

A conversation with the Solar Radiation Management Governance Initiative, March 11, 2016

Participants

- Steven Hamburg – Chief Scientist, Environmental Defense Fund and Co-Chair, Solar Radiation Management Governance Initiative
- Andy Parker – Research Fellow, Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies and Project Director, Solar Radiation Management Governance Initiative
- Cassandra Ely – Manager, Environmental Defense Fund and EDF Lead, Solar Radiation Management Governance Initiative
- Danielle Putnam – Major Gifts Officer, Environmental Defense Fund
- Helen Toner – Research Analyst, Open Philanthropy Project

Note: These notes were compiled by the Open Philanthropy Project and give an overview of the major points made by representatives from the Solar Radiation Management Governance Initiative.

Summary

The Open Philanthropy Project spoke to representatives from the Solar Radiation Management Governance Initiative (SRMGI) to get an update on a two-year, \$500,000 grant it made to SRMGI in July 2015 (<http://www.openphilanthropy.org/focus/global-catastrophic-risks/miscellaneous/solar-radiation-management-governance-initiative-general-support>). Conversation topics included the organization of regional meetings and SRMGI's use of grant funds.

SRMGI activities

The initiative is co-chaired by representatives from three wide-ranging organizations: the Royal Society, the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), and the World Academy of Sciences (TWAS). This provides the SRMGI with a broader perspective than many similar organizations, but also presents more complicated transactional and logistical hurdles. Andy Parker and Cassandra Ely are leading the initiative's work, and the co-chairs are very engaged and involved, but ramping up the work outlined in the grant proposal took longer than expected.

Regional meetings

SRMGI originally proposed six regional meetings (in the Caribbean, Pacific Islands, South East Asia, South America, the Middle East and North Africa, and two meetings in South Asia) with the goal of involving people from developing countries and emerging economies in the conversation about SRM governance.

Staff have focused primarily on organizing these meetings, reaching out to a small number of highly engaged contacts from earlier meetings and a 2010 working group. These contacts have helped the group identify locations for some of the meetings.

- **The Caribbean** – In the Caribbean, SRMGI is working with former Barbadian Senator Liz Thompson, a member of the 2010 working group and Executive Coordinator of the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development. Senator Thompson suggested reaching out to doctoral students and post-doctoral researchers at universities in the region.
- **Middle East and North Africa** – Asfawossen Kassaye, a professor at Addis Ababa University who attended a previous SRMGI meeting, is advising the group on its plans in Africa. He organized a pan-African working group on climate engineering following the earlier meeting and suggested next year's Colloquium of African Geology in Nigeria as a possible venue for continuing SRMGI's work in Africa.
- **Pacific Islands** – SRMGI has a contact in Fiji, but has had less frequent contact following a cyclone. However, staff is optimistic about plans for a meeting in Suva within 18 months.
- **South America** – The South American regional meeting is tentatively planned for Buenos Aires, pending an agreement on dates. SRMGI is working with Pablo Suarez, a member of the 2010 SRMGI working group and a professor at Boston College.
- **South Asia** – SRMGI is working with an NGO in Delhi to plan a meeting in September or October of 2016 and with TWAS co-chair Qasim Jan to plan a meeting in Islamabad. The organization intends to build on previous meetings in both cities.

Because SRMGI takes its cues on size, formality, and other aspects from local norms and customs, previous meetings varied enormously. They included a formal meeting at the African Academy of Sciences with 50-60 participants as well as an opportunistic gathering of 20-30 people in partnership with an NGO in Islamabad.

Staff's best guess at a "typical" meeting is one that is held in partnership with an NGO in the capital of a developing country with 30-50 attendees, including academics, NGO representatives, and policymakers.

Maintaining momentum after meetings

Finding enthusiastic participants for meetings has been straightforward, but maintaining momentum afterward is challenging. However, SRMGI has proposed several ideas that have been well received, including a global forum in autumn of 2017 for participants from the six regional meetings, possibly in conjunction with an existing global climate engineering conference.

Informal follow-up

SRMGI is attempting to build a spiral-like network that draws its strength from the complexity of the connections formed. In addition to formal follow-up efforts, the informal connections formed during the organization's meetings have had a significant impact, spawning bilateral conversations about the issue.

For example, staff have observed individuals who attended SRMGI-organized meetings introduce the issues discussed there at other meetings. These informal connections result in more diverse voices discussing equity, power, and decision-making with respect to climate change and geoengineering.

Website

SRMGI is revamping its website, rebranding the organization's logo and incorporating an event management platform to improve engagement with past and future meeting participants. Staff believe this will facilitate the collection of participant feedback and help make interactions more consistent.

Staff time

SRMGI has so far spent grant funds modestly, primarily on staff time. Since December 2015, project director Andy Parker is spending approximately 40 percent of his time working for SRMGI.

The group also utilizes 40 percent of an EDF analyst's time, and TWAS is finalizing the job description to hire a second analyst. The EDF analyst is currently focused on call management, logistics, support for outreach efforts, and the creation of work plans.

Once the TWAS analyst is hired, this individual will be responsible for coordinating the regional meetings, while the EDF analyst will provide broad support related to content (including the website) and high-level coordination around meetings.

Impact of COP21 on geoengineering

The 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris introduced a more aggressive target for capping global temperature rise (1.5 degrees Celsius). The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is expected to start work on a special report on how this goal might be met, and many scientists believe the lower target might require some form of geoengineering or intense technological intervention. This brings geoengineering closer to mainstream climate change conversations, a shift few predicted.

All Open Philanthropy Project conversations are available at <http://www.openphilanthropy.org/research/conversations>