



# National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)

MANAGE-University Alliance for Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

## Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow's Agricultural Extension



**Empowering the Next Generation of Extension Leaders: A Journey of Learning, Innovation, and Transformation**

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Hyderabad during April 22-26, 2024.

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**Day 1:** I had the opportunity to meet various extension graduates and professionals from across the country. During the World Café session, I engaged in meaningful interactions with all participants.

We divided into groups to discuss the challenges faced by our discipline and to identify areas for improvement. Each group presented their ideas on chart paper and explained them to others. Dr. Saravanan Raj emphasized that extension work is not limited to technology transfer; it also encompasses areas such as poverty alleviation, sustainable development, and rural prosperity. This discussion was truly eye-opening. I also learned about the immense importance of qualitative research. It helps us understand the real issues behind a phenomenon by exploring the "why" and "how" of causal processes, making the data more insightful.

**Day 2:** The discussions centered on addressing gender concerns in agriculture, the role of youth in societal transformation, the impact of digital technologies and ICTs on extension delivery, the new skills required by extension workers, and engaging in policy participation. Gender Equality, Youth, and Social Inclusion (GEYSI) was comprehensively highlighted as a framework for development and social change, emphasizing the need to integrate these dimensions into all policies and programs.

**Day 3:** Dr. Rasheed Sulaiman V emphasized the importance of developing technical, interpersonal, and personal skills for continuous career growth. He highlighted that extension work goes beyond technology transfer, it involves facilitating innovation, organizing producer groups, mediating conflicts, and advocating for policies.





The pluralistic nature of the Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) landscape necessitates collaboration among various stakeholders, including the public and private sectors, NGOs, CSOs, and farmers. To thrive, individuals and organizations must build new capacities, both technical and social.

The New Extensionist Learning Kit (NELK) serves as a valuable self-learning resource to equip professionals with modern extension skills. Innovation is a process, and extension professionals must act as facilitators by promoting group learning and consensus-building. Conducting capacity gap assessments and identifying training needs are essential for designing effective programs and institutional reforms. Successful scaling of innovation requires fostering alliances, enabling policies, and embracing new work approaches. EAS professionals can pursue diverse career paths in innovation management, policy analysis, ICT and knowledge management, agribusiness incubation, CSR, and livelihood programs.



**Day 4:** Field visits to Access Livelihoods and C-DAC Hyderabad offered practical insights into women-owned producer enterprises and the applications of IoT, AI, blockchain, machine learning, and big data in agriculture. These visits connected theoretical learning with grassroots realities and technological adoption, making the experience particularly enriching.

**Day 5:** I learned about the critical role of extension strategies in addressing climate change and influencing policy. These strategies emphasize that extension must be central to food systems, enhancing both policy formulation and climate resilience. Community-based and market-driven approaches, startups, and innovation ecosystems were highlighted as essential to agricultural development.

Yes, the training significantly transformed my outlook. It redefined Agricultural Extension from merely an advisory service to a policy-influencing, innovation-driven, and globally interconnected discipline, opening diverse career pathways beyond ARS and academia.



### Training Experience

The training was immersive, transformative, and empowering. It combined theoretical insights with practical exposure and cultural exchange, broadening my perspective on Agricultural Extension and encouraging me to think beyond traditional roles.



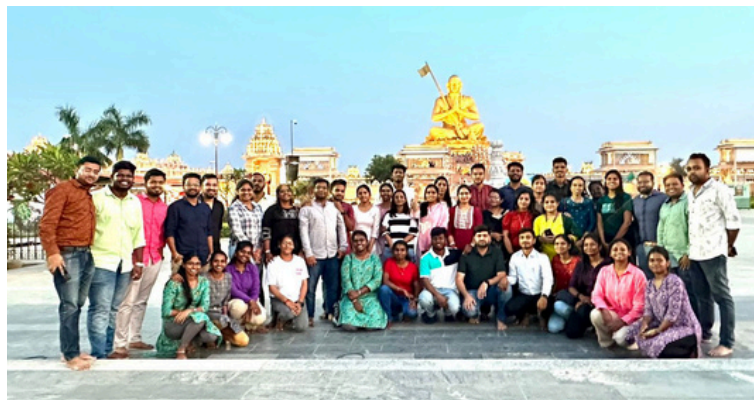
### Training Environment

The atmosphere was vibrant, collaborative, and intellectually stimulating. Informal expert interactions, engaging group activities, and the hospitality at MANAGE created a warm, supportive environment conducive to deep learning.



## What I Appreciate

I deeply appreciated the blend of academic rigor with practical exposure, ranging from GEYSI project design to field visits and learning about cutting-edge technologies. The cultural extravaganza further enriched the experience.



## Networking



Interactions with peers facilitated cross-learning and idea exchange. Networking with scholars, faculty, and professionals from diverse backgrounds encouraged knowledge sharing and opened doors to potential future collaborations.

## Main Takeaway

The most powerful realization was that Agricultural Extension is evolving into a multidisciplinary, technology-driven, and policy-relevant field, demanding new competencies and a globally aware mindset.

## Action Plan

- Advocate for curriculum reform aligned with the ICAR BSMA model.
- Integrate GEYSI principles into ongoing and future projects.
- Utilize tools like IoT, AI, and data analytics in extension programs.
- Participate in policy dialogues and capacity-building initiatives.

Through the training, I also recognized the value of internships. Following the program, I applied and was selected as a research intern at the Centre for Research on Innovation and Science Policy (CRISP), Hyderabad, where I gained practical experience in several key areas.





A turning point in my academic and professional life, this training transformed my understanding of Agricultural Extension, blending innovation, inclusivity, and global perspectives to empower the next generation of extensionists.

In conclusion, thank you to MANAGE for providing this invaluable learning opportunity and warm hospitality. A special thanks to Dr. Saravanan Raj for organizing such impactful training programs that empower the youth in Agricultural Extension and guide them toward diverse career prospects. This program helped us realize that Agricultural Extension is a powerful system for sharing knowledge, technologies, skills, and risk management practices across sub-sectors and supply chains, helping farmers achieve higher, sustainable incomes, as highlighted in Volume XI of the Doubling Farmers' Income (DFI) report. I am also extremely grateful to Dr. Rahalya and Dr. Neethu for their excellent coordination and facilitation throughout the training.

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