

The Humanitarian Futures Group: A framework for dialogue between humanitarian policy makers and scientists

The seminar series

The Humanitarian Futures Group aims to promote dialogue between a broad range of scientists (natural, social, economic and political scientists, legal and technical expertise) and humanitarian policy makers on issues of future vulnerability as well as evolving scientific learning and innovative technologies which could enhance response to future crises.

In its continuing efforts to look for ways to enhance the dialogue, the Humanitarian Futures Programme has recently launched a series of seminars focusing upon innovative tools and approaches emerging from science and technology that can help reduce human vulnerability to future disaster threats. We aim to hold a 1-1.5 hour seminar every 2 months. The proposed format for the seminar will be discussed with each presenter but will include: a presentation of the issue for seminar focus to include consideration of how this is practically applicable to the humanitarian context, to be followed by group discussion.

Seminar 2: Radiation and chemical hazards in the future: Are we worrying about the right things?

*12.30-14.00, Thursday
13 December*

Dr Michael Clark, Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards, Health Protection Agency

Scientific evidence for harmful long-term effects on health of radiation and chemicals is often presumed to be overwhelming, but is this the case? As human population rises and global industrialisation continues during the 21st century there are likely to be more radiation and chemical hazards emerging, but how should we assess the risks to make sure that appropriate resources are made available to reduce them? And how should we allow for genuine uncertainties in our knowledge, particularly when new technologies are involved.

Dr Michael Clark is a scientific spokesman for the Health Protection Agency and is responsible for the Press and Information Group at the Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards at Chilton. He is a physical sciences graduate of the University of Sussex and obtained his PhD at Queen Elizabeth College, University of London. His research background is in radiation measurements, risk assessments and nuclear safety. He has been an Adjunct Professor of Physics at the University of Tennessee.

Seminar 3: Predicting global food supply and distribution.

*12.30-14.00, Thursday
24 January*

Dr John Seaman, Evidence for Development

Climate change, increasing world population, and rising oil prices and agricultural production costs have created new fears of future global food insecurity. This seminar examines the extent to which it is possible to make practically useful predictions about future food supply and distribution.

Evidence for Development was established to develop and extend the use of methods designed for the support of development policy, economic management and programme design and evaluation. The methods are based on economic models built on standardised data sets which permit 'real time' estimates to be made of the likely impact of changes e.g. crop failure, price change, HIV/ AIDS, development interventions and are widely used, chiefly in Africa at a national and local scale.

Amongst proposed issues for future seminars are included:

- Legal frameworks for future crisis environments;
- Weather forecasting;



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- Climate change and tools for enabling climate change to inform strategy and programming;
- Ageing;
- Nanotechnology;
- Automatic identification and data capture;
- Information Communications Technology;
- Forms of insurance to address future vulnerability; and
- Urbanisation.

There are a restricted number of places for each seminar, with places allocated to those who first book.

To reserve a place, please contact either: Emma Visman or Rosie Oglesby, on the contact details below.

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