



Press release

Standard Chartered Bank completes 20 years of 'Seeing is Believing' programme

- Reached over 15 million people through strategic initiatives
- To open 31 new vision centres in October, one each day of the month

12 October 2023, India: This World Sight Day, Standard Chartered Bank is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its '**Seeing is Believing**' program, an initiative dedicated to eradicating avoidable blindness. Since its launch in 2003 in India, the programme has reached over 15 million people with a further commitment to take it to 18 million over next 3 years through strategic collaborations and initiatives.

Over the last two decades, Seeing is Believing supported projects have undertaken over 3.5 million cataract procedures, distributed more than 600,000 spectacles, and conducted 11,327 teleconsultations through these supported projects. These statistics underscore the significant impact of these initiatives in improving vision and eye health in India.

Standard Chartered also recognised the need of innovation, capacity building and training to make the entire ecosystem of primary eye care more effective. Keeping this social responsibility at the core, the Bank has supported three academies in India (Delhi, Hyderabad and Madurai) which have trained over 100,000 individuals to promote primary eye care.

In India, '**Seeing is Believing**' has been instrumental in establishing a robust eye care infrastructure with equity as its core value by establishing over 450 vision centres across 22 states, 50% of which are being operated by women. The Bank plans to extend this network by adding another 31 vision centres in October; one on each day of the month -- across Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Orissa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh. The Bank has also invested in the future of primary eye care by supporting futuristic vision centres to reach the last mile via telemedicine and providing best available care to those in need of treatments.

Over the next three years, the Bank is working towards reaching additional 3 million individuals while carrying out 112000+ cataract procedures through its supported projects. Alongside this, the Bank is aiming to dispense 380,000+ spectacles in line with its journey to eliminate avoidable blindness.

Standard Chartered Bank has outlined its key strategies for further expanding this programme by:

- Expanding into underserved areas
- Fostering innovation through technology and partnerships
- Diversifying services to encompass eye care
- Empowering women in leadership and workforce roles
- Preventing avoidable blindness through awareness campaigns
- Building capacity of eye care professionals through academies
- Creating futuristic vision centres with advanced telemedicine capabilities

Karuna Bhatia, Head of Sustainability, India, Standard Chartered Bank, said “This is a momentous occasion, and we are proud of the positive impact that the ‘**Seeing is Believing**’ programme has had over the past 20 years including making a visible change in some of the remotest parts in India. This initiative exemplifies our dedication to improving the lives of the people we serve by putting in place a conducive environment based on creating awareness and providing access to world class primary eye care treatment through our programme partners. As we commemorate this achievement, we look forward to carrying on with our work to end avoidable blindness and build a society where everyone can see a better future.”

Dr G N Rao, Founder, LV Prasad Eye Institute, said, “The partnership between Standard Chartered Bank and our institute is one of the most impactful one that we ever had. This covered the critical aspects of rural health, primary care, leveraging technology on the one hand and in building the eye health work force of different cadres fundamental to delivery of high-quality eye care. Creating careers for youngsters from disadvantaged rural backgrounds many of whom were women was another notable outcome.”

R N Mohanty, CEO, Sightsavers India said, “We have had a longstanding support from Standard Chartered Bank under its Seeing is Believing project. Our over two-decade long partnership has strengthened eye care services in some of the most remote and underserved regions of the country. Sundarbans in West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh are few of the states where Standard Chartered Bank has collaborated with Sightsavers India. Our aim together has always been to ensure that prevalence of visual impairment at all levels decreases, and coverage and quality of cataract and refractive error services increases. Through our eye health programmes under Seeing is Believing, we strove for increasing knowledge of eye health issues among communities and ensuring better accessibility, affordability, and quality of eye health services.”

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Standard Chartered

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