

WIDENING THE CIRCLE OF PARTICIPATION - WORKSHOP

Read and reflect on the following:

1. Before long, there forms a nucleus of friends in a cluster who are working and consulting together and arranging activities. For the process of growth to advance further, the number of people sharing this commitment must rise, and their capacity for undertaking systematic action within the framework of the Plan must correspondingly increase. And similar to the development of a living organism, growth can occur quickly when the right conditions are in place. (Universal House of Justice to Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, 29 December 2015)
2. We rejoice to see that in a growing number of clusters, and in neighbourhoods and villages within them, a nucleus of friends has emerged who through action and reflection are discovering what is required, at a particular point, for the process of growth to advance in their surroundings. (2019 Ridván message of the Universal House of Justice)
3. To have come this far implies intense activity occurring in specific neighbourhoods or villages, but also concerted effort being made by the generality of the believers living across the cluster— a rising spirit of universal participation in the work of community building. In practice, this means the mobilization of a sizable number of Bahá'ís who are creatively and intelligently applying the Plan's framework for action to the reality of their own circumstances wherever in the cluster they live. It entails families and individual believers working together and making a conscious decision to see themselves as belonging to an expanding nucleus. Such groups of friends set about widening the circle of participation in their activities by engaging with the networks to which they belong— networks created through a place of work or study, a local school, or a community hub of another kind—and by accompanying others who arise to serve alongside them.” (Universal House of Justice to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, 30th December 2021)
4. Within each centre of intense activity, collaborative arrangements emerge among groups of families, who organise community-building activities among themselves with a view to widening the embrace of such activities to many nearby households; an informal network of friends provides encouragement and support to the endeavours under way... And naturally, there remains a strong focus on being outward looking: finding ways to continually share the fruits of a thriving pattern of action with souls who are as yet unfamiliar with the Faith.” (Universal House of Justice to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, 30th December 2021)
5. ... the challenge facing the friends serving at the grassroots is essentially the same in every place. They must be able to read their own reality and ask: what, in light of the possibilities and requirements at hand, would be fitting objectives to pursue in the coming cycle or series of cycles? (Universal House of Justice to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, 30th December 2021)

Read the “Gracemere Narrative” (*supplied as a separate document*)

1. How does the Gracemere experience illustrate the guidance you have just studied?
2. What other insights from the narrative do you find helpful?

How does this apply to me?

- How are you and those working alongside you learning to widen the circle of participation of families and individuals in the community-building activities in your area?
- How are conversations on spiritual themes and the culture of home visits being strengthened in your area?
- What are the spaces/occasions in your area where families and individuals come together for collective worship?
- How can “uplifting” and “well prepared community gatherings”, including camps and festivals catering to families, children, junior youth, or youth become a feature of your area?
- How is the growing culture of worship and service contributing to the transformation of the lives of the people in your area?