

Niños de Baja

Mexico

IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

January | 2024

Recent Accomplishments

- The children with the greatest lag in reading have had the support of a tutor who has motivated and guided them to achieve extraordinary accomplishments such as: recognizing letters, reading aloud, understanding texts, writing correctly and improving the quality of their school work. These advances in the children have generated great self-confidence and they have recognized that they are capable of making great progress in their school cycle.
- Thanks to the weekly psychological therapies that the children of this home have received, some of them have been able to successfully complete their process, which has contributed to overcoming painful or traumatic situations that they have experienced at a young age.
- Repairs were made to some of the vehicles used to transport children in three of the homes that make up Niños de Baja: a) A broken and detached windshield was purchased, a battery was purchased and the suspension of the Casa Granada van was repaired, b) The crash of the Casa Hinton van was repaired, and c) A tire was purchased for the Casa Sonrisa van.



Overview of this Children's Home

Background & Mission

Niños de Baja began operations in 1968, starting with a single home that functioned as a day care center for the community. An additional home was built and they began to receive children from DIF. In the following years, more property was acquired and additional homes were built. Short-term missionary teams began to come to this home to provide the labor and resources needed for expansion. Currently Niños de Baja has five children's homes, with a total capacity of 56 children. In each home, emphasis is placed on creating a family environment. Each has a set of foster parents living in the home. Although the foster parents and staff are paid employees, each considers working here their mission. Their love and dedication are evident in the attitude of the children. Also, they have a dining room and kitchen, which are adequate to provide and share meals together. In addition, there is a guest house for visiting teams, a director's office and several storage and operations buildings.

Niños de Baja has a Christ-centered mission. Its future goals include continuing to provide the best care for children, breaking the generational chains of abuse, addiction and hopelessness by providing loving alternatives. In addition to encouraging children to continue their education and training after high school, seeking to maintain and expand their educational background. Ultimately, Niños de Baja wants children to become responsible and active members of society. This includes them being strong husbands, fathers, wives and mothers. They would love to one day see these adults return to their children and proudly tell them, "This is where I grew up, this was my family, and they loved me."

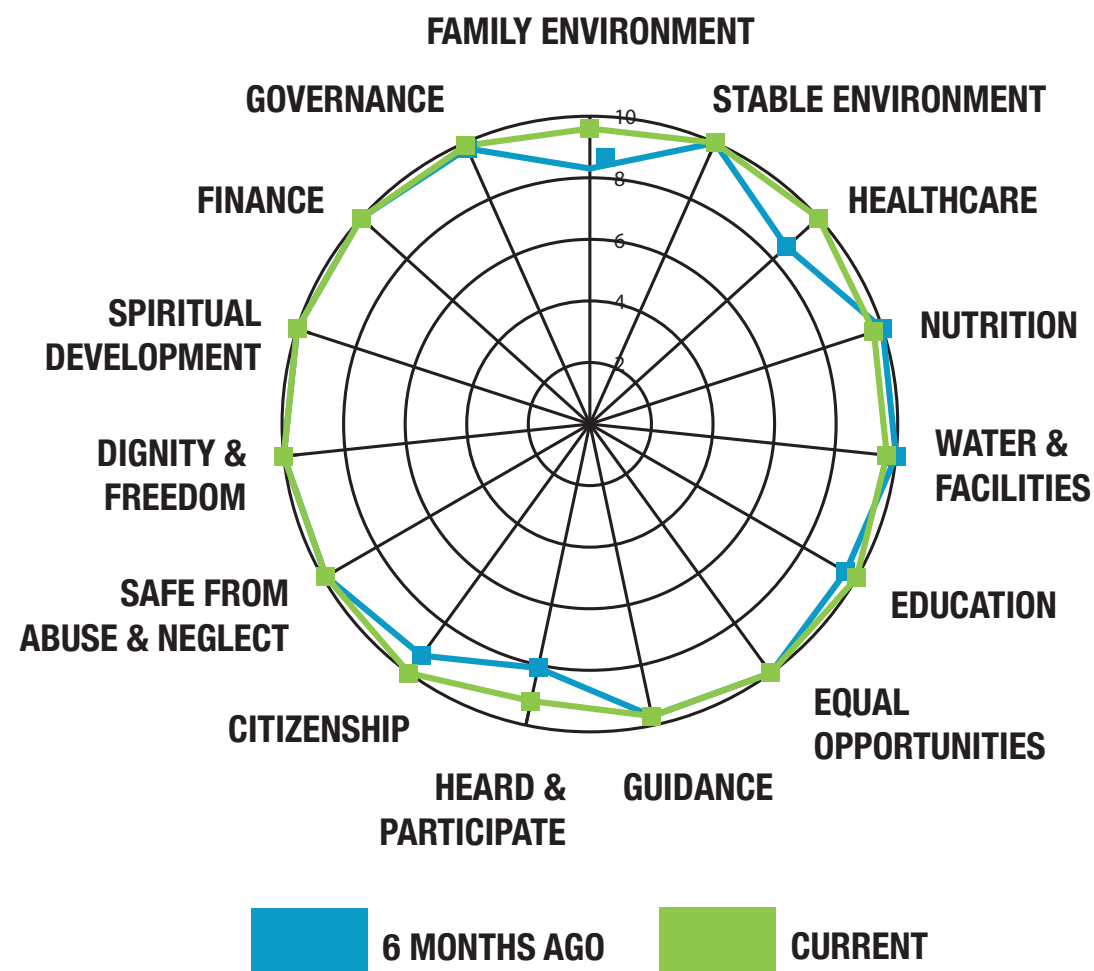


The Thrive Assessment

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 and compiled into an Improvement Roadmap.

Current Thrive Scale



Strategic Initiatives

PURCHASE A STATIONARY GAS TANK

PROJECT SUMMARY	According to the most recent update of the gas report, the specialist in this matter recommended replacing one of the existing gas tanks in the home because it has already fulfilled its lifetime. The current one shows some wear that could cause a major accident in the near future.
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	\$9,862.06 MXN \$597.70 USD

ULTRASONIC TESTING OF 3 GAS TANKS

PROJECT SUMMARY	According to the recommendations of the specialist in gas opinion and in order to continue with good practices in safety and hygiene for the welfare of all who live in this home, it is necessary to perform an ultrasound test to three gas tanks to determine their physical condition and resistivity to facilitate the management of maintenance and avoid a risk situation such as gas leaks or explosions.
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	\$6,480.00 MXN \$392.72 USD



Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Niños de Baja is made up of 46 girls, boys, adolescents and young adults between the ages of 6 and 17 years old. The children are distributed by age and gender and live in one of the five different houses that make up this home. Thanks to the vision of the founders and directors (Juan and Karla) within the five houses, the children are educated through the “Foster Parent” approach. This model allows each home to have a full-time father and mother figure in order to foster a family atmosphere and motivate the children to carry out activities together to strengthen the bonds of love and solidarity among them. Each house has a maximum of 12 children, with the exception of the youth house, which has a maximum of 8. One of the great successes that the directors have implemented with the caregivers is to share with them the book: “Effective Ministry to Orphans” by Dr. Larry E. Banta. In the book they find tools and a structure on how to provide a better quality of life for the children. Additionally, about four children receive family visits once a month, authorized by DIF. During these visits, Niños de Baja staff is always present and talks with the family members to invite them to avoid deceiving the children by telling them that they will soon be taken home.

Regarding the caregivers, they have received training related to trauma-informed care and attachment from “Espere” in recent months. In addition, the psychologist at the home provides ongoing guidance to the caregivers and conducts evaluations to ensure that they are providing good care to the children. The home has a written plan in English for the incorporation, training and evaluation of new caregivers. Likewise, it is very important for the directors that the potential caregivers to be hired get to know the five homes, the children and the activities that are carried out, in order to show them the reality and let them know that it is a job of great responsibility and commitment. Once the new caregiver is hired, he/she is given the opportunity to dialogue and to shadow the more experienced caregivers for a while to learn from the routine activities.

- Evaluate caregivers every three months by a psychologist on the care they are providing to the children in their care.



Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Within the children’s home there are rules and regulations established by the directors, which are clear and understandable. These rules are implemented in the five homes that make up Niños de Baja. However, there is great flexibility so that house parents can adapt them according to the age of the children and the needs that arise on a daily basis. In the event that some of the children break one or more of the rules, house parents implement positive discipline techniques that are adapted according to age and level of understanding. Within each home, house parents teach children to avoid calling each other names. Likewise, all staff speak to each other respectfully and set an example for the children. One of the best practices in this home is that the house parents participate in joint activities and play with the children on a daily basis. In addition, they carry out joint activities such as: cooking, watching movies, and acknowledging each child’s birthday through a celebration that makes it an enjoyable day for the birthday boy or girl. On the other hand, recently, the members of each house have gone out to the movies, to the Macroplaza, to eat Chinese food and to the park.

At Niños de Baja they faithfully follow Mexican labor guidelines and reforms. That is why caregivers receive all legal benefits, including vacation time and one to two days off per week. Within this vision in which the directors of Niños de Baja offer the best to the caregivers, it has allowed them to have a great job stability and most of them have been working there for 8 to 9 years. As a result, the turnover rate is minimal or non-existent. It is worth mentioning that this stability has brought great benefits for the upbringing and development of each of the children. On a quarterly basis, the caregivers meet with the psychologist of the children’s home to discuss special issues, as well as to talk with the directors about how to create a good environment and incorporate family values.

- Continue with the good practices that they carry out in this right.

Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In the month of August 2023, Niños de Baja received a visit from doctors from Rocky Mountain University. These were conducted in a medical day in which they made a general auscultation to each of the children and gave them wellness talks. According to the treatment recommendations made by the doctors, the directors gave the indicated follow-up and the children were seen by a doctor or specialist. Such is the case of 4 children who required urgent dental care and in the end 8 children benefited from the appropriate treatment. On the other hand, the children have participated in school eyesight exam brigades and have been fitted with glasses when necessary, even though most of the children do not like to wear glasses. The children are taken to the doctor whenever they get sick or have a follow-up for any illness. They have a doctor they trust in the locality who treats them immediately for minor illnesses, however, if they have an emergency or major illness, the children are taken to the Ensenada General Hospital where they receive immediate attention thanks to the support of the DIF. All the children have the corresponding documentation for their vaccinations as well as a file in which medical information is kept.

In order to form positive health habits in the children, soap and water are available near all dining areas and restrooms, and children are encouraged to wash their hands continuously and brush their teeth two to three times a day. Children are constantly checked for head lice and, if found, are treated immediately. On the other hand, adolescent girls have access to feminine hygiene products in sufficient quantities and are taught about menstrual hygiene care and disposal of feminine products by their caregivers. At Niños de Baja, there are first-aid kits in each house and they are stocked on an ongoing basis. The directors have a fund for any type of emergency, which has been used for any medical care or emergency that the children may require. Appropriate measures, training and treatment plans have been implemented for children with special conditions.

- Continue with general medical check-ups on an annual basis and whenever necessary.

Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

At Niños de Baja, good eating habits are encouraged and all the children of the five houses share together the sacred food at breakfast and lunch. In the event that any of the children cannot be present during mealtime, their portion is saved for them and then they eat at the house they live in. Delicious dishes are prepared daily based on a menu prepared by a nutritionist some time ago. Each dish prepared contains protein (legumes and animal foods), combined with cereals, fruits and vegetables. In the evenings, light dinners are served. In addition, each dish has the right amount of calories in order to contribute to optimal physical development. It is worth mentioning that the food is hygienically prepared, well presented and looks appetizing.

The kitchen, dining room and food storage areas are fumigated on a monthly basis and are free of pests and toxic substances. The kitchen and pantry area is kept clean and tidy, with dishes promptly washed and counters thoroughly cleaned. The kitchen staff took a course on food safety and preparation years ago, which has enabled them to continue applying this knowledge. It is worth mentioning that the kitchen staff has worked in the same position for years, so with love and great experience they prepare dishes according to the established menu and they also know that the children enjoy these dishes.

- That kitchen staff be retrained in food safety and preparation.
- Assess with a nutrition specialist that the current menus are viable and appropriate for the children (even if no longer required by DIF).

Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Recently, the facilities at Niños de Baja were inspected by government authorities to check that they are safe; fortunately everything went well. They recently updated both the structural report and the gas report, the latter of which recommended replacing a gas tank, as well as performing an ultrasound test on the rest of the gas tanks to verify their current condition. Currently, they have a civil protection plan that is working properly and is in force. In Niños de Baja they have followed up on all the regulations that govern the home. That is why they carry out renovations in a timely manner and in accordance with the regimes and laws that regulate them. The children's home has registered safety protocols and training for the children and employees. In addition, they have an emergency plan in case of fire, flood, earthquake, and disaster. The facilities have smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and meeting points. All personnel have been trained in civil protection issues and conduct one drill per year.

The five houses that make up Niños de Baja are in good condition. The sink faucets and shower heads are in good condition, and each room and bathroom has working light bulbs. All five houses are well lit, which increases the safety of the children and all staff. The electrical infrastructure is in good condition and they are safely connected. They have two people who perform general maintenance on all the facilities that make up the home. Currently, they use a list of needs to maintain each of the houses in the best possible way. When the electricity goes out, they use an alternating light generator to connect especially the refrigerators and prevent food from spoiling. The children have easy access to water and it is available whenever they want to drink it. The staff has also received talks on the care of drinking water, especially because there is not enough water in this area and it is vitally important to take care of it and avoid wasting it.

- To follow up on the best practices in this category in a decisive manner.
- Purchase the stationary gas tank.
- Perform ultrasound on three gas tanks.

Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

There are currently 45 children attending school, from kindergarten through high school. The only 16-year-old who does not attend classes is Tony, because he has a mental disability that prevents him from retaining his learning. However, within the home he has been supported by teaching him maintenance activities so that he can acquire practical skills that will be useful to him in his adulthood. It is worth mentioning that Tony enjoys these activities. Currently, Niños de Baja has a tutor who has evaluated the children to identify their academic abilities and detect those who require more support in the basic areas of learning. These tutoring sessions are provided in a personal and group manner and have been very useful for the children, since they have seen a great improvement in the children, which has been very satisfactory for the directors. On the other hand, in the educational institution the children attend, they are also diagnosed in order to identify any learning problems and provide them with the necessary attention and follow-up to achieve the expected goals. Regarding the monitoring of school grades, it is the house parents who are responsible for reviewing and detecting those areas in which they require more support and therefore, they are supported by the directors to seek the necessary help for the children to have a better school performance. It is worth mentioning that some of the children attend school full time because they are behind in school.

The right to education is applicable to all children. That is why the five houses that make up Niños de Baja support children to read and learn activities that allow them to develop their skills such as: playing instruments, painting, among others. Also, in each house there is a variety of age-appropriate books in their own language, which are available and easily accessible to the children. All five houses have internet access, computers, a space for educational activities and a bookcase with a printer. Since the pandemic, the children have been instructed on how to use the computer. All the children have material available to play with whenever they want. They have a grant program that can be applied from the time the children are in high school.

- Continue to provide tutoring to children with the greatest need.

Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this home all the children are given the opportunity to attend school, have books in their language, supplies, receive support from a tutor and learn new skills. Each of the children is very valuable to both the directors and the entire staff of the children's home. That is why when there has been a child who has required special support due to learning disabilities, physical or visual impairment, the necessary adaptations have been made so that they can have a better quality of life. Such is the case of Tony, who came to the home as a child with some physical limitations that prevented him from walking. Thanks to the support and adaptations that have been made both at the home and at school, Tony can now walk and run without the support of his walker. On the other hand, all the children have their own closet in which they keep their personal items. The house parents act as role models and are available to guide the children.

In Niños de Baja there is a plan for transition to adulthood and a written university support plan, in which all young people have the opportunity to receive this support whenever they wish to continue their studies in a trade or university. This university plan contains established guidelines in which the young adults are committed to comply with them and in case of non-compliance, the support can be withdrawn with prior notice.

- Continue to provide development opportunities for children.

Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

It is of vital importance to the directors that the children and adolescents receive psychological care from the moment they arrive at the children's home. For this reason, house parents, directors and the psychologist make sure that the children receive psychological follow-up once any behavior or risk situation has been detected. It is worth mentioning that weekly, at least 6 children receive psychological care sessions according to their treatment and/or urgency. The children and adolescents have received orientation and workshops on aspects related to their bodies such as: consent, bodily autonomy and limits. In addition, they have received education related to responsible sexual behavior, social networks and sexuality. To strengthen the children's learning, they are allowed to take tutorials under the supervision of their house parents that motivate them to develop their tastes and discover their talents. It has been surprising how the children have increased their knowledge. Such is the case of a girl who learned to apply acrylic nails. Some of the children have learned to play various instruments such as the box drum or ukulele. Also, in each of the houses they are taught activities such as making flour tortillas, baking bread or cookies. Joaquín, who is in charge of the maintenance area, shares his knowledge with the teenagers and young people so that they can learn construction activities. And as if that were not enough, all the children are also supported in providing them with knowledge and tools according to their academic interests. Recently, the directors had a dialogue with the adolescents and young people to learn about their concerns regarding their education, whether it is to learn a trade or to visualize studying at university. The directors also shared their experience in choosing a university career.

When looking for new caregivers, directors rely on their corresponding profile. In addition, they rely on the background and recommendations of acquaintances or church members to make a more accurate decision. Caregivers have been evaluated by DIF to determine if they are quality caregivers. Based on the results, the directors follow up accordingly. Likewise, caregivers have been evaluated by Espere's psychologist to assess aspects related to child care. On the other hand, at Niños de Baja, caregivers are oriented on how to address and manage sexual behaviors, how to model, teach and reinforce good behavior and basic life skills with the children by the psychologist and other specialists. The home has a policy related to children's sexual behavior; all staff are aware of this policy and are vigilant in following up on any adverse situations. In Niños de Baja there is a documented plan in which students after the age of 15 can access a scholarship to pay for their uniforms, transportation, books, lunch, etc. For this, there is a contract that allows them to commit to the guidelines and thus promote the value of responsibility.

- Document the plan for adolescents over 15 years of age, including their education or work after their time in the home.
- Develop a written life skills program that they carry out in an empirical manner in which children can participate on a regular basis.

Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Encouraging children to decide and freely express their emotions, sensations, thoughts and tastes, as well as to have enough information so that children can form their own criteria, are some of the actions that all the staff puts into practice with the children living in this home. That is why they are listened to and supported in their needs and concerns, as well as given the opportunity to decide what activities they want to do in their free time under the observation of their caregivers. Undoubtedly, this home greatly supports the children's entrepreneurial ideas, which allows them to enhance their leadership skills, strategy, vision and self-confidence. On the other hand, the children are given the opportunity to express their ideas of what they would like to eat, especially on special occasions, and their opinions or expressions are taken into account when a dish is not to their liking. All children have the opportunity to choose the clothes they want to wear, except when they go to school due to the use of uniforms.

In recent months, the directors of this home have implemented a process in which information from various specialists and follow-up treatment plans are added to each child's file in order to complement each child's development plan. When the children have an appointment or medical check-up, the house parents and/or directors explain and orient the children about the procedures that will be carried out. In addition, they give them the opportunity to ask questions and make them feel accompanied so that they feel confident to face this moment with greater confidence.

- Continue to implement individual development plans for each child and update them on a monthly basis.

Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Children are prepared for responsible citizen participation from an early age, allowing them to develop skills and values that will guide them to become active and committed citizens in the future as a fundamental factor for the development of a just and equitable society. All children have their birth certificate, are encouraged to perform personal chores on a daily or weekly basis according to their age and understanding, and receive education both at school and at the home on topics related to ethics, democracy, governmental processes and life skills. Niños de Baja carries out various activities to promote participation. They promote the celebration of national and local holidays such as September 16th with a Mexican party, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas, among other significant holidays. The children enjoy any festivity and among their favorite celebrations are the 15th birthday celebrations (quinceañeras) of the girls at the children's home.

The children participate in recreational activities outside the home such as going to the movies, park, macro plaza, etc. In case there are outings outside the range of the DIF guidelines, written authorization is requested. Also, the children are informed of relevant events that take place inside and outside the children's home to keep them informed. On another note, caregivers have received training on how they can help the children understand and practice the skill of being responsible.

- Continue encouraging the responsible citizen participation in the children.

Right to Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

For the directors of Niños de Baja, it is vital that children are respected and preventive actions are taken to avoid being affected by behaviors such as child neglect, negligence, trafficking or exploitation. Therefore, they have policies on the prevention of child exploitation, protective policies that prevent physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and psychological abuse, policies that prohibit time alone between a child and an adult, as well as a visitor's policy. Another way to protect children from abuse and neglect is the distribution of the five houses, which, separated by age and gender according to government standards, are located in a safe zone based on the surrounding community. Inside each of the houses there are private spaces for the children to bathe and dress. On the other hand, the children have psychological evaluations and continuous follow-up to help them work through their traumas from the moment they are integrated into this home.

Both house parents and directors have received training on how to identify, prevent and avoid abuse. In addition, all staff establish trusting relationships with children to discuss abuse and ways to report it, assess any signs of abuse or neglect, and follow established procedures for reporting any findings. On the other hand, in an effort to foster care for the children, the directors carry out a process to check the background of workers and volunteers through references obtained through the churches. Caregivers regularly assess children for signs of abuse and/or neglect.

- Train staff on abuse-related issues (identification, prevention and avoidance).

Right to Dignity and Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Fostering the right to dignity and freedom in Niños de Baja is indicative of providing the children with the opportunity to have access to resources and services that improve their quality of life and their stay in this home. Therefore, the house parents encourage the children to bathe daily. They provide them with a loving home environment where each child has their own bed, sufficient clothing, underwear, bedding, clean towels and their own toothbrush. In addition, they educate them to be kind and respectful to each other, take care of themselves, be self-sufficient and take care of their health. Consequences for rule infractions are discussed with the children in advance and communicated in a way that the child understands.

According to the gender and age range of each of the five houses, all children are provided with age-appropriate toys and art materials and are available to everyone whenever they need them. In addition, they have an outdoor play area and a playground for recreational and sports activities. At Niños de Baja, children are given the opportunity to do extra chores or activities within the home to earn some money or benefit; in the case of teenagers, they also have the opportunity to work in the community in a safe environment and keep the money they earn.

- Continue to provide children with the necessary resources and services that contribute to the improvement of their quality of life.

Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this home they try to do the Lord's work by motivating the children to be part of the Christian church based on Jesus Christ and His Word. For this reason, they are given the opportunity to be part of the Sunday church services in El Porvenir. The children are free to decide to participate in the community prayer as well as in the spiritual rituals.

On the other hand, one day a week everyone in this home has a devotional. In each of the five homes, every day the children and their house parents have a half-hour devotional to share topics taken from the Bible. Spiritual and religious books are available and accessible to everyone in the home. The living room or dining room is used as a prayer space and in the evenings each child has his or her own prayer in his or her bedroom.

- Continue strengthening the spiritual area.

Financial Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Undoubtedly, Niños de Baja is a home where the accounting processes are extraordinary, because transparency, good controls and monitoring of the Mexican laws regarding finances have allowed them to verify the good use of funds and that they are a reliable home. Here all the income and expenses that are generated daily are recorded, all receipts are kept and are supported by an accounting firm that prepares a profit and loss statement. The directors of the home have a small fund to cover the special needs of medicines or extraordinary and urgent expenses. At Niños de Baja each of the expenses are labeled and prepaid from the accounting office located in the city of Tijuana, B.C.

The accounting firm that supports Niños de Baja reconciles the bank account on a monthly basis, files annual returns in accordance with laws and government requirements, and maintains clear and transparent accounting records, which are available for review at any time. The home has detailed plans for its construction expenses. In addition, the directors meet with the board of trustees to discuss the annual budget. It is worth mentioning that this home is an authorized donor, which has allowed it to issue invoices for in-kind donations it has received, as was the case with the barrels that were donated by a wine company to decorate the Quinceañera party for the girls at the home.

- Continue with best practices in this category.

Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Caring, training, guiding and offering stability through legal benefits to the staff working in this home, are relevant aspects that the directors of Niños de Baja implement to provide the best to their team that is part of their workforce. That is why all the care staff have had training sessions on trauma and practical ways to facilitate child participation. They have also received training on caring for a sick child, common illnesses and treatments, emergency measures and specific training on infant and toddler care, CPR, as well as first aid. On the other hand, the directors have been a great example of leadership, they are very focused on creating a family environment and meet frequently with the collaborators.

In relation to legal matters, Niños de Baja has ensured in its articles of incorporation that the vehicles, the property, as well as any modifications that may be made cannot be sold for personal gain. All of these assets are in the name of Home NDB, A.C. They have an active board of directors that meets at least twice a year and/or when necessary. In this home, employee records are kept in a safe place. On the other hand, they have a job profile for when they are looking for new caregivers and conduct a process, in which new caregivers of the homes follow an experienced caregiver for more than a week.

Continue with the best practices in this category.



Current Improvement Partners



Espere partners with ACHF in Baja California to provide caregiver support through trainings, workshops, and roundtables” on ways to support the mental health and wellbeing for the children in their care as well as their own self-care. 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



**A CHILD'S
HOPE**
FOUNDATION