

**Annual Report on the work of the**  
**Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children**  
**for the year 2005-06**

**1. Introduction**

After some eventful years of expansion and development and the accomplishment of the second phase of our project at the end of the previous financial year it was the last year that saw the *Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children* (ASKMSC) gradually shift towards day-to-day business again. New children could be admitted and found a home for the first time in their lives while old ones saw further progress in various fields such as education, sports and arts.

**2. Activities:**

**(i) General** – The year started with a reunion of sorts when in April'05 Ajar Sheikh who had ran away 9 months before was found by chance on a railway platform one hour by train south of Kolkata. The boy seemed to be in very poor condition and was willing to return to the society. In the same month the ASKMSC was also able to admit the first new child ever since the admission of Vicky Roy in September'02. The boy, Sahid Rahaman Nasker, had been referred to us by CINI-Asha and more cases were to follow throughout the year. In total the society admitted 12 new children in the last accounting year of which 8 cases were sent to us by CINI-Asha. Two cases were referred by OFFER, one case by Mahila Seva Samity and one case was found and admitted by a member of our staff.

In order to integrate the new admissions in the existing group system two new groups had to be formed and for each new group a new teacher or group attendant had to be employed. Further to this we had to employ a second doctor for the routine check-ups, a second football coach and some other new staff. This way the society was able to create more employment opportunities, but it was found to be very difficult to find skilled and motivated people for the jobs offered.

Easier than finding new staff was the admission of the new boys to school. Particularly Apollos' Academy and A. K. Ghosh Memorial School were willing to take in our new children even during the ongoing school year. Ajar Sheikh too could be readmitted to school without problems. As it was the beginning of the school year when he came back to the society we were able to admit him to class IV of A. K. Ghosh Memorial School, although he had missed most of class III due to his absence.

Our efforts to give good education to all our children continued to be mainly successful with many of our children being amongst the best in their respective classes. Co-operation with schools such as Nava Nalanda School, A. K. Ghosh Memorial School, Apollos'

Academy and Ram Mohan Mission School carried on. Himali Boarding School in Kurseong, Darjeeling District continued to sponsor three of our children in the last year and another boarding school in Kurseong offered to take in two of our boys on a discounted rate.

Some problems of the previous year could be successfully solved others carried on. Shibu Dey who suffers of ADS and learning disability could be admitted to Manovikas Kendra a school for children with special needs and is now doing well while the problems with Pappu Sheikh continued throughout the last accounting year. Shortage of staff and a constant change in group teachers, Ajar Sheikh's struggle with reintegration in the project as well as the onset of puberty in some of our boys were some of the other problems of the last year.

In the last financial year there was no more major construction on the two buildings of the society. The rooftop of the new building was covered with a fibre sheet roof so that it could be used as a rooftop terrace. The kitchen was shifted to the new building and both the buildings were painted freshly on the inside and outside. The drainage in the courtyard was done and then the courtyard was filled with soil to level it. Some landscaping took place and there was a failed attempt to cover the courtyard with a lawn.

The annual inspection for the extension of our licence to run a home for street children took place again in the month of July and the Directorate of Social Welfare granted extension in the month of September.

As every year some foreign delegations came to visit our project, amongst them Dr. Marco Frank Treasurer of the German organisation "Aktion Lebenshilfe fur Indiens Strassenkinder e. V." in November 2005 and once again Dr. Toni Pizzocco president of the Italian organisation "Sudtiroler Arzte fur die Dritte Welt" in February 2006.

The absolute highlight of the past year in terms of football was the visit of the German club FC Bayern Munich to our project in December'05. In the same month we organised a football tournament jointly with Balak Samiti Club. In February'06 the French junior football coach Mr. Michel Sauvestre came for another coaching session, but a planned repetition of the football camp in Rashpur could not take place, because the hostel was already fully booked. Besides football there was as usual no lack in other activities, such as Yoga, gymnastics, drawing, theatre, dance, Tabla lessons, handicrafts, cooking classes as well as other extracurricular activities and excursions.

**(ii) Problems faced by us** – One of the major problems faced by us in the last year was a constant lack of employees. With the admission of new children during the year it was also necessary to employ more staff. We tried various ways to get qualified and motivated people through word of mouth, newspaper ads and networking with other NGOs, but it remained very difficult to get

employees. Of those who applied many were not at all fit for the job and throughout the year there was a lot of fluctuation particularly amongst the group attendants. Some we had hired already failed to appear for work on day one and others came for a day or two and then did not show up for work again. Even those who stayed on longer than just a few days would often quit again after a month or two. Moreover some we had hired proved not to be fit for the job at all and we had to sack them again after some time. For this reason we had been many times understaffed in the last year and it was difficult to run the home. The groups who did not have group attendants had to be distributed to other groups for the time being.

Another problem faced by us in the last year was the onset of adolescence in some of our older boys. Mainly Ajgar and Pappu were behaving very moody and unruly and some of our staff did not know how to deal with this problem, which in return provoked even more rude and unruly behaviour in the children concerned. We therefore sent some of our group attendants for special teacher training courses to tackle the problem.

With the move into our new house we also thought it to be a good idea to supply beds for all the children. Before they were sleeping on rolled out mats on the floor as they were used to from their previous live on the street. We therefore had ordered double bank beds from the carpentry section of Don Bosco Ashalayam for all the rooms and also mattresses, but most of the children could not get used to sleep in a bed. They took of the mattresses from the bed and still preferred to sleep on the floor. Even after one year only a few children sleep in bed.

**(iii) Education** – Contrary to previous years when schools would refuse to admit our children because of their backgrounds it was no problem in the past year to get admission for our new boys to school. Apollos' Academy and A. K. Ghosh Memorial School were willing to take in our new children even in the middle of the ongoing school year. Therefore throughout the year more and more of our new children were admitted to school and by the end of the financial year we had children attending the following schools and classes:

Ram Mohan Mission school:

Class IV: Suraj Dhopi.

Nava Nalanda School:

Class IV: Sudhir Dhopi.

Class III: Qutubuddin Sheikh.

Class II: Ashim Mondal, Khokan Halder.

A. K. Ghosh Memorial School:

Class IV: Ajgar Sheikh.

Class III: Biswajit Sikdar, Kishore Halder, Chattu Shau, Raju Chakraborty, Jagannath Das, Pradip Das, Pintu Das.

Class II: Gour Halder, Somnath Mistri, Suman Deb, Vicky Sharma.

Class I: Banti Sharma, Prabir Adhikari, Sanu Singh.

KG II: Abul Sheikh.

KG I: Babu Ghosh, Raquib Purkait.

Apollos' Academy:

Preparatory: Bubai Yadav

Nursery II: Raja Ratha.

Nursery I: Ravi Yadav, Pintu Shaw, Tapos Ghosh, Shuvendu Halder, Manoj Biswas, Chandan Das, Sahid Naskar, Raja Das.

Montessori: Biswajit Sarder

Himali Boarding School:

Class III: Subhasish Mondal.

Class I: Vicky Roy.

Nursery: Sourav Dey.

Manovikas Kendra:

Nursery II: Shibu Dey.

With some exceptions most of the children continued to do well in school and some were toppers again in their respective classes at the end of the year. Unfortunately Pappu Sheikh once again was one of the exceptions even though we were able to admit him to a Boarding School near Kolkata with Bengali as the medium of teaching. Side by side the school also offered vocational training. We thought it would be a little easier for him to study in his mother tongue and in addition to that he could also learn a trade to support himself in the future. But lack of interest in school and onset of adolescence made it impossible for him to integrate there and after a few months he escaped from that boarding school. Three months later he returned to the society, but was no more interested to return to school. We therefore approached Don Bosco Ashalayam to take him into their carpentry section for school dropouts. But there too he could not adjust and eventually asked the Fathers to bring him to a village where he thought a few members of his family could still be alive. As to our knowledge he is now staying with some relatives in the countryside.

Rather more successful we were with Shibu Dey who suffers from ADS and learning disability. He could be admitted to Manovikas Kendra a school for children with special needs and is now doing very well. He is very motivated to go to school now and improves

steadily.

For Ajgar Sheikh we decided not to readmit him to Nava Nalanda School, but instead to class IV of A. K. Ghosh Memorial School. There he passed an admission test with ease even though he had missed most of class III due to his absence, but he had to struggle throughout the year to get promoted to class V. Three other children Jagannath Das, Biswajit Sikdar and Pradip Das were not promoted at the end of the year. All of them will have to repeat class III in A. K. Ghosh Memorial School.

Despite the fact that Subhasish Mondal had been admitted from class I in A. K. Ghosh Memorial School straight to class III in Himali Boarding School, Kurseong he became once again first in his class. Sourav Dey too did very well in the Nursery section of the same school, but Vicky Roy continued to have difficulties just like in his previous school. In March '06 we were able to send two more children to a boarding school in Kurseong. Abul Sheikh and Babu Ghosh were admitted to class I and Nursery in Sunshine School. All in all we have five children in Kurseong boarding schools now and hope to add some more in the next year.

As far as education inside the society was concerned we decided to introduce English as the medium of teaching within the groups and asked all our group teachers only to speak in English with the children. We also sent our teachers to special teacher training courses to improve their ability to deal with our children.

**(iv) Medical** – On the medical front we expected a major open heart surgery last year to correct Sourav Dey's Ventricular Septal Defect. Money was provided by the Italian NGO "Sudtiroler Arzte fur die Dritte Welt" to cover for the huge costs of the operation and it was planned to do the necessary operation during the long school holidays of Sourav last winter, but when we did all the preliminary tests required for the surgery the heart surgeon advised us to wait another year with the surgery as he thought there would be a small chance that the problem would still be solved on its own. Since we had already received the money for the operation from the Italian organization we thought to discuss the case with Dr. Pizzocco president of the Italian NGO "Sudtiroler Arzte fur die Dritte Welt" and his team of doctors who were expected to come in the month of February '06 for another visit. When they went through all the test results they came to the same conclusion and also advised us to wait for another year.

In the last year we had our first appendix case in the society. Tabos Ghosh got his appendix removed in the month of February '06 and he recovered very fast from the necessary surgery.

Besides that there was no serious health related problems in the last year. Dr. Mandal continued with his monthly check-ups and recorded a good state of health and development of our children as well as a normal gain in weight and height throughout the year. Dr. Toni Pizzocco and his team of Italian doctors as well as Dr.

Marco Frank from the German organisation “Aktion Lebenshilfe für Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.” could also convince themselves about the good state of health of our children during their visits. With the number of children increasing we decided to hire another doctor. Dr. Das offered his service and is now regularly looking after all the new boys.

In the month of July’05 the Lions Club of Jadavpur organized a health check-up for all our children and in the month of November’05 we organized an HIV awareness program jointly with two other NGOs and sent our oldest boys to participate in it.

**(v) Sports and related Activities** – The number one sport in the last accounting year remained football in our project. We took the idea of a football academy one step further and divided our children in two teams an ‘A’-team and a ‘B’-team and hired a second coach. Football as a sport has really clicked with our children and they have all become very enthusiastic if not mad about the game. Nevertheless we suffered some setbacks and our application for affiliation in the Nursery Division of IFA had been rejected by the IFA last year. A planned repetition of the football camp held in the previous year in Kalikata/Rashpur near Amta on invitation of the local NGO Agragati and with our French youth coach Mr. Michel Sauvestre could not be organized during Mr. Sauvestre’s last visit in February’06, because the hostel was already overbooked well in advance. We were also not able to arrange for an alternative and had to drop the plan for a football camp eventually completely. We now hope we will be able to organize a camp again in the next financial year. In any case the stay of our French coach Mr. Sauvestre was once again a very fruitful one for our project and three weeks of intensive training with Mr. Sauvestre sure improved the skills of our children further. During his stay Mr. Sauvestre also gave an interactive lector on football in Vidyanagar College. A bit more successful was our attempt to organize a football tournament jointly with Balak Samiti Club at the end of Dec’05. Not only was it a big success in terms of spectator turnout, but our boys also managed to reach the semi finals of the tournament. In another tournament the annual ‘Kelar Mela’ we made it to the finals and won. But the absolute highlight of the year in terms of football was the visit of the German club FC Bayern Munich to our project in December’05. The children were invited to watch the games of the German football giant in the 111<sup>th</sup> IFA Shield competition in Salt Lake Stadium and after the final they were allowed to meet with the players in the dress room.

But in spite of so much focus on football other sports are not at all neglected. The new courtyard is just ideal for sports and activities such as badminton, volleyball or basketball and was already used for these games during the last winter season. It can also be utilized for Yoga and gymnastics.

**(vi) Leisure, Arts & Music** – Some of the activities added in the previous year have become much-loved by the children in the last year. Particularly the cooking class, though initially frowned on by staff and children alike, is enjoyed now because it gives them a chance to cook their favourite food and of course eat it! The spacious ‘games room’ has become such a desired destination for the children that special timings had to be added to the weekly routine of each group to avoid overcrowding. Here a volunteer was always available to play all kinds of games with them and for a little while they could forget about studies and school. They could also listen to music, watch a movie, read a book, sing or paint, do handicrafts or enjoy other creative activities under the guidance of the volunteers. Further to these activities there was football as the main activity of every day. Drawing lessons and acting were also enjoyed by practically all the children twice a week and some of them took Tabla lessons while three of our children have chosen to take dance lessons twice a week in a school nearby. Not really a favourite with all the children, but also important is the compulsory Yoga twice a week.

**(vii) Birthday** – For the first time last year we were able to celebrate the 19<sup>th</sup> November or “birthday” of our children in the new courtyard. It was a beautiful way to commemorate the fifth return of the day when the first ten children moved in on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2000. But first of all the day started with the usual football tournament in the morning. All seven groups were playing one another backed up by staff and members. After lunch the much-loved ‘treasure hunt’ and other group games took place again and when in the evening the guests poured in the courtyard had turned into an illuminated theatre where our children sang songs, played Tabla, recited poems and performed a theatre play to entertain the guests. Eventually the beautiful day was rounded up by a superb dinner.

**(viii) Meals** – Regarding meals there has been no change in the last year. The children are still served mainly rice, dal and vegetables for the main meals and sometimes roti is given instead of rice for dinner. There is one day per week where fish is offered and one day with meat for lunch. Otherwise soja is a regular source of proteins. Cereals are given in the morning and we also continue to supply the children with fruits for the daily snack break at 5 o’clock.

**(ix) Excursions** – Like in the year before, though for different reasons, there were not so many excursions and outings in the last year. A trip to Puri in May’06 could still be organized and everybody enjoyed the beach and the sea again, but the annual excursion to Makaibari Tea Estate in the month of November’05 was unfortunately cancelled by the owner of the estate at short notice and we were not able to arrange for an alternative trip due

to unavailability of train tickets. The planned repetition of the football camp in Rashpur too had to be dropped, because the hostel was already completely booked well in advance and we could not get rooms anymore. So besides the trip to Puri our children were left with only the annual picnic, which took place in December'05 again. But to make up for this our volunteers went out with some of the children when ever they could to explore the city, go to the parks or simply for shopping.

**(x) Volunteers** – As every year this year too we had quite a few volunteers local and foreign. One big room in the new building has been reserved as the “Games Room”. This is where the volunteers were mainly supposed to work with the children. There is lots of space to play with the children or to do handicrafts. But sometimes the volunteers also helped with other jobs, such as cooking class or bringing the children to and from school. French football coach Mr. Sauvestre of course did football training sessions with the children and once again a Lady from Germany organized non-figurative and abstract drawing competitions as well as handicraft workshops over the winter months.

### **3. Finances:**

Once again the financial situation of the society was sound in the past accounting year. With only a few construction and renovation jobs pending funds were last year mainly needed for the monthly running costs. In the future too we will mainly have to cover day-to-day expenditure and costs for maintenance and upkeep of the two buildings. This means the projected annual need of funds in comparison to the previous years should come down again considerably in the years to come even if the number of children will further increase. The high amounts required in the past for expansion will not be necessary.

The three NGOs “Aktion Lebenshilfe für Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.” of Germany, “Sudtiroler Ärzte für die Dritte Welt” of Italy and the “A.S.K. Children’s Trust” of the UK continued to be the main pillars of the society in the last year. Their financial support has become by now a steady and reliable source of income for the project. Particularly the personal sponsorships arranged for our children by the German NGO are very vital for us, as they guaranty a regular monthly amount for each child, which already covers all the major monthly expenditure for that child. This way it is easier for us to do the financial planning.

In the last accounting year we also managed to get quite a few local donations again, but most of them were given to us by NRIs passing through. Nevertheless some local clubs as well as private donors contributed blankets, clothes and some cash, too, or sponsored a meal for the children. Besides that there was the annual membership fees of the members.

### **4. Outlook:**

Within the coming financial year we will probably fill in the last vacancies in our project and the first and second building will run



at full capacity accommodating approx. 50 former street children. This would mean that in order to help more street children and other children in need we must continue our efforts to get more boarding schools to admit and sponsor former street children.

It also would mean that the first and second phase of our project is complete and our priority for the future must be to find suitable land for the third and last phase of the project a campus in the countryside for bio-dynamic farming, recreation and also to give some more children a home in the future.