



## National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)

MANAGE-University Alliance for Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

### Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow's Agricultural Extension



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## Introduction

The National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP) aims to build future-ready young professionals by strengthening their technical, digital, and leadership competencies in agricultural extension and rural development. The program focuses on enhancing self-awareness, exposing participants to emerging career opportunities effectively to sustainable, climate-resilient, and inclusive agricultural systems.

## Key Learnings from Each Day of the Programme

### Day 1

**Day 1:** First at MANAGE did not feel like the start of a typical training program. It felt like the opening of a story—one that gently invites you to pause, listen, and look within.



As the sessions unfolded, my understanding of agricultural extension began to expand. What once felt like a technical discipline slowly revealed itself as a dynamic bridge between people, climate, technology, and change. Discussions around Climate-Smart Agriculture, digital tools, and emerging career pathways made me reflect on how the field is evolving—and how important it is to grow along with it.

In the session by Dr. Saravanan Raj, Director (Agricultural Extension), MANAGE, who said that, “Agricultural extension is a driver which drives people globally for the change.” It is something which will stay with me throughout my life and I’m probably going to use this line whenever I get a chance.

A strong theme throughout the day was introspection. We were encouraged to first understand our own strengths, skills, and areas for improvement before aligning ourselves with career opportunities. This idea stayed with me, as it emphasized that meaningful professional growth begins with self-awareness.

The group activities brought the day to life. Working together, sharing perspectives, and learning from like-minded peers and seniors transformed the sessions into a collaborative experience. These interactions not only deepened learning but also fostered connections that made the journey feel shared rather than individual

As Day 1 came to a close, I realized that I was carrying more questions than answers—and that felt like progress. This first day was not about reaching conclusions, but about beginning a process of reflection, learning, and growth.



## Day 2

**Day 2:** Next day at the MANAGE – National Young Professionals Development Programme (NYPDP) was a day of deep reflection, mindset shift, and clarity on the evolving role of agricultural extension. The sessions encouraged us to look beyond conventional approaches and rethink how extension functions in a rapidly changing agricultural and rural development landscape.

The day began with a powerful recap that focused on the idea of Unlearn – Learn – Apply. A key message was that meaningful change does not come from attempting to reform systems from the outside, but from becoming the system we wish to improve. This perspective emphasized personal responsibility, adaptability, and proactive leadership in professional growth.

**•Unlearn – Trying to change the system.**

**•Learn – Be the system you want to change.**

**•Will Apply – Creating opportunities instead of waiting for them.**

A major theme of the day was the changing nature of agricultural extension. Extension is no longer limited to technology dissemination; it now spans the entire agri-food value chain, integrating farmers, markets, institutions, startups, and policy processes. The discussions highlighted how extension professionals must respond to global challenges such as climate change, food security, digital transformation, and the empowerment of women and youth.

The session on research priorities in agricultural extension provided a global outlook, stressing the importance of climate-resilient agriculture, sustainable food systems, digital innovation, and inclusive development. These priorities underscored the need for research that is evidence-based, context-specific, and oriented toward real-world impact.

An important highlight was the session on Extension Marketplace and Digital Pathways, led by Dr. Raahalya. The session emphasized structuring extension innovations clearly—by identifying problems, target groups, benefits, and calls to action. It also reinforced the importance of ownership, communication, and adaptability for future extension professionals. How one can strengthen his knowledge with all the courses and training programs available online was definitely a key point.

Listening to the experiences of MANAGE interns added a strong practical dimension to the day. Their field exposure, challenges, and learning journeys helped bridge the gap between theory and practice, offering realistic insights into professional growth within the extension ecosystem.

Overall, Day 2 reinforced that agricultural extension today is about designing opportunities, enabling collaboration, and creating sustainable impact. The sessions inspired a renewed sense of purpose, reminding us that extension professionals must continuously evolve to remain relevant, responsive, and responsible in a changing world.

## Day 3

**Day 3** at NYPDP, MANAGE felt deeper and more thought-provoking, as the sessions encouraged us not just to learn, but to think, question, and reflect. The day was centered around research, evaluation, and extension—areas that quietly shape how real change happens on the ground.

The morning began with Dr. Parmveer Singh from the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, who introduced us to the Delphi Technique. What stayed with me was the idea of patiently building consensus through structured expert dialogue. His session made me realize how important credibility, multiple perspectives, and transdisciplinary thinking are when research is meant to inform policy or practice.

Later, Dr. P. V. K. Sasidhar from IGNOU took us through the world of Monitoring and Evaluation. As he explained the link between inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impact, things started falling into place. The discussion on logical frameworks, Bennett's Hierarchy, and Focus Group Discussions reminded me that good evaluation is not just about numbers, but about listening, learning, and improving continuously.



The post-lunch sessions with Dr. Mahesh Chander from IVRI were energetic and inspiring. Through stories, case studies, and interactive conversations, he spoke about entrepreneurship, gender equality, and organic farming in extension.



His teaching style—rooted in real-life experiences—made the sessions lively and relatable. The case study he shared clearly showed how thoughtful extension efforts can improve farmer incomes and strengthen rural livelihoods. His message to stay skilled, curious, and connected with global knowledge platforms truly resonated with me. His one line, “Life is short, make it exciting and be skilled, become somebody,” were truly encouraging and I wish to follow it.

The day ended with an NYPDP alumni interaction, which felt like a quiet moment of reassurance. Listening to their journeys made the path ahead feel challenging yet achievable. I ended Day 3 feeling motivated, reflective, and grateful—reminded once again that learning is not just about gaining knowledge, but about shaping perspective and purpose.

## Day 4

**Day 4:** The day began with a session by Dr. Krithika Sundaram on “Beyond Technology Transfer: Extension Professionals in the Development Sector.” The discussion gently but firmly shifted our perspective from linear technology dissemination to people-centred development. The emphasis on co-creation, empathy, and understanding field realities reinforced that effective extension begins with listening and shared learning.

This was followed by sessions conducted by Dr. Sreeram Vishnu, who introduced us to Social Network Analysis (SNA). Through this session, we learned how relationships, trust, and influence patterns shape information flow and technology adoption in communities. The idea that extension success depends on who connects with whom felt both simple and profound.

Dr. Vishnu's next session on Textometry added another layer to our understanding of qualitative research. It highlighted ways to analyze large volumes of textual data, helping researchers uncover deeper meanings, narratives, and patterns within social science research—an approach especially relevant for extension and development studies



In the second half of the day, we visited Pragati Exotica. This exposure helped us understand work in ornamental and exotic plant cultivation, supporting landscaping, urban greening, and aesthetic horticulture. The nursery showcases how plant diversity, quality planting material, and professional nursery management contribute to sustainable green spaces and environmental enhancement. I was truly impressed with the knowledge owner had about his work and also his passion for trees. Learning about WeACT Bio, with its focus on sustainable biological solutions and eco-friendly agricultural innovations, reinforced the importance of aligning technology with environmental and farmer-centric values.

The day concluded with a visit to the Statue of Equality, offering a quiet moment for reflection. It felt symbolic—reminding us that knowledge, inclusivity, and social harmony must remain at the core of any development effort.

## Day 5

The last day marked the culmination of an intensive and inspiring training programme, with sessions focusing on agri-innovation, incubation, and policy engagement in agricultural extension. The day began with a brief recap, helping participants connect previous learnings with the final themes of the programme.

The session on Policy Engagement for Agricultural Extension, led by Dr. Rasheed Sulaiman Director, CRISP, provided deep insights into Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS) and the evolving role of Extension Advisory Services. Through conceptual frameworks and real-world examples such as the upscaling of solar irrigation, the session stressed the need for stakeholder mapping, evidence-based policy briefs, and effective multi-stakeholder dialogue. Also I am grateful that I had the opportunity to do the speaker's introduction for Dr. Rasheed. It was me stepping out of my comfort zone and even though it was a little step, it felt good.



The concluding sessions focused on reflection and action planning, facilitated by Dr. Sandipamu Raahalya where participants shared feedback, completed commitment cards (Head, Heart, Hands), and identified take-home messages. These reflective activities helped translate learning into personal and professional commitments.

## A Five-Day Experience

In those five days I felt like I was somewhere else. A place where everything is possible with determination and commitment to your work. NYPDP thought me that extension is a global subject. I never knew that training could be so much fun and easy to learn. The sessions were conducted in a friendly yet professional nature. Each and every lecturer had his own persona and different method of teaching. And despite obtaining the different methods their goals were similar.

Personal development and understanding ourselves holds how much power was learned by everyone through this training. Asking doubts, making everyone included and paying attention to everyone was the highlight of the training for me. Also the interactive group activities, resourceful reflections of each day and insights were truly helpful.

Each session had something to offer beyond the ppt slides, the experience and the knowledge of each professional present there were clearly noticeable. Even the seating arrangements were made in a way that we can interact with new people and come out of our comfort zone.

The hospitality, accommodation and food were really impressive. The warmth every person included in conducting this program carried made me feel like I belong there and I am not some stranger from other state. It was a great example of how a training program should be conducted.

## Change in Perspective

Like everyone else I also considered Extension Education as a minor field. Despite being a discipline of Agricultural extension education I did not know the power this subject holds. The exposure I got about this subject and about this field was remarkable. The sessions highlighted that meaningful change is not driven by ideas alone, but by how effectively those ideas are incubated, communicated, and scaled through the right institutional and policy support.

How taking a deep dive into our strengths, weaknesses and understanding helps us to realize what we want and what we are capable of. Most importantly, the programme shifted my mindset from being a learner to becoming a future contributor.

## Peer Interactions and Networking

One of the most valuable takeaways from this program was the opportunity to build meaningful professional connections. Interacting with participants from diverse institutions, regions, and academic backgrounds created a rich learning ecosystem where ideas, experiences, and aspirations were freely exchanged. Every conversation—formal or informal—added depth to my understanding of agricultural extension beyond textbooks and classrooms.

The program also provided a rare platform to connect with seniors, mentors, and practitioners who are actively shaping the extension and development landscape. Learning from their journeys, challenges, and career pathways was both motivating and grounding. These interactions helped me visualize how theory translates into practice and offered guidance that will influence my academic and professional decisions moving forward.

Most importantly, the networking experience went beyond exchanging contacts—it fostered a sense of community and collaboration. The friendships formed during discussions, group activities, and shared reflections created bonds built on mutual respect and shared purpose. This network, I believe, will continue to grow and evolve, supporting future collaborations, learning, and collective impact in the field of agricultural extension. The connections I made here are truly special to me because each and everyone inspires me a different ways that makes me want to do better.



## What I Appreciate

What I truly appreciated about this programme was its ability to connect theory with real-world relevance. Each session was thoughtfully designed to move beyond concepts and help us understand how agricultural extension, innovation, and policy actually function on the ground. The discussions on agri-innovation, incubation, and policy engagement broadened my perspective and encouraged me to think systemically rather than in silos.

Another aspect I deeply valued was the quality of mentorship and facilitation. The insights shared by Dr. Saravanan Raj and the seamless coordination by Dr. Sandipamu Raahalya created an environment that was both intellectually stimulating and supportive.



Beyond academics, the programme fostered a strong sense of community and inspiration. Interacting with peers, seniors, and professionals from diverse backgrounds enriched the learning experience and reinforced the importance of collaboration in agricultural development. Overall, this programme was not just a training experience—it was a space for reflection, connection, and renewed purpose.

### Most Significant Takeaway

The biggest takeaway from this program was a shift in perspective on agricultural extension—from seeing it as a linear process of technology transfer to understanding it as a complex, collaborative innovation system. The sessions highlighted how extension today must integrate innovation, incubation, policy engagement, communication, and stakeholder collaboration to create sustainable impact. This program helped me connect local realities with global development frameworks, reinforcing that effective extension work requires systems thinking, adaptability, and continuous learning.



Equally important was the personal and professional growth the program enabled. Through interactions with experts, mentors, peers, and seniors, I gained clarity on the skills needed to contribute meaningfully as a young professional—critical thinking, evidence-based communication, policy awareness, and the confidence to engage beyond academic boundaries. Overall, the program did not just enhance my knowledge; it strengthened my purpose and commitment to work in agricultural extension as a change agent who bridges science, policy, and people.

## Applying it Forward

### **Adopt a systems approach in extension work**

Move beyond linear technology transfer and design interventions that integrate farmers, startups, researchers, policymakers, and institutions as part of an Agricultural Innovation System.

### **Engage with agri-innovation and incubation ecosystems**

Collaborate with incubation centres, agri-startups, and FPOs to support locally relevant, scalable innovations, especially for smallholders and rural youth.

### **Use evidence-based communication**

Translate research findings into blogs, briefs, and extension materials that are accessible to policymakers, practitioners, and farmers.

### **Link local research with global frameworks**

Align future research and fieldwork with SDGs, climate-smart agriculture, and international development priorities to enhance relevance and scalability.

### **Build and sustain professional networks**

Stay connected with peers, mentors, and institutions from the programme for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and career guidance.

### **Develop as a reflective practitioner**

Regularly reflect on field experiences, document lessons learned, and remain open to unlearning and relearning as extension systems evolve.

## My MANAGE NYPDP Journey

MANAGE was a magic to me. It changed my whole perspective about extension and towards myself too. This whole training built something inside me which is eager to explore, to ask questions, to find answers and most importantly to learn with utter most curiosity



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