



## **Rumours about the Po Valley earthquakes of 20th and 29th May 2012**

Federica La Longa, Massimo Crescimbene, Romano Camassi, and Concetta Nostro

Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia, Rome, Italy (federica.lalonga@ingv.it, +39 06 855082007)

The history of rumours is as old as human history. Even in remote antiquity, rumours, gossip and hoax were always in circulation - in good or bad faith – to influence human affairs. Today with the development of mass media, rise of the internet and social networks, rumours are ubiquitous.

The earthquakes, because of their characteristics of strong emotional impact and unpredictability, are among the natural events that more cause the birth and the spread of rumours.

For this reason earthquakes that occurred in the Po valley the 20th and 29th May 2012 generated and still continue to generate a wide variety of rumours regarding issues related to the earthquake, its effects, the possible causes, future predictions.

For this reason, as occurred during the L'Aquila earthquake sequence in 2009, following the events of May 2012 in Emilia Romagna was created a complex initiative training and information that at various stages between May and September 2012, involved population, partly present in the camp, and then the school staff of the municipalities affected by the earthquake.

This experience has been organized and managed by the Department of Civil Protection (DPC), the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology (INGV), the Emilia Romagna region in collaboration with the Network of University Laboratories for Earthquake Engineering (RELUIS), the Health Service Emilia Romagna Regional and voluntary organizations of civil protection in the area.

Within this initiative, in the period June-September 2012 were collected and catalogued over 240 rumours.

In this work rumours of the Po Valley are studied in their specific characteristics and strategies and methods to fight them are also discussed. This work of collection and discussion of the rumours was particularly important to promote good communication strategies and to fight the spreading of the rumours.

Only in this way it was possible to create a full intervention able to supporting both the local institutions and the individuals involved to adequately address the emergence and management of organizational problems and social issues related to the earthquake.