

The Copenhagen Climate Game

a simulation-based role-playing exercise



“Most people get lost when they just see the results of models. But people *really* understand when, as I saw in this Copenhagen exercise, they *experience* the results.”

Dr. Bob Corell, Global Change Program of the Heinz Center, USA
former chair of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment

The Copenhagen Climate Game is a half-day simulation-based role-playing exercise that gives groups of 10 to 50 people an experience of reaching a global agreement to mitigate climate change.

Set up as a highly simplified UN negotiation similar to what will take place in Copenhagen in 2009, the exercise asks participants to play the role of delegates from India, China, the US, the EU, Brazil, island nations, and other places. Negotiators work together to reach a global accord that meets the group’s goal for CO2 levels. The UN Secretary General receives pledges from three different blocs, asks his technical staff to simulate them in the *Pangaea* climate simulation developed by the Sustainability Institute, and informs delegates of the results. Often, the teams must go back for another round of debate, strategizing, and collaboration.

The Copenhagen Game was designed by Drew Jones of the Sustainability Institute and John Sterman of MIT. The exercise has been used around the world, with business leaders, students, and policy makers.

Players tend to identify strongly with their roles — we’ve seen politically conservative Americans arguing vigorously for the rights to economic development for the south, Chinese nationals defending the US position, and “climate refugees” from Bangladesh climbing on the desks of the Indian delegates to escape sea level rise.

Overall, we’ve seen the Copenhagen Climate Game help people quickly learn the policy-relevant science of climate change, viscerally experience the international dynamics, and succeed at crafting a solution to the challenges, while taking a realistic look at the scale of changes ahead as we shift to a low-carbon global economy.

Please contact us to learn how to present the Copenhagen Game to your group.

“I found I need the physical experience of representing Africa and other nations in the negotiation to really get the key insights that will lead to success.” Participant, Germany

“I learned that once I participated “inside” the model I could visualize the results of different emissions reductions targets.” Participant, Sweden

“The exercise allows you to understand how difficult and important it is to achieve a reduction in atmospheric CO2 levels over the coming decades. It showed me, from a global decision-making point of view, that unless we change our language and decisions in the international agreements, it will be impossible to reach consensus.” Participant, South Africa

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