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Climate Science War Game: A Journey

It was a cool day in early April when an email popped up on my phone with the subject line: Composition of Climate War Game Team. It was a highly anticipated email. I opened it quickly and read to my dismay the list of names entitled Water, which included mine but was otherwise unfamiliar. I didn't know a single person on my War Game team and thus I did not know what to expect.

Upon reaching India, the first thing that the Water Sector did as a team was meet for dinner. It was very casual; the five of us ate a lovely dinner in the café above the Rodas hotel in Mumbai and got to know one another. As I ate my ravioli, we discussed the team assignments and collectively decided who should take which role. Chynna, the business major and confident speaker, was assigned team leader/presenter for part 1. The persuasive Nick Ireland insisted on becoming team negotiator, and amicable Pedro offered to be team representative. The ever-curious and eloquent Thurston was interested in being team leader for part 2 and I, having discovered an effective compatibility between Thurston and myself, as well as an innate interest in technology, offered to be technical lead to work alongside Thurston in part 2.

It became clear that evening that there was unity among the Water Sector; we made decisions regarding the team roles effortlessly and all felt satisfied in our roles. This was a relief. It also became clear, however, that we had a lot of work to do. That

first dinner was marked by pleasant conversation and basic planning, but there was an undertone of stress as the bulk of the work loomed ahead of us. At least, that's how I felt. A historical over-stresser, I tend to be easily intimidated by new academic assignments. As my team laughed and casually discussed how the intimate relations of water to all other sectors would make things messy for us in the War Game, I felt a knot of anxiety form in my stomach.

We planned to have our individual slides ready within the next few days to have some time before the deadline to put everything together. I must admit that I procrastinated, dreading the task of researching such a broad topic (water in climate change science) and consolidating the information into just five slides. With the busy schedule and the inconsistent internet access, I struggled to make time for my research.

Once I began, though, I realized that I had been psyching myself out for nothing (as I tend to do). Using the previous War Game presentation as inspiration, I managed to research and put together quality slides on climate change science as it pertains to water. The subject matter was really very interesting to me, as water availability is a hugely pressing issue facing humanity. The Water Sector met the following day to put the whole presentation together and I, seeing the confidence of my teammates, felt optimistic about our performance in the upcoming War Game.

When the day came, I felt ready. Each team member had explained the specifics of his or her research to me, so I felt prepared to fight for the Water Sector.

The presentation went well. Chynna effectively relayed all of our information. After the presentation, however, a curveball was thrown. A group of PhD students focusing specifically on water and climate change had shown up and were prepared to

question us on a topic that they had been studying for years. I was very nervous upon going to the front of the room to answer questions, and they asked some questions that threw me, but overall I feel good about the way I answered them. I didn't say anything that wasn't true; I stuck to my research.

Upon breaking for lunch, spirits were high among Team Water. We animatedly discussed what our plans were for meeting with the other sectors and what we wanted from each of them. This is when I really got into the spirit of the War Game, thinking strategically for the betterment of my team. We determined that we wanted to collaborate with Agriculture, Health Care, and Energy to achieve support for our plan to recommend that 10% of the profits from big corporations go to developing technologies to reduce aerosol emissions, recycle and treat water, harvest rainwater, and build dams. We agreed to support the Agriculture Sector in their collectivization efforts, in return for a promise to regulate and reduce the usage of groundwater. Although it was not really my role, I found myself being very active in these negotiations. It just sort of came naturally to me. The meetings were all positive.

When we rejoined with all of the sectors for discussion, things got a little more complicated. There were a many differing viewpoints being contributed all at once, and I definitely felt myself getting overwhelmed. In the chaos of it all our team did not achieve everything that we wanted, but we did eventually receive support for our Interlinking of Rivers Project. I am content with my contribution to the discussion and feel that I represented the desires of my team well.

I believe that the Climate Science War Game, despite being a dreaded event for me, was a very beneficial experience. I intend to pursue a career in the field of climate

change science and so participating in an activity that simulates a real negotiation process was a learning experience for me. For one thing, my confidence grew as a speaker and a negotiator throughout the War Game process. Additionally, I gained insight on how negotiation processes such as these proceed. It was apparent that decisions regarding policy suggestions related to climate change are not easy decisions to make; the groups have conflicting interests and even the most well-intentioned decision yields unintended consequences. I believe that this insight will better prepare me to face these sorts of issues in my career.