

Annual Report on the work of the

Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children

for the year 2023-24

1. Introduction

The last financial year marked a pivotal moment in the wonderful history of the *Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children* (ASKMSC). As the last of the boys raised by us transitioned into adulthood, a new chapter unfolded with the admission of the first girls to our children's home in Santoshpur and with the accumulated experience and knowledge gained over the years the society is well-positioned to provide support and care to another generation of vulnerable children.

2. Activities

(i) General – The *Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children* continued its mission of supporting children in need. In the past year the society provided financial assistance to ten boys, a decrease from the previous year's fifteen. This reduction in the number of beneficiaries also led to a decrease in overall expenditure again.

Among the boys supported one remained in school, three pursued higher education in college and two were enrolled in vocational training courses. The remaining boys were in the process of transitioning into the workforce by trying to secure meaningful and worthwhile employment.

A significant milestone for our society was the resolution of a long-standing licensing issue with the Directorate of Social Welfare and Directorate of Child Rights and Trafficking by end of July 2023. Unfortunately we were almost immediately obliged to apply for renewal of the same. Nevertheless the successful issuing of the license enabled us to

expand our support beyond boys and include girls in our welfare program. This expansion led to the admission of two girls to our home, where they received comprehensive care including food, shelter and education.

Additionally, two other girls were awarded scholarships as part of the society's outreach program, which aims to provide educational opportunities to children in need. This expansion of support to girls underscores the society's commitment to help all children in need, regardless of gender. Sadly we were told by the authorities that we still could not help



our target group, the street children of Kolkata, since we first would need to be registered under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act. So we had to continue with girls whose parents could give consent to the admission, but the admission of such girls to our society revitalized the institution. The four pillars of formal school education, music, sports, and arts were re-established ensuring a holistic development of the children. We also continued to organize social gatherings and annual celebrations, including the special 'Birthday' party held on the 19th of every November. To foster a sense of community and well-being, a picnic in the countryside and some day trips were organized in the winter. The 25th anniversary celebrations of ASKMSC also continued with various events, such as a visit to CINI's drop-in shelter at Sealdah Station to donate



clothes and a small party commemorating the day the society was registered on July 6th.

To enhance collaboration and impact we were also very active to re-established connections with other NGOs throughout the year. In addition to CINI we tried to strengthen our partnership with organizations such as Hamari Muskan, Sanlaap, and SEED.

The financial stability of our organisation was once again ensured by the continued support of our long-standing German partner 'Aktion Lebenshilfe fur Indiens Strassenkinder e.V.'. Furthermore the society benefited from the invaluable contributions of visitors and volunteers who generously offered their time and expertise.

At the beginning of the coming financial year the last few boys will transition out of our long running Aftercare Unit. In light of this we have made the decision to close the unit by the end of April'24. This will enable us to concentrate further on our girls' home.

(ii) Problems faced by us – After a year and a half of waiting the much-awaited license was finally issued at the end of July'23, but with a major setback: it was backdated, meaning it would soon expire again. This forced us to almost immediately reapply for renewal. To our dismay we were also informed that without a separate registration under the Juvenile Justice

(Care and Protection of Children) Act, we would be unable to admit street children and orphans, our primary target groups. Instead we could only admit children with parental consent. This necessitated the submission of another lengthy application process, similar to the one we went through for the initial license. This delay could potentially set us back another year and a half or two until the required registration is complete, which is highlighting the ongoing bureaucratic hurdles in the sector.

Another issue we encountered was the inability of a few remaining boys to complete any training or college courses despite multiple attempts, leaving them reliant on sporadic low-income jobs or our continued support for survival. Throughout the past year three of our wards found themselves in this precarious situation. So when Sri Aurobindo Ashram Delhi extended an offer of one-year vocational training course scholarships, we presented the opportunity to the three boys. All three expressed interest and with our assistance submitted applications, all of which were accepted. However, on the departure day for Delhi only one of them was ultimately prepared to embark on this journey.

(iii) Education – In the past year we had only one of our boys still in school and three in college. They attended the following institutions:

Nimpith Ramkrishna Vidyabhavan

Class XI	Sukhdev Naskar
----------	----------------

iLead College

BID	Sourav Dey
BSc	Somnath Maity, Babu Ghosh

Our last boy in school got the results of his class X board exams in May'23 and had passed with good marks. He went on to do his higher secondary education from the same school. Four of our wards successfully completed their Bachelor's degrees in June'23 and secured employment. While two others dropped out of college but are now employed and independent. That leaves us with only three boys left in college. We also sponsored a one-year vocational training course in Food Production (General) at the National Institute of Hotel Management and an 18-month diploma course in Professional Business Accounting at George Telegraph Institute last year. Additionally, Sri Aurobindo Ashram New Delhi offered scholarships for 'second chance' vocational training courses. Three of our wards applied and were selected, but only one ultimately pursued the opportunity in Delhi in March'24.

(iv) Medical – Last year was a mixed bag for our ward's health. While overall health was satisfactory the year was not without challenges. Sadly

we had another dengue fever case again that fortunately resolved within our sickbay without further spread and a case of lower respiratory tract infection which required a week-long hospitalization of one of our wards. Fortunately it was fully covered by health insurance. With the recent admissions of destitute girls into our home, prioritizing their health has become paramount. We have therefore instituted comprehensive health checks upon admission and monthly follow-ups at KPC Hospital's Paediatric Department to ensure their well-being. The success of our health insurance program for boys underscores the need to extend this vital coverage to our newly admitted girls as well. This will provide them with the necessary care and us with financial peace of mind.

(v) Sports - At the heart of our philosophy sports, especially football, have always held significant importance. Unfortunately, with the absence of residents in our Santoshpur home, our sports activities dwindled to spontaneous events involving inmates of our Aftercare Unit and alumni. However, a new chapter unfolded with the opening of our girls' home. This revitalized our sports programs, making yoga and diverse sports an integral part of their daily routine. This not only enhances their physical health but also contributes to their mental well-being.

We are particularly thrilled about our upcoming endeavour: forming a new girls' football team. This initiative aims to provide opportunities for physical activity, empower young girls and cultivate essential values such as teamwork, discipline and a competitive spirit. Through sports we hope to inspire and uplift these young minds, creating a positive impact on their lives.

(vi) Birthday – Knowing that this was going to be the last 'Birthday' organised by the boys for the boys, everyone was eager to make it an even



better and bigger event than the years before.

And so the planning began with everyone contributing their ideas and enthusiasm to make it a memorable occasion. A beautiful entertainment program was worked out, featuring singing, dancing and skits performed by the boys themselves. Plenty of guests were invited, including friends, family and well-wishers. From the decorations to the menu, every detail was carefully considered. Colourful balloons and lights adorned the venue. Delicious birthday cakes were baked and snacks were prepared. The day of the birthday celebration arrived and the excitement was palpable. They all had gathered together to celebrate their special day with the traditional football tournament in the morning and games in the afternoon. For the evening program the boys dressed in their finest attire and when the anthem of our charity 'Imagine' by John Lennon was sung by one of the boys to open the show everyone got Goosebumps. The event was filled with laughter, joy and camaraderie and when the day drew to a close, everyone left with fond memories of a truly unforgettable celebration.



(vii) Meals – Since opening our girls' home we have returned to our tried and tested meal plan. This means they can enjoy egg curry three times a week, fish curry twice a week and chicken curry once a week. The rest of the meals include a variety of vegetable curries and pulses, with soybean flakes added for extra protein. We make sure to use seasonal vegetables to keep the diet balanced throughout the year. For breakfast they have either cereal with milk or buttered toast with banana. Plus they get a daily fruit snack in the afternoon. Dinner is another main meal with rice and curry.

(viii) Excursions – This year we once again organized a winter picnic for all our beneficiaries and alumni. It was a day filled with fun, laughter,



good food and great company. In addition to the picnic our esteemed founder and a group of boys embarked on a short cycling tour with overnight camping in the serene countryside. This adventure provided an

opportunity for bonding, exploration and a much-needed break from routine.

(ix) Volunteers – Throughout the year we were incredibly fortunate to receive support from some of our former wards. These individuals who once benefited from our care have now turned around to give back to the organization. Their dedication and willingness to help whenever needed is truly inspiring. Their contributions have been invaluable and we are deeply grateful for their continued support.

We were also thrilled to welcome some foreign volunteers once again. Their enthusiasm and fresh perspectives brought a new energy to our organization. Their presence was a welcome addition and we appreciate their contributions to our mission.



Unfortunately there was also some extremely sad news at the beginning of the past financial year. It is with deep sorrow that we announce the passing of three extraordinary individuals who dedicated their lives to the service of others. Karl Neulicheld, Annelies Ghosh and Franz Otremba were invaluable members of our organization. Their sudden departure in April and May'23 left us stunned and heartbroken. For many years they generously supported our mission, not only through financial contributions, but also by actively volunteering their time and energy at our home. Their unwavering commitment and selfless dedication have left an enduring legacy. They will always hold a special place in our hearts. May they rest in peace!

(x) Aftercare Unit – For years our Aftercare unit helped our boys' transition into adulthood. It was the bridge between their childhood in our home and their independent lives as adults. All our boys learned valuable life skills here, before they dared to venture out to establish themselves on their own. As our last boys are moving into their own places by the beginning of the next financial year, we will be ending the lease on the ACU flat in April'24. This means we can fully dedicate ourselves to our children's home and welcome more girls in need.

3. Finances

Last year marked a significant turning point for our organization. After reaching the lowest number of just ten beneficiaries, we experienced resurgence towards the end of the fiscal year with the admission of our first group of girls. This positive development injected new life into our

mission, but will also increase our costs again in the future. As for the last financial year our operational costs saw once again a substantial drop of about 30% in comparison to the previous year. This reduction was directly linked to the decreased number of individuals we were serving.

For the second time our German partners, ‘Aktion Lebenshilfe fur Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.’ have been instrumental in shouldering the entire financial burden for this. We express our sincere gratitude to them and all those who have contributed to our cause. But to ensure the sustainability of our operations and meet future financial demands, we must explore various strategies in the future. Increasing our membership fees and re-establishing connections with other organizations for donations are potential avenues to consider. By diversifying our funding sources, we can strengthen our financial position and continue to provide vital support to those in need.

4. Outlook

The coming months will be crucial for the *Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children* to admit more destitute girls and fill the home to capacity. To ensure that the primary target groups, street children and orphans, can benefit fully from our support, expediting the registration process under the Juvenile Justice Act is essential. This will enable us to include them in the cases we admit. Additionally, establishing a comprehensive routine for the home again will be vital to maintain a smooth and well-organized operation.