

# press release

**For immediate Release**

## **Standard Chartered upgrades Mbagathi Hospital to tackle rising cases of blindness in Nairobi**

**Nairobi Tuesday 6th March 2018...** Standard Chartered Bank in partnership with The Fred Hollows Foundation Kenya has launched a project to tackle vision loss due to diabetes among the urban-poor population in Nairobi County and its environs. The project which seeks to reach 80,000 people over the next two years will upgrade Mbagathi Hospital to enable the county facility to integrate ophthalmic services with routine screening and management of diabetes mellitus patients. It will also address cataract incidences which are the leading cause of avoidable blindness.

The project model links the target beneficiaries with diabetes and eye health services for awareness, ensuring timely identification, referral, treatment and follow-up. Speaking at the launch, Standard Chartered CEO, Mr. Lamin Manjang said the Bank has set aside KShs 12 million towards the project which is being funded under the Seeing is Believing initiative. The initiative has so far reached more than 7.6 million people in Kenya since it was launched in 2003.

"We are happy to compliment the governments' efforts to provide affordable healthcare as one of the 'Big four' pillars. With quality diabetes and eye health training, modern equipment, service provision and advocacy, the project will make screening, referral and treatment available and accessible to the needy residents of Nairobi County," said Mr. Manjang.

Ms Jane Ohuma, Country Manager, The Fred Hollows Foundation Kenya said the partnership is unique since it will enable the Bank to expand the scope of interventions from the traditional causes of avoidable blindness.

"Research has shown that Diabetes is rapidly becoming a major cause of blindness among Kenyans, with the national prevalence of 2.2% in 2015. This prevalence is likely an under-estimate as 88% of Kenya's population have never had their blood sugar tested. It is estimated that 33% of people with diabetes have diabetic retinopathy, of whom around 10% have an advanced, vision-threatening form of the disease," said Ms Ohuma.

Diabetic retinopathy is currently the leading cause of vision loss in working-age adults and as the global prevalence of diabetes increases, so too will the numbers of people with diabetic retinopathy. "The biggest challenge to tackling this treatable complication is lack of awareness, late identification, poor referral system, treatment and follow-up. This project model seeks to solve these challenges by linking the target beneficiaries with diabetes and eye health services." added Ms Ohuma.

Since 2003, the Seeing is Believing initiative has achieved tremendous success in Kenya through funding 10 projects. The support has been channelled towards screening, surgical operations and capacity building for professionals in the health sector.

As at December 2017, the fund had invested USD3.89 million in 23 projects including developing smartphone technology to enable eye screening in remote locations in Kenya and India; setting up high quality online training on diabetic retinopathy laser treatment in Africa and Asia; and manufacturing realistic eye models to enable surgical training in Tanzania.

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