



### **Improving Education: Madrasa Programme, Zanzibar**

In Zanzibar, Madrasa schools were once exclusively devoted to religious education. When the local community wanted to broaden the education of its children, it requested assistance from the Aga Khan Foundation, which then supported local educators in the development of an integrated, culturally relevant curriculum.

Through its Madrasa Resource Centres (MRCs), the Foundation also helps mobilise parents for the construction and operation of schools. A good example is the Donge Mchangani area – which once did not have a school of any kind. Worried that its children were falling behind, the Village Organisation decided, as one of its development priorities, to create a school.

Through the Foundation's Zanzibar Madrasa Resource Centre (MRC), local people selected by the Village Organisation were trained to become teachers. The training, which typically lasted two years, included classroom practice, the development of teaching aids from locally available materials such as bottle tops, shells, stones, etc., and administrative skills such as record keeping, management and planning. Training took place both at the Madrasa Resource centre and on site.

The Foundation also worked to help ensure the viability of the school. Parent associations and school committees, for example, have proven critical to the construction, maintenance and operation of all schools in the Madrasa programme in East Africa.

To date, the Foundation's MRCs have established over 200 pre-schools, which are now educating nearly 50,000 children in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Fifty percent are girls. 2000 women have been trained as pre-school teachers and over 1,500 School Management Committee

members have received training in practical, financial and management skills. Another 50 schools, reaching more than 1,000 children, are expected to be functional by the end of 2005.

AKDN's educational programmes range from early childhood education to doctorates in nursing, medicine, education and development. Almost all of the agencies are involved in education: the Aga Khan Education Services (AKES) currently operates more than 300 schools and advanced educational programmes that provide quality pre-school, primary, secondary, and higher secondary education services to students in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Uganda, Tanzania, and Tajikistan. It works closely with other agencies on a wide spectrum of issues, including curriculum development, nutrition, and increasing access to quality education.