

# ***“Increasing Perceptions of Bahá’í Models of Development”***

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Acting from the premise that Bahá’u’lláh’s “wondrous system” provides us with a “coherent” set of development principles applicable to the problems of the entire world, participants were divided into groups representing different cultures, which then consulted on a particular local problem handed to them, along with the constraints and norms of the particular culture. Sample problems included the building of a school or center, illiteracy, obtaining fresh water, gender equality in the education of children, conflict with local traditions or religious leaders, lack of obedience to Baha’i laws by new Bahá’ís, etc. Norms to be dealt with included the subordinate status of women, lack of skills, pride, lack of self-confidence (deference to "experts"), traditions, values, the need to coordinate with the governments or tribal councils, etc.

During the debrief with the wider group, participants explained the process of their particular consultation in terms of the Bahá’í principles used, with emphasis on how these principles were linked to each other and how a principle might “presuppose” another. Similarities and differences between the groups were compared and contrasted during the debrief. The relationship between the deductive and inductive consultation processes in the transfer of “what works” from one culture to another was also subject to discussion, as participants increased their perceptions of the universals in Bahá’í development, from both "insider" and "outsider" perspectives. These activities were designed to lead to discernment of the advantages (in SED) of what we, as Bahá’ís, have been given “a priori” by God through Bahá’u’lláh -- as we attempt to develop different complementary models of development.

Goals of the workshop:

1. Content: Explore SED problems in diverse cultural scenarios.
2. Process: Engage in the process of consultation using Bahá’í principles.

For a broad exploration of the various concepts and principles intended for exploration during this workshop, relevant quotations from the Writings and access to the various sample scenarios, click the following link: <http://www.homestead.com/watsongregory/files/introductionSED.htm>