

‘For a Better Partnership’

Ways to Increase Awareness of the RCA in the Regional Community

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1. Introduction

Over the past 30 years, under the aegis of the RCA, a productive partnership has existed between the RCA Member States, the IAEA and the UNDP, with sizeable investments in nuclear science and technology being made in human resource development, technology transfer and technical infrastructure.

The RCA has recognised the maturing of its relationship with the IAEA and the need to take on a heightened role in the management and running of the programme. The RCA Member States are now investing more resources in the programme and are assuming a greater degree of “ownership”. As part of this expanded and more independent role, the RCA National Representatives formulated and adopted the following Vision for the next 25 years

- *Security and Safety of Food & Nutrient*
To produce cheap and nutritious food.
- *Health Care*
Good health care at affordable price for mass populations.
- *Industrial Development*
To improve economy and provide employment.
- *Energy*
Fuel of the economy.
Depletion of conventional sources.
- *Environmental Care & Protection*
Efficient technology ensuring environmental integrity.

To make a significant regional impact in these sectors in fulfilment of this Vision, the RCA will need to make concerted efforts to:

- increase awareness in the wider regional communities of the capabilities and capacity of the RCA to contribute in a meaningful way to these socially important sectors,

- forge productive alliances with key partners and donors to demonstrate and reinforce the strengths of nuclear science and technology when applied to these areas, and
- emphasise the unique strengths of the RCA.

Increasing awareness of the RCA will not be a simple endeavour because it is a complex entity and many outsiders have difficulty in understanding all the facets. The RCA Member States will need to develop and agree a carefully thought through awareness strategy.

This paper offers some suggestions and highlights some issues in the context of “awareness” in the hope that it will be a contribution to the further development of an effective and productive consensus approach.

2. Expanding the RCA’s Horizons.

While there has been a general move to increasing general awareness of the RCA through such measures as upgrading the RCA Annual Report, setting up the RCA webpages and the preparation of brochures and other information on RCA, these have been largely ad hoc moves rather than a part of an overall strategy. It is now time to shift to a more comprehensive approach with careful consideration being given to a number of issues, including:

- Who is the target audience and at what level the approach needs to be taken - nationally, regionally or internationally?
- How is the information going to be effectively delivered? Verbal or written communication? Method of presentation - conference, seminar, workshop, TV, radio, videotape, one-on-one presentation, specialist journal, brochure, newspaper or magazine?
- What are and who has the appropriate delivery skills to make the delivery effective to the target audience?
- How can this all be accomplished within the available financial and human resources.

Ultimately the effectiveness of the promotion of the RCA will depend on the ability of the RCA to deliver efficiently and effectively and provide the outputs, outcomes and added value that a partner wants. An awareness programme will need to focus on such aspects. Initially the past RCA track record will be an important factor underpinning the establishment of the RCA’s credentials but in the future, the ability of the RCA to deliver will be under increasing scrutiny.

2.1 Changing the RCA paradigm

There is a common perception that the RCA is the IAEA’s RCA and not the RCA Member States’ RCA. This is perhaps not an unreasonable conclusion for an outside observer to make, since the majority of RCA projects have been and are funded by the IAEA. Additionally the RCA Coordinator’s Office is located in Vienna, within the Technical Cooperation Department and is thus part of the IAEA secretariat.

Over the years some Member States and the UNDP have provided cash contributions to support extrabudgetary projects or individual activities within a footnote a/ component of an IAEA project. Quite properly RCA projects funded by the IAEA have to conform to their priorities to secure

funding against the competition from other project proposals and are implemented according to the IAEA procedures, rules and regulations but such close alignment of the RCA and the IAEA may not always provide a mutually satisfactory relationship under all circumstances.

One objective for the future should be for the ownership of the RCA's programme to be much more clearly seen by the outside world as a product of the will of the RCA Member States.

If the RCA 25 year Vision is to be achieved, it will have to be undertaken using new and emerging technologies and with upgraded human and physical resources, all of which will require a significant investment of additional financial resources. The available pool of funding from both the IAEA and the RCA Member States is limited and inevitably the expansion of the extent and breadth of the RCA programme must be concerned with seeking donor support from outside of the IAEA and the RCA Membership and possibly outside of the Asia Pacific region.

Currently competition for donor funds is very high and amount available is at best relatively static so where then can additional funding be found to finance the RCA projects? One answer could be the integration of specific RCA projects into programmes being conducted under other regional or international arrangements. Another could be for the RCA to carry out revenue generating operations for regional or international or other organisations and use these funds to support the projects.

Within the RCA there are some highly valued and scarce skills and resources over and above the nuclear science and technology skills that reside in the individual Member States. The extensive RCA networking and long experience in the organisation and implementation of a wide diversity of events from workshops and seminars to field demonstrations on both a regional and a national scale are such examples and these are great assets.

Whatever strategy or mix of strategies are devised as the means to fund the RCA projects, it is almost certain that they will require an underpinning programme of enhanced awareness to demonstrate that the RCA would be an efficient and an effective partner delivering added benefits through nuclear science and technology.

2.2 New RCA stakeholders

Broadly the major RCA stakeholders over the past 30 years have been the RCA Member States, the IAEA and the UNDP. At the national level most Member States have had a major preoccupation with building up human capacity and physical resources within the national nuclear research institutes (NNRIs) over most of this time. The recent changes in the RCA have seen the Member States adopt a range of innovative measures such as the Lead Country concept and Regional Resource Units, as they adopt more responsibility for the management, design and execution of the technical programme. The horizon for many of the projects has now shifted to providing organisations outside the NNRI with technological solutions incorporating nuclear science and technology.

In line with the RCA 25 year Vision, the new stakeholders for RCA will need to be identified in the Security and Safety of Food & Nutrient, Health Care, Energy, Industrial Development and Environmental Care & Protection sectors, with interests that are spread from local and national levels up to regional and international levels. Awareness strategies will need to be focussed on key

players within this complex matrix of sectors and communities. The needs of the existing stakeholders should not be forgotten in this process.

In addition the RCA has the capability to significantly advance the acceptance and the utilisation of nuclear science and technology in the Asia Pacific region and beyond. Cooperation with other organisations carrying out promotional activities could produce productive partnerships and the sharing of information and awareness materials could be mutually beneficial.

2.3 Regional Representation - a key to the future.

The imminent opening of the RCA Regional Office could be a watershed event for the RCA as it offers the potential to be a key element in a strategy to increase awareness and to forge productive alliances in the Asia Pacific region and expand the influence and reputation of the RCA and achieving the paradigm shift discussed above.

At present the only individual recognised as the *“human face of the RCA”* is the RCA Coordinator. Because of the yearly rotation of the position of Chair of the RCA National Representative Meetings there is no long-term focus on any individual as a contact point or representative. The establishment of the RCA Regional Office, staffed independently from the IAEA secretariat, now offers a possibility to promote a personalised and independent RCA image based on the Regional Representative. This is especially important in our region since “doing business” is strongly bound up with personal contacts and face-to-face interactions. All of which are influential in achieving positive outcomes.

2.4 Strategic Timing

In trying to access new partnership opportunities for the RCA and to become integrated into new projects, it will be important to have a good range of appropriate awareness materials to alert target organisations of the strengths of RCA and the value that the RCA could bring to their projects. In many cases a long lead-time has to be assumed, especially for international organisations and good planning and management is required. It will be important for the RCA, through the Regional Representative, to have very early access and involvement with potential partner organisations, as key parameters are often agreed at this stage. These can significantly shape future outcomes and often have far reaching consequences such as excluding or limiting the incorporation of unforeseen components.

3. Strategy for the Future.

“May you live in interesting times” - traditional Chinese curse.

3.1 Awareness Strategy

It is taken for granted that all the scientific and technological aspects of the RCA programme are undertaken by professionals with specific expertise. This approach will also be required in the awareness strategy. Professional experts in promotional and awareness programme in the RCA Member States will need to be used to assist the technical experts in effectively achieving the desired end results. It will not be possible within the reasonably available resources to simultaneously cover all the awareness and promotional requirements.

The RCA Regional Office could be used to identify where the important regional and international organisations are in the implementation of their project cycles and when they will start the initial planning for their next new phases. Nuclear technologies appropriate to the needs of these organisations will need to be identified as well as their utilisation of competitive technologies.

The Regional Office could prepare technological profiles of target organisations to position the RCA to undertake awareness presentations at crucial times and then in conjunction with the Member States, have promotional and awareness materials prepared and ready.

3.2 Expanding the Options

The use of nuclear science and technology throughout the region is not optimal and there are many possibilities for its increased utilisation. There are many reasons for this ranging from lack of information on the nuclear solutions to concerns about the use of radiation and radioisotopes. Even within the general science and technology communities there does not always seem to be a strong appreciation of the benefits of nuclear science and technology. Efforts need to be made to correct this at both the national and the regional level. The RCA National Representatives should address this issue and consider how nuclear science and technology might be specifically integrated into the science initiatives of regional organisations such as APEC.

The on-going acquisition of new skills and new technology are going to be important objectives for the RCA in order to maintain its position as a resource and a provider of beneficial nuclear science and technology. This will be an on-going requirement since the previous investments are not durable items for the most part. Knowledge advances and equipment gets dated and obsolete. For the future the RCA should lift its horizons to look beyond just the maintenance of its investments in nuclear science and technology to a position where these investments can be compounded through the introduction of added value, for example devise an integrated packaged solution rather than a single components.

4. Conclusion

The launching of an awareness campaign on the RCA should not be an end in itself but a means to expand the RCA's activities and achieve its 25 year Vision. There will need to be a clear focus on the prime aims and objectives. The RCA National Representatives will be key players in the development of the strategy to secure the required resources for an expanded programme. The RCA Regional Office can play a pivotal role in the day to day implementation of the strategy and in establishing the "RCA image". As in the past the strength of the RCA comes from the Member States' commitments and resolve to work together on the peaceful application of nuclear science and technology for the common good. This new phase in the life of the RCA is a major investment for the future and will be an important seachange in the way in which it is viewed by both the Member States and the outside community.