

A Framework For Action: How Bahá'ís Work to Change the World Today

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“How long will injustice continue? How long is chaos and confusion to reign amongst men? How long will discord agitate the face of society

...The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appears to be lamentably defective.”

Bahá'u'lláh

“The Tabernacle of Unity has been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. . . . Of one tree are all ye the fruit and of one bough the leaves. . . . The world is but one country and mankind its citizens. . . . Let not a man glory in that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind.”

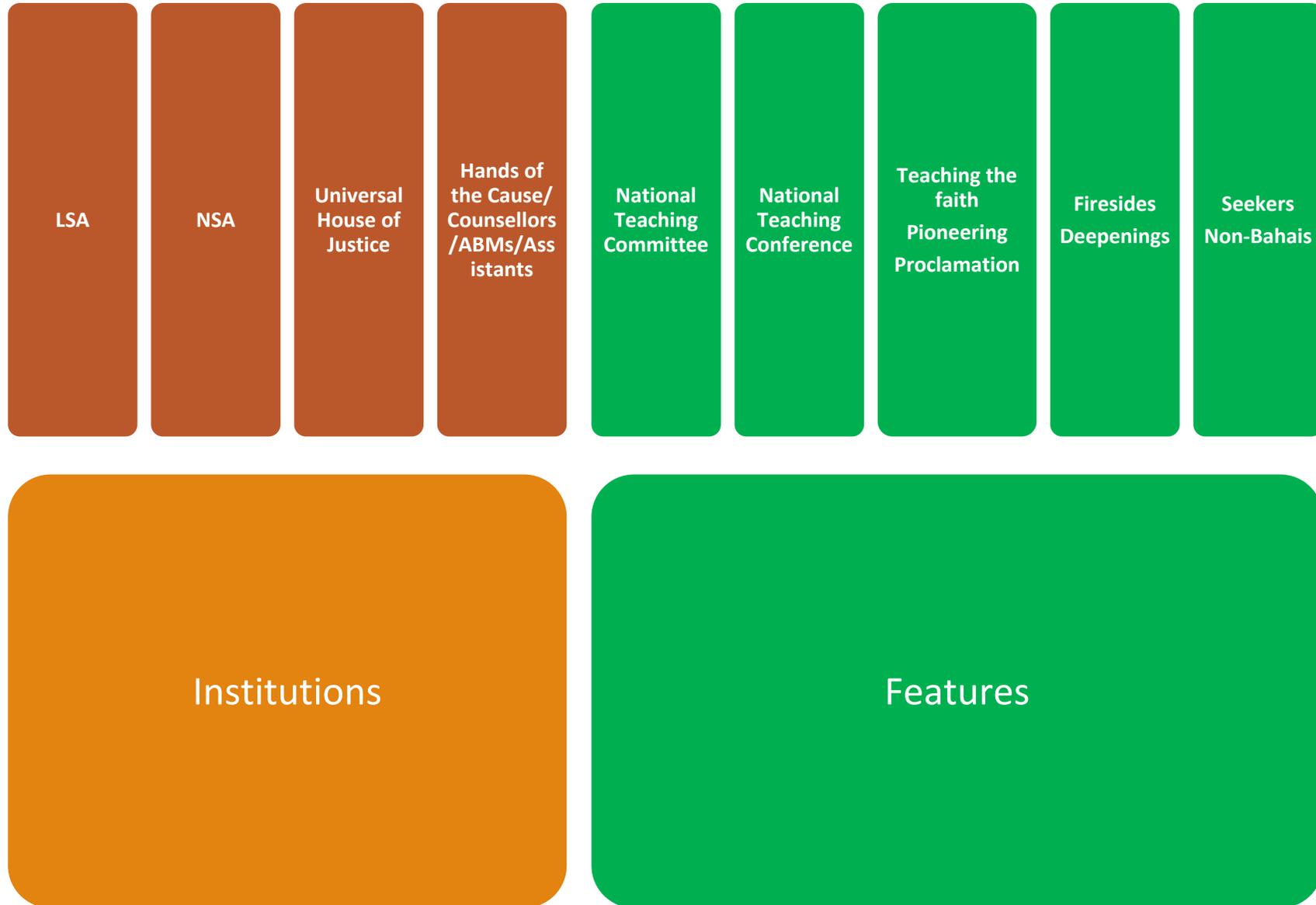
Bahá'u'lláh

“The work advancing in every corner of the globe today represents the latest stage of the ongoing Bahá’í endeavour to create the nucleus of the glorious civilization enshrined in His teachings, the building of which is an enterprise of infinite complexity and scale, one that will demand centuries of exertion by humanity to bring to fruition.

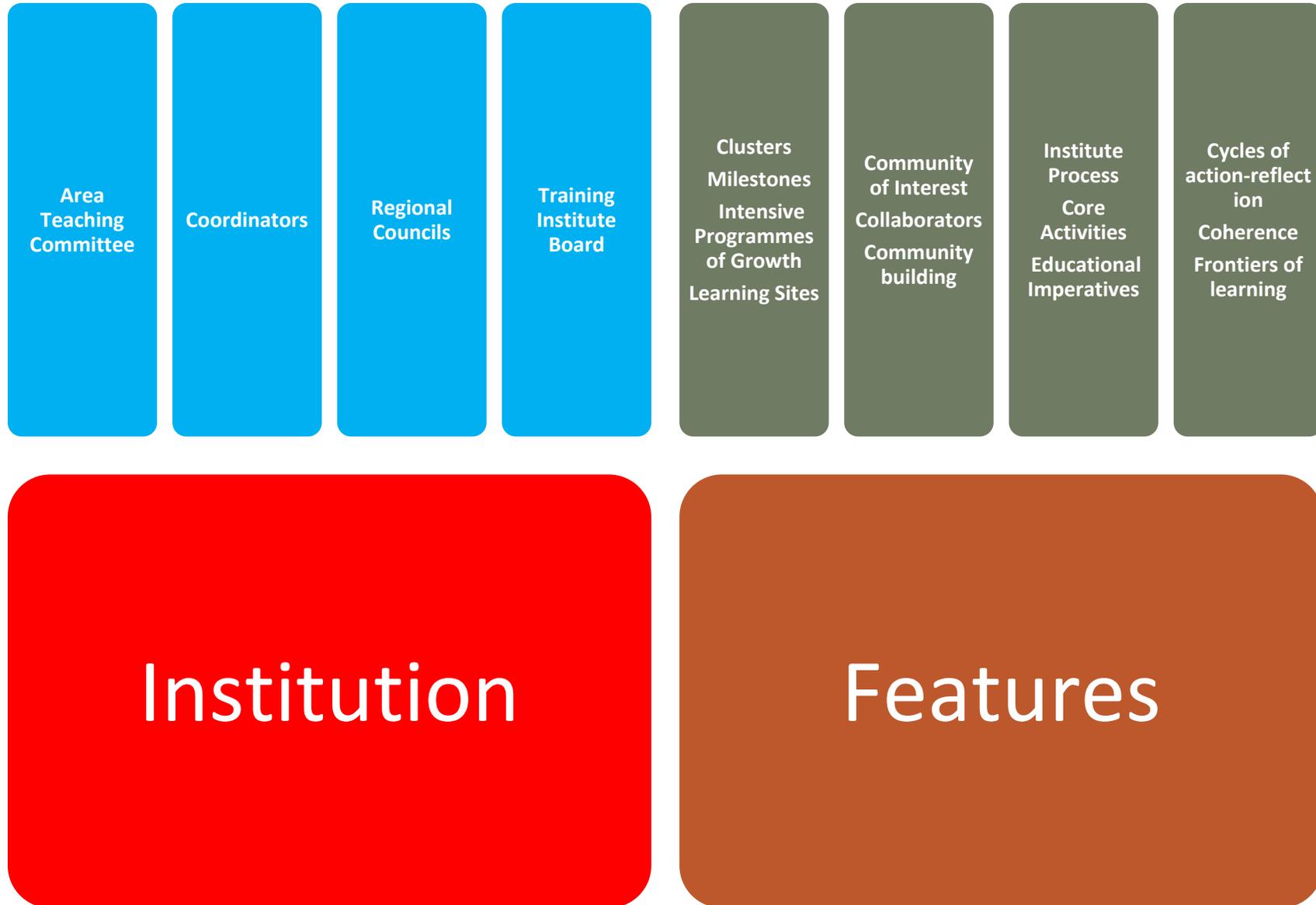
There are no shortcuts, no formulas. Only as effort is made to draw on insights from His Revelation, to tap into the accumulating knowledge of the human race, to apply His teachings intelligently to the life of humanity, and to consult on the questions that arise will the necessary learning occur and capacity be developed.”

Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 2010

1921-1992: Administrative Order



1993-2021: Change of Culture



“The experience of the Bahá’í community may be seen as an example of this enlarging unity. It is a community ...drawn from many nations, cultures, classes and creeds, engaged in a wide range of activities serving the spiritual, social and economic needs of the peoples of many lands.

It is a single social organism, representative of the diversity of the human family, conducting its affairs through a system of commonly accepted consultative principles, and cherishing equally all the great outpourings of divine guidance in human history. Its existence is yet another convincing proof of the practicality of its Founder’s vision of a united world, another evidence that humanity can live as one global society, equal to whatever challenges its coming of age may entail.

If the Bahá’í experience can contribute in whatever measure to reinforcing hope in the unity of the human race, we are happy to offer it as a model for study.”

Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*

...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.

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 Bahá'u'lláh's conception 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. It should be clear to everyone that the capacity created in the Bahá'í community over successive global Plans renders it increasingly able to lend assistance in the manifold and diverse dimensions of civilization building, opening to it new frontiers of learning.

Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 2010

"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, expressive of the dynamic coherence between the material and spiritual dimensions of life, includes classes for the spiritual education of children in which they also develop a deep appreciation for the fundamental unity of the various world religions; groups that assist young people to navigate a crucial stage of their lives and to withstand the corrosive forces that especially target them; circles of study wherein participants reflect on the spiritual nature of existence and build capacity for service to the community and society; gatherings for collective worship that strengthen the devotional character of the community; and, in time, a growing range of endeavours for social and economic development. 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. The process which is unfolding seeks to foster collaboration and build capacity within every human group—with no regard to class or religious background, with no concern for ethnicity or race, and irrespective of gender or social status—to arise and contribute to the advancement of civilization."

Universal House of Justice, 27 December, 2017

Impact – Engagement

“The worldwide community has shown the capacity to engage, at any given time, over a million people in such activities, helping them to explore and respond to spiritual realities.”

Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 2019

Impact – Capacity building

Makeni in Sierra Leone: "Within a period of just over four years, the cluster moved from having 8 core activities with 53 participants—none of whom were junior youth—to about 200 core activities in which over 2,000 individuals participated, with a corresponding increase in the number of human resources."

Upolu, Samoa: "Between 2013 and 2015, the number of classes in the cluster grew from 16 with 100 participants to 127 engaging 1,000 children", which I estimate is about 10% of all children in the likely age bracket in that island (a significant percentage of the national population of that age)

Source: The Five Year Plan 2011-2016: Summary

Impact – Scale

- 200 clusters around the world had passed the third milestone in 2015: “It denotes the appearance of a system for extending, in center after center, a dynamic pattern of community life that can engage a people - men and women, youth and adults - in the work of their own spiritual and social transformation.”. This usually involves tens of individuals mobilising hundreds.
- Among these 200 clusters (several hundred more anticipated by 2021), in "many scores of clusters, there are over a thousand inhabitants—sometimes several thousand—taking part in a well-established pattern of activity that embraces ever-larger numbers, raising communities whose habits of thought and action are rooted in Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation.”
- In Delhi, in 2016, the community was sustaining 1000 core activities mobilising 7000 local residents, including 200 junior youth groups and 250 children's classes. Each of the junior youth groups would also have engaged in acts of service.
- In Lumumbashi, DRC, in 2015, 600 people were mobilizing 10,000+, the largest engagement at the time.

Sources: Universal House of Justice 19 December 2015; The Five Year Plan 2011-2016: Summary

Impact – Social Transformation

"In some of the clusters where growth has advanced to this extent, an even more thrilling development has occurred. There are locations ...where a significant percentage of the entire population is now involved in community-building activities. For instance, there are small villages where the institute has been able to engage the participation of all the children and junior youth in its programmes. When the reach of activity is extensive, the societal impact of the Faith becomes more evident. The Bahá'í community is afforded higher standing as a distinctive moral voice in the life of a people and is able to contribute an informed perspective to the discourses around it on, say, the development of the younger generations. Figures of authority from the wider society start to draw on the insight and experience arising from initiatives of social action inspired by Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. Conversations influenced by those teachings, concerned with the common weal, permeate an ever-broader cross section of the population, to the point where an effect on the general discourse in a locality can be perceived. Beyond the Bahá'í community, people are coming to regard the Local Spiritual Assembly as a radiant source of wisdom to which they too can turn for illumination. "

"...In such clusters, while the friends continue to be occupied with sustaining the process of growth, other dimensions of Bahá'í endeavour claim an increasing share of their attention. They are seeking to understand how a flourishing local population can transform the society of which it is an integral part. This will be a new frontier of learning for the foreseeable future, where insights will be generated that will ultimately benefit the whole Bahá'í world."

Universal House of Justice 19 December 2015

Example – Kiribati

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-sXRzVrIYI>

What the video does not show is that this did not happen in a vacuum, but in the context of a very robust community building process: In the South Tarawa cluster of Kiribati alone, the number of core activities grew from 80 to 118 over the course of one cycle, with more than half being facilitated by youth. After a few more cycles, during which several hundred more young people joined community-building activities, the number of core activities surpassed 200." Some 3000 junior youth participated in the junior youth empowerment programme by 2016, 30% of the junior youth population of the entire country. Expulsions dropped as did underage drinking, and eventually youth offending and incarceration rates.

Clusters
Milestones
Intensive
Programmes
of Growth
Learning Sites

Community
of Interest
Collaborators
Community
building

Institute
Process
Core
Activities
Educational
Imperatives

Cycles of
action-reflection
Coherence
Frontiers of
learning

A Framework for Action: Some Key Elements

Today the human world is in need of a great power by which these glorious principles and purposes may be executed. ...a power is needed to carry out and execute... the remedy for human conditions—namely, the unification of mankind. ... The accomplishment of this unification cannot be through racial power, for races are different and diverse in tendencies. It cannot be through patriotic power, for nationalities are unlike. Nor can it be effected through political power since the policies of governments and nations are various. ... Therefore, it is evident that no means but an ideal means, a spiritual power... will heal this world sickness of war, dissension and discord.

Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace