

The 4th Multicultural Disaster Risk Reduction Treasure Hunt and Workshop was held (June 6, 2026)

Topic : Inclusive Bosai, Multicultural DRR, Disaster Education

Place : Tohoku University Katahira Campus, Espace, and Katahira area

On Saturday, June 6, 2026, the multicultural disaster risk reduction treasure hunt and workshop was held for foreign residents living in Sendai for the 4th time. The workshop was co-organized by IRIDeS, the Uehiro Disaster Risk Reduction Research Division, the Sendai Tourism, Convention and International Association (SenTIA) and the Tohoku University Center for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI). A total of 49 participants from 17 countries took part, including Foreign Resident Disaster Prevention Leaders, language volunteers affiliated with the Sendai Tourism, Convention and International Association (SenTIA), and members of the general public. Participants had diverse levels of disaster-related knowledge and experience, ranging from those who had only recently begun living in Sendai to those who had experienced few disasters in their home countries and Japan.

The workshop began with presentations by Assoc. Prof. Julia Gerster (Disaster Memory Studies Division, Uehiro Disaster Risk Reduction Research Division) and Ms. Yuko Yamaki from SenTIA, who explained the types of disasters that are likely to occur in and around Sendai and the measures that residents can take to prepare for them. For the first time, participants could work with various apps that might assist them during disasters and when preparing for them. Asst. Prof. Miki Ishikawa (Uehiro Disaster Risk Reduction Research Division) explained how text-to-speech technology and translation functions of applications can support not only communication during disasters and for people with hearing impairments, but also everyday communication for foreign residents living in Sendai. Another significant achievement toward realizing inclusive disaster preparedness was the ability of participants from diverse countries to communicate with one another using sign language interpretation provided by Research Associate Rieko Takahashi (Uehiro Disaster Risk Reduction Research Division) as well as speech recognition technology, facial expressions, gestures, and other communication methods.

Following the presentations, participants took part in the “DRR Treasure Hunt” in which they solved quizzes prepared by Prof. Elizabeth Maly (International Research Collaboration Office) related to Sendai’s history and culture, including its disaster history, to find locations useful during disasters. The participants were also encouraged to use the app “Uni-Voice” which provides information on hazard maps and evacuation facilities. Using the apps and maps, they explored the Katahira district and searched for facilities such as elementary schools and community centers that serve as evacuation shelters or disaster-response vending machines.

At each location, Prof. Maly, Asst Prof. Ryo Saito (Cognitive Sciences Lab), Asst. Prof. Ruben Vescovo (Disaster Geo-informatics Lab), Asst. Prof. Ishikawa, Research Associate Takahashi, Research Associate Nobuko Igari (Uehiro Disaster Risk Reduction Research Division) and Research Associate Yumiko Saito (Uehiro Disaster Risk Reduction Research Division), and Katahira resident Risa Yanagiya, who served as guides for the groups, explained disaster preparedness practices and the functions of the facilities.

The storage room for emergency supplies at the Katahira Community Center was also opened for participants. Prof. Takeshi Sato (Disaster Education Research and Implementation Lab) explained the contents of the emergency stockpile and demonstrated how to operate a manual power generator. With Prof. Sato’s support, participants were also able to try operating the generator themselves.

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After the DRR Treasure Hunt concluded, Assoc. Prof. Gerster and Research Associate Saito introduced various disaster preparedness items and explained how to use them. Survey respondents stressed that the treasure hunt “helps us to identify places [useful during disasters], like disaster response vending machines, and refuge areas” and that they were glad to see emergency shelters in person.



Assoc. Prof. Gerster discussing disaster preparedness



Prof. Maly explaining the DRR treasure Hunt and the app Uni-Voice.



One of the groups solving their first quiz



Prof. Sato explaining the manual power generator



Assist. Prof. Ishikawa and Prof. Maly explaining disaster preparedness sites using the speech recognition app and text-to-speech technology



Reaching the goal!



Final group picture with most of the participants, staff and volunteers!

Text and pictures : Yumiko Saito (Uehiro Disaster Risk Reduction Research Division)
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