

DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES

DEEPENING PROGRAMME – 172 B.E.



The National Spiritual Assembly has created this deepening programme, which is intended to contribute to the strengthening and development of Local Spiritual Assemblies particularly in relation to the role of the institution in the support and advancement of the teaching work. It is intended for collective study by the Assembly members, ideally in collaboration with the Auxiliary Board member and assistants.

Beyond raising consciousness and developing a unity of vision, it is hoped that this six hour deepening can serve as an ongoing resource for every Assembly's practice of continued study, consultation and reflection on actions taken and new understandings achieved. Every Assembly meeting could be enriched and guided by the study of just one or two quotations, perhaps after the opening prayers.

"The divinely ordained institution of the Local Spiritual Assembly operates at the first levels of human society and is the basic administrative unit of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order. It is concerned with individuals and families whom it must constantly encourage to unite in a distinctive Bahá'í society, vitalized and guarded by the laws, ordinances and principles of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation. It protects the Cause of God; it acts as the loving shepherd of the Bahá'í flock . . . Strengthening and development of Local Spiritual Assemblies is a vital objective . . ."

(Message from the Universal House of Justice to the Baha'is of the World, Naw-Rúz 1974)

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1 LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES AND THE PROCESS OF GROWTH

1.1 PREPARATION FOR THE ASSEMBLY MEETING

As part of their personal preparations before arriving at the Local Assembly meetings, it is suggested that reflection on these quotations about the qualities for membership of a Spiritual Assembly provide a source of inspiration and a spiritual standard to strive and aspire towards in service.

The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold. Should they be graciously aided to acquire these attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Bahá shall be vouchsafed to them.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections From the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p.87)

The strength and progress of the Bahá’í community depend upon the election of pure, faithful and active souls...

(Letter from Shoghi Effendi to the friends in Persia, April 9, 1932: The Spiritual Character of Bahá’í Elections, p.3)

If we but turn our gaze to the high qualifications of the members of Bahá’í Assemblies . . . we are filled with feelings of unworthiness and dismay, and would feel truly disheartened but for the comforting thought that if we rise to play nobly our part every deficiency in our lives will be more than compensated by the all-conquering spirit of His grace and power.

(Shoghi Effendi, Bahá’í Administration, p. 88)

Among the necessary qualities specified by the Guardian are those of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience.

(The Universal House of Justice, To the Bahá’ís of the World, 25 March 2007)

There are special prayers revealed by of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for the opening and closing of Spiritual Assembly meetings, which are found in many Baha’i prayer books.

Alongside prayers for Assembly meetings, Local Assemblies may wish to offer prayers for certain individuals or aspects of the community.

The Assembly may wish to use a selection of the following quotations following the opening prayers, to prepare collectively for a sacred environment that attracts the Divine confirmations.

The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly. They must be wholly free from estrangement and must manifest in themselves the Unity of God, for they are the waves of one sea, the drops of one river, the stars of one heaven, the rays of one sun, the trees of one orchard, the flowers of one garden. Should harmony of thought and absolute unity be non-existent, that gathering shall be dispersed and that assembly be brought to naught. The second condition is that the members of the assembly should unitedly elect a chairman and lay down guide-lines and by-laws for their meetings and discussions. The chairman should have charge of such rules and regulations and protect and enforce them; the other members should be submissive, and refrain from conversing on superfluous and extraneous matters. They must, when coming together, turn their faces to the Kingdom on high and ask aid from the Realm of Glory. They must then proceed with the utmost

devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden. The honoured members must with all freedom express their own thoughts, and it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another, nay, he must with moderation set forth the truth, and should differences of opinion arise a majority of voices must prevail, and all must obey and submit to the majority. It is again not permitted that any one of the honoured members object to or censure, whether in or out of the meeting, any decision arrived at previously, though that decision be not right, for such criticism would prevent any decision from being enforced. In short, whatsoever thing is arranged in harmony and with love and purity of motive, its result is light, and should the least trace of estrangement prevail the result shall be darkness upon darkness.... If this be so regarded, that assembly shall be of God, but otherwise it shall lead to coolness and alienation that proceed from the Evil One.... Should they endeavour to fulfil these conditions the Grace of the Holy Spirit shall be vouchsafed unto them, and that assembly shall become the centre of the Divine blessings, the hosts of Divine confirmation shall come to their aid, and they shall day by day receive a new effusion of Spirit.

(Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 87)

In this day, assemblies of consultation are of the greatest importance and a vital necessity. Obedience unto them is essential and obligatory. The members thereof must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise. This can be attained when every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should any one oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed. The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions. If after discussion, a decision be carried unanimously, well and good; but if, the Lord forbid, differences of opinion should arise, a majority of voices must prevail.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 1982 lightweight edition, p. 320)

We urge you ever to bear in mind that the purpose of Bahá'í administration is primarily to lend strength and directive to the teaching work and to promote the establishment of the Faith. It should never be regarded as an end in itself but purely as a means to canalize and make effective a spiritual vitality generated by the Word of God in the hearts of the believers.

The dedication and zeal with which you promote the Cause of God are highly commendable and we will pray at the Sacred Threshold that the process of expansion and consolidation will be greatly intensified as a result of your efforts.

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia, November 12, 1973)

1.2 THE EVOLVING ROLE AND DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES

... Throughout the Plan, we have watched with the keenest interest the effects of these developments on the functioning of Local Spiritual Assemblies. It gives us pleasure to note that two types of progress are being made in this respect. In those clusters where most of the Local Assemblies have been extremely weak, a growing number are gradually assuming their responsibilities as they learn to guide specific activities of the Plan in the areas under their jurisdiction. At the same time, long-standing Local Spiritual Assemblies are exhibiting signs of

added strength as they have come to embrace a vision of systematic growth—this, often following a period of adjustment in which some struggled to understand the new realities being created at the cluster level.

(Universal House of Justice, 27 December 2005, To the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors)

Please take some moments to reflect on the vision of systematic growth and the “new realities being created at the cluster level”. Briefly consider the stage of development of your Local Assembly.

Clearly, for the Local Spiritual Assembly to ‘learn to guide specific activities of the Plan within its area of jurisdiction’ its members will need to be familiar with the current guidance of the Universal House of Justice. In this way, all can gain a common understanding of the general direction of the progress of the Faith, and align their efforts with the vision of the House of Justice. What are some ways in which the Assembly can facilitate the study of such guidance, both for itself and for all community members? How can turning to the guidance of the Universal House of Justice become a habit at every Local Spiritual Assembly meeting and generally within the community?

1.3 GROWTH AND THE TRAINING INSTITUTE PROCESS

The purpose of such training is to endow ever-growing contingents of believers with the spiritual insights, the knowledge, and the skills needed to carry out the many tasks of accelerated expansion and consolidation, including the teaching and deepening of a large number of people – adults, youth and children.

(‘Training Institutes’ – A document prepared for and approved by the Universal House of Justice, April 1998, p.2)

Developments since then have served only to demonstrate further the efficacy of a sequence of courses that seeks to build capacity for service by concentrating on the application of the spiritual insights gained through profound study of the Writings. Participants are exposed to a body of knowledge that fosters a set of related habits, attitudes and qualities and are assisted in sharpening certain skills and abilities needed to carry out acts of service.

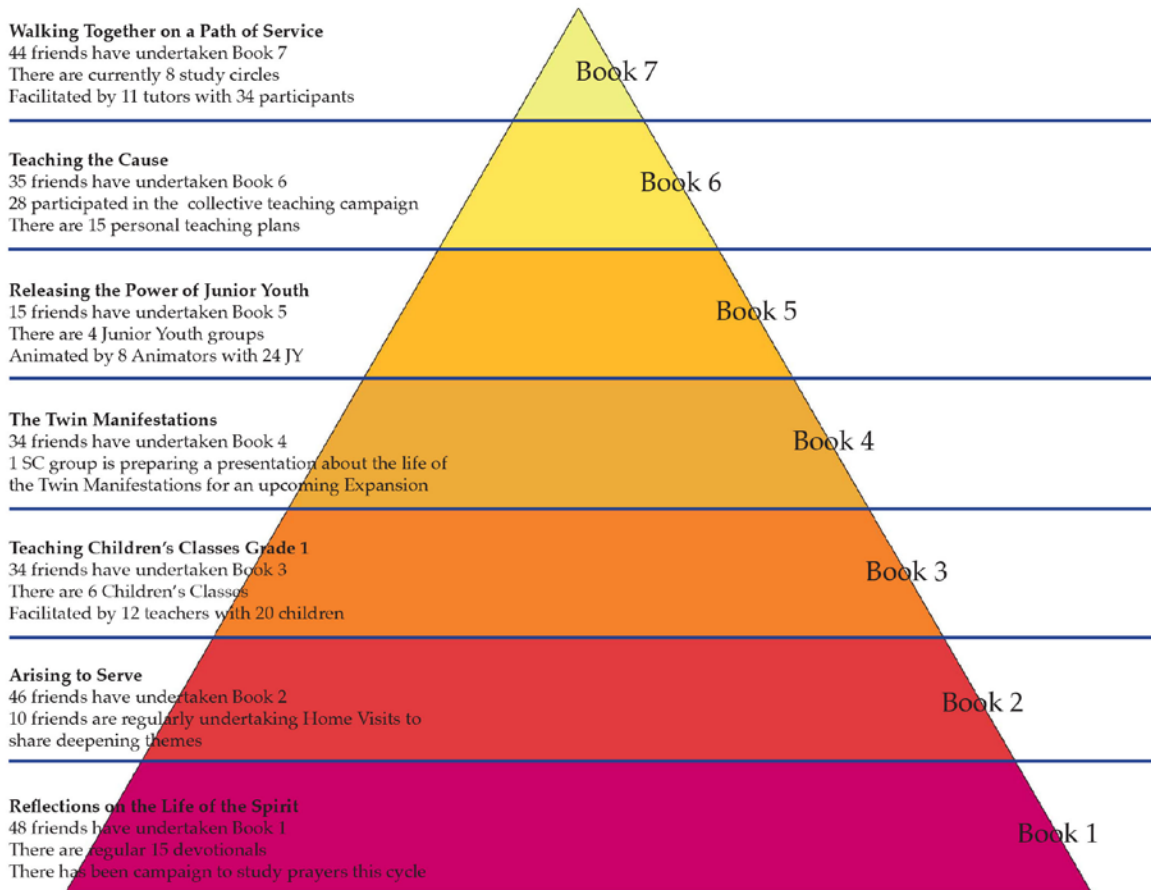
(Universal House of Justice letter, 27 December 2005, p.2)

The institute process must be strengthened so that a sizeable number of friends proceed through the main sequence of courses.

(Universal House of Justice letter, 27 December 2005, p.8)

Using your community list, begin to map out the pyramid of resources for your locality. An example is shown below.

Training Institute Pyramid



In order to analyse the development of human resources and the commensurate activities that are initiated from the Training Institute process, it would be helpful to use this Training Institute pyramid alongside a spread-sheet that indicates the names of the friends that are trained, and those that are currently shouldering responsibility towards the service component of each book.

In this way, the Local Assembly will be able to consider the Training needs for friends, as well as the accompaniment required for trained resources to be supported in the initiation of activities. Such a consultation will be most helpful alongside the Co-ordinators and Auxiliary Board member or assistant.

This exercise will need to be refined beyond the scope of this deepening, and reviewed during subsequent meetings. It provides a basis for many of the consultations that are to follow, and will aid the Assembly's on-going actions and reflections.

Your consultations in subsequent meetings may give rise to the following considerations – for the purpose of this exercise, just read through each point as a reminder of this “tool of limitless potentiality” and the contributions it can make to both individual progress and vibrant communities.

Based on the pyramid of resources for your community:

- how might you best accompany those who have undertaken Book 1 to contribute to the devotional character of the community?
- how you might best encourage those who have undertaken Book 2 to share deepening themes in the homes of new believers or engage in meaningful, spiritual conversations with neighbours, friends, relatives or work colleagues. What is your understanding of the nature and role of home-visits and why are they an important part of community life?
- how might the Assembly encourage those who have undertaken Book 4 to speak with ease about the Life of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh and share these stories at Feasts and Holy Days?
- what might be the role of the Local Assembly in considering the development of children's classes and junior youth groups in close consultation with the co-ordinators and / or Auxiliary Board member?
- how are friends engaged in teaching and how has Book 6 enabled the development of both individual and collective teaching plans? How has the Local Assembly been consulting with the Area Teaching Committee and / or Auxiliary Board member in this regard?
- how is the Training Institute process being strengthened through the vital service of tutors? Is the system moving / growing?

1.4 GROWTH AND LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES

It is gratifying to see that current approaches, methods and instruments are providing the means for Local Spiritual Assemblies, even those newly formed, to fulfil these responsibilities as they set about to ensure that the requirements of the Five Year Plan are adequately met in their localities. Indeed, the Assembly's proper involvement with the Plan becomes crucial to every attempt to embrace large numbers—itsself a requisite for the manifestation of the full range of its powers and capacities.

(The Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2010)

As for the institutions, entry by troops will act upon them as much as they will act upon it. The evolution of local and national Bahá'í Assemblies at this time calls for a new state of mind on the part of their members as well as on the part of those who elect them, for the Bahá'í community is engaged in an immense historical process that is entering a critical stage. Bahá'u'lláh has given to the world institutions to operate in an Order designed to canalize the forces of a new civilization. Progress towards that glorious realization requires a great and continuous expansion of the Bahá'í community, so that adequate scope is provided for the maturation of these institutions. This is a matter of immediate importance to Bahá'u'lláh's avowed supporters in all lands.

(The Universal House of Justice, Ridván 1996)

Please reflect on the “new state of mind” we are being called develop, and how might this relate and contribute to the “great and continuous expansion of the Bahá'í community”?

For such an expansion to be stimulated and accommodated, the Spiritual Assemblies must rise to a new stage in the exercise of their responsibilities as channels of divine guidance, planners of the teaching work, developers of human resources, builders of communities, and loving shepherds of the multitudes.

(The Universal House of Justice, Ridván 1996)

How does an Assembly's attention to the current core activities of the Plan contribute to its development towards a new stage of responsibility? How can expansion be "stimulated and accommodated" in this way?

Particularly must the progress in the evolution of the institutions be manifest in the multiplication of localities in which the functioning of the Spiritual Assembly enhances the individual believers' capacity to serve the Cause and fosters unified action. In sum, the maturity of the Spiritual Assembly must be measured not only by the regularity of its meetings and the efficiency of its functioning, but also by the continuity of the growth of Bahá'í membership, the effectiveness of the interaction between the Assembly and the members of its community, the quality of the spiritual and social life of the community, and the overall sense of vitality of a community in the process of dynamic, ever-advancing development.

(The Universal House of Justice, Ridván 1996)

. . . its strength must be measured, to a large extent, by the vitality of the spiritual and social life of the community it serves—a growing community that welcomes the constructive contributions of both those who are formally enrolled and those who are not.

(The Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2010)

None of the accomplishments of the individual or the community could be sustained without the guidance, encouragement and support of the third participant in the Plan—the institutions of the Faith. It is heartening to see to what extent the institutions are promoting individual initiative, channeling energies into the teaching field, underscoring the value of systematic action, fostering the spiritual life of the community and nurturing a welcoming environment. In helping the community to remain focused on the aim of the Plan, they are learning in practical terms what it means to maintain unity of vision among the friends, to put mechanisms in place that facilitate their endeavors and to allocate resources in accordance with priorities wisely set.

(Universal House of Justice, 27 December 2005, To the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors)

Please describe the relationship and dynamic that must exist between the Local Assembly and

- the individuals residing in a locality?
- the community under its jurisdiction? What do you understand of the term "community"?

Please reflect on your Assembly's development in this regard. Would this matter be a useful on-going item for the Assembly to reflect on? You may wish to consider the following:

- To what extent is the Local Assembly promoting individual initiative, channelling energies into the teaching field, underscoring the value of systematic action, fostering the spiritual life of the community, nurturing a welcoming environment?
- How is it helping the community to remain focused on the aim of the Plan and developing unity of vision among the friends?
- How is it putting mechanisms in place that facilitate the endeavours of the friends and allocating resources in accordance with priorities wisely set?

Now read the following passage:

For its part, and in response to growing numbers attending activities, the Local Assembly is enhancing its capacity to discharge the many responsibilities it carries on behalf of an expanding community. It seeks to create an environment in which all feel encouraged to contribute to the community's common enterprise. It is eager to see the cluster agencies succeed in their plans, and its intimate familiarity with the conditions in its area enables it to foster the development of interacting processes at the local level. With this in mind, it urges the wholehearted participation of the friends in campaigns and meetings for reflection, and it provides material resources and other assistance for initiatives and events being organized in the locality. The Assembly is also attentive to the need for new believers to be nurtured sensitively, considering when and how various dimensions of community life are to be introduced to them. By encouraging their involvement in institute courses, it aims to ensure that from the very beginning they regard themselves as protagonists in a noble endeavour to build the world anew. It sees to it that gatherings for the Nineteen Day Feast, Holy Day commemorations, and Bahá'í elections become opportunities to reinforce the high ideals of the community, strengthen its shared sense of commitment, and fortify its spiritual character. As numbers in the community grow larger, the Assembly gives thought to when it could be beneficial to decentralize such meetings so as to facilitate ever-greater participation on these important occasions.

(Universal House of Justice, 29 December 2015 to the Conference of Counsellors)

- Consult on the responsibilities carried by the Local Assembly which are mentioned in this passage, reflecting first on how your Assembly can begin to enhance its capacity to fulfil the following responsibilities:
 - Create an environment in which all feel encouraged to contribute to the community's common enterprise.
 - Fostering the development of interacting processes at the local level.
 - Urging the wholehearted participation of the friends in campaigns and meetings for reflection.
 - Providing material resources and other assistance for initiatives and events being organized in the locality.
- Please consult on the needs of new believers mentioned in the passage, and how the Assembly attends to them.
- Reflect on the opportunities offered by gatherings for the Nineteen Day Feast, Holy Day commemorations, and Bahá'í elections. How can the Assembly develop capacity for this responsibility?

1.5 THE FUNCTIONING OF MEMBERS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ASSEMBLY AGENDA

What needs to occur in the first instance is relatively straightforward: Individual awareness of the process of growth gathering momentum in the village, born of each member's personal involvement in the core activities, must coalesce into a collective consciousness that recognizes both the nature of the transformation under way and the obligation of the Assembly to foster it. Without doubt, some attention will have to be given to certain basic administrative functions--for example, meeting with a degree of regularity, conducting the Nineteen Day Feast and planning Holy Day observances, establishing a local fund, and holding annual

elections in accordance with Baha'i principle. However, it should not prove difficult for the Local Assembly to begin, concomitant with such efforts and with encouragement from an assistant to an Auxiliary Board member, to consult as a body on one or two specific issues with immediate relevance to the life of the community: how the devotional character of the village is being enhanced through the efforts of individuals who have completed the first institute course; how the spiritual education of the children is being addressed by teachers raised up by the institute; how the potential of junior youth is being realized by the programme for their spiritual empowerment; how the spiritual and social fabric of the community is being strengthened as the friends visit one another in their homes. As the Assembly consults on such tangible matters and learns to nurture the process of growth lovingly and patiently, its relationship with the Area Teaching Committee and the training institute gradually becomes cemented in a common purpose. But, of still greater importance, it will begin to lay the foundations on which can be built that uniquely affectionate and genuinely supportive relationship, described by the beloved Guardian in many of his messages, which Local Spiritual Assemblies should establish with the individual believer. . .

. . . Its continued development implies adherence to the injunction laid down by 'Abdu'l-Baha that "discussions must all be confined to spiritual matters that pertain to the training of souls, the instruction of children, the relief of the poor, the help of the feeble throughout all classes in the world, kindness to all peoples, the diffusion of the fragrances of God and the exaltation of His Holy Word." Its steady advancement requires an unbending commitment to promote the best interests of the community and a vigilance in guarding the process of growth against the forces of moral decay that threaten to arrest it. Its ongoing progress calls for a sense of responsibility that extends beyond the circle of friends and families engaged in the core activities to encompass the entire population of the village. And sustaining its gradual maturation is unshakable faith in 'Abdu'l-Baha's assurance that He will enfold every Spiritual Assembly within the embrace of His care and protection. . . .

(Universal House of Justice, 28 December 2010 to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors)

Please can you give examples of what a Local Assembly may wish to consult upon in a meeting, and make a list of these?

Can you identify a relationship between the injunction of the Master and the core activities of the Plan?

- How can the Local Spiritual Assembly consider the “training of souls” through its consultations on the development of the Training Institute process in the locality?
- How can the Local Spiritual Assembly consider the “instruction of children” through its consultations on the development of children’s classes in the locality and the subsequent accompaniment of the Junior Youth age group?
- How can the Local Assembly consider simple steps in the contribution of a community towards “the relief of the poor, the help of the feeble throughout all classes in the world, kindness to all peoples” and what may be the role of the Junior Youth empowerment programme towards this service?

- How can the Local Spiritual Assembly consider “the diffusion of the fragrances of God and the exaltation of His Holy Word” through its consultations on the development of devotional gatherings in the locality?

1.6 GROWTH AND INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION

... the conditions thus created in such clusters have made it possible to launch intensive programs of growth, in which large numbers of friends eagerly participate in the learning that takes place through successive cycles of activity seeking to integrate well-coordinated collective action with effective individual initiative. And you are equally aware of how interaction among three entities—the institute, the Auxiliary Boards, and the Area Teaching Committee—in close collaboration with responsive Local Spiritual Assemblies, can help carry the friends from one cycle to another and accelerate the learning process.

(From a message dated 17 January 2003 written by the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World)

If you are a Local Assembly in a cluster that has launched a programme of growth, how can the nature of your interaction with the cluster agencies be developed?

If your Assembly is part of a cluster that is striving to reach the first milestone towards a programme of growth, how are you consulting and collaborating with the Auxiliary Board members or their assistants to take initial steps individually, and to accompany others on this path of service?

2 PLANNING TOOLS

2.1 PREPARATION OF THE AGENDA

Below is an example of an agenda for a Local Spiritual Assembly meeting, highlighting key areas of its work, with examples of some items that may fall under each section. It is suggested that you make a list of items that relate to your own community under these sections.

LOCAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BAHAIS OF XXX - Agenda - Meeting Date 00/00/00

i) Assembly welcome and opening prayer followed by prayers for individuals and community

ii) Reading and study of passage on consultation, nature of Assembly gatherings, role of the Assembly etc.

iii) Approval of minutes of the last meeting

1) STUDY OF RECENT MESSAGES OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

- Ridvan message
- Message to the Conference of Counsellors 29 December 2015
- Other messages relevant to the current Plan

2) GROWTH: TEACHING & TRAINING (EXPANSION & CONSOLIDATION)

- **Updates on existing core activities / human resources**
 - Helen's Book 2 study circle has now completed Unit 2 and would like to consult with the Local Assembly on preparing a presentation for an upcoming Teaching Day on the Life of Bahá'u'lláh.
 - Rory's group are 2 sessions away from completing the Book 4 and some of the participants have submitted a story for the community newsletter, describing their experiences and also inviting others to join the Book 5.
 - Francis feels she needs some financial support to help with the cost of the CC venue.
- **Updates on new core activities being initiated and new resources being accompanied**
 - With the help of the JY Co-ordinator, the Brindleworth neighbourhood team planned 3 outreach days over the long weekend, to see if they could start a JY group as part of the upcoming Expansion Phase. They have met the community centre and need some help with funds. They also felt that a letter from the Local Assembly introducing the animators and referencing their DBS numbers would be helpful.
 - Efforts to start the Children's class in Oxlow has been slow – it seems to have stalled. Would a card to this team uplift their spirits? Contact needs to be made with the CC co-ordinator.
 - Gemma mentioned to one of the Assembly members at the Feast that she isn't part of a teaching team and isn't sure who to work with. Can 2 members meet with Gemma to consult with her on which path of service may most interest her and with the help of the co-ordinators identify the next steps?

- **Collaboration with Cluster Agencies**
 - Circulate letter about the upcoming Reflection Meeting by e-mail and share at Feast
 - Arrange a date to meet with the Area Teaching Committee
 - Review Statistics for the Auxiliary Board member and send by close of week
- **Analysis of Human Resource development using the Concentric Circles Diagram**
 - Identify 2 friends that each Local Assembly member can be in close touch with over the course of the coming cycle and accompany to the next stage of engagement
 - Review the statistics and assess key areas of learning
 - Reflect on the potential for new activities through the scheme of accompaniment

3) **ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONING & COMMUNICATIONS**

- Review of Assembly members Action Points for last month
- John's request for Assembly's consideration to change meeting day due to work schedule
- Review of communication from Stanton Local Assembly
- Preparation for upcoming bi-election ballots and card for Gudron
- Request for a meeting about Huqúqu'lláh from Dr Rowshan
- Review of upcoming 3-month Calendar of Events

4) **COMMUNITY FUNCTIONING**

- Community deepening on the Message of the Universal House of Justice on Universal Participation
- Review of Day of the Covenant Holy day Celebrations
- Preparations for coming Feast – agenda for consultative portion
- Youth turning 15 or 21 – letter from LSA and card from community

5) **TREASURY**

- Feast Donations for Chile Temple dedication and upcoming Fundraising Activities
- Review of Standing Order for National Assembly
- Review of guidance related to donations for JY venue made by a non-Bahá'í parent

6) **EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

- School Visit Updates – King Davids and Cheetwood Primary School by Crayford Youth teaching team
- Quarterly SACRE meeting – Representatives report and recommendations
- Bi-monthly Multi-Faith Dialogue: Invitation to the Ahmaddiya Mosque and MRI Chaplaincy

7) **OTHER & CLOSE**

- Next Meeting Date and Venue. Closing Prayer.

2.2 PROVIDING ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT TO ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Aware of the guidance provided in the 28 December 2010 message from the House of Justice pertaining to their responsibilities, and enriched by “each member’s personal involvement in the core activities”, Local Assemblies are periodically examining their contribution to the overall effort. Representatives of Assemblies often participate regularly in cluster planning meetings and share with other members the ways in which their Assembly can support the cycles of activity. Assemblies are also able to think about all community members, providing encouragement and

support and ensuring that each finds a meaningful part in the work of expansion and consolidation.

(Insights from the Frontiers of Learning 1.4 An Effective Organizational Scheme)

Why is the personal involvement of Local Assembly members in the core activities important?

Why is the attendance of Local Assembly members at Cluster Reflection meetings important?

How do these impact the development of the Local Assembly as an institution?

How do these impact the development of the community through the accompaniment of the individuals that make up the community?

2.2.1 A TOOL FOR ANALYSIS AND PLANNING

The concentric circles diagram below is a simple tool, which you may wish to use in an upcoming Assembly meeting as an aid to the process of analysis and accompaniment.

Using the community list, please reflect on each member of your community that is under your loving care, according to their engagement and participation in the Institute Process, placing them within one of the following 3 stages of engagement, along a continuum as described:

- Heightened engagement in community life, shouldering responsibility by hosting core activities, undertaking home-visits, participating in Reflection meetings, Teaching Projects, Feasts and Holy Days etc.
- Some Involvement in community life, attending core activities, Reflection meetings, Feasts and Holy days and involved in personal teaching
- Little or no involvement in active community life, participation in core or other activities

It is vital to understand that these groups do not in any way denote a hierarchy, but merely a method for the Local Assembly as an Institution to analyse the reality of the community, and see how it can accompany each member to progress and contribute towards active community life. An example is shown below.

Based on this information, it would appear that more than half of the community are engaged in community life, but a third of the members are rarely seen. Due to different personal circumstances, some have asked not to be contacted whilst others have become less engaged over time.

Total number of community members: 48

Local Assembly members are highlighted in yellow.

Inner circle Friends shouldering responsibility: 11 or 23%

Second Circle Friends participating in community life (core-activities, feasts, Holy Days): 21 or 44%

Outer Circle Non-engagement in community life: 16 or 33%

Local Assembly Consultation and Action

How might the Local Assembly go about devising a plan for the accompaniment of the community towards its strength and vibrancy?

How can souls from the outer or middle circle towards the inner circle?

What processes and mechanisms need to be put in place to assist this?

It would be helpful for the Local Assembly to review this diagram and repeat this exercise every 3 months to assess movement and development that has been taking place over time.

3 FURTHER RESOURCES

These materials are not of course comprehensive. Local Assemblies will need to refer to publications or online resources, as and when particular questions arise. Examples of suitable resources are set out below.

Some useful resources for Local Spiritual Assemblies:

Bahá'í Administration, Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1968)

http://bahai-library.com/compilation_local_spiritual_assemblies

Guidance Notes for Local Assemblies, including information for treasurers, are available to registered users on the UK Bahá'í Admin Website, and we encourage the members of Local Assemblies to register on this site and to draw upon this resource.

<https://bahaidata.com/local-spiritual-assemblies/>

The memorandum and articles of association are found here:

<https://bahaidata.com/welcome/memorandum-and-articles-of-association/>

In addition, Local Assemblies should always feel free to contact the National Office (nsa@bahai.org.uk) or their Auxiliary Board members or their assistants.

Additional useful references for study:

The following numbered paragraphs all refer to the work of Local Spiritual Assemblies in the current series of global Plans and can be found in 'Turning Point' - Selected Messages of the Universal House of Justice and Supplementary Material 1996–2006, available in pdf form or to view online at:

<http://www.bahai.org/library/other-literature/periodicals-supplementary-materials/turning-point>

Part III, Section 53: Impact of Growth on Administration Processes (a document prepared by the International teaching Centre July 2005)

53.11 – 53.16 Involvement of Local Spiritual Assemblies

Part III Section 52: Building Momentum – A Coherent Approach to Growth (a document prepared by the International teaching Centre, April 2003)

52.85 to 52.87	Fostering an Encouraging Environment
52.100 to 52.104	Facilitating individual initiative
52.92	The On-going Collection of Statistics
52.82	Enhancing Institutional Capacity
52.84	Managing the process of growth