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touching tiny lives

# 2008 Annual Report

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# 2008 Annual Report

## *A year of growth and opportunity*

### **2008 Overview**

Touching Tiny Lives experienced many successes and significant growth during 2008. Building on the solid foundation established during its first three years of operation, TTL notably expanded the scope and reach of its projects to serve over 450 clients in 2008.

The Outreach program remained firmly at the core of the TTL mission, serving over 250 children in their homes. The PMTCT program saw marked growth in 2008 as well, serving 56 new clients, and reaching over 200 women in total. At the safe-home, 33 of the most vulnerable children were rehabilitated.

The growth in these programs was made possible by reaching further into the communities already served by TTL,, and also extending into the underserved rural areas in the highlands of Lesotho. From its base in Mokhotlong, TTL expanded its outreach program to the neighboring district of Thaba Tseka. After a soft-launch in late 2007, the Thaba Tseka project matured into a thriving addition to TTL's Mokhotlong outreach efforts, and in 2008 over 35% of TTL's outreach clients came from the Thaba Tseka program.

TTL also expanded services within the Mokhotlong district, working in almost every corner of the district. Of particular note is TTL's blossoming work in the Makhoaba (also known as San Martin) area, one of the least accessible, and therefore most underserved, areas in Mokhotlong district. In close collaboration with the San Martin CHUL clinic, TTL started regular visits to the villages surrounding the clinic in the Summer of 2008, where need was evident and plentiful. TTL established a good working relationship with the clinic and started serving dozens of children in that area within the first few months of service.

Building on early successes in the area, TTL also chose San Martin as the site of an innovative pilot project to train and support Village Health Workers (VHWs) to make them a viable tool in the fight against malnutrition and HIV/AIDS. Launched in November 2008, the Village Health Worker program is training 35 VHWs on important aspects of malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, TB, and prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT). The program will

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provide VHWs with the tools and knowledge to serve as lifelines to the communities where they live.

### TTL By-The-Numbers: 2008



**1400 +:** Visits made to children's homes to provide nutritional, medical, and educational support through the Outreach Program

**400 +:** Visits by clients to clinics and hospitals, facilitated by TTL

**251:** Number of children served through Outreach program

**179:** Visits made to expectant and new HIV+ mothers

**153:** Women trained on breastfeeding, nutrition, and hygiene

**78:** Pregnant women and new mothers tested for HIV by TTL

**56:** New PMTCT clients (HIV+ pregnant and breastfeeding women) given support

**33:** Children rehabilitated in safe-home

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**TTL's Work**

**Outreach**

Touching Tiny Lives served over 250 children through its outreach efforts during 2008. Each of these children has a unique and difficult story, but share the common need for assistance to help them through their vulnerable early years. TTL provides that help in whatever form is needed, whether it is the delivery of a monthly food package, counseling and education for caretakers on how to seek medical treatment, or financial support for transport to the hospital and hospital fees.

Of the 251 clients served during 2008, 158 were from Mokhotlong district, with the other 93 residing in the Mashai area of Thaba Tseka district. In order to serve these clients, TTL made over 1400 individual home visits. By reaching clients in their homes, TTL establishes personal relationships with each individual family, and tailors its services to the specific needs of that family.



With TTL's support, these clients also made over 400 visits to local clinics and hospitals. By encouraging and enabling these visits through education and financial support, TTL not only ensures appropriate medical care, but also instills strong treatment-seeking behavior for the future.

Of the 251 clients served, 101 clients were successfully "graduated," having achieved stable health and nutritional conditions. With TTL's support, each of these children passed through a period of greatest vulnerability and is now able to live and be supported by their families and communities.

Sadly, 27 outreach clients also passed away during the year.

## **Kefoue Nkhoee: A New Home, And A New Lease On Life**

For Kefoue Nkhoee, 2008 was a year of new dreams and new possibilities. At three years old, Kefoue had experienced a life-time full of misery. From the Molikaliko area of Mokhotlong district, her mother died when she was just two years old, leaving her in the care of her elderly grandmother.



**Kefoue's Grandmother**

When TTL first visited Kefoue in late 2007, she was severely malnourished with undiagnosed HIV, and living in a rundown rondaval with her grandmother. TTL acted quickly to get Kefoue tested and started on ARVs, while also providing food packages to improve nutrition in the household. Recognizing that her living environment was contributing to her health problems, TTL also built her and her grandmother a new rondaval.

By mid-2008, Kefoue's outlook for life was remarkably different than just a year earlier. She is now on life-saving medicine, eating well, and living in a clean new home.



**Kefoue**

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**PMTCT**

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Recognizing that the best long-term solution for children in Lesotho is to avoid transmission of HIV/AIDS in the first place, TTL spent 2008 ramping up its PMTCT (Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission) program. Working with local clinics and hospitals, TTL assisted 56 new clients who were either pregnant or breastfeeding, providing them with services such as transport to hospitals for delivery, clean bottles and brushes, and formula if they chose to stop breastfeeding. Additionally, TTL helped to train over 150 women on breastfeeding and hygiene best-practices. All told, TTL directly reached over 200 women as part of the PMTCT program.



A TTL Outreach worker trains a woman on how to safely use formula

TTL also worked with partner BIPAI (Baylor International Pediatric Aids Initiative) to improve PMTCT efforts at San Theresa's Clinic in Thaba Tseka. Despite having a busy maternity ward (20+ deliveries/month), St. Theresa did not have any ARVs, including the specific regimens imperative for prevention of mother-to-child transmission. With the help and facilitation of TTL, Baylor doctors working in Thaba Tseka came to St. Theresa to train the staff in administering the PMTCT medications. With this training in place, St. Theresa was able to receive the appropriate medications from Paray District Hospital. Now, St. Theresa is stocked with PMTCT medications, and TTL is referring all the HIV positive pregnant women in the area to the clinic for delivery.

**Safe-home**

33 children were rehabilitated at the safe-home in 2008, making it the busiest year yet for TTL. Of these children, 23 were successfully reintegrated with their families during the year, 9 are still residing in the safe-home (soon to be reintegrated as well), and 1 passed away after responding poorly to treatment for TB and HIV.

Many of the children that have stayed with TTL this year have made remarkable recoveries, escaping from death's doorstep to become smiling, playful babies ready to return to their families. As TTL's Outreach and

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PMTCT programs grow and serve increasing numbers of children, the safe-home will continue to serve as a final safety net for the most vulnerable.

### **Retselisitsoe Mohlomi: Exceptional Care**

Not many children in Lesotho have visited a cardiologist, but Retselisitsoe Mohlomi is an exception. He arrived at TTL in late 2007 following the death of his mother when he was just three months old. Despite the early intervention, Retselisitsoe spent much of 2008 in the TTL safe-home struggling for his life.



HIV+, Retselisitsoe suffered from regular precipitous drops in his blood oxygen, and was constantly in and out of the hospital. After exhausting options in Lesotho, TTL decided to seek specialist treatment in South Africa, where he was seen by a pediatric cardiologist, and finally started on a successful treatment program.



**Retselisitsoe**

After spending months with his tiny nose attached to oxygen tubes, he made sustainable progress in the second-half of 2008 and was reintegrated with his thrilled grandmother in October.

Now, Retselisitsoe is back in his home village of Nkokamele being cared for by his grandparents, playing with his neighbors, and occasionally receiving visits from his old friends at TTL.

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## Expansion of Mokhotlong Campus

2008 was also a year of expansion on TTL's Mokhotlong campus. TTL built two new rondavals to house volunteers and medical personnel. The rondavals will ensure that TTL has adequate housing to accommodate international volunteers, as well as medical personnel working directly at TTL or with the adjacent district hospital.



## Organizational Profile

In the Mokhotlong district of Lesotho, HIV and AIDS are ravaging the community. With HIV rates estimated at near 30%, Lesotho is at the epicenter of the global HIV epidemic. Life expectancy has dropped from 45 to 38, and rates of associated infections, such as TB, are soaring. Largely as a result of this epidemic, some estimates suggest that there are as many as 100,000 orphans in Lesotho, out of a population of only 1.8 million. Many other children have contracted HIV from their mothers. In too many tragic cases, children in Mokhotlong district are both orphaned and HIV positive.

Touching Tiny Lives (TTL) is dedicated to helping children under five years of age affected by this epidemic. Managed and staffed by women and men from the community, the organization has served over five-hundred kids since beginning work in 2004, and currently provides life-saving support to over 130 children and pregnant mothers.

To do this, TTL employs a unique model consisting of three integrated programs. At the core of the Touching Tiny Lives model is an outreach program that supports children in their homes by providing nutritional,

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medical, and educational support. A complementary PMTCT (prevention of mother to child transmission) program works with pregnant mothers to prevent transmissions to newborns. Finally, TTL operates a safe-home in Mokhotlong where severely malnourished and sick children are rehabilitated. The safe-home is a final safety-net for the most vulnerable kids, and a temporary home to some of the cutest babies around.

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