

press release

Standard Chartered Bank partners with Sightsavers and Brien Holden Vision Institute to fight avoidable blindness

28th March 2014 – Kampala, Uganda; Standard Chartered Bank has partnered with SightSavers and Brien Holden Vision Institute (BHVI), the key implementing consortia NGOs for its Seeing is Believing Child Eye Health project, to provide free pediatric eye surgeries to children between 0-15 years throughout Uganda. The event at Grand Imperial Hotel also saw the handover of eye surgery equipment and computers to Gulu Hospital.

Seeing is Believing is the Bank's global initiative to tackle avoidable blindness in communities across our footprint, especially among children, and to raise awareness of blindness and visual impairment. It raises funds for investment in eye care projects that aim to have long-term impact in areas of high need. The Standard Chartered Group has committed to raising USD 100mn by 2020 for the programme through fundraising and Bank investment in the global initiative. In 2013, the Bank further extended its support for eye health by committing USD 20mn to support the work of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Trust in helping the elimination of avoidable blindness.

Standard Chartered Bank is working with the Ministries of Health and Education through NGO consortia led by Sightsavers and BHVI respectively to strengthen the health system in Uganda in a bid to ensure that hospitals have the capacity and ability to handle pediatric surgeries and children with refractive errors are provided with spectacles.

Speaking at the event, the Bank's Head of Corporate Affairs, Mr. Herbert Zake said, ***"The Bank's shareholders, staff and management have a great concern for the vulnerable and remain committed to making a difference whenever we can. This is therefore why we are investing USD 1.2 M in child eye care in Uganda over the next 4 years. We hope that this intervention will contribute to the reduction in child mortality resulting from visual impairment. There are 1.4 million blind children in the world, the impact of blindness and visual impairment on children therefore is far greater than for adults, as children have their whole lives before them. In terms of the impact on reducing years lived with disability, curing a child of blindness is, on average, equivalent to curing 10 adults with cataract surgeries."***

“The programme which targets children aged 0 to 15 years, takes a holistic view of child eye health looking at the whole child’s needs: from building awareness and education of child eye health among families and communities; building the referral networks to identify and correctly diagnose children for problems (including within schools); to ensuring the clinical infrastructure and human resources are in place to treat children with blindness and visual impairment; and ensuring that children who cannot be medically or surgically treated are given support and educational opportunities to enable them unleash their full potential,” Mr. Zake added.

Dr. Grace Ssali Nsibirwa, a paediatric ophthalmologist at Mulago Regional Referral Hospital, thanked Standard Chartered Bank for its support to the Child eye care project. She said, ***“As Mulago Hospital, we applaud Standard Chartered Bank for taking this initiative and we are hereby assuring you of our full commitment to provide all the assistance in our means to ensure that this program succeeds and is sustainable. I would like to use this opportunity to call upon other organizations to emulate the example Standard Chartered has set in offering service delivery.”***

The uniqueness of this programme is based on the fact that two partner NGO consortia, who for years have worked more independently, will work together to address the holistic needs of children. Both consortia have distinct but complementary objectives. Importantly, Brien Holden Vision Institute will focus on developing an African model for school eye health, building networks to identify and correct child eye health problems as early as possible and will support the education of blind children. The other consortium, led by Christian Blind Mission (CBM) [in East Africa] and Sightsavers [in Uganda], will mainly focus on strengthening the health system to enhance the existing clinical capacity to deliver child eye care at all levels, (human resources, awareness creation, equipment, consumables) and will work on strengthening referral systems from community to tertiary level.

While addressing the guests, the Country Director, Sightsavers, Dr. Johnson Ngorok said; ***“The goal of the project is to increase access to child eye health services by 30% over and above the current level of service provision. Implementation will be carried out by the four tertiary eye centers that we have - Mulago National Referral Hospital, Mengo Hospital, Ruharo Eye Center in Mbarara and St. Benedictine Eye Hospital in Tororo as well as six Regional Referral Hospitals i.e. Jinja, Soroti, Lira, Gulu, Arua and Fort Portal. In terms of geographical coverage the project will reach 9 of the 14 ministry of health regions,”*** he concluded.

The Seeing is Believing Child Eye Health project will use the existing Ministries of Health and Education infrastructure and Human resources for its implementation.

“Blindness and visual impairment have serious effects on the educational and employment opportunities of children. Less than 10% of blind children attend school, which is a worrying statistic,” said Sub-Regional Manager (Eastern Africa) Brien Holden Vision Institute Ms. Naome Nsubuga.

According to Ms. Nsubuga, there is an estimated 8,500 to 10,000 children with severe visual impairment and another 4.5m (10%) suffering from refractive error and other eye ailments in the whole of the East Africa region.

“This ‘one-programme, two-projects approach’ means that all partners involved can play to their strengths to meet the whole needs of the child”.

Project statistics:

- USD 1.2 million invested over 4 years
- 4 million children will directly benefit through screening, treatment for basic eye problems, eye surgeries, and eye glasses.
 - 3 million through the Brien Holden Vision Institute Consortium
 - 1 million through the Christian Blind Mission / Sightsavers Consortium
- 5,908 children to receive surgeries
- 757 children will be referred for rehabilitation and education
- 7 million children will directly benefit through health education
- 82 eye care clinics will be enhanced and established in hospitals across the region
- 8,840 people will be trained in child eye care through the programme (including paediatric ophthalmologists, Low Vision specialists, optometrists, ophthalmological nurses, maternal child health workers, community workers and school teachers)
- National child eye health coordination systems will be enhanced
- Conducive changes for inclusion of child eye health in existing health and education systems, training programs, guidelines and ultimately policies, will be advocated for
- Regional sharing of resources, training facilities and coordination will be strengthened
- The Brien Holden Vision Institute consortium includes the Fred Hollows Foundation, Light for The World, Operation Eyesight Universal, Perkins International, African Vision Institute, Uganda Optometric Association, Tanzania Optometric Association and Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology.
- The CBM led consortium consists of Sightsavers, the Eastern Africa College of Ophthalmologists, Mulago National Referral Hospital – Ministry of Health, Uganda among others.

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Notes to Editors

Facts on blindness and visual impairment and why it's important

- *There are 39 million blind people in the world.*
- *A further 246 million people have moderate or severe visual impairment.*
- *80% of blindness and visual impairment is avoidable (meaning preventable or treatable).*
- *90% of blind people live in the developing world.*
- *Globally, 1.4 million children are blind.*
- *Less than 10% of blind children attend school.*
- *In developing countries only 25% of blind people are gainfully employed and the proportion is expected to be far less in developing countries.*
- *The estimated economic cost of lost productivity from avoidable blindness is estimated USD200 billion annually.*
- *Research highlights that the returns to tackling avoidable blindness and visual impairment in developing countries are 4.1 times the additional cost required to eliminate it over 10 years.*
- *Tackling avoidable blindness has a clear impact on the economic power of households. Cataract surgery on a blind member of a household was shown to increase household expenditure by 50% across three countries – bringing it on par with normally sighted households.*
- *Restoring someone's sight not only enables that person to be economically productive but it also liberates carers to work or attend education.*
- *145 million people are visually impaired due to uncorrected refractive errors, indicating that a simple pair of glasses could restore normal vision for millions of people.*
- *VISION2020 is making a difference[1]:*
 - *Since the global campaign began, approximately 20 million people have had their sight saved.*
 - *Infectious causes of blindness are decreasing as a result of public health interventions and socio-economic development. Blinding trachoma now affects fewer than 80 million people, compared to 360 million in 1985.*
- *Ageing populations and lifestyle changes mean that chronic blinding conditions such as diabetic retinopathy, cataract and age-related macular degeneration are projected to rise steeply in the next ten years.*
- *Tackling blindness contributes to the wider developmental agenda laid out in the Millennium Development Goals[2] – including MDG 1 (tackling poverty); MDGs 2 and 3 (access to education and gender equality); MDG 4 (child mortality) and MDG 6 (combating disease).*
- *Tackling blindness is one of the most cost-effective health interventions. A sight-restoring cataract operation costs as little as USD 30.*

About Standard Chartered Bank in Uganda

Standard Chartered Bank Uganda is a member of the Standard Chartered Group. The Bank has been operating in Uganda for over 100 years having celebrated its centenary in August last year. As Uganda's first bank, established in 1912, it currently has a network of 12 branches and 30 ATMs spread across the country. The Bank employs over 500 people. Standard Chartered's core businesses in Uganda are in Consumer Banking, Corporate and Institutional Banking and Global Markets products and services.

[1] http://www.hollows.org.au/sites/default/files/pdfs/other/Ending_Avoidable_Blindness_english.pdf

[2] The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) comprise eight international development goals adopted in 2000 at the UN Millennium Summit as a blueprint for addressing the needs of the poor across the globe.

Standard Chartered is committed to the community in Uganda through various community relations programs, working closely with the Ministry of Health, Uganda Red Cross, Sight Savers International, World Vision and Water Aid. The Bank's philanthropic work in Uganda was recognized when we won the awards below;

- *Bank of the Year" 2012 in Uganda - FT-The Banker - Bank of the Year*
- *Euromoney Best Bank in Uganda 2009 & 2010*
- *EMEA Finance Best Foreign Bank in Uganda 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013*
- *Best Bank in Quality Standards by the Uganda National Bureau of Standards 2013*
- *Best in CSR 2013 – Health (Seeing is Believing) by The Uganda Chapter on Corporate Social Responsibility*
- *Tumaini Best Corporate Award 2013*
- *Public Opinions Uganda Responsible Investment Best Bank 2013*
- *Consumer Insights; Best Bank in customer service 2009*

Standard Chartered – leading the way in Asia, Africa and the Middle East

Standard Chartered is a leading international banking group. It has operated for over 150 years in some of the world's most dynamic markets and earns more than 90 per cent of its profits in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. This geographic focus and commitment to developing deep relationships with clients and customers has driven the Bank's growth in recent years. Standard Chartered PLC is listed on the London and Hong Kong stock exchanges as well as the Bombay and National Stock Exchanges in India.

With 1,700 offices in 70 markets, the Group offers exciting and challenging international career opportunities for nearly 87,000 staff. It is committed to building a sustainable business over the long term and is trusted worldwide for upholding high standards of corporate governance, social responsibility, environmental protection and employee diversity. Standard Chartered's heritage and values are expressed in its brand promise, 'Here for good'.

For more information please consult:-

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