

## Gogo Irene and Mavambo Trust, Harare, Zimbabwe



In Harare, Zimbabwe, Gogo Irene could not enroll her granddaughter in school without a birth certificate. “It pained me so much to see this child growing up so smart but not in school,” she recalled. When she connected with Mavambo Trust and found Francesca could start at their school for orphans the next day, she shouted, “Go scrub yourself, you are a schoolgirl now!”

Irene also joined Mavambo’s group of grandmothers where they discussed their problems and got support and training in growing sack gardens. “The first day the vegetables were ready,” she said, “I cooked so much, we ate and ate and it was the first time the

grandchildren said, ‘Gogo, I can’t finish.’ That day I knew my life was transforming. The grandchildren started growing and I started to gain weight and look beautiful again. I started selling extra vegetables at a table outside my house and could afford to buy clothes for the children and all of the other things they need. We grannies learned dressmaking for income, and patchworking, so even scraps of clothing would not go to waste – they can become blankets for the children. Now we grandmothers have started saving together and using the revolving loans for bigger projects. With my loans I go to second-hand markets and buy clothes that I sell here or trade for maize in the rural areas.”

The Stephen Lewis Foundation partners with community-led organizations like Mavambo Trust in the 15 sub-Saharan countries in Africa worst affected by the continuing HIV and AIDS pandemic. Mavambo’s website states: *Mavambo Orphan Care (MOC) is a local non-governmental organisation established in 2001 in Zimbabwe with a mission of empowering children to develop their maximum potential by capacitating them to become socially adjusted, self-sustaining, healthy responsible citizens.* Programmes it runs include a school feeding programme, child protection, psychosocial support, education support, health and hygiene, and household economic strengthening. <https://mavambotrust.org.zw>

Irene’s story is on p.165 of [Powered by Love: A Grandmothers’ Movement to End AIDS in Africa](#), which is available in VG4A’s library and GVPL.