



# National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)

MANAGE-University Alliance for Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

## Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow's Agricultural Extension



### From Insight to Inner Strength: Reflections on My NYPDP Journey at MANAGE

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What started as a five-day training program at MANAGE became a deep dive into the field of extension education, an experience that not only broadened my intellectual horizons but also grounded my understanding in real-world relevance, nurturing both clarity of thought and strength of will. The program opened doors to many new frontiers, showed us new paths, and empowered us to think critically and purposefully.

I had just begun my PhD and was plagued with doubts about my future, questioning whether this was the right path, whether the field had potential, and whether my efforts would be meaningful. I wondered whether I had what it takes to be a scientist or professor, and if not, what would become of this degree. Amidst this whirlpool of uncertainties, I came across a post from MANAGE announcing the 'National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP),' which seemed like an answer to my questions.



This program was an eye-opener, especially the sessions led by speakers who were mostly young professionals like us, who had taken the road less travelled, explored the job market, and found exciting new opportunities. Prior to attending, I lacked direction. This program provided clarity and empowered my will to pursue knowledge. What set the speakers apart was their courage, dedication to the pursuit of knowledge, and their constant search for new arenas. I understood that I had to start from scratch and move forward with courage and dedication. That alone would be my saviour, it would reveal less explored paths and help me discover my true potential.

## Key Learnings

The first day began with participant introductions, followed by a session where Dr. Saravanan Raj asked us to discuss and reflect on the challenges and opportunities within various extension mechanisms and institutions using the *World Cafe method*. The relaxed, cafe-like setup encouraged open dialogue, enabling participants to share their ideas freely. We also reflected on the effective use of the BSMA syllabus. During the initial discussions, Dr. Saravanan made me realize the depth of knowledge required to become a competent professional in this field. He also explained how the roles of professionals in agricultural extension are constantly evolving and highlighted the need for continuous learning to stay relevant.

The session on qualitative research by Dr. Ipsita Sapra emphasized the importance of understanding people beyond numbers, to uncover why people say what they say and what it reveals about society. One key takeaway from the second day was the importance of viewing every intervention or project through a multidimensional lens, ensuring our actions do not unintentionally reinforce existing inequalities, whether based on gender, caste, or other social divisions.

Dr. Rasheed Sulaiman's session on policy engagement was particularly eye-opening. He emphasized the need for extension professionals to expand their competencies by utilizing resources from platforms like FAO, GFRAS, AESA, etc. This made me reflect on my limited understanding of the domain and how I had never considered policy engagement as a viable career path. This understanding was further deepened during a discussion with Dr. Suchiradipta Bhattacharjee, who shared her experiences in influencing policies through evidence and advocacy. Her work demonstrated how professionals can drive systemic change, reinforcing the importance of bridging research and policy.



The field visit to Access Livelihoods was equally inspiring. It showcased how commitment and credibility can help build strong relationships with rural communities. The organization's work in empowering rural women through skill development and livelihood support highlighted the transformative potential of grassroots interventions. Our visit to CDAC provided us a glimpse into the future of agriculture through technology integration. We learned how technologies like AI, machine learning, and blockchain are being used to support both government initiatives and citizen services. Another compelling session was led by Mr. Parmveer Singh and Ms. Anuradha Chaudhary, who are pursuing their PhDs abroad. They shared their experiences navigating higher education in international institutions, shedding light on available opportunities, preparation strategies, and the resilience required to succeed. Their stories sparked introspection, making me wonder whether I should have explored similar opportunities.



Dr. Kritika Sundaram introduced the role of extension personnel in the NGO sector, expanding our understanding of career opportunities beyond academia and government. The most important takeaway from her session was this: if we aspire to work in a particular position, we must consciously build the required competencies. Regularly upgrading our skills is what will keep us relevant in today's job market. The session by Dr. P. Sethuraman Sivakumar focused on the importance of using contemporary, high-quality, and robust methodologies in extension research. He discussed the potential of AI and modeling techniques in enhancing decision-making for farmers and stakeholders, linking innovation with practical outcomes.

On the final day, a session on agricultural extension and climate change was led by Mr. Srajesh Gupta. He emphasized looking at agriculture as a holistic food system and extension as a node in this interconnected network. He underlined the need for professionals in this domain to excel in problem identification, communication, and management to address climate change challenges. The session on monitoring and evaluation by Dr. P. V. K. Sasidhar shed light on the importance of planning and key frameworks for M&E. A session on entrepreneurship, innovation, and startups was equally insightful, sparking curiosity about innovation in agriculture and how startup founders are revolutionizing society.



### Change in Perspective

This training program reignited my passion and commitment to making meaningful contributions to society. It broadened my perspective on the opportunities available after postgraduate studies in agricultural extension. More importantly, it reminded me that true learning extends beyond the classroom, it is driven by purpose and passion and is reflected in the dedication we bring to our work.

The atmosphere created by the organizers was extremely conducive to learning and growth. They encouraged questions, guided us in self-assessment, and helped us view issues from multiple perspectives. Each day unfolded with thoughtfully curated sessions that were engaging and thought-provoking. The experts were approachable and encouraged interaction, creating a highly participatory and inspiring learning environment. Perhaps the most powerful part was how the philosophy of extension, *“to teach how to think, not what to think”* was demonstrated throughout the program.



## Networking

Interacting with so many talented and spirited young professionals from across the country was truly enriching. The exchange of ideas, experiences, and shared moments fostered a sense of belonging, as though I had become part of a vibrant, like-minded community. Their passion for the subject was infectious, and it filled me with enthusiasm.

## Main Takeaway

- A clearer understanding of new opportunities and directions in the domain
- Insight into my current standing and how to develop my competencies for today's world
- The importance of knowledge and the application of robust methodologies
- The obligation to find impactful evidence through research to influence policy
- The need to seek real-world solutions while embracing diverse perspectives
- The courage and dedication required to pursue one's dreams

## Action Plan

The knowledge and skills I gained through this program have given me a clearer vision and the tools to shape my future path. I plan to apply these insights in future research with a focus on inclusive and evidence-based approaches. I will emphasize continuous learning and methodological rigor and aim to contribute meaningfully to society through thoughtful, impact-driven work.



## My MANAGE NYPDP Journey

My MANAGE NYPDP experience was both thought-provoking and emotionally grounding. It reaffirmed my confidence in the path I've chosen and renewed my sense of purpose. This training provided a space for reflection, connection, and growth, guiding me to think deeper and act with intention. As I conclude this report, I carry with me the profound impact of the speakers, their strength, clarity, and dedication over these five days. I strive each day to become the kind of person who can one day stand before others and say, *"Your words transformed my journey."*

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