

**Annual Report on the work of the
Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children
for the year 2022-23**



CELEBRATING

25

YEARS

Transforming Lives



1. Introduction

The *Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children* (ASKMSC) was established in February 1998 and proudly celebrates now already 25 years of transforming the lives of destitute children. As we marked this milestone our greatest aspiration was to welcome a new generation of little ones, this time destitute girls. While the lack of a license dampened our spirits we remained undeterred in our commitment to serving the community. We continued to provide essential support to our young adults equipping them with the tools necessary to thrive independently. Simultaneously we held steadfast in our hope that the authorities would recognize our dedication and grant us the license to extend our reach to more destitute children.

2. Activities

(i) General – As the last few boys had transitioned to our Aftercare Unit our home in Santoshpur fell silent and the absence of their laughter and energetic footsteps left a void. The spaces they once filled with their playful antics now stood empty, waiting for destitute girls to move in. The year was therefore dominated by our fervent hope for the competent authorities to grant us a new license to remove all legal obstacles before the first girls could be admitted. Unfortunately, despite submitting our application at the end of the previous year, we found ourselves navigating the labyrinthine corridors of bureaucracy, attempting to expedite the sluggish and lethargic machinery. Week after week we knocked on office doors, submitted status inquiries or made phone calls, yet by the end of the year the desired license remained elusive and our wait extends into the next.

Unable to admit new children our efforts shifted towards aftercare services, focusing on assisting our remaining young adults in achieving independence. We provided them with career counselling, educational opportunities and life skills training. All in all the Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children supported a total number of fifteen boys financially this year, coming down from 19 in the previous one, which also resulted in a decrease of the overall expenditure. One of our wards still went to school, while nine went to various colleges and three to different training institutions. The remaining two of them were trying to find employment throughout the year with varying degree of success. Apart from education, sport in general and particularly football has always been an important part of our philosophy, but with no one left in our Santoshpur home activities were more and more limited to spontaneous events with inmates of our Aftercare Unit and alumni participating.

Even though sports and leisure activities became fewer in number, social get-togethers still took place and besides the annual ‘Birthday’ party in our home in Santoshpur on 19th November’22, we were able to organise a picnic again in the countryside. There were also a few day-trips and outings. Furthermore there was another proud event in February’23 that deserved to be celebrated - the 25th Anniversary of the ASKMSC!

With the end of the pandemic life came back to normal again, but there was other health related problems than Covid that kept us on our toes.

The end of the pandemic also meant the arrival of some foreign visitors again after a long gap and even volunteers from abroad were finally able to come and help us again with repair and maintenance work. Together with the purchase of some new furniture, for example for our rooftop canteen this contributed to the perfect new look of our children's home!



With the reduction in annual costs our longstanding German partner's the 'Aktion Lebenshilfe für Indiens Strassenkinder e.V,' were our sole provider of funds for the past year and we did not need any further support. As always we are very grateful to them for their generosity! With their help and support we are committed to continuing to provide destitute children with the best possible care and support.

(ii) Problems faced by us – This year we faced a major challenge in the form of the license issue. When we submitted our application to run a home for girls in March'22 we were confident that we would be able to celebrate our society's 25th anniversary in February'23 with a home full of newly admitted destitute girls. However, by August'22 we had still not heard back from the competent authorities. We began to visit the relevant government offices almost weekly to expedite the process and we also submitted many letters inquiring about the status of our application. Despite our efforts we were unsuccessful in obtaining the license. The only progress we could see by the end of the financial year was the statutory inspection of our home, which was done jointly in February'23 by an inspector from the Directorate of Social Welfare and one from the Directorate of Child Rights and Trafficking. It had taken the authorities almost a full year for this and we have to see now how this will further pan out in the coming year.

Apart from the license issue it was occasional conflicts and quarrels between the young adults in our Aftercare Unit that caused problems and demanded our attention. These disagreements often stemmed from differences in personality, lifestyle, and personal boundaries. While some conflicts were relatively minor and could be resolved through mediation, others escalated into more serious incidents that required intervention. In these cases we worked with the young adults involved to understand the root causes of the conflict and develop strategies for resolving their differences peacefully. We organized meetings with them and provided support and guidance to help them develop healthy communication skills

and learn how to manage their emotions effectively. Addressing these conflicts was an important part of our work with the young adults, as it helped to create a safer and more supportive environment for all residents of our Aftercare Unit.

(iii) Education – As the financial year began another two of our wards anxiously awaited the results of their higher secondary exams and they were very happy to learn that they had passed successfully despite two very difficult years during the pandemic with almost no in-classroom teaching. This leaves us now with only one of our wards still in school. He studied throughout the year in the following school and class:

Nimpith Ramkrishna Vidyabhavan

Class X	Sukhdev Naskar
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This boy sat for his class X exams at the end of the year and is now eagerly awaiting his results, so that he can do his higher secondary in the coming two years.

Apart from that we still had nine of our wards enrolled in various colleges last year and they were pursuing the following courses:

George College, Sealdah

BBA	Biswajit Sarder, Raquib Purkait, Raja Ratha
BSM	Abul Shaikh, Tapas Ghosh

iLead College

BID	Sourav Dey
BSc	Somnath Maity, Babu Ghosh

Indira Gandhi National Open University

BSWG	Chandan Das
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Three of our wards sadly dropped out of college last year, seeking different paths. One of them successfully joined and completed a nine-month optometry course, but then decided not to work in this profession, another joined the office staff of a tax lawyer and the third tried unsuccessfully so far to join the police force. And of the two who had passed their higher secondary at the beginning of the year one immediately got employment as a youth coach with Luckball Academy in Lucknow, while the other one did odd jobs and is still searching for his place in the world. Also one of our wards, who had not yet joined any course after leaving school successfully, enrolled for a one year electrician

training course by George Telegraph Institute, but left it again more than half way through the course.

Despite these setbacks it was a matter of pride for us when one of our former wards completed his Bachelor Degree in Mechanical Engineering in Germany last year, although without any financial supported from us. He went on to do his Master Degree. Another one of our wards who had completed a year at college in the USA came back in May'22 after his scholarship had ended. He enrolled with our support in a local college to complete his studies.

Equally proud we were about one of our wards who finally completed a computer degree course with Frameboxx Animation & Visual Effects Pvt. Ltd., which had extended far beyond its initial duration due to the pandemic.

(iv) Medical – As the pandemic subsided a new threat emerged in Kolkata: Dengue fever. This year we were not spared from this menace. After many years we had some cases again and one of our boys, as well as one of our former boys, who lives in the neighbourhood even had to be hospitalized!

Fortunately, there were no other major medical emergencies in the past year. Any minor problems that arose were well taken care of in the OPD department of the nearby KPC hospital. Furthermore, all our wards and staff received their third COVID-19 vaccine in July 2022, with only a few of them experiencing mild discomfort afterwards.

We remain committed to provide our wards with the best possible healthcare and support and we were also working hard in the past year again to provide a safe and healthy environment for them.

(v) 25th Anniversary of the Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children



In February 1998 the Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children was founded and the MoA was signed. So our organization proudly celebrated already its 25th anniversary, marking a quarter of a century of working to change lives for the better, as exemplified by the achievements of the following cases, to name a few...



Pintu Shaw

Talented baker! Already in the profession for more than 6 years. Currently working for the Missionaries of the Word in the NGO's bakery.

Vicky Sharma

Brilliant student! Currently pursuing graduation in Applied Informatics from Bad Mergentheim College, Germany. He is also a trainee in the German company WAREMA.



Suraj Dhopi

Extraordinary footballer! Was selected for a training session with the German giants FC Bayern in Munich, Germany at the age of 13. Currently a professional licensed coach for Luckball Academy, Lucknow.



Babu Ghosh

A great scholar! Took a course of Business Management & Administration at Kirkwood Community College, Iowa, USA on a scholarship. Currently pursuing graduation (BSC) from iLead College, Kolkata.



These four cases are just a few examples of our overall achievements and we could have rightfully and proudly celebrated our 25th anniversary in February'23 with a bang, but we opted only for a small ceremony on this day, to which all the boys including the alumni were invited. Also we sent some of our boys from our Aftercare Unit to visited Nicco Park on the next day for them to have a little fun and enjoyment on this occasion. A T-shirt was also designed according to the motto '25 Years Transforming Lives' and was printed for everyone to commemorate this event. But otherwise, we plan to mark this milestone in our organization's history with more meaningful gestures than a big celebration in the coming months. This decision was made unanimously and was fully supported by our boys, the very people whose lives we have been able to transform over the years!



So we have scheduled a visit to the girls' project of Child in Need Initiative (CINI), our long-standing local partner, for a clothing and food donation in April'23. This is also supposed to be a symbolic start of our joint future collaboration for girls in need.

We shall also visit the CINI drop-in-shelter at Sealdah station somewhat later into the financial year for another clothing and food donation at the special request of our boys, since there is probably no better place to honor our 25 years of work than the one where the common journey with most of the children we supported began!

On 6th of July'23, the 25th anniversary of our organization's official registration under the West Bengal Society Registration Act, 1961 we plan another small get-together with our wards and former wards in our home in Santoshpur.

But it is our greatest hope and wish that we can round off our anniversary year celebrations by welcoming our first girls next year, so that we can transform even more lives for the better in the 25 years to come!

(vi) Birthday – After all the restrictions of the pandemic years it was a given that this year it was going to be a 'Birthday' celebration in style again with full entertainment programme and many invited guests! And since organising an annual 'Birthday' fete has become a routine affair for our young adults now, the house was fast decorated with balloons, streamers, colourful lights and



what not! The stage was put together in no time and a dress rehearsal of the many parts of the show was done the evening before the party. All was tailored to the interests of the young adults and so the celebration at the home was a joyous event. All had worked very hard to plan a day full of fun and activities for everyone to enjoy.

The morning started with the usual football tournament nobody would like to miss! And after a delicious breakfast a day with a variety of activities, including arts and crafts, games and music followed, only interrupted by a scrumptious lunch.

In the evening the guests arrived and a very entertaining show began with the anthem of our charity 'Imagine' by John Lennon sang by one of our boys. Songs and dances followed including a fashion show where the young adults had the opportunity to showcase themselves. It all ended with the usual cake cutting ceremony on stage and a wonderful dinner thereafter. All in all the full-day celebration was a wonderful opportunity for the young adults to come together and have fun. It was also a great way for the staff to show their appreciation for the young adults and their accomplishments!



(vii) Meals – With the transition of all young adults to the Aftercare Unit our beloved home's once bustling kitchen had its familiar aromas replaced by a quiet stillness. Our kitchen fairy the tireless magician behind countless scrumptious meals now prepared nourishment for a smaller group – the dedicated staff, occasional volunteers and visiting guests. But once we will be able too admit new children we will follow our time tested diet chart again according to which we serve three times per week egg curry for lunch or dinner, twice a week fish curry, once a week chicken curry and all other meals will be served again with a choice of vegetable curries and pulses with soybean flakes for additional protein intake. There will be a well-balanced diet throughout the year with vegetables that vary as per the season. For breakfast there will be cereals with milk or butter toast with banana and everyday fruits will be given during the afternoon break, while there will be another main rice meal with curries for dinner.

(viii) Excursions – This year, after a long and unforeseen pause, we were delighted to resurrect our excursion program again, organizing three short, but memorable day outings. Two of them were to different places in the countryside to the new homes of two former wards, now living independently with their families. Their warm hospitality made these trips truly special, allowing us to enjoy nature and appreciate the simple joys of

country life at least for a day. It was really heartwarming to see everyone enjoying together.

In addition to the outings to the countryside, we also organized a day trip to Nicco Park to commemorate ASKMSC's 25th anniversary. This decision was made unanimously by the young adults reflecting their desire for a fun and engaging day. Nicco Park with its vibrant atmosphere and diverse range of attractions proved to be the perfect destination for this celebration. The young adults revelled in the park's exhilarating rides and engaging activities, creating lasting memories that would forever be etched in their minds.



Overall the reinstatement of our excursion program is fostering a sense of community and provides our wards with opportunities to create cherished memories. We are grateful for the support of our former wards and the enthusiasm of our young adults and we look forward to continuing this tradition of enriching experiences in the years to come.

(ix) Volunteers – After a long time we had the pleasure of welcoming two foreign volunteers again this year, who brought fresh energy and perspectives to our organization. Their presence was a welcome addition and we are grateful for their contributions. Throughout the year we also received valuable support from some of our former wards, who stepped up to help whenever needed. Their dedication and willingness to give back is truly inspiring, and we are deeply appreciative of their assistance. These individuals play a vital role in our organization, and we are fortunate to have their support!

(x) Aftercare Unit – Despite the current absence of wards in the home our commitment to the still crowded Aftercare Unit - a haven for young adults transitioning into independent living- remained steadfast. We continued to provide them with cooking gas, groceries and spices, ensuring they had the resources to prepare their meals independently. So another batch of young adults could demonstrate their newfound self-sufficiency and work out a weekly roster and take turns to cook.

But life within our Aftercare Unit is not without its challenges. As they navigate the complexities of adulthood, they also encounter obstacles and conflicts that test their resilience and resourcefulness.

3. Finances

This financial year our total expenditure decreased again in line with the declining number of beneficiaries and this time the entire annual budget was provided by our German partners the “Aktion Lebenshilfe für Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.”.

We are very grateful for their continued support. They have been a vital source of funding for our organization since its inception and their generosity has enabled us to provide much-needed help to destitute children in Kolkata. With their financial support we were able to continue to provide our young adults with the essential services they need including food, shelter, education and healthcare.

4. Outlook

As we embark on a new year we will continue to provide aftercare services for our young adults till the last one has completed his education or training and can live a life on his own.

Besides this we will remain unwavering in our mission to transform the lives of vulnerable children. With renewed determination we will continue to advocate for the license that will enable us to welcome a new generation of girls into our loving care.

We are confident that with the support of our donors, volunteers and the authorities we will soon celebrate the admission of our first group of girls, marking a new chapter in ASKMSC's journey of transforming lives.