

# WORKSHOP REPORT

THE STANLEY FOUNDATION | MAY 2015

## Mobilizing Climate Action: To Paris and Beyond

This event summary, drafted by the Stanley Foundation, captures the key points and highlights discussed at the retreat “Mobilizing Climate Action: To Paris and Beyond” held March 4–6, 2015, in Tarrytown, New York. After the incredible success of the UN Climate Summit in September 2014, retreat organizers hoped to build off the event’s unprecedented momentum and bring leading advocacy organizations working at all levels of climate change action together to continue developing their communication and mobilization strategies for 2015. Participants in the retreat worked together to establish a greater understanding of each other’s organizational efforts and pinpoint the opportunities available to collaborate and coordinate their work to maximize the common goal of achieving a strong climate change agreement at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris this December and affect real change well beyond 2015.

Conference participants agreed that 2015 is a critical year. Progress on climate change negotiations will take place within the context of broader efforts to establish a sustainable development agenda that addresses the differentiated needs of all countries and provides adequate financing for development projects that will enable growth without negatively impacting the environment and humanity. Therefore, efforts to address climate change will be enhanced by integrating them with the post-2015 development agenda also being negotiated this year.

Accomplishing such an enormous task requires collaboration, including sharing common messaging and coordinating efforts—two key objectives of the “Mobilizing Climate Action” retreat. Participants reaffirmed the added value of acting together in a tangible way and expressed their interest in maximizing outcomes by expanding and stretching their current capabilities, including broad outreach, scientific research, convening, and ongoing information sharing.

### Highlights

- The year 2015 is a huge one for climate change action, with many opportunities to collaborate and coordinate to pressure decision makers into agreeing on strong commitments to address climate change at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) in Paris this December. However, encouraging tangible actions and providing real solutions beyond 2015 is equally as important to addressing climate change, if not more so.
- Climate change messaging should be reframed and rebranded. Messages of despair ought to be transformed into scenarios for hope and opportunity, particularly in the context of sustainable development.

### Mobilizing Climate Action: To Paris and Beyond

Tarrytown, New York

March 4–6, 2015



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The rapporteur prepared this report following the conference. It contains her interpretation of the proceedings and is not merely a descriptive, chronological account. Participants neither reviewed nor approved the report. Therefore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to all recommendations, observations, and conclusions.

- Increasing mobilization and amplification are critical leading up to COP21. This will include new media strategies as well as outreach to new audiences and advocates.
- Identifying leaders of all kinds in their respective spheres of influence will heighten awareness for newly acknowledged subgroups of climate change actors as well as political leaders; storytelling will incorporate a personal, emotional element of climate change that has been missing from the narrative.

## Identifying Shared Objectives

Despite a wide range of organizational goals, messaging strategies, and target audiences (e.g., business, policymakers, and engaged citizens), several common objectives emerged from the retreat. Based on an analysis of organizational goals submitted in advance of the retreat, it is clear that organizations working to address climate change are focused on fostering a meaningful agreement in Paris and strong climate action among all countries and sectors beyond 2015. Building on the current groundswell of climate action is critical for placing pressure on negotiators and decision makers to achieve these goals. Participants agreed they want to strengthen their ability to collaborate—particularly by sharing information—around key events and moments to achieve this effect. A stronger, smarter media presence would boost mobilization around and increase public awareness of these efforts to apply greater pressure at critical points throughout the year.

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A major challenge in addressing climate change is effectively reaching multiple stakeholders. Organizations are working to determine what messaging strategy is best to help the public and policy makers understand the serious consequences of neglecting climate change. It was suggested that messages creatively focus on the hope and opportunities provided by addressing climate change through sustainable development and equality. Many felt that messages would benefit from the art of storytelling—the ability to attach real human faces and experiences to climate change—and the science behind the truth of possible outcomes without tangible action and adequate solutions. Generally, there was agreement that consistency in approach will achieve the best outcomes; this broader approach can then be tailored at the local level so that the varied campaigns are connected.

There was consensus on advocacy organizations being ambitious throughout 2015 and striving to collaborate more than ever. Building on momentum established through the Climate Summit in 2014, participants want to deepen the pool of activists by mobilizing leaders across the world in their respective spheres of influence and reaching out to even more groups of stakeholders who will either be particularly affected by climate change or have a special reason to get involved, such as physicians, parents of young children, athletes, and the elderly. While target audiences do differ among organizations, it is widely agreed that engaging youth is of central importance to encourage future constructive climate action—for the youth of today are the decision makers of tomorrow.

## Opportunities for Collaboration

Participants agreed they could expand their current partnerships, reaching out to an increased variety of international actors (e.g., trade unions). They recognized that public-private partnerships in particular can leverage a great deal of influence in the decision-making process to affect policy change. Organizations can work together to create stronger political maps—tools for

identifying important actors and leaders in various sectors and geographical locations—in climate change advocacy.

Remarks from participants seemed to indicate that organizations could work harder to meet a growing public demand for information about climate change and fill a leadership void by giving people opportunities to get involved. Collaborative efforts can take advantage of mass mobilization opportunities in 2015 and should point to COP21 as a launch pad for critical mobilizing climate action at all levels beyond the agreement expected this year.

Creating more personal accountability was one element of public engagement considered by participants. Organizations could collaborate more to influence the interpersonal narratives of individuals committed to climate action that would uphold individual accountability. People can hold each other accountable when someone can first say, “How dare you act this way (that contributes to air pollution, for example),” and then suggest alternative courses of action that lead to a more resilient future. A focus on individual action requires making efforts in the global call for climate action more inclusive, such as making information available in more languages.

A wide variety of concrete suggestions for collaboration between conference participants and their global counterparts were identified. Here are some of them, a few of which are ongoing:

- Develop a “blue ribbon” symbol: Everyone knows what a blue ribbon signifies. Create a climate change symbol that is equally pervasive and can be used broadly across all public campaigns to escalate collaboration and solidarity.
- Launch a heroes and champions campaign: Recognize global leaders in the public sector who are working to address climate change and spotlight their efforts. Conduct political mapping to identify a larger number of current and potential champions. The campaign could also call out climate change “villains” who serve as obstacles to meaningful, tangible change. This can be done through an international ranking that compares political leaders or countries to one another in terms of their commitment to addressing climate change. Establishing “heroes” and “villains” adds a moral element that will advance advocacy efforts.
- Bring faces to climate change campaigns: Bring real people to the forefront of the climate change narrative, letting them speak to the consequences of climate change. Emotion and values are then a critical piece of the discussion, which helps provoke emotion in others and encourages individuals to hold each other accountable for acting more consciously with regard to climate change.
- Campaign on love and values: Encourage people to take climate action for the sake of something or someone they love; everyone loves something that could be affected by climate change. This will help evoke a sense of common humanity.
- Campaign for parents of young children: Reach out to parents of children ten and younger. Parents have a heightened concern about their children’s health at that age. Target parenting groups and leverage this increased sensitivity as an opportunity for more climate advocacy.
- Acknowledge business leaders for climate change action: Identify business leaders who are willing to take the spotlight and reveal their support for climate

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change efforts up to and beyond COP21. Ask them to publicly acknowledge why they are committing to climate action and what action they will take.

- Vote for climate change action: Either in tandem with already scheduled political elections around the world or on a single, separate day, encourage people to vote “Yes” that climate change is real and needs to be addressed. Focus on getting all generations involved and participating together—particularly parents or grandparents and children.
- Train media and establish a rapid response team: Spend time with media organizations to train them on climate change messaging. Establish a team that is equipped to react quickly to stories, whether positive or negative in nature.

## Mobilization Pathways to Paris and Beyond

Moving forward, four areas of collaboration were identified as crosscutting categories that address the objectives and opportunities identified throughout the overall discussion, including the broad goal of developing a common message to increase mobilization and amplification around climate action. Participants voluntarily assigned themselves to one or more area, which will continue as self-driven and informal working groups: new message campaigns, media amplification, engaging leaders, and events. Below are the brief objectives and summaries identified for consideration of each group.

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### New Message Campaigns

#### Objectives

- Develop message substance and processes to achieve consistency and aligned content production.
- Share results of message testing with the larger group.
- Identify new messengers that make climate change more personal.
- Develop a common ask and goal for what the group wishes to achieve from Paris and beyond.

Working group members may elect to help each other identify clear, simple messaging broadly applicable for use by all organizations working to address climate change. This messaging can then be adapted strategically to reach each group’s target audiences. New messaging will emphasize solutions and goals, recognizing that pointing directly to climate change may not be the most productive way to achieve tangible action. Importantly, the group will work to identify champions to expand messaging outreach to more audience subgroups, including faith groups, first responders, military members, and athletes. Participants already conducting message testing will share their results broadly to help avoid duplication of effort.

### Media Amplification

#### Objectives

- Accelerate organizational linkages so that messaging can be coordinated.
- Develop a simple, flexible space for sharing information effectively and efficiently between organizations.
- Collaborate to help build the capacity of existing organizational media networks.

This effort will focus on expanding current media capabilities. The combined breadth of organizational and mass media reach available today makes it possible to spread important messages and information across the globe, which can be enhanced by increasing the number of languages in which content is available. Working group participants aim to collaborate to strengthen their abilities to identify media partners and perform outreach to and training for them. This group plans to coordinate efforts with the organizers in the events working group to strategically share messages with the media and maximize mobilization and amplification efforts.

## Engaging Leaders

### Objectives

- Establish advocacy heroes and champions and reach people who can influence action to address climate change.
- Conduct an exercise to understand gaps in key stakeholder groups, identify leaders of important global sectors (e.g., business, civil society) within those groups, and devise an outreach strategy.
- Maintain regular communication among group members and strategize how to best engage leaders across the globe for the events in 2015.

Identifying leaders to represent all levels of climate change advocacy is critical for reaching a strong agreement at COP21 in December as well as continuing momentum and action beyond 2015. The political mapping of and outreach strategy to the variety of leaders will contribute to maximizing impact in various subgroups such as civil society, business, and political organizations. Ideally, these strategic outreach efforts will make current leadership networks more inclusive.

## Events

### Objectives

- Create a shared calendar that allows climate change advocacy organizations to post events in a centralized location everyone can access.
- Use shared calendar to generate collaboration around key moments.

All participants agreed on the need for a centralized calendar where organizations can add events and monitor opportunities for collaboration and coordination. The calendar is a critical tool for greater mobilization and amplification, providing contact information for event organizers and leaders so as to help facilitate coordination efforts. The calendar will also be a tool for the engaging leaders and media amplification working groups, which will rely on the events calendar in developing their outreach strategies.

## “Together we can, together we must, together we will”

A de facto slogan, “together we can, together we must, together we will” was an often repeated phrase, and participants acknowledged that in the spirit of “together we will,” each working group will depend on the others to maximize efforts, highlighting the importance of coordination at all levels of involvement.” Initial group leaders stepped up to kick off each area of collaboration, with the intent to share leadership over time. Overall, participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet face to face to identify mutual objectives and discuss the best strategies for moving forward together. However, it was recognized that

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drawing in other advocacy organizations dealing with climate change that were not present at the retreat would be essential to achieving the working groups' goals. Therefore, working group leaders committed to reaching out to more organizations to encourage broader participation.

## Participants

### Organizers

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**Antonio Hill**, Executive Director, Global Call for Climate Action

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Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only. Participants attended as individuals rather than as representatives of their governments or organizations.

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