## **Buena Vida**

**Mexico** 

# INPROVEMENT ROADDAP April 2023



# **Overview of this Children's Home**

## **Background & Mission**

Gabriel and Meche started in 2011 as directors, caring for 24 children. Upon their arrival, one of the first needs they identified was that the home did not have enough food to feed the children for a week. The home had many areas of opportunity, such as infrastructure, health, cleanliness, and care of the children, putting all their efforts into seeking resources and donations to pay for everything they needed. Not having enough support to cover this expense, Gabriel and Meche used their funds and savings from their work for more than seven months until help arrived at their home to take care of all the children's needs and the house's utilities.

As the years passed, the property owners gave them only three years to find another location for the home. Gabriel and Meche decided to use a piece of land they owned to start the construction of the orphanage. The initial funding for this work came from individual monetary donations, other foundations, Gabriel's savings, and groups of volunteers who helped with labor and work. This stage of construction took about four years, during which time other donors gradually came forward to join the cause and move in completely. Since then, they have kept up the pace of growth, improvements, and advances to consolidate the service to their children.

Buena Vida's mission is to provide comprehensive assistance to abused and neglected children. It is also to provide a safe, loving home where children are educated spiritually with a solid moral foundation and to give them the necessary tools to grow up to be good parents and responsible and productive citizens.

### A Child's Hope Foundation

Ultimately, Gabriel and Meche want to form people with values that are capable of integrating into society positively by being professional, hardworking, honest, and capable of forming their own families, thus being a creation of hope for tomorrow.

## **Recent Accomplishments**

- regularly to provide therapy sessions.
- heating and air conditioning for the children.

During the last six months, the home found a psychologist who now visits the home

• The home also recently installed mini-splits in the bedrooms to provide better comfort with



## The Thrive Assessment

## **Strategic Initiatives**

### PURCHASE STOVE, MICROWAVE, TABLES, AND CHAIRS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	In recent of a ment classes, s oven worl
	slowing th works, an this activi the volunt
ESTIMATED FUNDING	0-5K

### **PURCHASE 4 WASHING MACHINES**

	To cover a necessary are in poo effectively.
ESTIMATED FUNDING	0-5K

### **MAINTENANCE OF 3 VEHICLES**

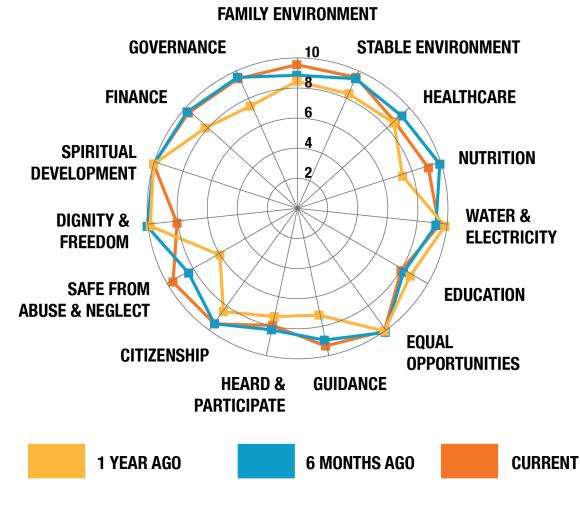
PROJECT DESCRIPTION	Buena Vid last servic school, the medical ap chores. Be vehicles m
ESTIMATED FUNDING	5-10K

## What is the Thrive Assessment?

In 1959, the United Nations (UN) adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which defines children's rights to protection, education, healthcare, shelter, nutrition and more. We have codified all 13 Rights, as well as a Finance Standard and a Governance and Human Resource Standard, resulting in a total of 15 standards. These standards ensure that children receive care that truly helps them to thrive, now and in the future.

The Thrive Assessment will be administered every 6 months with each partner home to chart the progress of each standard. Our team works with caregivers to outline next steps which and compiled into an Improvement Roadmap.

### **Current Thrive Scale**



months Meche has implemented baking classes as part toring program for the children. To carry out these she uses the stove in her own home, and although the rks perfectly, the stove burners no longer work at 100%, he cooking process. Likewise, the microwave no longer nd they need to have a couple of tables and chairs for ity, which they will also use when there are visits from teer groups.

all the laundry needs of the children's home, it is y to have four new washing machines. The current ones or condition and no longer wash the children's clothes *i*. The cost of each washing machine is \$6,000 pesos.

da's three cars need general maintenance, as they were ced several years ago. The cars transport the children to ney're used to complete administrative tasks, attend appointments and visits, and other daily household secause of the long distances they must drive, the nust be in optimal condition.

### **Right to Live with Family** SURVIVING **SUSTAINING**

THRIVING

They have 15 DIF children, and recently 2 new children arrived at the home. In total, Buena Vida serves 23 children.

The home encourages family visits as long as these visits are approved by DIF. Currently, family visits have decreased due to the fact that there have been several children leaving the home, and this has resulted in fewer visits. There are the same caregivers who have been at the home for more than seven years, so the groups of children feel guite stable because there are no changes in the caregivers. For more than three months, the staff has had training in trauma, in addition to attending a mandatory school for parents as a requirement for the children to enter elementary and middle school. They have certificates of the training they have taken with the organization, ESPERE, and a psychologist has been hired to support the caregivers with strategies to care for the children. A new, younger caregiver will also join the team to support the retirement process of one of the caregivers. The home has a plan for incorporating new caregivers, which has been implemented at Buena Vida and has been a model for other homes. The staff evaluations have been done by DIF, and all have passed those evaluations. However, they are not up to date.

Find a way for caregivers to be evaluated by a specialist in the childcare standard.



In this home, the house rules are explained to the children. When new children are placed in the home, they try to explain to them the rules at the time of their arrival, if the time or schedule allows it since they often arrive at night. They all speak to each other by name, at least in the presence of adults. However, the director is aware that in the absence of the directors or at school, the children call each other differently, but never by derogatory nicknames. Play activities are very infrequent between the caregivers and the children since the games among the children are very physical or sporty, and due to the age of the caregivers, it is very unlikely that they will be involved in more than just supervising them. Twice a month, the caregivers meet with a specialist to discuss the children's needs, and this specialist provides them with tools or suggestions for caring for them. The home has family traditions, and Gabriel is planning to remodel the homework room to bring back family movie night, which is one of the activities that everyone enjoys most.

Seek alternative games between caregivers and children to promote interaction between them.

#### A Child's Hope Foundation



SURVIVING

Children have medical check-ups at least twice a year. However, most of the time, these check-ups or medical visits only occur when they present symptoms of an illness.

The children have been vaccinated, and the directors follow up with them so that they have their complete vaccination scheme; however, in some cases, there is no record of the children's previous vaccinations. They have almost all the vaccination records, and the director has already requested support from the health department to have all these documents in the children's files. The adolescents have everything they need for personal hygiene and know how to dispose of it.

No routine eye exams have been performed; only those children who seem to need it have been attended. In dental and hearing matters, they only attend to children who require attention due to some discomfort or issue.

Children have a medical record for each development area, which is kept on file and up to date.

The home has a first aid kit for emergencies, a stationary first aid kit, and more than six portable first aid kits. Also, a medical emergency fund is available for their use.

There are children who are in need of orthodontic treatment, however, for the moment being, they will have to wait to receive treatment since their teeth are still shedding and erupting.

In general, the children's health is good but they have had a series of daily accidents and common illnesses that have involved medical care expenses, medications, and purchases of special rehabilitation devices and bandages.

Perform routine dental, vision, and hearing screenings for all children.

□ Continue to take the necessary steps to have 100% of the vaccination cards.



SURVIVING

Children receive tasty and appetizing meals that are hygienically prepared. Protein is provided daily in their diet. There is a menu planned monthly and it is organized in a balanced manner, and offers a variety of foods to the children.

For the directors, it would be ideal to provide the children with 2 to 3 servings of fruits and vegetables, however, this depends on the season and their prices. The director would like to be able to include more fruits in his menu, but the budget does not always allow it.

#### **SUSTAINING**

#### THRIVING

#### SUSTAINING

#### THRIVING

#### A Child's Hope Foundation

They have received the support of a DIF nutritionist who has reviewed the menus every two months, receiving good comments on their planning. Their kitchen staff has not been trained in hygienic food handling. In this regard, the director has requested support from DIF so that they can help train the team and bring it in line with their standards. On the other hand, their food storage warehouses are clean, organized and free of pests.

- Training personnel in hygienic food handling matters
- □ Seek and implement fundraising strategies to increase their food budget.

# Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

**SUSTAINING** 

THRIVING

The home has been certified in safety issues and has a civil protection plan validated and accepted by state authorities. As part of its emergency plan, it has identified shelters in the nearby community to rely on if needs be. The home can withstand the elements and typical weather conditions of the location. In an emergency, the home has no alternative light source or electricity generation. They have a power generator but for the facilities, it is not enough. Its facilities are very secure and have a camera system that supports the monitoring and security of the property and, above all, of the children. The leadership has created a written maintenance plan, and most of the facilities' preventive and corrective maintenance needs have been addressed. However, some areas are still under construction and renovation in the director's house and volunteer camp area.

□ To have an alternative energy source in case of a power outage (batteries for solar panels or a power generator).

## **Right to Quality Education**

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The house has space within the homework area to set up a library. Although they have some books, including illustrative ones that the children like to read, a library needs to be built. Gabriel suggests that if the donor, Brad Jensen, is interested in continuing with the implementation of the BLR program in the home, they could start planning this project and design a space that will be designated for this program as a library. However, this project should be paused for at least a few months until the summer of 2023. This pause is needed because the home is being restructured regarding the caregivers' working hours, breaks, and vacations. Also, Beatriz, who will be in charge of this program, is busy covering these shifts/ vacations. The children at school are being provided with aptitude tests and professional advice. Maricela, the new psychologist, will also be evaluating the children's learning to assess their academic level and identify any lag.

#### A Child's Hope Foundation

There are basic materials for school projects, which are stored in a warehouse to be used efficiently. They have enough art supplies that visiting volunteer groups have left behind after each service trip. Currently, they do not have the funds or necessary resources to provide education and housing for the children after their stay at the home. Gabriel recently identified that there is an urgent need to be able to service the three cars that are used in Buena Vida, whether it is to take the children to school, run errands in the city, or to move administrative issues. Gabriel mentions that they all need preventive maintenance for better performance and durability.

- □ To have a greater quantity and variety of school materials.
- children after their time in the home.
- Achieving general maintenance (Tune up) to the three cars in the home



#### SURVIVING

Not all of the children have their birth certificates. However, this is not due to a lack of followup by the children's home but rather to the steps DIF still has to take to obtain those. In the case of Rafael, Gabriel will make a letter addressed to the deputy attorney and his lawyer because he has not been able to attend school due to lack of a birth certificate. On the other hand, in Buena Vida, the children are taught to be respectful of each other, they're told about the consequences of their actions, and taught to repair their damages. The children are assigned to do chores, especially according to age, which helps keep the home free of trash and misplaced objects. Children are taught about democratic processes and celebrate important national events or holidays. The children participate in community outreach activities at least twice a year, such as donating food baskets to families in need in La Mision. A donation of rice and beans is also made to Pastor Tomas for the community church. On several occasions, Meche has also checked warehouses in search of items that will not be used in the home in order to distribute those items in the community, an activity in which the children also participate. Also, the kids attend school trips and special events outside the home as often as possible and as is allowed.

Continue to take the necessary steps to obtain the missing birth certificates.



#### SURVIVING

The level of security at the home is adequate in regards to the surrounding community. Also, the home has private facilities for the children to bathe and change. The children's bedrooms are separated to ensure their privacy. In terms of staff training, almost all staff have been

Seek allies to support them with the necessary resources to offer what is needed to the

### △ △ A Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

#### SUSTAINING

#### THRIVING

### Right to Be Safe from Abuse & Neglect

#### SUSTAINING

#### THRIVING

#### A Child's Hope Foundation

trained in positive discipline techniques. Still, it is necessary to teach children as young as 5 years old strategies for identifying and reporting abuse. To attend to the children more effectively in the therapeutic area, when they arrive at the children's home, they undergo a psychological evaluation to help identify and work with them on traumatic situations.

- □ Train 100% of staff in positive discipline.
- Ensure that children receive an educational session on abuse and how to report it.



The children are taught well in advance what the consequences of infractions of house rules are. The teens are given the chance to clean the visitor dorms and campground for a small tip, which they can later use to make repairs to any property damage they might cause. Aside from this, DIF does not allow the children to get jobs in town. The children have adequate bedding (sheets and blankets) cleaned every two weeks or when soiled. Even though this is true, they need to purchase new washing machines as the current ones are in poor condition: they do not clean clothes thoroughly and are insufficient in number to meet all the home's needs. All children have their own toothbrushes and clean towels. Two of the most important needs are to purchase more undergarments for both boys and girls, mainly for the children new to the home, and to replace the children's sports shoes. The ones they currently have are very worn out or in bad condition because they generally only have this one pair that they use for both school and PE classes.

There is a safe, age-appropriate outdoor play area in the home. Age-appropriate toys and art materials are available for all children. Additionally, the home has registered safety protocols and training for the children and employees on civil protection issues.

- Buy four washing machines to meet the washing needs of the household.
- Have enough undergarments for all children.
- More sports shoes for all children.

### **—** Right to Equal Opportunities THRIVING SURVIVING SUSTAINING

All children are given the opportunity to take some job training or attend trade school, in case they are not interested in continuing a career path at a university. Some examples of the trades include baking, beauty, electricity, basic carpentry, and others. This is done for them to learn a trade or job skill in case they want to pursue something other than a professional career.

#### A Child's Hope Foundation

Gabriel implements a strategy of having a talk with the teens regarding their life plan. However, this process is more organic, where nothing gets documented on paper. In the case of the young adults who grew up in the children's home and still live there, it has been documented that they are part of the home's staff team. Currently, there is a young lady as a caregiver and a young man as maintenance staff, who have both passed the DIF suitability assessment.

Necessary adaptations have been made for children who require them. For example, in the past, the adaptation of glasses or the use of splints for minor injuries has been applied. The home has a plan for transition into adulthood, yet, this needs to be documented or written for all children.

Have documented transition to adulthood plans for children 13 and older.



#### SURVIVING

Buena Vida has a psychologist who works with the children. This psychologist has experience working in children's homes and works with children and adults by providing her services externally. She will attend twice a week to apply psychological evaluations to the children. Once the evaluations are ready, she will make an individualized work plan focused on the needs of each child. She will also conduct staff training and attend individually to the adults, caregivers, and directors, to work with them on stress and anxiety situations.

The home has yet to develop or implement any education or work programs for youth after their stay in the home. Also, there needs to be a written plan to support the development of life skills. There are no follow-up strategies or communication and counseling for adolescents enrolled in college or technical careers. Meche, for her part, has implemented a mentoring program with baking classes for the boys and girls. In this class, she teaches them how to make cakes and desserts as a way to learn a skill and with the idea that anyone who wants to make a business out of it in the future can do so. In addition to that, it is a time of fun and learning for children. Currently they need to have a better stove and microwave for these classes, since the one they are using to teach the children is the stove in the directors' house. Although the oven works perfectly, it is the burners that make the cooking time take longer.

Also, when there are visitors at Buena Vida, they typically want to spend time with the children during meals. However, this is not possible 100% of the time as there are not enough chairs and tables for everyone to be seated at the same time, so they need to purchase at least four additional tables and 20 more chairs.

- □ Have a written program for the development of life skills.
- and chairs for the dining room.

### SUSTAINING

### THRIVING

Implement counseling strategies to support adolescents enrolled in technical or college careers.

Obtain a new stove and microwave to improve baking times in baking classes and tables

### **Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions**

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Children can decide what to do in their free time as long as it does not alter the dynamics and rules of the household. They can also choose the clothes they want to wear daily, although in the case of younger children, such as Jayco and Rafael, they are instructed on what attire is appropriate for the day. Meche inspects and chooses the donated clothes they receive and from there, the children choose the clothes to their liking. In addition, at least twice a month the children include their preferences in the creation of the menus, as long as the food budget allows it. The menu is always posted so the children can see what they will eat for the day. The home has not yet implemented any strategy of creating hope plans or similar strategies, nor do they have child participation committees.

- □ Implement hope plans or similar strategies for children.
- □ Consider strategies for implementing a child participation committee.

# Right to Spiritual Development

**SURVIVING** 

**SUSTAINING** 

THRIVING

Children are allowed to be part of a spiritual community. Children are free to participate in daily communal prayer or other spiritual rituals. The children pray daily before every meal and at bedtime. Children are offered service opportunities to practice their spiritual learning, like reading bible verses in church. Pastor Tomas offers a small Sunday service in the home, in which all children are involved as well as the staff. Children learn about and participate in religious celebrations, for example, play performances at church. There is a designated place for prayer and meditation, even though Gabriel expresses that prayer can be done anywhere. Spiritual and religious materials and books are available and accessible for anyone to read. Very often, the directors have had to donate bibles because they receive abundant donations of them.

□ Continue with their good practices



The home has a process in place to record their income and expenses, and receipts are kept for these expenses. Gabriel personally creates their monthly expense statements, and a gualified accountant validates those. They perform internal audits on their monthly finances and keep the records available for review. In this home, controls are in place and followed to

#### A Child's Hope Foundation

minimize opportunities for misuse of funds. The leadership has identified the best suppliers for their food and construction materials purchases, however, they are always in a constant search for the best offers to optimize their resources. The home does not have an annual budget for its administration since it always operates with what is available for the month. Tax returns have been filed in accordance with government requirements. Buena Vida has an adequate division of functions or tasks for internal control.

□ To have the advice of an expert in the subject to help them create their annual budget.



#### SURVIVING

Caregivers have been given a written job description outlining their job responsibilities, however, they still need to have a document detailing their employment status. All caregivers have attended medical and hygiene training sessions, as well as first aid and CPR annually. The property and any modifications are insured through a contract for the next 80+ years so they cannot be sold for the benefit of the directors or anyone else. The home has all licensing, auditing, and governance requirements as they are currently in the process of renewing their license. The organization has and complies with a vacation and annual leave policy for all staff. There are currently 11 staff members, including the directors, of whom only four are provided social security benefits. Newcoming caregivers shadow an experienced caregiver for a minimum of one week. Weekly staff meetings are held to provide them with opportunities for support and orientation regarding their positions, almost always led by Meche. Employee files are kept securely, which include their most important documents. Ongoing meetings are held to discuss issues of concern and process improvements as well.

□ Have a written document detailing conditions of employment and a job description for all employees.

- To have personnel files with all the updated documentation.
- □ To have sufficient funds to pay the social security benefit for seven employees.

#### SUSTAINING

### THRIVING

# Current Improvement Partners



Espere partners with ACHF to provide caregiver support through trainings, workshops,

and roundtables on ways to support the well-being of the children. Additionally, they offer support to therapists working in our partner orphanages.

For a list of projects and opportunities to coordinate on go to www.ACHF.org/Projects

