

Social Action – Junior Youth

COMPILATION

What is Social Action?

Such actions seek to apply the teachings and principles of the Faith to improve some aspect of the social or economic life of a population, however modestly. They represent the coherence between the material and the spiritual.

Helping the wider community

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.

(Universal House of Justice, 30 December 2021, §16)

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.

(Universal House of Justice, 30 December 2021, §16)

...within clusters, expansion and consolidation, social action, and contributing to prevalent discourses are dimensions of a single, unified, outward-looking endeavour carried out at the grassroots of society.

(Universal House of Justice, 30 December 2021, §17)

Social Action in the 9-year plan

Projects, both large and small, have been started in order to respond to a range of social issues. Numerous Bahá'í-inspired organizations have been established by groups of individuals to work for many different objectives, and specialist entities have been founded to give attention to a particular discourse.

(Universal House of Justice, 30 December 2021, §20)

We rejoice to see these diverse, harmonious expressions of faith by the devoted followers of the Blessed Beauty, in response to the tribulations of a perplexed and sorely agitated world.

(Universal House of Justice, 30 December 2021, §20)

Local social action

Passivity is bred by the forces of society today. A desire to be entertained is nurtured from childhood, with increasing efficiency, cultivating generations willing to be led by whoever proves skilful at appealing to superficial emotions.

(Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 2010, §10)

Even in many educational systems students are treated as though they were receptacles designed to receive information.

(Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 2010, §10)

...the Bahá'í world has succeeded in developing a culture which promotes a way of thinking, studying, and acting, in which all consider themselves as treading a common path of service.

(Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 2010, §10)

Learning as a mode of operation requires that all assume a posture of humility, a condition in which one becomes forgetful of self, placing complete trust in God, reliant on His all-sustaining power and confident in His unfailing assistance.

(Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 2010, §20)

Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation is vast. It calls for profound change not only at the level of the individual but also in the structure of society.

(Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 2010, §25)

Only as effort is made to draw on insights from His Revelation, to tap into the accumulating knowledge of the human race, to apply His teachings intelligently to the life of humanity, and to consult on the questions that arise will the necessary learning occur and capacity be developed.

(Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 2010, §25)

...every human being and every group of individuals, irrespective of whether they are counted among His followers, can take inspiration from His teachings, benefiting from whatever gems of wisdom and knowledge will aid them in addressing the challenges they face.

(Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 2010, §26)

Indeed, the civilization that beckons humanity will not be attained through the efforts of the Bahá'í community alone. Numerous groups and organizations, animated by the spirit of world solidarity that is an indirect manifestation of... the principle of the oneness of humankind, will contribute to the civilization destined to emerge out of the welter and chaos of present-day society.

(Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 2010, §26)

Starting in local communities

The community, a building block of the global arena, can provide a space where alternative, inclusive, and cooperative ways of life can find expression, where men wholeheartedly come to see women as equal partners, and all are empowered to develop leadership abilities.

(Bahá'í International Community, *The Heart of Resilience: The Climate Crisis as a Catalyst for a Culture of Equality*, 2022)

Through moral educational programs, attitudes of unity and fellowship are instilled from a young age so that participants come to view each other as valued allies working for the well-being of their communities.

(Bahá'í International Community, *The Heart of Resilience: The Climate Crisis as a Catalyst for a Culture of Equality*, 2022)

Central to this process is the concept of capacity-building—of enhancing the ability of participants to better understand the material, social, and spiritual realities of their societies and to devise next steps as they collectively chart their own path of progress, deriving fulfilment through service.

(Bahá'í International Community, *The Heart of Resilience: The Climate Crisis as a Catalyst for a Culture of Equality*, 2022)

Toward this end, spaces have organically emerged for individuals to reflect together on their challenges, identify constructive responses, and explore deeper questions related to the meaning of life.

(Bahá'í International Community, *The Heart of Resilience: The Climate Crisis as a Catalyst for a Culture of Equality*, 2022)

These spaces can serve as arenas where hope in times of difficulty finds expression, and bonds of solidarity can strengthen. The... capacities, attitudes, and qualities characterizing a community can reinforce its resilience in the face of extreme events or ongoing environmental burdens.

(Bahá'í International Community, The Heart of Resilience: The Climate Crisis as a Catalyst for a Culture of Equality, 2022)

Education

...if [education and institutional capacity building] are to effect the profound changes in the minds of people and in the structures of society (needed to shift towards sustainability), the nature of the educational processes will need to be rethought.

(Bahá'í International Community, Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism 2010)

As a starting point, the program of education must be based on a clear vision of the kind of society that we wish to live in; and the kind of individuals that will bring this about.

(Bahá'í International Community, Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism 2010)

It needs to help learners reflect on the purpose of life and help them to step out of their cultural realities to develop alternative visions and approaches to the problems at hand and to understand the manifold consequences of their behaviors and to adjust these accordingly.

(Bahá'í International Community, Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism 2010)

Schools themselves must become participants in the social transformation processes. The curriculum cannot simply aim to impart relevant knowledge and skills; rather it should aim to develop the vast potential inherent in the human being.

(Bahá'í International Community, Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism 2010)

Individuals must be assisted to channel this potential towards the betterment of their communities and the advancement of society as a whole.

(Bahá'í International Community, Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism 2010)

The level of consciousness and the deep spirit of service and collaboration required to transform individual behaviors and institutional forces in the direction of sustainability will require a transformation of educational processes commensurate with the task at hand.

(Bahá'í International Community, Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism 2010)

The Example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

At Adasiyyih, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's village in the Jordan Valley at the southern base of the Golan Heights, He settled thirty Bahá'í families, guided them in farming operations and advised them on their agricultural practices. They produced and stored the grain that saved Palestine from starvation during the First World War.

Facing community challenges

to help previously antagonistic groups find unity through pursuit of a common goal;

to learn to put aside inherited customs and attitudes that belong to humanity's period of adolescence, and 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.

(Universal House of Justice, 30 December 2021, §36)

JUNIOR YOUTH VERSION

What is Social Action?

A social action is when we want to apply the teachings and principles of the Bahá'í Faith to improve, even in some small way, something in the social or economic life of our community.

We show that our material and spiritual life fit together and each supports the other.

Helping the wider community

This is a way that the Bahá'í Faith can make a difference in building a better society. We invite more people, inspired by the teachings of the Faith, to help improve the spiritual character and social conditions of our community.

What is different in our contribution as Bahá'ís with our friends is building our own capacity for service. We believe that people can take responsibility for their own development.

Within our community, teaching about the Bahá'í Faith, social action, and contributing to discourses (talking about Bahá'í principles addressed to social needs) are dimensions of a single effort to reach out to others at the grassroots of society.

Social Action in the present plan

Many projects, large and small, have been started to act on different social issues. Numerous Bahá'í-inspired organizations have been established by groups of individuals with different objectives, and some specialise on a particular discourse, like the International Environment Forum for the environment and sustainability. These all respond to the trials and difficulties of a world that has lost its way.

Local social action

In society today, we learn to be passive, not taking any action. A desire to be entertained is taught from childhood, with increasing efficiency, creating generations willing to be led by those who are good at appealing to our superficial emotions.

Even in many schools, students are treated as though they were containers made just to receive information.

Bahá'ís have a culture where we think, study, and act, while we are all walking a common path of service.

If we want to learn, we need to be humble, becoming forgetful of ourselves, placing complete trust in God, relying on His all-sustaining power and confident in His unfailing help.

Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation calls for deep change not only in individuals but also in the structure of society.

To learn and build our capacity, we need to study and be inspired the Bahá'í writings, to draw on the accumulating knowledge of the human race, to apply His teachings intelligently to the life of humanity, and to consult on the questions that are raised.

Everyone and every group, whether or not they are Bahá'í, can take inspiration from Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, benefiting from whatever wisdom and knowledge will help them with the challenges they face.

The civilization we are building will not come through the efforts of the Bahá'í community alone. Many groups and organizations, working for world solidarity that shows the oneness of humankind, will contribute to the civilization that will come out of the confusion of present society.

Starting in local communities

The community is a space where we can show other ways of life in which we cooperate and include everyone, where men see women as equal partners, and all can become leaders.

From a young age, moral education programs can teach unity and friendship so that everyone come to view each other as helpers working for the well-being of their communities.

We need to build the capacity of everyone to understand the material, social, and spiritual realities of their societies and to plan their next steps as they progress together through service.

This means finding spaces where people can discuss together their challenges, find constructive responses, and explore deeper questions about the meaning of life.

These spaces are places where we can find hope in times of difficulty, and make stronger connections between us. Our communities can build their capacities, attitudes, and qualities to become stronger in the face of extreme events or ongoing environmental problems.

Education

Education is necessary to make deep changes in the minds of people and in the structures of society towards sustainability, but we must rethink the way we educate.

First, the program of education must be based on a clear vision of the kind of society we wish to live in; and the kind of individuals that can do this.

Education needs to help us to think about the purpose of life and to look beyond what we have inherited in our own family and community to develop other visions and approaches to our problems. We must understand the many effects of our behaviour and make needed changes.

Schools must contribute to social transformation. They should not only provide relevant knowledge and skills, but help to develop all the possibilities in each person.

Each person must be helped to direct their capacities towards making better communities and advancing society as a whole.

Great changes in education are needed to make our individual behaviour and institutions work for sustainability with a high level of consciousness and a deep spirit of service and collaboration.

The Example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

At Adasiyyih, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's village in the Jordan Valley just south of the mountain of the Golan Heights, He settled thirty Bahá'í families, guided them in how to farm and advised them on better forms of agriculture, bringing new seeds and crops. They produced and stored the grain that saved Palestine from starvation during the First World War.

Facing challenges in our community

- we help groups who were against each other to find unity by working together for a common goal;
- we learn to forget about customs and attitudes inherited from the past, and to overcome prejudices of all kinds;
- we guard against any tendency to criticise or look for faults, and instead are positive and constructive in the way we approach things;
- we put the equality of women and men into practice;

- we leave behind doing nothing and not caring by taking individual initiatives to act;
- we put our support of plans to act together before things we personally preferred;
- we learn to use modern technologies without letting them take us over and make us dependent;
- we value how warm we feel when teaching the Faith and the joy of serving humankind above the things and attractions of this world;

- we reject becoming addicted to consumerism, always wanting to buy more;
- we turn away from materialism, the belief that only material things are important, as it is advertised and sold to us every day, and look instead on the bright light that is the laws and principles of God.

