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History of Earthquake Awareness in Turkish Society over the last 20 years

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Turkey has rather a short history in disaster preparedness although it is often exposed to destructive earthquakes. There, the 1999 Izmit earthquake (M 7.4) was one of the mile stones in disaster preparedness. The first major step in this field has been taken establishing the Disaster Preparedness Education Project at Bogazici University's Kandilli Observatory and Earthquake Research Institute (KOERI). The project was funded by the United States Agency for International Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) following the 1999 Izmit Earthquake. In 2004, this project has been transformed to Disaster Preparedness Education Unit (DPEU) which ensured sustainable development of earthquake education and awareness programs in Turkey. The main purpose of activities is to prepare the society against potential destructive earthquakes and its secondary disasters. In this context, it is aimed to improve the disaster awareness, local preparation and rapid response organizational skills of the society to reduce the potential losses. DPEU maintains these intense education activities under following layout: (1) Certified on-site trainings for adults (2) EarthquakePark activities for children (3) Mobile earthquake simulation trainings for public. DPEU's preparedness programs focus on educating public and making them be prepared for earthquakes by planned behaviors before, during and after the earthquake. Approximately 4000 schools and 150,000 students are reached within the scope of EarthquakePark trainings. In addition, mobile earthquake simulation trainings have reached 260,000 people in 300 districts. This study investigates how DPEU's education and training activities have increased earthquake preparedness over the last twenty years. In this frame, we analyzed the results of pre- and post-training tests applied to attenders of the activities. Results indicate that there is a concrete relationship between large earthquakes and training demands. It is obviously seen that major earthquakes (e.g. 1999 Izmit earthquake, 2011 Van earthquake, etc.) triggered increase in training demands. On the other hand, this post-earthquake response systematically decrease over time. Similarly, use of protections against non-structural risks decrease as it progresses away from the earthquake over time. Our statistics show that personal educational levels are correlated with the outcomes of the trainings in terms of sense of earthquake phenomenon.