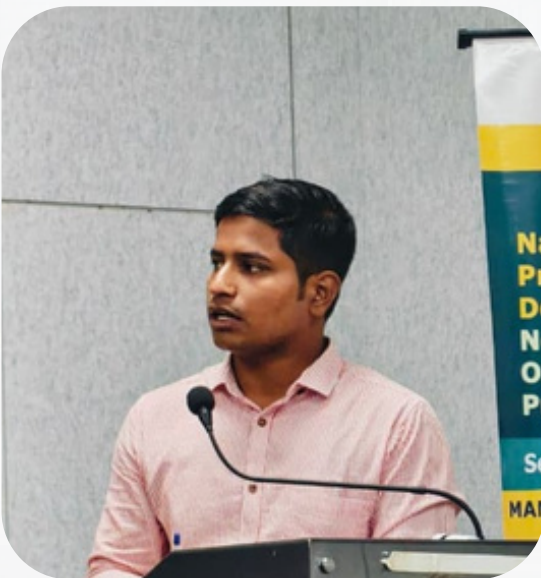




# National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)

MANAGE-University Alliance for Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

## Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow's Agricultural Extension



### MANAGE NYPDP: Co-Creating the Future of Agricultural Extension

#### **Basu Anand**

Participated in the MANAGE-NYPDP at Anand Agricultural University (AAU) Gujarat, during September 22–26, 2025



[Basu Anand](#)

## Key Learnings

### Day 1 : New Competencies, Career Opportunities and Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension

The program began with an inspiring inaugural session and lectures by Dr. Saravanan Raj, who outlined MANAGE's vision, legacy and impact. We explored the emerging competencies needed for modern extension professionals, expanding career opportunities and the role of digital skills in transforming agricultural advisory systems.



Dr. Saravanan emphasized the importance of democratizing innovation through incubation and agri-startups. A group activity followed, where participants were randomly divided into diverse teams to encourage creativity, inclusivity and unbiased participation. Our group discussed challenges and opportunities in job prospects for students of the extension discipline.

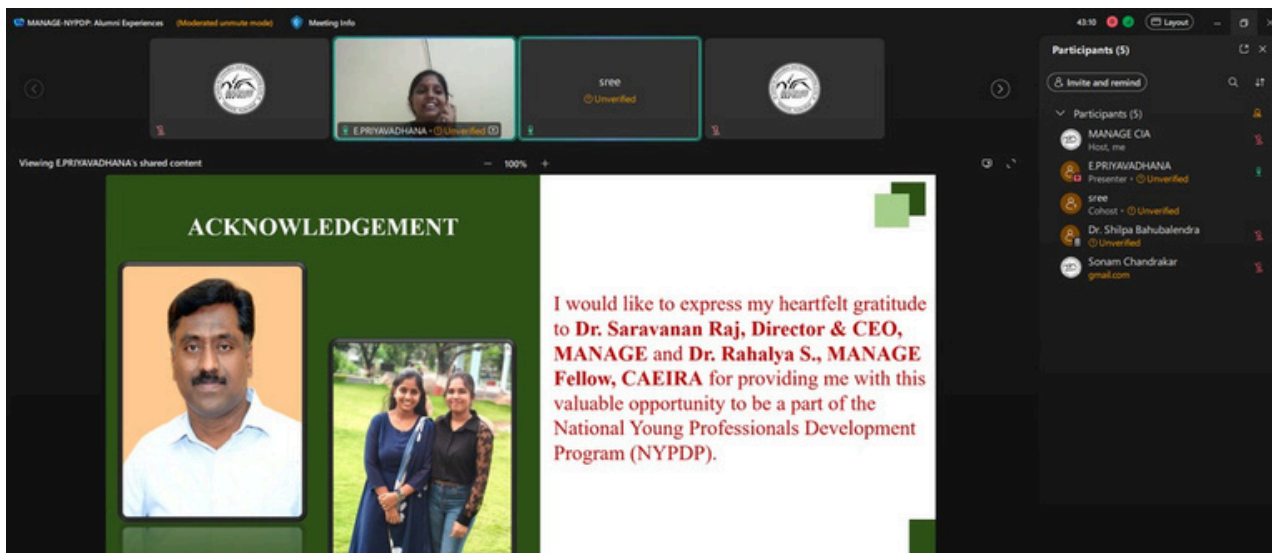
For our team, I took the initiative to moderate the discussion for the first time, which was both a learning and leadership experience. We identified traditional job avenues such as ARS, SMS (KVK), Lectureship, SRF/RA positions, as well as emerging roles like policy researchers, consultants in NITI Aayog, NGO professionals (PRADAN, JEEViKA, SEWA) and research analysts

The program managers positions in organizations like the FAO, World Bank, ICRISAT, CRISP and also discussed roles in startups, policy fellowships and postdoctoral research abroad. Challenges we identified included poor communication and networking skills, limited practical exposure, insufficient mentorship and lack of specialized positions for extension professionals in government and industry.



## Alumni experience

The day concluded with an engaging interaction with Ms. E. Priyavardhan, a MANAGE alumna, who shared her NYPDP journey and valuable professional insights.



Finally, some curious students had the chance to hear Dr. Sarvanan Raj's story about his college years, including his studies, participation in multiple national and international conferences, his first job and his publications and work that built his confidence, which was very motivating.

Key Takeaways:

- Identify and continuously refine your area of interest.
- Sincerity and commitment define success.
- Opportunities are limitless-adapt and upgrade constantly.
- Digital competence is the future of extension.
- Peer learning is a powerful tool for professional growth.
- Dr. Saravanan's reminder resonated deeply: neglecting our discipline is a disservice when institutions and the government invest so much in our education.

## Day 2 : Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension

Day 2 deepened our understanding of research frontiers and priorities in agricultural extension. In the group activity, teams pitched research proposals on diverse themes-contract farming, FPOs, millets, gender and climate change. Our group presented on contract farming in Gujarat, citing examples of firms like PepsiCo, Falcon and Iskon Balaji Foods.



The group activity involved participants forming random groups and preparing a relevant research idea, had a potential solution to a problem and was sellable. Then they had to prepare a pitch for the idea.

Dr. Vidya Vemireddy (IIM Ahmedabad) briefed us on the research frontiers and methods for young professionals in agricultural extension. She emphasized farm laws, policies in agriculture and especially for agricultural extension.

Dr. Sambhu Prasad (IRMA) delivered an insightful session on institutional innovation, equipping us to address emerging socio-economic challenges and broadening our perspective on innovation, emphasizing that innovation extends beyond products to institutions, systems and sustainability transitions. In his activity, we explored technological and institutional innovations such as blockchain for traceability, biopackaging, AI-based pest detection and ethanol-blended farm machinery.



Later, Mr. Srajesh Gupta (C-GEM, Gujarat) redefined extension as a multi-partner, interdisciplinary practice focused on identifying, communicating and managing agricultural challenges. He discussed emerging market avenues like climate and carbon markets, niche farm produce and AI-driven advisory systems.

Key Takeaways:

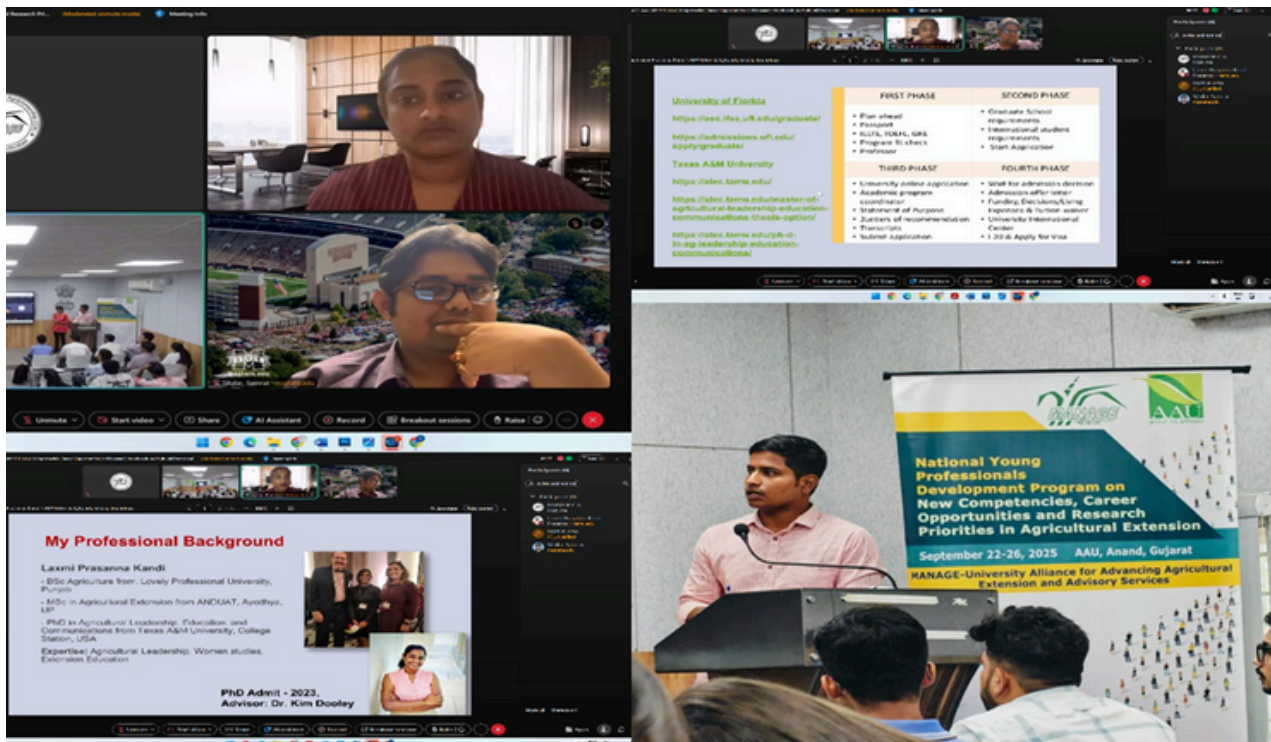
- Extension professionals serve as innovation intermediaries.
- Research must evolve to reflect dynamic agricultural and institutional realities.
- Innovation is holistic-encompassing technology, systems and governance.

Extension's scope extends far beyond traditional boundaries.



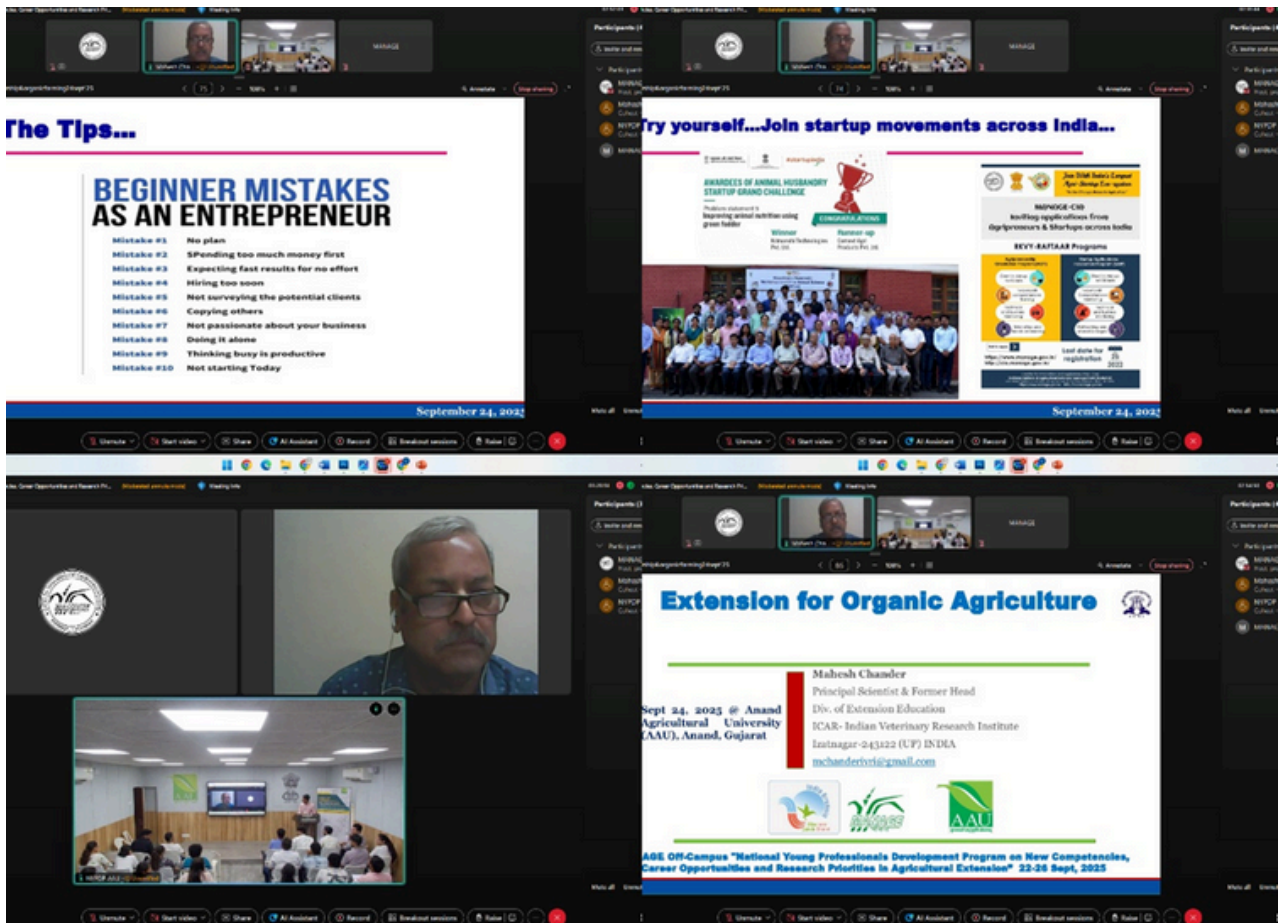
## Day 3 : Global Prospects and Innovation Pathways

The third day expanded our global perspective. Ms. Laxmi Prasanna Kandi, Mr. Samrat Sikdar and Dr. Paramveer Singh guided us through higher education and research opportunities abroad at universities like Texas A&M, UC Davis, Purdue and Mississippi State, highlighting allied disciplines such as Communication, Program Planning, Climate Change Science, Gender Studies, Agricultural Leadership and Natural Resource Management. They advised us on building academic profiles, crafting CVs and applying for scholarships and international programs.





Dr. Mahesh Chander inspired us with his lecture on agri-startups organic farming, incubation, market-led extension and pluralistic approaches.



Dr. Suchiradipta Bhattacharjee focused on policy engagement and communication skills, teaching us how to deliver impactful elevator pitches for research and funding proposals. She elaborated on career avenues in policy consulting, advocacy, journalism and social entrepreneurship and introduced policy fellowships and certification courses for further development.



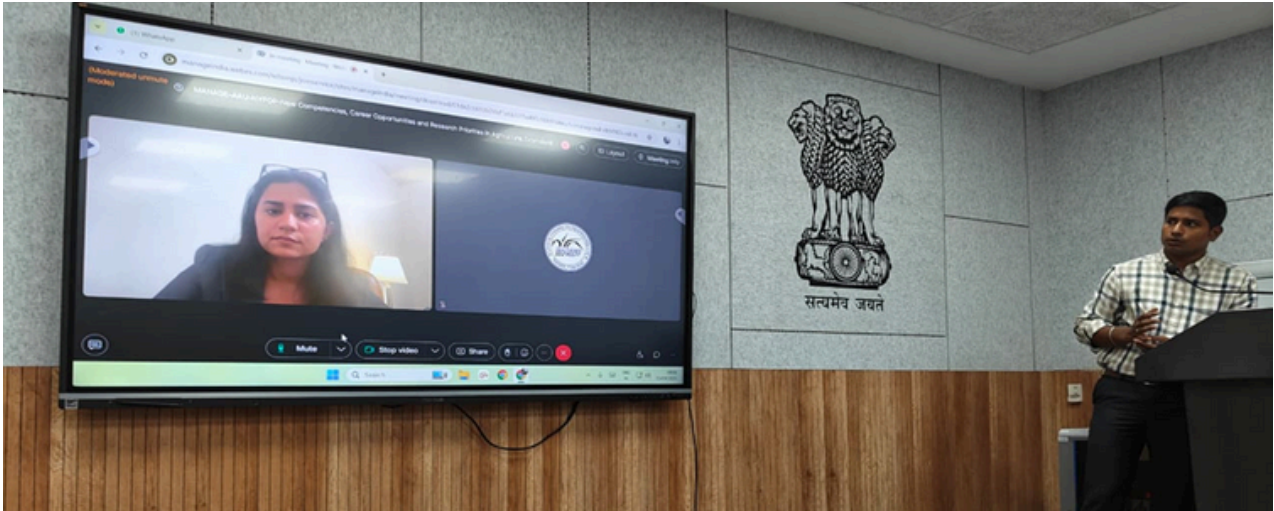
In the afternoon, field visits made the learning tangible.

- At AMUL, we witnessed the success of India's cooperative model, a lesson in farmer empowerment and institutional resilience.
- We also visited an FPO led by Mr. Devesh Patel, who exports organic products such as honey, turmeric biscuits and herbal cookies. He shared practical insights into export market risks and the importance of secure payment systems.



## Day 4 : Monitoring, Evaluation and Policy Engagement

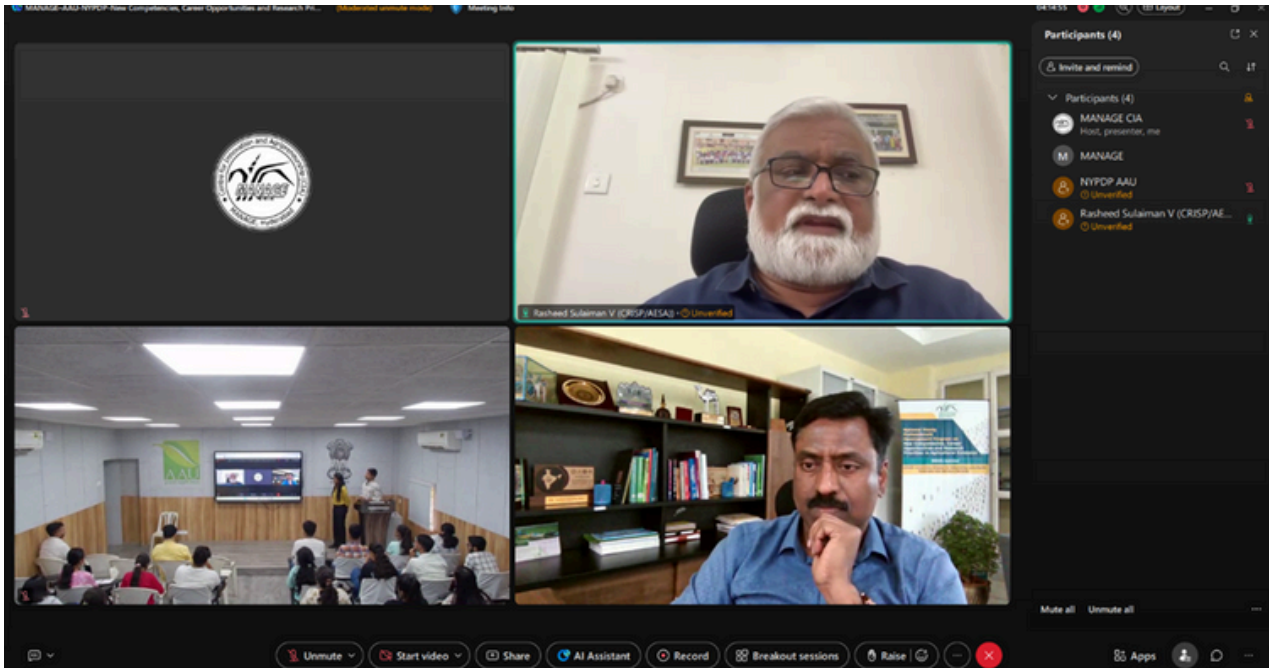
Day was highly technical and application-oriented. Dr. Anuradha Choudhary (University of Nebraska) introduced frameworks for monitoring and evaluation (M&E)-process, outcome and impact evaluation-along with participatory and culturally responsive models. She also introduced software tools like NVivo, MAXQDA, ATLAS and Tableau for qualitative and quantitative analysis



Dr. P.V.K. Sasidhar discussed essential competencies for extension professionals, including program planning, ICT, CSR engagement and program evaluation. He highlighted the MEAL framework (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) and the Theory of Change. We conducted a focus group discussion on competency gaps in undergraduate curricula-an enlightening exercise in self-assessment and curriculum development.



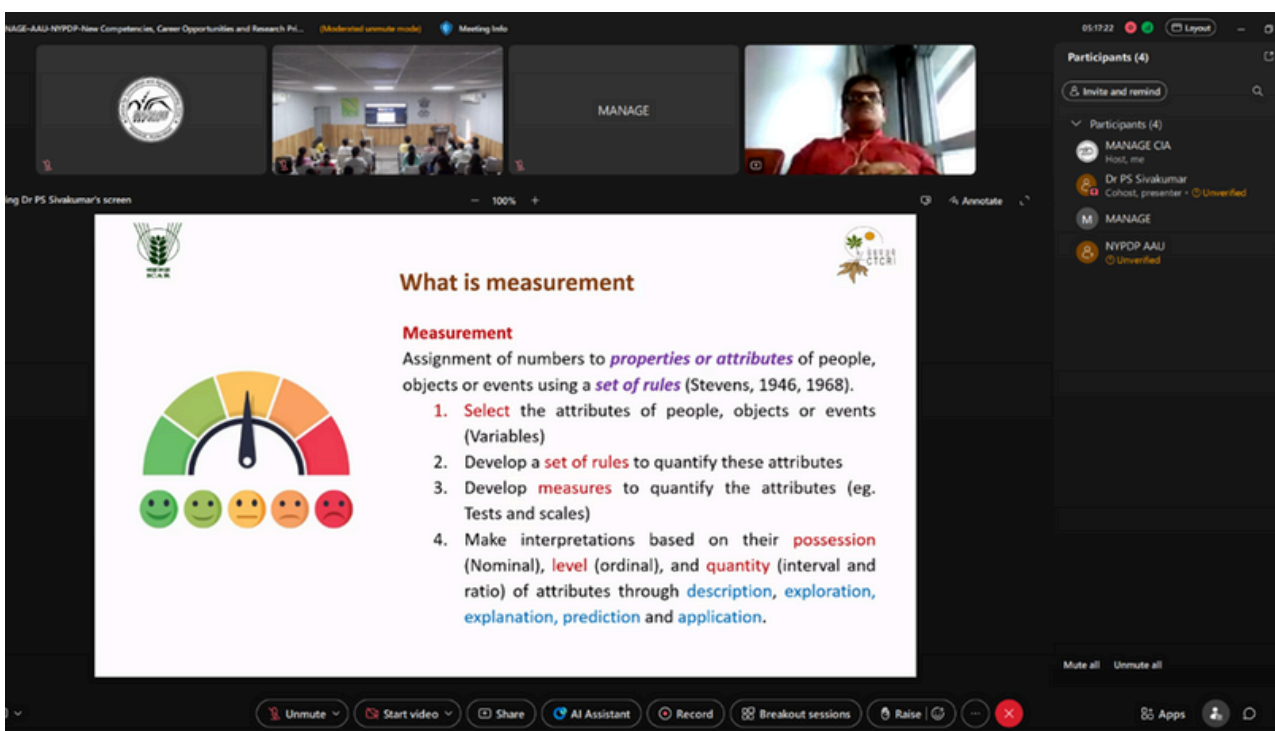
Dr. Rasheed Sulaiman emphasized policy engagement, writing skills and continuous learning as crucial for professional excellence



Dr. P. Sethuraman Sivakumar followed with an engaging session on Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and the COARSE process for scale development. The day concluded with alumni reflections by Ms. Jena Paul, followed by a creative video exercise where we recorded our takeaways-enhancing our confidence and communication skills.

Key Takeaways:

- Evaluation is as important as execution in extension programs.
- Competency-based education ensures reflective learning enhances self-awareness and professional growth.



## Day 5 | The Extensionist as a Development Professional

The final day unified the entire week's learnings. Dr. Krithika Sundaram (Shroff Foundation) emphasized that extensionists are not merely information providers—they are development professionals and co-creators of knowledge.

She discussed essential skills like Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), baseline surveys, logical framework analysis and evidence-based decision-making. She stressed that research must lead to community action, citing examples of water budgeting and carbon assessment. Emerging roles such as community mobilizers, policy advocates, development communicators and capacity builders were also highlighted.



In the concluding session, Dr. Saravanan Raj reconnected us with digital learning tools, internship opportunities and lifelong learning platforms. The closing “Head, Heart and Hands” reflective exercise beautifully summarized our personal and professional transformation.

Key Takeaways:

- Extension is a development mission driven by empathy and engagement.
- Community action and research must go hand in hand.
- Lifelong learning and digital adaptation define modern professionalism.



## Five Days Training Experience

My five-day journey at MANAGE was truly transformative—a blend of learning, reflection and inspiration. Before joining, I feared missing out on an opportunity that so many seniors had cherished. Once there, I realized why—it was one of the most thoughtfully designed programs I've attended, tailored to help young professionals discover their potential, understand their duties and identify new opportunities within agricultural extension.

Each day introduced a fresh perspective—emerging competencies, research priorities, global prospects, policy engagement and development communication. Eminent experts connected theory with practice, encouraging us to think critically about our role as extension professionals in a rapidly changing agricultural landscape. Interactive group discussions, alumni interactions and field visits made learning deeply engaging and experiential.

What stood out most was how the program reignited curiosity and confidence—instilling the belief that the future of agricultural extension depends on innovation, adaptability and lifelong learning. In essence, the NYPDP was not merely a training—it was a journey of self-discovery, purpose, professional commitment, self-growth and a promise for lifelong learning.

## Change in Perspective

The training strengthened my belief that agricultural extension is far more than technology dissemination-it is a dynamic process of empowerment, innovation and collaboration. The sessions redefined extension as a multidisciplinary bridge connecting research, policy and practice.

Learning about digital tools, agri-startups, policy advocacy and foresight research helped me see the discipline as a catalyst for socio-economic transformation. I now perceive extension professionals as facilitators of knowledge and change agents capable of driving inclusive development. The program inspired me to adopt an innovative and impact-oriented approach to both research and fieldwork.



## Atmosphere and Environment

The training atmosphere was vibrant, inclusive and intellectually stimulating. From day one, the environment encouraged curiosity, creativity and collaboration. The sessions were highly interactive-balancing formal lectures with group tasks, brainstorming and case-based learning.



Resource persons, both online and offline, were genuinely passionate about shaping the next generation of extension professionals. Their energy inspired us to think beyond boundaries. The participants, too, were enthusiastic and respectful, creating a culture of shared learning and mutual growth. The program fostered both professional and personal development in a friendly, motivating setting.

### What I Appreciated Most

What I appreciated most was the holistic design of the program-it seamlessly integrated knowledge, skills and purpose. Every session was curated to address different dimensions of extension-from research and innovation to communication and community engagement.

The opportunity to learn directly from eminent experts and interact with alumni provided deep insights into career pathways and real-world applications. I particularly valued the reflective exercises, especially the “Head, Heart and Hands” activity, which encouraged us to internalize our learning and reflect on our purpose.

Above all, I admired the organizers’ dedication and the human-centered approach of MANAGE. The program truly reflected their vision to nurture future-ready professionals who can bring meaningful change to agricultural systems.

### Peer Interactions and Networking



Peer interaction was one of the most rewarding parts of the program. Engaging with young professionals from diverse universities and regions exposed me to varied perspectives on extension education and practice. Group discussions, collaborative activities and networking sessions enhanced my teamwork, leadership and communication skills.

Interacting with MANAGE alumni and experts broadened my professional network and gave me valuable guidance on research, career development and higher education opportunities. These exchanges built lasting connections and a strong sense of belonging to a national community of young extension professionals working toward a shared mission-transforming India's agricultural innovation ecosystem.

### Most Significant Takeaway



My most significant takeaway was realizing that agricultural extension is transitioning from knowledge transfer to knowledge co-creation. The future of extension lies in combining technical expertise, digital proficiency and interpersonal skills to create participatory and sustainable solutions.

The program reinforced that sincerity, adaptability and innovation are essential traits for professionals aiming to make a real difference. It taught me that extension is not just about advising farmers-it is about empowering communities through knowledge, empathy and collaboration.

## Application of Learning

I plan to integrate the learnings from NYPDP into both my academic and professional pursuits. I will apply digital tools, participatory approaches and evidence-based research in my projects to enhance relevance and impact.

The program inspired me to promote innovation-led extension models and contribute to building stronger linkages between research and field-level applications. I also intend to share my learnings with peers and students to foster a culture of continuous professional development. Most importantly, I aim to carry forward the same sense of dedication, professionalism and resilience that the MANAGE team demonstrated throughout the program.



My MANAGE NYPDP journey was a perfect blend of learning, inspiration and transformation. It made me realize that I am part of a larger community of passionate extension professionals who share a common vision for the discipline. Sharing ideas, experiences and aspirations with such dynamic individuals was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that will continue to guide my professional journey.

## My MANAGE NYPDP Journey



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