

Vibrant COMMUNITIES

Gender Analysis in Community- Based Poverty Reduction: A Report on the Gender and Poverty Project

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March 2004



Status of Women
Canada

Condition féminine
Canada

Financial assistance for this project and report was provided by the Women's Program, Status of Women Canada. The opinions expressed in this document do not necessarily represent the official policy of Status of Women Canada.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Spring 2003 the Caledon Institute of Social Policy and Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement jointly initiated a unique partnership with Status of Women Canada and representatives from six communities across Canada to create the Gender and Poverty Project.

The community partners were active participants in Vibrant Communities, a Pan-Canadian initiative in which 14 communities have come together to explore promising strategies for poverty reduction. Partners in the Gender and Poverty Project included: Capital Region, British Columbia; Surrey, British Columbia; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; Trois-Rivières, Quebec; Saint John, New Brunswick; and Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Vibrant Communities is sponsored by Tamarack, Caledon and the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation. Funding for the Gender and Poverty Project was provided through Status of Women Canada.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the Gender and Poverty Project was to explore the gender dimensions of poverty, and to strengthen the capacity of participating communities, and Vibrant Communities as a whole, to deepen their collective work in poverty reduction through use of a gender lens.

Specific project objectives were:

- To develop and adapt tools and processes for understanding the gender dimensions of poverty
- To identify community strategies and policy changes for addressing these issues.

Comprehensive Project Strategies

In keeping with the overall approach of Vibrant Communities, the Gender and Poverty Project integrated a range of strategies at both the local and national levels, including:

- The formation of a Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Working Group
- National research on, and development of, gender tools and resources
- Local research on the gender dimensions of poverty in six communities
- Local popular education workshops in six communities
- Analysis and sharing of learning.

Local Gender and Poverty Workshops and Research

Workshops were held in each of the six participating communities with the support and direction of the Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Working Group members. Over 200 women and men, including people living on low income, representatives from women's organizations, social agencies, government and business attended pre-workshop focus groups and day-long Gender and Poverty workshops in participating communities.

A workshop format was identified that was sufficiently flexible that it could be adapted for use in each of the local settings. The process used was a visual, popular education methodology called 'The Wall.'¹ The methodology uses the image of a stone wall to depict a gender analysis of today's economy. 'Stones' signifying recent changes to jobs and social programs are identified and used to build a picture of the circumstances affecting the lives of women and men living in poverty.

Each community also completed research leading up to the day-long workshop. The local research consisted of basic statistics on gender and poverty for the local setting and a narrative report on what has been done to date in that setting with respect to gender and poverty.

Learning through the Gender and Poverty Project

The community-based Gender and Poverty Workshops and research raised many issues about the gender dimensions of poverty across Canada, and recent changes to jobs and social programs that have affected men and women, boys and girls – in the home, community and workplace. The personal stories and information gathered through project partners and workshop participants provided rich, detailed information to share with policy-makers, as well as for use in local planning. Reports from each of the local communities, including their research and workshop summaries, are available with additional gender resources and tools generated through the Gender and Poverty Project on the Vibrant Communities website (www.vibrantcommunities.ca/g2s321.html).

Key local workshop and research themes that emerged are listed below:

Social

- Increasing culture of fear and uncertainty due to job insecurity and cutbacks
- Growing perception of a distinction between 'deserving' and 'undeserving poor'
- Race, culture, age and ability deepen dimensions of discrimination and the experience of poverty
- Mental, physical and emotional stress related to fulfilling multiple roles in home, community and workplace – particularly among women
- Men, particularly poor men, feeling 'disposable' with evolution of gender roles, and changes/cutbacks in primary industry sector jobs
- Violence against women and children on increase, contributing to deepened and sustained poverty
- Demands of multiple roles creates burden on time and increases isolation – experienced by men, women and children
- Multiple factors contributing to general desensitization to poverty and distress, and to the poor becoming invisible.

¹ *Starting with Women's Lives: Changing Today's Economy. A facilitator's guide to a visual workshop methodology.* Suzanne Doerge and Beverley Burke, 2000. Canadian Labour Council and the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada.

Economic

- Growing gap between those with higher incomes and those with low/no incomes
- Greater participation in the underground economy – including involvement in sex trade by youth – just to survive or to pay for education
- Children and youth increasingly taking on roles as income earners
- More women in the workforce longer with little access to pensions
- Men and women making less in lower paying jobs that require higher or more specialized qualifications and less security
- Continuing gender inequity in pay and inflexible work conditions for women – particularly for lone parents

Policy

- Fewer public services and existing services becoming more difficult to access – particularly for the ‘waged poor’
- Women more impacted by recent cuts to public services – loss of services and jobs
- Program silos resulting in revolving door syndrome and bandaid approaches that are ineffective for enabling transitions to work
- Lack of child care policy and accessible programs presenting significant barriers to poor women

Emerging Strategies and Actions

While the Gender and Poverty Workshops focused primarily on analysis, brainstorming of potential actions resulted in identification of the following challenges and possible responses, among others. These ideas will be brought forward to community partners, local Vibrant Community working groups, and Vibrant Communities Leadership Roundtables for further planning and action using a gender lens:

Meeting Basic Needs

- Increased and continuous dental and eye care coverage for homeless/those at risk of homelessness, persons on social assistance and the working poor
- Affordable housing

Reducing Barriers

- Quality, affordable, and accessible day care – 24/7
- Recognition of foreign trained professionals’ qualifications and support to practice professions and trades
- Greater access to training and social supports while in the workforce
- Regulations and enforcement around spousal and child support from “dead beat dads”
- Community education on rights and responsibilities around poverty and communication of success stories

Building Skills

- Cost coverage and support for those seeking GED (high school equivalency)
- Better, more integrated transition-to-work programs

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- Addressing educational and training needs of youth, including addressing high cost of education Access to employment, training and certification for women and youth in trades

Creating Economic Opportunities

- Living wage campaigns
- Programs to address stress and flexibility around family responsibilities in workplace (human resource policies)
- Removal of stringent 'labour force attachment' rules for social organizations
- Pay equity legislation and enforcement in private and public sectors

Participation and Collaboration

- Mobilization of persons living in poverty to address issues – poor people's congresses
- Efforts towards integration and breaking down of silos in government programs and departments
- Encouragement of greater corporate social responsibility around poverty reduction

Project Outcomes

The Gender and Poverty Project was successful in establishing a foundation within Vibrant Communities for working on the issues of gender and poverty. Capacity for gender analysis in poverty reduction was enhanced both at the local community level and at the level of the Pan-Canadian Vibrant Communities initiative as follows:

1. Participating community partners and Working Group members noted a greater local capacity to analyze the link between gender and poverty
2. An initial list of strategies and actions was developed that local organizations and Vibrant Communities Leadership Roundtables can use to address gender and poverty issues in their communities
3. An expanded set of supports has been created through the project, including six local community updates and research reports, a package of resources, gender analysis tools, case studies on the use of gender analysis in poverty reduction, and a Gender and Poverty page on the Vibrant Communities website to promote and support community-based gender and poverty analysis
4. A commitment has been made by Vibrant Communities sponsors to explore ways a gender perspective can continue to be integrated into the Pan-Canadian Learning Community, existing Vibrant Communities tools and resources and Trail Builder supports.

Future Directions

There is still much work to do to integrate capacity for gender analysis into local and national planning and action in Vibrant Communities. The following are recommendations from the project facilitators, in consultation with the Gender and Poverty Working Group, for ways to build on the learnings from this past year:

1. Introduce multiple supports to increase the participation of low-income residents in gender analysis work in participating communities (e.g., case studies, tools, outreach).
2. Build partnerships at the local and national level to engage other organizations and sectors in the issue of gender and poverty.
3. Improve the access to, and coordination of, local statistics on gender and poverty (possibly through collaboration with the Canadian Council on Social Development).
4. Explore more deeply the links between gender, race and disability (through tools, case studies, action-research, popular education).
5. Support local action through training and resources for outreach, public education, policy change and integration of gender issues in local planning.
6. Explore ways to more fully integrate a gender perspective into the Pan-Canadian Learning Community and Trail Builder components of Vibrant Communities and the overall evolution of the initiative.
7. Explore and build links with gender and poverty initiatives outside of Canada.

Reflections on Project Design

Much is learned about a project's process and design on reflection after project completion. The following are reflections of the Gender and Poverty Working Group and facilitators that may inform the design of future projects dealing with gender and poverty:

- The language of gender was experienced as a barrier in bringing people in many of the local communities together around the issues. Plain language approaches to workshop outreach and project development proved to be important.
- More time and resources were needed for gender analysis training with the project team and the local communities in order to enhance and sustain this capacity in poverty reduction efforts.
- Accommodations (stipends, child care coverage, transportation) to involve low-income participants were an important and valuable feature of the project.
- There is a further need for best practices on how to respectfully include low-income people in comprehensive community-based poverty reduction efforts that are multisectoral.
- Combining the focus on gender with a focus on other factors such as race or disability proved to be very challenging, requiring multiple workshop sessions.
- There is a need for greater outreach efforts to ensure inclusion of African Canadian, First Nations and new immigrants in ongoing poverty reduction work, including that focused on gender.
- Projects such as this, seeking to address the root causes of poverty, require longer time frames to integrate learning and to achieve sustained results affecting poverty reduction.

Summary and Conclusion

The Pan-Canadian Vibrant Communities Gender and Poverty Project was a unique partnership with and between six local communities, Vibrant Communities sponsors, and project facilitators to apply gender analysis to community-based, comprehensive poverty reduction work.

Through collaboration on a multi-layered set of strategies, this partnership helped lay the foundations for the six participating communities to effectively integrate or extend their use of gender analysis in their ongoing poverty reduction efforts. Relationships with other groups at the local and the Pan-Canadian level have also been forged to expand the reach of the project. Gender-based analysis and the gender dimensions of poverty are now squarely on the agenda of the Vibrant Communities initiative nationally.

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Acknowledgements

The Gender and Poverty Project has been a true partnership among residents and representatives of six Canadian communities, Vibrant Communities sponsors and project facilitators.

This report is based on the daily, lived experience of the women and men, girls and boys in our communities who are living in poverty. The project sponsors and facilitators would like to thank all of those residents from the six communities who shared their lived experience of, and insights into poverty through the Gender and Poverty workshops, research, working groups and focus groups.

The Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Working Group members have been crucial to the implementation of the project. It is their collective expertise, resourcefulness, commitment, and determination that resulted in neighbourhood focus groups and local workshops with over 200 people in six cities across Canada, as well as comprehensive, community-based research reports – all of which contributed to this final project analysis and report. Their leadership and community connections, too, will carry the project learnings forward into meaningful local and national gender and poverty action. Many thanks to these dedicated individuals and their organizations.

Members of the Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Working Group are:

Karasima Brands, Mark Cabaj, Ethel Coté, Kathie Cram, Tina Daye Fraser, Terry-Lynn Dean, Donna Dixon, Karen Gingras, Louise Hara, Jenny Kain, Susan Keeping, Joan Jones, Caroline Lachance, Eric Leviten-Reid, Gordon Michael, Brenda Murphy, Rebecca Parker, Carolyn Rogers, Rajesh Saxena, Linda Western, Jane Worton and Cathy Wright.

We would also like to thank the following for their part in bringing this project to completion.

- Participants in the local Gender and Poverty working groups and advisory committees
- Local researchers and workshop organizers: Karasima Brands, Ethel Coté, Donna Dixon, Lynn Hainsworth, Cindy Hanson, Louise Hara, Caroline Lachance, Rebecca Parker, Colleen Reid and Cathy Wright
- Gender and Poverty Project researcher and advisors: Marina Biasutti and Chandra Budhu
- Status of Women Canada: Sheila Regehr and Huguette Leclerc
- Tamarack Institute Staff: Louise Kearney and Suzanne Holder
- “The Wall” workshop developers and facilitators: Suzanne Doerge, Bev Burke and Barb Thomas

Finally, we would like to thank Status of Women Canada for the financial assistance that made this project possible.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Spring 2003, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy and Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement jointly initiated a unique partnership with Status of Women Canada and representatives from six communities to create the Gender and Poverty Project.

The community partners were active participants in Vibrant Communities, a Pan-Canadian initiative in which 14 communities have come together to explore promising strategies for poverty reduction. Vibrant Communities is sponsored by Tamarack, Caledon and the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation. Funding for the Gender and Poverty Project was provided through Status of Women Canada.

The purpose of the Gender and Poverty Project was to explore the gender dimensions of poverty and to enhance the capacity of participating communities, and Vibrant Communities as a whole, to integrate a gender lens into their poverty reduction work.

The situation of poverty among women in Canada is well established. More than half of all Canadians living in poverty are women. In total, approximately 19 percent of women in Canada live below the poverty line. Fifty-six percent of lone parent families headed by women are poor, compared with 24 percent of those headed by men. Almost half (49 percent) of single, widowed and divorced women over 65 are poor.

Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, Women and Poverty: Fact Sheet.

Catherine Lang, of C. Lang Consulting, and Toby Goldberg Leong were contracted to be co-leaders and facilitators for the Gender and Poverty Project. Eric Leviten-Reid, from the Caledon Institute, and Mark Cabaj, from Tamarack, designed the project at the outset and served as conduits to their respective organizations, to Status of Women Canada, and to Vibrant Communities convenor organizations and sponsors.

Two consultants were invited to provide additional insight into approaches for integrating gender analysis in poverty reduction work. Marina Biasutti was engaged as a project researcher and tool developer, and Chandra Budhu acted as special advisor on race and gender analysis.

The Gender and Poverty Project is best viewed as an exercise in action research, capacity building, and ultimately community building – an effort that has initiated, and will hopefully continue to contribute to, new learning and action in local and national poverty reduction work.

The following is a report on the project processes and outcomes.

2.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND

2.1 Rationale and Objectives

One of the key tenets of Vibrant Communities is that community-based collaboratives who are committed to substantially and sustainably reducing poverty within their neighbourhoods must address the root causes of poverty in a comprehensive way. Vibrant Communities is an initiative designed to support communities to develop comprehensive, multisectoral strategies for poverty reduction.

While all men and women living in poverty experience huge challenges, research tell us that women as a group, and indeed specific groups of women, are especially negatively affected. This is particularly true in womens' experience of violence, harassment, and lack of access to services such as daycare that would enable them and their children to move out of poverty.

From the 'Thinking Behind the Wall' background document.

Gender represents the roles and responsibilities that men and women commonly learn to play in our society. Gender inequality, and the attitudes, values and systems that uphold it, has been recognized as a critical root cause of poverty 'generation.' For this reason, the Caledon Institute and Tamarack, in partnership with Status of Women Canada, launched the Gender Analysis in Community-Based Poverty Reduction

project in Spring 2003.

The potential for the Gender and Poverty Project was first identified through the Vibrant Communities Policy Dialogue. The Caledon Institute convened the Policy Dialogue throughout 2003 and early 2004 to engage government representatives in learning about comprehensive community initiatives for poverty reduction and the potential contribution of public policy in supporting such initiatives. Representatives of Status of Women Canada who were participants in the Policy Dialogue encouraged the development of the funding proposal that led to this project.

A primary goal of the Gender and Poverty Project has been to strengthen the capacity of participating communities, and the Vibrant Communities initiative overall, to promote gender equity and to deepen their collective work in poverty reduction using a gender lens.

Specific Gender and Poverty Project objectives included:

- To develop and adapt tools and processes for understanding the gender dimensions of poverty
- To identify community strategies and policy changes for addressing these issues.

2.2 Project Strategies

In keeping with the overall Vibrant Communities approach, the Gender and Poverty Project integrated a wide range of strategies at both the local and national levels. These included:

- The formation of a Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Working Group
- National research on gender tools and resources
- Local research on the gender dimensions of poverty in six communities
- Local popular education workshops in six communities
- Analysis and sharing our learning

3.0 ORGANIZING THE PAN-CANADIAN PROJECT

3.1 Project Team

A collaborative team directed the Gender and Poverty Project. Members of the team included: project manager and representative of the sponsoring organization, Caledon Institute for Social Policy, Eric Leviten-Reid; team member and representative of Tamarack, Mark Cabaj; and project leads and co-facilitators, Toby Goldberg Leong and Catherine Lang.

3.2 Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Working Group

A Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Working Group was formed in June 2003 as a fundamental aspect of the project organization to enable local participation in project design and delivery. The Working Group was made up of the project team and at least two representatives from each of the six communities involved in the Vibrant Communities initiative that expressed interest in developing their capacity to integrate gender analysis into their poverty reduction work. The six communities were:

- Halifax (inner city), Nova Scotia
- Saint John, New Brunswick
- Trois-Rivières, Quebec
- Saskatoon (core neighbourhoods), Saskatchewan
- Surrey, British Columbia
- Capital Region, British Columbia

Not all Working Group representatives were directly connected with local Vibrant Communities convenor groups. Of the six participating communities, four either had convenor group representatives on the Working Group or communicated regularly with their local Vibrant Communities convenor groups.

Representatives from Status of Women Canada, and from two other Vibrant Communities local partners (Niagara and Edmonton) also participated in Pan-Canadian Working Group conference calls from time to time.

The Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Working Group members have been crucial to the implementation of the project. Their role included acting as champions in introducing gender analysis into their local poverty reduction work, overseeing the contracts with local researchers and workshop organizers, learning about gender analysis and sharing their learnings through the project with Vibrant Communities and their local organizations.

From July 2003 to January 2004 as many as 20 women and men participated in eight Working Group conference calls. The majority of participants were women, several of them low-income women. Others had past experience with poverty, or worked within organizations committed to anti-poverty advocacy and/or poverty reduction.

On September 21, 20 members of the Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Working Group and project team met face-to-face in Guelph, Ontario for a one-day workshop. This gathering allowed the participants to get to know each other, to take part in gender training, to be introduced to tools for use in the research and implementation of their community-based workshops, and to plan for those workshops and research.

The project budget allowed for stipends or honoraria to enable low-income Working Group participants to fully participate in the conference calls and the face-to-face gathering.

3.3 Local Gender and Poverty Working and Advisory Groups

In Surrey, Saint John, Saskatoon and Halifax, local working groups or advisory committees were formed to assist the representatives from the Pan-Canadian Working Group to plan or direct the local aspects of the project.

The working groups varied in size and composition but served as the key organizing bodies for the local dimensions of the project. Their tasks included: hiring local researchers and workshop organizers; identifying participants for the community-based workshops and focus groups; confirming objectives for the workshop and planning for follow up; developing a local learning group on gender and poverty; gathering reflections on the project outcomes; and administering the local project budget.

These groups also enabled relationships to be made with other individuals and groups from within the local Vibrant Communities effort and beyond who had an interest in the issue of gender and poverty. As the project reaches its end, these working groups are providing the basis for championing the issue and carrying it forward within their local communities.

4.0 RESEARCH AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Gender and Poverty National Resource Research

From June to September 2004 a project consultant was contracted to research resources for gender and poverty work nationally and internationally.

The research has resulted in a number of useful resources: a listing of tools and guides for community-based gender analysis and gender-based research; case studies of gender analysis and gender-based research in poverty reduction work; a backgrounder on gender and poverty statistics, facts and background papers; and the development of three simple tools on gender analysis for poverty reduction.

A short case study on the Vibrant Communities Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Project has been added to the package of tools and resources. This case study includes reference to the six community-based reports produced by the project's community partners.

All of these resources will be translated into French and made accessible in both official languages through the Vibrant Communities website.

4.2 Local Community Research

Each community participating in the project was asked to do local research leading up to a one-day workshop. The research consisted of local statistics on gender and poverty and a narrative report on what has been done to date in the community or region with respect to gender and poverty.

Communities drew from local reports, data collected by some local agencies and, in some cases, special studies such as the Urban Poverty Project, which used customized data sets from the 1996 Census obtained from Statistics Canada. Several of the communities also opted to do focus groups with low-income residents and with agencies serving the poor as a prelude to the full-day workshops.

Together, this research and the workshop reports provided the raw material for this final report to Status of Women Canada, and for presentations on February 10, 2004 to the Vibrant Communities Policy Dialogue and on March 8 (International Women's Day) to Vibrant Communities convenors. Each community will also utilize its own research report to further its work in poverty reduction locally and regionally.

4.3 Community-Based Gender and Poverty Workshops

Workshops were held in each of the six participating communities. Over 200 women and men, including people living on low income, representatives from women's organizations, social agencies, government and business attended pre-workshop focus

groups and day-long Gender and Poverty workshops in participating communities across the country.

A workshop format was identified that was sufficiently flexible that it could be adapted for use in each of the local settings. The process used was a visual, popular education methodology called 'The Wall.' The methodology uses the image of a stone wall to depict a gender analysis of today's economy. In action, the process draws on the experience of women and men to analyse their environment, and to assess the impacts of changes to jobs and social programs on men and women, and on different groups of women.

Each community found value in the process though it fit especially well in some situations, notably where most of the participants were low-income residents able to discuss the issues of gender and poverty from their own experience. The format provided 'glue' that gave shape to the overall project.

5.0 LEARNING ABOUT PROJECT PROCESS AND STRUCTURE

Learning occurred on a number of levels within the Gender and Poverty Project. The impact of the project design, including the organizational infrastructure that it was built on, tells us about such things as capacity issues, inclusion and diversity in comprehensive community-based poverty reduction efforts. The local and national research and the community-based workshops, on the other hand, offer us an understanding of how gender and poverty intersect, how poverty affects men and women differently, and how gender in turn influences the process of poverty.

The following sections of the report offer reflections on both the process and structure of the project as well as the content learnings and outcomes.

5.1 Capacity Issues

Capacity for Gender Analysis

The concept of gender is one that many of us do not use explicitly in our day-to-day lives. It takes training to learn how to "put on" a gender lens. It takes time and practice to integrate gender analysis into our personal and collective way of seeing and acting in the world.

From the start of the Gender and Poverty Project it was clear that the levels of understanding of gender concepts and how they impact poverty varied widely – among the host organizations, the facilitators, the working group members and local project participants. Some gender analysis training was included in the Working Group conference calls, and two gender analysis primers were developed and distributed early in the project to help build some common understanding of what gender involves. Exercises on recognizing gender and the impact of gender relations on our lives were

introduced at the face-to-face meeting of the Working Group in September 2003 as well. In spite of these capacity-building efforts, we recognize that there was a need to dedicate more time and resources on gender analysis training with the project team and the Working Group throughout the project, in order to enhance and sustain this capacity within their work in the community. Gender training with local community participants in the Vibrant Communities initiative would also have been helpful.

The language of gender was experienced as a barrier in bringing people in many of the local communities together around the issues. For example, “gender” was misinterpreted by some as meaning “sex” (biological) and by others as referring to “sexual orientation” or “transgender.” This problem was collectively identified by the Working Group, and their local counterparts, and was addressed by using plain language where possible. We noted the purpose of the project as being to discover “how men and women experience poverty differently” and to look at the “root causes” of poverty and “how they impact men and women” rather than using the word “gender.”

Although the experience of women’s disproportionate poverty is well documented in Canada generally and through the local Gender and Poverty research in particular, there were still tensions within the project with respect to introducing a women-centred approach and a gender lens for analyzing poverty, particularly in mixed gender and multisectoral workshops. The design of the popular education process used for the local workshops privileged women’s experience and emphasized that women’s work is often invisible, unpaid, underpaid and undervalued – a point that was not easily accepted by a few workshop participants. This gender dynamic highlighted the need for more time to “make the case” for using a gender lens in poverty reduction before conducting such sessions with multisectoral groups.

Involvement of Men in the Project

With the exception of one local representative and two project team members, all of the Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Working Group participants were women. While it is not unusual that women involved in poverty reduction work would be committed to exploring the use of a gender lens in their work, the lack of participation of men within Vibrant Communities could easily imply that this project was ‘women’s work’ or ‘for women only.’

As they take this work forward it will be important for Tamarack and the Caledon Institute to reinforce the message that gender analysis is important to both men and women in planning meaningful community-based and national poverty reduction initiatives.

Local Vibrant Community Capacity

The Pan-Canadian Working group participants were keen and committed to integrating a gender lens into their local poverty reduction work. However, this commitment did not necessarily reflect the buy-in and capacity of local Vibrant Communities convenor groups and their Leadership Roundtables. In three of the six communities the link between the Working Group participants and the Vibrant Communities leadership roundtables was somewhat tenuous. This gap reflected organizational issues within Vibrant Communities at the local level in those communities.

It is important to note, too, that in some communities the local Vibrant Communities initiatives are more advanced than in others. In some cases, full-fledged leadership roundtables have not yet been formed. The outcomes of the Gender and Poverty Project will likely be well sustained through strong Vibrant Communities Roundtables.

Further, in the two communities that have not as yet completed a community planning process for Vibrant Communities, it is clear that a gender-based analysis will be integrated from the start into that process. In those communities whose Vibrant Communities Roundtables are fragile or on hold, the project will be slower to have an impact.

All Working Group members agreed that the Gender and Poverty Project increased their own capacity for gender analysis and they will take this capacity with them into their work on poverty reduction, particularly in community-based anti-poverty groups.

Local Partnerships with Women's Organizations

Links between poverty reduction and women's organizations varied in the six communities. 'Traditional' feminist organizations have clearly suffered from cutbacks and shifts in the women's movement in the last ten years. Some of those women's organizations whose representatives were present or involved in organizing the local Gender and Poverty workshops commented on their dilemma – a lack of core funding has necessitated more charitable fundraising, yet restrictive regulations (regarding advocacy by charities) has diminished their capacity to actively advocate for women as feminist movement organizations. Many of these groups have turned their full attention to poverty alleviation services for women, such as shelters and lone parent programs, leaving them little time to mobilize women or network with anti-poverty groups or poverty reduction initiatives.

It is no surprise, then, that the most recent work on gender and poverty in the six local communities has been short term, research- and project-based. This was viewed as a significant capacity deficit, inhibiting long term action on gender and poverty issues.

Capacity for Extended Learning

Harnessing the efforts of six unique local communities within the objectives of the Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Project proved to be a significant challenge. In turn, each of the local community representatives were confronted with the short time lines and limited resources provided for them to form local working groups, contract co-coordinators for research and workshop development, do the research and organize their local workshops.

Pan-Canadian Working Group conference calls were initiated five months into the project, due to a delayed project start. This led to fewer calls than originally intended (8 rather than 12), and less time at the start and end of the project to learn and share across communities through this conference call format. Project facilitators also chose to use more one-on-one and regional group calls to establish relationships more quickly with the representatives from each community and to assist them in addressing local challenges. There are limitations to the use of conference calls to work through detailed planning issues especially when there are a large number of participants on the calls.

Given the tight project time lines and fewer conference calls, there was little room to explore the deeper connections affecting gender and poverty, including race and disability. Working Group participants agreed on the need for longer project time spans to allow for community process, and to facilitate more and deeper learning opportunities as the project progresses. A face-to-face meeting and training earlier in the project might also have accelerated and deepened learning as the project progressed.

5.2 Inclusion of Low-Income Participants

The inclusion and active engagement of low-income women and men at various levels of the project was articulated as a Gender and Poverty Project objective from the outset. Budgets for participating communities included amounts for stipends to enable low-income persons to become active members of the Pan-Canadian Working Group, as well as to involve low-income residents in the local working groups and workshops. The budgeted amounts were to be administered flexibly at the community level to cover such costs as childcare, attendant care, e-mail access, telephone and transportation. As well, the stipends were intended to recognize the value of the lived experience of low-income persons and their time, especially when working alongside paid social organization or government employees.

Each community used their budgets for inclusion in unique and different ways. At least two contracted low-income persons as workshop organizers. Most provided honoraria or stipends for persons living in poverty who participated in workshops and focus groups. Another community used the stipends to engage members of the antipoverty coalition in the local working group and hired a collective childcare provider for the workshop.

In spite of these attempts at inclusion, there was varied participation of persons on limited income at community workshops. Generally, in local workshops that were more multisectoral, far fewer low-income persons attended. Tensions also arose in local working groups around setting precedents for paying low-income persons for their participation, or for remunerating volunteers. Other issues arose around payment of persons who were restricted in the amount of income they could receive through social assistance.

Despite the tensions, all participants in the Pan-Canadian Working Group strongly validated this approach to inclusion and agreed that the accommodations were an important and valuable feature of the project, reflecting gender sensitivity and reinforcing the values of inclusion. Several commented, however, on the need for better direction and best practices from Vibrant Communities sponsor organizations on how to respectfully include low-income persons in comprehensive community-based poverty reduction efforts that are multisectoral.

5.3 Diversity Participation

The Gender and Poverty Project offered some flexibility to participating communities in planning their local research and workshops. In particular, communities were given the option of focusing on the gender dimensions of poverty with specific equality seeking groups such as aboriginal women and women who are recent immigrants. Most opted

to include a more diverse group in their research and workshops including women from diverse racial and ethnic communities, the disabled, youth, elders, low income persons, as well as inviting cross-sectoral participation in workshops (government, business, social services). All but one community invited men to actively participate in the one day “Wall” workshop.

In those communities that invited participation of the various sectors, there were significantly fewer government and business representatives in attendance, and many more social service and advocacy group representatives. This point speaks to the complexity of engaging diverse groups of people in grass roots poverty analysis and action planning using such tools as a gender lens and root cause analysis. It also points to the need for creative strategies for being inclusive of low-income persons while engaging other cross-sectoral representatives in community-based poverty reduction planning and action.

One of the six communities initiated a workshop series with the disability community in addition to its one-day cross-sectoral gender and poverty workshop. This series will extend beyond the timeframe of the national Gender and Poverty Project, and may lead to a multi-year initiative. The organizer used a ‘fish bowl’ approach that allowed members of the disability community to speak with each other while government and business representatives observed and witnessed. This strategy facilitated empowerment among the members of the disability community and understanding among the government and business representatives. Other communities conducted their pre-workshop focus groups with low-income persons in community agency settings as a way to build trust, bring these collective voices to the workshops, and encourage their involvement in the Gender and Poverty workshops and in subsequent anti-poverty work in their communities.

The diversity of each community was reflected in the variety of approaches they employed, as follows:

Trois-Rivières – held focus groups with men and women together prior to its day-long workshop; the day-long workshop was held with Francophone women only.

BC Capital Region – offered a second series of workshops with the disability community; used working groups from THE CHALLENGE as a basis for small group planning in its day-long workshop.

Surrey – included highly diverse community representation; held focus groups with men and women separately prior to the one day workshop, and engaged local working group members as small group facilitators in the workshop.

Capital Region, Surrey and Saskatoon – included First Nations and new immigrant participation.

Halifax – held separate focus groups for men and women residents from the inner-city neighborhood prior to the workshop; workshop was geared to African Canadians in inner city neighbourhood.

Saint John – the special focus of research and workshop was on the issue of access to education and training.

Combining the focus on gender with a focus on other factors such as race or disability proved to be very challenging. In BC's Capital Region at least three workshops were needed to address the challenges associated with disabilities and their overlap with issues related to gender. Similarly in Halifax, it was difficult to address gender and race in the discussion of poverty during the day-long workshop, given that race was the primary and common identity that has brought the inner city neighbourhood together. Progress has been made in terms of opening up these issues, and identifying some key observations; however, further work is required.

At project end, most of the communities reflected on the need for greater outreach efforts to ensure inclusion of African Canadian, First Nations and new immigrants in ongoing poverty reduction work, including initiatives which focused on gender.

5.4 Access to Tools and Resources

Gender Tools and Resources

While there are many resources on gender analysis available, most of the tools reviewed early in the Gender and Poverty Project were from the field of international development and from federal government sources, (e.g., Status of Women Canada and Health Canada). It appears that the work of the Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Project here in Canada is forging new territory in developing domestic, community-based case studies.

The Gender and Poverty Project researcher found no case studies on the use of a gender lens in comprehensive community initiatives in the US – these projects have been an important source of insight for the Vibrant Communities initiative. Nor were any case studies discovered on the interplay of gender and race or gender and disability in anti-poverty projects. Several interesting examples of gender analysis in poverty reduction in the UK were identified. These have been included as case studies in the tools package.

There is a need to develop a greater body of resources and research on gender and poverty reduction in Canada. The Vibrant Communities Gender and Poverty Project has taken a step in contributing to this development.

Access to Local Statistics

Communities involved in the project had very limited access to local statistics on gender and poverty. They reported that the statistics were costly and therefore inaccessible to most community groups. As well, little coordination of gender-segregated data collection and analysis at the local community level was found. Social assistance departments, health agencies, and social planning groups all may have pieces of the puzzle of gender and poverty in their statistical research and databases. One researcher suggested a central resource location could assist to co-ordinate the information.

Local researchers also noted a significant gap in information and data on how specific groups are affected by gender and poverty (e.g., Aboriginal parents, immigrant and visible minority residents).

Time gaps in the statistical profiles were found to be a barrier in presenting an accurate picture of the gender dimensions of poverty in local communities. Older, more accessible or affordable data from an earlier census did not reflect major demographic changes occurring in some regions. In Surrey, BC, for example, substantial growth has occurred in the last few years primarily due to immigration but this trend is not reflected in the 1996 census. Data collection from various sources also has changed over the years, making comparisons between past and present difficult.

Statistics do not take into account all groups of people whose lives we may need to understand better to do effective and targeted poverty reduction work. Some statistics are simply not available. Other data does not include persons who are already 'lost to the system'; that is, those who have been cut off from social assistance due to provincial cutbacks, are unwaged and unpensioned, are recent and unregistered immigrants, or youth. No source for information could be found, for example, on the number of female-led lone parent families living in poverty in Surrey.

Given these gaps, community-based action research is recommended to ensure that the voices of these 'hidden' or 'invisible' groups – in particular new immigrants, lone-parent women, homeless women and youth – are considered in poverty reduction planning and action.

There is substantial work to be done, too, to facilitate local and coordinated access to statistical information to provide a clear community-based picture of the gender dimensions of poverty in Canadian communities and neighbourhoods.

Tamarack has developed a tool called "the Poverty Matrix" that encourages local poverty reduction champions to scrutinize which members of the community are impacted by poverty and how they are affected. Through the Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Project it became clear that the tool was not gendered and required adaptation to give a more accurate picture of poverty. At least one participating community had already adapted the tool from a gender perspective prior to the Gender and Poverty Project. Another initiated research and reflection on a gendered Poverty Matrix as part of the Gender and Poverty Project.

The Working Group reinforced the need to review such tools not only from a gender perspective, but also taking into consideration the dimensions of race and disability.

“The Wall”¹ Popular Education Workshop

“The Wall,” a popular education workshop process, was chosen to try to bring a coordinated, grass roots approach to all six communities participating in the Gender and Poverty Project. Given the significant differences between the communities, the adaptation of this workshop format posed a challenge.

As noted earlier, this workshop approach is most appropriate in integrating women in particular, and their experience, into an analysis of the causes and impacts of poverty. In those communities where fewer low-income women attended the day-long session, the experiential nature of the workshop fit less well. Especially in sessions attended by multisectoral representatives (government, business, social agencies, along with persons living in poverty), it was more difficult to engage many of the participants as they had little or no experience of poverty. Some men, too, had difficulty adapting to a woman-centred analysis.

In these communities it might have been more helpful to hold a series of separate workshops, one with low-income persons or low-income women specifically, one with government, business, and social services representatives, then perhaps one with these groups together. Unfortunately, there were not sufficient resources within the project to investigate these options. Several of the participating communities successfully adapted elements of these ideas by organizing pre-workshop focus groups, using special facilitation tools (e.g., the ‘fishbowl’ process used with the disability community workshop in BC) to ensure that the voice and experience of low-income women and men was integrated into the workshops, and by doing follow-up presentations with cross-sectoral groups on the results of the workshops.

As noted earlier, it was difficult for participants in workshops geared to specific communities of interest, such as the disability community workshops in Capital Region, BC, and the inner city Halifax workshop, to integrate the gender lens within a one-day workshop. Integration might have been easier using The Wall approach if the workshops had been organized with women only.

The Wall process gives analysis greater priority over planning as an important first step toward mobilizing groups to action on gender issues. With only one day to engage the six local communities in analysis and planning, the workshops were definitely ‘short’ on action planning. Nevertheless, the summary of the workshops and the visual Wall picture (see Tools in appendices) were concrete tools left with each community to take their analyses further into planning and action.

Working Group members unanimously agreed that integrating a deeper gender (and race and disability) poverty analysis with planning for action and policy change, particularly with a multisectoral group, requires a longer time frame than the Gender and Poverty Project afforded. They advocated for funding for such work that recognizes this fact, and provides resources for an incremental approach that could sustain comprehensive gender and poverty work at the local level.

¹ *Starting with Women’s Lives: Changing Today’s Economy. A facilitator’s guide to a visual workshop methodology.* Suzanne Doerge and Beverley Burke, 2000. Canadian Labour Council and the Women’s Inter-Church Council of Canada.

6.0 GENDER AND POVERTY ISSUES AND ANALYSIS

Local Gender and Poverty Workshops and research raised many issues on recent changes to jobs and social programs and the effects of these changes on men and women, boys and girls – in the home, community and workplace. The personal stories and information gathered through the project partners and workshop participants provide us with rich, detailed information to share with policy makers, as well as for use in local planning.

A cumulative summary of the workshop notes across the six participating communities is provided in Appendix 4. The following section outlines the key points participants in the six workshops held in common:

Few Gains, More Losses

- In general, workshop participants painted a dim picture of the changes to jobs and social programs that have occurred over the last ten years in their communities and how these changes have impacted them, contributing to deepening poverty within their neighbourhoods. Most communities report few gains and many more losses.

Culture of Fear and Stress

- There is a culture of fear in homes, communities and workplaces due to cutbacks, job loss and insecurity. This means people are less likely to advocate for themselves or as a community given their fear of retribution.
- There is increased isolation of women, men and children due to increased responsibilities in the home, community and workplace, and decreased access to supports.
- The stress of isolation, fear, insecurity and increased responsibilities is passed on to the next generation. Parents reported having to make impossible choices between buying food or medication for their children. These stresses have led to a significant decline in physical and mental health that will likely be intergenerational.

No Access to Public Services

- There has been an erosion of basic public services in communities. Workshop participants have experienced directly the impacts of the changing role of government vis à vis social equality and access. As governments have passed on the role of job development, training, affordable housing, recreation and other public services to other government levels or to the private and voluntary sectors, few have witnessed the benefits and many more have noted that their poverty has deepened.
- Some movement has been seen toward corporate social responsibility. This is considered a hopeful sign that the business sector will contribute more actively to communities. It is increasingly difficult for individuals to 'fit' into the qualifying criteria for the social programs that do exist. Many people noted an increased bureaucratization and greater inaccessibility of services and benefits (e.g., dental services, special health benefits and attendant care).
- Services have been removed from local neighbourhoods in an effort to rationalize government operations. This has disadvantaged the poor, who may not have access to, or be able to afford, transportation.

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- More working poor are using extra services including food and clothing banks and transportation supports, where available.

No Access to Work

- Generally, those living in poverty noted a lack of decent jobs available in their communities. Many more jobs today are part time, contract or low paying.
- A lack of formal work experience is keeping many people poor. This is true for those trained in primary or 'old economy' industries where there are few job openings. It is also true for new immigrants without Canadian experience or for those that require special accommodations in the workplace due to disability.
- For many people seeking jobs their skills and experience are not recognized in the job market without formal qualifications 'on paper.' Foreign trained professionals cannot access jobs in their fields since their certification is often not recognized, and access to training and re-certification is limited and cost prohibitive.
- There is a revolving door in employment support and social programs. Without coordination and ongoing support for those seeking to move out of poverty and into work, there are no sustainable gains. Current 'band aid' programs lead to false hopes.
- Young men and women now are turning increasingly to the sex trade for money to meet their basic needs and increasing post-secondary tuition rates.
- There is much more underground economy activity taking place "just for people to survive."

Deserving and Undeserving Poor

- The current environment of cutbacks creates a jarring perception of the "deserving and non deserving poor." Those who are most marginalized – for reasons of health, gender, disability, race, age – feel that they are deemed 'undeserving.' This creates a divide among people living in poverty.
- There also is a growing gap between those living on higher incomes and those with low or non-existent incomes.
- Ultimately, these trends have led to the invisibility of the poor in communities. There also is a perception of mass desensitization to the reality of poverty and the deepening distress within our communities.

The Gender and Poverty Difference

Participants in the Gender and Poverty workshops and focus groups noted several differences in the way that men and women have experienced changes to employment and the social safety net and how these perceptions may contribute to a different experience of poverty between men and women.

Gender Roles and Paid Work

- Men's traditional role as 'breadwinner' is being eroded by a lack of access to decent jobs and advancement opportunities. Men have borne the brunt of the cutbacks to primary industry jobs and have been forced to leave their homes and communities to find work. Distance can lead to family breakdown.
- Women are feeling the pressure of added roles. In addition to the more traditional domestic gender roles of child care and caring for sick parents, women are often the primary income earners for their families.
- Women have been significantly impacted by recent cuts to public services. As a group they have experienced greater job losses from cutbacks in the public sector as well as the loss of important social and public services. Earlier job gains that were made in access and equity for women and equality-seeking groups in the public sector have been reversed.
- Children and youth increasingly are taking on roles as income earners. In some jurisdictions, (BC, for example) the working age has been lowered.
- Women's unpaid work (childcare, home care) limits the time they have available for paid work. Many single mothers are juggling several part-time jobs to fit in other responsibilities. Few workplaces offer 'family friendly' flexibility.
- More women are in the workforce for longer periods. Lower wages and increased part-time work mean more informal economic participation with no access to pensions. A greater number of older women are working at low-paying part-time jobs and/or caring for grandchildren.
- There is still little gender equity in pay. Men still earn more than women for work of equal value.
- Lower-paying jobs require higher or more specialized qualifications, with less financial return for both men and women.
- 'Beauty-ism,' or judgment of persons based on their appearance, is now affecting men as well as women in accessing scarce jobs and promotions.

Gender and Social Roles

- Sexual and physical violence against women, young men and children appears to be increasing. This leads to increased fear, isolation and incapacitation. Racism is also experienced as violence. Violence – including racism and hate crimes – contributes to the downward spiral into long-term poverty.
- Men who have lost jobs due to disability or downsizing feel 'stuck.' The skills and education they do possess often are judged obsolete.
- Poor men are feeling disposable. They are less likely than women to seek help and to use available support services.

Gender and Access to Social Programs

- The removal of services from local neighbourhoods and side-by-side (silo) programming means that women may have to travel to several locations and negotiate several systems to access basic services – all while trying to care for children and work part-time.
- Social (publicly funded) programs do not always take into account the need for flexibility to accommodate women with families.
- There are few resources tailored for single fathers, and few social and personal supports for men living in poverty.
- Lone parents, particularly single mothers (who have more children on average to care for than do male single parents) have difficulty accessing jobs that

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- accommodate parenting schedules. There is a significant and ongoing lack of quality, affordable and accessible childcare.
- Lone mothers with young children continue to experience more prejudice than men in accessing affordable housing.
 - Homelessness programs tend to focus on men's experience. Women's housing problems follow different patterns which are not fully taken into account in studies and programming for the homeless.
 - There is very little help for men or women to transition out of poverty into living waged work.

Gender Stereotypes and Public Perceptions

- Stereotypes of poor people deeply influence public perceptions. Men in the street are viewed as 'lazy' or 'dangerous' while poor women (with the exception of sex workers) are invisible, or have been labeled as poor caregivers (e.g., "because their kids are fat").

In all workshops there was unanimous agreement that race, culture, age, ability and appearance deepen the dimensions of discrimination and exacerbate people's experience of poverty.

7.0 PROPOSED ACTIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Actions Proposed at Community Workshops

The time available for the six local workshops was too limited to sufficiently integrate gender analysis into comprehensive planning for action. And yet, workshop participants identified a significant number of program and policy changes – most generic and some gender based. These can be considered in further work on community action planning and policy advocacy for poverty reduction. Many workshop participants also identified specific actions they could take to affect personal and community change.

The following is a sampling of the community changes and actions collectively brainstormed by workshop participants:

Meeting Basic Needs

- Increased and continuous dental and eye care coverage for homeless/those at risk of homelessness, persons on social assistance and the working poor
- Affordable housing

Reducing Barriers

- Quality, affordable, and accessible day care – 24/7
- Recognition of foreign trained professionals' qualifications and support for practicing professions and trades
- Greater access to training and social supports while in the workforce

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- Regulations and enforcement around spousal and child support from “dead beat dads”
 - Community education on rights and responsibilities around poverty issues and communication of success stories

Building Skills

- Cost coverage and support for those seeking GED (high school equivalency)
 - Better, more integrated transition-to-work programs
 - Addressing educational and training needs of youth, including addressing high cost of education
 - Access to employment, training and certification for women and youth in trades
- ### ***Creating Economic Opportunities***
- Living wage campaigns
 - Programs to address stress and flexibility around family responsibilities in workplace (human resource policies)
 - Removal of stringent labour force attachment rules for social organizations
 - Pay equity legislation and enforcement in private and public sectors

Participation and Collaboration

- Mobilization of persons living in poverty to address issues – poor people’s congresses
- Efforts towards breaking down silos in government programs and departments and encouraging integration.
- Encouragement of greater corporate social responsibility around poverty reduction

Personal Actions

The personal actions that workshop participants committed to undertake as their contributions to poverty reduction are too many to enumerate in this report. They are evidence of the passionate desires of workshop participants to make positive change in their communities and themselves.

All of the proposed personal actions are captured in the community Gender and Poverty reports. Examples include:

- “Change begins inside yourself.”
- “I won’t give up hope.”
- “Vote.”
- “I will help organize other groups to become a bigger voice.”
- “I will be assertive, defend my point of view and find out about things.”
- “Continue to fight for the adoption of Bill 112 and for a minimum below which social assistance benefits cannot drop.”
- “Become educated so as to be a full-fledged participant in the community.”
- “Will hold a workshop in March for teachers, professionals and classmates – about this information [disability, poverty and gender] – and record complaints about what service providers are doing wrong.”
- “I will talk with someone about what we learned today.”
- “Speak with Action Committee for People with Disabilities about writing letters to medical professionals.”

- “Will share today’s experience with other people at BC Ministry of Human Resources.”
- “Will tell three employers about this [disability and poverty] focus group.”

7.2 Policy Implications

Many of the collective actions and initiatives brainstormed at local workshops have national, provincial and local policy implications. Although it is beyond the scope of the current Gender and Poverty Project to analyze and plan how policy could effect change in these areas, discussions on the policy implications could be continued with local Vibrant Communities Leadership Roundtables and anti-poverty groups, as well as through the Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Working Group, Vibrant Communities Policy Dialogue and Convenors’ Group.

National Policy

Some of the areas for change identified at local workshops that have significant national policy implications include:

<i>Research</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public access to, and affordability of, gender-segregated census statistics, and neighbourhood-based, gender-related statistics
<i>Funding</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate funding approaches for organizations working on poverty issues and programming – outcomes-based funding versus core funding for critical organizations, e.g. women’s organizations
<i>Policy and Program Delivery</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing programs and funding • Affordable and accessible local childcare programs and funding • Neighbourhood-based access centres for government/social programs (e.g., EI, training) versus centralization • New, more creative policies regarding government role in training, and transition-to-work programs • Policies related to pensions for low-income persons, women, working poor • Harmonization of policies affecting poor/women at municipal, provincial and national levels • Review of impact of policy regarding advocacy and non-profit organizations and access to government and charitable funding • Review of labour force attachment policies as related to funding of non-profit organizations • Solidarity employment policy and programming (e.g., social co-ops, community economic development, social enterprise) • Voting and representation of women and the poor (proportional representation-type approaches) • Access to health services (provincial use of health transfers) and pharmacare for low-income Canadians • Corporate social responsibility and community reinvestment policy

Local and Provincial Level Policy

Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of data collection and access to data for organizations locally
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy for core funding for organizations working on gender issues (women centres, etc.)
Policy and Program Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative policies for work access for the disabled • Provincial coverage for GED preparation and exams • Work at provincial level on gender equity policies • Work on acceptance of qualifications of foreign trained professionals and tradespersons • Access to health, dental services and pharmacare for those on social assistance and low-income/working poor • Regulatory and policy work on spousal and child support • Review of provincial policies on working age of youth/new immigrants and training wages • Household/economic unit income policy • Policy for affordable, accessible childcare (with federal government) • Policy supporting transitional supports such as health card, transportation assistance and upgrading • Breaking down silos in programs and government departments dealing with the poor and women • Policies regarding access to housing for disabled, older women, single mothers, new immigrants, youth
Policy Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative approaches to policy development in partnership with government, low-income people and local community organizations • Advocacy for policy requiring gender considerations for all programming dealing with low-income population • Household/economic unit income policy • Policy for affordable, accessible childcare (with federal government) • Policy supporting transitional supports such as health card, transportation assistance and upgrading • Coordination of data collection and access to data for organizations locally

For planning and action on policy issues to occur in some communities, a greater capacity for understanding the policy change process may be required. Vibrant Communities could offer local workshops, policy dialogues and coaching/mentoring – bringing together representatives across sectors to learn and discuss creative ways of working in partnership to affect policy changes that address the gender dimensions of poverty.

8.0 PROJECT OUTCOMES

The Gender and Poverty Project was successful in establishing a foundation within Vibrant Communities for working on the issues of gender and poverty. Capacity for gender analysis in poverty reduction was enhanced both at the local community level and at the level of the Pan-Canadian Vibrant Communities program. The following section outlines the project's impacts.

8.1 Local Community Impacts and Actions

There was general agreement among Gender and Poverty Working Group members that the project either established or extended their capacity to integrate gender analysis into poverty reduction efforts at the local level. In several of the communities where the link between Working Group representatives and local Vibrant Communities Convenor Groups was strong, that capacity will continue to have an impact on the work of Vibrant Communities.

In Capital Region, BC for example, gender was a focus of their planning and action prior to the Gender and Poverty Project, and that commitment and capacity was strengthened through the project. Trois-Rivières and Surrey, BC have not yet developed a community plan under the Vibrant Communities program. When and if this happens, organizers intend to integrate gender analysis into the planning as a direct result of the Gender and Poverty Project.

Other local impacts, such as concrete commitments to action, include:

BC Capital Region

- Commitment to integrate their local workshop analysis and a gender lens into the ongoing work of the CHALLENGE working groups
- Community Council Board will ask their Human Resources committee to consider the impact of wages and roles on gender of staff
- There will be follow-up on specific actions coming out of the Gender and Poverty workshop and working group discussions, e.g., support for provincial hygienists to see patients prior to seeing dentist, commitment to seek more gender balance and diversity in volunteers and staff including involvement of youth, creating task group for Human Resources that supports sustainable families and income, ensuring that indicators for the 2004 Quality of Life Report are broken down by gender where possible
- Commitment to gain a deeper understanding of the differences experienced by men and women who have a disability and live on a low or fixed income, and to identify action-oriented solutions
- Identification of potential funding partner to continue work on gender, disability and poverty into a three-year initiative.

Halifax

- Planning by Halifax Inner City Initiative to use the popular education workshop approach to facilitate continued community engagement, including looking at the issue of homelessness
- Interest in doing more training in gender analysis and poverty reduction and to integrate this with an understanding of race and poverty in their community.

Saint John

- Interest in using the findings and policy recommendations of the Saint John local research by the New Brunswick Provincial Department of Training and Employment Development at the policy level in Fredericton, NB
- Interest in doing additional gender analysis training.

Saskatoon

- The development of a new, positive link with a regional women's organization in Saskatoon, the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence
- Increased participation of low-income persons in the Saskatoon Anti-poverty Coalition as a result of the Gender Analysis workshop and local working group participation
- Commitment of the local Gender and Poverty working group to continue meeting with the basic objective of learning how to apply gender analysis in their own work.

Surrey

- Plans to continue filling out the Poverty Matrix for the Municipality of Surrey with a gender perspective
- Commitment to integrate gender analysis into Vibrant Surrey's planning process.

Trois-Rivières

- Strategic planning process in Trois-Rivières' Vibrant Communities initiative will incorporate a gender dimension.

8.2 Pan-Canadian Vibrant Communities Impacts

In addition to impact and actions at the local community level, Tamarack and the Vibrant Communities initiative at the national level noted outcomes as a result of the Gender and Poverty Project. These include:

- Development of a Gender and Poverty communication plan by Tamarack
- The Vibrant Communities website now features gender resources, research, and reporting; including local community reports and the tools developed through this project, and will serve as an ongoing mechanism for sharing learning about gender and poverty (see <http://vibrantcommunities.ca/g2s321.html>).
- A growing commitment within Vibrant Communities to consider the gender dimensions of poverty may lead to a recommendation that groups seeking funding should consider gender in their plans
- Tamarack's Poverty Matrix will be revised to take into account a gender lens
- Presentations were made to disseminate the project results to both the Vibrant Communities Policy Dialogue and the Vibrant Communities Convenors Group in February and March 2004.

With the current round of funding for the gender and poverty work coming to its conclusion, Caledon and Tamarack have committed to help the Pan-Canadian Working Group on Gender and Poverty continue its work by:

- Arranging meetings of the group on an ongoing basis
- Continuing to update and upgrade the Gender and Poverty web page with relevant materials
- Creating opportunities to highlight the gender dimensions of poverty in all facets of Vibrant Communities' work.

Caledon and Tamarack also have committed to working with the participating communities to find additional resources needed to take the next steps in building on this work both locally and at the Pan-Canadian level.

9.0 DISSEMINATING AND SHARING PROJECT LEARNING

The process of disseminating the results, recommendations and lessons from this project has already begun. The project was featured in a workshop held at Vibrant Communities Face-to-Face Forum in September 2003, a webpage has been established enabling all visitors to the Vibrant Communities website to learn about the project, the Vibrant Communities Policy Dialogue held two sessions in which the Gender and Poverty Project was featured, and a presentation on the project was made to Vibrant Communities convenors in their March 2004 teleconference.

Pan-Canadian Working Group representatives, in collaboration with their local counterparts, have already begun to present both the local and national project findings to community and regional partners. For example, a presentation to the United Way Poverty Roundtable in Surrey, B.C. by two representatives of the Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Working Group has already taken place. Other local representatives have identified local, national, and international conferences that might be sites for sharing the results of the project.

When this project report is published, it will be widely disseminated in hard copy as well as in electronic form through the Vibrant Communities website (some women's organizations already have requested copies of the report). The tools developed as part of the initiative also will be disseminated in print format and will be posted on the Vibrant Communities website. Finally, additional support from Status of Women Canada has made it possible to translate all of the local reports from the project. All of the materials generated through this initiative will therefore be available in both French and English through the website. It is likely that links to the Gender and Poverty Project tools, resources, and reports on the Vibrant Communities website will be established on the websites of other relevant organizations.

Sharing these materials is the first step toward building active relationships with various partners within and outside of Vibrant Communities around the issues identified.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUILDING ON OUR LEARNING

There is still much work to do to integrate capacity for gender analysis into local planning and poverty action. This work will require additional resources as well as the commitment of the local Vibrant Communities leadership roundtables. There is also more work to do to integrate a gender lens into the national Vibrant Communities initiative and Pan- Canadian learning network. The following are the recommendations of the project facilitators, developed in consultation with the Gender and Poverty Working Group, for possible extensions to the gender project to build on the learnings from this past year:

	Pan-Canadian	Individual Communities
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve research capacity and data collection to “make the case” for action on gender and poverty • Group purchase of gender segregated data to build a better picture of the gender and race dimensions of poverty • Partnership with Canada Council on Social Development Urban Poverty Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve research capacity and data collection to “make the case” for action on gender and poverty • Pilot local clearinghouse for data and research on gender and poverty
Tools and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of gender lens on Vibrant Communities tools and full review of existing tools and processes using a gender lens • Documentation of process and sharing with learning community – “how does a program like Vibrant Communities learn?” • Tools research and adaptation on gender, race, disability and poverty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time and capacity to build in learning; in particular, explore connections between race and gender, and disability and gender, in poverty and poverty reduction • Local training on how to creatively effect action and policy change, and on partnerships to effect policy change • Training and facilitation to explore links between race, gender, disability and poverty and apply gender lens to poverty reduction work
Equity of Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document inclusive processes and develop best practices on inclusion of low-income persons in multisectoral poverty reduction initiatives • Continued access to resources to include low-income persons on Gender and Poverty Working Group • Inclusiveness and outreach with diverse, equality-seeking groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further resources for work of grass roots anti-poverty groups to sustain connections with low-income communities • Integration of low-income persons in local gender and poverty working groups • Inclusiveness and outreach with diverse, equality seeking groups • Document inclusive processes and develop best practices on inclusion of low-income persons in multisectoral poverty reduction initiatives • Continued access to resources to include low-income persons on Gender and Poverty Working Group
Community Planning and Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouragement or requirement that Vibrant Communities Roundtables consider gender in poverty reduction research, planning, action • Resources to support planning towards action at local level – follow up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vibrant Communities Roundtables consider gender in poverty reduction research, planning, action
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National collaborations to address policy change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local training on how to creatively effect policy change, and on cross-sectoral partnerships for policy change • Engaging business and government sectors in discussion of gender and policy action
Links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building links between groups in other parts of world working on gender and poverty • Exploring links between women’s organizations and poverty reduction groups and coalitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring links between women’s organizations, diversity groups and poverty reduction groups • Further mobilization and cross-sectoral sharing locally – coming full circle

11.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Pan-Canadian Vibrant Communities Gender and Poverty Project was designed as a unique partnership with and between six local communities, Vibrant Communities sponsors, and Gender and Poverty Project facilitators to apply gender analysis to community-based, comprehensive poverty reduction work.

Through collaboration on a multi-layered set of strategies, this partnership helped lay the foundations for the six participating communities to effectively integrate or extend their use of gender analysis in their ongoing poverty reduction efforts. Relationships with other groups at the local and the Pan-Canadian level also have been forged to expand the reach of the project. Gender-based analysis and the gender dimensions of poverty are now squarely on the agenda of the Vibrant Communities initiative nationally.

With this enhanced capacity, it may be possible to build more comprehensive and meaningful poverty reduction efforts in the future. Using the local gender and poverty research and gap analyses and the newly created gender resources, and informed by the experience, energy and participation of Gender and Poverty workshop participants, Vibrant Communities Leadership Roundtables and local anti-poverty and women's groups can plan and act more strategically to address the gender dimensions of poverty. They also can explore the policy implications arising from the local Gender and Poverty Project collaboration by means of local policy dialogues.

Sponsors of Vibrant Communities, in turn, will continue to support local and national capacity and learning on gender and poverty. They are committed to sustaining and growing the project partnerships by seeking additional resources for local action and they will enhance their own capacity for analysis to include the role of race, disability and gender in poverty and poverty reduction.

List of Appendices

- Pan-Canadian Gender and Poverty Working Group Terms of Reference
- Phases of Local Research
- Thinking Behind “The Wall”
- Gender and Poverty Workshop Summaries
- Community Reports
- Gender and Poverty Tool Package, Resource Review, Case Studies



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