



Practitioner's Guide:

Rapid Assessment of Nutrition - RAN



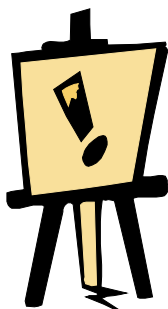
Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Technische Zusammenarbeit
(GTZ) GmbH



Bundesministerium für
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
und Entwicklung

Rapid Assessment of Nutrition - RAN

Brief Description



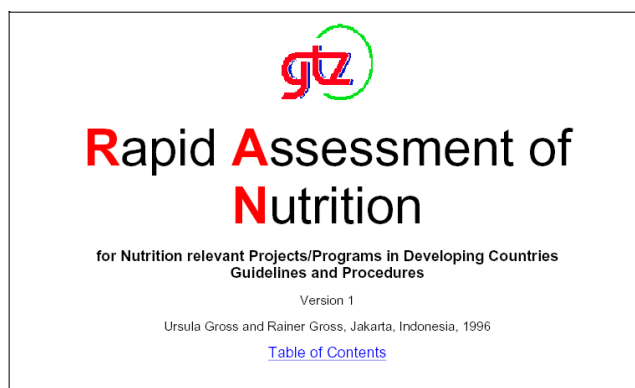
RAN stands for **R**apid **A**ssessment of **N**utrition for poverty and/or nutrition related Project/Programmes in developing countries. RAN is an exploratory method for initial assessment of the absolute poverty and the nutritional situation during project identification (e.g. pre-feasibility study). Once a project idea is considered to be relevant for project/programme development within a deprived region or population, RAN is to be carried out before the decision about the purpose or nature of the evaluated project is made. It can be applied, in an interdisciplinary team, where problems in different areas are to be discussed as causes of the poverty situation. RAN offers a set of methods for data collection:

- ▶ Analysis of existing data, use of results of local surveys or data bases from relevant public or private institutions.
- ▶ Interviews with national, provincial or district planners.
- ▶ Talks with the local resource persons.
- ▶ Transects (compare Transect method in MethodFinder).
- ▶ Group discussions with the potential target population.

These methods allow an overview of the situation, summarizing the main facts and causes of the preliminary defined problems for the final conclusion, describing the degree of concern of a particular nutritional problem.

Malnutrition remains the most adequate indicator for assessing the poverty situation and nutritional vulnerability within a region. Therefore, RAN has integrated the study of body stature of school-children, during project identification, which reflect the poor conditions and food insecure situation of the communities.

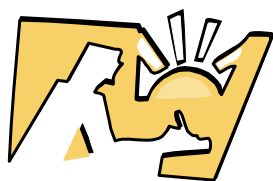
Cross-reference:



Rapid Assessment of Nutrition - RAN

Proposed Main Users

Purpose of the Method



It is a tool to be used in interdisciplinary teams together with agronomists, nutritionists, health experts and social scientists. The main users of method RAN are:

- ▶ Specialists or consultants assigned to conduct feasibility studies.
- ▶ Regional planners or technical staff with knowledge and skills in quantitative and/or qualitative methodology.



The success of projects / programs depends on the adequacy of problem identification, on the capacities of the implementing institutions and on the commitment of the involved actors, to take over the different steps of the project cycle. Many organisations within the development cooperation have recently been emphasising the improvement of planning processes, which includes project identification and design based on the perceived needs of the affected population.

In this context, RAN has the following purpose:

- ▶ Rapidly assessing the existing local situation and related poverty factors of selected rural/urban population groups to obtain basis data for the decision making process about nutrition relevant intervention strategies.
- ▶ Planning and recommending measures, during the project identification of the feasibility process, which can improve nutrition, food security or livelihood security within a community.
- ▶ Rapidly collecting data on the overall conditions (National/provincial/district level) in a systematic way.
- ▶ Obtaining the perception of the potential target population, concerning their nutrition problems and needs.
- ▶ Gaining information on the consideration, approaches and strategies of the decision makers and regional planners at national, provincial and district level.

Rapid Assessment of Nutrition - RAN

Advantages



- ▶ Provides information on nutrition before a final decision on the nature of the project is made (project identification).
- ▶ Is partly participatory since the perception of the problems and needs of the population is assessed through group discussions.
- ▶ Provides a methodology for choosing alternatives or different affected areas through comparing existing indicators or surveys (if available).
- ▶ Provides tools and semi-structured guidelines for sensitisation on nutritional problems.
- ▶ Is a relatively open method, where different subjects and areas, as well as different participatory approaches for data collection, are combined.
- ▶ Provides important information on institutional and organisational aspects and capacities.
- ▶ Integrates local specialists in the screening process.
- ▶ Can be applied in a relatively short time frame (3 weeks).
- ▶ Provides the possibility of negotiation with the local institutions and government officers, and making them more sensible regarding nutrition.

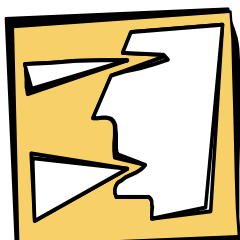
Limitations



- ▶ Is a resource consuming additional methodology, during project identification. (At least two specialists from different disciplines should be engaged in the RAN mission.)
- ▶ Needs specific knowledge on nutrition, rapid appraisal approach, management of participatory needs assessment and data analysis for adequate interpretation of the results.
- ▶ Is not objective or quantitatively assured, but appreciative!
- ▶ Is not a sufficient tool to assess all aspects of the nutritional situation. Nutrition is a complex subject and needs to combine different quantitative and qualitative methodologies, as described in the Nutrition Baseline Survey Methodology.
- ▶ A general criticism of all assessment methods within deprived areas is that there will be no service or intervention, in all survey regions, after RAN assessment procedures have been finished.

Rapid Assessment of Nutrition - RAN

Principles & General Procedures



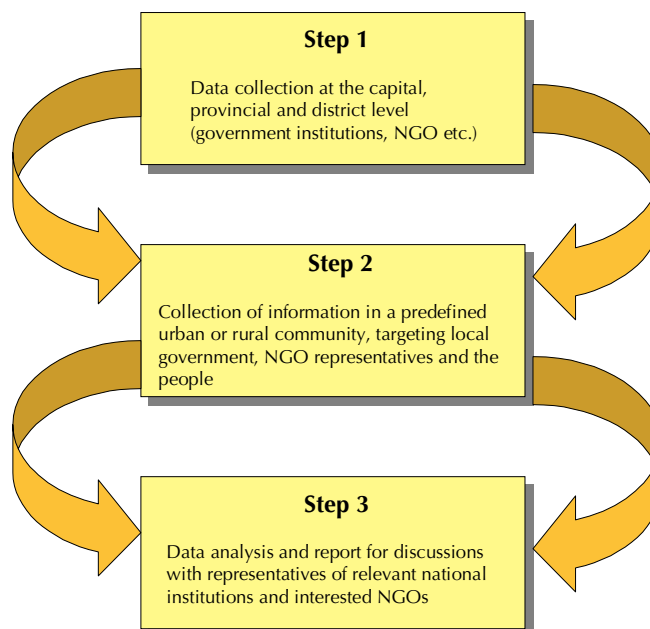
The procedures to apply RAN include mainly the review of existing data and the assessment of the perception of the population to be targeted in the future. The analysis of documents or statistics, and the application of qualitative rapid assessment procedures are the predominant tools during project identification.

RAN usually takes no more than three weeks and depends on the professional experience, the working conditions, the knowledge on local languages, the capacities of the involved institutions and the experience with participatory and rapid assessment tools.

RAN can be applied as a particular methodology, but it can also be part of a general project identification mission.

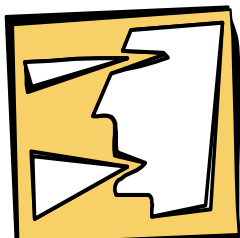
RAN is conceptualised for the systematic assessment of nutrition related information during project identification. The presented methodology serves to guide and orient a project finding mission, collecting data under time pressure and within an unknown context. RAN should therefore be adapted to the local context, e.g. when it is applied in conflict post-war regions or in transformation countries.

Figure 1: Three methodological steps of RAN



Rapid Assessment of Nutrition - RAN

Principles & General Procedures



Step 1: Data collection at the capital, provincial and district level (government institutions, NGOs etc.)

► Methodology:

- a) Review of scientific literature, which can provide some poverty oriented cause-effect-relationships for the population in a specific country.
- b) Review of information gained in governmental offices (Health department, agricultural sector, statistical offices etc.), which provide useful general data on the demographic, health and socio-economic situation at a regional level.
- c) Review of studies conducted by international organisations (World Bank, World Food Program, International Red Cross, Medecins sans Frontière) and national NGOs (Associations working in the area of public health, nutrition, women's affairs, watershed management or rural development).

► The outcomes:

- a) First Interim Report.
- b) Suggestions and assumptions, based on the review of the literature and secondary data records, for reflection and study in the rural/urban areas and communities.

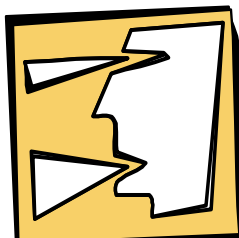
Step 2: Collection of information in a predefined urban or rural community, targeting local governments, NGO representatives and the people

► Methodology:

- a) Several trips to selected communities should be undertaken to talk with the people in the surveyed area.
- b) Transects should be made with local government officers and community leaders, through the district or community, in order to observe and compare the secondary data and the verbally communicated information with the reality.
- c) Group discussion should be carried out with local people, to obtain an idea about food habits, beliefs, customs and perceived needs in the sector of food security.
- d) Measuring the body stature of school children could be a tool if no anthropometric data is available in the region. Measuring the height of children with a simple anthropometric tape can provide important information on chronic malnutrition i. e. if children are too small for their age. This reflects the poor conditions or poverty situation in the communities.

Rapid Assessment of Nutrition - RAN

Principles & General Procedures



► The outcomes:

- a) Second Interim Report, based on the outcome of the talks with local key persons, semi-structured interviews, and question guidelines applied during group discussions in the field.

Step 3: Data analysis and report for discussions with representatives of relevant national institutions and interested NGOs

► Methodology:

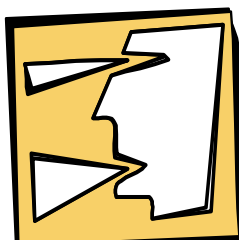
- a) The analysis of the survey forms provides comparable information between communities or geographical areas.
- b) The analysis of the semi-structured interviews provides complementary information about the perception of the people concerning nutrition and poverty.
- c) The analysis of the group discussion provides specific topics (problems, ideas, doubts, perceptions, self-assessment of poverty etc.), which could have emerged during the discussion process at community level.
- d) Cross checking the different sources of information and persons to be involved during project identification helps clarify the understanding of the nutritional and/or poverty situation of the population.

► Outcomes:

- a) The final report, including the main findings, hypothesis for the project planning and conceptualisation of areas to be studied in detail, and the general conclusion on the nature of the project (e.g. Integrated Food Security Project, agricultural extension project, community development project, specific nutrition project etc.)

Rapid Assessment of Nutrition - RAN

Principles & General Procedures



Summary

The following table presents the elements that need to be scheduled while undertaking a RAN during the project identification stage. The table summarises the previous steps 1-3 into 16 smaller steps.

Table 1: Summary of steps 1-3

Nr.	Activity	Time Frame
1	Search and study of literature and reports from international organisations	5 Days needed for steps 1-4
2	Collection of information at national government offices	
3	Talks with representatives of government offices and NGO	
4	Preliminary analysis of information and 1st interim report	
5	Travel to provincial or district level	5 Days needed for steps 5-10
6	Talks with local representatives of government offices and NGO	
7	Analysis of information and local statistics	
8	Selection of 4 rural communities/urban sectors	
9	Finalisation of guidelines of questions to be applied in the field	
10	Preliminary analysis of information and 2nd interim report	
11	Travel to the selected communities or urban sectors	5 Days needed for steps 11-13
12	Assessment in the selected communities, applying informal interviews, group discussions and anthropometric measurement in schools	
13	Return travel to the capital	
14	Analysis of the survey forms and preparation of the summarized report	5 Days needed for steps 14-16
15	Preliminary conclusions and discussion with relevant counterparts and institutions	
16	Final report of the "Project identification Mission"	

Useful forms for field work

Two types of practical forms have been developed to facilitate the application of RAN during project identification:

- 1) Analysis forms (AF) – to be applied during Step 1.
- 2) Survey forms (SF) – to be applied during Step 2.

These forms should be considered as an aid. If necessary, they should be adapted to the specific situation of a survey, and not be considered binding.



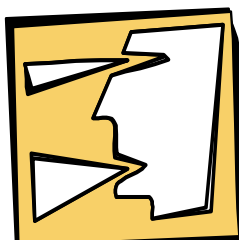
1) Analysis Forms (AF)

The Analysis Forms are developed for:

- a) Data comparison of national average, province and district to identify limited resources and problems.
- b) Partial justification of the pre-selected area for the future project/ program implementation (targeting approach).

Rapid Assessment of Nutrition - RAN

Principles & General Procedures



Note: In general, at the District and Community level, the socio-economic situation of the population and the supply of resources should be worse than at the national average and province level, to be sure an area with poverty conditions has been selected.

Examples of analysis forms have been prepared for fieldwork:

- a) Seasonality in the surveyed area.
- b) Data for the agricultural sector.
- c) Data for the health sector.
- d) Data for the economic sector.
- e) Data for the educational sector.
- f) Demographic data.
- g) Analysis of anthropometric indices (Based on the data obtained from measuring the body stature of the schoolchildren during RAN).

Analysis forms compare the sector related data at the national, provincial and local level, in order to determine the most affected areas. The following table is an example:

Table 2: Analysis form comparing sectoral data at different levels

Indicators	National Average	Province	District	Community (Observed)
Data of the agriculture sector				
Data of the agriculture sector				
Data of the agriculture sector				
Data of other sectors.....				



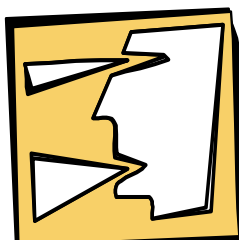
2) Survey Forms (SF)

The survey forms are provided to:

- a) Guide the practitioners again on the points considered as important for observation, interview and group discussion.
- b) Fill in the results of the observation, semi-structured interviews, and group discussions with community members of all communities.
- c) Visualise the results obtained in all communities, comparing them and identifying weaknesses and strengths.
- d) Include the available resources and existing habits in the analysis of alternatives.

Rapid Assessment of Nutrition - RAN

Principles & General Procedures



Examples of survey forms have been prepared for fieldwork:

- a) Infrastructure in the community.
- b) Living conditions of the visited households.
- c) Demographic and socio-economic data.
- d) Health services in the 5 communities.
- e) Survey Form AGRICULTURE – Cultivation.
- f) Survey Form AGRICULTURE – Domestic animals.
- g) Food consumption habits.
- h) Breastfeeding, supplementary feeding and weaning practices.
- i) Anthropometric data collected from schoolchildren.
- j) Analysis of groups and institutions potentially participating in the project.

Survey forms compare the obtained data between different communities, e.g. table 3.

Table 3: Survey form comparing obtained data between different communities

Sector / Subject	Community				Most Affected Community
	A	B	C	D	
Infrastructure					
Schools					
etc.					



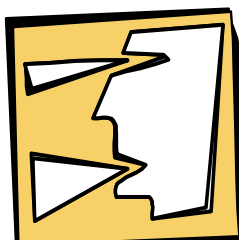
Additional information: Measurements of body stature of school children

The most reliable way of assessing the nutritional situation of a community is to take the body measurement of the children. Children show body growth failures when they grow up under poor conditions or if they are suffering from food shortage or infectious diseases. These failures in body stature are due to long term nutritional or health problems and can be measured. The relative height for age of a preschool child is internationally recognized as an appropriate indicator for the nutritional problem within a community.

Therefore, anthropometric measurements of the first grade in local schools are a good proxy indicator for nutritional problems within the community. Samples should be taken during project identification according to given field conditions and time constraints.

Rapid Assessment of Nutrition - RAN

Principles & General Procedures



- ▶ The standing body height (stature) of the schoolchild is measured in a standing position. The child should stand without shoes on a level floor and should lean with its back against a wall. The child then draws himself or herself to full stature without raising the shoulders, with hands and arms hanging relaxed, with the feet flat on the ground. The legs and heels should be placed against each other. The buttocks, shoulder blades and head should rest against the wall. The estimated line between the eyes and the auditory passages should be level with the floor.
- ▶ The stature should be measured using a microtoise fixed to the wall (to the nearest 0.1 cm). If a microtoise is not available, a wooden rule or a measuring tape (preferable a tape made out of fibreglass) should be placed against the wall. When measuring stature, the measuring tapes or wooden rules, in which a device is placed on the head when the tape or rule is fixed to a wall should not be used. The scale should commence at 0 cm at the floor. Otherwise, the result can be inaccurate, about 1 cm short.
- ▶ A wooden or metal right angle should be employed in measuring. This instrument is placed lengthwise against the measuring tape on the wall and is pressed gently against the head so that the stature can be read on the measuring tape in cm.

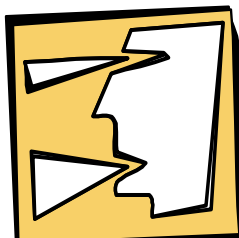
Measuring tapes are sometimes calibrated in inches and centimetres on the same side. This can cause confusion during measurement.

Table 4: Anthropometric Data Sheet of School children
(separate forms for each community)

Community:			
Child (name)	Sex (m/f)	Age* (months)	Height (cm)
* Date of birth if available			

Rapid Assessment of Nutrition - RAN

Principles & General Procedures



Presentation of findings

The final report of RAN should present all relevant nutritional and poverty related information of the potential target population as listed below:

- a) Description of the situation by sector (Summary of the analysis forms).
- b) Description of the situation by region (Summary of the survey forms).
- c) Description of the situation from the community point of view (Analysis of the group discussions and key interviews in the field).
- d) Estimation of the situation from the point of view of policy makers (National, regional, and local).
- e) Results of the anthropometric measurements.
- f) Preliminary description of the problem tree.
- g) Proposal for the type of project.
- h) Proposal for the main project strategies.
- i) Analysis of alternatives.
- j) Summary.

Rapid Assessment of Nutrition - RAN

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