

## **Introduction:**

This is a simulation designed to explore the question of whether beans have culture. It uses a fictitious context and interaction that is loosely based on a case study from an actual international development project. Participants will either play an active role in a cross-cultural encounter or play the role of observer.

## **Objectives:**

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Experience intercultural communication barriers.
2. Examine various perspectives on international aid.
3. Recognize various factors that can influence the intensity of an intercultural encounter.

## **Time:**

30 minutes (plus 10-15 minutes if using optional Intensity Factors Index – see below).

## **Group Size:**

Small group (to be divided into two different groups and one observer).

## **Materials:**

Simulation – Beans Don't Have Culture Background Information Handout; Simulation - Wangoan Bean Expert Briefing Sheet; Simulation - MWU Bean Expert Briefing Sheet; Simulation – Observer Briefing Sheet; Optional - Intensity Factors Index (all in [Downloads](#)).

## **Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:**

- Minimization
- Acceptance
- Adaptation

## **AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:**

### Cultural Self-Awareness

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

### Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks

- To demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs & practices.

### Curiosity

- To ask complex questions about other cultures.
- To seek out and articulate answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.

### Other Skills:

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion.

### Activity Instructions:

1. Pass out a copy of the “Simulation – Beans Don’t Have Culture Background Information Handout” to all participants. You as the facilitator can choose to either read the handout out loud to your participants, instruct participants to read silently, or have each participant read a paragraph out loud, going around the room.
2. Assign roles. You’ll need at least two participants to play the role of the Wangoan Bean Experts, two participants to play the role of the MWU Bean Experts, and one participant to play the role of observer. Divide relatively evenly depending on how many participants you have, always making sure to have one observer. You can ask participants if there is a role they’d prefer and if anyone does not particularly enjoy simulations and would rather play the role of the observer (if you think this is appropriate for your specific group of participants and would still ensure enough participants in each group – otherwise, you can simply assign the roles yourself).
3. Once roles have been assigned, you’ll need to split the groups up, either on opposite sides of the room or in two separate rooms, and brief each group separately. Pass out the corresponding briefing sheets to each group to read and process. Then brief each group, as well as the observer, prior to beginning the simulation to ensure understanding of roles and goals.
4. Bring both groups together (they can sit or stand depending on what is most accessible for participants) to conduct the simulation. Give them at least 5 minutes, depending on how the conversation unfolds, to interact with each other. Once the conversation has come to a natural end (with or without a resolution), you can end the simulation.
5. Debrief with participants. **Optional:** Pass out the “Intensity Factors Index” to participants.
  - How did it feel to play your role?
  - Wangoan Bean Experts: What was your goal? Was it achieved? What kinds of cultural differences did you notice in your discussion with the MWU Bean Experts?
  - MWU Bean Experts: What was your goal? Was it achieved? What kinds of cultural differences did you notice in your discussion with the Wangoan Bean Experts?
  - Observers: What was your goal? What did you observe? Is there anything else you would like to add?
  - What are some deeper values behind the behaviors you played or experienced? If you are familiar with concepts for these, feel free to share.
  - How do you feel about the way the different groups were depicted in this exercise? Why?

- What are “real world” implications of this exercise?
- What are some practices or strategies that might help avoid the kind of situation that was demonstrated here?
- **Optional:** Pass out the “Intensity Factors Index” to participants and ask them to consider how Intensity Factors impact both groups as they interact for the first time. What might the Wangoan Bean Experts experience? The MWU Bean Experts?\*

*\*Ask this question only if there is ample time to present the “Intensity Factors Index” to participants (in [Downloads](#)). This is an optional add-on that takes an additional 10-15 minutes. The Intensity Factors Index is excellent and takes the discussion to another level, particularly because it offers concepts that learners could consider for upcoming adaptation opportunities, e.g., going to college, starting a new job, etc.*

- Do beans have culture?