Chapter 5

Considerations and Policy Proposals

This chapter makes several recommendations and defines stakeholders and coexistence and co-development with surrounding communities, taking into account the following documents on stakeholder involvement: 'Stakeholder Involvement in Nuclear Issues' (IAEA, 2006), 'Stakeholder Involvement Throughout the Life Cycle of Nuclear Facilities' (IAEA, 2011), 'Communication and Stakeholder Involvement in Environmental Remediation Projects' (IAEA, 2014b), and 'Stakeholder Involvement in Decision Making: A Short Guide to Issues, Approached and Resources' (OECD and NEA, 2015).

5-1. Requirements for improving the current situation

1) Who is a stakeholder? – a flexible approach

Targets should be approached individually, because it is difficult to exert influence if you take a whole-country approach. Advertisements aimed at everyone tend to be boring and interest no one.

It is important to identify the targeted stakeholder to determine the appropriate means of involvement. Once the stakeholder has been defined, it is necessary to examine what channels of information the target is familiar with, such as newspapers, magazines, or the Internet.

Concentrating on one target will produce an effect, and it is also possible that individuals who feel that nuclear power is trustworthy will be a positive influence on others.

Women are highly motivated to learn and tend to be more concerned with issues of safety than necessity. It is often beneficial to provide them with opportunities for experience-based learning. They are easily approached through local group activities. If the opinion leaders of these communities are convinced of the merits of nuclear power, they will become powerful advocates for the nuclear cause.

The topic of food is a good place to start for approaching housekeepers who have an aversion to nuclear energy. On the other hand, many of these people feel that nuclear power is none of their business, especially if their homes are far away from nuclear facilities. Is it therefore necessary to consider whether it is worth calling the attention of this group to nuclear power.

Often, fathers are moved by the appeal of necessity and safety. Approaches should also be tailored to their occupational backgrounds, for example agriculture or independent businesses.

2) Promote understanding about nuclear power

While we should appeal the strengths of nuclear power, generally, the emphasis is placed on the weaknesses. The media often features weaknesses because there is no interest in the strengths. Hence, the public will often be more familiar with the disadvantages of nuclear power.

To counter such tendencies and promote a balanced understanding, efforts should be made to deliver topics to the media that throw a different light on nuclear energy. The obvious strong points were the focus of attention in the early years of nuclear development. Nowadays, these points are well known and therefore are not considered newsworthy.

Public acceptance activities tend to conclude with 'let's think about this together' and offer no conclusions. On the contrary, direct appeals like 'X is the strong point' should be made. Sufficient information should be provided to the public so that they can think about nuclear issues as their own problem. It is ideal to provide transparent information on both the strong and the weak points and let the public make comparisons for themselves.

Most people do not have a good understanding of the issues, and this ignorance worsens anxiety levels. It is therefore crucial to deliver elementary and necessary information to promote an informed understanding of nuclear energy.

3) Convincing dialogue

Unidirectional public relations methods have limitations (IAEA, 2014b). This effect expands when the audience is large and mixed. Discussions held in small groups, where participants can talk with more ease, are more effective than lecturing a large group of people, unless the speaker is very skilled. It also helps to find good advocators. People may feel frustrated if they cannot freely ask specific questions or make comments during the lecture. Trust can be nurtured if people experience the satisfaction of asking questions and hearing from others. Discussion is more effective than a lecture format, especially for people who are hostile to nuclear power. If more people understand and accept nuclear power, eventually word should spread that 'nuclear is necessary after all'.

4) Build mutual reliance

It is important that the government is reliable, respectable, honest, sincere, strives to explain as best it can, and when it faces trouble, provides transparent information, and knows the site well. It is important that utilities build relationships of trust with residents on a daily basis, rather than only when a

conducting a special event, such as a briefing meeting or networking event with local inhabitants.

5) Revise methodologies for providing information

Information for nuclear public acceptance should be based on the assumption that 'nuclear power is dangerous' rather than 'nuclear power is safe', and explain how dangerous phenomena are handled safely. In the past, safety was emphasised too much, giving people a reason to complain that 'nuclear is not reliable' or 'nuclear is not always safe' whenever something happened, however trivial. It is nonsense to require perfect safety only for nuclear energy when no such state exists in any human endeavour.

Nuclear opposition groups are good at voicing peoples' concerns because their claims focus on only on the disadvantages of nuclear power. Nevertheless, we have much to learn from their communication techniques. Our information tends to be lengthy because we try to explain everything.

Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, public visits to nuclear power stations are less welcome. This has created a greater divide between the public and nuclear facilities. Events should be held to familiarise the public with nuclear power, even if site visits are no longer possible.

5-2. Timely and frequent stakeholder involvement

1) Timing

Timely advertisement and communication have a larger effect than regular small notices, which are unlikely to attract the attention of people with no interest in nuclear power. Promoting stakeholder evens at times when public attention is focused, for instance right after the Chernobyl accident, will be most effective. Incidents should be seen as an opportunity to advertise events, and such timings should not be missed. Large-scale accidents like Fukushima are an exception. At such times, any advertisement will have a negative effect and may fuel public antipathy. Besides accidents, public referenda against nuclear power (e.g. in the Republic of Korea or Switzerland) and energy crises also draw attention, especially during winter and summer consumption peaks. At such opportunities, information on the necessity and safety of nuclear generation should be provided in addition to topical information.

It is crucial that precise information is provided to the media from the start. Articles released sometime after the incident that start with a 'It turns out that there was a problem with. . .' or a 'The cause of the trouble was actually. . .', are particularly damaging. Such correction articles will not gather as much attention as the first sensational piece. However, if there are mistakes in any reports, it is better to correct them late than never.

In contrast, during normal operations, delivering textbooks, lectures, and workshops are better than newspaper advertisements. Newspaper articles will not be read at such times, because nuclear power is not an issue that attracts a great deal of a positive interest.

2) Frequency

Advertisements and communications should be repeated because readers quickly forget information. Short and simple yet repeated and continuous advertisements have an imprinting effect.

5-3. Regional development

To obtain permission for the construction and operation of a nuclear facility, the contribution to the local economy is key. This includes employment of residents, local procurement and contracting of business to local firms, organisation or co-organisation of and participation in local events, and participation in local volunteer activities. While local procurement is important, it is also vital that the developers, main contractors, and the operating company exert a strong local presence. If people feel that the promoters of nuclear power are managing things from a distance, they will regard the project with suspicion. This can lead to a feeling in the local community that there is no real commitment in the area.

5-4. Support and advice by third-party advisers

It is commendable that advisory bodies and other third parties provide support and advice. Examples of mechanisms to promote this objective include the following:

Stakeholder involvement. Stakeholder involvement schemes should be supported by third party advisers (e.g. professors in local universities).

Training and skills. Training and skills both at the technical and advanced level is important, in addition to having good relations with local professional training services and universities.

Involvement of national and local governments. Governments should make their stance towards nuclear energy clear, as it helps instil a sense of trust amongst the public. It is imperative to train experts to be good spokespeople, including executives. The main spokespeople in the administration are the chief cabinet secretary and press secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Effective representatives create a favourable impression of the government. Once journalists acknowledge and trust such people, they will seek their opinions and quote them in articles. Hence, the influence of these people will gradually

impregnate the media, and their knowledge and personalities will make an impression on journalists.

To promote trust with the media, it is helpful to secure permanent posts for successful spokespeople. Current public attitudes towards the judgement of experts or authorities are always questioning; therefore it is unwise to depend excessively on experts or authorities when attempting to gain the public's trust. The leverage provided by good advertisements and spokespeople should be recognised in this regard.

1) Educational curricula

We need to examine how to include nuclear power and energy issues in the educational curricula. In Japan, the Atomic Energy Society of Japan set up a working group that has been making annual proposals such as 'The proposal regarding the description of energy in elementary and secondary education textbooks (Atomic Energy Society of Japan, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013).

Unlike in the past, when textbooks contained factual errors or biases regarding nuclear energy, current science textbooks offer the facts in plain writing. Civic textbooks are the most enthusiastic, with sections on nuclear use in relation to energy issues. In some of these textbooks, opinions for and against restarting nuclear power plants are described side by side and students are encouraged to debate their merits. All textbooks describe the Fukushima accident associated with the Great East Japan Earthquake in an objective manner without bias and point out that there are safety concerns. While many paragraphs are devoted to the topic of renewable energy, most textbooks do not promote anti-nuclear views. This kind of transition is very desirable.

5-5. Models for information provision

1) Media relations

Why is it necessary to provide understandable information to the media when incidents occur? The reason is based on the French experience following the Chernobyl accident, where support for nuclear energy plummeted because of poor media relations. In an opinion poll after the accident, 93% of respondents expressed their belief that 'we are not being informed of the situation', while 79% answered that 'we are not being informed of the facts'.

An investigation clarified that neither the government nor the electric utilities covered up the facts. Information was disseminated, but it was too technical and difficult for the media to understand. Hence,

the outcome was the same as if they had not provided information at all.

Simple graphs and figures are more effective than verbose texts. For instance, providing a table of the amount of radioactive substances found in food is effective.

2) Spokespeople

It is very productive to offer a clear, considerate explanation to the media about an incident once it occurs. If the spokesperson displays a sincere but hospitable attitude, the media will be prompted to ask honest questions as much as they want. This has the power to change what the media will broadcast. Articles can become more accurate and cease to be intentionally malicious.

The nuclear industry should secure a few permanent personnel who are skilled at communication with the media. It is preferable that such personnel belong to neutral organisations, such as universities or research institutes, for example the Japan Atomic Energy Agency.

5-6. Implications and policy proposals

How could we convey the facts to the public and improve communication methods? The experts invited to the workshop gave the following opinions.

- Nuclear communications have usually focused on technology. To build trust, however, nuclear communications need to include integrity, competence, and benevolence. Talking about the need for nuclear power, instead of talking about technology using technical jargon, is crucially important for effective communication.
- The most effective approach is to share personal stories, be open and honest, admit mistakes, and to apologise when needed. The roles of the national, municipal, and local governments are also important to maintain a clear and firm commitment to projects.
- Local stakeholder involvement should be led by locally employed personnel from the vicinity of the nuclear facility (key persons) who understand and are sensitive to local issues, culture, and attitudes. All sectors – industry, academia, government, and education – should work together with a clear vision and a common understanding for mutual communication. A strong link with local schools, colleges, universities and employment opportunities can be helpful for establishing communication bridges.
- Developing business projects and investments is also recommended to enhance the reliability of

the nuclear industry and the government. This can be achieved by promoting opportunities to secure public and private investment and delivering projects and programmes that secure an ambitious economic legacy.

- In addition to these actions, the role of the media should be reconsidered and firmly re-established. Media, including social networking sites, can and should build public opinion and can often amplify trends. Communicating through the social media is one method for improving public acceptance of nuclear power.

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