

Annual Report on the work of the
Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children
for the year 2011-12

1. Introduction

In the year 2011-12 we were looking back at fourteen years of successful work since the formation of the *Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children* (ASKMSC) in cooperation with our German partners "*Aktion Lebenshilfe für Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.*". and with the first of our children sitting for Class X exams a new point in the history of our society was reached. We were also able to reap the fruits of many years of continued and determined efforts to promote football amongst our children and to improve their game by offering the boys qualified training to foster their talents. Unfortunately we also faced a few problems again this year and witnessed a further decline in the number of boys in our home.

2. Activities

(i) General - The last year was full of ups and downs for the ASKMSC. The number of children continued to decline and at the end of the financial year 2011-2012 the ASKMSC had only 36 children aged 9 to 17 years, down from 40 at the beginning. Four more boys have left for various reasons. While in the case of [REDACTED] the reason was on the very positive side, as he found his family again after a gap of more than ten years and was reunited with them, it was a rather more sad story for the other three cases. We had decided to send back [REDACTED] to his relatives after repeated violent attacks by him on our staff. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were also sent back to their families after repeated break ins by them.

As far as school education is concerned the ASKMSC reached a new point in its history with the first one of our children, [REDACTED], sitting for his Class X exams in March 2012. The results are expected to be published in June 2012. Like in the previous year all our other children, too, went to formal schools attending classes III to IX with the overall results getting more stable again after some years of decline, even though at a quite low level.

On the other hand our football project FC Kolkata seemed to thrive and there was a lot of success throughout the year. As one of the highlights another boy, [REDACTED], went to Munich, Germany for football training with German football giants FC Bayern Munich in July 2011. Further to this five of our children were chosen by the talent scouts of the same club for the finals of FC Bayern Youth Cup India held in January 2012 in Nehru Stadium, New Delhi and the goalkeeper of our U14 team represented West Bengal in the School Football Tournament held in Goa in November 2011. Besides that an increased number of football training camps were held in different places throughout the year

and a football tournament was won by our U14 team. Unfortunately other activities, such as art classes, drama, etc. could not be provided with the same intensity as in previous years due to shortage of appropriate staff.

In the past year we had to deal with an increased number of health related problems and hospitalisations for different reasons, but all problems could be overcome and the general health of our children remains well at the end of the year.

The annual 'birthday' of the children was celebrated with great enthusiasm again, even though we had decided it to be a small and intimate party this year for reasons mentioned below.

Many foreign visitors and dignitaries came again during the year amongst them a delegation of our German partners "*Aktion Lebenshilfe für Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.*" headed by their President Bernhard Pfister.

Once again no inspector from the Directorate of Social Welfare came this year and the extension of our license is therefore still pending.

(ii) Problems faced by us – The problems with aggressiveness and adolescence and a "*right to grab or steal what I want*" attitude of some of our boys finally had to have consequences this past year as some of the boys had become a liability for the project and were no more accessible by reason or counselling. Further to this they gave a very poor example to the younger boys who started to emulate them. It was therefore decided to send those children concerned back to their families, if relatives were known and to continue to support them for their school education and football training while they would no more stay in our home in Santoshpur. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] after repeated break ins and looting sprees in our home and their insistence that they had a right to steal what ever they wanted were the first two to be removed in September 2011. Later on in the year [REDACTED] after repeated violent attacks by him on our staff was also sent back to his family. After an initial outrage by the other boys about the removal of their 'brothers' the climate in the home began to improve again and the older boys started to think about their own future and we engaged them in a positive dialogue about what their lives could be after leaving our home and what career path they could follow in the future and which help they could still expect from us. Younger boys became more disciplined and obedient again when they realized that crime might be more trouble than it's worth and that perhaps it might not be such a good idea to try to be like their elder 'brothers' in this regard.

Shortage of good and qualified staff has always been a problem of our society in the past. Again not much improvement could be made in this regard and one of the two new recruits of the previous year even had to be sacked again within the probation period. But with the number of children declining less staff is currently required.

A longstanding problem faced by us is the renewal of our license by the Directorate of Social Welfare. Despite repeated annual applications with

the Directorate to extend our license, again no inspector from the Directorate has come this year for the routine annual inspection of our home for former street children and therefore our application is still pending even after the end of the financial year 2011-2012. As every year we submitted another application for extension in March 2012 and hope the problem will be solved within the next financial year.

(iii) Education - All of the originally 40 boys went to formal schools during the year with four boys attending two boarding schools in Kurseong, Darjeeling District, but most of the children study at nearby Apollos Academy and Young Horizon School, which they can reach on foot. Three more boys have tried admission to Young Horizon School this year, but couldn't clear the admission test; whereas [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] tried admission to Holy Home Boarding School in Serampur and passed successfully.

Among the children of our society [REDACTED] a student of Apollos Academy was the first one to appear for class X board exams in March 2012 and his results are expected in May or June. Ajgar will now need vocational training after his results are out. It will be therefore a task of the coming months to find a suitable place for him.

The following schools and classes were attended by our children in the past year:

Apollos' Academy

Class X	[REDACTED]
Class IX	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Class VIII	[REDACTED]
Class VII	[REDACTED]
Class V	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Class IV	[REDACTED]
Class III	[REDACTED]

Young Horizon School

Class VIII	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Class VII	[REDACTED]
Class VI	[REDACTED]
Class V	[REDACTED]
Class IV	[REDACTED]
Class III	[REDACTED]

Manovikas Kendra

PVB III	██████████
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Himali Boarding School, Kurseong

Class IX	██████████ I
Class VII	██████████
Class V	██████████

Sunshine School, Kurseong

Class VI	██████████
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After three years of giving the better students of Apollos Academy School the chance to sit for admission test in Young Horizon School it can be observed now that no further student is able to make the change to the higher standards of Young Horizon School. It therefore can be safely assumed now that the process of separating the more academically inclined from the others has come to an end. This means that there is probably no use in letting children sit again for admission tests for Young Horizon School next year.

Further to this we have also observed an arrest of the downward trend of the last years in the results of the children, even though at a somewhat low level.

(iv) Medical – There was a few hospital cases throughout the year with ██████████ being hospitalised for one week for treatment of brucellosis. ██████████ went through an ear operation staying three days in the hospital for recovery. ██████████ suffered a head injury after falling on the hard floor and was also treated in the hospital. All these boys fully recovered and most cases were covered under Medi Claim and paid in full by our health insurance.

Further to this ██████████ was diagnosed with a heart problem in Munich, Germany during his stay with FC Bayern Munich. He was banned from practicing football for 8 months and will need another check-up in April.

In general the overall health of most of our children was good throughout the year, with ailments limited to common cold and flu, a few scratches and minor injuries, mostly due to sports. Our general physician Dr. Mondal keeps all medical problems in check and continues monthly examinations of our children, recording weight and height together with other health related data minutely in the health file. This way a good general state of health of our children as well as a healthy weight gain is clearly documented.

(v) Sports and related Activities – The past year was very intensive as far as football is concerned with a lot of events and special training camps. One of the highlights certainly was the U16 FC Bayern Youth Cup India organised by Germany's football giants FC Bayern Munich. In trials first held in Delhi [October 2011] and then Mumbai [December 2011] two teams of 15 boys each were selected for the finals held in the famous Nehru Stadium in Delhi on 10.01.2012 ahead of the match Indian National Team vs FC Bayern Munich. Five of our children qualified for the finals, one for the Delhi Selection and four for the Mumbai Selection. They were Suman Deb, Suraj Dhopi, Sudhir Dhopi, Raja Ratha and Banti Sharma. Banti Sharma was also selected as a goalkeeper to represent West Bengal in the finals of the Indian School Football Competition held in Goa in November 2011 where West Bengal ended up third. Further to this our Suraj Dhopi was invited to join the Residential Football Academy of Mohun Bagan in Durgapur. But one of the biggest highlights was the training camp of FC Bayern in Munich, Germany attended by one of our boys, Raju Chakraborty in the month of July 2011. After Suraj Dhopi he is already the second boy of ASKMSC who was selected for his outstanding football playing skills by the German club to attend the training camp. All this can be seen as a direct result of our efforts to promote football and to combine football with charity and is a great success for us. These efforts are also reflected in the many one week football training camps we held once again over the winter months, such as Kalna in December, Puri in January and Madhabpur in March. The last two mentioned were once again under the special guidance of the FIFA licensed Youth Coach Michel Sauvestre from France, who trained with our boys for three month this year, from January till March.

Besides football there were a lot of other sports related activities. Volleyball has become a well established part of the weekly routine over the years and is frequently played in our courtyard. Our volleyball team has hence improved a lot. Badminton is played by the younger boys in winter and jogging is sometimes done by the older boys. While being in Kurseong we organised again our now classic '*Victoria Boys School Run*'.

(vi) Leisure, Arts & Music – Besides sport it was always an important aim of the ASKMSC to stimulate and foster creativity in our children with music, arts and theatre classes as well as craft workshops. Tabla classes have been conducted thrice a week for many years now with an incredible enthusiasm among certain boys and the music is appreciated by all. Singing seems to have taken a passion among some of the children and an amazing performance of those boys with their teacher Ms. Barnali Das was witnessed during the annual 'birthday' celebration of our society. With the help of a volunteer we were also able to offer guitar classes again after a long gap and the same were received very well. Listening to music in their leisure hours has become a craze amongst our children in the past year and book reading hour after dinner is still attended well and has

successfully changed some of the children to book worms. Our little library with about 1000 titles is hence frequently visited by many. For those interested two volunteers from a local drama group gave drama lessons twice a week, but unfortunately they had to eventually stop for personal reasons at the end of October 2011.

Side by side with the already mentioned activities there were courses such as electronics, computer or tailoring with various interest by our children. However some of these courses were very irregular and after the computer teacher had left the computer course had to be discontinued again for the time being. Sadly no new art teacher could be found last year, but fortunately Ms. Annelies Ghosh continued to hold her daily arts & crafts workshops over the winter months.

(vii) Birthday – This year the twelfth return of the 19th November 2000, which we celebrate as the ‘birthday’ of all our children was celebrated in a rather modest way, since our drama teacher dropped out for personal reasons just two weeks before the event. This left the drama group, which provides always the main part of the annual birthday performance without a head. We therefore decided not to invite many guests and instead had a little party with children, staff and volunteers. This did not affect the spirit of the occasion and everyone enjoyed the day.

(viii) Meals - In the past years little has changed concerning the meals. Aiming for balanced nutrition we serve fruit, salad, vegetable and meat as well as carbohydrates in form of rice and bread in sufficient quantities. The children get two non-vegetarian meals per week. Fish curry is served every Monday and meat curry with rice and vegetables on Saturdays. The children are served mainly a choice of vegetable and dal curries with rice for lunch and dinner and sometimes roti is given instead of rice. Curries with soybean flakes are offered for further protein intake. Both lunch and dinner are supplemented by salad. Milk and cereals are served for breakfast and we continue to supply the children with fruits daily as snacks in the late afternoon.

(ix) Excursions – Again there were outdoor activities and day trips to various places of natural and cultural interest throughout the year and our excursion to the seaside town of Puri was for the second time combined with a football camp held by visiting French Youth coach Michel Sauvestre in January 2012. Further to this some other football camps were held in various places in the countryside, such as Kalna in December 2011 or Madhabpur in March 2012. Besides that there was also a lot of travelling for our U17 football team for trials and matches in Mumbai and Delhi and one of the highlights of the year was the trip of all our children to Delhi in January 2012 sponsored by Audi India to see the final of the FC Bayern Youth Cup India. As every year we did our excursion to Kurseong in the hills. Unfortunately our annual picnic did not take place,

as there were too many excursions over the winter months to find a suitable date for it. There was also no boat trip to the Sundarbans this time for similar reasons, but most of our children spent a week in a village of the Sundarbans during the summer holidays.

(x) Volunteers – Here we would like to take the opportunity to thank all the friends and well-wishers who have supported our project in India and abroad as volunteers, fundraisers and activists, especially the members and supporters of our German partners “*Aktion Lebenshilfe fur Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.*”. The initiator and founder of our organisation, respected Mr. Wolfgang Muller, Ms. Annelies Ghosh, who has regularly contributed to our charity and teaches arts and crafts, all the volunteers that worked with us Michel Sauvestre who contributed 3 months to practicing football with boys, Julia Dehand for contributing 6 months of hard work in our laundry and Christian Tangen for contributing a year to maintenance and upkeep and supporting all the other work in the project.

3. Finances

From the onset of the ASKMSC our German sister charity and partners “*Aktion Lebenshilfe fur Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.*” have provided the financial means to build and run our project. This very successful cooperation of almost fourteen years further continued in the past financial year and flow of funds was stable and reliable as always. In addition to this the German NGO continues to provide personal sponsorships for all our children and has taken the initiative to finance a solar power plant for our project to create environmental awareness.

There were also some local monetary contributions again to our society as well as the annual membership fees of our members. Furthermore some local clubs as well as private donors contribute clothes.

4. Outlook

With the first of our children completing Class X and more children to follow in the coming years it will be necessary to focus on finding suitable places for vocational training in the future, as not all of our children might want or are able to carry on with an academic career. A holistic approach with education, vocational training and guidance must be the aim, if our society wants to succeed in integrating young minds into human adult society.

The long planed “Village Project” or phase III in the development of our society could be a vital part of this holistic approach and its realization therefore becomes even more urgent in the future. It also seems to be imperative to separate the older boys from the younger ones and therefore to have an alternative place to accommodate them. It would also be desirable to have some more admissions again to progress our main aim of helping destitute children. This as well as an inclusion of a full size playground on the campus of the planed “Village Project” would also benefit our football project.