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giving sight

BACKGROUND

The Global Burden of Blindness

>300 million people are blind or visually impaired simply because they don't have spectacles. The lack of refraction services and spectacle provision in eye care services in under-served communities has significant negative consequences in terms of lost education and employment opportunities. This results in impaired quality of life and lost economy for the individual, the family and community.

The Approach

The creation of a system for optical devices and equipment resulted in the Global Resource Centre (GRC). The GRC is a collaboration of like-minded organisations (initially supported by ICEE, SightSavers International and Christian Blind Mission) to pool buying power, create low cost access and thus allow eye units to become sustainable through income generation mechanisms that are still affordable to the community.



Photos Courtesy of Dean Saffron

ADVANTAGES

- Online ordering
- Centralised distribution
- Promote the tracking of worldwide trends to inform purchasing decisions and resource allocation
- Central quality checks
- Affordable, accessible and acceptable spectacles and devices

Coordinated solution

- Eliminate the duplication of efforts & resources between NGO's
- Allow large and small customers to access the same cost efficiencies
- Combined purchasing power
- Creation of a pool of preferred supplier

BENEFITS OF REDUCED UNIT COST

- More affordable to societies
- Reduced global burden of uncorrected refractive error
- Better vision, better chances at improved quality of life

OPPORTUNITIES CREATED BY AFFORDABILITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Cross subsidisation

- Significant income can subsidise other eye care activities
- Creation of infrastructure that allows for skills transfer to communities
- Opportunities for employment and ability to earn income

Models of Delivery

- Potential to develop entrepreneurship programs e.g. Social Entrepreneurship Models
- Sustainability of models can pay for refractive services

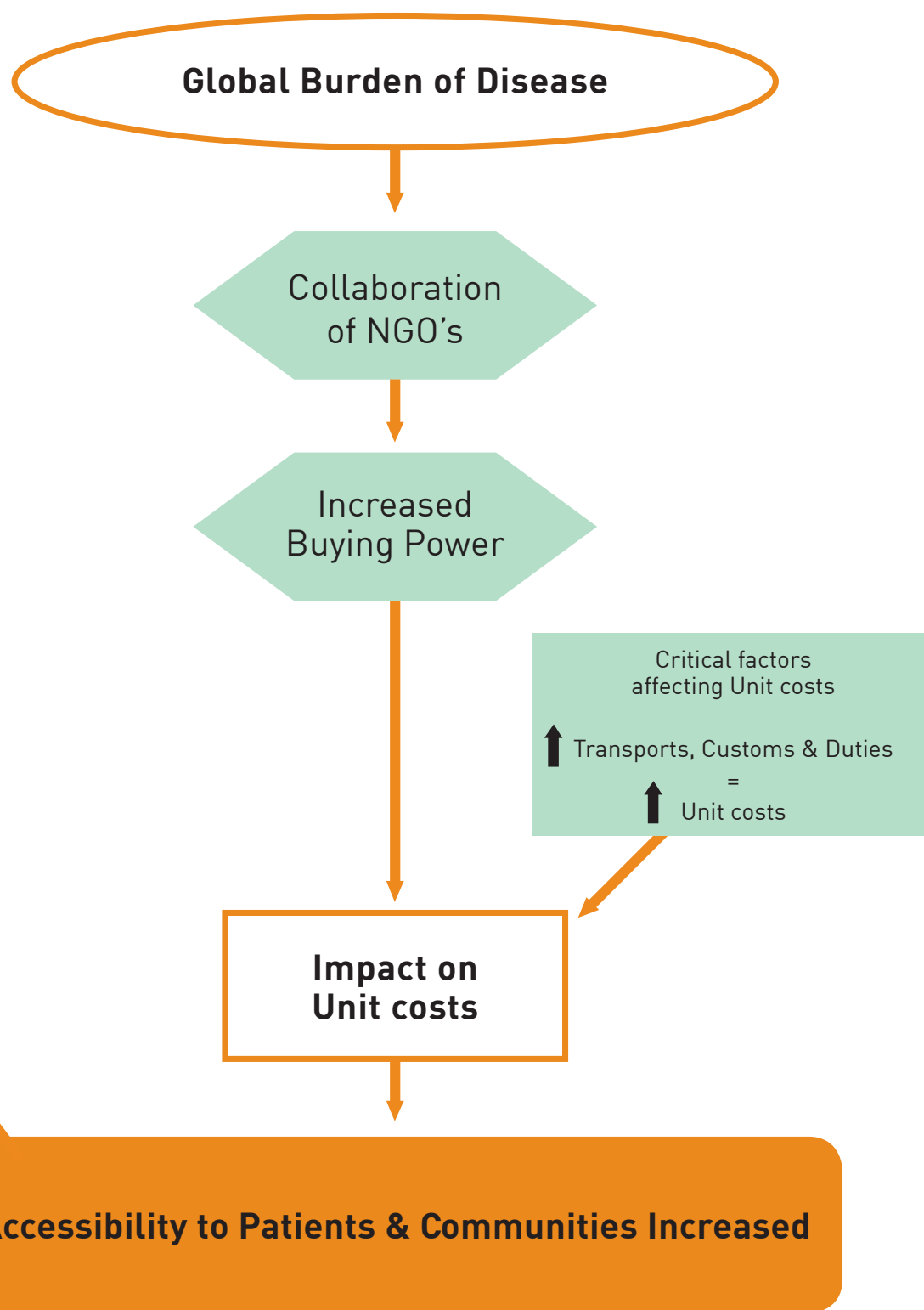
CHALLENGES

- Lack of efficient planning of device requirements
- Inadequate allocation of budget to purchase products
- Different procurement ordering systems among NGOs
- Ensuring that purchasing is done from suppliers who DO NOT utilise child labour or violate human rights
- Understanding the different custom laws & regulations in different regions & countries

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Endorsement by all NGOs which will ensure high volumes, the cornerstone to the success of the approach
- Engaging Ministries of Health and Finance in country to waiver custom duties and taxes on optical products and equipment
- Formalising a subsidisation partnership with a preferred courier company

PROCESS FLOW



CONCLUSION

Global efforts allow for NGOs to create a sustainable spectacle provision system that can aid a development perspective by creating skills and employment opportunities for communities while creating access to much needed eye care.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This information was previously presented as a poster at the 8th Annual General Assembly of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), Buenos Aires, Argentina, August 2008.