

Study Guide: Universal House of Justice Letter to the Conference of the Continental Board of Counselors – 30 December 2021

Introduction *(To be used in conjunction with the full letter by the House of Justice.)*

Capacities Scarcely Glimpsed Needed
(Paragraph 1)

Over the past 25 years the Bahá'í world has undergone a transformation that has endowed it with an undreamed-of capacity to:

- Learn
- Grow
- Serve Humanity

By the conclusion of the new series of plans, in 2046, the Bahá'í community will need to have acquired capacities that can scarcely be glimpsed at present.

Purpose: To Work for the Betterment of the World and Live Together in Concord and Harmony
(Paragraph 2)

Bahá'u'lláh's teachings make this purpose possible, building a society that consciously pursues this collective purpose across generations. It means learning how to:

- Raise up vibrant, outward-looking communities
- Bring about spiritual and material progress (communities)
- Contribute to the discourses that influence the direction of progress

These all represent ways of awakening to the energies latent in the human soul and channeling them towards the betterment of society. They are the means of releasing the "society-building power" of the Faith.

This Series of Global Plans Will Last 25 Years – Until 2046
(Paragraph 3)

These global Plans will carry the ark of the Cause into the third century of the Bahá'í Era, concluding at Ridván 2046.

During this period, the Bahá'í world will be focused on a single aim: **the release of the society-building power of the Faith in ever-greater measures.**

The pursuit of this aim will require a further rise in the capacity of the three protagonists, the:

- Individual believer
- Local community
- Bahá'í institutions

A dynamic relationship is needed between each of the three protagonists, which are incapable of manifesting their full potential on their own. It is by strengthening their dynamic relationships with one another that their powers are combined and multiplied.

"Abdul-Bahá explains that the more the qualities of cooperation and mutual assistance are manifested by a people, *"the more will human society advance in progress and prosperity."*

This "distinguishes and shapes the interactions of individuals, institutions, and communities, and it endows the body of the Cause with moral vigour and spiritual health."

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Introduction, *continued*

Gaining an Ever More Profound Understanding of Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings (Paragraph 4)

Enkindled souls being raised up through the processes of the Plan are seeking to gain an ever more profound understanding of Bahá'u'lláh's teaching – *"The sovereign remedy of every disease"* – and to apply them to the needs of their society.

They are committed to the prosperity of all, recognizing that the welfare of individuals rests in the welfare of society at large. They eschew partisanship and the contest for worldly power.

Conscious of how the forces of materialism are at work around them, they promote these qualities and attitudes, which are the building blocks of a stable social order:

- Transcending differences
- Harmonizing perspectives
- Promoting consultation for decision making
- Rationality and science
- Trustworthiness
- Cooperation
- Forbearance
- Tolerance
- Understanding
- The inherent oneness of humanity
- A view that everyone is a potential partner with whom to collaborate
- A commitment to fostering fellow feeling even among groups who may traditionally have been hostile to one another
- The creative power of unity
- Humanity's capacity for altruism
- The power that true religion possesses to transform hearts and overcome distrust
- A commitment to remaining respectful of the freedom of conscience of every soul and the necessity to never impose their own standards on anyone
- Clarity about what they have learned and what they still need to learn

Ernest pursuit of the Plan's central aim will cause many such communities to emerge.

Study Questions

1. What is the single aim the Bahá'í World will be focused on between now and 2048? What needs to happen to achieve this aim?
 2. Why is a dynamic relationship needed between the three protagonists?
 3. Why are enkindled souls seeking to gain an ever more profound understanding of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings?
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The Movement of Clusters

Further Advances in the Process of Entry by Troops Needed (Paragraph 5)

In every part of the world, diffusing the light of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation ever more widely and extending the roots of His Faith ever more deeply into the soil of society have measurable outcomes:

- The number of clusters where a program of growth has been initiated
- The degree of intensity that each program of growth has reached

The means now exist for a swift advance in relation to both of these measures. Our goal must be, during the current series of global Plans (between Ridván 2022 and Ridván 2046), to **establish intensive programs of growth in all the clusters in the world**. This formidable objective implies a broadening and intensification of activity on a scale never witnessed. **Rapid progress toward this goal must be achieved in the course of the Nine Year Plan.**

Cluster Adjustments (Paragraph 6)

NSAs and RBCs are asked to determine whether their clusters would benefit from any adjustments. Much has been learned over the past 21 years about the manageability of clusters in terms of size in various contexts and parts of the world. Some modification has already begun. Areas that are sparsely populated owing to the natural terrain may be excluded from the clustering scheme.

Basic Model for Community Expansion and Consolidation will Remain (Paragraph 7)

The movement of clusters along a continuum of development will remain the basic model for the expansion and consolidation of the community. The features of the developmental path are already well known to the friends.

By the close of the One Year Plan:

- Programs of growth will be under way in over 6,000 clusters.
- The second milestone will have been passed in close to 5,000 clusters.
- The believers will have advanced further in 1,300 clusters.

These figures must climb considerably over the coming nine years. Once any adjustments have been made, NSAs and RBCs will be asked to forecast the numbers of clusters where progress could be made past the first, second, and third milestones.

NOTE: These are only well-informed estimates; At Ridván, The House of Justice will set the total collective aspirations of the Bahá'í world for the Nine Year Plan.

A Chief Objective: At Least One Third-Milestone Cluster in Every Country and Region (Paragraph 8)

There is immense value to a region to have at least one community that has passed the third milestone. In such clusters, the means to disseminate insights and share experience about community-building are in place and a swift acceleration of the expansion and consolidation work becomes possible.

It is imperative that during the Nine Year plan the process of growth reach this level of intensity in at least one cluster in every country and region. It will require the concentrated effort of many to serve on dedicated teams of international and homefront pioneers who will dedicate significant time and energy over a number of years. Collaboration and mutual assistance are needed.

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The Movement of Clusters, *continued*

Meaningful Conversations Lead the Way for Group Enrollments (Paragraph 9)

Over the last five years Bahá'ís have gained the capacity to engage in conversations on spiritual themes through Ruhi Institute courses and experience. This opens settings in which receptive souls, whole families and peer groups can take part in meaningful conversations which awaken interest in the Faith.

Those who recognize Bahá'u'lláh and accept the privileges and responsibilities uniquely associated with membership in the Bahá'í community experience a singular moment in their spiritual development. Participation in community-building activities open wide the doors to give encouragement to those who stand at the threshold.

Reflect on Effective Teaching and Be Occupied with an Ongoing Process of Learning (Paragraph 10)

Auxiliary Board members will help the believers reflect on effective ways of teaching in their surroundings and to fan the passion for teaching that will attract Divine confirmations.

Different settings and circumstances lend themselves to different approaches, and the friends should be occupied in an ongoing process of learning about what is most effective in the place where they are.

Study Questions

1. What are the implications of establish intensive programs of growth in all the clusters in the world?
 2. What can be achieved by making cluster adjustments?
 3. Why is the House of Justice calling for at least one third-milestone cluster in each country and region?
 4. To what does the capacity to engage in conversations on spiritual themes open the doors?
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Learning from the Most Advanced Clusters

Universal Participation in Community Building (Paragraph 11)

Passing the third milestone implies intense activity in specific neighborhoods or villages and a concerted effort by the generality of believers in a cluster – the mobilization of a sizeable number of Bahá'ís who are applying the Plan's framework for action, including families and individuals working together as an expanding nucleus and engaging with their networks at work, school community hub or otherwise to accompany others who arise to serve.

A Specialized Form of Community Building

Steps are being taken in some clusters to systematically reach a specific receptive population that is dispersed throughout the cluster. It is a specialized form of community building that shows great promise. Many such opportunities will emerge as the friends participate in the Plan, learn from experience and kindle the joy of teaching.

Coordination is Needed as Growth Occurs (Paragraph 12)

As inhabitants of receptive neighborhoods and villages begin to participate in large numbers, more coordination is needed to cope with the complexities involved. Collaboration emerges among groups of families, who organize community-building activities with a view to expanding to many nearby households in an informal network providing encouragement and support.

Culture in these places is changing – valuing the worship and service of many people at once. Community gatherings, including camps and festivals frequently occur, and include the arts, such as music and song, resulting in:

- Generating joy
- Strengthening bonds of unity
- Disseminating knowledge
- Consolidating understanding
- Acquainting those in the wider society with the principles of the Cause

There remains a strong focus on being outward looking: finding ways to continually share the fruits of a thriving pattern of action.

The Focus Broadens (Paragraph 13)

A specific heartening phenomenon emerges when a significant portion of the population is taking part in community-building activities. These things begin to occur:

- The friends at the grassroots are increasingly occupied with the progress and well-being of everyone in the vicinity.
 - Bahá'í institutions feel more keenly their responsibility for the spiritual education of an entire generation of children and junior youth, most of whom might already be engaged in community activities.
 - Local Spiritual Assemblies strengthen their relationships with authorities and local leaders:
 - Entering into formal collaborations
 - Multiplying initiatives of social action in response to needs
 - Auxiliary Board Members appoint additional assistants to serve a single village or neighborhood:
 - Following one or more lines of action
 - Offering counsel and support
 - Lending momentum to the processes in motion
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Learning from the Most Advanced Clusters, *continued*

A Profound Change Occurs (Paragraph 14)

In places where large numbers of a population are participating in the activities of the Plan, this happens:

- The inhabitants possess an increased capacity to steer the course of their own development.
 - The institutions and agencies of the Faith have an expanded vision of their responsibilities, are aware of the social forces at work, and act to preserve the integrity of the community's main endeavors.
 - The relationship of the Bahá'í community to the surrounding society undergoes a profound change.
 - The Bahá'í community becomes a highly visible protagonist in society in its own right, ready to take on important responsibilities and intensify a broad, collective process of learning about spiritual and material progress.
 - As the wider society embraces many aspects of Bahá'í community life, groups come together in a combined movement inspired by acceptance of the oneness of humanity.
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The Friends Must Be Able to Read Their Own Reality (Paragraph 15)

The ways in which the society-building power of the Faith will find expression in different settings vary. Bahá'í activity on this scale is not possible everywhere because clusters and parts of clusters differ. The challenge facing the friends everywhere, regardless of the milestone achieved, are the same. They must be able to read their own reality and ask:

What, in light of the possibilities and requirements at hand, would be fitting objectives to pursue in the coming cycle or series of cycles?

For every community there is a goal in reach, and for every goal a path to reach it. We must hasten to achieve it.

Study Questions

1. How is the participation of large numbers of people in the community-building activities changing culture?
 2. What happens when a significant portion of the population is taking part in community-building activities?
 3. What, in light of the possibilities and requirements at hand, would be fitting objectives to pursue in the coming cycle or series of cycles?
 4. What, in light of the possibilities and requirements at hand, would be fitting objectives to pursue in the coming cycle or series of cycles?
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Contributing to Social Transformation

**“Atmosphere”
in Which Souls
Can Grow and
Reflect God’s
Light**
(Paragraph 16)

The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh is concerned with the transformation of both humanity’s inner life and social environment. The social environment provides the “atmosphere” in which souls can “grow spiritually and reflect in full the light of God” shining through the Revelation.

A clear sign that the society-building power of the Cause is being released in a cluster is that efforts are being made by a growing band of its inhabitants, inspired by the teachings of the Faith, to help improve the spiritual character and social conditions of the wider community to which they belong. The contribution made by Bahá’ís is distinguished by its focus on building capacity for service; it is an approach founded on faith in the ability of a population to become the protagonists of their own development.

**Coherence
Comes from a
Common
Framework for
Action**
(Paragraph 17)

As the intensity in a cluster increases, the friends there become more conscious of social, economic, or cultural barriers that are impeding people’s spiritual and material progress.

- Children and junior youth lacking support in their education
- Pressures on girls resulting from traditional customs related to early marriage
- Families needing help with navigating unfamiliar systems of healthcare
- A village struggling for want of some basic necessity
- Long-standing prejudices arising from a legacy of hostility between different groups

When a Bahá’í community encounters these situations and others, it will be drawn to respond to such realities as its circumstances permit. **Within clusters, expansion and consolidation, social action, and contributing to prevalent discourses are dimensions of a single, unified, outward-looking endeavor carried out at the grassroots of society.**

All these efforts are pursued according to a common framework for action, and this above all else brings coherence to the overall pattern of activity.

**Human
Resources
Increase
Cluster
Capacity**
(Paragraph 18)

Cluster capacity for social action increases with more human resources. It is being undertaken in these important fields:

- The environment
- Agriculture
- Health
- The Arts
- Education

Over the course of the Nine Year Plan, a proliferation of formal and informal efforts to promote social and economic development will emerge. Where possible,

- Local Spiritual Assemblies will need to learn how to cultivate initiatives and foster promising efforts.
 - Bahá’í-inspired organizations will be needed in some cases.
 - National Spiritual Assemblies will need to find ways to stay well informed about what is being learned at the grassroots and analyze the experience gained.
 - This may require dedicated entities to follow social action.
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Contributing to Social Transformation, *continued*

Reframing Issues with a New Perspective (Paragraph 19)

The capacity for social action and the capacity for contributing to the discourses of society are closely connected. In short, it is participating in a conversation about something that affects people's lives and offering a perspective based on Bahá'í principles and experience. Individuals learn this skill through institute courses. More formally, it is central to the work of the BIC and national OPAs. At the grassroots, this capacity becomes increasingly important as the Bahá'ís engaged in community building and learn about the social problems and aspirations of the people in an area. As the numbers increase, so does the need for the Bahá'í community to offer its perspective. LSAs begin to be viewed as a source of moral insight.

Over time, the efforts of the Bahá'í community become more systematic and they get better at encouraging constructive discourse and consensus. Community leaders and authority figures are engaged in the discourse and spaces are created for various groups and interests to use consultation to reach agreement, all the while continuing to learn more throughout the Nine Year Plan.

Individual Efforts with Like-Minded Organizations (Paragraph 20)

In response to the tribulations of a perplexed and sorely agitated world, social action and engagement in social discourse have also emerged as individual Bahá'ís have positioned themselves in occupations and like-minded organizations where they have been able to lend Bahá'í perspective to a particular discourse, drawing on these principles and insights to guide activities occurring at the grassroots and benefiting from the wise counsels of LSAs and NSAs.

- Large and small projects have been started in response to a range of social issues.
 - Numerous Bahá'í-inspired organizations have been established by groups of individuals to work for many different objectives.
 - Specialist entities have been founded to give attention to a particular discourse.
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Study Questions

1. How do we know that the society-building power of the Cause is being released?
 2. What happens when the Bahá'í community encounters social, economic, and cultural barriers that are impeding people's spiritual and material progress?
 3. What needs to happen when formal and informal efforts to promote social and economic development begin to emerge?
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Educational Endeavors and the Training Institute

The Significance of Education in Social Transformation Cannot be Underestimated (Paragraph 21)

The significance of education in community building is unmistakable, and for social action it remains the primary Bahá'í contribution in most parts of the world. The training institute is a pre-eminent example. Building capacity for service through ever-increasing numbers of individuals will continue to be a central feature of the Plans.

The capacity for community development that has already emerged, represented by hundreds of thousands of individuals who are able to serve as tutors, animators, or children's class teachers, is a resource of historic consequence.

A More Expansive View of the Training Institute is Needed (Paragraph 22)

The training institute was first introduced in the context of raising human resources to take on the tasks of expansion and consolidation. Now, participation in institute courses is preparing the friends for deeper engagement in the life of the wider community, giving them knowledge, insights and skills to contribute to the progress of society in a seamless, coherent educational experience for these three stages of the educational process:

1. Children, ages 5 to 11
2. Junior Youth, ages 11 to 15
3. Youth through adulthood, ages 15 and older

Curricular materials build capacity for a broad range of initiatives. They offer a seamless, coherent educational experience beginning at the age of five, and serve as a direct counterpart to activities at the grassroots. Systems for the preparation and refinement of educational materials will need to be extended. The House of Justice will soon set out the approach that will guide this work over the coming years.

Raising Institute Capacity (Paragraph 23)

To raise the capacity of institutes to deliver each of the three stages of the educational process, attention is increasingly being given to enhancing the quality of the educational experience itself, in addition to expanding the system for its delivery. A critical requirement is to enable all to progressively advance their understanding of the educational content, its:

- Objectives
- Structure
- Pedagogical principles
- Methodology
- Central concepts
- Interconnections

Key factors supporting this work, in many places, which further raise capacity are:

- Training institute boards supported by collaborative groups
 - Auxiliary Board members
 - Separate teams focused on
 - Children's classes
 - Junior youth groups
 - Study Circles.
 - Individuals with a depth of experience in the promotion of institute activities serving as resource persons
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Educational Endeavors and the Training Institute, *continued*

Raising Institute Capacity, *continued* (Paragraph 23)

Institutes have been organized into groupings of varying sizes to enable lessons learned by the most experienced institutes to be shared more widely, increasingly through formal seminars.

Collaboration between junior youth spiritual empowerment program learning sites and associated institutes are extremely fruitful and should be intensified. The knowledge that has now accumulated about factors that contribute to the effectiveness of the institute process is extensive. The International Teaching Centre will organize what has been learned and make it available.

An Educational System in a State of Constant Refinement (Paragraph 24)

Many individuals are needed to further develop the institute:

- To plan ahead
- To ensure that individuals with capacity are able to:
 - Sustain their service
 - Continue to be involved in the institute in other meaningful ways (when circumstances change)

Every believer will want to contribute to the institute's advancement, especially the Bahá'í youth, because:

- Releasing the potential of young people is a sacred charge for the believers.
- The House of Justice asks that all Bahá'í youth view the future development of the institute as a sacred charge.
- A broad movement of youth will set the standard for a higher level of institute functioning.
- Youth should seize every opportunity in these areas to encourage more souls to benefit from the institute's programs:
 - Schools
 - Universities
 - Work
 - Family
 - Social interaction

Some youth will be able to devote a year or more to service to provide education to those younger than themselves and support the institute's activities as an ever-present dimension of their lives throughout their own education and in their careers.

An Increased Awareness of the Importance of Education (Paragraph 25)

In many parts of the world, a natural outcome of the participation of individuals and families in the institute process has been an increased consciousness of the importance of education in all its forms, not limited to the courses offered by the institute itself.

Engagement in the institute process by large numbers has been seen to gradually reshaped this aspect of culture within a population. The institutions of the Faith will need to take responsibility for ensuring that this can be fulfilled. Long-term results depends on the effort made to invest in those who will assume responsibility for collective social progress.

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Educational Endeavors and the Training Institute, *continued*

Constant Endeavor Needed

(Paragraph 26)

Shoghi Effendi has laid great stress on the importance of striving, through “constant endeavour,” to obtain “a more adequate understanding of the significance of Bahá’u’lláh’s stupendous Revelation.”

The training institute has no parallel as an instrument for the systematic exposure of limitless numbers of souls to the life-giving waters of the Revelation and the inexhaustible meaning of the Word of God.

The friends’ efforts to increase their understanding of the Faith and its teachings are not limited to the institute process. Effectiveness is demonstrated by a thirst to continue to study the Cause beyond the study of the Revelation itself, the implications that the teachings hold for countless fields of human endeavor are of great importance.

EXAMPLE: One form of education through which young believers are becoming better acquainted with a Bahá’í perspective on issues relevant to the progress of humanity is participation in the seminars offered by the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity. Given the vastness of the ocean of the Revelation, it will be apparent that exploring its depths is a lifelong occupation of every soul who would tread the path of service.

As the Faith Gains Greater Visibility

(Paragraph 27)

As the contribution being made by the Faith to the progress of society in different parts of the world gains greater visibility, the Bahá’í community will increasingly be called upon to explicate the principles it advocates, and to demonstrate their applicability to the issues facing humanity.

The more the intellectual life of a community blossoms and thrives, the greater its capacity to answer this call. It will be up to the followers of Bahá’u’lláh to provide, in the world of ideas, the intellectual rigor and clarity of thought to match their commitment to spiritual and material progress in the world of deeds.

Study Questions

1. How does education bring about social transformation?
 2. How is the Training Institute changing and what are the implications for the future?
 3. In what way will the capacity of institutes to deliver each of the three stages of the educational process increase?
 4. Why is “a more adequate understanding of the significance of Bahá’u’lláh’s stupendous Revelation” so important?
 5. As the visibility of the Faith’s contribution to the progress of society increases, what will the Bahá’ís be called on to do?
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Raising Capacity for Administration at All Levels

Bahá'í Administrative Development is Essential (Paragraph 28)

Eighty years ago, a letter written on behalf of the Guardian described Bahá'í administration as “the first shaping of what in future will come to be the social life and laws of community living.” Today, at the beginning of the second century of the Formative Age, the shape of Bahá'í administration has developed considerably, and its continued development will be essential for the release of the society-building power of the Faith.

LSA Development (Paragraph 29)

LSAs are nascent Houses of Justice, described by Shoghi Effendi as “the chief sinews of Bahá'í society, as well as the ultimate foundation of its administrative structure.” Much depends on their readiness for undertaking administrative activity. A sense of Bahá'í identity can gradually gain strength as a pattern of action grounded in the teachings becomes established.

A community will often have attained a certain level of capacity for community-building by the time the formation of an LSA becomes possible. Efforts must be made to cultivate an appreciation for the formal aspects of community life associated with Bahá'í administration. The LSA is then likely to be aware of its responsibility to encourage and strengthen activities to sustain a vibrant community. It will also need to gain proficiency in discharging its responsibilities, such as:

- Managing and developing a Local Fund
 - Supporting initiatives of social action (in time)
 - Interacting with local government and civil society
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Establish More LSAs (Paragraph 30)

Attention must be given to establishing Local Spiritual Assemblies and consolidating their operations, especially in areas where this has received less emphasis. This will contribute to a rapid rise in the number of LSAs formed. Consideration should be given to whether in rural areas existing arrangements for defining the boundaries of each locality are adequate.

Sacredness of Electoral Process (Paragraph 31)

The extent to which the station and leadership of a Local Assembly is recognized in a community is related to how deeply the believers appreciate the sacredness of the electoral process and their duty to participate in it. As consciousness is raised in a community about the spiritual principles underlying Bahá'í elections, a new conception is formed of what it means for someone to be called to serve on an institution, and understanding increases about how the individual, the community, and the LSA and its agencies relate to one another. Conversations about the formation of the LSA and its purpose, the strength of the LSA and the dynamism of community life are reciprocal, in that they reinforce each other.

A Two-Stage Electoral Process (Paragraph 32)

This reciprocal effect has been especially noticeable over the last two years in places where the House of Justice has approved the adoption of a two-stage electoral process for an LSA, an approach which traces its origins to instructions given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the Spiritual Assembly of Tíhrán. Twenty-two Local Assemblies, spread over eight countries, have already begun to be elected by this method during this period. Similar in many respects to the election of an NSA, it involves the division of a locality into units, from which one or more delegates are elected, after which the delegates elect the members of the LSA. As the number of Bahá'ís residing in a locality grows large and the community's capacity for managing complexity increases, the case for implementing a two-stage electoral process becomes commensurately stronger. In the coming Plan, the House expects to authorize the adoption of this method for electing an LSA in many more places.

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Raising Capacity for Administration at All Levels, *continued*

Local Haziratu’l-Quds and Staffed Office (Paragraph 33)

The more prominent the role that of the LSA in advancing the community-building work, where large numbers are being welcomed into Bahá’í activities, and where the complexity of an Assembly’s work and manifold responsibilities is increasing, the Assembly sometimes finds that its Secretary needs to be supported by a staffed office, and eventually a local Haziratu’l-Quds. In these cases, the LSA consults regularly with those involved in coordination on the cluster level, closely follows the development of centers of intense activity, and offers support.

As LSAs Develop, Regional and National Institutions Must Be More Systematic (Paragraph 34)

As Local Assemblies begin to take on a greater share of responsibility for nurturing the development of the community, institutions at the regional and national levels must become more systematic in their efforts to support them.

EXAMPLE: This need is being addressed in methodical ways, for instance by National Assemblies or Regional Councils convening periodic meetings with the Secretaries and other officers of Local Assemblies to consult about the unfoldment of specific lines of action.

National Growth Committees in Smaller Countries (Paragraph 35)

Enhanced capacity of Regional Councils for administration and support is conducive to accelerated progress. In smaller countries where Regional Councils are not required a formal structure will emerge at the national level to help clusters advance. NSAs in those areas will be appointing that formal structure, a National Growth Committee, which will:

- Appoint and support ATCs
- Arrange for homefront pioneers
- Support teaching plans and projects
- Deploy homefront pioneers
- Distribute core literature

National Growth Committees will also be established in countries where Regional Councils have not been formed but could be established eventually.

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Raising Capacity for Administration at All Levels, *continued*

Countervailing Forces (Paragraph 36)

When the spiritual energies released by earnest pursuit of the Plan surge, they meet resistance from the countervailing forces that hold humanity back from attaining full maturity, the vitality of lines of action being followed need to be preserved and fortified. Auxiliary Boards will assist the friends in facing these challenges by helping:

- Previously antagonistic groups find unity through pursuit of a common goal
- To put aside inherited customs and attitudes that belong to humanity's period of adolescence
- To overcome prejudices of all kinds
- To guard against any tendency to view matters with cynicism or an eye for faults, and instead sustain an eager and constructive outlook
- To put the equality of women and men into practice
- To cast off inertia and apathy through the exercise of individual initiative
- To put one's support of plans for collective action before feelings of personal preference
- To harness the power of modern technologies without succumbing to their potentially enervating effects
- To prize the sweetness of teaching the Faith and the joy of serving humankind above worldly interests
- To reject the opiate of consumerism
- To turn away from materialist ideologies and the worldviews they aggressively promote, and fix one's gaze upon the bright beacon that is the laws and principles of God.

These, and many more, are responsibilities to fulfil in the tumultuous years ahead. Auxiliary Board Members will help the friends to grow in faith, assurance, and commitment to a life of service, and accompany them as they build communities that are havens of peace, places where a harried and conflict-scarred humanity may find shelter.

Accommodating Many Lines of Action Calls for an Expanded Vision (Paragraph 37)

The community's capacity to maintain focus is one of its strengths. This focus must accommodate many lines of action, all of which must advance without being in competition. This calls for an expanded vision, a nuanced understanding of:

- Coexisting imperatives
- Added flexibility
- Heightened institutional collaboration

The Faith's resources are finite, and individuals experience many demands on their time. As the Plan unfolds and the ranks of those who are willing to serve swell, the varied aspects of a rich and vibrant Bahá'í community life will advance in step, and the society-building power of the Faith will shine forth.

Study Questions

1. How does the administrative capacity of an LSA affect the progress of community building in its jurisdiction?
 2. How does the understanding of the friends about the sacredness of the electoral process affect the station and leadership of the LSA in a community and how does this affect areas with two-step elections?
 3. Why do Regional Councils need to be more systematic as LSAs assume greater responsibility?
 4. What are countervailing forces and how should the friends respond to them?
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A Historic Mission

An Extensive, Rigorous Test of Resources (Paragraph 38)

The present-day capacity of the Bahá'í community, combined with the discipline it has achieved through adherence to a coherent framework for action, has prepared it for an extensive, rigorous test of all its resources, spiritual as well as material.

The Plan that will shortly commence — the first major undertaking in a sacred twenty-five-year venture, generational in its scope and significance — will make demands of the individual believer, the community, and the institutions reminiscent of the demands that the Guardian made of the Bahá'í world at the outset of the Ten Year Crusade.

If, by the grace of Almighty God, the friends should succeed in reaching the heights of heroism to which they are now summoned, history will assuredly pay tribute to their actions in terms no less glowing than those with which it honors the glorious deeds that decorate the annals of the first century of the Formative Age.

Perspective of History Fully in View (Paragraph 39)

The perspective of history is kept fully in view. The civilization of today has been found wanting, and the verdict has been issued by the Supreme Pen: “Know ye not that We have rolled up that which the people possessed, and have unfolded a new order in its place?” The establishment of Divine Civilization is, in the words of the Guardian, “the primary mission of the Bahá'í Faith”. It is to be built upon the most foundational qualities, ones for which the world stands in great need:

- Unity
 - Trustworthiness
 - Mutual support
 - Collaboration
 - Fellow feeling
 - Selflessness
 - Commitment to truth
 - A sense of responsibility
 - A thirst to learn
 - The love of an all-embracing heart
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Ever More Perfect Channels (Paragraph 40)

The House of Justice longs to see humanity illumined with the love of its Lord. It longs to hear His praise on every tongue. Knowing the ardency of its wish, believers know the emotion with which its members, when they lay their heads upon the Most Holy Threshold, implore Bahá'u'lláh to make the believers and all who cherish His precious Faith, ever more perfect channels of His ineffable grace.

Study Questions

1. What demands will be made on individual believers, the community and the institutions as the Bahá'í community ventures into the first major undertaking in this 25-year venture?
 2. What is the primary mission of the Bahá'í Faith and what are the foundational qualities it is to be built on?
 3. How can we become ever more perfect channels of His ineffable grace?
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