1. Country and Sector Background

Agriculture sector in Bangladesh accounts for about 23% of the GDP and another 33% of GDP is contributed by the rural non-farm economy, which is largely linked to agriculture. Thus, agriculture and rural non-farm economy are the main sources of livelihood for rural people. Despite substantial progress in overall poverty reduction, about half of the population still lives below the poverty line. With almost 85 out of 100 poor people living in rural areas, poverty in Bangladesh is largely a rural phenomenon. Improved economic performance of the agriculture and the rural non-farm sectors is, therefore, critical to reducing poverty.

Agriculture in Bangladesh is characterized by small farm size and rice dominated farming systems. The productivity of rice and other crops is low and there are large yield gaps between farmer’s fields and experimental plots. Same is true for other agricultural commodities such as fisheries and livestock. Over the last three decades, there has been a significant increase in the production of cereals, especially rice, to bring about food self sufficiency. However, this could be threatened in the future due to increasing population and stagnating yields. Diversification of agricultural production systems to high value commodities is slow with limited post-harvest value addition. The private sector makes limited contribution to agricultural research and its investment in agro-processing is a nascent activity.

Acceleration of agricultural growth is being constrained by: (i) weak technology generation and transfer; (ii) deteriorating and declining natural resource base, especially cultivable land; (iii) poorly functioning input and output markets and delivery of other support services; (iv) low private sector investment in agro-processing; and (v) weak local institutions such as Producer’s Organizations (POs) to influence performance of the government agencies, including the large agricultural technology system (research and extension) which is ill prepared to meet the emerging challenges. Since several constraints to accelerate agricultural growth are directly
influenced by the performance of the technology system, a program designed to address its current weaknesses would be critical for the success of a strategy to reduce rural poverty.

2. Objectives

_Lending Instrument._ Since institutions building, especially in the case of agricultural research and extension, is a long-term undertaking, a programmatic approach using an Adaptable Program Loan (APL) instrument is proposed.

_Program Phases._ The proposed program would be implemented in three phases over a 15 year period with a total IDA commitment of about US$ 150 million. The main focus of each phase, along with possible triggers for moving from one phase to the next, would include:

Phase 1 of the program would focus on institutional development. Key triggers would include: amendments of the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) Act and Acts of individual Agricultural Research Institutes (ARIs), establishment of Krisihi Gabeshana (Agricultural Research) Foundation (KGF), and decentralization of planning and funding responsibilities for demand-led extension plans to the Upazilla level organizations.

Phase 2 of the program would continue with institutional strengthening, including reorganization of BARC, but with an increased focus on agricultural technology generation, dissemination and adoption. In addition, phase 2 would address the need for fiduciary (financial management and procurement) and budgetary reforms for agricultural research and extension services. Key triggers would include GOB’s agreement to finance 50% (25% in phase 1) of the operational costs of the sponsored public goods research (SPGR) and full funding of decentralized Upazilla extension programs initiated under phase 1.

Phase 3 would continue the overall program support for institutional strengthening, but with a focus on agricultural technology generation, dissemination and adoption. In addition, assessment of the program impact on agricultural productivity, farm income and poverty reduction would be initiated. The key triggers would include an increase in GOB funding to 75% of operational costs of SPGR, reorganization of line departments (Department of Agricultural Extension-DAE, Department of Fisheries-DOF, Directorate of Livestock Services-DLS) and ARIs to improve institutional efficiency in line with recommendations of special studies and rationalization of ARI network of research stations and sub-stations to reflect revised priorities and changing needs of the technology system.

_Program Development Objective._ The long-term objective of the proposed program would be to reduce rural poverty through improvements in agricultural productivity and farm income, with a particular focus on small and marginal farmers.

_Project Development Objectives._ The development objectives of the first phase project of this long-term program would be to reform and strengthen the national agricultural technology
system in order to improve its performance. This is expected to result in increased productivity and improved farm incomes.

*Outcome indicators.* The achievement of the project development objective would be measured against the following outcome indicators: A more efficient and effective agricultural research and extension system which is able to increase: (i) the number of appropriate agricultural technologies developed; (ii) the number of farmers adopting new agricultural technologies; (iii) the number of farmers engaged in production of high value commodities with effective market linkages (iv) the level of agricultural productivity by farm size and type.

3. **Rationale for Bank Involvement**

*Rationale for Bank Involvement.* The Government of Bangladesh’s (GOB) Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) gives high priority to accelerating agricultural growth to increase rural incomes, reduce poverty and improve food security. The potential sources of future agricultural growth are expected to be increased productivity, diversification into high value agriculture (HVA) and post-harvest value addition. In recognition of the critical role of the science and technology in exploiting these potential sources of agricultural growth, GOB has made a modest increase in 2005-07 budgets for the National Agricultural Research System (NARS), which had declined from around 0.27% in 1997-98 to 0.2% of AGDP in 2003-04. However, GOB lacks resources to increase agricultural research investment to 0.6% of AGDP, the average for developing countries as a group, which is much lower than the corresponding 2% of AGDP for developed countries.

GOB has requested assistance from the World Bank to increase public investment in agricultural research and to reform the technology system so that it is able to help achieve the PRSP objectives. Since institution building is a slow process, requiring sustained support, GOB is keen to avoid the ‘stop and go’ development pattern experienced in the past, linked to cycles of the externally funded projects. As compared to other development partners providing support for the agricultural sector, the Bank is best placed to provide a longer-term assistance to enable Bangladesh to revitalize its agricultural technology system, which was established primarily with earlier support from the World Bank.

The Bank’s recent study of the rural non-farm sector and a policy review of the national agricultural technology system have identified key areas for reform to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the technology system. In addition, the lessons learnt from the earlier Bank projects and OED’s project performance assessment report have highlighted the importance of addressing the unfinished agenda on institutional reform, including issues related to governance and autonomy of NARS, decentralization of extension management and funding decisions, weak management systems and sustainability of funding. The Bank has wide experience in helping governments to improve and reform agricultural research and extension systems and the proposed project interventions respond to the valuable lessons learnt from earlier projects in Bangladesh. The Bank Group’s close association with the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) further adds to its unique position to help Bangladesh to strengthen linkages with the CGIAR’s international agricultural research centers and the wider international scientific community.
A well coordinated assistance program from the Bank and other development partners would help GOB to develop a long-term strategy for strengthening the technology system, taking into account the new challenges and the changing roles of the public and the private sectors. Such a strategy would also be able to help with the introduction of improved business processes, benefit from international experiences in reforming national agricultural research and extension systems, support access to new sciences and invest in developing the human capital. However, if left unsupported, the public institutions would continue to decline and fail.

In the context of Paris Declaration on harmonization and alignment of development assistance and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Rural Poverty Partnership Initiative (IPRI) in Asia Region, the proposed program has been identified by the World Bank and IFAD as an appropriate vehicle for developing strategic partnership in a sector prioritized by GOB’s PRSP for alleviation of rural poverty in Bangladesh. During discussions between regional officials of the World Bank and IFAD, it became clear that significant gains could be made through this partnership.

4. Description

The proposed approach consists of a long-term programmatic approach that is specifically designed to address the critical reforms, investment and institutional development needs that are necessary for revitalizing the national agricultural technology system in Bangladesh. This would involve a series of investment projects, using the Adaptable Program Lending (APL) instrument for this purpose. The proposed National Agricultural Technology Project (NATP) would be the first phase of this long-term program. Approval of subsequent phases by the World Bank Board would be contingent on the progress made in implementing the agreed policy and institutional reforms in the previous phase.

Component 1. Agricultural Research Support

This component would aim to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the national agricultural research system through: (a) promotion of a pluralistic institutional structure by enabling entry of new partners to support the research system; (b) making agricultural research more participatory and demand-led; (c) developing technologies to promote sustainable intensification and diversification of agriculture and for post-harvest value addition; and (d) bridging the yield gap between what is possible and what is being currently achieved by farmers.

Activities to be financed under the component.

The component will have national coverage, and the following activities would be financed.

(i) Establishment of an Autonomous Krishi Gobeshana Foundation to manage the Competitive Grants Program. GOB would establish an autonomous Krishi Gobeshana (Agriculture Research) Foundation (KGF), with its own Governing Board, to manage the Competitive Grants Program (CGP) with independence, objectivity and transparency (this
has already been approved by the Government). KGF would invite multi-disciplinary agricultural research and development proposals from all organizations with capacity to undertake such work, including NARS institutes, universities, NGOs, and the private sector. By opening the CGP to non-traditional partners, a more competitive pluralistic institutional structure for the NARS would be facilitated. The priority research themes for competitive funding would be identified through a demand-led process involving farmers, including researchable priority themes/constraints identified during micro-level planning of agricultural extension (described under Component 2).

(ii) **Sponsored Public Goods Research (SPGR).** Long-term strategic and cross-cutting research would be supported on selected priority themes of public goods nature, e.g. issues related to sustainable management of natural resources, germplasm conservation. The SPGR proposals would be largely prepared and implemented by the Agricultural Research Institutes (ARIs) under NARS and coordinated by the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC). However, partnerships between national and selected international institutions with excellence in research and education in areas of relevance to Bangladesh, would be supported, especially to build capacity/skills of national institutions in ‘new sciences, e.g. molecular biology, bio-informatics.

(iii) **Enhancement of Institutional Efficiency.** To improve governance, institutional responsibilities and management systems of NARS, the 1996 BARC Act would be amended and Acts of individual institutes under the Ministry of Agriculture (and possibly the Acts of institutes under the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock) would be revised. The amended Act would also incorporate proposal for introduction of uniform service rules for the NARS scientists (ARIs and BARC). BARC’s organizational structure would be rationalized and its capacity strengthened for improved resource allocation, prioritization, coordination, human resource development, monitoring and evaluation of research, as well as for promoting adoption of participatory research planning and implementation processes. These changes would contribute to improved efficiency and effectiveness of the NARS. Concurrently, capacity of BARC and ARIs would be enhanced to manage fiduciary responsibilities related to procurement and financial management. Funding would be provided for preparation and implementation of a need-based human resource development plan, including enhancement of capacity in social sciences, access to IT tools and techniques for improved communications and dissemination of research information.

**Component 2. Agricultural Extension Support**

The long-term objective would be to establish a decentralized demand-led extension service, which is knowledge-based and accountable to farmers for planning and delivery of extension support. The proposed interventions would draw on lessons learnt from extension approaches previously pilot tested in Bangladesh and other countries in the region, especially the decentralized and participatory technology transfer mechanism and institutional innovations promoted under the National Agricultural Technology Project in India which was completed in 2005.
**Geographic coverage and selection criteria.** The national coverage under this component of the program would be achieved in phases, covering about 25% of the districts/Upazillas under the current project and expanding to other districts and Upazilas during subsequent phases based on implementation experience and changing needs of farmers. Multiple criteria, covering socio-economic, bio-physical and institutional considerations, would be used to select the districts, followed by selection of Upazillas. The selection criteria could include: poverty levels; population density; status of rural infrastructure; bio-physical (rainfall, soils, irrigation water) potential; major production systems; status of natural resource base; implementation capacity; and institutional support.

**Activities to be finance under the component.** The project would finance extension micro-plans, technology validation trials and demonstrations, NGO Services, consultancies, training, information and knowledge sharing, including publications, production of publicity materials for print and electronic media, office equipment and supplies and incremental operating costs. Specific activities would include:

(i) **Decentralization of Extension Service.** Responsibility for preparation, implementation and funding of demand-led extension micro-plans (covering crops, horticulture, livestock and fisheries) would be delegated to the Upazilla level. The key elements of the decentralized system would include: (a) targeting, motivation, organization and capacity building of rural producers with the help of NGOs to form Common Interest Groups (CIGs) based on livelihoods or some other common interest, e.g. credit, water use, to prepare and implement participatory extension micro-plans at the Union level reflecting the priority needs of the CIG members in crops/horticulture, livestock and fisheries sub-sectors; (b) aggregation of Union micro-plans to provide the Upazilla extension plan, along with sub-sector (crops, livestock, fisheries) budget estimates, for review and approval by the Upazilla Extension Coordination Committee (UECC); (c) funding for implementation of extension micro-plans would be provided by line departments through respective budgets, with the project bridging the funding gap; (d) technical support and training of CIGs by the Upazilla and Union level extension teams (departmental staff, NGOs and farmer resource persons), who in turn would be trained and technically supported by the district level extension staff with the involvement of research scientists; and (d) the national level policy guidance, inter-agency/departmental coordination and monitoring and evaluation of the decentralized extension system by the National Extension Coordination Committee (NECC), supported by the District and Upazilla level Extension Coordination Committees (DECC and UECC), with representation of all relevant stakeholders.

(ii) **Strengthening of Research-Extension-Farmer Linkages.** Support would be provided for: (a) the early involvement of researchers in extension planning and work on demand-based on-farm technology validation; (b) demonstrations, workshops and farmer exchange visits, including increased use of communications technologies for training and dissemination of extension related information; and (c) establishment of Farmer’s Information and Advice Centers at the Union level to promote farmer-to-farmer exchange of information/experiences, as well as interactions with public/private service providers.
(iii) **Enhancing Institutional Efficiency.** To improve overall efficiency of the public extension service and to strengthen a decentralized pluralistic institutional structure of extension service providers, assistance would be provided to: (a) develop producer’s organizations (POs) based on CIGs, especially at Union and Upazilla levels, to empower members for greater participation in planning, implementation and monitoring of extension and to make the public service more responsive to their needs; (b) evaluate and revise current structure, functions and business procedures of different line departments (Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), Department of Fisheries (DOF) and Directorate of Livestock Services (DLS)), including capacity to manage fiduciary responsibilities; (c) update MOA’s National Agricultural Policy (NAP) and the New Agricultural Extension Policy (NEAP), preparation of a new livestock extension policy consistent with GOB’s PRSP, and preparation of a national extension implementation strategy to strengthen coordination and synergy between extension activities of different line departments (DAE, DOF and DOL) and complimentarity with the private sector service providers; and (d) strengthen training capacity and facilities for need-based human resource development (DAE, DOF, DLS staff and farmers) in strategic partnerships with other organizations, e.g. agricultural universities, large NGOs.

**Component 3. Development of Value Chains**

To assist with development of value chains of selected commodities (e.g. fruits, vegetables, flowers, poultry, dairy, meat, fisheries) in selected Upazillas, where farmers are already engaged in production of such commodities for the local or export markets, alternative market-led approaches to farmer-market linkages and value addition would be tested. As in Component 2, CIGs and POs would be the focal point for decentralized participatory planning and implementation.

**Activities to be financed under the component.**

The project would finance consultancies, NGO services, technology validation trials and demonstrations, publications, production of publicity materials for print and electronic media, office equipment and supplies and incremental operating costs. In early years, there would be a strong emphasis on bridging the ‘know-how’ gap in this field based on analysis of selected value chains. Specific activities would include:

(i) **Strengthening Farmer-Market Linkages.** To facilitate production of the type (variety) and the quality of commodities demanded by the market, the project would help producers to organize themselves in to groups and diversify production by self-selecting market options and products they wish to invest in. This would help to vertically integrate small and marginal producers into value chains covering key commodities of interest to the poor, including rice, maize, fruits, vegetables, livestock and fisheries. More specifically, the project would: (a) as in Component 2, organize producers into CIGs and POs with a focus on small and marginal farmers; (b) where appropriate, promote contract farming by linking CIGs and POs with processors and/or marketing organizations for production of selected commodities, especially for the local market, building on experience gained from on-going contract farming activities in the country; and (c) disseminate ‘best practices’ for
production, post-harvest technologies, management of value chains and to promote quality improvement based on low-cost post-harvest management practices, including cleaning, grading, packing, storage and transport, and introduction of higher sanitary and phyto-sanitary standards (SPS) required by the national and/or export markets. Different options for extension support would be utilized. These could include the use of decentralized public extension service or contractual arrangements with other service providers, including NGOs or the private sector. Option for establishment of demand-based ‘user support fund’ would be considered to provide producer groups and their organizations investing in higher-risk activities to access services from suppliers of their choice.

(ii) **Capacity Building and Knowledge Management.** Support would be provided for: (a) capacity building of trainers, and training programs aimed at capacity building of CIGs, POs agribusiness staff and public officials (research, extension, regulators) in commercial farming practices, including issues related to agribusiness development, access to appropriate financial services and marketing support; (b) information sharing support to both the public and the private sector participants; and (c) development of effective linkages with the research system and support for validation trials, especially for work on local value chains.

(iii) **Enhancing Institutional Efficiency.** The focus would be on strengthening of institutional arrangements and ‘know-how’ of organizations able to support market-oriented production systems, including: (a) support to CIGs and POs to play a central role in helping members to improve access to markets, both through orderly contract farming and direct marketing, and other services (inputs, credit, technical support); and (b) improvements in institutional and operational effectiveness of Hortex, the specialized agency established by MOA to promote post-harvest value addition and market linkages to accelerate growth of high value chains of agricultural commodities; especially horticulture.

**Component 4. Project Management and Coordination.**

The Project Coordination Unit (PCU) would coordinate and facilitate implementation of NATP under the direction and supervision of the Project Steering Committee (PSC). The Project Implementation Units in BARC, DAE, DOF and DLS would be responsible for ensuring implementation of project activities assigned to institutions/units under their respective organizations. The PCU would be headed by the Project Director and would have 3 National Coordinators responsible for Agricultural Research (component 1), Agricultural Extension (component 2) and Development of Value Chains (component 3). It would also have expertise in Administration, Financial Management, Procurement, M&E, and Social/Environmental aspects to support and develop capacity of implementing agencies, as needed.

5. **Financing**

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<tr>
<td>INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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6. Implementation

*Project Coordination Unit (PCU).* Operating under the overall direction of the PSC, PCU would have the responsibility for coordination of NATP implementation by line departments (DAE, DOF, DLS), BARC, KGF, NGOs and grassroots organizations of the participating farming communities. Based on inputs from different implementing agencies, it would consolidate NATP annual budget and work plan for approval by the PSC. PCU would facilitate compliance with fiduciary requirements of the project related to financial management and procurement, overall monitoring and evaluation of project activities and inputs from experts on any specialized subject matter to ensure timely implementation of the project.

*BARC* would be responsible for prioritization, review and approval of the sponsored public goods research (SPGR) proposals submitted by ARIs for implementation. It would also assist KGF in identifying and prioritizing thematic areas for support under the CGP. It would arrange independent reviews of implementation progress of research programs, coordinate monitoring, evaluation, as well as impact assessment of research, preparation of human resource development program for the national agricultural research system and arrange special studies on thematic areas needed to support ARIs.

*KGF.* Operating under its own Governing Board with autonomy and transparency, KGF would be responsible for managing implementation of the CGP.

*Project Implementation Units (PIUs) in DAE, DOF and DLS.* PIUs in the participating line departments would facilitate timely implementation of decentralized extension activities by teams operating at District, Upazilla and Union levels. They would have responsibility for ensuring compliance with fiduciary requirements of GOB and IDA.

*Upazilla Extension Coordination Committee (UECC)* would oversee planning, budgeting, coordination and implementation of extension activities at the Union and Upazilla levels. UECC would have representation from all the key stakeholders (line departments – DAE, DOF and DLS; farmer organizations, NGOs and the private sector, including input suppliers, marketing agencies and credit). The participatory extension micro-plans prepared by the Union level teams would be reviewed and approved by UECC.

*Horticulture Export Development Foundation (Hortex).* It would assist in the implementation of Component 3 by promoting more equitable value chain governance and market linkages for selected high value commodities (fruits, vegetables, flowers, poultry, dairy, fisheries). It would organize training programs and knowledge sharing on issues related to value chain development, especially for the export markets.

*NGOs.* Under Components 2 and 3 (extension support and development of value chains), NGOs would be contracted to assist in the development of community-based grassroots organizations (Common Interest Groups (CIGs) and Producer’s Organizations (POs)). In addition, under Component 3, NGOs would assist in developing capacity of CIGs and POs to address their own technical, financial and marketing needs related to high value commodities.
Common Interest Groups (CIGs) and Producer’s Organizations (POs). Common Interest Groups (CIGs), based on livelihoods or some other common interest, e.g. credit, water use, to prepare and implement participatory extension micro-plans at the Union level reflecting the priority needs of the CIG members in crops/horticulture, livestock and fisheries sub-sectors. CIGs would be federated into Producer’s Organizations (POs) at the Union, Upazilla and District levels; with an initial focus on the development of the Union level organization. POs would facilitate access to technical financial and marketing services by the producer members. They would also play an advocacy role on behalf of producers, especially opposite elected leaders and government administration.

7. Sustainability

Project sustainability depends on (i) continuous ownership of various initiatives by the GOB and other stakeholders; (ii) strong political support at various levels; and (iii) adequate flow of financial resources to carryout activities after the project closes. Furthermore, the sustainability of this project would be facilitated through (i) the implementation of the 15-year long-term program i.e. through a series of APLs; (ii) through the establishment of an Endowment Fund by GOB that would ensure stable and sustainable financing of KGF and the CGP for agricultural research; (iii) agreement with GOB to increase its budgetary contribution for financing the SPGR and decentralized agricultural extension program; (iv) strengthening institutional capacity for various agencies dealing with agricultural research and extension; and (v) deepening institutional reforms over time, with a particular focus on agricultural research and extension.

8. Lessons Learned from Past Operations in the Country/Sector

International experience as well as the World Bank (along with other development partners) experience in Bangladesh provides many lessons for designing agricultural research and extension projects. The proposed program seeks to build on the following critical lessons:

(a) Institutional Reforms: The institutional reform of the existing agricultural technology system is essential for improved efficiency and effectiveness. Under the proposed program, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) would (i) amend the BARC Act and Acts of individual ARIs (without rescinding them), under the Ministry of Agriculture (and possibly the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock), to improve incentives, productivity, quality and accountability, (ii) establish an autonomous Krishi Gobeshana Foundation (KGF) to manage the Competitive Grants Program (CGP) for financing agricultural research; and (iii) decentralize the planning and funding for agricultural extension in selected Upazillas.

(b) Institutional Development: Institutional development for agricultural research and extension is a long-term process and hence there is a need to support the agreed approach over a longer period. The proposed long-term programmatic approach for a period of 15 years is the most appropriate for building and strengthening development institutions.
(c) **Sustainability:** Lack of sustainability of project activities is one of the recurring problems. The main reason is lack of adequate resources to cover the operational costs. Under this program, the policy, approach and operational procedures would be changed to ensure adequate budgetary financing to meet the operational needs for agricultural research and extension.

(d) **Governance:** Weak fiduciary system (both financial management and procurement) not only leads to delays in project implementation but it also creates governance problems. Both the financial management and procurement capacity and systems would be strengthened under this program.

**Impact:** In the past, the main focus of agricultural research and extension has been monitoring inputs and outputs rather than the impact on performance, productivity and farm income. Under this program, the focus would also include monitoring and evaluation of the impact (in addition to input and output) of agricultural research and extension activities.

9. **Safeguard Policies (including public consultation)**

Even though none of the safeguard policies are expected to be triggered by the proposed project, the Environmental and Social Safeguards Management Framework has been prepared that is designed to address any inadvertent adverse effects during project implementation. Extensive public consultations have already been held and the disclosure process is on-going.

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<td>Projects on International Waterways (OP/BP/GP 7.50)</td>
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10. **List of Factual Technical Documents**

(i) Bank report on “Revitalizing the Agricultural Technology System in Bangladesh”.
(ii) Government’s Project Description Report for the National Agricultural Technology Project – draft prepared by BARC.
(iii) Government’s Social Assessment of the National Agricultural Technology Project.
(iv) Government’s Environmental Management Framework for the National Agricultural Technology Project.
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