

# American foreign policy must reflect American values

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED writes from Princeton

LAST week, after the first day of a two-day blizzard, I was shovelling snow. I saw my young neighbour's young wife take their humongous SUV out of her garage, and as she drove past our house she waved at me. I waved back. After ten seconds, she backed all the way to our driveway, rolled down the window and addressed me: "I am going to the grocery store; do you need anything?" I thanked her and said "no." Next morning, as I was getting dressed to negotiate another foot of snow, I noticed that my young neighbour was clearing OUR driveway with his snow blower! These are the kind of Americans we have come to know, love and respect. These are the kind of Americans the Al Qaeda terrorists do not know or care about. That is why it was so traumatic for us when we realised that the Al Qaeda terrorists had murdered close to 3000 Americans like our neighbour on September 11. Sura Ma'un teaches Muslims their duty to their neighbours. Our neighbour practices Sura Ma'un without ever hearing about it!

If we are to recount all the assistance, friendship and generosity Americans have extended towards us over the years that will require several columns. I shall never forget the business trip I made with an American colleague to northern Iowa in May 1990 during the month of Ramadan. I told my friend that since I was fasting and sunset was well after 9 P.M., to go ahead and have his dinner alone at the usual time, around 5 P.M. I bought some food for Iftar and dinner from a grocery store. As I was sitting down to eat around 9:30 P.M. there was a knock on my door. It was my friend: "What's the matter, aren't you hungry? Let's go!" He hadn't eaten! The only reason we are in America is because of a Jewish Professor of the University of Pennsylvania and his wife. We met them while they were on sabbaticals at Oxford. The Professor and his wife arranged for our postdoctoral and graduate scholarship at Penn. And most of our Bangladeshi friends around here received their green cards courtesy of the effort of a very able Jewish attorney. Therefore, it must be remembered that our criticism of the Bush administration is not a criticism of America, and that the criticism of Sharon's Israel is not a criticism of the Jews.

The principles on which America was founded -- truth, justice and belief in one God -- are identical to Islamic beliefs. More than once in these columns the writer has referred to America as a "Muslim" nation in that sense. It was no surprise therefore that after 9/11 as American Muslims reeled under the horrendous monstrosity that was undertaken in their name, the average Americans, after the initial anger, reached out

to their Muslim citizens to protect them from an expected backlash. Harvard President's attending the Ju'ma prayer with Harvard's Muslim students three days after 9/11 was an example of such outreach. Unfortunately, the tragedy also provided the American Islamophobes with a golden opportunity to proclaim the beginning of the much-vaunted clash of civilization between the West and Islam, which, they stressed, America as the only real civilization must win at any cost. The Islamophobes range from the scholarly Princeton emeritus Professor Bernard Lewis, who

particular. (The writer will devote at least one piece to the neo-Conservative movement in the future). For over a decade the neocon movement was honing its strategies in the expectation that eventually they would be able to emerge from the shadows and implement a foreign policy to destroy the "Islamic threat to civilization." September 11 provided them the opportunity. What is most disturbing is that the neocons are taking America away from its founding principles. In March 2001, before 9/11, a veteran of Israeli military, Robert D. Kaplan, briefed President

Americans. Daniel Pipes is on record as saying that the enfranchisement (voting rights) of Muslim Americans is a threat to Israel! Frank Gaffney, who at one time was a Deputy Secretary of State, recently wrote that Muslim Americans are fifth columnists, and the process of their separation from American society must begin! Meaning, arrangements must be made to intern Muslim Americans in camps, just as the Japanese were during World War II. Mr. Gaffney suggests that Muslim-American opinion-makers (such as the writer) should be the first to be interned! Following the neocon strategy to the letter, Mr. Gaffney published his article in an obscure magazine as a trial balloon, or an off-Broadway production. Once he finds out how it plays with focus groups, he will perfect it and move it to the mainstream: Broadway, or the neocon trumpets, "The Weekly Standard," and "Commentary."

Of course there is a much easier way for Israel: accept the Geneva Accord (for which according to Richard Cohen, my favourite Washington Post columnist, Israeli negotiator Yossi Beilin has been "Charles) Krauthammered as virtually a traitor and (William) Safire'd to a crisp"). Former Israeli Prime Ministers Ben-Guerion and Golda Meir must be turning in their graves seeing that all the Palestinians, the Arab and the Islamic world want in exchange for their recognition of Israel is for Israel to withdraw to 1967 border, and Sharon, who wants the whole pie, is adamantly opposed to it!

It was so disappointing to read in The New York Times on December 7: "American soldiers have begun wrapping entire villages in barbed wire. American soldiers are demolishing buildings thought to be used by Iraqi attackers. They have begun imprisoning relatives of suspected guerillas." This is what Israel does, not America...The trick for America is not to be like Israel. To win the war on terror, America must project American values in its foreign policy...

## LETTER FROM AMERICA

### It was so disappointing to read in The New York Times on December 7: "American soldiers have begun wrapping entire villages in barbed wire. American soldiers are demolishing buildings thought to be used by Iraqi attackers. They have begun imprisoning relatives of suspected guerillas." This is what Israel does, not America...The trick for America is not to be like Israel. To win the war on terror, America must project American values in its foreign policy...

claims that Islam is a failed religion, to the think-tanker Daniel Pipes, who says Muslims are inherently violent, to evangelist Franklin Graham who calls Islam "an evil and wicked religion." This incessant Islam-bashing by the Islamophobes in the media has had the desired effect. To the Pew Research Centre poll question whether Islam is more likely than any other religion "to encourage violence among its believers," only 25 per cent said yes in March 2002. In June 2003, 44 per cent said yes. Islamophobia doubled in America in one year.

With the disappearance of the bipolar (communist, capitalist) world after Soviet Union's implosion in 1990, American foreign policy establishment faced the daunting task of formulating foreign policy to counter unknown or understood threats. Into the void entered Harvard's Samuel P. Huntington who in a seminal paper in 1993 postulated a "Clash of Civilizations" mostly between Islam and the West. The optimists advocated a shift from threat mentality to an opportunity mentality and called for a civilizational dialogue between Islam and the West, pointing out that Islamic laws and beliefs are very similar to the basic premises of America's founding fathers. The Islamophobes won the day.

The most notorious among the Islamophobes are a close-knit group called neo-Conservatives, who are predominantly Zionist-Jewish and 100 per cent dedicated to the supremacy of the Israelis over the Muslim world in general and the Palestinians in

Bush on his book, "The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War," which theorises a "Lord of the Flies meltdown" and that "the most important moral commitment for America is to preserve its power." Kaplan's subsequent book, "Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos," became a required reading for policymakers leading up to the attack on Iraq in March 2003: "Our moral values...represent our most vulnerabilities." According to Kaplan, barbarians have exploited a global ideology Islam -- to recruit "holy warriors." The only adequate response is to remake the map of the Middle East, and indeed the world through regime change. (sounds familiar?)

Mr. Kaplan's bogus hypothesis must be refuted. America's moral values are its strengths, not its weaknesses. As the holy Qur'an says, bereft of spirituality, individuals and nations are doomed. Therefore, no true friend of America can ask America to adopt pagan ethos. The problem with these neocons is their obsession with the survival of Israel. They believe that the survival of Israel is directly proportional to the military might of America. Their original plan was to use America might to invade and neutralise, Iraq, Syria and Iran, so as to buy Israel another 50 to 100 years of existence. Now that it appears as though America might leave Iraq sooner rather than later, they are petrified. In America they are demonising the one block that sees through their game and are not afraid to articulate it: Muslim

## Lest we forget

### Prof Munier Choudhury

SHAMSHER CHODHURY

THIS 14th December 2003 was the 32nd Anniversary of my illustrious brother's kidnapping. My brother and I were watching from the outer balcony of our ancestral home in Central Road, the Indian fighter jets flying right over our head, apparently hurling rockets at a house where presumably the then Commander of the Pak Armed Forces General Niazi had taken refuge. It was now 11:45 am, the shelling and rocketing which began around 7 am had come to a sudden halt.

My mother called out from the inner yard of the house opposite the outer verandah on the ground floor. "Now that there is some respite from the air raids, the two of you should have a quick shower and have lunch. I am laying the table". At this we both came down and my brother went for his bath at the makeshift bathing place which was located at the inner yard of the house having a bucket, a plastic mug and a water tank capable of storing about ten to twelve buckets of water on a six by three feet of concrete platform.

At about this time as I was waiting for my brother to finish his bath and make way for me I saw a microbus camouflaged in mud had stopped right in front of our main outer entrance and about three or four young men alighting from the bus, all in militia uniform. All had rifles in their possession. The two of them were making rattling sounds beating on the lock hanging from the large gate made of wrought iron apparently trying to attract attention of the inmates of the house. I was watching all this from the window of one of the rooms on the ground floor, which provided a clear view of the gate and the front yard including the street right across. My first reaction was to ignore, wait and watch and at the same time hoping that they would give up and disappear. No such thing happened. They seemed determined and now even began to shout. Seeing this I finally came out and decided to face these people who appeared from nowhere. Besides I was quite apprehensive of their purpose since the entire city was under curfew imposed by the Pak Army. As I approached the gate one of the three people now standing on the outer side of the closed gate asked me to open the gate to which I responded by saying that I would like to know the purpose of their visit. The three of them said in one voice that they had come to see "Munier Sir". I was now getting somewhat nervous and told them that they could not see him since he was unwell. At this, one of them looked at me angrily and asked me to open the gate in a terse voice. I felt I could no longer resist them from coming into the yard. After some exchange of words leading to arguments and counter arguments about my brother being sick and his inability to meet them, I finally asked these people (who I later learned to be Razakars) to wait till I found my brother

standing in front of the glass window located on the middle section of the stairs, still in a vest and a Lungi. Before I could say something, he wanted to know if these people had come to see him. Having had confirmation from me he asked me to tell them to wait. A little while after he returned wearing a Punjabi (a traditional long sleeved shirt reaching way below the knee) and the Lungi and in a pair of slippers. As he approached the Razakars, they greeted him and said that they had come to take him to the Police station for some questioning. At this my brother wanted to see their authority by way of a Warrant of Arrest. After considerable exchange of words the Razakars could neither persuade my brother to accompany them nor could they produce any document in support of his arrest. As matters came to a pass my brother refused to accompany the Razakars. As I was watching the proceedings standing beside him, one of the Razakars all too suddenly rushed behind my brother and held the gun pressed at his back ordering him to move. I was completely dumbfounded at the sudden turn of events and followed my brother to the entrance door of the bus. And now as he was entering the bus he turned to me and said "Rushdi (a name by which my family used to address me) I better go."

**Epilogue**  
32 years have gone by, since that frightful incident, I have neither seen nor heard from him. To this day I keep asking myself: "Is he dead, if so who killed him and why? Was he tortured to death? Who was he thinking of before the end came? Was he thinking of his mother whom he left waiting at the dining table to join her? Or was he thinking of his wife and children whom he had left behind? My mother has left this world (June 2000). I am glad that at least her long and painful wait for her son was over. As for me the gaping wound caused since my brother disappeared still remains, yet I feel no real pain. I have learnt to live and cope with the tragedy. But what I find even harder to deal with is the current state of our beloved Homeland. The tragic state of our country has long overshadowed my personal loss.

As I went in, I found my brother



### Dr Md Fazle Rabbee

NUSRAT RABBE

DR Md Fazle Rabbee, an internationally renowned cardiologist, was martyred in the infamous intellectual Killing in the 1971 War of Liberation. After graduating with a gold medal and highest honors from the Dhaka Medical College, he obtained two postgraduate degrees from the United Kingdom in the shortest time possible. When he returned to Dhaka, his reputation as a brilliant physician spread throughout the country very quickly. He was a very accomplished medical researcher and a superb clinician. He rose to the rank of joint Professor of Cardiology and Internal Medicine immediately. He received the Nuffield fellowship for his contribution to medicine and was scheduled to depart for Switzerland with his whole family in 1972.

Dr Rabbee, a humanitarian, believed in Ganamukhi Chikitsa and provided free medical care to thousands of poor patients. In 1971, he and his wife helped and protected countless freedom fighters and their families from death and disaster. They stood firm in Dhaka during the war (March 1971-December 1971) and surrounded their friends of all religions who were artists, scientists, professors, bankers, and students. They believed in a progressive and secular society.

Dr. Rabbee was lifted from his house on Wednesday, 15th December at 4 pm by Pakistani



army and local collaborators. Despite many efforts by his wife to reconsider the decision to kill Dr Rabbee, the Pakistani army officials went ahead with their decision to silence him forever. He was married to his beloved wife, the later Dr Jahan Ara Rabbee, ex Additional-Directory General of Health whom he met in medical school. Even though Dr Rabbee had died, his vision for Bangladesh and faith in humanity and peace prevail in many Bangladeshis at home and abroad. He is fondly remembered for his irreplaceable contribution to Bangladesh, both for his genius in medicine and for his unwavering commitment to serve and protect the common people of our country.

Nusrat Rabbee is the daughter of Dr Md Fazle Rabbee and Dr Jahan Ara Rabbee. She is a visiting professor at the University of California at Berkeley.

## Profile of a martyr

S SABER

EULOGY of a flower is less than what it denotes, while unspoken truths imply greatness and delimits its expanse, penning the truths with sincere efforts cannot but limit it. Sardar Mahbub Neaz is one of those flowers, personification of all the greatness the world can have. He possessed qualities more than one can write of. The eulogy of Neaz will not be all exhaustive of what he had in him.

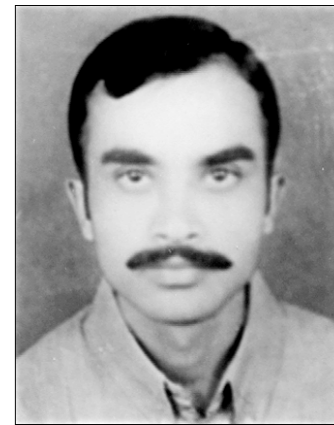
Son of a civil servant, late Manje Ali Sardar, Neaz was every inch a Bengali. He cherished in him a spirit of non-bowing Bengal. After 25th March an inborn flame of liberation was kindled in him. Probably that's why he set off from the chain of affection of all near and dear ones to take part in liberation war in its very beginning. In Sector-2 headquarters, Melaghar Camp, everybody used to be touched by the most humble etiquettes of Commander Neaz. He had an inborn capacity to lead in a confident manner. Everyone in Banani specially the youngsters cannot check tears while they speak of their beloved Neaz Bhai.

Who can forget the unique act of courage set by him two days after the devastating night of 25th March. Simple story of demolition of an LMG-fortified Punjabi devil with bare hands.

To the thousands of his mourning admirers he was a total hero. The love and respect he enjoyed was very hard earned. Naturally, those people weak in some sense or other always sought his protection and help in a situation they felt helpless. There was an unmatched combination of courage and integrity, self-respect and respect for others.

An unceasing flame of independence of character was in him. He infused this spirit in all those who came near him. Neaz's solemn vow was to shake off all the efforts to make Banani citizens subservient to the lordships of Monem Khan, all petty lords and local wicked class, the then people at the helm of affairs. As the local people say, in those years of tension everybody depended on him for their safety and honour. When everybody was afraid of the nefarious designs and physical dangers, it was Neaz who stood like a rock to defend them. Naturally, those disturbance-prone people in power had always been conspiring and he had to act as saviour for years. At one time in desperation they concocted a case, the so-called Banani Conspiracy Case (for 'conspiring against the state'). As founder of Banani Nabarun Shanga he had to face all the police action that followed. Every time Neaz stood with his unmatched personality and courage, his ruthless adversaries, all professional armed goons in hundreds backed by those unscrupulous people in power, had to evaporate.

A lover of truth and justice, Neaz would always oppose the breach of truth and justice. It was one bright sunny morning in the month of March 1969 a couple of days after the imposition of Yahya's Martial Law, he challenged the whimsical behaviour of five Punjabi Air Force officers at Banani. While everybody was experiencing a shivering sensation of fright and nervousness, Neaz with his usual calm, confident and smart steps ordered them to restrain themselves. What magic his lips bore, all God knows, it had the effect of a command and



the officers instantaneously obeyed it. There were great many incidents when he would beat up a few Punjabi soldiers for misbehaviour with the passengers in the Cantt. Bus Service. These are examples of his omni-strong nerves.

Although not an office bearer of EFU employees union, they always took Neaz as their mouthpiece. Neaz was a shield to them against the high handed activities of the Karachi-based authorities. This love of justice and revolt against gestures put him into suspension for five times but reinstated, but finally after the army crackdown one Lt Col Bashirullah, Chief Personnel Manager, EFU Insurance Co. came here to dismiss him and a few others.

One illuminating feature of this many sided genius was his softness of heart and affection to the poor and distressed. His face was stiff at sight and lips were closed most of the time. But his softness touched all those who came near him. He used to take many poor employees of his office to his doctor brother-in-law for free treatment. Hundreds of such erstwhile unknown people come weeping, narrate countless such small acts of love, kindness he bestowed on them.

All these are but vain attempts to depict what he was. Homosapiens are greater than angels. A glance at Neaz Bhai at least gives some justification of what God said: a combination of all the best a physique can contain with least boast and highest respect for others as well as for self. A valiant freedom fighter he was captured and believably killed by the occupation forces between 10th and 15th December 1971.

Today, he sleeps among the greatest and bravest martyrs in the countless, nameless graves of unknown soldiers. That is the sole solace of his admirers. The love and respect right from the core of hearts of the admirers will illuminate his unknown grave. At the heyday of his life, he rendered the biggest sacrifice that can touch our imagination. I cannot but recall here some oft-quoted lines of Shelly:

"We look before and after and pine for what is not,

Our sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught,

Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought...

His dream along with thousands of martyrs has come true. I can visualise his gentle looks with heavenly light smiling from across the bar. Let us all hope and pray that his soul rests in peace. He has submitted to the cruelest truth of the world -- death, wherefrom no one can escape. It is a truth that one can never fail, a truth that every one has to avail.

## The State of the World's Children 2004

# Best practices

UNICEF and its partners are working towards achieving gender parity in education and universal primary education. Programmes to improve girls' primary school enrolment and completion rates have paid dividends for boys and girls, their families, communities and nations. The variety and scope of UNICEF's programmes and approaches illustrate the need to be flexible and responsive to community needs. With its partners, UNICEF is matching interventions to the needs and goals of the populations they serve. Some examples of successful measures to improve girls' education are described below.

**Afghanistan:** The Back to School campaign has allowed 4 million children to enrol in school -- 1 million of whom are girls. The Afghan government worked with local communities, non-governmental organization and the international community to rebuild a school system left in ruin by two decades of war. Back to School, a UNICEF-supported initiative begun in 2001, has helped repair hundreds of school buildings, provide safe water and sanitation facilities, and supply more than 8,500 tents to be used as temporary classrooms.

**Bangladesh:** Schools for the hard to reach, using the BRAC model, run for two hours each day, six days a week, and are attracting children who would otherwise have no chance to receive a basic education. With total enrolment now at about 1.2 million, the majority of whom are girls, and an overwhelmingly female faculty, the programme is a success.

**Bhutan:** Some 261 community schools have been established in huts, temples or farmhouses rather than in specialized school buildings, with management and supervision vested in parents and the local community. The Department of Education has successfully narrowed the difference in the proportion of primary school enrolment between boys and girls from 24 per cent in 1990 to 6 per cent in 2000. The drop-out rate for both boys and girls

has also decreased significantly from 8 per cent in 1995 to 4 per cent in 1999.

**Bolivia:** UNICEF has supported training of 13,500 teachers through a Bilingual Intercultural Education programme. This programme has been adopted as a national policy and is now fully integrated into the country's education system. A National Plan for Literacy and Production has been created and piloted by UNICEF. More than 2,400 literacy centres are operating, reaching 120,000 people.

**Brazil:** The Bolsa Escola initiative to promote education and counter child labour has been so successful that it has been taken up on a national scale and is currently being applied in sub-Saharan Africa. Poor families that agree to keep their 7- to 14-year-old children in school and record at least 90 per cent attendance receive a minimum monthly salary.

**Ecuador:** Under the Beca Escolar scheme, introduced when an economic crisis led 20 per cent of the poorest families in the country to withdraw their children from school, girls are given priority access to scholarships. In 2002, Beca Escolar benefited 105,000 children, and it is being extended to 300,000 children in 2003.

**Egypt:** A series of high-level meetings chaired by the First Lady, H E Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, set girls' education as Egypt's top

development priority for the next five years and pledged to end the gender gap by the year 2007 -- by reaching more than half a million out-of-school girls. A national task force has been established, involving more than a dozen government ministries along with non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, with the aim of establishing 3,000 girl-friendly schools in 2003.

**India:** The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the Government of India's policy statement on universal elementary education, was announced in 2001. It aims to promote quality, community-based education and recognizes that education should be made useful and relevant by improving the curriculum, focusing on child-centred activities, investing in teacher training, and developing effective and innovative teaching aids and strategies. The initiative focuses on children from socially vulnerable and economically marginal groups, including girls, and promotes the active participation of the community in the management of schools. It has provision for the distribution of free textbooks to all girls and children belonging to the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes up to grade 8.

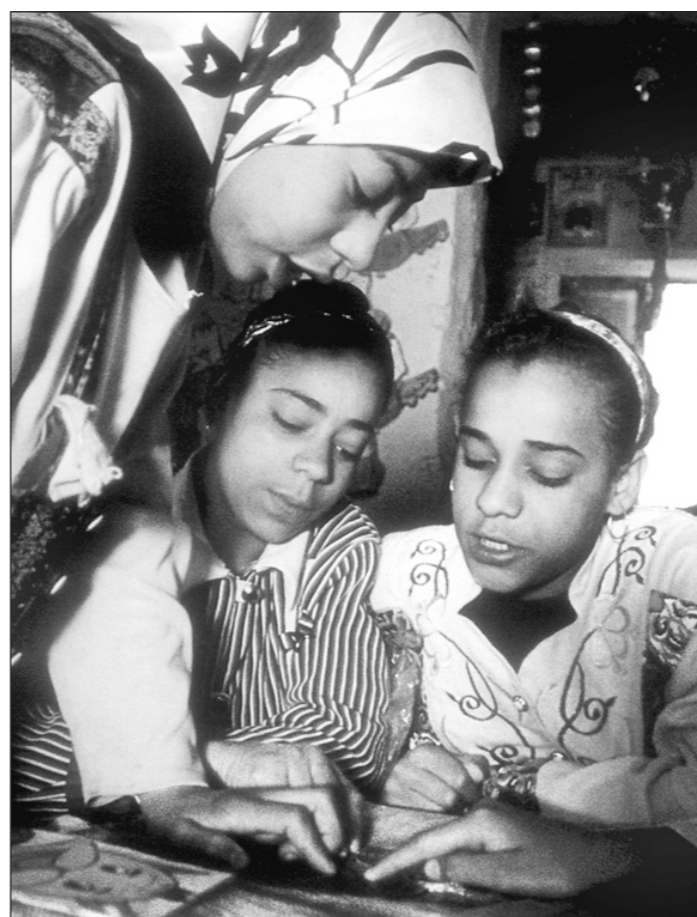
**Kenya:** In response to a new policy abolishing school fees, more than 1.3 million children entered school for the first time in 2003. The national primary

school enrolment leapt from 5.9 million to 7.2 million pupils. Textbooks and other school supplies were provided to help disadvantaged children make a successful transition to school.

**Morocco:** According to a 2001 Ministry of Economic Provision and Planning survey, about 23,000 girls were employed as maids in the Grand Casablanca region, some 60 per cent of them under age 15. Since 2001, in partnership with local non-governmental organizations, and supported by the Wilaya of Casablanca, UNICEF has helped these girls receive an education and basic health care.

**Myanmar:** The School-Based Healthy Living and HIV/AIDS Prevention Education programme is taught to children from grades 2 to 9 as part of the standard curriculum. It focuses on a range of health and social issues, such as HIV/AIDS, personal hygiene, nutrition and drugs, through activities designed to develop life skills. Introduced in 1998, the programme now covers 1.3 million students in nearly 9,000 schools and is being adopted by the government as the standard for life skills teaching throughout Myanmar.

**Turkey:** Local learning centres have been so successful that the Turkish Ministry of education has adopted the open primary school as a model for its girls' education strategy. The open primary



schools, which were set up to enrol girls normally confined to the home, aim to give a second chance to girls who have not completed their compulsory primary schooling -- as well as to release them from the burden of domestic work in their own families.

**United Republic of Tanzania:** The Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania programme serves an estimated 3 million overage children and adolescents who are out of school. It provides basic education through a specially designed three-year course, at the end of which children are eligible to join the mainstream school system. The project has been introduced into the formal

education system to serve all overage children and adolescents who will not be eligible to enter the school system under new rules that stipulate age as a condition for entry.

**Zambia:** The Programme for the Advancement of Girls' Education was piloted in 1995 in 20 schools. By 2000, it had been taken to scale, operating in over 1,000 schools in all 72 districts. Using 12 'interactive interventions', the programme seeks to promote female role models, improve the effectiveness of classroom practices, and enhance girls' access to a quality education.