

# Ideas for Growth Around Bicentenary Celebration

The following is a set of comments and questions to facilitate planning for this cycle, for the preparation of the celebration itself, and for the cycle after the celebration:

Every effort to raise vibrant communities will help bring the goals of the Five Year Plan within reach.

- It is hoped that “countless events” will be planned. In how many localities do you envisage that celebrations will occur? What is the estimated number of events? How many participants will each locality welcome?
- It is expected that large numbers will be attracted to the Message of Bahá’u’lláh, and our plans should take this into consideration. On the one hand, we need to be well prepared; on the other hand, we should not be limited by our perceived capacity, but rather rely on the potent spiritual forces of this year. Many will join different activities after the celebrations; the interest of others will be sustained in different ways; still others will be affected by just hearing about the life and teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.

## The Cycle Before the Bicentenary:

- Every community is thinking about how to “attract the largest possible number” of souls to participate in the celebrations.
  - Encourage every believer to study the relevant messages from the Universal House of Justice, and the two recent editions of Reflections on Growth, in order to deepen their understanding of the significance of the celebrations, gain a sense of mission, and nurture a desire to contribute.
  - Reach out—through home visits, special gatherings, or other spaces—to each youth and adult participating in the core activities, to their families, and to the families of children and junior youth. Encourage them to invite others so that they see themselves as co-hosts rather than guests.
  - Where possible, particularly in locations where the process of community building is advanced, reach out to the whole population. This could be done, for instance, by mapping neighbourhoods and villages to ensure every family is included.
  - Approach local authorities and community leaders.
  - Make available teaching materials that can reach many, for instance, cards, prayer books, stories, booklets, and e-publications. As an example, at the inauguration of the Mother Temple of South America, 5,000 friends were each given 10 prayer books to share with people they met, with the hope that 50,000 souls would be exposed to the Words of Bahá’u’lláh.
- The sequence of institute courses—in particular, Books 2, 4, and 6—can be used to enhance the capacity to connect hearts to Bahá’u’lláh. Special campaigns can be organized to train, orient, and accompany the human resources needed to embrace those who wish to participate in the community-building activities. How can collaborators in the institute process and assistants to Auxiliary Board members be mobilized? Will their current numbers be sufficient? How can the number of those who assist with promoting devotional meetings, home visits, and firesides be increased?

## Preparing for the Bicentenary Celebration of the Birth of Bahá’u’lláh

- What existing spaces can be used to increase the participation of the community in preparing for, and following up after, the celebrations?
  - How can the Nineteen Day Feast and other community meetings be used to encourage, and consult on, the preparations for the celebrations and beyond?
  - Can home visits be used to encourage each individual and family to plan for the celebrations and beyond?

- In light of the above, and in order to stimulate and coordinate efforts associated with the Bicentenary, each institution needs to consider the rhythm and intensity of its pattern of activity. This may need to be similar to an intensive campaign or an expansion phase.
- Is there a need to appoint, orient, and train new Area Teaching Committees or institute coordinators to respond to the interest generated during this time?

### **The Celebration Itself**

The celebratory events associated with the two-hundred-year anniversary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh need not be confined to the two days of the Twin Holy Birthdays. They can start with many celebrations held in homes and workplaces with extended family, neighbours, friends, and colleagues, culminating with the formal celebrations on the Twin Holy Birthdays.

- How are important celebrations generally organized in your community? Are there aspects of the local culture that need to be taken into account?
- Will those involved in celebratory events be able to register for core activities or institute courses? Will they have the opportunity to formally embrace the Faith?

### **The Cycles After the Bicentenary**

- Anticipating an unprecedented increase in the number of those who are interested in becoming involved in the processes of the Plan, what are the implications for the institutions and agencies and for human resource development? How will the role of each institution and agency need to evolve—for instance, are current structures or schemes of coordination adequate? Will there be a need for more friends able to devote additional time to service in response to the momentum generated? What are the implications for meeting spaces and properties, the funds of the Faith, and literature and educational materials?
- How will each cluster harness the energy of youth who are attracted to the Person of Bahá'u'lláh? Are there plans to train new facilitators and to hold youth gatherings?
- Do institute campaigns need to be organized in advance?
- We might not be able to integrate everyone into our educational activities. What are other creative ways of engaging new friends? These could include, for example, carrying out regular devotional meetings, home visits, firesides, and community gatherings; sending prayers, quotations, and e-publications to those interested; and other uses of technology to help sustain interest, such as websites and electronic messaging.