

GHANA

Strategy Support Program



Session 8: Bringing evidence to policymaking

Chair: Felix Asante

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SESSION SUMMARY

In this session we discussed obstacles facing evidence-based policymaking, which spanned from improving relationships with country governments, collecting better data, and creating a monitoring and evaluation system. Donors finance policy research, such as IFPRI's country strategy support programs, and in turn such research programs have to demonstrate that they have influenced the policies and strategies of the countries they serve. Country governments and donors typically agree on major policy objectives, such as growth and poverty reduction, but they typically disagree on the strategies and policy instruments that are appropriate to reach these goals. This leads to what can be described as a "two-world challenge." To access donor funds, country governments produce policy and strategy documents that reflect the interests of the "donor world." Yet, these policy and strategy documents remain either vague, or they are not implemented because they do not fit the requirements that governments face in their "real world." In their "real world", politicians may prefer agricultural policy instruments, such as input subsidy programs, which fit better with their policy beliefs and which can be also used to reward key constituencies. Policy research can be more influential if it concentrates on policies that matter in the policy-makers "real world" rather than in the "do-

nor world." Policy research should focus on those programs for which country governments indeed end up spending the bulk of their resources. Policy-makers may not demand any research on such programs. Still, policy research could have an influence if it takes a supportive approach (helping to find out how such programs can be more effective) rather than taking a judgmental approach (showing—in line with donor perceptions—that such programs are not very effective).

As in other sessions, our discussion stressed the need to create strong and transparent linkages between politicians and researchers. To this end, ReSAKSS was established in response to the growing demand for information and analysis in support the CAADP agenda, and has been part of the team that carries out technical review of the national agricultural investment plans that countries need to develop in order to access donor funding. ReSAKSS has achieved some success in creating awareness for MoFA to bring on non-state actors to generate information and conduct research. But even with stronger linkages between donors, governments, and researchers the ability to provide good evidence-based policymaking is currently hampered by poor data. Funding and capacity support for data collection has not been sufficient.

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