



SRI LANKA

2023 IFRC network country plan

Funding Requirement **CHF 29.1M**

Appeal number **MAALK002**

In support of the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society



25

National Society branches



100

National Society staff



12,500

National Society volunteers

People to be reached



500,000

Ongoing emergency operations



75,000

Climate and environment



3.5M

Disasters and crises



50,000

Health and wellbeing



10,000

Migration and displacement



30,000

Values, power and inclusion

IFRC network multiyear focus

Emergency response

- Complex emergency
- Extreme weather resilience

Longer term needs

- Food security and malnutrition
- Health and migration • Humanitarian diplomacy
- Developing the capacity of the National Society
 - Branch strengthening

Key country data

Population

22.2M

INFORM severity rating

high

Human Development Index rank

72

Hazards



Poverty



Food insecurity



Health



Cyclones



Violence

Funding requirements

Total 29.1M CHF

Through the IFRC

28.6M CHF

Host National Society

576,000 CHF

IFRC Breakdown

28M CHF

Ongoing emergency operations

Longer term needs

43,000 CHF

Climate and environment

354,000 CHF

Disasters and crises

58,000 CHF

Health and wellbeing

21,000 CHF

Migration and displacement

48,000 CHF

Values, power and inclusion

50,000 CHF

Enabling local actors

Ongoing emergencies

MDRLK014

Sri Lanka Complex Emergency



NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society was established in 1936 and has been operating a range of humanitarian services for the last eight decades. Formed as the Ceylon Central Council Branch of the British Red Cross, it was set up as a volunteer-based organization to respond to man-made and natural disasters such as the malaria epidemic of 1934. The organization was re-formed in 1949 as the Ceylon Red Cross Society, after the country became independent, and was recognized in 1952 as a member of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). The Ceylon Red Cross Society was re-named as Sri Lanka Red Cross Society in 1972.

The National Society's Strategic Plan has three strategic aims:

- Build resilience among vulnerable communities to cope with disasters and emergencies
- Reduce risks of morbidity and mortality during health emergencies and promote health lifestyles amongst communities

- Reduce stigma and discrimination in society through improved community behaviours and increase social acceptance whilst upholding human dignity, working with different vulnerable disadvantaged groups.

The strength of the National Society lies in its branch network covering all 25 districts, with 158 division level offices and 500 field level offices. In addition to its network of more than 6,000 volunteers, it has 150,000 members across the entire island.

The Sri Lanka Red Cross works closely with the Government of Sri Lanka, in particular with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Disaster Management. The National Society's key health priorities planned for 2021–2025 include non-communicable diseases, dengue, first aid and healthy ageing. In 2023, it will extend auxiliary support to the Government on vaccination rollout programmes, including within schools. Furthermore, the National Society is increasing its auxiliary support to the Government of Sri Lanka and enhancing its own capacity to respond effectively to the evolving crisis, and the urgent need for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

IFRC NETWORK ACTION IN 2023

Joint situational analysis

Sri Lanka is facing its worst economic crisis since independence in 1948. Alarming rates of inflation have led to widespread economic hardship. Food insecurity now affects three in 10 households. Monthly inflation rates rose to more than 54 per cent in June 2022, the highest recorded. Public finance and sovereign debt challenges, as well as the availability and affordability of food, fuels, fertilizers and medicines, have disrupted livelihoods across the country.

Rising commodity prices, a weak tourism sector and a fiscal deficit have caused the rupee's value to fall since the start of 2022. Meanwhile, soaring inflation, power cuts and fuel shortages are also hampering economic activity. In March 2022, the Government announced that there would be power cuts lasting between 10 and 15 hours a day, leading to mass protests. Schools and government offices were forced to close in late June 2022.

A needs assessment conducted by the IFRC in 11 of the country's 25 districts has found that 96% of the more than 2,900 households surveyed have been affected by the current crisis in some way—with food insecurity, health, livelihoods, and nutrition among the top concerns. Deteriorating physical safety and security, as well as violence against women and children, stood out. The report uncovered worryingly high problems of access to food, either because of high cost, income stress or lack of availability. Runaway inflation and loss of livelihoods have doubly impacted people's ability to cope with the record cost of living. Income loss is causing significant food insecurity, while inflation is driving up the cost of medicine and fuel costs are preventing access to essential healthcare.

Furthermore, civil unrest has spiked due to political uncertainty in Sri Lanka's Government. Thousands of protesters took to the streets in July to force President Rajapaksa's resignation. As a result, humanitarian operations are impeded as many government counterparts are not fully functional.

Sri Lanka is also affected by various weather-related hazards, including cyclones, monsoon rain, flooding and landslides. Droughts are common, as are lightning strikes, coastal erosion, epidemics and pollution. Of these, localized and seasonal flooding are the greatest threat to people. There is a growing risk of floods due to the expected increase in the impact and frequency of tropical storms. This pattern is affected by climate change.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a fall in the country's exports, the collapse of its tourism industry, and businesses struggling to operate under such stringent distancing measures. Many firms may have to close or reduce their workforces.

Social cohesion and reconciliation remain central challenges in Sri Lanka, despite early signs of recovery from a 26-year-long civil war in a religiously, ethnically and politically diverse social setting.

Ongoing emergency response

For real-time information on emergencies, see [IFRC GO page Sri Lanka](#)

Lanka

- Appeal number: MDRLK014 Sri Lanka Complex Emergency
- Appeal launch date: 7 June 2022
- Appeal end date: 6 June 2023
- 500,000 people targeted

Short description of emergency

Sri Lanka's economic crisis has been developing since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020. Strict containment measures resulted in the decline of foreign currency income through the tourism sector, worker and diaspora remittances, foreign direct investment flows and world trade.

To save its reserves, the Government limited the import of essential items. The situation was further exacerbated by a ban on synthetic fertilizer, which caused food insecurity. Protests erupted due to the resulting shortages and a sharp increase in food prices, fertilizer and fuel. Medication and medical consumables are also in short supply. Issues that have since stemmed from the emergency include power cuts, disrupted transport systems, long queues for necessities, inflation, rapidly increasing food insecurity, and a sharp decline in agricultural production.

In June 2022, the IFRC launched an Emergency Appeal to support the Sri Lanka Red Cross response to the crisis. The Appeal defines the response operation for the initial twelve months. Emergency needs are expected to persist, and an evaluation of the most appropriate response mechanism will be carried out before the end of the Emergency Appeal timeframe, taking into consideration donor response

People affected

While the current crisis impacts Sri Lanka's entire population, the 2.2 million people below the poverty line remain the most vulnerable.

People to be assisted

The Sri Lanka Red Cross is planning to support 500,000 people (100,000 households). It will focus on farmers in the Northern, North Central, Central, Uva, Sabaragamuwa, Eastern, Southern and Northwestern provinces, low-income fishermen in the coastal districts, and irregular income labourers in the Western province.

The National Society is also supporting the health sector with in-kind medications sourced through partners and distributed through health facilities. It is targeting people living with disabilities, the elderly, single- or female-headed households, and young mothers. Further assessments are being made as the situation escalates.

Key humanitarian impacts due to the ongoing crisis

- Civil unrest and violence, resulting in injuries, hospitalizations, property damage and arrests
- The loss of livelihoods – particularly for urban and rural daily wage earners, fishing communities that do not have fuel to operate their boats, and farmers who lack fertilizers
- A rapid price increase in staple food items like rice and vegetables
- Severe food insecurity, including a lack of supplements for children and nursing mothers
- Problems with children's education, which is being affected by power cuts and inadequate public transport

- Long days spent waiting in long queues without drinking water, food and sanitation – leading to deaths and hospitalizations
- Mental health problems

Short description of the emergency operational strategy

Through the Emergency Appeal, the IFRC is supporting Sri Lanka Red Cross with its response to civil unrest and food insecurity. It is supporting the basic needs and livelihoods of vulnerable low-income urban, fishing and rural households through multi-purpose cash, in-kind assistance, technical support and resources. It is also providing support to households with pregnant and nursing mothers, and malnourished children, through the provision of nutritional dry rations, and by distributing school packs to children in the most economically disadvantaged households.

Community health volunteers are providing first aid and psychosocial support, as well as safe drinking water. The National Society is seeking in-kind medication donations from partners and distributing them to health facilities. It is also providing menstrual hygiene education and sanitary supplies to teenage girls attending schools in underprivileged areas.

To address sex- and gender-based violence, the IFRC is supporting the National Society in training volunteers on protection, gender and inclusion, and community engagement and accountability. The IFRC is providing overall technical support and strengthening the capacity of the National Society's headquarters and district branches

IFRC will support and enhance these activities by coordinating the IFRC network and engaging with the UN system and the private sector.

Strategic priorities

Climate and environment

Sri Lanka is ranked 23 in the 2000-2019 Global Climate Risk Index and is highly vulnerable to climate change, due to its high temperatures, unique and complex hydrological regime, and exposure to extreme climate events. Extreme weather conditions, such as prolonged droughts and flash floods, not only threaten people's livelihoods, but also the physical and social health of local communities.

The past decades have seen the severity of landslides increase in the country's highland regions, due to a combination of heavy rain, geological changes and deforestation. Sea level rises, storm surges and coastal erosion are greatest in the west, southwest and southern coastal belt, where about 50 per cent of Sri Lanka's population lives. This puts people in those areas at a higher risk of cyclones and tsunamis. In addition, vector-borne diseases are spreading at an alarming rate, due to changes in the climate which are conducive to mosquito breeding.

Main actions and areas of support

The Sri Lanka Red Cross is part of the IFRC [Global Climate Resilience Programme](#), which aims to foster an unprecedented scale-up in locally led, climate-smart disaster risk reduction and adaptation efforts to prevent and reduce climate-related disaster impacts, and build community-level climate resilience. The

programme aims to support 500 million people in 100 of the most climate-vulnerable countries, focusing on the least supported and marginalized communities. This multi-year programmatic approach consists of four operational pillars: (1) scaling up climate-smart disaster risk reduction, anticipatory action and preparedness; (2) reducing the public health impacts of climate change; (3) addressing climate displacement; and (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.

The National Society in Sri Lanka offers support to Sri Lankan communities, stakeholders, staff and volunteers on climate-resilient agriculture. This includes rainwater harvesting, climate-smart crops, integrated natural resource management, land and water management, conservation, and drought-resilient agriculture techniques for farmers in the dry zone.

The Sri Lanka Red Cross aims to contribute to national climate action projects such as the restoration of traditional man-made reservoirs that support agricultural and household water use, tree planting programmes and mangrove restoration. At a community level, the focus will be on risk communication and knowledge sharing, and technical partnerships to strengthen community-based organizations. The National Society will also further invest in training and capacity building on climate change adaptation and mitigation for staff, youth and selected volunteers.



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Statistics

According to the National Disaster Management Plan of Sri Lanka, **climate change disasters cost the country LKR50 billion** (US\$313 million) annually, in the areas of housing, infrastructure, agriculture and relief. Landslides are becoming more severe in the highland regions – due to a combination of deforestation, geological changes and heavy rains – and floods and droughts are increasing.

Disasters and crises

The most significant crisis in Sri Lanka in 2022 was the economic downturn. According to ACAPS, political unrest and increasingly violent protests are likely to continue – disrupting livelihoods and contributing to high inflation in the price of essential consumer goods. Disruptions to fuel supply may hinder the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Sri Lanka is increasingly vulnerable to natural hazards and their after-effects. The frequency and the impact of hazards such as mudslides and landslips have a long-lasting effect on the economy, the well-being of communities and development gains. This is amplified by an increase in urban populations, a lack of good governance and climate change.

Main actions and areas of support

From 2023 to 2025 and with IFRC support, the Sri Lanka Red Cross will prioritize immediate relief and response, as well as long-term disaster mitigation and resilience

building. It will strengthen the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of its response by expanding cash and voucher assistance, developing anticipatory action through forecast-based action protocols, and enhancing its digital data management implementation, including through mobile data collection.

The National Society also plans to strengthen its response to emergencies by investments in logistical capabilities and building a pool of skilled internal and external surge team members. It will review the disaster response team training curriculum. The National Society will deliver workshops and pro forma resources, enabling access to IFRC support through its Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF) and Emergency Appeal funding.

The National Society will advocate for better-informed disaster risk management and response, and risk communication and community engagement activities. This will in turn raise awareness of climate mitigation and disaster risk reduction among communities, with a focus on youth.

Statistics

Around nine per cent of Sri Lanka's population are farmers, and about 40 per cent are engaged in agriculture or livestock production. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), **70 per cent of households have had to reduce food consumption** in response to the crisis, with many people having to borrow money and sell property and belongings.

Health and wellbeing

Sri Lanka's humanitarian emergency has a direct effect on the country's health care system, and the health and well-being of its people. A severe shortage of life-saving medicines and medical consumables continues to endanger lives.

Challenges are further compounded by the lack of fuel and long power cuts, which leads to a reduced operational capacity of healthcare facilities. Despite state-funded free health care, recent crises have increased demand in relation to malnutrition, communicable diseases, frequent disruptions to WASH systems, and maternal and neonatal health.

According to UNICEF, Sri Lanka is the second worst in South Asia and the tenth worst in the world on child malnutrition, due to low-nutrient diets among the under-fives. As a result of the economic crisis, 73 per cent of households reported a loss or reduction in their income. As of April 2022, the monthly cost of a nutritious diet per household had increased by 156 per cent. With less money for essential commodities, families have resorted to eating less nutritious, less expensive foods and limiting portion sizes. The rates of undernutrition and malnutrition are expected to grow.

Main actions and areas of support

The National Society's auxiliary role to public authorities will strengthen its position on the country's public health strategy. With support from the IFRC, Sri Lanka Red Cross will improve access to sustainable, affordable, appropriate and quality health services in the face of new emergencies for people of different ages.

Volunteers will continue to provide first aid services as an all-time priority of the National Society. Staff and volunteers will continue to enhance their capacities to provide age and gender sensitive first aid. The National Society will digitalize training in local languages, so it can be offered to a broader range of people.

The Sri Lanka Red Cross will offer support to the National Dengue Control Unit of the Government as the number of dengue cases in urban communities increases, as well as to health sector-led operations on COVID-19 and other diseases. Working with Medical Health Offices and regional level health authorities, the National Society will ensure communities are better equipped to face health risks through volunteer training and mobilization that builds on dengue prevention activities,

epidemic and pandemic preparedness, and psychosocial support. Assessments will also be conducted to better identify the health needs of the country related to essential medicines and medical consumables, and to ensure donations from partners are effectively used in response to its changing landscape.

Statistics

Sri Lanka **imports more than 85 per cent of its medical supplies** and the economic crisis results in critical shortages in essential supplies.

Migration and displacement

Sri Lanka is a significant country of origin, transit and destination for many people on the move including economic migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees, and people who have been trafficked. Disasters are the main trigger for internal displacement in Sri Lanka. There remain populations of internally displaced people (IDPs) in some parts of the country from the past long-running civil war. The ongoing crisis is prompting a large-scale migration. With the falling value of the Sri Lankan rupee, many seek to go abroad – moving by formal and informal channels – to earn money or study; many to leave the country permanently. On 1 August 2022, more than 550 undocumented migrants were captured from various parts of the country by the Sri Lankan navy, many of them try to migrate illegally to Australia.

Sri Lanka's proximity to several regional conflicts makes it a destination for people from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Myanmar and other countries. However, it is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention. It does not have a national law and mechanism to offer permanent resettlement to refugees, and only hosts refugees temporarily for a few years. It is therefore only a temporary transit point for many people awaiting resettlement in a third country.

Main actions and areas of support

The Sri Lanka Red Cross has adopted a multi-pronged approach in responding to migration needs within Sri Lanka. Humanitarian service provision will continue to be essential to the National Society's engagement with migrant communities, through psychosocial support programmes for refugees and asylum seekers, post-departure family visits, financial management training for migrant workers' families, and restoring family links.

The National Society will seek to establish partnership programmes with UNHCR, IOM and civil society organisations for after-school education support for school-going children in refugee families.

In parallel, with IFRC support, the National Society will conduct a migration and displacement needs assessment, with the aim to better understand and anticipate the different migrant communities and the service ecosystem which surrounds them. As its understanding grows, the National Society will be better placed to support evidence-based programming, strategic dialogue, policy development and humanitarian diplomacy. It will develop a policy on migration and displacement, with a focus on effective and efficient humanitarian response.

Statistics

According to IDMC, **over 121,000 internal displacements were recorded in 2021**, while around 11,000 people remained internally displaced by the end of 2021, as a result of the past civil war. According to ILO (2020), over 200,000 Sri Lankans emigrate for work per year, contributing to the 2 million Sri Lankans working overseas.

Values, power and inclusion

Sri Lanka is a country that has come out of a 26-year long civil war. Besides being politically, ethnically and religiously divided, divisive factors at a social level have also resulted in violent attacks and communal violence in recent years, including instances of violent extremism.

COVID-19 lockdowns and the economic crisis have heightened social divisions, resulting in an uneven distribution of services and coping mechanisms. Gender-based violence has been exacerbated and is seen to be the result of various social factors, including deep prevailing inequality between genders due to firm social norms, women being in economically disadvantageous positions, and the prevalence of poverty.

Other protection and inclusion issues include discrimination of minority groups, marginalized communities, and high disability rates linked to malnutrition, accidents, diseases, disasters, and the remnants of war. The mental health of the population has been further affected by these multiple shocks, while the long-lasting psychological impact of the civil war remains.

Main actions and areas of support

The Sri Lanka Red Cross will continue to leverage its network of volunteers to support communities in social cohesion and reconciliation. It will ensure that all programmes offer dignity, access, participation and safety to affected community members, and promote safeguarding and inclusion for vulnerable people during its operations.

Feedback mechanisms will be carefully designed to manage sexual and gender-based violence allegations, child protection concerns and sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment. Empowering youth through innovative programmes will also contribute to community engagement, gender-sensitive and inclusive interventions. The National Society will adapt all its reporting formats to ensure age, gender and disability disaggregated data are in line with IFRC standards.

With IFRC support, the National Society will revise its protection, gender and inclusion policy, and further raise awareness and integrate protection, gender and inclusion into the organization. It will develop a policy on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, which it will implement throughout its networks.

Statistics

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, **one in five women reported being subject to domestic violence**. A UN multi-country study on men and violence indicated that 74 per cent of Sri Lankan men do not approve of beating women. However, the majority related manhood to dominance and violence, with 58 per cent agreeing that “it is manly to defend the honour of your family even by violent means”.

Enabling local actors

The Sri Lanka Red Cross strives to fulfill its mandate as the humanitarian auxiliary to the public authorities, continually seeking ways to improve its services and engagement at every level. It seeks to enhance its capacity in planning, humanitarian diplomacy, digitalization of its systems and services, and branch coordination.

To strengthen its branches, the National Society will use the IFRC's Branch Organizational Capacity Assessment (BOCA) tool and contingency plan results to measure its achievement towards the National Society's strategic plans. The BOCA process is intended to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies branches as a whole, in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities.

Engaged

The Sri Lanka Red Cross will deliver more of its programming through strategic partnerships and will strengthen its advocacy, in particular on raising awareness of protection concerns for migrant communities. It will use first-rate communications to report on its humanitarian actions. The National Society will step up its social media engagement on Facebook and Twitter to promote its work in disaster and crisis areas. Images and videos will enable donors, the private sector, international agencies and other key audiences to engage with its humanitarian work.

Embarked on a digital transformation journey, the National Society will strengthen its capacity for digital community engagement and develop digital solutions for programme delivery. Internally, the National Society will focus on data management, including data literacy, data culture and infrastructure. It will establish and document data and information management

roles and responsibilities of personnel. To support these efforts, it will focus on connecting all branches digitally, developing a positive digital culture and using data in all operations. This includes stopping the use of paper-based assessment tools. The IFRC will provide capacity building and technical support in the design of information technology, management and systems.

Accountable

The Sri Lanka Red Cross will move to digital records and archives in finance, assets, logistics, planning, budgeting and reporting, to improve information management and support systems. It will focus on an integrated computer system to facilitate effective reporting for procurement, inventory and fleet management, and finance.

The National Society will ensure all staff have knowledge of and receive training in regulations on fraud and corruption, and sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. Signed acknowledgment of receipt of these policies will be kept in each staff member's human resources file. Alongside the IFRC, the National Society will initiate staff focus group discussions on these topics.

Trusted

The Sri Lanka Red Cross will continue to revise its constitution, and present suggested amendments to the 2023 annual general meeting. Once the constitution is adopted, an interim central governing body will be formed at the national level, and interim branch committees at the branch level.

With IFRC support, the National Society will continue to promote youth engagement. It will ensure youth representation in the central governing board.

THE IFRC NETWORK

The IFRC

The IFRC is at present the main supporter of the Sri Lanka Red Cross. The support focuses on strategic and operational coordination, including supporting the National Society to execute its auxiliary role in emergency and disaster response, National Society development, and humanitarian diplomacy. It also supports accountability as a cross-cutting theme. In recent years the National Society was supported through a

number of [Emergency Appeals and Disaster Response Emergency Fund \(DREF\) operations in relation to floods, disease outbreaks, violent attacks, and accidents](#). In 2022, besides the Emergency Appeal for complex emergency, the National Society received support from the DREF for monsoon-related extreme weather. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IFRC, through its global Appeal, has supported the National Society in its COVID-19 response, including immunization.

IFRC membership coordination

The IFRC coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess the humanitarian context, humanitarian situations and needs; agreeing common priorities; co-developing common strategies to address issues such as obtaining greater humanitarian access, acceptance and space, mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress. This also means ensuring that strategies and programmes in support of people in

need incorporate clarity of humanitarian action, development assistance, and the auxiliary role efforts to reinforce the role of National Societies in their respective countries.

During the 2004 Tsunami operations, up to 23 participating National Societies were supporting the National Society and have now left the country after completing their projects. Participating National Societies currently providing remote support and assistance during emergency operations include those of China, Kuwait, Singapore and Turkey.

Movement coordination

The Sri Lanka Red Cross collaborates with the IFRC and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). During emergencies, the IFRC and the ICRC work together to provide technical support to the National Society in Sri Lanka, and to share information at regional and sub-regional levels. This is carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and Cooperation (SMCC) principles, and the newly adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#).

The ICRC supports the National Society with migration, restoring family links, humanitarian values, safer access, first aid, and the dissemination of international humanitarian law. In Sri Lanka, the ICRC helps people affected by the past conflict, including detainees, the families of missing persons and economically vulnerable households. The ICRC also works with ministries, armed forces, police and universities to promote international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Coordination with other actors

The Sri Lanka Red Cross maintains active and close partnerships with national and international partners in public, non-governmental and corporate sectors. It works closely with UN agencies and others such as ZOA, Oxfam and USAID in the country. The National Society

works with Dettol, Manchee and Maliban at a national level, and international corporate partners such as Coca-Cola. It also works with media networks such as Hiru TV and the Independent Television Network.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [IFRC Global Plan and Country Plans](#)
- [Subscribe for updates](#)
- [Donor response](#) on IFRC website
- [Live Disaster Response Emergency Fund \(DREF\) data](#)
- Operational information: [IFRC GO platform](#)
- National Society data: [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network, with **192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** and around **14 million volunteers**. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

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