



National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)

MANAGE-University Alliance for Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow's Agricultural Extension



Ms. Rithisha R S

Participated in the MANAGE-NYPDP at MANAGE Hyderabad from June 01 to 05, 2026.



Rithisha RS

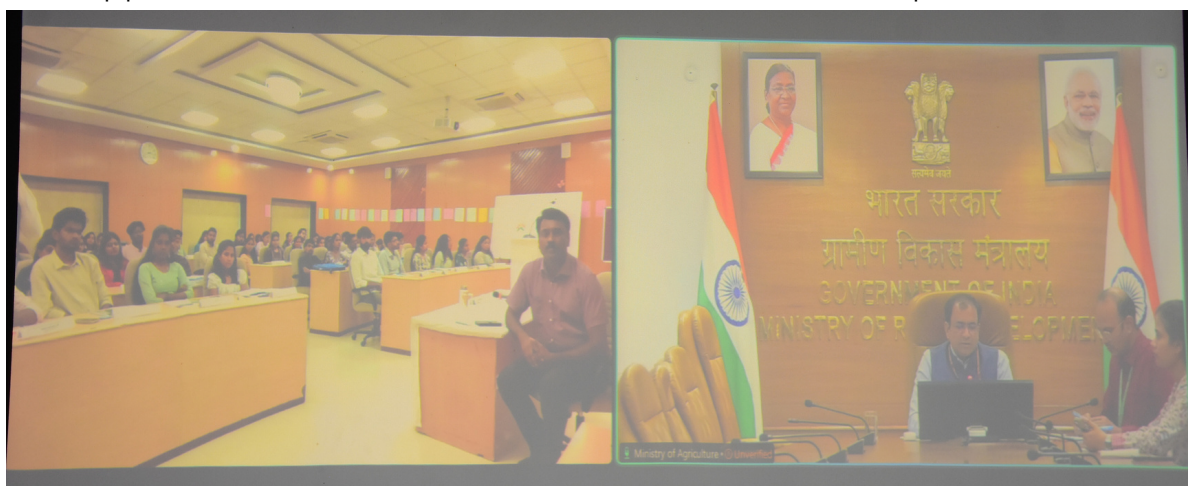
Introduction

When I first signed up for the NYPDP, I honestly expected another week of lectures to sit through between my coursework at IARI and also thought it will be useful but never expected it would become a unforgettable experience to cherish. Five days later, I left Hyderabad with a notebook full of information, a phone full of new contacts from universities I had never even heard of before, and, somewhat unexpectedly, a clearer sense of who I want to become as an extension professional. This is my attempt to put that week down on paper, not as a list of sessions attended, but as it actually unfolded for me , the sessions that challenged me, the conversations that stayed with me, and the quieter moments that ended up teaching me the most.

Key Learnings

Day 1

The opening day was less about extension theory and more about extension identity. Dr. Saravanan Raj's sessions on "Our Professional Identity" and "New Competencies and Job Opportunities for Agricultural Extension" were eye-opening. They mapped just how wide the field has become, well beyond the traditional government extension officer role I had pictured. The Human Career Mapping exercise made me actually sit down and write where I want to be, which I had never done on paper before. Shri Sanjay Kumar Agarwal (IAS), Director General, MANAGE, set the tone for the week with his inaugural address, and hearing NYPDP alumnus Mr. Sunnyrudh Singh (Visiting Research Scholar, Fresno State University) speak about his own journey made the "global opportunities" conversation feel real rather than aspirational.



Day 2

Day 2, for me, was the most intellectually demanding day of the program, in the best way. We heard directly from US land-grant university faculty and scholars on how graduate-level research in agricultural extension education is actually conducted abroad, which gave me a much clearer benchmark for my own coursework at IARI. Dr. Saravanan Raj's session on Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension and the Extension Marketplace exercise helped me see where the gaps and the opportunities currently lie. The "Must-Know AI Tools for Academic Researchers" session by Dr. Aditya Sinha (Bihar Agricultural University) was useful for me as a budding researcher who is struggling to figure out the path of research. I left with a working list of tools that I now use for my own literature review.

Earlier I know only about very few courses on some major platform like NPTEL but now after Dr. Raahalya's, "Future-Proofing Your Career" session, I got to know many free certification courses that are much needed for my professional growth as well as personal from various International organisations and the candid "Ask Me Anything" with MANAGE interns rounded out a day that balanced research depth with practical experience shared by them.



Day 3

Dr. Mahesh Chander (Principal Scientist, IVRI) led back-to-back sessions on Extension for Entrepreneurship and Gender Equality, and Extension for Organic Farming were both grounded in field realities rather than textbook frameworks.



The afternoon field visit to ACCESS Livelihoods, Hyderabad, was a genuine highlight of the week, seeing how a livelihoods focused NGO translates extension and entrepreneurship principles into real, on the ground impact for rural communities and specially women. The Interaction with Mr. G V Krishnagopal, was truly inspiring, the amount of optimism motivated me to be positive even in storm. The experiences he shared were truly educating and astonishing. The evening spent exploring Hyderabad was a welcome, informal close to a content-heavy day.



Day 4

The day started with a quiet reflective writing exercise held outdoors in a natural setting, where we wrote down what we would learn, unlearn, and carry into everyday life from the program. It made me look inward and it helped me name my own needs, strengths, and weaknesses with a clarity I had not expected to find in a training program. Dr. Saravanan Raj's session on Democratising Innovation and Technology Transfer through incubation and startups session was informative.

Dr. Rasheed Sulaiman (Director, CRISP) gave us a grounded look at Policy Engagement for Agricultural Extension and gave insight about AESA which I wasn't aware earlier And Dr. Sethuraman Sivakumar (Principal Scientist, ICAR-CTCRI) conducted a stimulation game which was the best part and my most favourite part of the program. The hours ran into seconds during the activity and wished it stayed longer. The day closed on that same reflective note with the Research Ethics Cafe, an informal dinner-table conversation led by Dr. P. V. K. Sasidhar (IGNOU) on the ethical dimensions of research, which felt like exactly the right way to end a day so focused on innovation and introspection.



Day 5

Dr. P. V. K. Sasidhar walked us through Monitoring & Evaluation competencies for extension professionals and then demonstrated Focus Group Discussion techniques, which we immediately practiced ourselves in small groups where I participated and shared my insights in a FGD for the first time. It was a far more effective way to learn facilitation than any lecture could have been. The closing exercises, Commitment Cards (Head, Heart, and Hands) and the Future Extension Wall gave the week a sense of completion, Leaving with an actual written action plan, rather than just a certificate, is what made Day 5 stand out.



Five-Day Training Experience

If I had to sum it up: structured, fast-paced, and surprisingly personal. Every day moved between rigorous content like research methods, policy, AI tools and softer, reflective sessions like the recap formats (My Neighbour's Insight, Hot Seat Harvest, One Word One Reason) that MANAGE used to open each morning. By the end of the week, the daily recap sessions alone had taught me as much about my fellow participants' perspectives as the formal lectures taught me about extension itself.



Change in Perspective

Yes, quite significantly. I came in thinking of agricultural extension largely as a government-led, field-advisory function with limited scope and opportunities. This week reframed it for me as a much broader ecosystem that spans graduate-level research (as taught by the US land-grant faculty), AI and digital tools, entrepreneurship and incubation, policy engagement, and research ethics. The visit to ACCESS Livelihoods in particular shifted how I think about where the discipline is headed. Extension is not just about disseminating recommendations from a research station, it is equally about the grassroots, livelihoods-driven work that NGOs do to turn those recommendations into lasting change for rural communities.

Training Environment

The accommodation and food were so good that only gaining knowledge and experience was to be done and nothing else to be worried of. The room mixed with budding extensionist and experienced extensionist taught many things beyond books. The schedules were packed but didn't feel exhausting. The atmosphere was so good that it felt 5 days went off in 5 minutes. Calm evenings in the campus made me reflect the day into me



What I Appreciate

The Interaction with Dr. Saravanan Raj, the stimulation session by Dr. Sethuraman sivakumar and the visit to Access livelihood were my favourites. The program didn't just impart knowledge and experience, it made me realise where I stand in the profession. The program wasn't like other programs we often attend, it was a mixture of knowledge and self-reflection.



Networking

The networking we do with the fellow extensionist is the key asset we gain during the program. The program paves way to ice break and make us interact and network with each other. The peer group formed during this program helped me gain insight into different perspective, culture and experience. The conversations with fellow participants were an added bonus which helped me find the right path towards my research and career journey.



Main Takeaway

If I had to pick one moment, it would be the Day 4 reflective writing exercise on what I would learn, unlearn, and use in everyday life done outdoors, away from slides and microphones. Every other session gave me a skill or a piece of knowledge; this one gave me self-awareness. Writing those three lists down made me identify my own needs, strengths, and weaknesses with a clarity I had not managed on my own before the program, and that self-knowledge is what I expect to carry forward longer than any single tool or framework I learned this week. Most importantly I learned to reflect my Passion towards extension through actions not just mere words (motivated and learned from Dr. Saravanan Raj, through his speech about his own life journey).



Action Plan



I, now have a clarity on how to start my research and my career ahead. I will definitely impart more skills and knowledge through different courses and give back as much as I could to my discipline. I will also participate and involve in many other aspects of my discipline which I got to know through the program.

My MANAGE NYPDP Journey

Once in a life experience for extension student which brings a holistic change in the professional as well as personal life. The experience of great minds can't be gained mere by reading books or knowing them, the interactions with them indeed transform our mind.



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