



National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)

MANAGE-University Alliance for Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow's Agricultural Extension



Opening Doors to Growth and Possibility

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

 [Harshad Lokhande](#)

Key Learnings

Day 1 : We had an entire day with Dr Saravanan Raj, who emphasised a powerful point: select your area, equip yourself with knowledge through MOOCs and other resources and do not limit yourself only to agriculture. Extension is a broad field and our wings can spread far beyond conventional roles.

One of the most striking realisations for me was about time and change. I often thought that personal change takes weeks, perhaps 21 days as is commonly believed. Yet Dr Raj reminded us that transformation can happen in a single moment, if we decide for ourselves. Equally, the time we lose on social media could instead be invested in growth, adding value to our lives.



We also had a group activity where we discussed challenges and opportunities across six areas – students, extension faculty, curriculum, institutions, professional programmes and job prospects.

The key learning was simple but profound: rather than blaming others, if we focus on changing ourselves the process becomes easier and more effective. After all, we are the future professionals in this field and the responsibility begins with us.

In the evening, Dr. Saravanan Raj shared his personal story which deeply inspired me. Many times I have thought that things in my life are not moving in the right way and that challenges are overwhelming. His journey encouraged me to view situations from different angles, to recognise that opportunities are always present and to believe that we need only one job – if we prepare ourselves and commit to one area wholeheartedly, everything else will follow.

- Choose one area of passion and prepare deeply for it
- Invest time wisely, reduce distractions and focus on growth
- Change is not slow – it can begin in a moment if we decide
- Stop blaming external factors, focus on self-improvement
- Opportunities exist, but we must work to make them possible

Day 2 : The morning session was with Dr Saravanan Raj Sir, focused on research priorities.

- A research topic should link local issues with global relevance to gain wider acceptance.
- Avoid repeating past studies and instead identify genuine gaps.
- Reading extensively before writing is the key to preparing a strong paper.



We then had a group activity where each group was asked to design a research topic and market it. With very little time, we had to think quickly, refine our idea and present it effectively. This activity highlighted the importance of critical thinking, creativity and persuasive communication.



The next session was with Dr Vemireddy Mam, Assistant Professor at IIM Ahmedabad, who gave us a glimpse into the future of agriculture and farming.

- She explained how fragmented landholdings may increasingly be taken on rent by a few, changing the role of smallholder farmers.
- In this process, many men may migrate to urban areas for jobs, leaving women to shoulder the main responsibility of agriculture. This will create new challenges and burdens for rural women.
- The role of extension will also shift – from supporting numerous smallholders to addressing the needs of fewer consolidated landholders, while ensuring the concerns of women farmers are not neglected.
- She highlighted the importance of needs assessment and how high-quality research can influence policy, sharing examples from her own work.

I had the opportunity to interact with her personally and learnt an inspiring point: to start a business, you do not always need a business school; what you truly need is to understand business and take the first step.



The following session was with Dr Shambu Prasad Sir, Professor at IRMA, who introduced us to the concept of institutional innovations.

- He showed how new institutions and collective efforts can address rural and agricultural challenges.
- Through a group activity, we were able to understand how institutional arrangements evolve and why they are crucial for sustainable solutions.
- His session made me realise that extension is not only about individuals but also about creating strong systems and institutions that support farmers and communities



The final session was with Dr Srajesh Gupta, who broadened our understanding of extension.

- He explained that extension is not limited to agriculture; it also involves programme planning, communication and management. Opportunities exist wherever these skills are applied.
- He highlighted how we must move from conventional extension towards transformative extension, supported by examples from entrepreneurship and policy.
- A case study of an entrepreneur from the North East who developed a food forest concept showed how challenges can be turned into opportunities, even selling unique products such as elephant-trampled mango turmeric.



Day 3

The first session was with Ms Laxmi Kandi and Mr Samrat Sikdar, who shared insights on opportunities in foreign universities in our subject area.

- They explained the entire admission process in four phases: planning, graduate school requirements, recommendations, interviews and funding, illustrating it through their own experiences.
- Mental health and resilience were emphasised as essential during the journey of applying and studying abroad.
- Ms Laxmi Kandi highlighted opportunities in evaluation and monitoring worldwide, the skills required and how we can prepare ourselves to become suitable candidates.
- Mr Samrat Sikdar explained course structures and PhD examinations in foreign universities, helping us understand how to align our skills and profile effectively.

Following this, Dr. Mahesh Chander Sir highlighted entrepreneurial opportunities and the support available through government programmes such as RAFTAAR and Incubation Centres.

- He emphasised that career growth is not limited to conventional extension; we can explore areas like supply chain extension, market lead extension.
- Coming from an extension background and having written a book on organic farming, he motivated me not to limit myself to a single area.
- He shared examples of various entrepreneurship models across the globe, which were really motivating.

The final session was with Dr Suchiradipatta Bhattacharjee, who shared insights on policy engagement and research impact.

- She emphasised that as researchers, we can actively contribute to policy by going beyond data collection.
- A common trend is to disconnect from respondents after collecting data, but she explained that maintaining contact, sharing findings, or inviting them to thesis presentations builds trust and credibility.
- She illustrated this through her own research, where professional stakeholders were initially sceptical. By keeping them informed and engaged, she was able to influence policymakers and ensure her research had real-world impact.
- From this session, I realised the importance of relationship-building and communication in ensuring research contributes meaningfully to policy.



Key learnings from the visit:



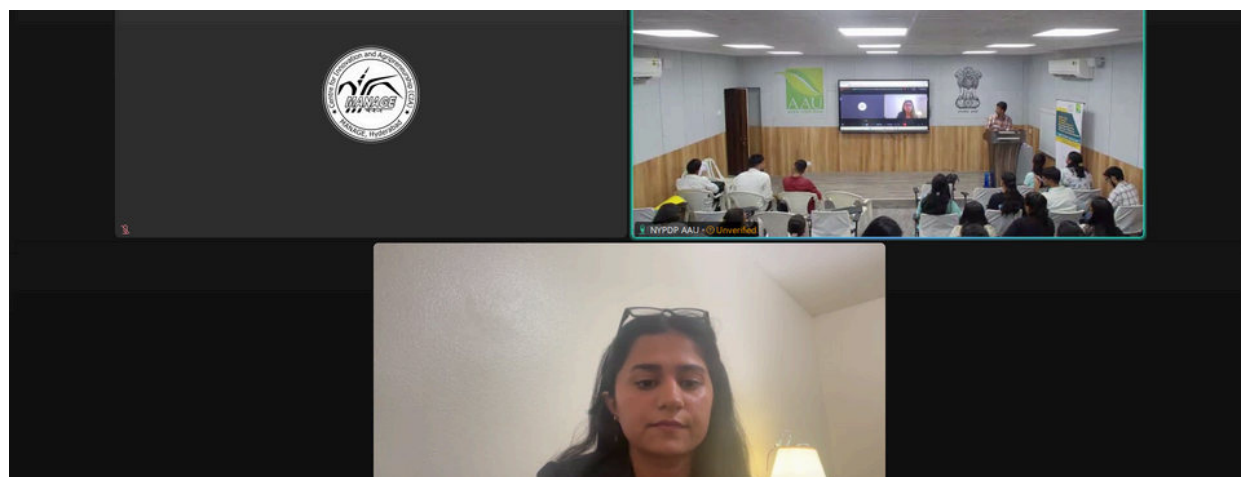
We visited an FPO in Anand, where we met Mr Devesh Patel, a successful organic farmer and exporter.

- Mr Patel started with small piece of land and has now built a venture with certified organic products, value addition and exports.
- He established an FPO, connecting multiple farmers to source organic produce, showing the importance of collaboration and networking.
- He shared insights about market-oriented value addition, processing techniques and scaling up operations.
- His cold storage unit using ammonia-based technology requires ₹28–30 lakh per year, highlighting the level of investment and planning required in agribusiness.
- From my perspective, I learned that even small beginnings can lead to significant success with vision, perseverance, innovation and practical knowledge.
- The visit reinforced that strategic thinking, resource management and market awareness are critical for turning challenges into opportunities.

Day 4

Dr. Anuradha Choudhury, PhD Scholar, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA

- Dr. Choudhury introduced various evaluation and monitoring methods, frameworks and data collection techniques.
- She highlighted the Photovoice method, where participants capture photographs of actual situations to document strengths, weaknesses, or challenges they observe in the field.
- We learned how to analyse these photographs to derive meaningful insights and use them to improve evaluation and monitoring processes.



Day 5

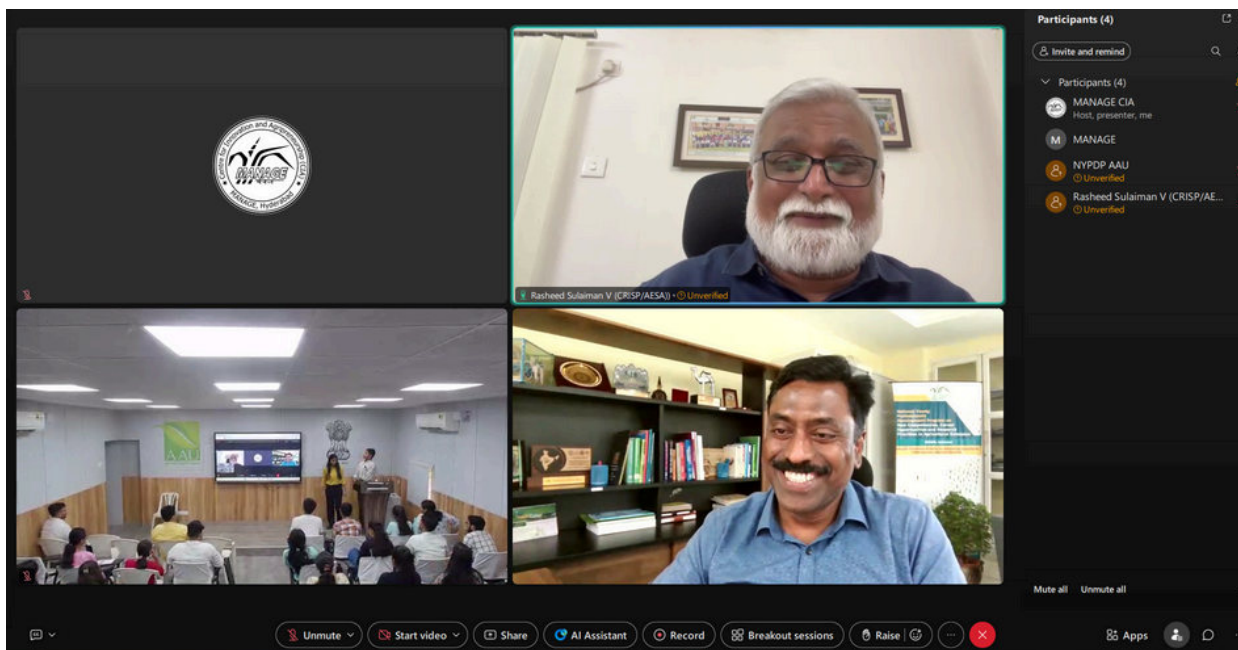
Dr. PVK Sasidhar, Professor, School of Extension and Development Studies, IGNOU, New Delhi

- Dr. Sasidhar provided a comprehensive and effective session on impact assessment and evaluation in a short time.
- I learned the differences between appraisal, monitoring and evaluation and explored further types of evaluation through practical examples.
- A focus group discussion allowed us to understand how such activities are conducted in real situations and explored process skills and competency gaps in the undergraduate agricultural extension curriculum in India.
- This session enhanced my knowledge of the effectiveness of evaluation methods and how they contribute to assessing and improving extension programs.



Dr. Rashid Sulaiman, Director, Centre for Research and Innovation in Science Policy, Hyderabad

- Dr. Sulaiman provided insights into policy engagement in agricultural extension.
- He explained what policymakers look for and how to develop policies that attract attention and influence decisions.
- He shared various resources for understanding policy landscapes, helping us navigate policy frameworks effectively.
- From this session, I learned the importance of proactive engagement with policymakers to ensure research and extension outcomes have meaningful impact.



Dr. Kritika Sundaram

- I understood the vast opportunities available for extension graduates in social science research and documentation, especially within NGOs.
- I learned about the key competencies needed for this field, such as documentation skills, analytical thinking and ground-level engagement.
- I realized the importance of building tie-ups with local organizations to strengthen field connections and gain better participation during data collection.
- I understood how roles like community mobilizer, development communicator and capacity builder can create real impact in rural development.

The 5-day NYPDP training program was a truly enriching experience for me. Interacting with distinguished speakers from diverse areas of agricultural extension gave me deep insights into the field and helped me identify both my strengths and areas for improvement. The group activities and practical exercises enhanced my learning and made the sessions more engaging.

Connecting with fellow trainees from different universities and states was equally valuable, as it broadened my perspective and built a sense of community within our discipline. The speakers' knowledge, humility and passion were deeply inspiring, motivating me to grow further in my professional journey. I consider this program very important for me in understanding the scope and potential of extension education.

Change in Perspective

This training definitely changed my perspective on Agricultural Extension. Earlier, I used to think that extension was limited to roles like ARS, SMS, or Agricultural Extension Officer and that there weren't many opportunities beyond these conventional positions. But through this training, I realized that the field is much wider and full of possibilities.

The experts shared real-life examples and experiences that helped me understand how extension connects with entrepreneurship, development organizations, agribusiness, policy and many other sectors.



Training Environment

The atmosphere and environment during the training were very energetic and positive. Trainees came from different states and universities, which made it more interesting. Everyone wanted to learn about our field and the new opportunities in it, so it felt very encouraging.

Each day we were excited to know what new things we would learn and which speakers we would listen to. The sessions were full of learning and motivation. Overall, the atmosphere during the training was really nice and lively.



What I appreciate

What I appreciated most about the training program was how nice and down-to-earth the speakers were. They have achieved great heights in their fields, yet they talked with us so kindly and generously. They truly wanted to teach us and help us understand the importance of our field.

I also liked their aura and could really feel their positive energy. They made us feel confident that we are not behind anyone and helped us see the many opportunities in Agricultural Extension. I was truly inspired by their humility, knowledge and the motivating energy they carried.

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Networking

From peer interactions and networking opportunities, I gained a lot of learning and confidence. Earlier, I used to think that my situation was not good and sometimes blamed my situation. But after talking with people from different universities, I realized that the situation is almost the same for everyone. This made me understand that instead of blaming the situation, we need to challenge it and overcome it with a positive attitude.

I also learned about the different paths others are following, their dreams and what steps they are taking to achieve them. Listening to their experiences was very insightful and encouraging. Most importantly, I made some really good friends and we shared our stories, thoughts and goals. Overall, it was a very nice and meaningful experience for me.



My Most Significant Takeaway

The most significant takeaway from the training is that I realized I don't need to switch fields or go to a business or social work college to pursue something different. My own field of Agricultural Extension already offers wide opportunities and by improving my skills through available options like online courses and internships I can compete and achieve my goals. This insight changed my attitude I understood that with focus and effort, I can reach my desired goal without looking elsewhere.

Application of Knowledge and Skill

I plan to apply the knowledge and skills gained from this program in several ways. During the training, I understood which areas I am truly interested in and which align with my purpose. The program also gave me insights on how to improve myself and develop the necessary skills.



I will continuously update and upskill myself to reach that level. I plan to take internships to gain practical exposure in my field and apply the skills I have learned. This will prepare me to step confidently into my career and work toward achieving my goals. The knowledge and skills from this program will guide me in every step of this journey.

My MANAGE NYPDP Journey

My journey is from being someone who once wished to leave Agricultural Extension to pursue my purpose in life, to someone who now understands that my purpose can be fulfilled more easily and fully within my own field.



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