
Motivation at the Margins:

Gender Issues in the Canadian Voluntary Sector

By Louise Mailloux, Heather Horak And Colette Godin

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	3
Methodology	4
Limitations	4
Historical Overview	5
Impact Of Women's Involvement In The Voluntary Sector On Society	5
Motivations For Giving, Volunteering And Participating	6
Differences: Women Vs Men	9
Equity Issues	11
Factors Influencing Participation	11
Salaries And Benefits: Gender Differences	12
Impact Of Government Cuts	13
Women's Organizations: Funding	14
Unpaid Work That Women Do	15
Information And Communications Technologies (Icts)	15
Conclusion	17
Recommendations	18
Bibliography	19
Appendix A: List Of Persons Interviewed Or Consulted	22
Appendix B: Highlights Of The Views Of Key Informants	23
Appendix C: Interview Guide	24
Endnotes	25

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) Secretariat commissioned a research brief to outline some of the challenges women volunteers and paid staff in the voluntary and community sector face, to identify both gaps in research and indications of progress toward gender equality to advance in that direction, and to make recommendations on how to move toward gender equity in the voluntary sector. Reductions in core funding to the sector throughout the 1990s combined with increased client demands, reporting requirements and greater reliance on government service contracts, had substantial impact on the voluntary sector, and on the women who form a large proportion of the volunteers and staff within it. Hence, identifying gender inequities is important to the mandate of the VSI: strengthening the capacity of the voluntary sector and improving the relationship between the voluntary sector and the federal government.

While information about the voluntary sector is incomplete, data indicate that on average, between 50 and 75% of non-profit sector employees are women; 54% of all volunteers are women; and in certain areas, the gender breakdown is 80 to 90% women. Scant information exists concerning other demographics such as age, ethnic or racial background, accommodation of people with disabilities, education level, or the types of jobs held. More fundamental questions of how many people work in the sector, under what conditions, not to mention their individual and

organizational needs, remain largely unaddressed.

Through their involvement in the voluntary sector, women have developed skills, learned to manage organizations, sat on Boards of Directors and obtained greater access to economic and political power. Women in the voluntary sector now have improved access to power and leadership. But these gains have been undercut by longstanding under-funding of the sector. Most women in leadership positions have, and can barely retain, insufficient and transitory support staff. While significant progress has been made on many women's issues, including family supports, supports to women and children who are victims of violence, and health issues, there is also an uneasy perception that these and other women's issues have become more diffused, if not set aside for other causes or priorities.

Within the voluntary sector, salaries are low and benefits often non-existent. For large segments of the voluntary sector, particularly those in the social and health services, annual salaries have remained stagnant over the last decade, as low as \$20,000 for day-care services and civic and social organizations and \$27,000 for mental health and substance abuse services and social advocacy organizations. Many trained and experienced staff, including those dealing with demanding clients, earn just \$10 per hour, and many agencies shifted to hiring new staff principally on a contract or part-time basis rather than as regular employees in order to save on payroll taxes.

Several studies show that workloads have increased for virtually all managers and front-line staff, including massive increases in paperwork, or administration. Both management and staff multi-task, taking on many different kinds of work, leaving managers less time to provide needed guidance to overburdened staff dealing with increasingly severe client issues.

Reductions in government spending on services, especially social and health services, have led to an increased demand for volunteers, but now fewer people are contributing more hours. This situation can be extremely stressful for women already overextended but who feel they have no choice but to respond. Some groups grapple uneasily with such contradictions, relying on volunteers to keep a women's centre open, for instance, when asking women to work for free may reproduce the financial dependency of women, against which they have been struggling for so long.

Women's groups are also feeling increasingly marginalized in the area of information and communication technologies. Lack of funding for women's groups and other marginalized communities resurfaces as a major barrier to access and participation. A study of over 450 groups found that women's, consumer, human rights and recreation groups owned fewer modern computers (1.3 on average) than groups from the economic development, professional development and education sectors (between 3.8 and 7.8 on average) Groups in remote regions were even more ill equipped. The community sector, particularly women's groups, has been unable to take advantage of various programs and to assist in the development of coherent policies. A failure by the voluntary sector to re-examine the extent to which this has been so will widen the digital divide along economic, gender and geographical lines.

Accessibility remains the most important issue for women with disabilities, often of greater import than gender identity or discrimination, for both volunteers and staff. While some factors influence both men and

women with disabilities, women face additional barriers, e.g., lower self-esteem than men and other women, making them feel extremely marginalized. Immigrant and visible minorities - with women often facing a triple bind of gender, race and poverty - also tend to be more marginalized in mainstream organizations.

The voluntary sector needs to examine its practices towards minority groups and women and to promote policies that increase employment equity. The issue of salaries and benefits needs to be addressed, as does the gender gap in the management structures. The voluntary sector must also do more to promote women-friendly practices to enable females among volunteers and staff to participate without incurring extra costs.

In a time when women's struggles are largely depoliticized, perhaps what is needed more than ever is for women to forcefully voice the need for adequate salaries and working conditions in a sector so vital to the well being of many Canadians.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the following recommendations cannot be easily achieved, or they would have been implemented already. In a time when women's struggles are largely depoliticized, what is needed, perhaps more than ever, is for women to forcefully voice the need for adequate salaries and working conditions in a sector that is so vital to the well being of so many vulnerable Canadians.

Research:

- Undertake a thorough gender analysis of the sector to analyze the breakdown of occupations and to test for wage gaps.
- Perform a thorough comparison of the voluntary sector's wages and benefits with those of other sectors for positions with similar qualifications, responsibilities and duties.
- Examine how organizations promote gender equity through the use of the Internet and to increase women and women's

groups' access to the Internet. Promote and implement existing ideas, e.g., Womenspace website.

Action with regard to employment and volunteer management:

- Promote the implementation of policies such as pay equity, employment benefits and pension plans. Organizations could be encouraged to develop general human resources guidelines or to find ways to promote good practices in terms of gender equity. A checklist could be one easy and accessible tool for organizations.
- Since less than 10% of community organizations are unionized, promote a better understanding of unionizing as a means to improve equality.
- Take stock of organizations that have implemented women-friendly practices, e.g., day-care and tax credits for employees and volunteers, and promote these practices across the sector.
- Develop guidelines for organizations on gender equity in management structures and also for volunteers as part of improved accountability mechanisms to funders and members.
- Profile accommodation and hiring practices in the voluntary sector - educate organizations on the discrimination women/people with disabilities face in the sector in order to promote accommodation.
- Promote awareness and understanding of gender equity in the voluntary sector.

Action with regard to participation in voluntary sector governance:

- Find ways to be more inclusive in VSI processes, and advocate for better representation of diverse groups, e.g., women/people with disabilities, as well as representation of various ethnic, class, and racial groups.

Action with regard to funding:

- Secure commitment of long-term funding from governments for the sector and for women's organizations in particular.

INTRODUCTION

In the voluntary sector, undoubtedly a major pillar of Canadian society, women constitute a large proportion of the staff and volunteers. A 1996 Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) survey found that in 1994 to 1995, non-profit organizations provided 1.6 million jobs.¹ While information about the voluntary sector is incomplete, it appears that between 50 and 75% of the non-profit sector employees are women,² and that 54% of volunteers are women, although the numbers are greater if informal volunteer activities are included.

As in much of the world, Canadian society operates in ways that lead to discrimination based on gender, resulting in women and girls not receiving a fair share of benefits and opportunities relative to their endeavours and contributions.³ Recent data on income levels in Canada shows that:

- The poverty rate for women is 20%, for women of colour 37%, and for Aboriginal women 43%
- Women in couples with children under 16 had median incomes of 48% of their male partners: \$13,153.
- Women aged 45 to 64 made only 51% of their male counterparts' earnings, with their median after-tax income being only \$14,779. As retirement income is a function of lifetime earnings, this is a predictor of greater risk of poverty in retirement.
- Women in the Atlantic region had the lowest median after-tax incomes in Canada: \$11,235.⁴

The high proportion of women in the voluntary sector, combined with the sector's reductions in core funding, increases in client and reporting demands and greater reliance on income from government service contracts, make gender inequities a significant concern of the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI), whose mandate is to strengthen the capacity of that sector and to improve its relationship with the

federal government. To advance in that direction, the VSI Secretariat commissioned a research brief to outline the challenges women volunteer and paid staff in the voluntary and community sector face, and to identify gaps in research and recommendations that would contribute to progress toward gender equality.

As other researchers discovered, data profiling employment trends in the voluntary sector are nebulous, not only with respect to worker characteristics, e.g., age, gender, education level, or the types of jobs held, but also to the fundamental questions of how many people work in the sector, under what conditions, not to mention the needs they and their organizations face.

More has been written on unpaid volunteering, e.g., motivations, volunteers' contributions to different sectors such as education and social and health services, as well as on the tensions that arise in organizations between paid staff and unpaid volunteers, all of which is reflected here.

METHODOLOGY

The first step was to review academic databases, which yielded several documents (half of which were written prior to 1990) concerning mainly volunteers rather than paid staff. Libraries at Status of Women Canada (SWC) and the Centre d'éducation des adultes et de la condition féminine (CDEACF) were also consulted. E-mail solicitations were sent through the PAR-L (a list-serve used by feminist scholars and activists) and the CDEACF list-serve. Web searches were performed on several websites, including the Centres of Excellence on Women's Health, Metropolis Canada (for comparative research and public policy development about population migration, cultural diversity and the challenges of immigrant integration in cities in Canada), the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy and the Internet Nonprofit Center. The VSI Secretariat also provided helpful documents and links to voluntary sector sites.

In addition, 15 key informants from the voluntary sector, identified by the VSI Secretariat and the research team, were consulted or interviewed (see Appendix A for a list of key informants and Appendix C for a sample interview guide). The interviews yielded valuable information on the impact of women's involvement in the voluntary sector, women's motivations for participating, the gendered division of labour, inequities based on gender or other factors such as race or disability, barriers to participation, and recommendations for action.

LIMITATIONS

It was not possible, given the time constraints of the project, to find or review everything written in Canada on gender issues in the voluntary sector. For example, Statistics Canada has extensive data from the 1997 labour survey, but no reports have been published specifically on the gender breakdown of volunteer activity, as was done in 1987. These data are retrievable, but not within the project's timeframe. While we know that the gap has narrowed in terms of gender representation in certain volunteer activities and staff functions, recent data would have been helpful. Instead, the 1987 survey serves as a baseline for future research on the voluntary sector. Little information was found, for instance, on immigrant women, and no research was found on Aboriginal women, lesbians or women with disabilities in the voluntary sector.

Fortunately, researchers have begun to bridge some of the gaps. For example, research on immigrant women in the voluntary sector in Alberta is examining positions held, training received, whether salaries are reasonable for those in the paid work force, what their experiences are, and whether they are visible or invisible in the workplace.⁵ Another research team in Montreal is examining the impact of immigrant women's participation in the voluntary sector on the development of democracy in Canada.

For now, this paper provides a general overview, including gaps in knowledge and recommendations for further research and action.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Canadian women have a long tradition of volunteering and have contributed tremendously to society, both through charity and advocacy work. The volunteer work of Canadian women was absolutely essential in the areas of social assistance and public charities until World War II, when government began to take on some of these responsibilities.⁶

In the temperance, abolition, and suffrage movements, women found a voice and a means to influence the development of Canada. Black women played a major role in benevolent societies, especially in Nova Scotia and southern Ontario, and were active in the abolitionist cause. Jewish women worked together within their community to support education and social welfare causes and the enrichment of Jewish life in Canada. Rural women also organized as urbanization triggered problems and changes in their communities. Organizations such as the Women's Institutes of Canada (established in 1897) and various provincial women's agriculture groups sought to address their needs and concerns, and to set up support structures and systems in their communities.

Most recent gains for women's rights resulted from the volunteer work of women and women's organizations. The outburst of activity in the late 1960s and 1970s touched and transformed every aspect of social, political, cultural and economic life in Canada, and led to action and organizing related to the environment, Aboriginal rights, and globalization. The volunteer work performed by women on a daily basis in organizations, communities and families across the nation today continues to be essential in education, health and community organizations, especially in the face of substantial government withdrawal of funding and/or services in those sectors.

IMPACT OF WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR ON SOCIETY

Those long in the voluntary sector agree that, overall, women's presence in the sector has had a positive impact. It was women who

brought "women's" issues to the forefront and took action on issues such as children and the family, women's health, violence against women and children, reproductive freedom, and the marginalization of other groups.

Some of these contributions were highly visible, leading to changes in law and policy, and the creation of new programs; others have been more day-to-day and service-related, but still essential to women's lives and well-being.

Through their involvement, women have developed skills, learned to manage organizations, sat on Boards of Directors and obtained greater access to economic and political power. Women in the voluntary sector now have improved access to power and leadership. But this gain has been undercut by reductions in financial resources in the voluntary sector. Most female officers and employees in leadership positions have little support staff; in addition, it is difficult for them to retain staff, who often use skills and experience gained in these positions to move into higher paying, lower stress positions elsewhere. Hence, how much impact this leadership can have is limited, continuing the cycle that makes it difficult for women to gain the jobs with the highest incomes and the greatest influence, even as they rise into leadership positions.⁷

Others feel that women's issues have become diffused, and set aside in favour of other issues. This hierarchy of issues usually does not focus on improving women's rights. And, there are still traditional ways that women are involved that do not support gender equality.⁸ Funding for women's organizations, even locally, is now much lower than was the case twenty years ago; most of this diminished funding is short-term and project-based. Workloads have increased dramatically because of the vacuum created by the withdrawal of government services; women's groups often take up the slack, despite reduced funding with which to do so. Voluntary sector staff has been reduced, with those left making much less money than their private and public sector counterparts.

MOTIVATIONS FOR GIVING, VOLUNTEERING AND PARTICIPATING

Giving, volunteering and participating are all influenced by a complex set of factors, including economic conditions, demographics, values, government policies and personal circumstances.⁹

For example, income levels and income growth affect the amount of discretionary income people have for donations. The economy also affects employment rates, hours of work and the quality of people's work, which, in turn, influence the availability and quality of free time that individuals can devote to volunteering or giving. Family responsibilities also affect women's choices.

Changing demographic conditions also influence donating, volunteering and participating, e.g., the consequences of an aging population. For some, age brings greater discretionary income to channel towards charitable donations; to others, declining health may interfere with volunteering. Yet for others, retirement provides the opportunity to devote more time to a particular cause. A study of seniors' involvement in Sherbrooke (Quebec) showed that seniors aged 60 and over accounted for over 74% of volunteers in the region.¹⁰ Increasingly seniors aged 65 to 74 are helping others 74 and older, a trend reinforced by the governments' disengagement from the health and social services sectors.¹¹ Other demographic factors – the ethno-cultural composition of the population, immigration and increased population mobility – also influence participation.

Values, of course, underlie the choices individuals make about which activity to engage in, and what is done with discretionary income or free time that affect giving, volunteering and participating.

Governments also influence giving and volunteering through the policies that encourage, or not, these activities. Improved tax credits for donations, the introduction of

mandatory community service as a requirement for secondary school graduation or adequate funding for community organizations show that the government can have a positive impact.

At a more personal level, perhaps the single most important motivation for people, regardless of age, sex, class, cultural or racial background to get involved in the voluntary sector is the desire to help and to make a difference. Another factor includes the acquisition of new skills, leading to a job or a better one, which is becoming more prevalent. Women are more likely than men to use volunteering as a means to obtain paid work since they enter or re-enter the workforce at different stages of their life.¹²

In a study of women's organizations' volunteer boards, the motivations of the individuals included wanting to make a difference, wanting to act (instead of sitting around and talking), and in general a desire to help.¹³ Others related more to professional skill development, e.g., financial skills, managerial skills, and administrative skills. There was a general interest in the trade-off of bringing and using skills already acquired with the opportunity to develop/acquire new ones. Still others were motivated by their membership in a minority community such as ethnic or sexual orientation groups and their allegiance to the interests of those groups/communities. Although none of the women mentioned entering into board service to establish bonds of friendship, many reflected that this was one of its most positive results.

In this study, one woman who had been involved in a particular organization over a period of time noted that there had been a considerable shift in the motivations and interest of board members. Whereas previously, most women's service on the board was due to their political struggles in the greater socio-political context (their desire for equality/equity with men), more recently many women on boards were motivated by personal or professional interests or the desire to help other women. The change in motivation from a political/activist focus of the women's move-

ment toward professionalization and a social work orientation is reflected here.

The need to respond to special needs of others, and the desire to belong to a group and maintain links with the community, were cited as principal motivating factors for volunteering among seniors in a rural Quebec homecare study.¹⁴ Many seek an authentic and unique experience in the relationships forged with the people they help.¹⁵ Women volunteers 50 years and older in rural Quebec communities are involved in ways that vary according to the periods of their lives and the conditions of each generation.¹⁶ While linked to children's education and church-related activities at an early age, women could become more socially engaged later on by taking on issues such as violence against women or other rights-based issues. And despite an increase in availability, as women aged, many chose not to volunteer so as to have more time for themselves or fulfil spiritual needs.

In a study of Canadian women married between 1914-1945, upper middle class women (defined in the study as Vital Volunteers) did considerable unpaid work.¹⁷ Some of this time was spent entertaining guests related to husband's work, other portions were in volunteer efforts that they were encouraged to do. As the women were freer to do volunteer work because the family did not need them to do paid work, they were expected to do volunteer work. Yet, their work was perceived, externally and perhaps by the women themselves, as more trivial than paid work, despite the fact that they devoted many hours and much skill to co-coordinating activities or events. Often aware of the skills and responsibilities that were being called for, women still did not perceive the importance/seriousness of the work.

While there are no statistics for women with disabilities' involvement in the voluntary sector, it is important to note that the voluntary sector is more important to this community because people with disabilities are less likely to be formally employed, because of access barriers.¹⁸ There are extremely high

poverty and unemployment rates within the disability community, making them more likely to volunteer in order to feel that they are contributing. Consequently, the participation rate of women with disabilities is very high.

Institutional, social and cultural barriers render integration for immigrant women slow and difficult, or unattainable in some cases. Statistically, immigrant women are not well integrated, even though they often have higher levels of education than Canadian-born women; their average earnings are less, and they are over-represented in lower status jobs and are often underemployed.¹⁹ A study on the integration process of immigrant women in urban centres in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and the organizational activities of immigrant women, assessed their significance in the integration process. Volunteering was a positive experience for these women, and was a strategy used to facilitate their integration. Laurence Lagouarde, coordinator of the Centre des femmes de Montreal (CFM), the membership of which is about 80% immigrant women, has noticed similar motivations among immigrant women involved in the CFM: Volunteering can be a way to integrate in their new country, create a network, practice French or English and develop a feeling of belonging.²⁰ However, at the Collectif des femmes immigrantes de Montreal, volunteers are well educated, speak French and are already well integrated into Canadian society. They see their involvement as a way to obtain employment, and if they don't already have a job, their priority is to find paid employment.²¹

A qualitative study explored whether volunteer work promotes a positive settlement experience for married Chinese women immigrants to Canada from Hong Kong since 1987; it also found that volunteering has a positive impact on the women involved.²² In the pilot project, women participants were recruited from English as a Second Language (ESL) programs to be trained and then placed as volunteer workers in various community organizations. Some of the general problems included a lack of English language skills, family centralism (social relationships formed

tightly around family ties and within a particular immigrant ethnic community), a lack of knowledge of community structures and resources, and a lack of understanding, familiarity and/or comfort with Canadian culture. Specific to these women were the problems of what the author refers to as married widow syndrome.²³ In these cases, women who were active or working in their communities previous to immigration are now more restricted to the domestic sphere; often their husbands had not left their businesses in Asia. These women reported a social isolation from the extra-familial and extra-ethnic community, and a lack of self-confidence due to language and culture considerations that played a role in their non-participation in the mainstream life of their new communities.

In general, their experiences were positive. They reported an improvement in their English language skills, the development of new friendships both with other participants and with volunteer and staff in their placement organizations, an improved understanding of cultural behaviour (especially child rearing practices and attitudes) and community resources as well as a growth in confidence and readiness to interact with people beyond their families and shared cultural group.

The author points out however, the ethical dilemma that would arise if such programs were promoted on a broad scale as a way of helping immigrants to integrate. She writes, One may (thus) argue that the volunteer experience is exploitative of the labour of immigrant women," but adds, "while it is true that the participants would have benefited equally, if not more, from paid employment that would have put them into contact with Canadians, their level of confidence, English proficiency, and knowledge of the culture may have prevented them from getting such employment: The volunteer experience provided a more flexible, less demanding and less stressful environment than paid jobs."²⁴

In terms of women's experiences as volunteers, and the challenges they face as volunteers, some studies have explored psy-

chological factors that might be considered on a broader scale.

A study of high profile civic leaders in the United States exposes some interesting psychological factors that are probably commensurate with Canadian cultural patterns.²⁵ Externally these women were establishing independence and competence in a man's world - politics, business etc., yet because they were women, they had to be indirect and non-confrontational in their approach to exercising influence. Many expressed a need or preference for a low-profile approach and often downplayed their own accomplishments. Internally, many of the women, even the most skilled and recognized, expressed a surprising amount of self-doubt and uncertainty with regards to the value of their work and their actual accomplishments.

This tension between the women's acceptance of traditional gender roles because of the privileges and status they bought them, and their desire to break from those very confines created a fair amount of psychological inner conflict and also some fairly complex psychological mechanisms for resolving these dilemmas. But despite these complexities, the women were able to gain much that was of value to them: broadened experiences, skills, social relationships and feelings of self-worth.

In a study on women volunteering as board members, few women who joined board of directors to develop their skills were initially intimidated or shy about taking on an active role. There was an interest in getting involved in a power centre but some self-doubt initially as they stepped into that role, which could be related to gender conditioning and perceived traditional roles for women vs. men. Empowerment might be a desirable goal but was not easy to achieve. Some women who stepped into their positions as board members had to deal with the psychological issues of self-esteem, confidence, and empowerment.²⁶

DIFFERENCES: WOMEN VS MEN

According to a fact sheet on gender differences in giving and volunteering prepared by the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy (based on figures provided by the National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating NSGVP), slightly more than half of Canada's volunteers and donors are women but men tend to contribute more hours and dollars per capita.²⁷

The study indicated that 81% of women and 75% of men made donations, women contributing \$2.32 billion, and men donating \$2.12 billion. On average, men gave \$243 while women gave \$236, while both contributed the largest proportion of total donations through places of worship (48% and 50% respectively). Men were more likely to make a donation through payroll deduction (13% vs. 9%), but women donated more to certain organizations on a regular basis (47% vs. 41%).

Although the pattern for women and men was similar, the largest differences were that women were more likely to donate to health organizations, and men to donate to philanthropy and voluntarism, e.g., fundraising organizations. The top motivation endorsed by both female and male donors was compassion towards people in need, but women were more likely to have been personally affected or to know someone personally affected as their motivation.

The NSGVP found that more women volunteer than men (28% vs. 25%) but men tend to volunteer more hours than women (170 hours for men and 155 for women).²⁸ Quebec is the only province where there is a nearly equal number of volunteers among men and women (51% men vs. 49% women). There was a decline, however, in the percentage of Canadians who volunteer, to 27% in 2000 from 31% in 1997. Accompanying the decline in the volunteer rate was a decline in the total hours contributed, but those who did volunteer gave more time.²⁹

According to NSVGP, women are more likely to:

- Canvas, campaign or fundraise (47% vs 39%)
- Provide care or support (25% vs 21%)
- Collect, serve or deliver food (25% vs 21%)

Men are more likely to:

- Teach or coach for an organization (30% vs 22%)
- Maintain, repair or build facilities (23% vs 9%)
- Drive for an organization (22% vs 17%)³⁰

Unfortunately, the NSGVP does not provide detailed profiles of gender breakdowns on volunteering as did the 1987 National Survey on Volunteering.³¹ Some of its findings from the 1987 data are worth highlighting, as several are probably still valid today. For instance, it found that women tended to do more informal volunteer work than men, i.e., outside organizations.³² This was calculated according to what men and women perceived to be volunteer work. Many of the women surveyed performed various tasks on a daily basis that were not just basic domestic/care-giving tasks in their own families; but only some of those activities were perceived by the women as volunteer activities. Due to their socialization, women often feel obliged to help out in the care of others, even outside their immediate families, and suggesting that this is why they perform more informal (extra-organizational) volunteer work than men, without even perceiving it as such.

Of the women and men who identified themselves as formal volunteers i.e., as volunteers associated with an organization, in response to the question Did you help run this organization?, 42% of men replied "yes," compared to 31% of women.

The top six volunteer jobs for women were:

- making items,
- preparing or serving food,
- selling items,
- collecting/distributing food or goods,
- providing care or companionship, and
- office administration/bookkeeping/library work.

The top six volunteer jobs for men were:

- repairing/maintaining/building facilities,
- professional consulting,
- fire-fighting/first-aid/search and rescue,
- coaching/refereeing/judging,
- sitting as a board member, and
- promoting ideas/researching/writing/speaking.

Another notable difference between men and women volunteers was employment status. Of those surveyed who considered themselves volunteers, 73% of men were employed full time, compared to only 38% of women; 16% of the men were not in the labour force, compared to 40% of women. This discrepancy was consistent with the overall Canadian employment statistics of that period.

The Health Organizations category revealed that 77% of volunteers were women, substantially higher than the overall percentage in the study (55%).³³ The authors surmised that perhaps this was a result of health care generally falling into the stereotypically female domain (care-giving, etc.). Similarly, more women participated in making items, preparing food, and selling than men (37% women, 27% men); and a higher percentage of men recruited, educated, spoke in public, and sat on boards than women (30% for men and 14% for women). Men spent more time counselling and giving advice, and they comprised two-thirds of boards of health organizations, even though women had a much higher volunteer rate, again following stereotypical gender role lines.

The Social Service Organizations profile showed that, in this category, male volunteers were more likely to have approached the organization on their own accord, whereas women tended to have responded to public appeal campaigns.³⁴ More men helped to create the organizations they were involved with than women did. Again on the issue of actual activities, there were significant gender differences. Men were more likely than women to supervise other volunteers (22% vs. 14%), sit as a board member (29% vs. 20%), and say that they help run the organizations (35% vs. 27%).

The 1987 and 2000 NSGVP data clearly establish that while the gender gap has narrowed in terms of what male and female volunteers do, there is still a stereotypical division of labour. Men tend to coach, sit on boards, contribute ideas, and do maintenance tasks; women are more active in food-related activities, selling, making things, and fundraising. There are still far fewer women than men in community infrastructure, service clubs, fire fighters or community economic development.³⁵ According to statistics from the Centre d'action bénévole de Montreal, which coordinates volunteers for approximately 500 organizations in the Montreal area, women make up two-thirds of the volunteers and are mostly involved in community and social services, while men, who make up the other third, are mostly involved in sports and recreation.³⁶

Another area dependent on women volunteers is the education system. Primary schools in particular depend on women to volunteer; without them, there would be far fewer activities and, in many cases, no school libraries.³⁷ Mothers often feel guilty if they don't volunteer when they have free time. However, there are also benefits to getting involved in school issues, such as taking part in the decision-making process.

Women make up 80 to 90% of volunteers and staff of the Association Québécoise pour les droits des retraités (AQDR) a Quebec seniors' rights organization. According to Huguette Beauchamp, past president of the

AQDR, women outnumber men as President of the Board in the various chapters across the province.³⁸ In terms of board membership, among the community organizations in the Sherbrooke MRC, women accounted for 66% of the boards, a trend the authors believe holds for the rest of Quebec. The study also found that 74% of the region's volunteers were 60 years and older, and of these, 71% were women.³⁹

There may be fewer differences between men and women volunteers from the disability community than in the general population. According to Kathy Marshall of DAWN Canada: 'In disability organizations, there are very little recognizable divisions of labor along general gender lines. This is because there are so few of us with so little resources that everybody is forced to do everything.'⁴⁰ She notes, however, that women gravitate to volunteer work relating to family connections, e.g., day-care and helping others, whereas men work on board development and organizational issues.

Clearly, no generalizations can be made for immigrant and visible minority communities, although it may be assumed that the division of labour in immigrant and visible minority organizations reflects the cultural values prevalent in each community.⁴¹

Some in the field consider that, in fact, the patterns of men and women, their participation, their issues, and their challenges or advantages in the voluntary sector differ little from the patterns in other sectors: In the voluntary sector, the governance is male. There is more female leadership in social work-type organizations and activities, also child-related parts of the sector and women's organizations.⁴²

EQUITY ISSUES

FACTORS INFLUENCING PARTICIPATION

Many factors influence participation in the voluntary sector, such as age, class, education, income, family responsibilities, racial discrimination, etc. For instance, across visible minority communities, women often face a triple bind - as women facing gender-based inequity, as immigrants facing settlement issues, and as women of colour facing systemic and structural racial barriers.⁴³ Racism, sexism and classism - which are structurally integrated in mainstream agencies - generally compound the inequities faced by women within these communities. For these reasons perhaps, visible minority and immigrant women tend to volunteer in religious, cultural or community organizations that serve these communities, although many work in mainstream organizations.⁴⁴

For women with disabilities, there are also serious obstacles to surmount. Accessibility in organizations largely determines where they volunteer; consequently, people with disabilities tend to stay within their own community, or with organizations set up to accommodate them.⁴⁵ Accessibility is the most important issue for women with disabilities, both as volunteers and staff. In many cases, disability overrides gender as a pressing concern for women with disabilities, having a greater impact than gender identity or discrimination.

As staff, hiring practices are the most significant issue for people with disabilities, with organizations divided into two groups: consumer-controlled organizations, which often have affirmative action hiring, and service-providing organizations which tend to have far fewer affirmative action hiring processes, with people with visible disabilities facing more stigmatization. Therefore people with visible disabilities might be less likely to go out into the community (into a non-disability organization) and offer their services. People with invisible disabilities often appear

more versatile and therefore can move more freely in non-disability organizations and groups.

While other factors influence both men and women with disabilities as volunteers, women face additional barriers when trying to so participate and contribute, having to deal with self-esteem more than men with disabilities and more than other women, as they feel extremely marginalized.

Economic well-being is another determinant of participating in the voluntary sector, particularly as a volunteer. Women who are better off economically, often linked to the level of education, are more available for volunteer or advocacy work, remarks Viviane Barbot of the Fédération des femmes du Québec, adding that when women are in a precarious situation financially, all their energies are focused on that.⁴⁶ Women may also face other problems such as family violence, or isolation, low self-esteem, or legal problems. It's usually only once they have solved these problems, or started to solve them, that they feel able to become involved.

It is vital that organizations cover expenses such as childcare, transportation and even meals when necessary to women's participation. Volunteers should not have to incur expenses when they give of their time, although many do.

Those in the sector for some time have experienced first-hand the real, concrete lack of women-friendly practices: No one asks volunteers, do you need childcare? They'll ask you what your food preferences are if you're going to a meeting or a conference, but they won't ask you, say if you serve on a board, do you need accommodation because of children, e.g., an earlier meeting time? They don't ask you if you need hotel accommodation with a play area or supervised childcare services, etc., or, for example, offer women charitable receipts for childcare expenses.⁴⁷

Staff

SALARIES AND BENEFITS: GENDER DIFFERENCES

As noted earlier, data on salaries and benefits in the Canadian voluntary sector are still very sketchy. Data do exist for certain sectors comparing them with the private or public sector but there have been no studies of the sector as a whole. Between 1991 and 2000, there has been some growth in employment, but salaries remained modest and often stagnant for the following areas, in which the employers were predominantly, if not almost exclusively voluntary organizations:

- child day-care services: annual wages only reached the \$20,000 mark in 2000.
- civic and social organizations such as service clubs, sports associations, ethnic associations, and youth groups such as the Girl Guides: \$20,000 (in constant, inflation-adjusted 2000 dollars, as are the remaining dollar figures).
- community care (or assisted living) facilities for the elderly: average annual wages were about \$23,000.
- individual and family services (including both child and youth organizations such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters; services for the elderly and persons with disabilities; and other services, such as friendship centres, crisis centres, home care, self-help organizations and refugee services): average annual wages were almost flat at \$24,000.
- other residential care facilities such as group homes and half-way houses: average annual wages were about \$26,000.
- residential developmentally handicapped, mental health and substance abuse facilities: annual wages ranged between \$24,000 and \$27,000 over the decade.
- social advocacy organizations: annual wages were about \$27,000.
- vocational rehabilitation services: average annual wages were about \$23,000.⁴⁸

As might be expected, given the relatively meagre salaries, the benefits in Canadian voluntary organizations also tend to be quite limited. The 1996 HRDC/CCP study shows that only 10% of charities have unionized staff; 24% offer no benefits to their employees; and only 7% pay clerical and support staff more than the average industrial wage.⁴⁹ The authors note that the data emerging since then have not been more encouraging.

In terms of senior management representation, evidence of glass ceiling effects in Canadian voluntary organizations appear mixed.⁵⁰ A study of mid-size organizations in Alberta and Saskatchewan found that 63% of executive directors and 79% of second-level managers, were female (along with 88% of managers of volunteers), but it did not break down their salaries by gender to test for disparities.⁵¹ Another study in British Columbia was largely silent on these matters, although it found the vast majority of employees (81%) were female.⁵² Haiven (2000), however, found that although 77% of employees in the Canadian organizations she studied were female, 75% of the managers were male.⁵³ Her study included several large (multi-million dollar annual revenues) organizations, and 11 of 13 were located in Ontario, so those two factors may have played a role. Finally, the Canadian fund-raisers' survey (Charity Village 2000) found male full-time respondents earned an average of \$55,929 in 1998, while women earned about 10% less (\$50,356).⁵⁴

There did not appear to be any systematic information available about other equal opportunity and diversity issues. Haiven (2000) reports that although both have equal opportunity or diversity policies, neither the Canadian nor the British organizations studied actually hired many people from ethnic minorities or with disabilities.

IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT CUTS

Recent studies show the adverse effects of government funding cutbacks on the staff of voluntary sector organizations. The CCP/HRDC literature review demonstrates those effects on the organizations and their workers.

An Ontario study of 40 voluntary organizations found that from 1988 to 1998, increased demand for services was the norm, with several agencies doubling or even tripling caseloads, with little or no increase in staff.⁵⁵ The workload had increased for virtually all managers and front-line staff, including a massive increase in paperwork. Both management and staff have had to multi-task and take on many different kinds of work, leaving managers with less time to provide needed guidance to the over-burdened staff dealing with increasingly serious client issues. This was especially true in larger agencies that had cut middle management positions. In some smaller agencies, the sole administrative position was cut, leaving the remaining staff to take turns answering the phone and doing bookkeeping. The non-unionized organizations also reported a great deal of unpaid overtime or home-based work. Even unionized workers were doing more paperwork, additional tasks, and in some cases were working a longer day for the same pay.

Salaries throughout the sector remained low, largely frozen for at least five years. Many trained and experienced staff, including those dealing with demanding clients, earned just \$10 per hour. About half of the agencies had shifted to hiring new staff principally on a contract or part-time basis rather than as regular employees in order to save on payroll taxes.

Besides the increased workload and limited compensation issues, these studies found an increase in the amount of "professionalization," with funders' increasing requirements for accreditation and sophisticated evaluations and reports, requiring staff to become computer-literate and to have other qualifications and organizational competencies. Increasingly, staff needed advanced

degrees to increase the chances of winning contracts or grants, even if the training was not directly applicable to the tasks at hand. Smaller grassroots agencies are being crowded out by larger, more professional organizations. Over half of the agencies also mentioned that the general field of human resources was becoming increasingly legalized, and some were concerned about their liability regarding staff or volunteers giving what could be construed as medical advice without the necessary qualifications, or volunteers or staff being at risk from violent clients, and other legal and risk management matters. Not surprisingly, there were similar findings in studies done in the Maritimes in the late 1990s.⁵⁶

As the welfare-state disintegrates, women pick up the slack again informally (in the domestic family sphere). "You almost have to be a missionary to work in community groups," notes France Cormier of the Centre d'action bénévole de Shawinigan.⁵⁷ Lack of funding in the sector is a serious barrier to women's participation. It sometimes leads to the interruption of services, very low salaries for women and precarious jobs. Given this situation, it is not surprising that workplaces, especially the mainstream organizations, rarely offer women workers other kinds of support such as childcare.

WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS: FUNDING

Stable funding is particularly rare for groups that provide services specifically to women.

Women's needs often rank low in society's valuation and such organizations are often perceived as having less prestige. As a result, corporations tend not to be generous in funding women's causes: a United States study found only 5 or 6% of Foundation money goes to women's groups.⁵⁸ Most granting agencies prefer to fund groups who say their programs are universal.

Women's organizations are more dependent on government funding, increasing their vulnerability in times of government cutbacks

In recent years, Canadian women's groups have lost most of the stable funding once available especially from the federal government departments such as the Secretary of State for Women's Program or (more recently) Status of Women Canada. There have been substantial cuts at the provincial level as well.

Organizations constantly having to scramble for funding include shelters for battered women and children, clinics where women can take control of their own reproduction, sexual assault counselling centres, legal clinics for women dealing with divorce or custody issues, and organizations advocating greater legal and economic equality between women and men. This situation can be extremely stressful for women already overextended but who feel that they have no other choice than to respond: "Basically, the two words that come to mind are desperation and need," says Darlene Jamieson, a member of the National Association of Women and the Law. "I was sitting in a meeting of women lawyers recently and we were reviewing some cases. There's a whole trend towards criminalizing abused women within the judicial system. We just looked around at each other and said, we have to do something about thi". These are all women with full, full lives, huge workloads, many with family responsibilities. But we have no choice, it's got to be done."⁵⁹

A pilot study by Meinhard and Foster (1997) found that women tend to operate in a collaborative framework, rather than a competitive or cost-cutting one, in response to reduced funding and an increased demand for services.⁶⁰ Results from a more in-depth study by Meinhard and Foster are not available yet, but one can predict that falling back on volunteers is a strategy that women's groups must rely on, despite the fact that it goes against what they have been fighting for.

Some groups grapple uneasily with such contradictions, of needing to rely on volunteers to keep a women's centre open, for instance and their belief that asking women to work for free just goes to reproduce what they have been struggling against. "If a task requires a full-time volunteer, it should be a paid

position and we have to do everything possible to find the funding," says Viviane Barbot, President of the Fédération des femmes du Québec.⁶²

As a result of cutbacks in both funding and public services, women in the voluntary sector are burnt out from advocating on behalf of the more marginalized and trying to provide the level of service required in the face of increasing demands, both from clients and from funders and government in the form of increased paperwork to fulfil more stringent accountability requirements. A systematic study of the working conditions across the voluntary sector would surely confirm this disquieting picture.

UNPAID WORK THAT WOMEN DO

Women's volunteer work in formal situations only scratches the surface of what women contribute without pay on a day-to-day basis. Beyond what constitutes volunteer work, the fact is that women do far more unpaid work than men. According to an article from the Canadian Women's Health Journal by Lesley Poirier entitled, "Spare 28 hours a week? Care giving still in Women's Job Description", one in five Canadian women spend an average of 28 unpaid hours per week caring for an ill or family member with a disability.⁶³ Two-thirds of Canadian care-givers work outside the home as well. Twenty percent report negative health impacts to themselves as a result of the extra work, and 40% report personal expenses incurred. As the population ages, more and more care is going to be needed, and as women outlive men on average, most of both the needy and the needed will be women. In the future, society needs to seriously consider the problem of unpaid care giving in the domestic sphere; as it affects not only those needing care, but also the caregivers themselves.⁶⁴

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES (ICTS)

The Womenspace website, dedicated to the promotion of online activism for women's rights and civic participation and funded by Status of Women Canada, provides a forum for thinking and sharing on women's presence on the web.

Feminist activists Jo Sutton and Scarlet Pollock, for instance, write about the digital divide: The lack of analysis and planning to ensure the inclusion of the diversity of women in communications technology will have huge repercussions on women. Women risk being excluded from educational or employment opportunities and health information.⁶⁵

One key issue they identify is bridging the gap between information haves and have-nots. Typically, women have less online access than men, for all the usual gender-related reasons: time, money, control, learning opportunities, other commitments, and prioritizing others' needs. Poverty, race, age, disability and other factors add to the barriers. The predominance of English on the Internet adds layers of difficulty for those who speak other languages. In addition, as the authors point out, language is not simply about translation. Language also carries culture developed through history, within specific geographical areas, and in addition, women tend to use language differently than men. As more information is appearing solely online, women need to develop strategies to ensure that online material can reach women who do not have Internet access. It is also important to create an Internet information base that reflects the diversity of ideas that exist in our communities.

Nicole Nepton, who created and manages the Cybersolidaire website, believes that since women have fewer resources, it seems likely that they will not only experience a deficit in the digital world but this will be compounded by the deficit they already face in the political sphere and the economy. If nothing is deliberately planned, the Internet will likely generate more inequality for women.

Again, lack of funding for women's groups and marginalized communities resurfaces as a major barrier to access and participation. For instance, a 1997 survey of 458 Quebec community groups by Communautique, an organization dedicated to social justice and the democratic use of information and communication technologies, found that women, consumer, human rights and recreation groups owned fewer modern computers (1.3 on average) than groups from the economic development, professional development and education sectors (between 3.8 and 7.8 on average). Predictably, groups in remote regions were less equipped than groups from metropolitan areas.⁶⁶

Of the sixty-three women's groups responding to the survey, 9 (or 14%) didn't own a computer at all, 20 (15%) owned only one computer, a Pentium (indicating they equipped themselves fairly recently) and 12 groups had two Pentiums). More than half of community groups surveyed had only one computer with Internet access, forcing people to take turns to do Internet research or access E-mail.

The chronic shortage of funds in women's groups can cripple even the most valiant efforts to facilitate access to the Internet. Internet au féminin, a pilot project of the Centre d'éducation aux adultes et de la condition féminine (CDEAFC) to encourage women's groups to connect to the Internet, didn't have money to buy equipment as did several groups, even though help was available through Volnet, a program of Industry Canada designed to connect community groups by paying a significant part of the costs involved.⁶⁷ Another potential source of funding for Internet access, Industry Canada's Community Access Program (CAP) has turned down many women's groups because their facilities would be available only to women.⁶⁸

As Heather Gordon of the Sunshine Coast Women's Resources Centre comments: "The 'volunteers will do it' view doesn't work in the women's sector - we're volunteered out!! Volunteers haven't done it in (CAP) sites either - sit on the CAP listserv and watch the sustainability part of the discussion. And

Volnet may be an answer for some women's organizations but not for many of us - particularly those of us who have led the charge thus far. We have done so much already with almost no financial support. It is both inspiring and frustrating to imagine what could be done if even 1% of the Industry Canada annual budget were given to further the development of women's connectivity!!"⁶⁹

A particularly telling case is related to CANARIE, "Canada's advanced Internet organization", funded by the federal government and several telecommunications and education institutions. Until recently, only one of its eight-person board of directors was a woman. Similarly, until recently, only two of 10 Board members of the Canadian Internet Registration Authority were women.⁷⁰

The federal government started in the late 1990s to connect Canadians in earnest. As the government re-examines its Innovation Agenda, it is an opportune time to re-examine to what extent the community sector, particularly women's groups, have been able to take advantage of the various programs and assist in the development of coherent policies. If this is not undertaken, the digital divide along economic, gender and geographical lines is certain to widen further.

CONCLUSION

The question that lingers is: how will the voluntary sector be able to continue to motivate giving and participating if present trends continue? As seen above, women make up a large portion of the voluntary sector, sometimes accounting for as much as 80 to 90% of staff and volunteers in the health and social spheres. Given the very low salaries and minimal benefits across the sector, it is surprising that women continue to volunteer and work under such conditions, in such high numbers.

Several studies reviewed, and practically every person interviewed in the context of this overview, highlighted the fatigue that workers and volunteers experience as the state disengages and downsizes health and social services. A way must be found to secure a commitment from government for stable and long-term funding of the sector. Failing to address the funding issue will continue to cost the sector and society at large, and the rapid turnover in community organizations and the recent shrinking of the volunteer pool points to serious troubles ahead. Meagre wages paid not only cost women individually but Canadian society as well as these women age without adequate pensions or personal savings, thereby becoming dependent on government assistance.

There are huge gaps in knowledge in terms of the voluntary sector's demographics (age, education, gender, ethnic background), salaries and benefits paid in different parts of the sector and in relation to the public and private sectors, as well as the effects of government cutbacks. This lack of knowledge impedes pressing for better conditions. There is a definite need for more thorough studies that use a gender and diversity perspective, and such a perspective should be an integral part of the work of the National Survey of Voluntary Organizations, to be undertaken as part of the VSI.

While women have risen to leadership positions in the sector, they are still by and

large under-represented in the upper levels of management structures, both as paid employees and volunteers, particularly for larger and more prestigious organizations. There are also significant access barriers for women/people with disabilities (often overriding gender concerns) and for immigrant and visible minority women/people (though women often face the triple bind of gender, race and poverty (as new immigrants). The sector should examine its practices towards minority groups and promote policies that increase employment equity. The work of the Capacity Joint Table on human resources in the voluntary sector should explicitly include these considerations.

Finally, the voluntary sector must examine the digital divide from a gender perspective in order to identify barriers and develop coherent policies to bridge the gaps that exist within the sector, assisted by increased public-sector funding. Any recommendations of the Information Management/Information Management Joint Table should include these considerations.

There is a significant opportunity for the VSI to take stock and promote policies to increase gender equity in the voluntary sector. Besides advocating for women's right to a decent living at par with workers in other sectors of the economy, the VSI and any future leadership models for the voluntary sector and/or joint activities by the voluntary sector and the federal government should promote policies that encourage further diversity in voluntary-sector organizations to reduce the barriers preventing women with disabilities and from different ethnic and racial backgrounds feeling welcome.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the following recommendations cannot be easily achieved, or they would have been implemented already. In a time when women's struggles are largely depoliticised, what is needed, perhaps more than ever, is for women to forcefully voice the need for adequate salaries and working conditions in a sector that is so vital to the well being of so many vulnerable Canadians.

Research:

- Undertake a thorough gender analysis of the sector to analyze the breakdown of occupations and to test for wage gaps.
- Perform a thorough comparison of the voluntary sector's wages and benefits with those of other sectors for positions with similar qualifications, responsibilities and duties.
- Examine how organizations promote gender equity through the use of the Internet and to increase women and women's groups access to the Internet. Promote and implement existing ideas, e.g., Womenspace website.

Action with regard to employment and volunteer management:

- Promote the implementation of policies such as pay equity, employment benefits and pension plans. Organizations could be encouraged to develop general human resources guidelines or to find ways to promote good practices in terms of gender equity. A checklist could be one easy and accessible tool for organizations.
- Since less than 10% of community organizations are unionized, promote a better understanding of unionizing as a means to improve equality.
- Take stock of organizations that have implemented women-friendly practices, e.g., day-care and tax credits for employees and volunteers, and promote these practices across the sector.

- Develop guidelines for organizations on gender equity in management structures and also for volunteers as part of improved accountability mechanisms to funders and members.
- Profile accommodation and hiring practices in the voluntary sector - educate organizations on the discrimination women/people with disabilities face in the sector in order to promote accommodation
- Promote awareness and understanding of gender equity in the voluntary sector.

Action with regard to participation in voluntary sector governance:

- Find ways to be more inclusive in VSI processes, and advocate for better representation of diverse groups, e.g., women/people with disabilities, as well as representation of various ethnic, class, and racial groups.

Action with regard to funding:

- Secure commitment of long-term funding from governments for the sector and for women's organizations in particular.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED OR CONSULTED

Viviane Barbot
Présidente, La Fédération des femmes du Québec

Huguette Beauchamp,
Past President, Association québécoise de défense des droits des
personnes retraitées et préretraitées.

Aoura Bizarri
Coordinatrice, Le Collectif des femmes immigrantes de Montréal

Susan Carter
Executive Director, Voluntary Sector Initiative Secretariat

Kevin Cohalan
Executive Director, Centre d'action bénévole de Montréal

France Cormier
Directrice générale, Le Centre d'action bénévole de Shawinigan

Johanne Fillion
Présidente, Réseau québécois des femmes pour l'environnement

Darlene Jamieson
Women's Future Fund - president, National Association of Women and
the Law-member

Laurence Lagouarde
Volunteer Coordinator, Le Centre des femmes de Montréal

Kathy Marshall
National Co-ordinator, DAWN Canada (DisAbled Women's Network)

Rosalie Ndejuru.
Directrice générale, Le Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des
adultes et la condition féminine (CDEACF)

Nicole Nepton
Coordonnatrice bénévole, Cybersolidaires website

Michèle Ollivier
Collaboratrice, Communautique

Jo Sutton
Chair Program Delivery, VoINet National Advisory Committee

Elaine Teofilovici
Chief Executive Officer, YWCA of/du Canada

APPENDIX B

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VIEWS OF KEY INFORMANTS

1. Impact of women's involvement in the Voluntary Sector

- Most of the gains that have been made for women's rights have been due to the volunteer work of women and women's organizations.
- Issues of children and the family, women's health, violence against women, reproductive freedom are much more recognized.

2. Changes in the Voluntary Sector

- Twenty years ago there was a great interest in looking at women's and gender issues; it was a priority on the political agenda.
- There is a much higher workload in the sector because governments are downloading so many services that they used to provide.
- The nature of the work involved has changed a great deal in the last twenty years. Individuals play far more roles than before. Volunteers and staff are required to have multiple skills and varied knowledge.

3. Areas where women are likely to get involved in the Voluntary Sector

- Women are more present in the social sphere - activities and organizations, sexual violence, or human rights or an extension of their traditional roles - childcare, health or poverty. There are far fewer women than men in community infrastructure, sports and recreation, service clubs, fire fighters or community economic development.

4. Motivations to participate in the Voluntary Sector

- While the primary motivation for volunteering is the desire to help and to make a difference, increasingly motivations include the acquisition of new skills, leading to employment. This is particularly true for the younger generation and immigrant women.

5. Key Equity Issues

- While it is difficult to generalise because the sector is varied, in general in mainstream organizations, women are found at all the levels of organizations except at senior levels.
- Funding of community organizations remains precarious, especially women's groups. Most of the existing funding is short term and project-based.
- It is surprising to several respondents that women's salaries remain so low.
- The state has recuperated volunteer work to make up for massive cuts in social and health services.
- As volunteers, immigrant and visible minority women face barriers such as lack of language skills or knowledge of Canadian culture.
- The most important barrier for women with disabilities is accessibility, often overriding gender concerns.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Gender Equity Issues In The Canadian Voluntary Sector

The Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) is a joint initiative to strengthen the capacity of the voluntary sector and to enhance the relationship between the Sector and the Government of Canada.

The VSI Secretariat is presently conducting research synthesis project to identify key gender equity issues in the Canadian voluntary sector, e.g., decision-making/power, safety, health, aging, parenting, income, wages and benefits, racial or ethnic discrimination, ability, sexual orientation, etc., and within communities - immigrant and visible minority, Aboriginal, persons with disabilities, remote, rural, etc.

This research also aims to identify measures or further research needed to achieve gender equity in the sector.

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Title: _____

Has the volunteer and community sector changed over the last twenty years? What are the factors behind this change?

From your perspective, what has been the impact of women's involvement in the voluntary/not-for-profit sector?

for women individually?

for society as whole and/or women's rights?

Are there community sectors where women are most likely to be found? If there is a difference between women and men, how would you describe it?

What are the factors that influence women's participation in the voluntary sector as volunteers or as staff?

Are there barriers to women's participation? If so, please describe.

In your opinion, what are the key equity issues that women face in the voluntary/not for profit sector:

as volunteers?

as staff?

For each of the issues identified, what measures or policies would you recommend to improve the situation?

What concrete action can the Voluntary Sector Initiative undertake to gender equity in the voluntary sector?

In your opinion, which of these actions would have the greatest impact in the short and medium term? Which one would you prioritise and why?

Do you have other comments, thoughts, suggestions?

Thanks for your participation

ENDNOTES

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