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Understanding Africa Socio-Economic Emergencies in the Face of Rising Foreign Aid and the Structural Political Alternative

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Abstract: The continent of Africa is the most resourcefully blessed with both vast natural and human resources in abundance but the natural advantages have not equitably transformed into development as the continent has suffered socio-economic uncertainties. In the wake of alleviating from the depressing situation, Africa since 1985 has had billions of dollars in development aids and Africa pay over $20 billion dollars annually in servicing. Unfortunately, the billions in aids do not make its socio-economy better in comparison to what it experienced during the 1970s. With political and socio-economic emergencies rampaging in the continent, the potentials of another series of development related issue is looming ahead and Africa cannot afford to put itself in another debt pit when it is still struggling in another. This work attempts to present the socio-economic emergencies in Africa, making an account of the failure of foreign aid in Africa and proffer political structural alternatives.

Keywords: Foreign Aid, Africa, Debt, Economic Development, Socio-Economic Emergency.

Introduction

The continent of Africa is the second largest in the world both in terms of land mass and in terms of population, and ironically it ranks as the poorest continent. Africa currently is facing one of its toughest times in history as socio-economic and political crisis looms across the continent. This includes civil wars, insurgency and terrorism, climate change, economic misfortunes, migration crisis, internal displacements of persons among numerous others. The continent has however received massive assistance in development and humanitarian aid in restructuring its economy and managing disasters. The more controversial between these two aids is the former as debate has been on to justify its influx vis-à-vis its outputs and outcomes on the continent.

Foreign development aid has not convincingly proven solution to the series of problems engulfing the world's poorest continent and the 'next emerging market.' Rather it has methodically compounded its woes. African economies' performance since the 1980s has been poor despite the inflow of foreign aid in billions of dollars annually into the continent that in most cases, as proven in this work, served as means of self-enrichment and a formidable hindrance to development as it cripples the local markets and nourishes economic uncertainties.

Africa on the contrary is presented with the urgent needs of rebuilding the degrading economy and comprehensively addressing the rampaging emergencies, as foreign aid cannot sustain an ever-demanding Africa. Hence, the imperativeness of massive aid policy reviews on the side of the lenders and indigenous economic reforms on the side of the borrowers.

The Aggravating Socio-Economic Emergency in Africa

Africa is the world's wealthiest yet poorest continent. This is more than a literary paradox but an economic reality. The continent sits on an abundance of wealth enough to feed more than 55 economies but the channelling of resources into equitable development of its people has proven a tall order. It has prompted political economists to tag it a poor continent, an example of a famished famer. It is, however, worthy of a defence that the continent of Africa is prone to disasters and crisis, both natural and humanly inflicted, which includes humanitarian crisis and a wealthy history of civil wars and sectarian violence. To make a couple of cases, the Ugandan Civil War between 1980 and 2013 left about 127,529 people dead. Just Shortly after the inauguration of the Obote administration in 1981, a military top brass, Yoweri Museveni alongside his loyalists declared themselves the National Resistance Army (NRA), an action that saw great figures of casualties especially between 1981 and 1985 (Uppsala 2015). In 1973, the war between the Ethiopian government and the Ogadeni Rebels in struggle for the Ogaden region left around 23,265 lives lost; the region today is a shadow of its original. The Rwanda Civil War (Hutus against Tutsis), one of the darkest internal wars of all time, saw a reportedly 520,718 people dead with thousands of innocent children in casualties from 1990 to 1994 (Brunberg 2015).

In the millennium, numerous African countries have been in battle against insurgency and terrorism that have led to thousands of deaths and with great economic effects. Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon are in a multinational effort to rid their region of the deadly Boko Haram sect responsible for thousands of deaths and numbers of kidnappings in the region. Kenya and Somalia still struggles in the curtailment of the gruesome acts of the Al-Qaeda linked Al-Shabab, a group responsible for series of attacks in both countries. These are just a few of series of conflicts that have contributed vastly to the level of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Africa up till 2015 and leaving intended sustainable infrastructures both physical and administrative severely affected.

The effects of climate change caught Africa unguarded, with record drought levels in some parts of Senegal, Mali and Sudan, and with more regions severely affected, more than 4 million people and hundreds of thousands of farm animals are at risks of hunger and starvation. The effect of climate change is hitting Africa so hard despite the fact that the continent contributes the minimal to global warming, yet the consequences on Africa has been devastating. Harsh climatic conditions are escalating especially in the Sahara regions, most of the affected countries generates low annual revenue not enough to address their problems and would need billions of dollars to keep their populations under control through food provision, shelter and afforestation. To consider that a big percentage of their national revenue are spent on addressing these cases is actually one reason their socio-economy would struggle; logically, it does not go beyond simplicity to know that massive aid reliefs would be looming.

The lightning effects of globalisation through world educational system reforms, technological breakthroughs and demands on major aspects of life, and the global market dynamics leaves Africa with no option other than to move from its standing position into the global trend – a feat that has proven too big as more than half of its countries still find it hard to comply with the Millennium Development Program.

The state of heath care sectors across the continent is disheartening and the results far from encouraging. In Africa, more than one million people, mostly children under the age of five, die annually from malaria. The United Nations (UN) Millennium Project revealed that roughly 3,000 African children die every day from malaria, mathematically one in every 30 seconds despite the billions of dollars invested annually to eradicate the disease. The Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO), an agency of the UN estimated in 2010 that around 240 million people in the south of the Saharan region were hungry and around 40% of the total population of the continent was frequently unable to obtain sufficient food daily. In the same vein, the UN Millennium Project announced that 500 million Africans suffers from waterborne diseases, around 37% of the global figures, and more than 50% of its population is suffering from cholera like diseases.

Most of the world's poorest countries are in Africa. With 75% of the world's poor, Africa is the world's poorest continent. This list includes Congo-Kinshasa with $394.25 as annual GDP, Zimbabwe with $589.46 and Burundi with $648.58, as put by the IMF 2013 statistics. Apparently the figures are not expected to change positively between 2014 and 2015 as estimated by the IMF in 2014. This means the percentage of hunger cases is likely to remain relatively stagnant through this period.

In Africa, south of the Sahara, women are over 230 times likely to die during childbirth than in North America principally because of the poor medical facilities across the continent. The international charity organisation Aids Education and Research Trust (AVERT), revealed in 2011 that there were some 23.5 million people living with the Human Immune Virus (HIV) in the region compared to 22.5 million in 2009, with 2.3 million being children, and that around 70% of the world's HIV population are in Africa (AVERT, 2011). Angola has the highest figure on the continent with around 230,000 of its population living with the virus.

The figures of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) in Africa are staggering as it runs into millions. Somalia has over 1 million internally displaced persons due to civil war in the east African country, Sudan has around 6 million IDPs coming from decades of civil war especially between the north and south which saw the country eventually split up, and the case of the disheartening Darfur conflict. In Nigeria, there are close to a million IDPs owing to violence and terrorism in the northeast of the country and in the Central African Republic, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimates that close to 1 million are IDPs resulting from political crisis in the country (IDMC, 2014).

With Africa in the face of growing adversaries, to address the emergencies it is a certainty that its governments and institutions need a robust restructuring and development plan that would be an all-inclusive; one could speak of a Marshall Plan equivalent for the continent and relief funds for countries with economic incapacitation or those recovering from internal wars and disasters. The African Union and the World Bank has tried in this respect but none has effectively yielded intended results, including the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) initiatives; therefore, the need for governments to find safe haven from their adversities. World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have been a haven for Africa, neither safe nor dangerous but ready to offer aid to Africa in helping restructuring and repositioning their economies; the final results are however questionable. The manner of grant of these aids and their disbursement into the required sectors of the socio-economy craving for them stands a controversial point as analysts have continuously debated.

An Account of How Foreign Aid Has Retard Socio-Economic Development in Africa

The continent of Africa has lived under the care of foreign aid for decades, especially in 1990s; it is however not surprising to know that between 1999 and 2002 scores of African countries had around 70% of their annual budget tied to foreign aids. The case of Ethiopia was at a particular point with up to 90% of its annual budget being from foreign aids. Countries with most international debts are those that have struggled to manage internal humanitarian crisis because of either conflicts or natural disasters, and more than 50% of them are in Africa. Countries such as Rwanda, Ethiopia, Liberia and Congo Brazzaville experienced civil wars with billions of dollars in aid and relief packages needed to address the humanitarian crisis and rebuild its infrastructure. With a poor annual income in the face of high recurrent expenditure, it will be virtually impossible to generate such high amount internally, hence the reason for African countries turning to the West for assistance.

With the World Bank giving development aids to nearly every governments and regimes in Africa, the returning effects is that Africa collectively pays up to $20 billion annually in debts servicing. Repayments in millions of dollars for countries that generates less than enough revenue per annum is economically worrisome, and this has effectively disrupted national development flow in the affected countries. The IMF in its published report *Aid in Africa* in 2005 revealed that the influx of foreign aid into the Africa economy has not been met with tangible development, which is quite true, and that the billions of dollars in aids has not transformed into improvements in the receiving countries with a 5.5% average growth. With Africa facing so much to resolve with little incentives at hand, the foreign aids are likely to become bigger than ever. Africa between 1980 and 2002 borrowed up to $50 billion annually, some countries acquired double of the figures and this made the level of total reserves to total external debt at 44.09% as measured by the World Bank in 2013, with its international borrowing projected to rise by about 50% in 2015 (Udeme 2015, 19).

Africa is in an economic emergency, so to speak. The continent urgently has to find alternatives for debt settlement because it will not be able to address key developmental problems such as insecurity, mass illiteracy, poor health care system, unemployment and poor infrastructure and others in the face of the situation it has induced itself and it is despairing because aid would not stop coming to Africa.

Over the past 65 years, Africa received more than $1.2 trillion of development related aids while the level of per capita income relatively remains stagnant. A very high proportion of these aids are not of long term benefits as they are either aids mostly in forms of food materials, military arms and medical supplies, which only lasts for a short period rather than long term aids in nature of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), or more comprehensive and all involving development packages.

In response to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur and Sudan, the United Nations and the United States of America had reportedly supplied for years processed foods and materials mostly from American manufacturers in worth of billions of dollars in the form of aid reliefs. Instead of this, a more creative scheme inclusive of investment and diversion of funds into boosting production capacity of the recipient countries principally in agriculture and mining would yield good results on the long run, as it will see the local industries strengthened. This will not only increase the productivity level of these economies but also lay foundations for self-sustainability on the government side with improved focus on local markets. These might be considered as effects on states within the same geographical dispensation with 90% economic integration struggling to balance their economies yet borrowing en masse:

Long-term effects of debts on Africa:

- More inflation prone,
- More debt loaded,
- More susceptible to vagaries of currency market,

- Higher tendency to corruption and funds mismanagement, and
- Weakening of the capacity of local market industries.

These are too great economic consequences African has to pay for the economic mistakes of their governments and myopic nature of their leaders. It is important to note that the aids are not free in whatever cases, especially the bilateral aids; they are often to be settled with exploitative interests or make the recipient countries subjected to some politically and economically driven demands, most especially anti-African culture demands such as legalisation of same-sex marriage and worrisome investment policies to favour the lending countries. This has systematically made African states backbenchers and receivers of policies determined by lenders in the international market making its economy highly foreign driven and suffer from the price dynamics in the international market. Such was the case when the Nigerian economy was massively hindered by falling oil prices in 2015, also the case during the 2011 global financial meltdown when Africa lost billions of dollars and most countries on the continent had to restructure their economic programs to maintain a balance during the downturn.

In the global market, Africa is virtually handicapped – the local economies depend on the dimensions in the West to make economic decisions, solely because their economic mainframes are highly entangled in the Western mothership in nature of loans, bailouts, bonds and investments. Political economists have argued that Africa needs foreign aid more than ever in consideration of the inability of some countries to keep up with the demands of the Millennium Development Agenda.

However, socio-economic outcome disparities exists between the nature and contents of bilateral and multilateral aids; most of the aid influx to Africa comes from the Bretton Woods institutions and some extensions of the UN in the form of developmental aids, especially coming from the Structural Adjustment Programmes era. With the drastic increase in figures of IDPs, ravaging drought cases and hunger problems hampering human development, humanitarian aids if well structured would be more than justified as developmental aids on the contrary has successfully put Africa in the midst of oceanic corruption and rampaging poverty.

Bilateral transactions between most African countries and the West have seen over hundreds of billions of dollars go to the borrowers in the last decade in the form of development aids. It is insulting to know that the standard of living in Africa is still poor as around 414 million in the Africa south of the Sahara lives in extreme poverty. The inescapable questions are where are the intended developments? Why are foreign aids non-reflective on the streets and in African markets? The responses obviously are not any way near farfetched. The World Bank and some African regimes have reportedly participated in corruption of roughly $100 billion of loans proposed for development in the continent (Moyo 2009). Aids have gone to nearly every government in Africa since the 1980s and the standard of living in Africa in 2015 is below what Africa experienced during the 1970s when emphasis was more on grassroots development and foreign trade rather than foreign aid.

In response to the meagre level of development on the continent, the African Union revealed in one of its reports in 2002 that corruption costs the continent over $150 billion annually (Moyo & Ferguson 2009, 1-35), a figure many analysts consider a mere shield in the face of heavily looted treasuries within the period as many African leaders and ministers stood trial for corrupt charges both in their countries and abroad. Conversely, a bold step for the international lenders to assist Africa in all fairness and reality would be for them to check aid intentions and their disbursement strategies in Africa.

In the same vein, the World Bank in 2012 opined to the amazement of African leaders that long-term domestic and international debt in Africa would rise by about 50% in 2014 (cited in Merotto, Stucka & Thomas 2012, 37). Mark Thomas an economist with the World Bank noted that African countries with the highest level of borrowings since the 2005 Debt Relief including the Republic of Benin, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, São Tome and Principe, Senegal and Uganda "could well within a decade be back to pre-debt relief debt stock levels" (Thomas 2012). This is not playing out an economic prophecy but also a reality. Another economist with the Africa Research Institute Paul

Adams, on the same issue observed the "rising debt-to-GDP ratios have mitigated by upward revision of GDP in Ghana, Kenya and Uganda but the cost of external financing looks set to increase just as economic growth slows." Ethiopia's debt levels as forecast are likely to exceed 50% in 2015 and its foreign exchange reserves looking to decline despite being among the 10 fastest growing economies in the world (Adams 2015).

One thing the international lenders refuse to note or deliberately ignore is the daunting reality that most of the borrowers in Africa are struggling to have a stabilised and sustainable financial administrative system in comparison with recent borrowers in Europe and Asia. Whatever the intentions of these aids, when the systems are corruptly annihilated they just would not work.

An average African country could have up to three regimes in the space of five years and government economic agendas becomes unstable and hard to give records and accounts of financial aids issued to the country as corruption and mismanagement remains a bane. The CATO Institute in one of its reports on the failure of aid in Africa noted that the more aid poured into Africa the lower its standard of living and that between 1975 and 2000 the per capita GDP of Africans living in the south of the Sahara dropped at an average annual rate of 0.59% (Ayodele et al. 2005). Within this timeframe, per capita GDP adjusted for purchasing power partly declined from $1,770 in 1995 to $1479 (Thomas 2012), the present Africa is no way different from this state. It is almost assertive that the World Bank with the United States as its power player loans billions in aid to Africa without bothering of the long term consequences on the economy if the outcomes are anything to go by.

Africa since the 1980s has received around four times an equivalent of the Marshall Plan and has yet to come of benefit. A prominent evidence to show that the IMF and World Bank were careless on aid policies in African was the case of Zaire, the modern day Democratic Republic of Congo. In 1978, a former IMF appointee in Zaire, Mr. Irion Blumenthal raised an alarm to the IMF that the Zairian financial system was consumed in corruption such that the possibilities of the country paying off its debts were nearly unrealistic. The IMF was insolent and instead proceeded to give Zaire the largest loan an African country had ever had at that time. A former president of the country Mobutu Sese Seko was reported to have embezzled up to $5 billion from the country between 1965 and 1997, a large junk of loan intended for development; currently the country's GDP is $32.9 billion to its 69.3 million populations (World Bank 2014).

In Tanzania the socialist initiated, Ujaama, acclaimed huge financial support from the economic powers especially in the socialist East accounting to around $10 billion into the Tanzanian coffers over a 20-year period (Moyo & Ferguson 2009). In the Tanzania case, the effect of the $10 billion aid was non-repetitive as the Tanzanian economy constructed at an average of 0.5% annually between 1973 and 1988 with an average personal consumption determination of 43% within this period. Its last revealed GDP in 2014 was $36.620 billion averaging $16.16 billion from 1988 to 2014.

The likes of Liberia, Congo-Kinshasa and Somalia enjoyed similar luxury between 1960 and 1995 and presently none have a stable economic and social-political system. Liberia suffered from civil wars and genocide, especially during the reign of Charles Taylor; Congo-Kinshasa has one of the highest poverty rates; and Somalia has the worse experience in both economic and socio-political.

In 2009, former Malawian president Bakili Muluzi was charged with mismanagement of aid funds of around $11 million. He was charged on 80 counts of allegedly siphoning aid cash into his private account. Muluzi, who ruled the poor southern African nation from 1994-2004, was first arrested over the allegations in 2006. In 2009, he was charged with another corruption scandal for embezzling $800,000 during his presidency but continuously cleared of the charged (Mike 2015). Before his death in 2011, he was ordered to repay around $58 million in embezzled fund of aid funds from key sections such as education, infrastructure and health. Frederick Chiluba, a former president of Zambia also reportedly stole around $50 million from state coffers to help fund extravagant spending on designer clothes, wristwatches and shoes. Many African leaders have followed suit as it has been a media reporting point.

In appreciation for the ineffective aid policies in Africa, political economist have affirmed that the West systematically plan to make Africa indebted to the region's financial organisations so it could check the possibility of another economic bane like Japan and China rising from the continent as it politically did against Biafra. Consider these three archives on aids in Africa:

- In 1985, the UN held a Special Session on Africa to engineer methods of boosting aids to Africa. Consequently, the organisation in March 1996 launched a $25 billion Special Initiative for Africa; the application of the initiative was not however realised as leaders of the benefiting countries embezzled a whooping percentage of the aid.
- In 2005, the multilateral debt relief initiative cancelled about $100 billion of debt in 30 African countries including the IMF, the World Bank and the Africa Development Fund, in exchange for more robust economic reforms, which include eradicating corruption. In 2014, Africa's foreign debt is nearly what it was in 2005 (Adams, 2015).
- The World Bank in 2013 introduced to Africa the Debt Management Performance Assessment Tool (DeMPA) because of the increasing level of the continents debt profile. A strategy aimed at giving governments economic balancing through the diversification of the economy and maintaining a level between debt servicing, public borrowings and government spending. The plan covers main areas of public debt management including:

I. Borrowing and related financial activities,
II. Governance and development of strategy,
III. Coordination with macro-economic policies,
IV. Cash balance management and cash flow forecasting, and
V. Operational risk management and debt records.

In respect to this, significant steps are yet to be taken by states on the continent as many governments are counting the possible cost to their pockets at the detriment of national development.

The submission would be as good as the reality of things playing out in the streets and markets in Africa. Nonetheless, not all hope is lost in the quest of elevating Africa from her imported misery. Political economists can propose beautiful plans for African development just like Moyo did with her *Dead Aid* in 2009; but the most pivotal and foundational plans to alternatives are definitely political structural. A good reason why the series of the "theoretically great plans" from both the Bretton Woods and the African financial institutions have failed to revamp the decaying African economy could be traced to:

- The failure of democracy and administrative transition,
- Politically weak positioned financial institutions,
- Internationally weak and non-competitive political administrations,
- Vague socio-economic policies designed by politically driven socio-economists,
- Corrupt political leadership, and
- Subjugating international treaties and charters in membership role and structures.

These are just to attest to the fact that politics is part of the problems for Africa's dependence on aid and in fact the most primary. In whatever manner African governments might choose to neutralise the aid venom on the continent, great cognisance should be on the political structuring of the countries.

Mapping Alternative to Aids for Africa Development

It is glaring that Africa is in a massive socio-economic mess; and considering the whooping figures in debt servicing Africa has to meet be to free from its debt, more than economic strategies would be required. The political landscaping in Africa in itself is not designed to favour its economic progression as neo-colonialism and imperialism has defined its structuring through economic and political relations in ensuring the West always protect its interest in Africa. Many African leaders in their nerve-racking agreements with countries from the core have for successfully for decades nailed Africa's political and economic powers to the wall, whereas only a massive restructuring of its democracies and strengthening of political institutions is its only choice. If only Africa's political stance are strong enough to compete with the super players in the committee of states it will definitely make Africa have the wherewithal to negotiate fair on international agreements and relations.

Almost in the same vein, the weak position of Africa in global politics, especially in a couple of conventions and treaties, negatively affects its economic chances in the same negotiating table. One pain in the neck for Africa is its position in the World Bank and the UN. A critical assessment of the subjugation of African states in these treaties and charters has revealed that Africa in reality only number-up the membership in these organisations: they are nothing but mere financial investments for the West, and a collection of pawns to serve and protect the kings and queens even at the risk of their own survival. In the light of this, Africa has only been able to amass less powers and entitlements. This detrimental positioning in the global political circle should be restructured through the involvements of the African Union and the regional organisations in a robust political rehabilitation plan to help African countries attain development.

Outside the vagaries of abruptly fostering corruption on the content of Africa, aid has also made governments less innovative in managing the economy with about 70% of the public purse coming from foreign aid. This has given the governments less burden on grassroots economic initiatives towards building a competitive market. African leaders should however invest in the local entrepreneurs and promote indigenous industries, as the growth in the level of internally generated revenues will see the level of Africa borrowings dwindle.

The UN and its agencies have donated tons of relief materials accruing over 200 billion dollars as humanitarian assistance to Africa without result-evidence intentions of empowering the manufacturing industries on the continent. Suppose the reverse is the case it would see the budget on humanitarian aid materials slashed by up to 40% in the space of 10 years.

Overall, the aid policies demand revisiting as according to records giving Africa loans in billions of dollars for development has been aggregately ineffective. Its alternative should rather be on promoting massive investments into the untapped economic potentials of Africa probably through FDI as China has done in setting the pace through massive investments in constructions and agriculture.

African leaders' dependence vastly on foreign aid either in debt relief packages or in military hardware would not move the continent forward as proven above. Investing heavily in capacity building across the continent would be a viable alternative. The continent boasts of a huge youth population and with the level of academically trained personnel on a rise, individual governments should seize the need for economic structuring as an avenue of employment creations. The governments should also provide an environment conducive to attract prospective investors through the reformation of its policies on investments and mining, security strengthening and a fair taxation system.

Another alternative for Africa is the improvement of the tax systems. There are hundreds of industries all over Africa and, as reports suggests, a worrisome number of them have successively evaded tax. This cuts across small business and the individual. On the other hand, most of the aids coming to Africa are accrued from the taxpayers in the lending countries because of good taxation systems. These moneys are loaned to Africa only for them to be grossly embezzled by corrupt leaders. Dambisa Moyo, an acclaimed author on the discourse and a former employee with Goldman Sachs, in line with the above hypothesised a good alternative for African governments in adopting more innovative measures of improving their internally generated revenue through focus on local industries and improvement of their exchanging capacity (Moyo & Ferguson 2009).

In addition, since African governments have proven non-trustworthy custodians of the aid packages, a viable alternative could be the involvement of the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). This, if politically well managed, could prove a good alternative as the NGOs have proven to be not only transparent but organisations that have had more direct interactions with people at the grassroots and have also recorded remarkable successes in most cases of crisis management as history can attest.

Africa cannot resolve all its challenges in a day and definitely foreign aid would not stop coming overnight. The reality however is that Africa has more than enough to do in ensuring the almost two trillion dollars in aids are justified by the aggregate state of its socio-economy and polity.

As data has proven, foreign aid will not see Africa attain the level of the development of its lenders as they (the West), during their quests to development, focused more on internal means to development with huge investments in the agriculture, mining, health and education sectors. Africa's financial power will be continuously weakened if the debt servicing does not stop.

With a vast human and natural resources in endowments, the future of Africa could still be secured only if both the lenders and borrowers look beyond the immediate emergencies and considers the future consequences of their actions and inactions.

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