



National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP)

MANAGE-University Alliance for Advancing Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow's Agricultural Extension



A Transformative Paradigm Shift for Agricultural Extension

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Participated in the MANAGE-NYPDP at Anand Agricultural University (AAU) Gujarat, during September 22–26, 2025

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Key Learnings

Looking back on these last five days of complete immersion and growth, the word that comes to mind is transformative. This MANAGE NYPDP journey has been an eye-opening experience that fundamentally reshaped my entire understanding of Agricultural Extension and my future within it. It went beyond theoretical knowledge and provided a new, modern and global lens through which to view my career and future potential.



If you had asked me before the NYPDP training what my goal was, I would have said something simple: to get a job in agricultural extension. But one powerful idea turned that thinking on its head. It was the simple declaration that **“Extension is not a local subject; it is a global subject.”** I now see this as a call for a complete cognitive shift, one that reframes our entire discipline moving it from the confines of regional agricultural challenges into the broad arena of global food security, climate change, and sustainable development.

Redefining the Extension Professional

I learned that the role of today's extension professional has evolved from a simple instructor to a dynamic **network node interface**. We are facilitators, connecting farmers and communities with diverse sources of knowledge to empower their decision-making. The focus is no longer on finding a pre-existing job where an "Extension person" is required, but on developing and owning a set of high-value competencies that are in demand across international development organizations, private sector agribusiness, policy think tanks and entrepreneurial ventures. **My career is not a fixed title, but a collection of skills I can offer the world.** This modern role demands a broad skill set that extends far beyond traditional agriculture.

Key competencies now include:

- Gender Mainstreaming
- Knowledge Management & Public Relations
- AI in Research & Data Analysis
- Applied Behavioural Change
- Policy Engagement & Extension
- Organizational Behaviour & Development (OD Specialist)
- Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)



This skill-based approach opens up a world of opportunities in impact assessment, freelance consulting, and research on value chains and livelihoods.

It's a call to action: **“Don't settle for less, the world is waiting. Come and disrupt.”** It signals an end to the passive acceptance of established roles and methodologies. Instead, it champions a proactive, entrepreneurial spirit.

Research with Purpose and a Global Conscience

Research in agricultural extension must evolve to solve real-world problems and influence policy, rather than merely promoting a specific technology. This requires a strong understanding of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. We also gained understanding about Delphi Technique and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs).

The powerful observation that “Our research is often isolated, far from rural reality” serves as both a critique of the past and a directive for the future. The path forward is clear: it involves a deliberate and continuous effort to equip oneself with the practical skills and global perspective necessary to be effective.



It all comes down to staying relevant. If our work is evolving to meet today's challenges, our research must evolve in tandem with it. Otherwise, we're just studying yesterday's problems. Research can no longer be an isolated academic exercise; it must be deeply connected to solving real-world problems and contributing to a global agenda. The guiding principle is that research, while conducted locally, must be compared with and connected to the global context.



All work, including local research, should be connected to a global context, using the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a guiding framework to ensure efforts contribute to both productivity and sustainability.

We learned about the steps for selecting a research topic, starting from priority setting at a global, national, and regional level. The goal is to solve real problems with the right tools. We delved into the differences and importance of both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Building Networks and Seizing Opportunities

Building a career isn't just a checklist of accomplishments; it's a story of growth, connection and seizing the right moments. Professional growth is accelerated through active engagement with the global extension community. Organizations like AESA (**Agricultural Extension in South Asia**) and GFRAS (**Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services**) are vital platforms. Registering with them, participating in their forums and even publishing blogs can significantly raise one's professional profile.

The group activity was a key example of the value of peer interaction. Working together to identify a research topic and justify its importance allowed for a rich exchange of ideas and collaborative problem-solving. It demonstrated how different perspectives can come together to create a stronger, more well-reasoned outcome.

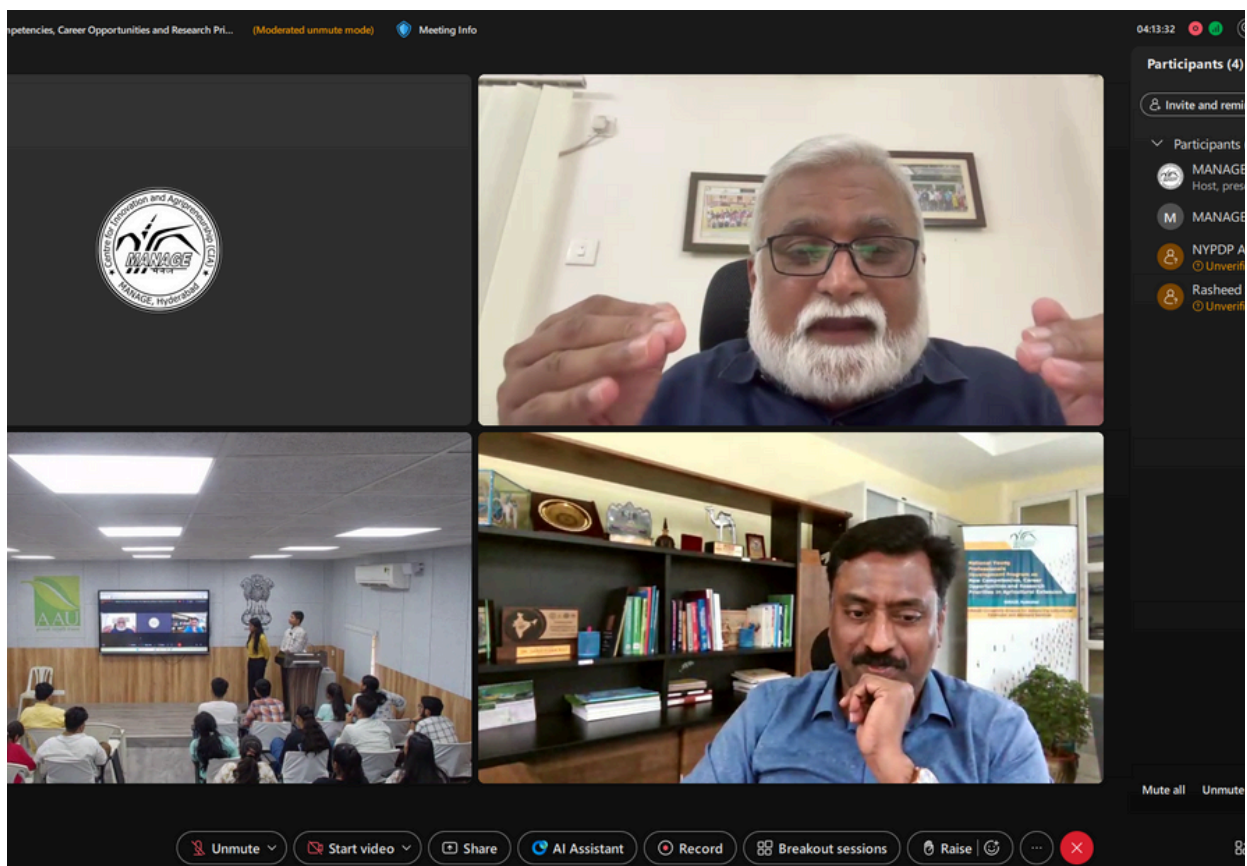


From Publication to Policy Influence

The ultimate aim of modern extension research should extend beyond publication in an academic journal. The goal is to generate evidence that can influence policy. This requires researchers to be proactive in communicating their findings to policymakers and advocacy groups.

This experience has armed me with more than just knowledge; it has given me a concrete plan. I will now:

- Expand my job search globally, using platforms like LinkedIn to find roles that require my specific competencies in M&E and impact writing.
- Commit to continuous learning by actively using resources like Coursera, MOOCs, and the FAO e-learning academy to build my skills in areas like policy engagement.
- Frame all my future research with a global conscience, ensuring it aligns with broader sustainability goals.
- Engage actively with the professional community by registering with organizations like AESA and GFRAS to contribute to the global conversation and build my network.



This also opens up job opportunities I hadn't fully considered, such as roles in evaluation & impact assessment, data analysis, freelance consulting, and research on value chains and livelihoods. It's not just about a job title; it's about the impact we can make.

Furthermore, practical experience gained during academic studies is invaluable. The theory is your foundation, but practical experience is what builds the rest of the structure.

The future of extension is undeniably digital. Proficiency with online learning platforms like Coursera, MOOCs, and Udemy for continuous learning is essential. Furthermore, mastery of quantitative, qualitative and data visualization software is required. The modern professional must be comfortable with digital tools like podcasts, webinars and e-learning resources from global bodies like the FAO and UN CC to stay relevant and effective. The discussion also covered the value of distance learning internships and understanding different research methodologies.



Visits to Amul and OrFarm FPO would greatly enhance the NYPDP training by bridging theory with practice. Visiting Amul is about more than seeing a dairy; it's about walking through a living legacy. It's a chance for trainees to understand how, with unity and a shared vision, millions of small farmers built a global brand. It's a foundational lesson in the power of community and collective action that shaped the nation.

A visit to a modern Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) like OrFarm shows you the future of farming in action. It's where you can see what it truly means to be a modern "agri-preneur." It's all about being quick, smart and thinking like a business. You get to see how they take a simple crop, add value to it maybe through clever packaging or processing and then sell it directly to buyers to get the best possible price.

The bottom line is that this approach puts more money directly into farmers' pockets. This is how we ground training in the reality of rural innovation and fire up the next generation of agricultural professionals.



The atmosphere was incredibly motivational and collaborative. The emphasis on global opportunities, combined with passion, created a dynamic and inspiring environment. The inclusion of group activities suggests a focus on peer learning and interactive problem-solving, making it a very engaging and supportive space.



The MANAGE NYPDP program was more than just a training experience - it was a catalyst for growth. The program's emphasis on experiential learning, collaboration and mentorship helped me discover my potential and ignited a passion for creating positive change in the field of extension.

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