



## BAHÁ'Í CENTER ASSISTANCE

### **Lessons Learned #3**

The Bahá'í Center Assistance Corp. (BCA) is a committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States to support the growth and development of the Faith by providing a systematic program of education, training and technical assistance to communities whose goal is to lease or purchase and maintain Bahá'í Center Properties.

The article below is one in a series of case studies that present lessons learned from situations that local communities have experienced.

Scenario: The Local Spiritual Assembly established a Center Committee to develop plans for a new Bahá'í Center. The committee had volunteers from the community to consider ways to raise funds. Some questions raised were:

- How can pledges be raised?
- Is it proper to sell bricks with donors' names on them?

The Assembly, Center Planning Committee, Fundraising Committee and community consulted and decided to contact BCA for information. BCA forwarded this request to the National Spiritual Assembly's Office of Treasurer for guidance.

Lessons Learned: The specific methods the Assembly or friends in a community may choose for fundraising for a Bahá'í Center are governed by the same Bahá'í principles that apply for any other fundraising for the Faith. A community may use fundraising methods that are appropriate for the community and consistent with Bahá'í principles. If the proposed method is undignified or divisive, then other methods should be used.

The Assembly and its Center fundraising committee should keep in mind the value of "relationship building" in fund development. In conversations, consideration should first be given to listening to the cares and concerns of the Bahá'ís in the community. Then individuals will be more receptive to information about the Center project. The need for funds can be described later when the listeners ask how they can help or are ready to hear about fundraising goals. The common thread is to build and enhance the "relationship" that the friends feel about the Bahá'í Center and can see what their personal role might be in helping in the fundraising goals.

In many organizations, people are induced to give more by offering them personal recognition, such as upgrading them from one “giving club” to another or attaching donors’ names to buildings, furnishings, programs and paving stones. These methods are inappropriate fundraising methods for Bahá’í funds. In an April 3, 1976 letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’í of the United States, the Universal House of Justice wrote: “There should be no public display of contributing or pledging.” In making its decisions, the community was asked to keep these guidelines in mind during consultation on the most appropriate means to raise funds for a Bahá’í Center.

More information: More information on fundraising for a Bahá’í Center project is in Chapter 5 of the Local Bahá’í Centers Technical Assistance Manual, which is available at [www.bahaicenterassistance.org](http://www.bahaicenterassistance.org). Consultations with members of BCA can be arranged by an Assembly or registered group request by emailing [info@bahaicenterassistance.org](mailto:info@bahaicenterassistance.org) or calling 847-425-7940.