



THE NATIONAL LIAISON OFFICER:

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The NLO is the principal interface between the Agency and a national authority on technical cooperation (TC) and related matters. The role of the NLO has been recognized as pivotal in ensuring the optimal performance of the TC programme and in enhancing the benefits derived by Member States. In its resolution GC(51)/RES/13 of 21 September 2007, the General Conference recognized that national nuclear and other entities are important partners in the implementation of technical cooperation programmes in Member States and in promoting the use of nuclear and related technologies for achieving national development objectives, and in this regard recognized the role of the National Liaison Officers. This resolution also encouraged the strengthening of the Agency's TC activities through a number of actions aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of TC management, facilitating partnerships in development and helping Member States in specific areas. To do so, Member States should be in a position to effectively manage and utilize Agency support. As stressed in recommendations by the Agency's Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and its External Auditor¹ and as suggested by SAGTAC², an effective approach toward meeting these needs is to augment and strengthen the role of the NLO. A strengthened role for the NLO and his/her office or unit within government is essential for effective management of the TC programme in Member States.

2. The NLO provides the focus for all Agency TC related matters in a Member State. As a consequence, the duties of the NLO encompass much more than administrative processes. They cover leadership, strategic thinking, operational management, supervision, coordination and relationship building with a wide range of stakeholders. Aspects that require particular attention are the following:

- An NLO who is aware of issues, trends and needs and who engages in continuous dialogue and exchange of information with project counterparts can play a valuable facilitating role, with both the government and the Agency's Secretariat, in addressing problems;
- An NLO responsible for monitoring lessons learned and best practices, and serving as a focal point for knowledge preservation and retrieval, provides great value for a more effective TC programme;
- Management by the NLO of both regional and national programmes helps increase efficiency and avoid duplication of efforts and diversion of resources to non-priority areas;
- Better communication with key stakeholders, in line with government policies and approaches, increases the relevance and effectiveness of the programme. Key stakeholders include government offices responsible for international cooperation, planning units, representatives of the main development sectors in a Member State, and relevant multilateral and bilateral development partners, including NGOs;
- Increased networking with UN agencies and donors offers the possibility of forming alliances and partnerships in development activities that can leverage new resources to address national priorities.

3. Given the scope of TC activities, it is recommended that Member States put in place appropriate modalities to enhance liaison between the NLO and the Permanent Mission.

¹ Report on the field mission of External Audit to Morocco, December 2005, paras. 8-11.

² Report to the Director General, Second meeting of the Fourth Standing Advisory Group on Technical Assistance and Cooperation (SAGTAC IV-2), Vienna, 6–10 February 2006, Recommendation No. 2.

II. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NLO

4. The roles and responsibilities are presented below primarily in the context of the NLO's function, but equally pertain to the corresponding institutional responsibilities of the NLO office or unit. The NLO:

- (i) Serves as the principal focal point for the provision of advice to the government on all aspects of the TC programme.
- (ii) Serves as the interface between the government and the Secretariat in all matters related to planning, programming, programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the TC programme.
- (iii) Builds a knowledge base for national development programmes through liaison with development agencies, and identifies potential areas for Agency collaboration and donor participation.
- (iv) Ensures that the benefits of potential nuclear applications are known and understood by relevant sectoral units of government, the national planning entity, universities and scientific institutions, and end users. It is vital that a close relationship is established with the national planning entity concerning development programmes and priorities relevant to Agency technical cooperation.
- (v) Serves as a resource centre for knowledge about the Agency's planning processes and modalities, and about end users. In addition, ensures that lessons learned and proposed corrective actions, adaptations and innovations for future projects are documented for the purposes of knowledge preservation.
- (vi) Acts as national coordinator³ for the Country Programme Framework (CPF), and provides leadership for preparation of the CPF. More specifically:
 - Promotes understanding about national goals and objectives, and seeks complementarities between national development priorities, the TC Strategy and the Agency's policies to ensure that the proposed activities add value to national development efforts;
 - Takes a leading role in aligning the CPF to the national Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets;
 - Organizes and coordinates working groups in major national priority sectors as input to the CPF process;
 - Coordinates preparation of the plan of action and steps resulting from the CPF;
 - Organizes the required national inputs identified during upstream work for the agreed plan of action as a project concept note;
 - Ensures that newly identified project initiatives are consistent with the CPF.
- (vii) Interacts with project counterpart institutions and the Secretariat in the formulation, design, facilitation and management of projects, using the Programme Cycle Management Framework (PCMF) website. More specifically:

³ Although the overall responsibility for the preparation of the CPF within the country lies with the NLO, s/he should be authorized to assign coordination duties to another person, either in his/her or in another office/unit.

- Ensures coordination with all relevant national stakeholders relating to the preparation and submission to the Secretariat of project concepts;
 - Reviews submitted project concepts with counterparts;
 - Clears project concepts and submits them to the Secretariat for consideration;
 - Prioritizes pre-qualified concepts according to national priorities;
 - Reviews and endorses proposed country programmes (national and regional projects);
 - Assists project counterparts in facilitating implementation actions, as necessary;
 - Ensures that project closure and evaluation procedures are carried out in a timely manner.
- (viii) Ensures that technical cooperation policies and procedures are disseminated, understood and adhered to by project counterpart institutions.
- (ix) Through the project counterpart institutions, keeps under review progress, problems and actions concerning project implementation, and facilitates implementation as necessary.
- (x) Keeps informed about national institutions taking part in coordinated research project (CRP) activities as part of a reference base of the country's overall engagement with Agency programmes, and informs relevant universities and scientific institutions of new CRPs that have relevance to the achievement of national objectives or the enhancement of technical cooperation activities.
- (xi) Keeps informed about the status of nuclear safety and safeguards measures in the country and of adherence to the legal instruments adopted under Agency auspices.

5. National authorities may wish to consider establishing a National Programme Management Committee comprising the NLO and representatives of key national sectors and stakeholders. It is recommended that this Committee meets at least twice a year and produces a report that may be shared with the Secretariat. In support of the NLO, the Committee may serve as a steering body to:

- Disseminate and exchange information on projects, programmes and development priorities;
- Monitor and communicate information on Agency policies, initiatives and programmes;
- Monitor CPF development, updating and implementation;
- Review and consider project concepts submitted to the NLO by various institutions in the country;
- Align the project concepts with national development priorities and MDGs;
- Select project concepts to be forwarded to the Secretariat for consideration;
- Consider, select and rank project designs for submission to the Agency;
- Develop strategies for building and sustaining internal and external partnerships in support of Agency approved projects;
- Devise approaches for the sourcing of counterpart funds for Agency approved projects.

III. NLO PROFILE

6. The Secretariat is aware that the selection of the NLO is the responsibility of the Member State. The NLO profile presented below should be regarded as guidance in this regard.

7. Each Member State participating in the TC programme is requested to appoint a senior official with appropriate managerial and technical competence to serve as the NLO. The NLO should be endowed with the appropriate authority, resources and infrastructure to fulfil the responsibilities outlined above.

8. In some Member States, the workload may be too heavy for a single NLO, especially if s/he holds a senior management position dealing also with issues unrelated to the Agency. Specific duties could be assigned to National Liaison Assistants in order to improve overall management. Countries with less complex TC programmes may not require such an expanded level of NLO operations and there the emphasis could be placed on optimal use of management tools, such as the PCMF. Given the increased use of information technology tools, it is important that the NLO office is provided with appropriate information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure.

9. The effectiveness of the NLO is highly dependent upon a set of competencies that reflect core knowledge and judgement, management aptitudes, and leadership skills to drive pro-actively the cooperation process with a results-based approach and to inspire innovation and organizational learning. The overarching responsibilities of the NLO function are managerial; nevertheless — given the range of activities covered — a good technical knowledge is also important.

10. Desired qualifications of the NLO are:

- A senior government official with a degree in management and/or science and technology;
- Recognized qualifications or equivalent working experience in international relations;
- Substantial experience in managing technical programmes, with a minimum of ten years preferred;
- Excellent communication skills in order to network and deal with all levels of government and development partners;
- Demonstrated abilities in leadership and initiative;
- Proficiency in English, the primary working language of the Agency;
- Capability to work interactively with computer systems.

11. A properly designed training package for NLOs and their staff will be made available online by the Agency and regularly updated. This package will be composed of modules on specific duties, required actions, administrative processes and management skills necessary to accomplish the numerous responsibilities of the position.