

# Grace Villa Children's Home

A photograph of three women standing in front of a colorful mural. The mural features two large white swans with yellow crests, red and green floral patterns, and a small figure of a person on a hill. The women are smiling and dressed in casual to semi-formal attire. The woman on the left wears a floral dress, the middle woman wears a white top and a patterned cardigan, and the woman on the right wears a grey sweater. The background is a light green wall with the mural.

Uganda

## IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

July | 2023





# Overview of this Children's Home

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## Background & Mission

Grace Villa was started in 2013 by Ms. Ruth Kendegye Ndyabahika. It is a fully registered home licensed to accommodate 30 children and located in Makanga Kabale District.

The home started with 5 children in a rented house where they resided for seven years until they were requested to vacate because the owner wanted to use it. The home then looked for funds to relocate and in three months they managed to buy the beautiful home where it is located now. Currently, Grace Villa cares for about 30 children and over 400 children have gone through its care.

The mission of Grace Villa is to build families for children in need, help them shape their own future and share in the development of the communities. Their vision is to see a world where all children are loved, enjoy equal opportunities and resources, and live happy lives free from discrimination, abuse or exploitation.



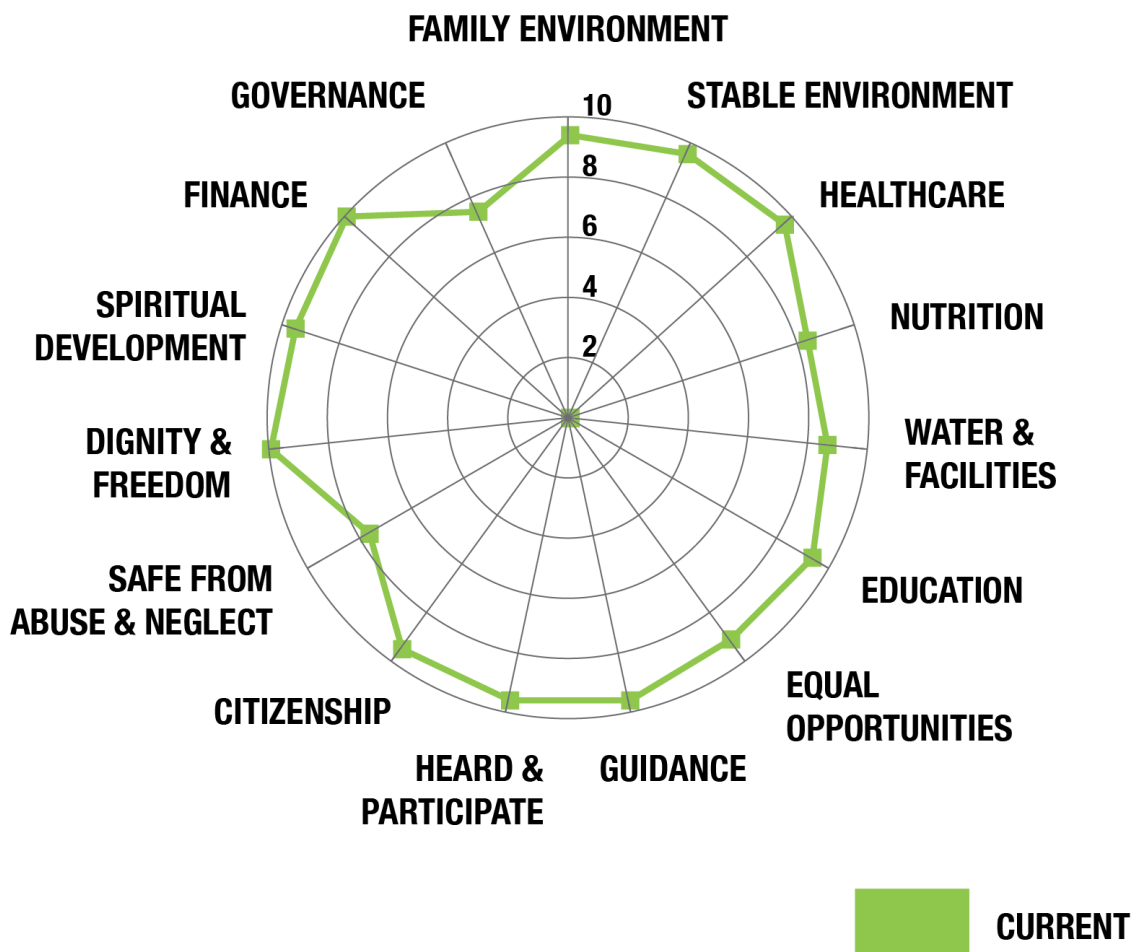
# The Thrive Assessment

## 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 are then compiled into an Improvement Roadmap.

## Current Thrive Scale



# Strategic Initiatives

## AGRICULTURE PROJECT

<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	The home has enough space to enable them to do a backyard gardening project. This project could help supplement the nutrition requirements.
<b>ESTIMATED FUNDING</b>	UGX 2562000 USD \$712

## NUTRITION TRAINING

<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION</b>	The home could use the support of a trained nutritionist to support staff on meals preparation and other required areas. (Train cooks in food safety and nutrition )
<b>ESTIMATED FUNDING</b>	UGX 1156000 USD \$322



## Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Grace Villa has 30 children, 6 caretakers, a cook and a social worker with two staff that sleep at the home. The home maintains records which include background of the child, medical files etc. Caretakers do not complete certification training on trauma informed care. On receiving a new staff member, they are oriented, given clear guidelines to follow, and evaluated monthly during staff meetings. Siblings are encouraged to play together daily before supper to promote sibling bonding. The home also ensures that children work as a team and as a family. The home has the support of a social worker for reunification purposes and she is helped by a probation officer who visits the home twice a year. There is currently no therapist who evaluates the caregivers on the care they give the children, but a social worker and the probation officer usually do so. The home promotes family visitation when possible. There is a timetable to visit a family on a weekly basis and parents are also allowed to visit children but this is not common.

- ☐ Address need for caretakers to complete certification on trauma informed care on a quarterly basis.
- ☐ Find a therapist to evaluate caretakers on the care they are giving to the children.



## Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

House rules are well-explained to the children as soon as they join the home, and penalties are given as per their age and ability. Children are called by their preferred names and not nicknames, as per information given to the home when the child arrives. Children have Saturday afternoons to engage in unstructured play where they participate in music, spelling

- ☐ Have caretakers meet with a specialist to discuss behavioral ideas to effectively teach
- ☐ Create time for caretakers to engage in joint activities and play with children on a daily



## Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home conducts a full wellness once a year check to ensure that children are in good health. They receive vaccinations in a timely manner and their cards are kept updated (the youngest child is 3 years old). For children who come into the home post-vaccinations, parents are asked to photocopy and present them to the home. Soap and water are available at the dining area as well as the toilet facilities and children are encouraged to always wash their hands after using the bathroom and before eating. The home uses the Medicus clinic in town that attends to the children in case of emergencies. While there is no specific pediatrician that attends to them, the health facility head addresses their needs most of the time. Adolescent girls are given sufficient feminine hygiene products and they are taught basics of hygienic menstrual care. Children brush their teeth daily. Since the children are not overly young, they are encouraged to take a bath more often by themselves and there are no cases of soiling. Annual visual exams are not done, but if a child complains of eyesight problems, they are checked immediately. There is a dentist that comes in every 3 months to do dental checks, but the home needs to also carry out vision checks annually. Children are not checked for lice since the home has not had any cases. Each child has a medical file within their personal files. The home has 2 first aid kits that are well stocked and children see a doctor when sick. There is an emergency fund, but this is not limited to medical emergencies only. There is one child that has a heart problem, but medication is given monthly and special feeding is considered too.

☐ Establish a medical fund for the home.



## Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Children eat enough calories and are growing well. They receive four tasty meals a day and a balanced diet is provided. Proteins like fish, eggs, and milk are also incorporated into the children's menu daily. Fruits are not given to them on a daily basis, but they are provided three times a week. Food is prepared in a hygienic manner, and there are no toxic substances in the kitchen or dining area. The home once had had an issue with rats, but they have since been eliminated. The home ensures cleanliness and the kitchen is well ventilated. They follow a set menu, but sometimes it is not followed e.g., if they receive a visitor, special meals are prepared off the menu. The facility has no nutritionist, but the cook was trained upon recruitment to ensure that food is prepared in a nutritious and safe manner. Training In food safety and preparation is required annually.

- ☐ Obtaining the support of a nutritionist is required to make sure that children receive appropriate nutrients daily.
- ☐ Provide fruits and vegetables to children on a daily basis.
- ☐ Train cooks on food safety and nutrition annually.



## Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The facility has not been inspected this year, but the probation officer and the police check the home to ensure safety. The home has piped safe water that is free from chemicals or decay, and they have prefects that ensure drinking water is boiled. Staff haven't received formal training on water quality or its relation to health, but they have general knowledge about it. All bathrooms and living areas have functioning light bulbs. Waste is properly disposed of in the manhole and doesn't contaminate drinking water. Fire extinguishers are in place. The home also has water tanks to store water in case of a water shortage and access to solar power in case of a power shortage. The home has support staff like a plumber and electrician and in case of an emergency, safety concerns are addressed. Sink faucets and shower heads are in good condition and the outdoor premises are well lit and safe. The home has no smoke alarms and no documented emergency plan or drill that children and staff participate in annually. However, children are briefed on what to do in case of emergencies. The facility is up to code with local government requirements, and the electrical infrastructure is sufficient with electrical equipment wired safely. The home uses solar power as an emergency alternative power.

- ☐ Install smoke alarms.
- ☐ Document an emergency plan that children and staff participate in annually.
- ☐ Establish an annual written plan to address property maintenance.





## Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

All children are in school with some in vocational institutions. Children above 7 are assessed by a teacher and able to write and read. Most of the children above 9 can add, subtract, multiply and divide. Children with learning disabilities are identified by the caretakers and teachers. Those with hearing problems are also identified, assessed, and supported with one on one coaching to help them perform better. The little ones are read to by the older children, but no age-appropriate reading techniques are used. The home does have a child at a grade 1 level, but she is being specially instructed on how to read and write. The home has a library with age-appropriate books and it is accessible by all children. Most of the books at home are in English, but a few are in their local language. Group tutoring is done through activities like filming classes, tailoring classes and music classes for additional education. In this area, it is challenging to resettle children, so funding is often provided until they finish university. Although there are no children below school age, the home has toys and supplies for little children. Grades are discussed at the end of the term by the caretakers and plans are made for children with challenges. There is one laptop that children can use to access the internet but the home also conducts computer lessons. One on one tutoring is also done by social workers where necessary, but not weekly.

☐ Continue with current practices



## Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Each child has personal items and a bag or locker where they can keep them. All children have the same opportunities to attend school, but children who excel are taken to advanced schools to help encourage the others. There are no children with disabilities at the moment, but cases that come up are referred to homes that take on disabled children. The home provides a transition plan to all children regardless of gender or family history and are taught what to expect as they transition into independent living. The home administrators act as role models and are always available for counsel. Although the home has no children with learning disabilities, children who are having challenges in class are being helped to improve.

☐ Identify resources and expertise to accommodate children with disabilities.





## Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home has standards of minimal education for prospective workers, in regards to staff employment and an experience of working with children is also considered. Caregivers ensure that children behave well and dress appropriately. Caretakers are discouraged from wearing tight clothes to model appropriate dress for the children. Children are educated about their bodies, discouraged from staying in closed rooms, and educated to reject any inappropriate physical contact. The home has rules and regulations that are understood by all children and they know what is expected of them. Health talks and counseling are done by a counselor from outside the home once in a while, but generally the social worker talks to the girls. Caregivers are not evaluated, but they undergo quarterly training by the government to help prepare them as quality mentors for children. Children are taught about their body and the social worker addresses topics related to sex. Caregivers model and teach basic life skills e.g., cooking, tailoring, crafting. The home participates in workshops that address sexual behaviors and a policy is in place to guard children against sexual behavior. Children receive psychological healing and therapy when a need arises, but not on a weekly basis. Children are also imparted with skills like baking, playing musical instruments, and singing. The home also looks out for interests the children have and builds on them. The home also follows up with the children until they are done with university.

- ☐ Provide children with psychological healing and therapeutic resources on a weekly basis.



## Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Children decide what they want to do in their free time under the supervision of caregivers. Children's needs are acknowledged and provided for, as deemed appropriate. Children participate in menu planning. While they are also allowed to pick out their outfits, children are checked by staff to ensure they are appropriately dressed. Information on health care procedures is provided and explained to both the children and caretakers prior administration. Children are free to opt out of activities that they do not want to participate in. Each child has an individual development plan, but some children opt out of school to focus on cultivating other skills. Children participate in leadership roles e.g Miss Grace Villa pageant where one girl is chosen as Miss Grace Villa and prefects are voted every year.

- ☐ Continue with current practices.



## Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Every child has a birth certificate and other needed documents like care orders, health records, and child development plans. The home engages in district seminars on how to help children learn and practice responsibility. Each age group has chores to do on a daily basis. For example, the girls 12 and above wash dishes while girls 9 and below sweep and clean the compound. There is a time table for cooking where the younger and older children are mixed so they can learn from each other. National and local holidays are observed. The home commemorates the Mute Biile day who was their patron as well as the home anniversary. The home is clean and well organized with no litter. Children go swimming and jogging but there are usually no special outings. Social workers model good acceptable behavior and special visitors sometimes come in to talk to children. Children do not currently perform service in the community. Children give donations in the community and also visit and help old women in the community who live alone. Major current activities are shared by social workers but children also access news on TV.

☐ Continue with current practices.



## Right to Be Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home has a security guard and fence protecting the property as well as a partnership with the Kabale police for security purposes. The home has only girls and they have private bathing and toilet facilities as well as a sleeping area. Staff and ancillaries do not currently receive annual training on positive discipline or alternatives to corporal punishment, but they

- ☐ Document a visitor policy.
- ☐ Including a clause of no one on one time into the home policies.
- ☐ Reviewing the discipline techniques with caregivers every staff meeting.



## Right to Dignity & Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Children shower every day and safety precautions are taken for infants. Children are treated as one large family. They are kind to each other and no bullying or belittling is accepted in the home. Children have access to their own bed, a towel, sufficient clothes and bedding. Children take care of themselves i.e., brushing their teeth, bathing, etc. as much as possible. Consequences for infractions of rules are discussed and children are aware of them. All children are old enough that there are no cases of soiling. Bed linens are cleaned regularly and each child has their own brush. The outdoor play area is spacious, safe and adequate for all ages. There are a few toys and enough art materials for all children. Children are allowed to speak their native language. Children can do extra chores and receive additional privileges but not necessarily money. Children who are in Ordinary level and Advanced level holidays are allowed to work and keep their money and use it productively.

☐ Continue with current practices.



## Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Youth participate in church activities, including Sunday school for the young ones. Children don't have communal prayers daily, but participate in house prayers every day before dinner time. Within the home, everyone participates in and celebrates Christmas, Easter and other religious holidays. Bibles and other spiritual books are available and accessible. Although there is no quiet separate place for prayers, children can use the dining hall.

☐ Continue with current practices



## Finance Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home keeps records, writes a requisition and gives accountability of money spent, including paying taxes. The finance assistant handles the accounts and other tasks like tax fillings. The home administrators sit with the finance assistant and discuss what items to forego and what is urgent so that money is properly allocated. While the home doesn't run on

☐ Continue with current practices.



## Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home has its own land registered as well as a land title. New staff have two weeks of orientation where they shadow experienced caretakers. The home has a monthly work plan that outlines what each person is supposed to do and if an employee is absent, he or she must delegate. Staff meetings are done on a monthly basis or when a need arises, but not necessarily on a weekly basis. Employees do not have contracts, appointment letters, or a job description, but they are advocating for them hopefully it will be worked on. The home is fully licensed with an NGO permit and a certificate of registration. Training on child development and attachment are done at the district monthly or during division meetings, which are done quarterly. The home has a board who live in Uganda and others live abroad. Caregivers do not receive annual training on caring for sick children or promoting good hygiene, but skills are obtained through district meetings and staff meetings within the home. Staff do not receive vacation or leave, but they do have every Sunday off. Individual files for every employee are available, but they are not updated. Employees involve the children in all activities as much as possible, but there is no training done on the importance of child participation.

- ☐ Health training to take place by the health inspector.
- ☐ The home should abide by a leave and vacation policy.
- ☐ Update the organization chart to enable delegation and supervision.





# Current Improvement Partners



## Both Ends Believing

Both Ends Believing (BEB) is an organization with a global presence. They offer an incredible case management software (Children First Software) that helps governments create digital identities for vulnerable children, a pivotal step in placing kids in families. Our partnership with BEB Uganda looks like training members of their team in the Thrive Certification Program so they can enhance the support they give to the children's homes they work with.

For a list of projects and opportunities to coordinate on go to  
[www.ACHF.org/Projects](http://www.ACHF.org/Projects)

