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Wide range of outreach activities in a hazard region: many ways to centre the same target.

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We believe that in the present communication era, it is of central importance to go out of our laboratories and departments, and use different tools to reach a wider range of people. This is especially important when dealing with environmental hazard topics (e.g.: earthquakes, volcanoes etc). The “Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia” (INGV) in Rome has been working on this challenging communication project for several years. The main goal is to inform people in order to create a diffuse Earth Science culture, towards a natural hazards preparedness. In seismic and volcanic regions, the first step is indeed the knowledge of the natural phenomena. To promote learning we try to give the basic scientific information through many activities able to attract people and to arise their curiosity, hosted both in our labs and on the road.

On one hand, all year-long our labs are visited by more than 3000 students of all ages and grades. Despite our efforts we are able to fulfil only half of the total requests. During the visit the students follow a didactic route separated into three different phases: 1- an interactive frontal lesson of geosciences; 2- a “play-time” with hands-on exhibits; and 3- the visit of our labs, and a “field” lesson on real-time earthquake localization in our Seismic Monitoring Room (as the INGV coordinates the National Seismic Network).

On the other hand, we also meet the public out of our offices in different institutions and places like schools, Third Age University, cultural circles, museums and public libraries. We take part to ceremonies for the anniversary of large historical earthquakes or eruptions (e.g.: the 90^{th} anniversary of the 1915 Fucino earthquake), national scientific events, etc. For example last year, during the XV Week of Scientific and Technological Culture, we organized conferences, a special video-conference

with the Concordia Base in Antarctica, and a national drawing contest entitled “Once upon a time a volcano...”. This was not only a competition but also a mean to make children think about myths and reality of active volcanoes. We received more than 850 drawings from all over Italy, and with the best 17 we made a calendar that was distributed to schools. The Italian Minister of education and research rewarded the winners during a ceremony.

For the 2005 Science Festival of Genoa (Italy), we proposed a short but successful 3D cartoon dealing with tsunami that was seen by more than 13000 visitors in 10 days. This followed the impact on the public of the recent event of Sumatra.

Besides, every year we update and implement our portable museum, designed to perform on the road educational activities focused on the understanding of geomagnetism, plate-tectonics, seismology and seismic hazard. (see Winkler et al., 2005; Nostro et al., 2005).

All these activities have a high social worth when organised in cooperation with local and state authorities. In our case we have a very close link with the Department of cultural activities of Municipality of Rome: school visits, an annual stage of the portable museum (more than 9.000 visitors in 2 weeks) and meetings in public libraries are some activities held within the framework of this partnership.

Finally we publish different kind of educational material, differentiated for the different school grades, and distributed during all events. Some of this material is also available for download from our web page (www.ingv.it - outreach link). Among these the “Geopagine”, a synthetic and educative one-page (also useful for reporters) explaining diverse geophysical topics. One of the new release of this year is a special page regarding the tsunami, written to face many request we had about. We published also a little book untitled “Knowing the earthquake and the tsunami” and two CD-Rom, one of them in collaboration with a monthly magazine of broad scientific interest.

When we heard that a young girl in Thailand saved lives because she remembered a lesson she heard about tsunami, we thought that all the efforts we could make to reach people make sense.

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