Policy Innovation and Experimentation for Effective and Equitable Climate Solutions

THE CHALLENGE

Climate change disproportionately affects people living in poverty and threatens to push over 120 million people below the global poverty line by 2030. To effectively and equitably confront climate change, decision-makers need scientific evidence not only on which technological innovations are effective, but also how to design policy innovations that overcome behavioral, economic, social, and political barriers to adoption. Advancing science and evidence-informed action at the intersection of technology and policy is critical for ensuring that climate solutions achieve real-world impacts and benefit low-income and marginalized communities disproportionately harmed by climate change.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The King Climate Action Initiative (K-CAI) at The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) proposes to collaborate with scientists and engineers across MIT and J-PAL's global network of hundreds of university and policy partners to co-design, pilot, evaluate, and scale high-impact solutions to mitigate climate change and help vulnerable communities adapt. Our three key objectives are to:

1. Co-design and measure the impacts of mitigation and adaptation innovations in the real world,

2. Catalyze the scale-up of effective and equitable climate solutions with policy partners, and

3. Elevate MIT as a global leader in science-based climate policy.

SOLUTION APPROACH AND EXPECTED IMPACT

With MIT's support, we can implement at least 30 cutting-edge research and scaling projects on cost-effective mitigation and climate change adaptation and resilience within five years and catalyze the scale-up of evidence-informed climate policies that reach more than 15 million people living in poverty within 10 years.

We will achieve this through three core program components:

1. **Competitive Research and Scaling Funding**: Grants for J-PAL and MIT researchers to bring climate solutions from MIT and around the world into the field, rigorously evaluate their impacts on people and the environment, and scale the most effective and equitable solutions with policy partners internationally.
2. **Scaling and Research Fellows**: Embedding staff, students, and researchers from J-PAL and MIT in NGOs, governments, and J-PAL regional offices to build a network of researchers and implementers to accelerate the diffusion of effective and equitable climate solutions.
3. **Visiting Scholars and Student Scholarships**: Bringing experts from low- and middle-income countries to MIT to share their knowledge with faculty and students, learn, and build new research collaborations.

BUILDING INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAMS ACROSS MIT

Through these three program components, J-PAL will forge collaborations with researchers across MIT to bring the latest innovations into the policy domain, leveraging J-PAL's extensive network of government, NGO, and funding partners and our comparative advantage in influencing policy to scale effective technologies and policies. By collaborating with MIT researchers starting from the early stages of solution development, to testing and implementing it in the field, we can provide behavioral insights to co-design innovations that are more likely to succeed outside the lab and connect MIT teams to new policy partners around the world.

A GLOBAL NETWORK TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO POLICY ACTION

J-PAL and MIT are well positioned to help shift the norm toward evidence-informed climate change solutions. With seven regional offices and a global network of over 260 affiliated researchers at 90 universities, including 22 MIT faculty members, J-PAL collaborates with hundreds of policy partners around the world to conduct rigorous research, build capacity, share policy lessons, and scale up effective social programs—which to date have reached over 540 million people worldwide. The J-PAL network has evaluated over 45 environment and climate programs in 18 countries since 2010. Since 2020, K-CAI has seeded 30+ research and 6 scaling projects, from the world's first randomized evaluation of a flood early warning system in India, to adapting and scaling cap and trade schemes to cut pollution in India, to working with a global shipping company to cut excess emissions.

Our project is led by **Prof. Abhijit Banerjee**, Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics at MIT and J-PAL co-founder and Director. **Iqbal Dhaliwal**, Global Executive Director of J-PAL, and **Claire Walsh**, K-CAI Project Director, will manage the proposal's implementation with the J-PAL staff team. Every research and scaling project will be led by one or more faculty members from J-PAL and/or MIT.

To learn more, please visit www.povertyactionlab.org/kcai.