

# Buena Vida Orphanage

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Mexico



# IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

April | 2024



# Overview of this Children's Home

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## Background & Mission

Gabriel and Meche started in 2011 as directors, caring for 26 children in their care. One of the first needs they identified upon their arrival was the lack of enough food to feed the children for a week. The home had many areas of opportunity such as infrastructure, health, cleanliness and care of the children. All their efforts were directed towards finding resources and donations to meet the needs. Not having enough support, Gabriel and Meche used their funds and savings of more than 7 months until the help started to arrive at their home to take care of all the needs of the children and the payments of the home's services.

As time went by, the owners of the property decided that within three years they would look for another location for the orphanage. Gabriel and Meche decided to make use of a piece of land they owned to begin construction of the orphanage. The initial funding for this work came from individual monetary donations, other foundations, Gabriel's savings, and groups of volunteers who helped with labor and work. This stage of construction took about 4 years. During this time other donors came forward to join the cause and move them completely. Since then, they have maintained the rhythm of growth, improvements and advances to consolidate the service of their children.

Buena Vida's mission is to provide comprehensive assistance to abused and neglected children. It is also to provide a safe loving home where children are educated spiritually with a solid moral foundation. They are provided with the necessary tools to grow up to be good parents, responsible and productive citizens.

# Recent Accomplishments

The 3 cars used for school transportation were serviced.

A mentoring program has been implemented with baking and jewelry making classes for the children.

They have a written document detailing conditions of employment and a job description for all employees.

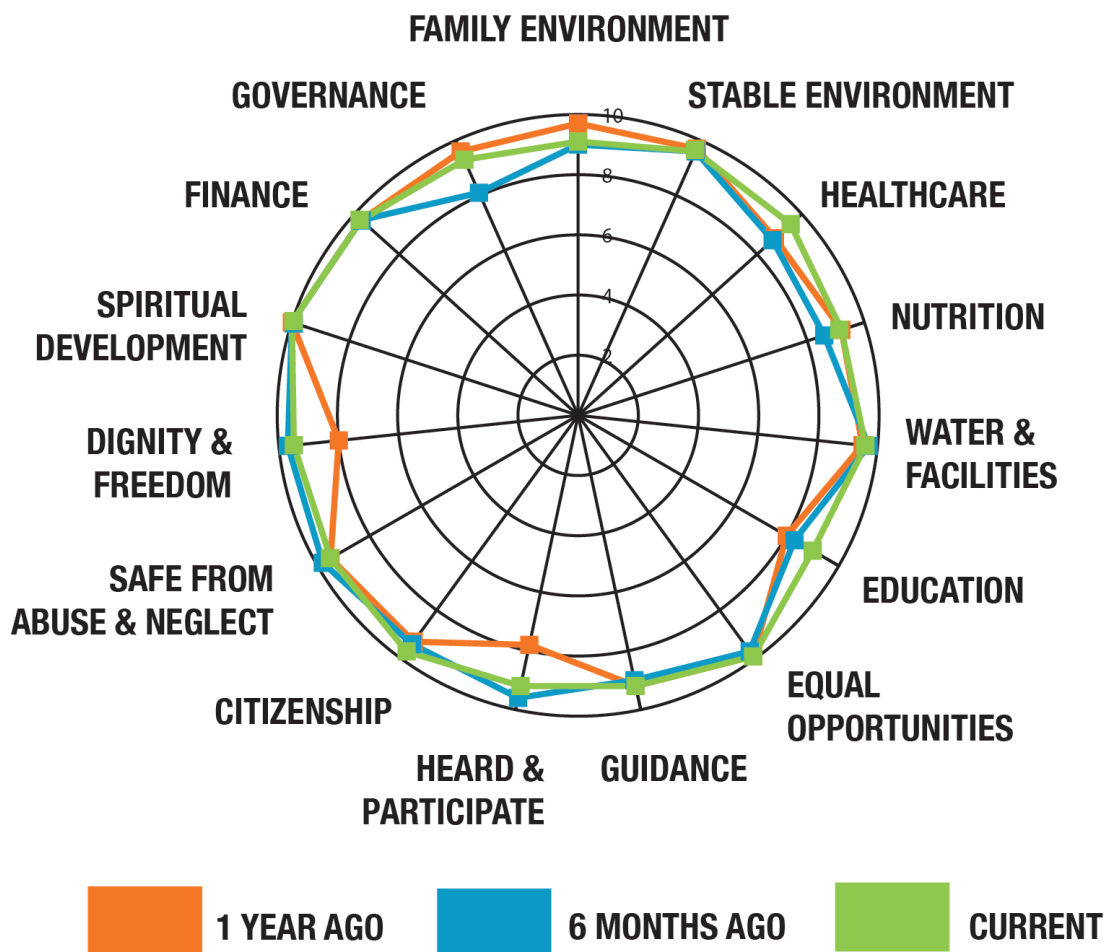


# The Thrive Assessment

## 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

## INDUSTRIAL 2 DOOR FREEZER

<b>PROJECT SUMMARY</b>	To keep food in optimal conditions, it is necessary to have an industrial freezer in which meat and dairy products can be stored. Having this equipment will guarantee quality food in sufficient quantities for the children. Gabriel foresees that the purchase of this freezer will be made in the USA because it has a better price in the market. Therefore, the budget for its purchase includes the cost of importing the equipment.
<b>INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST</b>	90764.36 \$ MXN \$5,350 USD

## OFFICE CAR

<b>PROJECT SUMMARY</b>	It is necessary to have a 6-cylinder 4x4 car to carry out office movements, travel with few passengers and help to have a better use of its budget in gasoline expenses. They currently have 3 units, but they are 8-cylinder cars, which has an excessive impact on gasoline expenses.
<b>INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST</b>	\$ 84814.00 MXN \$ 5,000 USD

## PURCHASE OF LAND TO EXTEND BUENA VIDA

<b>PROJECT SUMMARY</b>	The director would like to purchase the land next to the Buena Vida Camp area in order to extend the Buena Vida dining room and kitchen. This idea is to be able to offer a better and bigger space for the children and volunteers. The idea is to be able to have all the food together in the same physical space. Also, by making this change, the current dining room of Buena Vida could now become a new dormitory to serve more children in the orphanage.
<b>INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST</b>	\$ 848,140.00 MXN \$ 50,000 USD



## Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Buena Vida is at a thriving level in this category. They have a total of 26 children in the home and 2 new girls recently arrived at the home. The home encourages family visits as long as they are approved by DIF. However, family visits have decreased due to several children leaving the home and this has resulted in fewer visits. They are the same caregivers who have been at the home for more than 7 years. Therefore, the groups of children feel quite stable. A couple of months ago Buena Vida started training with its psychologist Maricela, who is in charge of training the staff in various topics of relevance to the care of children. With the integration of new caregivers, the environment is more stable at Buena Vida. Although they are still being monitored in their performance, it is important for the director to have an incorporation, training and evaluation plan for his collaborators. It is also important to have a training plan for 100% of the staff on trauma issues. DIF has conducted staff evaluations and all have passed these evaluations. Some children have family visits that are approved by DIF, and Meche is in charge of supervising and following up on the visits with the biological family.

- Have a training plan for staff on trauma issues.
- To have a plan for the incorporation, training and evaluation of new collaborators.



## Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Buena Vida is at a prosperous level in this category. In this home the children are explained the rules of the house. When they are new children, they are explained upon arrival, if time or schedule permits. Everyone communicates by name. However the director is aware that in the absence of the directors or at school they call each other differently. Never by derogatory nicknames or nicknames. Play activities between caregivers and children are very infrequent. This is in the sense that the games between the children are very physical or sporty and due to the age of the caregivers. Twice a month the caregivers meet with a specialist to discuss the children's needs. The specialist provides tools or suggestions for caring for them. The house has family traditions and Gabriel is planning to remodel the homework space to resume family movie night, which is one of the activities that everyone enjoys the most.

- Implement actions for caregivers to participate in joint activities with the children in their care, according to their possibilities.



## Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Buena Vida is at a prosperous level in this category. Children have medical check-ups at least twice a year. However, most of the time these check-ups or medical visits are at the time of symptoms of illness. The children have been vaccinated and the directors follow up with them so that they have their complete immunization schedule. Not all children have their immunization records or documentation. Adolescent girls have what they need for personal hygiene and know how to dispose of it. Routine eye exams have not been done. Only children who show need have been attended to. In dental and hearing care, we only attend to children who require support for some ailment. The dental area is the one that requires the most attention. The children have a medical record for each of the areas of their development and these are filed and updated. The home has a first aid kit for emergencies, a stationary first aid kit, and some portable first aid kits. In general the children's health is good, but they have had a number of daily accidents that have involved medical care and medication costs. Gabriel is interested in having medical check-ups for all the children during this period in order to follow up on their medical health needs.

- Perform routine dental examinations for all children.
- Continue to make the necessary arrangements to have 100% of the vaccination cards.



## Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Buena Vida is at a prosperous level in this category. The children receive tasty and appetizing meals that are prepared in a hygienic manner. Protein is provided daily in their diet according to their budget possibilities. More funding support is needed to provide more portions of fruits, vegetables and other food variety to the children. There is a planned monthly menu, which is organized in a balanced way and offers a variety of foods to the children, including foods of their choice at least once a week. The kitchen staff has not been trained in hygienic food handling. These courses need to be updated. The food storage areas are clean, organized and free of pests. As for the kitchen facilities, it will be important to perform general maintenance or change the kitchen exhaust fan to ensure that it is well ventilated.

- To have more funds to be able to provide more fruits, vegetables and varied foods.
- Maintain the kitchen exhaust hood.



## Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Buena Vida is at a prosperous level in this category. The house has been certified in safety issues. It has a civil protection plan that has been validated and accepted by state authorities. However, it has yet to obtain approval of its operating license. Within its emergency plan, it has identified locations in the nearby community. The house can withstand the elements and weather conditions specific to the location. In the event of an emergency, the house does not have any alternative source of light or electricity generation for its refrigerators. They currently have a generator, but it is not sufficient for the installations. Their facilities are very secure and have a camera system that supports monitoring and security actions. The leadership has created a written maintenance plan. Most of the facilities' preventive and corrective maintenance needs have been addressed. For this, it has professional support through outside vendors and the support of Lupe. He is a young man who grew up in Buena Vida, now living in the camp area, who helps with maintenance and construction, in addition to the work done by the groups that visit the house during the year.

- Having a power generator for the refrigerators and freezer, in case of emergency.
- Continue to take the necessary steps to obtain all safety and operational certifications.



## Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Buena Vida is on a Prosperous level in this category. The home has a space available within the homework area where a library can be set up. Although it has some books, including illustrative books that the children like to read, it is not integrated in an attractive way as a library for the children. The director is still considering setting up a library area but has not yet decided in which space.

Basic materials are available for school projects, although they do not have extra materials during the school period. Maricela, the psychologist, has evaluated the children's learning and has determined their academic level and has looked for strategies to help them improve in these deficient areas or in need of special education. They have enough art materials that have been donated to them. However, there is not much variety and sometimes the home has used them for school projects or homework. They have funds or resources necessary to provide education and housing for the children after their stay at the home, as well as some other moral and family support for those who wish to stay at Buena Vida.

- To have an adequate space for reading in the form of a library with at least 75 books of interest to children.
- Implement a program to improve the reading skills of children from the age of 9.



## Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Buena Vida in this category is at a thriving level. All children are given the opportunity to take some job training according to the options available in the locality. This is done in order for them to learn a trade or job skill in case they do not want to pursue a professional career. Gabriel implements a strategy of talking with the youth about their life plan. Even so, this process is more of an organic talk and there is nothing in writing before, during or after. In the case of the youth who grew up in the group home and still live there, it has been documented that they are part of the group home team and they fulfill support functions such as maintenance or kitchen assistant as well as other tasks assigned by the directors. Necessary adaptations have been made for children who require it, in the past the adaptation of glasses or the use of splints for minor injuries, use of glasses and applications of assessments to identify learning disabilities have been applied. Despite this, there are no local supports identified to address the needs of the children in these areas and it is the teacher and psychologist who have helped to work on these challenges. The home has a transition to adulthood plan which is not documented or written for all children nor has it been implemented on an ongoing basis with all children.

- Identify and implement coordinated work strategies between the psychologist and teacher to address learning needs.
- Have a documented transition plan in place that is applicable for children 13 years of age and older.



## Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Buena Vida is at a Prosperous level in this category. The children's home has a psychologist who sees the children individually and in groups at least four times a month. In addition to her therapeutic tasks, she performs psychological evaluations of the children and establishes an individualized work plan focused on the needs of each child. She also conducts staff training and provides individual counseling to adult caregivers and directors. This is done with the objective of working on stress and anxiety situations with them. The psychologist also conducts work and training sessions with the directors and caregivers to support them in managing their job burnout and training on various topics. The home has not developed or implemented any education or work program for the young people after their stay in the home. However, many educational and independent living skills activities are developed in a very organic way as part of their day to day life at Buena Vida. Meche, has continued to implement a mentoring program with baking classes and the children have embraced this class with great gusto and have shown high quality and dignified work for high quality baking. However, no evidence of this progress has been documented in each child's file.

- Have a written life skills development program.
- Document in each child's file the skills they have learned in their mentoring program.



## Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Buena Vida is at a thriving level in this category. Meche and Gabriel have implemented more strategies to involve the children in decision making, promoting their right to participation. These strategies have been involved in creating the menus of the home and with that they always know what they are going to eat. They also decide what Friday activities they want to do, and if the budget allows, they decide on locations for family or group outings, as well as activities and celebrations within the home. The children can decide what to do in their free time as long as it does not alter the dynamics or rules of the group home. They can also choose the clothes they want to wear on a daily basis and help the younger children learn to select the most appropriate clothes for the day and the occasion. The home has not yet implemented a strategy of creating hope plans or any similar strategy. However, there are indications of involvement of a children's committee, organization of events, celebrations and participation in community activities at least three times a year.

- Implement hope plans or similar strategy for children aged 13 and older.



## Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Buena Vida is at a prosperous level in this category. Finally, all the children have their birth certificates. Thanks to Gabriel's follow-up and management, we have been able to have all the documents for the children of Buena Vida. In the children's home, the children are taught to be respectful of each other. In addition, they are taught about the consequences of their actions and how to repair their damages. The children are assigned special chores according to their age. This helps to keep the home free of garbage or misplaced objects. The children are taught about democratic processes and practice this right. They celebrate important national events and their favorite holidays with Noche Mexicana and the Christmas holidays. The children participate in community outreach activities at least twice a year, such as delivering groceries to needy families in the Mission. In addition, when possible, the children attend school trips and special events outside of the home, as long as they are previously authorized by DIF. These trips are usually to the beach, swimming pools or the zoo. The camp area needs to be cleaned and rearranged of debris, construction materials and some objects that should be sent to the warehouses so that the space is free of unnecessary or misplaced items. It is of great importance to maintain the mentoring program and also add more independent living skills development activities.

- Cleaning or re-organizing the camp yard.
- Maintain the mentoring program and add life skills development.



## Right to Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Buena Vida in this area is at a prosperous level. The level of security of the home is adequate relative to the nearby community. The home has private facilities for the children to bathe, change and sleep. In this period the directors have paid more attention to the implementation of training for the staff. For example, the most recent training they have been given is related to positive discipline techniques. However, together with the psychologist, we have sought more free training resources that are easily accessible to all employees through virtual platforms for greater convenience. In the group therapy work, the children have been talked to about abuse prevention issues and how to report it if they are being abused. The necessary psychological evaluations have been done in order to identify and work with them on traumatic situations. For this period the directors will work together with their psychologist Maricela to create a training plan for the staff that addresses issues of need for the caregivers in relation to their work but also personal development issues for the whole team. One of the areas of opportunity is on the corroboration of the background of the collaborators are frequent visitors. It is therefore highly recommended that the director has a process in place to verify this information.

- Create and implement staff training program.
- Have a plan for background checks of frequent visitors and collaborators.



## Right to Dignity and Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Buena Vida is at a thriving level in this category. Children are talked to ahead of time about the consequences of infractions of the home's own rules. Teens are given the opportunity to clean up the camp from volunteers and visitors to earn a little money to either buy something that is of interest to them or to pay for the cost of repairing any damage they have caused to the property. Other than this, DIF does not allow teenagers to go out into the community to work in order to safeguard their safety. The children have adequate bedding (sheets and blankets) that is cleaned every two weeks. However, there is a need to change bath towels, mattress covers to protect the mattresses in cases of bedwetting, and more underwear, especially for the new children. There is an outdoor play area in the home that is safe and suitable for all ages. However, since the court is a multi-purpose court, it is necessary to have two new basketball goals, since they currently only have one and are no longer in good condition for the use they are put to. On the other hand, the home has registered safety protocols and training for the children and employees in civil protection matters, which have already been revalidated for the next 12-month period.

- Seek support from donors to provide the children with more clothing and underwear.
- Seek support from donors so that the children have better bath towels and mattress covers.
- Two new basketball goals for the playground area.



## Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Buena Vida is at a thriving level in this category. Children are given the opportunity to be part of a spiritual community. Children are free to participate in daily communal prayer or other spiritual rituals. Daily, they pray for food before eating and pray at bedtime. Children are offered service opportunities to practice their spiritual learning, such as reading biblical texts in church and listening to songs and praises. Children attend church services in their Christian community on Sundays. Children learn and participate in religious celebrations, such as theater shows and dramas in the church. There is a designated place for prayer and meditation. Although they rather practice prayer at night before going to sleep and before each meal. There are materials, spiritual and religious books available and accessible whenever they want to read them. Often, they have given bibles to the church because donations of them come to the home in abundance.

- Maintain good practices implemented in this category.



## Financial Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Buena Vida is at a prosperous level in this category. The household maintains a way to record its income and expenses. They keep receipts for their expenses. To this end, Gabriel has started using an application where he records all his expenses and income, which allows him to keep his records up to date. Gabriel personally creates his monthly expense statements and these are validated by a qualified accountant who is also in charge of all monthly and annual tax returns. They perform internal audits on his monthly finances and keep the records available for review. At this home, controls are in place and followed to minimize opportunities for misuse of funds. The leadership has well identified the best suppliers for its purchases of food and building materials. For their administration, the home does not have an annual budget as they always operate on what they have available for the month. However, they plan their expenses over \$25,000, which are generally for construction projects at the home and the director's house. Buena Vida has a proper division of roles or tasks for internal control in which Gabriel and Meche maintain continuous communication of their priorities for exercising their available budgets. A good practice that Gabriel has implemented is the categorization of his construction projects as short, medium and long term, as well as assigning strategies to cover these needs through the resources he receives or the groups that visit him.

- Maintaining good practices in this category.



## Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Buena Vida is at a prosperous level in this category. Caregivers and other staff have a written job description document outlining their job responsibilities. Ninety percent of the staff have attended medical and hygiene training sessions, as well as first aid and CPR on an annual basis. The property and modifications are insured so that they cannot be sold for profit, and the directors have a commodatum contract with Buena Vida. The home has all licensing, audit, and governance requirements as it is in the process of renewing its license to operate. The organization has and complies with a vacation and annual leave policy for all staff. New house sitters follow an experienced house sitter for a minimum of one week. In particular Meche is the one who conducts follow-up and feedback meetings with new staff and weekly staff meetings are held to provide opportunities for staff to receive support and orientation regarding their positions, almost always led by Meche. Employee files are kept securely, including their most important documents, and are kept up to date as required by law. It is very important to have a constant training plan for the staff on topics related to their work activities. Maricela and Gabriel will design a training plan for the next 6 months in order to develop the staff in their different areas of work.

- Implement the training plan for directors and staff with the support of the psychologist.



AMIGOS

A CHILD'S  
**HOPE**  
FOUNDATION