

**Socioeconomic equity of Acadian and  
Francophone women living in a minority  
situation in the Atlantic provinces**

**Phase 4: To be Heard**

**VIVAT Communications**

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This analytical report on the overall development plans for each of the provincial Acadian and Francophone communities in the Atlantic region was prepared by VIVAT Communications, with the assistance of the Femmes Équité Atlantique (FÉA) analysis committee, composed of:

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## Foreword

The **Femmes Équité Atlantique** (FÉA) working group was formed in 2004 as an initiative of the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research. Its goal is to increase the effectiveness of Acadian and Francophone women's associations in minority situations in the four Atlantic provinces in finding solutions to the problems faced by women that are related to a lack of socioeconomic equity.

**Femmes Équité Atlantique** (FÉA) is an association of eleven organizations in the Atlantic Francophone community (see the list in Appendix A). Its principal activities are to inform, raise awareness, educate and mobilise greater numbers of women (and their allies) in the four Atlantic provinces to increase the visibility of socioeconomic issues, both at the regional and national levels.

**Femmes Équité Atlantique** (FÉA) is currently the only women's working group in the Atlantic region. Its existence allows women from across the region to be informed and consulted, and ensures a female presence in provincial issues and activities, thus reinforcing women's representation in the governance of Acadian and Francophone communities in the Atlantic region.

## Introduction

This report, sponsored by **Femmes Équité Atlantique** (FÉA), is one of the stages in the initiative entitled *Socioeconomic equity and Acadian and Francophone women living in a minority situation in the Atlantic provinces*. This ambitious project is divided into four phases:

- Phase 1: Information
- Phase 2: Education
- Phase 3: Mobilisation
- Phase 4: Representation

The report is the principal element in phase 4 (“*Representation*”) of the initiative and is the means by which FÉA will publicly promote the cause of socioeconomic equity in the Acadian and Francophone community of the Atlantic region.

## Context

Prior to presenting and analysing the global development plan of each of the provincial Acadian and Francophone communities in the Atlantic region, we have proceeded with an overview of socioeconomic conditions so that the situation of Acadian and Francophone women in the region can be appreciated in its proper context.

“Acadian women” refers to women who define themselves as being members of the Acadian community and for whom the history of the Deportation is a part of their family heritage; “Francophone women” are those whose mother tongue is French.

The following major points are necessary in understanding this context:

- Acadian and Francophone women in the Atlantic region live in a linguistic minority situation. In the Atlantic provinces, Francophones represent less than 4.6% of the overall population; the greatest concentration (over one-third of the population) lives in New Brunswick and the smallest percentage (approximately 0.5%) lives in Newfoundland and Labrador. This minority situation has an impact on the welfare of women and their socioeconomic living conditions.
- The majority of Acadian and Francophone women in the Atlantic region live in rural areas. They are geographically isolated, and consequently are faced with a dearth of opportunities and services. This situation has an impact on their health and living conditions, including issues such as poverty and lack of training and educational opportunities.

Acadian and Francophone women are among the most impoverished persons in Canada. This statement is supported by the following statistics that were presented at the Women’s Summit held in August 2004 in Halifax, Nova Scotia:

- In 2001, the total average income of Francophone and Acadian women in the Atlantic region was \$18,064, compared to \$21,463 for Francophone women in the rest of the country.
- During the same period, the average employment income of Francophone and Acadian women in the Atlantic region was \$19,303, compared to \$19,405 for Anglophone women and \$29,182 for Francophone men.
- The average income of Acadian Francophone single mothers in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador was \$21,203 compared to \$25,797 in the rest of the country.

The education level of Francophone and Acadian women in the Atlantic region has improved over the last few years. However, even though Francophone women have more education than Francophone men, their annual employment income remains lower than that of Francophone men in the four Atlantic provinces.

It is therefore clear that both in Acadia and among Francophones in the Atlantic region, most of those living in poverty are women.

## Objectives & Methods

In 2007, FÉA members studied the global development plans of their respective provinces using an inclusive analysis. The objective of the analysis behind this report was to take an account of the presence of women in the plans and policies of the Acadian and Francophone community of the Atlantic region and to present suggestions to their decision-makers as they begin preparations for the next five-year plan. The results of the analysis of each of the provincial plans constitute the body of this report, along with a global analysis of the four plans and a series of recommendations.

The project and report are meant to be positive steps in contributing to progress for the community as a whole. The vision of women as described in the report provides an analysis of diversity, and as such it is also applicable to other groups within the Acadian and Francophone community of the Atlantic region, particularly to seniors and youth. The report attempts to provide answers to the following questions:

- Do the plans reflect the needs and realities of Acadian and Francophone women in the Atlantic region?
- What are the differences and similarities among the four plans?
- What strategies should be adopted so that future plans will reflect equitable participation by women, and take into account their socioeconomic needs?

Finally, this report is intended to be a public document, and a tool by which women in the Atlantic region will be able to mobilise the community around the issue of socioeconomic equity.

The four global development plans of Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador are studied here to determine whether or not they respond to the specific needs of women in the region. In this study, financial considerations were not taken into account. Only the themes, objectives, actions and possible results were examined under the lens of inclusive analysis.

## What is an inclusive analysis?

- An inclusive analysis uses a perspective that takes differences into account – whether these are due to gender, culture, or other realities.
- An inclusive analysis presupposes a vision that includes all the dimensions of a given community during the process of developing documents, policies, and strategies.

In the inclusive analysis of each of the plans, the FÉA members considered the following questions:

- Which results will have a favourable effect on the lives of both women and men?
- Are the anticipated results different for women and men and for different groups of women and men?
- How are the needs of both women and men taken into account?
- Which indicators could be used to verify the results or impacts on women and men?



## **Analysis of the provincial GDPs**

### **Global development plan for Prince Edward Island**

#### General remarks:

The Société Saint-Thomas d'Aquin is the Acadian and Francophone organization in this province. The Francophone community of Prince Edward Island has 15 community organizations that depend on the involvement of 110 volunteers and approximately 52 full-time and 10 part-time employees; most of these are women. In addition to these numbers there is one provincial school board.

The Global development plan for Prince Edward Island is called “Plan Vision” and it covers the period 2004-2009. It follows on the heels of several years of assessments and evaluations and a vast process of global strategic planning that was initiated in 2003, during which period 450 people were consulted, half of them women.

As these women were from all sectors of the Acadian and Francophone community, it might be assumed that they were able to state their position on all the sectors and areas of the consultations; however, it must be emphasized that due to a lack of human resources, they were not able to participate in all the consultations on all of the targeted sectors.

#### Plan Vision (2004-2009):

Plan Vision emphasizes individuals and their well-being in all areas of life. It is unique because it includes statements of values and a vision with the clear objective that all members of the community should feel fully included in the development process. These innovative elements deserve to be mentioned:

- Sense of pride and belonging
- Respect and compassion
- Inclusiveness and equality
- Transparency and accountability
- Leadership
- Developmental approach
- Human resources
- Commitment to community development
- Respect for Acadian culture and the French language
- Collaboration and partnership

#### Vision:

*“The Acadian and Francophone community of Prince Edward Island aims for the prosperity and fulfilment of its population, in an inclusive, thoughtful and guided manner to assure a united approach, as well as community growth and recognition at the provincial and national levels.”*

The following five sectors were identified during the consultations:

- Education
- Community development (including the political sphere)
- Economy
- Culture and heritage
- Health

The abovementioned sectors were incorporated into Plan Vision under three strategic orientations:

- Social and economic well-being
- Mutual aid and support
- Participation and commitment

#### Strengths of Plan Vision:

As we have indicated above, Plan Vision aims to be inclusive and thus devotes many of its actions to the well-being of individuals, which includes women as members of the Acadian and Francophone community of Prince Edward Island.

In the strategic orientation *Economic and social well-being*, under the objective to “*Improve the quality of life of the Acadian and Francophone population of Prince Edward Island*”, some actions will be especially beneficial to women (even though these are not directly mentioned).

#### Example:

“*Establish a mentoring program for leaders and community personnel.*” In light of the fact that the majority of those involved in community development are women, we may conclude that this program will very beneficial to them. The same is true for actions such as “*Set up a volunteer training program*” and “*Develop and implement adult and family literacy programs in French and French language reeducation (refrancisation)*” because approximately 60% of the clientele for literacy programs on Prince Edward Island are women.

#### Shortcomings of Plan Vision:

In spite of the abovementioned strengths of the plan, the FÉA working group highlights the following shortcomings in Plan Vision:

1. The plan obviously aims to include men, women, youth and seniors in all of the sectors affected. The statements of values are indicative of this aim. However, by tacitly including women in all of the sectors, their presence can be found everywhere in general but nowhere in particular.

Example:

Under the strategic orientation *Economic and social well-being*, one of the actions is to “*Develop and implement a strategy for economic diversification in rural Acadian and Francophone areas on Prince Edward Island*”.

Women are not mentioned here even though, according to the vision of the Plan, they are clearly included in the approach. However, the role of women in the rural economy and their specific needs (daycare, equal pay for equal work, part-time versus full-time employment) require specially adapted programs. Was this taken into account? It is impossible to know if it was.

2. The activities set out in the plan lack precision.

Example:

Under the strategic orientation *Economic and social well-being*, one action mentioned is to “*Set up high quality infrastructures, support institutes and material resources*”, without indicating which types of support, infrastructure and resources are being referred to. This does not allow us to decide whether or not they are adapted to the specific needs of women.

3. Plan Vision must be re-evaluated at the end of 2009, but right now it does not include clearly stated results, and more importantly, there are no performance indicators that allow us to evaluate the status of women in the plan or if the objectives have been reached.

## Global development plan for New Brunswick

### General remarks:

The New Brunswick Acadian and Francophone community development plan was produced in 2004 by the Forum de concertation des organismes acadiens du Nouveau-Brunswick [Consultation forum of Acadian organizations in New Brunswick].

There are 33 Acadian and/or Francophone community organizations in the province.

### The Plan:

The New Brunswick Acadian and Francophone community development plan includes ten *strategic orientations* accompanied by *final results*. The means have been defined for each of the results.

The strategic orientations are:

- Development of the French language and Acadian identity
- Reinforcement of the political and legal framework
- Roles and consultation of organisations
- Economic development
- Social and community development
- Education and training
- Increased access to means of communication
- Reinforcement of relationships with the Francophone world
- Artistic and cultural development
- Public health in Acadian New Brunswick

### Strengths of the Plan:

The New Brunswick Acadian and Francophone community development plan aims to be inclusive, and the majority of its stated actions seem to apply to the Acadian community as a whole.

The strategic orientation entitled “*Artistic and cultural development*” whose ultimate result is to “*Promote and acknowledge the value of Acadian culture*” is an example of a good use of an inclusive analysis in policy development and application. Its means of action are feasible, the clientele has been properly identified, women and men are mentioned equally, and professional artists, both male and female, can situate themselves within the chosen means of action.

### Shortcomings of the Plan:

The expression “*Acadiens et acadiennes*” [Acadian men and women] is used in the

explanation of the issues and in the need to raise awareness, but disappears in the following stage, when it is time to address problems. This might appear to be a simple omission, but it nevertheless symbolises one of the plan's shortcomings.

1. By targeting the population as a whole, the specific needs of women are not addressed. By presuming that women are everywhere in general, they are in fact nowhere in particular.

Example #1:

In the strategic orientation "*Economic development*" the specific conditions of women in the economy and employment sectors are not considered. For example, although the plan states it will "*Promote Francophone women's access to executive positions and non-traditional employment*", key factors that affect the presence of women in the workforce are not mentioned in the means of action (e.g. daycare, flexible work schedules, for example). As well, we know that women earn less than men in identical positions (in New Brunswick in 2004, women working full-time earned an average of 79.6% of men's salaries), but this issue is not even raised in the plan.

Example #2:

In the strategic orientation "*Public health in Acadian New Brunswick*" with the anticipated result being "*The improvement of the health and well-being of the population of the New Brunswick's Acadian community*", none of the means of action specifically address women or even raise the issues of health and well-being that are specific to women, such as family violence and reproductive health, or even at the socioeconomic level, where women are the majority of those affected by poverty.

2. The New Brunswick Acadian and Francophone community development plan lacks specific objectives. Its scope is broad and includes a list of statements and results that are very praiseworthy, but which run the risk of creating false hopes due to a lack of details and consideration of key factors with significant impact on women's lives.

Example #1:

Under the strategic orientation "*Development of the French language and Acadian identity*" where the anticipated result is to "*increase a sense of attachment to the Acadian identity*", the actions involved in "*increasing the use and promotion of the French language*" ultimately provide very few specific measures to the population. Considering the vital role of women within the family and their majority presence in the field of education, it seems evident that any efforts in achieving these goals must not bypass women's involvement.

Example #2:

In the strategic orientation "*Public health in Acadian New Brunswick*" where the

anticipated result is “*the improvement in the health and well-being of the Acadian population and community in New Brunswick*”, the actions do not specify how this vision of improved health and well-being will be achieved. On what criteria will the actions be based? Have the essential issues regarding health and well-being been identified? How, and to whom, will issues such as violence or mental health be addressed? The statements in the plan are too vague and therefore do not provide us with this information.

3. The New Brunswick Acadian and Francophone community development plan does not include clear statements regarding results and contains even less information on performance indicators. Therefore, we cannot evaluate the position or impact on women, or even if the objectives have been achieved.

## **Global development plan for Nova Scotia**

The Global development plan for Nova Scotia covers the period from 2004-2009 and was prepared under the guidance of the umbrella organisation for Francophones in Nova Scotia, the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE) [Acadian Federation of Nova Scotia]. It led to numerous consultations with the different Acadian and Francophone organisations in the province.

There are eight Acadian regions in Nova Scotia, and each one has a regional organization to represent their interests with FANE, and eleven provincial organizations (including the Fédération des femmes acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse [Federation of Acadian women of Nova Scotia]).

### The Plan:

The Global development plan for Nova Scotia includes six sectors:

- Arts and culture
- Economic development and employability
- Education and training
- Communication and technology
- Legal and political frameworks
- Health and well-being

Each of these sectors is accompanied by more specific points and anticipated results as well as a list of possible partners for each of the sectors.

### Strengths of the Plan:

The Global development plan for Nova Scotia aims to be inclusive and clearly seeks to have a positive impact on the Acadian and Francophone community throughout the province. Three of the six sectors, “*Arts and culture*”, “*Communication and technology*” and “*Health and well-being*” appear to address women to the same degree as men.

Some points of the plan are mainly and sometimes even exclusively addressed to women. For example, under “*Schools*”, two anticipated results are exclusively addressed to women: “*Pursuing knowledge and improving techniques for educators in early childhood and family centres*” and “*Integrating the historical contribution of Acadian women into the school curriculum.*” Similarly, at the post-secondary level, one activity is addressed exclusively to women: “*Offering personalized training for women to ensure their economic advancement.*”

As well, women are identified as partners in three sectors: “*Economic development and employability*”, “*Legal and political framework*” and “*Health and well-being*”.

### Shortcomings of the Plan:

1. During the consultation process leading up to the plan, FANE offered community organizations the opportunity to participate in discussions on only two previously selected sectors of the global development plan. This decision was made due to a lack of resources, and it ended up penalising women to a certain degree because, like other interested groups such as youth or seniors, women are affected by all areas of community life.
2. With a clear desire to be inclusive, the sectors discussed and the associated points address the population as a whole, and the services delivered will necessarily be general in scope. They may therefore not respond to the specific needs of women. When the presence of women is presumed to be everywhere in general, they end up being nowhere in particular.

#### Example:

In the sector “*Health and well-being*”, no results or activities are specifically addressed to women. We may therefore wonder if key factors in women’s health (reproductive health and family violence, for example) have been taken into consideration, or if the services offered will remain very general in scope. The same observation can be made with regard to men who have special health and well-being problems such as a greater incidence of lung cancer and suicide.

Certain sectors of the plans and their associated points do not include activities or actions that are specific enough to be able to judge as to their impact or chance of success.

#### Example:

In the sector “*Education and training*”, the following result is targeted: “*More young women taking advanced courses in science and mathematics for better access to more diversified high school studies in French.*” However, this desired result is not accompanied by any action. The same situation occurs with regard to another desired result that is exclusively targeted to women (cited above in “Strengths of the plan”): “*The historic contribution of Acadian women is integrated into the school curriculum*”. Here again, no action is proposed in order to achieve the desired result.

3. The Global development plan for Nova Scotia does not include performance indicators, therefore we cannot evaluate the success of the target objectives, or to what degree the female clientele has benefited from activities.

#### Example:

In the sector *Economic development and employability*, the following result is targeted: “*Francophone and Acadian women have better access to the workforce.*” Without performance indicators, how will we know if women have benefited from the programs? How will we know if there has been an increase in



the number of women in the workforce?

## Global development plan for Newfoundland and Labrador

The Global development plan for Newfoundland and Labrador covers the 2004-2009 period. The plan was prepared for 2004, but was not officially approved by the community. It was therefore completely revised and approved during a community forum in November 2006 for the three remaining years of the five-year plan.

The Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador [Federation of Francophones of Newfoundland and Labrador] (FFTNL) is the principal Francophone organization in the province, representing the interests of ten community organizations (regional associations and provincial organizations) located in the three main regions: the western part of the island, Labrador, and the St. John's capital region in Newfoundland.

It is important to note that there is no provincial organization for Francophone and Acadian women in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, in spite of many attempts by the community. Only one working group of women officially exists, the Femmes francophones de l'ouest du Labrador (FFOL) [Francophone women of western Labrador].

### The Plan:

The Global development plan for Newfoundland and Labrador includes five sectors of activity:

- Education
- Communications and culture
- Health and community affairs
- Youth training
- Economic development

Two other sectors were part of the global development plan for 1999-2004, but they do not require community actions per se:

- Political representation
- Restructuring of provincial organizations

Each of the five sectors of the plan is preceded by a “*Status report*” and is accompanied by points of action (objectives), anticipated results and a list of possible partners. Finally, each objective is classified by order of importance: “*Essential*”, “*Important*” or “*Desirable*”.

In the preamble to the plan, it is explained that the document does not include either an agenda or performance indicators, because these details are part of the concrete projects to be implemented in the follow-up to the plan.

### Strengths of the Plan:

The global development plan for Newfoundland and Labrador aims to be inclusive and clearly seeks to have a positive impact on the Francophone and Acadian community throughout the province.

In the “*Health and community affairs*” sector, one point is specifically addressed to women. “*Creation of a provincial network of women’s committees*” is deemed to be an “*Essential*” objective. It is accompanied by five actions to achieve the desired result.

### Shortcomings of the Plan:

1. By targeting the population as a whole, women’s specific needs are not considered. Women are assumed to be everywhere in general, but nowhere in particular. Aside from the objective cited above (which does not mention the efforts that have already been made by the Francophone women of Labrador working group in attempting to create a province-wide women’s federation), the presence of women is nowhere specified in the report, which, at first glance, is perhaps not a significant shortcoming, but it is one which causes us to question the plan’s capacity to respond to their specific needs.
2. The Global development plan for Newfoundland and Labrador is very general.

#### Example:

One of the objectives in the “*Youth training*” sector is “*Development of youth training*”. The actions listed here are basic ones such as “*Carry out a survey to identify the educational needs of youth*” or “*Set up a consultation process between youth and the school council*”. This is a far cry from more targeted actions that would take into account the specific realities and needs of young men and women. This situation can be explained by the more recent development of the Francophone and Acadian community in the province, which is the smallest in the Atlantic region.

3. As indicated above, the Global development plan for Newfoundland and Labrador does not include performance indicators, which prevents us from determining if the objectives have been reached, and to what degree the female clientele will have benefited from these activities.

## Remarks

In spite of the vast differences among the Acadian and Francophone communities in the four Atlantic provinces in terms of population, development, and human and financial resources, the development plans for each of the four communities are very similar, and from a women's perspective, are characterized by similar shortcomings:

### Shortcoming # 1:

**Each one of the plans aims to be inclusive, but in addressing the community as a whole, the needs of specific groups are neglected. This is however an unintended result on the part of the community organizations that prepared the plans.**

The individual analysis of each of the plans has already highlighted this shortcoming, but we should nevertheless take a closer look at one of the several examples.

In orientation no. 4 of the Global development plan for the Acadian and Francophone community of New Brunswick, which centres on economic development, point D.3 reads as follows: “*Support the economic initiatives that may enhance the development of the Acadian community in New Brunswick*”. To do this, four actions are proposed, but none of them specifically mentions any particular group. The contribution of women is therefore not considered, and neither are their needs or even the obstacles that may prevent them from participating in the economic development of their community.

It would have been interesting if from the start, the persons who prepared the plans had asked a few questions (which could also be used to serve other groups, such as youth, men and seniors), such as the following:

- Are there sex-based differences that have an impact on this issue? If so,
- What are some of the *key factors* that affect women? And what influence do these factors have on the ability of women to become involved in economic development?
- Have we consulted women and/or experts on the issue during the planning stage of this initiative?

This type of thought process would assuredly have been sufficient to target the appropriate actions and to make them more relevant to women in the community.

### Shortcoming #2:

**In each of the plans, women are specifically mentioned, but this consideration was not brought to a logical conclusion in order that the proposed activities, actions or strategic orientations respond to the concrete needs of women.**

This is the case with orientation no. 2 in the Global development plan for the Acadian

and Francophone community in New Brunswick, and the targeted result “*To improve the political and legal framework of Acadian New Brunswick*”. One of the five proposed actions is to: “*Stimulate and recognize the engagement of women and youth in local, regional, provincial, national and international decision-making instances*”.

This praiseworthy objective nevertheless remains very vague. A few questions would assuredly have provided some interesting avenues:

- Why is it that women (and youth in this specific case) participate in fewer numbers at all levels of the democratic process? This question would have led to others, such as:
  - Who should we consult regarding this issue to ensure a broader recruitment?
  - How should we proceed in encouraging women’s participation?
  - What exactly do we mean when we say “stimulate and recognize” the engagement of women in decision-making processes?
  - What is our aim? (Obtaining specific seats for women? Or simply a better level of representation?).

### Shortcoming #3:

**Any global development plan or strategic plan must, by definition, be broad enough to include all the needs of the community it serves. However, to achieve its objectives, it must contain avenues for action and activities that are sufficiently targeted to have a chance of succeeding. In the four plans we analysed, the statements are too broad, and the objectives too vague and general to enable any real progress to be achieved.**

This is the case in the Global development plan for the Acadian community in Nova Scotia, in the “*Legal and political*” sector, where under the heading “*Rights and services in French*”, the following statement appears: “[*That*] *the government of Nova Scotia adopt a zero tolerance law regarding violence and abuse*”. There is no doubt that this objective is principally addressed to women because according to the most recent statistics (2002), 8 out of 10 victims of violence are women. The phrase “*zero tolerance*” is vague and represents, at best, a far-off ideal, and at worst, an unachievable dream.

The Federation of Acadian women of Nova Scotia participated in the consultations on the legal and political sector during the preparation of the Global development plan, and it is undoubtedly for this reason that the objective was included in the plan. However, we are within our rights to wonder how this issue will be approached and how such a vague objective can be achieved.

It would have been useful to ask the following questions:

- Do we have all the necessary statistics to bring this project before the provincial government?
- Do we know exactly what the concerns of women are with regard to this issue?

- How will we integrate their concerns into our action plan?
- Will the passing of this type of law really change anything for victims? Should we also consider projects that target the prevention of violence and which provide follow-up support for victims of violence and their aggressors?
  - How does the question of language affect this issue?

Shortcoming #4:

**We have already emphasized at several points in this report that all the plans are inclusive and aim for the well-being of the community. The word “community” is in itself inclusive. However, by neglecting to specify the group within the community to which a given program, activity or avenue is addressed, any eventual services remain general in scope. Because women and men do not experience the same social, economic, family and community realities, the impact of the plan will be different for each group, and very often, men will be favoured to the detriment of women.**

Let us take as an example Prince Edward Island’s Plan Vision: in the strategic orientation “*Social and economic well-being*” under the objective “*Sustainable economic development*”, one of the anticipated actions is “*To offer specialized services in areas such as planning, marketing, electronic business, exportation and financial management*”. These services are evidently aimed at both women and men, and the community’s economic organizations encourage women to participate. However, when the target clientele is not specified, we may wonder who will benefit. Again, to produce a concrete effort for inclusiveness, it would have been necessary for the planning group to put forth a few questions:

- Are there sex-based differences with regard to this issue?
- What is the relative situation of men and women at a basic level (economic, family, social situation)?
- Does this action take into account these economic, social and family differences?
- What will be the impact of this action on equity between men and women? Will it encourage greater independence for women?
- How will we encourage participation in this action? Will the communication strategies have to be different for men and women?
- Will training be offered at times and places or in circumstances (with daycare services, for example) that will make it worthwhile for women as well as men?

Shortcoming #5:

**Finally, in all four provinces, the five-year plans do not include concrete anticipated results or performance indicators, and this makes evaluation of the plans rather difficult.** Of course, as was explained in the Global development plan for Newfoundland and Labrador, we should find these indicators in the activities resulting from the global plan.

However, in the framework of an inclusive analysis of the development plans, the

absence of performance indicators prevents us from determining if progress has been achieved in the areas of equity and parity of services offered to men and women, as well as if there is any possible extension to other groups in the community, such as seniors and youth.

## Recommendations

In light of the analysis of the four global development plans for the Acadian and Francophone communities in the Atlantic region, FÉA has established the following recommendations for consideration by decision-makers in the community:

### 1. Acknowledge the true meaning of inclusiveness

The global development plans we have analyzed are all intended to be inclusive. They aim for the well-being and development of the community as a whole and their activities are addressed to all members regardless of sex, age, etc. In the case of Prince Edward Island's Plan Vision, inclusiveness has even been carefully defined in the list of values that give purpose to the plan: *“The Acadian and Francophone community of Prince Edward Island believes that all individuals have the right to the same quality of life and to participate actively in community life regardless of their status.”*

But is this sufficient to guarantee inclusiveness? More than simple awareness or a desire to include all groups within a community in a development plan is required to achieve inclusiveness. We need to reflect on what this means in terms of strategies and actions, and to bring the necessary means to the process.

An illustration of this is found in all four plans regarding health services, where an objective such as *“to improve the well-being of the community”* may imply all members of the community, but this does not make it inclusive. To achieve meaningful inclusiveness we need to:

- Draw up a profile of the needs of the various groups concerned – children, youth, seniors, women and men.
- Set forth the key factors that affect the health and well-being of these groups. For women, this would mean addressing the challenges related to reproductive health or family violence.
- Define the obstacles faced by these groups that limit their access to the planned activities (for women, this may be a question of limited free time, daycare needs, geographic isolation and transportation, poverty) and to take the necessary measures to reduce or eliminate these obstacles.

### 2. Understand the difference between equality and equity

**Equality between the sexes** means that women and men have the same status and that they benefit from the same conditions to fully exercise their human rights, and the same ability to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development, as well as to benefit from the results.

**Equity between the sexes** is fairness toward women and men. To assure equity, measures must often be adopted to compensate for historic and social disadvantages that



have prevented women and men from having equal opportunities.

Equity leads to equality. Similar to the minority linguistic issue, where we now accept the idea of reparation for historic damages suffered by minority linguistic groups, we also acknowledge that simply treating women and men identically does not lead to equal results and that sometimes women and men must be treated differently to obtain identical results. This is due to different living conditions or because a traditional discriminatory situation must be counterbalanced.

This notion of equality is entrenched in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

### **3. Develop a different way of consulting**

In the four development plans that we have analysed, the preparatory stage gave way to consultations – extensive consultations on Prince Edward Island in the context of the implementation of Plan Vision; and by holding the first community forum of that type, in Newfoundland and Labrador – in which women were involved. It is also true that women were the majority presence in community structures in the four provinces; as well, they were de facto partners in the development process of all plans of this scope.

However, on the strength of the desire to be inclusive and to promote true equality between the sexes, the preparation of the five-year community development plan requires more extensive consultation than simply the presence of women in governing structures or in a few actions set forth in the plan.

Women are the backbone of community action. As such, they are deeply affected by all aspects of community life and development: childhood and education, health, well-being, economic development, arts and culture, the legal and political framework. This reality has rendered it difficult for women's working groups to be effective at the public consultation stage, because they have often lacked the human resources to attend all the meetings and workshops.

We should not think that just because women are present at the table, they necessarily represent women's interests foremost. A woman in a position of responsibility who participates in the process of preparing a global development plan cannot always speak on behalf of women, particularly if she is representing a broader segment of the community. For example, the women who lead Acadian and Francophone organizations, or who are executive committee members of non-profit associations, or who sit on school boards, are in a position to look out for the interests of a very broad clientele and thus cannot represent women's interests only.

#### **4. Add performance indicators**

A global development plan that will remedy the shortcomings described above will have to include performance indicators so that planners will be able to ensure that the target clientele has been reached, and that participation in activities, actions or programs reflects the community's diversity and the specific needs of its constituent groups.

Therefore, over the course of the five years of the plan, we will be able to verify that the specific needs of women are taken into account, that women who have taken on leadership roles in the community have a better knowledge of women's needs, and that their activities respond to these particular needs.

The principle of enabling evaluation also applies to other groups within the community. The organizations concerned will be able to evaluate the plan's overall effectiveness, and this will prove to be a major asset when it comes time to meet with financial backers to prepare a new global development plan or to negotiate new financial agreements.

## Conclusion

The Femmes Équité Atlantique (FÉA) working group is happy to submit this reflection to decision-makers and participants in the Acadian and Francophone community of the Atlantic region who will soon be undertaking the weighty process of preparing a new five-year global development plan.

It is clear that all the Acadian and Francophone organizations of the Atlantic region would like to be fully inclusive in all the activities and services they offer to their community, and FÉA applauds the efforts made towards achieving this goal in their most recent plans for global development.

FÉA therefore hopes that this report will serve as a guide for decision-makers, and that the recommendations from the report will lead to the concretization of global development plans that involve both men and women, and which are the fruit of a thorough reflection on the need to include women and fully integrate their specific conditions and needs.

Finally, we wish to emphasize that the work presented here today was done with a positive outlook, in the spirit of community service. The inclusive analysis that is at the basis of this reflection is applied here for the cause of women, but it can also be applied for the benefit of other sociocultural groups. FÉA therefore hopes that this work will contribute to a broader inclusion of all the diverse sociocultural groups on which our Acadian and Francophone communities are built.

## Appendix A

### List of FÉA members

- Association des femmes acadiennes et francophones de l'Île du Prince-Édouard [Association of Acadian and Francophone women in Prince Edward Island]
- Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE), [Network of economic development and employability], Prince Edward Island
- Fédération des femmes acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Écosse [Federation of Acadian women of Nova Scotia]
- Femmes Action [Women Action group], Nova Scotia.
- Femmes francophones de l'ouest du Labrador [Francophone women of western Labrador]
- Représentation à Terre-Neuve [Representation in Newfoundland]
- The Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, New Brunswick
- The New Brunswick Women's Collective
- University of New Brunswick Women's Studies Program
- Association acadienne et francophones des aînées et aînés du Nouveau-Brunswick [Acadian and Francophone Seniors' Association of New Brunswick]
- The New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity
- New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women (Observer)

## **Appendix B**

### Mission:

To increase the effectiveness of Acadian and Francophone women in the Atlantic provinces who are attempting to find solutions to the problems resulting from a lack of socioeconomic equity.

### Values:

1. Lack of equity is a social, political and economic issue.
2. Society promotes values that attribute privilege to certain groups, which results in sex-based discrimination, among other problems.
3. The lack of socioeconomic equity has direct consequences for education, health, violence against women and poverty.
4. All persons, regardless of gender, ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, intellectual and physical ability, or social status, have the same right to good quality living conditions and to participate actively in community life.

In addition, Femmes Équité Atlantique believes it is essential to unite Francophone and Acadian women in the Atlantic region so that they may:

1. Become aware of the problems resulting from the lack of socioeconomic equity that we share as Francophone and Acadian women living in a minority situation.
2. Agree on an action plan to benefit Francophone and Acadian women in the Atlantic region.
3. Increase their ability to defend the interests of Francophone and Acadian women in the Atlantic region.

Appendix C:

Presentation