IISEE Newsletter

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International Institute of Seismology and Earthquake Engineering BRI Japan

1 Tachihara Tsukuba Japan 305-0802 tel+81-29-879-0678 facsim+81-29-864-6777

In This Issue

Sympathy for the Victims by the Earthquakes in Venezuela

By IISEE

It is with great sadness that the terrible earthquakes struck Venezuela.
We want to express our heartfelt condolences to those who lost their lives and our sympathies to those who have been affected by the earthquakes.
We also pray from the bottom of our hearts for the earliest possible recovery of the affected areas.

The international training programs on Seismology and Earthquake Engineering began in 1960, and 25 participants from Venezuela have completed the programs.
We pray that they will be safe in these difficult times.

Report on Noto Peninsula Study Trip

LESSONS FROM NOTO:

EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE, RESILIENCE, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PREPAREDNES

MAHMOOD Mirza Shibli
(Earthquake Engineering Course, Public Works Department, BANGLADESH)

Our Noto Peninsula study tour was held from April 20 to April 22, 2026. The tour began with a visit to Keiju Medical Center. Two buildings at the medical center sustained non-structural damage during the earthquake, forcing the suspension of services. Fortunately, the main building was base-isolated and successfully survived the earthquake damage. The next day (April 21, 2026), we visited Suzu City and Wajima City. While visiting the two cities, we could clearly see the extent of the earthquake damage. On the third and final day of the study tour (April 22), we visited the Kaiso port in Wajima city, which was severely damaged by the earthquake and uplifted by about 4 meters due to ground movement. This rendered the port unusable due to shallow water and severe structural damage.

The destruction due to the Noto earthquake was beyond imagination. From the port area to the mountain sides, we found a clear footprint of the disaster at every site we visited. The disaster was so massive that even two years after the event, people in the affected areas were struggling to return to normal lives. The damaged ports, abandoned houses, collapsed shrines, and burnt-out power supply lines all stood still as the eyewitnesses to the disaster.

Fig 1: Uplifted Manhole at Suzu

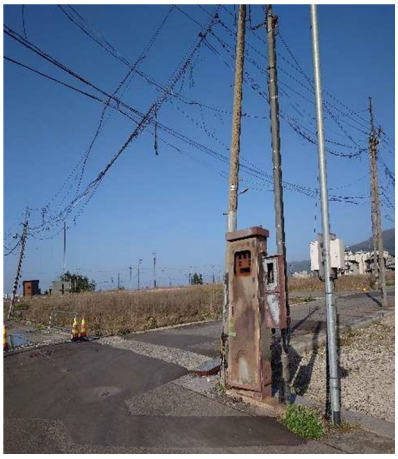


Fig 2: Burnt Power supply line at Wajima

Fig 3: Uplifted Harbor at Kiso Port, Wajima

However, the most important lesson we learned from the study tour came from the experience shared by the affected people. After the earthquake, the road network was damaged, and landslides prevented the emergency response team from accessing the area. At that time, local communities played a vital role in rescuing those trapped victims. In schools and hospitals that became evacuation centers, community members worked together to distribute food, care for seniors, and support those with medical needs.

During this earthquake, most retrofitted buildings survived, highlighting the importance of seismic retrofitting and rehabilitating old structures. However, non-structural damage disrupted emergency services. This highlights that engineers should pay more attention to non-structural members during earthquakes, as damage to non-structural members can disrupt building functionality, even when the building is structurally safe. The visit to Keiju Medical Center clearly highlights the importance of having a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and an effective Business Continuity Management (BCM) in place prior to a disaster. Such strategies help ensure that critical services can be maintained or quickly restored during and after disasters, minimizing operational disruption in essential facilities like hospitals.

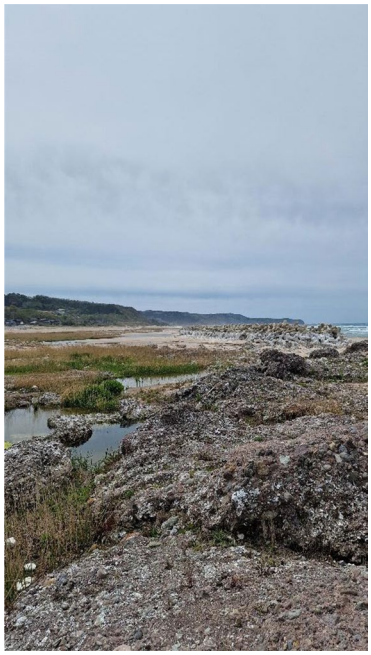
IMPRESSIONS ON STUDY TRIP TO NOTO

SEZER Selim
(Seismology Course, Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, TÜRKİYE)

The study trip to the Noto Peninsula was a profound experience that directly connected our theoretical studies with real-world disaster management and the sheer reality of geological forces. Visiting the affected areas provided a clear, firsthand perspective on both the destructive power of nature and the complexities of recovery.

We observed the vital importance of preparedness at Keiju Medical Center, where BCM and BCP frameworks, supported by seismic reinforcements, successfully maintained uninterrupted medical services during the crisis. However, witnessing the severe damage at Mitsukejima Island and the staggering 3.8-meter coastal uplift at Kaiso Fishing Port served as stark reminders of nature's overwhelming power. These extreme geological shifts demonstrated that we must design infrastructures to withstand not just shaking, but permanent topographical changes.

Suzu City-The Reconstruction Support Tour



Significant coastal uplift observed

In Suzu City, Horyu Elementary School showcased excellent coordination, highlighting how strong community bonds enhance emergency response. Although the long wait for temporary housing posed challenges, the establishment of a local agricultural community showed remarkable cooperation. In Wajima, the catastrophic fire at the Morning Market was a somber lesson on the devastating potential of secondary disasters. Conversely, participating in a traditional chopstick workshop emphasized that preserving cultural heritage is essential for long-term recovery.

Beyond the technical observations, this trip illuminated the profound resilience of the Japanese people. Their unwavering determination to rebuild—whether through restoring livelihoods or preserving traditional arts—and their commitment to learning from past disasters are truly inspiring. This experience has deeply reinforced my goal to apply these invaluable lessons to help build safer and more disaster-resilient communities when I return to my home country.

REFLECTIONS ON THE NOTO STUDY TRIP

MAIMUNA Afra Kansa
(Tsunami Disaster Mitigation Course, Indonesian Agency for Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics, INDONESIA)

This study trip was a valuable experience that provided both academic insights and personal reflections on disaster management in Japan. Through visits to medical facilities and reconstruction sites, I learned how preparedness, response, and recovery are implemented in a comprehensive and structured way.

One of the most impressive aspects was the level of preparedness in the Keiju Medical Center. Regular tsunami evacuation drills are conducted three times a year, involving all staff members. Although patients do not directly participate, some staff simulate patient roles to create realistic scenarios. This demonstrates the importance of continuous training to ensure that every individual clearly understands their responsibilities during emergencies.

In addition, I learned about post-earthquake recovery processes in Suzu City, including how building damage is systematically assessed and how residents are relocated from evacuation centers to temporary housing. This structured system reflects strong coordination and effective planning.

Observing reconstruction and recovery conditions in Suzu City

Made traditional Japanese chopsticks in Wajima City

A particularly memorable and emotional experience was visiting Wajima City. Even after two years, some areas are still under reconstruction, and the damage remains visible. I could truly feel the sadness in the area. However, I was also touched by the resilience of the community. I also had the opportunity to make traditional Japanese chopsticks and visit an old shrine that remained standing despite the earthquake. The people were very kind and welcoming, despite the hardships they have experienced.

Overall, this experience showed me that Japan is highly advanced in disaster preparedness and response. While recovery in some rural areas may take longer, there are many valuable lessons that can be applied to improve disaster management in my own country.

Business Trip to Uzbekistan

By IISEE

Three IISEE staff members (Dr. Hara, Dr. Hayashida, and Dr. Watanabe) traveled to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, at the end of April. Dr. Hara and Dr. Hayashida attended the 16th Asian Seismological Commission General Assembly (16th ASC), held from April 26 to 29, while Dr. Watanabe participated in the commemorative ceremony for the "International Day in Memory of the Victims of Earthquakes" on April 29. Details of these events will be featured in the next issue of this newsletter.

IISEE's exhibition booth at the 16th ASC

During their stay, the staff members had the opportunity to reunite with former IISEE participants who were visiting Tashkent for the conference. We organized an IISEE alumni gathering, where participants enjoyed catching up with old friends and renewing connections with fellow alumni.

Group Photo at the IISEE Alumni Gathering

The Third "Strengthening Seismic Disaster Risk Reduction Countermeasures for Critical Buildings Course" Began

By IISEE

We have been conducting the IISEE training course "Strengthening Seismic Disaster Risk Reduction Countermeasures for Critical Buildings" since the fiscal year of 2024. The Course is intended to improve earthquake disaster countermeasures for critical buildings (government buildings, hospitals, fire departments, police departments, etc.) that serve as bases during disasters, ensuring emergency response and administrative services are not disrupted.

This year, the opening ceremony was held at the Building Research Institute (BRI) on May 29th, featuring introductions of the people involved and welcoming remarks by Dr. Fukuyama, President of the BRI, and Ms. Moriguchi, Director General of the Tsukuba Center of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

14 participants from 12 countries will spend approximately eight weeks learning the latest technologies and knowledge to strengthen earthquake resistance and post-disaster response through lectures and other activities.

Dr. FUKUYAMA Hiroshi,
President of BRI

Ms. MORIGUCHI Kanako,
Director General,
Tsukuba Center, Japan International Cooperation Agency

Group Photo

(Short Report) Start of Individual Study and Send-off Party

By IISEE

The IISEE annual training course 2025-26, which began in October 2025, completed its group training (basic and applied lectures in each field) on May 15th. We held a send-off party for the start of individual study (research guidance on individual themes), which began on May 18th. Several participants are conducting their individual study in distant locations.

The Activities of Ex-Participants《Serialization, Part3》

Name: Gonzalo Antonio Fernández Marañón

Course Participated: 2014 Global Seismological Observation Course

Affiliation: Observatorio San Calixto (OSC), Bolivia

Position: Director, Observatorio San Calixto

【Recent Activities】

In 2025, I was invited to present scientific and technical talks on the use of IMS–CTBTO data for seismic hazard assessment, and I continue to actively participate in CTBTO Science and Technology Conferences. OSC has also hosted several high-level diplomatic and scientific visits, including representatives from the Japanese and French embassies.

Finally, I was honored to receive the French Academic Palms (Ordre des Palmes Académiques) at the rank of Chevalier, recognizing my contributions to scientific cooperation and academic exchange between Bolivia and France.

Name: Khereddine Attafi

Course participated: 1996 Global Seismological Observation Course

Affiliation: National Institute of Meteorology, Tunisia (Former)

Position: Deputy Director of Geophysics (Retired since August 1st, 2025)

【Recent activities】

In August 2025, I reached the age to move into retirement.

As I come to the end of this period, I would like to thank all the professors and lecturers at BRI in Tsukuba and JICA for offering me the opportunity, first, to attend the course on global seismological observation in 1996 and, second, to receive support for the seismic stations installed later in the central part of the territory of Tunisia; this network was in service from 2000 to 2008. All the courses that I attended were very helpful and offered me the opportunity to develop my skills. Along with seismology, I have been involved in seismic hazard assessment in Tunisia since 1991, as well as in tsunami observation in the Mediterranean Sea with many partners from European and Arab countries.

As part of this, I contributed to the installation of three VBB stations (Thala THTN, Tatouine TATN, and Tamra TAMR) in the frame of the NEAM (North East of Atlantic and Mediterranean sea) and the WM (Western Mediterranean) seismic networks. These seismic stations became operational, and the data workflows were managed by GEOFON until 2017.

Before leaving the INM (Institute of Meteorology), I was involved in a working group for the development of regulations for the seismic design of buildings. Within the working group, I worked on the seismic hazard evaluation part and on the preparation of a tender for that study.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all the faculty members and lecturers at BRI and JICA, and particularly to Dr. Toshiaki Yokoi, whom I met recently in Morocco, and to the professors who were with him, for giving me the opportunity to learn from their know-how and their scientific papers.

With my best regards to everyone involved, I wish continued success in the future for the work carried out by Japan in the fields of seismology and on engineering seismology; I also apologize if I have not mentioned by name all the administrative staff and lecturers who provided us with very useful courses.

Thank you.

Contact Us

The IISEE Newsletter is intended as a go-between for IISEE and ex-participants.
We encourage you to contribute reports and articles to this newsletter. Please let us know your current activities in your country.
We also welcome your co-workers and friends to register on our mailing list.
iiseenews@kenken.go.jp
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