

**Lessons learned
from the past RCA activities
and
future direction of RCA and RCARO**

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Background of RCA

1964-1969

IPA (India Philippines Agency Agreement)

The very first co-operative programme for Research Reactor Utilization

The participating countries

India, Indonesia, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Taiwan and Thailand.

The Chairman of the IPA Agreement -

Dr. Raja Ramanna, India

who later became Director, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre and the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, India.

Background of RCA

1969-1972

A number of meetings held among MS & IAEA for establishing a new regional cooperation in the South East Asia, the Pacific and the Far East - RCA came into force in 1972.

1972-1996

Phase-I (1972-1987)

- Two extensions of RCA Agreement of 5 years each.
- Initially 11 Members States, increased to 14.

Phase-II (1987-1996)

- The Agreement modified into "RCA Agreement 1987".
- Two extensions of 5 years each.
- 14 Members States, increased to present strength of 17.
- General output -
 - Development of technical manpower.
 - Building capabilities to solve common regional problems.
- Instrumental in formation of ARCAL and AFRA
- National capacity building & Self-reliance in terms of competent scientists and reliable laboratory services

Background of RCA

1972-1996

Programme directed by Technical Officers from the Agency.

The Agency was deeply involved in the conceptualization and realization.

Background of RCA – 1997 onwards

- A draft Guidelines & Operating Rules prepared by the Agency, endorsed by RCA GC in 1997
- Ad-hoc Committee meeting to study the structure of RCA, March 1999 in Singapore.
- LC (Lead Country) Concept should be pursued.
- RCA GC, 2000 meeting approved the LC Concept.
- The revision of the RCA Guidelines & Operating Rules with the role, duties & responsibilities of LC were documented.
- Now, MS do all upstream work for initiating and formulating projects proposals.
- Model Project Criteria and UN MDG (Millennium Development Goals) are followed.

RCA performance (till 1998)

The Technical Officer from the IAEA always lead the team of experts from various MS for the following work,

- Upstream work to conceptualize and formulate projects
- Proposing training events
- Identifying appropriate RRUs
- Selection of the Experts, Lecturer etc.
- Formulating the Work plan of the project implementation

RCA performance (till 1998)

Some of the major projects during these years were in the following areas,

- Food and Agriculture
- Nuclear Energy
- General Development
- Health
- Industry
- Radiation Protection
- Research Reactors

RCA performance 1998 onwards & Lessons Learnt

Lead Country Concept

- Terminology was used first time during NRM in NZL in 1998, then RCA Co-ordinator proposed the names of some Countries as Lead Countries for certain programmes, resulting in a sudden reaction from the NR.
- Took quite some time to be understood and practiced – it was clarified that LC in this case does not necessarily mean that the country is technically best in that field.
- LC may have only one good scientist but he/she may be able to *coordinate* the activities of the programme with a lot of support from his/her country.
- By the year 2000, at least the NR were quite clear about this terminology.
- IND took over from JPN LC in Industry
(JPN is more advanced than IND in Industry)
- For ENO, MAL is made LC and IND Assisting LC
(IND is not less advanced than MAL in IT area – Silicon Valley full of Indians – Developed Nations outsourcing jobs in India)

RCA performance 1998 onwards & Lessons Learnt

Lead Country Concept

- Still LC concept has not percolated to all levels – has to be debated & clarified again and again.
- The person handling the programme starts having individual as well as national pride and wishes to continue. In the real sense, the person is a coordinator and should be able to give up one type of work and move on to another.
- Positive side - “ownership” is demonstrated (this is what IAEA wants!)

RCA performance 1998 onwards & Lessons Learnt

Ownership

- Ownership is a very important “keyword” in RCA.
- IAEA is a partner which provides expertise, financial & secretarial support to the RCA programme.
- IAEA provides overall policy framework keeping in mind safeguards, safety & security requirements.
- Technical Officers & RCA Co-ordinator represent the IAEA – They should actively participate (not as observers) in all programmes as they are essential component. IAEA selects Experts and candidates for the training events – can be taken as unbiased.

RCA Annual Report

- Till 1997 - prepared by the Office of the RCA Co-ordinator.
- 1998 – Transition – New RCA Co-ordinator – New format containing quantified information about all the meetings, training events & workshops etc. - with the help of NR from India
- 1999 onwards – Same format continues.
- From 1997 till 2001 - The number of projects and the training events gradually increased as can be seen from the Annual Reports.
- Since 2002 - As per directive of the Agency, the projects are more focused and the number is less resulting into less number of events than the earlier years.

SWOT Analysis of RCA

- **Strength** of RCA – Synergy between Developed Countries, Developing Countries and Least Developed Countries - more than half the population of the World
- The forum which brought the RCA countries together is "IAEA", a UN organization without any bias – The countries of Asia-Pacific region starting a nuclear programme. (If an individual country takes the lead to form a group, there is generally a bias.)
- The MS take pride in the ownership of the programme.
- Unfortunately, the strength of RCA has also become its **Weakness** when there is a finance crunch.
- Lot of support is needed for the developing MS and at the same time the developing MS should be able to contribute something in return.
- **Opportunities** are many - RCA activities can be geared towards wider applications and improvement of nuclear science & technology, as a tool in solving the increasingly complex technological problems in the region.
- **Threat** to the RCA is not only lack of additional funding requirement but the division of effort by some MS with some other organizations/groups doing similar activity. At times amounts to duplication.

SUGGESTIONS

- *Desirable to have a nomination / selection of LC based on a documented criteria*
- *Rotation should be mandatory.*
- *Developing Countries with suitable infrastructure should be preferred so that it costs less and they also develop competence.*
- *Desirable to debate this point again and some new terminology instead of LC can be evolved. (Theme/Project Co-ordinator?)*
- *All Member States must put efforts to actively involve scientists and technologists from other Ministries such as Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare in the RCA programme, as the nuclear techniques in these areas are supplementary.*

SUGGESTIONS

- *The nuclear technology is a component in these sectors. This component either replaces conventional techniques or supplements the conventional techniques. At times, nuclear technique is the only techniques to solve a problem.*
- *Every Member State has its own National Programme and RCA projects are linked with the national programme. Apart from RCA, there are new Groups / Organizations in the region, doing similar activities. Thus the time and efforts of the same scientists is distributed, at times, leading to duplications and wastage of vital financial resources*
- *There were number of Co-ordinated Research Programmes (CRPs) under RCA before year 2000. But no new CRP is initiated under RCA, it is not necessary as there are enough CRP's.*

RCA Regional Office (RCARO)

- ✓1978 – RCA NRM, Vienna – mention made to have RCA Office in the region (Who's Initiative?)
- ✓1997 – 19th RCA NRM, Myanmar – MS recommended to have a Regional Office to enhance the "ownership concept" in line with the change
- ✓2000 – 22nd RCA NRM, India - ROK offered to host RCARO in ROK and support the Office in ROK - MS supported.
- ✓2001 – 23rd RCA NRM, Bangladesh - MS in principle agreed to establish the Office in ROK.
- ✓2001 – 30th RCA GCM, Vienna - formal agreement by MS.
- ✓2002 – 24th RCA NRM, ROK - RCARO became reality on March 27, 2002 on "Interim basis".
- ✓2003 – RCA GCM, Vienna - Resolution adopted on the Establishment & management of the RCA RO in Korea.
- ✓2005 – 26th RCA NRM, MAL - The Meeting decided to extend the RCARO beyond the interim period to full operation.

RCA Regional Office (RCARO)

The main mission of the RCARO

- To increase the RCA Awareness in the Region
- To promote additional Partnership with the International Funding Organizations in the region for the RCA Programme.

RCA Regional Office (RCARO)

Although in principle, it was agreed to establish this office, this was preceded by a lot of discussion in every meeting, during 1998 to 2001, regarding the need, location, role/ functions, administrative & managerial aspects, Director's standing and his salary, and the legal provisions/position with respect to the IAEA and the RCA Coordinator.

This discussion still continues..... During the meeting and outside.

RCARO-Performance and Lessons Learnt

- After completing all the formalities, RCARO presented a very ambitious work plan in 2003 - curtailed during the meeting of the NR - MS wished that RCARO pursues only given mandate.
- A very elaborate work plan for 2004 was prepared and presented during the NR meeting in 2004.
- The following statement was included –
RCARO will make more efforts to give RCARO a legal entity. The RCA Resolution adopted by the 32nd RCA General Conference in Vienna in September 2003 will be the basis for such endeavor. However, on a long-range, it will be necessary to amend the RCA Agreement or to conclude a separate Supplementary Agreement on the establishment and operation of the RCARO in Korea.

RCARO-Performance and Lessons Learnt

- As per RCARO, it cannot function as a legal international entity as it faces difficulties in approaching potential donors. In legal terms RCARO is a unit of KAERI. (A status which is an order of magnitude higher than the status of the individual RCA offices of the MS.)
- The activities undertaken by RCARO in 2004 have been as per the mandate - Awareness Increasing Activities and Partnership promoting Activities.
- In addition, the third major activity in 2004, has been 'Nuclear Knowledge Preservation and Enhancement Programme' - not thought of earlier - RCARO must be complimented to initiate this programme which is in line with the IAEA's effort for preserving nuclear knowledge for future needs.

SWOT analysis of RCARO

- The **Strength** of RCARO lies in the ownership, as all the scientists connected with RCA from the MS show a sense of pride that they have a Regional Office.
- The time was opportune for having a RO, when the transition to ownership was taking place.
- RCARO has received the fullest cooperation from the Korea Government that has provided the resources needed by the RCARO to implement its mandate.
- In a sense, the **Weakness** is also because of the new ownership concept of MS. The MS are very keen to take up the LC role in various activities and wish that the RO takes up only those common activities which are difficult, time consuming and need funds normally not available from the IAEA or other member states.

SWOT analysis of RCARO

- The other **weakness** is the lack of international 'tag' which probably comes in the way of approaching other international funding organizations.
- *It will be very difficult to get the international status as the IAEA does not have any other regional office of a similar nature, the earlier one in Indonesia for about a year, was a UNDP office. IAEA has regional offices but only for liaison or for safeguards.*
- There are a number of **Opportunities**, any activity for which no MS offers to become LC, can be the mandate of the RO.
- *Some common activities like preparation of the RCA annual report and the RCA home page can be pursued by the RO. In 2000, all the data was electronically transferred to India and the annual report was prepared by the RCA office in India.*

SWOT analysis of RCARO

- The linkages established with the RCARO home page are very significant.
- The **Threat** is the probability of lack of activities in future. There appears to be a need for RCARO to undertake more programmes to ensure continued support from the Korean Government, and thus there seems to be a lack of confidence among some of the Member States with regards to future financial support from the host Government.

Other Organisations

SAARC - The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
Established on December 8, 1985

Member States : Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal,
Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Objective : It aims to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life through accelerated economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region.

BIMST-EC – Bangladesh India Myanmar Sri Lanka Thailand-
Economic Cooperation.
Established on June 6, 1997 as
Bangladesh- India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Co-operation
(BIST-EC).

- At Ministerial meeting in Bangkok on 22 December 1997, Myanmar became member and BIST-EC renamed as BIMST-EC.
- At Ministerial meeting in February 2004, Bhutan and Nepal became new members.

Other Organisations

Objective : To increase regional cooperation in trade, investment, industry, technology, transport, communications, energy, tourism, agriculture, fisheries, and human resource development.

ASEAN - The Association of South East Asian Nations
Established on 8 August 1967.

Member States : Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Objective : to accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavours in the spirit of equality and partnership of Southeast Asian nations, and to promote regional peace and stability.

FNCA – Forum for Nuclear Cooperation in Asia
Established on 10 November 2000.

Member States : Australia, China, Indonesia, Rep. of Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Japan, and Vietnam .

Objective : To promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear technology with neighboring Asian countries.