



A Canadian Gender Curriculum Educational Strategy

Report of Phase One

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Executive Summary

The goal of the Gender Lens Program is to ensure that gender-based analysis becomes an integral component of public sector policies and the policy making process. The specific goal of Phase One was to determine the crucial components of an educational curriculum which will imbue the full spectrum of policy development and implementation with a gender based analysis, together with strategies for the development of such a curriculum.

The outputs of phase one are:

- 1) the identification of the core components or building blocks required for the development and implementation of a national gender equity educational program
- 2) the identification of appropriate structure or framework for the delivery of the educational program
- 3) a report of recommendations arising from focus groups, concerning the development of a comprehensive training program on gender equity.

Recommendations from Focus Groups

Gender Education Strategy Format

Facilitation of a gender equity strategy should be undertaken by a team of female and male facilitators, each of whom must be well known and respected. The suggestion arose from one focus group that this team could come from out of province, as target audience members may be more interested to learn about what has worked outside their own community.

Guest speakers should be invited to share their experiences - 'real people telling real stories'. Single mothers, women and men working in non-traditional roles would be such examples. Because policies reflect the deeper values and consciousness of a society, the attitudinal dimension across the entire society is a strong determinant of policy and its consequences. Therefore, public education and sensitization are much needed, as is specific gender training targeted at government policy makers.

Focus group participants stressed that change is necessary at all levels of society, however this project can focus only on fostering change in clearly defined and specific areas such as working with policy makers to ensure that they consult those affected by policy in a timely and meaningful manner

An effective gender education strategy must involve:

- a media campaign

- gender inclusive language
- plain language, avoiding jargon
- a literature review
- a review of what has worked and what hasn't in other countries
- inclusion of all stakeholders

The Target Audience should include:

- Policy Makers
- Politicians
- Deputy Ministers
- Academics
- Researchers
- Community Members
- Service Providers
- Youth

Based on the focus groups that have been held in rural and urban Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, the following three crucial issues have emerged:

- 1) The curriculum must address the reality that women continue to hold the vast majority of family responsibilities, in addition to their professional careers.
- 2) The curriculum must acknowledge that until women have addressed housing, nutrition and safety issues in their lives they can not focus on a gender education strategy.
- 3) The curriculum must target the youth of Canada as part of an comprehensive strategy for social change.

Background

Project Rationale

The Beijing Platform for Action states that “governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of main-streaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects for women and men, respectively” (United Nations, 1995, Section C, Paragraph 105). In response to Beijing, many jurisdictions in Canada developed protocols to help decision-makers assess the impact of policies on women. A recent Federal example of this, ‘*Setting the Stage for the Next Century: The Federal Plan for Gender Equity*’ (Status of Women Canada, 1995), mandated federal departments and agencies to include a gender perspective in all policies and programs. However, just because policies and programs must have a gender perspective does not automatically mean that it will be so or that more equitable outcomes will result.

Policy makers and stakeholders must work in partnership with women to build gender analysis capacity and accountability mechanisms which measure the conditions of women’s lives. These dimensions are not fully apparent in the current Federal Plan. The policy arena must be the broad determinants of health and the Curriculum will demonstrate the applicability of gender lens protocols in specific areas of health policy. Using the determinants of health approach means recognizing that economic, political and social factors affect the health of women as much, if not more than, biological factors or the available array of health services. Women disproportionately undertake most of the paid and unpaid ‘caring’ work in society. It is imperative therefore that women are not regarded as ‘shock absorbers’ for the bumps in health care reform (Armstrong, 1996). Policy makers must ensure that women do not continue to be disadvantaged by the policy process and that instead they receive equitable benefits for their endeavors.

The first stage of the GEL program focused on the roles of policy-makers, decision-makers and other crucial stakeholders in the health and health-related policy arena and how their attempts have, or have not, affected women. The focus of the work to date has been on understanding gender specific implications of policy decisions and the protocols developed to do this. Several products have resulted from this preliminary phase: a continuously updated Annotated Bibliography; a comparative analysis of selected gender lens tools; a paper “*Lessons from the Field: Policy makers on gender-based analysis tools in Canada*” (Skinner, 1998); a detailed synthesis paper. These products document the internal and external factors which facilitate or inhibit the application of gender analysis to health policy issues. The two papers include recommendations for the development, implementation and evaluation of gender equity strategies.

A critical lesson arising from the first phase was the importance of tailoring gender equity protocols to meet the specific needs of the target audience, including extensive consultation and

with an emphasis on shared learning. Research by Brodie (1995) demonstrates that although some women have benefitted from public policy re-structuring, most have not. Re-structuring diversely has affected the majority of women primarily because the policies were blind to the diversity of equity populations. They did not take into account the extent to which class, culture, economics,

ethnicity/race, geographical location, mental and physical (dis)abilities and religion are significant variables that impinge directly upon women.

There is significant inconsistency in defining and applying gender-based analysis. Skinner (1998) concluded that there are three types of barriers confronting gender-based analysis: attitudinal; operational; theoretical. Attitudinal barriers are difficult to overcome because one usually is dealing with pre-determined and resistant mind sets. Such mind sets may mean that some policy makers are overtly hostile to the whole notion of gender equity analysis, some may accept the intellectual arguments but see no need of application and some will be dismissive of the entire concept. Operational barriers are more mundane and resource based. The arguments here are that there is insufficient expertise, money, people, or time to implement gender equity analysis. Theoretical impediments arise when policy makers express interest in the concept but conclude that they lack the requisite skills, models or data. Most of the work to date on gender-based and gender equity analysis has addressed the theoretical difficulties through the development of specific protocols or tools. However, initial research suggests that the tools developed so far promise much but deliver little because there still exist significant impediments to successful implementation (Teghtsoonian, 1997).

Policy-makers and others have to understand the inherent value of applying gender analysis to policy issues. To do this, more than protocols are needed. Policy analysis and development cannot be effective, equitable or responsive without a contribution from those who are most affected. Therefore, meaningful consultation with the community must be an integral component of policy analysis and development. Community consultation should provide the input that will make visible the realities of women who are affected by the policy and who are marginalized or disadvantaged not only by their gender, but by virtue of their geographic location (urban, rural, specific province, etc.), age, education, life situation (care giver, single parent), (dis)ability, education, employment, socioeconomic status, race, culture and religion.

'Community' is often assumed to be the individual women who make up a specific geographic, demographic or ethno-cultural group. However, there is another layer to community, which is emerging as a key resource for the policy analyst. Community-based, equality-seeking women's groups have long been advocates for diverse groups of women. They have traditionally been involved in affecting public policy through lobbying and social activism and have been very effective at influencing policy in many demonstrated cases. Not only do these groups have 'their finger on the pulse' of their communities, they have an exceptional understanding and analysis of problems and needs and the most effective ways of resolving them. More recently the value of these connections and skills has been recognized by policy makers and input from these groups has been sought in a more collaborative and less adversarial process. Community-based, equality-seeking women's groups have been recognized as key informants for policy analysis and development. They must be included in both the policy analysis and development processes and

the training of policy makers.

Education in gender sensitivity and training in skills development are important prerequisites to implementing protocols. Certainly community, academe and policy-makers within government are all key participants in an informed and effective policy process. Because these three groups have not traditionally 'spoken the same language', efforts at meaningful consultation and collaboration have met with mixed success. We are cognizant of this and therefore at this stage, we intend to identify the critical components essential to and the necessary structure for the creation of a dynamic curriculum guide and training materials in gender-based analysis for application and implementation in policy development, targeting - in particular - the social determinants of women's health.

Definition of Terms

Gender-Based Analysis, Gender Equality Analysis, Gender Equity Lens

These terms are fundamentally interchangeable in that they apply to some form of gender analysis, but are linked with specific organizations and guides, which may differ in many ways including in their objectives, principles and format. The term gender-based analysis (GBA) is most readily linked to the federal government initiatives to develop step-by-step guides such as those developed by Status of Women Canada and Human Resources Development Canada. GBA is thus defined as:

- *Gender-based analysis* is a process that assesses the differential impact of proposed and existing policies, programs and legislation on women and men. It makes it possible for policy to be undertaken with an appreciation of gender differences, of the nature of relationships between women and men and of their different social realities, life expectations and economic circumstances. It is a tool for understanding social processes and for responding with informed and equitable options (SWC, 1996).
- *Gender Equality Analysis* is linked with Justice Canada and its Gender Equality Initiative (GEI) and is defined as follows: a process to help identify and remedy problems of gender inequality that may arise in policy, programs and legislation (Justice, 1998)
- *Gender Equity Lens* comprises an analytical framework and educational curriculum that incorporates a process to assesses the differential impact of proposed or existing policies and programs on women and men.

Project Goal

The goal of the Gender Lens Program is to ensure that gender-based analysis becomes an integral component of public sector policies and the policy making process. The specific goal of Phase One was to determine the crucial components of an educational curriculum which will imbue the full spectrum of policy development and implementation with a gender based analysis, together with strategies for the development of such a curriculum.

Project Partners

The project team included: Dr. Frances Gregor, School of Nursing, Dalhousie University; Ms. Georgia MacNeil, Women's Centre Connect Nova Scotia; Ms. Peggy Mahon, Department of

Adult Education, St. Francis Xavier University; Dr. Thomas Rathwell, School of Health Services Administration, Dalhousie University. The project team, with the exception of Ms. Mahon, comprised the researchers involved in the MCEWH supported project to develop a gender equity lens for the policy evaluation process.

It was important for the project team to remain connected to those who develop and implement policy, to those who influence the policy process and those who are the subject of the policy. In this respect, we established an advisory group drawn from Officials of the Atlantic Provinces, Ministers responsible for the Status of Women, Canadian Women's Health Network, Dalhousie University's Faculty of Health Professions, Nova Scotia Council for Multicultural Health, Metro Immigrant Support Association (MISA) and community based women's groups. The role of the Advisory Group was to assist with the identification of potential focus group participants, ensure that the data gathering component was as inclusive as possible, that the relevant educational issues and curriculum content had been identified and that the project remained focused on the crucial aspects of diversity.

Methodology and Work Plan

The identification of the components of an educational strategy and national curriculum require the involvement and direct contribution of many stakeholders. Each stakeholder must be satisfied that their aspirations and concerns are reflected in the final product. A series of stakeholder focus groups was conducted to ensure that all interested parties had an equal opportunity to contribute to the process leading to the design and content of the educational curriculum. The focus group format has been chosen to create an interactive environment with stakeholders to encourage free flowing dialogue and manageable information gathering.

The number and composition of the focus groups was determined in consultation with the Advisory Group. A fundamental principle we followed was that no stakeholder would be excluded from the process unless they expressly indicate otherwise. The purpose of the focus groups was to obtain views and opinions from a range of stakeholders on two specific issues relating to the development of the national education curriculum: the core components or building blocks that are essential to the development of the curriculum; the most appropriate way to structure the delivery of the education curriculum to ensure maximum benefits.

The project was undertaken between June and the end of December 1999. A part-time Project Assistant was employed with effect from July 1999. The responsibilities of the Project Assistant, in conjunction with the Project Team and the Advisory Group were: development of a detailed protocol for the identification of the various stakeholders and the selection of their representatives to participate in the focus groups; the process under which the sessions would be conducted; to facilitate, record and analyze the results of the focus groups; to contribute to the production of the final report of the project. The first two months of the project focused on the setting up of the Advisory Group, identification of the stakeholders, securing their agreement to participate and planning the number of focus groups and their locations. During the next four months the focus groups were conducted and their results analyzed. The final month was devoted to the compilation of the project report.

Focus Group Development

Participation in the focus group sessions was entirely voluntary and all information was recorded in such a way that no one comment or opinion could be attributed to any identified person.

Persons suggested for participation in a focus group by the Advisory Group received a Letter of Explanation and a Statement of Consent (Appendix 1) outlining the rationale for the project, the nature of participation and informing them of the procedures in place to ensure confidentiality. Participation in the focus group could be terminated without penalty. Participants were asked to keep their focus group discussion confidential. Audio tapes of focus group discussions were sealed in envelopes and placed in locked filing cabinets. Each tape was erased after it had been transcribed. Transcriptions will be kept confidential. Only members of the Project Team and the Project Assistant have or had access to the transcriptions. Any information or quotations derived from the discussion and used in the report are completely anonymous. Individuals are never identified by name. Participants have been offered a copy of the transcription of their focus group discussion.

The purpose of the focus groups is to obtain the views and opinions on two specific issues relating to the development of a national educational curriculum: the core components or building blocks that are essential to the development of the curriculum; the most appropriate way to structure the delivery of the education curriculum to ensure the maximum benefits.

Considerable effort was expended on ensuring that the focus groups in each location reflected the broad spectrum of possible participants. It was not possible however to convene focus groups which included all possible stakeholders. Several attempts were made to contact representative members of the black community in Nova Scotia but without success.

The focus groups were held in various locations throughout Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island to ensure that all stakeholders had a reasonable opportunity to participate. The number of participants was between 8-10. Participants were given examples of gender-equity situations and asked to share some of their own. The group was then asked to respond to six pre-determined questions. There was ample time for discussion and flexibility to include any other subject matter the group felt would be relevant to the Project.

Several criteria from the Advisory Group had been established for the focus groups:

- definitions of terms must accompany the focus groups
- plain language to be used and jargon avoided
- questions had to be open-ended in nature and non-specific
- focus groups needed to be facilitated in a way that they extracted people's views and opinions
- issues around community consultation needed to be explored

The information obtained from the focus groups was fed back to a selection of those participating in order to check that the results reflect the proffered range of views and opinions.

A total of seven focus groups was conducted in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia at these locations: Bridgewater, Halifax, Shelburne, Sydney and Yarmouth; Charlottetown and Summerside. The pertinent issues emerging from each focus group are outlined in Appendix 2.

Findings and Recommendations

The research had two principle objectives: the identification of the core components or building blocks required for the development and implementation of a national gender equity educational program and the identification of appropriate structure or framework for the delivery of the educational program. The information generated by the Focus Groups though very diverse has gone some way to satisfying both objectives. However, in both cases the results do not present a complete picture of the core components or building blocks for a gender equity education strategy, nor what might be an appropriate framework for the delivery of such a program.

The very broad nature of social change necessitates the identification of a variety of 'target groups'. Each group will have specific objectives associated with applying gender-related knowledge and each group will apply the knowledge differently. While we can assume that fairly uniform changes in attitudes will facilitate the desired changes in society, the particular knowledge requirements and behavioural changes required will be specific to each target group, thus necessitating a focused approach with each group. Therefore, more research into the way such groups function is needed in order to identify clearly the content and methodology appropriate for each particular group.

It is not certain why the responses from the focus groups were more obscure than expected and largely unrelated to the six structured questions designed to elicit particular information. Two main possibilities (which are not mutually exclusive) present themselves:-

(1) The six pre-determined questions. These may not have been the catalyst for generating discussion which the investigators expected.

(2) Composition of the focus groups. The intent was to obtain as great a cross-section of those affected by and those effecting policy and programs. Consequently each focus group contained participants from a number of different interest groups. However, it is a principle of qualitative research that a focus group be constructed of people who are largely 'homogenous' with respect to the topic under discussion. Within such a focus group, participants are more likely to feel at ease and willing to contribute freely. Thus one focus group would consist of policy makers, another, of a particular equity group, etc. Furthermore it is the role of the focus group moderator to establish rapport with every participant, to help each person to contribute and to control the group process so that - for example - no respondent dominates the discussion. It is unlikely that a focus group consisting of as many as ten people could be effectively moderated, especially when those people come from disparate groups.

Although policy makers participated in the focus groups, their particular perspective does not emerge from the results. It appears also that many of the 'equity groups' participating did not have comments. These groups certainly have experience with gender based analysis (gba) - that is what they do - and they certainly have experience in trying to use gba to influence policy. They should have some suggestions on how policy-makers could change their behaviours - a key component of the curriculum.

Skinner (1998) noted that the major barriers to effective gender sensitive policies are: pre-established, resistant mind sets (attitudinal); limitations in resources such as time, money and expertise (operational), and lack of understanding of gender analysis (theoretical). Education and training were identified as being of crucial importance in overcoming these barriers. The limited

involvement of certain stakeholders in the focus group, while disappointing, should not detract from the fact that the experience and expertise of those participating in the focus groups did offer some insight into what is required in the development of education and training materials. Despite the inconsistencies in the level of participants' contributions to the focus groups, certain patterns can be discerned.

The issues raised by the various focus groups can be categorized as Content/Curriculum, Participatory or Structural. The table on the following page summarizes the responses from the Focus Groups according to the three categories.

Content/Curriculum Issues	Participatory issues	Structural Issues
Curriculum should begin with look a historical background of gender	Create a registry of stakeholders that should be consulted on policy matters	Design separate curriculum for bureaucrats, policy-makers, politicians, community groups, youth.
Include participatory action research and community consultation in curriculum	Not all stakeholders have the resources needed to be present at policy making table. Important to recognize the <i>unpaid</i> work of women	GES curriculum should be presented as a 'work in progress'
Include section on the politics of decision-making	Know and understand your audience	Acknowledge the adversity that women face in being able to participate
The effect of the changing nature of employment from permanent to contract work	Involve the target audience in the planning of the education sessions	Provide the resources necessary to ensure broad participation: e.g. child care, transportation
Examine the role and power of women in the economy	Consider the specific needs of new immigrants and culturally diverse groups	Guest speakers relating 'real' stories
Recognize the dynamics of the family	Ensure that joint participation of policy-makers and 'front-line' workers	Strong team of facilitators
Explore the issue of 'tokenism' in the policy making process	The GES curriculum should be directed to Youth first in order to foster a broad societal change in attitude.	
Content must be specific to each target group	GES should be a central component of any government training program	
Specific impact of economic policies on women	Appreciate that for some women gender equity may not be a priority at the moment	

(The comments in *italics* are taken verbatim from the transcripts of the Focus Group and inserted

in order to give readers a flavour of the nature and range of the discussion.)

“Before you can educate a group, time must be taken to get to know them.”

“Provide child care, transportation, food and a safe environment for exchange. If not attendance for GES workshops will be low and involvement minimal. This also needs to be part of the curriculum you deliver to all participants. When they go back to their organizations to embark on their own GES and develop policies, these issues must be considered.”

Focus group participants stressed the need to be reality based when developing the GES curriculum. Even as we enter the year 2000, the reality continues to be that women are responsible for large amounts of work both inside and outside the home. On top of traditional roles of family life and child care, women now are increasingly entering the work force. To be effective, any curriculum addressing gender equity must acknowledge the size and demanding nature of women’s work load. It can not be forgotten that the majority of women’s work remains unpaid. Therefore, before embarking on development of GES these issues must be considered.

“It is recommended that the acknowledgment of the large, mostly unpaid family responsibilities be taken into consideration when developing this curriculum.”

“A educational component on the unpaid work of women must be incorporated. Perhaps a skit of dramatization should precede the workshop highlighting this issues.”

“Allow participants to begin the learning of this curriculum appreciating the work most women had to do before getting there.”

The participants in the focus groups were asked to comment on the important features that an effective GES. must include. Many suggestions were proffered, the most crucial are listed below:

- a media campaign
- gender inclusive language
- plain language, avoiding jargon
- a literature review
- a review of what has worked and what has not in other countries/jurisdictions
- inclusion of all stakeholders

Three significant aspects stand out from the list: the importance of language; involvement of all stakeholders; creating an effective program that draws on the experience from other jurisdictions.

“The development of policy is often an excellent way to catalyze change, especially in terms of gender equity. Keep doing it!”

Facilitation of a Gender Equity Strategy should be undertaken by a team of female and male facilitators, each of whom must be well known and respected. The suggestion was made that this team come from out of province, as target audience members may be more interested to learn about what has worked outside their own community.

Guest speakers should be invited to share their experiences - 'real people telling real stories'. Single mothers, women and men working in non-traditional roles would be such examples. The link between policy and how it is manifest as reality in women's lives often requires a conceptual leap. Social activist groups using participatory action research and women's stories (i.e. Their experiences) often face resistance from policy makers. The main objection articulated by policy makers is that such stories are not relevant and the data unreliable. However, a woman's 'story' is her reality - and shows exactly how a policy manifests itself in her reality - it is therefore *the* most important piece of information and somehow is not being heard or acted upon. It is essential that community, academia and government work together to develop a research protocol which both respects and validates this qualitative information.

The focus groups also identified who they believed should be the key target audiences for a GES program. These are summarized as follows:

- Policy Makers
- Politicians
- Deputy Ministers
- Academics
- Researchers
- Community Members
- Service Providers
- Youth

The focus groups stressed that since this curriculum could potentially be aimed at so many Canadians, segmenting each identified target audience would make the entire process seem much less overwhelming. It would also enable the content of the GES to be tailored to meet the specific training needs of the identified target groups. The result should be a more effective and relevant education and training program.

Knowing your target audience was emphasized again and again in these focus groups. Are they mostly single women who will require child care and transportation? What is the general social status and education level of the group? This is reminiscent of Manslow's hierarchy of needs. Before a group can be in a learning mind-set, basic needs have to be already addressed.

In every single focus group there was mention of youth involvement. Many felt for a national curriculum to be truly effective, it needed to be targeted at the next generation. Participants agreed that changing older participants may be much more difficult as they are often set in their ways.

It should not be assumed that the younger generation already is knowledgeable about gender equity. Many service providers said that if you go into a youth setting and ask them where gender inequity exists, the response that you will often get is that it does not exist. They feel that women and men today have equal opportunities. Professionals stressed however that as you probe further inequities become obvious. Youth will state differences in relationship roles, self esteem and body issues and future prospects. It has been the experience of participants that youth today are not as equal as they believe they are. This demonstrates an even greater need for gender education.

“ Prevention of future generations needing to be continually educated and mandated by policy could be avoided by reaching youth now. Develop a school based curriculum and partner with

school boards.”

“Bring GES into schools and ingrate it into the curriculum as early as elementary school.”

Project Relevance and Impact

The adoption of gender equity ideas and practices by policy makers, public servants and officials requires a flexible approach, enabling participants to adapt the gender equity protocols to their respective work environments. To ensure the adoption and adaption of these protocols within the health policy sector, the curriculum education strategy seeks to address the three learning domains: cognitive (knowledge gain); affective (attitudinal change); behaviour (skill development). The purpose of this phase therefore, was to enhance awareness and sensitivity of gender as a determinant of health and demonstrate capacity to implement it as an underlying component of public policy. In order for this to become reality, the following three factors must be paramount to any GES:

- 1) The curriculum must address the reality that women continue to hold the vast majority of family responsibilities (largely unpaid), in addition to their professional careers.**
- 2) The curriculum must acknowledge that until women have addressed housing, nutrition and safety issues in their lives they can not focus on a GES.**
- 3) The curriculum must be targeted at the youth of Canada as part of a comprehensive strategy for social change.**

Conclusion

Although complete information was not received, the diversity of focus group participants gave an insight into the complexity of our original objectives. Now that this overview has been developed, and taken with earlier work, a targeted curriculum can be developed. The project, with its present structure, resources and membership, cannot address the totality of change needed. It is important therefore to direct resources where they will do the most good by targeting policy-makers and to mobilize other groups - academics and community groups - to help develop and/or deliver the content and process parts of the curriculum.

Ultimately, the success of the project will be measured by the extent to which gender and diversity sensitive public policy becomes a routine matter. In the interim, one measure of the degree of success of the project will be the extent to which additional funding is secured to develop and implement the comprehensive educational curriculum and training program.

The project identified a rich array of factors that will have to be addressed in the development of the educational curriculum and training program. These will be incorporated into a detailed proposal for submission to an appropriate funding agency. The submission will seek funding to develop and test the educational framework and foundation training modules.

The over-arching goal is to develop a Canadian Gender Lens Curriculum which will consist of a

number of interactive computer modules and a Training the Trainers package. Each module will comprise a self-test pertaining to common gender misconceptions and practices, along with relevant readings, case studies, and a more detailed bibliography. The modules, which will provide a national and international perspective of gender-based practice and innovation, will focus on knowledge gain, attitudinal change, and skill development.

A curriculum delivered by interactive computer modules will appeal to and be effective with specific target groups only. The knowledge gained in this way will need to be consolidated with sessions in which people interact with others - either peers or contemporaries - to ensure a cross-fertilization of ideas and to engender real understanding of the relevant issues.

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Appendix 1

Letter of explanation and statement of consent

My name is Kelly Redmond-Evans and I am the researcher working with the Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health. I am working with a Project Team on Phase One of A Gender Educational Strategy.

The purpose these focus groups is to hear the voices of policy makers, researchers, academics and community members as they discuss gender awareness and issues in their work lives. We wish to obtain your views and opinions on two specific issues relating to the development of an educational strategy: the core components or building blocks that are essential to the development of the strategy; and the most appropriate way to structure the delivery of the education strategy.

The focus group will take approximately 2 hours. Everything you say will be kept confidential. That means only myself and the Project Team will have access to what you said in the focus group. We will include what you say in reports, but your name will not appear in a written or spoken report for the project. We ask that you also agree to respect the confidentiality of information given by others in the focus group. All information will be safely stored in a locked file cabinet. Any expenses you have for travel and/or child care to attend will be covered.

With your permission, we would like to tape record your group discussion. This information will only be used to check back and make sure what you said was written down accurately.

I have been told about the research project and I agree to participate. I am at least 18 years of age. I understand also that I may stop taking part in the study any time or not answer some questions.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

If you wish, you may receive a copy of the final report of the study. Please indicate here whether you would like to have a copy of the study results.

Yes, please give me a copy of the report No, I will not need a copy of the report

If you said yes, please indicate where you would like to receive the report on the back of this page.

Appendix 2

Results from Focus Groups

Focus Group I - September 20, 1999 Halifax, Nova Scotia

The first focus group generated more discussion about the overall intention of the project than it did with regard to the principle objectives of the project: the identification of the core components or building blocks required for the development and implementation of a national gender equity educational program, and the identification of appropriate structure or framework for the delivery of the educational program. Instead the participants insisted on commenting on the nature and scope of the project and offered the following suggestions:

- 1) Participants felt that using curriculum was indicative of a school-based educational strategy.
- 2) Participants requested that the intended target audience for this strategy be made very clear.
- 3) Participants requested that the goal of this Phase of the project be clearly stated.
- 4) Participants requested some definitions be discussed prior to the focus group.
- 5) Discussion around these topics pre-focus group should be interactive and exploratory.
- 6) The participants felt that even though prompts were used it is *imperative* that focus group questions be used and distributed before the focus group.

While the results of the initial focus group were not what was expected, they were useful nonetheless, in the planning and preparation of the remaining focus groups. The discussion also resulted in a re-think of the pre-determined questions developed to guide focus group discussions. The revised set of questions which formed the basis for all subsequent focus groups WAS:

1. What are some positive examples of gender-based analysis that you have experienced?
2. What have been some of the challenges of gender-based analysis you have experienced?
3. What should a National Gender Equity Educational Program look like?
4. What would the building blocks or core components be?
5. How should these building blocks be delivered to Canadians?
6. What recommendations do you have for the Project Team for the delivery of a comprehensive training program on gender equity?

These questions provided the core of the discussion for all subsequent focus groups, the salient features of which are briefly summarized below:

Focus Group II - September 24, 1999 Sydney, Nova Scotia

- sections of the strategy need to be broken down into manageable components- i.e a curriculum for policy makers, a curriculum for bureaucrats, a curriculum for youth
- curriculum should begin with a look of the historical background of gender
- curriculum should include participatory action research and community consultation
- curriculum should include the study of political action (small 'p' and big 'p' politics)
- the GES must be presented with the understanding that it is a Work In Progress, not definitive or void of modifications

Focus Group III - September 29, 1999 Summerside, Prince Edward Island

- the GES should include a Registry of Stakeholders for policy makers to use as a checklist to ensure that all potential stakeholders have been consulted - web based
- this strategy should also examine the fact that not all stakeholders (especially grassroots community organizations) have the resources to be at every policy making table
- the GES must examine the reality of tokenism in the policy making process - i.e the token women, senior, youth at the table

Focus Group IV - September 30, 1999 Charlottetown, Prince Edward island

- examine the changing world of work- from permanent jobs to contract work, less benefits and how this is affecting gender
- examine women's power within our economy- what would happen if women went on strike, chose not to celebrate Christmas?
- the need to recognize the unpaid work of women- through salaries, tax credits
- strategize how women can succeed on their own terms, with full recognition that the majority of family responsibilities still lies with them
- the GES must examine the needs of new immigrants and culturally diverse groups and how this strategy will directly relate to them

Focus Group V - November 15, 1999 Bridgewater, Nova Scotia

- recognize the family dynamic, the need for family resources
- know your target audience, get to know the group you want to serve; e.g. level of education, income status
- women who are going through separation or divorce have a decrease in income, they are struggling with the basics and issues around gender equity may not be a priority
- transportation is a re-occurring theme when trying to reach low income and rural participants
- youth need to be targeted first

Focus Group VI - November 16, 1999 Shelburne, Nova Scotia

- educate program and service providers that to provide effective and well participated programs, they must be geared to the target group
- if program or service for women, transportation and child care must be provided
- look at the economic state of the community you want to educate, what industries have been present here, what has collapsed
- women are not presently involved in the policy making process and it is clearly reflected in the policies
- involve your target group - involve them in planning right from the beginning at the grassroots level to increase comfort level

Focus Group VII - November 17, 1999 Yarmouth, Nova Scotia

- a GES is needed in the recent surge of re-training options offered for the government
- many are not women friendly (child care and transportation)
- acknowledge the barriers that exist - poverty and child care
- target the education system and youth for any real changes to take place
- acknowledge the extra obstacle women have that most men do not - i.e. family responsibilities
- when training policy makers do not separate them from front line workers - often they will learn more from their involvement