

# Rancho La Hermosa

## Mexico

A man with a beard, wearing a dark t-shirt with a white heart logo and blue jeans, sits on a white wooden bench. A dog sits on the bench to his right. The background shows a residential area with houses and a large mountain peak under a sunset sky. A power line tower is visible on the mountain.

# IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

March | 2024



# Overview of this Children's Home

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## Background & Mission

Rancho La Hermosa Orphanage was born out of many years of prayer and an unwavering determination to provide excellence in care. The building of the Ranch was conducted over a period of four years, and they are one of the few fully licensed and accredited orphanages in Baja. Rancho La Hermosa continues to grow and expand with a focus on receiving more kids and changing more lives.

Rancho La Hermosa exists to love and care for orphaned and abandoned children. They are a child-centric home where distressed children can find peace, comfort, and stability. They aim to provide a healing environment where kids can learn to thrive. They focus on spiritual and physical health as well as education, nutrition, and equipping our kids for a productive life.

Rancho La Hermosa is a beautiful blend of Mexican and American leadership, with an amazing team dedicated to the health and well-being of the kids. They intentionally raise kids in smaller dorm groups with loving dorm parents. Each dorm has parents committed to providing stability and a nurturing environment necessary for formative healing and growth.

## Recent Accomplishments

- They completed the construction and equipment of the library.
- They completed the big two-floor dormitory and the girls moved in.

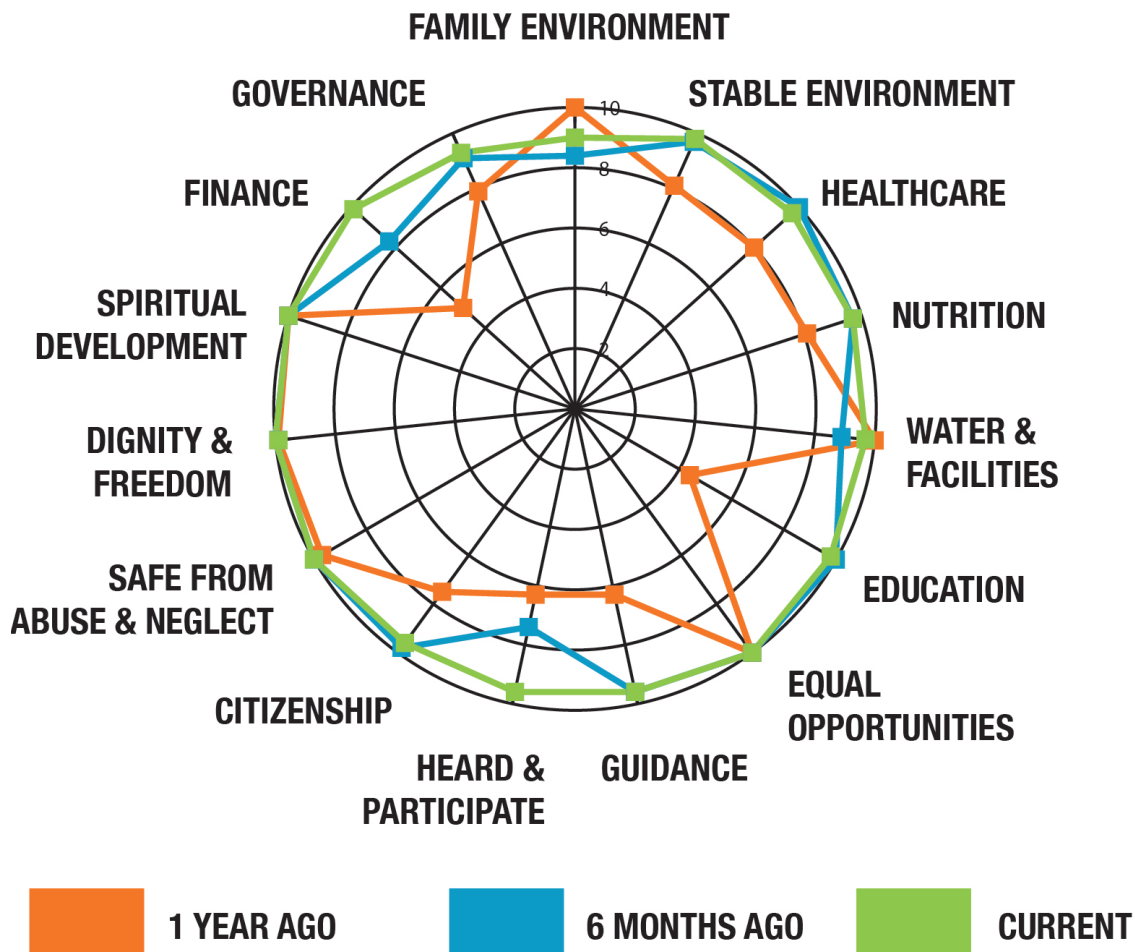


# The Thrive Assessment

## 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

## NEW GATES

<b>PROJECT SUMMARY</b>	DIF requires we install two new gates for the entrance and side entrance of the Ranch. They want stronger gates with spring loaded closing. The gates must have a concrete pad and be self closing.
<b>INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST</b>	\$ 4,500 USD

## FIRE PROTECTION PLAN

<b>PROJECT SUMMARY</b>	We have a need to complete our fire protection plan. We would like to obtain two large portable water pumps so in the case of fire we can connect to our water source and extinguish the fire. We are in need fo two pumps \$750 each (total \$1,500) and labor to complete the 1.5 inch water delivery lines to 40% of the property (the other lines are already installed). The cost of the labor is approx. \$2,000. Total for this project is \$3,500.
<b>INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST</b>	\$3,500 USD

## ONE-FOOT DEEP FOUNTAIN/POOL

<b>PROJECT SUMMARY</b>	Some time by next summer the home would love to have a one-foot deep fountain/pool for the kids to cool off in the heat. They envision a 14-foot round, 1-foot high fountain with water spraying out of the top. This project will help the kids to deal in a better way with the heat during summer. Because of the location of this orphanage and how high on the hill they are, the kids are more exposed to high temperatures and less chances to cool down.
<b>INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST</b>	\$4,000 USD



## Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at the Thriving level in this category. The kids' dorms usually have 5 to 7 kids per room, which guarantees individualized attention by their primary caregivers. The children's home promotes family visits and these occur in the church where they congregate, but only with the family relatives that apply for it and that DIF authorizes. Sibling groups play, eat and have unstructured time to spend together daily to reinforce their bonds. Although the home has improved in maintaining stable and committed caretakers. The staff members have received training on trauma informed care in the last 6 months provided by ESPERE. The home has an established caregiver plan for onboarding, training, and evaluating caregivers and has been supervised by the director. Lizeth, their onsite therapist, works on the assessments and profiling of the staff members at least quarterly.

- Update the information on the origin and legal status of each child in the file.
- Have a person on the team dedicated to identifying possibilities and facilitating family reunification processes.



## Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The children's home is at the Thriving level in this category. Depending on the children's age is the type of consequence for an infraction that is applied, but always positive-discipline based. Children in the home are always called by their preferred name and never by any degrading nicknames. With children that share names, they always find a respectful way of calling their attention in a way that isn't confusing for the child to know who they are referring to. On Saturdays, the staff works with the home's psychologist to receive support and discuss situations they might need help in in their daily task of caring for the children. The staff turnover rate has improved and that has naturally made the dorms more stable. Dave, Shannon and Aleyda all want to bring new house parents and caregivers to join them and accomplish the orphanage mission. In order to have this, they need first to create a plan or strategy to recruit people locally by expanding their community and network to present the orphanage's work and encourage others to come on board.

- Create and implement a strategy to search and recruit house parents who decide to come to support the mission of the home.



## Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at the Thriving level in this category. Not all the children received annual medical and dental checkups in the last 6 months. All of the children have been vaccinated, except for those cases where the kids' information needs to be obtained first to ensure the status of their vaccination records. The home has identified a local doctor for medical situations that don't pose a threat for the children. For more major incidents or medical emergencies, they turn to a hospital in Rosarito. Less than half of the children have received vision exams during the year according to the priority needs. The dorm parents are very good about reminding and supervising the kids when it comes to brushing their teeth as part of their daily hygiene routines but there are some kids with dental healthcare needs. All of the kids have a medical record on file and DIF always pays close attention to these when they come onsite to inspect the home and children. Rancho la Hermosa has been struggling with special needs medication; they have at least 6 kids that need psychiatric medication and DIF has not been providing it or the funds that amount to around \$750 USD per month to buy what they need. The teen girls in the home have sufficient feminine hygiene products and they have received training by Maria on how to properly dispose of these products.

- It is recommended that 100% of the children receive annual routine medical, dental and vision check ups.



## Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In this category, Rancho La Hermosa is currently at the Thriving level. The children in the home receive the proper amount of caloric intake each day. The cook creates the weekly menus and Aleyda reviews it for approval, but they do not have any support from a nutritionist that ensures the children are receiving appropriate nutrition daily. For this reason they just hired a specialist to run a nutrition program for a few months to train the cook and kitchen staff. There is a fruit basket in the kitchen where the kids can grab fruit whenever they would like, as well as healthy snacks; this ensures that the kids get their daily serving of fruits and appropriate food, even when it is snack time. Their meals are prepared in a hygienic and very tasty manner, but they need to work on their menus, reinforce the annual training on storing food safety and preparation. The home relies on the support of a fumigation service and other strategies to rid their kitchens, pantries and food storage areas of pests. Because the home is located in the hills, it could be quite difficult to keep the home free of pests 100% of the time but that is why they are extra aware and continuously fumigating.

- Have the support of a specialist in nutrition to ensure the children have an appropriate diet.
- It is highly encouraged that the cooks receive training annually on food safety and preparation.



## Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at the Thriving level in this category. The staff of the home goes into town to fill 5 liter water jugs to have drinking water available for the kids in the dorms, classrooms and kitchen. The home has a water storage system where they added 4 huge water containers; 3 are connected to water pumps ready for fire suppression and one is left in the case that they might need it. They are also still working to have their own water well. The staff has been trained in the importance of water and safety for use in cooking, cleaning and hygiene. They have somebody that is in charge of the maintenance, to address the ongoing needs of the home. They're also in need of a qualified person that can attend to the preventive needs and be in charge of keeping the maintenance plan updated at least on a monthly basis. With the volunteer groups who visit the home, they have the opportunity to address some of the repairs or projects around the home. The home has their civil protection plan created and in place and they are in the process of receiving the annual training for their staff. The home runs on solar energy, therefore they resort to using their power generators whenever there is cloudy weather and the solar panels are not providing enough power.

- Have a written maintenance plan updated monthly.
- Continue working to be able to meet all the requirements of local safety codes.





## Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at the Thriving level in this category. Their internet has improved and has not given them major problems. Only the older children are able to use the internet and they are working on strategies so that younger children can also have access. There are children who need tutoring to reach their expected level of reading and writing, and with the tutors they have a plan to improve in these areas. Children who are not of school age participate with the tutors in the other children's activities and there they carry out activities according to their abilities, talents and interest. The construction and equipment of the library is finished, and now they are working on establishing a reading program that adjusts to the possibilities and needs of the home, which includes giving the children more reading time in the library. The home has a plan to provide a space where they will be able to monitor young adults of school and work age, for their stay after their time at the children's home. This includes plans for continuing their education, training for work and developing skills for independent living, all this as part of their independent life transition program. For this project they have the first part of the investment to dig a septic tank and create a water container system as the next step, all as part of the first phase of construction.

- Have and implement a reading program in which children can participate more frequently.
- Continue working on the construction and structure of the transition home.



## Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at the Thriving level in this category. Children have a dedicated space for their personal items like photos, letters, belongings, art and much more. Children with special needs also have everything the rest have, including reasonable accommodations, access to therapy, tutoring, mentorship and ongoing follow-up. Children who are overweight or underweight are constantly monitored with special dietary adaptations based on their needs. Aleyda is the main person in charge of doing these follow-ups with the specialists and, together with the caregivers, doing the follow-up and supervision at home. For children who need glasses or other similar needs, efforts are made to provide them with necessary items or accessories. All children have the same opportunities for their education. The children have extracurricular activities like soccer, English classes, guitar lessons and more. The adults in the home act as quality mentors for the children; Pastor Daniel and Pastora Aleyda are the ones who are always looking for ways to educate and motivate caregivers to serve as quality mentors for all children. Plans for transition to adult life are under construction, as is the new building for this initiative.

- Maintain good practices implemented in this category.



## Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at a Thriving level in this category. The children's home has a job description for when they're searching for new caregivers. The children have a therapist who they can see individually on a monthly basis, and they also have other therapeutic strategies to help them heal, but they need to have more time with the actual therapist or hire a second one that can come more often. There is a complete team that monitors the interactions between children and adults with the intention of identifying whether or not they are trustworthy and quality people to interact with children. There is also a group that is ready to instruct boys and girls about the changes associated with puberty and adolescence, being coached by the pastor's wife and Aleyda. Education on sexuality issues are initially addressed by the house parents and hand-in-hand with the other adults in their support network, which makes this process very healthy for children. The staff has been trained on topics of reinforcement of good behaviors and modeling of the same, and they actively participate in the therapy program with ESPERE Therapeutic Community. Once the transition program for young people over 15 years of age is implemented, there will be a process for documenting written plans for education and work after their stay in the home. They have a very organic program of opportunities for adolescents. Although they are very aware that they will have one and they will stick to this plan, it is not ready yet. They also need to create the structure of the plan and the form to write the plans for each child.

- Have the support of one more therapists who can provide more continuous care to the boys and girls.
- Design and implement a form to create transition plans to independent living.
- Have transition programs for young people over 15 years of age.



## Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at a Thriving level in this category. Children can decide what to do in their free time as long as it is allowed by the house rules. Children can decide how to dress each day. They have a visible menu in the dining room so that children know what they will eat and include their opinion about the regular meals and meals on special days. There are no written development plans for most of the children. However, the orphanage leaders will soon start with the planning for the transition home program where they will provide different opportunities for skills development and training for self-sufficiency along with the individual development plans. The orphanage allows the children to have leadership roles and there are initiatives of children's committees, however this needs more structure, trainings to facilitate the sessions and follow-ups.

- Create and implement individual development plans.
- Implement more activities where the children can have leadership roles.



## Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho La Hermosa is currently at a Thriving level in this category. All the kids have their birth certificates and they completed the process for the ones that were missing and now this documentation is complete. Regarding the children being taught restitution, the consequences of breaking rules depends on the action. The consequences for wrongdoing are generally assigning additional chores or tasks around the home, such as washing the dishes or cleaning. Children have daily and weekly responsibilities that they must attend to, which are assigned according to age and being taught by the caregivers or house parents. They are taught organically about citizenship, which is part of the culture of the home. With the support of the mentors, too, they address some of the children's questions. Mentors Ricardo, Maria and Aleyda are in charge of teaching the kids life skills, although these mentors are aware that they can improve in this area like creating evidence for this process and filing this on each kid file. The children participate in community support activities such as distributing groceries to poor families or individuals in the community. Children also have the opportunity to attend school events in the company of their assigned caregivers, mentors or other significant adults who can chaperone.

- Continue implementing the mentoring program to develop skills for independent living.
- Through mentors it is important that they further promote children's participation in community activities.



## Right to Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho la Hermosa is currently at a Thriving level in this category. The facilities at this home are safe. All the staff members have been trained on positive discipline techniques, and they are participating in the Therapy program this period. There is a child protection policy in place which has been shared at least verbally with all staff and volunteers, and they also improved the background check process of the staff and visitors. Regarding discipline, caregivers do not spank or pull arms, and children are not scolded in public. While children do not generally work for wages, one of the teen girls is saving money to help pay for her braces, but it does not violate local laws. There are authorized personnel to accompany the children when they leave the home. Whenever a new child is received, the house parents meet with the psychologist to discuss their observations of behavior or challenges within a week of arrival. Caregivers also meet with the psychologist every week. Regarding visits from the children's relatives, these are only those approved by DIF and they continue to be carried out in their church, as the environment there provides security. In these visits there are always more than two people who are monitoring the encounters and have made reports to DIF if they notice any inappropriate actions or conversations with the children.

- Maintain good practices implemented in this category.



## Right to Dignity and Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho la Hermosa is currently at a Thriving level in this category. Boys and girls have access to their own beds. They have enough undergarments, towels, and clean sheets for each child. The directors and caregivers encourage the children to respect themselves and live together lovingly and harmoniously. As for work opportunities, there is a girl who has a way of earning a little money by doing extra tasks around the home. She's able to keep the money and she saves it to spend it on whatever she decides. Although Aleyda and her team have implemented strategies to develop independent living skills in children, it is important that they can also develop a strategy that allows generating and documenting evidence of these processes to create a system for reviewing life plans or transition.

- Implement a strategy that allows documenting the progress and development processes of independent living skills.
- Maintain good practices implemented in this category.



## Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho la Hermosa is currently at a Thriving level in this category. The home has religious materials such as books, bibles, and music available and easily accessible to children. The children belong to and are very close to their religious community, which also provides a lot of support and mentoring to the kids. They actively participate in their church community activities. Many of the girls participate in a dance group, services and other activities at church too. This is one of the opportunities they get to practice their spiritual learning and also strengthen their bonds of faith. The children have appropriate spaces to pray or meditate at the home. They also always thank God for their meals and blessings, inside and outside the orphanage. These practices have been instilled in the children since their integration into the home.

- Maintain good practice of the strategies already implemented in this category.



## Financial Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho la Hermosa is currently at a Thriving level in this category. This home controls and manages finances on both sides of the border, Mexico and US. They have a budget associated with expenses, allowing them to monitor if they are above or below their budget. As a director, Aleyda prepares a monthly report for Dave to review and analyze the movement of funds. Generally, they stick to their annual budget with only a marginal difference of 10-15% per year, thus proving the budget very useful. Once they are able to perform their expense analysis, the directors establish rules or strategies to stay within the budget. The home has a good workload distribution among the staff since they have job descriptions. When a team member is not carrying out their responsibilities, they use the job description as the basis for providing feedback. Regarding the planning of their budget for projects greater than \$25,000 dollars, they have established two separate budgets: one for expenses regarding the children and one for construction expenses. This is the way they can be held accountable for the use of these funds since their donors contribute to specific expenses, and separate budgets allow them to send expense accurate reports back. If they need to take money from the general budget, they notify and ask their donors for permission to use the money for something other than the purpose of the donation. Currently, their cost of living budget per child per month has increased greatly, which is why it is recommended to perform an analysis of their expenses in order to determine the areas in which they can improve and generate savings.

- Perform a living cost budget analysis of their expenses in order to determine the areas in which they can improve and generate savings.
- Maintain the best practices already being implemented in this category.



## Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Rancho la Hermosa is currently at a Thriving level in this category. Improvements to the home and the land are in the name of their association, so they cannot be used for another purpose. The home has an organizational chart that describes the functions and roles of all staff. The leadership of the home holds frequent meetings with their team to discuss areas of opportunity and process improvements. Additionally, they adhere 100% to each position's job description, implement feedback spaces for collaborators if they need to comply with their assignments, and use this same document as the basis of review and evaluation of staff performance. The home does not utilize employment contracts, however, there is a personal verbal agreement with each staff member regarding their function and benefits. To onboard new caregivers, it is highly recommended that the orphanage director have a mentoring strategy so that new collaborators can assume their responsibilities, specifically in caregiving. The home must renew its operating license, with all its updated training and certifications.

- Have a mentoring strategy so that new collaborators can assume their responsibilities.
- Renew the necessary certifications for the civil protection file and operational license.



# Current Improvement Partners



## Books, Library Reading (BLR)

Books, Library, Reading (BLR) believes that access to books and literacy is a fundamental human right. Their mission is to provide underserved communities with libraries, books, and reading programs to foster a love of reading from an early age. BLR partners with local organizations, schools, and governments to establish community libraries, train librarians and teachers, and distribute age-appropriate books and educational materials. By promoting literacy, BLR aims to empower individuals and communities through the transformative power of reading.



## Esperere

ESPERE (Educación Sustentable Para Erradicar la Pobreza en Regiones Empobrecidas) is a non-profit focused on improving educational opportunities in impoverished rural areas of Central America. They work directly with local communities to build and renovate schools, train teachers, provide educational resources, and implement sustainable agriculture and vocational training programs. ESPERE's holistic approach addresses the root causes of poverty by empowering youth through quality education, skills development, and access to economic opportunities. Their goal is to break the cycle of poverty through education.



## One Generation Alliance

One Generation Alliance is an international youth development organization committed to empowering the next generation of leaders. They provide mentorship, job training, and leadership development programs to underserved youth aged 14-24 in poverty-stricken communities worldwide. By fostering skills, confidence, and access to economic opportunities, One Generation Alliance equips young people to become self-sufficient, find meaningful employment, and bring positive change to their communities. Their vision is to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty through transformative youth empowerment initiatives.

For a list of projects and opportunities to coordinate on go to  
[www.ACHF.org/Projects](http://www.ACHF.org/Projects)



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