Finding new points of influence: Building partnerships between research and policy “worlds” in Ghana

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Key Message
Creating a dynamic link between research and policy has become essential to ensure that research plays its role for equity and development. Influencing policy requires significant involvement and requires diligent and sustained attention by researchers.
Summary

In their desire to be objective, researchers get uncomfortable about close contacts with either decision-makers or the communities. Decision-makers in return may regard researchers as too “academic”, impractical and slow whilst communities feel intimidated by both researchers and decision-makers. To apply research to the developmental needs of a country, researchers need to facilitate the process of multi-stakeholder priority-setting, build coalitions, create entry points to identify relevant research questions and nurture future leadership on who will use and manage the knowledge. Strengthening the linkages between policy and research requires an understanding of the key components of their interface; this means working together with “mediators”. Through its interactions with the SP/PAGIRE in Burkina Faso and WRC in Ghana, the CPWF-V4 is working at linking research activities and products for policy making. A key element of this process is the establishment of a small “visionnary team” (mediators) to guide the project activities and ensure their uptake. This paper presents the processes, challenges and opportunities of such an approach in Ghana.