

**World Health Risk Management Seminar
Launch of Inter-university Seminar, 15th July 2005**

A new series of seminars and lectures on various aspects of risk, with links by satellite in Tokyo, Bangkok and London, was successfully launched on July 15th 2005.

Professor Ryoji Sakai, Chair of the URMPM, whose brainchild this series is, introduced the programme, noting that using a satellite system, courtesy of the World Bank, allowed for greater networking and inter-activity, which allowed the seminar series to develop the debates around various aspects of risk.

Mitsuko Hoiuchi, Director, ILO office, Tokyo, noted that we live in a globalised but unequal world. We need security, but we also need empowerment. In this context, health is very important. She explained how her organisation, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), works. In the context of natural disasters, economic collapse, health problems such as HIV/AIDS or industrial accidents, there is a need for early warning systems, rehabilitation, and crisis management. These should all be people-centred and available to all. Thus the ILO is essentially a rights-based organisation. She asked who gets the benefit of globalisation and whether it is shared equally.

Y. Kamamura, Head, OECD Tokyo Centre, began by noting that the topic of the seminar was very timely and how pleased he was that it was taking place. He offered condolences to London citizens for the recent bomb attacks. He noted that the nature of large-scale risks was changing, with the recent tsunami, new diseases, as well as terrorist attacks, and society has to find a new capacity to manage them. While the impact of such risks is unknown, we have to be ready to face them. He explained that the OECD has been engaged in the study of system risk since 2000 and that in 2003, they issued a book which addressed both academics and governments of members states regarding the challenges involved. He noted that there are four driving forces behind globalisation: demography, environment, technology, and socio-economic development. Globalisation has had differing results for different people – some have benefited but others have lost their jobs. From the perspective of his organisation, the benefits outweigh the costs, but there remains a need to share the benefits more equally.

Pat Caplan (Goldsmiths College, University of London) distinguished between risk management and risk perception. It is particularly the latter in which social scientists are interested, looking at lay views of risk in their social context. Her own work has been on ideas about food and risk, and the perceived links between food and health. She went on to talk about the recent terrorist bombs on the tubes and bus, noting that while security is very important, such attacks need to be seen in the context of a series of political confrontations taking place mainly in the Middle East between Muslims and the West. But risk is seen to permeate our everyday lives and it is the job of social scientists to understand how people make sense of this.

Som-arch Wangkhomthong (Vice-President of Bangkok Hospital, Bangkok) drew a distinction between natural disasters such as tsunami and those caused by humans such as the recent political disturbances in Thailand. He stated that we need to share with Japan which has lots of experience in disaster management e.g. the Kobe earthquake, similarly to learn from the recent London crisis how to manage the current crisis in southern Thailand. It is clear that we must constantly be prepared. At the same time, it is vital that we respect the wisdom of local communities.

Chalermchai Chaikittiporn (Dean, Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University, Bangkok) talked about the importance of prevention in risk issues. He noted the significance of crisis management teams, and stressed how important it is to include traditional wisdom in knowledge management.

Following the opening speeches, there was a lively and wide-ranging discussion between the participants, all of whom agreed that this had been a most beneficial exercise.

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