



Laying the foundations for a sound risk communication strategy: the Italian Tsunami Alert Centre case

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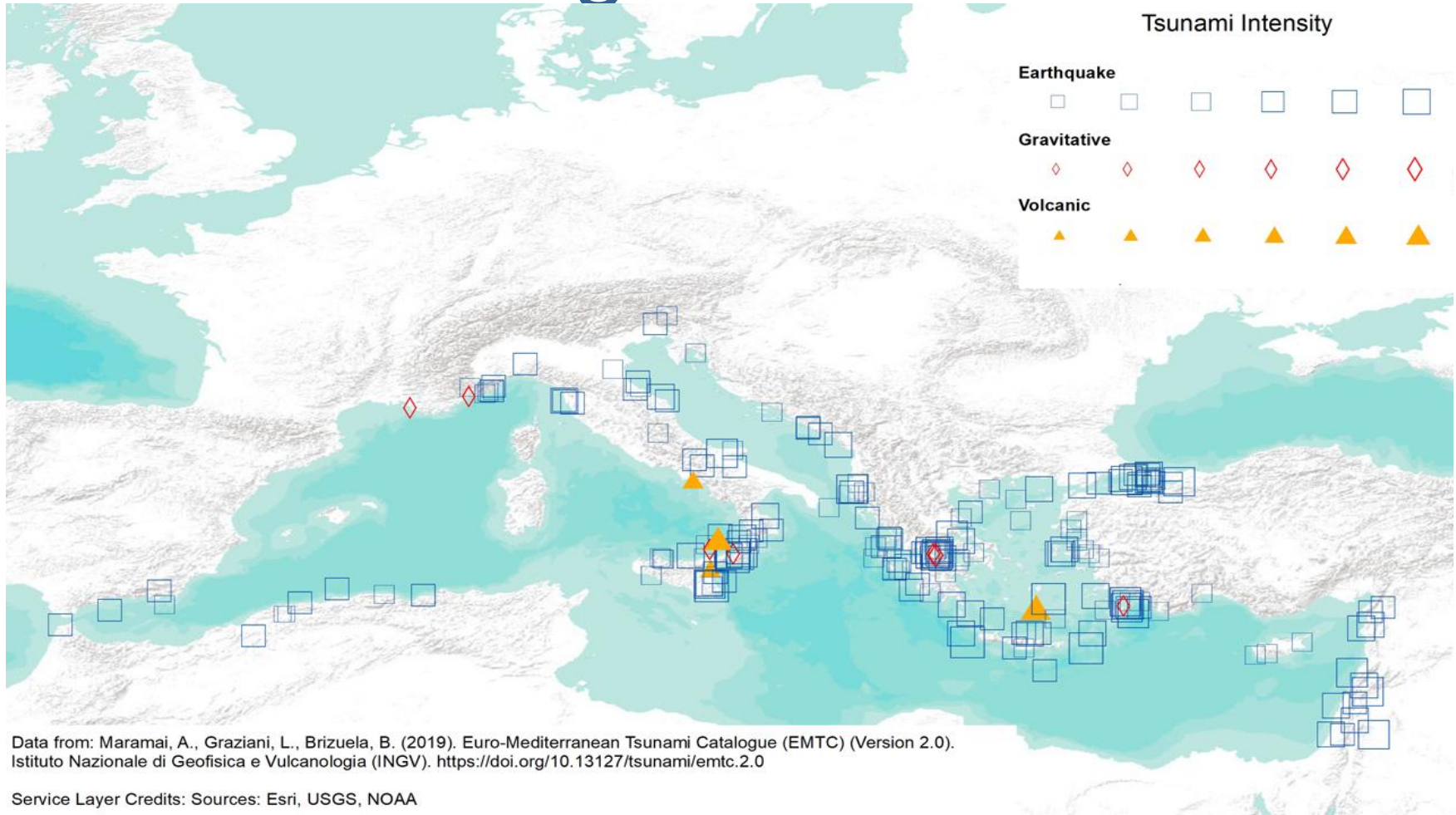


Global Network of TWS





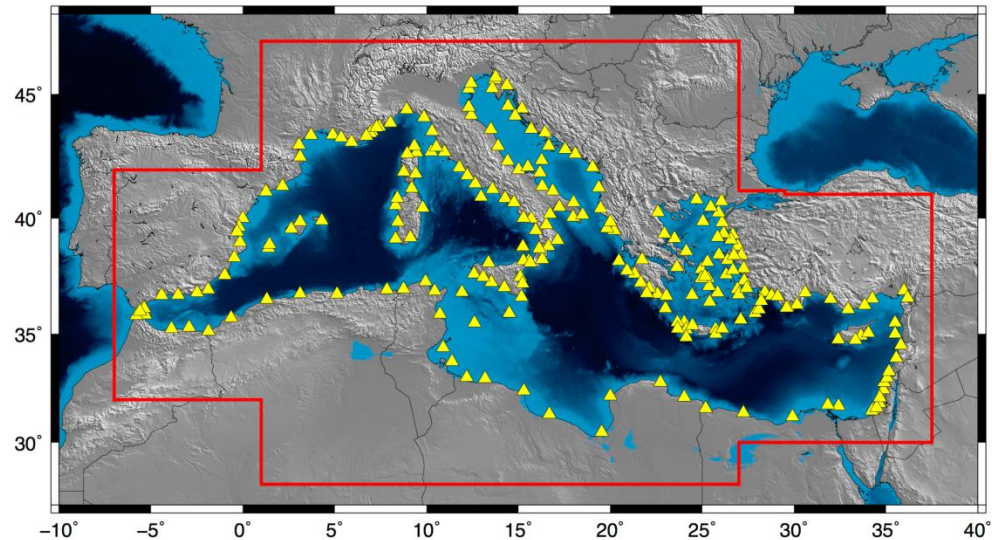
Tsunami in the Mediterranean: a neglected risk





The Italian Centro Allerta Tsunami (CAT) @ INGV

National Tsunami Warning
Center
Tsunami Service Provider
for NEAM countries
Tsunami Focal Point
for Italian authorities
Part of SiAM (Italian
alerting system)





Italian Prime Minister Directive “SiAM” (February 2017)



Main tasks:

- Tsunami Warning: NTWC / TSP TWFP
- Tsunami hazard (S-PTHA)

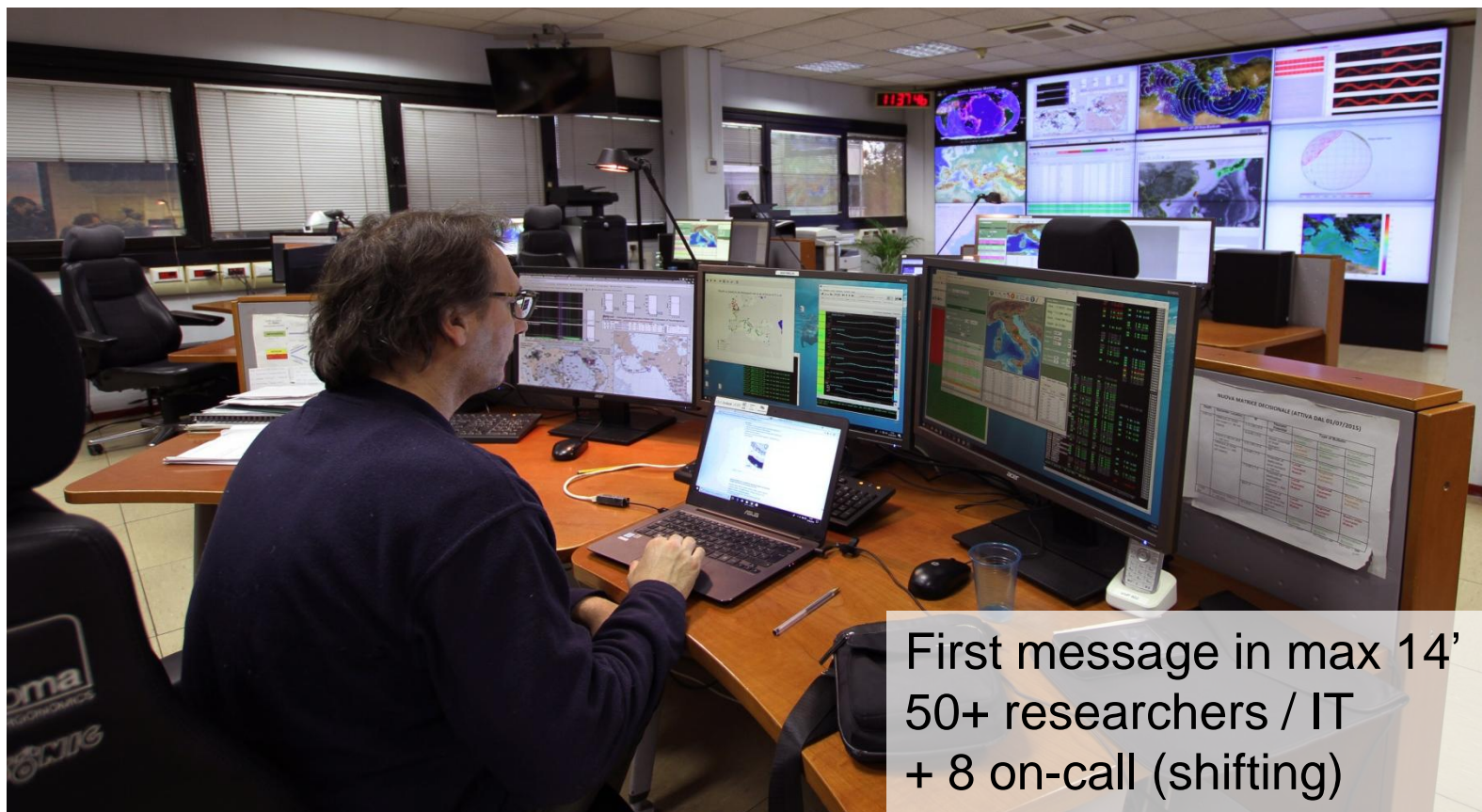
Criticalities:

- “Rare” tsunامي events in the Mediterranean
- Low attention by politics and decision makers
- Low awareness and preparedness





CAT-INGV in the monitoring room of the ONT in Rome - H24/7 Service









What if a small tsunami hits?






What is a strategy?

  **strategy** *noun*

BrE /'strætədʒi/ ; NAmE /'strætədʒi/ 
(pl. **strategies**)

- 1 ★  [countable] a plan that is intended to achieve a particular purpose
- *the government's economic strategy*
 - **strategy for doing something** *to develop a strategy for dealing with unemployment*
 - **strategy to do something** *It's all part of an overall strategy to gain promotion.*
- SEE ALSO **EXIT STRATEGY**





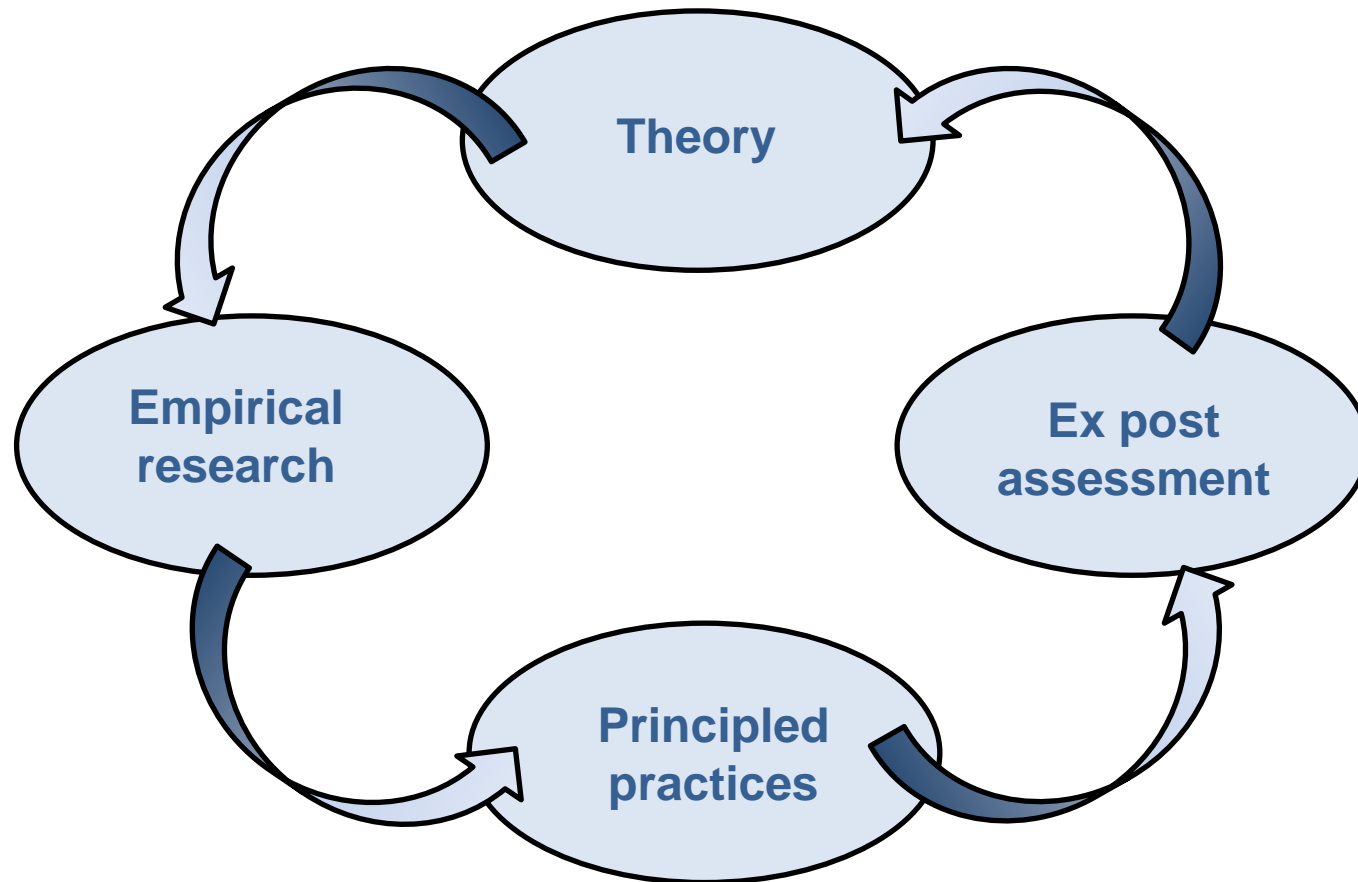
Starting from scratch

- Until mid-2018: no information available on Italian TWS operations
- Poor familiarity of populations with tsunamis (working hypothesis)
- Low risk perception (working hypothesis)
- Scarce availability of documents on tsunami in Italian
- Limited information from scientific and civil protection institutions
- Tendency to use a very technical language





From theory to «principled practices»



(Source: Cerase, 2017: 226)





Goals of the strategy

- Inform communication activities to the "best scientific knowledge"
- Make knowledge available to both citizens and the media through a plain and intelligible language
- Becoming a well-recognized and authoritative scientific source on tsunamis
- Counteracting fake news and rumors
- Avoid arbitrary and potentially harmful actions on behalf of communicators
- Promote the adoption of internationally recognized operating standards
- Encourage exchange between research institutions, agencies and individual researchers





From research to communication

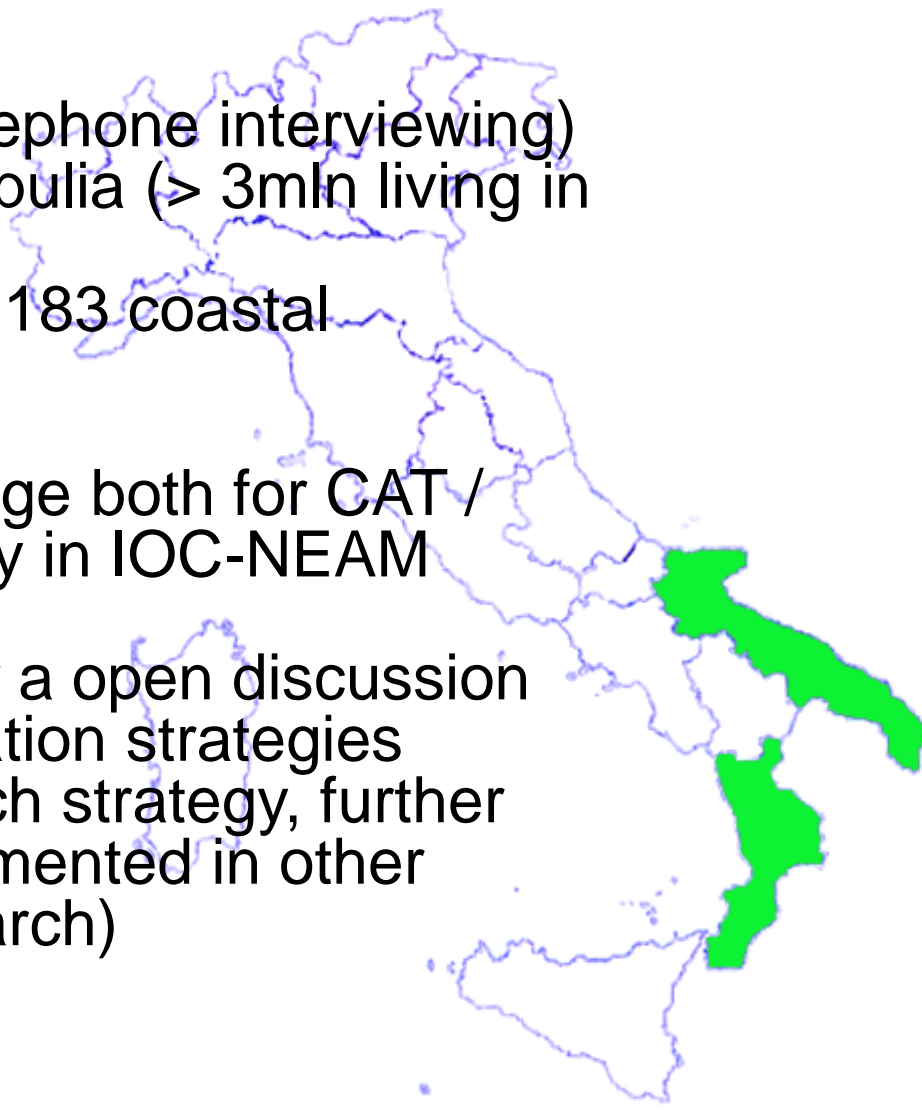
- The research question is: what kind of data, knowledge and resources are needed to communicate effectively?
- Research as a mean to define WHAT should be communicated and HOW (integration between the scientific and communicative components)
- CAT-INGV communication ALWAYS lays on risk communication literature and research data along with well-known best practices (e.g. TSP websites analysis)
- CAT-INGV launched a research on tsunami risk perception in Italy, to better understand public's needs and improve message effectiveness
- CAT-INGV also contributes to the activities of Working Group 4 (awareness) at IOC/NEAMTWS
- The research also includes the analysis of the legal profiles related to risk / emergency communication





Methods and techniques

- CaTi (Computer assisted Telephone interviewing)
- Pilot regions: Calabria and Apulia (> 3mln living in tsunami prone areas)
- Sample > 1000 interviews in 183 coastal municipalities
- Multi-method approach
- Goal: provide viable knowledge both for CAT / DPC and Tsunami community in IOC-NEAM Region
- Research results may trigger a open discussion on risk and crisis communication strategies
- Following the Astarte research strategy, further developments may be implemented in other countries (comparative research)





Evidence from risk perception research

- Social imagery on tsunamis is dominated by TV footage of Sumatra and Tohoku events
- People hold that terms such as tsunami and maremoto are not equivalent (risk is differently characterized)
- Awaiting big catastrophic event, may let us lose sight of the risk posed by smaller (and probable) events.
- The danger from small tsunamis is almost totally neglected
- The level of knowledge depends very much on education, gender and knowledge sources
- The area affected by the 1908 tsunami and Tyrrhenian Calabria highlight some distinctive features that should be further analyzed





Sources, channels and related issues

- Television is the most used and influential channel
- Other broadcast media (books, radio, newspapers, cinema) are important but less so than television
- The Internet plays a much smaller role than expected (Censis, 2017, Istat 2017 and 2019)
- The role of social networks as a possible driver of knowledge should not be overlooked
- Institutional sources are little used to get information, although everyone expects them to be active for alerting in case of an event
- Overcoming the last mile means putting in place very different tools and channels: ICTs alone could be insufficient





Drafting key messages

Key messages were drafted by considering:

- research literature,
- good practices,
- guidelines and documents (UNISDR, IOC-UNESCO)

General assumptions and hypotheses have been empirically tested through research on tsunami risk perception

“Tsunamis can also occur in the Mediterranean”

“ Even in the Mediterranean catastrophic events can occur”

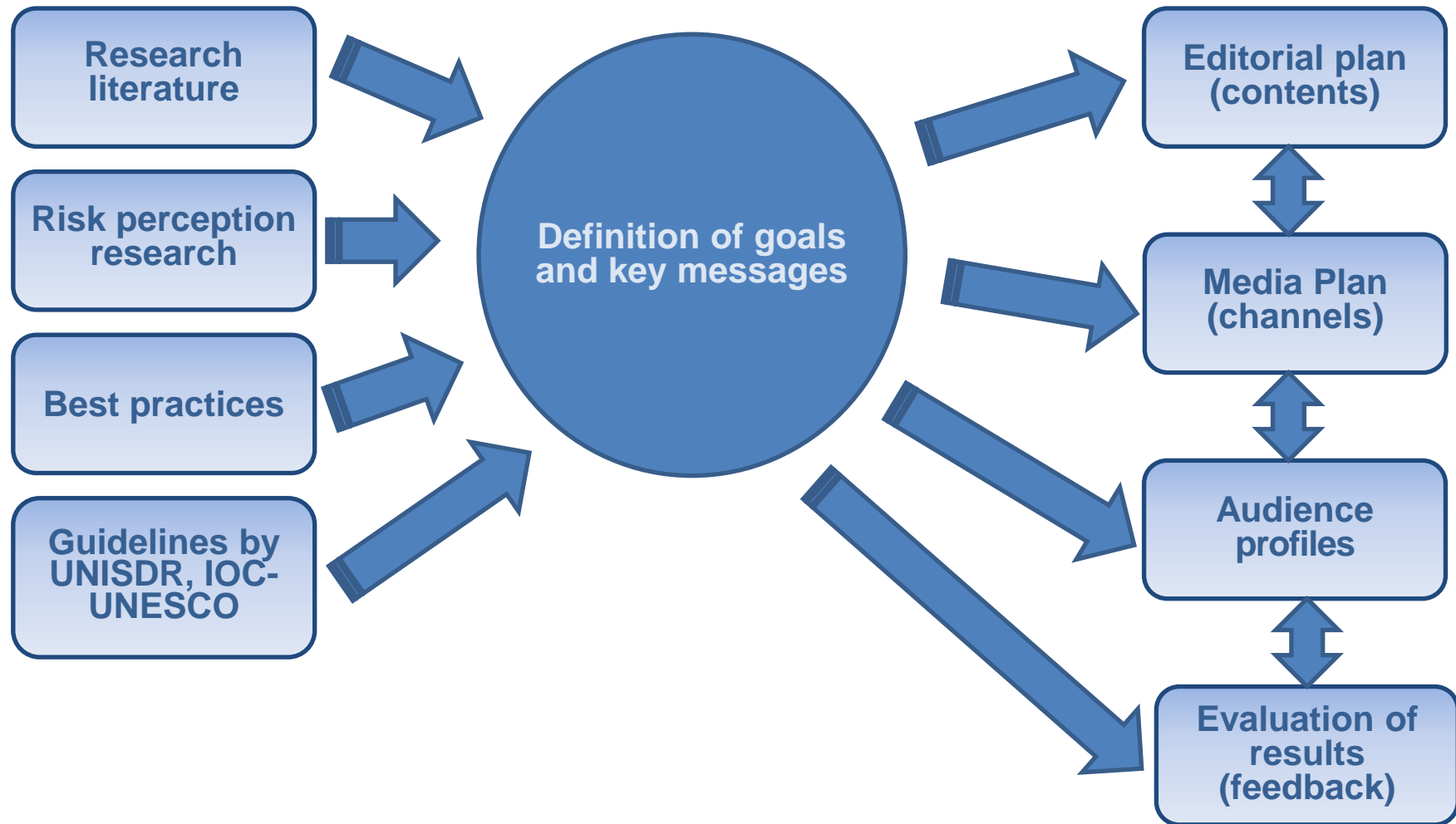
“ Beware of small tsunamis: they are more frequent and can be very dangerous”

“Basic knowledge on tsunami actually saves lives”



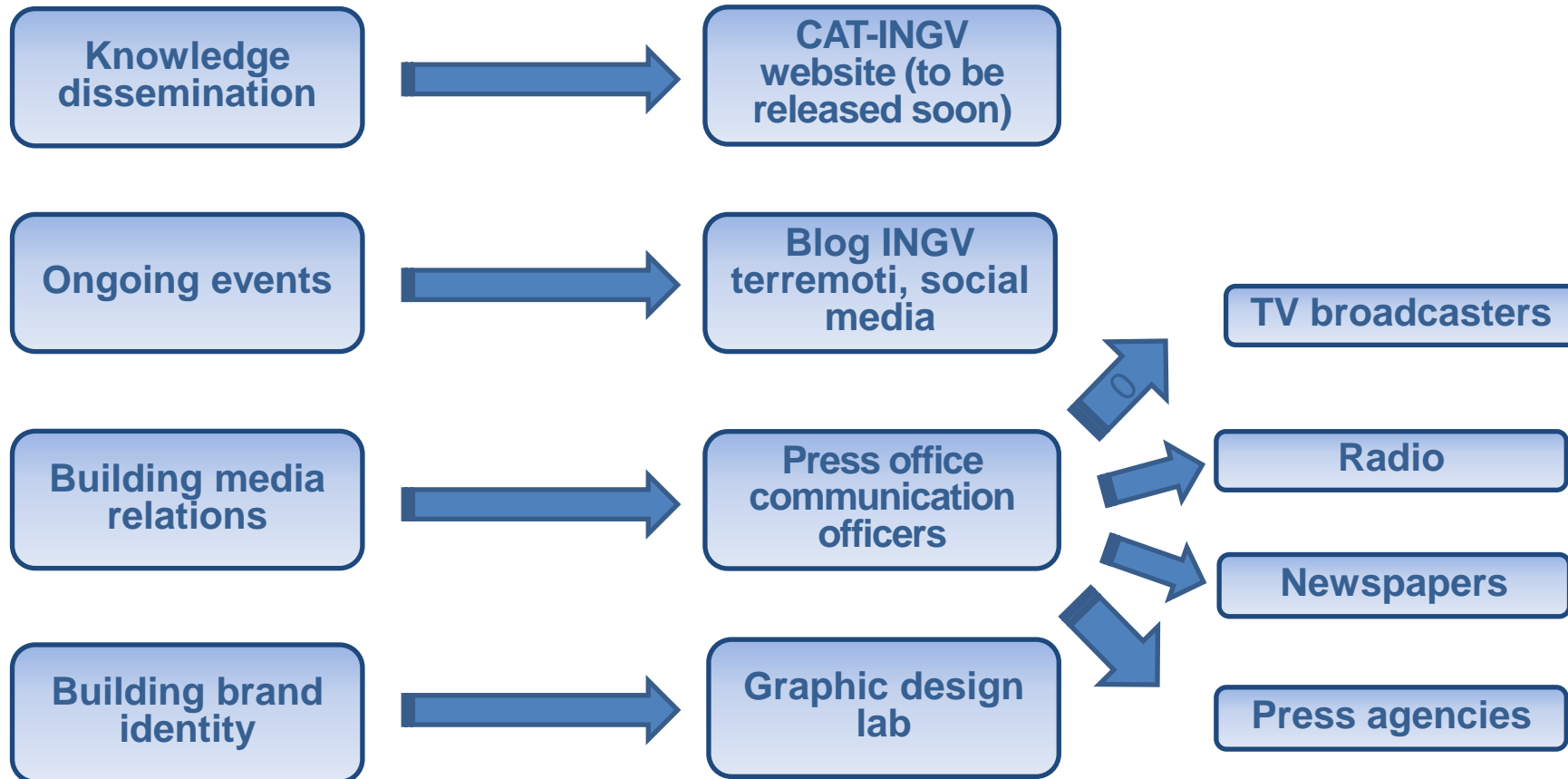


Building a risk communication strategy



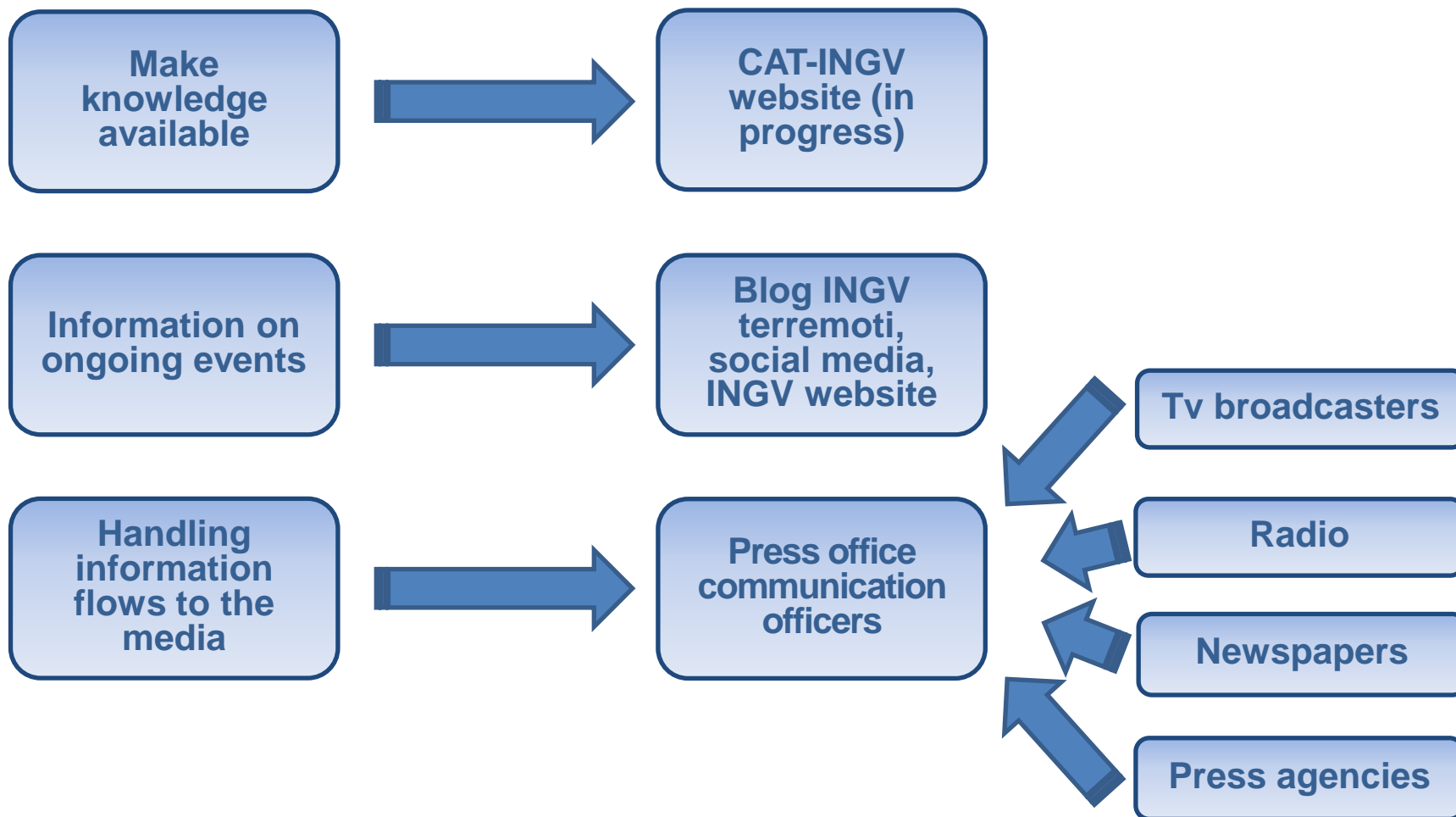


Communicating in peacetime





Communicating in a crisis





An open conclusion

- Tsunami risk communication: improve the way language is used (consider target education, avoid technical terms, use readability indexes).
- More information does not equate neither better understanding nor more effective risk mitigation
- Scientific and institutional sources should improve their communication
- Bear in mind what people actually know and understand
- Any message should provide information and suggest actions to be undertaken as to mitigate tsunami risk
- Making distinctions between scientific / risk communication would be a pointless exercise

