ANNUAL REPORT 2023











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Message from the President

The Annual Report-2023 of the Association for Community Empowerment (ACE) bears the testimony of one year of hard work, dedication, and determination toward a better community in Bangladesh. When the world is thinking about the problems of the modern age, Bangladesh is struggling to meet the basic need. For the last one year, we have been working to tackle a few pressing issues that the community is facing- Health & nutrition; Climate change & environment; Inclusive Economic Development, etc.

In the context of health and nutrition ACE has worked to secure access to quality healthcare and nutrition for Ready-made Garments (RMG) workers. We have initiated training sessions to aware them of healthy food and all the nutrients they need. We have also set up fair-price shops at factories for their easy access to healthy food. We have also set up a community kitchen where they are being provided with training in cooking healthy meals.

ACE acknowledges how important it is to build an inclusive development model that represents vulnerable communities like RMG workers and waste management workers. That's why ACE has designed its initiatives in such a way that we can foster financial stability and empower individuals to contribute to a thriving economy.

I think climate and environment is a burning question in Bangladesh. It is crucial to include a feasible proposition regarding the environment if we want to contribute to achieving our Sustainable Development Goal. ACE has taken the challenge to do its part in tackling pollution and its effects. We have targeted plastic as the main pollutant that is risking our environment. This year we are focused on promoting sustainable practices and advocating for environmental protection. We are working on these goals with the support of our donors and partnerships. This report is a testament to the tireless efforts and dedication of all our staff, volunteers, and partners. We are forever grateful for your unwavering support.

I would like to thank all the individuals who have supported us on this challenging path to make our communities inclusive and sustainable.

Paryin S Huda

President

Association for Community Empowerment (ACE)





Message from Executive Director

The Annual Report-2023 of the Association for Community Empowerment (ACE) bears the testimony of one year of hard work, dedication, and determination toward a better community in Bangladesh. Like many other countries, the marginalized communities in Bangladesh are struggling to achieve their development needs. Against this backdrop, we have been working to tackle a few pressing issues that the community is facing- Health & nutrition; Climate change & environment; Inclusive Economic Development, etc.

In the context of health and nutrition ACE has worked to secure access to quality healthcare and nutrition for Ready-made Garments (RMG) workers. We have initiated training sessions to aware them of healthy food and all the nutrients they need and set up a community kitchen where they are being provided with training in cooking healthy meals.

ACE acknowledges how important it is to build an inclusive development model that represents vulnerable communities like RMG workers and waste management workers. So, we worked hard to foster financial stability and empower individuals to contribute to a thriving economy.

I think Climate change and environmental degradation are the key concerns for our communities. It is crucial to include a feasible proposition regarding the environment if we want to contribute to achieving our Sustainable Development Goals. ACE has taken the challenge to do its part in tackling pollution and its effects. We are working on these challenges with the support of our partners and donors.

This report is a testament to the tireless efforts and dedication of all our staff, volunteers, and partners. We are forever grateful for your unwavering support.

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Md. Tanver Hossain

Executive Director

Association for Community Empowerment (ACE)





ACE Vision and Mission

Vision

Building a world where all communities are equally empowered to access development.

Mission

Exploring innovative solutions to inspire life and provide livelihood, empowering community

And healing environment through collective actions.

Innovation

Thinks creatively for solutions while learning from setbacks and mistakes.

Diversity

Care and respect for people of all races and economic groups.

Values

Accountability

Helping ensure that project components are implemented as envisaged and planned.

Sustainability

Nurturing continuity in project work, especially when change management is needed.

Effectiveness

Create positive impacts through the achievements of agreed objectives, resolves issues constructively and effectively



ACE Thematic Areas

Health and Nutrition

ACE acknowledges interconnected health, food & nutrition, and water, sanitation & hygiene are crucial for a thriving community. That's why the organization is developing a replicable integrated model for nutrition activities to improve health, nutrition and well-being of RMG workers through a participatory model of cooking healthy food.

Health: We are keeping health at the forefront of all our projects. We focus on promoting preventive care, increasing access to essential healthcare services, and addressing prevalent health issues within the community.

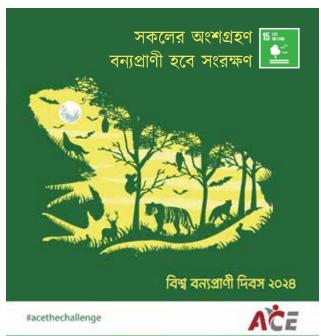
Food & Nutrition: ACE believes all efforts to keep our communities safe will only succeed if they have access to good food and nutrition. That's why our initiative aims to improve dietary practices and ensure access to safe and nutritious food. Our programs are designed to empower communities to make informed nutritional choices.

Water, Sanitation & Hygiene: Promoting sanitation and hygiene is essential to protect all communities equally from disease by preventing the spread of pathogens. ACE has undertaken to develop programs where clean water; sanitation facilities and hygiene education will be provided.

Climate Change & Environment

ACE is an organization working to revolutionize how we think about the climate and environment. The organization is promoting significant changes in attitudes and behaviors. As the environment and climate change are deeply interconnected, ACE is tackling these challenges from multiple angles:

Climate Change Actions: We address the root causes of climate change by promoting clean energy solutions, advocating for sustainable practices and fostering climate awareness.





Environmental Sustainability: We encourage the responsible use of our planet's resources. In this context our initiatives include promoting conservation efforts, protecting ecosystems, and encouraging responsible consumption habits.

Waste Management: We believe in a circular economy where waste is minimized, and resources are reused and recycled. We advocate for responsible waste management practices and promote innovation in this crucial area.

Inclusive Economic Development

ACE believes that inclusive economic growth is vital to all aspects of the development of individuals. To foster inclusive economic development to empower communities, ACE is focusing on three key thematic areas:

Sustainable Agriculture: ACE is designing its program to support local communities in developing and implementing sustainable agricultural practices that increase productivity, income, and food security. These initiatives include promoting climate-smart techniques, access to resources like seeds and fertilizers, and market linkages for farmers.

Livelihood Diversification: To ensure everyone's participation in the development diverse livelihood opportunities beyond traditional farming should be created. ACE plans to achieve this by providing training and resources for income-generating activities like handicrafts and small businesses.

Skill Development: We are motivated to invest in building the skills and knowledge needed for individuals to thrive in the changing economy. ACE is looking forward to designing a program that will include training programs in areas like financial literacy, digital literacy, and vocational skills relevant to local job markets.

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Policy & Advocacy

ACE recognizes the role of policy and advocacy in creating positive social change. In this context, the organization is working on:

Community Empowerment: We are working on initiatives that will support and enable people to express their concerns, access information and services, defend their rights, and explore further choices and options.

Diversity & Social Integration: ACE champions our community's diversity while striving to tear down barriers and build a society in which everyone feels welcome and cherished. Social integration is crucial to ensure each individual's participation in development.

Good Governance: To build a just society it is important to promote transparency, accountability, and participation in decision-making processes. Focusing on that we advocate for policies that reflect the needs of the community and ensure all voices are heard.



Education

ACE prioritizes the transformative power of education and focuses on development of social and emotional well-being, inclusive learning environments, and the use of technology to achieve educational goals.

Inclusive Education: In the delicate tapestry of societal development, education is a pillar of empowerment and progress. We strive to create programs that meet the different requirements of all learners, ensuring no child is left behind. This includes initiatives for students with disabilities, special needs, and those from marginalized backgrounds.

Social and Emotional Learning: Social and emotional learning (SEL) promotes the development of lifelong skills and behaviors that enable people to identify and manage emotions, regulate behavior, and make responsible decisions. This emotional intelligence helps to set and achieve individual and collective goals. That's why we advocate integrating social and emotional learning strategies into our curriculum.

Technology for development: Educational technology is a process of integrating technology into education in a positive manner that promotes a more diverse learning environment and a way for students to learn how to use technology. We are focusing on providing digital resources, computer literacy training, and innovative teaching methods to promote accessibility and engagement.



Nutrition for Communities

Fair-price Shop

Women workers in the Ready-Made Garments (RMG) sector in Bangladesh are in dire need of better nutrition, diet, hygiene, and sanitation education. Even though they form an integral part of the economy, they lack access to basic nutrition, health, and well-being services due to a scarcity of resources. Access to quality nutrition is a basic human right, yet many people, especially those living in poverty, are unable to get the nutrition they need. Our Annapurna project developed an accessible, affordable, and quality solution for the RMG (Ready-Made Garment) workers on health, nutrition, and conceptions of a healthy lifestyle to combat nutrition-relevant deficiencies. The project has established two fair-price shops that offer workers groceries and health nutrition products at a reduced price, allowing them to access nutritious food at an affordable rate. By leveraging the private sector and negotiating fair rates with traders and suppliers, the project is providing the RMG workers with access to nutritious food that is of better quality and at a lower cost than the local market.

The Inclusive Business model is an innovative approach to reducing the monthly expenditures of workers and enabling a change in their behavior toward their health, nutrition, and financial inclusion. This model has the potential to empower workers, especially females, by giving them the choice of purchasing quality goods at affordable prices. Through the Fair



The RMG Workers buying their daily commodities from the Fair-Price Shop established at Romo Fashion Today Ltd located in Gazipur.



Representatives from the Auchan Foundation, Association for Community Empowerment, and Mati Industries Ltd during a Fair-Price Shop visit at Teenage Modern Fashion Ltd, Savar, Dhaka



Price Shop, workers will get access to discounted goods, payment options, and micro-credit facilities, as well as a wide range of quality goods and products from renowned manufacturing brands in Bangladesh. These items are available at prices that are suitable to the worker's financial capabilities, so they can save time and money for themselves.

Community Kitchen



Delegates of Auchan Foundation Alain Reners and Juliette Bataille handing over the gifts to the trainees at the Community Kitchen

RMG workers lead a hectic lifestyle, and therefore, they prefer food items that require a minimum effort and can quickly be processed and cooked. Food items like eggs, noodles and snacked potatoes are frequently consumed by female RMG workers. But they are not skilled in preparing a healthy and hygienic meal. The Community Kitchen is designed with knowledge development to ensure that the RMG workers have access to the knowledge of cooking safe and nutritious food. We are aiming to create 3 community cooking club models where the family members will be able to learn healthy cooking and produce healthy meals and snack items. They can also sell these items to their colleagues through the fair-price shops.

Our Nutrition Trainer provided basic nutrition training among the workers of partner factories, organized community counseling sessions, and demonstrated that there are needs and benefits for both workers and management for nutritional education and nutritional food provision in factories. A formal meal plan including wages that provide means of buying nutritious and safe food, fortified foods and nutrition supplements, storing homemade food safely, and a clean dining room can significantly improve workers morale, reduce absenteeism, and increase productivity.



A snapshot of healthy cooking training among the RMG Factory workers and Community members at the Community Kitchen



Development Partners and Projects

Program title

Integrated Management of Plastic Assortment and Contribution Towards Green Economy (IMPACT-GE) [Phase-2]

Program Objective

In the first phase, the objective was the establishment of waste collection and processing enterprises for a sustainable environment, green jobs, and inclusive economic growth in 04 wards of Dhaka North and South City Corporation. In the second year (Year 2) of the IMPACT-GE project, the overarching objective is to achieve sustainability and operational competency. We would like to make a horizontal growth in this phase. We would also emphasize raising awareness and advocacy for PET recycling with DSCC and other stakeholders. To achieve these milestones, IMPACT-GE Project activities will be implemented in two aspects, are:

- Business aspect
- Social aspect

Key successes/ Achievements of the program

ACE has been supporting more than 300 waste workers and their family members in 4 wards under Dhaka South City Corporation. Developed an efficient waste management system along with reducing local air, water, and land pollution. By encouraging the occupational health, safety, and socio-economic development of waste employees and enhancing the plastic recycling process in an eco-friendly way, ACE is working to protect the urban environment in Dhaka South City Corporation.

Donor

The COCA-COLA Foundation

Lead Partner

SR Asia Foundation







From the left Tanver Hossain, Executive Director, ACE; Sumaya Rashid, Country Director, SR Asia; and DR. As-Saba Hossain, Climate Change & Health Specialist, ACE delivering speeches during the inaugural session of IMPACT-GE Phase II



Waste workers, waste handlers, and waste traders took part in the inaugural session of IMPACT-GE Phase II



Program Title

Access to Nutrition and Healthy Food for RMG workers and Dependents (Annapurna)

Program Objective

The "Access to Nutrition and Healthy Food for RMG Workers and Dependents" project aims to improve the health, nutrition, and well-being of the RMG workers and their family members by developing access to nutrition, diet, hygiene, and sanitation education through a replicable inclusive business model in 2 RMG factories and their communities through 2024. The project will benefit 10,000 RMG workers and their family members in Dhaka. The project also aims to develop an accessible, affordable, and quality solution for the RMG workers on health, nutrition, essential needs, and conceptions of a healthy lifestyle to combat nutrition-relevant deficiencies. It also aims to transform the life of deprived and vulnerable RMG workers through reasonable food facilities using the influence of global brands in value chains to improve working conditions in Bangladesh.

Key successes/Achievements of the program

Two fair-price shops in two garment factories and a community kitchen for RMG workers were established to enhance the health and nutrition status of over 10,000 garment workers and their family members with funding support from the donor organization. Expert cooks and Master trainers were available to train and demonstrate how to prepare healthy food preserving its nutrients and value at low prices. Workers and their dependents joined here to take training, cooking and buy healthy food at an affordable price. A partnership model was developed with the fair price shop so that the community kitchen can also sell food items to the factories through the fair price shops.

Donor

Auchan Foundation, France



Program Title

Assess the long-term health effects of switching from combustible to tobacco harm reduction products among Type 2 diabetic smokers in Bangladesh.

Program Objective

Evaluate the long-term health effects of a tobacco harm reduction product (oral nicotine pouch) on smoking cessation and health outcomes among type 2 diabetes patients who smoke cigarettes/bidis.

Key successes/ Achievements of the program

A protocol study on Diabetes and Smoking Cessation was published under this project in the prestigious "Journal of Clinical Trials". The research protocol titled "A Randomized Controlled Trial to Assess the Long-term Health Effects of Smoking Cessation Intervention through a Tobacco Harm Reduction Product among Type 2 Diabetic Smokers in Bangladesh: Study Protocol of the DISC Trial.

Donor

Foundation for a Smoke-Free World

Lead Partner

Centre for Substance Use Research Ltd. (Scotland)



Our Partners and Donors

Auchan Foundation

Auchan Foundation

As a global retailer, Auchan Foundation- France is committed to making a positive difference in the lives of 8 billion people by 2025. Auchan's mission is to promote sustainability and increase efficiency in the retail industry while creating tangible benefits for both customers and the environment. This organization works closely with non-profit associations and supports long-term projects with a strong social impact. They mainly aim to promote food knowledge and fight malnutrition.

The Coca-Cola Foundation



The Coca-Cola Foundation is the primary philanthropic arm of The Coca-Cola Company. The organization aims to make a difference in communities around the world by investing in transformative ideas and institutions that address some of most pressing global challenges. Recently it has refreshed its focus to specifically address sustainable access to water, a circular economy, climate resilience and disaster preparedness and response, economic empowerment, and causes impacting our hometown community.

The Center for Substance Use Research (CSUR)



The Center for Substance Use Research (CSUR) focuses on reducing health disparities, improving health equity, and addressing social determinants of health through innovative research. They collaborate with community partners to translate research findings into practical solutions and evidence-based interventions.

Social Responsibility Asia Bangladesh



The Social Responsibility Asia (SR Asia) Bangladesh is the wing of SR Asia – an International Organization. SR Asia Bangladesh works closely with policyholders and organizations to design socially responsible processes in the value chain. It campaigns for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sustainable Development.



Success Stories

Ensuring Equal Participation of Women in the Journey of Development

Sharmin Begum lives in a small room with her husband and four children in Shyampur, Dhaka. In this very room, she has her whole family put together. Her husband is a rickshaw puller. It was very difficult to support the children with her husband's meager earnings. In the meantime, the Covid-19 hit them financially. During lock-down when the husband could not go out with the rickshaw, it became difficult to feed the children.

In the face of a financial crisis, Sharmin was forced to marry her daughter off. But soon her fortune turned. From her neighbor, she came to know about work opportunities in initiatives taken by ACE. Here she works in plastic sorting and bailing. With her decent earnings, her children no longer have to go to bed on an empty stomach.

Like Sharmin, Mina also helps her husband support the family by working at ACE. There are many other women whose lives have been changed by participating in the initiatives of ACE. This organization is looking forward to reaching out to communities that are struggling to meet their basic needs. ACE acknowledges that one-time aid is not a sustainable solution. Therefore, the organization wants to advance all such projects where there will be opportunities to create workplaces for women.

It is not possible to achieve development goals by keeping half of the working population inactive. To continue the journey of development, women must join the workforce. Through our IMPACT-GE project, we have created an inclusive business model where waste management workers can be financially benefited and be part of a thriving economy. Where most of these assortment workers are female ACE feels more responsible and determination towards its mission. ACE aims to continue to make a significant difference in the lives of these marginalized communities.

Community Kitchen: Gateway to Nutrition and Self-Reliance



Representatives from the International Culinary Institute, ACE, Auchan Foundation, and Mati Industries Ltd took part in the inauguration of the Community Kitchen

Rahela Khatun (46) is a beneficiary of ACE's initiative for behavioral change. This initiative involves setting up community kitchens where RMG workers and their dependents are trained to cook nutritious meals.

Rahela's daughter works for Romo Fashion. She is the one who cooks for the family at home. She said, "I had no idea about the food value or how much nutrition we are getting from the food we are eating. Seems like we were eating just to fill up our stomachs."

Community kitchen is working as a learning center for the RMG workers and their families. Nutrition experts and chefs are providing them with training and health knowledge. There they learn how to cook food to preserve its nutritional value and how to cook nutritional food in an affordable way. They can generate extra income using the tips they got from the training.

"Her income falls short for us. I have now ventured into a home kitchen after learning affordable cooking tips from here. I take small snack orders to contribute to the family financially", said Rahela.

Under the Annapurna project this initiative seeks to provide the necessary knowledge, abilities, tools, and collective voice to the workers. To outline this objective ACE has provided this training to 500 hundred RMG workers and their families through community kitchen.



This training session is not limited to female workers only, even male workers took part too. ACE acknowledges that health is the pillar of any sustainable development. The RMG workers are the backbone of our national economy and ensuring their health should be our primary concern. ACE wishes to continue the community kitchen programs to do its part in weaving a pathway to a thriving community

Impacting life of thousands of RMG Workers in an Era of Inflation

According to a report by Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), the price of rice went up by 31%, lentils by 30%, flour increased by 33% and sugar being the highest went up by 50% when compared to the prices of 2020. Almost 39 other food ingredients consumed daily have also seen a shoot up in price. But compared to this our income has not increased. Moreover, the wages of RMG workers are already limited.

Access to quality nutrition is a basic human right, yet many people are unable to get the nutrition they need. Especially female RMG workers in Bangladesh are in dire need of better nutrition, diet, hygiene, and sanitation education. Bearing that in mind we have set up two fair-price shops under our Annapurna Project. These shops provide grocery and health nutrition products at a much-reduced price. 5000 workers have been provided with direct access to daily commodities at a discounted price. A 5 to 10% discount on every product has increased workers' affordability.

The fair-price shops aim to develop an accessible, affordable, and quality solution for the RMG workers. That's why several payment options are incorporated in the shop, so it suits the workers' financial capabilities. Annapurna project has enabled the RMG workers to buy healthy food and sanitation supplies for their families too. Healthy diet ensures an increase in their working ability, and it takes us one step closer to the Sustainable Development Goals.

As we have stepped into a new era of inflation inequality where poor households have to bear the consequences of rising costs, ACE is determined to take on the challenge of ensuring sustainable change in health. We are now motivated to make horizontal growth in this project so that we can bring positive changes in more peoples lives.

Publication of Protocol Study on Diabetes and Smoking Cessation

At the Association for Community Empowerment (ACE), we are thrilled to announce that our work, developing a protocol for a research study, has now been officially published in the prestigious "Journal of Clinical Trials," marking a significant milestone in our pursuit of reducing tobacco-related harm. ACE, Center for Substance Use Research (CSUR), and Enam Medical College Hospital (EMCH) have collaboratively developed the research protocol titled "A Randomized Controlled Trial to Assess the Long-Term Health Effects of Smoking Cessation Intervention through a Tobacco Harm Reduction Product among Type 2 Diabetic Smokers in Bangladesh: Study Protocol of the DISC Trial."

The research study, a result of an extensive literature review, potential study tool testing, and a dissemination workshop primarily focuses on assessing the long-term health impact of smoking cessation. We are thankful to our principal investigator Dr. Farhana Haseen, Head of Longitudinal Research at CSUR, for her magnificent leadership throughout the journey.





Research Article

A Randomized Controlled Trial to Assess the Long-Term Health Effects of Smoking Cessation Intervention through a Tobacco Harm Reduction Product among Type 2 Diabetic Smokers in Bangladesh: Study Protocol of the DISC Trial

Farhana Haseen^{1*}, As-Saba Hossain², Nafis Rahman¹, Asif Moinur Chowdhury², Sohel Rana², Tanver Hossain², Shamima Islam³, Hasna Heena Mahmud², Joanne Coyle¹, Jyoti Goyal¹, Gabriel Barnard¹, Neil McKeganey¹

¹Centre for Substance Use Research (CSUR), 4 Woodside Terrace, Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom; ²Association for Community Empowerment (ACE), Lalmatia, Dhaka, Bangladesh; ³Department of Forensic Medicine, Enam Medical College Hospital (EMCH), Talbag, Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh

In this research paper, a novel method is developed for determining the health impact of a tobacco harm reduction product and valuable insights into the overall potential of smoking cessation in reducing complications in patients with diabetes and significantly contributing to policy decisions.



Audit Report

Rahman Anis & Co. Chartered Accountants

Association for Community Empowerment-ACE

H # 11,R # 05, Shakhertek, Adabor, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207

Statement of Financial Position

As at December 31, 2023

Assets	Notes	Amount in taka	
		31/12/23	31.12.2022
Property & Assets			
Non-current assets		23,10,250	3,58,382
Property, Plant & Equipment	7	22,74,518	3,13,718
Preliminary Expenses	8	35,731	44,664
Current Assets		18,61,398	77,78,226
Advance, Deposits & Prepayments	9	9,82,000	6,52,000
Cash and Cash Equivalents	10	8,79,398	71,26,226
Total	:	41,71,647	81,36,608
Capital Fund and Liabilities:			
Capital Fund		14,01,647	50,19,721
Fund Account	11	14,01,647	50,19,721
Current Liabilities		27,70,000	31,16,887
Liabilities for Expenses	12	9,20,000	7,70,628
Loan Received From Member's	13	18,50,000	23,46,259
Total		41,71,647	81,36,608

The accompanying notes from an integral part of these financial statements

Parvin S Huda

resident

Association for Community Empowerment (ACE)

Md. Tanver Hossain

Executive Director

Association for Community Empowerment (ACE)



Quotes of Beneficiaries





Rekha Dhar (19)

"I had no idea about the food value or how much nutrition we get from the food we eat. I was often sick due to fatigue and lack of essential nutrients...ACE has made us aware of food & nutrition and has also trained us on cooking healthy meals. Now I can cook delicious food with affordable ingredients. I sell some of the items to the fair price shops too."





Mina Akter (22)

"My children no longer have to go to sleep with an empty stomach. ACE has given me the chance to earn for my family and send my boys to school. Thanks to ACE...I no longer have to spend my days in financial uncertainty."



Some Photographs of Our Activities



Capacity-building training on organizational policies and management for ACE team members



Certificate Training on Health and Nutrition for RMG Workers facilitated by Md Abdul Alim, CEO, Sustainable Management System Inc



Snapshot of the annual get-together of ACE and its project staff





ACE and SR Asia Bangladesh teams attended the IMPACT-GE Phase II collaboration meeting



Representatives from the Auchan Foundation, ACE, and Mati Industries Ltd during a Fair-Price Shop visit at Teenage Modern Fashion Ltd, Savar, Dhaka.



Occupational Health and Safety Training given to the plastic waste collectors under the IMPACT-GE project



Free health consultations were given to the participants in the Occupational Health and Safety training



One of the ACE staff participating in archery as part of the annual retreat activity



Group photo- A snapshot of the ACE family in the annual retreat







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