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## Human Security Challenges and Environmental Management in Contemporary Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *Human security and environment are some of the basic issues that are capturing world attention in a number of fora since the middle of the twentieth century. The issue of environment becomes so important because every other development of national economies anchor on it. The Nigerian environment is more than ever before abused and degraded. Activities such as the discharge of runoffs chemicals onto water and land, deforestation, poor agricultural methods and disposal of waste materials and so on are noticeable. The paper posits that the use of Nigeria environment largely lacks control and monitoring in spite of its laws. However, Nigeria's poor environmental management have resulted in forest, disappearing and aquatic marine and wildlife species becoming extinct in large numbers; there is incessant flooding, erosion, and desertification. The effect also involves the destruction of farmlands, which lead to food insecurity and by extension increase poverty, the loss of aesthetic value owing to dumping in our towns and cities. Those conditions are partly responsible for human insecurity in Nigeria. The paper concludes that Nigeria need to enforce environmental laws, train, retrain environmentalists, and motivate them to monitor the environment for development.*

**Keywords:** *Human Security, Environment, Pollution, Degradation, Management and Development.*

### Introduction

Towards the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and now much have been discussed and is still going on in many fora about human insecurity and the abuse of physical environment in various ways. Before 1987, several issues associated environment in Nigeria and in some countries across the world were not taken serious by the stakeholders. The Nigeria government started taking action toward environment protection, when precisely in 1987, some Italian ships under Raphaeli dumped several barrels of toxic waste at Koko port, a small village of Koko in the present Delta State. Suffices to state that, most importantly, Nigeria drawing from the lessons



of the 1969 – 1970 Sahel drought disaster as well as the 1983 spiral drought that affected the entire Nigerian nation, it was evident that the government needs not be silent over the abused and degraded environmental condition in Nigeria. Besides, there were serious threats to Nigeria environment from within and outside, thus prompted the promulgation of Environmental Protection Decree No 85 of 1988, establishing the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) and the National Policy on Environment in 1989. Indeed, the seriousness on the part of the Federal Government led to the establishment of the Ministry of Environment in 1999 charged with the responsibility of coordinating, formulating and implementing the National Policy that would foster environmental resources conservation (Anijah – Obi, 2001).

On the other hand, the issue of human security in Nigeria received attention even before the colonial period. The angle of human security was in the area of threat to human life. That explains the institutionalization of various security groups since the colonial era – army (infantry, navy, air force) police and other para-military outfits in the country. The government gave less or no attention to the impact of environment on human security, rather preference was given to the area of threat associated with ownership of arms by unauthorized citizens, who either operated themselves as armed robbers, kidnappers, rapists, hostage takers, and others gangs or groups engaged in other forms of violence that are inimical to human survival. The other areas of human security that received attention are consequences of the deadly diseases, such as polio, measles, malaria, HIV/AIDS, and of recent Ebola imported into Nigeria by Liberian – American, Patrick Sawyer.

This paper highlights human security challenges and environmental management. It argues that human security anchors on environment. That without environmental security through good management, other forms of human security – economic security, food security, social security lack cohesion. For contemporary Nigeria to have breathe for sustenance, environment needs control and monitoring through application of enabling laws. That the impact of positive environmental management would reduce forest disappearance, maintain aquatic, marine and wildlife species, the challenges posed by erosion, desertification, flooding would drastically reduce for adequate development.

## **Conceptualizing Security, Human Security, Environment, and Environmental Management**

The consideration of these concepts have direct bearing on the subject of discourse. This is because it is only when the concepts and what they stand for are understood, can the discourse of the environment and its degradation can better be understood and appreciated.

### **The Concept of Security**

The term security is a concept that is often used by all manners of persons but it lacks a precise definition. Security is a state of mind not necessarily an objective state of being. It describes how people feel, not whether they are justified in feeling that way. It depends on the perceptions that people have of their environment, not necessarily on an objective view of that environment. Imobighe (1985) perceives security as a feeling of having protection, freedom from dangers, fear, anxiety, oppression and unwarranted violence. Therefore, security is all about human beings. Indeed, for human beings to be secure, other aspects of security must be optimal and encompassing – environmental security, economic security, food security, social security among others.

According to Soroos (1997) in Collins, contemporary security studies, he put forward that security is the assurance people have that they will continue to enjoy those things that are most important to their survival and well-being. McNamara (1968), a onetime US Secretary of Defense under the President John F. Kennedy administration (later President of the World Bank) states that security is not only about military force, though it may involve it; it goes beyond traditional military activity as well as traditional hardware. It is about development; without development, there can be no security. Here McNamara perceived security because of the period – the world was in a cold war when he conceived the concept. Thus, to him he thought of the measure that would be advantageous to human development especially the developing nations who have little or no business with the cold war palaver.

### **The Concept of Human Security**

The term apparently had its origin in policy statements emanating from the United Nations in the mid-1990s and in particular in 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP Report, 1994). In this document, the UNDP described human security as a condition where people have relief from the traumas that besiege human development. Human security means first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger,



disease, and repression. Second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – shelter in homes, in jobs or in communities. Ensuring human security requires a seven-prong approach to address economic, food, health, environment, personal, community and political security (Collins, 2007).

### **The Concept of the Environment**

The term environment has various meanings, as there are people interested in seeking for knowledge in their various fields of human endeavour. Many see environment socially, others see it culturally and still others see it as physical or biological. Social environment, for instance, consists of the interaction of man and man, man, animals, man, other living, and non-living things that assist in the existence and usefulness of man on this planet. Cultural environment has to do with the norms, values, ethics, and mores of the people.

The physical environment deals with how man interact with water, air, land, animals, and how they affect him and vis-à-vis. In this context, the environment here refers to the physical environment sustained through interdependence. This interdependence is the foundation of our worldly environment, without it there would be no life (Robinson, 1972:479). According to Adejemiua (2007), environment is life support that is all encompassing, comprising of all aspects of our planet earth and surrounding the air, land, atmosphere, marine and wildlife, swamps, and other life-support resources. In a more precise term, life-support environment is that part of the earth that provides the physiological and physical necessities of life including food, other energy resources, minerals, nutrients, air, land and water.

However, based on landscape designers classification, the environment while travelling either by air, water or land can be listed under three categories – fabricated (developed), domesticated (cultivated), natural (uncultivated) sites. The developed environment includes cities, industrial estate and transportation ways such as highways or streets, railways and airports. The cultivated environment includes agricultural lands, managed woodlands and forests, artificial fishponds, water dams or artificial lakes. Cultivated plants and domestic animals dominate this environment; people modify and manage them for food and fiber as well as for recreation and other human needs (Adejemiua, 2007).

In strict sense, natural environments are giving way to developed and cultivated environment. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO defined environment as the physical

and social resources available to a particular time in a given location, for the satisfying of human needs and aspiration. The environment, therefore, comprises the land, water, other living, and non-living resources. In totality, and environment represent the total surrounding biological, physical, chemical impact on the life and activities of man in his day-to-day interaction with nature (Porter and Brown, 1991; Collins, 2007).

### **The Concept of Environmental Management**

Environmental management involves the control and monitoring of the environment with a view to protecting it from pollution and degradation (Adejemiua, 2007). Anijah-Obi (2001), sees environmental management as the strategy by which human activities that affect the environment are organized so as to minimized social well-being and mitigate potential hazards by tackling their root causes. Environmental management is a strategy in which man puts the environment to use without necessarily altering its value through excessive pollution, over cultivation and deforestation or an aspect that may hinder biodiversity among other things. Indeed, the humans have heavily bastardized the Nigeria environment through careless and insolvent attitude of Nigerians towards environmental protection. In this connection, major environmental challenges, which currently threaten Nigeria state today, include deforestation, desertification, erosion, flooding, and pollution from oil industries, industrial effluents, solid and hazardous waste disposal.

### **Land Degradation and Human Security**

Land degradation is the deterioration of the natural environment, including the atmosphere, bodies of water, etc sometimes directly caused by man or natural occurrences. One of such ways in which the environment deteriorates is through pollution. Thus, pollution is the undesirable change in the physical, chemical or biological characteristics of our air, land, and water that may or will harmfully affects human life, or that of other desirable species of plants and animals we share the planet with as well as the industrial processes, living conditions, or cultural assets. Pollution may or will waste, or deteriorate our raw material, life-support and other vital resources (Adejemiua, 2007). Environmental pollution is any action that makes the environment unhealthy and hazardedly impure.

Individuals and companies doing business here are daily polluting Nigeria environment through various means. The degrees of pollution also differ depending on the function. However, in Nigeria today, the most



noticeable aspect of environmental pollution comes from the economic activities of oil exploitation particularly in the Niger Delta, and perhaps few industries that are still operating in Lagos and other big cities. Major pollutions come from the activities of oil multinational companies such as Exxon-Mobil, Agip, Shell, and Texaco that are doing business in Nigeria. In the process of drilling, transportation and storage of oil, there is usually oil spills and gas flaring.

Oil spillage is one of the ways coastal waters suffer pollution in Nigeria. Evidence abound that since 1960, Nigeria experienced over 5,100 oil spills. However, authorities have put the quantum of spills at about 4,900, whatever mathematical ratio, it is no doubt that oil spilled into the waters and some deposited on land is more than 4,900 spills estimated at over 2.5 million barrels of crude oil, polluting over 1000 square kilometers of coastline – mangrove swamps, rivers and creeks. The impact of this spill is enormous – it destroys vegetation, fishponds, and farmlands. Discharging the affluent into water kills the aquatic lives. It should be known that the people of this region eke their living mostly through farming and fishing (Akpan, 2009; Emordi & Azelaman, 2009).

The other process of water pollution is the discharge of untreated industrial water into streams, rivers, lakes e.g. Kaduna River receives untreated water from National Fertilizer Company of Nigeria (NAFCON) and other companies. The river is unfit for man's use for a long time now. Most of the industrial giants in Nigeria do not treat their effluents before discharging them into Nigerian waters. Again, in Lagos for instance, all types of wastes including human and industrial wastes, used engine oil and other oily substances are daily dump into the lagoon around for a Train Terminal, loco, Isale-Eko, Apapa industrial areas, Ebile metta and other areas in the metropolis.

In the same vein, gas flaring is real and a common phenomenon in the Niger Delta. Gas flaring continues day and night in most of the country's oil wells and Nigeria accounts for about 25 percent of the world gas flare. Currently, about 62 per cent of associated with the flaring of natural gas, while about 38 per cent is being re-injected to enhance oil recovery and other economic purpose. The Niger Delta, where gas is flare every day and night since these years of oil exploration. In this connection, gas flare results in acid rain which in turn ruined vegetation, farmlands and crops, the destruction of aquatic and wildlife species. The alternations in the environmental processes result in distortion and damage to natural balance of the ecosystem making the environment inhospitable for sustainable human habitation. Again, gas flaring has

become a potent factor in roasting and baking the land thus making it unproductive. Besides, it has pollutes and contaminates the surface and ground water sources (Adejemilua, 2007 & Akpan, 2009). All these occurrences are enough threats to human security and by extension constitute part of the National insecurity. The livelihoods of the people are in jeopardy – suffering from environmental threat, food insecurity, lack of access to safe drinking water and indeed general insecurity among other things.

Closely related are the issue Artisanal refining and its attendant effect on the environment. Although artisanal refining appears too many a phenomenon that is rooted on militancy. History of artisanal refining is not a recent issue. It has been there for over three decades, dating to the era of Nigeria-Biafra civil war. Artisanal refining is the outcome of the people's frustration because the environment, which they sustain themselves, have been degraded and hence, become unsustainable. For instance, for communities that depended on the traditional livelihoods of fishing and farming, the massive environmental damage means the dislocation of the local economy, leading to high level of poverty and destitution in these communities. This dislocation of the traditional economy gave rise to Niger Delta militancy that held the Nigerian nation to ransom for years until the political solution in the name 'amnesty' appeared.

The effect of militancy felt throughout the country led to the spills of millions of barrels of oil into rivers, creeks and the Atlantic Ocean. Billions of Naira worth of oil money was wasted. Many people have their lives and property destroyed, and the entire South-south and Southeast were tensed and insecure. The importation of firearms became unprecedented and freely used by the militants under different commanders. Indeed, militants held sway in the Niger Delta. Life was seemingly nasty and brutish, lacking the expected value of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It was the height of insecurity apart from the civil war in Nigeria – militancy affected budgets, foreign and local investments, and trade and indeed touched the heart of economic development and growth.

However, the important element apart from the killings, kidnapping and hostage taking and the general insecurity of lives and property, the environmental pollution by these artisanal refiners were enormous. The crude refining methods – produced gas flaring of a new dimension, the sludge from the products into the land and water also cause another havoc to the already polluted environment. However, money and indeed gains were made from the sales of these products, the environment



become more uninhabitable than before. The hydrocarbons discharged and other forms of air and materials weakened the environment than before and by extension lead to loss of biodiversity.

### **Solid and Hazardous Waste Disposal**

Sanitary landfill sites for disposing municipal solid waste and hazardous materials pollute both surface and underground water, primarily through leakage of leachate. However, Nigeria generates millions of tons of solid waste daily. For instance, Adekeye (2007) stated in Lagos and Rivers States generates solid waste estimated at between 522,043 and 342,352 metric tons annually. He continued to explain that solid waste increases as the population grows. Put differently, there is high correlation between population growth in cities and waste generation. It is common site to see household, cottage industrial waste dumped indiscriminately on our cities and towns, without recourse to its effects. Indeed, studies have shown that dumps are not environmentally friendly.

Apart from the contamination of soil, pollution of surface and underground water as earlier pointed, contamination of agricultural lands, lead alone has a poisoning effect. Improperly managed solid waste emits offensive odour, thus polluting the air and favour the breeding of rodents, mosquitoes and harmful reptiles. Dumpsites are homes to flies, fleas, mosquitoes, rats and other vectors, which are responsible for disease such as malaria, *filariasis*, *lassa* fever, yellow fever. These are common sites in our towns and cities. Equally discovered is that malaria, diarrhea, intestinal worms and upper respiratory tract infections are prevalent in the communities around dump. These have negative impact on the productivity of individuals living and doing business in these environments.

Indeed, the works of Eddy, Odoemelem and Mbaba of the Department of Chemistry, Michael Okpara University, Umudike showed that solid waste harbours radioactivity properties like flammables, explosives, corrosives, toxics and mutagenic, as well as anti-metabolic properties like allergic and infective elements (Adekeye, 2007). These are connects, with environment and activities of man within it. Since it affects the development and growth of man, it constitutes an aspect of national insecurity. A threat to man and by extension environment the home of man. Good health of individuals within a state promotes productivity, which eventually advances economic growth. Production of harmful wastes into the environment are detrimental to the well-being of those who create wealth hence high reduction in wealth creation may lead to

social problem and by extension conflict for resource control or accumulation.

### **Desertification**

Between 1970s and early 1980s, the issue of desertification in the World's Savannah areas captured world attention than ever before. It was very prominent in the Savannah of South of Sahara Desert in which Nigeria is part. However, several studies have questioned both the definition of desertification and the calculations used to arrive at or derive statistics (Adejemilua, 2007). Nevertheless, desertification is the process where the quality of land is reduced, through negative human activities or sometime caused by nature. Desertification mostly affects the Savannah States of Northern Nigeria. The natural activities responsible for desertification among other things include short or inadequate rainfall, longer dry season, while man-made activities include over-cultivation, over-grazing, bush burning, deforestation and other processes to which environment is put negatively or in an improper use.

Meanwhile, it is of note that desertification is about ninety-five per cent man-made. The main cause of desertification is the felling of trees for fuel wood. About 90 per cent of the citizens in Northern Nigeria rely on fuel wood. Apart from searching for fuel wood which usually leads to felling down of trees, or searching for animals (games) for food, other activities that reduces the land is poor farming methods. The common farming method used is the slash and burn or what most scholars usually refer to as shifting cultivation. Well, the actual shifting cultivation is a common practice in South America. This practice is also in most parts of Nigeria. This common farming practice opens the land to the effect of the wind and water erosion. Wind erosion is very common and more destructive in the Savannah than the water erosion. Often both act at various times and degrade the land.

However, other activities are those of the herdsmen, whose animal graze on the available vegetable and compound the problem, leading to forest retreat and a progressively low annual cropping. In Nigeria, the states highly prone to desertification include Zamfara, Kebbi, Katsina, Jigawa, Yobe, Sokoto, Bornu Bauchi, Gombe and Kano. In addition desert conditions are estimated to be advancing southwards at the rate of about 0.6km per annum with grave impacts for the 35 million Nigerians deriving their livelihoods from pasturing and fishing. For the impact on the human activities and nature have placed on the Savannah environment, to reduce or rejuvenate the environment, it is estimated that



it would cost Nigeria about US\$5, 110 million (₦648, 97 billion per annum) Akpan, (2009; Adejemilua, 2007). For every tree felled in the Savanna, especially the Sahel region three new trees need to be replace. Farming of any kind including trans-humans should be abolish. Issues on Lake Chad should be taken seriously because it may become a dry land in the next 20 years and would adversely affect Nigerians and by extension lead to human insecurity.

### **Erosion**

Erosion is an aspect of land degradation usually caused by man and sometimes by nature. Erosion is the removal of part of the land surface by wind, water, gravity, or ice. The ice factor is applicable to temperate, high mountains including tropical. Wind, water, gravity, ice are agents that transport the materials that were broken up by weathering. Erosion like desertification is about seventy-five per cent man-made. The careless manner in which man handles his environment for productive activities such as mining; quarrying and agriculture are responsible for erosion. For instance, mining is man's activity directly interferes with the landform especially when such mineral is located close to the land surface.

This is typical of Jos Plateau, where tin and columbite and Kassirite, Kaolin in Nasarawa, or where gold is mined as in Ilesa in Osun State. Another form of land degradation emanates from quarrying, where stone or rock is transported to several regions in Nigeria for building and other construction purposes. Okigwe escarpment, Akamkpa crush in Cross River State, Abakaliki in Ebonyi and Nasarawa and Plateau State. Umeuduji added that running wastes increase the sediment load of the rivers that drain the region coupled with the rapidly lowering of the topographic surface.

Indeed, the threat caused by soil erosion in some parts of Nigeria, especially in the Southeast, South-south and North-central is pronounced. Whether it is sheet, rill or gully the damage is devastating. The estimate is at over 4,000 active gully erosion sites across the country with over 505 of them being located in Southeast part of the country. The states highly affected by erosion in the South-east and South-south Nigeria are Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi, Edo, Akwa Ibom, Cross River (Akpan, 2009). The cause of the prevailing condition is mainly the activities of the local people, who frequently embark on bush burning and large scale felling of trees. Besides, there is shortage of farmlands and the situation has driven them to over-cropping and the need for fuel wood.

In addition, erosion has adversely affected social life and economic growth and development, some of which include displacement and rural-urban migration. Most violence, armed robbery, kidnapping, hostage taking for ransoms are some manifestation of rural-urban rift with lack of skill or even fixed abode in which one can eke a living. These groups of persons are security risk and contribute to national insecurity. Building of houses or construction of roads in erosion prone areas should be done with utmost care. For road or rail construction, consideration is given to impact assessment to avoid creating artificial canyons for erosion to thrive. Trees or windbreaks such as bamboo is necessary and should be cultivated in region that shows threats to erosion. Marine erosion needs embankments.

### **Flooding**

Flooding is one phenomenon that is associated with environmental degradation and has been with man over centuries. It is seen as an occurrence when peak discharge exceeds channel capacity, and this may be brought about naturally by intense precipitation – in the tropical countries such as ours-rain. In the temperate regions, it may be through ice or snow in addition to rainfall. Our flooding may occur as a discharge from river and stream network, discharge from dams or dam failure.

However, many scholars usually make classification – land flooding, coastal or marine flooding. Whatever classification flooding is because of excessive discharge of water where its route is blocked or cannot be accumulated in the channel or valley meant for it. Flooding is common in both rural and urban environments. Flooding is the most common environmental hazard in Nigeria, perhaps ranked next to desertification. The cause of flood is the negative activities of man in the environment, which ranges from the construction of houses along water channels, improper environmental assessment in the construction of roads, bridges or dams, industries, dumping of refuse and so on.

History of environmental disastrous flooding is not very strange to many Nigerians. It has caused untold hardship to many families – either lost of lives, buildings, farm crops and animals, incapacitation on humans among other things. For instance, in 1988 over 300,000 people were affected by flood in our rural and urban environments, in 1999 over 90,000 people were affected in 2003 over 210,000 people were affected. In 2012 according to National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), about 11,500 persons were displace by floods, which ravaged parts of Jigawa and Kano States (Emmanuel, 2012). In Anambra State flood



devastated over eight local government areas out of 21 with over 40 communities highly affected. The local government affected were Akwa North, Onitsha South, Ihiala, Anambra West, Ogbaru, Anambra East, Idemili South, Ayamelium (Onu, 2012).

The two areas cited represent the some of the numerous Nigerian environments affected yearly by this phenomenon. Indeed, looking at what constitutes national security, it is pertinent to say that flood with its attendant effect on our environment constitutes a 'big' threat to our survival as people and nation; hence a threat to national security. Building of especially residential houses along watercourses or flood prone environment should be avoided. Gully and sheet erosion can act as agents to flooding thus where there is gully or sheet erosion, efforts by government, community based organizations to checkmate erosion and by extension reduce flooding.

#### **Environmental Mismanagement, Some Lessons from the Past**

Man is responsible for environmental mismanagement because of inefficient utilization and management of the ecosystem. There is much expectation from the land in areas of food harvest, without correspondingly return some nutrients to the land. It may be because of ignorance, carelessness, or both. However, Ur of the Chaldeans was once a flourishing community, housed people and animals, there was water for man and animals and by extension people farmed, today it is in ruins. This is for the archaeologists for studies. Sahara desert over the years has been an environment that supported large settlements; today it is a mass of sand with dotted Oases. Its desiccation started about 8,000 BC. The problems associated to environmental degradation is not open to debate, and continues poor utilizations of the environment is now a big challenge for humans (Strike & Ifeka, 1971; Duiker & Spielvogel, 1998). Environmental abuse and its insecurity is experienced the world over especially in the developing world. Nigeria is experiencing serious environmental challenges arising from the negative human activities such as excessive cropping, deforestation, over-grazing and the incessant use of chemical fertilizers. These processes have dislocated the ecosystem and leads to insecurity of the system.

#### **The Way Forward**

Human security is not all about arms threat, environmental threats as discussed above is even stronger than arms threat. Every function of man whether food, industries, housing, aesthetic value, space security, social

security all anchor on good and protective environment. Thus environment need to be manage and sustain. In other words, to manage the environment for human security, consideration must be given to areas such as,

- Environmental planning.
- Provision and making every Nigerian have access to education and indeed environmental education.
- Enlightening the communities to participate in environmental protection in its various forms.
- Also making all to be part of environmental policies and their applications.
- Local government which is the grassroots administration be made to participate in environmental management; there are many ways in which they should kick-start at this level.
- Women have a great role to play in environmental protection and degradation: this is so because nearly half of the women in this country are farmers. They tend to expose the environment to the vagaries of agents of denudation, through felling down of trees and adoption of unconventional methods of farming.
- Population is also a factor; there is need for population control in the country that is highly undeveloped owing to poor governance.

#### **Conclusion**

The paper has been able to x-ray some of the factors responsible for human security challenges caused by environmental mismanagement. It came out with the fact that man is at the centre of environment whether building or protecting or mismanages it. That human security is not all about threats from arms, kidnapping, armed robbery, rape or any other violent acts that can take lives. That, human security anchors on clean and well-managed environment. Pollution and degradation of environment because of the fact that man is looking for comfort, good life, growth and development in the economy and in the process put the environment in jeopardy. A well-managed environment devoid of pollution of any kind adds value to human health. Healthy living in the population is a plus to productivity, which by extension is an index of human security. There is the difficult to eradicate land degradation; however, there is the possibility of reducing it for the well-being of all. It requires serious commitment on the part of the government and the public. Environmental management and control should be in the hands of experts. Experts should bring their

ingenuity and experience to bear on the planning, management and implementation of acceptable policies and practices to reshape the environment as part of the national security. In all, effective implementation of environmental laws would assist in environmental protection and by extension environmental management, which would lead to Human Security.

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