In a world of global challenges, continued poverty, inequity, and increasing vulnerability to disasters and disease, the International Federation with its global network, works to accomplish its Global Agenda, partnering with local community and civil society to prevent and alleviate human suffering from disasters, diseases and public health emergencies.

**In brief**

**Programme Summary:**
The Lesotho Red Cross Society (LRCS) recruited a new health and care coordinator, as well as prevention and orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) officers. The OVC programme was further strengthened through the recruitment of two OVC officers for Mafeteng and Thaba-Bosiu. With the assistance of the British Red Cross, LRSC also recruited an administrative assistant at their headquarters for one year.

Implementation of integrated community home-based care (ICHBC) was expanded from Mafeteng, Maseru, Berea, Leribe and Quthing, to two more areas in the highlands of Lesotho, namely Mokhotlong and Thaba-Tseka, through assistance from the Global Fund. The Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programmes funded by the British Government’s Department for International Development (DFID), through the Federation regional delegation in Harare, is implemented in two southern regions. The DRR programme aims to reduce the impact of natural hazards on targeted communities, through enhancement of community resilience, knowledge sharing and disaster response.

**Goal:** To work with the Government and other partners in reducing the vulnerability of communities to outbreak of diseases and HIV and AIDS through reduction of prevalence and impact.

**No. of people we help:** LRCS reached an inclusive target of approximately 10,000 beneficiaries through health and care, disaster management and information dissemination programmes.

**Our Partners:** LRCS worked with: Partner National Societies such as the British, German and Norwegian Red Cross societies; UN agencies including FAO, UNICEF and WFP; the ministries of Health and Social Welfare and Local Government, Justice and Human Rights; local organizations such as the National AIDS Commission (NAC), Disaster Management Authority (DMA), Children Gender Protection Unit (CGPU), Lesotho Planned Parenthood Association and Lesotho Network of People Living with HIV (NAP+); as well as international NGOs such as Global Fund to fight AIDS Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), the Clinton Foundation, DFID, MSF and Population Services International (PSI).

**Current context**

In 2006, Lesotho government’s support from humanitarian organizations towards prevention, care, support and treatment of HIV and AIDS increased in number of donors and funding. The FGATM extended its support to non-governmental organizations in HIV and AIDS prevention, OVC support and home-based care (HBC). LRCS was also a beneficiary of the Global Fund, utilized in extending ICHBC to other two districts. The Clinton Foundation brought funding support for HIV and AIDS treatment while Baylors College and other universities contributed in paediatric care and support. Donor support made it possible for the expansion of HIV treatment from one centre to virtually all government hospitals by the end of 2006.

The ‘Know Your Status’ initiative of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare was widely adopted and stakeholders used it as a national slogan in the promotion of voluntary counselling and testing (VCT). LRCS was recognised as the key stakeholder and partner in the promotion of the campaign and. The level of stigma has somewhat decreased after the subject of HIV has become the agenda. Although the ‘Know Your Status’ campaign still requires more funding support, it has already carved a way towards dealing with the scourge at an individual level.
HBC has been accepted and often initiated by the community members and efforts have been reinforced by the involvement of the office of the first lady and the wives of ministers. Local government has been a vital vehicle for coordinating development at district level and are working with the community leaders.

The LRCS disaster management programme aims at reducing risk to emergencies and is operational in two southern districts namely Mafeteng and Quthing. Food insecurity caused by disasters such as drought, HIV and AIDS and poor governance, jointly known as the ‘triple threat’, poses a serious problem to the most vulnerable people. The DRR programme hence aims at improving food security of the most vulnerable people, targeting the HBC clients, OCV, the chronically ill and the elderly. Actual implementation of the DRR activities started in January 2006. Volunteers established two demonstration vegetable gardens in Mafeteng and Quthing respectively and most activities were continued. The garden provides food and nutrition to vulnerable people and is run through well coordinated HBC support groups.

Progress towards objectives

Health and Care

Goal: To work in collaboration with the Government of Lesotho and other partners in providing high quality community-based health care and reproductive health services within LRCS operational areas.

Objective: The well-being of the most vulnerable communities is improved and maintained through preventive, curative and rehabilitative care and support.

The ICHBC was extended to communities in Maseru, Mafeteng, Mokhotlong, Thaba-Tseka, Berea, Leribe and Quthing. A total of 369 care facilitators were trained on HBC skills and they provided care and support to 2,679 chronically ill clients. A total of 788 people tested for HIV while 138 males and 267 females are on anti retroviral treatment (ART).

In 2006, a total of 8,634 OVC were registered. Care facilitators were trained on providing self help skills and psychosocial support to OVC through refresher training. A total of 6,666 OVC received educational support in the form of school fees and uniforms. Support groups for OVC were established with the purpose of upgrading the nutritional status of the OVC. Seedlings were supplied to different support groups in different areas, children and guardians were organized to participate in horticulture and poultry projects.

The Thaba Bosiu OVC project supported by the Norwegian Red Cross had a good harvest and was able to feed both OVC and HBC clients. The project has managed to secure 160 acres of land and the production of wheat, beans and vegetables has become more sustainable. LRCS facilitated the identification of fields and hiring of tractors for tilling the identified fields. In Mafeteng and Berea, more than 300 hectares were planted with sugar cane and pinto beans. Thaba Bosiu support groups were provided with chickens, pigs, wheat, and vegetables seeds. The management of the projects falls upon the responsibility of the guardians, OVC, chiefs and the care facilitators.

OVC guardians and care providers were equipped with skills on children’s rights and approaches of helping children who require protection. Public gatherings, schools, churches and Red Cross celebrations were used as a platform to raise awareness on anti stigma issues, children’s rights, condom use and demonstration. Towards the end of the year, LRCS faced a challenge of lack of female condoms; however male condoms were distributed in all the project areas. Prevention activities are now improving and a team of volunteers were trained in drama and sports for life to enable information dissemination through the use of sports and drama.

Disaster Management

Goal: Reduced impact of natural hazards (drought and HIV and AIDS) on Mafeteng and Quthing communities in the southern districts of Lesotho.
Objective: To reduce disaster-related poverty by strengthening the capacity of vulnerable communities.

A vulnerability capacity assessment (VCA) was conducted and has increased community ownership as well as defining the programme focus regarding interventions and target groups. In October 2006, the disaster management coordinator, two DRR project officers and the food security field officer attended training on ‘VCA learning by doing’ hosted by LRCS. The VCA training was coordinated by the Federation regional delegation and attended by representatives from other Southern Africa Red Cross societies, government officials and other non-governmental organizations. LRCS received good recognition after this training evidenced by the fact the Disaster Management Authority now invites the National Society to participate in assessments and workshops.

Information and Promotion of Humanitarian Values

Goal: The Movement’s Fundamental Principles and Red Cross Humanitarian Values are known and respected in all LRCS branches.

Objective: LRCS has a positive image, the knowledge of the Movement is known, and the National Society has increased media visibility.

The Federation regional delegation organized and coordinated a media tour to Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. The media tour covered issues on humanitarian challenges in the region while at the same time profiling the work of the LRCS.

Organizational Development

Goal: LRCS meets the basic requirements of a well-functioning National Society that is responsive and focuses on the needs of the most vulnerable communities.

Objective: LRCS has improved its capacity and delivers quality services to the most vulnerable.

LRCS held its constitutional annual general assembly and new members were elected. The newly elected members were inducted on the Red Cross Code of Conduct, principles, and values and on their roles and responsibilities. The process allows governance and management to be transparent and accountable to all members and stakeholders.

The National Society also continued receiving support in organisational development through a Federation Regional Delegation deployed delegate. The Federation Regional Delegation’s human resource manager also conducted a support visit to the National Society, and among other issues facilitated the review of the organogram and refinement of some job descriptions.

Working in partnerships

British Red Cross supported three ICHBC projects in Mapholaneng, Kena and Quthing with the same package as other ICHBC projects, including refill materials. The OVC package includes school uniforms, school books, primary school support contribution and self-help and income generating activities.

Norwegian Red Cross holistic support to OVC included educational, material, psychosocial, access to health, facilitation of youth clubs, IGA, shelter, water and sanitation and advocacy. Norwegian Red Cross also provided funding for construction of a pre-school, which was officially inaugurated in January 2007. The new HIV and AIDS programmes supported through the Federation Regional Delegation is facilitating support for ICHBC clients, OVC, prevention, capacity building and staff retention in all project areas.
The Global Fund brought in significant funding support the for ICHBC programme, which was to be spent in a period of less than 12 months; however the projects were phased out by end of the year. These were in Mokhotlong, Thaba Tseka, Maseru, Mafeteng, Berea and Leribe. The projects were supporting HBC clients and OVC, and their closure affected sustainability of support rendered to the most vulnerable people.

Other major projects which were phased out in 2006 included the German Red Cross funded food security projects, started in 2002 in Botha-Bothe and Berea. After closure there was continued educational support for OVC in Botha-Bothe, with stationery, school bags, food parcels and conservation farming.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) collaborated in OVC livelihoods support programme in Mafeteng district from August 2006 and is going up to March 2007. The project has facilitated distribution of fruit tree seedlings, vegetable seeds and garden tools for OVC families and other community members. Beneficiaries have started benefiting from their gardens, for an example, harvesting the vegetables for consumption and selling. The project is getting recognition from different stakeholders and the general public who have indicated interest in procuring own drip kits. So far ten families have shown interest and LRCS will facilitate procurement of drip kits.

The Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation and Red Cross have started to mobilize communities through public gatherings for construction of roof water harvesting tanks. The Ministry has committed to supply construction materials. It is important to mention that this commitment came after the introduction of the DRR project in the communities. The project also has support of LRCS Senior management which makes administration and management of the project easy especially on facilitation of procurement.

LRCS visibility and profile has improved through media coverage and participation in the sector agencies meetings. Red Cross membership volunteers has increased since the inception of the ICHBC projects which enables scaling up and rolling out of the projects.

Contributing to longer-term impact

By reaching out to chronically ill clients and OVC with home care and support including food security aid, LRCS has complied with the Federation Global Agenda in relation to prevention and alleviation of human suffering. Even though it is culturally understood that HBC has been the role of women in the community, both men and women have been identified and trained as carers and care facilitators. This has worked well and has injected a sense of responsibility to the rest of the men in the community. Youth clubs consist of both boys and girls with a common purpose.

In order to reinforce the safety of girls and women, LRCS has forged a partnership with the Children Gender Protection Unit of the police department to enhance protection for abused OVC. The Master of High Court is also working together with care facilitators to protect OVC from relatives who want to inherit their rightful property. Collaboration between World Food Programme (WFP) and chiefs has ensured that vulnerable groups have access to food and income for basic needs, thus contributing towards government’s poverty reduction strategies.

The regional HIV and AIDS Programme Appeal (MAA63003) was launched on 1 November 2006. The International Federation is scaling-up its response to HIV and is committed to reducing vulnerability to HIV and its impact through:

- Preventing further infections;
- Expanding care, treatment, and support;
- Reducing stigma and discrimination.

LRCS HIV and AIDS programme targets to reach one million people with HIV prevention, and 7,200 PLHIV and 10,200 OVC with care, treatment and support by 2010. An integrated HIV and AIDS five year (2010) programme (MAA63003LS) is seeking a total of CHF 40,733,471 for a period of five years.
Looking Ahead

The health and care programme is expected to improve in terms of operations and strategic direction during 2007 as a result of structural improvements conducted in 2006. Increase in the number of donors supporting the ICHBC programme will enable scaling-up of HBC and OVC support activities.

The lead farmers trained in 2006 will continue to provide capacity to other community members for food production, which will ensure that OVC and chronically sick patients are well nourished. The VCA tool adopted by LRCS is basis for effective assessment of the community needs and capacities, and consequently development of community-based programme.

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