

# Social Action

Contributing to Social Action

International Environment Forum

IEF youth – Social Action

# 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)

# Helping the wider community

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)

# Helping the wider community

...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.

# Social Action in the 9-year plan

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)



# Local social action

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

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

# Local social action

...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)

# Local social action

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)

# Local social action

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)

# Local social action

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.

# Local social action

...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)

# Local social action

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.

# 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.



# Starting in local communities

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)*

# Starting in local communities

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.

# Starting in local communities

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)

# Starting in local communities

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.

# 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.

# Education

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)

# Education

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.

# Education

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)



# Education

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)

# Education

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;

# Facing community challenges

- 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;

# Facing community challenges

- 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)