

1999 Bahá'í Development Seminar for the Americas

**PARTICIPATORY TRAINING AND
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

Facilitator: Linda S. Gershuny (Haiti)

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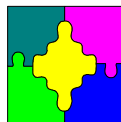
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OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

WHO?	100 Development "practitioners" from North and South America
WHY?	To share concepts and experiences about participatory training for community change agents, with individuals interested in comparing or broadening their knowledge and experience for more effective field application
WHAT?	PARTICIPATORY TRAINING AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION Importance of participation (Prosperity Statement, SDC, TB) Understanding of concept and practice (continuum, stages, capacities, consistency) Techniques: PLA, Popular Education, VIPP, Reflect, Cooperative Learning
TO DO WHAT:	Identify basic concepts and principles from Writings Exchange experience and understanding Examine case studies: From Haitian Roots ADC training and PLA activities with Parent Teacher Associations – NW Haiti Field Staff training and PLA activities with Key persons in South... in order to evaluate the application of principles and practices in light of underlying principles (development of capacity, grassroots responsibility, vision, hope, etc.) and learnings
WHERE	Salon 13 (Wed) plus Break – Out Salon 1 (40); Salon 6 plus Break-Out Salon 11
WHEN	WED and THURS Dec.(seminar) from 10am – 12 noon
HOW	Reflection on quote – pairs, share in larger group Sharing of experience in the area of Participatory Training and Community Participation – Document Quotes – questions to identify principles Video clips preceded by questions Successes, difficulties, lessons learned
MATERIALS	Handout – quotes Videos VCR Cassettes Future actions Exchange emails Evaluation of session

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING “PARTICIPATION” IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING



BAHÁ'Ú'LLÁH CALLS ALL TO RESPONSIBLE PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY

Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements.

-Bahá'u'lláh, *quoted in The Prosperity of Humankind*, p. 3. *Gleanings CVI*, p. 213

Every eye, in this Day, should Seek what will best promote the Cause of God. (...) Bend your energies to whatever may foster the education of men.

-Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings V*, p. 9

With the utmost friendliness and in a spirit of perfect fellowship take ye counsel together, and dedicate the precious days of your lives to the betterment of the world and the promotion of the Cause of Him who is the Ancient and Sovereign Lord of all. He, verily, enjoineth upon all men what is right, and forbiddeth whatsoever degradeth their station.

-Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings XCII*, p. 184

PARTICIPATION NECESSARY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF GLOBAL SOCIETY

The primary objective of governing institutions at all levels is the advancement of human civilization. This objective is difficult to satisfy without the **inspired and intelligent participation** of the generality of humankind in the life and affairs of the community. (...)The tasks entailed in the development of a global society call for levels of capacity far beyond anything the human race has so far been able to muster. Reaching these levels will require an enormous expansion in access to knowledge on the part of every individual. International institutions will succeed in eliciting and directing the potentialities latent in the peoples of the world to the extent that their exercise of authority is moderated by their obligation to win the confidence, respect and genuine support of those whose actions they seek to govern and to consult openly and to the fullest extent possible with all those whose interests are affected.

-Bahá'í International Community, “*Releasing the Power of the Individual: A Critical Challenge of the Emerging World Order*” from *Turning Point for All Nations*, pp. 13-14.

AGENCIES AND RELIGIONS MUST GO BEYOND LIP SERVICE TO PARTICIPATION

Future generations, however, will find almost incomprehensible the circumstance that, in an age paying tribute to an egalitarian philosophy and related democratic principles, development planning should view the masses of humanity as essentially recipients of benefits from aid and training. **Despite acknowledgement of participation as a principle, the scope of the decision-making left to most of the world's population is at best secondary**, limited to a range of choices formulated by agencies inaccessible to them and determined by goals that are often irreconcilable with their perceptions of reality.

This approach is even endorsed, implicitly if not explicitly, by established religion. Burdened by traditions of paternalism, prevailing religious thought seems incapable of translating an expressed faith in the spiritual dimensions of human nature into confidence in humanity's collective capacity to transcend material conditions.

-Bahá'í International Community, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, p. 3.

PARTICIPATION IN THE WHOLE PERMITS DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF SOCIETY

As social organization has increased, the scope for the expression of the capacities latent in each human being has correspondingly expanded. Because the relationship between the individual and society is a reciprocal one, the transformation now required must occur simultaneously within human consciousness and the structure of social institutions. It is in the opportunities afforded by this twofold process of change that a strategy of global development will find its purpose.

-*Bahá'í International Community, The Prosperity of Humankind, p. 5.*

THE PROCESS OF CONSULTATION: ESSENTIAL FOR EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION

Central to the task of reconceptualizing the system of human relationships is the process that Bahá'u'lláh refers to as consultation. "In all things it is necessary to consult," is His advice. "The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation."

-*Bahá'í International Community, The Prosperity of Humankind, p. 9.*

What Bahá'u'lláh is calling for is a consultative process in which the individual participants strive to transcend their respective points of view, in order to function as members of a body with its own interests and goals. In such an atmosphere, characterized by both candor and courtesy, ideas belong not to the individual to whom they occur during the discussion but to the group as a whole, to take up, discard, or revise as seems to best serve the goal pursued. Consultation succeeds to the extent that all participants support the decisions arrived at, regardless of the individual opinions with which they entered the discussion. Under such circumstances an earlier decision can be readily reconsidered if experience exposes any shortcomings.

Viewed in such a light, consultation is the operating expression of justice in human affairs. So vital is it to the success of collective endeavor that it must constitute a basic feature of a viable strategy of social and economic development. Indeed, the participation of the people on whose commitment and efforts the success of such a strategy depends becomes effective only as consultation is made the organizing principle of every project. "No man can attain his true station," is Bahá'u'lláh's counsel, "except through his justice. No power can exist except through unity. No welfare and no well-being can be attained except through consultation."

-*Bahá'í International Community, The Prosperity of Humankind, pp. 9-10.*

DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN POTENTIALITIES ENABLES SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

We must now highly resolve to arise and lay hold of all those instrumentalities that promote the peace and well-being and happiness, the knowledge, culture and industry, the dignity, value and station, of the entire human race. Thus, through the restoring waters of pure intention and unselfish effort, the earth of human potentialities will blossom with its own latent excellence and flower into praiseworthy qualities, and bear and flourish until it comes to rival that rose garden of knowledge which belonged to our forefathers. Then will this holy land of Persia become in every sense the focal center of human perfections, reflecting as if in a mirror the full panoply of world civilization.

-*'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Secret of Divine Civilization, pp. 4-5.*

TRAINING REQUIRED FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

What she (Persia) urgently requires, however, is deep reflection, resolute action, training, inspiration and encouragement. Her people must make a massive effort, and their pride must be aroused.

-*'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 10.*

TRAINING EFFECTIVE ONLY IF ORIENTED TO SERVICE

...the training that can make it possible for the earth's inhabitants to participate in the production of wealth will advance the aims of development only to the extent that such an impulse is illumined by the spiritual insight that service to humankind is the purpose of both individual life and social organization.

-Bahá'í International Community, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, pp. 12-13.