



## National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)

MANAGE-University Alliance for Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

### Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow's Agricultural Extension



**NYPDP: A Gateway to a New Era of Agricultural Extension**

#### **Minal Kumbhare**

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



**MINAL KUMBHARE**

## Key Learnings

When I first came across the notification for the MANAGE–NYPDP program hosted at Anand Agricultural University, Gujarat, I was filled with enthusiasm and curiosity. As a postgraduate student in Agricultural Extension, I have always looked up to MANAGE for its remarkable initiatives in developing competent extension professionals. Being a part of the 2025 edition of NYPDP was not just an opportunity for me; it represented an important step forward in my academic and professional growth.

The program's emphasis on emerging skills, research frontiers, and career prospects in agricultural extension truly aligned with my interests. During the five insightful days of the training, my expectations were not only met but far exceeded. It broadened my vision, deepened my understanding of the subject, and reshaped the way I perceive the role of extension in modern agriculture. I completed the program with enhanced confidence, fresh perspectives, and a strong motivation to contribute effectively to the dynamic field of agricultural extension.

## Day 1 - New Competencies and Job Opportunities in Agricultural Extension

The first day commenced with an overview session titled “MANAGE at a Glance,” followed by the formal inauguration and an insightful address by Dr. Saravanan Raj, Director (Agricultural Extension), MANAGE. His session shed light on the evolving roles and emerging competencies essential for the next generation of extension professionals.

A group discussion on “Challenges and Opportunities in Agricultural Extension for Professional Specialization and Excellence” provided a vibrant platform to exchange ideas and reflect on how we, as young professionals, can strengthen our identity and expertise in this field. The session on Next-Gen Extension Methods and Competencies emphasized the growing importance of facilitation abilities and digital proficiency for future-ready extension workers. Later, Dr. Saravanan's discussion on Agri-Innovation through Incubation and Startups highlighted the immense potential of entrepreneurship and technology-driven solutions in transforming agriculture. The day concluded on an inspiring note with motivational interactions from program alumni, whose success stories encouraged us to envision our own impactful journeys in agricultural extension.



## Day 2 – Research Priorities, Methods and Climate Change

Day two began with a reflective activity called Metaphor Sharing, where participants expressed their learning creatively. Dr. Saravanan Raj presented Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension, focusing on areas like Climate-Smart Agriculture, ICT-based services, and behavioural research.



Dr. Vidya Vemireddy from IIM Ahmedabad discussed Research Frontiers and Methods, highlighting the need for scientific rigor and interdisciplinary approaches. Dr. Shambu Prasad from IRMA then spoke on Institutional Innovations and Social Science Methods, emphasizing participatory and transdisciplinary models for effective change.





The day concluded with Mr. Srajesh Gupta's insightful session on Agricultural Extension in the Times of Climate Change, linking markets, communities, and policies to promote resilience and sustainability



### Day 3 – Higher Education, Policy Pathways, and Field Exposure

The third day centered around higher education and career development. Ms. Laxmi Prasanna Kandi and Mr. Samrat Sikdar, scholars from Texas A&M and Mississippi State University, shared valuable perspectives on international education and global career opportunities. A session on the Delphi Technique introduced us to an effective method for achieving research consensus and informed decision-making.

Dr. Mahesh Chander then delivered an inspiring talk on Extension for Organic Farming and Entrepreneurship, encouraging us to explore eco-friendly and sustainable agribusiness ventures. Later, Dr. Suchiradipta Bhattacharjee from IWMI discussed Policy Pathways and Engagement, explaining how research can meaningfully influence governance and policy-making. The day concluded with an enriching field visit to AMUL Dairy and a Farmer Producer Organization (FPO), where witnessing cooperative and farmer-led business models in action was truly the highlight of the day.





## Day 4 – Monitoring, Evaluation, and Scaling Research

Day four started with an insightful session by Dr. Anuradha Chaudhary on the Evaluation of Extension Programs, followed by Dr. P. V. K. Sasidhar from IGNOU, who elaborated on Monitoring and Evaluation Competencies. His practical demonstration on conducting Focus Group Discussions provided us with valuable hands-on research experience.



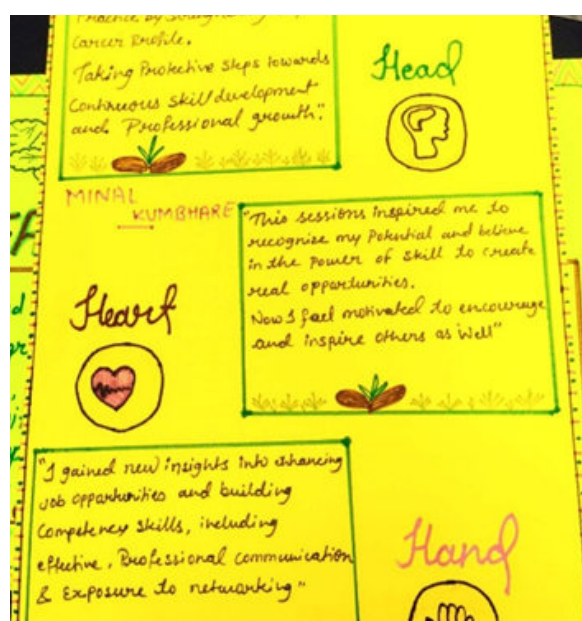
In the afternoon, Dr. Rasheed Sulaiman from CRISP discussed Policy Engagement for Agricultural Extension, emphasizing how evidence-based policies can strengthen extension systems. The day concluded with Dr. P. Sethuraman Sivakumar from CTCRI, who introduced Emerging Approaches in Measurement and Scaling in Social Science Research, offering insights into advanced analytical frameworks for assessing program impact.

## Day 5 – Knowledge Management, Digital Futures, and Valedictory Session

The final day focused on modern research and digital transformation. Dr. Krithika Sundaram from the Shroff Foundation shared her experiences in Social Science Research and Knowledge Management from the NGO perspective. Dr. Saravanan Raj then introduced us to Next-Gen Research Methods and explored the Digital Future for Extension Professionals, highlighting the growing need for data literacy and digital competency.



The program concluded with a reflective activity called “Commitment Cards” under the Head-Heart-Hands framework, encouraging us to connect knowledge, emotion, and practical action. The valedictory session wrapped up the five-day journey with a sense of gratitude, inspiration, and renewed optimism for the future of agricultural extension.



## My Five-Day Training Experience

The schedule was intensive, spanning from early morning to evening, yet it never felt exhausting. Each day brought fresh insights a balanced blend of lectures, discussions, demonstrations, and field experiences. The sessions were thoughtfully designed and highly interactive, keeping us engaged throughout.

I was particularly inspired by the diversity of speakers and the depth of topics, especially sessions by Dr. Saravanan Raj, Mr. Srajesh Gupta, and Dr. P.V.K. Sasidhar, which seamlessly linked theory with real-world practice.

I appreciated how MANAGE emphasized learning by doing, ensuring that every concept was reinforced through discussion or reflective activities. The program offered more than academic knowledge. It was a professional awakening. Interacting with national-level experts, young researchers, and alumni made the experience both intellectually stimulating and personally enriching.

### **Change in Perspective**

Before attending this program, I viewed agricultural extension primarily as a support system for farmers. However, after NYPDP, I came to see it as a transformative discipline — shaping policy, entrepreneurship, sustainability, and technology adoption. Dr. Saravanan Raj's sessions particularly reshaped my understanding of my role as an extensionist — not merely as a communicator, but as a change agent and facilitator of innovation. The program reinforced the idea that extension professionals are catalysts who bridge knowledge and action, expanding my perspective from addressing local challenges to creating a broader societal impact through innovation and leadership.

### **Atmosphere and Environment**

The atmosphere at AAU, Anand was vibrant and inspiring. The MANAGE and AAU teams ensured seamless coordination and created a welcoming environment for participants from across India. Interactions with speakers, fellows, and alumni fostered a sense of belonging to a national network of passionate young professionals.

The multicultural diversity among participants added to the richness of the experience, and every conversation, whether during sessions or tea breaks, offered fresh insights into extension systems across different states.





### What I Appreciated Most

What I valued most was the diversity of perspectives and experiences. The program went beyond traditional lectures, fostering interactive dialogue and meaningful discussions. The mentors were highly approachable, and their personal experiences in the field of extension instilled confidence and a sense of purpose in me. The perfect blend of academic knowledge and practical relevance made NYPDP an outstanding experience.



What made it even more special was that the program was designed by extensionists, for extensionists. It felt like a celebration of our profession and a powerful reminder that agricultural extension continues to grow and transform with every new learner and practitioner.

## Peer Interactions and Networking

Collaborating with peers from different states was a truly enriching experience. Activities like the “Extension Marketplace” and group exercises gave us a platform to share institutional perspectives and regional challenges. These interactions not only broadened our understanding but also opened doors for future collaborations, including joint research projects and conference presentations.

Engaging with MANAGE interns and alumni offered valuable insights into professional pathways post-NYPDP. I realized that beyond academic learning, the friendships and collaborations formed during the program will continue to strengthen our shared mission of advancing and improving agricultural systems.

## My Most Significant Takeaway

My most significant takeaway from the program was understanding that extension serves as the bridge between innovation and impact. The idea that “Change must begin with the change agent” resonated deeply throughout the sessions and continues to inspire me. I now appreciate the importance of continuous learning, adaptability, and collaboration as core competencies for a modern extension professional.

I left NYPDP with a renewed sense of purpose — determined to contribute to a future where agricultural extension fosters transformation, entrepreneurship, and resilience across rural India.

## Application of Knowledge and Skills

I plan to apply my learning in three key ways:

1. Incorporating participatory methods such as FGDs and Delphi techniques into my M.Sc. research to enhance engagement and insight.
2. Exploring opportunities in agri-innovation and incubation, inspired by MANAGE's sessions on startups and entrepreneurship.
3. Leveraging digital tools for extension communication and knowledge management to effectively reach and support a wider farmer audience.

In the long term, my goal is to become a professional who integrates research, policy, and practice to drive meaningful agricultural innovations that benefit communities.

## My MANAGE NYPDP Journey

I extend heartfelt thanks to MANAGE, Hyderabad, for organizing this visionary initiative and to Anand Agricultural University, Gujarat, for hosting us so warmly. Special gratitude to Dr. Saravanan Raj, Mr. Srajesht Gupta and Dr. P.V.K. Sasidhar whose sessions deeply inspired me to pursue excellence in this field.

I am grateful to the NYPDP organizing team — Dr. S.R. Patel, Dr. J.K. Patel, Dr. Raahalya, and all facilitators for making this experience meaningful and memorable. Their guidance, support, and encouragement will continue to inspire me in my academic and professional journey.



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