

A young boy with dark skin and short hair is swinging on a blue seat with yellow chains. He is wearing a grey t-shirt with a yellow stripe and patterned shorts. He is barefoot and looking to the side. The swing set is made of green and yellow metal. The background shows a paved area, some greenery, and a building in the distance.

# Ghana Make a Difference

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Ghana

# IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

November | 2023

# Overview of this Children's Home

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## Background & Mission

Cory and Stacey Hofman first traveled to Ghana in May of 2012. During their trip, they saw so many children that were hungry, abandoned and without shelter and became determined to help. Upon returning home, the Hofmans joined with others in Idaho to create Ghana Make a Difference (GMAD). GMAD was founded in July 2012 to protect vulnerable children and to preserve families in Ghana.

GMAD started on five acres of land donated by the local village chief. They have constructed and currently operate a main children's home (8,200 sq ft), a smaller home for children with special needs, a school, a dental/medical clinic, and a volunteer house. The home employs 36 local, full-time Ghanaian and refugee workers as nannies, social workers, teachers, cooks, maintenance/grounds workers, and management. Each year the home receives about 200 volunteers that travel to Ghana (mostly from the USA) to help further the work and mission of GMAD.

Ghana Make a Difference was established on the belief that children have been endowed by their creator with the inalienable right to be reared in a family. GMAD seeks to make a difference in the lives of children who have been abandoned or rescued from forced child labor by providing them with a place they can call home. It is a temporary home that includes food and shelter as well as physical, mental, and emotional nurturing. Additionally, there's an emphasis on trying to reintegrate children with their biological family or finding them a new adoptive family. The leaders at this home believe that families are central to God's plan for His children's eternal destiny, and the operations of GMAD reflect this belief.

They preserve families by providing a path to self-reliance through education, adult literacy, vocational training, social assistance, healthy living, and access to medical care. Many of the children sheltered at GMAD have been rescued from labor trafficking and have never attended school. In addition to the home, the GMAD Academy of Learning was created in 2017 to provide a powerful curriculum that is customized and flexible to better meet the needs of our children. Unique for Ghana, our children learn on tablets and laptops. The school is located onsite. Long-term, GMAD hopes to double their capacity from 60 children to 120 as well as complete a new school to educate these children and others in the community who are unable to attend school. Ultimately, the goal of Ghana Make a Difference is to always be, pound for pound, the most impactful place you can put a dollar. They run their operations using sound business practices, operating on donations and volunteer efforts, so 100% of every dollar goes directly to the cause. Anyone can make a difference at GMAD.





## Recent Accomplishments

Broken handrails around the facility were recently repaired to increase safety. Construction on a new dormitory was started to provide additional living space for children at the home.

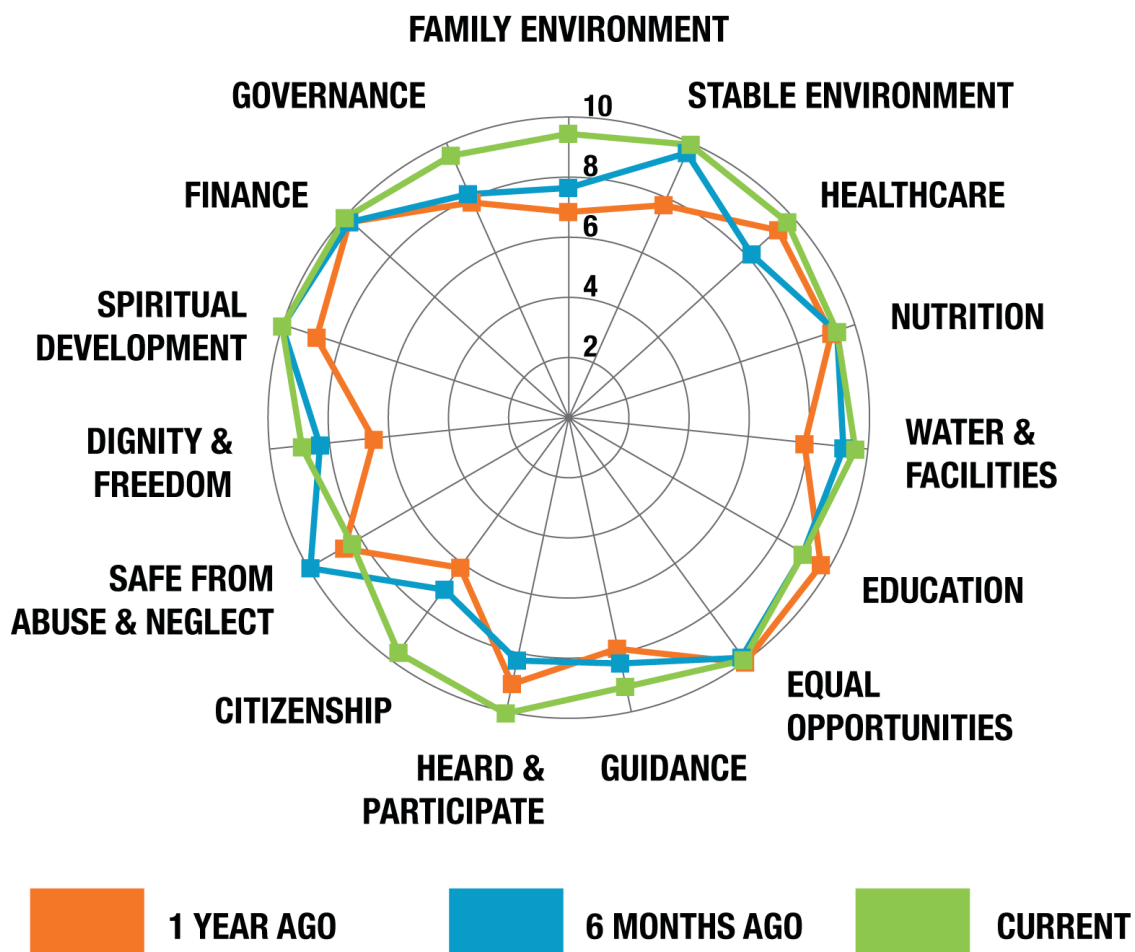


# The Thrive Assessment

## 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 compiled into an Improvement Roadmap.

## Current Thrive Scale



# Strategic Initiatives

## BATHROOM REPAIRS & IMPROVEMENTS

<b>PROJECT SUMMARY</b>	There are a number of broken shower heads and sink faucets in the bathrooms. Children often break the shower heads by hanging on them while showering. The home would like to repair the shower heads by replacing them at a higher height so children cannot hold on to and hang from them. They would also like to replace a few broken sink faucets as well.
<b>INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST</b>	11,950 CEDI \$ 1000 USD

## REPAIR OUTDOOR LIGHTS

<b>PROJECT SUMMARY</b>	There are currently some outdoor lights at the facility that have burned out. Since children sometimes need to walk between buildings after sunset, the lights need to be replaced to increase the safety and security of the home.
<b>INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST</b>	2,390 CEDI \$ 200 USD

## FIRE SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

<b>PROJECT SUMMARY</b>	The bedrooms need to have smoke alarms installed to protect and warn the children in case of fire. The property has some fire extinguishers for fire safety, but they need to be checked and possibly replaced.
<b>INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST</b>	3,585 CEDI \$ 300 USD



## Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

A new bunkhouse is currently being constructed, which will eventually allow for fewer children per room and provide more individualized attention. The caregiver staff is consistent as most staff are with the children at least 5 days or more in a week. Staff are also receiving specific training to equip them to care for kids with trauma four times a year. The home has an established onboarding plan when bringing on new staff members. Siblings are encouraged to spend time together since GMAD has a goal to reunite families when possible. Thus, helping siblings bond while in the home is important to the home. There is a therapist who meets at least twice a year with caregivers to evaluate the standard of care being given to the kids. Additionally, when family visitation is possible and safe, the GMAD staff allow it. There is a need for caregivers to receive more training regarding the values of a family and creating a family setting within an orphanage. GMAD also has a plan for the near future of having foster families who would come on-site to live in family units with foster children from the home.

- ☐ Implement additional training for caregivers on establishing a family environment and values.
- ☐ Complete bunkhouse construction so there is sufficient space for children to receive individualized attention.



## Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

House rules are explained consistently to children. Each child has age appropriate consequences given to him/her when rules are broken so they understand what they have done is wrong. Physical punishment is not used. Children are always called by their preferred names. Generally, younger kids don't play with older kids due to different interests, but they do spend time together in their groups. There's a social worker who meets and trains caregivers on ways to address behavioral concerns with the children on a monthly basis. Caregivers are receiving sufficient rest each week and caregiver turnover is very low since most caregivers started at the home years ago and have continued there. Monthly coaching is provided to caregivers regarding topics such as how to create a stable environment. Caregivers participate in activities with the children and have established traditions such as Thursday movie night, which helps new children assimilate to the home more easily.

- ☐ Continue with the current practices



## Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Children are receiving wellness exams once a year and the necessary vaccinations as scheduled. There is soap available and kids are encouraged to wash hands throughout the day. Sufficient feminine hygiene products are available for the girls, and they are taught how to use the products. Babies in diapers are changed frequently throughout the day. Each child has a medical file to track incidents. Children brush their teeth daily, but some children need to be reminded to brush them at least twice per day. The home has sufficient access to medical care and has an emergency medical fund to use when needed. GMAD does have some special cases where children need added care or treatment, but caregivers have been trained for those cases, so they know how to handle them. Because GMAD receives dental and medical mission visits, children have medical needs addressed quickly and if the visits were not sufficient, customized care would be sought out.

- ☐ Remind children to always brush their teeth in the morning and the evening.



## Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Children receive sufficient calories each day and food is always prepared in a hygienic manner. A nutritionist also prepares the menu for the home on a quarterly basis. All kitchen and food areas are free of toxic substances and pests. The cooking area was recently improved for ventilation and is now much safer. Professional cooks prepare food that is very appetizing for the children and protein is provided daily. Sufficient fruit and vegetable servings are provided daily as well. Although food safety is practiced by the cooks, they have not received formal training on proper food safety.

- ☐ Implement training resources for the cooks on food safety & preparation





## Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home has an annual safety check on the facility done by the fire department and the Ghana Health Service. The home also has sufficient clean drinking water that is treated and run through a filter. Children have access to that drinking water whenever needed, but a method for identifying which water is safe for drinking should be considered. There is also a safe way to dispose of sewage so as to not contaminate their water. Plans are in place in case of fire, and they have tanks to be used in case of the loss of water. The home does have a generator to use in case of electricity loss, but the expense is costly and they don't use it unless it is an emergency. As part of the staff GMAD has a facility team to address ongoing needs around the property. While there is generally sufficient lighting, there are some outdoor lights between buildings that need to be replaced. The school also needs more tarps (window coverings) to help keep the water out when it rains as well as block the sun during warmer weather. Bathroom repairs and improvements are needed. The shower heads could be moved up and out of reach of the children to keep them in functioning order. Faucets around the home need to be fixed as well. GMAD keeps the facilities up to code for the government requirements. Smoke alarms are needed within the kitchen areas and bedrooms. The home is also working on integrating drills with the children for fire and emergency safety. Training on hygiene that includes topics of safe drinking water for health are planned for the future.

- ☐ Implement signage for safe drinking water so residents, volunteers, and visitors are all available.
- ☐ Repair outdoor street lights for safety.
- ☐ Hire a plumber to repair & adjust shower head heights as well as fix sink faucets.



## Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

All children that are school-age attend school on-site at the home. Teachers use assessments via quizzes to identify each child's learning abilities. Previously, there were some children struggling with the alphabet, but they are using a system that has helped them improve. Some older children arrive to the home after working in forced labor situations and are very behind academically. However, the home always creates a plan to help children reach the appropriate academic levels. The nannies in the nursery work with infants to help them reach milestones prior to the infants reaching school-age. The home has a new social worker, Bernice, who has experience in evaluating learning disabilities. However, improvements on formalizing the process of evaluations and identification of learning disabilities could be done. The home has prayer time daily where reading is encouraged and children are sometimes assigned to prepare for reading out loud to the class. Some of the older children are also assigned to read to younger children who cannot yet read. The home does have a library with books in English



## A Child's Hope Foundation

accessible to all children, but they are lacking in books written in the local language of Twi. Children have access to computers and the internet and sometimes gather for homework time, but there's currently no consistent tutoring available. Leadership is working on fundraising an apartment for young adults who are aging out of the home, but some young men are also preparing to leave on LDS missions. Developmentally appropriate toys and supplies are mostly available. There's a social worker that discusses grades and academic progress with children. More instruction on computers and programs could be implemented as well as more art supplies for children. One on one tutoring is not happening often.

- ☐ Formalize the process of using evaluations to identify learning disabilities with Bernice.

## Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Each child has a space for their personal items. All children have the right and opportunity to receive an education. The home has appropriate playground equipment for all children, including those with disabilities. Every child has access to a social worker who helps them create a plan for the future, which can include family reunification or transitioning out of the home and into independent living. GMAD has resources for children with learning disabilities, but they see a need to increase that support with more learning materials that are not electronic.

- ☐ Secure additional resources for kids with learning disabilities that are not electronic.



## Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home uses job descriptions when looking for new caregivers. Because the kids come from different areas and from different backgrounds, it can be a challenging environment for caregivers. The home has improved on this and plans to keep a focus to maintain a respectful environment. GMAD has a leader specifically assigned to educate kids on their bodies and consent, as well as puberty and sexual behavior. On a monthly basis, all kids have access to a counselor to support them in psychological healing. Both the home leadership and a social worker assess the caregivers to determine if they are quality mentors for the children in their care. They are also trained on how to help the children manage sexual behaviors. The older kids are exposed to educational and work opportunities to help them see options for the future. Each child has a "Care Plan" co-created with them by a social worker that includes their plans and goals. This plan is reviewed with the kids on a monthly basis. Older kids are also given money before leaving for school so that they can purchase lunch while away. This helps the kids learn how to manage money and provide for themselves.

- ☐ Continue with the current practices



## Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Children can decide what to do in their free time, under the condition that it's an approved activity within reason. There is opportunity for children to express needs which are acknowledged. Menu-planning with the nutritionist incorporates the preferences of the children. Children pick out their clothing after school, once they change out of their school uniform. There is always a social worker who explains medical procedures to children beforehand. Children can opt out of non-essential activities that they don't wish to do in order to maintain their rights. Each child has an individual development plan that is regularly updated. Leadership roles via role plays (chief, lawyer, etc) are provided to help determine where children's interest and strengths lie. Additionally, on a weekly basis, Family Home Evening is an activity run by the kids.

☐ Continue with the current practices



## Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Each child at GMAD has their birth certificate. The caregivers are trained to help children learn and take on responsibilities. These responsibilities include things like washing their clothes, sweeping the property, helping prepare meals, making their beds, etc. GMAD celebrates holidays with the children like Independence Day and Mother's Day. The grounds are kept clean and the children help to maintain that. GMAD will periodically plan outings with other children's homes nearby to participate in activities like volleyball, sightseeing, and soccer. Leadership at the home feels these activities are creating positive memories for the children. The children are given opportunities to provide service in the community as the older kids often help translate and perform routine tasks during the medical mission visits with community members. The younger kids have helped with things like painting a community building, but more involvement for younger children in service could be considered.

☐ Look for service opportunities within the community for younger children to participate.



## Right to Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home has a security staff, fence, and barbed wire to ensure children are kept safe. Children have access to private facilities for bathing, dressing, and using the toilet. Sleeping facilities are kept separate between boys and girls. Training on positive discipline techniques generally happens once or twice each year and corporal punishment such as caning is not permitted. No one-on-one time between a child and adult or two children is permitted. The home has a child protection program and receives visits from the Justice Welfare Department who meet with the children to ensure abuse is not occurring. While there have been problems in the past with some staff who did not follow protocol regarding labor exploitation, the home does have a policy in place to prevent exploitation and any staff found to break policy are dismissed. The Justice Welfare Department helps train caregivers at least twice a year on recognizing and preventing abuse, as well as evaluating children for signs of abuse and reporting it. The home also discusses abuse reporting methods with children. Outings off-campus do occur and staff always accompany the children. A visitor policy is in place and background checks are done for both staff and visitors. Currently intake assessments don't happen regularly and could be improved.

☐ Continue with the current practices



## Right to Dignity and Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Each child has their own bed in the home with clean bed linens. The home has a need for more undergarments and clothing for the children. Most of the time they have sufficient, but there are times when the donations run out. The children are taught how to care for themselves like bathing and brushing teeth. Additionally, children are allowed to do as much as they can for themselves whenever possible. The home has an outdoor play area that has options for all ages. The home doesn't have sufficient toys for the number of kids right now and conflict between children does happen due to this shortage. English is taught to the children while living at GMAD, but they are allowed to speak their native language as well. Children are allowed to earn an allowance when doing extra chores around the property and can keep that money for their own personal spending. There have been some opportunities for teenagers to work in the community as well, but not very often.

☐ Purchase additional undergarments for the children.

☐ Obtain additional toys and art supplies for the children.





## Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Church services were previously held outside the home and most children participated, but they now hold church services on-site in the dining area and other rooms. Children always have the opportunity to participate in these services and the close proximity makes that very easy now. Daily prayer and other spiritual rituals are available for children to take part in. Children learn and participate in religious holidays as well as have access to religious materials and books. The older children attend seminary classes and Sunday school. Leadership roles like preparing the sacrament, leading the music, and cleaning the church spaces are also available for children to take on. There are places within the home where children can pray and meditate personally.

☐ Continue with the current practices



## Financial Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home has a method for tracking donations and expenses monthly as well as keeping financial records. Tax filings are done on time each year on the US side. A profit and loss statement is created monthly. There are some internal controls in place for purchasing and there are multiple people who share financial duties to help ensure funds are used appropriately. GMAD's bank accounts are reconciled monthly by internal leadership. There is an external review done quarterly and a qualified accountant doing a review annually as well.

☐ Continue with the current practices



## Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Ghana Make a Difference has the land in the name of the home and it can't be changed or sold for personal gain. New caregivers shadow experienced caregivers for at least a month before taking on their responsibilities. There is a written organizational chart kept and new staff members are introduced at monthly staff meetings to orient everyone to their new role. New caregivers are also given a written description of their position as well as the terms of their employment. The home is required by the government to have an operational license, which they have. Department meetings occur weekly with leadership and caregivers or between staff and social workers. Solomon, a social worker, provides training annually to caregivers on attachment and child development. The home has a board of directors in the US and an advisory board in Ghana. Both boards meet 1-2 times each year, sometimes virtually. Training on caring for sick children and good hygiene is provided to caregivers annually. There is a vacation and leave policy for staff in place, and all employees have files that are updated regularly and kept in a secure place. Some caregiver training has previously touched on child participation, but more focused training on this topic could be done, especially by the social workers.

- ☐ Implement more training on child participation by the social workers.



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