

ISUS NEWSLETTER

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF URBAN SCIENCES – UNIVERSITY OF SEOUL



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2026 Spring Global Urban Leaders Program Completion: Connecting Urban Leaders Across Borders

The Global Urban Leaders Program (GULP), a five-month program hosted by the International School of Urban Sciences (ISUS), University of Seoul, successfully concluded with a completion ceremony on July 1, 2026. The ceremony celebrated five senior public officials from Maldives, Vietnam, Ghana, Indonesia, and Mongolia, and was attended by Dr. Shin Lee, Dean of ISUS, representatives from the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) and Seoul Human Resource Development Center (SHRDC), as well as GULP coordinators and advisors.

Hosted by SMG and ISUS, GULP is designed for decision-making and senior-level public officials in the urban sector. The programme provides participants with opportunities to learn from Seoul's urban development experience through lectures, field visits, policy exchanges, and practical project development. It aims to strengthen international cooperation and support the development of feasible urban projects that can be adapted to participants' home cities and countries.

Learning Beyond the Classroom

Throughout the programme, participants explored Seoul's approaches to urban management, sustainable development, infrastructure, transportation, smart-city development, and international cooperation. The combination of classroom learning and field-based experiences allowed participants to connect policy concepts with practical urban solutions.

A key feature of GULP is its emphasis on applying knowledge to real urban challenges. Participants were required to develop two Project Concept Papers (PCPs), with one PCP incorporating a Letter of Interest (LOI) issued by their home government and submitted to both KSP and KOICA. This project-based approach encouraged participants to translate lessons from Seoul into potential solutions for their own cities.

Beyond academic learning, GULP provided a platform for participants from Maldives, Vietnam, Ghana, Indonesia, and Mongolia to exchange experiences, perspectives, and ideas. These connections strengthened an international network and demonstrated how cities can learn from one another while adapting solutions to their own urban challenges.

The 2026 Spring GULP welcomed experienced public officials to learn from Seoul's urban development experience and explore practical solutions for their cities. By connecting knowledge, people, and partnerships across borders, the programme continues to foster global urban leaders committed to more sustainable, innovative, and collaborative urban development.

Learn more about GULP and its admission details:
https://isus.uos.ac.kr/isus/web/bbs/eisus_not01/3502. (N.J.Nash)





2026 ISUS Summer Global Project Development Fair: Showcases Innovative Urban Solutions

The 2026 ISUS Summer Global Project Development (GPD) Fair was held on July 24, 2026, at the International Conference Hall, Natural Science Building, University of Seoul. The event brought together Korean organizations such as Korea Overseas Infrastructure and Urban Development Corporation (KIND), International Contractors Association of Korea (ICAK), Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG), other partner stakeholders, UOS representatives, and international ISUS students to showcase collaborative projects addressing real-world challenges in urban development, infrastructure, and construction.

The GPD gave students a chance to turn classroom knowledge into real project ideas. Working across different backgrounds and countries, students shared their ideas, exchanged knowledge, and developed solutions that respond to the needs of different cities and communities.

In her remarks, Dr. Shin Lee, Dean of ISUS, highlighted the continued growth and improvement of the GPD projects. The invited review panel also noted that this year's proposals were clearer, more feasible, and more practical than in previous years. The projects showed stronger ideas for smart metering, implementation, and replication, making them more suitable for real-world application.

Six Projects, Six Ideas for Change

This year, six groups were selected to present their project proposals:

1. KokKok Green Connector: An Electric Feeder Pilot for Vientiane BRT
2. Affordable Smart Energy and Green Building Support for Social Housing
3. Proposal for a New Solar Project in Oman
4. Eco-San UZ: Sustainable School Sanitation in Uzbekistan
5. Renewable Energy and Safe Water Access for Rural Communities in the Gran Chaco Region
6. Integrated Marine Plastic Recovery & Circular Resource Facility in Malaysia



Exploring International Project Opportunities

Beyond the project presentations, students also joined a special sharing session, "Exploring International Project Opportunities through Training Programs for Foreign Officials." The session introduced students to real examples of international cooperation, ODA, smart-city development, and project financing through three case studies:

- International Contractors Association of Korea (ICAK): Land, Infrastructure and Transport ODA and Support for Korean Companies' Overseas Expansion
- Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG): Seoul's Smart Urban Solutions
- Korea Overseas Infrastructure and Urban Development Corporation (KIND): Financing Smart City Projects: Cases, Hurdles and Potentials to Think Together

The session gave students a closer look at how good ideas can move from planning to implementation through international partnerships, ODA, and smart-city financing. Together, the GPD presentations and sharing session showed how ISUS students are learning to connect knowledge, innovation, and practical action to address urban challenges around the world. (N.J.Nash)



The 2nd Green Growth Idea Hackathon at World Green Growth Forum 2026

On July 9–10, 2026, ISUS students participated in the 2nd Green Growth Idea Hackathon, held as part of the World Green Growth Forum (WGGF) 2026 in Pohang. The hackathon challenged participants to develop practical ideas that could contribute to green growth and environmental sustainability and present their proposals to a panel of judges. ISUS was represented by two interdisciplinary teams, K-NetZero and Blue Trace, bringing together students from different programs and academic backgrounds. K-NetZero consisted of Reksy Rakasiwie and Azka Aulia Ramadhani (MUD 9), Nirmala Basyir Alwi (MUDSIP 8), and Regina Pinta Roatur (MGLEP 11), while Blue Trace brought together Eric Kazubwenge, Jude Nartey Amanor, Ajith Samaraweera, and Salim Bait Bilal (MGLEP 11). After presenting their ideas and responding to questions from the judges, both teams proudly received the Encouragement Award.

Although both teams focused on marine-related environmental challenges, they approached them differently. K-NetZero proposed transforming recovered marine plastic into K-pop merchandise, using the power of fandom to encourage participation in waste and carbon-reduction actions.

Blue Trace, through its Blue Carbon Blueprint, focused on mangrove restoration and proposed combining field measurements, remote sensing, and eDNA monitoring to strengthen the transparency and reliability of blue carbon projects. Together, the two ideas showed how technology, creativity, and community participation can contribute to marine protection and climate action.



Reflecting on the experience, Azka Aulia Ramadhani (MUD 9) shared that WGGF was meaningful not only because K-NetZero could present an idea with potential impact on the marine ecosystem, but also because they could learn from participants from different parts of the world. For her, the event became a space for knowledge sharing, where different ideas could inspire one another. Receiving the Encouragement Award was a proud moment, but the exchange of perspectives and inspiration from other teams made the experience even more valuable. (R.R)





ISUS Students Present at the Korea Society of Climate Change Research Forum

The 2026 First Half Academic Forum of the Korean Society of Climate Change Research was held on June 25 to 26, 2026, at Sejong University, under the theme “Climate Crisis and Resilience: New Standards for Adaptation, Infrastructure, and Disaster.” The conference brought together researchers and experts to exchange ideas and explore new approaches to climate change, resilience, and disaster management.

During the International Session on June 25, three ISUS students, Eric Kazubwenge, Isuru Wasana Eththiligoda Gamage, and Chehara Sachini Opatha Geekiyanage, had the opportunity to present their thesis research. The students were supported and mentored by Professor Seung Beom Seo, Head of the Department of Sustainable Urban Development, SCSP and MGLEP Programs, and



Director of the Global Urban and Infrastructure Research Center, as they presented their research at the conference.

Among the research presented during the session, Eric Kazubwenge shared his thesis, "From Policy to Practice: Rwanda's Institutional Readiness for Article 6 Carbon Markets," which explores Rwanda's readiness to translate international climate policy into practical action through carbon markets. His presentation offered an insight into the importance of strong institutional capacity in turning climate commitments into meaningful implementation.

For Eric, the conference was more than an opportunity to present his research. "Presenting my thesis allowed me to share my work with experts and gain valuable feedback that will help strengthen my research," he shared. The conference also introduced him to new trends and interdisciplinary approaches in climate research, highlighting the value of practical and collaborative solutions.



The experience broadened their perspectives, strengthened their confidence in presenting research, and encouraged them to further contribute to the field of climate change. Opportunities such as this allow ISUS students to take their research beyond the classroom, exchange ideas with a wider academic community, and gain valuable insights that can support their future research and professional development. (N.J.Nash)

Future Mobility in Focus: Students Explore Gangneung's Smart Infrastructure



On 9 July 2026, students from the Master of Urban Development and Smart Infrastructure Policy (MUDSIP) and Master of Urban Development (MUD) programmes at the International School of Urban Sciences (ISUS), University of Seoul, visited Gangneung City as part of the Transportation and Infrastructure course led by Professor Young-Jun MOON.

The field visit provided students with an opportunity to move beyond the classroom and explore how smart mobility, urban infrastructure, and real-time data are being applied in everyday city operations. The visit began at Gangneung City Hall, where students received an institutional introduction and briefing on the city's smart-city planning.

Students then visited the Gangneung City Urban Information Center, where they observed real-time, AI-driven traffic management systems and integrated municipal data platforms. Opened in November 2024, the centre brings together information on traffic, road conditions, parking, weather, environmental monitoring, disaster response, autonomous driving, crime prevention, and CCTV surveillance, supporting faster and more informed urban management.

A key lesson from the visit was that smart mobility goes beyond technology. Its value lies in connecting data, infrastructure, and decision-making to help cities respond more effectively to congestion, emergencies, and other mobility challenges.

The group also visited Gangneung Olympic Park, an important venue in the city's preparation for the 2026 ITS World Congress, to be held from 19 to 23 October under the theme "Beyond Mobility, Connected World." At the Olympic Museum, Professor MOON shared his first-hand experience of transportation and logistics planning during the 2018 Winter Olympics, highlighting how the city's Olympic legacy continues to support its smart-mobility transformation.



One of the highlights was an autonomous vehicle test ride along active municipal routes. Students experienced how self-driving vehicles use sensors and Vehicle-to-Everything (V2X) communication to navigate public roads. The experience also prompted reflection on safety, accessibility, public acceptance, regulation, and infrastructure readiness.

Overall, the Gangneung field visit served as a living laboratory, connecting classroom knowledge with real-world applications. Gangneung's integration of Olympic legacy infrastructure, intelligent transport systems, urban data, and autonomous mobility provided students with valuable insights into how cities can build practical and scalable pathways towards smarter, safer, and more sustainable mobility. (N.J.Nash)

Institutional Visit to Sejong City



On July 21, 2026, students traveled to Sejong City for an institutional field trip, including a visit to the Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements (KRIHS). During the program, students learned about KRIHS's important role in Korea's Comprehensive National Territorial Planning, its current scope of work, and the KRIHS World Campus Programme. Students also gained insights into the role of LH (Korea Land and Housing Corporation), Korea's public corporation for land, housing, and urban development, particularly its involvement in the planning and development of Sejong City. The field trip offered students an opportunity to see how research, policy, and urban development are connected in Korea's planning practices.



For Awantha (MUD 9), who was visiting Sejong City for the first time, the field trip was a valuable opportunity to experience Korea's planning system beyond the classroom. Learning about KRIHS helped him better understand how research contributes to national territorial planning, while the introduction to LH provided another perspective on how planning ideas are translated into actual urban development. Sejong City itself also offered an interesting real-world setting to observe how these different aspects of planning come together. Reflecting on the experience, Awantha described the trip as "a great opportunity to better understand Korea's planning practices and connect classroom knowledge with real-world urban development." For him, seeing these processes firsthand made the concepts discussed in class more tangible and showed how research, planning, and implementation can work together in shaping a city. (R.R)



Beating the Heat: Summer Vacation in Korea



When the semester finally ends, what is the best way to spend summer in Korea? After months of classes, presentations, assignments, and thesis preparation, summer vacation gives ISUS students a much-needed chance to slow down and enjoy life outside the classroom. But there is one thing that can surprise international students experiencing their first Korean summer: the heat and humidity! With long sunny days, sudden rain showers, and temperatures that can make even a short walk feel exhausting, exploring Korea in July and August sometimes requires a little more planning. Still, summer brings its own atmosphere, with green mountains, lively beaches,



walks, seasonal festivals, and plenty of reasons to get outside, or find creative ways to stay cool.

This summer, ISUS students found different ways to explore Korea, from nearby escapes to destinations farther from Seoul. Some spent a relaxing evening picnicking along the Han River, one of Seoul's favorite summer spots for enjoying the riverside view, sharing food with friends, and watching the city lights after sunset. Others visited Namyangju, just outside Seoul, where rivers, green landscapes, and quieter surroundings offer a refreshing break from

the busy capital. For those looking for more adventure, Mindungsan provided a hiking experience surrounded by open mountain scenery and nature, making the climb a rewarding way to spend a summer day. Farther south, Busan offered a completely different atmosphere, with its famous beaches, coastal views, seafood, and lively neighborhoods making it a popular summer destination. From riverside picnics and peaceful nature trips to mountain hikes and seaside getaways, these places showed how many different ways there are to enjoy summer in Korea.



Summer vacation can also become one of the most memorable parts of studying abroad, as students finally have time to explore without rushing back for the next class. Some travel with classmates, while others try their first solo trip in Korea. Between battling the humidity, carrying a portable fan everywhere, and searching for shade, everyone finds their own way to enjoy the season. In the end, summer in Korea may be hot and unpredictable, but it gives ISUS students something they rarely have during the semester: time to travel, rest, discover new places, and make memories before another busy semester begins. (R.R)



Alum of The Month: Karen Elizabeth LANDAZURI PROAÑO (MUAP 14)



Karen Elizabeth LANDAZURI PROAÑO (MUAP 14, Ecuador) has been building a professional bridge between Korea and Ecuador since graduating from ISUS. Now contributing to the Santo Domingo Sewerage System Expansion Project, an EDCF-supported initiative involving Korean and Ecuadorian institutions, she shares how her experience at ISUS continues to shape her approach to urban development, international cooperation, and cross-cultural collaboration.

Could you briefly share your professional journey since graduating from ISUS and tell us about your current role?

After graduating from the ISUS Master's Program in Urban Planning and Administration at the University of Seoul, I returned to Ecuador with a broader perspective on urban development, public administration, and international cooperation. One of the most meaningful opportunities in my professional journey came in December 2023, when I joined the Santo Domingo Sewerage System Expansion Project in Ecuador.

The project is financed through a loan from the Export-Import Bank of Korea (KEXIM) under the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF), and involves Korean and Ecuadorian institutions, including HKSD Joint Venture, Kunhwa Engineering & Consulting, and the Municipality of Santo Domingo.

My role combines translation, project administration, quantity surveying, and coordination between the different institutions involved. I prepare contracts, amendments, official documents, and periodic progress reports, as well as support the preparation and review of work progress payments. I also help facilitate communication between Korean and Ecuadorian professionals and analyze differences in policies, procedures, and working approaches between both countries.

This experience has allowed me to see how the knowledge and international perspective I gained at ISUS can be applied to a real urban infrastructure project.

How has your experience at ISUS influenced your professional work and perspective on urban development?

ISUS changed the way I understand urban development. Before studying in Korea, I mainly saw urban planning from the perspective of my own country. Living and studying in Seoul allowed me to understand that cities are complex systems where infrastructure, public policy, governance, technology, environment, and people's quality of life are deeply interconnected.

One of the most valuable lessons I took from ISUS was the importance of thinking beyond individual projects and understanding the broader systems and institutions behind them. I also learned the value of long-term planning, coordination between different stakeholders, and learning from



experiences in other countries while adapting them to local contexts.

Today, when I work on the Santo Domingo project, I often recognize concepts and perspectives that I first encountered at ISUS. The program gave me not only technical knowledge, but also the ability to look at urban challenges from different perspectives and communicate with professionals from different cultural and institutional backgrounds.

Your work involves cooperation between Korean and Ecuadorian institutions. What have been the most rewarding and challenging aspects of working across different cultures and systems?

One of the most rewarding aspects has been being able to contribute to a project that represents a concrete connection between Korea and Ecuador. I have the opportunity to work with professionals from both countries and to understand how different approaches can complement each other.

At the same time, working across cultures has taught me that communication is about much more than translating words. Korean and Ecuadorian professionals may have different approaches to planning, decision-making, communication, documentation, and problem-solving. Understanding these differences and finding common ground is an important part of my role.

This has probably been one of the most valuable lessons of my professional career. I have realized that being a bridge between two systems requires not only language skills, but also cultural understanding, adaptability, patience, and the ability to see situations from different perspectives.



Looking ahead, what are your goals for the future, and is there anything you would like to say to current students, fellow alumni, and the ISUS community?

Looking ahead, I would like to continue working at the intersection of urban development, international cooperation, and Korea-Latin America partnerships. I hope to contribute to projects that transform knowledge and cooperation into tangible improvements in people's quality of life.



I also hope to continue strengthening the connection between Korea and Ecuador. My experience has shown me that the relationships we build during our studies can become professional partnerships and, eventually, opportunities to create real impact.

To current ISUS students, I would say: do not think of your time at ISUS as simply a degree or a one-year academic experience. Think of it as the beginning of a much longer journey. The knowledge, friendships, cultural understanding, and professional relationships you develop in Korea can continue to influence your career many years after graduation.

I am especially grateful to ISUS because my journey did not end when I left Seoul. In many ways, that was when the real impact of the experience began. Today, I can see how what I learned in Korea continues to shape the work I do in Ecuador, and I hope my experience can encourage other alumni and future students to build their own bridges between Korea and their home countries.





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