



# FOCUS 'N GE

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE GENDER EQUALITY UNIT

Hello Colleagues!

As we move forward in pushing a gender transformative agenda as part of our strategic commitment **Grow Program Impact**; in this edition of Focus 'n GE, we bring to you a promising and innovative model applied in our project for women's economic empowerment in Pakistan. As always, we ask ourselves critical questions and invite you to do the same!

Since 1975 there has been global recognition that national mechanisms for gender equality and the advancement of women and girls are vital for ensuring that public policy is gender responsive, for being catalysts of change and monitoring the status of women and girls in societies. The call for these mechanisms was underlined in the [CEDAW Committee General Recommendation No. 6](#) in 1988 and was reaffirmed in 1995 in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

Over the decades there has been a mushrooming of such mechanisms around the world in the shape of ministries, autonomous commissions and decentralized gender focal systems across governments. As a collective, these mechanisms are often referred to as *women's national ma-*

*chinerias* whose core function is to promote and mainstream gender equality across government action.

Globally many gains can be attributed to these mechanisms such as the adoption of equal opportunity laws, national gender equality policies and plans, establishment of institutions within local, regional and federal governments for advising on matters of concern to women and girls or coordinating, supporting, monitoring and advocating for women's equality. However, at the same time it is recognized that these higher level actions have not translated into positive outcomes on ground for a host of reasons including weak capacity, low resources and low authority and ac-

countability of these mechanisms.

### So what does this mean for us?

Read on to see how we took the **concept and principles** of a national gender equality institutional mechanism, adapted it into a model for **systematic grassroots** application and applied it in our project Rural Women's Empowerment through Enhanced Participation in South Punjab's Dairy Sector, Pakistan (WEE-PK).

You can ask, do these mechanisms work? Our response, yes they do! Not only can they be effective, they can be replicable and sustainable. **If done well, they can be powerful drivers of change!**

### Rural Women's Economic Empowerment through Enhanced Participation in South Punjab's Dairy Sector (WEE-PK Project)

- ◆ Funded by Global Affairs Canada
- ◆ **Location:** Layyah, Muzaffargarh and Vehari Districts, Punjab Province, Pakistan
- ◆ **Project Duration:** September 2014 to March 2019





## WEE-PK

WEE-PK's overall objective is to economically empower poor rural women, their families, and communities by strengthening the dairy sector in three districts of southern Punjab, namely Vehari, Layyah and Muzzafargarh. The project aims to increase women's participation and decision-making in supplying quality milk to the market. WEE-PK works towards its overall objective **through promoting modern animal husbandry, improving commercial dairy practices, increasing market access, and improving institutional (cooperative) management and business acumen among women** and poor communities. A key outcome of the project is to establish and strengthen functional and sustainable **Farmers Milk Cooperatives (FMCs)** that provide equitable economic benefits to women and men livestock farmers by building on the successes of a previously implemented project in Pakistan. The project will directly reach 12,250 beneficiaries consisting of 9,188 women and 3,062 men in the three districts.

## THE CONTEXT FOR WOMEN DAIRY FARMERS IN SOUTH PUNJAB

### Undervalued labour

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in its [2015 study](#) found women in Punjab spend around **12 to 15 hours daily on agricultural activities**, which also includes taking care of livestock. In **dairy production, women account for 93 percent of total employment** and play a larger role than men in livestock maintenance and dairy production – animal feeding, cleaning, care, milking, chopping of fodder and are solely responsible for homemade milk products. Women are also involved in the sale of milk; **yet in spite of their immense labour contributions in the sector the project baseline data found that women earn a mere 68% of the amount earned by men.**

**Gender norms root cause of low value of women**

The project gender assessment uncovered **several interrelated barriers and challenges women dairy farmers face** including:

- ◆ Low mobility due to cultural norms with little freedom to venture outside their homes
- ◆ High burden of household care work which is considered the sole responsibility of women and girls
- ◆ Low decision-making autonomy in their homes or communities with men controlling decision-making across spheres
- ◆ Economic dependency on men with little control over their earnings
- ◆ Low access to information and services such as veterinary services, skills training and markets resulting in selling milk at exploitative rates to middlemen.

Women's full participation in the dairy sector, and specifically for the sale and marketing of milk and milk products, is **severely limited due to stringent cultural and gender related norms** that restrict women's movement beyond the home and their ability to interact with men outside their families.

### Even as members of existing FMCs

some 80% of women felt they had no or limited say in decisions taken by the FMCs of how income should be spent or what sort of new business opportunities should be explored. Women felt they were not listened to, were seldom called for meetings or that decisions were taken by men. High proportions of men conceded that women are given no importance in FMCs and the enabling environment to let them freely share their opinions is not there. Lack of time and need for male accompaniment or permission are common barriers women face in participating in FMCs. Women also face harassment, which is a major hurdle in effective participation in FMCs and their economic empowerment in the dairy sector.

### WEE-PK's gender transformative approach to tackle gender-related barriers women face in the dairy sector:

- a) Affirmative action measures that favour women in: FMCs, skills development and productive assets distribution
- b) Simultaneous enabling environment creation in households and communities through concerted engagement of men and other gatekeepers
- c) Development of equitable FMC culture and structures and policy advocacy



## TRANSPOSING A MACRO MODEL TO MICRO LEVEL FOR IMPACT

The ILO in its [2018 Global Report](#) states, “at 48.5 percent in 2018, women’s global labour force participation rate is 26.5 percentage points below that of men.” Prevalent cultural norms play a large part in limiting space for women’s economic empowerment. Globally almost [“two in five people agree](#) that men should have stronger

rights than women to jobs when they are scarce.” Clearly, just creating a gender-sensitive policy environment is not enough- though critical; there is a need to confront gender barriers at individual, family and community levels concurrently.

Keeping in mind the macro level positive impacts of gender equality institu-

tional mechanisms and the challenging gender related context of the WEE-PK project, we looked at the question of how the concept and principles of these mechanisms could be leveraged and transposed to the micro level in a systematic way for gender transformative, grass-roots led change.

## CREATION OF THE GENDER EQUALITY MECHANISM: WEE-PK GEMS

**Organizational platform:** Three hundred and thirty (330) Farmers Milk Cooperatives (FMCs) are the key market-driven business entities supported in the project villages with pivotal roles for women’s participation. These FMCs perform specific functions including milk collection, testing and marketing and offer in-house training opportunities and services to members. These FMCs also create opportunities for increased connectivity to milk delivery systems, financial markets, and consumers.

For establishing the gender equality mechanism across the project, **FMCs provide the organizational platform** necessary for systematic implementation of the project’s gender transformative approach.

WEE-PK formed new and engaged with existing village FMCs through formal Terms of Partnership that set:

### Women’s representation numbers

- ◆ Quotas of 75% but not less than 50% women members in the General Body and 50% women in the Executive Body
- ◆ The positions of the General Secretary and Vice President in the

Executive Body reserved for women

- ◆ Annual elections of the Executive Body requires the election of women on a rotational basis i.e. if a man was elected in year 1, a woman had to be elected in year 2
- ◆ Any decision making by the FMC requires a quorum of 75% women from the General Body and the same of men

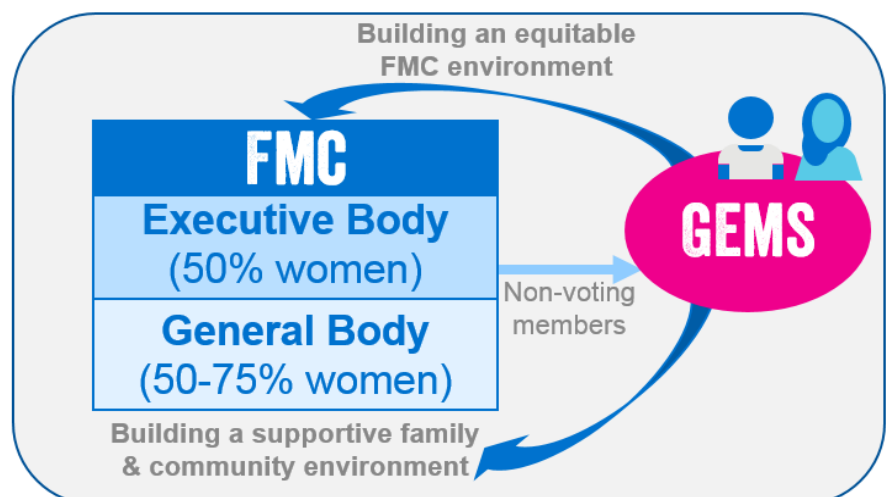
### Complaints mechanism

- ◆ A three member complaints committee (2 women and 1 man mem-

bers) to deal with any complaints including sexual harassment with a detailed procedure for filing, investigating, arbitrating and dealing with complaints.

### GEMS

- ◆ A woman and a man **Gender Equality Monitor** (GEM) as ex-officio/non-voting members of the Executive Body to work internally in FMCs and externally in the village to promote gender equality with their terms of reference annexed to the FMC Terms of Partnership.





## GEMS AT THE HEART OF THE GENDER EQUALITY MECHANISM

GEMs are **knowledgeable leaders** to foster an environment that is supportive of women's participation and decision-making. One woman GEM and one man GEM in every FMC work together to act as **change agents** to:

- ◆ Create an **enabling community and household environment** for women to participate actively in the dairy sector;
- ◆ Ensure their **FMCs function** in a way that promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women FMC members.

**Selection process:** GEMs were selected in the initial stages of the project based on an agreed set of criteria in collaboration with women and men in communities and FMC leadership. The **core criteria for their selection is that they are embedded in the local culture and have pre-existing community networks and respect.**

**Capacity building process:** Both women and men GEMs are provided with **extensive gender equality training and key messages** for promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment. They are also **provided hands-on support by the project** as they roll-out their community and FMC related work.

**In FMCs:** Both women and men GEMs conduct **formal gender sensitization of FMC members** either together or in sex-segregated groups as appropriate, focusing on the importance of joint decision-making and running of the FMC. GEMs **facilitate procedures** such as FMC meeting timings, quorums and encourage the participation of women members. Both GEMs then **continue monthly meetings with the FMC members** to mentor them about the importance of working together and making joint decisions about milk collection, quality of milk, milk handling, selection of milk pro-

cessors, determining the price of milk, and any value addition for milk products. **As a first step in the promotion of gender equality and women's economic participation, the FMC becomes gender-responsive** and enables women to engage in a meaningful platform for joint economic decision-making. And at the same time FMCs model participatory behaviours and practices for the larger community.

**In communities:** GEMs carry out weekly and monthly large and small community groups educational dialogue with community gatekeepers including village leaders, elder women, and other local influencers to create a broad enabling environment for women to get engaged in their FMCs, attend monthly meetings, visit chiller shops to sell milk, and manage the FMC as a business along with the male members.

**In households:** GEMs hold several weekly and monthly meetings with women and men in the families of women dairy farmers to gradually confront gender stereotypes and norms and to motivate families to support women's participation in FMCs and economic activities.

GEMs also leverage community events to deliver their messaging on gender roles, norms and women's economic empowerment.

### WOMEN GEMS

Give gender equality messages to:

#### FMC

- Women FMC members
- Executive body women members

#### Community

- Elder women family members of FMC members
- Elder women in community

### MEN GEMS

Give gender equality messages to:

#### FMC

- Men FMC Members

#### Community

- Male family member of women FMC members
- Religious Leaders
- Male opinion makers

## TRAILBLAZING GEMS REALIZING DREAMS

Maryam Bibi, had an unfulfilled dream of becoming a teacher. Her conservative family made her quit education after completing primary school. *“I wish every girl of my village to pursue their dreams and complete education. I believe our village can progress only if girls are allowed to complete their education and women to engage in economic activity.”* When the FMC of her village nominated her as a GEM she felt her dream to spread awareness had become a reality. The training she received from WEE-PK boosted her confidence to carry out gender equality awareness among the women FMC members and her community.

Maryam uses innovative methods to promote gender equality. *“I invested more time on those women who took gender equality messages with suspicion, tried to understand their point of view, and this resulted in convincing them to the advantages of women’s economic empowerment. Besides, I*



*didn’t rely only on formal meetings to convey messages, and leveraged different social gatherings like marriage and religious ceremonies and gatherings to convey the messages.”*

She further shared, *“initially, the women in my village were not cooperative. They feared that taking part in FMC meetings would affect their household tasks and ultimately disturb their family peace. I remained steadfast and was finally successful in persuading them that their participation in FMCs and selling milk at the chiller was beneficial to them. It gave women confidence and now they easily visit the chiller*

*shop to sell milk and get better price per liter”.* Maryam has particularly focused on joint household care work in her messaging: *“Earlier, all the household chores were the responsibility of women only. Now, some men have also started to take part in household chores. My advocacy has also helped increase girls’ school enrollment than before.”*

Maryam now has bigger dreams for women of her village, *“I am planning to form a group of motivated women to help illiterate women in getting their issues resolved from different government departments.”*

## ENGAGING MEN FOR WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP

*“My initial opposition to the idea of establishing an FMC of women and men dairy farmers faded away, as I realized women’s economic empowerment had nothing against Islamic teachings. The new realization motivated me to assist Plan International in the establishment of an FMC and then also become a male Gender Equality Monitor to promote women’s economic empowerment in the village,”* said Qari Muhammad Tariq, a religious scholar from village Yaray Wala, Muzaffargarh.

Promoting gender equality messages was not easy for Qari Tariq. He first motivated influential men in his area and activated his network of religious students to promote women’s economic empowerment using teachings of Islam and women rights. *“These techniques helped in obtaining support on gender equality messages from within the community”,* Qari Tariq shared. His community campaign resulted in es-



*establishing an FMC with more than 50% women members, and a woman becoming President of the FMC.*

Talking about gender transformative change in his village, Qari Tariq said, *“earlier women of our village could not even step out of their homes, let alone participate in community meetings and*

*highlight their issues. Now the FMC women members not only participate in the meetings and decisions but also rigorously claim income accrued on the milk contribution.”* He plans to continue to spread gender equality messaging through his students that would cascade to the community and beyond.

# GEMS MAKING A DIFFERENCE: BY THE NUMBERS

In December 2017, the project collected data from FMCs across the three intervention districts. This data helps shed light on the effectiveness of GEMs towards the overall objective of the project which is the economic empowerment of women in the dairy sector that includes, increasing their participation in FMCs; decision-making capacity in FMCs, in their homes and over their productive assets; and increasing their income level. **The results are telling!**

- ◆ According to the 2017 project data, **average women's membership across all FMCs was 62.5%**. This exceeds the 50% minimum proportion of women in FMCs requirement of the project and is well on its way towards achieving the 75% mark. This is a major first step in supporting women's agency.
- ◆ From 25% at baseline the **proportion of women in decision-making positions in FMCs went up to 46.2%** in December 2017, thus pointing to the fact that women feel empowered to be able to operate in these positions, that they have overcome gender-related barriers in participating in mixed sex entities as well as mobility challenges and that the environment of FMCs has become inclusive and gender equitable. Typically, cultural norms in these villages did not allow women to be engaged in community-level decision making, which is considered a male domain.
- ◆ In terms of women feeling they are able to **actively participate in decision-making in FMCs the proportion went up from 31.6% in 2016 to 44.7%** in 2017 and in the ability to participate in **household decision-making it increased by some 21 percentage points from 37.3% to 58.3%** in the same period.
- ◆ In terms of perceptions regarding **the degree to which women are able to actively participate in decision making related to productive assets** there has been a **sizable shift from 13% at baseline to some 83.8%** in 2017 reflecting more knowledge, skills and confidence women have in making decisions about their productive assets and a high level of control over these assets.
- ◆ The 2017 annual data shows a **76.3% increase from the baseline of women FMC members' monthly mean income from sale of milk** and a 62.8% increase from the baseline of women FMC members' monthly median income from sale of milk. As members of FMCs, women dairy farmers, jointly with men from their communities, collect milk and sell it to milk processing companies at a better price. This is a huge improvement in women's attitude and ability to work through FMCs from the baseline at which 80% saw no major benefits in selling milk products away from their home.
- ◆ **Similarly, in 2017, we see a major shift in women dairy farmers' making an effort to ensure their FMC becomes a viable and sustainable business entity.** The data reveals that the percentage of **women FMC members contributing regularly to their FMC operational costs has risen from a mere 3% at baseline to some 47.1%** indicating the value they place in their FMCs.

These are exciting project results supported by ample evidence provided by various presidents and other executive and general body members of FMCs that their women and men **GEMs have been instrumental in driving these results** primarily by encouraging increased women's participation in FMCs by working at both the household and community level barriers as well as internal FMC operational barriers women face in meaningful participation. This massive push has been complimented by other critical project inputs to build women's capacities in business management, marketing, technical modern animal husbandry and leadership skills. Other **project results reveal women are breaking gender stereotypes** and entering technical fields in the dairy sector traditionally held by men including becoming milk technicians, village veterinary workers and artificial insemination technicians.

## GEMS MAKING A DIFFERENCE: IN REAL LIVES

### From Housewife to coop president!

Sumaira Bibi's transformative journey from housewife to President of Al-Falah FMC is nothing short of awe-inspiring. She used to sell a couple of liters of milk a day for a pittance but now she heads an FMC selling an average 11,000 liters of milk monthly for more than Rs. 570,000 (CAD 6,000). Sumaira shared that it was only made possible with the support of her family and **encouragement from GEMs who**



**promoted women's leadership among the FMC members and the community.**

*“My role as a housewife was largely limited to interaction with my family members. As an FMC member I became aware about issues of women's voice and participation in decision making. Now as President of the FMC, the women members have confidence in my ability to better represent them. The women dairy farmers now happily participate in FMC meetings, raise their issues and assert their rights”, she shared.*

Both her family and community now respect her more than before. *“After assuming the role of FMC President, I saw people's increased confidence in*

*my abilities.”*

With the support of GEMs, Sumaira has resolved several issues that women FMC members were facing. *“The women FMC members in our village were discouraged, particularly by their mother-in-law, from participating in the FMC meetings and even visiting the chiller to drop milk. Jointly with the women GEMs, I held individual meetings with elder women to understand their concerns that were primarily about neglect of household chores. I sorted out their concerns by adjusting the timing of the FMC meetings and chiller visiting time.”* GEMs however, continue their community promotion of shared household

chores. Sumaira indicated that the role played by GEMs to address gender barriers and promote gender equality has helped women to become FMC members, mitigate any negative concerns from religious or community leaders, and spread the idea of women in FMC decision making along with men. She further shared, *“participation of women FMC members in meetings and decision-making processes has increased considerably. Women are no more an idle part of the meetings and have become very vocal. Women members highlight their problems, identify and propose solutions in meetings. Often male FMC members support the arguments of women FMC members.”*

## IS THERE A BUSINESS CASE FOR GEMS ?

At the beginning of this edition, we asked if there is value in instituting systematic mechanisms for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women modelling good practice national level mechanisms and we said that yes there is. Clearly the results show that. But let's look at the emerging model itself to see what learnings we have amassed, challenges there are and what must have are necessary for the effective functioning of such mechanisms including their status, structure and location, scope of mandate and functions, resources, legitimacy, power and visibility.

**Status, structure & location are critical:** GEMs are embedded in the FMC Executive Body structure as non-voting members. This gives them a certain status, power and visibility not just in the FMC but in the community also, contributing to their legitimacy in the community as they do their work. Given GEMs are physically located at the village level, their influence can generate grassroots change, which is where the most entrenched gender issues are by and large.

In terms of structure, the fact that a male/female team works together towards a common purpose is important for demonstrating several things: 1) gender equality is not just a woman's issue, both are equal partners and beneficiaries of change; 2) breaking



prevailing gender stereotypes as GEMs carry out their role and model gender equitable behaviours; 3) maximum outreach to all sorts of community and household gate keepers and organizational stakeholders.

**Mandate and functions:** In WEE-PK while the project set broad parameters of the roles of GEMs both inside FMCs and in communities, detailed functions were established in close consultation with the community, FMC members and with GEMs themselves. Key to this was good evidence of the contextual gender equality issues and challenges facing women in their economic empowerment specifically and broader rights violations. Once a clear mandate was established, this was written into the FMC Terms of Partnership so everyone was clear on their role.

In terms of functions, it was important also for GEMs to recognize FMCs as business entities and to work towards

the agenda of creating enabling gender equitable environments both in and outside FMCs to support greater participation of women for FMC viability. Thus a clear mandate and role were critical.

A key learning is that it is important for gender equality mechanisms to go beyond their traditional role of making sure policy and or legislation is sound from a gender equality lens (in this case the rules of business of FMCs) and play a strong internal and external catalytic role from get go.

**Legitimacy:** We cannot over-emphasize the importance of legitimacy for such mechanisms to be able to perform optimally. Community acceptance is key especially in conservative societies where risks are inherent in any gender transformative work. In WEE-PK, this was handled through three concurrent processes. 1) a clear selection criteria for GEMs was established in close consultation

with communities and FMCs that included requirements such as “respected in the community”; 2) men and women GEMs were selected by communities from their midst - which was important from a community acceptability perspective as well as for reaching out to other local movements and actors; 3) their role and presence was made visible and promoted by FMC leadership both in the FMC and in the community and in the various FMC organizational development trainings. GEMs are local residents and constitute a local and organic gender equality resource.

**Resources:** For GEMs to flourish, adequate resources were ensured by the project in terms of training and materials. These were developed after a detailed contextual needs analysis keeping in mind limitations such as low literacy of some GEMs and the communities they work in. Appropriate training material was developed after pilot testing covering a range of topics including GEM’s role, skills, women’s rights and gender equality modules for working inside FMCs and in communi-

ties. A training plan was implemented, supported by on-going on-the-job hand holding so that GEMs became more comfortable with the messaging they impart and the way in which they convey messages.

In WEE-PK GEMs are paid a small monthly stipend by the project for a limited period with the intention that FMCs would absorb the costs going forward. We could have leveraged voluntary means that exist in communities, but recognized that GEMs will be doing a job, spending time and using their resources such as cell phones for setting up group meetings, or going door to door for which they should be remunerated equally. This was also done to demonstrate to FMCs that their labour is not free or to be under-valued at a principle level but to demonstrate “return on investment” so that after the project sunsets, FMCs take ownership of GEMs. We also know that voluntary community workers have high attrition rates resulting in the need for repeated onboarding and training which has time, effort and cost implications. And

finally voluntary work that invariably is done by women tends to place a greater burden of work on their existing time constraints. While this can raise sustainability questions for the model, given the contributions of GEMs, it is expected that FMCs will take on GEMs as the costs are minimal compared to the gains. The key is in leveraging local resources from efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability stand points.

**Replicability and scale up:** The GEMs model provides an easy to implement grassroots approach that is being applied in a women’s economic empowerment project housed in a local organizational structure - Farmers Milk Cooperatives. As long as there is an organization or a structure (community based, private sector or public sector) in place, local buy-in is created and evidence is produced to back the model, it can be adapted for any sector. For example in health programming, it can be located in Community Health Committees, in child protection programs in local child protection structures and so forth.

## GE UPDATES

- ◆ Since the last Focus ‘n GE, the CNO GE Unit has **welcomed two new GE Advisers**. We welcome Lila Pavey and Julie Martineau to the Team!
- ◆ In the 1st Quarter of FY 19 (June to September 2018) we **surpassed our targets on our two KPIs** in the proportion and dollar value of gender transformative projects. 48% of our active projects are gender transformative with the dollar value being at 62% of the total. We are slowly but surely going in the right direction as we apply rigorous criteria for rating our projects to hold ourselves accountable in delivering quality programs.
- ◆ Almost 400 experts in 22 cities across six continents took part in Plan International’s online perception-based **Expert Survey on girls’ Safety in Cities Across the World**. Specialists were drawn from the fields of women’s rights, children’s rights and urban safety. **TORONTO** was part of the 22 cities studied! Stay tuned for the results!
- ◆ **Tackling Child Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM):** Under the umbrella of 18+, the Global Gender and Inclusion team and the Child Protection in Emergencies team are on creating a Program Model that can be implemented in humanitarian settings for tackling CEFM, including the Theory of Change and a Results Framework. These new program documents will consolidate 18+’s global framework for tackling child marriage.
- ◆ **Strengthening our support to LGBTIQ+ Adolescents:** Plan International has developed a new training module (Adolescents in All Their Diversity) for staff on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics as part of the Planting Equality 2.0 action learning program. Nine LGBTIQ+ organizations in 6 countries have been actively involved in the development, contextualization and facilitation of the module.

## FEEDBACK AND NEXT BULLETIN

We hope this was useful! But we would love to hear your comments, questions, thoughts and topics that you would like to see in the next **Focus ‘n GE**! Send a line to our amazing Technical Quality Officer, Daniela: [DDonia@plancanada.ca](mailto:DDonia@plancanada.ca)