

# AMBASSADOR'S SPECIAL SELF-HELP PROGRAM

## SNAPSHOT

### Out From Under the Tree: A New Training Center for HIV/AIDS Support Groups

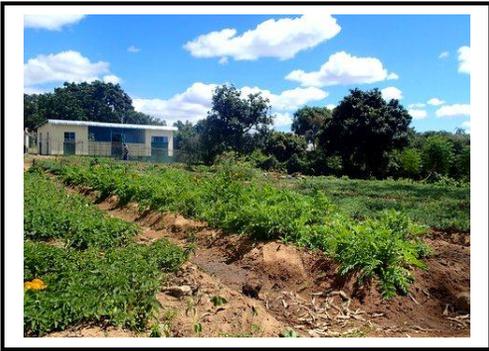


Photo: SSH Program

Little Children of the Blessed Lady's Herbal Garden and Processing Center grows herbs, vegetables, and fruit to make teas, ointments, herbal remedies, and juice for people living with HIV/AIDS. With PEPFAR funding through the Ambassador's Special Self-Help Program, LCBL built a counseling and training center next to the garden to continue growing the community's knowledge in herbs, nutrition, home care, and livelihood activities.

The SSH Program awards grants to non-governmental, non-profit, or community-based organizations registered for at least one year to implement short-term (12-month), small-scale development projects that include significant community involvement.

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Just north of Harare, beyond the popular hiking destination of Ngomakurira, past the Makumbi Secondary School, at the end of a bumpy dirt road, flourishes a garden. In the middle of the garden is a tree. Underneath the tree, women living with HIV/AIDS used to gather for support group meetings and informal training sessions.

That was before the faith-based NGO Little Children of the Blessed Lady (LCBL) was selected for an Ambassador's Special Self-Help (SSH) Program small grant. Founded in 2007 and registered with the Traditional Medical Practitioners Council in Zimbabwe, LCBL seeks to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS through natural remedies, nutritious food, and herbal therapies.

With other donor funding, LCBL built a small, one-story building in 2012 to serve as their herbal processing center. They planted a hectare of herbs, vegetables, and fruit trees and eventually opened an Herbal Clinic on the south side of Harare.

Still, the support groups gathered in the garden under the wide branches of the tree. Sister Yullita, a certified herbalist, met frequently with the women to discuss herbal remedies, home care options, family health, and nutrition. As the women began to plant their own gardens and sell their herbs back to the processing center, their ambitions grew.

Using Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) funding through the SSH Program, LCBL designed and built a new counseling and training center alongside the garden. The small building includes a clinic for health counseling, a kitchen for making herbal tea, an office, and a large meeting room.

To the HIV/AIDS support groups, the building provides much more than just a meeting space. The chairwomen of the Beginning New Life support group said that with this new meeting center, the women "feel proud... We are empowered as people. We want to use this space for livelihood projects such as soap making, candle making, and peanut butter processing."

"We still face discrimination and challenges in our communities," she continued, "but, when we come here, we can leave the stress behind. We can receive training, share ideas, and work to improve our lives."

More than 200 people from the surrounding villages will benefit from the center through the agricultural trainings, health counseling, and livelihood projects that are now housed in the new space.