

press release

Standard Chartered's 'Seeing is Believing' reaches USD75m fundraising milestone to tackle avoidable blindness

This World Sight Day, Standard Chartered announces that it has raised US\$75 million since 2003 to tackle avoidable blindness around the world

Solwezi (Zambia), 9th October 2014 – To mark World Sight Day 2014, Standard Chartered has announced that its 'Seeing is Believing' programme has reached a fundraising milestone of US\$75 million, progressing towards its target to raise USD100 million by 2020, to bring affordable eye-care in areas of high need.

'Seeing is Believing' is Standard Chartered's global charitable initiative to tackle avoidable blindness run in partnership with the International Agency for Prevention of Blindness (IAPB). As one of the biggest corporate contributors seeking to eliminate avoidable blindness, 'Seeing is Believing' has reached 53 million people across Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America.

In Zambia, 'Seeing is Believing' was launched in 2009 – first partnering with Sightsavers and then with ORBIS. The bank has since invested US\$1million into the partnership with ORBIS, which covers Solwezi and the wider North Western province.

Speaking at the World Sight Day commemoration in Solwezi, Standard Chartered Bank CEO, Andrew Okai, said, "*The global economic cost of blindness is estimated to be US\$200 billion per year. Through Seeing is Believing, Standard Chartered aims to addresses a key health issue that diminishes the quality of life of individuals and impacts economic growth..*"

Mr. Okai added, *“This year, we are proud to announce that we have raised US\$75million for Seeing is Believing since 2003. Zambia has benefitted from these fund-raising efforts through our US\$1million investment into eye-care provision in the North Western province. In 2013, we opened the New Vision Centre at Solwezi General Hospital – I am delighted that the centre has been able to prevent blindness and restore the eye sight of people in Solwezi and beyond.”*

Across the world, 39 million people are blind and 246 million people suffer from visual impairment. With 90 per cent of avoidable blindness occurring in low and middle income countries, it is an issue with particular resonance in many markets where Standard Chartered operates.

David Fein, Chairman of Seeing is Believing and Group General Counsel of Standard Chartered, said: “Started in 2003 as a staff-driven initiative, Seeing is Believing has grown to an international campaign which has supported 96 eye health projects in 26 countries worldwide.”

“Building on the great momentum, we pledged at the Clinton Global Initiative 2011 to raise US\$100 million by 2020 to tackle avoidable blindness. Thanks to the great efforts of our staff, clients, partners and friends, today we announce that we are well on course to hit our fundraising target. While we are delighted with progress so far, avoidable blindness is still an under-acknowledged health issue, and it will not be eliminated without the support of many. Corporations and individuals, donors and volunteers – today, on World Sight Day, we call on you to join us in the fight to eliminate avoidable blindness.”

You can donate to Seeing is Believing by visiting www.seeingisbelieving.org. Every donation is matched by Standard Chartered, thereby doubling the impact.

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Notes to Editors:

Standard Chartered

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Seeing is Believing

[Seeing is Believing](#) is a global initiative to help tackle avoidable blindness, and is a collaboration between Standard Chartered and the International Agency for Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) and leading eye care organisations. It raises funds for investment in eye care projects that have long-term impact in areas of high need.

Seeing is Believing contributes to 'VISION 2020: The Right to Sight', the global initiative for the elimination of avoidable blindness led by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the IAPB. To date, Seeing is Believing has raised over USD75 million for blindness initiatives and plans to raise a further USD25 million by 2020.

Seeing is Believing is the largest cash contributor to VISION 2020 through IAPB. As part of the Seeing is Believing programme, Standard Chartered pledges to match all donations until the target of USD100 million is reached.