

Annual Report on the work of the
Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children
for the year 2008-09

1. Introduction

In the eleventh year since the formation of the *Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children* (ASKMSC) we were once again able to provide some more destitute children with a home for the first time in their lives and our football project bore the first fruits in the last financial year with one of our children being invited for a football camp in Germany after winning a talent hunt contacted by the German football giant FC Bayern Munich. Besides that there were also few set-backs, as suitable land for our village project could not yet be found and with one of our new admissions running away again.

2. Activities:

(i) General – At the beginning of the financial year 2008-2009 the ASKMSC had 41 children aged 6 to 14 years of whom five went to boarding schools in Kurseong, Darjeeling District, while the rest stayed in our home for former street children in Santoshpur. Over the year two more children [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] both about eight years old got newly admitted, while another boy, [REDACTED], who had been with us already since July 2005 had to be returned to his mother end of April 2008 on her demand. As newly admitted [REDACTED] ran away again after staying only two months with us we ended the financial year with the same number of children in our home as we had started it.

For the second consecutive year the results of our children in school worsened and we therefore had to put more stress on studies and cut down a bit on activities, but sport and football in particular remained an integral part of our extracurricular activities. Already since 2003 we have been combining charity with football and ASKMSC with a football academy. Hence the time was felt right this year for a club identity of our own and FC Kolkata came into existence in January 2009! But already before the launch of FC Kolkata our football academy could celebrate its first big success when one of our children, [REDACTED], was selected by Germany's football giant FC Bayern Munich for a sponsored training unit in Germany. Besides sports there were the usual activities, such as drawing lessons, Yoga, electronic course, etc., but some of the activities had to be shortened to give extra time for studies.

There were no major medical problems in the past year besides some fractures and minor injuries. Those were mainly due to sports activities, but in general the overall health of our children was good throughout the year.

Co-operation with other NGOs such as CINI-Asha, PBKOJP Boy's Home, etc. continued in the past accounting year.

The annual birthday party was organised again on 19th of November 2008 and was drawing ever more visitors and guests this year. The two major excursions of the year were once again Puri in April 2008 and Kurseong in October 2008.

Like every year we had a lot of visitors again particularly throughout the winter months. Dr. Meyer-Hamme from "H.E.L.G.O. e.V." came twice for short visits in September 2008 and February 2009 and Dr. Marco Frank Treasurer of our German fundraising organisation "ali sk e.V." stayed for 3 weeks in November 2008. Johanna Geissler Secretary of the same organisation came in January 2009. The entire second team of German football giant FC Bayern Munich also visited our project in January 2009 together with Gerd Muller their assistant coach.

(ii) Problems faced by us – The year started with the mother of [REDACTED] approaching us to return her child. Her economic situation had improved after getting married for a second time and she therefore thought she was now able to look after the boy herself. We were therefore forced to release the boy who had been with us since July 2005. In the same month in another incidence the mother of [REDACTED] during a visit encouraged her child to run away, which he did soon after. Four weeks later she decided to readmit her child again. Another child [REDACTED] who had been newly admitted with us by CINI Asha also ran away and reappeared at Sealdah Station soon after. Since the boy already had a history of running away from homes where CINI Asha had placed him, they decided to keep him under counselling at their drop-in-shelter at Sealdah Station. After this turbulent beginning of the year things calmed down again and went back to normal, but problems with adolescence and poor results in school continued throughout the year.

[REDACTED]'s invitation to join a football training camp in Germany organised by FC Bayern Munich presented us with an almost impossible task. How to get a passport for an orphaned former street child? But tireless efforts of our Secretary Pranab Kr. Das and the kind help of CINI Asha and the Child Welfare Committee made the impossible possible and the boy left for nine days to Germany in August 2008.

No inspector from the Directorate of Social Welfare came this year for the routine annual inspection of our home for former street children and therefore our application for extension of license applied for in March 2008 is still pending even after the end of the financial year 2008-2009. As every year we submitted another application for extension in March 2009 and hope the problem will be solved within the next financial year. Else we might be forced to stop admission of new cases once again until the license issue is resolved.

(iii) Education – Like in the previous year this year, too, with the exception of one child, newly admitted [REDACTED], all of our children went to school throughout the year and once again they went to five different schools in Kolkata and two boarding schools in Kurseong. During the past financial year our children were attending the following schools and classes:

Nava Nalanda School:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

A. K. Ghosh Memorial School:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Apollos' Academy:

[REDACTED]

Young Horizon School:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Manovikas Kendra:

[REDACTED]

Himali Boarding School, Kurseong:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Sunshine School, Kurseong:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

No School:

██████████

The general downtrend of the results of our children in school, which could already be noticed in the previous year, continued this year even so some of the boys who lacked interest in school due to adolescence became more serious about studies again. Therefore more stress had to be put on studies this year, which resulted in a reduction of time available for other activities, such as sports, art and music. Despite this effort some of our children failed class again at the end of the school year or passed only after repeating an exam or under special consideration. In the case of ██████████ who failed class I in Young Horizon School it is already decided to readmit him to Apollos' Academy next year.

With the exception of ██████████ all our boys in boarding schools in Kurseong did well again this year, but with the political situation in the hills getting more and more uncertain it might become imperative in the future to think about returning them to Kolkata schools.

(iv) Medical – With the exception of the occasional fracture and some bruises mainly due to football, there were no major medical problems in the past year. Our general physician Dr. Mondal continued with his monthly check-ups of our children, recording weight and height together with other health related data minutely in a health file. This way the overall improvement of the state of health of our children as well as a healthy weight gain was well documented. German neurologist Dr. Marco Frank, treasurer of our German sister charity could convince himself once again of the generally good state of health of our children during his visit in November 2008.

(v) Sports and related Activities – Sport continues to play a major roll in ASKMSC to balance the classroom blues in our institution and in the past financial year our association with the German football giant FC Bayern Munich developed further, which encouraged us in our idea of combining charity with football by running ASKMSC side by side as a football academy. The first team of FC Bayern Munich came to Kolkata at the end of May 2008 for the farewell match of world famous goalkeeper Oliver Kahn. The children and staff of ASKMSC already welcomed them at Kolkata international airport and were invited by the club to join the 'Kid's Clinic' with FC Bayern and Oliver Kahn at CCFC ground the next day. Two of our children Ajar Sheikh and Suraj Dhopi got the chance to participate with 46 other children in the clinic while the rest of our kids looked on. There was a brief training session together with the players of FC Bayern under the guidance of the coach Ottmar Hitzfeld followed by a

small tournament. The children were divided into 6 teams and two players of FC Bayern joined each team. At the end of the day six children had been selected by the club to fly to Germany for one week of training at the football academy of FC Bayern Munich and our Suraj Dhopi was one of them!

A few months later in January 2009 the second team of FC Bayern came once again to Kolkata together with the world famous “Bomber” Gerd Muller. Already in December 2005 they had visited our home for former street children in Santoshpur and this time, too, they came for a visit and spent some time with our children. Gerd Muller and his team enjoyed kicking the ball with the boys in our courtyard and also had to give many autographs.

Encouraged by this our football academy went yet another step forward with the introduction of our new football team FC Kolkata at the end of the financial year.

Throughout the year we also organized some football and volleyball matches with the boys and staff of PBKOJP Boy’s Home again, had a couple of football matches with the various boarding schools during our annual excursion to Kurseong again and were also able to combine our annual excursion to Puri with the help of the Sports Officer, Puri, Sri Rabindra Nath Senapati with a football camp held there.

Even so football is still the number one sport of the ASKMSC volleyball has become a serious competitor and is played regular in our courtyard.

Besides that there were a lot of other sports and activities again during this year, such as athletics, badminton, yoga, etc.

(vi) Leisure, Arts & Music – With the pressure in school getting ever higher studies have taken up a lot of time reserved for activities earlier. But there was still some time for activities such as drawing classes, theatre, Tabla lessons, dance classes, tailoring and electronic course, cooking classes and book reading.

Our respected Vice-President and artist Ms. Sudeshna Mitra Battig started special weekly arts classes for the most talented of our boys and Ms. Annelies Ghosh held her daily arts & crafts workshop again over the winter months.

(vii) Birthday – The annual “birthday” of our children on the 19th of November has become an ever bigger event this year with more and more guests coming to enjoy the evening program. But before the usual entertainment of music, dance, theatre, recitals and songs performed by our children there was a football tournament in the morning and games and quiz in the afternoon again and unlike last year there was no exams on this day and all the children could participate. As always birthday cake and snacks rounded up the program at the end of the day and made it yet another happy birthday for the children.

(viii) Meals – Regarding meals there has been no change in the

last year. The children are still served mainly a choice of vegetable and dal curries with rice for lunch and dinner and sometimes roti is given instead of rice. Fish curry is served every Monday and meat curry with rice and vegetables on Saturdays, which means the children get two non-vegetarian meals per week. On the other days curries with soybean flakes are offered for further protein intake. Both lunch and dinner are supplemented by salad. Milk and 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 – Our annual excursion to Puri took place at the end of April 2008 and we managed to combine the same with a football camp. The other major excursion of every year is our trip to Kurseong, courtesy Mr. Banerjee owner of the Makaibari Tea Estate. It took place at the end of October 2008 and we were able to play some football matches there with various schools.

Another highlight of every year is the annual picnic in the countryside. This year too, there had been a day full of games, food and fun at the beginning of February 2009. Further to this there had also been a few outings and day trips to various places again throughout the year.

(x) Volunteers – Besides the respected founder of the ASKMSC Mr. Wolfgang Muller and our arts and crafts teacher Ms. Annelies Ghosh, who are both from Germany and have regularly contributed to our charity, there is nowadays also some local volunteers who help with the homework and studies of our children. Further to this our respected Vice-President and artist Ms. Sudeshna Mitra Battig gives special art classes for the most talented amongst our children.

3. Finances:

The past financial year was the second consecutive year almost solely financed by our German sister charity the NGO “Aktion Lebenshilfe für Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.” which also provides personal sponsorships for our children.

There were also some local monetary contributions again and some local clubs as well as private donors contributed again clothes or sponsored a meal for our children. Besides that there were the annual membership fees of the members.

4. Outlook:

In addition to our main aim of helping some more street children in the coming year we also hope to further advance our football project and get proper recognition for the same with the promotion of FC Kolkata as a club, since this might give our children a chance to pursue football as a career when they are adults.

It is also hoped that finally some suitable land can be found for the planned project in the countryside, as this village project would be helpful in many ways. Some renovation work on the existing campus might be required in the coming year and financial support for the same must be sought.

