



FARMSECURE™

SUSTAINABILITY AND PROFITABILITY IN AGRICULTURE



Quote

"Through its innovative financing structures, Standard Chartered Bank is a valuable partner to Farmsecure™ and the achievement of its vision for agriculture. We believe in partnering with our bankers to add more value to the numerous charitable projects we already support in Bethlehem. This is a meaningful partnership in action - leveraging our respective resources and capabilities to make a sustainable difference in the lives of others."

Jerome Yazbek
Farmsecure's Group CEO



Seeing is Believing

Farmsecure™ partners with Standard Chartered Bank, ICEE and Nissan South Africa to provide eye screening services to 500 learners in Bethlehem

Imagine that you are a youngster at school and unbeknown to you, you have impaired vision. You struggle through the day without fully grasping what is being taught in the classroom. Every day your classmates leave you just that little bit further behind and you slowly sink into despair. This is indeed the reality that faces countless youngsters at schools in our country, particularly in remote rural locations. So imagine how profoundly the lives of these children are improved through a visit from a one-stop eye screening and spectacle provision service. As vision is the most important element of the learning process during a child's first 12 years, it certainly is not too difficult to visualise the beaming smiles that follow this life-changing "seeing is believing" experience.

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Hlengiwe Shamase
ICEE optometrist

Studies have shown that approximately 5% of South Africa’s total population suffers from some kind of disability and sight disability is the most common disability (at 32% of the total). Ocular problems and visual disorders are a common occurrence in all societies and the burden of eye disease in rural South Africa is particularly high, with an estimated 750 blind in 100,000 of the population, due mostly to cataract and glaucoma. It is estimated that 80% of South Africa’s blind population live in rural areas.*

Many people living in rural areas work within the agricultural sector and as much of the labour requirements within this sector require manual and technical labour which is totally reliant on good visual skills for success. The inability to see properly while performing many of these tasks could prove dangerous for the worker and fellow workers, cause damage to machinery or property in the workplace and could even have a detrimental effect on the consumer in the case of food production.

It is within this rural and agricultural context that the visionary private sector partnership was established between Standard Chartered Bank, Farmsecure™, Nissan South Africa and ICEE (International Centre for Eye care Education) to conduct eye tests on more than 500 learners in Bethlehem in the Free State and prescribe spectacles to those in need. For most of these children this will be the first time their eyes are tested. The beneficiaries of this remarkable service are from four different projects supported by Farmsecure™ Grains in the Bethlehem district namely the Maluti Hoogland School, Graanveld School, Charlotte Theron Children’s Home and Youth Care Centre and YWAM (Youth With a Mission).



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ICEE optometrist

On 2 February the partnership hosted a media event to showcase the eye testing initiative at the Maluti Hoogland School. Prior to launching this initiative Standard Chartered Bank, in partnership with ICEE and the KZN Provincial Department of Health, achieved a milestone in health care by providing 1 million eye examinations and screenings in the province. The success of the “Giving Sight to KwaZulu-Natal” programme has sparked a future initiative to replicate the project model in other locations and the visit to Bethlehem forms part of this goal. ICEE is a developmental, non-government organisation that works in partnerships with government and other NGO’s to bring much needed eye health within reach of people around the world. This Australian-based international organisation is providing a truly global free service.



Eye testing in progress



Maluti Hoogland is a school (primary and high school) for children with learning disabilities and this is where the Nissan Mobile Child Eye Care Clinic was conducting screenings in early February 2012. The youngsters were excitedly waiting their turn for an eye screening and glaucoma test while optometrist Hlengiwe Shamase and eye technician Mandla Mbuyisa attended patiently and thoroughly to each child. The clinic is a fully converted vehicle maintained by Nissan South Africa with an onboard, state-of-the-art spectacle and lens production laboratory and staffed by an optometrist and eye technician. The service that this team provide is to do eye screenings as well as cutting the lenses, assemble the spectacles and present the final product to those in need before moving to the next screening venue.

The Charlotte Theron Childrens' Home and Youth Care Centre cares for 123 children aged between infants and 18-year-olds. Farmsecure™ Grains has recently become involved with supporting needy learners at Graanveld School in Bethlehem. The Youth With A Mission centre is located just outside Bethlehem. Farmsecure™ Grains is currently involved in a feeding scheme for children from informal settlements in this area.

"I love my job as it makes a difference to people on a daily basis," says ICEE optometrist Hlengiwe Shamase. It was quite clear, watching while she worked with the children, that she certainly means this. "Growing up I recall how my grandmother battled with eye problems and as we lived in a rural district, she did not have access to eye care. I realised early in life that helping people with this challenge can make a significant difference to the lives of others.

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Eye Technician Mandla Mbuyisa administering eye pressure testing



"The mobile clinic takes us to schools in rural areas as well as to old age homes. Through this community exposure I get to see a very broad range of conditions that many of my colleagues only ever see in textbooks. I have a heart for this and enjoy helping people and at the same time working in this field expands my experience considerably." Mandla Mbuyisa administers eye pressure tests for glaucoma and cuts the lenses for glasses to fill prescriptions on site. He echoed Hlengiwe's sentiments that he loved his job with ICEE.

Amongst the recipients of eye screening and spectacles was Gershon Anku from YWAM. Gershon is a Ghanaian national volunteer missionary worker and is currently the Staff Leader at Youth With A Mission at Lindley, a neighbouring town. Elma Wolmarans, the Social Responsibility Co-ordinator based at Farmsecure™ Grains, had arranged for him to receive screening as part of the programme. He is 47 years old and explained that he had developed severe problems with his vision during the past year. "I am extremely grateful for this opportunity as it will make a huge difference to my life," said Gershon with a big smile.

The Farmsecure™ Group is committed to supporting communities throughout their sphere of activities and the Group is investigating the possibility of extending the eye clinic services in the future. "Through its innovative financing structures, Standard Chartered Bank is a valuable partner to Farmsecure™ and the achievement of its vision for agriculture. We believe in partnering with our bankers to add more value to the numerous charitable projects we already support in Bethlehem. This is a meaningful partnership in action - leveraging our respective resources and capabilities to make a sustainable difference in the lives of others," says Jerome Yazbek, Farmsecure's Group CEO.

*Source: www.eyesite.co.za



Gershon Anku from YWAM gets his eyes tested



Elma Wolmarans, Social Responsibility Co-ordinator based at Farmsecure™ Capital, with Gershon Anku from YWAM after his eye tests



ICEE optometrist Hlengiwe Shamase and eye technician Mandla Mbuyisa with the Mobile Nissan Mobile Child Eye Care Clinic