

Research Programme in RCA

A Material for Discussion Prepared by Australia, Indonesia, Japan, and Philippines

Summary

This paper explains firstly how the question of research component in RCA programme came to the attention of the last Meeting of RCA National Representatives held in Mumbai, India. It then describes the background of the issue, itemizes the points to be explored, identifies the role and function of research activity in RCA programme.

After indicating some of the problems that are experienced with the on-going TCD RCA and RID procedures, several proposals are made in order to solve the difficulties in promoting research activity in RCA programme.

1. Introduction

The 22nd Meeting of RCA National Representatives, held on 28 February to 3 March 2000 in Mumbai, India, discussed certain aspects of the current policy of IAEA Department of Technical Co-operation in fulfilling a secretariat function to the RCA. In particular, a representative of Indonesia noted that the current TC policy places the major emphasis on technology transfer through "Training", and apparently precludes research components. He pointed out that the research should remain as an essential plank within the RCA programme activities as stated in the Agreement to "*promote and co-ordinate co-operative research, development and training in nuclear science and technology*". The chairperson clarified that TC Strategy does not preclude a research component that should be supported by development programme. He added that research component could also be covered under the Agency's Co-ordinated Research Programmes (CRPs), which are implemented, by Research and Isotopes Department.

The Meeting decided to set up a working group comprising Australia, Indonesia, Japan and Philippines, to clarify the point of issue, and to investigate research needs, existing mechanisms for supporting research such as CRPs and any new mechanisms that might be desirable.

The present paper tries as a first step to itemize the principal points of issue for consideration by Member States. The Working Group wishes that the present RCA General Conference Meeting of National Representatives would overview the issue, and identify any remaining problem to be investigated by the Working Group so that further discussion could be made at the next Meeting of RCA National Representatives to be held in Bangladesh in 2001 when a more complete paper be submitted by the Working Group.

2. Background and Explanation of the Issue

- a. Historically, when RCA was initiated, RCA Co-ordinator's Office (RCA Co-ordinator) operated within Research and Isotopes Department (RID). Research component was spiritually quite strong then within RCA programme. Later on when RCA Co-ordinator was transferred to TC Department with the establishment of RCA Office therein having RCA Co-ordinator at Director' level, DRI continued to show its strong interest in RCA programme activities as evidenced by the attendance of its DDG at RCA Working Group Meeting every year until 1994. (Both DDGs from TCD and RID attended.) RCA programme was a joint venture by both departments with good co-ordination, and research component was duly treated.
- b. However, when restructuring of RCA office started with downgrading of RCA Co-ordinator from Director's level to P-5 within TCD, somehow the interest by RID in RCA started to appear weakened. No representative from RID attended the RCA Working Group Meeting (renamed presently as "Meeting of RCA National Representatives) any more since 1995, which resulted in the insufficient information transfer from the Agency to Member States as regards to RCA CRP, its programming and performance, results and etc., to which an officer from DRI was assigned as technical officer.
- c. During the recent several RCA Working Group Meetings (Meeting of RCA National Representatives), the representative of TCD repeatedly stated to the effect that research components were not given priority within RCA programme. This is interpreted more correctly

that research component is not a priority within RCA programme that is managed and financed by TCD.

- d. It is understood that, as the chairperson of the 22nd Meeting of RCA National Representatives clarified, the TC Strategy does not preclude a research component that should be supported by development programme that comes under the auspices of TCD.
- e. Above observation leads us to consider questions as follows:
 - (1) How can a research be covered by “ development programme”, that is operational by TCD, in consistence with the TCD’s policy?. What kind of research could be included in this category? What are the limitations to this approach?
 - (2) How can Co-ordinated Research Programme (CRP) that is operated by RID as RCA programme be more properly formulated, implemented, co-ordinated with, and included in the RCA Programme operated by TCD (RCA office)?. Does the authority and capacity of the RCA Co-ordinator enable such instruction and co-ordination?
 - (3) Could there be any other type of research programme scheme (other than the ‘CRP’ as defined and implemented by Agency RID) that is more suitable to achieve the RCA objectives to “*promote and co-ordinate co-operative research*” ?,

3. Role and Function of Research Activity in RCA Programme

Any co-operative research programme has multiple functions. While it has a specific goal to achieve by concerted efforts, it inevitably involves several activity elements such as those listed below.

- a. Education and training of scientists and technicians,
- b. Technology transfer,
- c. Harmonization of technological and social standards,
- d. Provision of materials and equipments,
- e. Developments of infrastructure,

In short, a co-operative research activity serves to promote most effectively the capability building of participating Member States. In this regards, a co-operative research could be a core programme of such TC activities as personal and group training, workshop meeting, technical visits, expert assignment, provision of equipments and etc. It follows therefore that “Research Component” needs to be given a stronger emphasis in RCA programme. A review by Dr. Manoon of Thailand of the past RCA programme is given in Annex 1 for reference.

4. Coordinated Research Programme (CRP)

Past and on-going CRPs within the RCA programme are listed in Annex 1 and 2. There are quite many CRPs that produced excellent out-puts. However, as stated above (Para 1), some of them suffer from the lack of co-ordination with TCD and also lack of good communication with Member States. Some of them suffer from the intrinsic, structural shortcomings in its formulation, implementation, evaluation and application or dissemination of results. Some typical characteristics of Agency’s CRP, which are not always shortcomings but quite often so **from the view point of RCA**, are as follows.

- a. Proposal (subject/title) of CRP comes quite often from a technical officer’s idea, not from the Member States. It often does not conform to the priority needs of the Member States.
- b. RCA Member States do not participate in the assessment meeting of the proposal in the Agency.
- c. Participating researchers/institutions are often recruited from the Member States through personal contact by a technical officer.
- d. Most importantly, it is a “co-ordinated research” and not a “co-operative research”. (There is a slight difference between these two.)

Definition of Agency’s CRP is given in Annex 2. Lists of on-going and past RCA CRPs are given in Annex 3 and 4.

4. A Proposal – a possible solution

- a. It is proposed that TCD confer with the RID in order to develop a scheme to ensure better co-ordination regarding CRP.
- b. It is requested that RID be well informed of the “RCA Operating Rules and Guidelines”, and that technical officers concerned abide by the spirits of such rules and guidelines in developing and implementing a RCA CRP.
- c. It is suggested that current framework of Agency’s CRP be examined in view of the developing new needs and changing atmosphere of scientific research. In this connection, introduction by the Agency of a doctorate fellowship programme in conjunction with a CRP is a welcome endeavour.

- d. As regards to RCA co-operative research activity, a new scheme be established in order to accommodate a co-operative research programme that dose not quite fit to the framework of Agency's CRP with regard to its formulation, implementation and evaluation processes as well as funding.
- e. The working group will continue to look into the matter based on the comments from Member State, TCD and RCA office, RID as well as other relevant offices of the Agency. More concrete proposal will be presented at the forthcoming Meeting of RCA National Representatives to be held in Bangladesh in 2001.

Annex 1. Review paper by Dr. Manoon on RCA programme

Annex 2. Definition of Agency's CRP

Annex 3. List of on-going CRPs in RCA Programme

Annex 4. List of past CRPs in RCA Programme