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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, growing to serve 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 deeper 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 San Martin area (also known as Makhoaba), one of the least accessible, and therefore most underserved, areas in Mokhotlong district. In close collaboration with the San Martin Christian Health Association of Lesotho (CHAL) 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 breastfeeding options for HIV positive mothers. The program will provide

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

TTL By-The-Numbers: 2008



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

400 +: Visits by clients to clinics and hospitals

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 shares 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.



Kefuoe Nkhooe: A New Home, And A New Lease On Life

For Kefuoe Nkhooe, 2008 was a year of new dreams and new possibilities. At three years old, Kefuoe 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.



Kefuoe's Grandmother

When TTL first visited Kefuoe in late 2007, she was severely malnourished with undiagnosed HIV, and living in a rundown rondavel with her grandmother. TTL acted quickly to get Kefuoe 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 rondavel.

By mid-2008, Kefuoe'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.



Kefuoe

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.



Retselisitsoe playing at the safe-home

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 getting ready to return home

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 Tsoenene 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 rondavels to house volunteers and medical personnel. The rondavels 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 less than 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, 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.
