

Gender Equity Lens Factsheets

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April 1999

These factsheets were developed as part of the Gender Equity Lens Project of MCEWH. Other papers on gender equity published under this project are:

- C. Saulnier and E. Skinner. *Gender Equity Lens Resource Document*. (Halifax: MCEWH, 1999).
- E. Skinner, C. Saulnier, S. Bentley, F. Gregor, G. MacNeil and T. Rathwell. *Lessons from the field: Policy makers on gender-based analysis tools in Canada* (Halifax: MCEWH, 1998).
- C. Saulnier, S. Bentley, F. Gregor, G. MacNeil, T. Rathwell and E. Skinner. *Gender Mainstreaming: Developing a Conceptual Framework for En-Gendering Healthy Public Policy* (Halifax: MCEWH, 1999).
- C. Saulnier, S. Bentley, F. Gregor, G. MacNeil, T. Rathwell and E. Skinner. *Gender Planning: Developing an Operational Framework for En-Gendering Healthy Public Policy* (Halifax: MCEWH, 1999).

This project was funded by Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health (MCEWH). MCEWH is financially supported by the Centres of Excellence for Women's Health Program, Women's Health Bureau, Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of MCEWH or the official policy of Health Canada.

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The Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health is supported by Dalhousie University, the IWK Health Centre, the Women's Health Bureau of Health Canada, and through generous anonymous contributions.

FACT SHEET #1

MAINSTREAMING GENDER ANALYSIS: WHAT IS IT AND WHY DO IT?

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO MAINSTREAMING GENDER ANALYSIS

Gender-based analysis, gender equality analysis, gender-inclusive analysis, and gender equity lens are approaches used in developing gender analysis guides. Each term is interchangeable in that they apply to some form of gender analysis, but each is linked with specific organizations and guides which often differ significantly in their objectives, guiding principles and format. A brief description of each term follows:

GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS

Gender-based analysis (GBA) is most readily linked to federal government step-by-step guides such as those developed by Status of Women Canada and Human Resources Development Canada. GBA is defined as a process that assesses the differential impact of proposed and/or existing policies, programs and legislation on women and men. It makes it possible for a policy to be undertaken with an appreciation of gender differences, the nature of relationships between women and men, and the different social realities, life expectations and economic circumstances of women and men. GBA is a tool for understanding social processes and for responding with informed and equitable options (SWC, 1996).

GENDER EQUALITY ANALYSIS

Gender equality analysis (GEA) is linked with Justice Canada and its gender equality initiative (GEI). GEA is defined as a process to help to identify and to remedy problems of gender inequality that may arise in policy, programs and legislation (Justice, 1998).

GENDER-INCLUSIVE ANALYSIS

Gender-inclusive analysis (GIA), a term used by the Saskatchewan government, is defined as identifying how public policy can affect women and men differently and in what ways policy and programs can be developed to ensure equitable results for both men and women (SWS, 1998).

GENDER EQUITY LENS

The goal of the Gender Equity Lens Project (GEL) of the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health is to develop an analytical framework and educational curriculum that incorporates a process to critically assess the differential impact of proposed and/or existing policies and programs on women and men. The project aims to influence the development, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs to minimize negative impacts on women.

THE BENEFITS OF MAINSTREAMING GENDER ANALYSIS

If gender analysis is integrated into the policy and program processes it:

- profiles the needs, issues, priorities and constraints of women,
- ensures the development of a broad range of policy and program options,
- predicts potential positive and adverse affects of policies and programs,
- encourages reflection and policy/program adjustments,

- encourages the use of enriched data and information,
- improves the quality of advice provided by the policy/program analyst,
- provides a broader outcome/impact analysis, and
- provides a broader research and evaluation foundation for developing policies and programs.

BENEFITS FOR GOVERNMENT

Mainstreaming gender analysis enables the government to:

- make more informed decisions by taking into account a range of significant factors including gender,
- meet its national and international commitments to equality more effectively,
- meet requirements in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms,
- avoid potential embarrassment when a policy or program disproportionately negatively affects women, and
- more efficiently progress towards its overall objectives.

BENEFITS FOR POLICY ANALYSTS AND POLICY/PROGRAM DEVELOPERS, IMPLEMENTORS AND EVALUATORS

Gender analysis can:

- give them a better understanding of social and economic contexts of various groups, and thus of how policies and programs interact with them,
- expand their knowledge base and set of skills, and
- improve the quality of policy advice and policy and program options because more factors are considered and the affects of policies and programs on women are more accurately predicted and evaluated.

BENEFITS FOR WOMEN AND CANADIANS

In the long term, mainstreaming gender analysis in the program and policy process will benefit women and Canadians more generally because it:

- identifies whether additional steps are required to enable women to benefit from a certain policy or program and provides an opportunity to revise a policy that might negatively affect women,
- works to eliminate discrimination against women based on sex and gender and thus contributes to the advancement of women's equality and gender equity, and to the improvement of women's health, and
- contributes to improving the status of women and to achieving greater social justice, equity and equality for all Canadians.

CONTRASTING GENDER-NEUTRAL AND GENDER-BIASED POLICY

Gender mainstreaming in the policy and program process should neither result in gender-neutral nor gender-biased policies and programs.

GENDER-NEUTRAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Gender-neutral policies and programs failed to take into account the sex composition and gender characteristics of their target groups, especially if they are focused on macro-level planning. The underlying assumptions of these policies and programs are:

- everyone regardless of their differences based on race, class, ethnicity, sex, ability, etc. are affected in the same way, and
- treating all people the same is fair because we start out equal.

The implications of gender-neutral policies are such that:

- women are disadvantaged and/or women do not sufficiently benefit, and
- men are advantaged and benefit because the policy is rarely neutral but male biased.

GENDER-BIASED POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Policies and programs are gender biased when differential negative treatment of women is ill-founded or unjustified and when policies and programs operate in favour of men as a gender. The following assumptions underlie gender-biased policies and programs:

- women experience the world as men do and thus the male standpoint, experience and standards are privileged and female experiences, activities, and world views are rendered invisible
- women's predominant roles are as mothers and caregivers in the home and are so defined
- gender equality is always about sameness and equivalence to men because any different treatment is unfounded and unfair

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GEL FACT SHEET #2

MAINSTREAMING GENDER: LEARNING FROM HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Gender Equity Lens Project (GEL) focus on health-related policies and programs entails a second-level commitment to ensure that gendered and *healthy* public policy is developed. Making links with health impact assessment (HIA) is one way to promote the incorporation of gender into the healthy public policy movement. Indeed, many cabinet submission guidelines across the country include a requirement to screen for health impacts as well as gender impacts. For example, the British Columbia cabinet submission guidelines state that gender implications *must* be analyzed and that “the likely positive or negative impact of each option on the health of individuals, groups and communities, or on the health care system *should* be analyzed” (Government of British Columbia, 1993, p. 15). Lessons can be learned from efforts to develop health impact assessment tools to screen policies and programs. Initial research indicates that, for example, in BC, the HIA tool is currently being revised to make it more user-friendly and more effective (Proctor-Simms, 1998).

Framed within social determinants or using quality of life indicators, the same or similar barriers stand in the way of using HIA, mainstreaming gender, and employing gender analysis guides. Health issues defined within a social determinants approach should include gender as a key determinant. Some of the challenges identified by Proctor-Simms (1998) in her examination of the literature and through her consultation with tool developers parallel the challenges to mainstreaming gender. The following table summarizes these challenges:

Challenges to HIA

Non-health sectors have traditionally given insufficient consideration to potential health implications of proposed and existing policies

Lack of collaboration and co-operation on common issues and policy initiatives, and competing interests between and within sectors and across jurisdictions

Lack of understanding of the broad meaning of health, healthy public policy, and/or determinants of health

Resistance in some sectors to see their policies as “health policies” because of perceived encroachment by the health sector

The complex and inter-related nature of the determinants of health, and often long latency periods between causes and the resulting impacts on health status

Lack of time and resources (financial and human)

Challenges to GEL

Sectors that do not specifically address social policy or traditional women’s issues do not see the relevance of gender mainstreaming

Difficulty achieving horizontal and vertical support, co-operation and collaboration

Same concern, specifically lack of understanding toward gender as a health determinant

Gender issues hold a specific challenge — they can be personalized and this may intensify resistance

Difficulty measuring long-term impacts of policies and programs and progress toward long-term goals such as achieving gender equity and improving women’s health status

Inadequate resources and resistance in a time of cutbacks to sufficiently resource

Challenges to HIA, cont'd

Lack of political will (e.g., political cycles) and/or high-level accountability and commitment to HIA

Lack of available relevant data (particularly qualitative) and uncertainty over appropriate population health indicators to do accurate HIA and to monitor health impacts

Possible perception that HIA is not valuable or too simplistic

Challenges to GEL, cont'd

Some concerns exist for ongoing leadership and high-level commitment to both principle and practice

Lack of both qualitative and quantitative data; need for ongoing development of comprehensive EGEL to monitor and evaluate; need for better uptake of policy research

Perception that gender analysis is too complex and burdens overworked employees

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GEL FACT SHEET #3

DEVELOPING ECONOMIC GENDER EQUALITY INDICATORS (EGEI)

MEASURING PROGRESS ON GENDER EQUALITY

To support gender mainstreaming initiatives and in response to challenges posed by the lack of appropriate research, gender equality indicators have been developed to provide an information base and research resource for making decisions and evaluating outcomes. These social indicators are designed to measure well-being or quality of life. The Federal-Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women initiated development of economic gender equality indicators (EGEI) for monitoring progress toward gender equality and economic well-being (FPT, 1997).

EGEI provide background sex-desegregated data on differences resulting from cultural prescriptions and social characteristics that determine gender roles. They can be used when deciding gender equality goals and priorities, identifying problems, anticipating effects, shaping solutions, and evaluating the policy (Morris, 1998). Information is provided on women's and men's paid and unpaid work, total workload, paid and unpaid work patterns by household type, total income, after-tax income and total earnings, university degrees granted, training participation, training hours, and occupational return of education.

Three types of indicators have been constructed: (1) individual attainment, (2) gender differences, and (3) gender equality. Individual attainment indicators provide information strictly about women's achievements in education, economic resources, etc. The second type of indicator desegregates information by sex (not gender) along with other comparable categories such as province and age. The third category measures the status of women relative to men (McCracken and Scott, 1998).

INDICATOR LIMITATIONS

All three types of indicators should be used together since all offer vital information. However, these indicators have some limitations. First, "the vision of equality here [EGEIs] is clearly one predicated on the equal or 'same' status of individuals" (McCracken and Scott, 1998, p. 16). Second, the goal is to achieve a better indicator result. Attaining a better indicator reading should not be the end goal because this could be done in inappropriate ways and may not be what women need. For example, a better indicator reading could result from decreasing men's status, or by trapping women and some men into a solution that does not deal with how they would have defined the problem (Morris, 1998). Finally, EGEIs, by their nature, quantify complex social and economic phenomena and thus can be reductionist.

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GEL FACT SHEET #4

MAINSTREAMING GENDER ANALYSIS AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION

A COMPLEMENTARY RELATIONSHIP

“There is strong potential for a complementary relationship between gender analysis and consultation. A gender analysis can help identify fruitful themes for consultation, and consultation can strengthen the validity of the gender analysis” (Schalkwyk et al., 1996, p. 12). To avoid duplication and waste, and to capture diversity, governments must recognize that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) share skills, experience, expertise, responsibility and accountability, and thus both share a commitment to change and for ownership of outcomes (Roberts, 1996). Moreover, gender analysis must begin with women’s own assessment of their needs; it must be build on women’s knowledge and skills and contribute to women’s ability to organize as a group (Oxfam, 1995). Thus, a key to gender mainstreaming is public consultation and the participation of women, women’s groups and other NGOs.

CHALLENGES TO CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN’S GROUPS

There are levels and forms of collaboration that are possible between bureaucrats who support women’s equality and those outside of the bureaucracy, but they are constrained by their respective constituencies and contexts. There are specific challenges to consulting women’s groups and challenges that women’s groups face when attempting to participate in the policy or program process. Underlying relations between women’s groups and the bureaucracy is the issue of mutual trust. Often management does not trust external groups, and the groups do not think they are genuinely being consulted. Women’s groups have spent much time and energy writing briefs and presenting to government commissions and task forces only to have their submissions discounted. Thus, they are sometimes skeptical about influencing the process and are concerned that they are wasting their time and energy.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR A SUCCESSFUL CONSULTATION PROCESS

When consulting women’s groups and other NGOs, there are various formal and informal processes that can be used. A formal process can be less interactive (e.g., presenting briefs, making presentations) than an informal process that may take the form of casual meetings with parties already familiar with each other or gathering information through telephone conversations. The formal process involves a more detailed strategy outlining goals and objectives, requires a more substantial budget, involves more groups and individuals, and more time (SWS, 1998). The following general guidelines for consultation should be followed for the benefit of all parties:

- Ensure that women and women’s groups have some influence and are not immediately outnumbered or in the minority
- Use a combination of informal and formal forms of consultation
- Ensure that a diversity of women and women’s organizations participate
- Encourage early input into a policy or program
- Involve women and their organizations at all stages of the process (agenda setting, formulation, implementation, and evaluation)

- Provide ample lead time because most organizations operate with a volunteer board
- Provide support for child care, transportation and accommodation in recognition that women have fewer financial resources, assume the majority of care-giving responsibilities and that these groups have suffered cutbacks
- Set up meetings during the day for staffed organizations and during the evening or weekend for volunteers
- Provide comprehensive information in appropriate formats before the consultation and ensure meetings are held in accessible buildings and in safe and non-intimidating rooms
- Provide groups with updates and inform them of the progress and outcomes of the consultation

BENEFITS OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION

Genuine consultation should be about building partnerships and a more participatory process. The benefits for policy makers, developers, implementers and evaluators of encouraging public participation and consulting with NGOs include the following:

- attaining information sometimes not otherwise available through traditional research or data gathering processes, thus their information gathering is more comprehensive
- exposure to alternative ways of thinking about or conceptualizing an issue and innovative ways of problem solving
- being offered diverse and unique perspectives on a policy or program often because those they consult have first-hand experience; this improves their ability to address community needs and avoid policies and programs that do not fit their target population
- a more transparent, participatory development process means that the public better understands policies and programs, and thus they are used more effectively

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