STUDY GUIDE AND OUTLINE
OF THE 29TH OF DECEMBER 2015 LETTER
FROM THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
An analysis of the letter (considering nodes and edges) show that the most influential keywords of the text are

- Cluster
- Community
- Friend
- Youth

The most influential context of the letter are

1. Cluster, friend, effort, and process
2. Community, development, advance, and spiritual
3. Youth, society, group, and child
4. Institute, work, capacity, and support
SUMMARY OUTLINE OF THE LETTER

1. Determination to bring the previous Five Year Plan to a fitting conclusion and eagerness to advance further along the path marked out.

2. Achievements in the past Five Year Plan which includes raising to 5000 the numbers of clusters with programmes of growth, half a million completed book 1, a generation of youth being galvanized into action, Bahá’í institutions and their agencies promoting collaboration and mutual support, and capacity for learning in not only expansion and consolidation but notably in social action and prevalent discourses of society.

3. Challenges of the coming Five Year Plan – “to bring to fruition the seeds that have been so livingly and assiduously sown and watered” in previous five Plans.

The emergence of a programme of growth

4. Grown collective understanding of shared characteristics of passing the first and second milestone.

5. Extending the process of growth to new clusters depends on the ability to draw on help from other clusters such as visiting teaching teams or tutors and homefront pioneers (clusters not yet opened to the Faith)

6. The chief aim is enabling inhabitants of a cluster to offer acts of service. When this fundamental requirement is met, a programme of growth has emerged.

Strengthening the pattern of action

7. A nucleus of friends working together, expand the number and capacity of committed participants working within the framework of the Plan.
   a. Growth occurs quickly when conditions are in place.

   a. Progress relies on quality of the tutors’ efforts – not to hastily nor overly prolonged.

9. The necessity to accompany individuals at a level that extends far beyond encouraging words.

10. Flow of participants in the institute process creates a growing need to systematically support and accompany those who begin serving as teachers of children, animators and tutors.
11. Increased capacity raised by the institute process will eventually signal the need for an Area Teaching Committee, whose principal focus is the mobilization of individuals.

12. Auxiliaries and Regional/National Assemblies must assist the emerging agencies of a cluster, not by formulating plans in the abstract or impose own expectations on the planning process but by capturing current reality of the cluster, identify the immediate next step to facilitate progress and enhance abilities to devise and implement a course of action.

13. Learning through action and as learning accelerates; friends grow more capable of overcoming setbacks.

14. Individual and collective transformation, effected by the agency of the Word of God, is central to pattern of actions that evolves. This transformation reveals itself through capacity to express profound understanding and explore spiritual reality in conversations. As institute process gains momentum, teaching assumes greater prominence in the lives of the friends.

15. The raising capacity for meaningful conversations is harnessed in the plan, in particular during the expansion phase.

16. In clusters with intensive programme of growth, efforts to invite the participation of friends, co-workers, extended family and acquaintances remain essential. At the same time, pattern of community life has to be developed in places where receptivity wells up.

17. For existing programmes of growth to continue to gain strength, the strategy of initiating community-building activities in neighbourhoods and villages that show promise must be widely adopted and systematically followed.

18. Reaching the second milestone is accompanied by qualitative and quantitative advances.

19. Goal is to raise, by 2021, the number of clusters with intensive programme of growth to 5,000 (second milestone).

20. The objective is formidable and herculean labour will be required but considering the plight of a humanity bereft of Bahá’u’lláh’s elixir, nothing less can be expected from the friends.

21. Counsellors and the National Spiritual Assemblies will, in consultations, assess the implications of this goal for their respective communities. The process of consultation will need to quickly be extended to the grassroot levels.

*Embracing large numbers and managing complexity*
22. To reach out to large numbers requires the capacity to adapt to a substantial increase in complexity.

23. Growth process continues to gain intensity; the human resource development proceeds with minimal interruption and generates a constantly new pool of workers. An educational system with all its component elements is now firmly rooted within the cluster.

24. Experiences show that a pattern of action that is able to embrace large numbers comes chiefly from working to bring more neighbourhoods and villages to the point where they can sustain intense activity.

25. Capacity building accelerates when members of distinct populations that show receptivity are in the vanguard of capacity building efforts.

26. As growth in a cluster advances further and additional coordinators are required, coordinators start working together in teams rather than adding another layer of administration.

27. The Area Teaching Committee is raised to a new level of functionality where they both accurately assess the capacities and various social realities for community building in the long term. In this work, they draw on the help of individuals beyond their members and are in close collaborations with Local Spiritual Assemblies.

28. The Local Spiritual Assemblies enhances its capacity to carry out its responsibilities in a growing cluster.

29. Mode of learning permeates the whole community and cluster wide reflection meetings complemented by meetings for smaller areas spur collective ownership.

30. A natural outcome of such clusters is social action. However humble it may be, it foster learning how to apply the Revelation to social existence and friends are drawn further into the life of society.

31. When the process is strong enough to achieve and sustain a high degree of participation in all aspects of the capacity-building endeavours and manage the complexity entailed, the third milestone is passed. Currently there are about 200 such clusters.

32. In some of the clusters that have passed the third milestone, a significant percentage of the entire population is now involved in community-building activities and its effect on the general discourse can be perceived.

33. Although such developments are yet a distant prospect for many, in some clusters this is reality. Another frontier of learning in the foreseeable future will be to understand how a flourishing local population can transform the society of which they are an integral part.

*Releasing the potential of the youth*
34. The exploits of the youth are one of the finest fruits of the present Plan. Measures to encourage the full engagement of the youth must be a major component of the new plan.

35. The youth represent the most responsive element of every receptive population, and special gatherings for youth are increasingly common feature of activity in many clusters.

36. Efforts to contribute to the betterment of society fail to tap the deepest springs of motivation if it is devoid of exploration of spiritual themes. The importance of “doing” must be harmonized with “being”. All institutions must foster the capacities released in the youths.

37. The youth also support each other by coming together and in groups engage in further study and discuss their service, to reinforce one another’s efforts and build resolve, looking into extend the circle of friendship.

38. Reaching out to the families of the youth is a natural way of strengthening community building. Institutions and agencies are challenged to increase their own capacity to find ways of systematically realizing the potential of the youth.

39. The friends must guard against adopting a narrow outlook on what development to maturity entails (education, marriage, occupation). The significant decisions they make about the direction of their adult lives will determine whether service to the Cause of God was only a brief and memorable chapter of their younger years, or a fixed centre of their earthly existence, a lens through which all actions come into focus.

Enhancing institutional capacity

40. The national and regional institutions were able to meet the demands of the present plan through shared spirit of collaboration among the three protagonist of the Plan (the individual, the community and the institutions). The new plan will further test the capacity of Bahá’í institutions.

41. The Regional Bahá’í Councils have increased to guide and support cluster agencies and provide resources as necessary. In smaller countries that do not require Regional Councils, the National Spiritual Assemblies are increasingly giving thought to ways of helping clusters advance.

42. Regional and national institutions will need to remain fully acquainted with the developments at the grassroots and what is being learned in clusters so to support the progress. New arrangements at the national level might be required.
43. National Spiritual Assembly ultimately has responsibility for fostering all aspects of a Bahá’í community’s development, and will benefit from periodically considering adjustments to better support the growth process.

44. Training institutes will also need to attain higher level of functioning primarily for unfoldment of the three stages of the educational process and the learning associated with each for ensuring growth in quality and reaching ever-growing numbers. Alongside managing day-to-day operations, the scale of what must be accomplished requires considerations be given to strategy.

45. An important aspect of enhancing institutional capacity over the coming years will be the ongoing development of the local and national Funds, as growth will require more financial resources.

46. The act of contributing to the Fund, it is a practical way of hastening the advent of that civilization, and a necessary one. The sacrificial and generous contributions of the individual believer, the collective consciousness promoted by the community of the needs of the Fund, and the careful stewardship of financial resources exercised by the institutions of the Faith can be regarded as expressions of the love that binds these three actors more closely together.

47. The Counsellors has a system through which the lessons learned in the remotest parts of the planet can benefit the worldwide process of learning in which every follower of Bahá’u’lláh can take part.

48. The need to assist the friends in at least 5,000 clusters where the pattern of action is being intensified will be a considerable challenge for the Counsellors, their Auxiliary Boards and their assistants, with implications their mode of functioning.

A period of special potency

49. The intensification of activity which the next five years requires will further enrich the devotional life. By convening a gathering for worship, the spirit of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkár is evoked in any locality.

50. During the Five Year Plan about to commence, there will occur two momentous occasions of this kind: the two-hundred-year anniversaries of the Birth of Bahá’u’lláh and of the Birth of the Báb in 2017 and 2019 respectively.

51. Next year the Baha’i world will mark one hundred years since the first of the Tablets of the Divine Plan flowed from the pen of the Master. In these fourteen Tablets, revealed during one of humanity’s darkest hours, ‘Abdu’l-Baha laid out a charter for the teaching work that defined its theatre of action as the entire planet. Every effort made by the friends to
systematically propagate the divine teachings traces its origins to the forces set in motion in the Divine Plan.

52. The coming global endeavour to which the friends will be summoned calls for the application of proven strategies, systematic action, informed analysis, and keen insight. Yet above all, it is a spiritual enterprise, and its true character should never be obscured. May He Himself reinforce them at every turn.