

**Annual Report on the work of the**  
**Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children**  
**for the year 2012-13**

**1. Introduction**

The *Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children* (ASKMSC) was founded in February 1998 and the financial year 2012-13 was therefore already its fifteenth successful year to help the poor and destitute children of Kolkata with the support and cooperation of our German sister charity and partners “*Aktion Lebenshilfe für Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.*” (ali sk e.V.). With the first inmate leaving our home and getting settled in mainstream society we have come full circle in the past year and after the final opening of the long planned “Village Project” in the countryside or phase III in the development plan of our society another milestone has been reached.

**2. Activities**

**(i) General** – A total of 38 children aged 5 to 18 years were supported by ASKMSC at the end of the financial year 2012-2013. Already in the previous year our society made history with the first boy, Ajjar Sheikh, sitting for his Class X board exams and after his results came out in June’12 he became the first to have successfully passed Class X. He was also the first to turn 18 and leave our home, but continues to get support from us. Seven more boys were sitting for their Class X board exams this year and they eagerly wait for their results to be published end of May’13. Two more boys were admitted to a boarding school in Serampur called Holy Home School.

Another milestone was the long awaited opening of another branch in the countryside for recreation and further accommodation. The Child Welfare Committee (CWC) has already ordered two new boys from CINI-Asha to be placed there, Sukhdev Naskar, 5+ years and Sk. Saforid, 7+ years.

Work climate in the home improved a lot over the year particularly after the arrival of our volunteer Ms. Katrin Kohl from Germany who worked out a new routine with our staff in daily staff meetings and made sure it got implemented. Also corrective measures of the previous year showed some results. Still there were a few problems with some of the boys. Abul Sheikh misbehaved in Sunshine Boarding School, Kurseong and was eventually expelled and Pradip Das failed his class in Holy Home Boarding School and refused to go further to school. But in general our children were more motivated and cooperative again and this resulted in an increased interest and participation in extracurricular activities in their leisure time, such as making music, singing, movie making, theatre and computer courses to name a few. The positive results of this could be witnessed in a well organised ‘Birthday’ on 19<sup>th</sup> November’12 with a perfect entertainment program under the guidance of our volunteer Ms.

Kohl and performed by our children. On the other hand progress in the field of sports was rather more modest with even a few setbacks, but there is hope that four of our boys who have set for their Class X board exams might join a residential football academy of a professional club in the coming year. This would be a great success for our football project.

In September'12 there was a case of Dengue Fever in our home, but otherwise the year past without any major health related problems. All our children seem to be in a good and healthy state.

Unlike in previous years we were not able to organise our traditional annual excursions to Kurseong and Puri last year for different reasons, but our annual picnic in February'12 in partnership with two other NGOs was once again a great success.

Sadly there was once again no reaction by the Directorate of Social Welfare to our annual application to renew our licence to run the home and we must seriously discuss in the coming year how to resolve the issue or else think about possible conclusions.

There have been many volunteers and helping hands again in the last year and we are very grateful for their support! We are also obliged to our German sister charity and partners "*Aktion Lebenshilfe für Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.*" for their constant and stable financial support in all those years. With their support the financial situation of our society was once again healthy in the past year and there should be no financial problems arising in the future.

**(ii) Problems faced by us** – After strong problems in the past with stealing, aggressive behaviour and lack of discipline of many of our children during the awkward adolescent phase some corrective measures of the previous year had finally resulted in a better work climate in the home again and this development continued in the last year. This could be gauged by an increase in interest and participation in the daily routine as well as extracurricular activities on offer. We continued the positive dialogue with the older boys in regular meetings, discussed about their future as young adults, possible career prospects and which help they could still expect from us after leaving the home.

Unfortunately we could not reach out to our children in boarding schools, with the result that one of them Abul Sheikh continued his adolescence fuelled '*fight against the system*', which finally got him expelled from Sunshine Boarding School in Kurseong. All appeals to the school to revoke this decision and have mercy on him went in vain and in another unfortunate development Pradip Das of Holy Home Boarding School failed his class and now refuses to continue with his school education. Both the cases must be resolved in time for the coming school year.

Much to our regret we were forced to cancel both of our big annual excursions, the one to Kurseong in October and the one to Puri in January as well as all the planned football camps for the past year. Therefore the children could not get the recreational balance they so much require.

Since quite a few years now we face the problem that the Directorate of Social Welfare does not show any reaction to our annual application for extension of our license. The statutory annual inspection of our home for street children has not taken place in years and repeated enquiries with the DSW have also not changed anything in this regard. Therefore our application for renewal of our licence is now pending for years without any fault of us. The DSW simply seems to ignore us. In March'13 yet another application for renewal was submitted with the DSW, but there seems to be not much hope for any solution. This casts a permanent shadow over the running of our home and for most of the past years new admissions had to be put on hold until the license would be finally renewed, but after years going by without any change further steps might have to be considered now.

**(iii) Education** – Two more children could go to school for the first time in their lives last year while two more boys were sent to a boarding school and Ajgar Sheikh who is an adult now decided to join National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) for his higher secondary education while working in a call centre side by side. This means a total of 38 children went to school with the support of ASKMSC in the past year and they attended the following schools and classes:

*NIOS*

Class XI	Ajgar Sheikh
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*Apollos' Academy*

Class X	Sudhir Dhopi, Suraj Dhopi, Chottu Shaw, Pintu Das, Kishore Halder, Raju Chakraborty
Class IX	Jagannath Das,
Class VIII	Sanu Singh
Class VI	Bubai Yadav, Manoj Biswas, Pintu Shaw
Class V	Biswanath Maity, Raja Das, Sahid Naskar
Class IV	Ravi Yadav, Samir Mondal

*Young Horizon School*

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

*Manovikas Kendra*

PVB III	Shibu Dey
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*Himali Boarding School, Kurseong*

Class X	Subhasish Mondal
Class VI	Sourav Dey

*Sunshine School, Kurseong*

Class VII	Abul Sheikh
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*Holy Home School, Serampur*

Class VIII	Pradip Das
Class VI	Raquib Purkait

*Sripfaltala F. P. School, Raidighi*

Class I	Sk. Saforid, Sukhdev Naskar
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Among the children of our society Ajgar Sheikh had been the first one to appear for class X board exams in March'12 and his results came out in the first week of June'12. He had passed with good results and at first he had wanted to join a vocational training, but then found himself a job in a call centre and decided to carry on with school side by side by joining NIOS.

Seven more children, one of Himali Boarding School and six from Apollos' Academy were sitting for their class X board exams in March'13 and their results are expected in June'13. Three of them have already shown interest to carry on with school to do their higher secondary and four would rather like to join a residential football academy of a renowned club, such as Mohun Bagan to concentrate on their football career.

No more children sat for admission test for Young Horizon School in the past year after we had observed that no further students are able to make the change to the higher standards of Young Horizon School, but two students of Apollos' Academy Pradip Das and Raquib Purkait got admitted to Holy Home School, a boarding school in Serampur. While Raquib adapted well, Pradip failed his class there and his case has to be further decided now.

In another rather sad development Abul Sheikh was expelled from Sunshine Boarding School in Kurseong due to unacceptable behaviour and it will be a task for the coming school year to get him admitted to a new school.

Another child, Shibu Dey has completed all classes and courses in

Manovikas Kendra and will probably begin with vocational training in the coming year. Negotiations are on the way with a local bakery and he might be able to begin with training soon.

Further to this all the six Class X students of Apollos' Academy have joint a free computer course by 'mjunction' a 50:50 venture promoted by SAIL and TATA Steel in January'12. The course consists of computer training, project work as well as training for job interviews. Also mock interviews will be taken, which will help them to find a job afterwards. A certificate will be given after the 4 months course.

In general it can be said that after several years of downward trend in the field of education the last year, with very few exceptions, has shown very positive development again and it is encouraging to see that our children are more motivated and concentrated and on target again to build their future on a solid school education.

**(iv) Medical** – One of the major health problems of the previous year had been the case of Raju Chakraborty who had been diagnosed with a heart problem during his training with FC Bayern in Munich, Germany. He had been banned from practicing football until another check-up in April'12 showed that his condition had improved satisfactory.

In the month of September'12, Jagannath Das was diagnosed with dengue fever and the boy was immediately quarantined in our 'Sick Bay'. Fortunately he recovered well and no other person within the home was infected. Besides this there was no major health related problem 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 Medica Hospital.

One of the major reasons for the good health of our children is the monthly check-up of all boys by our general physician Dr. Mondal, which he has done regularly since the opening of our home more than twelve years ago. This way he was always able to detect problems at an early stage and contain them.

**(v) Sports and related Activities** – Sports as always played once again a major part in the lives of our children and in the running of our home in the past year, but after some big highlights and success in the previous years things went on a bit more modest due to various reasons.

There have also been some setbacks last year, e.g. one of our children, Suraj Dhopi who had been already accepted by the Residential Football Academy of Mohun Bagan in Durgapur and was even offered a grant of Rs 1000/- a month all in a sudden had second thoughts about it and refused to join. Further to this FIFA licensed Youth Coach Michel Sauvestre from France had to cancel his entire winter training session with our '*FC Kolkata*' teams, because of an accident. Due to this various football camps planned for the winter had to be cancelled, including the major one in Puri in January. Our coach from Honduras Marbyn Molina was also not available for many months and only returned from his country in March'13

and with five children permanently leaving our home and two more going to boarding school the number of players in our A Team had become so low that we had to go back to the old system of one 'A' and one 'B' Team instead of three teams. Moreover the interest in Volleyball somewhat faded in the last year and our annual '*Victoria Boys School Run*' in Kurseong did not take place, because the excursion was cancelled.

But there were also positive developments over the year. The Swiss football coach Christoph Gobeli of FC Bern contacted us and offered to take training sessions two to three times a year during his visits to Kolkata. One of our boys, Sudhir Dhopi participate in the '*JDBI Marathon 2013 Event*' a run of 8 km in February'13. He ended up a brilliant 8<sup>th</sup> place in the adult category. And after completing Class X board exams four more boys have shown interest to join Mohun Bagan's residential football academy in Durgapur.

**(vi) Leisure, Arts & Music** – When it comes to free time listening to music is definitely the most favourite pastime of all our children, but more and more of them took the initiative to make their own music rather than just turning on the FM radio. Whether learning Tabla the classic way with our Tabla teacher or finding the right cords on *Youtube* to play a certain song on the guitar or simply coming together to sing some tunes, a lot of musical activities could be heard in our home during the past year. Even a music video with all the children was produced and then uploaded to our *Youtube* Channel at ASKMSC. Further to this our volunteer Ms. Katrin Kohl got many of the children and their educators into rehearsing little theatre plays and funny little scenes. All this was reflected in a very exciting and entertaining program during the annual 'birthday' celebration.

In the months of April and May'12 documentary filmmaker David Ruf from Germany held a film workshop for interested boys of our society and a script was worked out by the children and then turned into a movie. The result can be seen also on our ASKMSC *Youtube* Channel.

For the lovers of arts & crafts Ms. Annelies Ghosh held her daily workshops again over the winter months and all these activities go very well with our aim to stimulate and foster creativity in our children.

Reading had also become very much in vogue amongst most of our children in the last couple years due to the daily book and magazine reading hour after dinner. Therefore books from our little library with about 1000 titles were in high demand.

Side by side with the already mentioned activities there were courses on offer for those interested, such as a GW-BASIC computer programming course held by our respected founder Mr. Wolfgang Muller or tailoring classes with Ms. Barnali Das.

**(vii) Birthday** – Our annual function held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2012 was one of the most extraordinary ones in years. In stark contrast to the previous years all children were very motivated again to contribute to the entertainment programme of the event. Under the guidance of our

volunteer Ms. Katrin Kohl all group educators were able to get their children involved and so one of the best functions ever could be organised. The day that commemorates the day when the first children had moved into our home in the year 2000 has ever since been celebrated as the 'birthday' of all our children. And so it started with a little football tournament in the morning, followed by games and quiz in the afternoon and when the guests started to arrive in the evening the children performed all the little theatre plays, songs, poems, tabla and guitar pieces they had practiced so hard in the weeks before with lots of fun and enthusiasm.

**(viii) Meals** – As for many years now we continue to offer our children two main rice meals with curries for lunch and dinner everyday. Rice is offered with pulses and with a choice of vegetable curries with soybean flakes and salad. Instead of once a week we have also started to serve two times fish curry during the week, Mondays and Thursdays as well as one chicken meal on every Saturday. Besides a sound breakfast comprising of milk and cereals or butter toast with jelly we offer various fruits for afternoon snack We also provide a school tiffin during every school day and an additional snack on days with football training when calorie intake is high.

**(ix) Excursions** – In contrast to the previous year the last year was marked by the absence of any excursions due to various reasons. Our annual tour to Kurseong in the hills had to be cancelled, because the lodge where we always stay owned by the Bharat Scouts was closed due to renovation when we wanted to go and our annual trip cum football camp to Puri had to be cancelled due to an accident of our FIFA licensed French Youth Coach Michel Sauvestre, who had to cancel his trip to India because of that. Instead we had a few day outings and our annual picnic in February, which was joined by children of two other NGOs.

**(x) Volunteers** – Besides the initiator and founder of our organisation, respected Mr. Wolfgang Muller, we had another fulltime volunteer for the period of one year Ms. Katrin Kohl from Germany. Ms. Kohl who is a trained educator and teacher with many years of experience in England was organising staff meetings, timetables and looked personally after one group. Further to this Ms. Annelies Ghosh, a regular in our society taught arts and crafts over the winter months again and Karolin Gummerer and Karl Neulichedl from Italy looked after the laundry and Mr. and Ms. Otremba supported us where ever help was required. In the field of football we missed our 'Michel Uncle' this year who had to cancel his visit due to an accident. Mr. Christoph Gobeli from FC Bern, Switzerland has become a regular supporter of our football project giving training trice a year during visits to Kolkata. And in this regard Marbyn Molina from Honduras should be mentioned, who is a permanent support for our football project since years. We would like to thank all of them for their

contribution!

**(xi) Country Project** A long wish for a project in the countryside for recreation and to accommodate more children was finally fulfilled in parts with the opening of a small centre in Raidighi in Parganas (S) District in August'12. A ground-floor flat was rented with three rooms, kitchen and sanitary unit and two boys Sukhdev Naskar, 5+ years and Sk. Saforid, 7+ years were sent by the CWC soon after. Also some children of our main branch stay out there from time to time for recreation during weekends and holidays. The centre is still in a very early stage and is going to be developed further in the future.

### **3. Finances**

Our project continues to be financed mainly by our sister charity and partner in Germany the "*Aktion Lebenshilfe fur Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.*", which has provided the financial means to build and run our project from the onset. Further to this the Italian organisation "*Sudtiroler Arzte fur die Dritte Welt, Onlus*" has also supported us frequently in the past and did so again in the last year. This means that flow of funds continues to be stable and reliable, including personal sponsorships for all our children and at the same time the total annual expenditure of our society has marginally decreased during the last financial year despite a high inflation due to the fact that the number of children was declining lately.

As the financial situation of our society is sound, we have not focused on raising local donations in the last year. But there are always the annual membership fees of our members and some local clubs as well as private donors who contribute clothes.

### **4. Outlook**

Another seven of our children have completed Class X board exams and finally a new branch for recreation and further accommodation was opened in the countryside last year. The first child of ASKMSC has turned 18 years and found himself a good job and got settled successfully outside of our home. All this should fill our hearts with joy and let us look ahead with confidence to make sure more children will follow. But since the licence issue with the Directorate of Social Welfare is not resolved for several years now and there is not much hope for change it is difficult to plan for the future.