



Office of Public Information

'Respect' – an initiative of the Prince's Trust

BACK IN 1998 the Prince of Wales and the Chief Rabbi in a discussion over dinner came up with the idea of a multifaith project which would encourage people to give a gift of time and service to people of other faiths.

This was to have been a Millennium project, but like so many Millennium projects, it didn't happen.

Now the Prince of Wales wants to use the idea as a way of celebrating the Queen's Golden Jubilee. An advisory group of faith representatives, including the National Secretary, has been developing the initiative with senior people from the Prince's Trust and TimeBank, the national campaign that encourages people to volunteer.

Renamed, "Respect: it's about time", the initiative was launched on April 29 at a major media event in the presence of the Prince of Wales and religious leaders in Birmingham.

The initiative, which will last for two years, will help grassroots members of different faiths in the UK to get to know each other by offering gifts of time and service. The National Spiritual Assembly is fully behind the initiative and encourages the friends throughout the UK to develop suitable small-scale projects of humanitarian service that they can do for people of other faiths.

Of course, this will require tact and wisdom in making contact with other faith communities. Our motives in doing this are not to teach or proclaim the faith in any direct way, but to come to know and respect our Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian neighbours.

We hope too that people from the various faith communities may also wish to be of service to us.

The National Assembly has set up a task force to develop ideas for projects and to monitor Bahá'í involvement. But please don't wait to be asked. Individuals and communities should feel free to get involved. The leaflet included with this Journal includes a phone number and website that you can contact for ideas.

Please keep the National Assembly up to date with what you are doing and how things go.

We need your press cuttings

We would like to remind everyone that we need a copy of any press coverage you get for the Faith or for Bahá'í activities, so that we can have an accurate picture of how things are going across the country in this important aspect of proclamation and public information.

Please send a cutting (or good quality photocopy) with a note of the newspaper's title and the date of publication to the Office of Public Information.

United Nations Days and Weeks

Bahá'ís have in the past been able to hold meetings in connection with appropriate United Nations Days, or to mark these events in co-operation with other organisations, thus increasing our outreach into the wider community.

To help this the Office of Public Information is making available a full list of UN Days and Weeks occurring throughout the year. It is available electronically in RTF or PDF form (please specify which) from opi@bahai.org.uk or in hard copy from OPI.

New statement on Social Cohesion

The National Spiritual Assembly has prepared and issued a new statement on Social Cohesion. This is a subject of great current concern, to the government, to other bodies, and to people in general. It is one issue where it is clear we do have something to offer, as evidenced by the growing success of the Institute for Social Cohesion, an initiative of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom.

The new statement “Social Cohesion – Dwelling in the Same Land” is available on request from OPI at the postal address below, or electronically as a PDF file or plain text from opi@bahai.org.uk.

The statement is placed on the national Website at <http://www.bahai.org.uk/>.

UK Bahá'í Office of Public Information

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Committee for International Pioneering and Travel Teaching

YEAR TWO OF THE FIVE YEAR PLAN is under way. The clock is ticking. The minutes, the hours, the days fly by. The countdown has begun. Now we are beginning to seize the chalice of service and rise to the challenge set for the United Kingdom.

Overseas pioneers (short and long term): At least 150 by the end of the Plan. To date: 43
Overseas travel teachers: At least 500 by the end of the Plan. To date: 82

(Universal House of Justice letter to the National Assembly, February 3, 2002)

So, if each Area in the UK aims to send out two pioneers and five travel teachers to overseas goals during the Plan, we will achieve the basic target. No problem! The divinely guided, supreme institution of the Faith has assessed our present strength and knows what we are capable of, so let's do it! We already know that there is a special call for Cyprus, especially for the Greek speakers among you. Several other countries are far advanced in their plans to respond but the community in Cyprus looks eagerly to the land that sent out their valiant Knights of Bahá'u'lláh, Hugh McKinley and his mother Violet, almost five decades ago, to once again arise sacrificially and play a leading role in healing that divided island.

The International Teaching Centre has recently made available a document with lots more detail on local conditions and help needed around the world. In Europe, Malta, Corsica, and, for hardier souls, the Faroe Islands, get top billing along with the Balkan states recovering from the ravages of war. So, no excuse, get your copy now from the National Office!

The beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, has written:

“To the band of pioneers, whether settlers or itinerant teachers, ...I, myself, as well as the entire Bahá'í world, owe a debt of gratitude that no one can measure or describe. To the sacrifices they have made ... future generations ... will no doubt pay adequate tribute—a tribute no less ardent and well-deserved than the recognition extended by the present-day

builders of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh to the Dawnbreakers, whose shining deeds have signalled the birth of the Heroic Age of His Faith."

(Messages to America, p. 70)

As the song says, "You can be a hero!"

Bahá'u'lláh Himself goes even further:

"They that have forsaken their country in the path of God and subsequently ascended unto His presence, such souls shall be blessed by the Concourse on High and their names recorded by the Pen of Glory among such as have laid down their lives as martyrs in the path of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsistent"

(Cited in Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986, p. 227)

Need we say more!

You can get in touch with the CIPTT by email: peyman@onetel.net.uk.

Children's Bahá'í Education Service

Conceptual DNA – A Curriculum for life

EVERY COMMUNITY, whether national, political, cultural, ethnic or religious, must contemplate what to pass on to succeeding generations. They must decide what to bequeath to their descendents. They have to somehow envision a future in which they themselves may not partake but which perpetuates values, ideas, symbols and insights they hold dear. The ways of being, thought and action developed over the known lifespan of the community must, in some way, be transmitted. It is like replicating a metaphysical DNA. If the transmission is incomplete or does not take place, the community is decultured, extinguished – in one generation.

The contemplation of what to pass on – how much, in what form, with what elements and in what proportions – constitutes, perhaps, the most important activity a community will ever indulge in. It is the conceptual equivalent of biological reproduction – the survival of the species. It is a curriculum.

The UK Bahá'í community, having begun to establish a network of formal Sunday Schools and other children's classes or activity groups, turned its attention to the process of refinement. A series of conferences in the UK at national, regional and local levels, over a period of nine years, from 1985 to 1994, was held to consult upon the nature, purpose and application of Bahá'í educational principles, especially in relation to the development of a UK National Bahá'í Curriculum.

Also, it was becoming increasingly clear, from letters of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'í world, and plans formulated for the UK national Bahá'í community by the UK National Spiritual Assembly, that the production of a Bahá'í Curriculum was necessary for the further systematisation and development of formal Bahá'í education. Accordingly, a curriculum was commissioned for the National Spiritual Assembly's consideration and approval.

It was necessary, at the outset, to determine why a curriculum was necessary in the first place. Why could the teachers not simply be provided with lesson plans? Why was it necessary to go through the rigmarole of what seemed like a purely theoretical or academic exercise? These concerns, and others held by Bahá'ís, were readily addressed.

A curriculum defines what should be taught and why. It gives us an overall grasp of the totality of what is to be taught and the relationship of each of the elements in it to each other and to the whole. It helps toward a standardisation of educational provision with continuity, consistency and progression. It provides direction and purpose with specific goals set out in manageable stages. It assists in maintaining a balance of elements. It acts as

a map or framework that enables us to see overlaps and gaps and allows us to gather and position previously scattered and unrelated learning materials produced with great effort and sacrifice. It also provides a strong focus for teacher training.

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Secondly, it was necessary to determine what kind of Bahá'í adults the Bahá'í community wanted its children to be in the future. The answers to this question would determine the broad structure of the curriculum. Bahá'ís, guided by the relevant statements in Bahá'í scripture, wanted children who, as adults, would have acquired:

- i. a spiritual and moral character devoted to sacrifice and service
- ii. a knowledge and understanding of the Bahá'í Faith and other Divinely Revealed Religions
- iii. skills appropriate to the individual, family, social and administrative life of a Bahá'í

Here, then, was mirrored the tripartite nature of education, giving rise to the three attainment targets of the curriculum. From this framework the curriculum was developed, written and approved. It was launched in November 1996 for adoption throughout the UK. Copies have also gone to over 50 countries. It has already given rise to three Bahá'í syllabi and a Bahá'í teacher training course. As another result of its publication, it is now possible to locate or commission lesson materials that will cover all the elements necessary in a balanced way, for each age group from 2-16 years.

One of the most satisfying aspects of the creation of the National Bahá'í Curriculum is the use of the inter-relationship between the Bahá'í scriptures and expert knowledge from a specific field of study, and the ploughing back into the Bahá'í community of experience gained from outside it.

Trevor R.J. Finch

Bahá'í Agency for Social and Economic Development

Report from SAT project in the Honduras

IT WAS DIFFICULT explaining to my colleagues at work that my 2-week trip to Honduras at Easter wasn't going to be an ordinary holiday. No-one really believed me of course, not even when I explained what I'd be doing. Sarah Richards and I would be representing BASED-UK in a team evaluating the SAT programme in northern Honduras. The Tutorial Learning System (SAT in Spanish) is a secondary education system that has been funded for the last five years by the British government. Our mission was to report how that money had been spent and what had been learned from the project. The Bahá'í-inspired nongovernmental Bayán Association of Indigenous Socio-economic Development manages the SAT programme and the British Bahá'í community, via BASED-UK, supports Bayán.

So while you were all celebrating Naw Rúz, I flew to Boston to spend the night with Erin Murphy (another team member). The next morning we flew via Miami and San Pedro Sula, Honduras, to La Ceiba on the Atlantic coast. At the headquarters of Bayán we met up with the remaining team members: Filippo del Gatto and Ada Laetia Vega, the latter from the Honduran Ministry of Education. This was truly a team of Unity in Diversity, with 5 nationalities (American, Dutch, English, Honduran and Italian) living in 3 countries and with backgrounds either in education or agriculture/forestry.

The next 4 days were spent visiting different SAT groups in 5 communities in the Departments of Atlántida and Colón. Some of the SAT groups were only 1 month old, while others had been running for 2 years. We talked to dozens of people: students, tutors, parents, community leaders and educational authorities; and were inspired by the stories about the influence of the SAT programme on their communities.

Early Wednesday morning we flew east to Palacios in the La Mosquitia region. This is the town where a small hospital was founded in the mid-1980s by two pioneering families and where Bayán began. The airfield was a grass strip and was busy with lots of small planes. We later discovered that this happens every morning between 7 and 8 am, before the winds become too strong for safe landing. Logistics was definitely the key word in our first meeting with the Bayán co-ordinators Alejandro and Ricardo. How were we to fit as many village visits as possible into 2.5 days taking into account wind and sea conditions, as well as the fact that these were the days before Easter?

The SAT programme has been going on in these communities for 5-6 years and many students (often with families) are heavily involved in all kinds of community activities and organisations. Well, it took over an hour but we managed to arrange 5 visits. To reach Cusuna, the most far away village, we had to travel more than 1.5 hours over the ocean. The waves weren't too bad and Sarah and I thoroughly enjoyed sitting in front of the boat (and being burned alive by the scorching sun). Reaching land did mean getting wet feet and trousers, but the ocean also offered the opportunity of a swim before lunch.

I still don't know how Alejandro found the river entrance to Palacios when we returned at night. No lights to indicate the mouth of the river, only a nearly full moon. After all these field visits and conversations with staff from Bayán, the only thing left to do was the real work: report writing.

What else is there to say? That the most stressful part of the evaluation was the television interview on Sunday afternoon during the weekly television slot of the Bahá'ís of La Ceiba? We all agreed on that for sure.

Sarah and I kept reminding ourselves that this was work, but it did feel like a holiday sometimes. Especially when we were travelling by boat over the ocean. And what nicer job than talking to people and being shown the agricultural activities of SAT groups?

We felt very privileged to be there and to see the 'application of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh to the gradual process of the building of a new civilization' in action. Realising that this process, started only 6 years ago in one of the most remote areas of Honduras, is currently happening in 35 communities of 3 Departments and will expand to 10 Departments by 2005.

While we were there the Minister of Education signed the final agreement to recognise the SAT programme as a formal State-owned secondary education system for rural areas. Bayán had been waiting for this signature for 16 months.

We met several of the Honduran Bahá'ís who came to England last year on their way to the Opening of the Terraces? They were at the Bahá'í spring school and it was a wonderful surprise for all of us.

I was also able to spend 2 beautiful days at the Tierra Santa Home, see how the money raised by the British Bahá'ís has been used, and notice how Tierra Santa influences the whole village?

Of course there is much more to tell, so if you'd like to hear more or see photos/slides you'd better come and find me at Sidcot summer school.

Ineke Gijsbers

The Tutorial Learning System (SAT) Rural Education Project

MANY PEOPLE working for sustainable development now believe the main priority is education. The "System of Tutorial Learning" (SAT) project is a non-formal education programme run by the Honduran nongovernmental organisation "Bayán Association for Indigenous Social and Economic Development".

SAT has evolved over a period of almost 30 years of experimentation, primarily in Colombia, where, as in Honduras, formal state education systems suffer from "urban bias" and encourage young people to migrate to the cities. The programme has proved so successful in Colombia that there are currently 35,000 SAT students. SAT is now being promoted among two indigenous or ethnic minority groups in a remote and very poor area of north-east Honduras called La Mosquitia. In order to support this project, BASED-UK has received a grant from the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

The Bayán Association started with a small hospital in 1986 in order to meet the basic health needs of the local population. At that time there was no hospital or clinic in the area. However, Bayán soon realised that the needs of the indigenous Miskito and Garífuna peoples went far beyond health, and that the basic constraint to a more self-reliant path of development was the lack of educational opportunities beyond primary school. Weak human resource development makes these people very vulnerable to outsiders, who are often exploitative.

SAT is a non-formal secondary school education which aims to provide young people with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to become community leaders. Moral principles are integrated into SAT, since experience has shown that education systems based only on material principles tend to cause greater inequity. The main motivating factor is therefore a strong emphasis on service to the community. Much of the course involves practical 'learning by doing' activities, for instance each SAT student group has an agricultural research plot on which to experiment with different combinations of crops. Many other rural development activities have also emerged using SAT as a springboard – examples of this are a system of loans to set up small service businesses, a village co-operative marketing system and pre-school classes. It is therefore a truly "empowering" programme for rural people.

The Honduran Ministry of Education is very interested in this project as a prototype for other rural areas, but due to lack of resources is not able to provide financial support. However, it has qualifications. With the support of the British and Honduran Governments, BASED-UK feels that this project has great potential but considerable financial support is essential during its establishment phase. We believe that education is not a "quickfix" approach to development – all too often "quick fix" projects have left rural people even more dependent on aid. Education is something that people never lose, and it has a multiplier effect – better educated parents, especially mothers, will pass it on to their children (in Honduras most of the SAT students are female). Through education young people can learn to have a greater respect for the environment.

This project, situated on the edge of the Rio Plátano Biosphere Reserve which has the largest area of surviving rain forest in Central America, also aims to promote the sustainable management of natural resources.

For further information see: www.escalix.com/freepage/bayan/ [No longer available.] or contact BASED-UK on 01235 524857.

