



# Engaging the “Whole System” in an Appreciative Inquiry Summit

## Whole System Collaboration at World Vision

**Appreciative Inquiry Case Study**



*It's been incredibly powerful to include thousands of people in the process. Not only did we develop more robust strategies, we saved time and money and created a new model for participation and collaboration.*

**– Watt Santatiwat, Vice President**

In early 2004, World Vision embarked on a strategic planning process to identify goals and priorities for guiding the organization into the future. With over 20,000 employees and offices in 100 countries, World Vision is one of the world’s largest non-profit organizations and is the world’s largest distributor of food, feeding over seven million people in 2003.

A seminal component of World Vision’s planning process occurred in June 2004, when 150 of the organization’s leaders, donors, and partners met in Bangkok for an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Summit. World Vision went beyond simply involving its top leaders in the process – it engaged 4000 employees and stakeholders in a groundbreaking and highly successful “virtual summit” process.

Before the Bangkok summit began, employees and other stakeholders were asked to participate in face-to-face meetings at country and regional levels to explore this theme: “What gives life to World Vision when it is at its best?” Both individuals and groups summarized their stories and insights and then logged into an online community designed to capture and share best practices among the globally dispersed organization. Over 4000 people from 60 countries contributed to this important “pre-work” by participating in a month-long cycle of face-to-face and online dialogue and collaboration.

When the summit began in Bangkok, virtual participation continued, with the online community

serving as a link through which the entire organization could participate in the summit process. Highlights from the Bangkok meeting were summarized and posted to the online community. Overnight, the rest of the organization’s members around the world read, discussed, and voted on issues and ideas that emerged from the face-to-face summit. Their input was summarized and integrated into the Bangkok meeting the next day.

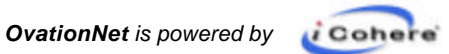


For World Vision, engaging the broader organization in a shared experience resulted in higher quality goals and plans, the rapid alignment of stakeholders around the world, and enhanced organizational readiness for implementation. World Vision’s approach illustrates the power of inviting the whole system to “participate” in a summit, and how virtual and face-to-face AI processes can weave together an entire system, tapping collective wisdom in the spirit of positive change.

**For More Information**

*To learn more about OvationNet, including introductory AI workshops by David Cooperrider, AI online learning modules, the AI Toolkit for Virtual Summits and the OvationNet Web Portal, contact:*

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