

Transitions in the RCA Programme Ownership and Management¹

Situation before the end of 1995

Until the end of 1995, the RCA programme had been literally “directed” from the Agency through the RCA office. This was despite the stipulation in the agreement that the agency will only provide secretariat support to the RCA. The role of the MS, in the Agency’s view, was not clearly in accordance with the agreement. The Agreement states that projects must be initiated by MS; this had not been the case since many projects were Agency-initiated (involving the TC Section Heads, the RCA office, the Technical Officers) and the MSs agreed to projects presented during the two major meetings of the MSs².

The ownership of the RCA programme during this time (until the end of 1995) was manifested through the following:

- i) Discussion and endorsement of projects during the working group meetings and their review and/or approval during the General Conference meeting.

Except for donor countries like Japan and Australia who proposed projects that their respective governments could support, the other countries rarely, if at all, proposed projects for the RCA. Majority of project proposals came from technical officers. For large projects such as the early joint UNDP/RCA/IAEA projects³, the agency was deeply involved in their conceptualization and realization.

- ii) Implementation of the project at the national level through a network of national project coordinators for each project.
- iii) Participation in national coordinators meeting to discuss progress and/or future direction of the project.
- iv) Chairing of the meetings - in practice the chairperson comes from the host country of the working group meeting. This job includes only chairing the meetings.

The RCA programme is implemented via a network of national RCA Coordinators and Project Coordinators/counterparts and sub-project Coordinators, as necessary.

RCA Ownership

The concept of ownership of the RCA programme was first proposed in 1995⁴ at the 17th RCA Working Group Meeting (WGM) held in Malaysia. The DDG-TC in subsequent statements propounded that MSs should play a greater role in managing the RCA programme.⁵ At the 18th RCA WGM in Beijing, China in 1996, the role of the Agency and that of the Secretariat were examined again. Consequently prior to the

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² These major meetings are : the working group meeting normally in March of each year and the General Conference in September which coincides with the IAEA general conference.

² The current joint UNDP/RCA/IAEA project (RAS/97/030) was developed with the participation of several member states and the agency.

³This was included in the statement of Dir A.F. El-Saiedi, former Director, TCPA.

⁴ See for example the DDGTC statement during the 24th RCA GC in September 1995.

RCA GC meeting, several MSs proposed several recommendations on the management of the RCA programme. At the 25th RCA GC in October 1996 the MSs endorsed the recommendations, with one exception⁶. Additionally, at the 19th RCA WGM in Myanmar in March 1997 a draft operating guidelines and procedures⁷ was presented to the MSs. A final version was endorsed during the 26th RCA GC in October 1997.

The ownership of the Programme takes various forms: from the rationalization of the projects into thematic programme areas, the designation of Lead Countries, the designation of regional representatives or project manager and the level of their participation. The discussions on these have led to the recent decision by Member States to study a structure for the RCA (discussed in another section below).

Thematic Programme Areas and Lead Countries

At the 26th RCA GC meeting in October 1997 MSs agreed to establish thematic programme areas in five fields (Radiation Protection, Agriculture, Energy, Industry and Environment, and Health) and designated the Lead Country for each. The Lead Countries were assigned to develop the project proposals for the 1999-2000 cycle. In February and March 1998, Lead Countries and MS developed project proposals without the presence of Agency officials, such as technical officers. The results were not generally acceptable to IAEA as no criterion acceptable to the Agency was followed nor any prioritization done based on funding availability.

The Lead Country concept was expanded at the RCA meeting of national representatives in Taupo, New Zealand in March-April 1998 when Lead Countries were designated for the sub-projects under the joint UNDP/RCA/IAEA project and the ongoing projects.⁸ Two parallel actions were also taken then: first, a paper was to be prepared on the role/office of the proposed UNDP project manager⁹ and second, to study/adopt the model project criteria¹⁰ for use by MS. On the first item, the report of the study indicated unfavorable cost benefits and financial and logistic implications. This idea was dropped. On the second item this was adopted and used during subsequent Project Formulation Meetings (PFMs), in which Technical Officers were once again invited to participate.

At the 27th RCA GC meeting on September 1998 MS reviewed the role of the Lead Countries during the programming and implementation stages of the project. The Lead Countries were expected to initiate and develop project proposals during the programming stage. During the implementation stage the Lead Countries are expected to help monitor the project implementation.

MSs proposed to study further the role of the Lead Country as contained in a draft document presented at the said 27th RCA GC meeting. At the 28th RCA GC Meeting in September 1999, the MS revised their operating rules and guidelines to incorporate firmly the role of the Lead Countries and other related items.¹¹

⁶ The exception pertains to the stationing of a regional representative in the region; this was the subject of further discussions among the Member States.

⁷ These guidelines for the RCA programme was prepared by Mr. Cherif, DGO.

⁸ A write up on the role of Lead Country is available from RCA Office.

⁹ Prepared by Messrs Rolland(AUL), A.K. Anand(IND) and S. Kobayashi(JPN)

¹⁰ The Agency has already established the model project criteria and had been using these in development of project proposals since 1997/1998 cycle

¹¹ This document is available from the RCA Office.

In 1999 due to lack of effort and progress one Lead Country handed over its role to another country which could mobilize more resources for project formulation and development. In another case the Lead Country was given more time to organize an advisory group meeting (AGM) for the formulation and development of the project; in the third case Lead Countries and Assisting Lead Countries are working well together and forgetting who is lead or assisting.

Currently, it can be said that MS are now playing their role in project formulation and in hosting regional events by offering much more “in-kind contribution” than what was done earlier.

Implementation of project activities is still done through the RCA Office which has all the technical and administrative support from other units within the Agency. Consultations are also held between RCA Office and the chairpersons¹²

RCA Regional Manager

The MSs had proposed the stationing of an RCA senior representative in the region.¹³ The representative would, among other things, speak on behalf of the MSs, solicit donation, and promote RCA in the region. However, the funding for this position was a constraint since the agency would not be able to provide financial support to a non-agency staff when it is already providing Secretariat services through the RCA office. Donor countries would also expect the representative to speak on behalf of the donor. The designation of a project manager for the current joint UNDP/RCA/IAEA project was proposed to be a stepping stone towards the regional representative concept. However, while this position is allowed for and mentioned in the project document, the funding for the project manager has not been provided by the UNDP.

The Agency has been asked to study this matter further; later it concluded that the Agency regular budget could not support such a post since this would reduce the amount of funding available for project implementation. (As already indicated above this idea of a regional UNDP manager was dropped).

Structure for the RCA

At the 27th RCA GC meeting in September 1998, the MSs recognized that funding for the position of the regional manager or project manager is still uncertain. However, the Lead Country concept seemed to have widespread support and MSs requested the agency to organize an ad hoc committee to study the structure for the RCA taking into account the concept of Lead Country.

This meeting, which took place in March 1999 in Singapore, examined various models for the structure of RCA, and concluded that the Lead Country concept should be pursued.¹⁴ This was furthered institutionalized when the MS approved at its 28th RCA GC in Vienna, Austria, the revision of the RCA Operating Rules and Guidelines in which the role of Lead Country as well as duties and responsibilities were documented.

¹² These are the past, present and future chairpersons - they are selected respectively from the countries which hosted the previous and current RCA Meeting of national representatives, and the following year's RCA Meeting.

¹³ See from report, 19th RCA Working Group Meeting, Oct 1997, Annexure A-9-1 & A-9-2.

¹⁴ The Meeting also recommended other mechanisms to improve the implementation rate of the RCA programme, including the use of RRUs, outsourcing and use of cost free experts. This is the subject of a separate submission.

Proposal for a Regional Office

During the 22nd RCA Meeting of National Representatives in Mumbai, India, on 28 Feb-3 March 2000, Korea announced its intention to host an RCA regional office. KOR was asked to define this further and in July 2000 a formal proposal was submitted to the Agency. This proposal was circulated to MS and presented at the Briefing of Representatives of RCA Missions held on 23 August 2000 at the IAEA headquarters in Vienna.

The full text of the proposal is included in the documents for discussions at the 29th RCA GC. A summary is indicated in Table 1. The proposal has been circulated to RCA MS for comments

The Agency's legal division was consulted on this proposal and some excerpts of the legal opinion are indicated in Table 2

Copies of the comments from Member States have been circulated earlier.

Table 1 Proposal for an RCA Regional Office

Feature		Remarks
Country location	Korea	Seoul or Taejon
No of Staff	4 plus Agency fellows	1 Director, plus 3 staff¹⁵; agency fellows¹⁶
Office expenditures	KOR gov't; Director's salary plus those of staff	KOR will pay Director's salary if from KOR; other countries will support their own.
Duties	DIR: to be defined by consensus	Preference: a generalist, not a specialist
Terms	Director: 3 years	nominated and approved at the RCA General Conference
Yearly budget(estimated)	\$250,000	includes salary of DIR(if Korean), and staff salaries, travel, local transportation and office management

Table 2: Some Legal Implications

Topic	Agency opinion
RCA Agreement	needs either modification of existing RCA Agreement or another one on this topic only
Immunities and privileges of the position	needs agreement of the Member States
duties of the director	must be defined and agreed by all MS.

¹⁵ 1 Administrative Officer; 1 Secretary, 1 Project Planning Officer.

¹⁶ Fellows from TC project are proposed to be assigned.