



## MANAGE Internship: Cultivating Experiences for Future Professionals



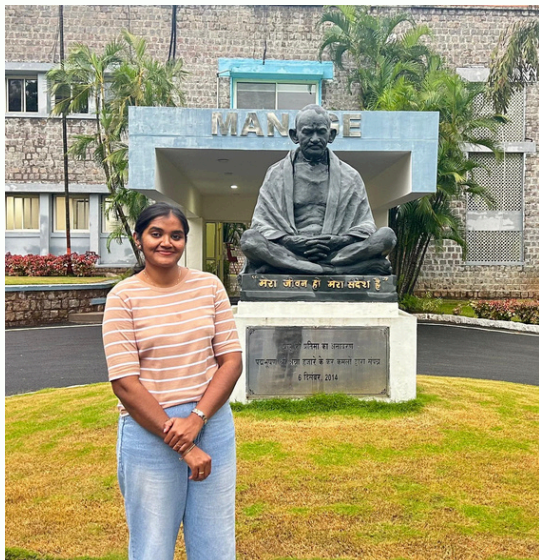
### Breaking Barriers Within: The MANAGE Internship Impact

I am Jeena Paul from Kerala, completed my six months internship program on 'Innovation, Incubation, and Agri-Startup Ecosystem' at MANAGE-CIA from January 20 – July 19, 2025.

 [jeena-paul](#)

*"The greatest breakthroughs happen not when we conquer the world outside, but when we overcome the limits within ourselves."*

## Internship Experience



The first three months felt like an induction period, where adapting to the work culture was a bit difficult and stressful, with lots of doubts [To read my earlier reflections: <https://www.manage.gov.in/managecia/CiaInternships.aspx>]. The remaining three months were smoother, as I had become more experienced with the tasks and gained a better understanding of the system.

The six-month internship felt like transitioning from three months of apprenticeship to three months as a proper employee at the centre. It was truly a transformative journey from day one to the last.

From having zero work experience in an office setting to having my own workspace, role, and opportunities was truly a dream come true; exactly what I had been craving in the middle of ten continuous years of higher studies. It was worth taking a break from my Ph.D., especially because working in an incubation centre gave me clarity on the next steps for my research topic in the agri-startup ecosystem.

## Key Roles and Responsibilities

In the beginning, my key roles included serving as the in-charge of conducting the Agri-Startup Stakeholders Connect program and follow-up in-charge for Cohort 4 and Cohort 9 startups. I was also assigned the task of preparing a review on the global and Indian agri-startup ecosystem prior to 2016.

Over time, new roles came to me, including serving as editor for the MANAGE-CAEIRA Internship Notes, NYPDP Diaries, Startup Compendium, and proofreading proceedings, success stories, and annual reports.







A major responsibility I handled was coordinating the 8th and 9th editions of the Agri-Startup Stakeholders Connect program, held at Kerala Agricultural University (KAU), Thrissur and Indian Institute of Plantation Management, Bengaluru (IIPMB), respectively.

My tasks covered the entire process; from sending proposals to host institutions, preparing budget requests, creating registration forms, sending invitation mails and letters, preparing content for brochures and posters, drafting program schedule, following up with participants, preparing travel requests, making pre-event arrangements at the venue, preparing feedback forms, issuing participation certificates, settling bills, and finally, preparing the program reports. This role not only gave me valuable exposure but also helped me build strong professional connections.

In addition, I coordinated the RKVY-RAFTAAR Cohort 12 mentoring program and worked with the National Faculty Development Program (NFDP) on 'Agri-Innovation and Incubation Ecosystem to Mentor Agri-Startups and Agri-Business.' Apart from program coordination, I drafted the review titled "*Indian Startup Ecosystem before 'Startup India': An Agri-Startup Scenario,*" which included a list of agri-startups launched in India during 2005–2015. I also contributed to scheduling topics for the Saturday Webinar Series, identifying speakers, preparing their introductions, and later processing their honorarium receipts.



I was part of the Centre of Excellence Incubation Committee (CIC) 2025 – Review of Progress Meeting for Cohorts 5, 7, 8, and 9 startups, where my role involved preparing schedules, coordinating with startups for their presentations, and drafting the proceedings.



I also served as visit coordinator for trainees, accompanying them to Nutrihub, WE-Hub, and C-DAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing) in the last three months of my internship.

In my startup follow-up work, I was responsible for bill verification, cross-checking documents for fund release, and maintaining the contact with the assigned startups. One of the other tasks we did as a team was taking 25 countries each and finding the agricultural universities along with their email IDs. It was an exploration into different countries and the websites of several universities that we had never thought of seeing before.

## Working Environment

The best thing that happened to me during the internship was getting the opportunity to work under Dr. Saravanan Raj, a visionary leader who always finds innovative ways to make work interesting. He is a role model I can look up to in my career, especially in the way his job excites him.



The working environment at MANAGE-CIA is truly positive; you are given space, a voice, an opinion, and even decision-making opportunities. Our contributions are valued and recognised in the work we do. The environment offers ample opportunities to improve, innovate, and explore; the only requirement is that you must be ready to utilise them. Every day at the office is a new learning experience, with new tasks; often unexpected and sudden, yet everyone remains committed to their work and completes it through team effort, without worrying about working hours. It is a workplace for people who want to learn and grow beyond the limits of time and space, with every resource provided if you have the dedication to contribute meaningfully.



## Cherishing Moments



In April, *Ghibli* art was trending, so I came up with the idea of making a video with my fellow interns for 'Digital Marketing Skills for Agri-Startups' program promotion in *Ghibli* style [click here to watch the video: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DIfxld0tj8H/?igsh=MWdkNHJxcGxmNWcycQ>].

It turned out really well, and everyone liked it, it was truly the result of our teamwork.

Another memorable moment with my fellow interns was our Internship Experience Podcast. The four of us got ready like celebrities and spoke with confidence and power in the MOOCs lab. It was both fun and a learning experience on how to present ourselves in front of a camera during an interview [Click here to watch the Podcast: <https://youtu.be/t1XlgaGahYU?si=qxepQ6uARnuB-cPg> ].



Another exciting moment was delivering a session to the participants of the National Faculty Development Program (NFDP) on 'Agri-startup Stakeholders Connect' program. Even though the participants were very senior and held high-level positions, we interns had the opportunity to take individual sessions on the program we were coordinating.

The most satisfying moment for me was the recognition I received for my efforts in coordinating the Stakeholders Connect program at Bangalore. I felt especially happy because I hosted the entire program, and it turned out to be fruitful and effective. Even though it was arranged at short notice, with a lot of rush and on a small scale, the support from the MANAGE-CIA team members made all the pre-arrangements seamlessly possible. The active participation of startups, students, and experts ensured that the program was successful right down to the root of its purpose.



## Skills and Knowledge Gained

During the course of my internship, I discovered that one of my strong skills is editing and proofreading. I have a keen eye for words and can easily catch mistakes in framing or context.



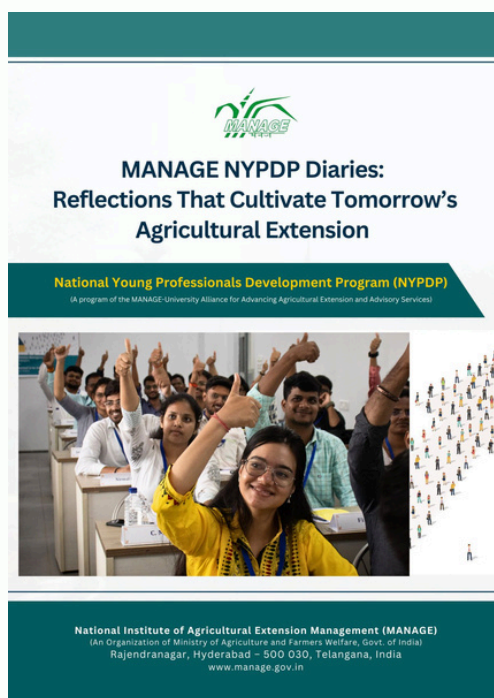
This strength gave me the opportunity to edit 50 NYPDP diaries and become one of the editors of the book published by MANAGE, “MANAGE NYPDP Diaries: Reflections That Cultivate Tomorrow’s Agricultural Extension.” I was also part of the editorial team for the MANAGE-CIA Startups Compendium for Cohorts 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. [Link for all the compendium: <https://www.manage.gov.in/managecia/CIACompandiums.aspx>].

And contributed to MANAGE-CIA resources by preparing program reports for the Cohort 12 Mentoring Program [Click here to read the Cohort 12 report: <https://www.manage.gov.in/managecia/CIARKVYRAFTAAR.aspx>] and the Agri-Startup Stakeholders Connect program (Kerala and Karnataka editions)

[Click here to read the MANAGE - KAU Agri - Startup Stakeholders Connect report: <https://www.manage.gov.in/managecia/images/SCP/Kerala.pdf>]







Another skill I developed was designing using Canva, a tool I had little knowledge of before. As part of my work, I began designing Internship Notes and NYPDP Diaries, and also contributed to the design of the MANAGE-CIA Startups State-wise Cluster Mapping.

[Link for NYPDP Diaries:

<https://www.manage.gov.in/caeira/NYPDP.asp>]

[Link for Internship Notes:

<https://www.manage.gov.in/caeira/internship.asp>]

Most of the time, when visitors or guests came to CIA, our Director encouraged interns to interact with them and present about the programs we were coordinating.



These experiences gradually helped me overcome stage fear and speak confidently in front of senior officials. As a result, my public speaking and interpersonal communication skills improved significantly.



Another major improvement was in my writing skills. In the early days, I didn't know how to draft a Note for moving a file, send an official email, or even prepare a work report in a professional manner. With practice, I became capable of drafting Notes or emails according to the purpose, all on my own.

Finally, my coordination and hosting skills grew considerably. I learned to deal with people effectively, follow up with them, and respond promptly and appropriately; skills that have become essential prerequisites for the coordinator role.

## Takeaways and Action Plans



All the experiences I gained at MANAGE-CIA are valuable takeaways for my life and career. As someone new to the professional work culture, I could not have asked for a better place to begin my journey, a place where I received both respect and recognition. I learned how to conduct myself in an office, collaborate with colleagues in sharing tasks, and express ideas and opinions confidently in a team setting.

Each member of the MANAGE-CIA team taught me something unique.

- Dr. Saravanan Raj demonstrated that work is worship and that thinking beyond boundaries is what makes you relevant, with consistency being the key to success.
- Ms. Usha Sree showed how to manage situations gracefully, even when circumstances are challenging.
- Mr. Saurabh Kumar modelled an organised mindset and a systematic approach to tasks.
- My fellow interns; Ms. Sonam, Ms. Maithri, and Mr. Arvind, inspired me with their ability to take on challenges, think creatively, and work with dedication and commitment until each task was successfully completed.







Another major takeaway from my time here has been the importance of maintaining an active presence on LinkedIn. This not only boosts visibility but also expands one's professional network. I developed the habit of following relevant pages, engaging with meaningful content, and connecting with resource persons. This practice has been an eye-opener, shaping my thought process, surrounding me with motivating content, and inspiring me to take up new challenges and keep learning.

My primary action plan is to reflect on the insights gained from this internship and integrate them into my Ph.D. research. The clarity I have developed about the agri-startup ecosystem; including its stages, challenges, and opportunities will directly influence the research work I undertake. I plan to study and explore this field further, making meaningful contributions through research papers and articles.

In addition, I am keen to continue working within the incubation ecosystem. As entrepreneurship is my passion, I intend to follow this path to develop my own startup idea and work towards its execution, with the ultimate goal of contributing to the betterment of the farming community.

*"Growth begins the moment you step beyond the familiar and challenge your own boundaries."*



I consider the six months I devoted to this internship, even at the cost of pausing my Ph.D. research and personal life, as one of the best decisions I have ever made. It was worth every moment. These experiences are something I would never have gained had I continued my life as a student for another year. This journey was an eye-opener, a timely reminder to realign my focus, and a turning point that gave me clarity about what work life truly entails.

Now, I understand how I should prepare myself from this point onwards, where opportunities exist, and how to make the best use of them. I am deeply thankful to MANAGE and Dr. Saravanan Raj for introducing this six-month internship program; a true blessing for young minds who deserve the chance to gain work orientation and experience professional culture before stepping into a full-time role.

For me, this opportunity was not just a learning phase but a starting point towards excellence. I am truly grateful for it, and I will always consider my role as a MANAGE-CIA intern to be a milestone in my career.

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