Canada’s commitments to sustainable, equitable development include promises to address the causes of climate change, environmental degradation, and persistent disadvantages facing marginalized populations, including women, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and people living in poverty. This policy paper suggests that we already have valuable policy mechanisms to achieve these goals, namely environmental assessment process (EA) and gender-based analysis (GBA). Unfortunately, in many jurisdictions in Canada, these mechanisms are not fully developed and/or well-integrated. Strengthening and aligning EA and GBA – and mandating their use – will support Canada’s efforts to advance equitable, sustainable development for diverse populations in the North and South.

How does resource development affect diverse communities?
Fulfilling Canada’s obligations to equitable, sustainable development is a daunting task for a number of reasons. First, the development of natural resources has long been a key component of the Canadian economy. Development of natural resources is consequently equated with economic growth. While some natural resources, such as hydro-electric and wind power, are integral to sustainable development, others, such as oil and coal, contribute to climate change. Development of natural resources may generate economic growth, but it also causes damage. Mining and lumbering create on-going environmental degradation and even so-called “green” energy may cause immediate as well as lasting harm.

Second, resource development poses particular challenges in the North. As natural resources in southern Canada have been depleted, industries and governments have looked to the North for new, rich supplies. While Northern communities may or may not reap the benefits of resource development, research demonstrates that they experience many negative effects. There is also compelling evidence that the negative effects of resource development are experienced most often and profoundly by women, Indigenous people, people living in poverty, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. For example, many resource development industries are dominated by men and sexual harassment is a common complaint among women workers. At the same time, women employed in these industries are frequently relegated to traditionally ‘female’ jobs, such as

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**Resource development contributes to:**
- Loss of jobs and job opportunities for local and unskilled workers;
- Lack of affordable housing and rising rates of homelessness;
- Higher rates of food insecurity as a result of rising food costs and loss of traditional food source;
- Growing strain on existing infrastructure, such as hospitals and other essential services communities;
- An increased incidence of gender-based violence, sex work, and human trafficking;
- Loss of access to the land with negative effects for subsistence, culture, and well-being.

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housekeeping and administration, which tend to come with lower status and pay. Resource development that destroys or pollutes land also harms Indigenous communities by diminishing food sources and interfering with cultural and family practices that are central to Indigenous identity and the well-being of both current and future generations.

What kinds of policy mechanisms are available in Canada to guide resource development?

Environmental assessment (EA) and gender-based analysis (GBA) are policy mechanisms that can be used to understand and mitigate the harms associated with resource development. Each term has a variety of definitions, but most share some common features.

Our analysis of EA and GBA frameworks across Canada revealed that there is little integration of these two policy mechanisms in most jurisdictions (see Table 1). In Newfoundland and Labrador, GBA is mandatory in EAs, but only to ensure that women have equal access to employment in resource development projects. Nunavut’s EA guidelines direct proponents to consult women’s groups about the potential effects of resource development, but have no formal GBA requirements. Even where there is a requirement to undertake GBA or other diversity analyses across government – as is the case federally and in Quebec and Ontario – the publicly available guidelines for EA do not mention GBA. Interestingly, the 2015 Auditor General’s report noted that two of the four Natural Resources Canada initiatives under review had not done a complete GBA.

What are the implications of the disconnect between GBA and EA?

Given the weight of the evidence regarding the differential impact of resource development on diverse groups of women and men, it is deeply concerning that most of those who undertake EA in Canada are neither required nor prepared to consider the effects of gender and/or diversity. 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

### GBA

According to Status of Women Canada, GBA is an analytical tool used to assess the potential impact of policies, programs or initiatives on diverse groups of women and men, girls and boys, taking into account gender and other factors, such as age, education, language, geography, culture and income.

### EA

According to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, EA is a process or tool used to identify, mitigate, and monitor potential adverse environmental effects of development. Some EA processes involve attention to negative effects on communities, but many focus on the physical environment – air, water, land, flora, fauna, etc.
resource development – information that might not have come to light through standard approaches to EA. When EAs ignore gender and diversity, it is also difficult to expect developers and governments to plan for, monitor, and mitigate harms for diverse populations of women and men.

**How might GBA be integrated into EA?**

Many tools have been developed to help policy makers integrate GBA into their work. For example, Status of Women Canada designed an on-line GBA training resource for federal policy makers, which has been made publicly-available in all jurisdictions. Recently, new activities related to forestry and mining have been added to this resource. FemNorthNet has designed a specific tool for applying gender and diversity analysis to resource development. It poses a series of questions to be considered during all phases of resource development.

**Where to from here?**

Recently, both GBA and EA have come under scrutiny. In 2015, the Auditor General of Canada reported that many federal departments and agencies were not using GBA or not using it well, completely, and consistently. The report concluded 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.” During the same period, the federal government recognized that EAs, required for most large resource development projects, need to address the effects of development on people as well as on land and wildlife. In 2016, the federal government responded to these findings by increasing funding for GBA in the federal budget and introducing new, interim EA principles that affirm the importance of consulting with and considering the implications of resource development for communities, with particular attention to Indigenous rights. These are encouraging developments. With new investments in GBA and a broader understanding of EA, these complementary policy mechanisms could help to ensure that Canada’s resource development is sustainable, equitable, and respectful of diversity. But the requirement for GBA in EA – and in all government policies, programs, and initiatives – should not be optional. Indeed, according to the 2015 Auditor General’s report, **one of the principal barriers to the integration of GBA into policy, legislative, and program initiatives was “the absence of mandatory requirements.”** Governments at all levels should work toward the integration of GBA into EA as a key strategy for supporting efforts to mitigate the adverse effects and maximize the long-term benefits of resource development for diverse women and men in Northern communities.

**Questions to think about:**

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?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender* Analysis</th>
<th>Environmental Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can</td>
<td>GBA required for all federal policies, programs, and proposals submitted to Cabinet, but not consistently applied across federal government</td>
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<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>GBA not required. GBA Strategic Plan currently being implemented.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>GBA not required. A limited use of GBA in relation to women’s health.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MB</td>
<td>Individual provincial departments have completed training, and have policies requiring Gender and Diversity Analysis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NB</td>
<td>GBA mandated by Cabinet and required for all departments, policies and programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>GBA not mandated, but is accepted part of official practices. Women’s Policy Office consulted at all stages of policy process when there are potential gendered impacts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NS</td>
<td>GBA not required. Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women works with many government departments to support GBA.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NWT</td>
<td>GBA not required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NU</td>
<td>No formal GBA process mandated or practiced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ON</td>
<td>Use of Inclusion Lens to consider diversity in all policies and programs is required.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEI</td>
<td>Individual departments, committees and councils have Gender and Diversity Analysis policies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>QC</td>
<td>GBA used in some departments and programs. Two action plans to increase the use of GBA have been developed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>GBA not required. The Status of Women office conducts GBA upon request.</td>
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<tr>
<td>YK</td>
<td>GBA not required. Cabinet submission template asks about differential impacts for women and Women’s Directorate reviews Cabinet submissions using GBA.</td>
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</table>

*Different terms are used to identify GBA policies and practices across jurisdictions.*
Gender-based analysis meets environmental assessment

References


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Gender-based analysis meets environmental assessment


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