



National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)

MANAGE-University Alliance for Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow's Agricultural Extension



Mr. Abhishek Naik

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

 **Abhishek Naik**

Introduction

Joining this training has cleared most of my doubts. One of my biggest weaknesses as an Agricultural Extension student was not being able to figure out what job opportunities or career scope I had in my subject. This program made me realise that, as Extension professionals, we have more opportunities compared to many other agricultural disciplines. We are not confined to agriculture alone but can explore a wide range of roles in various organisations.



The group projects made me feel included and taught me how to collaborate effectively as part of a team, as well as contribute as an individual. As a first-year Ph.D. student, I was struggling to decide on my research topic. Listening to the stories and field experiences shared by the speakers helped me realise how we, as Extension students, can genuinely contribute to improving the lives of farmers, and the sessions helped me discover what I truly want to do for my Ph.D. research.

The training opened my eyes to the crucial role Extension agents play in supporting farmers and rural communities, and how our work can influence policymakers. The session on “AI Tools for Academic Research” was especially beneficial, as it will help directly in my research. I now believe that, in today's world, we should be aware of AI tools to work more efficiently and to update with the current trends.

The visit to Access Livelihoods gave me an understanding of how the organisation operates and how it works hand-in-hand with farmers. This experience helped me see farmers from a new perspective, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to be part of a focus group discussion it was a unique and insightful experience.

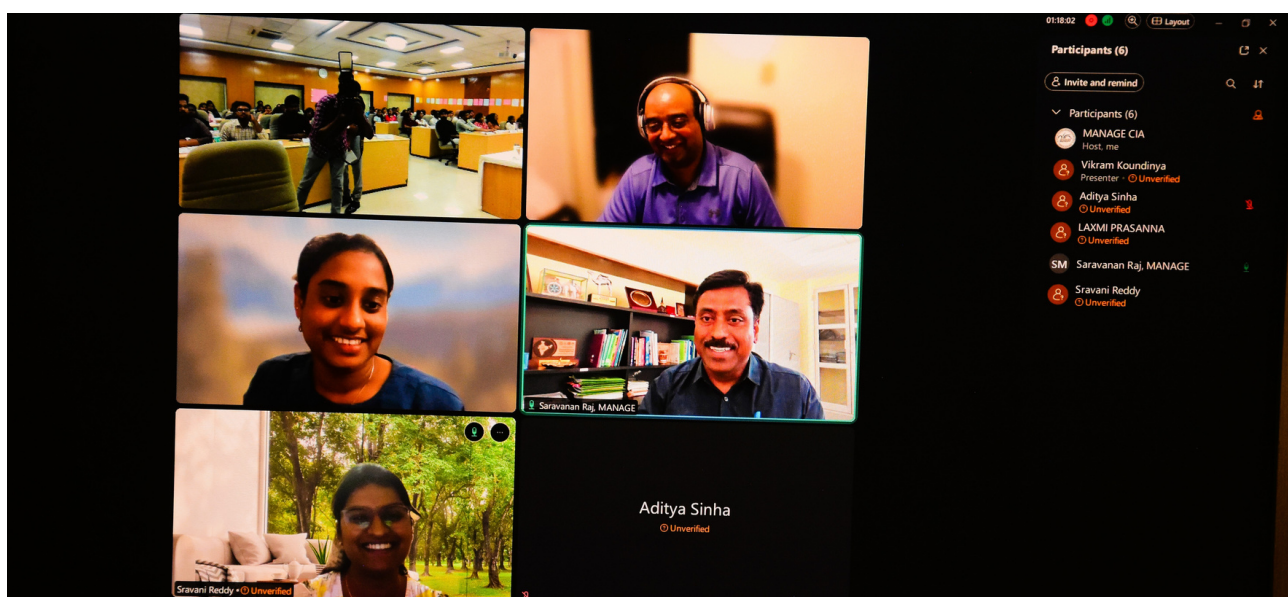
Five-Day Training Experience

If I were to capture these five days in a single word, it would be Self-Reflection. I arrived at MANAGE, Hyderabad as a first-year Ph.D. student full of questions and somewhat uncertain about where a degree in Agricultural Extension Education could actually take me. I left with far more than answers, I left with a sense of direction.

What struck me most was how wide the canvas of Extension actually is. Dr. Saravanan Raj's opening sessions on professional identity and emerging competencies were genuinely eye-opening: I had mostly associated Extension careers with teaching or government service, and the discussions on consultancy, research and development roles, project-based work, post-doctoral fellowships, and global collaborations reframed how I think about my own career altogether. I now see a much longer runway ahead private companies working on agri-value chains, development consultancies, multilateral research projects, and academic post-docs are all genuinely on the table for someone from my background, not just abstract possibilities I had read about.



The technical sessions were equally formative. Listening to Dr. Vikram Koundinya, Ms. Sravani Reddy, and Ms. Laxmi Prasanna Kandi speak about proposal writing, research methodology, and data analysis tools from the vantage point of leading U.S. universities gave me a sharper sense of what rigorous, fundable research actually looks like, and how much ground I still have to cover to get there. Dr. Aditya Sinha's session on ethical and trustworthy AI tools for literature review and academic writing was, for me, one of the most immediately useful sessions of the week it gave me both the tools and the ethical guardrails I need to use AI responsibly in my own work.



If this training did one thing for my Ph.D. journey specifically, it pushed me firmly toward food and nutritional security as a research area. As a research enthusiast, I had been circling this space for a while without quite committing to it; hearing how directly it connects to climate resilience, rural livelihoods, and policy convinced me that this is one of the most active and consequential areas of Extension research today and it is where I want to spend the next few years of my work.

Change in Perspective

The training has significantly changed my perspective on Agricultural Extension. I now understand its importance not just in bridging the gap between farmers and research institutions, but also in areas like advisory services, policy engagement, gender sensitivity, capacity building, and addressing climate change.

The training made me realise the vast number of job opportunities available in this field and how flexible these roles can be. It emphasised how essential our work is, not just for the farming community but for the broader rural society, and how we can help improve their quality of life. Listening to the speakers' sessions opened my eyes to many potential research areas and how our research can make a real impact on society.

Training Environment

Beyond the content, the environment at MANAGE, Hyderabad did a lot of quiet work in shaping how much I absorbed during the week. The campus has a calm, purposeful feel to it well-kept grounds, distinctive architecture, and enough open space that five intensive days of classroom learning never felt suffocating. Hyderabad's weather that week was unexpectedly kind to us, and I found myself looking forward to the short walks between sessions almost as much as the sessions themselves.

Inside the training hall, the seating, lighting, and overall classroom setup were arranged for an interactive format rather than a lecture-style one groupings small enough that questions felt welcome, with enough room to break into discussion clusters for group exercises. The accommodation and food were genuinely among the best I have experienced in any training program so far, which made it easier to stay mentally fresh through long, packed days.



Dr. Raahalya S, Dr. Saravanan Raj, and the rest of the MANAGE-CAEIRA team were visibly invested in making the week work always available before and after sessions, patient with questions, and quick to adjust the schedule whenever a discussion needed more time. It is rare for the logistics of a program to actually support the learning rather than compete with it, and at MANAGE, that balance felt right. Overall, the program was extremely well-organised and exceeded my expectations on nearly every count.

What I Appreciate

What I appreciated most was the sheer depth of knowledge in the room, session after session. Shri Sanjay Kumar Agarwal, IAS, opened the program with remarks on grassroots exposure and adaptability that set a serious, purposeful tone for the rest of the week. Dr. Saravanan Raj's command over career pathways and competency-building in Extension was matched by his genuine enthusiasm for mentoring early-stage researchers like me.

The sessions led by Dr. Vikram Koundinya, Ms. Sravani Reddy, and Ms. Laxmi Prasanna Kandi carried the weight of real experience from leading U.S. research institutions, and it showed in how concretely they could speak about proposal writing, systematic reviews, and scientific publishing. Dr. Aditya Sinha's grasp of AI tools for research was both technically sound and ethically grounded, not always an easy combination to find. Dr. Mahesh Chander's session on entrepreneurship, gender-responsive extension, and organic farming stood out for how effortlessly he moved between policy-level thinking and field-level realities.

My favourite session, without question, was Dr. Sethuraman Sivakumar's session on Human Decision Modelling. He has a rare ability to take genuinely complex statistical concepts and ground them in real farming decisions, and he was generous enough to sit with me afterward and work through some of my own research questions in detail that single conversation may have shaped my Ph.D. direction more than any one lecture did. Dr. P. V. K. Sasidhar's closing sessions on research ethics, monitoring and evaluation, and focus group discussions tied the week together with exactly the kind of practical rigour a young researcher needs. Across all these speakers, what stayed with me was not just what they knew, but how willingly they shared it.

Networking

This training provided me with a platform to connect with people from different parts of India. Peer interactions helped me understand diverse cultures and the challenges faced in different regions. I learned about the differences in how our universities operate, where my institution excels, and where it might be lacking compared to others.

The chance to engage with working professionals also gave me valuable insight into their roles and working environments. These interactions helped me learn a great deal beyond the classroom.



Main Takeaway

My biggest personal takeaway from this week is a fairly simple commitment: to be more consistent in everything I do. That means writing properly and regularly rather than in occasional bursts, using AI and other tools ethically and transparently in my research rather than as a shortcut, and being honest enough to speak my mind and my heart in academic spaces rather than holding back out of uncertainty. I want to show up in my department, in my research, in conversations with juniors and peers more consistently and more efficiently, treating good practice as a daily habit rather than an occasional effort.



This sits alongside the broader lesson the training reinforced for me: that grassroots needs must be addressed in alignment with policy frameworks, and that the involvement of youth in agriculture is more urgent than ever. Through the interactive sessions, field visits, and real-life experiences shared by speakers, my understanding of Extension has deepened and my perspective has broadened. If grassroots realities and policy frameworks need to move together, then my own discipline as a researcher has to be just as consistent.

Action Plan

This training has exposed me to a wide variety of potential research topics that I'm genuinely interested in, and it has helped me finalise food and nutritional security as the focus of my Ph.D. research. The knowledge I've gained about job opportunities across consultancy, private companies, research and development, and post-doctoral positions and the competencies each of these paths requires will help me determine the career direction that suits me best once I complete my degree.

I also hope to use what I've learned to guide my juniors and colleagues, helping them clarify their own doubts and make informed decisions about their future in Agricultural Extension, much as this training did for me.

If I were to describe this training in one word, it would be Self-Reflection.

- **Reflective**, because it gave me the space to honestly re-assess where I stand and where I genuinely want to go.
- **Purposeful**, because it turned a set of scattered interests into a clear research direction in food and nutritional security.
- **Transformative**, because it changed not just what I know, but how I plan to work more consistently, more ethically, every single day.



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