

Rancho de los Niños

Baja

IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

April | 2023



Overview of this Children's Home

Background & Mission

Rancho de los Niños began in 1968 when Jerry Walkenson, a Christian leader from San Diego, began building churches and orphanages in Baja California. One of these projects was Rancho de los Niños, which has been largely serviced by local community members from the beginning. Over the years, they have benefited from both American and Mexican connections, whose combined efforts have provided services such as underground electricity and plumbing, arable farmland, and facilities for children. These connections have allowed the orphanage to continue operating and provide a happy childhood for hundreds of children.

The mission of Rancho de los Niños is to provide the foundations for the proper development of its children: housing, nutrition, education, and balanced growth. Rancho de los Niños hopes to provide its children with the needs and resources necessary to develop their full potential, both personally and in society.

Recent Accomplishments

They were able to purchase a vehicle and legalize it to transport their kids to and from school.





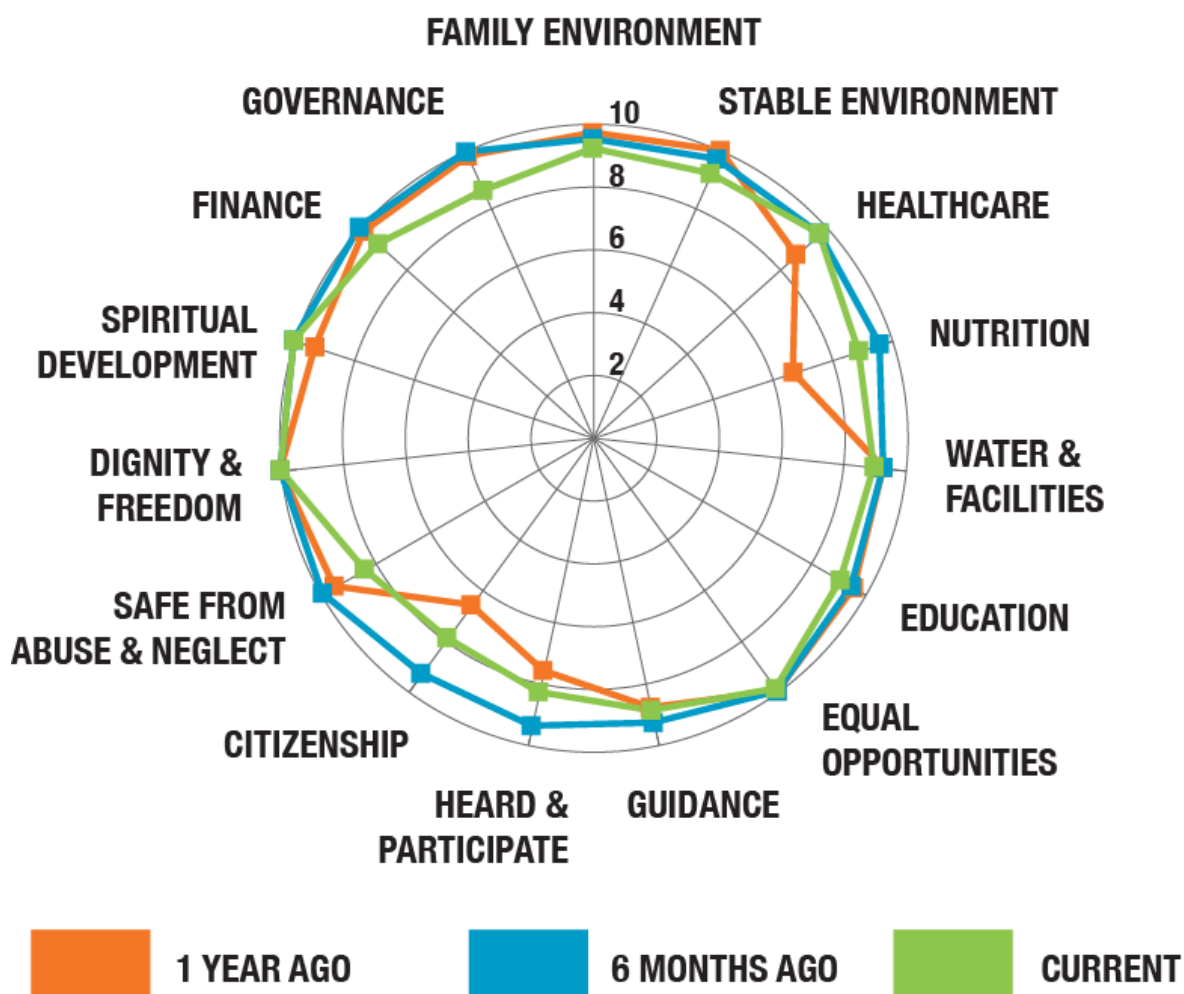
The Thrive Assessment

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

URGENT SURGERY

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	In the third week of April, a brain tumor was detected in one of the children who lived in this house, so the doctors immediately determined that urgent surgery was required to save this child's life. To support this situation's expenses, it is considered vitally important to use the \$5,000.00 USD to meet this need as soon as possible.
ESTIMATED FUNDING	>\$5,000



Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Each house has a maximum capacity of 16 children, assigned according to gender and age of the children, however, up to 21 children have been in the boys' dorm before. Currently, the home has a mixed age group ranging from 6 to 18 years old, so, with a lot of love, they seek to implement strategies and dynamics that allow a pleasant relationship between them. Each time a new child joins Rancho de los Niños, they are usually accompanied by their birth certificate and a record that, in most cases, describes the origin of each child. Even so, there are times when no documentation comes at all; in these cases, support is sought in schools to obtain a copy of both the birth certificate and the CURP, being one of the alternatives to learning the origin of the children. To promote family bonding between groups of siblings, the children are encouraged to play and spend time together daily for at least two hours. Family visits are encouraged monthly (last Sunday of the month for 2 hours). Usually, only three children out of the 91 who live in this home receive a visit from a family member.

For each house, there are two constant caregivers. At least once a year, caregivers are trained by DIF on topics related to trauma and parent education programs. Rancho de los Niños does not have a written plan established to incorporate, train and evaluate caregivers. However, the psychologist at the home evaluates them and, together with the director, determines if they meet the required profile. In addition, they rely on DIF Ensenada, who have also defined the guidelines and characteristics that caregivers must meet, and they examine to determine if they are quality caregivers.

- ☐ Design an established written plan for the onboarding, training, and evaluation of caregivers.
- ☐ Train caregivers on a quarterly basis on topics related to trauma.



Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Within the children's home, they have regulations that each of the caregivers implements within the homes they are in charge of. Each caregiver explains the rules to the children appropriately and coherently. They also use positive discipline to help children correct their faults. Inside the home, staff and children call each other by their preferred names, avoiding denigrating nicknames. Likewise, child abuse is prevented; the caregivers are always aware of each situation, and if anything abnormal is detected, a solution is immediately offered. Once the children have completed their educational activities and/or responsibilities, they can participate in activities they enjoy doing at the kiosk, running around the park, going to the playground, and playing soccer. A caregiver always supervises them. Within each house, they have established routines in which children eat, play, and work together, all to strengthen the bonds and emotional ties between them.

Caregivers often meet with the director of the home, who is a psychologist, to discuss ideas of behavior, how to discipline children, and how to communicate more effectively with them, in addition to discussing general issues that contribute to improving the quality of life of the children. One of the priorities of this home is to ensure emotional stability and promote a family environment with the children. The caregivers have been collaborating for more than two years in this home. Most are married couples of foreign workers who mostly come from the State of Chiapas and have come to contribute their values, warmth, and love to the children, which has also led to decreased staff turnover. At Rancho de los Niños, caregivers try to spend time playing with the children as long as all the caregivers are on the lookout. In this home, traditional activities are carried out to increase coexistence, such as playing soccer, organizing barbecues, and celebrating birthdays every month. Also, they do activities in each house such as watching movies on weekends, etc.

- ☐ Establish strategies to achieve play activities between caregivers and children more frequently.



Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Thanks to the support of various volunteer groups such as Corazón de Vida, they often bring health campaigns to Rancho de los Niños with various services and specialists who carry out wellness checks and examinations for all the children who live in this home. In addition, they receive specialized care from the local dentist to provide orthodontic treatment to children who need it. Most children have their vaccines and the documentation corresponding to the vaccination schedule. Dr. Angélica has been identified in a nearby neighborhood, with whom the children are taken for immediate medical attention as a first instance. In a second instance, the children are taken to the doctors' offices of Roma Pharmacies, and depending on the situation, the children are taken to the General Hospital of Ensenada or the Velmar private hospital. As of now, not all children have a complete medical record since it has been difficult because of the constant traffic of the children and even more so when they are newly admitted.

To strengthen hygiene and health habits, soap and water are available in various areas of the home, and caregivers frequently remind children of these habits. Children brush their teeth three times a day. In addition, children who wear diapers have their diapers changed immediately after they are soiled. Children are often checked for lice; appropriate treatment is provided if found. It is worth mentioning that there have been gusts in which many children have been filled with lice, however, they are always looking for ways to eradicate them. Caregivers are responsible for explaining and informing adolescent girls about menstrual hygiene care, what to expect, how to take care of themselves, how to use and discard feminine products, and providing them with feminine products in sufficient quantities. The home has a medical fund for emergencies and first aid kits containing the basics. They also have a medicine cabinet that is fully stocked and located in the kitchen area.

- ☐ Complete the children's medical records that are still needed.
- ☐ Stock all available first aid kits.
- ☐ Have children receive their missing vaccines and obtain their vaccination records.



Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Everything possible is done to ensure the children of this home are well nourished. For this reason, delicious meals are prepared daily with enough animal or vegetable protein and a minimum of two servings of fruit and vegetables to reach the number of calories required for their healthy development. Meals are prepared hygienically, well chilled, and cooked thoroughly.

The kitchen, dining room, and warehouse are free of toxic substances and pests and are kept tidy and clean. In addition, the kitchen area is well-ventilated. Every year, the cooks receive training related to food safety and preparation. Currently, in each house within the children's home, the caregivers are preparing meals for the children who live there, allowing children to participate in food preparation and propose the foods they enjoy eating.

- ☐ Have the support of a nutritionist to verify that children are getting enough nutrients daily.
- ☐ If possible, if it is part of the work plan, hire the needed kitchen staff.



Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Recently, the Rancho de los Niños facilities have been inspected by Civil Protection to assess the safety of the property. This authority recommended that some updates be made to the Internal Civil Protection Program that has been in the works. They currently have an emergency plan in case of fire, flood, loss of water, and loss of electricity, and they have constant training and participate in the national drill. In addition, they have supplies to protect children in the case of an accident, such as working smoke detectors and extinguishers, which indicates that the facilities meet the requirements and codes of the local authorities.

Rancho de los Niños has safe and clean purified water for when the children would like to drink it. The water is stored in a container, supplied by a private company which shares a bacteriological opinion that the water is free of bacteria. They also service the container twice a year. In this home, they have a person who provides qualified and reliable support in maintenance matters. In addition, the rest of the caregivers also support that the facilities are kept in the best possible condition. At least one bulb works in every bathroom and living room, every house has a safe septic tank that doesn't contaminate drinking water, and sink faucets and shower heads are functional. The facilities are safe and capable of withstanding heavy rains, winds, and floods. In addition, the electrical infrastructure is sufficient for their needs at home; the outdoor facilities are well-lit to increase the safety of children. Rancho de los Niños is in constant dialogue with staff about the importance of drinking water quality and care.

- ☐ Purchase batteries for solar panels that allow them to be used at night.
- ☐ Have a power generator to use in case of emergencies.

Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Regardless of whether the children are newcomers, all children are allowed to go to school, have individual tutoring and access books and school supplies to develop and strengthen their education. Rancho is home to eleven children and adults with special needs who have a house just for themselves, in which there are adaptations to improve their quality of life. They also have specialized personnel so that they receive adequate care and training to develop their capacities as much as possible. On the other hand, when children with physical disabilities are identified, efforts are made to provide them with what they need, such as children who need glasses, a hearing aid, etc. Each of the children has space to store their clothes and personal items.

To support adolescents who are about to begin the transition to independent living, activities are assigned to them so that they can learn a trade and strengthen their knowledge with routine and more complex activities. Both caregivers, adult mentors, men and women, act as role models to guide children and guide them on the best possible path.

- ☐ Develop a transition plan for adulthood.



Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The vast majority of children who live in Rancho de los Niños attend school regularly. There are children from preschool to university at this home, due to this, both the director and the assistant director have a very well-defined strategy for taking them to and from school on different schedules because the investment in gasoline is very large. All children have frequent access to art supplies. With regard to younger children or those with disabilities who do not attend school, they have a teacher who is responsible for stimulating their development and skills through various activities such as reading them stories, drawing, and playing different games according to their level of understanding.

Children ages seven and older can articulate at least every letter of the alphabet, read, write and perform simple mathematical operations. In the case that any of the children should ever require help to improve academically, there are two teachers who support them and establish improvement strategies in a personalized or group form, as the case may be. To reinforce learning in this home, they have internet and computer equipment so that the children can do their homework, and they have also received classes on how to use the computer and its various programs. In addition, each house has a minimal variety of books available for when the children would like to read them. On the other hand, caregivers analyze the report cards of each of the children and try to follow up when any of them require specialized support.

- ☐ Develop a plan to have funding and housing available for children to pursue additional education after completing their time at the home.

- ☐ As soon as possible, seek support from a specialist who evaluates children to ensure that they are capable of reading and writing within a grade level equal to or higher than their corresponding level and, if they are unable, develop a plan to improve their literacy.
- ☐ Establish a strategy to increase the variety of books and art material.



Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

At Rancho de los Niños, the administrative area has a profile and job description for when they are looking for new caregivers; the director is responsible for all the corresponding processes to define if hiring is feasible. In addition, the director has instructed caregivers to offer children a model of respectful behavior and reinforce the sense of how to take care of their bodies and set limits. This home has a series of simple and clear rules that are explained in a way that is understandable to children, in this way, all staff are alert to guide children to understand and respect these rules. Both the director and the caregivers speak in advance with children and adolescents about going from puberty to adolescence and are educated to engage in good, responsible sexual behavior.

Children often receive psychological care, and support is provided as required, either individually or in groups. In addition, caregivers have been evaluated to determine if they are quality mentors for the children through the support of the psychologist who attends the home. Caregivers are also trained annually on how to teach children good behavior, basic life skills, and how to address or manage children's sexual behaviors. Adolescents over 15 can often learn new things to broaden their interests and prepare them for their future. The director of Rancho de los Niños is responsible for coaching and guiding them in acquiring new skills. Likewise, there is open and constant communication with adolescents in technical or university careers.

- ☐ Develop and implement a policy that addresses the issue of children's sexual behavior.
- ☐ Develop a written plan for children over 15 to develop their education after completing their time at the home.



Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Children can decide what they would like to do in their spare time as long as they stick to the rules and regulations of the home. In addition, when children express a need, it is considered and supported so that it is addressed, and it is usually the caregivers who take care of it. Now that food is being prepared in each house, children can participate in menu planning at least once a month to incorporate their tastes and preferences. The children have enough clothing and are given the option of choosing the clothes they will wear.

To avoid a traumatic situation, both children and caregivers are informed about the medical care procedures that will be performed. Children are given the option to choose whether or not to participate in activities that are not essential. In this home, children are involved in activities that allow them to take on leadership roles and can develop this skill, positively impacting the home and/or community.

- ☐ Implement individual development plans for each child and update them every month.



Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

More than half of the children have a birth certificate proving their identity and nationality, which, because it is a very important document, the director and the assistant director of this home are constantly looking for strategies to obtain these. To prepare children for responsible citizenship, they are assigned personal responsibilities and are encouraged to participate in various recreational activities within the home. In addition, they are taught through example and continuous dialogue on issues related to ethics and democracy. Main current events are frequently shared with the children to make them aware of the situations that occur in the home.

Caregivers often discuss ways in which they can help children understand and practice the skill of how to be more responsible. The director of Rancho de los Niños mentors adolescents over 15 years of age and teaches them basic life skills. Children participate in community service activities at least twice a year when given the opportunity. National and local holidays such as Mexican Independence Day, spring parades, Christmas, and other special dates are respected and celebrated in this home. On the other hand, the home is free of clutter, and objects such as bicycles, tables and tools are stored in their corresponding place.

- ☐ Train caregivers on ways they can help children understand and practice the ability to be responsible.
- ☐ Continue with the relevant strategies to obtain the missing birth certificates of the children.



Right to Be Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The level of security of the home, in regards to the surrounding community, is very safe because, fortunately, the National Guard is situated next to Rancho de los Niños, which provides greater protection and allows them to feel safe. Inside the home are private facilities so children can bathe and go to the restroom; the bedrooms are separated by age and gender. Infants and toddlers stay mostly in the play area, in their cribs only when they sleep. Newly admitted children are evaluated by DIF, however, if any risky situation is detected, it is immediately addressed by the psychologist at the home.

Children over five years old have learned to express their disagreements thanks to the teachings they have received at the home. When children leave the home, they are always accompanied by their caregivers. All staff have received training from the director in positive discipline techniques and have been trained in identifying, preventing, and avoiding abuse. Rancho de los Niños has a policy that prohibits an adult from spending time alone with a child, as well as a policy that ensures that they will not be physically, verbally, sexually, emotionally, or psychologically abused. Caregivers frequently observe children for signs of abuse or neglect; if any situation is detected, they immediately report it to the director for follow-up. They also have a written policy for visitors. In addition, they have an established process for checking staff backgrounds.

- ☐ Implement a policy to prevent child exploitation.
- ☐ It is recommended that new children be evaluated to work on their traumas.



Right to Dignity & Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this home, caring for the dignity of each of the children is essential. For this reason, they are made to know how important they are to caregivers and directors by providing them with everything they need to improve their quality of life and acquire positive habits that allow them to care for themselves. Consequently, they are taught to bathe daily. They are given access to their bed, towel, and a toothbrush. They have enough clothing, underwear, and clean blankets. Children are encouraged to be kind to each other and are talked to in advance about the consequences of breaking rules and norms.

They have toys and art supplies appropriate for all children's ages. In addition, inside the home, they have an outdoor play area that allows them to enjoy various activities. Children can perform additional tasks or work to earn financial aid or a privilege. It is worth mentioning that two teenagers have been allowed to work in the community, in a safe environment, to earn a little extra money.

- ☐ Increase the amount of art materials
- ☐ Continue the excellent work they are doing.



Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this home, children are taught about faith and love for God and their neighbor; all children attend a Christian church, which allows them to have the opportunity to be part of a spiritual community. Children are free to participate in communal prayers within the house they are staying in.

In addition, children learn and participate in religious celebrations. A group of people from their church come to Rancho de los Niños to carry out various activities with the children and strengthen their spirituality. This home has spiritual materials and books, which are available and accessible to children. In addition, in each of the houses, there is a small space in their living room that allows the children to be in silence and pray whenever they would like to do so.

- ☐ Continue the excellent work they are doing.



Finance Standard

SURVIVING	SUSTAINING	THRIVING
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The director of the home is responsible for monitoring the income and expenditure record. They have a special folder for this information, which is readily available for review. On an annual basis, tax returns have been submitted in accordance with government requirements, and bank accounts are reconciled every month. They have an internal or external review of their finances every three months. They have an accountant who supports them on all matters related to accounting.

Year after year, the director seeks to draw up an annual budget to determine the amount of money he will require for the operation of the home as a whole, considering that the priorities are: food, the stability of children, health, and education. They have detailed plans for more important expenses. In the case of construction projects, they rely on donations and labor from volunteers who visit the home.

- ☐ Establish a policy that will help them minimize opportunities for misuse of funds.
- ☐ Establish major construction plans in writing.



Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING	SUSTAINING	THRIVING
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Through the Constitutive Act, they have ensured that in Rancho de los Niños, the land and all the improvements that can be made are not sold for personal benefit. They have all the licenses, audits, and governance requirements that the state authorities request. They have a board of directors that meets frequently.

Within Rancho de los Niños, they have an established process in which new caregivers follow an experienced caregiver for at least two weeks to learn the processes, responsibilities, and activities to be carried out. Also, often and whenever necessary, the director and assistant director meet with caregivers and all staff to discuss issues of concern and process improvements. Efforts have been made to strengthen communication and to address any need as soon as possible. Another well-defined process is to provide caregivers with a written

A Child's Hope Foundation

document that details their conditions of employment and responsibilities. From DIF B.C., caregivers have received training on attachment, child development, caring for sick children and promoting child participation. In addition, caregivers are allowed to have leave and vacation time in accordance with the regulations established by Mexican labor law. The collaborators have a file that contains personal information, internal regulations, and all the corresponding documentation.

- ☐ Prepare the organization chart with the positions defined in Rancho de los Niños.
- ☐ Have more information regarding the Board of Directors.



Current Improvement Partners



corazón de vida

Corazón de Vida

These partners work with 10+ orphanages in Baja California. Their focus is food, education, staff salaries & some small construction projects. They also help kids from orphanages get an apartment and go to college.

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

