

# Annual Report 2010



Karen Organization of Minnesota

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# The Karen Organization of Minnesota Story

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## Our Mission

*To enhance the quality of life for Karen and other refugees from Burma in Minnesota*

## Our Vision

- *We assist refugees to settle, integrate and become increasingly self-sufficient*
- *We foster cultural knowledge and understanding*
- *We strengthen organizational capacity and effectiveness to meet the needs of the community*

## Our Story

The Karen (pronounced Ka-REN) are an indigenous ethnic minority from the mountainous regions of Burma (also known as Myanmar) and Thailand, where they constitute the second largest ethnic group in each country. Karen and other ethnic minorities from Burma have been persecuted by the Burmese military juntas, who have conducted acts of genocide against them both in Burma and while in Thai refugee camps. Many Karen families who fled Burma and Thailand have resettled in Saint Paul, MN. Over the last ten years, Saint Paul has become home to one of the largest populations of Karen outside of Southeast Asia, estimated today at over 5,000.

Originally called Karen Community of Minnesota (KCM), Karen Organization of Minnesota (KOM) began as an informal organization serving the Karen community residing in Minnesota in 2003. Prior to being funded, we were providing mutual support, self-help and cultural preservation, and quickly became the primary provider of resettlement services, for Karen in Minnesota. Without these initial voluntary services many new Karen refugees would not have obtained essential services such as, access to healthcare, quality education and family care, needed to thrive in their new environment.

KCM (now KOM) took significant steps over the next five years to move from an informal organization to a strong community-based organization. We received over three years of organizational development, training and strategic planning under the wing of well-established nonprofits in Minnesota and inaugurated an ethnically and professionally diverse and highly motivated Board of Directors.

In 2008, KOM became the first Karen-led organization in Minnesota and the United States to gain 501(c)3 status and participated in ten months of technical assistance training to better serve our clients. Then, in October 2009, within a 24 hour period, KOM was awarded our first three grants launching us into being a fully funded resettlement agency, allowing us to serve our clients in an even greater capacity in the areas of:

- Employment Services
- English Language Learning Services
- Social Services
- Civic Participation
- Immigration/Legal Services
- Community Health Education (added July 2010)

Since October 2009 we have served over 800 Karen and other Burmese refugees in Minnesota. With our capacity and talent growing stronger every day, we plan to serve even more in 2011 and the years to come!

# Dear Friends of Karen Organization of Minnesota

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*This year has been an exciting, challenging, and very encouraging time for Karen Organization of Minnesota (KOM). We have made significant strides to become a sustainable organization, delivering quality services and helping improve the quality of life for Karen and other refugee families from Burma who live in Minnesota. 2010 was our first full year of providing services to Karen and other refugee families from Burma and we are extremely proud of the many accomplishments we have achieved.*

*This past year has been a constant change for KOM. With every change we grow stronger, bigger, and better equipped to deliver the most effective services to our community. Hundreds of individuals and families have been supported and helped through KOM services. We are constantly looking for ways to improve and enhance our core services to ensure we are most effective and beneficial to Karen and other Burmese refugees in Minnesota.*

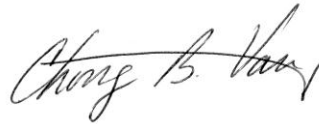
*As we look forward to 2011, we are excited at what lies ahead. Already we have added farming and youth programs and continue to look for comprehensive ways to serve our community. We are also working hard to continue to narrow our cash flow gap and make improvements to our programs to better serve our communities.*

*We would like to say “Ta Blut doe mah! (Thank you very much)” to our friends and families, non-profit organizations and businesses for your support of KOM, whether financially or through collaboration. We are grateful for your support in 2010 and look forward to future partnership and endeavors together.*

*Yours in the work,*



Susan T. Schuster  
Board Chair



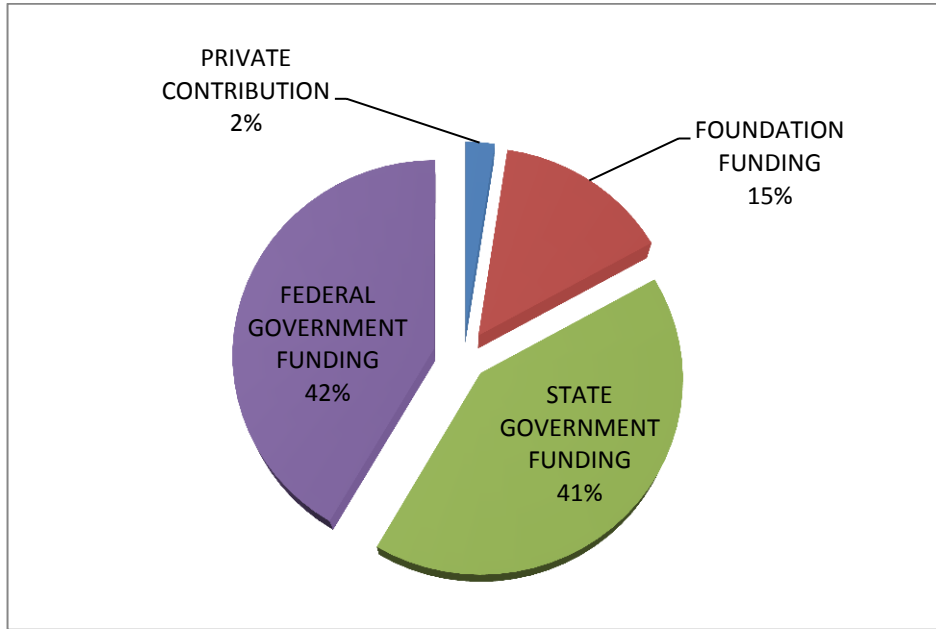
Chong B. Vang  
Executive Director



# Financial Summary

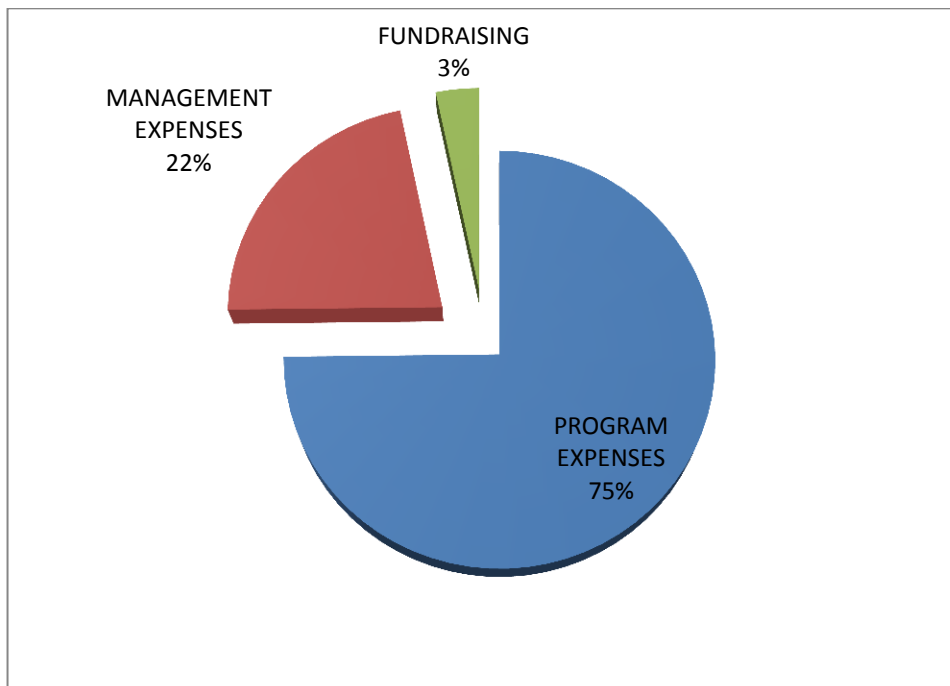
*Karen Organization of Minnesota made tremendous strides in 2010 to become financially stable. Executing astuteness in how we best serve our community with the resources we have, KOM continues to gain momentum going into 2011 to grow our resources and implement wise spending.*

## Where the Dollars Come From



**Fiscal Year 2010**  
**Total Funding:**  
**\$450,704**

## Where the Dollars Go



\* For further Karen Organization of Minnesota financial details please go to [www.mnkaren.org](http://www.mnkaren.org).

# Board of Directors, Advisors & Staff

*The Karen Organization of Minnesota Board of Directors is an integral part to the success of KOM. Their wide range of backgrounds and professional expertise yield a diverse, dynamic and dedicated team. The leadership, time, talent and charity of the Board of Directors are at the forefront of KOM's efforts and accomplishments.*

**Susan T. Schuster, Board Chair**

**Eh Taw Dwe\*, Vice Board Chair**

**Nicole (Nicki) Donlon, CPA, Board Treasure**

**Kathy Morrison, Board Secretary**

**Sara Chute, MPP (Former Board Chair through October 2010)**

**Paw Wah Toe\***

**Htoo Lo (Raymond Tint)\***

**Benjamin Aung \***

**Aye Mya Phyu \***

**Saw Josiah\***

**Pastor William Englund**

**Oo Reh \***

**Steve Messick**

**Daniel Tun Baw \***

**Jim Letts, MD**

**John P. James, Legal Counsel**

## Former KOM Board of Directors

**Jennifer Dunbar, Board Secretary**

**Priscilla P. Aung\***

**Kyaw Kyaw\***

**Tonya Cook**

**Tun Naing\***

**Lay Taw Du\***

**Hser Nei\***

**Peggy Kennedy**

*\* Those with a \* are former refugees. There have been 13 former refugees on the KOM Board of Directors. Currently there are 8.*



*The KOM Staff is the heartbeat of all that is achieved daily for Karen and other Burmese refugees in Minnesota. The staff's diverse backgrounds and experiences produce a strong, unique, hard-working and dedicated team ready to meet the various needs of our community. We began 2010 with four staff and enter 2011 with fourteen.*

**Chong Bee Vang\*, Executive Director**

**Jeanna Bauer, Employment Counselor (EMERGE AmeriCorps volunteer)**

**Bah Soe Gay\*, Youth Academic Support Coordinator**

**Ah Hsi\*, Youth Academic Support Coordinator**

**Eh Tha Khu\*, Youth Academic Support Coordinator**

**Htoo Lwee\*, Community Health and Social Services Coordinator**

**Saw Morrison\*, Program Manager**

**See Nay\*, Farming Coordinator**

**Ko Nay Oo\*, Social Services Coordinator**

**Lay Tha Paw\*, Program Assistant**

**Thomas Ritnorakan\*, Employment Counselor**

**Marnar Saw\*, Social Services Coordinator**

**Shana Schrock, Operations Manager**

**Danny Vang\*, Youth Social Support Coordinator**

## Former KOM Staff

**Temilade Adedoyin**

**Kaw Tha Blay\***

**Glaw Dee\***

**Sally Djikerman**

**Diane Galatowitsch**

**Rachel Olson**

**Wilfred Daniel Tun Baw \***



*\* Those with a \* are former refugees. There have been 15 former refugees on the KOM Staff. Currently there are 12.*

# Enhancing the Quality of Many Lives

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*Whichever role you played with Karen Organization of Minnesota in 2010, you can take great satisfaction in knowing that together we enhanced the quality of life for over 750 Karen and other Burmese refugees in St. Paul, Roseville and the surrounding suburbs. Much of the time our Karen staff and volunteers provided interpretation for the following services as well!*

**408** refugees were assisted with one or more social service through KOM

**39** refugees were assisted in securing stable housing

**133** refugees enrolled in child care/ECFE, after school programs or mental health care

**96** refugees attended bus training, received assistance with obtaining a driver's license, connected to community activities and events all to help them become more independently functioning

**758** the number of referrals made for refugees to connect with outside social services

**313** refugees enrolled in employment services

**151** refugees received employment placement

**58** refugees received employment and job training

**44** refugees enrolled in English Language Learning classes (20+ hours per week)

**61** refugees participated in Parent-Teacher meetings

**205** refugees attended Safety and Law Enforcement training

**23** refugees were referred for a breast or cervical exam

**106** refugees improved their financial potential by attending Financial Literacy Training

**75** youth and adult refugees grew in their leadership abilities by participating in Wilder's Leadership Course

**273** refugees participated in World Relief Immigration Workshops

**386** refugees increased their cultural understanding of their new home in Minnesota through Mass Orientations

**253** refugees received Health Education materials with **101** specifically attending a Health Education class

**2** refugees received additional medical care because of abnormalities found through preventative health care exams they were referred to through KOM

**2** local organizational leaders are engaging with KOM in implementing smoke-free policies at their organizations

**32** refugees enjoyed local entertainment events (such as a Timberwolves game) through our partnership with Tix for Tots

**Over 750** individuals or families served by Karen Organization of Minnesota Programs

# Charitable Giving

## Ta Blut Doe Mah!

*It is only through the kindness of generous individuals and organizations that we can continue our mission. We are so grateful for those who support the Karen Organization of Minnesota, and we thank you for being a part of the good work we are doing here. Together we can continue to enhancing the quality of life for Karen and other refugees from Burma in Minnesota!*

### Individual Donors

Temilade Adedoyin  
M. L. Barton  
Sara Chute  
Darrell Cox  
Andrew Dahl  
Jason Dalebroux  
Nicole Donlon  
Bruce T Downing  
Jennifer & Timothy Dunbar  
Pastor William Englund  
Diane Galatowitsch  
Susan & Mark Galatowitsch  
Christianna Hang  
Joel Haugen  
Melanie Haugen  
Glen Hill  
Donald L. Horney  
John P. James  
Saw Josiah  
Scott M. Klismet  
Erinn & Jim Letts  
Richard Scott & Heidi Limpert  
Kathy Lytle  
Jay McGowan  
Charlie Mishek  
Mike Olson  
Aye Mya Phyu  
Andrew Proshok  
Jeffery & Jonel Radke  
Jeffery L. Radunz  
Nancy Senst  
Ann Settgest  
Michele A. Schermann  
Shana Schrock  
Susan T. Schuster  
Nathan Uhl  
Amy Wehrman  
Kevin Winge  
Michelle Winter  
Beverly & Steven Wolf

### Organization Donors

Arlington Hills United Methodist Church  
Bethel University  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Neighborhood House  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church  
The College of St. Scholastica  
UCare  
Vinai Insurance Services, LLC

### In-Kind Donors

Nicole Donlon  
Diane Galatowitsch  
Robert F. & Gail C. Kamrath  
Bouachao Yang & Kao Lor  
Kathy Lytle  
Yapor Vang & Mai Yang  
Perry Vang & Mai Hnou Yang

### Event Sponsors

Benjamin T. Aung & Priscilla P. Aung  
First Baptist Church  
First Karen Baptist Church  
Hmong American Partnership  
International Institute of Minnesota  
Neighborhood House  
North Suburban Community Foundation  
River Centre  
Southeast Asian Refugee Community Home  
Southeast Asian Health Services  
Ucare  
Vietnamese Social Services of Minnesota  
World Relief Minnesota  
Dennis Neng Xiong & Maikao M. Yang

### Organization Development & Technology Support

Cheryl Chute  
Bob Frawley  
John Meacham  
Gregory Olson  
PriorityOne Technologies

### Partners

Amherst H. Wilder Foundation  
Bridging, Inc.  
Community Action Partnership  
of Ramsey & Washington  
Counties  
District 6 Planning Council  
First Baptist Church of Saint  
Paul  
Five Oaks Community Church  
Karen Community of  
Minnesota  
Karen Culture Organization  
Metro Transit

Minnesota American Karen Society  
Minnesota Food Association  
MORE Multicultural School for  
Empowerment  
National Alliance of Vietnamese American  
Service Agencies  
Ramsey County, Community Human  
Services Department  
Roseville Area Schools  
Saint Paul Police Department  
Saint Paul Public Schools  
Southeast Asian Refugee Community  
Home  
Student Placement Center  
Tix for Tots  
Vietnamese Social Services of Minnesota  
Vinai Office Park  
Wells Fargo  
Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment  
World Relief Minnesota

### Grants & Contracts

Office of Refugee Resettlement, United  
State Department of Health and Human  
Services  
Minnesota Department of Human  
Services, Refugee Employment Services  
Minnesota Department of Human  
Services, Refugee Social Services  
Eliminating Health Disparities Initiative,  
Minnesota Department of Health  
Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of  
Minnesota  
Otto Bremer Foundation  
Marbrook Foundation



# Enhancing Lives

The mission of Karen Organization of Minnesota is to enhance the quality of life for Karen and other Burmese refugees in Minnesota. We have a wide variety of programs and services to assist our clients in their various areas of need.

## Employment Services

Karen Organization of Minnesota is dedicated to finding employment opportunities for the Karen and Burmese refugees. KOM knows that in order for families to be self-sufficient, steady employment is a necessity.

KOM has partnered with Southeast Asian Refugee Community Home to assist Karen and Burmese refugees by providing job training and employment counseling. KOM has Karen Employment Counselors who work personally with Karen and Burmese clients to:

- ✓ Provide work-readiness training
- ✓ Job application assistance
- ✓ Resume development
- ✓ Job search assistance
- ✓ Employer networking
- ✓ Community support services
- ✓ Transportation to and from job interviews
- ✓ Translation services
- ✓ Vocational training placements
- ✓ Bus cards
- ✓ Uniforms
- ✓ Job orientation and training
- ✓ Placement follow-up



## Education

KOM has partnered with MORE Multicultural School for Empowerment to have an ELL class for those in need of English Language Learning (ELL) at a beginner's level at the KOM office. In addition to this class KOM connects clients to additional ELL resources available to them, including Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE). ECFE is a unique program that meets the needs for parents to learn English, while also providing early childhood education for their young children during the parent's ELL class.

KOM also provides Health Education for Karen and other Burmese refugees through one-on-one counsel, small group discussions and large group classes, all provided in their native language.



## Social Services

One of the primary goals of KOM is to provide social services to meet the needs of the Karen and Burmese refugee community. Currently, KOM is in partnership with World Relief Minnesota to provide social services to the Karen and Burmese refugee community in Minnesota. We provide transportation to/from appointments and translation services as needed.

### *Stable Housing for Families*

KOM helps families access subsidized or unsubsidized housing units. For those interested in purchasing their own house, we provide referrals to agencies and websites that assist with the home buying process. We

also work in partnership with assistance programs to help clients navigate decision making on getting a loan, credit score, etc.

### *Safe Living Environments for Refugees*

KOM provides education, training, and support to parents for issues such as child safety, safety in the home and neighborhood, basic rights and regulations, preventing gang involvement, sexual harassment, and school harassment.

### *Engagement with Community Services and Programs*

KOM refers clients with mental health needs to appropriate mental health services and provides any assistance necessary to ensure clients receive these services. We also facilitate the enrollment of K-12 refugee students in after-school tutoring programs offered through the St. Paul and Roseville Public Schools. Likewise, we connect clients to County Child Care and Assistance.

## Independent Functioning Families

KOM knows the greatest resource for refugee families is when they are able to function independently and begin assisting their fellow community members. KOM offers many services to equip Karen and other Burmese refugees who are working hard and committed towards becoming self-sufficient, contributing members of society. Such services include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Orientation for parents, explaining expectations for parent involvement in their children's education
- ✓ School enrollment for students
- ✓ Instruction, tutoring and assistance in obtaining a MN Driver's License
- ✓ Access to resources for vehicle purchase auto insurance
- ✓ Assistance receiving Social Security card, SSI Disability and (Women, Infants and Children) WIC services
- ✓ Recruiting former clients to assist newly arrived refugees in similar ways they received help



## Immigration/Legal Services

Refugees arriving in the United States face numerous legal and immigration requirements that must be adhered to so they can retain their legal status in the US. Likewise there are many opportunities for refugees to become a permanent resident and eventually a US Citizen. In collaboration, KOM assists Karen and other Burmese refugees with various legal services provided by World Relief Minnesota.

## Training and Orientation Services

*"I am only a six year old American boy."*

When refugees move to the United States, almost every aspect of life and the way things function in their new homeland are foreign and completely new to them. One of our Karen staff who has been in the US for six years and has been successfully assisting many in his community, refers to his own continued learning curve by often stating, "I am only a six year old American boy." Self-sufficiency is best acquired by growing in knowledge, cultural awareness and understanding. Through many partnerships, KOM offers several training and orientation opportunities:

- ✓ **Financial Literacy Training** (in partnership with Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment and Wells Fargo Bank)
- ✓ **Adult and Youth Leadership Training** (in partnership with Amherst H. Wilder Foundation)
- ✓ **Bus Training** (in partnership with Metro Transit)
- ✓ **Safety and Law Enforcement Training** (in partnership with Saint Paul Police Department and Department of Natural Resources)
- ✓ **Cultural Mass Orientation** (in partnership with Karen Community of Minnesota)
- ✓ **Housing Orientation**



## Community Health Services

KOM is committed to enhancing the quality of life for Karen and other Burmese refugees through improved health. We have partnered with Vietnamese Social Services to provide health education, health screening access and health system navigation services, making available healthcare more accessible to the community. KOM has a Karen Community Health Coordinator who works personally with Karen and Burmese clients to educate and set up preventative healthcare appointments, focusing on:

- ✓ Breast Cancer
- ✓ Cervical Cancer
- ✓ Heart Disease
- ✓ Stroke
- ✓ Harmful effects of smoking

# Giving Back

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## Community Events

*Karen Organization of Minnesota partnered with other organizations within the Karen and Burmese refugee community in 2010 to sponsor and coordinate events that celebrate the heart of our community.*

- Karen New Year (January)
- Karen Wrist-Tying/Memorial Day Celebration and Soccer Tournament (August)
- KOM Open House (August)



## Our Volunteers

*Volunteers make a tremendous difference in our ability to help our community! Karen Organization of Minnesota volunteers serve by assisting clients to go through mail, fill out paperwork/applications, setting appointments, providing interpretation and transportation to/from appointments, translating documents, accomplishing administrative and janitorial tasks as well as overall support both to KOM clients and staff. We are so grateful for the amazing things our volunteers accomplished in 2010.*

*Last year our volunteers donated **3,388** hours of service to KOM!*

***Ta Blut Doe Mah!***



# Make a Difference

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*There are many ways you can make a significant impact in the lives of Karen and other Burmese refugees in Minnesota by supporting Karen Organization of Minnesota.*

## Monetary Gifts

KOM accepts gifts of tax deductible cash donation, stock, property, life insurance policies and perhaps your employer will match your gift. You can also include KOM as a beneficiary in your will.

## Join our Events

Attend, support or sponsor any of our events throughout the year:

Karen Wrist-Tying/Memorial Day Celebration (August)

Karen New Year (December/January)

## In-Kind Donations

Assist Karen families with various tangible needs they have as they begin their new life in Minnesota. We will connect you directly to families in need of items such as:

Cooking/cleaning/toiletry supplies

Furniture/household goods

Warm clothes

Food

School supplies

Vehicles

## Volunteer

Assist with transportation

Join an event committee

Interpretation/translation

English conversational partner



## Host a Family

Inviting a Karen or other Burmese refugee family into your life and your home is a **treasured gift**.

Please consider hosting a family for special holidays, birthdays and even assisting them in everyday tasks such as, sorting through their mail. **Investing** in a refugee family will produce an **invaluable return** for you and your family. You will make a **wonderful, faithful and life-long friend!**

*Supporting your Karen and other Burmese refugee neighbors is easy!*

*Mail your gifts to 1394 Jackson Street, Suite 324, St. Paul, MN 55117 or donate online at [www.mnkaren.org](http://www.mnkaren.org).*

*For more information contact the Executive Director at 651-788-7593, ext. 306*

*Thank you to all who made 2010 such a successful year for Karen Organization of Minnesota! We look forward to your partnership in 2011 and for years to come!*



## **Karen Organization of Minnesota**

1394 Jackson Street, Suite 324

Saint Paul, MN 55117

Phone: (651) 788-7593

Fax: (651) 788-7909

Web: [www.mnkaren.org](http://www.mnkaren.org) Email: [info@mnkaren.org](mailto:info@mnkaren.org)



Karen Organization of Minnesota

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