

# press release

## **We've awarded eight eye health innovation grants**

***Eight ideas that could significantly impact the way eye health is treated and supported in developing countries***

**20 February 2014** – Standard Chartered's Seeing is Believing, a collaboration between the international bank and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), has awarded eight innovation grants totalling USD1 million to a series of institutions, including NGOs, an NHS Trust, universities, and a private company in a bid to bring high quality eye care to low-middle income countries.

In May 2013, Seeing is Believing called on innovators from across the world to bid for funding to develop new ideas with the potential for significant impact on the way eye health is delivered in low-middle income countries. After receiving over 300 proposals from institutions from more than 50 countries, eight grants have been awarded:

- **CBM UK – establishing the optimal and most cost-effective primary treatment for glaucoma in Africa**

The grant will fund an African glaucoma laser trial to test the long-term clinical efficacy and cost-effectiveness of a new, pain-free laser treatment for glaucoma – Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty (SLT). CBM will evaluate whether the long-term costs and success rate of SLT are better than current treatment approaches involving the continued use of eye drops, with a view to recommending SLT as a primary glaucoma treatment across Africa.

- **Ellex Medical Pty. Ltd – halving the cost of cutting-edge lasers for eye treatments in the developing world**

The grant will fund a pilot project for the development of a low-cost, affordable pattern scanning laser for use throughout the developing world, in order to improve patient access to laser treatment for diabetic retinopathy.

- **Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust – applying innovative NHS practices to train health workers on one of the leading causes of blindness**

The grant will fund an online training model that's proven effective in training staff to accurately identify diabetic retinopathy in patients in the UK. The model will be scaled up and tested internationally, initially focusing on training health workers in Indonesia, Botswana and Bangladesh.

- **London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine – management skills for the forgotten middle**

The grant will fund a project to develop and pilot the use of an online portal to deliver free planning and management training to remote-based, mid-level health workers in Botswana, Ghana and Kenya. As mid-level health workers have a better on-the-ground view of the eye care needs in a given area than senior health workers based in capital cities, this idea hopes to dramatically increase their management expertise.

- **London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine – testing new approaches to tackling glaucoma, the second largest cause of blindness in Africa**

The grant will be used to assess the cost-efficacy of using motivational interviewing, a technique developed to treat drug addiction, to help increase the take up of treatment among patients suffering from glaucoma. The team will also assess whether laser treatment is a more effective option to surgery.

- **Operation Eyesight Universal (Operation Eyesight) – a revolutionary approach to school screening in Africa**

The grant will fund a pilot test so that Operation Eyesight can establish if school screening can be improved by applying the use of an adapted smartphone called Portable Eye Examination Kit (Peek)\*. Operation Eyesight's pilot will focus on Kenya, but has potential to be scaled more widely in Africa and beyond.

- **The Royal Society for the Blind (RSB) – showing employers that with some assistance, blind people can be productive employees in South East Asia**

The grant will fund a pilot project that evaluates whether the loaning of specialist equipment to employers, such as Braille devices, will assist in improving employment rates for blind or visually impaired people in South East Asia.

- **Wake Forest University Health Sciences – bridging the surgical gap to tackle blinding trachoma in Africa**

The grant will fund a project to bridge the gap between classroom training and real-life surgery for nurses carrying out treatment for trichiasis – a painful and blinding condition affecting trachoma sufferers. The project will test whether specially constructed life-like models can be used to improve surgical success rates for trichiasis, which to date have been poor.

**Richard Meddings, Chairman of Seeing is Believing**, said “When we announced that we were giving grants to find new and innovative solutions for eye health in low-middle income countries these initiatives are exactly what we wanted. All the ideas have the potential to significantly impact the way eye health is treated and supported. If they prove to be successful, they can be expanded to other hospitals and communities, in Africa, Asia and beyond.”

**Peter Ackland, Head of IAPB**, said “We have a series of great ideas to bring new solutions to some of the barriers standing in the way of eliminating avoidable blindness for good. The projects seek to tackle some of the biggest challenges in eye health. How to bring treatment to the millions of people in rural areas? How to address some of the key human resource challenges in Africa? How to combat rising problems like glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy? Giving innovators the freedom to test their ideas could help us find the next breakthrough in eye health innovation.”

Two kinds of innovation grants were made available: a USD50k grant to back the development of innovations at initial pilot stage; and a USD200k grant to support innovations that have undergone some initial testing and are looking to prepare themselves for scale up. The grants announced today represent the first wave of grants being offered. With USD2 million worth of funding still left to allocate, the next wave of funds will be made available over the next five years.

*\*Peek is an adapted smartphone that carries out comprehensive eye examinations in even the remotest of settings. The Peek team is led by Dr Andrew Bastawrous and Stewart Jordan from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine in partnership with Dr Mario Giardini at the University of Strathclyde, and Dr Iain Livingstone at the Glasgow Centre for Ophthalmic Research.*

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## **Notes to Editors**

### **Standard Chartered Bank (Vietnam) Limited**

In Vietnam, Standard Chartered’s history can be traced back to 1904 when the Bank opened its first branch in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City).

Following the official approval from the State Bank of Vietnam, effective 1 August 2009, Standard Chartered commenced operations in its locally incorporated entity – Standard Chartered Bank (Vietnam) Limited. Local Incorporation was an important milestone in Standard Chartered’s development in Vietnam.

Standard Chartered now has three branches and employs over 850 staff. The Bank provides a full of suite banking products and services for corporates, financial institutions, small and medium enterprises and individuals.

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