

press release

Seeing is Believing grants encourage innovators to see things differently

11 April 2016 – Standard Chartered’s Seeing is Believing, a collaboration between the bank and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), has launched the second phase of its Innovation Fund, expanding five of the original projects and awarding grants to seven new projects.

Launched in 2013, the fund encourages innovators to develop pioneering ideas that have the potential to significantly impact how eye care is delivered in low and middle income countries.

The first phase funded landmark projects which included developing smartphone technology to enable eye screening in remote locations in Kenya, building platforms for high quality remote online training in Africa and manufacturing realistic eye models to enable surgical training in Tanzania and Ethiopia.

In this next phase we have awarded grants totalling USD1.85 million, including USD0.85 million to seven new projects to begin tackling a diverse range of issues associated with avoidable blindness. These projects are:

- **Peek Vision Foundation and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM):** training teachers in India to use an eye examination mobile app developed by Peek to quickly identify children with eye problems and refer them for treatment;
- **Aurolab:** manufacturing affordable, robust and portable equipment to treat cataracts in India;
- **Aurolab in partnership with PlenOptika:** developing an inexpensive and robust handheld device that reliably measures a patient’s eye prescription in less than a minute;
- **DAISY Consortium:** designing a simple way for visually impaired people to use a mobile device to read books;
- **Fred Hollows Foundation:** developing a mobile app which enables hospital administrators across China to record and analyse their surgical results, and benchmark these against those of other hospitals to improve standards of care;
- **Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust:** creating an online application to support practical skills training in retinal laser treatment; and
- **Zhongshan Ophthalmic Center, Sun Yat-sen University (ZOC):** using laser treatment in rural glaucoma care in China.

Five of the projects from the fund’s first phase will now receive USD1 million to allow them to expand the scope of their work, either by continuing their research or scaling up their operations. These projects are:

- Operation Eyesight Universal: training teachers in remote parts of Kenya to use a smartphone-based screening system to identify children with eye problems and refer them for treatment;
- Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust: developing online training to improve diabetic retinopathy screening across Bangladesh, Botswana, Indonesia and Tanzania;
- SightLife: using a social marketing framework to overcome the barrier of low consent to donation of eye tissue and organs throughout rural China;
- LSHTM: delivering free, online, professional learning to strengthen the planning and management skills of eye care workers in resource-limited settings across Botswana, Ghana, Kenya and South Africa; and
- Wake Forest University Health Sciences: training surgeons across Tanzania and Ethiopia to perform complicated trichiasis surgery on trachoma patients by developing a realistic eye model.

David Fein, Chairman of Seeing is Believing, said, “We are excited to award these innovation grants to these worthy organisations to enable them to continue to develop technological solutions to a host of challenges around avoidable blindness and sight impairment. They have the ability to revolutionise the way eye care is delivered in Africa and Asia.”

Peter Ackland, Head of IAPB, said, “This fund, and the grants that it provides, is at the forefront of breaking down the barriers that are standing in the way of eradicating avoidable blindness. The need for quality eye-care is most prevalent in remote, low-income locations. The Innovation Fund has allowed people and groups to approach that problem in unique and creative ways, and already we’ve made several breakthroughs that could revolutionise eye-care across the globe.”

Andrew Bastawrous, Founder of Peek Vision Foundation, said, “Our first grant from the Innovation Fund enabled us to run a trial in Kenya in which 21,000 children across 50 schools were vision screened in just nine days. 900 children were identified as having vision problems. By using the smartphone technology as an intervention, we were able to almost triple the number of children getting to hospital for treatment. Phase two will enable us to screen 300,000 Kenyan children, as well as expand into other countries. We’re trying to reach as many children as possible, and the Innovation Fund is helping us achieve that.”

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About Seeing is Believing

Seeing is Believing is a global initiative to tackle avoidable blindness, and is a collaboration between Standard Chartered (a leading international banking group) and the International Agency for Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) and its membership of eye health organisations.

For more than a decade Seeing is Believing has been supporting projects to tackle avoidable blindness and visual impairment. To date, Seeing is Believing has raised over USD86 million, taking it more than halfway towards its fundraising target of USD100 million by 2020. Funds raised through Seeing is Believing represent the single largest cash contribution from the private sector to the development of eye health programmes 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.

For more information please visit www.seeingisbelieving.org.

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