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MANAGE Musings

A knowledge-sharing series that brings together the insights, perspectives and experiences of MANAGE to shape ideas, inspire dialogue and drive meaningful action

From One Concern to a National Mission: The Journey of MANAGE's National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)

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MANAGE Musings: The Journey of MANAGE NYPDP

The National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP) is a remarkable story of how a concern can become a movement. Born from a deep concern about the quality of agricultural extension education, theory, research and practice, it began with an attempt to strengthen agricultural extension teaching faculty that did not unfold as originally envisaged.

Almost accidentally, the journey turned towards young professionals. What started as an unexpected experiment has today evolved into a growing national community, young, connected and committed to renewing the discipline, building new competencies, advancing research and shaping the future of agricultural extension.

Every transformation begins with a question.

For the MANAGE, the journey of the National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP) on New Competencies, Career Opportunities and Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension began with a question that had concerned extension professionals for decades:

How can agricultural extension education continuously generate new knowledge, renew its curriculum, and keep pace with a rapidly transforming agricultural sector?

One of the authors of this MANAGE Musings had articulated these concerns as early as 2003 in his abstract, "Agricultural Extension in India: Do or Die Away," published in the abstract volume of the First National Extension Congress, SEE, Agra.
The concern remains relevant today: Agricultural extension is evolving. New technologies, climate challenges, changing farmer needs, digital platforms, emerging research priorities and new forms of advisory services are reshaping the profession. For young professionals entering this changing landscape, academic knowledge alone may no longer be enough. They need opportunities to discover new competencies, explore emerging career pathways, identify relevant research priorities and, above all, build their professional identity.

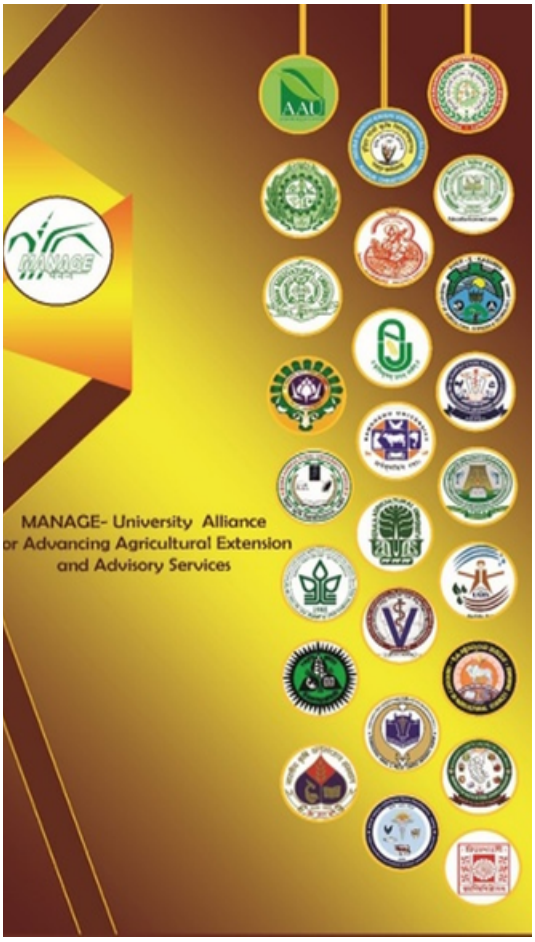
The answer did not emerge overnight. It evolved through years of dialogue, experimentation, reflection and, most importantly, a willingness to listen to the aspirations and needs of the next generation of agricultural extension professionals.

What began as an institutional effort to strengthen agricultural extension education gradually took an unexpected turn from universities to faculty, from faculty to students, and from students to a growing professional community. The journey has moved far beyond a five-day training programme. It has evolved into a continuing ecosystem of learning, reflection, peer engagement, professional networking and specialised development.

In many ways, NYPDP is the story of an idea that grew beyond its original boundaries, an idea that began with a concern for the discipline and evolved into a community committed to shaping its future.

What follows is the journey of five major milestones, decades of concern to one evolving idea, and a growing community of young professionals who are not merely preparing for the future of agricultural extension, but helping to reimagine it.

As a premier national institute, MANAGE has a broad mandate spanning capacity development, management education, knowledge management, policy research and advocacy. Drawing on its extensive reach across India and its engagement with countries in Asia and Africa, along with its expertise in Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS), MANAGE envisioned a collaborative platform to advance agricultural extension education and practice. This vision took shape in 2017–18, when MANAGE, in collaboration with 30 agricultural universities, established the MANAGE–University Alliance for Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services.



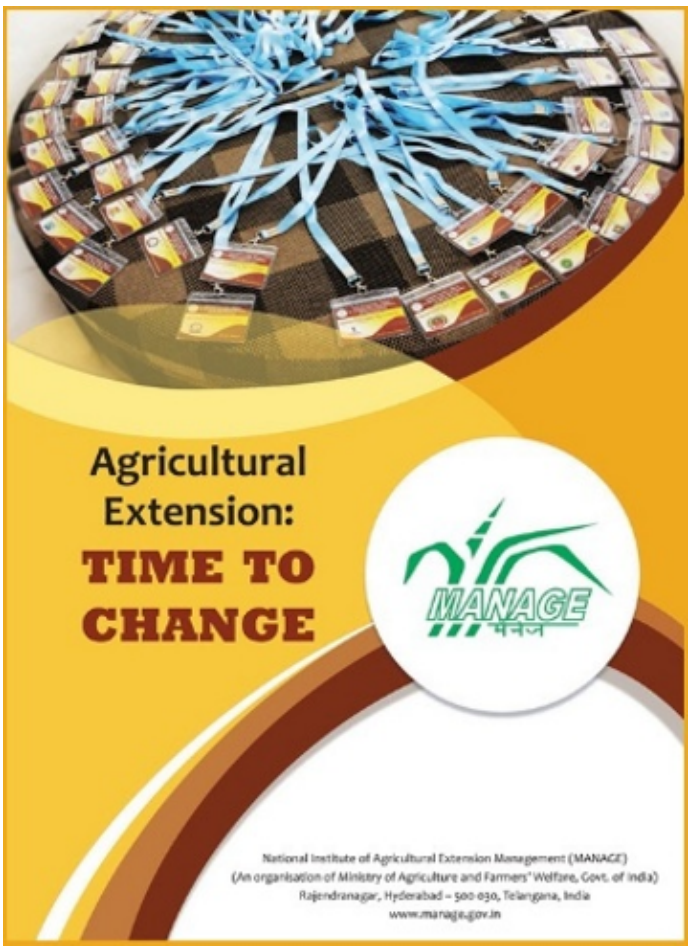
This alliance also envisioned along with curriculum revision, it sought to anticipate emerging needs of the agricultural sector, identify evolving research priorities, strengthen research and professional competencies, document and share field-level agricultural extension innovations, facilitate stronger linkages between academic-knowledge institutions and stakeholders, and promote extension approaches responsive to contemporary agricultural challenges. This alliance provided an important institutional foundation for subsequently rethinking the competencies and professional development needs of the next generation of agricultural extension professionals.

https://saravananraj.in/2020/08/manage-university-alliance-for-advancing-agricultural-extension-and-advisory-services/

Milestone 1

The **first milestone** was the national workshop on **"Agricultural Extension: Time to Change,"** organised by MANAGE, Hyderabad, from **14–16 February 2017.** It brought together faculty members, agricultural extension professionals, students and development practitioners to critically reflect on the evolving role of agricultural extension education and research.The workshop highlighted several interconnected challenges. Agricultural extension was evolving beyond technology transfer towards innovation, collaboration, entrepreneurship and more complex development concerns. However, curriculum content did not always reflect these changes, research often remained disconnected from field-level problems, promising extension practices were not adequately documented or shared and weak university–practice linkages.

Two questions emerged strongly from these discussions:



"Are we preparing students for the agricultural extension system of yesterday or for the one they will encounter and help shape today and tomorrow?"

"How can this imperative for change be translated into curricula, research, and practice to impart new competencies and professional development that prepare the next generation of agricultural extension professionals?"

https://www.manage.gov.in/publications/working%20papers/Time2Change_MANAGE.pdf

Milestone 2

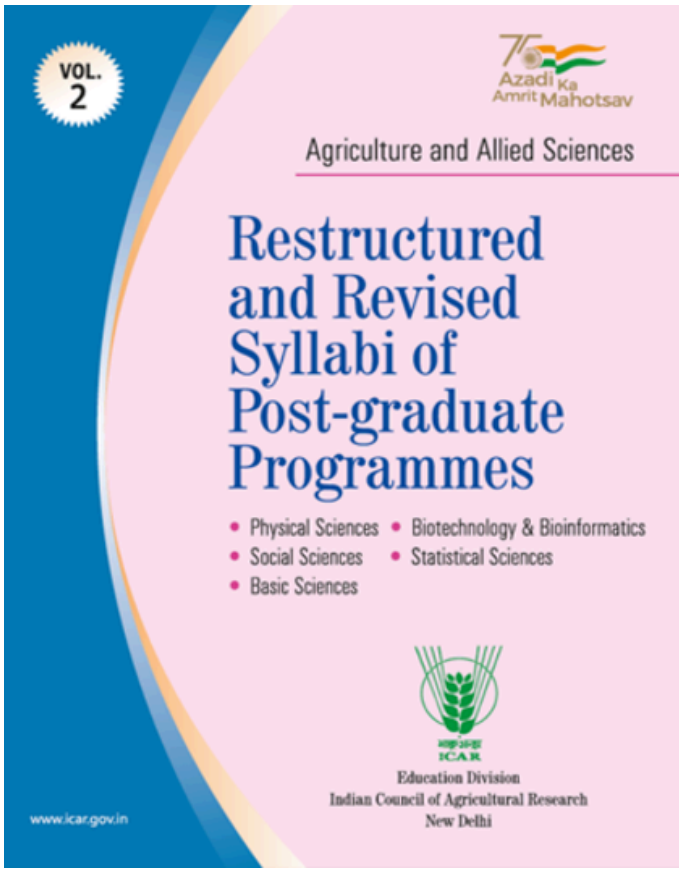
From Curriculum Reform to Faculty Development

As a follow-up to the national workshop, MANAGE constituted a Committee on Agricultural Extension Curricula Reforms. Working closely with the ICAR Broad Subject Matter Area (BSMA) Committee and drawing on inputs from a diverse range of stakeholders including faculty from agricultural universities, ICAR institutes, non-governmental organisations, employers, extension professionals, and students—the process resulted in a revised and forward-looking curriculum.

The revised curriculum sought to go beyond content revision by emphasising academic rigour, practical relevance and multidimensional competencies required to address the growing complexity of technology transfer, agricultural innovation and rural advisory systems.

Yet, curriculum reform alone could not transform the classroom. The effectiveness of any new curriculum ultimately depends on the faculty who interpret it, teach it and translate it into meaningful learning experiences.

This led to the next critical question (and also indicated in the ICAR curriculum document that the faculty needed training because the complete curriculum is new and revised)



https://www.manage.gov.in/managecaeira/Agricultural_20Extension_20Education_PG-Syllabi-Vol-02.pdff

"How could the new curriculum move beyond the document and reach the classrooms through the faculty who would bring it to life?"

Milestone 3

Taking Curriculum to the Faculty. When Change Met Its First Challenge

National Faculty Development Program (NFDP)

In year 2023-24, MANAGE launched the National Faculty Development Program (NFDP) on New Frontiers in Agricultural Extension from February 26th to March 1st 2024 at MANAGE, Hyderabad, aimed at familiarising faculty members with the revised and emerging curriculum of agricultural extension education.

However, the response fell short of expectations. The five-day programme brought together 12 faculty members, (six from agricultural universities, six from deemed universities and private colleges) along with three scientists and two students from nine states. The initiative could not continue in the same format. Despite the presence of 74 agricultural universities, other deemed universities and colleges, participation from universities in the NFDP was notably limited, with only 12 faculty members attending.

While conferences, award ceremonies and other professional events offer opportunities for recognition, networking and professional exposure, programmes centred on curriculum reform and strengthening classroom teaching appear to receive less attention. The limited participation of faculty from agricultural universities in the NFDP raises an uncomfortable but important question: **Are professional development priorities aligned with the responsibility of preparing the next generation of agricultural extension professionals?** Beyond participation, the deeper concern is whether faculty members and institutions are willing to question established practices, embrace emerging areas and take ownership of curriculum reform. Academic leadership must be measured not only by professional achievements, but also by the willingness to translate knowledge into better teaching, relevant research, application and meaningful opportunities for students. Without this commitment, even well-designed curriculum reforms risk remaining on paper rather than transforming classroom learning.



This realisation prompted MANAGE to think differently about the next step:

If the change could not reach every student through the faculty, could MANAGE take the change directly to the students themselves?

Milestone 4

From Faculty to Students, Taking Curriculum Change Directly to Students

MANAGE National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)

The first programme, held from 22–26 April 2024, brought together 46 postgraduate and PhD scholars from different universities and states across India. The idea was simple: expose young agricultural extension professionals to new competencies, emerging career possibilities and contemporary research priorities. But behind this simple idea was a much bigger ambition,

"to change the way young professionals think about agricultural extension".

Could five days really make a difference when students had already spent years within the conventional academic system?

The programme began by trying to answer that question.

Five Days, New Perspectives

The programme introduced areas of growing importance, including digital innovations, climate change, emerging research priorities, policy engagement, gender, organic farming from an extension perspective, monitoring and evaluation, entrepreneurship, international opportunities and the role of NGOs. The first day went further, helping participants see where each area could take them: the careers, the competencies required, relevant courses and the associated research priorities. The aim was to look beyond conventional pathways such as ARS, Assistant Professor or KVK Subject Matter Specialist, and to move from asking "What can I do after my degree?" to "What area do I want to specialise in, and what competencies do I need to get there?"

For instance, a participant interested in becoming a Monitoring and Evaluation specialist could begin to understand what competencies are required, what additional courses or skills could strengthen their profile, what research areas they could explore and what kinds of career opportunities exist in the field.

Taking NYPDP Closer to Students

The first programme also revealed a practical challenge: reaching more young professionals without placing an additional financial and logistical burden on students travelling to Hyderabad. This led to the introduction of the **university collaboration model**, through which NYPDP was organised in partnership with universities and institutions across different parts of the country.

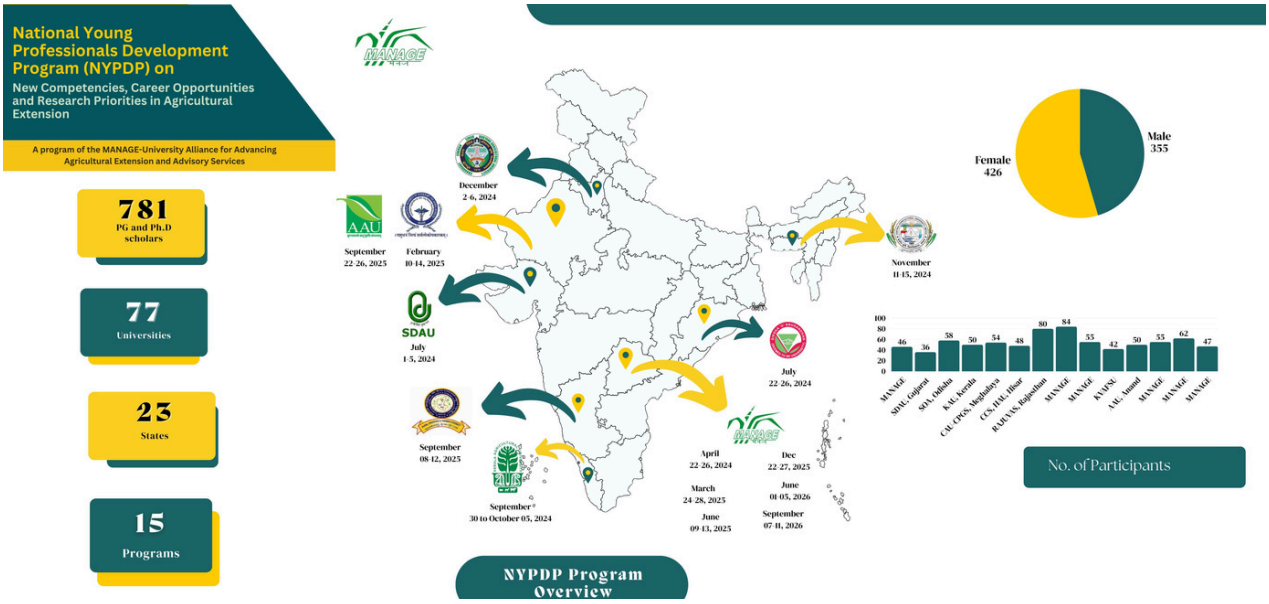
The model enabled students to participate at their own campuses, while also extending learning opportunities to students from nearby institutions. Responsibilities were shared between MANAGE and the collaborating universities: the universities provided the venue and accommodation, while MANAGE took responsibility for programme funding, resource person selection, planning and overall execution. This arrangement brought the programme closer to students, reduced travel-related barriers and enabled universities to become active partners in expanding access to professional development opportunities.

The first programme at MANAGE was therefore followed by programmes organised in collaboration with 8 universities across different parts of the country, including Sardarkrushinagar Dantiwada Agricultural University (SDAU, Gujarat), Siksha 'O' Anusandhan University (SOAU, Odisha), Kerala Agricultural University (KAU, Kerala), Central Agricultural University (CAU, Meghalaya), Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University (CCSHAU, Haryana), Rajasthan University of Veterinary & Animal Sciences (RAJUVAS, Rajasthan), Karnataka Veterinary, Animal and Fisheries Sciences University (KVAFSU, Karnataka) and Anand Agricultural University (AAU, Gujarat).



Reach and Outcome: A Journey of Growth

The growth of NYPDP is visible in numbers but the numbers tell only part of the story. Since its inception, 15 cohorts have been conducted, reaching young professionals across 77 universities and 23 states. The programme has gradually grown from its first cohort of 46 participants into a national community of young professionals exploring new possibilities in agricultural extension.



Accessibility and affordability was also an important part of the journey. From the first batch to the 12th batch, participants could attend the programme in different locations and without a registration fee. This helped students from different parts of the country participate without worrying about the cost of the programme.

As the programme grew, the registration model also changed. From the 13th batch onwards, a nominal registration fee of ₹3,000, including food and accommodation, was introduced. This change came from the experience of conducting the earlier batches. At times, students registered for the programme but did not attend, while some participants may not have fully understood the value of the programme before joining. In some cases, participation was driven more by immediate personal interests than by a clear interest in the learning opportunity. The idea behind introducing a nominal fee was therefore to attract aspiring young professionals and to encourage more conscious and committed participation. When a student makes a small investment from their own pocket, there is often a greater sense of commitment towards attending the programme and making the most of the five days.

Building a community around the programme

NYPDP Champions
Peer outreach

NYPDP Diaries
Participant reflections

NYPDP Mentor Diaries
Mentorship and insights

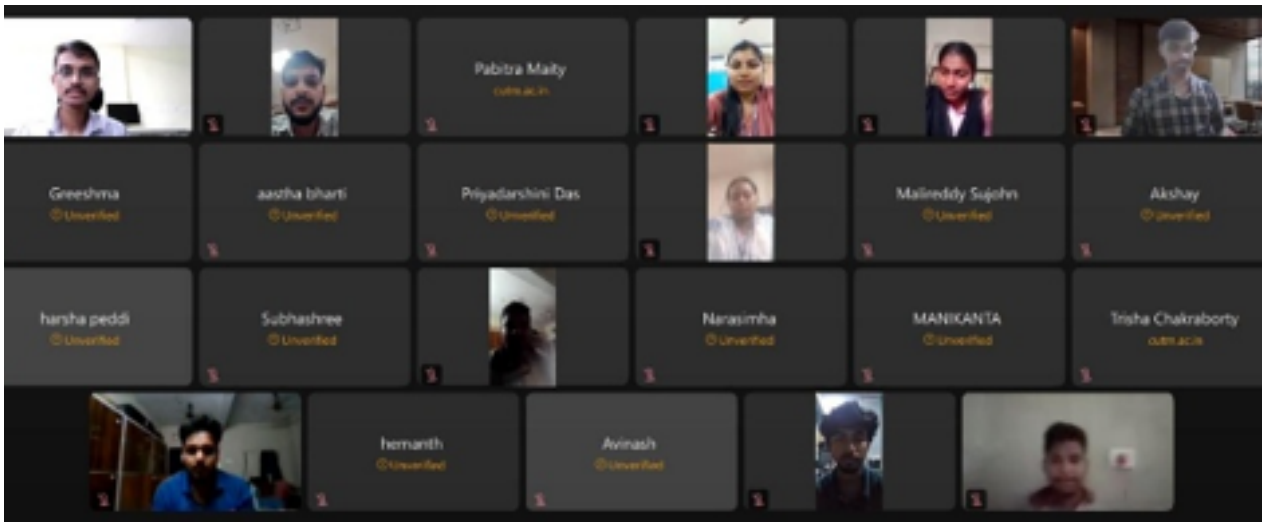
NYPDP Impact Diaries
Learning and application

NYPDP Champions

MANAGE cannot physically reach every student in every university and every corner of the country. But learning does not always need to travel through a classroom. Sometimes, it travels through people. This idea led to the emergence of NYPDP Champions. Alumni began organising outreach sessions and peer interactions at their universities, sharing their experiences and explaining how the programme had contributed to their professional journeys. They also began nominating friends, juniors and seniors for upcoming programmes.

Participants were no longer only beneficiaries of the programme. They were becoming ambassadors of the learning.



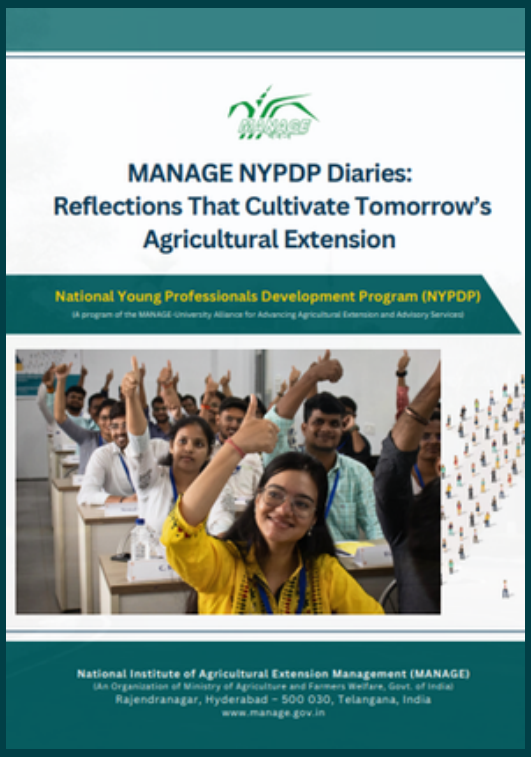


NYPDP Diaries: When Learning Becomes a Story

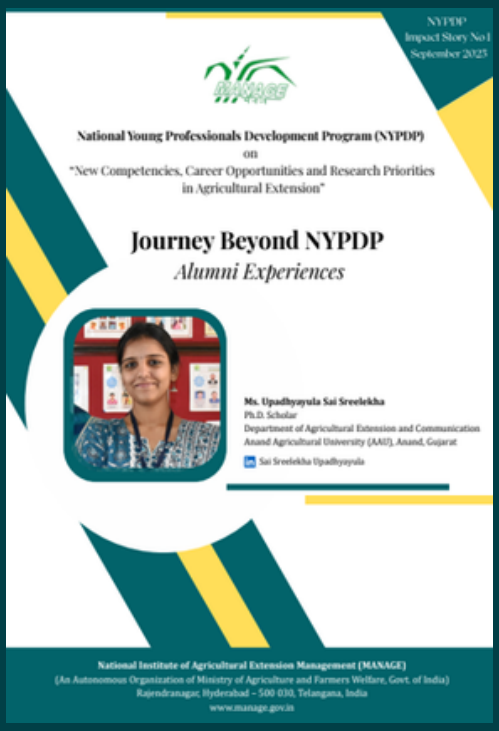
The team also realised that the impact of NYPDP could not be understood only through what trainers delivered.

It was equally important to understand what participants took away, reflected upon and eventually did with that learning.

This led to the MANAGE NYPDP Diaries: Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow's Agricultural Extension, creating a space for young professionals to document their experiences, learning and reflections. So far, 117 young professionals have shared their experiences through the diaries as on 08.10.2026



https://www.manage.gov.in/managecaeira/NYPDPImpactStories.aspx



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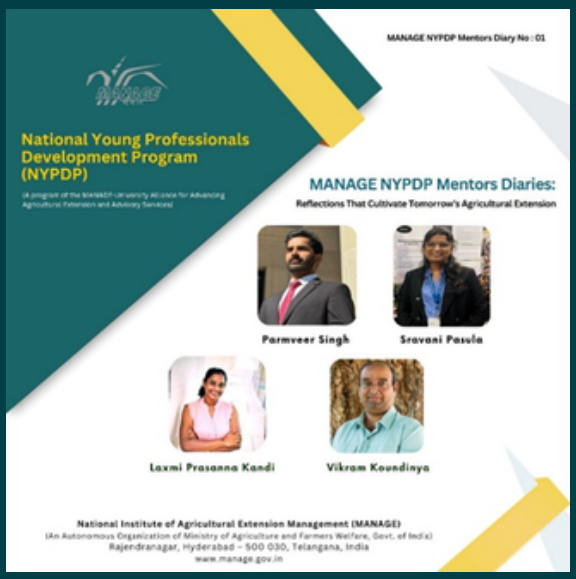
But the question soon moved beyond

*"What **did you learn?"** to*
*"What **did you do with what you learned?"***

This led to the NYPDP Impact Diaries: Journey beyond NYPDP- Alumni Experiences, where participants reflected on their journeys three and six months after completing NYPDP. Their stories began to show how the programme continued to influence their professional journeys. Participants explored the priority research topics, online courses, applied for fellowships, attended international conferences and took up internships etc. Many also began identifying their areas of interest and exploring ways to develop deeper expertise in their chosen professional niche area. In this way, the diaries became more than documentation. They became a window into the continuing journey of young professionals after NYPDP.

Mentor Diaries

Learning is not a one-way process. While participants were sharing their reflections, mentors were also encouraged to share their experiences and resources through the "MANAGE NYPDP Mentors' Diaries: Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow's Agricultural Extension". The mentors shared useful resources, professional experiences and suggestions for young professionals seeking to build their professional identity. This created another layer of connection between experienced professionals and young professionals who were just beginning to define their careers.



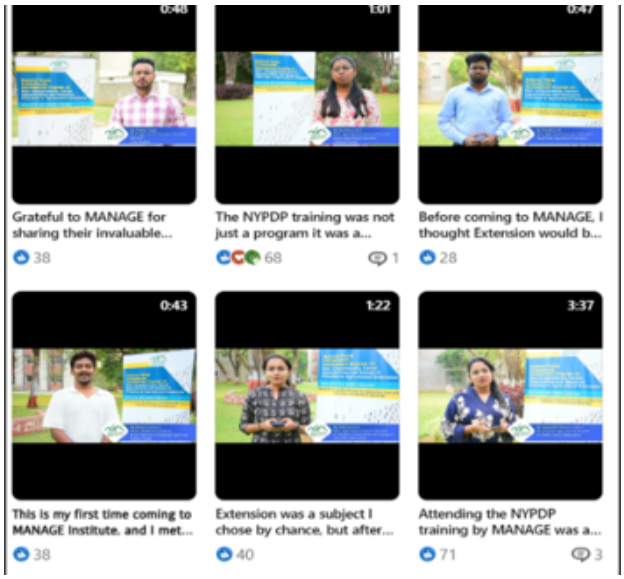
https://www.manage.gov.in/managecaeira/NYPDPMentorsDiaries.aspx

Building a Community beyond Four Walls

Another visible change has been the growing confidence of participants to communicate their professional journeys.

What started as individual posts gradually contributed to a larger professional network. The **MANAGE-CAEIRA** LinkedIn community grew to 53,428 (as on 22.10.2026) and beyond, bringing together professionals not only from agricultural extension but from different areas of agriculture. The number itself is significant, but the larger idea is more important. It is not merely a community of followers. It is a community where professionals speak, share, learn and connect with one another.





https://www.youtube.com/@MANAGE-CAEIRA/videos

Milestone 5

From NYPDP to NYPDP P.L.U.S: Discipline Unfolding

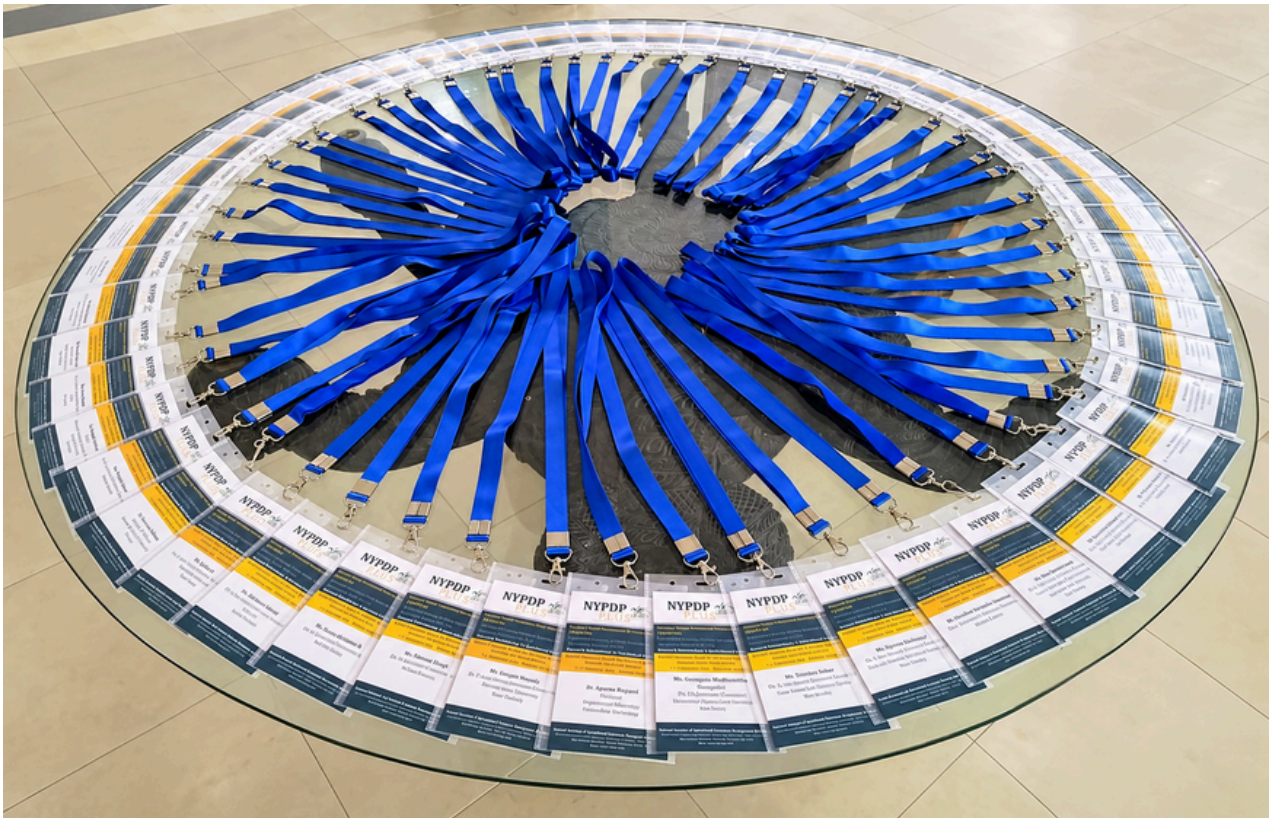
As the NYPDP community grew, another need became evident. The broad exposure offered by NYPDP was valuable, but many participants wanted to go beyond awareness and explore specific areas in greater depth. This led to the evolution of the **National Young Professional Development Program for Professional Learning to Unlock Specialisation in Agricultural Extension (NYPDP P.L.U.S.).**

The philosophy is straightforward:

"Agricultural extension is no longer limited to traditional career pathways. Young professionals need opportunities to identify their areas of interest, develop specialised competencies and build expertise in emerging fields"

The First Step towards Specialisation

The first P.L.U.S. programme, on Research Methodology in Agricultural Extension, was held on 7–11 September 2026 at MANAGE, Hyderabad, with 47 postgraduate and PhD scholars from 13 states. It covered qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method approaches, data collection and analysis, scientific writing and AI-enabled research tools, and helped participants develop research proposals and publications.



NYPDP —P.L.U.S

National Young Professionals Development Program(NYPDP) for
Professional Learning to Unlock Specialisation in Agricultural Extension (P.L.U.S) on
Research Methodology in Agricultural Extension
MANAGE-University Alliance for Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services
7–11 September, 2026 MANAGE, Hyderabad





Check out the meeting note:

https://aesanetwork.org/nypdp-p-l-u-s-research-methodology-in-agricultural-extension/

The next specialised programme on Monitoring and Evaluation is organised from 12-16 October 2026. A total of 14 postgraduate and PhD scholars from 04 states participated. The programme focuses on developing skills in designing results frameworks, logical frameworks, indicators, and monitoring plans, while enhancing participants' ability to interpret and communicate M&E evidence for evidence-based decision-making, programme improvement, and policy development.

The next specialised areas are Digital Innovations in Agricultural Extension, Gender, and Innovation Scaling and Policy in Agricultural Extension. The direction is clear: from exposure to exploration, from exploration to specialisation, and from specialisation to professional expertise.

What Made NYPDP Work?

A Sustained Commitment to the Next Generation

NYPDP stands out as a unique national initiative designed specifically for postgraduate and doctoral scholars in agricultural extension, with a focus on preparing the next generation of agricultural extension professionals. Unlike conventional capacity-building programmes, it represents a sustained investment in young professionals, with successive cohorts creating a continuing pathway for learning, professional development and engagement with the discipline.

While student education and professional development primarily fall within the mandate of universities and ICAR, MANAGE recognised the need to complement these efforts by creating a dedicated national platform for young scholars to explore emerging competencies, diverse career pathways, research priorities and contemporary developments in agricultural extension. The vision extended beyond conducting a training programme; it was about reaching students across institutions and states and building a continuing learning opportunity for them. This commitment, supported by universities, resource persons and participating scholars, enabled NYPDP to evolve from its first cohort into a continuing national programme.

Team

One of the most important factors behind NYPDP has been its team of resource persons. The programme has been supported by practitioners, specialists and professionals with practical experience in their respective fields and who were involved in developing the curriculum and who also bring practical experience in their respective areas. Many of the resource persons have been associated with the programme from curriculum designing. This continuity has helped create consistency in the quality and direction of the sessions.

Another strength is the team's understanding of the purpose of NYPDP. The resource persons do not need to be repeatedly briefed about what they should teach. They understand the objectives, scope and spirit of the programme, and this allows them to design their sessions accordingly.

Universities: The Trust That Takes NYPDP to Students

Universities and faculty members play an important role in encouraging students to participate. Their willingness to nominate, recommend and send students to MANAGE reflects their belief that such exposure can add value to students' academic and professional journeys.

For many faculty members, sending a student to NYPDP is not simply about attending another training programme. It is about giving young professionals an opportunity to discover emerging areas, understand new career possibilities and develop competencies that can help them navigate a changing agricultural sector. The strong participation from states such as Tamil Nadu (112), Maharashtra (85) and Uttar Pradesh (72) reflects the important role that universities and faculty members have played in taking NYPDP forward.

Alumni as Ambassadors

The NYPDP alumni gradually became an important part of the programme's outreach. They began reaching out to their peers, juniors and seniors, sharing their experiences, feedback and key learnings from the programme. As alumni started sharing their own journeys, the outreach became increasingly community-driven, rather than depending entirely on MANAGE's promotional efforts. Their personal experiences helped other students understand what NYPDP could offer and encouraged them to consider participating. Sometimes, it is not the trainer who speaks most powerfully about a programme, but the impact the programme has on the trainee.



The Journey Has Not Been Without Challenges

When Plans Change at the Last Mile

One of the key challenges in scaling up NYPDP has been building genuine institutional ownership. In some instances, universities have cancelled collaborative programmes after announcements and promotional activities were already underway, disrupting implementation and coordination. Limited support from university leadership, reluctance to share basic facilities such as training halls and accommodation, and unwillingness to waive off even the nominal cost of ₹150 per participant accommodation have further constrained the expansion of university collaborations. While global engagement and institutional development are widely emphasised, investing in the professional development of the next generation of young professionals does not always receive the same priority. For NYPDP to scale further, universities must move beyond viewing it as just another programme and recognise it as an investment in their own students and the future of agricultural extension.

Registrations Do Not Translate into Participation

Another challenge has been last-minute dropouts. Some students who register for the programme are unable to attend because of personal reasons or other commitments. While such situations are understandable, last-minute withdrawals create difficulties in making effective use of planned logistical arrangements and resources. To address this challenge, MANAGE moved from the earlier model of free registration to a registration fee that includes food and accommodation. This was introduced to encourage greater commitment from registered participants and support smoother programme planning.

Keeping the Learning Journey Alive

Perhaps one of the continuing challenges is sustaining engagement with participants after they complete NYPDP. Young professionals return to their universities and academic responsibilities after the programme, and remaining actively engaged with the NYPDP community can sometimes be difficult. While MANAGE has explored different ways of keeping alumni connected through initiatives such as NYPDP Champions, Diaries and other engagement activities, maintaining sustained participation remains an ongoing journey.

The challenges, therefore, have not been the end points of the NYPDP journey. They have become opportunities to rethink how the programme can remain relevant, accessible and connected to young professionals across the country.

The Missing Celebration of Agricultural Extension

The NYPDP Diaries offer a valuable glimpse into the experiences, reflections and aspirations of young professionals in agricultural extension. Yet, of the 781 students who participated in the programme, only 117 came forward to document and share their reflections. The pride, passion and enthusiasm for the discipline remain strikingly muted among most of the students. While these voices offer meaningful insights into how young professionals perceive the discipline and envision their futures, they also raise an important question: how can we encourage more students to articulate their learning, celebrate their discipline and develop a stronger sense of professional identity? The challenge extends beyond imparting knowledge; it is about creating a culture in which young professionals feel confident expressing their ideas, take pride in their field and become active advocates for the future of agricultural extension.

The Struggle to Find a Research Niche

Many students struggle to identify a specific area of specialisation and translate their interests into focused research. Despite exposure to emerging themes and diverse career opportunities, some find it difficult to move beyond broad subject areas and establish a clear research direction. The limited participation of just 14 students in the NYPDP P.L.U.S. programme on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), despite its relevance to research, development programmes and impact assessment, reflects this challenge. The real concern is not simply a lack of interest, but a lack of awareness about where a particular specialisation can take them. Without this clarity, students risk overlooking promising research and career pathways within their own discipline.

The Journey Continues

Looking back, NYPDP may appear to be a training programme. But its journey tells a much larger story. It is a story of moving from faculty to students, from curriculum to competencies, from training to transformation, and from individual learning to community learning.

The journey so far has demonstrated the value of building this process step by step. From the MANAGE–University Alliance, National Workshop on Agricultural Extension (Time to Change), curriculum reform and faculty development to NYPDP, NYPDP Diaries, Impact Diaries, Mentors' Diaries, NYPDP Champions and now NYPDP P.L.U.S., each stage has built upon the previous one.

Therefore, is not simply about conducting more programmes. It is about strengthening this evolving ecosystem of learning. MANAGE, Universities, mentors, practitioners, alumni and young professionals can continue to work together to create opportunities for learning, peer exchange, professional networking, specialisation and application.

Perhaps the most important lesson from the journey is that: **the building professional competencies and transformation does not always begin with a large intervention. Sometimes, it begins with one young mind, one question, and the willingness to imagine agricultural extension differently. As one voice begins to speak, a few more find the confidence to share, and those voices gradually reach hundreds, connecting with thousands. In this way, a training programme evolves into a community and grows into a continuing journey of professional learning and transformation for agricultural extension professionals.**

The opportunity ahead is to ensure that this growing community does not simply participate in programmes, but goes on to create new knowledge, develop new competencies, new practices, build new pathways and contribute to the future of agricultural extension.

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Above all, we acknowledge the young professionals whose participation, questions, reflections and continued engagement have given NYPDP its purpose and momentum.

Finally, we recognise the dedicated efforts of the MANAGE team, whose commitment to conceptualisation, programme design, coordination and implementation has helped NYPDP evolve from an initial initiative into a continuing national platform for professional learning and development. We hope this account of the journey inspires universities, institutions and professionals to strengthen their collective efforts in preparing a confident, competent and future-ready generation of agricultural extension professionals.

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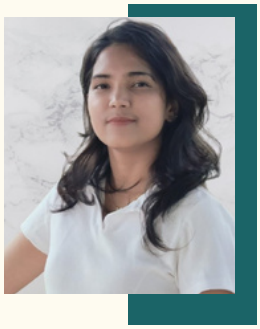
MANAGE launched its flagship National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP) in 2024, in partnership with agricultural universities across India. The program is designed to cultivate next-generation competencies, explore emerging career pathways, and identify research priorities in agricultural extension. NYPDP orients young scholars toward contemporary themes in extension research, practice, and policy, fostering leadership among future extension professionals in an ever-evolving agricultural landscape. Till today, fifteen successful NYPDP cohorts have trained 781 young professionals from 77 universities across 23 states, nurturing a vibrant and interconnected community of emerging extension leaders. Collaborative editions with institutions such as SDAU (Gujarat), SOA (Odisha), KAU (Kerala), CAU (Meghalaya), CCSHAU (Haryana), RAJUVAS (Rajasthan), KVAFSU (Karnataka) and AAU (Gujarat) have significantly enriched the program, creating a robust ecosystem of experiential learning and academic exchange. Building on this foundation, NYPDP P.L.U.S. takes the journey further by creating opportunities for focused and specialised learning. It enables young professionals to move beyond introductory exposure towards deeper knowledge, specialised competencies and greater professional capability in their areas of interest. The journey of NYPDP continues with the next generation of agricultural extension professionals not merely preparing for change, but becoming the change makers who will shape the future of agricultural extension.

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