



National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)

MANAGE-University Alliance for Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow's Agricultural Extension



The Extension Renaissance: Lessons from MANAGE NYPDP

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Participated in the MANAGE-NYPDP at MANAGE Hyderabad during June 09-13, 2025.

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The program's design, which included a diverse range of speakers, interactive sessions like World Cafe, and practical visits to organizations like Access Livelihoods Consulting (ALC) and C-DAC, ensured a holistic and engaging learning environment. The content, meticulously curated to cover new competencies, digital transformation, research priorities, and varied career paths, directly addressed the evolving demands on agricultural extension professionals.

Key Learnings



Day 1 (June 09, 2025) - Laying the Foundation: New Competencies and Gender Dynamics

Day One, effectively set the context for the entire program. The initial sessions, "MANAGE at a Glance" and "Journey with NYPDP" by Team MANAGE, provided a strong orientation to the institution's vision and the objectives of the program. The "Speed Networking" session was a fantastic icebreaker that quickly connected participants. The inauguration by Dr. Sagar Hanuman Singh, Director General, MANAGE, further underscored the significance of the program. A key learning from the morning was the comprehensive session by Dr. Saravanan Raj, Director (Agricultural Extension), MANAGE, on "New Competencies and Job Opportunities for Agricultural Extension." This session highlighted the evolving skill sets required for extension professionals in today's agricultural landscape.

In the afternoon, the session on "Research on Gender in Agriculture: Equality, Social Inclusion, and M&E" by Dr. Meghajit Sharma Shijagurumayum, Post-Doctoral Fellow from the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, was particularly insightful. It emphasized the crucial importance of integrating gender equality and social inclusion into both agricultural research and practice, along with the essential role of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). The "World Café" group exercise provided an interactive platform to collaboratively understand the evolving challenges in agricultural extension. My primary learning was the foundational shift towards a more inclusive, adaptable, and professionally competent approach to extension work.

Day 2 (June 10, 2025) – Digital Transformation and Sustainable Extension Approaches

Day Two, was pivotal in understanding the transformative role of technology and community-led models in modern agricultural extension. Dr. Saravanan Raj's "Recap of Day 1" effectively connected the previous day's learnings to the emerging themes. His subsequent session on "ICTs & Digital Competencies for Agricultural Extension: Navigating New Frontiers" offered a deep dive into how digital tools are reshaping extension services. This session emphasized the imperative for extension professionals to become digitally literate. Ms. Anamika Sharma, MANAGE Intern, introduced "Value Chain Extension and Advisory Services – Network Approach," which provided valuable insights into connecting farmers with markets.

Dr. Sethuraman Sivakumar, Principal Scientist (Agricultural Extension) at CTCRI, presented on "Emerging Approaches in Measurement and Scaling in Social Research," outlining advanced methods for evaluating and scaling up social research interventions. The afternoon sessions led by Dr. Ramanjaneyulu, Executive Director of the Centre for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA), on "Agricultural Extension Research for Ecological Agriculture" and "Community Sustainable Extension – CSA Experiences and Changing Roles of Extension," were particularly impactful. These sessions focused on climate-resilient, community-led development models and the evolving roles of extension professionals.

Finally, Dr. Rasheed Sulaiman, Director of CRISP, delivered a session on "Policy Engagement for Agricultural Extension," highlighting how extensionists can contribute to evidence-based agricultural policymaking. A key learning from the day was the dual importance of technological integration and community-centric, sustainable practices in modern agricultural extension.



Day 3 (June 11, 2025) – Beyond Technology Transfer: Organic Farming, Entrepreneurship, and Real-World Impact

Day Three, offered a comprehensive learning experience, uniquely blending theoretical discussions with an insightful field visit. The visit to Access Livelihoods Consulting (ALC) in Hyderabad was a highlight. ALC's work with marginalized communities, including their end-to-end support systems, sustainable agriculture practices, and value chain extension models, demonstrated the expansive role of extension services beyond simple technology transfer. Their promotion of Community Extension and Entrepreneurship Systems, in partnership with over 65,000 marginalized producers, provided tangible examples of impactful extension in action.

Dr. Mahesh Chander, Principal Scientist at IVRI, delivered a session on "Extension for Organic Farming, Entrepreneurship, and Gender Equality." This session emphasized the growing importance of organic farming and the need for gender-equitable extension strategies to ensure inclusive agricultural growth. Dr. Saravanan Raj returned to lead a session on "Democratising Innovation and Technology Transfer: Agri-Innovation through Incubation and Startups," highlighting how incubation centres foster agri-innovation and entrepreneurship among rural youth and farmers. A particularly interesting discussion was led by Ms. Divina Matla, MANAGE Intern, on "Empowering Indigenous Food Systems." The main learning from the day was the critical role of extension in fostering entrepreneurship, promoting sustainable practices such as organic farming, and ensuring inclusive growth through real-world community engagement.

Day 4 (June 12, 2025) – Navigating Career Pathways and Technological Advancements

Day Four, comprehensively covered diverse career avenues in extension education and provided valuable insights from various organizations. The morning began with a global perspective shared by Dr. Vikram Koundinya (University of California, Davis), Mr. Samrat Sikdar (Mississippi State University), and Ms. Laxmi Prasanna Kandi (Texas A&M University, USA) on "Graduate Study and Career Opportunities in Extension Education and Evaluation in the United States." This session offered an excellent overview of international academic and professional pathways. Dr. Parmveer Singh, Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, shared his experiences through the session titled "Experiences, Dilemmas, Role of Mentorship, Challenges and Ways to Overcome Them," offering candid and practical advice on navigating a career in this field.

Dr. S. Raahalya, MANAGE Fellow, provided insightful perspectives in her session on "Exploring Methodological Landscapes: From Traditional Approaches to Next-Gen Research Methods," enriching our understanding of evolving research methodologies. The afternoon was dedicated to exploring "New Competencies, Career Opportunities, and Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension" through the lens of experiences from NGOs, I-NGOs, KVKs, and FPCs, with valuable contributions from Dr. Arun Balamatti, Senior Manager at ICRISAT.



A highlight of the day was the practical visit to the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) in Hyderabad, which was highly informative. C-DAC showcased its role as a knowledge centre in research & development, training, services, outreach, and business. Learning about their contributions to ICT for social development, particularly in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Block-chain Technology, Machine Learning (ML), and Big Data in Agriculture, alongside their developed software applications for agriculture, provided a glimpse into the cutting-edge technological integration within the sector. My key learning was the recognition of the vast and rapidly evolving landscape of career opportunities in extension, both domestically and internationally, increasingly shaped by technological advancements.

Day 5 (June 13, 2025) – Research Trends, Monitoring & Evaluation, and Policy Engagement

The final day, effectively synthesized the week's learnings by focusing on research trends, Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E), and policy engagement. Dr. Saravanan Raj delivered a session on "Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension," emphasizing the importance of aligning research with emerging field challenges and stakeholder needs. Dr. P. V. K. Sasidhar, Professor at the School of Extension and Development Studies, IGNOU, New Delhi, provided critical insights in his session on "Monitoring & Evaluation: Competencies for Extension Professionals," outlining essential skills for designing and implementing effective M&E systems. His hands-on demonstration of "Methods to Conduct Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)" was particularly practical and beneficial for future research applications.

Ms. Iniya V, MANAGE Intern, presented on the "Role of Agri-Tech Startups in Driving Innovation and Transformation," highlighting the vibrancy and growing impact of the startup ecosystem in agriculture. The "Sharing Insights" session, involving participants and Team MANAGE, created a space for collective reflection and feedback. The program concluded with a powerful "Take-Home Message and Action Plan" session, which encouraged participants to formulate concrete, actionable steps for applying their newly acquired knowledge. The overall learning from the day was the critical importance of evidence-based approaches, from robust research to effective M&E and the vital role of extension professionals in shaping and influencing agricultural policymaking.

Training Experience



My five-day training experience at the MANAGE NYPDP was profoundly enriching and intellectually stimulating. It felt like a carefully curated journey through the past, present, and future of agricultural extension. Each day brought fresh perspectives, ranging from foundational concepts to cutting-edge technologies and their real-world applications. The balance between expert presentations, interactive group activities, and impactful field visits made the learning process both dynamic and engaging. I particularly appreciated the diversity of the speakers' backgrounds; from academic researchers to practitioners from NGOs and international organizations, which provided a truly holistic view of the field. The unwavering commitment of MANAGE to fostering a new generation of extension professionals was evident throughout the program. This immersive experience has undoubtedly broadened my understanding and equipped me with a more comprehensive toolkit for navigating the complexities of agricultural development.

The training significantly changed my perspective on agricultural extension. Prior to attending, my understanding was more traditional, largely centered on the transfer of technology from research institutions to farmers. However, the NYPDP unveiled a far more dynamic, interconnected, and comprehensive vision of the field. Here's how my perspective shifted:

- **From Linear to Systemic:** I now understand agricultural extension as an integral part of a complex "Agricultural Innovation System" (AIS). It's not just about one-way information flow, but about facilitating interactions, brokering knowledge, and fostering innovation among all stakeholders.
- **Embracing Digital Transformation:** The sessions on ICTs, digital competencies, and visits to C-DAC highlighted the imperative of digital literacy and the transformative potential of AI, ML, and Big Data in agriculture. My perspective evolved to see technology as a fundamental enabler for efficient and inclusive extension.
- **Beyond Production to Holistic Development:** The emphasis on gender equality, social inclusion, organic farming, and community sustainable extension broadened my view beyond mere production increases to encompass sustainable livelihoods, environmental stewardship, and equitable growth.
- **Diverse Career Pathways:** The program dramatically expanded my understanding of career opportunities beyond academia or government roles, including NGOs, FPCs, international organizations, and agri-tech startups. This provided a much more expansive and exciting outlook on professional engagement.
- **Importance of M&E and Policy:** The focus on Monitoring & Evaluation and policy engagement underscored the need for evidence-based decision-making and the role of extension professionals in shaping agricultural policies.



The atmosphere and environment during the training were exceptionally vibrant, collaborative, and highly conducive to deep learning. MANAGE, as the host institution, provided an excellent setting for such a program.

- **Welcoming and Engaging:** From the inaugural "Speed Networking" session, there was an immediate sense of community. The organizers and speakers were very approachable, fostering an environment where questions were encouraged, and discussions flowed freely.
- **Intellectually Stimulating:** The quality of the speakers and the depth of the topics covered ensured a consistently stimulating intellectual environment. The blend of theoretical concepts with practical case studies kept the learning dynamic.
- **Interactive and Participatory:** The program actively encouraged participation through group exercises like "World Cafe", "Learning Reflections", and "Sharing Insights". This made the experience highly interactive rather than a series of passive lectures.
- **Professional and Organized:** The entire program was meticulously planned and executed. The schedule was adhered to, and logistics were handled seamlessly, allowing participants to focus entirely on the learning experience.
- **Positive and Empowering:** There was a strong sense of optimism about the future of agricultural extension. The discussions often highlighted solutions and opportunities, leaving participants feeling empowered and motivated to contribute to the sector.

What I Appreciate

What I appreciated most about the MANAGE NYPDP was its holistic and forward-thinking approach to professional development in agricultural extension. It wasn't just a collection of disjointed sessions; rather, it was a carefully constructed narrative that built upon itself daily, progressively deepening our understanding of the field's evolution. Specifically, I particularly valued:

- **The Blend of Theory and Practice:** The program skilfully combined theoretical insights from leading experts with real-world examples and practical site visits (ALC, C-DAC). This bridge between academic knowledge and practical application was invaluable.
- **Emphasis on New and Emerging Areas:** The strong focus on "New Competencies," "ICTs & Digital Competencies", "Agri-Innovation through Incubation," and "Research Priorities" ensured that the content was highly relevant and future-oriented, preparing us for contemporary challenges.

- **Diversity of Speakers and Perspectives:** The program brought together a wide array of speakers from different organizations (MANAGE, Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT, CTCRI, CSA, CRISP, IVRI, ICRISAT, University of California Davis, Mississippi State University, Texas A&M University, University of Saskatchewan, IGNOU). This provided a rich tapestry of perspectives and expertise.
- **Action-Oriented Conclusion:** The "Take Home Message and Action Plan" session on the final day was crucial as it prompted us to think concretely about how to apply our learnings, ensuring the program's lasting impact.

Networking

A standout feature of the MANAGE NYPDP program and perhaps its most rewarding aspect was the unparalleled opportunity for peer engagement and networking. I had the privilege of meeting a diverse group of individuals from all corners of India, each enriching our collective experience with their unique backgrounds and perspectives. Crucially, it was outside the formal sessions during casual tea breaks, shared field visits, and dinners, that truly enduring relationships began to take shape.



Our group, which organically adopted the name "Paradise," became a symbol of the profound camaraderie and shared joy we discovered. Together, we created beautiful memories through laughter, meaningful conversations, and a spirit of unwavering support. This expanding web of friendships and potential collaborations represents an invaluable asset, one I will always cherish, knowing that these connections will thrive long after the program ends, nurturing a robust and supportive professional community. This deep sense of connection and the authentic friendships forged significantly amplified the overall impact of the program, turning it into a personal odyssey of shared experiences and meaningful growth. Being surrounded by M.Sc. students, Ph.D. scholars, young faculty members, and Subject Matter Specialists (SMS) from various agricultural universities, colleges, and KVKs across India fostered a rich environment for intellectual exchange and collaborative learning.

From peer interactions, I gained:

- **Diverse Regional Insights:** I learned about the unique agricultural challenges and extension practices prevalent in different states and regions through informal discussions with my peers. This broadened my understanding of the varied contexts within Indian agriculture.
- **Shared Challenges and Solutions:** Engaging with individuals at similar career stages allowed us to discuss common challenges faced by young professionals in extension and collectively brainstorm potential solutions.
- **Motivation and Encouragement:** The enthusiasm and passion of fellow participants were infectious. It was motivating to realize that a vibrant community of young professionals is dedicated to advancing agricultural extension.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Group activities and discussions encouraged collaborative problem-solving, where we could learn from each other's academic backgrounds and practical experiences.
- **Establishment of Professional Connections:** I made valuable connections that could lead to future academic collaborations, research partnerships, or even mentorship opportunities.
- **Exposure to Different Institutions:** I gained insights into the academic programs, research focuses, and institutional cultures of other universities and organizations, which is beneficial for future career planning.
- **Resource Sharing:** Peers shared valuable resources, research papers, and information about professional development opportunities that I was previously unaware of.

Main Takeaway

My most significant takeaway from the training was the paradigm shift required in agricultural extension from a prescriptive, top-down approach to a more dynamic, digitally-enabled, and innovation-driven facilitative role. The program vividly illustrated that the extension professional of today and tomorrow must be an agile learner, a technology enthusiast, a skilled communicator, a gender-sensitive facilitator, and an advocate for sustainable, farmer-centric development. The sessions collectively reinforced the understanding that agricultural extension is not static, but a continuously evolving field that demands ongoing adaptation and skill enhancement, especially in areas such as Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E), and policy engagement.

I plan to apply the knowledge and skills gained through this program in multifaceted ways in my future endeavours, whether in academia, research, or practical extension work:

- **Embracing Digital Tools:** I will actively seek to integrate digital competencies and ICTs into my work, exploring the use of AI, ML, and Big Data applications to enhance efficiency and reach in agricultural extension efforts.
- **Adopting Gender-Sensitive Approaches:** I will consciously incorporate gender equality and social inclusion principles into any research, teaching, or extension projects I undertake, recognizing their critical role in achieving equitable agricultural growth.
- **Focusing on Entrepreneurship and Value Chains:** I will explore opportunities to promote agri-entrepreneurship among rural youth and farmers, leveraging insights on incubation centers and value chain development gleaned from the program.
- **Strengthening Research Methodologies:** For research, I will apply the insights on "Next-Gen Research Methods" and align my research priorities with emerging field challenges and stakeholder needs. The hands-on FGD demonstration will be particularly useful for primary data collection.
- **Improving Monitoring & Evaluation:** I will prioritize developing strong M&E competencies to effectively design, implement, and assess the impact of agricultural interventions, ensuring evidence-based decision-making.
- **Policy Engagement:** I will actively consider how my work, whether research or extension practice, can contribute to evidence-based agricultural policymaking, understanding the pathways for policy engagement.
- **Continuous Learning and Networking:** I will commit to continuous professional development, staying abreast of new trends, and leveraging the invaluable network of peers and experts established during the program for ongoing collaboration and knowledge exchange.



My MANAGE NYPDP Journey



My MANAGE NYPDP journey was an invigorating odyssey into the evolving landscape of agricultural extension, shifting my perspective from traditional practices to a dynamic, future-ready paradigm shaped by digital innovation, inclusive growth, and entrepreneurial thinking.

This immersive experience not only equipped me with vital new competencies and career insights but also connected me with a vibrant community of passionate young professionals. These meaningful interactions have deepened my commitment to contributing towards a progressive, resilient, and sustainable agricultural sector.

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