

Annual Report on the work of the
Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children
for the year 2013-14

1. Introduction

In the past financial year the more than fifteen years of good work and service to humanity rendered by the *Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children* (ASKMSC) were at risk to come to an end due to the many years the Directorate of Social Welfare has already ignored all our applications submitted to them for renewal of our license. Subsequently the year was in many ways a somewhat uneasy one finally accepting the fact that this pending license issue with the DSW might not get resolved in the near future or maybe never and hence had to have consequences now from our end with the focus on efforts to secure the future of our children.

2. Activities

(i) General – After our first boy had turned eighteen in the previous year an entire generation of boys who grew up in ASKMSC in the last 9 to 14 years is slowly heading towards adulthood. The past year therefore saw another seven of our boys reach majority and hence an ‘Aftercare Program’ had to be worked out for them and an ‘Aftercare Unit’ was established, since they could not be further kept under one roof with those who are still minors. A total of eight young adults chose to get further support under this newly designed ‘Aftercare Program’ of them six were admitted to boarding schools for their Higher Secondary Education. One was offered a job in our home in Santoshpur while doing his Higher Secondary Education side by side and a last one had found a job in a Call Centre and had rented a room on his own. As he is rather independent by now our support for him is limited to life guidance and he also got covered by us under ‘Medicare’ for another year.

Another 28 boys who are all still minors were either admitted to boarding schools under our new ‘Sponsorship Program’ or continued to be inmates of our home in Santoshpur while attending local schools for their education. One boy started a vocational training in a bakery. Another two young boys lived in our home in the countryside where they attended a government run Bengali medium school nearby. This means the *Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children* supported a total of 38 children and young adults aged 6 to 19 years in the past year of whom a total of 19 are studying in boarding schools now.

While in the previous year seven of our boys had successfully passed their Class X board exams another seven set for their Class X board exams this year and their results are expected to be out in coming May’14. If they should pass as well already a total of 15 boys will have cleared their Class X exams, which can be considered a huge success for our work.

With so many more children in boarding schools the football project of

our ASKMSC called 'FC Kolkata' had become perceivably smaller over the year, but it got a good moral boost when our work in this regard got finally recognized by FIFA headquarters in Zurich, Switzerland.

Sadly our work did not get this kind of recognition, appreciation or support from the Directorate of Social Welfare over the years as they simply did not react to any of our annual applications for renewal of our license in the past six years. This forced us to take the hard decision at the beginning of the financial year to shut down our home for the time being until the license issue is sorted out. Therefore it was resolved to admit most of the children to boarding schools in the future.

Cooperation with other NGOs was intensive again throughout the year. Amongst the most impressive events for our children and young adults was a return visit to an NGO in Lilua that helps children who work and live at a garbage dumpsite there while our annual picnic was once again jointly organized with the boys of PBKOJB Boy's Home at the Dhakuria Lakes.

Volunteer Ms. Katrin Kohl from Germany who had helped to create a good working atmosphere in the home again in the previous year left us at the end of June '13. Her absence is very much felt and we are very grateful to her and of course all the other volunteers and helping hands who had rendered their services again in the past financial year. We are also grateful to our German sister charity and partners '*Aktion Lebenshilfe für Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.*' for their continuous and stable financial support in all those years. With their help the financial situation of our society was once again sound in the past year.

In the home the children continued to be more motivated and cooperative particularly with the number of boys declining noticeably over the year. It became very fashionable to get together daily and sing for hours with some of the boys playing the guitar along. This impressed visiting Austrian artist and musician Mr. Frizzey Greif who travels the world to promote his World Peace Project 'Frizzey Light'. He therefore suggested recording a song together.

With most of our children in boarding schools and the remaining few having important school exams around the 19th November the annual birthday celebration of all our children could only be held as a low key event on that day and for the first time guests could not be invited.

In terms of medical fitness of our children the past year went by without any major problems and all the children were in a good state of health.

(ii) Problems faced by us – While strong problems with lack of discipline of many of our children, aggressive behaviour, stealing of money, etc. during the awkward adolescent phase could slowly but fully be tackled by corrective measures over the past years one problem could simply not be sorted out. Our main problem has been for years the unresolved license issue with the Directorate of Social Welfare. Since our license to run the home expired in 2008 all applications for renewal of the same submitted to

the DSW have simply been ignored by them. No officer came for the statutory annual inspection of our home and occasional inquiries in the DSW were met with indifference and unspecific statements. With a heavy heart we had therefore decided in a meeting of the governing body at the beginning of the financial year to shut down our home completely as we felt we can no longer bear the constant insecurity to run a home without a license. Strangely a couple of months after it was resolved to shut down the home until a new license is issued the DSW all in a sudden wrote us a letter after so many years of ignoring us and threatened to close our home for running it without a license for so many years! This only confirmed our notion that the future of our children was at stake and that it was the right decision to shut down our home completely for the time being and instead try to help our children in a different way. With this intension in mind the ‘Sponsorship Program’ was newly designed, which put the responsibility for our children back to their relatives if any and the ASKMSC would only sponsored the education in a boarding school for them and send them back home to their families during the school holidays. This way even if the DSW would close down our home our children would still be safe. Similarly we offered our young adults under our new ‘Aftercare Program’ to continue to sponsor their higher secondary education in boarding schools if so desired by them and made sure they had a place to go during school holidays if they wanted to. This way the number of dependent children who would lose their home if the DSW should decide to close it came down considerably and should come down to zero in the future. With the future of our children secured it would then be safer to negotiate with DSW to finally renew our license again.

(iii) Education – As already mentioned more children were admitted to boarding schools in the past year. Six of them were admitted to class XI of Indira Gandhi Memorial High School for their Higher Secondary Education and ten to Ramkrishna Sarada Mission School in various classes from V to IX. These included two difficult cases of the previous year were one student got expelled from his boarding school and another boy had initially refused completely to carry on with his school education. Both the new boarding schools are in Barasat and with the two boys in Himali Boarding School, Kurseong and the one in Holy Home School, Serampore we have a total of 19 children in boarding schools now, while 17 children continue to attend local schools. This is a first step to our plan to vacate our Santoshpur home completely due to the longstanding license problem we face with the DSW. It also means a total of 36 children went to school with the support of ASKMSC in the past year and they attended the following schools and classes:

Indira Gandhi Memorial High School

Class XI	Sudhir Dhopi, Suraj Dhopi, Chottu Shaw,
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	Pintu Das, Kishore Halder, Raju Chakraborty
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Apollos Academy

Class X	Jagannath Das,
Class IX	Sanu Singh

Young Horizon School

Class X	Gour Halder, Vicky Sharma, Ashim Mondal, Khokan Halder, Somnath Mistri, Suman Deb
Class IX	Banti Sharma
Class VII	Raja Ratha, Chandan Das, Tapos Ghosh, Babu Ghosh,
Class VI	Biswajit Sarder
Class V	Somnath Maity

Ramkrishna Sarada Mission School

Class IX	Pradip Das
Class VIII	Abul Sheikh
Class VII	Bubai Yadav, Manoj Biswas, Pintu Shaw
Class VI	Biswanath Maity, Raja Das, Sahid Naskar
Class V	Ravi Yadav, Samir Mondal

Himali Boarding School, Kurseong

Class XI	Subhasish Mondal
Class VII	Sourav Dey

Holy Home School, Serampur

Class VII	Raquib Parfait
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Sriphaltala F. P. School, Raidighi

Class II	Sk. Saforid, Sukhdev Naskar
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A year after the first child to get passed the class X board exams there were a total of 7 boys who had appeared for their class X board exams and all got pass marks when their results came out in the last week of May'13 and some of them even past with excellent results. This is a big success for our organisation and after initial hesitations of some of these boys all of them decided to go for further studies and do their Higher Secondary Education.

One former inmate of our home who had turned 18 last year and continued

to get support for NIOS education side by side to his job under our 'Aftercare Program' left the Program, as it was not possible for him to study for NIOS due to frequent night duties. He is now more or less completely independent from our organisation and able to live his own life, but he continues to get life guidance and advice when ever needed from us as well as coverage under health insurance.

In another case a boy who had completed school and had joined a vocational training in a bakery with our help at the beginning of the financial year, which also included a 3 months internship in a 4 star hotel quit the training just a few days before his final exams and left. As the boy is still a minor and a case of MR it has to be seen now what further help and support we can give to him in the future.

(iv) Medical – With the exception of one case of Chicken Pox there was no major health related problem in the past year and the few minor injuries due to sport, such as strained muscles or ligament issues were all treated free of charge by a physiotherapist of a nearby hospital. The major reasons for this good state of health of our children are the physical exercise they get in our organisation, the balanced diet provided and the monthly check-up of all boys by our general physician Dr. Biswajit Mondal. By checking their health every month Dr. Mondal is always able to detect health related problems at an early stage and contain them before they get serious.

(v) Sports and related Activities – Football remains to be the main sporting activity in ASKMSC, but with more and more children getting admitted to boarding schools the dwindling number of children is starting to have an impact on our football project and the teams of '*FC Kolkata*'. Already before we had to reduce the number of teams from three to the previous two again and with only 17 children remaining in the house this has come down to more or less just one team. And while in the past we had one full U17, U15 and U13 team respectively the remaining team is also not very homogeneous by age now. Despite this our many years of work in the field of football have finally also come to the notice of FIFA headquarters in Zurich, Switzerland and in recognition of our efforts the world body of football has sent us football shoes, jerseys and balls amongst other things. This is a huge honour for all of us and gives us the motivation and encouragement to carry on with our work.

After a long absence to his native country our main football coach Mr. Marbyn Molina from Honduras was able to practice regularly with our boys again. He was supported trice a year by FIFA licensed Swiss Youth Coach Mr. Christoph Gobeli who has recently changed as coach from FC Bern to the Swiss Super League Club Young Boys Bern. Unfortunately once again no football camp could be held over the winter.

Besides football some of the boys started regular jogging in the early morning on their own initiative and even Yoga was done again by some of

them occasionally. Also Badminton and Volleyball were played in our courtyard during the winter season.

(vi) Leisure, Arts & Music – The trend of the previous year to make their own music had some of the kids inspired to form their own band '*The Backbenchers*'. Using guitar tutorials on 'Youtube' they improved their guitar playing skills and started to compose and record their own songs as well as a few cover versions, which were then uploaded again by them to 'Youtube'. A visiting musician from Austria Mr. Frizzey Greif travelling the world to promote his World Peace Project 'Frizzey Light' was so impressed by this that he suggested to record a song together. The project was then named '*To be Strong*' and the result is due to come out in the coming year. Sadly the past year also meant the end of Tabla lessons, as our Tabla teacher of many years had to stop classes due to personal reasons.

Besides music listening reading books has become a very well established time pass with our children and our small library with about 1000 titles can sometimes not fulfil anymore the thirst for more. We therefore had to buy again a few new titles in the past year, which were from the kid's wish list.

Further to this some voluntary courses and activities of the previous year went on for those interested, such as the GW-BASIC computer programming course held by our respected founder Mr. Wolfgang Muller or the tailoring classes with Ms. Barnali Das. Ms. Annelies Ghosh held an arts & crafts workshop again for a few weeks during her annual visit from Germany. But as she is getting increasingly unable to walk due to old age those who wanted to participate had to come to her flat to do so.

(vii) Birthday – The annual birthday celebration of all our children on 19th November has always been a high light of the year and everybody was looking forward to it. But this year most children were in boarding schools at that time and further to this amongst the children still present in the home the students of Young Horizons School had important exams on the very day and the next and therefore we decided to keep the event a low key affair this year with only a small program. This was also the reason for not inviting any guest this year. Nevertheless there was a birthday cake to mark the occasion and a cake cutting ceremony after the children had come back from their exams. The house, too, was decorated nicely for the event, but since the children had to prepare for the next day's exam it was back to studies right after the cake cutting ceremony! However the day was rounded up with an ample meal for dinner.

(viii) Meals – The ASKMSC revises its weekly food chart every once in a while according to the seasonal availability of vegetables and other ingredients, but there is always a well balanced diet throughout the year, which consists of two times a week fish curry, once a week chicken curry

as well as curries with soybean flakes on the other days. There are cereals with milk or butter toast with jelly for breakfast and the children get a 'school tiffin to go' to bridge the time until the main rice meal at lunch time, which is served with a choice of vegetable curries and pulses. Everyday different fruits are given during the afternoon break while there is another main rice meal with curries for dinner. We also provide an additional snack on days with football training when calorie intake is high.

(ix) Excursions – Just like the previous year there were no excursions with all the boys, but six boys of the 'Aftercare Unit' went to Puri over the Christmas holidays. Our annual picnic we once again did jointly with the boys of PBKOJP Boy's Home in February'14, this year on their invitation. The picnic took place at nearby Dhakuria Lakes and was a complete success. Further to this there have been a few day outings again of which one was a visit of an NGO run school and coaching centre for the children of the garbage and rick-pickers next to the Lilua garbage dumpsite, a mountain of garbage that impressed all. Despite their own backgrounds all our boys were quite shocked and saddened by the gigantic mountain of garbage and the plight of the people who had to scour through it for a living. The Lilua NGO had set up a school for these children next to the garbage hill and after a football match with them we enjoyed a good meal together.

(x) Volunteers – Quite a few foreign volunteers from different countries have rendered their services to ASKMSC again in various fields in the past year, amongst them Ms. Katrin Kohl who had come already in September'12 and left in July'13 to go back to her country of origin, Germany. Ms. Kohl was in charge of the teaching staff and set with them for daily meetings to organise the day and discuss possible scope for improvement. She also had her own group the class X boys of Young Horizons School who had grown very fond of her classes. We are very grateful to her for her help and wish her all the best for her future. Some regular volunteers such as Mr. and Ms. Otremba from Germany or Ms. Karolina Gummerer from Italy came again for different periods over the year to help to keep the house clean and organised and wherever help was required. Mr. Marbyn Molina from Honduras supported our football project with his regular practice and FIFA licensed Youth Coach Mr. Christoph Gobeli from Switzerland came thrice in the past year for a week or two to support him holding special training sessions for the children. Further to the already mentioned many other volunteers came again in the past year. To name a few Mr. Frizzey Greif and Christine Jarosch from Austria, who did a music project with the children and Ms. Annelies Ghosh from Germany, who held her annual arts & crafts workshop again and last but not least the respected initiator and founder of our organisation Mr. Wolfgang Muller also from Germany who is a permanent support right from the beginning. As every year we would like to thank all

the mentioned and unmentioned volunteers for their contribution and help!

(xi) Country Project – Besides the two little boys placed there in the previous year by the CWC our branch in the countryside is now also used by the ‘Aftercare Unit’ to accommodate the 18 years and above young adults during school holidays, while the two little boys are shifted at that time. Also some children of our main branch stay out there from time to time for recreation during weekends and holidays. Further to this a visit with all the boys to our country project was organised to hold a training session with our Swiss coach in nearby Mathurapur.

3. Finances

The financial situation of our society continued to be sound and consistent in the past year despite an increase of the total annual budget in comparison to previous years due to the admission of another 16 children to different boarding schools at the beginning of the year. With the help and support of our sister charity and partner in Germany the “*Aktion Lebenshilfe für Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.*” we were able to make up for that.

Besides the annual membership fees of our members we had no local cash donations during the year, but there was a few sponsored meals as well as a few clothes donations again by some neighbours or local clubs.

4. Outlook

With the pending renewal of our license by the Directorate of Social Welfare and the decision to shut down our home in Santoshpur for the time being until the license issue is resolved it is hard to give a positive outlook for the future. All plans for the further development of our project are currently on hold and we can only hope that the DSW will finally renew our license in the near time. Else the sufferers will be the children!