



FemNorthNet Submission to the
Expert Review Panel on federal Environmental Assessment (EA) processes
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Requiring Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) and Participatory Research Principles in Environmental Assessments

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Executive Summary

*Research by the Feminist Northern Network (FemNorthNet) over the past six years has revealed several complex challenges facing women in the north, and highlights the fact that northern women's experiences are not adequately considered in Environmental Assessments. Our key recommendations are: **to include a gender based analysis plus (GBA+) requirement as a mandatory component of Environmental Assessments (EA); and to incorporate principles of participatory research into EA processes, including in follow-up and monitoring.***

Overall, our research shows:

- *There are no requirements for GBA+ as part of EAs in most jurisdictions across Canada;*
- *Failing to consider the impacts of resource development on at least half of the local population hides the serious problems that local women and communities can experience with new projects;*
- *Connecting federal GBA+ requirements with EAs can help to identify and therefore mitigate the negative consequences of resource development for women and communities who bear the greatest burden;*
- *Principles of participatory research, which include local capacity building and diverse opportunities for participation, are an essential component of EAs*

We call on the Expert Panel to press for the incorporation of GBA+ in EA processes, and for the adoption of participatory research principles into project review and monitoring. Both will support Canada's efforts to advance equitable, sustainable development for diverse populations in the North and South. Findings to support these recommendations help to answer five questions raised by the Expert Review Panel:

- *Are the current scope and factors considered in project EAs adequate?*
- *What should be scoped into an environmental assessment?*
- *What types of information should inform environmental assessment decisions?*
- *Who should participate in the implementation of follow-up and monitoring programs and how should that participation be encouraged or mandated?*
- *What does meaningful, effective and inclusive participation in the EA process look like?*

¹ This brief is based on work by members of FemNorthNet: Deborah Stienstra, Leah Levac, Gail Baikie, Jane Stinson, Barbara Clow, and Susan Manning

Introduction

Thank you for your investigation into Canada's federal Environmental Assessment (EA) processes. The Expert Panel's review of EA processes provides an excellent opportunity **to introduce a requirement for gender based analysis (GBA+) in all federal EAs, and for principles of participatory research to guide project review and monitoring.**

Over the past six years, the Feminist Northern Network (FemNorthNet) has been conducting participatory research to investigate the impacts of resource development on diverse women in northern communities in British Columbia (Kitimat, Haisla), Manitoba (Thompson), and Labrador (Labrador West, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and NunatuKavut). A description of FemNorthNet is provided at the end of the brief.

Within these communities, located next to major resource developments, we have asked a wide range of questions, including how women play leadership roles in their communities; how women's lives are connected to the natural environment; how women's voices are included in decision-making; and how women in communities define wellbeing and see their wellbeing affected by the arrival of resource development projects. We have also gathered a lot of existing research, some of which we published in an extensive report called, 'Gendered and Intersectional Implications of Energy and Resource Extraction in Resource-Based Communities in Canada's North'. Our findings contribute to answering five of the key questions posed by the Expert Panel, and in turn lead us to our two key recommendations.

Are the current scope and factors considered in project EAs adequate?

No. EA processes should consider gendered and community impacts, cumulative effects, and impacts on social infrastructure.

Recently, both EAs and GBA+ have come under scrutiny. In 2015, the **Auditor General of Canada observed** that many federal departments and agencies were not using GBA or not using it well, completely, or consistently, concluding that **"when gender-based analysis is missing or incomplete, gender-specific impacts might not be fully factored into government decisions about policy, legislative and program initiatives"**. At the same time, the federal government recognized that EAs, required for most large resource development projects, needed to address the effects of development on people as well as on land and wildlife.

Federal and most provincial and territorial EA panels are not required to consider gender impacts or impacts on communities (see Appendix 1), even though negative effects of resource development can be experienced profoundly by women, Indigenous people, people living in poverty, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups.

Despite the significance of resource development and extraction for the Canadian economy and society, regulatory mechanisms fail to address the significant impacts of 'development' on a majority of Canadians, and continue to perpetuate disproportionate negative impacts on many marginalized groups. We found that new resource developments and extraction activities contribute to significant adverse effects on northern and remote communities, including:

- Disproportionately negative effects on local women, Indigenous people, people with disabilities, seniors and recent immigrants;

- High housing costs, lack of housing and increased homelessness;
- Greater strain on existing infrastructure, such as hospitals and other health and social services;
- Few jobs and job opportunities for local, unskilled workers;
- Higher rates of food insecurity due to rising food costs and loss of traditional, land-based food sources;
- An increase in gender-based violence, sex work, and human trafficking;
- Loss of access to the land with negative effects for subsistence, continuity of culture, and wellbeing

Beyond potential impacts revealed when the diversity of community members is considered, there are other limitations to the current scope of EAs. One is that current EA processes do not fully consider cumulative effects. We describe cumulative effects as “the accumulation of, and interaction between, the environmental, cultural, and socio-economic effects of the full life of [sometimes multiple] resource extraction projects”. An example of this is when communities do not have the financial, human, or information resources to respond meaningfully to project proponents, especially because of past damages brought by past projects. Capacity building and resource support are critical responses to addressing the consequences of cumulative effects.

As well, effects on social infrastructure are obscured by the current review process. Social infrastructure includes things such as housing, professional services, childcare, and education and training opportunities. Gaps in this infrastructure are pronounced in northern communities, and create obvious problems, such as for lone parents (most often mothers) attempting to access employment, and for low-income workers trying to find suitable housing.

What should be scoped into EAs focused on resource development? What types of information should inform EA decisions?

GBA+, cumulative effects, and social infrastructure considerations should be scoped into EAs.

The requirement for GBA+ in EAs – and in all government policies, programs, and initiatives – should not be optional. The 2015 Auditor General’s report noted that one of the principal barriers to the integration of GBA into policy, legislative, and program initiatives was “the absence of mandatory requirements.”

Scoping GBA+ into EAs means using an intersectional analysis when considering the potential impacts of resource development and extraction projects. An intersectional analysis goes beyond one-dimensional gender analysis which views women’s experiences as universal and does not distinguish between different groups of women. It recognizes that women’s experiences vary depending on complex interactions between their race, class, ability, sexuality, language and more on one hand, and policies and social structures (like the economy) on the other. These interactions can lead to privilege, oppression and inequality. It is therefore important to look for and identify the differential impacts on different groups of women if we want to understand what’s happening in a community, or what might happen if a project is approved. Scoping GBA+ into EAs also means looking at impacts on women’s families and communities, since women tend to be very connected to and affected by both.

FemNorthNet’s intersectional analysis revealed that the costs and benefits of resource development are not evenly distributed across populations or communities. Women and other marginalized populations, including Indigenous people, people with disabilities, seniors, and recent immigrants, disproportionately experience these and other negative effects of resource development. The gendered and intersectional effects of

resource development are often invisible in research, policy development, program implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Many tools have been developed to integrate GBA+ into the work of federal departments and agencies, such as Status of Women Canada's on-line GBA training resource for federal policy-makers, which is publicly available. More work could be done to develop and tailor this to EAs and federal departments advancing resource development generally. FemNorthNet also designed a specific tool for applying gender and diversity analysis to resource development.² It poses a series of questions to be considered during all phases of resource development, including:

1. What are the costs and benefits, broadly defined, of the project and for whom? Will communities benefit socially and culturally as well as economically?
2. Whose needs are being considered and/or addressed? Is the project development process inclusive of diverse populations of women and men?
3. What kinds of information are being gathered and how is the information being used?
4. Who has power to make decisions and how are decisions made?
5. Who is responsible for on-going monitoring and reporting upon projects? What plans are in place to mitigate harms that emerge before, during, and after development?
6. Is social justice a consideration in development, implementation, monitoring?

Who should participate in the implementation of follow-up and monitoring programs and how should that participation be encouraged or mandated?

Diverse local community members should participate in the review of project proposals, and in follow-up and monitoring.

Diverse local community members should be supported with capacity building initiatives as part of their participation in EAs. Researchers in the north have created local advisory groups and have committed to training and employing local research assistants as part of their efforts to ensure that research with northern communities seeks to contribute directly to those communities. Similar practices should be adopted as part of the EA process. Some existing established assessment processes, such as the Mackenzie Valley Review Board's Socio-Economic Impact Assessment Guidelines, could provide good examples moving forward.

Recommendations made by EAs should be enforced.

When EAs ignore gender and diversity, the voices of women – who constitute more than half of the population – and other marginalized groups are silenced. For example, during the early stages of environmental assessment for the Muskrat Falls--- Maritime Link Hydro---electric Project, women's community groups in Labrador were not consulted. FemNorthNet worked with local women to highlight many of the social, cultural, and community harms associated with resource development – information that might not have come to light through the EA otherwise. When EAs ignore gender and diversity it is also difficult to expect developers, other groups in the community, and government to plan for, monitor, and mitigate harms for diverse populations of women and men.

² FemNorthNet. Feminist Intersectional Policy Analysis: Resource Development and Extraction Framework. CRIAW: Ottawa. 2014. <http://fnn.criaw---icref.ca/images/userfiles/files/FIPAFramework.pdf>

As a result of FemNorthNet's support for diverse local women to raise their concerns about the anticipated local impacts from building the new mega-dam nearby, the Panel made a series of important recommendations to mitigate the negative consequences the women identified, especially on their community. Unfortunately, the lack of action to implement the panel's recommendations on the community reveals another flaw in the EA process that also needs to be addressed.

What does meaningful, effective and inclusive participation in the EA process look like?

Meaningful, effective and inclusive participation in the EA process requires seeking out and including historically marginalized voices in community decisions. It also means taking their knowledge seriously by reflecting their concerns in the EA Panel's report and recommendations.

Those who have been historically marginalized are not likely to come forward to contribute to an EA process unless there are requirements, outreach processes and supports to get their input. Yet FemNorthNet's research indicates that it is precisely those that have been historically marginalized that need to be considered more in Environmental Assessments since they are least likely to derive benefits from the resource development and most likely to suffer costs or negative impacts (higher living costs, strained social infrastructure, loss of access to country food, etc.)

Meaningful, effective and inclusive participation could involve providing resources to community-based organizations that work with and include historically marginalized people to convene community discussions for input into Environmental Assessments. In FemNorthNet's experience it has been very important to provide supports to enable the participation of marginalized people. This includes providing transportation to and from meetings, childcare, food and a honourarium for their participation. It also requires spending time on personal outreach, and providing a culturally appropriate environment in terms of location and how the meeting is conducted. Interpretation may be needed especially into local Indigenous languages. Support for an attendant, sign language interpretation and/or speech to text transcription (CART – Communication Access Realtime Translation) may be required to enable the participation of disabled people. Resources should be provided for noting the concerns raised and communicating them to the EA panel so they can be reflected in the EA Report and recommendations.

Recommendations

Our two key recommendations are:

- ***to include a gender based analysis plus (GBA+) requirement as a mandatory component of Environmental Assessments (EA); and***
- ***to incorporate principles of participatory research into EA processes, including follow-up and monitoring***

To advance these recommendations, we propose:

1. That the Expert Panel press the federal government to play a leadership role in integrating GBA+ into its EA processes, encouraging provinces and territories to do so as well.
2. That the standing committee on the status of women (FEWO) receive a status report annually until

GBA+ is a mandated component of EA processes.

3. That the Environmental Assessment Agency and other federal departments collaborate with Status of Women Canada to develop tools and methods to ensure the full integration of GBA+ into EA processes.
4. That Status of Women Canada (SWC) be provided with a robust mandate and additional resources to assist the Environmental Assessment Agency, National Energy Board and other federal departments and agencies that promote or are involved with new resource development projects, with developing and applying a GBA+ framework to their work.
5. That SWC develop complementary community-oriented tools for GBA+ to ensure that project proponents and communities can understand and monitor or attend to the gendered impacts of resource extraction and development.
6. That communities be provided sufficient and on-going resources to consult on resource development projects and to identify, monitor, and address the impacts on diverse and marginalized members of their communities over time; as such, the federal government should take the lead in working with other levels of government and participatory researchers to address these needs so there can be meaningful community engagement in EAs.

Appendix 1: Requirements for Gender Based Analysis and Environmental Assessment by Jurisdiction

	Gender Analysis	Environmental Assessment
Canada	GBA required for all federal policies, programs, and proposals submitted to Cabinet, but is not consistently implemented in many federal departments and agencies.	Socio-economic impacts only considered for Aboriginal people and communities. Other social impacts only considered only when project intersects with another federal responsibility.
AB	GBA not required. Currently implementing a GBA Strategic Plan across provincial government.	Considers social, economic and cultural impacts. Proponent is required to develop First Nations Consultation Plan.
BC	GBA not required. Limited application of GBA in relation to women's health.	Considers economic, social, heritage and health effects. Encourages First Nations consultation.
MB	Individual provincial departments have completed training, and have policies requiring Gender and Diversity Analysis.	Considers socio-economic implications only when the direct result of environmental impact.
NB	GBA mandated by Cabinet and required for all departments, policies and programs.	Considers socio-economic impacts, including effects on community structure, quality of life and valued spaces.
NL	GBA not mandated, but is accepted part of official practices. The Women's Policy Office is consulted at all stages of policy creation process when there is a potential gendered impact.	Considers social, economic, recreational, cultural and aesthetic implications for communities. GBA+ is only required in relation to employment equity in EA process.
NS	GBA not required. Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women works with many government departments to do GBA+.	Considers effects on human health, socio-economic conditions, and physical and cultural heritage.
NWT	GBA not required.	Mackenzie Valley EA process considers a variety of social, cultural, and heritage impacts.
NU	No formal GBA process mandated or practiced.	Effects on Inuit way of life must be considered at all stages of project. Socio-economic impact assessment part of process. Encourages proponent consultation with women's groups.

ON	Use of Inclusion Lens to consider diversity in all policies and programs is required.	Considers socio-economic and cultural impacts. Proponent is required to consult with Aboriginal communities.
PEI	Individual departments, committees and councils have Gender and Diversity Analysis policies.	Socio-economic impacts limited to land use.
QC	GBA is used in some departments and programs. Two action plans to increase the use of GBA have been developed.	Northern Québec's processes consider socio-economic and cultural impacts for Aboriginal communities. The Cree and Inuit are part of the review boards for projects in their territories.
SK	GBA not required. The Status of Women office conducts Sex and Gender Based Analysis upon request for government departments.	Only considers socio-economic impacts for Aboriginal communities, and only in relation to traditional land use and treaty rights.
YK	GBA not required. Cabinet submission template asks about differential impacts for women and Women's Directorate reviews Cabinet submissions using GBA lens.	A socio-economic impact assessment is part of EA process. Explicitly values Aboriginal knowledge in EA process.

Source: Steinstra, Levac, Baikie, Stinson, Clow, Manning. Gendered and Intersectional Implications of Energy and Resource Extraction in Resource-Based Communities in Canada's North. Feminist Northern Network. May 2016.

The Feminist Northern Network, FemNorthNet, involved 40 community leaders and activists, over 30 students and 20 academic researchers from northern and southern Canada. FemNorthNet started in 2010 when the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAW-ICREF) was awarded a Community University Research Alliance (CURA) grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. FemNorthNet expanded its funding with grants from many sources since 2010, including a grant from the federal SWC Women's Program for leadership development programs for northern women community leaders. New projects, including the Community Vitality Index (<http://fnn.criaw-icref.ca/en/page/community-vitality-index>), evolved from, and continue under the FemNorthNet umbrella.