Interdisciplinary research: Benefits and challenges

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Session: Share Fair

A field trip including researchers from different disciplines may be one way of everyone on the team getting a better understanding of how their individual contributions link and complement one another to address the overall research questions of the project (Photo by Nguyen Kim Chi)
**Summary**

A number of the CPWF projects are interdisciplinary in nature comprising social, institutional, economic and biophysical sciences embedded in a common framework. In theory there are obvious benefits in undertaking interdisciplinary research (i.e. outputs will be more holistic and can address the broad objectives of the project more comprehensively). However, in practice, there remain several challenges in the actual day-to-day operation of applying such an approach. Coming to a common understanding on how outputs from one disciplinary component compliment and feed into another requires certain dialogue efforts to take place which often takes up much time. In large teams that are based in different countries and institutes, it also takes additional effort to ensure that the research is looked at through a truly “interdisciplinary” lens rather than each discipline working towards common outputs but independent of one another. Sharing experiences with other projects/basins on how to address these common challenges would be an important step at this juncture of Phase 2 projects as part of an adaptive learning process.