



**Building Competent Extension Professionals for the Future: Reflections from National Young Professionals Development Program (NYPDP), 08–12 Sept 2025, Venue: Veterinary College, Bangalore. Organised by KVAFSU, Bidar & MANAGE, Hyderabad**



*Aishwarya reflects on her recent participation in the Karnataka Veterinary, Animal and Fisheries Science University, Bidar, and MANAGE's National Youth Professionals Development Program on New Competencies, Career Opportunities, and Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension, conducted at the Veterinary College, Bengaluru, from September 8 to 12, 2025.*

## CONTEXT

Agricultural Extension in India is undergoing a profound transformation—driven by digital technologies, entrepreneurship, and the growing need for sustainability and inclusivity. Recognizing the importance of equipping young professionals with futuristic competencies, the National Young Professionals Development Program (**NYPDP**) on New Competencies, Career Opportunities, and Research Priorities in Agricultural Extension, jointly organized by the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad and Karnataka Veterinary, Animal and Fisheries Sciences University (KVAFSU), Veterinary College, Hebbal, Bangalore, from 8–12 September 2025, brought together a nationwide network of skilled experts and 42 young professionals included postgraduate students and doctoral scholars in agricultural extension, representing six states and 13 universities. The program aimed to strengthen **professional competencies, research skills, and leadership abilities** among early-career extension professionals. Over five intensive days, participants engaged in lectures, discussions, field visits, and hands-on activities that provided new perspectives on the evolving landscape of agricultural extension.



**Group Photo of dignitaries and the participants**

The five-day residential program brought together passionate young professionals representing diverse disciplines, including agriculture, veterinary, and fisheries sciences. Designed as a blend of learning, interaction, innovation, and reflection, the program aimed to nurture leadership qualities, entrepreneurial thinking, and research capabilities in the next generation of extension professionals.

### PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS:

This summary presents the **key thematic areas** and **highlights of learning** that emerged from the NYPDP.

## PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES



### 1. Reimagining Competencies for Next-Generation Extension

One of the central themes of NYPDP was the need to redefine professional competencies to match emerging realities in agricultural and allied sectors. Participants reflected on how extension has evolved from mere technology transfer to facilitation, innovation, and co-creation of knowledge.

The program emphasised:

- ✚ Systems thinking and inter-disciplinary collaboration.
- ✚ Communication and facilitation for participatory decision-making.
- ✚ Lifelong learning and adaptability to dynamic rural systems.

Interactive group activities helped participants identify challenges and opportunities in professional specialisation, encouraging them to envision roles as facilitators, innovators, and policy advocates.

**Key Highlight:** Participants developed personal “competency maps,” aligning their current skills with the emerging demands of digital, entrepreneurial, and multi-stakeholder extension systems.

*“Extension is no longer a single-lane road; it is a dynamic ecosystem that demands multi-competence and lifelong learning”*



## 2. Advancing Research and Methodological Capabilities

A central focus area was on strengthening research competence and understanding the methodological transitions occurring in extension science. The sessions explored how traditional survey-based studies are giving way to mixed-methods approaches, behavioural studies, and participatory models. Discussions highlighted the need for young researchers to connect their academic work with policy and field-level issues. Participants also examined new tools and frameworks for data-driven research, emphasising credibility, ethical research practice, and social relevance.

**Key Highlight:** The methodological landscape in extension now integrates participatory tools, digital analytics, and qualitative insights — shaping a new generation of reflective, impact-oriented researchers.



*“Methodological innovation is not just about tools; it’s about transforming the way we understand and engage with rural realities”*

## 3. Fostering Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Startup Mindsets

The NYPDP underlined the rising importance of entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems within extension systems. The field visit to the NaaVIC – RKVY RAFTAAR Incubation Centre at ICAR–NIVEDI provided participants with firsthand exposure to how startups are nurtured, supported, and scaled in the agriculture, livestock, and fisheries sectors. The program showcased success stories of agri-startups and discussed how extension professionals can act as bridges between research, innovation, and enterprise creation.





**Learning through games for entrepreneurship development**

**Key Highlight:** The exposure visit demonstrated that incubation and entrepreneurship are now core domains of extension — where professionals enable rural youth to transform ideas into enterprises and livelihood solutions.

*“Entrepreneurship is not an alternative to extension—it is the new extension”*



**Group discussion of the participants**

#### **4. Digital Competencies and Communication for Extension Excellence**

Recognising the digital transformation in agricultural knowledge systems, the program provided an immersive experience in digital communication skills. Through creative exercises such as short video development and digital storytelling, participants learned how to communicate research and extension messages more effectively using visual tools. The sessions highlighted that digital

competence is not limited to technology use — it includes content design, audience understanding, and ethical online engagement.



Group exercise for the participants

**Key Highlight:** Participants realised that digital media is a participatory space for knowledge exchange — and mastering it is now a fundamental extension competency.

“In the digital era, visibility is as important as validity; communication is an extension intervention in itself”

## 5. Gender, Inclusion, and Policy Advocacy

The theme of gender equality and social inclusion was explored in several discussions and activities. Participants explored frameworks for mainstreaming gender in agricultural programs, ensuring equitable access, participation, and benefits for women and marginalised groups. The sessions also introduced participants to the landscape of policy advocacy, emphasising how young professionals can contribute to evidence-based policymaking. Through interactive group tasks, participants drafted sample advocacy ideas, bridging research outcomes with actionable policy communication.

**Key Highlight:** The integration of gender analysis with policy advocacy reaffirmed that inclusivity and evidence are twin pillars of modern extension leadership.

*“Gender equality and policy advocacy are not parallel agendas — they are interlinked instruments of empowerment and transformation”*

## 6. Global Learning Pathways and International Exposure

A virtual interaction with scholars pursuing doctoral research in the United States opened discussions on global career and learning opportunities in Extension Education and Evaluation. The dialogue helped participants understand the structure of graduate programs abroad, research collaborations, and global research priorities in agricultural extension. The session encouraged them to envision international exposure as a pathway to mutual learning and cross-cultural competence.



**Key Highlight:** The global perspective inspired participants to link local extension initiatives with international research and knowledge-sharing networks.





## Graduate Study and Career Opportunities in Extension Education and Evaluation in the United States

Ms. Laxmi Prasanna Kandi, PhD Candidate, Texas A&M University (USA)

Mr. Samrat Sikdar, PhD Candidate, Mississippi State University (USA)

**September 11, 2025**

**National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad, India**

*"A globally connected extension professional can localise global wisdom and globalise local success"*

### 7. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reflective Practice

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) emerged as a crucial professional skill area for young extensionists. The sessions demonstrated how evaluation frameworks, logical models, and participatory assessments can enhance learning and accountability in programs. A live demonstration of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) methods gave participants hands-on experience in participatory evaluation techniques. The emphasis was on making M&E more learning-oriented than inspection-driven.

**Key Highlight:** Monitoring and evaluation were repositioned as tools for continuous learning and adaptive management in extension systems.

*"Extension thrives when it listens, learns, and evolves through evaluation"*



### 8. Integration, Networking, and Professional Growth

Beyond technical learning, NYPDP offered a powerful environment for peer networking and cross-institutional collaboration. Participants engaged in group activities, panel discussions, and informal

exchanges that fostered collective reflection and community building. By the program's end, they articulated a shared understanding of what it means to be a “next-generation extension professional” — one who is competent, inclusive, innovative, and globally aware.



**Key Highlight:** The program created a living community of young professionals committed to transforming extension through collaboration, creativity, and evidence-based practice.

“Networking in extension is more than exchanging contacts; it is about weaving bonds of trust and collective learning that last beyond”



“Toward a Future-Ready Extension Cadre”

## CONCLUSION

The National Young Professionals Development Program exemplified how structured learning, mentorship, and exposure can shape the next generation of extension professionals. By merging competency development, methodological innovation, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and inclusivity, the program has reaffirmed the evolving identity of agricultural extension — from service delivery to knowledge facilitation and empowerment. As participants return to their respective institutions and regions, they carry with them not only knowledge but a renewed purpose — to serve as catalysts for change, innovation, and inclusiveness in agricultural and allied sectors. Today's extension is not only about delivering knowledge but also about co-creating futures — and NYPDP has demonstrated how young professionals can lead that transformation.

The NYPDP stands as a model initiative for grooming “**next-generation extension professionals**” who are capable, connected, and committed to building a more inclusive and sustainable future. The program concluded with a powerful message:

“Extension begins with people — and its future rests in the hands of those who are willing to lead with knowledge, empathy, and innovation.”

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