GPAF Concept Notes - Strengths and Weaknesses identified during assessment of GPAF concept notes - updated in August 2012

This table identifies key strengths and weaknesses of concept notes submitted to concept note rounds for the GPAF Innovation and Impact windows that are considered to be relevant to the Community Partnership window.

1. Factors related to the project's potential impact on poverty

1.1 Identification of project need

Weaknesses	Strengths
Little or no information on the specific causes of poverty in the local community and with no relevant statistics to clarify the extent of the problem. Lack of reference to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and relevant government (or other recognized) data on both national level and especially for the specific target community. Insufficient analysis of what others are doing, why other initiatives addressing the same issue do not exist or have been unsuccessful. Target groups are not clearly and explicitly defined. Unclear reasons for selection of particular locations within countries and selection of beneficiary groups. Weak justifications for the added value of multi-country approaches. Insufficient evidence of consultation with potential beneficiary communities during the project identification process.	National context for MDG progress, referenced by recognized data complemented by further analysis of the local context and community in relation to the identified MDGs. Clear identification of gap or lack of appropriate initiatives to address the identified cause of poverty. Analysis rooted in deep understanding of the local community and different beneficiary groups, their needs and the target area. Clear and thorough processes for engagement with beneficiaries in the design of the programme, including appropriate mechanisms to enable active participation of women and other potentially marginalized groups. Clear demonstration of how the beneficiaries have influenced the project design. Evidence that other relevant stakeholders (including government) have been considered in the project design. The nature of any previous work in the area is clearly presented, and the proposed project addresses clear gaps in appropriate initiatives to address the area of concern.

1.2 Clarity of anticipated changes

Weaknesses	Strengths
The anticipated impact on poverty is expressed in terms of vague, general or global changes that are not specific to the identified causes of poverty and do not allow the setting of clear targets or indicators. Little indication of the anticipated scale of change (e.g. in income growth, crop productivity etc.). No clear line of sight to poverty reduction e.g. the initiative is focused on building capacity of a local organisation but it is not clear how this will lead to a reduction in poverty within the life span of the project. Unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved within the limits of the project period, budget and the capability of the implementing organisations.	Clear definition of the expected changes for the specific beneficiary community and different groups, the rate of anticipated progress/growth in income generation, access to services etc., and the link to relevant MDGs. Realistic estimates of the nature and extent of changes anticipated for specific target groups and a clear connection between the anticipated changes, the analysis of the problem and the needs of the target groups. Where appropriate, the changes recognize how the expected nature and extent of the desired change may be different for men, women, girls and boys.

2. Factors related to proposed project implementation arrangements

2.1 Design and Approach

Weaknesses	Strengths
Unclear how the initiative would address the specific problems identified in the analysis of the problem and lead to an anticipated impact on poverty at the community level. The project design fails to recognise the need for linkages with other programmes or government initiatives in the community. The proposed approach is associated with a high cost per beneficiary without sufficient justification (e.g. due to difficult to reach or widely dispersed target groups). The project is trying to address a broad range of issues, some of which are beyond the capacity of the applicant and identified partners. The proposed project is over-ambitious and unlikely to be successfully achieved within the proposed duration and with the proposed levels of resources.	Clear indication of why the proposed initiative is considered to be the most cost-effective approach, or how this will achieve real cost-effective impact and results at community level. Clear demonstration of how the intervention would challenge and/or hold to account, and/or support government work, make it more strategic and likely to support MDG achievement. Known challenges or concerns about the approach (e.g. debt creation in micro-finance, cultural factors which hinder adoption) are acknowledged and addressed. The proposed project approach includes high levels of participation by community beneficiaries and other stakeholders, and appropriate measures to ensure that the project is accessible to men and women, girls and boys.

Weaknesses	Strengths
The proposed approach is based on previous experience but little or no information is provided on the lessons learned. Insufficient evidence of beneficiary involvement in project identification and design. Insufficient clarity regarding how the project will actually be implemented in terms of direct engagement with the community target groups.	The organisations proposed to be involved in the management and implementation of the project have appropriate and relevant experience and capacity. Clarity of approach, free of jargon and rhetoric. Clear linkages to Government services and/or Acts, Policies where relevant. Alignment with work of government and/or other agencies is clear and adds to both value for money and probability of sustainability of outputs and potential for further scaling-up.

2.2 Organisational Capability and Partnership Arrangements

Weaknesses	Strengths
The organisational arrangements for managing and implementing the project are not sufficiently clear. The relative roles and responsibilities of the applicant and project partners are confused or not well-defined. The applicant and partners appear to have only limited or no previous relevant experience in the sector or project area that the project is intended to address. The added value of the applicant organisation in the successful delivery of the proposed project is unclear (beyond the sourcing of funds). For UK-based applicants, the added value is sometimes stated in terms of administrative tasks only, such as liaison with the donor and financial oversight, rather than specific skills, experience or capacity required for delivery of proposed project.	The management and partnership arrangements for implementation are clearly explained with a well-defined and well-justified division of roles and responsibilities between the applicant and proposed partners. The proposal includes appropriate collaborative partnerships and linkages between project and government departments (where relevant). The governance arrangements are clear, and enable both community beneficiaries and other stakeholders to influence the direction of the project as it is implemented. Added value of the applicant is clearly defined in specific, technical areas such as policy advice, networking, advocacy support and monitoring and evaluation.

3. Other areas to be considered

3.1 Value for money

Weaknesses	Strengths

Weaknesses	Strengths
Projects targeting a small number of beneficiaries but with a high budget, and no clear explanation of why the costs should be so high.

Target number of direct beneficiaries is either unclear or inconsistent.

No clear justification for multi-country initiatives (e.g. in terms of either value-added or economies of scale); or mention of 'economies of scale' without further clarification.

Little evidence of consideration of alternative, potentially more cost effective approaches. | The concept note demonstrates that the project design has taken into account appropriate value for money considerations.

The nature and potential value of the benefits are clearly presented and justify the proposed investment.

Clear balance of overall cost to anticipated nature and extent of impact.

Clear explanation of what aspects of the project promote cost-effectiveness, e.g. tested approaches which have been adapted to reduce costs, key savings in national and international resources made possible through the project etc.

The project intends to make use of existing resources/facilities and make them more efficient and/or effective.

Explanation of why the proposed approach is considered to be the most cost-effective and demonstrating that alternatives have been considered. |

3.2 Gender and Diversity

Weaknesses	Strengths
No clear breakdown of the specific issues facing girls, boys, women and men.

Even where issues around gender (problem statement) are strong and gender specific outcomes are presented, the attention to gender issues is not adequately reflected in the design.

No gender analysis beyond a brief reference to women and no strategies for addressing specific needs of women and girls. Nothing about power and decision-making disparities.

Many organisations stated that women and girls were to be involved in project activities, but they did not show either the specific barriers faced by women and girls within the project context, or how the project has been designed to overcome these. | Some concept notes are focused entirely on gender issues and integrate gender into all aspects of the concept note.

Where relevant, concepts incorporate gender analysis in terms of power relationships between men and women and identify why this is important for achievement of the project outcomes.

Clear identification of potential resistance to gender-related change from within the community.

Applicant clearly identifies specific gender-based barriers that are relevant to the project and shows how they will be addressed.

Being realistic in how barriers are to be broken down and clear about who needs to be involved to support the processes. |

Few concept notes differentiate the needs and perceptions of men and boys or the power relationships which underpin gender relations. In some cases, projects target women and girls but do not clarify how men and boys will be included. Some concept notes appear to be based on the assumption all activities targeting women will lead to 'empowerment' of women without exploring the issues related to women's role in decision-making. Failure to address common issues related to 'women's economic empowerment' such as the risks of creating increased workload, and inability to control economic assets.	Addressing multiple exclusions, e.g. disability plus gender, gender plus caste, caste plus disability etc. Clearly articulate how girls/women will have a role in decision-making or management within the project scope. Recognition of complexities in achieving change and addressing issues through project design e.g. by working with men and boys. Demonstration that consultation with beneficiaries has been/will be thorough and that the methods used provide a space for women, girls and other potentially marginalized groups to express themselves freely.