I. 12th CityNet Disaster Cluster Seminar concludes in Yokohama

September kicked off with the 12th CITYNET Disaster Cluster Seminar (DCS), held in Yokohama from September 4-6. Over 60 participants from 31 cities and organizations attended. Participants included representatives of international and national government agencies, local government agencies, academia, institutions, NGOs and NPOs, and private sector organizations with work in disaster risk reduction (DRR).

In Asia, the frequency and severity of natural hazards are increasing due to climate change. The goal of the DCS is to create a platform to discuss best practices for disaster resilience to learn from each sector and city. Presentations by participants on topics from how their cities respond to disasters to how innovative technologies can aid in disaster prevention were followed by rich discussions.

II. Intern Introductions

The Tsurumi River in early September. In the 20th Century alone, the Tsurumi River experienced almost a dozen serious floods, leading the City of Yokohama to develop extensive Flood Control Projects throughout the river basin.
Deputy Mayor Katsunori Watanabe welcomed participants on behalf of Japanese citizens, exclaiming his support for the seminar as a platform for DRR knowledge exchange as the both the frequency and intensity of natural hazards in the Asia-Pacific Region are increasing. He set the tone for the seminar, encouraging citizen response and mutual assistance when disasters occur, stressing that citizens need to be prepared for when disasters strike, and local governments need to provide citizens with the ability to do so.

In the keynote address presented by Dr. Yuki Matsuoka, Head of UNDRR Office in Japan, she highlighted the need for resilience, inclusiveness, and all-of-society engagement. National and local governments need to work with the private sector and other stakeholders to support citizens to build resilience to disasters. She stressed that having a strategy is not enough if it is not Sendai Framework compliant. She also emphasized that efforts to build resilience must address the “system of systems” that makes up a city. She appealed to cities to consider the urgency of target (e) of the Sendai Framework, to take concrete actions to implement the Sendai Framework, and called on cities to submit their concrete initiatives on DRR to the Sendai Framework Voluntary Commitments online platform to share their achievements with the international community.

The seminar again focused on the Sendai Framework priorities, with sessions targeted towards each, and additional sessions on the Making Cities Resilient Campaign and Yokohama’s Flood Risk Management plan.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

The four priorities:

1. Understanding disaster risk.
2. Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk.
3. Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience.
4. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.
The sessions were followed by three site visits: Yokohama Disaster Risk Reduction Learning Centre, the Kirigaoka Flood Retention Ponds, and the Shin-Yokohama Flood Control Project.

Details of the seminar will be available in a special report to be released shortly.

II. Intern Introductions

This September, we welcomed two new interns to the CYO team, from Japan and abroad.

Ms. Meghan Flood is a Geography and Professional Communications student at the University of Victoria, in Canada. She has a keen interest in sustainable urban development and how forms of communication and media can be used as a translation of knowledge from scientist to citizen. As an intern at CITYNET, Meghan is excited to learn more about how cities in Asia overcome urban development and sustainability challenges over the next four months, and is grateful to be able to support the programs of CITYNET and its members.

Mr. Taisei Ikema is a student at the University of Kokugakuin. He studies foreign language and culture, with the goal of being able to communicate with various people with different backgrounds all over the world. He was drawn to CYO to learn more about Disaster Prevention and how CYO works with other municipalities throughout Southeast Asia. Mr. Ikema is grateful to have interned with CYO, and is eager to share knowledge about disasters and what to do in emergency situations with friends when returning to university mid-September.
CITYNET Yokohama Project Office supports the SDGs.