Giving Green

Degrees Initiative

## Grantee Spotlight: Degrees Initiative

The Giving Green Fund is awarding an unrestricted grant to the Degrees Initiative to support national science policy engagement workshops and training for solar radiation modification (SRM) researchers in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Degrees is a global nonprofit that supports a growing community of LMIC-based SRM researchers and works to ensure their expertise informs national and international SRM decision-making.

Degrees' work falls within our philanthropic strategy of advancing solar radiation modification (SRM) governance and research, and, more specifically, within our sub-strategies of opening political pathways for well-governed research by engaging key stakeholders, building research governance and coordination infrastructure, and strengthening LMIC capacity to shape SRM research and governance. We recognize the significant uncertainties surrounding SRM and believe we should consider its (non-)deployment carefully and inclusively. The complexity and interconnectedness of Earth's natural systems make it difficult to predict how SRM effects would manifest and how much we could mitigate them. Please see Giving Green's strategy report for more information, including potential risks and co-benefits, recommended sub-strategies, theory of change, funding need, and key uncertainties.

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### What Is the Degrees Initiative?

The Degrees Initiative was launched in 2011 to address a structural gap in the SRM field. SRM expertise and agenda-setting have historically been concentrated in high-income countries (HICs), even though climate-vulnerable LMICs have the most at stake in how SRM research and governance unfold. Degrees works to close that gap by (1) funding climate experts across LMICs to conduct their own research on the physical and socio-political dimensions of SRM, (2) building a global community of LMIC experts, and (3) increasingly, connecting those experts directly to policymakers in their own countries.

Degrees maintains strict neutrality on whether SRM should ultimately be deployed. Its role is to ensure that whatever decisions LMICs make about SRM are informed by evidence produced by their own researchers, rather than by external consultants or institutions based in HICs.

## What Are We Funding, and How Could It Help Address Climate Change?

SRM is a set of hypothetical climate interventions that would cool the planet by reflecting sunlight and reducing the energy the Earth absorbs. Decisions about whether to deploy SRM would carry profound consequences, whatever the outcome. Ensuring those decisions are informed by robust evidence, transparent governance, and meaningful public participation is therefore in the public interest. We think the governance and research infrastructure built now will shape how future societies evaluate SRM, and whether any future decisions are made in ways that serve rather than disadvantage climate-vulnerable populations.

We are funding Degrees to expand its policy engagement workstream, which it launched in 2025. The grant would support three components:

1. **National policy engagement workshops** that would bring together LMIC researchers and local policymakers
2. **Training workshops and materials** that would help researchers communicate their work more effectively to government audiences
3. **Deepened policy engagement at the Degrees Global Forum** in Istanbul in 2027, the world's largest SRM conference, that would extend these relationships to an international audience

By building the science-policy link explicitly, Degrees' work could help LMICs evaluate SRM on their own terms, drawing on relevant, locally produced evidence rather than external or HIC-based advice.

A central risk of SRM research is moral hazard: the risk that policymakers and other actors treat SRM as a substitute for mitigation rather than a last-resort tool. Degrees constrains this risk through both how it frames its work and how it operates. Its policy engagement work takes no position on SRM itself; instead, it connects policymakers with independent, locally owned research. The thesis is that independent expertise helps policymakers resist exaggerated claims for and against SRM alike, and can itself expose SRM’s limitations and uncertainties. Degrees also never presents SRM in isolation from mitigation and adaptation, declines funding from sources that would argue mitigation should be secondary to SRM, and supports researchers in evaluating SRM through a risk-risk framework rather than privileging findings favorable to it. We think these practices reduce the risk that Degrees’ work is read as a reason to deprioritize mitigation.

## Why Do We Think Degrees Will Use This Funding Well?

Degrees has funded SRM workshops and research in LMICs for over a decade and has a demonstrated ability to convert that research into credible expertise and, increasingly, policy access. According to Degrees, whenever U.N. science policy panels on SRM convene, they include representation from LMIC experts who entered SRM through Degrees grants. Degrees also appears to be close to unique in this space. To our knowledge, it is the primary organization funding SRM research in LMICs, giving it an outsized role in the broader research and governance ecosystem.

Degrees has already piloted its science-policy approach at the Degrees Global Forum in 2025, in Ghana, where Degrees-funded researchers have worked closely with government officials, and in Pakistan, where Degrees says the response has been promising. This policy engagement workstream itself is newer and less proven than Degrees' research grantmaking. Still, we think Degrees' approach is well suited to closing this gap, and this grant will help the organization build on the pilot and roll out this workstream in other countries. Degrees has spent years building a credible, locally owned evidence base and a global network of researchers. We see policy engagement as a natural, low-cost extension of that credibility, not a departure from it.

*We publish grant spotlights to offer transparency to Giving Green Fund donors and resources for those interested in the impact strategies each grant supports. Giving Green believes our Top Climate Nonprofits have the greatest impact potential for large, unrestricted gifts. For several reasons, we also disburse and recommend grants to other organizations surfaced through our research process for work that we believe is at least as impactful as grants to our top recommendations.*

*This is a non-partisan analysis (study or research) and is provided for educational purposes.*

*Degrees Initiative is a registered nonprofit in the U.K.*