

My Father's House Family Homes

Zambia



IMPROVEMENT ROADMAP

May | 2024



Overview of this Children's Home

Background & Mission

My Father's House Family Homes was founded by Gary Schneider in 2002 when he responded to God's call to help children that were orphaned in Zambia. The homes exist to glorify God and see orphans raised to life in Christ in a home, in a family, and in a community where they are known and loved. Between 2004 to 2006, the first four Christ-centered homes headed by widows were formed in Lusaka. The homes provided Christ's love through meeting the children's physical, social, emotional, educational and spiritual needs. In 2008, a property was secured in a small town called Chongwe and more homes were built to create room to serve more children. In 2022, a major construction project which included four more homes, a sports field, a library and a worship center was completed. The current total capacity is now 12 families and 96 children.

Recent Accomplishments

1. The Manager at My Father's House facilitated Trauma Informed Care training for mothers, to equip them for effective caregiving.
2. The Manager has engaged a counselor to provide counseling services to all children on-site.
3. The Manager facilitated Mathematics assessments for children 9 years old and above, and has introduced an after school program to help students improve performance in mathematics and phonics.

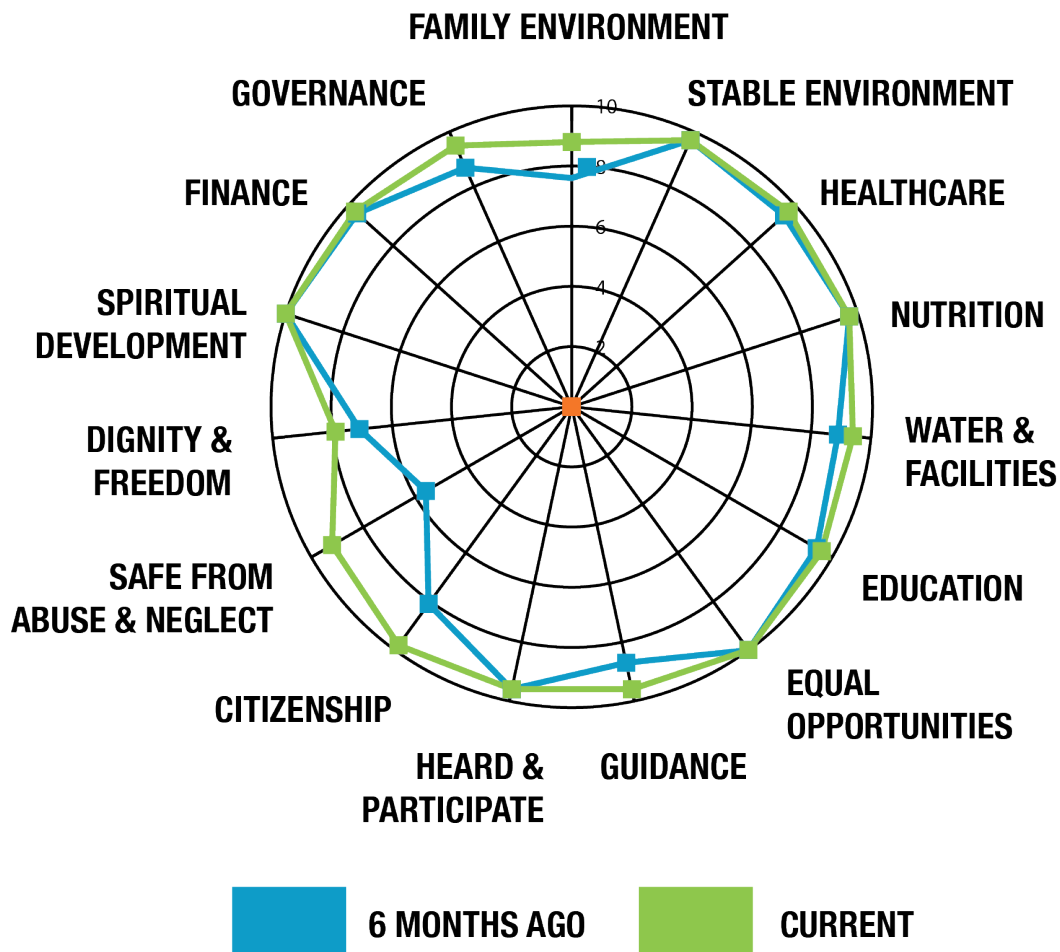


The Thrive Assessment

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

CAREGIVER EVALUATIONS

PROJECT SUMMARY	The manager of the My Fathers House Family homes would like to partner with a therapist to conduct biannual evaluations of caregivers aimed at assessing the quality of care they provide to the children.
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	K7000.00 \$270 USD

HIRE A BEHAVIORAL SPECIALIST

PROJECT SUMMARY	The manager of My Father's House Family Homes aims to facilitate quarterly meetings with a behavioral specialist to address behavioral issues, ensuring effective teaching and discipline for the children under their care.
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	K5600 \$215 USD

ESTABLISH EMERGENCY PLANS

PROJECT SUMMARY	The manager of My Father's House Family Homes seeks to facilitate and implement emergency plans for fire, flood, and water loss.
INITIAL ANTICIPATED COST	K4000 \$154 USD



Right to Live with Family

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

My Father's House is dedicated to providing comprehensive care for school-aged children until they complete high school or transition into a sustainable skill set for their future. Each nurturing home is overseen by a dedicated caregiver responsible for up to 8 children. Caregivers reside in the homes, ensuring constant support, and only take leave as needed, during which time a Matron provides attentive care. Prior to assuming their own household, new caregivers undergo a thorough two-month shadowing program with experienced mentors. In addition to providing a nurturing environment, responsibilities within the home are shared, with caregivers guiding children through age-appropriate chores. Efforts are made to maintain sibling connections, with regular visits encouraged to foster strong bonds. Detailed records are kept, emphasizing family connections whenever possible, though children without identifiable relatives may have limited documentation. The on-site social worker actively pursues reunification efforts for children whose families can be located. Recognizing the importance of trauma-informed care, the home's manager has facilitated training for caregivers. While performance evaluations are conducted periodically, consistency in this regard is lacking. Furthermore, there has been no provision for professional therapist assessments to gauge caregiver compatibility, an area the home manager would like to address to enhance overall support and effectiveness.

- Establish a plan for onboarding evaluations for caregivers.
- Facilitate caregiver evaluations bi-annually.



Right to a Stable Environment

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

In each home, clear rules are communicated to all children through verbal explanation and posted notices. When infractions occur, appropriate disciplinary measures are implemented based on the child's age and understanding. The social worker collaborates with caregivers to explore positive disciplinary strategies, although the absence of specialist guidance presents challenges in this area. Within the homes, emphasis is placed on familial activities such as homework sessions, shared chores, devotional practices, and attending church together, all aimed at nurturing a sense of unity among children. Caregivers are granted 30 days of annual leave, which they take at their discretion, along with one personal day per month. Efforts are underway to increase the provision of rest days for caregivers, a goal supported by the home manager who regularly engages in discussions with caregivers to address issues and foster a positive work environment. These proactive measures have contributed to a notable decrease in caregiver turnover, ensuring continuity and stability in care provision.

- Develop positive disciplinary guidelines.
- Implement more days off for caregivers .



Right to Healthcare

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

My Father's House has established a valuable partnership with a local healthcare facility to conduct monthly health check-ups for the children in their community. Each child has a dedicated medical record maintained at the clinic, which also administers all necessary vaccinations. While the clinic offers annual vision services and emergency care, dental services are provided on an as-needed basis. However, specialized paediatric services are not available at the clinic. The caregivers at My Father's House are well-prepared to attend to any special medical needs the children may have. Hygiene is diligently maintained, with adolescent girls provided with an ample supply of sanitary towels and educated on proper disposal methods. Additionally, regular hair washing, braiding, or cutting is ensured to uphold cleanliness standards. The importance of dental hygiene is emphasized, and children are provided with toothbrushes and toothpaste, as well as supervised by caregivers to brush their teeth twice daily.

- Implement annual dental exams for all children.



Right to Nutrition

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home adheres to an excellently planned menu, meticulously organized and approved by a government nutritionist. The children enjoy a diet rich in locally sourced ingredients that are carefully crafted to be appetizing. Each day, meals consist of a balanced serving of protein and vegetables, supplemented by an array of fruits on most days of the week. Food preparation takes place in a clean environment, meticulously maintained to be pest-free through thrice-annual fumigation sessions. The kitchen spaces are always kept clean and thoughtfully ventilated at all times, ensuring optimal hygiene standards are upheld.

- Increase fruit intake for children.



Right to Safe & Adequate Water & Facilities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

My Father's House undergoes an annual certification process to uphold minimum care standards. Each residence ensures ample lighting, access to clean drinking water, and proper sewage disposal methods. Additionally, fire extinguishers are readily available, and the home director is eager to train staff members in emergency protocols and conduct fire drills to meet government requirements. An emergency assembly point is already established. Moreover, the home manager expresses confidence in the overall safety of the residences due to their sturdy construction. However, there is a pressing need to replace the roofs of older homes, which remains the primary concern.

- Replace roofs of the older homes.
- Facilitate annual emergency drills and establish a documented emergency plan.
- Provide smoke alarms in the homes.



Right to Quality Education

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

Adjacent to My Father's House is a government-operated primary school, with which the home director maintains a strong rapport, ensuring enrollment for all resident children. Regrettably, the school often grapples with overcrowding, impacting the quality of education provided. However, the home mitigates this challenge through a robust after-school program dedicated to enhancing literacy, phonics, and mathematics skills, which has yielded positive results. Moreover, the home boasts a library and computer lab accessible to all its children. While the library contains a wealth of books, additional shelves are needed to accommodate its growing collection. Furthermore, there is a need to procure books in local languages to enrich the literary resources available.

- Procure books in local languages.
- Install additional shelves for the expanding library.

Right to Equal Opportunities

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The layout of the home is carefully designed to provide each child with their own bed space and storage area for personal belongings like clothing and shoes. Moreover, special provisions are made to accommodate children with specific needs, ensuring their well-being and comfort. Both male and female support staff offer mentorship and basic counseling to the children residing in the home. Furthermore, the home director has fostered relationships with community members, including pastors, who also contribute to mentoring and counseling initiatives.

- Continue with current practices.



Right to Guidance

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home maintains clear expectations for all caregivers to follow during the recruitment process. Caregivers undergo evaluations using a performance assessment tool, although no formal professional evaluations have been conducted. The home manager facilitates access to professional therapeutic services to address the children's psychological needs. Additionally, community members offer occasional mentorship and counselling. The manager has also identified the necessity for training to effectively address and manage sexual behavior in children. While formal documentation of life-skills training is lacking, the home manager ensures that practical knowledge, including cleaning, hygiene, and respectful interaction, is imparted to the children. Opportunities for involvement in facility programs are encouraged, and include activities such as bike repair, inventory management, and sales. Occasional activities like farming and church activities, although not formally documented, are also promoted in the home. A preparation plan is in place for children starting at age 15 to ready them for life after high school. Upon completing high school, children are informed that they will either receive a scholarship for higher education or undergo skills training, depending on their academic performance.

- Facilitate caregiver evaluations to determine quality mentors for the children.
- Provide caregivers with training on how to manage sexual behavior and educate children on their bodies.



Right to Be Heard and Participate in Decisions

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home has cultivated an environment where caregivers actively promote children's free time to nurture their personal interests. If children opt out of non-essential activities, they are free to abstain. Furthermore, children engage in activities such as collaboratively planning their annual food menu and independently purchasing clothing, with guidance. Each child also has an individual development plan, which is updated as frequently as necessary.

- Continue with current practices.



Right to Be Prepared for Citizenship

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The social services team ensures that children with traced family connections possess all necessary documentation, securely held by their family members rather than at the home. Additionally, the home manager ensures that children are kept informed about any changes in ministry regulations and the ethical standards governing the homes. To keep the children informed about current events, televisions are provided with access to news channels. Caregivers are encouraged to assign age-appropriate chores to the children, teaching them to maintain a clean and orderly environment. With a small budget for perishable items, caregivers instruct children in budgeting and involve them in purchasing items for the home. Special outings, like those during Christmas, are organized for the children to enjoy leisure activities. Moreover, annual shopping trips guide children in responsible spending by creating budgets. Under the management's guidance, new activities such as sports and special outings have been introduced for the children. Additionally, more community service opportunities have been incorporated to foster a sense of responsibility and engagement with the community.

- Continue with current practices.



Right to Safe from Abuse & Neglect

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home premises are equipped with 24/7 security services and now feature burglar bars on the windows to enhance safety measures. To further protect the children, the home manager conducts quarterly talks with them, emphasizing the importance of reporting any inappropriate or abusive behavior from anyone. All caregivers recruited by the home must provide a recommendation letter from their church. Moreover, to maintain the safety and privacy of the children, boys and girls are accommodated in separate quarters, and one-on-one interactions between individuals of the opposite gender are prohibited, though this rule doesn't apply to caregivers. While frequent visitors are encouraged, caregivers and the home manager remain vigilant to ensure that children are never left alone with them. Additionally, a child protection policy is strictly adhered to and signed by all on-site employees. The manager has arranged for children to undergo therapeutic evaluations to assist them in addressing trauma, and incoming children will undergo intake assessments as part of the admission process. In terms of discipline, social workers on-site provide guidance to caregivers, advocating for discipline through the withholding of privileges. However, caregivers have not received formal training from experts in this area.

- Provide staff with training on positive discipline techniques.
- Build an intentional strategy to enforce no one on one time between individuals.



Right to Dignity and Freedom

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home is dedicated to fostering an environment that upholds the rights and freedoms of children. Caregivers actively guide children towards self-sufficiency, providing grooming items and clothing for each child. Moreover, every child is allocated personal space to store their belongings. In a bid to promote independence, children are offered opportunities to undertake additional chores such as gardening, thereby earning privileges - a practice encouraged by the manager. However, it's important to note that children are not permitted to engage in paid employment as a means of earning money.

- Plan for teenagers to have opportunities to work in the community safely to earn money.



Right to Spiritual Development

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home deeply embraces Christian principles, encouraging all children to engage with a local church in the community. Actively involved in various church activities such as choir, youth ministry, Sunday School, and Bible study, the children find enrichment and spiritual growth. Within the home, caregivers and children come together for daily devotions and prayer sessions. Additionally, the home provides access to Bibles and other Christian reading materials to foster personal spiritual development among the children. Quiet spaces are designated for caregivers and children alike, offering opportunities for solitude and personal reflection.

- Continue with current practices.



Financial Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home maintains a rigorous administrative process to ensure transparency and accountability in financial matters. Withdrawals of funds require authorization from two individuals, and all expenditures undergo auditing by an external accounting firm. Monthly reports, prepared by the accountant, are submitted to senior management for monitoring and evaluation. Annual budgets are meticulously prepared to anticipate the financial requirements for each fiscal year, although unforeseen expenses may arise. Furthermore, there are instances where budgeted expenses cannot be fully met due to insufficient funding. In such cases, the home prioritizes expenses based on urgency and necessity, aiming to address critical needs first.

- Continue with current practices.



Governance and Human Resource Standard

SURVIVING

SUSTAINING

THRIVING

The home has taken measures to safeguard its property, ensuring it cannot be sold for personal gain. Currently, efforts are underway to update licensing, and the creation of dedicated space on-site for document storage has been achieved. While social workers at the home have received government training on child participation, this training has not been extended to other staff members. Nevertheless, the home director conducts monthly meetings with caregivers to address issues and enhance operational processes. In selecting caregivers for the children, the home maintains an effective system. All caregivers undergo a two-month shadowing period with an experienced caregiver before assuming responsibilities in their own home. The home manager has organized training sessions on attachment, child development, and the importance of child participation. Additionally, while the home has only received one training session on caring for sick children and hygiene, caregivers, many of whom are seasoned mothers, have acquired personal expertise in these areas. The home has also undergone inspections by health officials and has successfully met all minimum standards.

- Provide annual training on caring for sick children.



Current Improvement Partners



Every Orphan's Hope

Every Orphan's Hope is actively creating opportunities for vulnerable children to be placed in families. For kids that do not have the opportunity to be reunified, adopted, or fostered, EOH provides a family home. Our partnership with EOH consists of ACHF training members of their staff in the Thrive Certification Program to deploy in the residential care facilities they have and partner with. Learn more at www.everyorphan.org.

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



Every Orphan's

HOPE



**A CHILD'S
HOPE**
FOUNDATION