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EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MARKETING PROGRAMMES TARGETED AT THE LOWERINCOME SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Whilst there is an emerging business case for Private Sector involvement in poverty reduction programmes targeted at the lower income sector, there is limited understanding of the impact that the Private Sector has had in such initiatives. An aggravating factor is the lack of reliable evaluation mechanisms with which to assess Private Sector performance in alleviating poverty.

The research problem guiding this study was to determine the effectiveness of Social Marketing projects as a potential poverty alleviation approach for the Private Sector. The research sub-problems aimed to establish a set of criteria that could be used as a basis for developing appropriate Social Marketing evaluation frameworks and indicators.

Exploratory in nature, the method of data collection employed a qualitative approach, in which 9 In-Depth Interviews were conducted with experts possessing relevant knowledge of, or experience in, Social Marketing as a potential development tool for the Private Sector. Limitations in sample size were addressed by triangulating respondent profiles across a variety of different sectors (Corporate; Academic; Non-Governmental; Donor Organisation) in order to elicit as wide a set of opinions as possible. Results were then analysed according to an Interpretivist approach.

A broad set of criteria were identified that can be used to develop, or make a reasoned judgement about the suitability of, potential Social Marketing frameworks for the Private Sector. These criteria were tested through application to one particular Social Marketing evaluation framework identified in the literature review (the PSI PERForM framework). The latter was found to have limitations in its current form that would preclude a recommendation being made for wider use by the Private Sector. The PSI PERForM framework was then used as a platform with which to identify suitable indicators. The finding was that there are limitations in seeking universal indicators for such a framework, as indicators need to be customised around specific behaviours and target audience characteristics.

The key message of this research is that it is not feasible to attempt to identify a generic Social

Marketing evaluation framework and accompanying indicators, owing to a need to customise frameworks around underlying behaviours and target audience profiles.

The implications are that, in order for the Private Sector to be able to compare the effectiveness of Social Marketing as a development mechanism relative to other approaches, future attention should focus on impact evaluation frameworks. These offer potential in enabling not only individual project evaluations but also cross-project comparisons. The scale, cost and expertise required to conduct impact evaluation in this area would likely require new forms of collaboration with Academic, Non-Governmental and Donor Organisations.