

What is the Five Year Plan all about & what does it have to do with me, really?

A simple companionTM to

The Five Year Plan

2006-2011

163-168 B.E.

●
The Five Year Plan is very simple,
maybe that's why some of us don't get it –
this booklet breaks it down so you could see
how it is simply profound!
●



CAUTION:
Keep within
everyone's
reach.



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The Five Year Plan
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Table of Contents

1. Preface
2. Index
3. The Plan
 - a. Individual
 - b. Community
 - c. Institutions
4. The Year Ahead
5. Notes

Preface

What is a simple companion?

It is a simple companion.

So what does it accompany?

It is to accompany you as you study the message of the Universal House of Justice dated 27 December 2005 wherein the current Five Year Plan is introduced and explained.

Please note that this is by no means an interpretation or replacement for the Message itself – it is simply a breakdown to help you visualize the message and create a reference for its different components.

Where can I get the original document?

Information about obtaining it digitally and/or in print can be found on

<http://www.kdkfactory.com/simple/>

Index

<p>Accompaniment, Page 10 Area Teaching Committee, 14 Auxiliaries, 13, 14 Bahá'í-inspired NGOs, 14 Capacity building, 7-9 Children's classes, 10-12, 14 Cluster Children's Class Coordinator, 14 Cluster Institute Coordinator, Cluster Jr. Youth Coordinators, 14 Cluster Reflection Gatherings,12 Clusters, 7, 11, 12 Collective teaching, 11-13 Communities, 7, 12 Consolidation, 7, 11, 13 Core activities, 11, 12 Counselors, 13, 15 Devotionals, 11, 12 Entry by troops, 7, 9 Expansion, 11-14 External affairs, 14 Fifth Epoch, 7, 16 Formative Age, 7 16 Funds, 12 Home visits, 12 Human resources, 7, 11 Individual initiative, 9, 14 Individuals, 7, 13 Institutions, 7, 14 Intensive Programs of Growth, 11, 15 International Teaching Center, 12 Jr. youth groups, 11, 12, 14 Large-scale growth, 9, 12, 14 Learning process, 9, 11, 12 Local Spiritual Assemblies, 6, 15 Neighborhoods, 15 Nineteen-Day Feasts, 12</p>	<p>National Spiritual Assemblies, 14, 15 Practices, 8, 10 Presenting the Faith, 10 Prioritize, 11 Receptive population, 13 Receptivity, 10 Regional Council, 14 Regional events, 12 Sectors, 15 Sequence of courses, 8 Socio-economic development, 14 Study circles, 8-11 Summer/winter schools, 12 Systematic action, 9, 12, 14 Systematize, 7 Teaching field, 9, 14 Training institute, 7, 8, 14 Two movements, 7 Two-stage electoral process, 15 Unified vision of growth, 12 Wider community, 12</p>
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The Five Year Plan 2006-2011

As mentioned the Five Year Plan is very simple; here, we will illustrate just that. Please read the preface about the purpose of this booklet before reading on.

What is this all about?

- Right now, hopefully you are reading this between 2006-2011, we are in the **fifth epoch** of the **Formative Age***
- The Universal House of Justice in its 26 December 1995 message focused the Bahá'í world on learning how to grow and sustain that growth. The first step was:
 - o To systematize our efforts to develop human resources and to do so through the training institute*.
 - But that didn't happen right away in 1995; since then, we've been putting together the different elements and now it has given birth to a **framework for action** that only needs to be acted upon.

How did we go about it?

- In 2001 the Universal House of Justice divided us into geographic clusters and at last it was:
 - o Possible to think about growth on a manageable scale &
 - o See it as two movements:
 - 1) First, individuals going through courses (*Ruhi, that is**)
 - 2) Second, the movements of clusters from one stage of growth to the next.
 - o So, unlike ever before the process of expansion (teaching) and consolidation (deepening) was understood. There was a clear understanding of what needed to be done and the Universal House of Justice called:
 - Action!

Why did we go about it?

- The aim of this plan is raise our capacities as individuals, communities and institutions, so we could advance the process of entry by troops, which is the aim of the Bahá'í world until 2021; the end of the first century of the Formative Age. So, if you are going to be around for some years, be assured that the focus isn't going to change and it's going to intensify. Read on to see how you can serve and survive.

* See Notes

The Individual (a.k.a. You)

- Your achievements were noted in the 17 January 2003 letter wherein the Universal House of Justice stated the following:
 - You are characterized by:
 - A growing sense of initiative
 - Resourcefulness
 - Courage
 - And audacity
 - The qualities that attest to your faith:
 - Consecration
 - Zeal
 - Confidence
 - And tenacity
- They also acknowledged that the training institute has played a role here.
 - The developments have shown that the sequence of courses builds our capacity for service.
 - By giving us a chance to put into practice the spiritual insights we gain from studying the Writings.
 - This body of knowledge fosters a set of:
 - Related habits
 - Attitudes
 - Qualities
 - That helps us sharpen those skills and abilities that are needed to carry out the acts of service, aka, *the practices of these books*.
 - **But how exactly do we acquire those cool skills and abilities?**
 - By centering our discussions in the study circles on the Creative Word in an atmosphere that is:
 - Serious &
 - Uplifting - which then results in:
 - Raising the level of our consciousness about our duty to the Cause.
 - Creates an awareness of the joy we get from teaching and serving the faith. *And then:*
 - The spiritual context in which specific deeds are addressed endows them with significance.

- Builds our confidence to engage in acts of service that are:
 - Complex
 - Demanding
 - And above all, our reliance on God will sustain these endeavors.
 - And when we have entered the teaching field, putting what we have learned in practice:
 - We will face confirmations from all sides.
 - See more possibilities and opportunities to teach.
 - Witness divine assistance, first hand.
 - And achieve results that will exceed our expectations. *Nice!*
 - **But I already know what a phenomenal effect the Word can have on those that encounter it.**
 - True. But what's really heartening to know is that the institute process is transforming people on a large scale – in hundreds and thousands.
 - And continuing that with an intense effort, *my friend*, has been and is the aim of this Five Year Plan.
- **I see the point, but how will it work?**
 - This emphasis on capacity building gives birth to individual initiative which:
 - 1) Is basically understanding the requirements of *systematic action* needed to advance the process of entry by troops.
 - 2) And then pursuing the process with a posture of learning within the framework already laid out for us in the Plan. This results in:
 - Harmonizing diverse talents to move forward in united direction.
 - Avoiding the waste of energy and time that is caused by debating over personal preferences over a particular approach.
 - Commitment to long-term action grows.
 - And finally putting all our activities, no matter what and where, in a unified context.
 - **Individual initiative in action:**
 - It is clearly demonstrated in the field of teaching - be it in study circles or firesides, it's on the rise. *Why?*
 - Because we are equipped with the:
 - Skills &

- Methods.
- That are:
 - Effective &
 - Accessible to all.
- We are encouraged by the response our actions have brought as we converse on themes of spiritual import with peoples of all walks of life.
- And as we gain greater perception, we can:
 - Sense receptivity.
 - Recognize souls waiting to receive the message.
 - Seek out to share what has been so graciously given to us in our daily encounters with:
 - Parents of our neighborhood children's classes.
 - Peers at school.
 - Colleagues at work.
 - Casual acquaintances.
- And as we gain more experience, we can:
 - Adapt our presentation to the seeker's needs.
 - Use direct teaching methods that includes the Writings to offer the message in a way that is:
 - Forthcoming &
 - Inviting.
- **And when you are there, you help others get there**
 - We reach out to assist others to walk on their path of service by:
 - Taking up the challenge and accompanying our participants of the study circle we just tutored to:
 - Do their practices.
 - Start, when ready, their own study circles. Thus:
 - We widen the scope of the institute's influence.
 - Bring more eager souls in contact with the Word of God.
 - Continuously multiply the number of those who support the Faith.
 - And we continue until they have a longing to arise independently and devote their energies in awakening other souls and uphold the laws and principles of this Faith.

The Community (You and your neighbors)

- Basically, the same characteristics and qualities (talked about in the individual section) are evident in our community. *How much of it shows?* Well, that depends on what stage of development we are in:
 - o Advanced Stage: in a cluster at this stage it is pretty clear as to what can be achieved.
 - o Earlier stage: *Well*, at this stage we are still struggling to learn how we can put the Plan into action.
 - *To make it easier*, we could look into advanced clusters, humbly listen to their learnings and simply emulate them.

But how do we manage all that?

On many occasions the Universal House of Justice refers to the **coherence** that is brought to the process of growth by the four core activities:

- o Study Circles.
 - o Devotionals.
 - o Children's classes.
 - o Jr. Youth groups (*added recently. See Notes*)
- And because these core activities are:
 - o Structured &
 - o Organic
 - It results in a sustainable pattern of expansion and consolidation. And as seekers:
 - o Join these activities and declare their faith,
 - We gain momentum both:
 - Individually &
 - Collectively.
 - And to make sure that these new souls go through the institute courses so as to:
 - Increase the pool of our human resources,
 - o Which then brings about the conditions to launch:
 - **Intensive Programs of Growth (IPGs)**

The Purpose of the Core Activities:

- Examinations show that this coherence affects other aspects of community life because:
 - o **The study** and application of the teachings become a habit.
 - o **Devotional gatherings** generate a spirit that spreads throughout the community's collective efforts.
 - o **Integration of the Arts:**
 - Increases our energy,
 - Which leads to our mobilization.

- **Children’s classes and Jr. Youth groups** make our Faith’s roots strong - at a local level.
- **Home visits** – be it in big or small cities:
 - Strengthen the relationships of the community members.
 - Serve as a deepening opportunity to look into the Writings and discuss how the Faith applies in our daily lives.

The result of the Core activities:

- The spiritual foundations of communities becomes stronger:
 - The level of communication rises.
 - Relationships take a new meaning.
 - A sense of common purpose becomes the topic of the day.
- *Prove it:*
 - A study by the International Teaching Center (ITC) and other sources show:
 - That in such advanced clusters, the quality of Nineteen Day Feasts have improved.
 - That contribution to the Funds has increased.
 - That cluster reflection gatherings have become a place to discuss
 - Our needs & plans:
 - Which creates a collective identity &
 - Strengthens our collective will.
 - And that these clusters’ influence spreads beyond their borders to:
 - Regional events such as summer and winter schools.

And thus, as an individual, who is learning all this, you are called upon to make sure that your learnings are woven into decision-making.

The requirements of systematic action:

- Having seen success, we appreciate this systematic action. And the requirements that your community must learn and internalize are:
 - To agree on a unified vision of growth which is based on:
 - A realistic evaluation of possibilities &
 - Resources.
 - To develop strategies that could give it a better structure.
 - To make and act on a plan of action that is doable.
 - To make necessary changes while keeping it going.
 - To build on our accomplishments.
- At the same time, we behave with a desire and willingness to open up to the wider community. And as we welcome large numbers in our community:
 - We see more potentiality in people.

- We avoid setting up barriers that are based on our pre-conceived notions.
- We create an environment where:
 - Individuals grow at their own pace,
 - Without the pressure of unreasonable expectations.
- We become aware that the Faith is:
 - Universal - for everyone &
 - Comprehensive – all-inclusive.
- Thus our collective action focuses on giving the message:
 - Liberally &
 - Unconditionally.

Yes, this has already happened in areas where there is a **receptive population**.

- A determined social and political force is sweeping people across the continents, which results in:
 - Uncompromising appreciation for diversity and
 - Making everyone stronger,
 - Which is a crucial element to the expansion and consolidation.
- The Counselors' and Auxiliary Board members' task is to keep us focused.
 - This ability is a valuable asset gained through:
 - Discipline
 - Commitment &
 - Foresight
 - Maintaining focus doesn't mean we:
 - Neglect special needs and interests.
 - Or drop an essential activity so we could have another, rather:
 - We refine and develop our community life.
 - On the other hand, we are to **prioritize** – meaning:
 - Not all activities have the same level of importance at a given stage.
 - Some are to go forward before others.
 - That even the most well-intentioned plan or suggestion can:
 - Cause distraction.
 - Disperse energy &
 - Delay progress.
 - We just have to recognize and accept the fact that our time is not unlimited, thus:
 - It's only logical that we should dedicate a greater share of our time in advancing the Plan. *Wouldn't you say so?*

The Institutions (The people you elected and the people they appoint)

- None of our individual or community accomplishments could be possible without their:
 - Guidance
 - Encouragement &
 - Support
- The institutions:
 - Promote individual initiative.
 - Channel our energies into the teaching field.
 - Point out the value of systematic action.
 - Foster the spiritual life of the community.
 - Create a welcoming environment for everyone.
- As they help the community to remain focused, they learn in practical terms:
 - What it means to keep unity of vision among the friends.
 - How to coordinate the friends in their initiatives.
 - How to distribute resources in accordance to the priorities.
 - Some areas of activity may require individuals with specific skills. Worthy of mention are:
 - External affairs work, which the National Assemblies follow thoroughly.
 - Social and economic development projects, undertaken by Bahá'í-inspired organizations.
 - While attending to these needs, the institutions find themselves capable of directing the generality of the believers and their efforts to the central tasks of the Plan.

The components behind it:

- As we face the challenges that large-scale growth presents, it is the institutions that are determined to encourage us every step of the way.
- Some of us are:
 - Named by the training institute to coordinate the courses (*aka Cluster Institute Coordinator "CIC"*)
 - Others to coordinate children's classes (*aka Cluster Children's Class Coordinator*).
 - And yet others Jr. Youth groups (*Cluster Jr. Youth Coordinators*)
 - And yet again others appointed to the Area Teaching Committee by the Regional Council or the National Assemblies to:
 - Administer certain aspects of our systematic effort which should result in:
 - Accelerated expansion and consolidation
 - And the Auxiliary Board members work on both fronts to ensure that growth goes on unhampered.

- While these components are in place in many clusters, we are still learning:
 - About their functions &
 - The relationships among them.
- “What is important is that the current degree of flexibility, which allows for the creation of new instruments as needed, not be compromised so that the scheme of coordination represents a response to the demands of growth itself.”
 - We depend upon the Counselors and the National Assemblies to guide us through the process.

Local Spiritual Assemblies

- The recent developments have had two types of effects on the Assemblies:
 - In clusters where the Assemblies have been weak, they are assuming responsibilities and guiding certain parts of the Plan.
 - Assemblies that have embraced the Plan are showing signs of added strength
 - Often after a period of adjustments in which some struggled.

Gathering Momentum

- The whole process is gathering momentum in every area – be it urban or rural:
 - Certain large cities were divided into
 - **Sectors** which may need to be ultimately divided into
 - **Neighborhoods** – in each of which the Feast is conducted.
 - Keeping in mind the size of future communities is essential for the development of Local Assemblies.
 - As membership grows to thousands, the Assemblies will go through intense periods of learning.
 - And if the circumstances demand, the Universal House of Justice may authorize:
 - **A two-stage electoral process** – a pattern developed in Tihrán during the ministry of the Guardian.

Intensive Programs of Growth – this section of the Plan will be published separately if, of course, time permits and you find this helpful.

The year ahead (2010- 2011)

In the Riḍván 2010 message the Universal House of Justice announced the achievement of our goal: establishing 1,500 intensive programs of growth worldwide, one year in advance.

With a full year at hand, we are given the opportunity to strengthen our communities in preparation for the tasks that we will undertake in the next global enterprise (aka, the 2011-2016 Five Year Plan).

To see how the current Plan has unfolded so far and where we are headed to in the year to come, you may read the Riḍván 2010 message*.

What needs to happen within the next twelve months?

Refer to the following paragraphs to read what needs to be done how and who needs to do what:

Intensive Programs of Growth	Paragraph 6
The Individual and Institutions	Paragraph 7
Study Circles	Paragraph 11
Core Activities and accompaniment	Paragraph 12
Children's Classes	Paragraph 15
Jr. Youth Groups	Paragraph 18
The Institutions	Paragraph 24

What *else* needs to happen within the next twelve months?

At this stage, we are to reflect on the nature of the contributions our communities have made to the society and begin to think about two interconnected activities:

- 1) Involvement in social action &
- 2) Participation in the prevalent discourses of society.

What does that mean?

Refer to paragraphs 25-33 of the Riḍván 2010 message to see how the Universal House of Justice explains it.

*See Notes

Notes (things explained further)

Formative Age:

The Formative Age refers to a time period that began with the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that marked the end of the Heroic Age in which the Central Figures lived.

It will last until the Golden Age is established and consists of several epochs, which so far have ranged somewhere between 15 and 25 years.

Training Institute

In their 28 December 2005 message, the Universal House of Justice adopted the curriculum of the Ruhi Institute to be used worldwide. Read the message to learn why!

Riḍván 2010 message

The message is available in many languages via the official Bahá'í websites or can be obtained in print from your Local Spiritual Assembly. The English version is 11 pages in length, consists of three sections and 33 paragraphs.

Simply closing, to really see all of this in action you have to hit the field; so when you take off, call someone and be accompanied - or accompany.



A
simple companion
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The Five Year Plan

This evolution in collective consciousness is discernible in the growing frequency with which the word "accompany" appears in conversations among the friends, a word that is being endowed with new meaning as it is integrated into the common vocabulary of the Bahá'í community.

Universal House of Justice, Rídván 2010

Contents:

Preface
Index
The Plan
The Year Ahead
(2010-2011)
Notes