.

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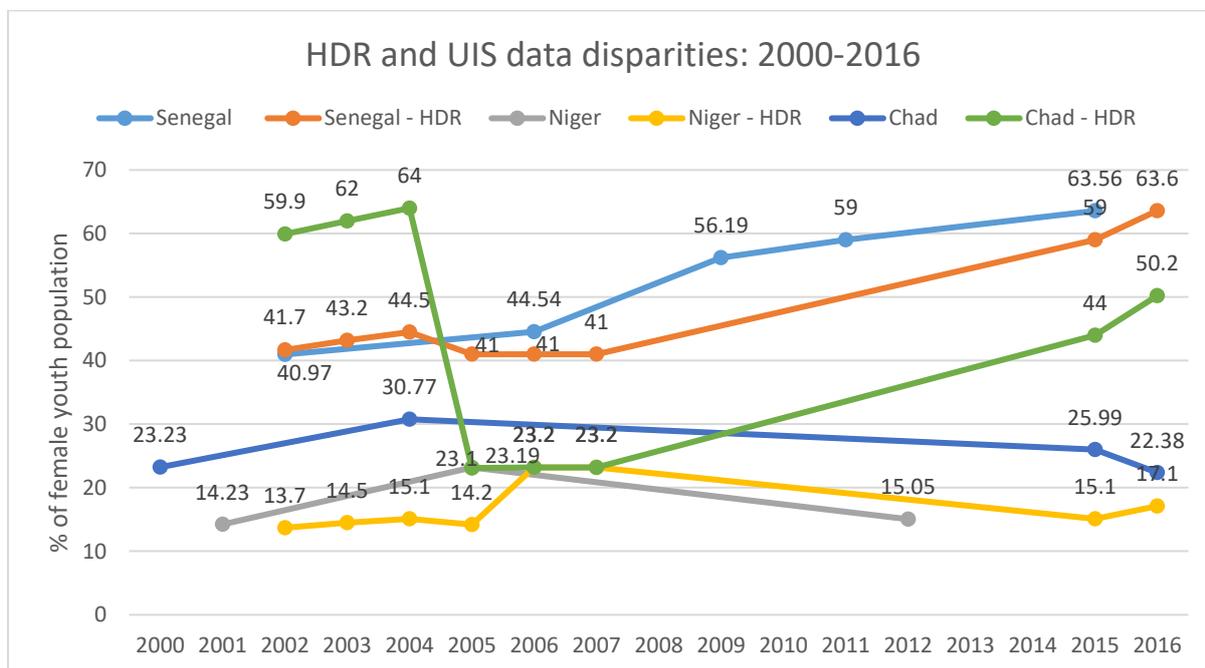
Key findings 1

What have we found out and how will this shape the next stage in the project?

1. Literacy rates are *not* rising at rates consistent with SDG targets. Furthermore they are declining in the destabilised areas of Francophone sub-Saharan Africa.



2. Data being used for policy decisions are incomplete and inconsistent.



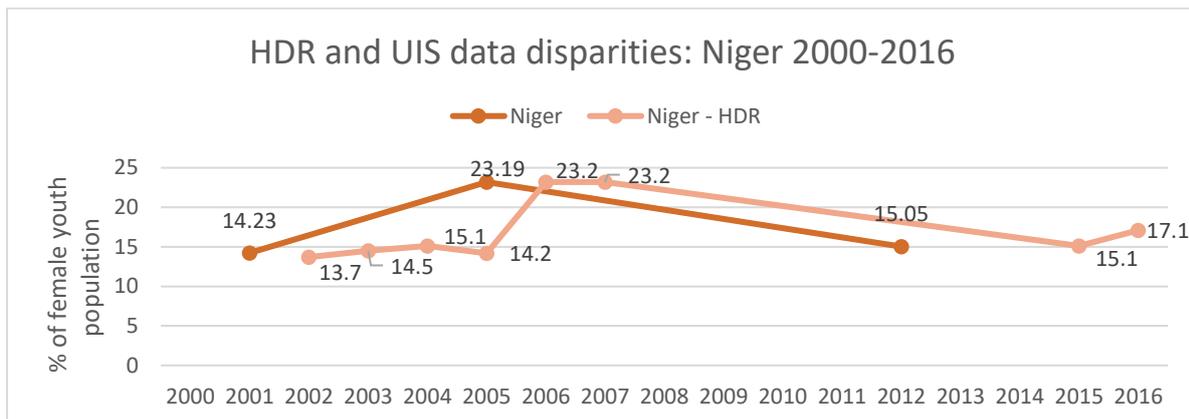
Conclusions:

The need for more accurate data is growing. Policy-making in the field of gender and literacy is likely to undergo an upturn from 2019. The major donor country, France, reinstated literacy and gender as a priority area for development assistance in August 2018 for action 2019-2030. The other major donor bloc, the OECD/DAC, has called for the prioritisation of gender in DAC actions from 2018. This project is responding to the needs for more accuracy and information.

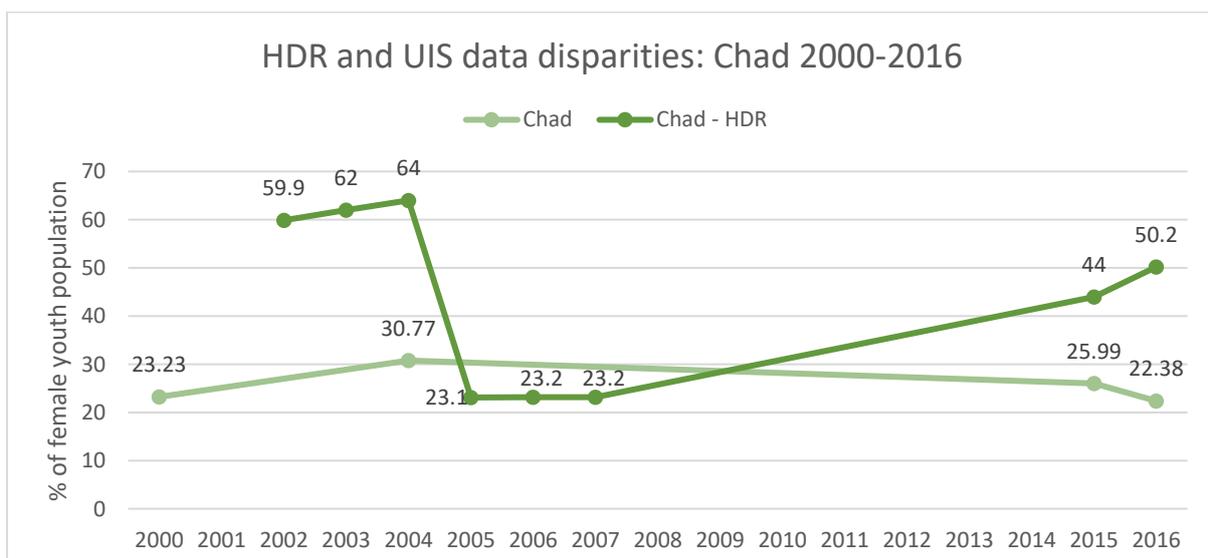
Key findings 2

Issues of note for policy-makers

Niger: our collation of all currently available national, regional and international data confirm that literacy rates have not been rising consistently, as previously believed, over the past twenty years. Our findings show that these have been falling in the second decade of the 21st century

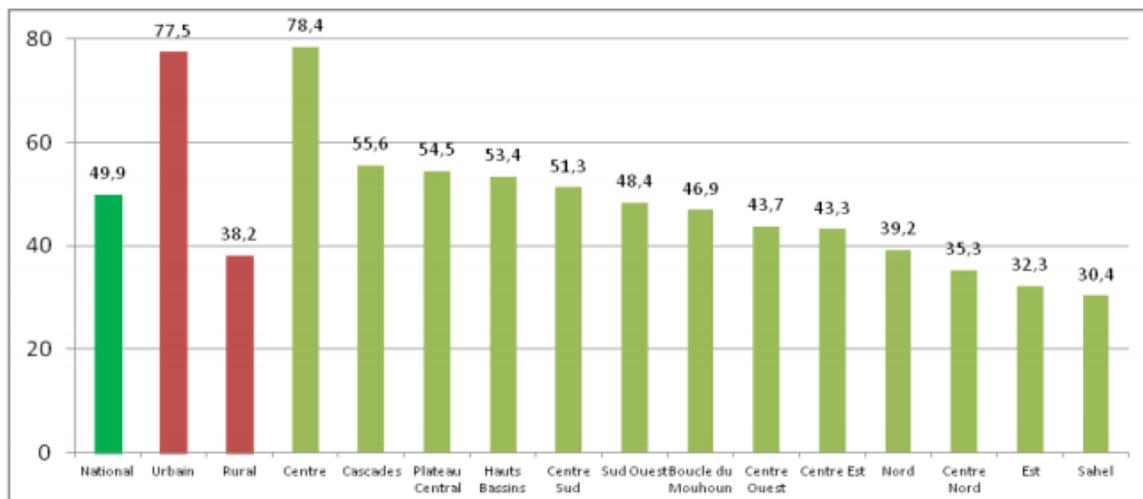


Chad: historically one of the least literate countries in the world, literacy rates have risen significantly in the 21st century in urban areas. However, there are such significant disparities in the data that making policy decisions on the basis of currently circulating data is not secure. Secondly, what data there are show significant disparities between urban and rural areas. Achievements in urban areas are not being replicated in rural areas and the gap is widening.



Burkina Faso: Data collection for the MDGs was regular and informative. However, gender and literacy have fallen off the radar and disaggregated literacy data are out of date. The latest national data were published 2014:

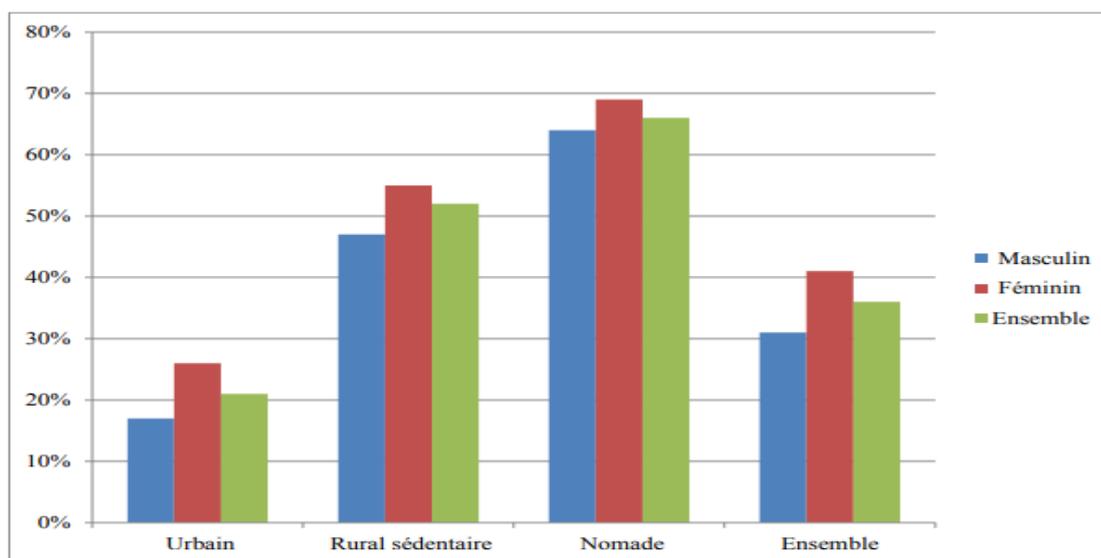
Graphique 1.8 : Taux d'alphabétisation des jeunes selon les régions



Enquête Multisectorielle Continue 2014 (Institut National de la Statistique et de la Démographie, Burkina Faso)

Mauritania: national and international literacy data are the most inconsistent. National surveys focus on sedentary / nomadic lifestyles as key determinants, gender being absent from recent surveys. Work in progress to identify the most credible statistics for this project.

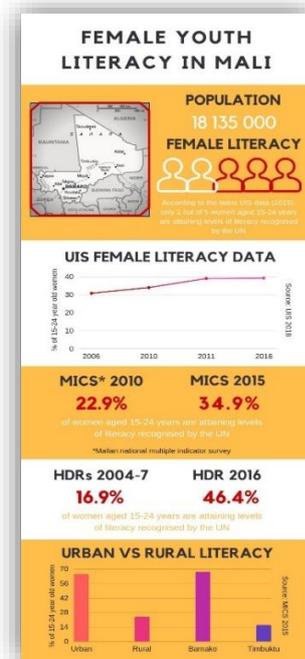
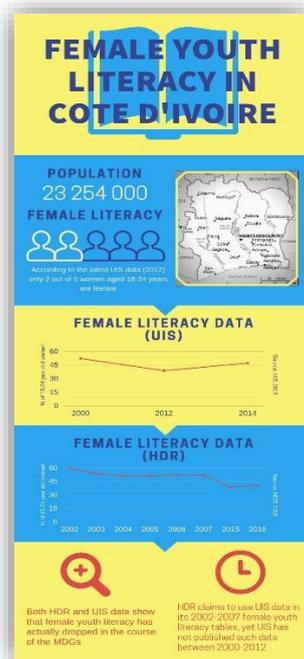
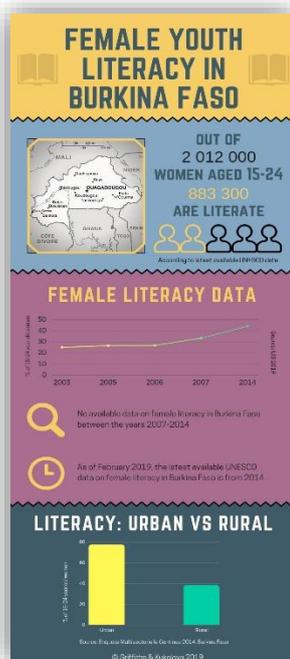
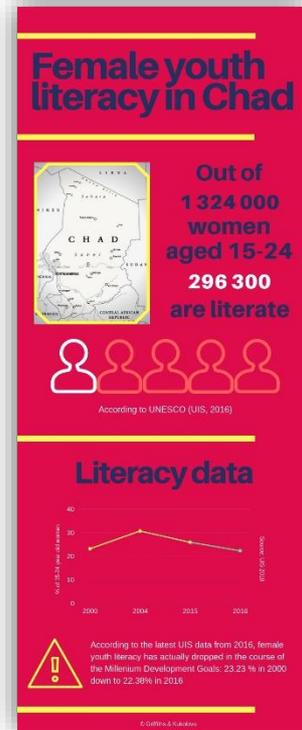
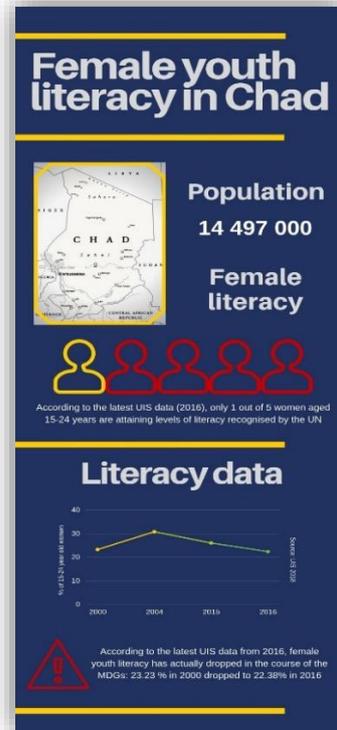
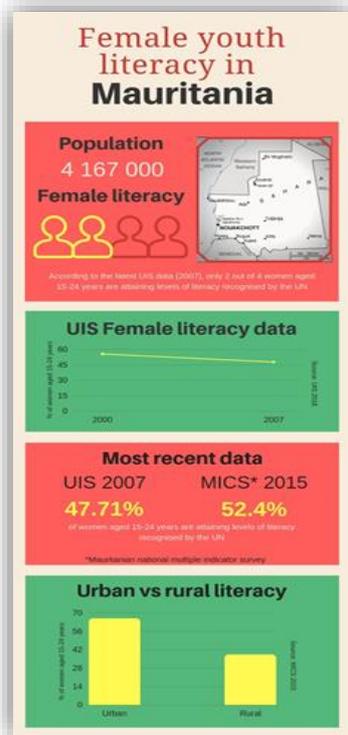
Figure 8.1 : Disparité du Taux d'analphabétisme selon la résidence et le sexe



Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat 2013 (Bureau Central du Recensement, République Islamique de Mauritanie)

Cote d'Ivoire: literacy is rising at an impressive rate in the urban areas following the government declaration in 2014 to increase literacy levels by 100% before the end of the decade. Meanwhile

school attendance has been falling among girls in the North of the country. The government is exploring the reintroduction of gender segregation in secondary education.
 Mali: the vast differences in literacy levels between southern and northern cities has been exacerbated by the occupation by Tuareg and Islamist rebel forces in the north.



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