

# Advent of Diversity Management and Inclusion in Nepalese Organizations The Role of Government and International Agencies

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## Abstract

*Nepal has been practicing theories of Human Resources Management (HRM) in the organizations only from few decades. The Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) are the relatively new topics in the country. In the 1980s, diversity management (DM) concepts first appeared in the United States. The majority of the European Union's industrialized nations have led the way in diversity management. No research hasn't been done on how HRM has changed as a field or how inclusion and diversity are now considered and discussed in Nepalese organizations. Examining the state of DM and included in Nepalese organizations will aid in shaping HR professionals' and legislators' perspectives on the importance of DM and I in Nepal. This study is basically based on desk review with the qualitative approach. Larger corporations in Nepal are still struggling to understand workplace inclusion and equality, though the community and nonprofit organisations have demonstrated a greater level of interest. In order to spread awareness of diversity and inclusion in the nation, several industries have taken some action. The article was developed by carefully reviewing previous, pertinent papers and articles. The article attempts to provide an exploratory review seeking to perspectives of Nepal government and international agencies regarding D&I through rigorous analysis of the available literature. This article discusses the government policies and initiatives take by international agencies to foster D& I in Nepal. The UN related organizations and ILO in Nepal have been emphasizing continuously for the need of adopting the principles of D&I in the human of profit making and non-profit making organizations in the country. The preamble of Nepalese Constitution 2015 has highlighted the inclusion to be ensured in all the structures of the government and the private sectors. The UN agencies and ILO Nepal in Nepal have taken remarkable steps for promoting the principles of D&I through Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and other frameworks in the non-profit and profit-making organizations in Nepal.*

**Keywords:** *diversity management, affirmative action, gender equality and social inclusion, reservation policy, proportional representation.*

## Background

According to (Sundas, 2023), the majority of Nepali organizations either place little focus on human resource management (HRM) or combine it with administrative duties. HRM is typically thought of as an activity that only involves employment law, employment, attendance, and hiring and choosing

employees. As a result, other crucial HRM areas like managing performance, incentive schemes, instruction and growth, wage management, dispute resolution, successor planning, position evaluation, and employment planning have been neglected or overlooked.

Even though HRM should play a smaller role, the majority of Nepalese organizations have placed little emphasis on it in comparison to other departments like banking, manufacturing, R&D, sales, and advertising (Sundas, 2023). Organization's management of equality and inclusion in their workforce changes in tandem with their transformation into deeper and more complicated structures.

Diversity is seen as each person's individuality in a recent endeavor. This includes many organizational functions, beliefs, and personal characteristics. It is defined as the combination of variations in values, sexual orientation, physical attributes, age, culture, ethnicity, and ability. The arithmetic of unlike terms is what it is. To put it simply, diversity is the state of being different. The existence of a broad range of variance in the numbers or traits being discussed is known as diversity. The term refers to a wide variety of cultures, perspectives, ethnic groups, socioeconomic origins, etc. that are present in the workplace.

The sources of diversity in an organizational setting, that is work environment inclusive, could be primary or secondary. The primary category includes age, gender, ethnicity, physical ability and physical characteristics. The secondary source on the other hand is designed to include income, education, marital status, religions believe and geographical location.

Although variation in age, racial background, sexual orientation, background, faith, and handicap status has received a lot of attention, researchers increasingly understand that these factors are only the beginning (Robbins and Judge, 2016). Employees may view one another via preconceived notions and preconceptions as a result of demographics, which primarily reflect superficial differences rather than ideas and feelings. Nonetheless, data indicates that individuals are less worried about

demographical differences if they see themselves as sharing more important characteristics, such as ideals and personality, which reflect profound variation.

In every context, managers need to guarantee increased productivity and establish an excellent work-life balance for a growingly diverse staff.

In industrialized nations, new business model efforts and regulatory agencies' diversity and inclusion rules have started to have an impact on all types of organizations, whether they are profit-making or non-profit. Business organizations are paying more attention to inclusion and diversity management as a result of the emergence of several theories on the subject and the voices of appropriate groups.

Both profit-driven and values-driven businesses today have successfully implemented diversity and inclusion initiatives and are glad to display them. Diversity management has been a crucial component of the strategic handling of human resources in these organizations. (Sundas, 2023).

Diversity is commonly understood to mean acknowledging, appreciating, and embracing differences among people, regardless of their abilities, sexual preference, faith, their ages, group, or ethnic background. This perspective is further supported by Grobler (2002:46), who notes that while every person is unique, they nevertheless share a lot of biological or environmental traits. Individuals' traits that influence their identities and social experiences are referred to as diversity (Certo, 2010). People from many cultures and origins have interacted more recently than in the past due to globalization. With rivals from nearly every corner of the globe, individuals generally accept the economy more.

To become more innovative and adaptable, the majority of organizations embrace diversity in the workplace. Throughout recent years, as management has realized how working life is

evolving, growing and enhancing diversity at work and worker efficiency has been a key concern. Since managing diversity in organizations is still difficult, managers often acquire the leadership abilities required in an international setting and get ready to mentor others in their organisations on how to respect various cultures and treat every employee with respect. According to several managers and business executives, diversity is a major problem in the current liberalization and globalization period.

Few studies have been conducted in Nepalese organizations to assess how well-versed Nepalese HR managers are in diversity and inclusion approaches. To evaluate the elements influencing the decision-making process about the implementation of diversity and inclusion in Nepalese organizations, a study must be conducted. The specific tactics that organizations must use to maximize diversity and inclusion during the introduction and implementation phases will be revealed in this study.

Diversity generally has drawbacks, such as the possibility for behavioral barriers that erode teamwork and collaboration, including discrimination, prejudice, indifference, multiculturalism, and gender role conventional wisdom, which can result from demographic disparities (Dressler, 2013).

The diversity and inclusion related problems can cause problems and challenges in Nepalese organizations. Nepal is a small country but it has almost 3 crores multi-cultural, multi-linguistic and multi-ethnic population. The labor market is populated with people from diverse cultures. Hence, there is a possibility of having unmanageable high workforce diversity in Nepalese organizations. But for the majority of Nepalese organisations, the idea of diversity and inclusion is relatively recent. Because some caste groups are disproportionately represented in employment and workers from

marginalised and minority groups are under-represented, weak diversity oversight in the workforce contributes to place of employment exclusions, bias, and groupism. In addition, inequalities in evaluations of performance, pay, and incentive systems further exacerbate the disorder in the field of human resources.

## **Defining Diversity Management and Inclusion**

Diversity is a notion that encapsulates how unique each person is, not only in terms of appearance or ethnicity but also in terms of personalities, experiences, ideas, identities, interests, objectives for their careers, and lifestyles. The diversity of identity can encompass a variety of factors, as Sarah Saska goes on to explain: "socialized and observable ethnicity, sex, faith, country of origin, body-shape or terms of size, maturity, and gender orientation, to name a few." (Waugh, 2020). Diversity, according to the International Labour Organisation, is the dedication to identifying and valuing the range of traits that make people special in a setting that values and celebrates both individual and group accomplishment. A person's identity depends on several aspects of their background. In acknowledging and valuing the various traits that set people distinct, variety offers remedies to end employment discrimination (International labor Office, 2014).

Diversity management is the term for organizational initiatives that, through certain strategies and initiatives, seek to increase the participation of workers from various backgrounds inside the foundation of an organization (CFI, 2023). Accordingly, according to the CFI team, organizations are adopting diversity management strategies in response to cope with the growing diversity of the workforce around the globe.

"There is no such thing as a single, authoritative definition of diversity management.

Rather, 'diversity management' refers to a set of ideas and practices that have been defined and described in various ways. As its name suggests, diversity management is a management strategy. It is applied predominantly top-down, as a managerial instrument." (Fischer, 2009)

Inclusion is the state where employees feel respected, valued and belonging to the organization. For this there should not be any kind of biasness, favoritism, discrimination against any employee because his or her background. All employee should be benefitted by equal employment opportunity from the time of entry to the organization until they retire. The employee irrespective of their background (gender, age, caste, ethnicity, disability, geographical locations, religion etc.,) should have access to opportunity and growth in the organization. Systems, processes and regulations should be transparent and friendly to all diverse employees in the organization supporting the principle of equity.

In a snapshot, a simple way of explaining diversity and inclusion is that "People often say that 'diversity' is an invitation to a party, whereas 'inclusion' is being asked to dance or being able to ask for a song request" (Waugh, 2020).

In order to demonstrate their dedication to implementing equal opportunity rules, investing in diversity management, and preventing workplace bias and assault, 33 private and public entities agreed upon it. Thus, more diversity networks were established in other EU nations, as supported by the French Diversity Charter (Overview of Diversity Management, 2014). Many additional European nations, including Germany, Spain, France, Belgium, and Italy, joined later in 2009 to report on the main forces behind diversity promotion and the growth of the Diversity Charter's network in their own nations. The European Commission received the results of their study, and the so-called EU Platform of Diversity Charters was introduced in

2010. Most EU member states now have access to the European Commission's assistance and a shared platform for exchanging efficient procedures and expertise (European Union, 2017).

Diversity management first appeared in the United States in the early 1980s, and many organizations now support it because it is recognized as a strategic tool to achieve equal treatment of employees regardless of race, gender, or nationality. Cultural diversity has impacted the workplace in Australia, where employees from diverse cultural backgrounds work together, and it has benefited organizations (Chidiac, 2018).

### **Case of Nepal**

Like many developing countries, the Human Resource Management (HRM) function is not yet fully established in Nepalese organizations (Muller, 2001). Other management operations, including scheduling, environment management, relationship with customers management, handling conflicts, managing stress, handling emotions, and diversity management, are also facilitated by human resources (Joanna Hernik, 2017).

At global level, a growing number of companies are adopting diversity management to have their performance level enhanced. American companies try to maintain diversity in three ways: at the entry level, partnership with suppliers and by promoting diversity and inclusion through scholarships (Dhital, 2021). Many positive policies pertaining to gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) have been developed in Nepal as a result of the ten-year armed conflict that lasted from 1996 to 2006. To encourage inclusion and diversity, the government, along with a number of international partners, implements progressive hiring and employment diversity strategies (Manohara Khadka).'

The reservation policy was executed in Nepal in 2007. It has contributed towards increased inclusion and diversity in public and civil service sector.

Ironically, the development sector which has been emphasizing inclusion and diversity also lacks in maintaining a significant level of diversity in their own organizations.

The story of the private sector is more depressing. Dhital further adds that the government reservation policy of 2007 has contributed to increased inclusion and diversity in public and civil service sectors.

In Nepal, the international organizations can be considered as the forerunner of triggering the concept of diversity management and the inclusion. Working in tandem with the new political power in 2006, the international agencies started the application of diversity management and Inclusion among the development partners (DPs) and organizations within them. There was much discussion and implementation of the gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) and diversity concepts.

Nepal has committed itself on global forums. Nepal has ratified 23 human rights agreements that have legal frameworks in Nepal that support gender equality and social inclusion (GESI). These agreements include the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Rights of Children and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and UN Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820 (Sundas, 2023).

GESI principle can be considered as the foundation for diversity management and inclusion in most of the non-government organizations in the development sector.

Another important step was Nepal's 2011 National Action Plan (NAP) on women, peace, and security, which made it the first country in Asia to do so (Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare

[MOWCSW] & UN Women, 2017 on GESI Profile for Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction, 2017).

Previous laws, civil code, even constitution in Nepal used to have discriminatory provisions to particular, caste, religion and gender. Later in 1963 and 1990 there some amendments were made to address these issues, but the constitution still had some discriminatory provisions, particularly in relation to citizenship and nationality, inheritance, ownership, marriage and family, job opportunities, and learning. The altered political climate and the substantial policy discussions between the government, civil society organizations, and development partners have resulted in significant reforms in subsequent years (ADB, 2010). Many efforts have been made to promote inclusion after the significant political shifts that followed the implementation of a broad truce on November 21, 2006, between the Maoist communist party of Nepal and the then government.

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### **Initiatives taken by UNCTAD**

During the Expert Meeting on Social Inclusion Programs and Their Impact on Sustainable and Inclusive Development and Growth, which took place in Geneva on November 27 and 28, 2014, the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD made the observation that, despite 20 years of strong growth, many developing nations had not yet achieved sustainable and inclusive development (Reported of the Specialist Bringing together on Social Integration Services and Their Impact on environmentally

friendly and Inclusive Development and Growth, 2014).

During the discussion, he underlined that the lack of social inclusion in the growth process in emerging nations can be attributed to several factors, including the creation of insufficient, high-quality jobs and the lack of sufficient and efficient methods to spread the benefits of progress. Nepal was one of 26 countries from around the world that attended the UNCTAD expert meeting. Nepal attended a UNCTAD meeting on November 27–28, 2014, when the UNCTAD Secretary-General underlined that developing nations still had a ways to go before achieving inclusive and sustainable development. (Report of the Expert Meeting on Social Inclusion Programs and Their Effect on Equal and Sustainable Communities and expansion, 2014)

### **UN agencies In Nepal**

In March of 2016, the Social Inclusion Action Group (SIAG) was renamed as GESI Working Group. A working group under the Social Cluster of International Development Partners Group (IDPG) was the GESI working group. The GESI Working Group's objective was to offer IDGP and other socioeconomic participants strategic guidance and assistance regarding inclusion in society and equality for women.

The IDPG and other development stakeholders are to get strategic guidance and assistance on gender equality and social inclusion from the GESI Working Group. Since March 2016, USAID and UN Women have served as co-chairs, replacing the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office.

National and international GESI experts and GESI Working Group members thoroughly reviewed the available GESI definitions, specifications, and tools utilized by different ministries and conducted thorough discussions and consultations with a range of government ministries and departments, as well

as local, district, and national Development Partners (DPs) and civil society organizations, including sessions in five districts (International Development Partner Groups, Nepal, 2017). These consultations and discussions were also held with the government focal persons to ascertain that this framework was based on effective measures practiced in Nepal. To make sure that this framework was founded on successful practices used in Nepal, these talks and conversations were also conducted with the government focal points. Additionally, they made sure that the framework included the essential components required to address issues and support the development of members from marginalized and vulnerable groups, including women and those living below the poverty line (International Development Partners Group, Nepal, 2017).

### **GESI Policy Mandates and Practices of Development Partners in Nepal**

Mission instructions, sectoral plans, and numerous international policies directed DPs in Nepal to work for diversity, GESI, and women's empowerment. In their national policy documents, many DPs included social inclusion recommendations with a Nepali focus concerning international mandates.

DPs use tools like the 14-step District Development Committee (DDC) planning process, gender analysis, poverty & social mapping, participatory rapid appraisal (PRA), and social analysis to identify and address issues on women and poor, vulnerable, and excluded groups. It is standard practice in DP-supported programs and projects to require that GESI-related goals be included in project development objectives and success indicators and that community groups feature at least 33% women with at least one woman in a key position. Members of local marginalized or minority groups must be represented on executive committees and included in community groups, according to some DP projects and programs.

The majority of DPs and INGOs in Nepal have embraced strategies to service delivery, economic development, and rights-driven campaigning. To combat violence against women and girls, specific measures are put into place.

For GESI-responsive budgeting and financial allocation/expenditure analysis, DPs employ a variety of techniques. DPs typically keep an eye on representation in development initiatives and service accessibility. In addition to the widespread practice of disaggregation by sex, caste and ethnicity have also increased in popularity throughout the past ten years (International Development Partner Groups, Nepal, 2017).

Social inclusion is the process of making it easier for people and groups to participate in society, according to the World Bank. Social inclusion can also be defined as the process of enhancing the capacity, opportunity, and dignity of those who are disadvantaged due to their identity to participate in society. Empowerment of the poor and marginalised is the goal of social inclusion. (Kafle, Thapa, Joshi, & Mainaly, 2018)

Recent work done by the DFID/World Bank Social Inclusion Action Program (SIAP) for the National Planning Commission has developed an "Inclusion Index" to help in identifying the most disadvantaged (Bennett and Parajuli:2008).

SIAG, therefore, initiated this survey on workforce diversity within international agencies. Based on the survey results, recommendations for ensuring greater diversity in the workforce of international agencies are presented in this document. SIAG intends to monitor the changes on an annual basis as a means to support and encourage international agencies to move as rapidly as possible to model the oft-cited goal of inclusion within their own workforces.

The majority of agencies participating in this survey

have a general clause in their human resource development policy committing the organization to having recruitment procedures and a code of conduct free from bias or discrimination. Almost all vacancy advertisements mention equal employment opportunities for women and encourage women and people from excluded groups to apply.

The UNDP, UNICEF and SDC are the only organisations in this poll that have a formal policy explicitly defining affirmative action in hiring practices. The Swiss Agency Development and Cooperation also defines its core organizational values guiding diversity, and outlines its operational understanding of affirmative action as the basis for the way the programs and projects it supports get implemented. SDC also documents some diversity friendly recruitment procedures<sup>14</sup> including an annual staff profile to monitor its own staff diversity.

UNDP's interim policy has affirmative action provisions to create more opportunities for women and individuals from excluded communities to appear for an assessment process during recruitment.

### **Role of International labor Organization**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) strongly upholds that all its member states should acknowledge, encourage, and implement diversity and inclusion. This commitment is reaffirmed in the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which was adopted during the International Labour Conference in 1998 (International Labour Office; International Labour Standards Department; Governance and Tripartism Department - Geneva, 2014).

In Geneva, the Governance and Tripartism Department and the International Labour Standards Department collaborated to create a guide that outlined the essential ideas. Employers, employees, and their organisations can use this resource in a wide range of workplace situations. It will offer

helpful and applicable information on valuing and fostering ethnic diversity in the workplace across the globe. This guide is applied in all the ILOs around the world (International labor Organization, 2008).

ILO has disseminated substantial amount of knowledge and information on diversity management and inclusion to the world by releasing guides time and again. ILO thinks workplace is the strategic entry point where discrimination like racial, gender, caste etc. can be dealt.

Specific training programs, including awareness sessions, skill development, and social dialogue, enable workers to understand key concepts, evaluate situations, and gain the essential skills and resources to combat racial discrimination. (International Labour Office; International Labour Standards Department; Governance and Tripartism Department - Geneva, 2014).

## **Nepal Government and GESI**

Various units of Nepal government have also simultaneously emphasized on the principles and practices of diversity and inclusion after the downfall of the Panchayat regime. In one of his Occasional Papers, Vol. 11, Om Gurung stated that the 1990 multi-party democracy gave Nepal's indigenous peoples, women, Madhesis, Dalits, and other marginalised groups a chance to express their long-standing, valid grievances and the agony of historical injustice. (Gurung, 2010)

Subsequently, with the enactment of Nepal's new constitution in 1991, all citizens were granted equal status before the law. The country was officially recognized as a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual democratic state, maintaining its independence, sovereignty, and unity.

Nepal Constitution 2015 was promulgated in 2015 as a result of peace accord in signed in 21 November 2006. Then political party, Nepal Communist Party

Maoist had raised inclusion as a major agenda with much force. Other political parties like Nepal Congress and UML joined hand with CPN, Maoist which could dethrone the King and the remove the constitutional monarchy system prompting a need for a constitution with modern idesa. The new constitution seemed to be much progressive by incorporating aspirations of the general people regarding social inclusion.

In last decades, there is huge diversity in the government employees which compelled the lawmakers , planners, academia etc. to emphasize on diversity. This action is the impact of the inclusion policy (Shailendra Prasad Bhatt, 2019).

Nepal became the first country in Asia to introduce a National Action Plan (NAP) on women, peace, and security in 2011. Extensive consultations were conducted on issues such as violence and inequality affecting women across 55 districts, covering 71.5% of the country's total districts. For this reason NAP can be considered as the most consulted NAP globally. Today NAP can be considered as a the foundation for supporting women empowerment in Nepal fulfilling the global concern on women.

Seven sectoral ministries in Nepal, including agriculture, education, federal affairs and local development, forestry, health and sanitation, urban development, and water supply, have introduced and enforced GESI policies and guidelines to enhance the meaningful participation of marginalized groups. (Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Operational Guidelines , 2017).

According to the article on women's rights, women have the following rights: equal ancestry, safe maternity and reproductive health, participation in all state bodies, property and family matters, and positive discrimination in social security, work, health care, and education. (International Development Partner Groups, Nepal, 2017).



## Approach Paper of 14th Three Year Plan

As stated in its Approach Paper for the 14th Three Year Plan (2016/17-2018/19), the GoN wants to achieve social justice and economic development. The Approach Paper acknowledges that resolving concerns of "backward" areas, classes, and communities as well as promoting gender equality are important. Organisations need to make deliberate efforts to reduce poverty, such as through social security, targeted initiatives, and fair resource distribution.

It acknowledges that these are cross-cutting issues and includes chapters specifically on inclusiveness (6.1.2) and gender equality and women's empowerment (6.1.1). The Approach Paper seeks to raise the human development and empowerment index of those who have been economically and socially disadvantaged while highlighting the importance of meaningful engagement from all people for Nepal's inclusive development. Dalits, Adibasi/Janajatis, Madhesis, Tharus, Muslims, Other Backward Classes (OBC),<sup>13</sup> minorities, the vulnerable, people with handicaps, gender and sexual minorities, farmers, labourers, residents of underdeveloped areas, and impoverished Khas Aryas are all included in this.

## GESI Policy/Strategies/Guidelines of Sectoral Ministries:

In order to accomplish sectoral goals, GESI issues must be addressed programmatically and institutionally, according to a number of GoN policies and guidelines, such as the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development GESI Policy, the Ministry of Urban Development GESI Operational Guidelines, the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation GESI Strategy, the Ministry of Education Consolidated Equity Strategy, and the Ministry of Health GESI Operational Guidelines. The inclusion of women, Dalits, Adibasi/Janajatis, Madhesis, Muslims, people with disabilities, and

marginalised populations in the development, execution, oversight, and assessment of sectoral policies, plans, and programs is emphasised in all of these sectoral GESI strategies and guidelines.

They acknowledge the necessity of pinpointing the precise obstacles that women, the underprivileged, the weak, and the marginalised encounter in the relevant field. Over the years, the GoN has established a number of institutional frameworks and processes at the central, district, and local levels to address issues of social inclusion and equal treatment for women (Kavita Rai, 2021).

## Election Commission Nepal

To foster a more inclusive electoral environment, the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) has actively worked to integrate gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) into its operations. As part of this initiative, ECN approved and implemented a Gender and Inclusion Policy (henceforth, the Policy) in August 2013 (Nepal Election Commission, 2013).

ECN views gender inclusion (GI) as an important idea that tackles the unequal power dynamics between different social groups and between men and women.

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems and United States International Development Agency (USAID) provided financial support for the development of the Gender and Inclusion Strategy 2015–2020 in Nepal.

The interim Constitution of 2007 had emphasized particularly the rights of Dalit, women and indigenous people, Madhesi community, poor peasants and labor etc. of Nepal. It also raised the concept of proportional representation of all marginalized and minorities in various sectors (Gender and Inclusion Policy 2013, 2013). Subsequently, a gender and inclusion coordination committee (GICC) was formed chaired by then Election Commissioner, Ms. Ila Sharma.

## Conclusion

Concept of diversity and inclusion was initiated from 1990 by the political parties who believed in the multi-party system. The agenda of diversity and inclusion was spearheaded by the Nepal Communist Party Maoist (now Nepal communist Party Maoist Center) after they signed the peace accord with then government in 2006 which was catapulted further by international agencies in Nepal. The government and its sectoral bodies have integrated the concept of diversity and inclusion in its functions and structures remarkably. These are basically evident in employment in government sectors and electoral system. On the other hand, development sectors (INGOs and NGOs) have massively emphasized the knowledge and practice of diversity and inclusion. There are many things yet to be initiated in private sectors in terms of diversity and inclusion in Nepal.

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