

Annual Report on the work of the

Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children

for the year 2024-25

1. Introduction

The financial year 2024-25 commenced with significant enthusiasm and optimism for the future of the *Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children*. Building upon the previous year's success - securing our license to run a girl's home and welcoming the first two destitute girls – we continued this vital work throughout the majority of 2024-25, admitting more girls with the consent of their parents and utilizing our 25 years of experience to mainstreaming them. Yet this promising chapter was suddenly closed in January 2025, when, after securing our long-sought registration under the Juvenile Justice Act, we were informed by the Directorate of Child Rights and Trafficking that we could only accept girls referred by the government and all current residents had to be sent back to their families. While this was a major setback, we remained committed to our mission. We expanded our outreach program to help children in need outside the home and as a result, the total number of beneficiaries grew significantly until 31st of March 2025.

2. Activities

(i) **General** – The number of children and youth supported by *Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children* changed significantly throughout the last year. The number of girls in the children's home rose to 12 until January 2025, after which these girls became part of our outreach program, which increased to 19 boys and girls by the end of the financial year. This represents a significant trend reversal. While the number of beneficiaries and thus the total costs had steadily declined in recent years, the number of destitute children and youth under our care has now risen sharply again. This naturally also meant a renewed increase of costs in the financial year 2024-25.

With the increase in the number of girls in the children's home, the reintroduction of groups of 5 to 6 children, each with their own caregiver





and with a separate weekly routine for each group, became necessary again. Activities such as sports, yoga, painting, crafts, singing and dancing, etc., could thus once again become part of the activity program at our children's home and even football training could now be resumed, which already made us dream about reviving

our football academy!

Gradually the girls were also enrolled in the local kindergarten and in January 2025 four girls started first grade at a school nearby. However, on January 10, 2025, the authorities informed us that only children assigned to us by them could be admitted to our home, so we tried to integrate these needy girls into our outreach program instead. By March 31, 2025, the authorities had not assigned us any more children and so our children's home was sadly empty at the end of the fiscal year, but our outreach program had grown considerably.

As for activities, the year traditionally began with a small get-together on the birth anniversary of **Ali Salem Khalifa** on 1st of April 2024. In his memory our society was founded and is named *Ali S. K. Memorial Society for the Children*. At the end of April 2024, we closed our Aftercare Unit after the four remaining boys all rented their own accommodations and became independent. Of the boys still supported by us, one attended class XII last year and did his higher secondary exam in March 2025. Three boys went to college. One of them graduated with a bachelor's degree in June 2024. Another one was in his final semester at the end of the financial year. A third unfortunately left college without a



degree. Two other boys completed their respective training courses during the year and found jobs to become self-sufficient.



In August, our application for registration under the JJ Act was finally approved, but as we were yet to find out this was not exactly a blessing for our work.

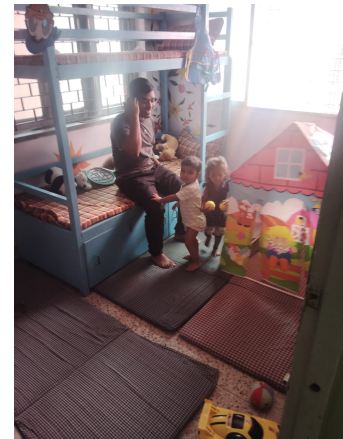
With the increasing number of beneficiaries, our annual expenditure begun to rise again, but with the continuous support of our German partners Aktion Lebenshilfe für Indiens Strassenkinder e.V.

and H.E.L.G.O. e.V. we did not face any financial difficulties in the past year. Apart from financial support we also had support from volunteers again, who provided invaluable assistance.

(ii) Problems faced by us – During the licensing visit for our girls' home by inspectors from the Directorate of Social Welfare (DSW) and Directorate of Child Rights and Trafficking (DCRT), we were informed of a critical requirement: to continue serving our core target groups—street children and orphans—we needed registration under the Juvenile Justice Act (JJ Act).



Without it, we could only admit children with the active consent of their parents. We submitted our application and after a year the registration was granted in August 2024. Prior to this, following the license approval for the girl's home, we had admitted twelve destitute girls with their parents' consent. The inspectors did not disclose a significant consequence of the JJ Act registration: the loss of our institutional autonomy regarding admissions. We learned that from the date of registration we were obligated to accept any girl placed in our home by the government via an order of the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), effectively removing our right to decide whom to admit. The full gravity of the situation became clear when we approached the CWC to get such an order for each of our twelve existing girls. The chairperson shockingly informed us that, given their age, our girls would be processed for adoption, even though their families had not expressed any wish to give them for adoption. Following this distressing news, we scrambled for legal avenues to continue to help these children in the residential care of our home. However, on Friday, January 10, 2025, the DCRT mandated that by Monday, January 13, all girls must be either presented to the CWC or returned to their families. We held a meeting with all twelve families on



Sunday, January 12. As no parent agreed to adoption, we were forced to request that they take their children home. We immediately counselled them to apply for educational sponsorship through our outreach program. By the close of the financial year, most parents had successfully applied and we were able to arrange support for their daughters' school education. Regrettably, the CWC has not placed any girls with us since the departure of the initial twelve and we are not

permitted to admit girls independently. Consequently, our home in Santoshpur remained empty as of March 31, 2025. Furthermore, we have



been informed that future placements by the CWC will be restricted to temporary shelter girls aged 12 to 17 who are survivors of domestic or sexual violence, which alters our operational mandate directly and conflicts with our foundational mandate. Our NGO was established and our donors contributed specifically to provide long-term

shelter for street, orphaned, or abandoned children. This imposed shift in purpose—forced upon us by the rules of the JJ Act—creates significant concerns. We fear losing vital financial support, as donors may withdraw funding intended for our original objectives. We also feel that it creates a legal dilemma for us regarding compliance under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, since the Central Government mandates that NGOs strictly adhere to the purpose stated by the donor when utilizing foreign contributions, while it now seems that the JJ Act, passed by the same government, compels us to spend these funds on a different cause.

In another development, we are getting more and more concerned about difficulties in obtaining proper documents for destitute children. Over the past few years, the process to get documents, such as birth certificates and Aadhaar cards, for destitute children has become increasingly difficult. This is especially true for children born at home or on the street. The lack of these documents creates a fundamental barrier to mainstreaming the children in need. Without them, they are effectively excluded from essential government services, including immunization programs, admission to government hospitals and formal school enrolment.

(iii) Education – At the beginning of the financial year we had three children in school and three young adults in college. They attended Nimpith Ramkrishna Vidyabhavan School, St Ann's Convent School and iLEAD College. Over the year the twelve girls that had been admitted to our home could be one by one send to nearby Olive Garden PreSchool for KG and later on, at the beginning of January 2025, four of them were admitted to the local Modern Land School for Class I. Unfortunately they could join school only for a few days, before we had to send them back to their families. Another three children attended with our support Krisna Chandrapur HS and one each Jhanjra High School (H.S), Baikunthapur HS and Binodpur SSK Primary School respectively.



In June 2024 one of our young adults graduated with a Bachelor Degree in ‘Gaming & Mobile Application Development’ from iLEAD College. Also one young adult completed his one-year training in Food Production (General) from the National Institute of Hotel Management in August 2024 and went on to join a 5 Star facility to become a chef. Another one completed his diploma course in Professional Business Accounting from George Telegraph Institute in January 2025. Further, in March 2025 one boy completed his higher secondary exams and is awaiting results now. However, there was not only good news when it comes to education of our young adults, since one young adult sadly dropped out of his vocational course at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi after five months while another one quit college after the 5th semester.

(iv) Medical – Upon admission a thorough medical examination was mandatory for all the new girls in our home. Monthly check-ups, where key health indicators like height, weight and overall wellness were carefully monitored, also had to be reintroduced. To facilitate this we established a valuable partnership with the paediatric department of nearby KPC Hospital, which provided these services for a very nominal fee. Additionally we had to develop an individualized immunization routine for each girl. This was to ensure all their vaccinations were current. Unfortunately, in November 2024, one of our youngest girls required hospitalization at the children’s ward of KPC Hospital for several days due to breathing problems stemming from a mild Pneumonitis. Luckily, she recovered in time to enjoy our annual ‘Birthday’ event.

(v) Sports - Sports, particularly football, have always been central to our mission. The admission of girls to our Santoshpur home finally allowed us to revitalize our sports programs, making daily age appropriate yoga and diverse physical activities key to their physical and mental health. A highlight was our plan to launch a new girls’



football team, an initiative intended to empower them and cultivate values like teamwork and discipline.

We deeply believe in the power of sports to inspire and uplift. Regrettably, this effort was suddenly cut short in January 2025 when the DCRT directive required us to vacate the home to prepare for the arrival of government-placed girls.



(vi) Leisure, Arts & Music –

Beyond the athletic field, our focus extended to nurturing the creative and expressive talents of our girls. We enthusiastically incorporated a vibrant schedule of dance, singing and drawing classes and were in the process of



introducing regular instructions in playing the guitar. These activities were designed to unlock their artistic potential and provide essential outlets for self-expression, significantly boosting their confidence and mental well-



being. Furthermore, to cultivate shared enjoyment and educational engagement we re-established a cherished tradition: once a week, every Sunday, we would gather to show an age-appropriate movie. This comprehensive approach—blending arts, music, and wholesome entertainment—was aimed at creating a well-rounded

and enriching experience. Like everything else, all these wonderful creative programs came to an abrupt end in January 2025.

(vii) Birthday – The children's birthday party on November 19th was always the highlight of the year and traditionally stands as the most



anticipated and cherished event for all the children, staff and former beneficiaries. For our new girls the celebration was particularly momentous, as it marked their very first time attending this event, leading to tremendously high excitement and anticipation. Similarly, we were thrilled to welcome the children from our outreach program to the party

for the first time. Adding to the special nature of the day, this was also the first 'Birthday' celebration that our young adults helped organize for the new children in our home and our dedicated caregivers spent weeks preparing a special entertainment program with these little girls.

The day began with different activities: the adult boys organized their customary football match in the morning, while the girls started their festivities with lively games in the courtyard after a hearty breakfast. Following a shared lunch, there was a host of interactive games designed for both the children and the staff. The evening featured a quiz



competition, which led into the much-anticipated entertainment program, attended by many invited guests. Keeping with tradition the program opened with one of our young adults beautifully performing our anthem, 'Imagine', before the

children and their caregivers presented their lively potpourri of songs and dance performances. The traditional birthday cake-cutting ceremony followed with cakes from our own bakery. It was truly a magnificent day of fun and camaraderie for children and adults alike, culminating in a sumptuous dinner.

(viii) Meals – Our tried and tested meal plan underwent a small adjustment, since the DCRT had asked us to add biscuits, cake and muri to the fruits of afternoon tiffin. Otherwise there are no changes and so there is egg curry three times a week, fish curry twice a week and chicken curry once a week on the weekly meal plan. 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 there are either cereals with milk or buttered toast with banana. Dinner is another main meal with rice and curry.



(ix) Excursions – Only in August 2024 we were able to go with all the girls for a day outing. We went to Science City, where dinosaurs and other exhibits awaited them. The unexpected departure of all the girls from our home in January necessitated a significant shift in our excursion plans, starting with our annual picnic.



To ensure maximum participation we held the event, which took place in early February 2025, near the boarding school attended by many of the children in our outreach program. This allowed a large number of students and many former beneficiaries to join us for a day marked by merriment, shared meals, and excellent companionship. Regrettably, a planned day-outing to the zoo with the girls had to be postponed and could not be rescheduled this past year. We now tentatively plan to execute this excursion in April 2025. Aside from Science City and the picnic, there were no other day-outings or excursions throughout the year. This lack of activities is unfortunate, as day-outings and excursions are invaluable for bonding, exploration and providing a crucial break from routine for staff and children alike.

(x) Volunteers – We were delighted to get the support of a few foreign volunteers again last year. Their fresh perspectives, enthusiasm and unique energy were a welcome addition to our home and we sincerely appreciate the positive impact they had on our mission.

Also a profound source of inspiration throughout the year was the unwavering support we received from our former wards again. These young individuals, who once grew and thrived under our care, have now come full circle, demonstrating remarkable dedication by actively giving back to the organization. Their willingness to assist whenever necessary is truly moving and their contributions, particularly during our annual ‘Birthday’, have proven absolutely invaluable. We are profoundly grateful for this continued loyalty.



(xi) Aftercare Unit – Our Aftercare Unit, designed to be the springboard for our young adult boys into an independent and self-determined life, officially closed at the end of April 2024. The decision to let the lease expire without requesting an extension was prompted by the final four residents successfully moving out to live independently. In retrospect, it can be said that the aftercare unit helped our boys’ transition into adulthood by being the bridge between their childhood in our home and their independent lives as adults. Learning valuable life skills here, they gained the confidence to venture out and establish themselves on their own. It can therefore be considered a complete success.

(xi) Outreach Program – While our primary focus has historically been on supporting homeless street children, we launched an important outreach

program at the beginning of last year to address a related need: providing educational opportunities for children who have a home, but lack the financial means to attend school. This initiative allows us to extend our aid beyond the boundaries of our Santoshpur home, which is currently limited to helping only girls. Through the outreach program, we successfully support children regardless of gender. Last year, we significantly expanded this program, enabling us to award scholarships to a total of 19 deserving boys and girls by March 2025. We are dedicated to further expanding this vital program in the future, especially given that we have yet to see any new admissions to our Santoshpur home facilitated by the government.

3. Finances

Our annual expenses have risen by approximately 39% compared to the previous year, a direct result of the growing number of beneficiaries in both our children's home and our outreach program. For the last two years our German partner organization 'Aktion Lebenshilfe für Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.', covered our full annual costs alone. This year, however, a portion of the annual expenses was covered by H.E.L.G.O. e.V. again, which contributed almost 1/5th of last year's income, while 'Aktion Lebenshilfe für Indiens Strassenkinder e. V.' contributed the remaining balance. While the continuous support of these organizations has kept our project financially stable all those years, we face a significant future risk. It is becoming increasingly difficult for us to help our primary target group, the street children of Kolkata and since the donors of our partner organizations specifically earmark their funds for this group, there is a distinct risk that our long-standing international partners may lose donors or even might no longer want to support us. As our local income consists solely of membership fees and small donations, the loss of this international support would make our work impossible.



4. Outlook

Our short-term goal must be to identify new avenues for supporting our core target group, the street children, focusing on assistance we can provide outside of a residential setting. Simultaneously, we are committed to further expanding our outreach program to assist other needy children who don't live on the street. We must also prioritize efforts to align our facility in Santoshpur with the legal provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act, because it is disheartening to see this facility - originally built as a home for street children - stand empty every day while there is such grave need for shelter. Implementing the JJ Act provisions will allow the home to serve a purpose again, even if it deviates from its initial mandate. Ultimately, our long-term vision is to restore the Santoshpur project to its

original intent: providing a safe and permanent home for Kolkata's street children.

