


Bahá'u'lláh's vision for humanity

<https://www.buildingpinellas.com/>

<https://news.bahai.org/story/1586/>

<https://news.bahai.org/story/1587/>

A person stands on a wet beach at sunset, looking out at the ocean with mountains in the background. The person is silhouetted against the bright sky and their reflection is visible in the wet sand.

The purpose of humanity/creation (i.e., true religion)

Bahá'u'lláh states that “the purpose for which mortal men have, from utter nothingness, stepped into the realm of being, is that they may work for the betterment of the world and live together in concord and harmony.” He has revealed teachings that make this possible.[\[1\]](#)

*The purpose of
humanity/creation
(i.e., true religion)*

Building a society that consciously pursues this collective purpose is the work of not only this generation, but of many generations to come, and Bahá'u'lláh's followers welcome all who labour alongside them in this undertaking. [\[2\]](#)



*Raising vibrant
communities that
are contributing
to spiritual and
material progress*

It means learning how to raise up vibrant, outward-looking communities; it means those communities learning how to bring about spiritual and material progress; it means learning how to contribute to the discourses that influence the direction of that progress.[\[3\]](#)

Raising vibrant communities that are contributing to spiritual and material progress

A vision of personal and collective transformation occurring simultaneously, founded on study of the Word of God and an appreciation of each person's capacity to become a protagonist in a profound spiritual drama, had given rise to a sense of common endeavour.^[4]

<https://news.bahai.org/story/1590/>



*Raising
vibrant
communities
that are
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to spiritual
and material
progress*

‘Abdu’l-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.” [\[5\]](#)

What Bahá'ís and those labouring alongside them are doing

The enkindled souls being raised through the processes of the Plan... are committed to the prosperity of all, recognizing that the welfare of individuals rests in the welfare of society at large... they are focused on transcending differences, harmonizing perspectives, and promoting the use of consultation for making decisions. They emphasize qualities and attitudes—such as trustworthiness, cooperation, and forbearance—that are building blocks of a stable social order. They champion rationality and science as essential for human progress.[\[6\]](#)

A wide-angle photograph of a large, ornate theater filled with a diverse audience. The theater has multiple tiers of seating, with the upper tiers featuring red curtains and decorative moldings. The audience is seated in the lower tiers, facing the stage area. The lighting is warm and focused on the stage, creating a sense of anticipation. The overall atmosphere is one of a grand, historic event.

Social Transformations

...where growing numbers are helping to build communities of this character, the power of the Cause to transform people's social existence, as well as their inner lives, becomes increasingly visible. [\[7\]](#)

Small Group Discussion

- *What are the characteristics and aspirations of the environment and population in your area? For example, the physical characteristics of the environment, the demographics of the population, the aspirations of children, youth, and parents, as well as the strengths and challenges you observe in your community.*
- *How is this vision of Bahá'u'lláh for humanity unfolding in your area? What contribution can each of us make for the “betterment” of society?*
- *What aspects of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh resonate with the aspirations of your community?*
- *How is cooperation and mutual assistance being manifested among individuals, the community, institutions, and the local leaders? Share examples of cooperation and mutual assistance among individuals, institutions, and the community in your area.*
- *How are you using consultation as a means for making decisions that will assist spiritual and material progress to occur? What are the spaces for regular consultation and reflection in your area?*
- *How are you learning to engage growing numbers in the process of building spiritually and materially vibrant communities?*

Distance traversed

- *Film screening: Glimpses of a Hundred Years of Endeavour*
- *Reflect on the endeavours of the Bahá'í community over the last one hundred years*
- https://youtu.be/4MsMfnkd6_I

Small group discussion (explore the implications of the theme in relation to your local reality)

Reflect on the distance traversed in your local area over the years in the context of the endeavours of members of the Bahá'í community and their friends. This should include a sense of the current state of the community and a vision for the coming years.




A vibrant street scene featuring a row of red brick buildings on the left. The building in the foreground has a white portico with columns and a black metal railing on its steps. A warm, glowing light fixture is visible on the left. To the right, a sidewalk leads past more brick buildings, with lush green trees lining the street. A street sign for "ARTHUR PL" is visible on the right side of the street. Several cars are parked along the curb, and a red building with a gothic-style arched doorway is visible in the background on the right. The overall atmosphere is bright and sunny, with a clear blue sky.

Building vibrant communities

The characteristics of a vibrant community

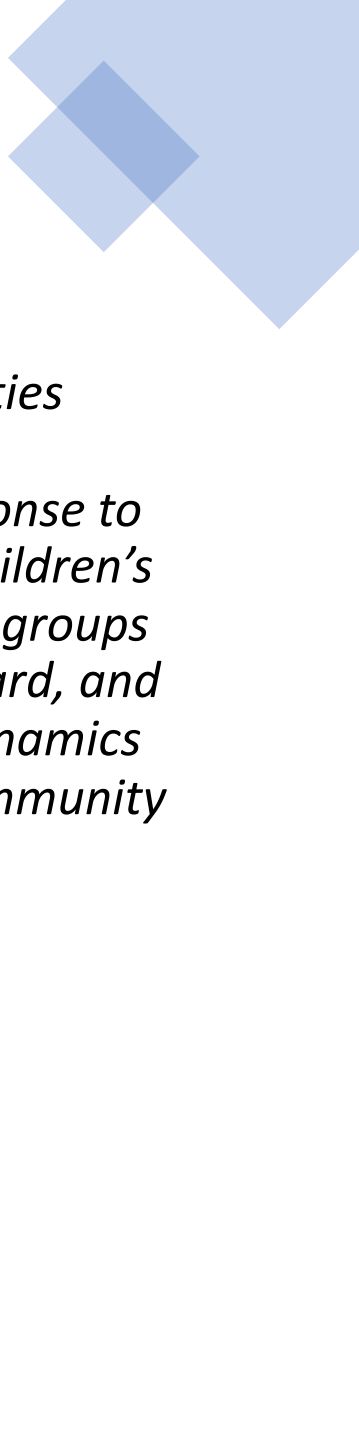
...Bahá'ís are engaged in cities and villages across the globe in establishing a pattern of life in which increasing numbers, irrespective of background, are invited to take part... This pattern of community life is giving rise to vibrant and purposeful new communities wherein relationships are founded on the oneness of mankind, universal participation, justice, and freedom from prejudice. All are welcome.[\[8\]](#)





The characteristics of a vibrant community


[From the collective experiences of Bahá'í communities around the world] it was recognized that certain [community-building] activities were a natural response to the spiritual needs of a population. Study circles, children's classes, devotional meetings, and later junior youth groups stood out as being of central importance in this regard, and when woven together with related activities, the dynamics generated could give rise to a vibrant pattern of community life.[\[9\]](#)



The characteristics of a vibrant community


...a rising spirit of universal participation in the work of community building... entails families and individual believers working together and making a conscious decision to see themselves as belonging to an expanding nucleus. Such groups of friends set about widening the circle of participation in their activities by engaging with the networks to which they belong—networks created through a place of work or study, a local school, or a community hub of another kind—and by accompanying others who arise to serve alongside them. These efforts have tremendous merit.[\[10\]](#)

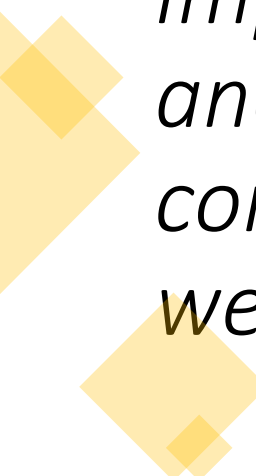
Within each centre of intense activity, collaborative arrangements emerge among groups of families, who organize community-building activities among themselves with a view to widening the embrace of such activities to many nearby households; an informal network of friends provides encouragement and support to the endeavours under way.[\[11\]](#)



*Importance of worship
and service, and
contributing to the
wellbeing of everyone*

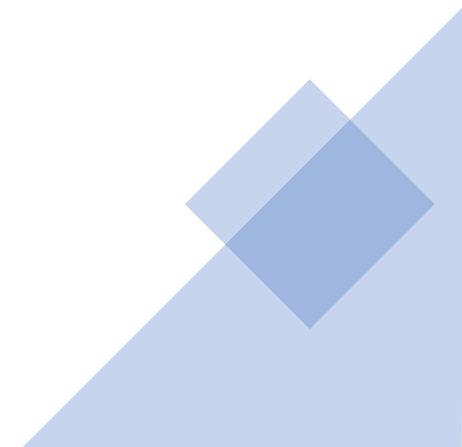
The character of daily life in such places [centres of intense activity] is adapting to the rise of a culture in which worship and service are cherished activities involving many people at once. Uplifting, well-prepared community gatherings—extending in some cases to camps and festivals—occur with increasing frequency, and music and song feature prominently on such occasions. Indeed, the arts as a whole, so integral a part of the development of a community from the start, stand out in such settings as an important means of generating joy, strengthening bonds of unity, disseminating knowledge, consolidating understanding, and even acquainting those in the wider society with the principles of the Cause. [\[12\]](#)







Importance of worship and service, and contributing to the wellbeing of everyone

The systematic pursuit of the Plan... gives rise to a pattern of collective endeavour distinguished not only for its commitment to service, but also for its attraction to worship. ...witness, for instance, how gatherings for worship have been integrated into the core of community life. Devotional meetings are occasions where any soul may enter, inhale the heavenly fragrances, experience the sweetness of prayer, meditate upon the Creative Word, be transported on the wings of the spirit, and commune with the one Beloved. Feelings of fellowship and common cause are generated, particularly in the spiritually heightened conversations that naturally occur at such times and through which the gates of the “city of the human heart” may be opened.[\[13\]](#)






...in such locations, the thoughts of the friends labouring at the grassroots are increasingly occupied with the progress and well-being of everyone dwelling 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 or even all of whom might already be engaged in community activities.[\[14\]](#)



*Importance of
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Small group discussion (explore the implications of the theme in relation to your local reality)

- How are you and those working alongside you learning to widen the circle of participation of families and individuals in the community-building activities in your local area?*
- How are conversations on spiritual themes and the culture of home visits being strengthened in your local area?*
- What are the spaces/opportunities in your area where families and individuals come together for collective worship?*
- How can “uplifting” and “well prepared community gatherings”, including camps and festivals catering to families, children, junior youth, or youth become a feature of your local area?*
- How does the use of arts “generate joy”, strengthen “bonds of unity”, and contribute to the dissemination of knowledge?*
- What are some examples of service or collective endeavours in your area that are contributing to the “well-being of everyone”, including children, junior youth, and youth?*
- How is the growing culture of worship and service contributing to the transformation of the lives of the people in your local area?*

The background of the image shows the silhouettes of a group of graduates. They are holding up their black graduation caps and white diplomas in the air, celebrating. The scene is set against a light, clear sky. The silhouettes are dark and prominent, capturing the joyous moment of graduation.

Educational endeavours and the training institute

The centrality of education



The centrality of education

The importance of education to a Bahá'í conception of spiritual and social transformation can hardly be overestimated. "Consider", Bahá'u'lláh states, "the revelation of the light of the Name of God, the Educator."[\[15\]](#)

The centrality of education

Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom. [\[16\]](#)

The centrality of education

Divine education is that of the Kingdom of God: it consists in acquiring divine perfections, and this is true education; for in this state man becomes the focus of divine blessings, the manifestation of the words, “Let Us make man in Our image, and after Our likeness.” This is the goal of the world of humanity.[\[17\]](#)

The centrality of education

The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is carried forward. [\[18\]](#)

The centrality of education

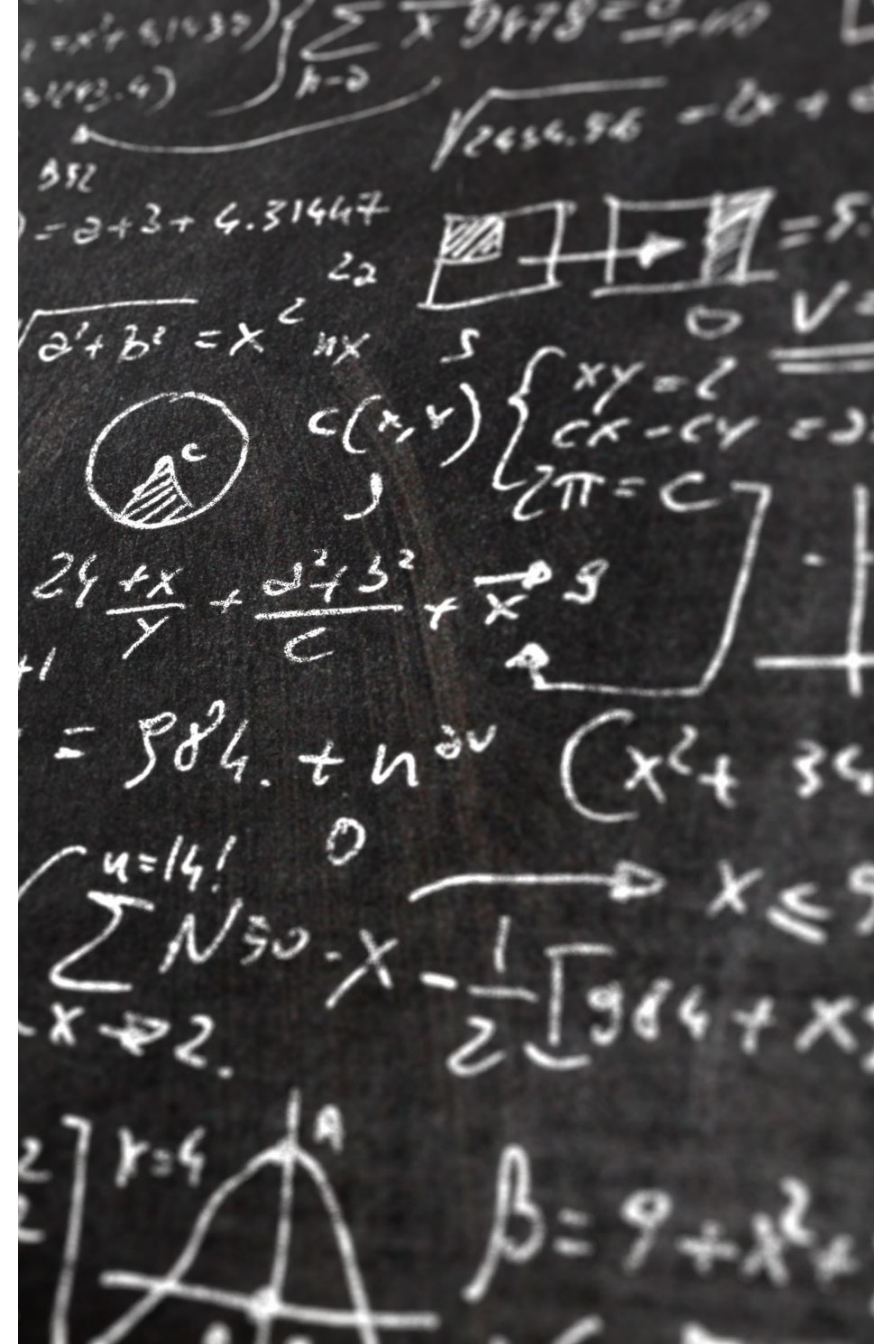
The significance of education in the work of community building is unmistakable, and in the field of social action the provision of education remains the signature contribution of Bahá'ís in most parts of the world. Pre-eminent among the structures and agencies created by the Bahá'í world to offer education is, of course, the training institute.[\[19\]](#)

The importance of the institute process in building both the capacity for service and the ability to contribute to the development of the local community and society

We may think of the work of the training institute, then, as maintaining a system of distance education to fuel and facilitate this evolving conversation [concerned with the advancement of society through the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh]. The principal elements of the system include the “study circle”, the tutor, and a set of materials, grounded in the Bahá'í writings, that express the spiritual insights and the knowledge gained in the process of translating Bahá'u'lláh's teachings into reality [for the development of their own community as well as for the progress of society].[\[19\]](#)

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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.[\[21\]](#)

The importance of the institute process in building both the capacity for service and the ability to contribute to the development of the local community and society

... participation in institute courses is preparing the friends of God for an ever-deeper engagement in the life of the wider community; it is endowing them with the knowledge, insights, and skills that enable them to contribute not only to the process of developing their own community, but to the progress of society. In short, the institute is a potent means for the society-building power of the Faith to find release.[\[22\]](#)

Educational programmes of the institute

[The materials of the training institute] offer a seamless coherent educational experience from the age of five, upwards to the age of junior youth, and through into adulthood, and they serve as a direct counterpart to the pattern of activities unfolding at the grassroots. [\[23\]](#)

The educational programmes offered by the training institute include classes for the spiritual education of children, the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme and study circles:

[Children's classes establish a] sustainable system for child education that will keep pace with both the growing concern among parents for their youngsters to develop sound moral structures and the rise in human resources in the community.[\[24\]](#)

...the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme [is] imbued with a strong twofold purpose, both to develop their inherent potentialities [of junior youth] and to contribute to the transformation of society.[\[25\]](#)

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A study circle is a small group that meets [regularly] ... to study the course materials. Anyone aged fifteen or older, whether a Bahá'í or not, is welcome to take part. The group is brought together by a tutor associated with the training institute.... All those participating are seen as active agents of their own learning, and tutors strive to create an atmosphere that encourages individuals to assume ownership for the educational process in which they are engaged. A study circle should be a space that leads to the spiritual and moral empowerment of individuals.[\[26\]](#)

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Youth: the sacred charge of the institute

Institutes know well that releasing the potential possessed by young people is, for them, a sacred charge; we now ask that Bahá'í youth view the future development of the institute in the very same light.... They should seize every opportunity—in their schools and universities, and in spaces dedicated to work, family, or social interaction—to encourage more and more souls to benefit from the institute's programmes. Some youth will be able to devote a period of service—perhaps even successive years—to the provision of education, especially to those younger than themselves; for many, support for the institute's activities will be an ever-present dimension of their lives throughout their own education and as they seek a livelihood from their calling in this world; but for none should it be anything less than a cherished commitment. [\[27\]](#)

Film screening: The Exemplar

Small group discussion (explore the implications of the theme in relation to your local reality)

- *How can the circle of those participating in the courses of the institute be widened to raise the capacity for service in your local area?*
- *What is required (or what obstacles need to be overcome) in your local area to enable every individual—young and old, men and women—to participate in the programmes for spiritual education offered by the training institute?*
- *How do you envision the future of the youth in your local area? What challenges do they face and how can you and those labouring alongside you assist them?*
- *Beyond the educational programmes of the training institute, how can the youth be encouraged and supported to continue their higher education (for example, high school and tertiary courses)?*
- *What steps can be taken to ensure that the educational system in your local area caters adequately to both the spiritual and intellectual needs of the whole community from childhood to adulthood?*



Greater London Cluster
Reflection Meeting

Children from
Enfield community
present...

Contributing to social
transformation



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- *Becoming protagonists of our own development and that of our communities*

The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is concerned with the transformation of both humanity's inner life and social environment.... The contribution made by Bahá'ís is distinguished by its focus on building the capacity for service; it is an approach founded on faith in the ability of a population to become the protagonists of their own development. [\[28\]](#)



*Becoming
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Capacity building is the watchword of these plans: they aim at enabling the protagonists of collective effort to strengthen the spiritual foundations of villages and neighbourhoods, to address certain of their social and economic needs, and to contribute to the discourses prevalent in society, all while maintaining the necessary coherence in methods and approaches. [\[29\]](#)

Social action

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Most appropriately conceived in terms of a spectrum, social action can range from fairly informal efforts of limited duration undertaken by individuals or small groups of friends to programmes of social and economic development with a high level of complexity and sophistication implemented by Bahá'í-inspired organizations. Irrespective of its scope and scale, all social action seeks to apply the teachings and principles of the Faith to improve some aspect of the social or economic life of a population, however modestly. Such endeavours are distinguished, then, by their stated purpose to promote the material well-being of the population, in addition to its spiritual welfare.[\[30\]](#)



Participating in discourses of society

Closely connected with the capacity for engaging in social action is the capacity to contribute to the discourses of society. At heart, this is simply a capacity for participating in a conversation about a matter that affects people's lives and offering a perspective grounded in Bahá'í principles and Bahá'í experience. Viewed in this way, it is a skill which many Bahá'ís have the opportunity to practise almost daily, for instance in their studies or occupations, and which is cultivated through involvement in institute courses.... Opportunities are sought out to share the perspectives of the Faith with community leaders and figures in authority, and spaces are created in which representatives of various groups and interests can be assisted to reach a common point of view through consultation.[\[31\]](#)



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 - *Small group discussion (explore the implications of the theme in relation to your local reality)*

- *Reflect on some of the social, economic, and cultural barriers impeding spiritual and material progress in your local area. In what ways are the community-building endeavours helping to raise consciousness and to overcome these barriers?*
- *How are you and those working alongside you learning to raise the consciousness of the local population of the spiritual qualities and attitudes that are needed to contribute to the betterment of society?*
- *What are some examples of the stirrings of social action in your local area?*
- *What is the nature of the interactions with figures of authority, local leaders and/or chiefs and how are they contributing to the advancement of the local population?*
- *How can we develop the capacity for more and more people to contribute to social action and the discourses of society?*
- *What are some of the signs of social transformation occurring within the local population in your area?*