

HUNGER DAY

Objectives:

- Develop empathy
- Understanding class dynamics
- Step outside comfort zone

Suggested Scheduling: End of week two

Time Required: Full Day

BACKGROUND AND ORGANIZATIONAL INSIGHT

This activity was adapted from Oxfam's Hunger Banquet, where invited guests pay the same for a meal, and based on a lottery, attendees get different meals representative of class distinctions in society. At Indicorps, we stretched the activity from a meal to a full day. Each fellow in the cohort and member of staff is randomly assigned to one of three classes - wealthy, middle class, and laboring class. Each is provided an identity/role, different sets of tasks, designations for meals, and food served/available to them. The laboring class had significantly more chores (laundry, errands, and dish-washing for the "wealthy" class in their cohort) and were given basic/limited food. The wealthy were treated royally and provided extravagant meals in excess. The arbitrariness of the lines and the ability to see/reflect on the different struggles of class is palpable.

ACTIVITY

This activity is based on stereotypical class distinctions. Each fellow is given a profile card that defines their class category and role for the day. Role cards define what people wear, assigned tasks and demeanor, with whom they can communicate, and sleeping arrangements. Those that are "illiterate" are asked not to read and write for the day. Those given lower class female roles are asked not to speak in groups or to a member of the higher classes, etc. Some people were assigned beds for sleeping, others were requested to sleep on the floor, etc. Fellows are asked to do justice to their roles and to try and live for a day (24 hours) as the character on their cards would in real life. Food and chores are distributed accordingly as well.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What was your initial reaction to your role? To your economic status?
- Could you relate to your character or understand her/his position?
- How did you feel towards the end? What was your evolution cycle?
- Describe how you felt internally and externally.
- How did Hunger Day differ from a day of fasting?
- What assumptions did you have about how each income group should behave?
- What are observations of interactions with your own group? With other groups?
- What do you think was the point of this exercise? What might you carry forward in your project ahead?

