

Casa Hogar Sion

Mexico

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, is posing with her arms raised in front of a large mural of a monarch butterfly. The butterfly is painted in vibrant red, yellow, and black colors on a light green background. The mural is on a light blue wall. In the background, there is a chain-link fence, a red trash bin, and a building with orange siding and a window with a metal grate. The text 'CASA SION' is visible on the building's facade.

IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

February | 2024



Overview of this Children's Home

Background & Mission

In 1999, Mamá Carmen and Papá Jorge González opened the doors of their own home to abandoned children living on the streets. Word spread in the community about what Jorge and Carmen were doing for these children in the community. Not having enough space in their own home, Mamá Carmen and Papá Jorge used their retirement funds to buy a small property 24 years ago in Tijuana. In which they built the Casa Hogar Sion, a home to care for as many children as possible in their new space.

Casa Hogar Sion is located in Tijuana and serves children between the ages of 4 and 23 years old. Although some children are taken there for short stays of 1 to 2 years. Most children will live there for 5 to 10 years or more. Thanks to the efforts of affiliated churches, independent groups, private and corporate donors, Casa Hogar Sion currently has seven buildings, all the children go to school and some of the older children are in private schools or in technical careers. They also have a computer lab with 10 new networked computers, and classes are held five days a week. Mamá Carmen not only wants to protect and care for her children, but also, she wants to provide them with opportunity and hope by focusing on education and leading by example, mom, dad and staff care for their children and their children's children.

Recent Accomplishments

1. They received a donation to buy two mats, beds, blankets and sheets for all the children from Ed Morel's widow.
2. The toilets in the different buildings where the children live were repaired and everything related to civil protection recommendations was repaired.
3. Its Internal Civil Protection Program has been approved and will be renewed for two more years.

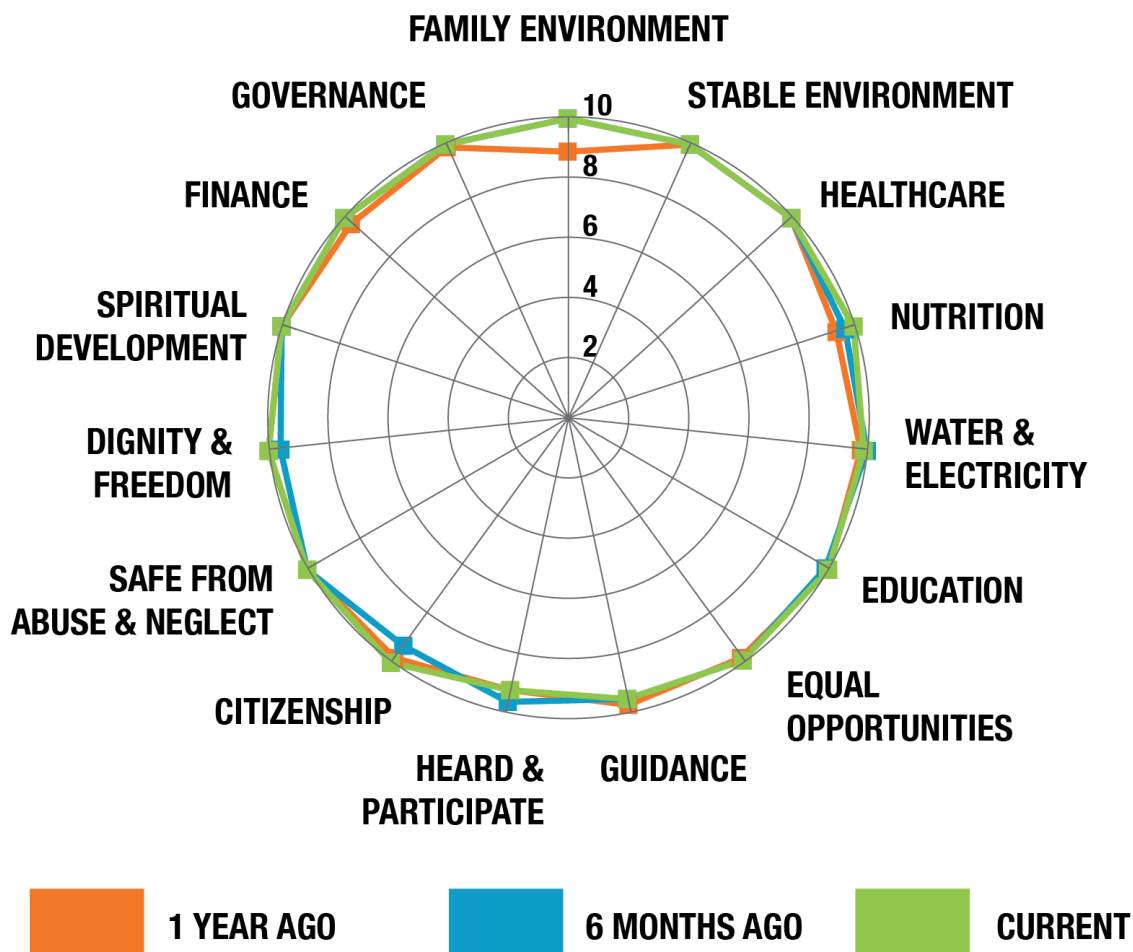


The Thrive Assessment

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

LAYING OF FLOORING

PROJECT SUMMARY	The parking lot of the babies' area is made of dirt, so every time it rains it becomes muddy and dangerous, making it difficult to walk or to park the vehicles of the home. Therefore, the fact that this area has a floor will facilitate pedestrian traffic and parking for the home's vehicles.
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	\$16,500.00 MXN \$1,000.00 USD



Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Casa hogar Sion provides a pleasant environment where children live in a family atmosphere. That is why they attach great importance to the well-being, stability and happiness of the children. Their model of care is through house parents, who care for the children during the day and night. They also have dormitory leaders in some of the buildings. Currently 40 children live in this home, most of them do not have relatives, so this place has become their home and family. All of the children living here have documentation related to their origin.

In relation to the personnel who work here, they have received training in: Trauma, dealing and discipline with children, behavior, family traits and values, and other topics of interest to caregivers. For the most part, these trainings have been provided by two psychologists and by the organization "Espere". They are also guided on the importance of being patient, good people, loving and maintaining purity in dealing with the children to positively influence the lives of all those who live there. The process of selection, incorporation and training of caregivers has been innovated, they have begun to implement new strategies in which their main objective is that both new personnel and those who have been working there for some time are well informed, trained and feel valued.

- Continue with training to strengthen the work of the personnel.
- Continue to encourage sibling coexistence to strengthen the bond amongst them.
- Continue to promote family visits with those children who have the opportunity (as long as authorized by DIF).



Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAININGSUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this home, various activities and actions are carried out to constantly promote a stable, loving and enriching environment, all thanks to the great leadership of Mamá Carmen and Papá Jorge who take care of all the necessary aspects for the children to live in a healthy environment. The children are distributed in buildings according to their age and gender. Their caregivers encourage them to live together and do various activities together. They explain to them the general rules of the home, as well as the infractions in case of breaking the rules according to their level of understanding. They encourage them to call each other by their names, play games and carry out special events and traditions such as: celebrating birthdays, playing sports, taking piano lessons, playing sports, participating in the BLR reading program, cooking together or just hanging out eating corn on the cob and having bonfires to promote socializing, active participation, camaraderie among children and increasing trust with their caregivers.

With the intention of valuing the great work that the caregivers do, they have the confidence of the directors, they have a day off and they are supported with leave when they need to leave for a medical appointment or a personal situation. Caregivers sign their contract for one year, however, they are encouraged to stay much longer by enjoying this ministry. Most of the caregivers have been working in this home for more than a year, generating a turnover of less than 10% per year. Currently, the staff of caregivers is complete, allowing us to offer the children a stable and safe environment. Caregivers have ongoing meetings with both the director and psychologists to discuss positive and effective discipline strategies and behavioral issues with the children.

- Continue to promote recreational and sports activities with children and their caregivers.
- Ensure that the staff continues to be fully staffed to provide quality care to the children who live here.



Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The commitment to the health and well-being of the children is fully met in this home. Regular medical check-ups have been performed and any medical needs and/or emergencies that arise are attended to, as in the case of Saraid who recently suffered a fractured foot and had to undergo emergency surgery. All children have completed their vaccination schedule and have been vaccinated against influenza a few weeks ago by personnel from the nearby health center. The children who need glasses already have them, and all dental needs have been taken care of since the check-ups in November 2023. Each child has a complete file, in which all information related to health, treatment, medication, etc. is recorded. When the children get sick or an emergency situation arises, they have the support of a doctor who works at the Castillo Clinic and who is also responsible for health care at Sion.

At casa hogar Sion, hygiene measures are emphasized and children are continuously reminded to wash their hands regularly, use antibacterial gel and brush their teeth three times a day. In addition, infants in nurseries are diapered according to each child's need. Also, children are continuously checked for head lice; if found, they are treated accordingly. This home has basic first aid kits in each of the bedrooms. They also have defibrillators and two extra first aid kits that are fully stocked. They have a medical fund for medical emergencies. The adolescents have access to feminine hygiene products, receive counseling from psychologist Jill and the caregivers about their menstrual cycles, and are taught the basics of menstrual hygiene care.

- Continue to take care of children's health.
- Maintain updated children's records.



Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The children living in Sion have access to adequate and nutritious food that allows them to lead a healthy and active life. All the dishes served here are delicious, well presented, but above all they are based on a balanced and nutritious diet such as the “Plato del Buen Comer” which includes proteins, fruits and vegetables allowing these foods to meet the needs of children. Therefore, children receive sufficient daily calories and the food is prepared in a hygienic manner.

Considering that the right to nutrition refers not only to physical access to food, but also to the availability of adequate nutrition information, students from Xochicalco University have come to this home to train both children and staff on nutrition matters. In addition, caregivers have received training from the Create Purpose organization. The kitchen, dining room and food storage areas are free of toxic substances and pests because they are fumigated once a month. The kitchen and stove area are well ventilated. At Sion, they continue to implement the traffic light technique that allows them to keep non-perishable foodstuffs in good condition and well organized.

- Procure new nutrition-related training for both children and staff.
- Have a nutrition specialist assess children more frequently.



Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

For the directors of Sion, it is of vital importance to keep the facilities safe and adequate for the well-being of the children and all those who live there. They are in full compliance with all regulations and codes of the municipal and state authorities in Baja California. Recently they were approved the Internal Civil Protection Program which means that this home has understandable emergency plans to deal with any risk situation such as: fire, flood, loss of water, loss of electricity, etc. This also means that the personnel have been trained in civil protection matters, that they have carried out drills and that they have emergency lights, fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, doors, meeting points, alarms and protective equipment.

They have worked hard to ensure electrical safety, the availability of running water, access to safe water for children to drink, and the implementation of surveillance systems within Sion. Likewise, they have qualified personnel to provide preventive and corrective maintenance to the facilities. In advance, when specialized labor is required, reliable personnel is hired to provide immediate solutions to the detected need. The sink faucets and shower heads in the buildings are in good condition. Currently, the roof of the girls' building is in poor condition due to the recent heavy rains in Tijuana, B.C., which caused water to enter the building. The outdoor facilities are well lit to increase children's safety. All personnel have received talks on the importance of drinking water quality and its relation to health.

- Repair and/or replace the roof of the girls' building.
- Lay flooring in the parking lot near the baby dorm area.



Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Individual responsibility, maturity and motivation for academic and personal success are fostered in each child. Therefore, all school-age children from kindergarten through college attend school on a regular basis. They are encouraged to increase their skills through the support of a teacher who guides through their homework and in reducing they fall behind academically. The children's education is complemented with extracurricular activities. In addition, they are provided a computer room with internet access and a library area containing a wide variety of books, art materials and age-appropriate toys for school support. The children are evaluated both at school and at home to detect any learning problems and to verify their mastery of writing, reading and basic mathematical operations. The caregivers keep an eye on the children's grades and support them to improve their grades. On the other hand, children are supported to show their talents. Such is the case of Angel, who in addition to being a good student is a great soccer player and is part of the school team. Undoubtedly, the support of teachers and caregivers has been essential for children to achieve their educational goals and objectives.

Younger children who are not of school age are supported by their caregiver, who reads them a daily devotional, helps them experience textures with appropriate books, plays with them, teaches them to follow rules at their young age, and encourages them to engage in related activities to stimulate the development of skills and abilities. In regards to the young adults who have reached the age of 18 and have graduated from this home, they are supported with financing for housing by the organization Corazón de Vida. In addition, the home supports them with funds, emotional and affective support so that they can continue with their desired career after concluding their time at the home. It is worth mentioning that there are young adults of legal age who wish to continue their stay at the home because they feel that it is their home and their family.

- To continue to provide all the support to the children so that they can continue to strengthen their education.

Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The care and nurturing of children through values, empathetic listening, equal opportunities and love have been ingredients that have strengthened the development and personality of the children. Therefore, all children receive the same opportunities to have access to quality education, psychological support, their own personal space to store their belongings, and to have the necessary resources for their well-being and integral development. At Sion, they have made the necessary adaptations for children who require glasses, dietary accommodations or learning disabilities.

At Sion, all caregivers act as role models for the children in their care. On the other hand, they have an unwritten plan for transition to adulthood, however, on a daily basis, adolescents are offered the opportunity to learn and carry out activities to help them begin the transition to independent living. Also, they are assigned responsibilities and tasks according to the affinity of their studies, their age or natural abilities that allow them to start a stronger independent life. Once the time of stay in the home approaches, the adolescents complete a written life plan that DIF requests from them.

- Have a written plan for transition to adulthood.



Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this home they are very clear about the importance of all the staff and especially the caregivers having the tools, knowledge and skills to provide relevant guidance to the children in their care. It is a priority for the directors that the caregivers meet the defined job description, that they are role models for the children, that they are respectful and that they actively participate in activities with the children to teach them practical skills and values. Caregivers are evaluated to determine if they are quality mentors and are provided with training on how to model, teach and reinforce good behavior and basic life skills with children as well as how to address or manage children's sexual behaviors. Regarding physical and emotional changes during puberty, it is the caregivers who discuss these issues with the children, and the psychologists reinforce this information and provide guidance on responsible sexual behavior.

The home emphasizes the importance of educating children about body care, consent and autonomy. In regards to child safety, Sion has policies and best practices in place to ensure the prevention of risk situations, supported by caregivers and all staff who continuously observe and supervise children and visitors. In order to continue strengthening emotional, physical and mental development, Sion has two psychologists who provide individual and group psychological care. They support adolescents in making a life plan to acquire psychosocial competencies that will strengthen and enrich their lives. At Sion it is vitally important to help children plan for their future, periodically review their goals and decisions so that they develop life skills after leaving home, and expose children to learn more about their career, professional and educational interests. And as if that were not enough, to continue reinforcing general knowledge, they have the support of the staff of Violence Prevention of the Municipal Police of Tijuana who constantly come to this home to provide training to raise awareness about the real situations that occur today.

- Develop a written life skills program.
- Design a written plan for teens over 15 years of age for education or work after serving their time in the home.



Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

For Sion, it is essential that children express and participate in decisions that affect them. In other words, they give children the opportunity to have a voice and a vote. Therefore, children can choose how to use their free time in activities that are of interest to them while respecting the rules and having their caregiver be attentive. Usually, children choose to participate in playground activities and sports. In addition, they can choose the clothes they will wear each day and are asked for their opinions about their culinary tastes on special occasions. On the other hand, when the children are going to have a recreational activity, Mamá Carmen approaches the children and asks them about the snacks or food they want to eat, and she tries to fulfill their tastes so that they can enjoy their activities as much as possible.

Children are encouraged to participate in activities that develop leadership skills and responsibility, as well as being assigned roles in group tasks and activities, allowing them to reinforce their self-esteem and develop new skills. At Sion, they do their best to provide all the support and treatment necessary for children who have been diagnosed with a physical, emotional or mental health condition. They keep an updated record for each child of all their general medical appointments or appointments with specialists as part of their development and evolution plan. Children and caregivers receive information about health care procedures and are given the opportunity to ask questions prior to administration.

- Complement individual development plans for each child.



Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Both in the schools the children attend and in Sion, they are educated and oriented so that they learn about the culture of civic responsibility, ethics, democracy, elections and the right to vote. They also ensure that all children have the necessary documentation to prove their identity through their birth certificate. Caregivers guide and support children to develop the value of responsibility by motivating them to do their chores, clean their space, select their clothes and repair damage through additional tasks and are motivated to fulfill all those responsibilities assigned on a weekly basis.

The children participate in extracurricular school activities and have also performed community service by participating in church activities where they have served food, helped with clothing distribution and invited people from the community to attend these events. In this home they celebrate national and local holidays with activities that include delicious food according to the celebration as well as recreational events. The celebrations most enjoyed by children are Mexico Independence Day, Christmas and Three Kings Day. Children may go on school field trips, participate in sports competitions, as well as special events outside the home as long as the DIF authorizes it. On the other hand, adolescents over 15 years of age have Brother Rafa or Sister Maritza who teach them life skills.

- Continue to foster life skills in adolescents over 15 years of age.
- That children have a course on ethics and the government process by August 2024.



Right to Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this home, they protect and take proper care of the children, taking the necessary measures to guarantee their emotional and physical well-being. In this regard, all staff have been trained by Espere, Saprea, psychologist Jill and Horacio in positive discipline techniques, body care alternatives, trauma and how to identify, prevent and avoid abuse. Sion has guidelines and policies related to the prevention of child exploitation, avoiding time alone between an adult and a child, and protecting children from physical, sexual, verbal and emotional abuse. The staff working in this home accompanies the children in case it is necessary to leave the home. On the other hand, each time a new child joins the home, psychological evaluations are carried out to help the child work through his or her traumas. All children over 5 years of age have received talks about abuse and age-appropriate reporting methods from the Municipal Police.

Casa Hogar Sion is very well illuminated on the outside and its level of security in terms of the surrounding community is good; the neighbors are aware of what is going on around them and the home. In addition, there are video surveillance cameras both indoors and outdoors that are constantly monitored. Inside the home there are dormitories that are separated by gender and age in accordance with Mexican law. They also have a private and safe space for children to bathe, go to the bathroom and get dressed. Sion has an established process for checking references and background checks of staff and frequent visitors through the use of the letter that clears them if they have no criminal record and request for references. Caregivers are constantly reminded that corporal punishment should be avoided and that it is forbidden to discipline children by withholding food or raising their voices.

- Continue to implement policies that protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation.



Right to Dignity and Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

At Sion they promote an environment that attends to the physical, emotional and social needs of the children, as well as providing them with the tools and opportunities to develop in an integral manner and promote a respectful and collaborative coexistence among them. They ensure that children are free to speak their native tongue, practice their religious beliefs, participate in cultural and sports activities and maintain their dignity in social life. An outdoor play area provides a safe environment for children of all ages to participate in a variety of activities.

Children are provided with appropriate clothing, undergarments, toothbrushes, towels, their own beds with clean sheets and blankets, as well as access to toys and activity materials according to their age. Children are taught to take care of themselves and to be as self-sufficient as possible, adapting the necessary precautionary measures for the little ones during bathing and other daily activities. In addition, kindness is fostered among the children through a constant focus on values, education and positive discipline. Clear rules are established and children are informed of the consequences of non-compliance, also providing them with the opportunity to earn privileges through additional work.

- Continue to provide the children with all the necessary supplies for their daily life.



Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Sion recognizes the value of spiritual leadership and the example of directors and caregivers in the spiritual growth and development of children and their influence in various areas of their lives. This home promotes a healthy environment where children have the freedom to explore and participate in spiritual activities if they so desire and where they are provided with the support and resources necessary for their individualized spiritual development.

The children have participated in dance activities, worship, baby care, in the “Sion Kids” area during the events and services of the Christian church they attend on a weekly basis. Inside each building where the children live there are religious materials, such as a bible and devotional book for each child according to his or her age. They also join daily in prayer and read their devotionals from the youngest to the teens to increase their knowledge about the life of Jesus. In Sion they are an example of love, they give all children a meaningful experience in the spiritual realm and motivate them to be good people.

- Continue to foster spiritual development in the children.



Financial Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

For Sion it is of vital importance that all financial information is transparent, therefore, they are always attentive to maintain strict guidelines and efficient control of all information generated with everything related to income and expenses. All receipts and financial information are stored in folders that are very well organized with tangible and complete evidence. Controls are implemented for the proper use of funds, labeling expenditures and reconciling them monthly with the bank account. Specific functions are assigned to carry out warehousing, purchasing and other activities.

They have an external accountant who assists them with tax returns and performs financial audits in accordance with Mexican law. In addition, he validates the accounting records and is always ready to support Mayra at Sion with any questions in the financial or accounting area. This home works under an annual budget.

- Continue to work with transparency in the financial area as they have been doing.



Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Casa Hogar Sion demonstrates a commitment to the well-being of its caregivers, legal compliance and institutional transparency to ensure the proper care and development of the children under its responsibility. Regarding caregivers, they are highly valued and appreciated for their human qualities and their daily work. They are granted vacations and leaves of absence in accordance with their employment contract. Caregivers receive a written contract with their job description and responsibilities. In addition, each caregiver has a complete file that includes information from job description to criminal record clearance letter. Caregivers also receive training on a variety of topics, including attachment and child development, family values, participation, CPR and first aid.

Meetings are held on a regular basis to address concerns, improve processes and maintain a good working environment. When a new caregiver enters, in addition to the defined processes for their welcome and training, they are assigned an experienced caregiver to learn about the job and observe the activities to be performed and the relationship with the children. Sion complies with all licenses, audits and governance requirements required by Mexican law. On the wall of the administrative office are visible all the current documentation that accredits all the licenses that are requested. Likewise, the home is insured and cannot be sold for anyone's own benefit; it is for the exclusive use of a children's home, according to its legal statutes in accordance with its articles of incorporation. The home has an organizational chart that describes the various positions and also has a board of directors that meets at least twice a year.

- Continue to promote the professional development of caregivers through ongoing training.
- Carry out living arrangements for caregivers outside the home.



Current Improvement Partners



ESPERE

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.



BLR

BLR’s aim is to help kids love to read and read often. We do this through getting them books that match their interests and books that may expand their interests and spark their curiosity. With these books and others, we create a well-organized, fun, and functional library. We also develop reading goals, activities and training for the kids and orphanage staff.

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



 **ESPER**
Community Counseling Ce



A CHILD'S
HOPE
FOUNDATION