

Partnering for Change: Link Research to Societal Challenges

Video Transcript

Antimicrobial resistance: Reflecting on the case – collaboration with the UN system

[Dr. Didier Wernli] A number of different actors were present in this project. This included a group of people appointed by the UN to provide recommendations for the future of the global governance of antimicrobial resistance, a funding agency, which is known to get involved into the design of the project, a private foundation working specifically for the UN system.

Several challenges were faced in the course of the project. First, timelines were very short, and this clearly represented a challenge for an academic institution. A second challenge was that the project was framed as consultancy.

As consultancy projects usually rely on the handover of intellectual property, there was a tension between the willingness to contribute to the debate, and the importance of not spreading any results before they could be published in a scientific journal.

Moreover, different expectations and goals between stakeholders required discussion and clarification. It can also take time to sort out the legal aspect of the collaboration, especially regarding intellectual property.

The combination of fundamental and more applied research was a further interesting aspect of this project. The theoretical background that we provided was useful to the production of the report by the United Nations Foundation.

Identifying categories based on fundamental research can help to respond to complex challenges. Framing is an important part of both the scientific and policy process. I could sum this up by saying: the work done at the fundamental level was useful to respond to the questions at the more applied level.

In the end, we did not receive the money for the project, because of intellectual property issues. But we produced a report which was integrated into the final recommendations of the IACG.

Overall, this collaboration was an interesting experience. As a researcher based in Geneva, I'm keen to work with international organisations on such highly relevant issues of global interest. In my opinion, the interface between international organisations and academia is definitely critical to move the agenda forward.