

ENHANCED PROGRAMMING FOR 2005/06 AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE RCA.

Examples of RCA Achievements

The RCA has been a valuable regional mechanism for capacity building and technology transfer in nuclear technology. In 1995 the UN Joint Inspection Unit declared the Joint UNDP/RCA/IAEA project to be the outstanding example of regional co-operative transfer of science and technology.

Recent important initiatives include –

- Increasing ownership of RCA by MSs through its Guidelines and Operating Rules and establishment of a Regional Office.
- Insistence on a focus on real problem-solving.
- Increasing partnerships with end users.
- Development of an RCA Vision

Present Challenges

A Regional Seminar in Kuala Lumpur in August 2000 concluded that there is a need for nuclear institutions to become more self-reliant and sustainable. The Board of Governors review of TC Strategy in May 2002 again stressed the importance of ensuring that the capabilities that have been established are sustainable.

A means to achieve sustainability is through attaining greater technical and financial self-reliance. Institutes may become increasingly dependent upon revenue from products and services. However, the Regional Seminar stressed that the managerial skills necessary to achieve self-reliance are not in place in many countries.

Recent meetings of IAEA MSs, such as the Meeting on Managing Nuclear Knowledge in June this year, have also acknowledged concern about the long-term maintenance of the knowledge base and national capabilities.

National Representatives will have noted that Agency hardcore funding accounts for over 60% of RCA project funds for 2003/04. The importance of responding adequately to Agency funding strategies is therefore obvious. Failure to do so risks the RCA being in a weak position at a time when there are many competing calls for limited Agency resources from many national programmes and from other regions.

Response to the Challenges

TC Strategy

The Board of Governors, in May 2002, once again endorsed the Strategic Goal that has been the basis of the TC Strategy since 1997–

To increasingly promote tangible socio-economic impact by contributing directly in a cost-effective manner to the achievement of the major sustainable development priorities of each country.

TC has set funding strategies and criteria to assist in achieving that goal. The criteria were initially formalised into the Model Project Criteria:

- Respond to a need or opportunity of MSs;
- Have the potential to produce a significant economic or social impact on development via an end user;
- Utilise distinct advantages of nuclear technology;
- Attract strong government commitment.

The emphasis on government commitment has now been strengthened in the Central Criterion. This requires providing evidence that there is a related national programme of high priority to the government with financial support. Alternately, a project may enhance a necessary infra-structure such as those related to a core or mandated Agency competency, for example, regulations and safety.

In finalising the regional projects for 2003/04, selection criteria included –

- the Central Criterion;
- the Country Programme Frameworks (CPFs), UN Development Advisory Frameworks (UNDAFs), Poverty Reduction Strategy paper;
- support from international donors, such as ADB.

Programming for 2005/06

National Representatives can expect the selection criteria for 2005/06 remain substantially as for 2003/04. However, TC will increase further the emphasis on its policy of “fewer, but better.” TC believes that the future lies in an insistence on high quality and a potential for high impact in its projects. TC will also seek evidence that project proposals have considered sustainability and self-reliance issues.

Challenges Remaining for the RCA

The RCA has also been evolving to meet today’s realities. Problem-solving and end user involvement are now key project criteria. Sectoral Programmes have been created to integrate previous small projects. There has been a decrease in the number of overall projects and an improvement in the alignment with TC strategies and the quality of proposals.

However, National Representatives may wish to consider ways to improve further the quality and potential for impact of future project proposals. For the RCA, there is also the challenge of demonstrating how its regional aspects can “add value” beyond what can be done within national or Agency programmes.

Within the RCA Guidelines and Operating Rules, the responsibility for proposal development rests with the Project Committees and, especially, the Lead Country Coordinators (LCCs). The recent meeting of LCCs revealed that the development of good project proposals requires further commitment and attention. The basic exercise of matching programmes to available budgets proved difficult at the meeting. Many LCCs were not fully conversant with TC strategy or its implications for developing proposals that the Agency could support. The Agency, National Representatives and the individual participants must share the responsibility for the difficulties at the meeting.

National Representatives may wish to consider a number of issues:

- Sectoral programming. Is this driven by high-level government policy or by technologies that are available or traditionally-supported?
- TC funding strategies. Are these well enough understood by MSs and LCCs?
- The role, selection and training of LCCs.
- Self-reliance and sustainability. What are the regional ‘products & services’ that RCA can offer end users?

National Representatives meet only twice a year. If they wish to enhance the chance of success of proposals for 2005/06, any changes in RCA programming procedures need to be initiated soon. Thought could be given to the following:

- Under the RCA Guidelines, LCCs are the “bridge” between the goals and requirements of funding agencies, including the IAEA, and the technologies that are available or that could be developed.
- LCCs are usually senior project scientists. Good scientists are not always good strategic planners or project managers, and most have not received relevant training.
- LCCs usually do not have access to policy makers in government.
- the needs of individual MSs or the wishes of individual LCCs may vary from the needs to deliver the optimum solution to a problem within a budget.
- the strengths of a consensus approach do not always include the ability to take hard and rapid decisions.
- Use of Advisory Bodies.

Solutions for a Sustainable Future

Sustainability of nuclear institutes comes ultimately from increasing the utilisation of nuclear technologies, and being adequately compensated for their use. The RCA has recognised this through the objectives set for its Regional Office, which include -

- To promote the visibility of the RCA in the region as a provider of solutions to the developmental needs of the region.
- To obtain greater funding for RCA programmes.

However, the marketing of RCA as nuclear technology consultants for the region will be successful in the longer term only if the RCA offers products and services that meet major regional priorities. In addition, RCA will need to develop a track-record with end users for proposals that are planned, delivered and reported to a high standard. Enhancing the capabilities of RCA in good project development and management should, therefore, be regarded as an integral part of becoming sustainable. The RCA has recognised the importance of good project management, and another objective of the Regional Office includes -

- to support MSs and Lead Countries in the formulation and development of RCA project proposals.

National Representatives should also note that the Agency is supporting the development of the managerial skills in national nuclear institutes that are needed to foster sustainability. In response to the recommendations of the Regional Seminar in 2000, the Agency initiated a regional project to assist MSs become more self-reliant and sustainable. Eleven RCA MSs are participating actively. As managerial skills become more commonly available in MSs, the trained staff may prove a valuable extra resource for LCCs and the Regional Office.

Recommendation

National Representatives may wish to consider whether RCA should prepare a paper(s) for discussion at the next Meeting of RCA National Representatives that –

- Outlines a strategy to be adopted by the RCA Regional Office for marketing the capabilities of the RCA to major regional development and funding organisations and increasing revenues to MSs.
- Provides an action list that will result in project proposals with a high chance of success for Agency funding in 2005/06.
- Makes recommendations for the further training or support of Lead Country Co-ordinators or project committees to ensure effective programming and project management.
- Considers how to integrate and optimise the resource for a sustainable future, including skilled promotion, development and management of projects, represented by –
 - The RCA Regional Office;
 - Lead Country Co-ordinators;
 - Regional Resource Units, including technology transfer or commercial units;
 - The RCA Secretariat.

