



National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)

MANAGE-University Alliance for Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow's Agricultural Extension



My MANAGE NYPDP 2025 Experience: Redefining Agricultural Extension

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

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This reflective review chronicles my profound experience during the MANAGE NYPDP 2025 program, a five-day intensive journey that redefined my understanding of agricultural extension and ignited a passion for its dynamic future. The program, a meticulously curated blend of theoretical insights, practical exposures, and invaluable networking opportunities, proved to be a truly transformative experience, instilling a renewed sense of purpose and direction in my professional trajectory. From the inspiring inaugurations to the hands-on field visits, each day unfolded with unique learning opportunities, contributing to an immersive and intellectually stimulating environment.

Key Learnings



Day 1 – Laying the Foundation: Introduction, Competencies, and Gender in Agriculture

The inaugural day of the MANAGE NYPDP program laid a strong foundation, setting the stage for a comprehensive understanding of the evolving landscape of agricultural extension. The introductory sessions, rooted in MANAGE's esteemed vision and legacy, resonated deeply and fostered a profound sense of pride in becoming part of such a prestigious initiative.

The program's inauguration, graced by the inspiring and motivational presence of Dr. Sagar Hanuman Singh, Director General, MANAGE, further amplified this sentiment, setting an optimistic tone for the days ahead. A key takeaway from the first day was the strong emphasis on the growing demand for new competencies in agricultural extension. This includes a broad spectrum of skills, from essential digital literacy and effective innovation management to the adoption of participatory approaches, highlighting the shift toward a more dynamic and inclusive extension paradigm.

Dr. Saravanan Raj's insightful session shed light on the expanding job opportunities in both international and domestic organizations, painting a promising picture of career pathways in this evolving field.

Complementing this, Dr. Meghajit Sharma's illuminating discussion on gender equality and inclusion, significantly broadened my perspective, emphasizing the need to integrate social dimensions into agricultural research and development initiatives. The day concluded with a highly engaging World Café exercise, an interactive learning experience where peer discussions enriched my understanding of the complex challenges faced at the grassroots level in agricultural communities. Overall, the first day not only provided a solid theoretical framework but also sparked critical awareness of the social and practical complexities inherent in agricultural extension.

Day 2 – Embracing the Future: Digital Extension, Value Chains, and Sustainable Communities

The second day of the program marked a deep dive into the technological and innovation-driven dimensions of agricultural extension. Sessions focused on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and digital competencies were particularly enlightening, clearly demonstrating that the scope of extension has evolved far beyond traditional field visits. It became evident that modern extension now involves the strategic use of mobile applications, data-driven platforms, and advanced virtual advisory systems, signalling a transformative shift in how knowledge and support reach farmers.



A major highlight of the day was Dr. Sethuraman Sivakumar's compelling discourse on the measurement and scaling of social research, which provided invaluable clarity on how evidence-based models can be leveraged for large-scale community impact.

Adding to the day's richness were two impactful sessions by Dr. Ramanjaneyulu, who masterfully introduced the concepts of community sustainable extension and ecological agriculture. These discussions aligned closely with the global climate-smart agriculture movement, emphasizing the critical need for environmentally conscious and sustainable farming practices. Equally impactful was Dr. Rasheed Sulaiman's session on policy engagement, which proved eye-opening. It highlighted the often-underrecognized role of extension professionals in shaping evidence-based policies that can drive meaningful transformation in the agricultural sector.

Collectively, these sessions redefined my understanding of agricultural extension as a truly interdisciplinary field—one that demands a balanced integration of technical and interpersonal skills, innovation, policy awareness, and, most importantly, empathy for the communities it seeks to empower.



Day 3 – Bridging Theory and Practice: Field Visit, Organic Farming, and Entrepreneurship

Day three brought a much-anticipated shift from theoretical discussions to a more grounded, practical experience, bridging classroom learning with real-world applications. The visit to Access Livelihoods Consulting (ALC) was truly eye-opening, offering a firsthand look at the tangible impact of extension services. Witnessing how ALC is transforming the lives of over 65,000 marginalized producers was both inspiring and deeply moving, reaffirming belief in the transformative power of effective extension. The key takeaways from this immersive field visit were both numerous and profound. Foremost was the critical importance of community-led models in driving sustainable livelihood development, underscoring the power of empowering local communities to shape their own futures.



Dr. Mahesh Chander's session on organic farming and gender equality further reinforced this idea, highlighting real-world examples of how empowering women farmers leads to significant positive change within agricultural communities.

Dr. Saravanan Raj's discussion on incubation and startups was particularly insightful, revealing the vast and often untapped potential of agri-tech entrepreneurship to revolutionize the agricultural sector.

The day concluded with a heartfelt presentation on indigenous food systems, serving as a powerful reminder of the immense value of local knowledge and its vital role in designing effective, culturally grounded extension initiatives. This day was instrumental in bridging the gap between theory and practice, powerfully illustrating that inclusive innovation is not just a concept, but the future of agricultural development.

Day 4 – Charting Future Paths: Career Insights and Visit to C-DAC

The fourth day of the MANAGE NYPDP program was distinctly career-oriented and forward-looking, offering invaluable insights into future pathways in agricultural extension. The morning sessions featured engaging interactions with alumni who have successfully established themselves in global institutions, providing a rare and enriching glimpse into international education and research opportunities in the agricultural sector. One of the most impactful moments was Dr. Parmveer Singh's candid reflections on the vital role of mentorship and strategies for overcoming professional challenges. His insights were deeply relatable and served as a strong source of motivation, resonating with the personal and professional aspirations of many participants.



Dr. Raahalya's presentation on methodological landscapes introduced a wide array of tools and approaches for conducting both qualitative and quantitative research, significantly enhancing our research capabilities. Additionally, Dr. Arun Balamatti's sharing of experiences from his work with NGOs and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) provided a comprehensive understanding of pluralistic extension systems operating across diverse organizational frameworks.

The highlight of the day was undoubtedly the visit to C-DAC Hyderabad, a truly transformative experience. Gaining firsthand exposure to the cutting-edge applications of Artificial Intelligence (AI), big data, and blockchain in agriculture was awe-inspiring. It showcased how advanced technologies can revolutionize rural development and extension services. This pivotal day not only broadened my understanding of the sector but also reshaped my personal and professional aspirations. It has inspired me to seriously consider pursuing higher studies and advanced research in extension education abroad, driven by a strong desire to contribute meaningfully to this rapidly evolving, technology-driven field.

Day 5 – Consolidating Learnings: Research Priorities, M&E, and Future Action

The final day of the MANAGE NYPDP program was intellectually fulfilling, serving to consolidate the wealth of knowledge and insights gained over the preceding days. Dr. Saravanan Raj's session on research priorities reiterated the critical need to align our research efforts with the real-world challenges faced by farmers, ensuring that academic work leads to tangible benefits for the agricultural community.

The day's key takeaways centred around practical application and impact assessment. Dr. P.V.K. Sasidhar's session on Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) emphasized that today's extension professionals must go beyond traditional roles and develop strong evaluation skills. This includes the ability to assess intervention outcomes and communicate results effectively to stakeholders, ensuring both accountability and continuous improvement. A highlight of the day was the Focused Group Discussion (FGD) demonstration, which offered valuable hands-on experience in facilitating discussions and collecting meaningful qualitative data.



Additionally, presentations on various agri-tech startups showcased the immense potential of technology in democratizing access to extension services, making vital support and information more accessible to a broader farming community.

The program concluded with a comprehensive wrap-up and action plan session. This provided participants with a valuable opportunity to reflect on their learnings and propose practical applications of their new knowledge and skills. It also fostered a strong sense of collective purpose and commitment to driving positive change in our respective fields.

Training Experience



My overall experience of the five-day MANAGE NYPDP training was nothing short of transformative. It offered an intense and enriching blend of theoretical knowledge, practical exposure, vital networking opportunities, and essential skill-building. Each day brought something distinct and valuable, creating an immersive and intellectually stimulating environment that kept me fully engaged and eager to learn more.

Change in Perspective

This training fundamentally reshaped my perception of agricultural extension. I no longer see it as a static or unidimensional field, but rather as a dynamic, multi-stakeholder, and technology-driven domain that demands a wide array of interdisciplinary competencies. Extension today goes far beyond traditional fieldwork, it encompasses research, policy formulation, entrepreneurship, and advocacy, reflecting its multifaceted and far-reaching impact.

Training Environment

The atmosphere throughout the training struck a perfect balance between professionalism and warmth. MANAGE successfully upheld a high standard of academic rigor while fostering a collaborative and friendly environment that encouraged open dialogue and peer learning.



The exceptional hospitality, strong infrastructure, and easy access to expert faculty made the entire learning experience both seamless and deeply enriching.

What I Appreciate

What I appreciated most was the remarkable diversity of speakers, ranging from esteemed national scientists to distinguished international scholars, offering a wide spectrum of perspectives and expertise. The thoughtful blend of academic depth with practical, field-based insights ensured a truly well-rounded learning experience. Additionally, the interactive nature of the sessions, marked by active participant engagement, created a dynamic and stimulating environment that significantly enhanced the quality of learning.



Networking

Forging Lifelong Connections: The "Paradise" Group

One of the most enriching and unexpected aspects of the MANAGE NYPDP program was undoubtedly the opportunity for peer interaction and networking.

I felt incredibly fortunate to meet participants from across India, each bringing unique experiences and diverse perspectives to the table. Beyond the formal sessions, it was the informal moments, during tea breaks, field visits, and dinners, that proved especially meaningful. These interactions led to what I believe will be lifelong connections. We organically formed a close-knit group and affectionately named ourselves "Paradise", a reflection of the shared joy, warmth, and camaraderie we experienced throughout the program. Together, we created beautiful memories filled with laughter, thoughtful conversations, and unwavering mutual support.

This network of friends and future collaborators is something I will always cherish. I'm confident that these bonds will endure far beyond the duration of the program, evolving into a supportive community for years to come. This sense of belonging and the genuine friendships we formed elevated the experience from a professional development program to a deeply personal journey of connection and growth.



Main Takeaway



The most significant takeaway from this entire experience crystallized into a powerful realization: "Extension is innovation in action." This phrase encapsulates the essence of what I've learned that extension professionals are not merely information disseminators, but true change agents in rural India. They serve as critical bridges, connecting knowledge, technology, and people, thereby driving progress and empowering communities. This profound understanding has had a lasting influence on my future plans and the way I intend to apply my learnings.

Action Plan

Inspired by the comprehensive learnings from this program, I have concrete plans to apply the knowledge and skills gained in my future endeavours. Specifically, I intend to:



- **Integrate Gender and Social Inclusion:** Consciously incorporate gender and social inclusion into all extension activities to ensure equity, address diverse needs, and reach all segments of the community, particularly marginalized and underserved groups.
- **Utilize ICT Tools and Develop Customized Content:** Actively leverage modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and design tailored, context-specific content that meets the unique needs of farmers. This includes exploring mobile applications and data-driven platforms to improve accessibility, relevance, and impact.
- **Advocate for Evidence-Based Policy Engagement:** Promote evidence-based policy engagement within my department and broader agricultural networks by contributing insights grounded in rigorous research, real-world data, and practical field experiences.
- **Mentor Rural Youth in Agripreneurship:** Guide and mentor rural youth towards agripreneurship and startup incubation, fostering a new generation of self-reliant innovators and job creators. Support them in navigating business development, accessing resources, and building sustainable enterprises.



My NYPDP journey can be succinctly encapsulated as: “A journey of inspiration, transformation, and empowerment – MANAGE NYPDP opened new doors, challenged old notions, and redefined what it means to be an agricultural extension professional in the 21st century.” It has been a true catalyst for both professional and personal growth, offering clarity of purpose, renewed passion, and a strengthened commitment to serve the farming community with innovation and inclusivity.

For those considering similar professional development opportunities, I wholeheartedly recommend the MANAGE NYPDP program. It stands as a beacon of excellence, offering an unparalleled learning experience that is both academically rigorous and deeply practical. One of the most transformative aspects of this program is its ability to completely reshape one's perspective on agricultural extension, from a traditionally perceived field to a dynamic, interdisciplinary, and technology-driven profession. The exposure to a diverse range of experts, the perfect blend of theoretical knowledge with field-based insights, and the highly interactive learning environment made it truly invaluable.

For future friends and juniors aspiring to make a meaningful impact in the agricultural sector, getting selected for this program should be a top priority. It is an investment in your future, one that delivers significant returns in terms of knowledge, skills, confidence, and a strong professional network.

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