



Office for the Advancement of Women

Information on women's activities in wider community sought

THE OFFICE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (OAW) is presently compiling a report on the work that Bahá'í women do in the wider community.

It is envisaged that all Bahá'í women and girls involved in any other organisations or activities, will send this information to the OAW for inclusion in the report.

The report will be useful in many ways: to gain a better understanding of the interests and involvement of Bahá'í women in the UK; develop a database of Bahá'í women involved with other organisations, (in order that those women to be supported in providing relevant information from the Bahá'í point of view to those organisations as necessary, for example regarding conferences, seminars and reports) and to be able to cite the breadth of work in which Bahá'í women in the UK are involved.

A questionnaire is available from OAW and the information required is simple: name, contact details, name of organisation, whether the individual is a member on an individual basis or representing the Faith, position in the organisation, and any other relevant comments.

There is no doubt that women are members of professional organisations such as those for doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, engineers etc. There must also be a huge number of women involved in Agenda 21, parent associations at school, interfaith organisations, hobby organisations etc.

In order for a comprehensive report to be created, the OAW would be most grateful if women could forward this information to:

Shiva Ashrafi, OAW, 27 Rutland Gate, London SW7 1PD
Email: oaw@bahai.org.uk or to shiva.ashrafi@bahai.org.uk

This can then be included in the information relayed to the Universal House of Justice. It is an important step in the work for the advancement of women in the UK, to know more about who the Bahá'í women are and their experiences, skills and interests and we look forward very much to receiving all your information.

Bahá'í Office for Religious and Educational Affairs

Citizenship: The Future is Here!

THERE IS NO DOUBT that Citizenship is at the heart of the Bahá'í Teachings: Bahá'ís have, for generations, been bringing the concept to the attention of a sometimes uninterested, apathetic society. Gradually, however, the wider world has come to see the necessity for teaching Citizenship to its children, although the precise make-up of the curriculum has been a cause of great debate.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has directed that from September 2002, Citizenship will become a statutory subject for Key Stages 1, 2, 3 & 4. The three areas for children to study are:

1. Social and Moral Responsibility
2. Community Involvement
3. Political Literacy.

Bahá'ís have, of course, a unique viewpoint to offer. BOREA has been instructed by the National Spiritual Assembly to coordinate Bahá'í activities relating to the teaching of Citizenship in non-Bahá'í schools. Therefore, if you should have any materials to offer towards the development of Citizenship, please liaise with BOREA, rather than directly with the schools. Not only will it be less confusing for the schools having only one person/agency to work with, but as BOREA is the National Assembly's arm in these matters, schools will begin to treat the Bahá'ís as a serious, highly effective organisation, rather than a collection of individuals. This, surely, is part of the Universal House of Justice's vision for the external affairs work that the Bahá'í International Community has been developing with great success during the last decade.

BOREA has produced a three-point plan to support Citizenship education in the UK:

1. To publish a Bahá'í Statement on Citizenship and present it to key figures in the educational and political establishments
2. To produce schemes of work for all the Key Stages, in line with the DfES guidance, to be used as a pilot during the 2001/2002 academic year
3. To review the pilot's success and publish the revised material in September 2002.

BOREA has produced fliers with details of the pilot scheme: please contact BOREA for copies of the fliers if you have any contacts in schools, or teacher training establishments, who you think might be interested in participating in the pilot.

To request fliers or further information on Citizenship, please contact:

Jenny Lockwood – Email: borea@oxenton.demon.co.uk

To offer classroom materials, please contact:

Simon Trick Tel: – Email: nstricks@yahoo.com

Bahá'í Agency for Social and Economic Development (UK)

Being the library of the community and much more

WHAT HAVE A COMMUNITY first-aid kit, chickens, election to a village council, vegetable gardens, cassava processing, sports and pig feeds in common? Well? Simple, they all relate to activities of SAT groups and achievements by SAT students in the past year. And this list could also include reforestation projects with coconut and fruit trees, adult literacy projects, tutoring primary school children with learning difficulties, etc.

These facts are from the monitoring report by Erin Murphy-Graham who went to Honduras in June on behalf of BASED-UK to report on the progress of the SAT rural education programme. For those readers who do not yet know about the project, SAT is an acronym for the Spanish equivalent of



“System of Tutorial Learning”.

The Bahá'í-inspired Honduran non-profit and non-governmental organisation BAYAN

Students and visitors on a SAT project in Honduras

is implementing the SAT non-formal secondary education programme in a remote and deprived part of Honduras. BAYAN has funding from the British and Canadian governments for this programme. The British government funding of SAT is channelled through and monitored by BASED-UK.

And although these achievements and activities are impressive, the most important event of the past year was the signing of agreements between BAYAN and three regional Departments (Gracias á Dios, Colón and Atlántida), indicating the formal recognition of the SAT programme as a viable secondary education system. National recognition of the SAT programme now depends on obtaining the final Ministerial agreement which would allow SAT students with a Bachiller (completion of secondary education) in Rural Well-Being to enter university. The local government departments of the Ministry of Education in Colón and Atlántida are paying the salaries of tutors and co-coordinators of new SAT groups.

In these two regions, 17 new groups were established with 420 students. Experiences gained in the region of La Mosquitia were used to improve the SAT programme right from the start, including the use of experienced teachers (these were not always available in La Mosquitia) and the wearing of the standard school uniform with an additional badge with SAT and BAYAN on it.

The year also saw the conclusion of the chicken and pig raising projects in all SAT groups. Many valuable experiences were gained, although a lot of chickens and pigs died (mainly due to the use of inappropriate breeds and difficult feeding requirements). An important lesson about accepting donations was learnt. In this case, accepting donated animals resulted in the use of less appropriate animals and feeds. However, several students would like to start their own rearing projects as soon as possible, using local breeds, but initial funding is a problem. BAYAN is therefore launching a new micro-credit initiative to allow students to borrow cash or goods to start.

Many impressive achievements, but difficult to measure and evaluate. But then, how do you measure increased self-confidence and female empowerment? By being elected to a village council (as in the case of two female students in Cusuna) or by attending community meetings and actively participating in them? How do you measure students' attitudes regarding community service? By the students not asking “for points” any more when they do a service project?

SAT groups have become a vital component of their communities, with many people and local organisations showing great interest in and support of the groups' activities. What are we to think of being referred to as “the library of the community” (in the case of the SAT group in Ciriboya), and SAT tutors being asked to attend local teacher meetings? Not to mention the donation (by the father of a SAT student) of a piece of land for the SAT palm tree project in Belen.

Please, don't think that everything was positive during the past year. Difficulties encountered included the departure of two SAT tutors to pursue university studies (which of course is very good for them), the problems with maintenance and administration tasks at BAYAN's field office in Palacios, and the difficulties in obtaining suitable seeds for different agricultural projects. All this, while not forgetting challenging issues such as communication, recognition of tutor's training, and travel by SAT-group coordinators between scattered SAT communities. Enough challenges until the end of April 2002 (the end of funding by the British government). We will keep you informed!

BASED-UK

Secretary: Susie Howard – Fax: 01235 533278, E-mail:secretariat@baseduk.org

Year of Service Desk

International Opportunities

Belize

Short and long term Bahá'í volunteers in wonderful and exciting San Ignacio, Cayo, Belize. There are many ways to serve here!



We need:

- Children's class teachers
- Youth leaders
- People to make regular and systematic visits to our many contacts (the result of our Summer Campaign 2001)
- Bahá'í teachers – Flexible Bahá'ís willing to help with as many activities as possible. We also need help with our regular activities, with chores and coordination (including driving, errands, organising groups to get things done like Bahá'í Centre cleaning, sign making, media tasks, etc.)

*It could be you!
Jody Koomen in Africa*

Do you fit any one of the above descriptions? Or are you willing to be trained? Your work will primarily consist of a combination of the above tasks. You may also work on a committee or become involved in some service, administrative, or logistical tasks such as copying, errands, driving, and media. If you are artistic, you may prepare posters, Bahá'í booth displays, flyers, etc. If you are musical, you may teach guitar and Bahá'í songs. Whatever talent you have, you may be asked to share it with others. You may learn something new and help out the community with your new skills.

Some volunteers will be trained as Ruhi tutors so they can carry out study circles. We train volunteers right here in Belize – as children's class teachers, tutors, Bahá'í teachers, and youth leaders. We also have training in activities, games, and arts and crafts which help to animate communities and help with training. We currently have more than 30 youth involved in our community activities. Most of the youth will be leaving in August 2001 or early September, but our intention is to have at least four new ones serving at the same time here in San Ignacio. We do have some local youth involved in the work also.

Volunteers will live with a pioneer family. It will cost approximately US \$250 per month (current amount subject to change). This includes food and housing, transportation for your Bahá'í service, and a weekly minimal allowance for snacks, etc. This does not include spending-money for clothes, personal travel, tours, special treats or snacks, or personal things like shampoo, film, special hair treatments, hairdresser, etc. You get one day off per week for rest, swimming in pool or river, canoeing, touring Mayan Ruins, or whatever.

You will find more information by visiting our general site and its year of service page on the internet at <http://www.bz.bahai.org>

Hong Kong

We are writing to seek your assistance in advertising our need for a mature Bahá'í youth to undertake a youth year of service in Hong Kong as soon as possible. We will provide sufficient pocket money for food and transport within Hong Kong as well as free hospitality in a Bahá'í home to the suitable candidate.

The main role of this youth would be to assist us in setting up a Youth Centre in Hong Kong to come together on at least a weekly basis to undertake meaningful projects which will develop their sense of Bahá'í identity and will be beneficial to the Bahá'í community. Projects would involve arts and drama, and provision of moral education services, which is our social and economic development project. In addition they would follow up contacts already made with outside youth and volunteer organisations and make new contacts in the field of service.

New Zealand

We have one community in New Zealand, Whangarei that urgently needs a dedicated youth volunteer. Whangarei is a beautiful town in the north island, known for its sunny weather

and fruit growing. This position requires a very mature, motivated youth who will be able to coordinate youth and pre-youth activities between different communities in our area, and someone who could work with the Local Spiritual Assembly.

The New Zealand Audio Visual Unit needs a year of service person starting in January 2002, or close to that date. It will be an outstanding opportunity for someone to learn motion picture production.

We want someone who wants to make a career in this field and has a burning desire to learn. They must be able to drive a car and have computer skills. They must be self-sufficient financially and need to provide their own transportation and living conditions.

Year of Service Desk

Secretary: Sylvia Miley

Esmyr Koomen, email coordinator – E-mail: yosdesk@koomen.demon.co.uk

Jonneke Koomen, youth advisor – E-mail: jonneke@koomen.demon.co.uk