

# Vitamin News

*Vitamin News* (Thai Public Broadcasting Service, Thailand) is a 7-minute newscast for children ages 6 to 12 (cf. screenshot 1). By emphasizing public interest topics and the need to pay careful attention, viewers are informed by *Vitamin News*. This episode, first telecast in 2011, focuses on the power of Thai children to cope with the flood crisis in their land (cf. screenshot 2). The program's host appears on a white background (cf. screenshot 3), sings a refrain, and strums a small instrument to engage children in deciding, "Which is better?"

A small boy and girl take turns in applying this question to three central concerns of everyday life after the flood, which are illustrated through on-screen text, animation, and whimsical sound effects:

- 1) What is the right thing to do with debris and human waste?
- 2) How can you approach the floodwater safely?
- 3) What can you do to help others (cf. screenshots 4-7)?

*Vitamin News* concludes with on-screen text (cf. screenshot 8) summarizing the learning points: be prepared, have a volunteer spirit, handle news with awareness, reduce stress, and increase happiness.

*Vitamin News* was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012 finalists in the 7-11 Non-Fiction category.

## International experts' opinions

International experts shared their opinions about *Vitamin News* during the discussion sessions at the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2012. Viewers discussed the role of children in the news format and suggested that children be given a voice in this program category. They pointed out that male adults are used as presenters in many informational programs and female hosts are needed also. A few expressed concerns about the ability of traditional news programs to engage children, but many agreed that the *Vitamin News* approach is appealing.

"Across the whole category, I think it's interesting that the shows where the children had a voice rather than adult presenters are the ones that really appeal to this age group." (female expert, UK)

Viewers compared *Vitamin News* to another news program, in the 7-11 Non-fiction category, *logo! Special: Japan – Your Questions* (ZDF, Germany) about the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power plant in Fukushima, Japan. Some remarked on the different approaches to the same type of information and same age group, especially adult involvement in the programs.

"The Thai one was simple, but you really felt that the kids – they were being led – but they had much more of a voice themselves. So, in a way, that makes it more memorable." (female expert, UK)

Viewers agreed on the challenge of making successful children's news programs. Some expressed their feelings that humor is an important element for this age group, even when presenting serious subjects.



Ill. 1: *Vitamin News* immunizes children against rumors and false information



Ill. 2: This episode focuses on a flood crisis in Thailand



Ill. 3: Songs help children decide how to respond to the news



Ill. 4: A girl and a boy dance and take turns talking about the flood

An expert from Taiwan shared his ideas about why *Vitamin News* works so well, suggesting that this style be adopted more widely.

“I think it is the expression of Thai people. They always see the happy side... they talk about the flood, but they have no sadness. They don't want their kids to feel sad because that helps nothing. It's a new style for every children's program to start.” (male expert, Taiwan)

*Elizabeth Spezia (Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, USA)*



Ill. 5: The boy says he wants to swim in the floodwater



Ill. 6: The girl says she stays out of the floodwater for safety



Ill. 7: Animation shows how to find news that is trustworthy



Ill. 8: On-screen text summarizes key points in the program

Screenshots from *Vitamin News* © Thai Public Broadcasting Service, Thailand

Target Audience 5.77	Idea 6.77	Script 6.13	Realization 6.00
Average Score per Category by experts' voters at PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONALE 2012			