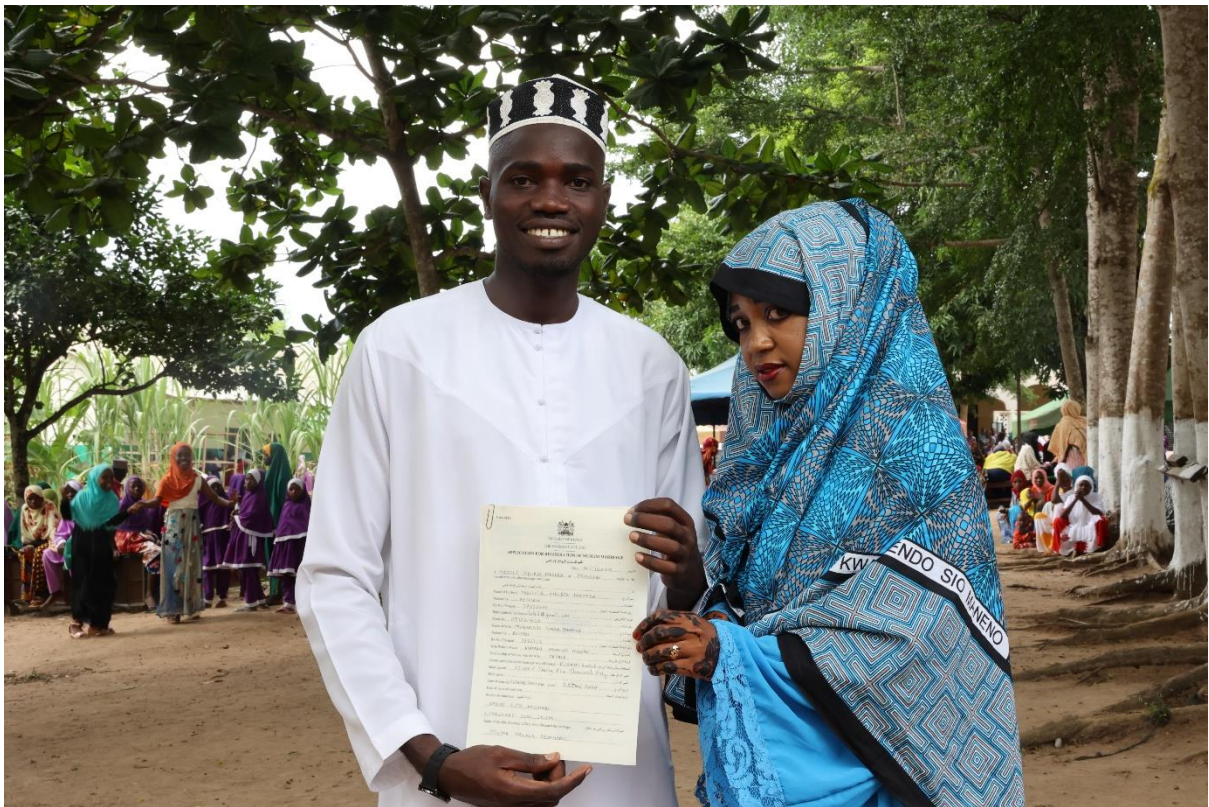


GROUP MARRIAGES 2024



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا
وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ
يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

And of his signs is that he created for you from among yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and he placed between you affection and mercy. Verily in this are signs for a people who reflect.

Holy Qur'an 30:21

Marriage is a sacred institution in Islam, offering valuable benefits to individuals, families and communities. It plays a role in emotional well-being, fosters economic stability and promotes social cohesion. It therefore plays an indispensable role in the fabric of society and is beloved to Allah (S).

Young people seeking to get married in rural Kenyan communities often lack the basic resources to do so. They face challenges including

- Payment of mahr.
- Obtaining the government issued marriage certificate at high cost.
- The burden of traditional cultural demands from the bride's family.

In the past the mission has organized group wedding programs to facilitate and support weddings between Shia youth in the communities supported by Bilal Kenya. Pursuant to legal reforms, Bilal Muslim Mission of Kenya is now authorized, through the appointment of several of its Shayukh as Shia Marriage Officers, to conduct Shia marriages and issue legal marriage certificates.



Accordingly, a group marriage for 40 couples was planned in January 2024. Interested couples registered and attended a full day pre-marriage counseling seminar held on the 21st of January at Al-Mahdi centre in Burani which was conducted by Licensed Clinical and Psychological Counselor Ms. Leah Kuria, Sheikh Ali Samoja, Sheikh Juma Shughuli and a few other individuals. Parents and Guardians were also in attendance. A meal was provided to the attendees.

Topics discussed at the seminar included:

- The importance of marriage and divine spiritual progress in marriage.
- Islamic teachings on marriage.
- The rights of husband and wife.
- Challenges in married life and the approaches to handle them.





The group marriage event took place on the 28th of January at Al-Mahdi centre in Burani. It covered couples from Al-Mahdi centre and the Husayni centre at Bahakanda Village. A *walima* meal was provided and couples only had to pay half of the required amount for the marriage certificate, the other half being paid by the mission.

The mission supported the grooms with a gift towards the 'Mahr' whilst all couples were also gifted some essential items - a mattress, pillows and bedsheets and will be provided with live goats for rearing.







The bigger picture and future plans

Alhamdulillah, we thank the Almighty for the opportunity to successfully carry out both the pre-marriage seminar and the group weddings. This project is phase one of a larger holistic program aimed at strengthening Islamic values and protecting the family through improvement of family relations, enhancing education, providing counseling services, improving housing conditions and helping young people seek employment or go into business.

We have been working with a qualified counselor to produce material which will be available for online viewing. We intend to work further with experienced counselors from the Kenyan Association of Counselors to train selected people from Bilal-supported communities to work as first-response counselors and resolve everyday problems, especially within the youth.

Centre-in-charges and community elders also play a vital role in dealing with marriage disputes with the assistance of the mission's inspectorate made up of senior and experienced Muballighs.

Plans are underway to develop a home improvement/house building program to ensure that families live within decent accommodation in keeping with their dignity as followers of the Ahlulbayt. The program will require the support of local communities and substantial input from them.

Our sincere appreciation to the Federation of Khoja Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaats of Africa (AFED) and the Orison Charitable Trust (OCT, UK) for supporting the project.