

Bridging distance and building relationships between women farmers in Australia and India to sustain and develop rural communities

G Ramsay^{*,1,2} T Nugent¹, D Parsons³, D Fear, K Kumbhakar^{4,5} and N Narain^{4,5}

*Corresponding author email address: gramsay@csu.edu.au

¹ Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Australia

² Graham Centre for Agricultural Innovation (An alliance between Charles Sturt University and New South Wales Department of Primary Industries), Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Australia

³ Central West Farming Systems, Condobolin, New South Wales, Australia

⁴ Ambedkar University, Delhi, India

⁵ PRADAN, Delhi, India

Abstract

This paper outlines a partially formed project that has been developed from the symposium and workshop 'Research and education for rural development and food security to build resilient rural environments: Australian and Indian perspectives', held in Delhi, India, in April 2015. It outlines some of the important issues and opportunities that can be explored, potential barriers and perceived outcomes. The project attempts to bridge the distance between women farmers through sharing cross-country perspectives on developmental issues. In particular, it is building conversations between women farmers in Australia (Farming Systems Group, Central West Farming Systems) and India (Self Help Groups) through the virtual space. In doing so it will enable sharing experiences and learning. The project will explore potential approaches to the process and argues that challenges such as language differences can be diminished while using internet based communication tools. The conception of distance is not just the physical distance that has to be overcome with distance including social and intellectual distance. The paper explores the question What would it take for groups separated by distance and difference to come together and can the internet play a role in bridging that distance? Initial project activities include an exchange point for building capacity and an understanding of the agricultural role of both groups of women and where and how it is similar and different between the two countries. Project activities will be developed in the spirit of deriving an understanding of what transformation means for each group and will focus on establishing connections between countries.