

**Annual Report on the work of the**  
**Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children**  
**for the year 2017-18**

**1. Introduction**

The past year was a milestone for the Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children (ASKMSC), because in this year we saw already the 20<sup>th</sup> return of the day it was founded. It was a reason for us to celebrate and to look back at those years when an entire generation of former street children grew up in our home and for many of this generation who are now young adults the process of separation from this home continued in the last year and with the start of repair and renovation work of the two buildings that were home for them for so many years maybe the past year was also the beginning of a renewal process.

**2. Activities**

**(i) General** – The financial year 2017-18 was a very special year for us, because we completed already 20 years since the founding of the Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children (ASKMSC) on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1998. And even though it took another two and a half long years till the construction of our first building in Santoshpur had been completed and the first 10 little boys could move from the street into their new home on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2000 it has been many years now we have been already trying to change lives of street children in Kolkata. An entire generation of former street children has grown up in our home ever since and hopefully more can be helped until this problem has finally disappeared from the streets of Kolkata and every child has found a home and can go to school. A total of 42 boys have been raised by us in those years of whom 30 have by now at least past class X. This includes 13 young adults who have passed their higher secondary exams. In the past year altogether 16 of these 42 boys still attended school with the financial support of ASKMSC while another eight went to college. The remaining 18 either work in part-time or full-time jobs in various fields or they are in the middle of learning a trade. Amongst them three are working for Decathlon Sports India while another one has joined the new Training and Education Programme of that company in June'17. In the same month one of our boys joined a bakery training in the bakery of the Missionaries of the Word and while one of our boys completed his one year training in 'Entrepreneurship' with the French project Life Project 4 Youth (LP4Y) another one joined there in November'17. The past year also saw another two boys turn 18 and now only 15 boys are still left out of the once 42 who have not yet reached adulthood. And since ASKMSC has seen its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the past year the two buildings on our Santoshpur campus, though a little bit younger than that were in need of some major repair and renovation work which started end

of October'17 and still goes on to this point. Cracks have been closed on the outside of the aging buildings and holes have been plugged on the fibre sheet roof. Some of the pipes supporting this roof had to be replaced too, since they were totally rusted. A few electric fittings have been renewed, such as switches and sockets, but major electric work is still pending since the complete wiring in the office building should be changed. And while all the damaged drainage covers have been exchanged by new ones the entire project is still in need of some major plumbing work. At the end of the past financial year paint work on the outside walls was going on and will continue deep into the next financial year and since we had planned to step up our efforts to find a solution for the license problem with the Directorate of Social Welfare only after the completion of this renovation work there is no progress yet in this regard. Another problem of the previous year about corporal punishment in one of the boarding schools could be solved by successfully shifting all of our wards to another school.

Volunteers from India and abroad have come again last year to help with the renovation and other work and some foreign dignitaries visited the project again, amongst them Mr. Matthias Knoche the Vice-President of our German sister charity Aktion Lebenshilfe für Indiens Strassenkinder e. V. (ali sk e.V.).

The process of separation from ASKMSC continued in the past year for some of our wards and a total of four young adults left the security and safety of our Aftercare Unit and started a life of their own, but even then we continue to provide support and guidance when ever required. This means when ever somebody decides to improve himself by combining a college education side by side with his day job or by completing his higher secondary while working we are there to advice and help. We also try to encourage our young adults to network and help one another with job opportunities were ever they can. This way one of our young adults who completed his training with Life Project 4 Youth (LP4Y) could help another boy to begin with the same course in that organisation.

Our Aftercare Unit has increased its autonomous status in the last year by a degree or two beyond the self-managed cooking and housekeeping when the young adults there took over the responsibility to pay the rent by themselves from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018. We now only carry on supplying them with gas cylinders and the necessary groceries and support them financially when ever health related problems arise. Sadly there were quite a few such health problems in the past year and some of them so severe that hospitalisation was unavoidable. Here it paid once again that we had obtained health insurance for all our wards many years ago.

More happy news came from our football team FC Kolkata again. Last year they played football with great enthusiasm again and kept on playing tournaments and friendly matches bringing home some small and big cups. A football match was also played again as part of the Birthday celebrations on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and after a long time a major

volleyball match took place in the afternoon of the same day. Foundation Day on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018 was observed with boys and staff in the afternoon and was rounded up by a dinner in a nearby restaurant.

All in all the past financial year successfully brought closer an entire generation of former street children to stand on their own feet.

**(ii) Problems faced by us** – At the end of the previous year we had been forced to take out our children from Ramkrishna Sarada Mission School, for their practice of corporal punishment particularly against our children. We were able to get all the six boys plus one from our home in Santoshpur admitted to Pearl Rosary Boarding School in Serampore in April'17 and feel that they are now definitely better looked after than Ramkrishna Sarada Mission School.

In the past years ever since boys from our home have left school it has become a challenge to find jobs for them. Particularly part-time jobs for those who go to college are hard to get by. We have tried to help them by teaching them how to write CVs and motivation letters and by encouraging them to network with their brothers who already got jobs. This has improved their chances to get a job quite a bit. Even school and home drop-outs who used to survive on odd jobs were able to find permanent jobs this way and seeing how others improved their chances by completing their school education with the National Institute of Open Schooling while on a job more of them showed interest to enrol for the senior secondary courses of NIOS.

A main problem for quite some time now is the process of separation from the Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children for our young adults. Since ASKMSC has always been like a family for them it is very difficult for some of them to start a life of their own even after finding a job. We have tried to encourage them to find their own places to stay and have applied soft pressure by making them to pay themselves for the rent in the Aftercare Unit. This way three of them eventually moved out in the past year while the other five continued in the Aftercare Unit, but share at least the rent. More are planning to move out in the coming year, as they have realised that we continue with support and guidance even after they have started their own lives.

With the beginning of repair and renovation work in late October'17 permanent noise and dust has become a problem for the few boys who are still in our home in Santoshpur and it was sometimes difficult for them to concentrate on their studies particularly during board exams. Unfortunately the work was not complete by the end of this past financial year and they will have to bear with it for some more time. For this reason we have also not stepped up our efforts yet to find a solution for the license problem with the Directorate of Social Welfare and the same is still pending.

**(iii) Education** – At the beginning of the past financial year only four of

our children attended a day school. Of them three went to nearby Young Horizons School and one to Welkin School. Another two had joined the National Institute of Open Schooling, NIOS while a total of nine boys studied in two boarding schools. Of them two studied in Himali Boarding School in Kurseong and seven in Pearl Rosary School in Serampore. Another one joined the Decathlon Sports India Programme for on the job training and higher secondary education end of June'17. This means that in the past year a total of 16 children and young adults still went to school with some or full support of ASKMSC. They attended the following schools and classes:

Navadiganta Model High School/Decathlon Sports India Programme

Class XI	[REDACTED]
----------	------------

Young Horizon School

Class X	[REDACTED]
Class IX	[REDACTED]

Welkin National School

Class XI	[REDACTED]
----------	------------

Pearl Rosary School

Class XI	[REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]
Class IX	[REDACTED], [REDACTED]s, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Himali Boarding School, Kurseong

Class XI	[REDACTED]
----------	------------

Nimpith Ramkrishna Vidyabhavan, Nimpith

Class V	[REDACTED]
---------	------------

National Institute of Open Schooling

Class XII	[REDACTED], [REDACTED]
-----------	------------------------

Two more boys of ASKMSC got the results of their higher secondary exams in May'17 and had passed it successfully while another eight boys completed their class X board exams with success. Of these eight boys seven continued to pursue their higher secondary education and one joined

a bakery for training. Another young adult joined college in the past year and there are a total of eight in college now one of them abroad. They study various subjects according to their interests, such as Sports Management, Computer Applications, Tourism Studies, Social Work, Business and more.

At the end of the past financial year another two boys gave their secondary board exams. They are now awaiting their results to come out in May'18. And for the first time in four years there was no candidate for the higher secondary exams this year, but one boy completed his one year training course in 'Entrepreneurship' with the French organisation Life Project for Youth (LP4Y) in July'17 while another one joined the same course in November'17. Furthermore one enrolled with Frankfinn Institute for the one year Diploma course in 'Aviation, Hospitality and Travel Management' completed his course in May'17. Apart from that there are still two boys attending foreign language courses at various levels sponsored by the French cultural institute in Kolkata Alliance Française du Bengal and the German cultural institutted at Max Muller Bhavan.

**(iv) Medical** – While for most of the past few years we were spared any major medical emergencies besides the usual common cold, skin problems and minor sport injuries the past year was one of the worst ever from the medical point of view. A total of seven of our wards had to be hospitalized over the year for various reasons. There were two cases of typhoid, one case of hepatitis A, a broken finger that needed surgery, a chronic suppurative otitis media that needed an ear operation, a torn muscle and a case of very high fever that could not be explained and eventually responded to antibiotics. All spent 3 to 10 days in nearby KPC Hospital and could be eventually cured and they recovered fully. But while one of them was not yet covered by health insurance due to lack of necessary documents all other cases were under the umbrella of our Health Care Plan and were fully or for the main part paid for by health insurance. This once again showed us the importance of having health insurance coverage for all our children as well as our staff to protect us from the financial impact of such unexpected medical emergencies.

Besides these serious health problems which required hospitalisation we also continued to send all our wards to the OPD of KPC Hospital. As this hospital is very close to our home and all kinds of specialists are available there under one roof at a very nominal rate it is the ideal solution for all our health related problems.

**(v) Sports and related Activities** – It has been 14 years now since our decision to run our home for former street children side by side as a sports academy and considering the many benefits apart from physical fitness, fun and enjoyment our children and young adults had and have from that it cannot be stressed enough what an excellent and foresighted decision it turned out to be. As a result of growing up with sports in our home already

in the past three of our young adults had been hired and worked in stores of the French international retailer 'Decathlon Sports India' in Kolkata, Delhi and Mumbai and it therefore no more comes as a surprise that this company has chosen another two of our boys last year. This time it was for their dual training and education programme. In this programme students who have passed their class X board exams are sponsored for their higher secondary education and at the same time get weekend training during these two years in a Decathlon store, with the chance to get permanent after successfully passing class XII. Even though only one of the two boys joined in the end it showed again the high demand for our boys due to their enthusiasm for sport. This also gives us hope that we get another two boys sponsored by Himali boarding school for their higher secondary education in the coming year for their excellence in sport.

Now when we talk about sports in ASKMSC the number one sport has always been football and football is to the day what keeps our ASKMSC 'family' together. Even after leaving the home there is hardly any day were former boys and current inmates don't meet for a game of football or come together to play as many tournaments with our team FC Kolkata as possible. One of the most prestigious tournaments of the past year we played was the 'Bradley Lowery Cup 2017' organised by the 'Happy Club' with 32 teams participating. It took place in August'17 and after a great performance and a lot of drama our team won it to the delight of our coach from Honduras Mr. Marbyn Molina. And at the end of that day they proudly returned with a cup that was easily the biggest cup our team has ever brought home!

But not only for ASKMSC cups were won again by our boys in the past financial year, but also for their respective schools they helped again to win many prizes not only in football, but also in volleyball, badminton, table tennis and more.

**(vi) Leisure, Arts & Music** – With almost no more children in the home the leisure activities keep on diminishing, except for the school holidays when all the boarders are present or when ever former inmates stop by. Apart from the already mentioned football matches on the nearby ground, which are then the most important activity for them there are the 'Ludo' competitions that attract children and staff alike. 'Ludo' is still a favourite time pass all year round, but particularly in the winter months when everyone gathers on the terrace to enjoy the afternoon sun with some games and cookies from our bakery while music is played in the background.

Coming together to watch a movie on Sundays and borrowing a book from our well-stocked library is also still in vogue as well as playing the guitar or learning new musical instruments such as flute or keyboard.

**(vii) Birthday and Foundation Day Celebration** – We at ASKMSC have for all those years celebrated the return of the day when our first ten

street children moved in on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2000 as our annual function declaring it the 'Birthday' of all our children, since their real birthdays were not known. But with the 20<sup>th</sup> return of the day the Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children was founded on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1998 we thought that this time we should celebrate both. So there was two special days in the past financial year with the first one being our 'Birthday' on 19<sup>th</sup> November. And of course like all those previous years it started with football. In the morning everybody gathered at the nearby football ground to play a match or two. 'Aftercare Unit' versus 'Children's Home' or 'Children's Home' versus 'Boarders' and so on. There was always competition! And after a break for lunch the boys shifted to volleyball to play some more matches in the afternoon. As excitement flew high and no team wanted to be the final losers, set after set was played till night had fallen. This caused a heavy delay until some exciting games like 'Balloon Fight', 'Banana Race', 'Quiz Competition' and 'Hit the Cans' could be played in the evening.

Friends from PBKOJP Boy's Home had been invited to the party and took part in the games and visitors had come from India and abroad, but due to the heavy delay the annual entertainment show for the guests could not take place for the first time ever. This was of course very sad because some of the boys had taken so much effort to practice and prepare for it. Fortunately there was a huge birthday cake and the very delicious dinner to compensate for it and so the day ended on a fine note with everybody dancing to some Indian and Western music.

While our 'Birthday' was celebrated with a lot of pomp and guests from near and far we decided to observe our 20<sup>th</sup> 'Foundation Day' amongst the 'family' only. All the kids and young adults met for lunch and a party with snacks and soft drinks in the afternoon. Stories of the past were exchanged and plans for the future discussed and in the evening everyone went out to a fine restaurant for a sumptuous dinner in style.

**(viii) Meals** – Not much has changed over the years as far as food is concerned, even though we always welcome new recipes. Our menu is balanced and tested and guarantees that everyone gets sufficient vitamins, nutrients and fibre. Besides the daily breakfast and afternoon snacks we serve two main rice meals with dal and curries every day. These main meals consist on three days of the week of rice, dal and egg curry which is either served for lunch or dinner. On two days of the week it is rice, dal and fish curry and once a week we serve rice with chicken curry. All other meals are served with dal and vegetable curries enriched with soybean flakes for additional protein intake. Vegetables vary as per the season, but there is always a well balanced diet throughout the year. There are cereals with milk or butter toast with jelly for breakfast and the children get a 'school tiffin' to fight back the hunger until the first main rice meal is served. Everyday fruits are given during the afternoon snack break for vitamin intake and to bridge the time until dinner.

**(ix) Excursions** – After some years without a picnic in the winter we were finally able to organise one again in the countryside. We went to Ramkrishnapur village near Jaynagar and all children enjoyed that day very much. They invited their brothers from PBKOJP Boy’s home and had a lot of activities together with them, such as volleyball and football matches, badminton and of course a delicious outdoor meal. We hope we can therefore make this a regular event again in the future. To celebrate 20 years since ASKMSC was founded we shall also consider having some other excursions and tours again in the coming year.

**(x) Volunteers** – This year too we had volunteers from India and abroad. They have helped in various fields and aspects of our project from giving free tuitions or football practice to helping with housekeeping, administration, renovation and repair work or organising the annual ‘Birthday’ and many more. And like every year we would like to thank all of them for their contribution and support. But on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ASKMSC we would like to give special thanks to all those who have contributed regularly for all those 20 years!

**(xi) Aftercare Unit** – In September 2015 we opened our Aftercare Unit in Picnic Garden for our 18 years and above young adults and by now it is a well established part of the ASKMSC. It continues to be an autonomous unit with a changing number of roommates and is run by the youths who organise their daily chores such as cooking, house cleaning, shopping, etc., on their own. In October’17 we went one step further and asked those of our young adults who used the facility to share the rent amongst them as well as other things they so desire while we went on to provide some groceries, rice and cooking gas and of course support and life guidance from our main branch in Santoshpur as and when required. It is very clear by now that the Aftercare Unit is a very important and helpful step for the transition to an independent life for our young adults.

### **3. Finances**

In the past financial year the major part of our funds came from abroad again. As every year our German sister charity and partner the Aktion Lebenshilfe fur Indiens Strassenkinder e. V. was the main donor, but after a gap of two years there was also a contribution from H.E.L.G.O. e.V. Germany again. Further to this there were practically no local donations this year, but the number of locals who wanted to sponsor a meal increased significantly as more and more people find us on the Internet. Apart from that there were the annual membership fees of our society members.

It can be noted that the steady drop of our annual budget as observed for the last three years has come to a halt for the time being. This is due to the costs of the ongoing renovation and repair works which have slightly

increased the annual expenditure again despite a further decline in the number of children.

#### **4. Outlook**

With more and more young adults leaving our home and starting their own lives and the beginning of a complete renovation of our home for former street children in Santoshpur there is of course hope that there will now be one day in the future when a new generation of street children can benefit from our existing infrastructure and our experience. Till then of course we will finally have to sort out our license problem with the Directorate of Social Welfare.