

## **32. Use of rapid assessment procedures for evaluation by UNICEF**

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**More than any agency other than the United Nations University, UNICEF has supported development and use of RAP. UNICEF has funded several RAP workshops, assisted work on RAP guidelines, and supported the videotape used to promote RAP. UNICEF both supports use of RAP and just as importantly, orients its staff in this methodology.**

**The RAP conference had over 20 participants from UNICEF field offices and its Evaluation Office in New York. Papers by UNICEF staff members are contained in this volume and several authors refer to UNICEF assistance to their studies or training.**

**This paper reflects the professional experience of Parson and Costlier in RAP-related staff training and use of qualitative techniques in project evaluations and assessments in Asia, Africa, the Americas, the Middle East, Central and Eastern Europe, and the Commonwealth of Independent States. It also shows the pragmatic, action-orientation of UNICEF, and the increasing professionalism in qualitative research among UNICEF staff. Eds.**

DURING THE PAST ten years we have, in UNICEF, increasingly been using rapid assessment procedures in our evaluation work. We have also collaborated closely with a number of institutions to expand the approach and make it more relevant to UNICEF's field work. We have found RAP to be useful for providing information to decision makers at every stage of the programming cycle - design, monitoring and evaluation. Our use of RAP is *eclectic* and reflects the fact that we see it as *a process* which is relevant for problem solving.

We view RAP not as a technique, but as an *approach* which utilizes many methodologies - many tools - both qualitative and quantitative. We view it as a flexible constellation of means for investigating. We use it to make a diagnosis of situations, to help us in problem solving, in getting data for decision making, to identify how programmes can be improved and what lessons can be shared. We see it as a useful approach - not only because of *rapidity* (rapidity, as a number of presenters have noted, is relative) but because it is *relevant*. It allows us to include the viewpoints and opinions of those people for whom programmes are intended, beneficiaries as well as policy makers and service providers. The assessment process and the decisions that may be affected by it thus can be shared and thereby contribute to the empowerment of those who are affected.

We also find RAP important because it is an approach which provides information but which in the very process of acquiring information can alter the situation. While conducting a RAP, evaluators involve participants and give them feedback. They also provide expert consultation

and often build consensus by bringing people together. Thus the use of RAP can be part of the change process.

What do we consider some of the hallmarks of the RAP process?

1. **RAP IS ACTION ORIENTED.** Information gathering through RAP is specifically geared to programme improvement, problem solving, decision making, extension of experience. This explicit focus casts the data gathering process in a pragmatic light. Rapidity is important in this context. If findings are to be used to modify actions, it is useful to obtain the information before the questions are forgotten or while decision makers remain highly motivated.

2. **RAP IS INVESTIGATIVE.** It attempts to discover new information or find new interpretations in addition to testing hypotheses. It attempts to discover not only what is happening but why it is happening, or in some instances, not happening. It looks both for the anticipated and the unanticipated. The process allows the evaluator to follow leads, check discrepancies, and obtain many different viewpoints from which a holistic picture can emerge.

3. **RAP IS PROCESS ORIENTED.** It analyzes not only the end results but the process of getting there. It attempts to discern the facilitating factors and the constraints.

4. **RAP ATTEMPTS TO ASSESS SITUATIONS HOLISTICALLY.** The process looks at many angles of a situation from many perspectives. It places problems in context; most quantitative assessments by their nature tend to be reductionist, looking at a limited number of variables. RAP also seeks to look at interactions, patterns and evolution over time.

5. **RAP DERIVES CONFIDENCE** from the fact that multiple key informants are involved. By piecing together information and insights from various informants RAP team members are likely to obtain a "true" picture. Key informants include a broad range of people - policy makers, managers, service providers, both within and outside the sector - and most importantly beneficiaries are also principal key informants.

6. **RAP PLACES GREAT IMPORTANCE ON "INFORMED JUDGEMENT"**. It attempts to ensure that judgements will be informed by putting emphasis on observing, describing, listening, and getting different viewpoints. It encourages arriving at collective judgements, often by consensus.

7. **RAP IS EFFICIENT** by emphasizing optimum use of existing data, and collecting and analyzing available information and documentation. RAP may include multiple techniques - qualitative and quantitative.

8. **RAP EMPHASIZES THE USE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAMS.** Because perceptions and interpretations are often conditioned by disciplines, RAP emphasizes bringing together experienced observers with different backgrounds and expertise. We put great importance on assembling a team with multiple skills and identifying a team leader good at facilitating interaction and coordination.

**9. RAP TEAMS INCLUDE "INSIDERS" AND "OUTSIDERS"**. We find it useful in most teams to include both. The insiders, both UNICEF and government, familiar with the project or programme, bring in-depth knowledge, comment on practicality of recommendations and above all are more likely to use recommendations if they have been involved in the RAP. Outsiders on the other hand, specialists familiar with the field or country or culture, can bring fresh, less biased perspectives.

**10. RAP CAN FACILITATE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT.** All members of the community are viewed as potential informed observers and can be drawn into the investigative process. Open ended interviews allow people to express opinions, offer suggestions, make recommendations. "Listening and learning" are emphasized. The process is interactive. Findings and recommendations are presented and discussed with programme planners and implementors so their views can be taken into consideration. The process promotes dialogue.

## **Background on the evolution of RAP and its uses in UNICEF**

Much of UNICEF's work in developing countries involves, hand in hand with government agencies, the planning, management, monitoring and evaluation of development programmes.

In the 1970s, as development aid expanded, there were two main ways of getting information to plan, monitor and evaluate the work of development agencies. There was the field trip - an activity carried out by professional development workers themselves - and there was long drawn-out research, often involving centrally planned sample surveys, and with gestation periods measured in months or sometimes years; consultants from developed country universities usually carried out the latter. Both ways of collecting information are, of course, extremely useful. RAP has evolved as a third and complementary process. To understand the need for RAP, it is worth dwelling on the pitfalls of field trips and on more academic research.

Field trips are a useful way of getting a "feel" for things, and getting first hand information quickly. But this type of appraisal method came in for an increasing amount of criticism detailed by Robert Chambers in his book, *Putting the Last First* [1]. There was concern that the level of contact of development professionals (particularly people from large international development agencies) with poor people was being reduced to "development tourism". Most impressions of what was happening in a development programme were fleetingly obtained from looking out of the window of a speeding vehicle, along with all the biases inherent in this way of gleaning impressions. The more senior one became, the more one was trapped into this way of becoming informed.

Chambers listed a set of biases associated with the field trip that are worth repeating here, for they still apply today. *Dry season bias* - traveling to remote places only when the roads are in good condition; *spatial bias* - only seeing what is happening close to roads, especially tarmac roads, and seeing more of life in urban compared to rural areas; *project bias* - being directed to where development funds are being spent, particularly towards showpiece projects; *person bias* - listening to and observing only the people with whom one comes into contact during the fleeting

visits; people who are fit, still alive, male, elite and using the service being developed; *diplomatic bias* - visitors being deterred by combinations of politeness and timidity from coming into contact with poorer people; *professional bias* - professionals tending to look and find what they look for in their own narrow field of specialization where a more holistic approach might be called for.

The other main way of deriving information on what was happening - large centrally planned and executed surveys, whether of a quantitative or a qualitative nature - was often useful, even indispensable, but sometimes produced misleading, irrelevant, obtuse, or late information. Reports were often written in a way that was difficult to interpret. Again this observation still applies today<sup>2</sup>.

So in the late seventies the feeling started to arise that what little time was available to interact with the public, especially the rural poor and people living in urban slums, could be put to use in a more systematic manner; that ways could be found to be able to listen more closely to what people had to say, to learn from them; for the public to be able to take a greater part in deciding course changes for development programmes that affected their lives; that another middle way between the fleeting field visit and the more detailed methods could be devised. Rapid assessment procedures (RAP) grew out of this need.

Another motivation stemmed from the wish of UNICEF staff to have more opportunity for direct contact with populations. UNICEF staff tend to be social scientists, although a large proportion are engineers or from backgrounds in the humanities. The nature of life for UNICEF staff directly involved with development work is that of a member of the middle classes, normally living in a well-off neighbourhood in a capital city. Most staff members spend their time in offices, or sometimes in provincial towns attending to administrative details. They have little time left for work at the front end of development work with the very people whom UNICEF is trying to help.

**Table 1. *Some of the Characteristics of Rapid Assessments***

- Paying great attention to the writing of the terms of reference for a RAP, often with the active participation of a steering committee, with the understanding that the introduction of unanticipated factors at a later stage is permitted
- Analysis of previously carried-out research in the area being evaluated
- A key role being played by observation of, and unstructured interviews with, the public and key informants, particularly government officials, individually and also in groups
- Triangulation
- Looking, listening, learning, relaxing
- Direct participation of informed professionals with experience in interpretation of findings in

multidisciplinary teams looking at the subject being evaluated in a holistic manner

- A flexible methodology emphasizing the identification of problems - looking at why and how as well as what
- Paying particular attention to the views of the public
- The arrival at objective judgements by consensus
- Brief, clearly written reports geared towards the making of decisions aimed at improvement of the use of resources.

Exposing UNICEF staff in a methodologically rigorous way to the rapid anthropological methods of collecting information, as laid out in the Scrimshaw and Hurtado manual [2], has also been used to familiarise junior staff on how to take a more rigorous approach during field trips (UNICEF staff are encouraged to spend about 20 percent of their time on field trips) so as to avoid Chamber's pitfalls as much as possible.

## **Use of RAP in evaluation in UNICEF**

### *Evaluation in UNICEF*

Evaluation in UNICEF is defined as a process which attempts to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of activities in the light of specified objectives. It is a learning and action-oriented management tool and organisational process for improving both current activities and future planning, programming and decision-making [3]. Within this broad definition of evaluation in UNICEF, a number of activities of an evaluative nature can be identified: annual reviews of programmes which UNICEF staff hold with their colleagues in government, external evaluations by donor agencies of projects UNICEF is implementing together with government as part of a government development programme, thematic evaluations looking into certain initiatives at the global level, reviews by UNICEF advisers, and so on. A RAP evaluation, therefore, is one amongst a number of evaluation styles used to evaluate UNICEF's work.

### *Selection of PAP procedures*

RAP, in UNICEF parlance, refers to a process rather than a particular set of methods. Exactly what type of assessment procedures are used depends on the job at hand. Funds available and the amount of time that can be put aside for an exercise are crucial factors. There is always a tension between carrying out a RAP too quickly with too small a budget and ending up with a process that has done little to further the area being studied. It is up to the participants in a RAP process to steer a course between field trip types of information gathering and long term, more classic types of social research. Chamber's principles of "optimal ignorance" and "appropriate

imprecision" must be applied, but as pointed out by Cernea [4], it is the RAP practitioners' judgement call on what can be ignored and how much imprecision can be appropriately tolerated without self destroying penalties. Rapidity is relative.

In UNICEF, a RAP exercise includes, as a central base, the use of techniques derived from the field of anthropology [2] such as focus group discussions, observation, and unstructured one-on-one interviews that form a body of mainly qualitative data. The anthropological techniques being used are accepted by some anthropologists as being a valid way of condensing an anthropological investigation from the normal two years or so to the two or three weeks available for RAP. Of course a main proviso is that the area under investigation in a RAP is much narrower than the typical anthropological investigation and the end product is quite different.

Normally, the qualitative information derived from the RAP will be used in conjunction with quantitative data which might already be available or which might also be collected as part of the RAP investigation itself. Any other of a large number of techniques may also be used; for example, participatory mapping, analysis of satellite images, household surveys with analysis of data and discussion of results, group discussions, and so on. A RAP exercise could be related to any part of the classic programme cycle; the planning of a development programme, the monitoring of the implementation of such a programme, the evaluation of processes or the evaluation of coverage, costs and impact. But it should never be used alone for decision making. Rather, it is seen as a complementary method of assessment to the less formal field trip which will only take a few days, or the more complicated, more academic, old fashioned types of research which might take years to gestate.

### ***Preparation for a RAP evaluation***

RAPs should follow the general principles of evaluation. A great deal of care should be spent drawing up the terms of reference for the evaluation team; the original objectives of the subject being evaluated should be recalled; a background paper on the history of the subject should be prepared which includes references to the reasoning behind strategies adopted, differences between planned and actual expenditures, course corrections, the results of previous evaluations and so on; there should be a clear set of issues to be addressed during the RAP; the methods to be used, including outlines for interview guides and questionnaires should be drafted; a schedule for the process should be devised as much as possible; due to budgetary constraints fieldwork for a UNICEF RAP evaluation cannot usually take more than three to four weeks. Indeed much of the basis for how RAP evaluations are carried out are determined by the practical need to complete the process within such a time frame; evaluations need outsiders to guarantee the objectivity of the process and outsiders usually have to be hired as consultants whose time should be put to the best use.

It is often useful to have a wide process of review for a terms of reference; a RAP evaluation steering committee is often the best way in which to manage this and all other stages of an evaluation. Having said this, it is the nature of a RAP for the final product to sometimes end up being slightly different from what was originally asked for. In this respect the drafters of a terms of reference must be confident enough to let the evaluators use their judgement in the last analysis in deciding on what to concentrate.

### ***Composition of an evaluation team***

A crucial factor to the success of any type of evaluation is the selection of the members of the team. One of the advantages of a RAP evaluation is that it does not necessarily adhere strictly to a predetermined protocol. It is adaptive and flexible. The end result can, and usually ends up being a little different to what was originally envisaged in response to local circumstances. It is vitally important, therefore, that RAP team members are experienced and have a strong sense of objectivity. They must have a clear sense of what judgements they can fairly arrive at given the particular application of investigative methodologies they have used during the RAP and the information they have derived from the use of those methods. Another important attribute among RAP team members is cultural sensitivity especially with the application of qualitative information gathering.

Experience has shown that it is vitally important that a RAP team should include people who actually work on a project as well as outside investigators; the responsibility for impartiality and objectivity lies, of course, with the outsiders, while those associated with the subject being evaluated act as readily available resource persons with the inside knowledge; they ultimately know best what recommendations for action have a possibility of being taken up. Also, human nature dictates that people are more likely to understand the rationale, and then to follow up evaluation recommendations, the more they have taken part in the process; and finally, RAPs operate under time constraints and insiders can move things a lot faster than outsiders left to their own devices.

Members of the team should be evaluators with expert knowledge of using the data gathering methodologies being proposed in the terms of reference. It is extremely important that the team includes members from different disciplines. In this way biases of any particular discipline are more likely to be avoided and perspectives and interpretations of the team will be enriched.

It is essential that at least one of the team members is a good communicator. The emphasis of RAP evaluation is the offering of concise action oriented recommendations for improvement aimed at decision makers. Good presentations where findings are clearly expressed, are essential in RAP and a well, quickly written and concise report is also expected.

Presentations of findings and results can also be prepared for presentation for interactive discussions on desktop/laptop computers if the RAP team has the communication skills. These days no RAP team is complete without at least one laptop computer which can be used for drafting.

### ***The place of RAP in participatory evaluation***

While RAP is a particularly useful type of method to use for evaluations (of a participatory nature which may be carried out in development projects where decisions on the use of development resources are made in democratic ways) by a team of people from within the community looking in and finding out what people are thinking and doing, it can also be used by community members (certain techniques which are frequently part of RAP, like focus group

discussions, under different labels such as "group meetings" form a normal part of participatory evaluation processes).

RAP evaluations have an especially important role to play in encouraging participatory development processes in projects which do not have a particularly strong element of participation in their planning and implementation stages. The rapid anthropological techniques used can ensure that significant attention is paid to the views of the people benefiting from the activities being evaluated. In this way, the RAP style evaluation can be used, if so desired, as a way of instilling a sense that more people's participation may be desirable in a development project.

### ***Uses and the influence of computer technology on RAP***

In many ways the evolution of RAP evaluations has been influenced by advances in computer technology, particularly laptop technology, and the availability of photocopiers. The process of wide consultation at all stages of a RAP is conducted with heavy reliance on the written word - or more particularly, on draft written words - on which comments are offered for incorporation into later texts and parts of presentations. This happens from the production of terms of reference, to the drafting of findings and recommendations. Quick turnaround times for the production and revision of written texts is crucial for as wide a consultation as possible given the limitations of time. Ten years ago it would have been impossible to have carried out an evaluative process with as wide a consultative process as is now considered normal in RAP evaluations.

Computer technology can also be put to good use in cases where quantitative data need to be gathered and analyzed as part of the process while a RAP team is on the move and dealing with other aspects of the evaluation.

### ***Data collection methods***

How does a RAP evaluation team go about collecting and analyzing information? The only factor limiting which methods can be used is time. The methods used in any particular RAP depend entirely on the objectives of the evaluation, the resources at the disposal of the RAP and the time available. There is nothing inherent in RAP which binds a team to use a particular set of methods. The use of rapid anthropological procedures is at the heart of the evaluative process called RAP. Here is a list of some of the methods which can be used in an evaluative RAP.

1. Review and analysis of other data and information available on the subject being evaluated. As a general principle no new information should be sought if it has already satisfactorily been found out by others. The investigation team should spend time identifying and interpreting such data sources including routinely collected data, evaluations, survey data, previous annual or special reports, etc.
2. Group interviews (focus group discussions) or community meetings. This technique, borrowed from commercial marketing, brings together groups of between half a dozen and thirty people for an extended discussion moderated by one of the investigators. The investigator is guided by a set

of questions or topics prepared by the team beforehand. Discussions usually last up to two hours. Information is elicited on participants' views on the benefits of the subject being evaluated, what their understanding is of the activities' goals and to what extent these have been fulfilled. Caution is exercised against putting too much weight on the opinions of anyone who tries to monopolize the discussion, and it is the job of the moderator to make sure that all express their opinions.

3. Observation. Activities related to the subject being evaluated are observed, normally according to a protocol agreed upon when the terms of reference were being drawn up. For fair, general comments to be made on the observations this procedure must be carried out in a number of separate locations.

4. Interviews with key informants. A cross section of key informants is identified by the evaluation team and interviewed. Pertinent questions that should be raised with key informants are usually formulated by the evaluation team at the planning stage of a RAP and adopted during the process as required. Key informants could be trained experts, government officials, local politicians, or other knowledgeable people who can provide insights into the subject being evaluated. Obviously, an evaluation team could be seriously misled by the biased opinions of a few individuals. It is important, therefore, that the net be cast wide so that many opinions are collected. The onus is then on the evaluators to interpret what they have heard from their many sources. When discrepancies are found it is often necessary to extend the number and range of informants in order to reconcile them and arrive at a more correct picture.

5. Cost analysis. It is extremely useful to include cost analysis. But often there is not enough time to carry out a detailed cost analysis and corners are cut; a trained economist may not be a member of the RAP team. Costs to external development agencies, government and people are taken into account. The main aim here is to raise issues of sustainability of activities and to make sure discussions of options for greater efficiency take place on the basis of some facts, and broad orders of magnitude.

6. Quantitative data, collected in various samples such as community-based sentinel sites. Quantitative data collection during a RAP process has become an easier task with recent advances in computer and printing technology. Quantitative data collection, including the design and production of questionnaires, and the input, analysis and feedback of data in the field can be done much faster now than was the case ten years ago. A good example of the frontiers of field use of computer technology is the work being pioneered at the Centre for Tropical Disease Research, Acapulco, Mexico, where large community-based quantitative surveys, with sample sizes ranging into tens of thousands, have been locally planned, carried out, and the results fed back to the public within a period of days [5]. This use of computer technology in a RAP style evaluation, is in itself an example of a participatory evaluation method.

In the past five years UNICEF has used a series of RAP evaluations - using all of these methods - in a number of thematic evaluations which are oriented to identifying lessons learned; for example, a study of growth monitoring and promotion in seven countries. In a series of assessments of how social mobilization was used to achieve universal immunization, multidisciplinary teams participated in a wide range of mobilization activities in communities studied.

As part of the evaluation process, parts of the team, with normally three to four people in each group, spend two to four days in each of a number of villages. During this time guardians of young children are interviewed individually and group discussions are held. Observations of growth monitoring sessions are carried out. Interviews are held with key informants such as village leaders and health workers about the running of programmes of which growth monitoring forms a part. Random sample surveys are carried out to determine the coverage and frequency of growth monitoring activities, and costing exercises are carried out. When possible a debriefing and feedback is given to the villagers before the team moves on to the next village.

### ***Disseminating initial findings, reaching consensus, making recommendations for action and final reports***

After the RAP team has finished the assessment phase of the work, they are left with the task of going through a process of briefing people, getting feedback, and trying to reach a consensus on what needs to be done and by whom. In practice there are limits to how much consultation can be done as it may be difficult for all key decision makers to make themselves available to be able to consider and give balanced feedback to the RAP team during the tight timetable which is a feature of RAP.

A useful part of the consultation process is the production of written draft recommendations and findings produced for steering committee members and other key decision makers for their individual review and feedback. Much useful comment and feedback can come through this channel which would not come to light during group meetings. As with any evaluative exercise, evaluators are often in a position to say things which others, for one reason or another, cannot.

Developing concrete recommendations is a way of focusing discussions so that suggestions for improvement in the way development resources are used can be properly discussed. Such discussions are essential to ensure that the recommendations for action which are made by the RAP team are realistic and implementable.

As part of the de-briefing process a preliminary report is produced. Initially this may be a draft for discussion. The final report should be easily readable and accessible. The ideal size of the main body of a RAP report is no more than fifteen to twenty-five pages. Busy decision makers cannot afford the time it takes to dissect a weighty report to find key points requiring action. A UNICEF RAP report generally will include findings, lessons learned and recommendations for action. When possible, a timetable should also be included specifying when recommended actions should take place and who is responsible for the action.

The emphasis of a RAP report is information for action to a group of decision makers who should themselves be involved in the RAP process. Recommendations and findings are given prime space at the start of a report and less crucial information like methodologies and background information, which are usually well known to the key decision makers who are the main audience of the report, are placed towards the end. This style of report structure often overturns the conventions of academic report writing.

The final report has to be seen in the light of the whole RAP process. As noted, the process is as important as the final product.

### ***Constraints to the application of RAP in UNICEF evaluations***

A main aim of a RAP evaluation, the arrival at consensus on recommendations for action, is never an easy task. If key decision makers are absent when debriefings are taking place, they do not give feedback in time for their comments to be taken into consideration in the production of a final report. Consensus on what to do is sometimes not reached. Key decisions cannot be made because of extraneous political factors. Sometimes it is found that too much emphasis is placed by some key decision makers on a final written report when in a RAP it is the process - the raising of issues, the discussions, the debates - rather than the product, which is of greatest value when it comes to finally influencing concrete actions.

A number of lessons can be drawn from recent UNICEF experiences using RAP. First, it is crucial that key players make themselves available to take part in as much of the process as possible rather than dwelling on a final written product; active participation of decision makers at several key stages is a crucial part of the RAP process. This is a key difference between RAP and other types of evaluative processes.

Second, a RAP team must be expert at communicating findings in a clear and analytical way so that issues can be quickly grasped and understood.

Third, the RAP process is facilitated when the principles of RAP are well understood by key decision makers taking part in the process. Sometimes there can be cultural problems associated with the RAP style; consensus on some subjects may be something which would normally have taken several months or years; there may be very good reasons why consensus is not wanted; decision makers may have a negative reaction to a draft recommendation and, rather than entering into a debate so as to try and reach consensus, refrain from taking further part in the process.

Fourth, most of these pitfalls and others can be avoided if careful attention is paid during the initial stages of a RAP on how the process should proceed.

A RAP evaluation can be a challenging process for those who are taking an active part. Resources are slim, the days are long, and the issues being tackled are usually broad; mistakes are made, but usually, on balance, UNICEF RAP evaluations turn out to be positive processes in which many lessons are learned and ways are found to better the way resources are being used to benefit the well being of children.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, what does the RAP process as used by UNICEF describe? It is born from the realization in UNICEF that many projects are most usefully evaluated in a less rigorous, less expensive, and less time-consuming way than was classically the case in the past but that a more

rigorous approach than the classic field trip is also required. RAP is a compromise between the classical academic style of examination, and one person making recommendations based on a few interviews with key people and perhaps a field trip to a project site. It is not meant to replace either of these approaches, but rather it is a complementary process. A key aspect of RAP is the emphasis placed on hearing the voice of the people through the use of anthropological techniques.

Action-oriented agencies sometimes need evaluation processes that will quickly lead to actions that can improve the projects being examined, and which at the same time make the opinions of the people whom UNICEF is trying to help heard. The RAP approach has proved to be a popular answer to this need.

## **Acknowledgement**

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## **Endnotes**

1. The views expressed in this article are those of the authors, not necessarily those of UNICEF.
2. The following example serves to illustrate this point; it illustrates the general likelihood that British medical doctors will be able to interpret simple statistics of the sort typically used in medical journals. Wulff et al (Wulff, H. et al. What do doctors know about statistics? Stat. Med. 1987; 6: 3-10.) report that medical participants in a course on postgraduate research methods scored a median of 4.0 correct answers out of 9 multiple choice questions on elementary statistical expressions (SD <SE <p<0.05, p>0.05, and r). A random sample of more senior colleagues - doctors working in hospitals - scored a median of only 2.4 and among those who had qualified more than 15 years before the survey the score went down to 2.1. Their conclusion was that " the statistical knowledge of most doctors was so limited they cannot be expected to draw the right conclusions from those statistical analyses which are found in papers in medical journals. "

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COMMENT:

In UNICEF RAP is being used to assess whether Growth Monitoring is working. There have been studies done now in eight countries.

COMMENT:

If a number of well trained and informed people interview and then come back and discuss, you can get some reasonable information. But we need to continue to try to improve this type of work.

COMMENT:

In INCAP, one methodological element used effectively, that may complement and add to RAP is "causal analysis." There is a manual published by WHO on this method.

COMMENT:

Operation research is more specific than RAP in that it is used primarily to test interventions. Operations researchers do not usually use an anthropological approach, but there is some overlap.