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Skills Building Sessions Generate Some Useful Lessons

A half-day was set aside at this week's Partnership Forum in Durban for skills building. In ten separate small group sessions, participants shared their experiences concerning what was working well. The following is a summary of some of the lessons learned:

Effective implementation of grants:

- Decentralizing the implementation process makes it easier to get close to affected communities.
- It is important to align the programmes to national plans.
- Civil society organizations have a key role to play in implementation, and should not just be sitting on the CCM.
- Qualitative indicators are as important as scale, coverage and quantitative indicators to measure success.
- A high level of leadership and political commitment goes a long way to ensuring the success of a programme.

Programmes for vulnerable groups:

- CCMs that are inclusive of key populations and that have inclusive processes for selection are more successful and sustainable.
- Legal constraints affecting vulnerable populations can be a barrier to CCM-supported proposals, so alternative approaches, such as the submission of non-CCM proposals, may be required.

Involvement of the private sector:

- It is useful to create a "buddy system" whereby large businesses provide support to small

businesses.

- The private sector can make a core contribution to CCM functions such as leadership, management and technical assistance.

The use of a PR with strong management expertise from the private sector can be a key to success where the required expertise does not exist at government level.

Civil society involvement:

- In some countries, intensive initial capacity building and ongoing technical support is crucial to the effective involvement of civil society.
- Government and civil society can work together to resolve bottlenecks.
- Transparency of procedures and allocations is critical to success.

Managing multiple PRs:

- Use of multiple PRs is likely to work best in countries with a history of civil society and government partnership.

Technical Assistance:

- Technical assistance needs should be identified and integrated into every stage of the grant process.
- There is a need to build appropriate and flexible budgets for technical assistance throughout the grant cycle.

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