

Civil Society Participation in the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative

A survey of six countries



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Meaningful participation of civil society is key to the success of the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative. Civil society organizations can act as trusted intermediaries between government, the private sector, and energy users on the ground, as well as having expertise in designing and delivering energy services, particularly for poor and vulnerable groups. The aim of this paper is to provide a ‘snapshot’ of the civil society experience of SE4ALL to date in order to understand the entry points for – and some of the challenges – of participation.



Executive summary

The United Nations Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative has set ambitious goals of, by 2030: achieving universal energy access; doubling the annual rate of energy efficiency; and doubling the share of renewables in the global energy mix. With 1.2 billion people still living without access to modern energy services and 2.8 billion without access to clean cooking methods, action to support these goals is needed urgently. From its inception in 2012, the SE4ALL initiative envisioned a multi-stakeholder approach as being critical to its success, with government, the private sector, and civil society as its three 'pillars'.

Meaningful participation by civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) in SE4ALL is widely recognized as being essential to the process; they can act as trusted intermediaries between government, the private sector, and energy users on the ground, as well as having expertise in designing and delivering energy services, particularly for poor and vulnerable groups.

However, SE4ALL has been criticized for offering little systematic institutional support for an inclusive multi-stakeholder process through its implementing agencies – such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the multilateral development banks (MDBs), and national development agencies.

In July 2014, SE4ALL celebrated its first global forum in New York and launched the 'Decade of SE4ALL', to run from 2014 to 2024. At this important moment in the evolution of SE4ALL, CAFOD, Hivos, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), and Practical Action decided to survey our civil society partners in six countries in different regions (Africa, Asia, and Central America) at different stages of national implementation. The aim was to provide a 'snapshot' of the civil society experience of SE4ALL to date, using a set of indicators for meaningful participation in multi-stakeholder processes developed from our own research.

Although the results were varied, the clear general trend was that the majority of respondents felt that they had not been adequately included, or were unable to engage meaningfully, in the SE4ALL initiative. Some areas of questioning resulted in particularly low scores – for example, responses to indicators relating to 'gender awareness and proactive outreach to vulnerable and excluded groups' as well as 'participation in implementation and monitoring'.

Overall, the survey findings show that without increased and ongoing support for meaningful civil society participation in SE4ALL, the initiative will have limited impact – particularly in terms of reaching the goal of universal energy access.

Summary of recommendations

Three overriding recommendations emerge from the survey responses. In summary, meaningful CSO participation in the SE4ALL initiative will require:

1. public commitment by the government to an inclusive multi-stakeholder process and appointment of a lead focal point;
2. clear guidelines for the design and delivery of the SE4ALL process, agreed among the stakeholders;
3. timely access to information on the process and adequate resourcing of civil society for informed and inclusive participation.

Without increased support for meaningful civil society participation in SE4ALL, the initiative will have limited impact

Introduction

The Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative has three primary goals of, by 2030: to ensure universal access to modern energy services; to double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency; and to double the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix. While the initiative has global aims, at its core is an explicit recognition that these goals will be achieved only through robust national-level, multi-stakeholder action. From the beginning, the three ‘pillars’ of government, the private sector, and civil society were identified as being essential to the success of the initiative (SE4ALL, 2011).

By June 2014, 83 countries had ‘opted in’ to the initiative and most had begun to implement it. Currently, implementation involves, firstly, carrying out a gaps analysis (GA)ⁱ to map the current status of the energy sector in a given country in relation to the SE4ALL goals (this has been completed by 43 countries so far). This should then be followed by the drafting of a national implementation plan (NIP).ⁱⁱ At the time of writing, 30 countries were developing NIPs (SE4ALL, 2014a).

In July 2014, SE4ALL celebrated its first global forum in New York and launched the ‘Decade of SE4ALL’ – to run from 2014 to 2024. CAFOD, Hivos, IIED, and Practical Action felt that this milestone was an opportune moment to consider the state of play regarding civil society participation in SE4ALL national processes, in order to understand the entry points for – and some of the challenges of – CSO participation.

This briefing paper presents the results of this analysis. It first identifies what the key elements of a good multi-stakeholder process are, based on archival research, and develops a series of indicators to capture these. It then presents an analysis of the responses of CSOs themselves to questions on the indicators, from a survey conducted in Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe.

The six survey countries were selected primarily because the author organizations (CAFOD, Hivos, IIED, and Practical Action) had trusted civil society partners locally who were involved in national SE4ALL processes (to varying degrees). In addition, the authors wanted to consider a varied geographical range of countries (from Asia, Central America, and Africa).

However, the purpose of the report is not to present a comprehensive picture – its limited scope precludes this – but rather to offer a ‘snapshot’ of civil society experience of SE4ALL to date. The aim is to provide some pointers as to how civil society engagement with the initiative can be enhanced, so that the expertise and support of CSOs can effectively be mobilized to achieve SE4ALL’s objectives.

The overall finding of the survey is that there is little evidence that civil society in the six countries has been able to contribute meaningfully and consistently to either the GA or the NIPs – although the picture varies from country to country.

This apparent lack of CSO participation is concerning, given the vital contribution that CSOs and CBOs can make to achieving the SE4ALL objectives. It could also suggest a lack of understanding of the crucial role played by civil society and community inclusion in the development and implementation of successful national energy planning.

Civil society has experience in the participatory design and delivery of energy services by and for the poorest groups

It is widely accepted that energy interventions will have a positive development impact only if questions of equality of access, and the benefits and costs of energy investments for poor and vulnerable groups, are addressed and accounted for in the design and delivery of services. Civil society can provide crucial support in this regard as it has experience in the participatory design and delivery of energy services by and for the poorest groups. In particular, it can build the capacities of end users and other actors in the value chain, and can act as a trusted intermediary between communities, government agencies, and the private sector.

Understanding good practice in multi-stakeholder engagement

The research began by identifying what ‘good practice’ in multi-stakeholder (government, private sector, and civil society) engagement looks like. This involved analysing consultation processes in a range of different successful multi-stakeholder initiatives, from the World Commission on Dams to the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Although the means of engagement varied in these initiatives (in part depending on the goals of a given process and its connected institutional structures), several factors were identified as being essential to good practice. To summarize, these factors included:

- commitment by all actors to multi-stakeholder engagement and a clear lead or focal point for the process;
- participatory and inclusive design of the consultation process;
- timely engagement with stakeholders;
- access to meaningful information by the stakeholders;
- gender awareness and proactive outreach to vulnerable and excluded groups;
- capacity building of stakeholders so that they can provide informed input;
- clear action plans and clear division of roles and responsibilities;
- participation of stakeholders in decision-making;
- participation in implementation and monitoring.

Applying these principles to the SE4ALL process

In the light of these key components of good practice, the SE4ALL initiative has some evident weaknesses: for example, there are few SE4ALL guidance documents that would help facilitate the ‘capacity building of stakeholders so that they can provide informed input’ or ensure that there are ‘clear action plans and clear division of roles and responsibilities’.

Where they do exist, the guidelines are often silent on the benefits, purpose, and modalities of civil society participation. The Country Action Reference Document (CARD), for example, does not contain any methodological guidance – or even mention CSOs – and the action agenda template, although containing some basic methodological guidance, does not contain adequate information on inclusion, nor is it a binding component of national-level implementation.

Similarly, there is a lack of transparent resourcing associated with the initiative, which has an impact on a number of the key components of good practice. CSOs normally operate on very specific mission- and/or project-driven budgets. Participating

meaningfully in a new, broad-based initiative such as SE4ALL requires significant staff time and resources that cannot easily be found within existing budgets by most organizations. This means that it is more difficult for the initiative to engage in 'proactive outreach to vulnerable and excluded groups' or participate in 'implementation and monitoring'.

Traffic light indicators

In order to gain a clearer understanding of exactly how inclusive the SE4ALL initiative has been in practice, the nine principles outlined above were translated into indicators. Thirty-three indicators were then formulated into survey questions that could be used at a national level, with a 'traffic light' system of answers to reveal how well countries were doing (with red denoting weak engagement and green signalling a more inclusive process – for an example of this, see Table 1).

In addition to the 'traffic lights', the survey included further questions designed to elicit more descriptive answers from the participants. A total of 50 CSOs and CBOs in Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe participated in the survey, which was carried out in April and May 2014.

Table 1 Access to meaningful information by the stakeholders

| | Traffic light indicators | Guiding questions |
|---|---|--|
| <i>Documents that explain the goals of the national SE4ALL process, timeline, and key decision-making moments made widely available</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No documents available • Limited documents and explanation available • Full documentation available | <i>What types of information were shared?</i> |
| <i>Important information was disseminated as early as possible</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not sent out, or not early enough to be useful for participants • Information sent out with some time to read it • Information was generally distributed well in advance, allowing for time to analyse, plan, and prepare for meetings | <i>Was information generally distributed with enough time to make use of it? Were you able to understand fully the documentation received? Were you clear about where to go for further information?</i> |
| <i>Key documents resulting from the SE4ALL process, such as the GA or action agendas (where they have been completed) are shared widely</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No documents available • Documents made available to those who ask for them • Documentation is communicated broadly and made available on official websites and in other media | <i>Was there adequate translation of key documents? Was there translation available during consultation meetings (if relevant)? If no translation has occurred, do you know why?</i> |
| <i>Translation of consultation and programme materials into the main local languages (if relevant)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No translation • Limited translation undertaken • Translation into most major languages | <i>How has SE4ALL information been distributed more generally? Has there been media outreach on the process? Has there been public discussion about SE4ALL?</i> |

Participating meaningfully in a new, broad-based initiative such as SE4ALL requires significant staff time and resources

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Dissemination of information to the wider public</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No dissemination efforts • Electronic dissemination only (e.g. on websites) • Printed, radio, or television media used in addition to electronic communication | <i>How has SE4ALL information been distributed more generally? Has there been media outreach on the process? Has there been public discussion about SE4ALL?</i> |
| The communication of processes and results is key to the success of SE4ALL. What is your impression of national efforts to do this? Please explain: | | |

Table 2 National traffic light scores across the nine key principles of multi-stakeholder engagement

| | Indonesia | Kenya | Nepal | Nicaragua | Nigeria | Zimbabwe |
|--|-----------|--------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|
| Commitment by all actors to multi-stakeholder engagement and clear lead or focal point for the process | Red | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Green |
| Participatory and inclusive design of the consultation process | Red | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Yellow | Yellow |
| Timely engagement with stakeholders | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Yellow |
| Access to meaningful information by the stakeholders | Red | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Red | Yellow |
| Gender awareness and proactive outreach to vulnerable and excluded groups | Yellow | Red | Red | Red | Red | Red |
| Capacity building of stakeholders so that they can provide informed input | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Red | Yellow |
| Clear action plans and clear division of roles and responsibilities | Red | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Red | Yellow |
| Participation of stakeholders in decision-making | Yellow | Green | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Yellow |
| Participation in implementation and monitoring | Red | Yellow | Red | Red | Red | Yellow |

Analysis of findings

Table 2 aggregates the responses from each country surveyed into an overall score for the nine key elements of an inclusive multi-stakeholder process (Table 3 gives more detail on how countries scored on each of the 33 indicators). The scores are based on the frequency of ratings for indicators in each section and the further descriptive analysis provided by survey participants.

Survey trends

Although the results were varied, the overwhelming trend is that the majority of respondents felt that they had not been included adequately, or they were unable to engage meaningfully, in the SE4ALL initiative.

It is worth noting that this is despite the fact that the respondents included CSOs who are actively working on SE4ALL goals (although not all are). In addition, CAFOD, Hivos, IIED, and Practical Action or their partners have all supported and/or funded CSO activities relating to SE4ALL processes in these countries. This suggests that the results could be different – and even worse – in countries not surveyed. Further research would be needed to determine this.

What follows is an overview of general survey trends by section.

1. Commitment by all actors to multi-stakeholder engagement and a clear lead or focal point for the process

Respondents were asked to consider whether there was evidence of initial outreach and statements of commitment (particularly from government) to a multi-stakeholder process. There were some organizations that recognized government bodies who were open to CSOs. For instance, in Zimbabwe one respondent stated: ‘The government is keen on the process and on various occasions has invited the civil society organizations for consultations and feedback on the progress.’ However, most respondents were unhappy with the level of commitment and felt that public statements were not supported by action.

Instead, the majority of organizations pointed to CSO leaders who they claimed were more active in sharing scarce information than were government bodies, and were described as being explicitly committed to securing a multi-stakeholder process. For example, in Indonesia it was claimed that ‘no outreach was done by UNDP, nor the government; however, specifically to CSOs, outreach has been done by IESR [Institute for Essential Services Reform] and Hivos’. (In this case, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and UNDP had hosted one facilitation meeting in August 2013 but it was not widely known about).

Overall, however, answers from this section overwhelmingly pointed to a lack of clear actionable commitment and outreach.

2. Participatory and inclusive design of the consultation process

This section received a large number of amber scores, with respondents describing some evidence of limited consultation in the design of the process. However, the more descriptive answers revealed that, as in the first area of best practice, the inclusion of CSOs in any process was normally a result of CSOs organizing themselves.

Furthermore, even when CSOs were involved at this early stage in the initiative, it was unclear how meaningful their participation had been in terms of influencing the broader design moving forward. Many respondents felt that this was due to the fact that their invitation to participate was ad hoc and often tokenistic, with little recognition of the value CSOs could bring to the process. One response from Kenya summarized this thus: ‘[We were] invited to consult as an afterthought.’ In Nepal, one respondent described how: ‘We were there in a team meeting which involved government and other CSOs – we clearly said that we wanted to be involved. We are ready to establish and coordinate ... this civil society part. Nobody followed up [or has] taken the initiative to encourage us.’

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The inclusion of CSOs in any process was normally a result of CSOs organizing themselves

Despite these frustrations, many organizations used the survey as an opportunity to reiterate the important role that CSOs can play in the process and their enthusiasm. In Nigeria, one respondent stated: ‘Civil societies have over the years been able to demonstrate the ability to work with communities and provide feedback to all.’

3. Timely engagement with stakeholders

One overall trend that emerged from the survey was the heavy, if informal, dependence on CSOs to self-organize in order to have an input into the process. From this perspective, it becomes even more important that CSOs are given adequate time to prepare for meetings so that they can engage in SE4ALL processes in a meaningful way. However, for those who were invited to have an input, it was generally felt that there was not adequate time to prepare for their (limited) participation. As one respondent in Nigeria describes it, ‘country inputs were rushed for submission without due recourse to input solicitation’.

Expectations varied around precisely how many days’ notice constitutes ‘timely engagement’ for specific meetings, but a number of organizations alluded to the fact that the timing of invitations was less important than clarity around their roles and how their inputs to the process would actually be used. For example, in Kenya it was felt that: ‘Time is adequate but ... [it] is still unclear to many CSOs about their roles and responsibilities.’

4. Access to meaningful information by the stakeholders

Most organizations were unhappy with the extent to which meaningful information was readily and widely available. One respondent in Nigeria summarized this as follows:

The primary challenge in the success of this lofty ideal is the paucity of information available to the majority of the citizens. The impression that the average man has of renewable energy [is] either that it is too expensive to afford, or that there is no need for technology to harness renewable sources of energy.

However, there are also important lessons to be learned about the unequal distribution of what little information was made available. Positive responses to questions around access to information tended to come from organizations that were larger in size, already had strong connections with government, and had their own resources available to engage with government and UN agencies. For example, in Zimbabwe (which gave the highest scores for this section), there are a small number of CSOs that are heavily engaged in the process and are able to fund their own engagement (although funding remains very limited).

Smaller CSOs and CBOs expressed frustration with an ongoing lack of access to meaningful information. One CSO in Nigeria described the following situation: ‘CSOs have to force their way into the process as the government is not interested in the inclusion of CSOs ... government works with few CSOs who may not be the ones that are active or very knowledgeable on the matter.’

This selective inclusion – or lack of transparency around which civil society groups are being included and why – works against the participation of local small-scale CSOs and CBOs. It also risks reducing local-level buy-in by wider civil society and the public because there is little knowledge about the initiative. This could lead to a situation

where end users' needs and wants may not be included in the design and delivery of projects, which would undermine the success of future SE4ALL implementation.

In Nigeria, respondents also stated that little was done to ensure that information was shared in a way that reflected the geographical spread of CSOs working on energy, with Abuja treated as the central hub for discussions and networking. According to an organization working in the Niger Delta: 'It would be helpful if outreach is conducted to organizations that are more active in the regions – particularly the south, which can sometimes be misunderstood as less suitable for renewable energy particularly.'

More worryingly, a number of organizations felt that certain civil society actors were being intentionally excluded from the SE4ALL process and from access to information. In Nigeria, one respondent claimed that the 'deliberate lack of information and engagement favours the few that are made aware, to the detriment of the majority who can contribute to the achievement of the SE4ALL objectives'.

Another indicator used to identify meaningful access to information was whether SE4ALL documents were available in local languages (where relevant). In Kenya, the lack of translation of SE4ALL documents into Swahili was heavily criticized. One Kenyan respondent described the issue thus: 'The fact that it is all in English shows who is driving [the] process and who they think the audience is – SE4ALL is driven from the outside and the messages are up there. English of this level is not trickled down to ordinary people.'

5. Gender awareness and proactive outreach to vulnerable and excluded groups

In every country, it is notable that the majority of CSOs surveyed were unsure about whether or not gender issues had been considered at all (both in terms of designing the SE4ALL process and in substantive discussions). This is regardless of the particular stage of the initiative in a given country. Every country scored red on the two indicators intended to assess this area ('Consultations designed to allow women to participate' and 'Gender dimensions of energy needs are written into the consultation as an agenda item, inform the choice of discussion topics, and are mainstreamed across reports and plans'; see Table 3).

While there are some examples of gender analysis taking place in practice (for example, in the Kenya GA), the fact that almost all the CSOs surveyed were unaware of any gender-related outreach suggests either that: 1) it is not occurring; or 2) there is a serious failure of communication with stakeholders around action in this area. Either or both conclusions are worrying, especially given the gendered nature of energy poverty and the importance of energy access for women's and girls' empowerment.

In the area of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, CSOs and CBOs have a vital role to play. CSOs often operate in areas that are hard to reach through formal institutions (such as government bodies) or private sector services (such as banking), and thus can promote the inclusion of vulnerable or excluded groups, which can include women and girls. For CSOs that work with the poorest communities, a key element of their organizational model is the empowerment of such groups. This means that they can offer credible and authoritative information

on the energy needs of such groups – including for health – along with supporting inclusive participatory approaches to designing and delivering energy services.

The gaps identified in this area are of particular concern given that the ‘Decade of SE4ALL’ has launched with a two-year campaign aimed at improving women’s and children’s health through the provision of modern energy. The CSOs surveyed had no knowledge of this campaign or of any dedicated capacity building, finance, or even analysis included in national-level SE4ALL plans to address the links between energy access and women’s and children’s health. This suggests a serious disconnect between the global-level action of SE4ALL and national-level processes.

The disregard for other vulnerable groups, such as those with physical disabilities, was seen as highly problematic. In Nicaragua, one respondent described the situation as follows:

This [exclusion] is an error and contradicts the idea that access to and use of sustainable energy is an issue that concerns ‘every man and woman’. The development of SE4ALL to date is exclusively focused on technical and economic considerations. This means that there is a tendency to design plans, programmes and projects at the national and local level that do not speak to the social aspects of development included in this kind of initiative.

6. Capacity building of stakeholders so that they can provide informed input

There was a universally strong demand for increased capacity building in all of the countries surveyed, with a lack of capacity around energy issues being seen as a major barrier to progress. For instance, one respondent in Nigeria stated that ‘capacity building remains a large void in promoting SE4ALL and adoption of clean/renewable technologies’.

The questions in this section evoked similar responses to those in area 4 (‘Access to meaningful information’) in terms of a general frustration at the lack of broad-based outreach to diverse CSOs and CBOs. This lack of capacity building means that the translation of the SE4ALL initiative into the national policy context is unlikely to happen. One respondent in Kenya described his frustration with the process because the ‘UN and World Bank don’t own those [energy] goals’.

It had been hoped that: ‘SE4ALL would form an umbrella and we’d have a synchronized approach, in which we could leverage influence and funding.’ One Nepalese respondent stated: ‘I talk to parliament and local governments in the districts and nobody can even pronounce the initiatives. It’s not a place for local participation – INGOs [international non-governmental organizations] have some buy-in but only because of size and status.’

A number of organizations pointed to an expectation that broad-based capacity building should be an explicit role of the UNDP and international agencies. In Indonesia, one organization replied that, so far, there was ‘no support from international donor agencies’ and highlighted the need for ‘more help for civil society to develop [an] enabling environment for implementation of SE4ALL, and aligning it with national and local development priorities’.

The government’s official statements have focused on the voluntary nature of the initiative and that it will follow its ‘own rhythm’

CSOs described a process where a consultant was ‘parachuted in’ to carry out the gaps analysis

7. Clear action plans and clear division of roles and responsibilities

A common theme running through all of the survey sections and across geographical regions was the lack of clear guidelines or clear roles and responsibilities for leading the SE4ALL initiative. The Nicaraguan experience is typical: ‘There has been no collective development of action points nor has the government presented the road map for developing the action plan or monitoring process. Nor has it been stated which actors will be involved and their responsibilities.’

In terms of the precise roles of other actors, it was evident that a number of respondents were unsure about whether or not there was even an individual or department within government responsible for SE4ALL-related activities. In countries such as Nicaragua, where a ministry was identified, its role was unclear: ‘In theory, and as far as we know, the focal point is in the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM), but we do not know them well as they do not respond to letters or calls.’ Furthermore, there appeared to be little promise of future clarification. According to the respondent: ‘The government’s official statements have focused on the voluntary nature of the initiative and that it will follow its “own rhythm” for meeting the 2030 [SE4ALL] objectives.’

8. Participation of stakeholders in decision-making

There has been minimal civil society participation in the preparation of the GAs in most countries. The lack of CSO involvement in this first stage of SE4ALL implementation has set a bad precedent for the inclusiveness of the process going forward and has resulted in a negative perception amongst CSOs of the intentions of governments and UNDP. In several countries, including the relatively high-scoring Zimbabwe, CSOs described a process where a consultant was ‘parachuted in’ to carry out the GA; the perception was often that he or she had little knowledge of the national context.

As a result, the GA was seen as superficial and the feeling was that valuable experience and insights were not sought from local CSOs and CBOs into the current national state of play regarding the three SE4ALL goals. This was seen as a missed opportunity, in the sense that many CSOs would welcome a meaningful baseline assessment for access, efficiency, and renewable energy that they could use in their own work. A more thorough and inclusive analysis could have provided energy practitioners with a valuable tool.

In countries that did include CSOs at the GA stage, most CSOs felt that they were unable to contribute meaningfully. In Nicaragua, for example, an expert workshop on renewables rapid assessment was held and a selected group of CSOs was invited. However, the selection criteria were not transparent and the workshop was not followed up with a shared outcome document. As a result, CSOs were unclear as to how their participation in the workshop will be reflected in the subsequent NIP, as this has not been shared. This experience was common across regions.

9. Participation in implementation and monitoring

Participation in implementation and monitoring scored significantly worse than other sections. With the initiative at a relatively early stage, this score reflects the high degree of uncertainty around the ability and willingness of certain bodies to include

The vast majority felt that no budgetary commitment was in place to enable civil society involvement

CSOs in the longer term when NIPs are eventually rolled out. While it is hoped that CSOs will play a vital role in the process, for example as project partners for particular interventions, according to some respondents: 'It is not yet clear what format the partnerships will take and who will be in charge of what aspects in the entire process' (Kenya).

A lack of access to finance, in particular, was reported as a problem in every country context and contributes to this feeling of uncertainty. Of the 50 organizations consulted, only seven responded positively that there was financial support available to enable their participation in the design and implementation of projects. The vast majority felt that no budgetary commitment was in place to enable civil society involvement, or, if it existed, they were unaware of it. This makes it extremely difficult for CSOs and CBOs to envisage or plan for a fully inclusive multi-stakeholder SE4ALL initiative.

National snapshots

While there are identifiable general trends, the following brief case studies contextualize the challenges and opportunities for civil society of the SE4ALL process within specific national contexts.

Indonesia

Box 1 Key SE4ALL events in Indonesia

- Early August 2013: coordination meeting for departments or agencies under the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (MEMR) to discuss input for the GA.
- 29 August 2013: national multi-stakeholders' workshop on SE4ALL conducted in Jakarta to discuss the GA.
- 4 December 2012, 13 February 2013, 23 May 2014, and 2 June 2014 (Jakarta): CSOs outreach on SE4ALL conducted in Jakarta and Yogyakarta carried out by Hivos and IESR.
- September/October 2013: initial draft of the GA (produced by the World Bank), coordinated by UNDP. Final document has not yet been shared or approved (as of November 2014).

The estimated 64 per cent electrification rate in Indonesia equates to roughly 82 million people who still do not have access to electricity (Sovacool, 2013). Furthermore, an estimated 46 per cent of the population living in rural and remote areas, including small islands, have no access to modern cooking fuels and are dependent on traditional forest-based biomass (Asian Development Bank, 2013).

However, despite the urgency of the energy access situation in Indonesia, there have been some early barriers to the progress of the SE4ALL initiative, not least the apparent conflict over the roles and responsibilities of key players; for example, the MEMR is perceived by one survey respondent to be 'hesitant to continue working on SE4ALL as UNDP fails to lead the process'. Before this apparent stalemate, the national consolidation and consultation (which included the early stages of the GA) had been slow to progress, with very little evidence of an inclusive multi-stakeholder approach. The initial draft of the GA (produced by the World Bank and coordinated by UNDP) was begun in September/October 2013. However, according to those surveyed, the document has not yet been finalized due to the lack of leadership and funding support from UNDP for the process.

Respondents said that much of the initial decision making had taken place within agencies inside the MEMR. In August 2013, however, a national workshop was held in Jakarta (the only one to take place thus far) and involved stakeholders from government agencies, CSOs and a limited number of private sector partners. Hosted by the MEMR and UNDP, the workshop aimed to discuss the GA (referred to as ‘rapid assessment’). Participants concluded that further consultation with key stakeholders had to take place before the NIP could be agreed upon. At the time of writing (October 2014), further discussions have taken place only under the leadership of CSOs (including Hivos and IESR) and little progress has been made among other stakeholders.

Despite the fact that the SE4ALL initiative appears to be stalling, there are other national-level policy changes that are evolving in accordance with SE4ALL objectives, for example, the national plan for renewable energy and energy efficiency. However, there has been no assurance that appropriate consultation processes have taken place to produce this document and so questions remain over the credibility and ability of the policy to deliver on energy access.

Nepal

Box 2 Key SE4ALL events in Nepal

- August 2012: government commitment to SE4ALL.
- August 2013: the GA completed and approved.
- August 2013: SE4ALL coordination mechanism established.
- January 2014: SE4ALL national workshop held.

The electrification rate in Nepal is estimated to be roughly 72 per cent (Nepal Energy Efficiency Programme, 2014) with a significant disparity between rural and urban areas. Although the country is recognized as having significant hydro potential, there remains a heavy reliance on wood and biomass for fuel.

The goals of the SE4ALL initiative appear to be embraced at a national level and are seen to be compatible with the national policy agenda. For example, Nepal’s current development plan has a target of reaching an electrification rate of 87 per cent by 2016/17 and has a particular focus on developing hydropower (SE4ALL, 2014b). Structurally, efforts are being made by the government to facilitate a multi-stakeholder process. For example, the National Planning Committee has established a coordination mechanism with two tiers: 1) a high-level national mechanism, which is chaired by the vice chair of the National Planning Committee; and 2) SE4ALL-based coordination groups. The intention is that each of the committees has representatives from government, the private sector, and CSOs (SE4ALL, 2014b).

However, while Nepal may offer a good basic model for coordination from government bodies, the country did not achieve a green rating overall for any of the traffic lights; respondents expressed a desire for improvement in each of the areas. In addition, the sample size in Nepal was limited, with larger organizations very familiar with SE4ALL activities and smaller organizations less so, which suggests that it is likely that smaller, less well connected CSOs are not as visible in the SE4ALL dialogues. This was recognized by a number of respondents; for example, one respondent stated: ‘Though a diversity of groups of civil society actors have been included in the consultation

process, including international organizations, local organizations, we need to make much more effort to include the energy poor and vulnerable communities.'

Nicaragua

Box 3 Key SE4ALL events in Nicaragua

- August 2013: Nicaragua opts in to the process.
- November 2013: presentation of GAs and expert workshops for renewable energy evaluation (IRENA, UNDP, and the Inter-American Development Bank) and for the preparation of the renewables rapid assessment (RRA).
- August 2014: a capacity assessment (Evaluación de Formación de Capacidades) starts as one of the main results of the RRA.
- To date: inputs for the action plan are being generated with a view to completion at the beginning of 2015.

Nicaragua has relatively high electrification rates (75 per cent in 2012: SE4ALL, 2014a) and the government plans to increase electricity coverage to 85 per cent by 2016 (SE4ALL, 2014a).

However, while such a context would seem conducive to achieving broader SE4ALL goals by 2030, there is considerable scepticism amongst the CSOs surveyed about how far the national roll-out of SE4ALL will include consideration of the broad range of access issues, particularly the energy needs and wants of poorer communities. While Nicaragua is at a relatively advanced stage of the SE4ALL initiative in terms of completing formal steps (such as the GA and the NIP documents), the government's principal concern at present – perhaps understandably, given its national policy objectives – is the renewables goal of SE4ALL. The RRA carried out focused exclusively on achieving this goal.

Nicaragua was the second lowest-scoring country in our research in terms of meaningful participation of civil society in decision-making, with CSOs and CBOs reporting an absence of coordination or support from UN agencies for their engagement in SE4ALL, and frustration with the lack of transparency around government SE4ALL planning. This is in spite of the existence of an established network of CSOs, with several decades' worth of experience and capacity in the renewable energy sector.

These CSOs also reported considerable structural barriers to accessing information. One respondent summed up the situation thus: 'The focal point is in the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) but we do not know them well as they do not respond to communications ... there is insufficient openness to give information about [the SE4ALL process].'

While some CSOs were invited to attend a workshop to discuss the RRA, after the workshop the respondents received no information about whether, or how, their feedback was incorporated in the subsequent NIP. There is anecdotal information that this document has been finalized but it has not been published. CSOs surveyed felt that, in light of this, their attendance at the workshop was more tokenistic than genuinely inclusive.

There is also little or no evidence of documentation being shared with CSOs after they participated in key stages of SE4ALL (such as the RRA) and so CSOs cannot determine the impact or influence that they have had. From the survey responses, it appears that it is the ministries (Energy and Mines, Environment and Natural Resources, and the Nicaraguan Energy Institute) and private sector actors (large implementers) who are the primary decision makers.

Overall, the view from the survey is that, while there has been some limited consultation with civil society about the GA and RRA – after their completion – CSOs have been only minimally involved in the further decision making process around the NIP.

Nigeria

Box 4 Key SE4ALL events in Nigeria

- October 2012: the GA completed.
- June 2013: one-day national multi-stakeholder event to discuss the NIP.
- To date, the NIP not yet completed.

With an electrification rate of roughly 48 per cent, over half of populous Nigeria suffers from inadequate access to energy. Unsurprisingly perhaps, Nigeria was one of the first African countries that opted in to the SE4ALL initiative. The Energy Commission of Nigeria itself approached UNDP for support in domesticating the objectives of the process. Alhaji Mohammed Wakil, Minister of State for Power, said that: 'The objectives of the SE4ALL initiative are in tandem with the goals of President Jonathan's Transformation Agenda, which gives high priority to providing access to safe, reliable, and affordable energy to our citizens in both urban and rural areas' (Punch, 2014). Wakil also spoke of efforts to develop a National Policy on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency with support from the regional body of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

From a government perspective, commitment and buy-in to the initiative has therefore been present. The Nigerian Energy Commission (in partnership with UNDP and other government ministries, departments, and agencies) has shown some leadership in organizing a small number of multi-stakeholder events, including, for example, a one-day multi-sectoral/development partners forum (on 11 June 2013). The forum shared progress made so far and discussed strategies for developing a SE4ALL country-specific action plan and strategy for Nigeria (Ekpenyong, 2013). The Nigerian Energy Commission also holds a quarterly multi-sectoral forum at which stakeholders can present their programmes, activities, and project plans in line with the objectives of the SE4ALL initiative. The federal government has also established a national renewable energy coordinating office under the Federal Ministry of Environment, which will highlight issues concerning access to energy and renewables in Nigeria in collaboration with the private sector, CSOs, and national banks.

However, despite some positive action from the government and UNDP in Nigeria, the results from the surveys tell us that this action has not resulted in a fully inclusive and meaningful process. CSO groups have found it difficult to identify clear contact points for the initiative within government, despite some structures being established, and there is ongoing ignorance about the exact purpose of the initiative and its

relationship to national-level policies. The respondents were highly critical of the lack of meaningful and accessible information and a number felt that little was done to reach out to smaller organizations working at the local level.

Kenya

Box 5 Key SE4ALL events in Kenya

- 25–26 October 2012: workshop organized by Hivos and Practical Action on catalysing civil society action for SE4ALL.
- 13–14 December 2012: national CSO workshop organized by Hivos, Sustainable Community Development Services (SCODE) and Practical Action on catalysing civil society action for SE4ALL.
- 10–14 February 2013: workshop for the core group to finalize the stocktaking and GA report.
- June 2014: stakeholder consultative workshop for development of the action agenda and investment prospectus for SE4ALL.
- 13–15 August 2014: training workshop for representatives of the core Ministry of Energy and Petroleum departments on developing an action agenda and investment prospectus for SE4ALL.

Kenya has the lowest electrification rates of any of the countries we looked at, currently estimated to be 18 per cent (IEA, 2012). However, the government has ambitious plans to increase this number to 65 per cent by 2022.

SE4ALL has enormous potential in Kenya but there appear to be several challenges for CSO engagement. Not least there is a general complaint (common to most countries surveyed) that access to information and participation is not equal for all stakeholders. However, there are important examples of CSOs self-organizing to magnify their input into, and voice in, the process, despite the overall traffic light scores being low, as well as some evidence of support for their participation from UNDP and national government.

In Kenya, Hivos, Practical Action, and others have played prominent roles in organizing and funding regional and national SE4ALL workshops. For example, a national workshop was organized along with SCODE in December 2012 to review the draft GA report. This involved 39 participants from 30 CSOs (including INGOs, NGOs, and CBOs) representing 15 counties. This early engagement and coordination led to the development of the ‘Waterbuck Declaration’ co-authored by those in attendance. The Waterbuck Declaration provided a clear and coherent statement of the position of these civil society actors on SE4ALL. While recognizing and welcoming national efforts to date, it also provided a steer on what additional government action was needed to make further progress on SE4ALL. Namely:

- engagement with CSOs working on the delivery of low-cost energy services that could help shape best practice strategies so that marginalized groups could be involved in the delivery of energy for household, community, and enterprise applications;
- allocation of resources by partners to enable meaningful participation by CSOs in SE4ALL planning and implementation;
- championing by the government of CSO and private sector participation, and investment in building their capacity, as a prerequisite to achieving universal energy access.

The declaration was a success in terms of engaging the Ministry of Energy and it led to further revisions and inputs from civil society to the GA. Although the national action plan has not yet been completed, the fact that the country scored a number of green lights for indicators relating to ‘participation in decision-making’ suggests that some instances of self-organizing and lobbying have led to a perception of influence. It is notable that the scores and descriptive answers are more cautious for those indicators referring to the future process (under ‘implementation and monitoring’).

Zimbabwe

Box 6 Key SE4ALL events in Zimbabwe

- 10–11 December 2012: national workshop for CSOs.
- January 2013: the GA completed – request for revision under review.
- To date, no progress on the NIP.

In Zimbabwe, CSOs describe SE4ALL as having an indirect but positive impact on their own ways of working – for instance, it has been a catalyst for shared planning and project implementation. However, there is little evidence from the survey that formal processes around the initiative have facilitated this.

There are a few self-selected CSOs that UNDP consults and partners with to transmit advocacy messages in Zimbabwe. In the opinion of Practical Action, Hivos, and ZERO, it is their cooperation and eagerness to facilitate a successful SE4ALL process that has created, in the words of one respondent, ‘an open door in partnership with each other and government [to] co-create solutions’. This is evidenced in the request from government that these organizations sit on the SE4ALL steering committee and have input to the new Zimbabwean renewable energy policy.

However, the inclusiveness of this partnership can be questioned, as well as whether these three players are representative of wider civil society, as they are all organizations of a significant size with existing capacities to engage with international processes.

Zimbabwean CSOs also identified clear challenges to their participation. These included the following:

- **Lack of leadership from UNDP.** According to the survey respondents, UNDP did not provide the direction and active support for their participation in SE4ALL that CSOs expected. A comparison was made to Malawi, where UNDP played a more supportive role, despite a weaker supporting network of CSOs. One respondent suggested that this is due to a lack of capacity in the national UNDP office rather than because of any strategic decisions about the need for more or less support in Zimbabwe.
- **Lack of resources.** CSOs identified a great need for financial support to ensure multi-stakeholder engagement in the initiative.
- **No baseline assessment of the national energy situation.** CSOs were unanimous in their disappointment with the GA, stating that it will be difficult to assess national progress towards the SE4ALL goals because no central body is effectively assessing the current state of the energy sector in the country.

Conclusions

SE4ALL's aspiration to have civil society as its third pillar is welcome – and, indeed, is a prerequisite for the success of the initiative in terms of achieving its energy access goal, as well as mobilizing widespread support for its goals on efficiency and renewables. While many CSOs are calling for a higher level of ambition from SE4ALL, most agree with the overall direction of travel and understand the critical importance of shifting to low/zero carbon forms of energy and greater efficiency in order to tackle climate change, as well as the importance of access to sustainable, affordable, safe, and reliable energy services for development and poverty reduction.ⁱⁱⁱ

However, since its launch in 2012, there have been a number of civil society statements calling for guidance from SE4ALL to ensure inclusive civil society and stakeholder participation at the global and national levels. These include a statement for the High Level Group on SE4ALL,^{iv} the Waterbuck Declaration in 2012 (Hivos, Practical Action and SCODE, 2012), publications on civil society actions (Hivos, 2013) and a letter to Kandeh Yumkella and Charles Holliday in November 2012.^v At the Rio+20 Summit, over 100 southern and northern CSOs issued a statement calling for SE4ALL to be implemented in a way that was meaningful, accountable, and people-centred. Key to delivering this aspiration was 'an extensive, transparent, inclusive and responsive consultation involving all stakeholders, particularly those directly affected by poverty, lack of energy access and the impacts of extractive industries, with an emphasis on women and marginalised groups' (350.org et al., 2012).

Thus, while this briefing is not the first call for meaningful civil society participation for the success of SE4ALL, it is the first (albeit limited) effort to gauge both the level of CSO participation on the ground and the quality of SE4ALL engagement with civil society.

The results show that, to date, opportunities for civil society to participate in the SE4ALL initiative at the national level have been constrained or non-existent in the countries surveyed.

What the survey highlights is a clear demand on the part of CSOs to participate in, and support the aims of, the broader SE4ALL process. Not only is there a readiness to engage, but there is clearly untapped expertise. Given adequate space, civil society groups can: provide expertise and experience on participatory design and delivery of energy access, particularly for the poorest groups; build the capacities of end users and other actors in the value chain; act as a trusted intermediary between communities, government agencies, and the private sector; and, last but not least, build wider public energy literacy and acceptance of the need for a low carbon energy transformation.

The survey results reinforce the urgent need to re-evaluate the way in which SE4ALL national processes include civil society and community voices in their design and delivery moving forward. Clear guidelines, dedicated resources, and, most importantly, political will on the part of all actors to build an inclusive national process are all needed to ensure that civil society can play its full part in helping to achieve the SE4ALL goals of universal access, increasing the share of renewables in the global energy mix and improving the global efficiency rate. SE4ALL, through its international and regional governance structures and activities, can do more to promote a greater

understanding of the value of working with civil society actors among national-level partners and focal points. This is especially important given the devolved nature of the initiative, which – rightly – means that the responsibility and power to implement the initiative lie at the national level.

Recommendations

In order to promote inclusive and effective civil society participation in national SE4ALL processes, SE4ALL signatory governments, supported by the international SE4ALL Board, Executive Committee, and Global Facilitation Team, SE4ALL regional and thematic hubs, UNDP, and Multi-lateral development bank (MDB) partners, should ensure the following.

1. Public commitment by the government to an inclusive multi-stakeholder process and appointment of a lead focal point

This commitment must go beyond simply stating the value of CSOs' and CBOs' participation in the process and should include concrete actions that are explicitly tied to principles of good practice in inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement (as per the nine principles outlined in this briefing).

2. Clear guidelines for the design and delivery of the SE4ALL process, agreed among the stakeholders

The guidelines should clarify the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders (government, private sector, civil society, and supporting partners), as well as the modalities of their participation at all stages of the process. This could include, where appropriate, development of a memorandum of understanding.

Currently, there are only a small number of SE4ALL guidance documents. These are universally weak and often silent on the benefits, role, and modalities of civil society involvement. Given this, it is unsurprising that in all of the countries we surveyed there was a lack of clarity concerning the role of CSOs in the national process. A set of guidelines that can address this gap and provide principles and a methodology for effective inclusion is therefore needed urgently.

3. Timely access to information on the process and adequate resourcing of civil society for informed and inclusive participation

Civil society has been key in driving support for SE4ALL's vision and mission, and has been a critical factor in urging governments to take up the initiative. However, the role of CSOs has been severely constrained by limited access to information (such as information regarding the timeline of the process, the decision points, and opportunities for input, etc.) along with a lack of resources. If civil society participation in the initiative were adequately resourced and encouraged, its critical support for achieving the initiative's objectives would be amplified and it could truly play its role as SE4ALL's 'third pillar'.

Table 3 National traffic light scores by indicator

| | Indonesia | Kenya | Nepal | Nicaragua | Nigeria | Zimbabwe |
|--|-----------|--------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|
| Commitment to multi-stakeholder engagement | | | | | | |
| Government expresses commitment to a multi-stakeholder consultation process | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Green |
| Broad-based outreach by government to potential CSO and private sector partners | Red | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Green |
| Existence of clear points of contact within government for civil society engagement | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Yellow | Green |
| Outreach resulted in a good level of general awareness about the SE4ALL process among relevant civil society, private sector and other stakeholders | Red | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Red | Yellow |
| Outreach resulted in awareness among the broader public about SE4ALL | Red | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Yellow | Yellow |
| Consultation design | | | | | | |
| Involvement of CSOs and other key stakeholders in the initial design of the consultation process: its goals, agenda, participants, location, and timing | Red | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow |
| Diversity of groups of civil society actors included in designing the consultation process, including international organizations, local organizations, and energy poor and vulnerable communities | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow |
| Clear guidelines exist for how civil society input will be used | Red | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Red | Red |
| CSOs and other stakeholders are planned to be involved in future stages of the process: design, GA, and investment prospectus development | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Yellow | Green |
| Timely engagement | | | | | | |
| Invitations to consultations and stakeholder platforms received in sufficient time to participate meaningfully | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Yellow |
| Stakeholder engagements take place before critical decision-making points in the SE4ALL process | Red | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Red | Yellow |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|-----|-----|--------|
| Access to information | | | | | | |
| Documents that explain the goals of the national SE4ALL process, timeline, and key decision-making moments made widely available | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Red | Red |
| Important information disseminated as early as possible | Yellow | Red | Yellow | Red | Red | Yellow |
| Key documents resulting from the SE4ALL process, such as the GA or action agendas (where they have been completed), are shared widely | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Red | Yellow |
| Translation of consultation and programme materials into main local languages (if relevant) | Red | Red | Red | Red | Red | Yellow |
| Dissemination of information to the wider public | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Red | Red |
| Inclusion of vulnerable or excluded groups | | | | | | |
| Invitations extended to independent women's organizations and community-based associations | Red | Red | Red | Red | Red | Yellow |
| Consultations designed to allow women to participate | Red | Red | Red | Red | Red | Red |
| Gender dimensions of energy needs are written into the consultation as an agenda item, inform the choice of discussion topics, and are mainstreamed across reports and plans | Red | Red | Red | Red | Red | Red |
| Invitations extended to tribal leaders or indigenous people's organizations (where relevant) | Red | Red | Red | Red | Red | Yellow |
| Civil society capacity building | | | | | | |
| Workshops or other events held to enable informed participation by CSOs | Red | Yellow | Green | Red | Red | Yellow |
| Government/donor response to civil society need for capacity building (where relevant) | Yellow | Yellow | Red | Red | Red | Yellow |
| Commitment to provide budgetary and technical support to civil society for participation in SE4ALL activities from government or donors | Red | Red | Yellow | Red | Red | Yellow |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Ongoing outreach to civil society for SE4ALL roll-out | | | | | | |
| Post-meeting action | | | | | | |
| Notes from consultation meetings are circulated and reflect accurately key discussions, outcomes, and next steps decided | | | | | | |
| Next steps agreed with specific time frames for action and parties responsible for implementing them | | | | | | |
| Participation in decision making | | | | | | |
| Government/donor commitment to facilitating civil society participation in SE4ALL decision making | | | | | | |
| Civil society participation in developing national GA, action agenda, and/or investment prospectus | | | | | | |
| Civil society's voice reflected in outcome documents such as the national GA, action agenda, and/or investment prospectus | | | | | | |
| Civil society participation on any national-level SE4ALL steering committees or other decision-making bodies | | | | | | |
| Implementation and monitoring | | | | | | |
| Plans made for the involvement of a range of stakeholders in SE4ALL implementation and monitoring | | | | | | |
| Specific budgetary allocations made to support civil society and community participation in project design and implementation | | | | | | |
| Agreements with governments and/or donors made for implementation partnerships | | | | | | |

Notes

- i. The term ‘gaps analysis’ (GA) is sometimes used by organizations and governments interchangeably with the term ‘rapid assessment’. For clarity, this briefing paper uses GA with the exception of the country case study sections, in which other, more country-specific terms are applied.
- ii. The term ‘national implementation plan’ (NIP) is sometimes used by organizations and governments interchangeably with the term ‘national action plan’. For clarity, this briefing paper uses NIP with the exception of the country case study sections, in which other, more country-specific terms are applied.
- iii. For further context, please see Wykes, Garside and Leopold, 2014.
- iv. Letter authored by CAFOD, Christian Aid, Friends of the Earth (FOE) England, Wales and Northern Ireland, GVEP, HEDON, HELIO, IIED, and Practical Action.
- v. Signed by CAFOD, Christian Aid, FOE England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Green Africa Foundation (Kenya), Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA), IESR (Indonesia), IIED, and Stakeholder Democracy Network (Nigeria).

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Front page photo: Leparua Greenhouse, Isiolo, Kenya – solar powered irrigation & agricultural training supplied by CARITAS Isiolo for a community greenhouse where a women's cooperative is growing tomatoes. © CAFOD/Annie Bungeroth

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