



P.O. Box 72, Mokhotlong 500
Telefax: (+266) 2292 0454
Cell: (+266) 63 126 126
E-Mail: ttl@leo.co.ls

2009 Annual Report

touching tiny lives

2009 Annual Report

A year of growth and progress

2009 Overview

2009 was a productive and innovative year for Touching Tiny lives. Recognizing a critical need, TTL endeavored to improve the scope, accessibility, and quality of its services. Focus was placed on expanding outreach services, village health worker training, and developing electronic records for clients. These efforts made 2009 not only a year of significant growth, but of advancement.

In 2009, 310 orphaned and vulnerable children were supported through outreach services: a 24% increase from 2008. TTL's PMTCT (Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission) continued to provide essential services to HIV positive mothers and vulnerable babies. 70 new mothers were supported through education and access to formula and medical care.

TTL's growth in 2009 is attributable to several factors. TTL has enhanced its outreach capacity through the addition of staff and a new car. It has also continued to expand its activities in the Thaba Tseka district and is now assisting communities served by the St. Theresa and Mohlanapeng clinics. In Mokhotlong, TTL has continued to build strong ties with community leaders and local health clinics and hospitals. The Village Health Worker Training Program, designed to identify children affected by malnutrition and HIV/AIDS, was implemented at two additional clinics. These partnerships are a valuable source of referrals and allow TTL to more efficiently locate children in need.

In an effort to ensure these children receive the best support possible, TTL implemented an electronic database. This database will allow TTL to better monitor individual clients and evaluate trends within communities. This technology will allow TTL to tailor their services and programs to fit the needs of the children in the Lesotho highlands.

Touching Tiny Lives has served 593 children in the Mokhotlong and Thaba Tseka districts since its inception in May 2004. Despite these achievements, TTL recognizes that there are many more children in need. TTL remains committed to strengthening and expanding its services to provide life saving support to these children.



TTL Accomplishments in Numbers: 2009

1842 Visits made to children's homes through the Outreach Program to provide nutritional and medical support, and training to caregivers

648 Visits to train women on breastfeeding, nutrition, and hygiene

520 Visits by clients to clinics and hospitals

397 Visits made to new and expectant HIV+ mothers

310 Number of children served through the Outreach Program

33 Children rehabilitated in the Safe-Home

29 New PMTCT clients (HIV+ pregnant and breastfeeding women) given support

16 Pregnant and new mothers tested for HIV by TTL



Joki: After a VHW found him severely malnourished he was rehabilitated at the safe-home. He is now happily reunified with his grandmother.



TTL's Work

Outreach

Touching Tiny Lives served over 300 children through its outreach efforts during 2009. These children face complex and often overwhelming challenges. TTL is dedicated to providing them with personalized support to help them through their 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 and adhere to medical treatment, or financial support for transport to the hospital and hospital fees. The outreach program allows TTL to provide vulnerable children with lifesaving services while keeping families intact.

Of the 309 clients served during 2009, 213 were from Mokhotlong district, with the other 96 residing in the Mashai area of Thaba Tseka district. In order to serve these clients, TTL made over 1840 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. These home visits also offer opportunities to provide caregivers with training on proper nutrition, basic medical issues, and disease prevention in the home.



With TTL's support, these clients also made over 520 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 309 clients served, 149 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, 31 outreach clients passed away during 2009. They are a poignant reminder of the hardships faced by orphaned and vulnerable children in Lesotho and the support they so critically need.

PMTCT

One of the difficult realities of the epidemic is that most young children with HIV contract the disease from their mothers. TTL ‘s PMTCT (Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission) program provides women with the knowledge and resources to give their children a chance at a life free of HIV. Working with local clinics and hospitals, TTL assisted 70 new clients who were pregnant, 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 made 648 visits to train women on breastfeeding, alternatives to breastfeeding, and hygiene best practices.



Nthabisang, whose mother is HIV positive, enjoys a bottle of formula.



Safe-Home

In 2009, 33 children were rehabilitated at the TTL safe-home. Of these children, 23 were successfully reintegrated with their families and are currently supported through outreach services. Seven children are still residing in the safe-home and will soon be reunified as well. Sadly, three children passed away after arriving at TTL in critical health. These children highlight the importance of the Outreach and VHW programs to identify seriously ill children as early as possible.



Nako: When he arrived at the TTL safe-house, Nako was malnourished and HIV positive. Today he is healthy and reunified with his extended family. TTL's outreach workers continue to support him and his family with his medications, clinic visits, and nutritional needs.

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 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.



Tsepang Posholi

Tsepang almost didn't survive 2009. He was brought to a TTL outreach worker in Thaba Tseka by a neighbor. The woman had taken pity on this desperate orphan, whose mother had died a month before and whose grandmother was gravely ill. As he was unwrapped from his blankets his wizened little face, eyes wide and cheeks taut, and skeletal body emerged. At seven months old, with all his clothes, Tsepang weighed just 6.4 pounds.

As he was driven along the winding roads back to the safe-home, Tsepang eagerly drank a bottle of formula. He had been sucking on his thumbs, sucking with desperation, and when they were pulled from his mouth he would scream. The thumbs were pruned, like they had just come out of the bath, and the skin had peeled away so that they were nearly white. After his first feeding, his eyes closed and the thumbs finally slipped out of his mouth.



Within three weeks of arriving at the safe-home Tsepang gained enough weight to be almost unrecognizable as the skeletal baby who first arrived. He is a survivor who, with love and food, amazed us all. He enjoyed entertaining TTL caregivers and outreach staff with his newfound ability to stand and take a few steps. After five months at the safe-home, Tsepang returned to Thaba Tseka and was reunited with his grandmother. After a dramatic recovery, he is now a happy, charismatic baby.



Village Health Worker Project

Following the success of a pilot project to train and support Village Health Workers (VHWs), TTL expanded the project to two additional sites in Mokhotlong. VHWs serve as a vital link between their communities and local health services. Through the VHW project, TTL provides supplementary training to enhance their abilities to serve as “first responders” in the fight against malnutrition and HIV/AIDS. Participating VHWs attend monthly workshops where they receive hands-on training in how to recognize, evaluate, and monitor the signs of malnutrition and HIV/AIDS. They receive additional guidance on breastfeeding options for HIV positive mothers. Empowered with this knowledge, VHWs are able to refer members of their communities to critically needed services, including those provided by TTL.

In 2009, TTL trained 42 VHWs at the St. Martin clinic, 32 at the Molikaliko clinic, and 43 at the Linakaneg clinic. These 117 men and women are now better equipped to serve as lifelines for their communities.



Children play while they wait their turn to be evaluated during a VHW training session.



TTL Client Database

In 2009, TTL staff and supporters collaborated on an ambitious and inventive project to compile information on the children served. With the help of Canadian consultant, Howard Block, TTL implemented a comprehensive database. Electronic records of each child are updated monthly with vital information concerning the child's health, nutritional, and family status. This database will enhance TTL's ability to monitor individual clients and evaluate trends within the Mokhotlong and Thaba Tseka communities. It will also provide a means to evaluate the quality and consistency of the services TTL provides. The database will be an important tool to identify areas of need within the communities TTL serves.

Development of Mokhotlong Campus

In 2009, TTL's Mokhotlong campus underwent significant expansion: a new office building was constructed. The new building will provide TTL with four additional offices and a conference room. This new construction will enhance TTL's capacity and provide new opportunities for collaboration. It offers the space necessary for TTL to continue to develop and expand services. In addition, it presents a unique opportunity for TTL to provide office space to other organizations interested in providing needed services to the Lesotho highlands.



Mathapelo and Thapelo Morojele

Mathapelo and Thapelo defied all odds and expectations in 2009. These premature newborn twins came to TTL in August after their young mother passed away during childbirth and the hospital's incubators failed to work. Fortunately, three doctors from the Baylor International Pediatric Aids Initiative (BIPAI) were working in Mokhotlong that week. The twins' prematurity and low birth weight, about 1.5 kg, placed them at risk for numerous complications. The BIPAI doctors took time from their busy schedules to examine the babies and provide much needed guidance.



Extremely small and fragile, they happily spent their days wrapped in blankets in front of TTL's heaters. The first months were challenging and at times precarious: both children spent time on oxygen. They required careful monitoring and numerous medical consultations over the phone. Yet with round-the-clock attention from TTL's excellent safe-home caregivers, both children survived and flourished. Today they are happy and healthy babies, looking forward to being reunited with their family.



Organizational Profile

In the Mokhotlong and Thaba Tseka districts 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 these districts are both orphaned and HIV positive. This epidemic is coupled with food insecurity and high rates of child malnutrition. Despite the immensity of the challenges faced, these highland districts are some of the most underserved areas in Lesotho.

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 six hundred kids since beginning work in 2004, and currently provides life-saving support to over 160 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.



touching
tiny lives

