

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Exploring Issues in Partnering Practice

# IN THE BANK'S BEST INTEREST

## Case Study of an Ambitious Partnership

“We believe that it is in the Bank’s best interest – and a key part of the Bank’s sustainability – to ensure that society does not forget the hundreds of millions of people who live in poverty, lack the basic necessities for life, such as food and healthcare, or who face the impact of environmental degradation and climate change that threaten livelihoods and economies.”

Peter Sands  
Group Chief Executive  
Standard Chartered PLC

## About The Partnering Initiative

The Partnering Initiative is a global programme of the International Business Leaders Forum which is registered as an educational charity in the UK. It promotes cross-sector collaboration for sustainable development by undertaking action research and disseminating partnering experience as well as by providing skills training, advice, evaluation and other support to partnerships and to individuals or organisations operating as partners.

[www.ThePartneringInitiative.org](http://www.ThePartneringInitiative.org)



### Disclaimer

This case study has been constructed from documents and interviews over a three-month period. The authors believe that it reflects as accurately as possible, within the time and space available, a balanced perspective on the **Seeing is Believing** story. They do wish to state, however, that any interpretations of the project or analysis of the partnership's evolution are entirely their own.

No views expressed in this paper represent any formal position of The Partnering Initiative, the International Business Leaders Forum or any of their supporters or partners.

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## About this paper

The partnership under the microscope is that of Standard Chartered Bank and the IAPB (International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness). Building on an earlier strategic alliance between the Bank and Sightsavers International, this collaboration is the foundation for a large-scale and ambitious project involving several international and national NGOs working at local levels.

The focus of this study is the evolving scale and scope of the partnership over time, the challenges encountered along the way and the solutions arrived at that have made this partnership both dynamic and successful. It is an attempt to present a balanced insight into a high-achieving project alongside a more critical analysis of an on-going partnership tackling the kinds of issues that so many cross-sector partnerships face on a daily basis.

To help readers to navigate easily and to select the issues of particular interest we have ordered the material as follows:

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The invitation from Standard Chartered was to use the **Seeing is Believing** project as a way of teasing out lessons that could be useful to others in the corporate or NGO sectors seeking to collaborate to achieve sustainable development goals. We take this opportunity to record our gratitude for their generosity in exposing their partnership to scrutiny and being so willing to share their experiences with others.

Hannah Tariq & Ros Tennyson

The Partnering Initiative  
December 2009

## The story so far

In 2003 Standard Chartered – an international bank with its major markets in the developing world – celebrated its 150th anniversary. As part of the celebrations the then Chief Executive (Mervyn Davies) invited staff from across the company to consider how the Bank should celebrate. The response communicated a clear expectation that the celebrations should involve giving back to the Bank’s communities in some way. Research was done to find a cause which would resonate with staff, match the Bank’s footprint and which the Bank could make a differentiated impact on. Blindness was identified as an emotive, appealing and neglected cause. This was the issue that went on to be championed so enthusiastically throughout the Bank for the next 6 years.

**Seeing is Believing** was launched with an initial target of restoring sight to 28,000 people in parts of the developing world where the Bank had a presence (one for each member of the Bank’s staff). But bankers are not eye care specialists, so the project from the beginning was built initially as a partnership with a global specialist NGO, Sightsavers International.

“We were the original NGO partner in this project so we have been involved from the beginning. In fact the project grew from an existing in-country relationship between our staff and Standard Chartered staff in Bangladesh. The whole project has been organic rather than pre-planned. We started with the target of a certain number of cataract operations in one country but now the project has evolved to cover whole eye care programmes. SSI still works with the project in 8 countries even though we are no longer the lead NGO partner.”

Kat Scaife  
Corporate Partnerships & Fundraising Manager for **Seeing is Believing** projects  
Sightsavers International

The first year exceeded its target by 100% and – now into its 7th year – **Seeing is Believing** has raised a total of \$17m and impacted the lives of 8 million individuals. That first partnership with Sightsavers International mobilised other partners. The programme is now a multi-partner initiative, targeting to raise a further \$20m to develop comprehensive eye care for 20 million people in underprivileged urban areas. By the end of 2012 it will have raised \$40m for eye care in the developing world.

From a small staff initiative this has, indeed, evolved into an ambitious partnership.

With ever-rising expectations of corporations in general, the banking sector has come under particular scrutiny due to the global financial problems of 2007-2009, referred to frequently in the international media as the worst financial crisis since the great depression. In the past two years, financial institutions have borne the brunt of society’s critique and frustration. It is against this backdrop that the case study has been written.

“If anyone needs convincing of the importance of taking a sustainable approach to business, then the extraordinary dislocation and disruption in financial markets in 2008 provided dramatic proof. While we will feel the negative reverberations of the financial crisis for years to come, the crisis also poses an opportunity for the private sector; it is forcing us to revisit the way we do business.

Sustainability, for us, is about taking a long term and broad view of our business and our markets. We see being a “force for good” as complementary to and supportive of our shareholder value creation objectives. In fact we can’t imagine doing business any other way.”

Peter Sands  
Group Chief Executive  
Standard Chartered PLC

### Why an eye care project?

**Seeing is Believing** has thrived as a community investment project of Standard Chartered not least because it continues to have the active engagement and support of so many of its staff from corporate headquarters in London to its local branches and offices throughout Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Americas.

But why has the issue of avoidable blindness proved such an engaging and enduring issue for the Bank and its staff? This can only be conjecture, but it seems to be a combination of reasons including:

- A perception that blindness is largely a hidden medical problem not being tackled consistently – ‘we can do something that is really needed’
- That blindness is an area where the Bank can make a unique difference - ‘with the exception of pharmaceutical companies, no other corporates are in this space’
- It is particularly prevalent in poor communities – ‘We have jobs in these communities... we are the lucky ones and we want to give something back’
- This condition is preventable and curable – ‘it

takes such a small, low cost intervention to change a life and a family's future'

- The perception that blindness is an issue that everyone can identify with – 'we can raise money for this, it is an issue that touches us and others deeply.'

Whichever reason or combination of reasons has motivated the Bank's staff they have continued to be involved in a number of ways and with a degree of personal commitment that is impressive. Primarily supporting the project as fundraisers, staff continue to think of inventive ways to solicit donations which the Bank agrees to match, thereby doubling the value of each contribution. Beyond this, many of the Bank's staff – at all levels of seniority – have become actively engaged in working on projects with the local NGO partners taking their commitment to an even more personal level. It is this active engagement that many staff cite as the key to the project's continuing popularity.

The emotional engagement of staff with this project has been key to sustaining high fundraising targets and the active interest of staff at project implementation levels.

## Engaging hearts and minds

**Seeing is Believing** is driven by the Bank's staff volunteers. With the exception of a small team based in the Bank's Head Quarters in London, responsible for overall management, the programme depends entirely on the voluntary fundraising activities of general staff. Effective internal communications are therefore absolutely crucial to the success of the programme.

A number of factors are key to ensure engagement with **Seeing is Believing** is kept high:

- The strong and active championing of the programme by a senior sponsor to secure senior buy-in
- The establishment of a set of voluntary country coordinators to lead fundraising and communications activity at a country level
- Integration of **Seeing is Believing** messages into the Bank's internal communications structure, e.g. integration into employee inductions
- The provision of opportunities for direct involvement in the programme through employee volunteering. Each employee is given 2 days a year as 'volunteering leave' and is actively encouraged to take this opportunity to engage.

### Box 1: Benefits and Disadvantages of Employee Volunteering

BENEFITS	DISADVANTAGES
Employees can act as internal support mechanisms for the initiative and help keep it within the culture of the organisation. This fosters broad-based support for the programme and increases sustainability.	Financial costs of hiring a coordinator / management team to manage employee engagement. Time spent by employees on these activities.
Employees feel a sense of ownership and take pride in the project, and there is less chance of the initiative being viewed as a 'corporate exercise'.	Costs associated with consensus building and the need to negotiate around how funding is used.  More enthusiastic employee engagement during high profile events (like launches) can lead the NGO sector to view it as 'just a corporate exercise'.
Voluntary nature ensures that only those employees that are truly committed to the initiative are involved and driving it forward. Voluntarism can help create a wide network of ambassadors for the partnership.	Lack of accountability: voluntary nature of the positions put limits on how hard the programme can be pushed and can make it harder to redistribute funds across countries  Fluidity: volunteers can change quite often.
Team building: can allow employees from different departments within the organisation to work together towards a common cause. Key skills of staff available to NGOs.	Employee volunteering opportunities that allow team building (i.e. fundraising and team volunteering) do not allow the utilisation of technical / primary skills (IT skills, marketing etc) that the NGO sector may find more useful. Volunteer opportunity for use of core skills are difficult to come by.
Cultural contextualisation: local employee engagement across an international network can help keep the initiative grounded locally.	Barriers to learning: there can be limits to sharing of good practice across borders.

**Seeing is Believing** has clearly become an important conduit through which the operating values of the Bank are expressed. It helps staff to identify with the Bank ‘brand’ and to align their work with their personal values.

“**Seeing is Believing** is not just a great way to make a huge difference for those people we help, it is also a fantastic way to improve engagement level and instil a sense of pride amongst our staff members who have proactively come up with their own ways to raise donations for **Seeing is Believing**.”

Bethy Kum Man Tam  
Chief Operating Officer, Hong Kong  
Standard Chartered Bank

This form of employee engagement has many advantages – these include ensuring that employees:

- ▶ Are truly committed to the project and involved in driving it forward so that their engagement is not undertaken as an empty corporate ‘duty’
- ▶ Feel a real sense of ownership of, and pride in, the project’s achievements
- ▶ Have opportunities for exercising leadership and responsibility thereby enhancing their professional development as well as their community commitment.

However, the entirely voluntary approach also means that things are inevitably less formalised which leaves the project vulnerable to:

- ▶ Staff changes – especially among the project coordinators in-country who also take on the role voluntarily – and therefore a lack of continuity
- ▶ Limited sharing of experiences and good practice across teams or countries – progress and implementation of new ideas being slower than necessary
- ▶ Staff not being formally accountable for their engagement – and therefore the possibility of a slip in standards
- ▶ Requirement for continual effort in promoting the project internally to ensure continuing engagement
- ▶ Significant costs in the form of negotiation and consensus building around fundraising rather than the simple execution of policy through the management chain
- ▶ Staff fatigue around fundraising.

## Who are the partners?

The lead partner is Standard Chartered Bank – known as the Donor Partner, for obvious reasons.

IAPB (the International Association for the Prevention of Blindness) took over the role of ‘Principal Partner’ from Sightsavers International in 2007. This was agreed as a positive development for **Seeing is Believing** as IAPB is the international umbrella body for NGOs working in this health area. IAPB acts as an intermediary between the Bank and the ‘Implementing Partners’ – crucial to a well-managed, coherent and systematic approach.

“**Seeing is Believing** is beneficial to both lead partners: it is a genuine collaboration. At its simplest the Bank partners with IAPB because we can provide specialist knowledge, technical skills, oversight and quality control for the project’s implementation. IAPB partners with the Bank for its financial support, profile and its encouragement of the implementing partners – all IAPB members. This symbiosis is at the heart of the partnership and it enables us both to create a dynamic and productive working relationship.”

Sally Crook  
Programme Manager, **Seeing is Believing**  
IAPB

The ‘Implementing Partners’ (see Box 2 for details) are a group of well-established, not-for-profit organisations that are working internationally to develop and deliver eye care programmes.

### Box 2: Summary of Key Partner Organisations

**Donor Partner** – Standard Chartered PLC: Standard Chartered has a network of over 1,600 branches in more than 70 countries all over the world. The emerging markets of Asia, Africa and the Middle East are responsible for more than 90% of its operating income and profits. Standard Chartered employs 70,000 people representing 125 nationalities.

**Principal Partner** - International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) is the pre-eminent membership organisation to which all major and many smaller eye care NGOs belong. In 1999, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and IAPB launched ‘VISION 2020: The Right to Sight’, a global campaign to eliminate avoidable blindness by the year 2020.

**Implementing Partners - include:** Aravind Eye Hospital, CBM (formerly Christian Blind Mission), Fred Hollows Foundation, Helen Keller International, International Centre for Eyecare Education, LV Prasad Eye Institute, Operation Eyesight Universal, ORBIS International, Shri Sadguru Netra Chikitsalaya (SNC)/Seva Sangh Trust, Dr. Shroff’s Charitable Eye Hospital and Sightsavers International.



## Case 1 – Aligning Interests

The initial proposal in one country – to create 40 vision centres in 4 different areas of the country delivering services to 2 million people – was submitted by the technical partner on behalf of 4 independent eye care organisations. This was a first. In no other **Seeing is Believing** country had this consortium approach been tried. During the planning process, however, it became clear that there was no real working partnership since each member of the consortium had quite different models of how the vision centres should work. This raised some fundamental questions about the project's coherence and cohesion. Key issues included the need to:

- Clarify the role of the technical partner
- Agree on performance targets
- Share quality standards for service delivery and training
- Have different approaches to reporting.

A two-day meeting was called to address this challenge that threatened to undermine the project. The meeting proved critical to understanding the apparent disconnects, approaches and attitudes. Those present agreed:

- Organisational diversity was an asset not a threat and that the project as a whole could benefit from different approaches. What was important was that all vision centres had to meet three key criteria: equity, quality and sustainability
- Delivery targets should be set for each organisation
- Trainers from each organisation should come together to set standards for the training of vision technicians
- The role of the technical partner was clarified and properly funded – with them taking on the monitoring / evaluation and auditing roles whilst working to enable partners to learn from each other rather than issue instructions
- On standard reporting procedures
- To commit to a partnership approach – with one partner declaring at the end of the 2 days that the greatest value would come not from the project itself but from the forging of a long-term partnership between the group of NGOs.

Lessons that came out of the meeting:

- Importance of being flexible
- Agreeing common frameworks which were not the same as an enforced standardisation of programming
- The role of funders in creating partnerships and innovative collaborations between divergent players.

“Standard Chartered being an international bank is a natural partner for CBM which works in over 100 developing countries. Standard Chartered’s expertise in global finances in the developing world is a natural fit as a partner to CBM’s role as a major player in the prevention and treatment of blindness throughout the world.”

Dr William McAllister  
CEO  
CBM

### Box 3: Summary of growth & development

## Seeing is Believing

A summary of Growth and Development



**Aims**

To restore sight to people

**Programmatic Activities**

Undertaking operations

**Partnering Activities**

NGO partnering technical expertise

**Achievements**

Enough money to restore sight

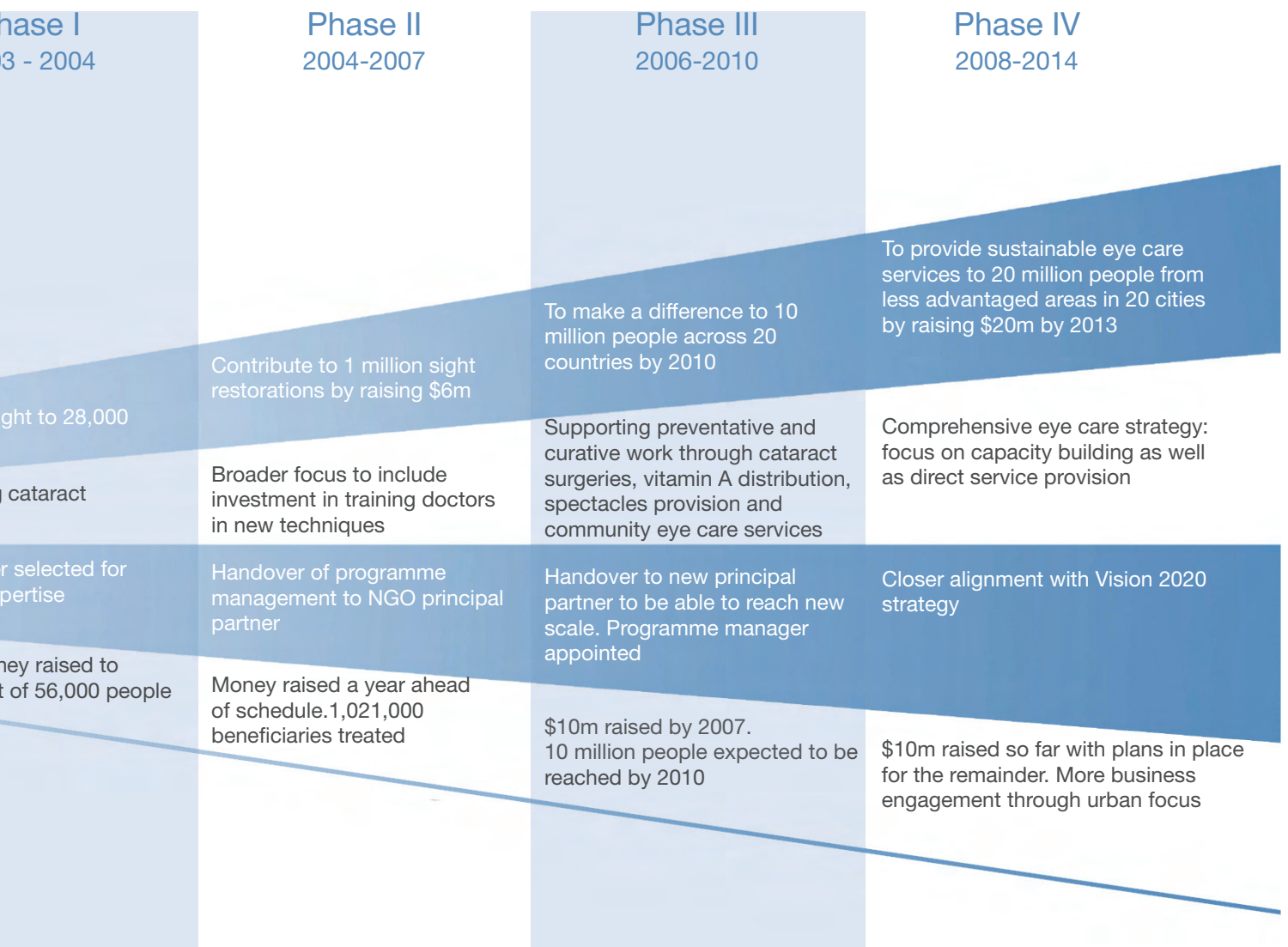
### General Issues

- Disconnect between SIB and NGO reporting methods
- Selective expenditure impeding a broader development
- Disconnect between local / global aspirations
- Responding to fundraising fatigue due to remoteness

The Implementing Partners work with their own local partners to reach into communities and build on local knowledge to respond to local needs. It is this group that delivers **Seeing is Believing** at the national and grass roots levels and that uses the money donated from around the world to achieve direct and measurable results.

“This project showcases like never before that where there is a will there is a way. We have helped to identify implementing partners across India and this has made a real impact on the lives of the poorest of the poor.”

Mr Shantanu Das Gupta  
Marketing Manager  
Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital



### Leadership in practice

A project of this scale and reach needs meticulous coordination. It also needs active leadership. Such leadership as it manifests in the **Seeing is Believing** project is summarised in Box 4.

## Growing Ambitions

### Project beginnings – Phases I and II

By World Sight Day 2004, **Seeing is Believing** raised over \$1.5m to restore 56,000 people's sight – double the initial target. Building on this early success, a second phase was launched to keep up the momentum and enthusiasm generated. The target for Phase II was significantly more ambitious – a million sight restorations in time for World Sight Day in October 2007 with the Bank committing to raise \$6m (including, for the first time, the provision of \$3m in matching funding). Beneficiaries were estimated from those that received supported surgery and the

numbers of people treated as a result of training medical staff in new surgery techniques that increased their surgical success rates.

### Expansion – Phase III

On World Sight Day, October 2006, it was announced that Phase II fundraising targets had been achieved a year early. In tandem, a commitment was made to further increase the scope of **Seeing is Believing**. New targets were set for a Phase III reflecting the Bank's consistent number-to-impact perspective. The new aim was to make a difference to the lives of 10 million people by raising \$10m in funds (\$5m through fundraising and \$5m to be matched by the Bank).

Phase III encompassed a number of key changes in the development of **Seeing is Believing**:

- IAPB replaced Sightsavers International as the principal partner in **Seeing is Believing**.

Box 4: Types of leadership in the **Seeing is Believing** project

Types of Leader	Characteristics	Activities
Project Champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Recognised status</li> <li>➤ Credibility with all key audiences (internal and external)</li> <li>➤ Authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Selling the idea to different stakeholders</li> <li>➤ Demonstrating commitment by example</li> <li>➤ Seeking out other people of influence</li> </ul>
Eye care Specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Subject knowledge</li> <li>➤ Direct experience of issue</li> <li>➤ Other technical expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Project development</li> <li>➤ Explaining options and what is appropriate in different contexts</li> <li>➤ Ensuring standards in eye care</li> </ul>
Brokers / Process Managers <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Understanding of different sectors' perspectives</li> <li>➤ Good verbal and written communication skills</li> <li>➤ Patience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Acting as interpreters between different players (within and across partner organisations)</li> <li>➤ Managing meetings and navigating areas of potential conflict or confusion</li> <li>➤ Developing appropriate tools and procedures for the project to ensure it is efficient and effective</li> </ul>
(Volunteer) Coordinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ability to mobilise (people and resources)</li> <li>➤ Access to people and projects</li> <li>➤ Enthusiasm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Engaging staff at local levels</li> <li>➤ Communicating / reporting upwards</li> <li>➤ Connecting to key players / stakeholders at local level</li> </ul>
Overseers / High-level Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Understanding of project's ambition and complexity</li> <li>➤ Willingness to give their name / backing to the project</li> <li>➤ Commitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Looking at the project as a whole from an objective perspective</li> <li>➤ Asking challenging questions</li> <li>➤ Providing quality assurance to external stakeholders / donors</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> We look at the role of 'brokers' in this project in more detail on page 19



This reflected the increasing ambitions of the programme and the Bank's need to work with a neutral organisation that could broker projects across a variety of different implementing NGOs

- **Seeing is Believing** expanded its scope of activity to look at prevention as well as cure, following advice from IAPB concerning cost-efficacy of investment and sustainability
- A professional fundraiser was hired in to centralise the process in response to fundraising fatigue.

These changes to **Seeing is Believing** show an increased understanding by the Bank of the complexity and developmental context of eye care. Once it was agreed that this wider programme was the way to proceed, a new way of presenting the project's impacts was found. The project aim was expressed in terms of "making a difference to the lives" of 10 million people rather than simply co-relating the funds raised to a parallel number of eyesight interventions. This allowed for much greater flexibility of action and investment although from the Bank's perspective it was a more vague proposition.

Phase III projects were significantly diversified – ranging from:

- The establishment of Vision Centres
- The distribution of vitamins and medication aimed at prevention of eye disease
- The provision of intra-ocular (artificial replacement) lenses for cataract patients
- Support for screening services and provision of spectacles for refractive error
- To the training of health care workers to strengthen community eye care services and to ensure sustainability of provision.

This growth has been the result of a number of factors including the:

- Growing level of engagement of Bank staff
- Development of the model building on experience
- Increasing confidence in the project of those involved
- Technical / specialist advice and input of IAPB
- Increased sophistication in understanding what kinds of intervention would be appropriate.

Projects were undertaken in a number of countries where avoidable blindness seriously impacts the community. All these countries – Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam – are places where the Bank operates. The range of implementation partners grew

to include: CBM, Helen Keller International and the Fred Hollows Foundation as well as founding partners – Sightsavers International and ORBIS International. At this stage, the project was also working closely in alliance with the global campaign: 'VISION 2020: The Right to Sight'. The programme is due to complete on World Sight Day 2010.

### A Strategic Shift – Phase IV

The funds required for Phase III were in place by World Sight Day in October 2007. In 2008, a new phase was launched, under the title: 'A New Vision'. The aim is to raise \$20m (\$10m through fundraising and \$10m to be matched by the Bank) to provide comprehensive eye care services for 20 million people in underprivileged urban areas.

Phase IV involved a number of key shifts:

- At the project level, the variety of programmes in Phase III was consolidated into a clear strategy of comprehensive eye care. This approach entails looking at eye care from a systems perspective to ensure projects are sustainable. It is the approach advocated by WHO and IAPB and involves attention to local capacity building and community outreach
- The shift to urban locations enables a much higher quality engagement from the Bank with the projects, including direct involvement in the form of employee volunteering, higher project visibility with the Bank's stakeholders and a closer working relationship between implementing partners and the Bank at a local level
- Governance for the programme is becoming increasingly decentralised as the portfolio of projects has increased. For example, the Bank's country teams are now required to sign off on projects being developed in their country.

The strategic approach of Phase IV is vital in enabling the partnership to be able to secure a larger financial commitment from the Bank. It also increases the ability of the Bank to incorporate **Seeing is Believing** into more of its core business operations – principally product marketing and client engagement. As a result, fundraising for Phase IV has also become far more decentralised and is being integrated into routine business activity. In addition, there is a more widely shared sense of ownership of the project.

Local implementing partners were asked for their views on relocating the project to urban areas. Their initial reaction was cautious – they feared that this might lead to projects subsidising services for the relatively privileged. During consultations, however, the issue of urban slums and the findings of a recent

UN Report on Rural to Urban Migration were explored. The conclusion was reached that switching to an urban focus would enable the programme to cater to a very significant under-served population and that the higher density would lead to a more efficient use of funds.

This new form of engagement with the implementing partners was critical in assisting the Bank to better leverage the investment as well as offering the partners a greater degree of engagement and support on the ground from the Bank's local country teams.

## Where does this partnership fit?

It is interesting to explore where the **Seeing is Believing** project fits in terms of type of Business: NGO models of collaboration. Box 5 suggests a range of partnership typologies.

On the face of it one might see this is a typical 'sponsorship' partnership – where the motivation is essentially charitable in character. That is, perhaps, how **Seeing is Believing** started but it is not how it continues. Rather, this project challenges such categories by the way it has evolved into a project at the heart of the Bank's culture and business values, used to build relations with clients, customers and governments. It is an interesting illustration of how hard it is

Box 5: Business - NGO Partnerships: A Typology

Type	Characteristics	Limitations/Risks
<b>'Sponsorship' type</b> Donations of: Cash Products / gifts in kind Pro bono work	Focus on effective marketing Builds on senior-level relationships Based on moral imperative / emotional response to poverty	Donor fatigue Less in line with new generation thinking A dependent rather than interdependent model
<b>'Marketing' type</b> Cause-related marketing Employee fundraising / payroll giving Product licensing	Building public perception Widening message reach (i.e. to new donors) Diversified income stream	Still largely transactional Employee / business change of focus / priority Too strong an alignment with a product
<b>'Capacity building' type</b> Employee engagement Capacity building (internal or external) Institution-building partnerships	Jointly designed projects / programmes Seeks to bring about changes in behaviour and systems Essentially about empowerment	High transaction costs Intangible returns / value added Highly inter-dependent (NGO loss of sole control)
<b>'Brokering' type</b> Facilitating large scale initiatives Facilitating local partnerships Matching product donations / expertise to projects	NGO bringing together / coordinating a range of players Built on principle of more 'transformational' activities Primary focus is sustainability of outcomes	NGOs work - if effective - is often 'invisible' Reliant on sustaining collaboration over time Reliant on a supportive external context
<b>'Advocacy' type</b> Issues driven partnerships / campaigns Changing business practice(s) Strategic partnerships aiming to change policy (usually with business associations not single businesses)	NGO as convincing 'voice for change' Built on attempts to: reach policy makers / leaders; have influence and change mindsets / behaviour Focuses on causes rather than symptoms	NGO potential conflicts of interest Takes focus away from operations / direct interventions Difficult to track impact and therefore to justify investment of resources
<b>'Business' type</b> Advisory services to improve business practices Social business development Alternative technology / product development (BoP)	'Joint venture' Uses core business priorities as prompt Accepts the business need to be profit-making	NGO 'mission creep' Requires rather different skills / competencies Moving towards a 'purchaser-provider' / procurement arrangement
<b>'Other'</b> Initiatives that are highly innovative, unexpected and 'ahead of the evidence'	Responsiveness to specific circumstances	Outside the mainstream so harder to get buy-in and recognition

Adapted from: Harrison, T and Tennyson, R, UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT: BUILDING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF GLOBAL BUSINESS – NGO PARTNERSHIPS

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to put a partnership of this kind into a fixed category.

One thing that is quite clear looking back over the 7 year history, is that there has been a significant shift from a purely philanthropic approach to the now very clear alignment for the Bank in the economic case for treating avoidable blindness.

### Where is the programme operating?

**Seeing is Believing** touches the lives of vulnerable people in many different parts of the world – with its focus on countries where avoidable blindness is a major problem and where treatment is inadequate or inaccessible to those who need it most.



At the time of writing, this is the map used by the project to capture the locations (at a country level) where **Seeing is Believing** is currently operating or where there are plans to operate in the immediate future.

**Seeing is Believing** makes an interesting study in leadership and, we believe, demonstrates that many different types of leadership are essential in a partnership of this complexity and scale. Credit is rightly given to the senior figures who initiated the project and who use their seniority and publicly stated personal commitment to keep the project high on everyones agenda. This is seen by all involved as critically important and very valuable, but this is not the only kind of leadership involved here.

Our study suggests that there are 5 types of leadership of significance in this partnership – see Box 4 (page 8) for a summary of these findings.

Many of those who fit into one or other of these categories may not see themselves as ‘leaders’ per se, but our reading of the way this project works suggests a significant level of healthy inter-dependency between these groups and a clear need for each of these leadership functions to make the whole work as comparatively seamlessly as it does.

## Dilemmas and Challenges

### Different operational values / styles

Business: NGO partnerships are not easy to establish – given the very different drivers and values the two sectors have. Whilst some NGOs are reluctant to receive funding from corporates at all, others are willing to receive funding but stop short of a more interactive collaboration. And those that are willing to explore the partnership model often still have to contend with scepticism and hostility from amongst their staff and trustees or, in the case of a membership organisation, from amongst its members.

**Seeing is Believing** is no different to other such partnerships in experiencing a number of inter-sectoral challenges. In the early days, differences in operational values and styles between the Bank and the NGOs led to:

- ▶ Concerns from the NGOs about the Banks level of control as the project donor
- ▶ Fears of over-dependency on the Bank’s resources in the minds of some of the NGOs
- ▶ Frustration (from the Bank) about inefficiencies and ‘soft’ reporting
- ▶ Frustration (from the NGOs) about the Bank’s early focus on cataracts, headlines and numbers
- ▶ Expectations from the NGOs about a more in-depth understanding of the complexities of developing sustainable eye care programmes from the Bank
- ▶ Expectations from the Bank about more in-depth understanding of the Bank’s core business/ financial sustainability model from the NGOs.

Over time, those involved report that the NGOs have become more confident in presenting their views and concerns whilst at the same time the Bank has become more receptive to critique and to valuing the partners own ideas. In other words, over time, both partners have been able to build on the diversity of each others approach and thereby created both a robust and an innovative working relationship. This is a continuous process, requiring on-going attention particularly at the time of any key changes of personnel.

### Differentials in Organisational Capacity

In addition to the issues covered above, there were material differences in organisational capacity between the two organisations which initially held back the expansion of the project. Both sides have had to invest in the partnership in order to address these challenges and have been willing to do so. For example, **Seeing is Believing** caused a huge surge in

Standard  
Charter

Donor

### Contributions

- Funds
- High levels of staff involvement
- Office facilities
- Higher visibility and publicity to the issue
- Profile and legitimacy for partners with other corporates and governments
- On the ground audit, oversight and expenditure

### Contributions

- Quality assurance in programme development through Standard setting in programme development and project deliverables
- Monitoring, tracking of and issue resolution in projects
- Professional reputation and reach
- Understanding of diverse contexts, health systems and local priorities
- Technical expertise and access to key health stakeholder groups (inc WHO)

Seeing  
is Be

Contributions to 1 million  
10 million people reached through  
30 million people reached by provision  
Contribute to the Vision2020 target  
blindness

### Principal Partner



International Agency for  
the Prevention of Blindness

### Benefits

- Increased access to resources, new funding and commitment into Vision 2020
- Increase in reach and impact of Vision 2020
- Enabled to serve NGO membership better and build profile of Vision 2020
- Builds impact / reach of advocacy work
- Greater credibility with other corporates through partnership track record



Partner

### Benefits

- Building the Bank's reputation in countries of operation
- Improved relationship with key stakeholders – including communities, governments and regulators
- Coordinated opportunities for staff engagement in local community issues
- Builds long term economic stability and growth in local communities



...n sight restorations by 2007.  
 ...ough prevention and cure by 2010.  
 ...n of access to eye care services by 2014.  
 ...t to eliminate main causes of avoidable  
 ...ss by 2020.

### Contributions

- Access to local NGOs in priority countries
- Understanding of issues, needs and priorities on the ground
- Local reputation among key constituencies of proven abilities / achievements
- Good stories to share / build publicity
- Links with MoH and other key stakeholders in national & district level VISION 2020 plans
- Technical and managerial oversight in-country

### Benefits

- Publicity for the cause at local levels
- Increase in the impact and pace of providing eye care services
- Partnering experience to bring to other partnerships
- Improved business practices in day to day management
- Access to long-term funding and attracts other sources of funding from reputational benefits through association with SIB
- Employee volunteering and engagement of Bank staff

**Implementing Partners include:**





the donations for which IAPB was accountable without having in place the resources to cope with this additional responsibility. Following discussions, the Bank agreed to finance a dedicated programme manager within IAPB to ensure there was the organisational capacity to satisfy accountability requirements.

“ Partnership is a much overused term and many partnerships never overcome the power differentials that exist in most donor-recipient relationships. The reason why our partnership with Standard Chartered is different and so productive is that both partners so clearly bring different things to the table and there is genuine mutual respect on both sides. Both partners invest in the relationship and both are prepared to work through the inevitable issues and challenges that arise in such a complex, million-dollar programme. This relationship is about far, far more than money.”

Peter Ackland  
CEO  
IAPB

### The Issue of Power

As Standard Chartered is the major donor into the partnership and the largest donor to VISION 2020 through IAPB, the issue of potential power imbalance arises as a sharp question. How can there be a 'partnership' given such unequal partners? There is also considerable variation in organisational capacity between the two organisations: one being a multi-national corporation with over 70,000 staff and the other a membership organisation with only a small core staff team.

It would be misleading, however, to focus just on financial resources as the Bank's defining contribution to [Seeing is Believing](#). The programme carries with it many significant benefits to the Bank in terms of employee engagement, building brand equity and providing a unique platform with which to engage stakeholders and clients. The Bank has a strong vested interest in the success of the partnership.

The resources that IAPB brings to the partnership, while different to the Bank's and more difficult to quantify, are nevertheless fundamental to its success. Recognition from the Bank of the IAPB contribution makes it clear that the power dynamics within the partnership are more even than outsiders might assume. First, IAPB are recognised world experts in the delivery of eye care programmes. As a founding organisation of 'VISION 2020: The Right to Sight' IAPB has unique expertise in understanding eye care needs and are uniquely placed to advise on project development. The Bank's partnership with IAPB provides [Seeing is Believing](#) with all the benefits from close

association with VISION 2020 - including increased profile with governments, and legitimacy with funders and NGOs. IAPB is essential to the coordination elements of this project - giving informed and detailed attention to the operational aspects of the programme without which it would be impossible to achieve the current high levels of reach, rigour and sustainability. IAPB also provides the crucial coordinating mechanism for the wide range of implementing partners - NGOs (a mix of national and international) operating in each of the selected countries. The Bank would not be able to provide these vital ingredients itself.

### Diverse ideas on project scope and delivery

In its early days [Seeing is Believing](#) was based on a simple premise - that cataract operations were an efficient, effective and cheap intervention. For this reason, it was cataract operations that were given priority in the early phases. The Bank built its initial fundraising programme on a powerful 'headline' approach and this undoubtedly got the project off to a strong start.

Quite soon, however, this became a cause of contention with the NGO partners as they felt that the focus on one intervention - however valuable - detracted from a more holistic approach to the issue. Their argument was that eye care required a wide range of investment and action in terms of infrastructure, training, intervention options and follow up. To focus solely on a single type of intervention was too narrow a perspective and a fuller programme of options, as well as investment in training health care workers, would be a much sounder medical proposition. However, for the Bank this would be more complicated to communicate and less 'catchy' as a driver for fundraising.

It also became obvious that different countries had markedly different health needs, health care cultures and delivery systems. In South Asia, health care to the poor is provided through philanthropic hospital outreach programmes whereas in parts of Africa such healthcare is seen as the responsibility of the health ministries. Yet, there was nervousness and concern from the Bank about funds not being applied properly when working within wider health systems in which the Bank feared there could be less transparency, and weaker governance and financial oversight arrangements.

This was not a project where a 'one size fits all' approach was ever going to work - it needed to be responsive to local conditions, adaptable to different challenges and to consider what systemic impacts would be desirable and possible.

After some serious soul-searching and considerable programme adjustments, the Bank now sees its contribution as multi-faceted and the project's scope as far wider and more significant than was at first

envisaged. It is now far more appreciative of the need to support wider health systems in order to ensure the sustainability of projects.

“We now have clear and transparent objectives that include raising our own profile, engaging our staff, demonstrating our commitment to the communities in which we operate and differentiating ourselves in our various markets. Over time we have learnt better how we can do this. As a bank, in addition to raising and managing funds for service provision, we can also fund training and infrastructure. But – perhaps even more importantly – we are now beginning to seriously raise the profile of avoidable blindness with governments and policy makers by leveraging our global network.”

Joanna Conlon  
Head of Seeing is Believing  
Standard Chartered PLC

### Divergent global and local perspectives

Perhaps inevitably in a global project of this scale, a continuous issue and source of tension is how, where and on what basis project development decisions are made. Both the Bank and the international NGOs share the dilemma of whether to opt for a ‘top down’ global programme ensuring coherence and manageability or a ‘bottom up’ series of locally driven programmes ensuring local relevance and ownership.

The centralised, global approach characteristic of Phase III led to some ‘mis-matches’ perceived as such both by local branches of the Bank (where local staff had their own ideas for projects) and by local chapters of the international NGOs (who did not always appreciate either externally-driven programmes or the involvement of a multinational corporation). Added to this was the variation in capabilities between the organisations in different countries – what worked perfectly in one setting and with a particular permutation of actors did not necessarily easily translate to a different setting even if the agencies themselves were the same. As a result, despite early success in central fundraising for Phase III, there was a considerable loss of Bank engagement with the project.

“The project is centrally well defined in setting out exactly what we will do on behalf of the group. But it also has local flexibility built in and that is a key requirement for any project to work well in its local context.”

Shah Masud Imam,  
Regional Head of Corporate Affairs, South Asia  
Standard Chartered Bank

With the renewed funding commitment of Phase IV launched in the midst of global economic downturn, it

## Case 2 – Value of thinking globally and acting locally

In sharp contrast to Case 3, which is an example of global and local priorities being out of sync, the Bank in this particular case developed a very strong partnership with NGO ‘C’, a long-standing implementing partner in [Seeing is Believing](#). The strength of the partnership was such that the Bank and the NGO carried out highly successful joint fundraising events. There was, however, no need for eye care projects in that country, so by agreement NGO ‘C’ became the conduit for channeling the funding into a neighbouring country where eye care was urgently needed and NGO ‘C’ was operating.

Cooperation extended to the facilitation of Bank staff visits to projects, to beneficiaries from the projects coming to meet the Bank staff that had undertaken the fundraising. This partnership at a local level raised \$1m in just 3 years.

This model is now being expanded within the region, with NGO ‘C’ acting as the intermediary between fundraisers and projects as well as between donor and recipient countries. Such is the strength of this approach, that new projects have been planned just to be able to absorb the funds generated.

The key success factors include the:

- ▶ Close political ties between the countries involved
- ▶ Presence of NGO ‘C’ in each of the countries and their capacity to channel funds between countries to where they are needed
- ▶ Layers of cooperation between the Bank in the countries and NGO ‘C’.

was clear that the engagement of the Bank’s country network with the partnership needed to be significantly increased in order to hit targets.

The programme now attempts to strike a balance between global and local priorities in all aspects of project development. IAPB’s key criteria for project development are that:

- ▶ Projects must address real need for eye care services, focusing on poorer countries / areas
- ▶ Projects must be carried out by a credible IAPB member
- ▶ The portfolio of projects reflects a good spread of IAPB’s membership.

On the other hand, the Bank’s key criteria were that all projects would:

- ▶ Provide opportunities for staff engagement (e.g. through employee volunteering)
- ▶ Resonate with the Bank’s stakeholders (e.g.

### Case 3 – Challenges in thinking globally and acting locally

**Seeing is Believing** is a global programme requiring central coordination to ensure a good range of projects across a variety of different IAPB partners and in a range of locations. Yet its success depends equally on building strong local connections between NGOs and the Bank in order to drive local fundraising and ensure an effective, mutually beneficial relationship. However, sometimes these needs do not harmonise - as in one country where a planned project failed due to different global and local priorities.

The country in question had established a successful local partnership with NGO 'A' in Phase II of **Seeing is Believing**. However, due to the changed criteria for project development Phase IV, a new project was proposed for central funding with a different global partner, NGO 'B'.

Initially, the Bank's country team was receptive to developing this new project with 'B' and went through the entire development process, even supplying final project approval at country-level. However, when the country team understood that there should be local contributions to fundraising, things changed. The local office no longer wished to support the project, since it would divert resources away from its well-established and successful relationship with 'A'. Since **Seeing is Believing** projects cannot be approved without sign off from the local Bank's CEO, the project with 'B' had to be dropped after a large amount of investment of time and energy. This was not just an issue for NGO 'B' but also for IAPB and its wider member relationships as well as for the Bank at local and global levels.

It is clear that Head Office did not understand the strength of the continuing relationship with 'A'. In response, the Bank's head office proposed building on the local relationship established with 'A' in order to turn the local project into a Phase IV project. Yet even here, project development failed as the Phase IV development criteria were too different from the existing local project which had inspired such strong local Bank engagement. At the time of writing, this country is not eligible for Phase IV funding.

This is an example of the difficulties faced by multi-layered partnerships. Agreements at global level do not necessarily translate into agreements at local level or vice versa. It also shows how local partnerships are crucial to the delivery of the global programme but also have the potential to seriously disrupt it.

Lessons:

- Caution and absolute clarity are required when seeking to translate global agreements into local agreements. All issues must be identified and be clear to all from the very beginning. If necessary, project development can be stopped before significant investment in time and effort is made.

governments, local NGOs, etc.)

- Be signed off by the local country CEO.

IAPB's criteria remained unchanged in Phase IV. Yet, the Bank's criteria entailed far more local buy-in than previously in order to spur fundraising. In some instances these criteria have not harmonised. In these cases, there is a considerable brokering challenge to maintain the partnership at both global and local levels.

IAPB's NGO membership has to take account of a wide range of cultures and contexts in which the Bank works. Some implementing partners say that they felt 'the goal posts were changed' when what was agreed in principle at one level was then challenged at another. It suggests that it remains challenging to undertake adequate consultations or to build in enough flexibility for local adaptation.

While tensions between global and local priorities have not been entirely eliminated, they are now more openly addressed as part of the new project development approach (see case 2). This increased transparency is at the heart of fostering local ownership of projects. Whilst global-local tensions pose some continuing challenges, it is at least recognised that the benefits in terms of the longer-term sustainability of **Seeing is Believing** through greater, more dispersed Bank engagement warrant the cost and effort involved in building more diversified approaches.

### The need for appropriate governance arrangements

“NGOs and companies are very different in how they operate and have quite different expectations of how things should be done – in terms of timeframe, budgeting, decision-making and measurement. This leads to levels of uncertainty and confusion – it can undermine the trust that is so critical to a long-term working relationship. When the partnership was going through a low patch (entering Phase III) we worked on building a clearly defined governance structure with representation from all stakeholders. We now meet regularly to look together at budgets and forecasts. This means a much more shared and ‘joined up’ approach as well as far more openness with a highly reduced risk of surprises at the end of a financial year or a phase.”

Martin Hayman  
 Management Committee Member  
 Seeing is Believing

Seeing is Believing has evolved a comprehensive management and governance structure. It is the result of a level of trial and error as the project has grown. It has taken time for the systems to be established and

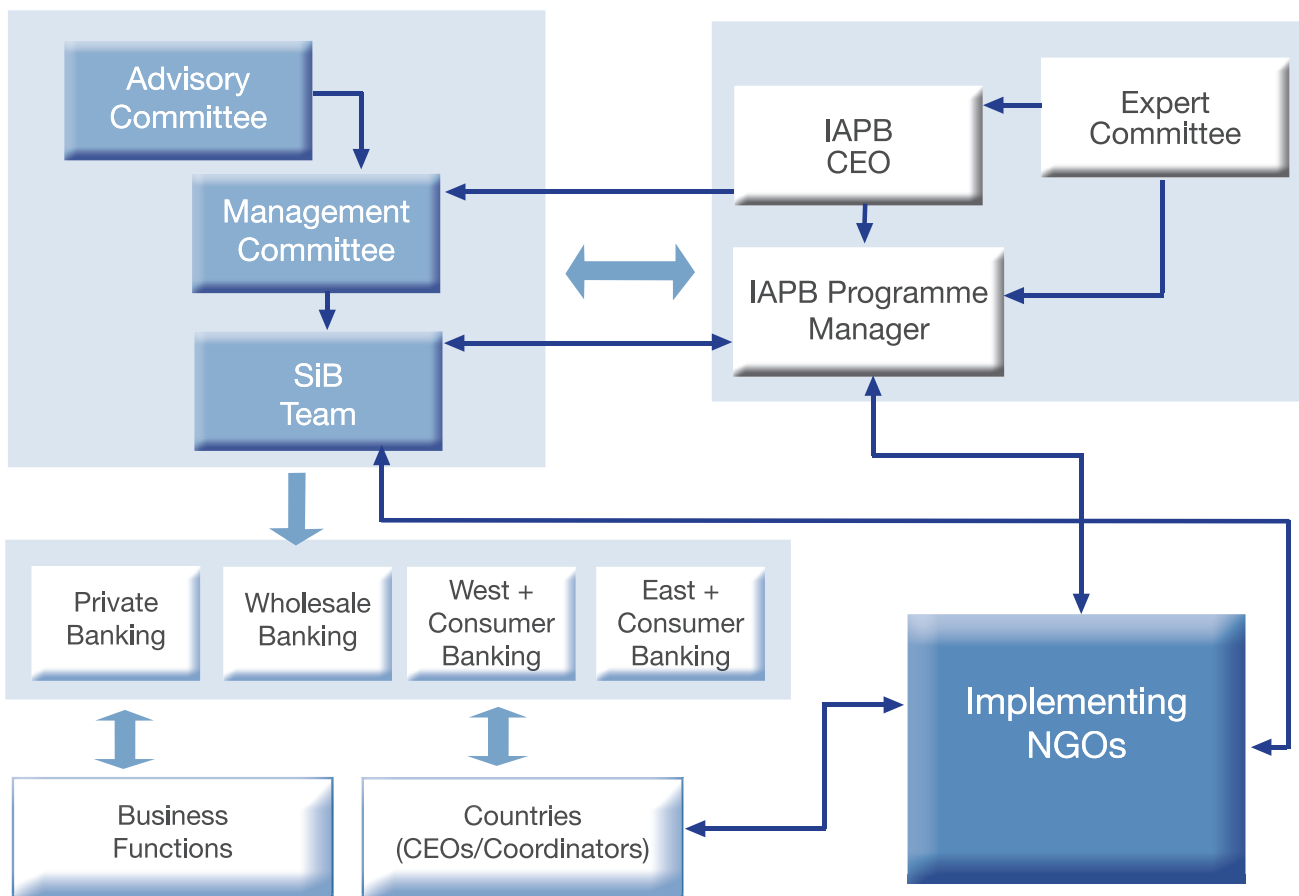
modified in the light of changing needs and experience of what has not worked as well as it could.

“I think a lot of the success of **Seeing is Believing** depends on the level of support of commitment that you get from the partner NGOs. It works both ways. We have demonstrated to them that we will be fair and open. In return they are fully behind us, happy to support and get involved in events and to encourage us to come and visit local projects whenever we want to.”

Alex Bainbridge,  
 Head of Financial Markets, Wholesale Bank  
 Standard Chartered Bank, Tanzania

A highly valued addition to the overall structure and development of **Seeing is Believing** has been the setting up of an Advisory Committee. This is composed of senior individuals from outside the Bank who themselves have a strong commitment to the issue and who are invited to keep a close and critical eye on the strategic direction of the project.

Whilst Standard Chartered can clearly provide financial management, auditing and oversight, the Advisory Committee is seen as a very important element in providing further – and visible – scrutiny of the overall project.





## Different views of 'success'

It is clear that the Bank and their NGO partners went into the collaboration with different perspectives of what 'success' would look like. Over time, however, the partners have moved far closer to a common set of success measures. What started with one group (the Bank) measuring numbers of people undergoing corrective eye surgery has now evolved into a greater recognition of the value of a wider set of indicators for a health programme, including significant focus on the sustainability of the projects funded and the need for a systematic approach. The team is now planning an evaluation programme that includes an assessment of the impact of an holistic eye care approach on the social stability and economic prosperity of families and communities.

A growing focus on the social and economic impacts of the project brings a clear link to the Bank's primary purpose – it is clearly in the Bank's 'best interest' that communities become more self-reliant, productive and prosperous<sup>2</sup>.

A common goal is to achieve outcomes that are truly sustainable.

*"We see the active participation of key stakeholders (government staff, community leaders, teachers, paediatricians and village health workers) as essential to sustainable interventions. It is their efforts that ensure ownership and responsibility and that fosters willingness to promote eye health in the community."*

Claudia Caravetta  
Program Officer  
ORBIS International

## Learning from experience

*"To be honest, I think Standard Chartered has been quite slow in recognising how important and influential this project could and should be. We need to see how powerful this project is and how much there is to share with others."*

Advisory Committee Member  
Seeing is Believing

## Learning to understand each other better

There has been a very significant investment of time by the Bank and IAPB in building understanding of each others priorities and working styles. As confidence and trust in each other has grown, allowances have been made and there is markedly more respect for the different organisational values and attributes.

2. See quote from Peter Sands, CEO, Standard Chartered on front cover.

It is clear that a lot of inter-organisational understanding between the partners has been achieved over the life of the project, through regular interaction and increasingly frank and open discussions. The Bank has worked hard to understand organisations that are mission rather than profit-driven. The NGOs have also come a long way in their understanding of the Bank's focus on a business-driven approach.

*"Seeing is Believing is like a business within a business. We put as much acumen and expertise into this project as we do into any of our businesses. Our aim is to deliver maximum return – in this case by reaching as many people as possible."*

Gill James  
Head of Sustainability  
Standard Chartered Bank

Similarly, the Bank has grown to understand the systemic complexity involved in delivering eye care and why the NGOs found it so frustrating to simply be asked to stack up the numbers ('X people treated using Y funds') rather than report on the behind the scenes health care infrastructure costs or the wider, social and economic impacts.

## Learning how to build greater equity between partners

The 'elephant in the room' of most partnerships is the issue of inequity deriving from one partner being the 'donor' and the other(s) being the 'recipient(s)'. It takes time and effort to build equity where there is an obvious lack of equality.

Research into a number of business:NGO partnerships<sup>3</sup> suggests that equity is most likely to be achieved when:

- ▶ Those with more power hold back and give up their natural tendency to assume control
- ▶ Those with less power are actively and consistently given genuine respect and space to air their views
- ▶ Partners take the time to properly map, value, record and publicise the non-financial resource contributions of those involved
- ▶ Credit is given to those that have genuinely earned it rather than where it is assumed to reside or where it is demanded
- ▶ There is a commitment to amplifying the voice of the powerless and to careful mediation between different stakeholders when necessary

3. Tennyson, R and Harrison, T, UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT: BUILDING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF GLOBAL BUSINESS – NGO PARTNERSHIPS – Published by: International Business Leaders Forum, 2008.



- When partners are prepared to go slower in implementing decisions – or even reverse those decisions – when necessary for the sake of the project’s overall wellbeing
- There is some skilful facilitation during the early partnership-building phase and in the ongoing relationship management process.

The research undertaken for this case study suggests that those involved in the **Seeing is Believing** project are using several of these approaches to build a fair, balanced and respectful collaboration.

In fact, it appears that a key role for partnership brokers (see below) is to ensure that equity between the partners is built and maintained – for example, by ensuring that the different resource contributions from each partner are acknowledged and formally recognised.

### Learning about the critical role of partnership brokers

The point has been made earlier about how this partnership has depended on leadership at many levels (see Box 4). Most particularly, it is clear to us that **Seeing is Believing** has been able to develop so fast and so coherently because of the action of those acting as ‘partnership brokers’ at all levels. These individuals (whether appointed or self-identified) are dedicated to supporting the partnering process. They – like brokers in many partnerships around the world – work tirelessly to invigorate, promote, challenge, drive, communicate and support the project by their sustained efforts to maintain good partner relationships.

During interviews with people from the Bank, from IAPB and from Implementing Partners, we were regularly told that ‘without XXX this would not have happened’. Often in reports of partnerships this critical role is under-played – we think this is a mistake and feel it is vitally important to give it due recognition.

The skills involved in good brokering include working in ways that balance:

- Listening to all those involved with giving voice to partner priorities / concerns
- Facilitating engagement with steering developments
- Driving forward to reach targets by empowering / supporting others
- Providing technical expertise with the time it takes to build strong / enduring relationships
- Being endlessly patient yet quietly persistent.

It is an interesting question about how far the project’s success is due to a relatively small group of (largely behind the scenes) brokers and how the project would change if these roles were not covered as effectively as they currently are.

### Learning how to communicate better

After some trial and error, the communication and reporting procedures have become more attuned to the different needs and expectations of the partners. A number of different communications ideas have been tried and worked through to achieve a greater level of interaction and learning across the project. This has resulted in:

- Significant agreements or new developments being more fully discussed with local implementing partners in advance of decisions
- Earlier identification of problems where timely advice or support can avert relationship or project breakdown
- An increasingly shared approach to the media, external relations and advocacy
- Greater transparency in how money is raised, allocated and dispersed
- Fuller records of the employee volunteering aspect of the project
- Better chronicled stories from the perspective of beneficiaries and local project staff
- More regular sharing of successful ideas and good practice with other countries and partners in the network
- Bi-annual reporting on progress against planned activity, outputs and budget.

### Learning to be flexible

A willingness to be flexible has grown as the trust between the various players has deepened over time. For example, it was agreed with the Bank to adjust the reporting requirements to half-yearly reports from quarterly reports once the case made by the implementing partners about the amount of time it was taking to report more frequently was understood and accepted.

Similarly the NGO partners – coordinated by IAPB – were able to persuade the Bank that simply reporting numbers on Excel spreadsheets was not a good format for capturing equally significant achievements in terms of outcomes and impacts on families and communities. IAPB coached the implementing partners in the use of planning tools that also reflect their monitoring and reporting. Reports now take the form of a

Partners	The key factors in the project's success – according to each type of partner <sup>5</sup>
<p><b>IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS</b></p> <p>Delivering the project at local level</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Actively engaging with the donor partner's local staff and raising 20% contribution to the total funding of new projects</li> <li>➤ Communicating with NGO and donor partner head quarters to keep them informed of progress, challenges and changes</li> <li>➤ Ensuring that the values and position of each implementing partner are well understood and being prepared to negotiate on things that are not working well</li> <li>➤ Encouraging key stakeholders and supporters to come and see for themselves the impacts of their inputs</li> <li>➤ Voicing clearly what is needed on-the-ground</li> <li>➤ Thinking for the long-term and being prepared to give as well as take.</li> </ul>
<p><b>PRINCIPAL NGO PARTNER</b></p> <p>Coordinating the project at global level</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Actively engaging with the donor partner to help them understand how the money is being spent and why</li> <li>➤ Understanding the organisation of the donor partner and how decisions are made</li> <li>➤ Employing a full time person to coordinate the programme willing to understand corporate drivers and priorities</li> <li>➤ Leveraging access to technical knowledge and local expertise to maximise the investment</li> <li>➤ Helping partners to arrive at clear procedures and allocation of responsibilities</li> <li>➤ Liaising with implementing partners regularly to stay grounded in the programmatic side and to be sure that the programme always meets genuine local needs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>DONOR PARTNER</b></p> <p>Supporting the project at both global and local levels</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Investing more than just money: staff engagement and expertise are equally important</li> <li>➤ Understanding better the mission and wider context for what a partner is doing and hoping to achieve through the project</li> <li>➤ Listening to and being considerate of partner needs and constraints</li> <li>➤ Getting to understand the programmatic aspects so informed decisions can be made that are best for everyone</li> <li>➤ Employing a Programme Manager dedicated full time to the project – preferably with a background in development</li> <li>➤ Having clear procedures and clearly allocating responsibilities</li> <li>➤ Running the project like a business where there is an expectation of return on investment</li> <li>➤ Ensuring regular communication and genuine discussion between the partners especially between the local and the global elements</li> <li>➤ Being prepared to compromise, compromise, compromise.</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> These views were drawn from 1-2-1 interviews and have been included only when the authors had heard them repeated often enough to be convinced they are truly representative.

broadly based narrative in addition to excel sheets that link to their expected outcomes.

The introduction of a logical framework approach to planning allows the partners to have the opportunity to plan for and reflect on a wider range of outcomes, including quality concerns (essential in surgical and medical eye interventions) which the NGO partners believe better articulates the wider impacts of the project.

This in turn has enabled the Bank to understand the nature of their investment more fully – Bank staff now report on the wider social and economic impacts of the project, not simply the numbers of people treated.

### Learning how to keep up momentum

This project depends more critically than most on sustaining high levels of engagement and enthusiasm over a period of many years. As one senior Bank staff member put it: How can you expect individual employees to organise yet another sponsored walk year after year? And there clearly was a drop in momentum in the late stages of Phase II. Re-invigorating commitment and enthusiasm has happened through:

- Renewed leadership within the Bank (notably from the Group Finance Director)
- Hard work and constant effort in terms of internal communications
- Emphasis on staff engaging with the project in ways other than just fundraising – for example, by visiting projects or supporting capacity development within partner NGOs
- Changing project focus to renew interest and / or be more appealing to those providing funding – the decision to target urban communities seems to have been instrumental in renewing energy
- Moving fundraising into core business activities - i.e. developing a fundraising model that can hook on to what the Bank does every day rather than require the Bank to go over and above the norm. This now includes constructive linkages with the Private Bank and its own philanthropy programme; the Consumer Bank's credit cards; and the Wholesale Bank's relationships with its brokers
- Looking for further funding from other sources / donors including other corporate partners
- Bringing new project champions onto the Advisory Committee to promote and build the project
- Building more responsive and deeper relationships with the NGO partners to help to capture and communicate the outcomes from the project and the impacts on people's lives.

## Critical Success Factors

What are the key factors that make any development partnership a success in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and impact? A review of business:NGO bio-diversity partnerships undertaken in 2002<sup>4</sup> articulated the 5 critical success factors as:

- Fully engaged partner organisations not just a few key individuals
- Active commitment to ensuring benefits and 'value added' for all partners
- Maintaining a learning culture in day-to-day operations by internalising lessons and building from mistakes
- Genuine respect, building on diversity and an increasing degree of trust between the different players
- Having a strategic impact over and above local successes.

How does this compare with the [Seeing is Believing](#) partnership?

Our several months of work investigating this partnership convinced us that [Seeing is Believing](#) does indeed have all the critical success factors associated with an efficient, effective and impactful partnership (as characterised above).

Standard Chartered – the lead partner – draws on many elements of its commercial strengths as a highly successful corporation including:

- Building on its 150 years providing banking services in developing countries – working often with NGOs who are themselves Bank clients as well as building on a strong local reputation for financial probity
- Engaging as much of its 72,000 strong workforce as possible in supporting and developing the programme at all levels
- Adapting its core competencies and systems (in financial management, good governance, effective oversight and procedures, public relations and publicity) to shape and strengthen the project in a business-like manner
- Using its corporate reputation and influence to have reach and impact in order to achieve ambitious project impact targets.

Clearly, however, no matter how high the level of commitment, how many competencies it can deploy or resources it can raise, the Bank could never 'go it

4. Tennyson, R. GETTING REAL: THE CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINING BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS, published by IUCN, 2002.

alone' and deliver this project directly. Bank staff can claim absolutely no expertise per se in eye care nor does the Bank have any credibility (in project delivery terms) with healthcare NGOs whether working at grass roots, national or international levels. Indeed, no one in the Bank could have been expected to know either the range of intervention options available or the preferences of one type of intervention over another in specific conditions and circumstances (although many have learnt a lot during their association with this project).

We have tried to characterise (see page 20) the different – and essential – contributions to the project made by the different partners. Specifically IAPB as the principal NGO partner bringing a number of its own competencies and specialist strengths including its:

- Access to highest levels of eye care expertise and experience
- Respect from and ability to reach eye care specialist NGOs in the selected countries through its membership network and found status of the wider global campaign 'VISION 2020: The Right to Sight'
- Ability to create and manage appropriate protocols for project development and reporting
- Role as 'broker' between the Bank and the implementing partners
- Role as 'ambassador' for the project with public sector agencies at national and international levels
- Lending increased global profile to the programme through alignment with 'VISION 2020: The Right to Sight'.

The success of the project is precisely because of the inter-dependent nature of the partnership(s) – both the global coordinating partnership (initially with Sightsavers International and now with IAPB) and the many 'implementing' partnerships at country-level.

**“What makes this a productive partnership? Regular communication, listening to our partner’s needs, trying to be considerate, having clear goals, maintaining good relationships with people at senior and operational levels within the partner organisations and always being willing to compromise when necessary.**

**More generally, partners need to look beyond bending the partnership to their individual interests but instead focus on driving their productive efforts on cultivating the ground of common interest.”**

Stefan Chojnicki  
**Seeing is Believing** Coordinator  
Standard Chartered PLC

## What next?

A 'New Vision' (Phase IV) is due to conclude in 2014 with the joint raising of \$20m to provide comprehensive eye care to less-advantaged populations in at least 20 cities that are within the Bank's global footprint.

Working in partnership with the IAPB, World Health Organisation (WHO) and other leading eye care NGOs, **Seeing is Believing** is on course to have provided sustainable eye care to 20 million people since the start of the project in 2003. The care will be comprehensive – from community outreach and awareness, to vitamin A supplementation, spectacle provision, and more sophisticated surgery.

Where might the project go beyond 2014?

**“Might there be a Phase V? It is definitely on the cards but we have to be a little cautious. Just getting bigger and bigger may become too much for us to handle. We are considering other options – perhaps expanding the project by working with other corporates in some form of federation – expansion by the multiplication of the model by others. We have created a model that works – it would be good for others to see it and to adopt or adapt it to achieve equivalent goals!”**

Richard Meddings  
**Group Finance Director**  
Standard Chartered PLC

## Acknowledgements & Further information

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Should you require any further information about **Seeing is Believing** please go to [www.seeingisbelieving.org.uk](http://www.seeingisbelieving.org.uk)



# Seeing is Believing



## WHAT DIFFERENCE HAS THE PARTNERSHIP MADE?

To those impacted or at risk from avoidable blindness?

- Increasing access to eye care services and health education – including over 2.5 million sight restorations
- Knowing that something can be done and blindness is not inevitable
- Improving wellbeing, productivity and prosperity of families and communities.

To the NGOs involved and their respective missions?

- Longer-term funding from the same source for their context-specific proposals
- Additional (technical and managerial) benefits from working with a corporation and the ability to reach other donors / stakeholders
- Having a new and powerful voice supporting their mission with policy makers and media.

To the Bank and the Bank's various stakeholders?

- Providing new ways of engaging with clients – globally and in-country
- Building employee commitment and loyalty to the company at all levels
- Building the Bank's reputation amongst key stakeholders such as governments and regulators through evidence of a long-term approach to the Bank's community investment.

## WHAT FURTHER DIFFERENCE COULD IT MAKE?

To those impacted or at risk from avoidable blindness?

- Reach more people by growing the project; securing more funding and using media and communications to reach families and communities at risk
- Give publicity to new needs and recognition to good working practices
- Encourage trained staff to stay working locally
- Increase the experience and capacity of NGOs working to engage the corporate sector
- Further develop the resources of the partnership to forge greater concerted action around advocacy
- Link health activities with economic opportunities to address the cycle of blindness and poverty at the same time.

To the wider partnership movement?

- Provide evidence that cross-sector partnerships work
- Set a standard for partnership as a mechanism to help achieve ambitious sustainable development goals
- Encourage others not to be put off the partnership approach by the early challenges they face – or even by unexpected challenges at a later stage.

To other corporations interested in social investment as part of core business?

- Provide a working model at global and local levels for other banks and corporations of an effective business: NGO partnership
- Provide new entry points for other corporates to become involved
- Challenge others – perhaps particularly Financial Institutions – to make this kind of project central to the way they do business.