



Rapid Assessment Method for Older People

Minutes of the presentation workshop organised by

HelpAge International, Brixton Health and VALID International

Monday 7th December 2015, HelpAge International office, London, UK

The Rapid Assessment Method for Older People (RAM-OP) is a solution to fill the data gap about older people's needs in humanitarian contexts. It is a thorough, quick, simple, low-cost tool that allows humanitarian and development workers to obtain valuable information on older people specific needs, including their nutritional status, through a house to house survey.

Developed by HelpAge International in collaboration with Valid International and Brixton Health, and with funding from the Humanitarian Innovation Fund, the method is so quick because it requires a sample size of just 192 (regardless of the size of the population to survey) and the process can be achieved in just two weeks, including training and data collection, entry and analysis.

Launched on the 25th November 2015, RAM-OP was presented to various humanitarian actors on December 7, during a one-day workshop. The agenda included:

- Brief presentation of the RAM-OP tool kit
 - Manual
 - Tools: Questionnaire, data entry software, data analysis software
 - What does it produce?
- Methodological considerations
 - Sample design
 - PROBIT estimators for GAM. MAM and SAM
 - Bootstrap: Blocked and weighted
 - Sample size
- The indicators
- The manual and online tool kit
- The future

From the Q&A:

The RAM-OP tool kit is entirely available from open sources: OpenOffice for the questionnaires, EpiData Entry for the data collection files, R Analytic Flow for the data analysis. This is meant to make RAM-OP available to everyone everywhere, quickly.

The data collection could be done on tablets rather than from paper questionnaire. Valid International is currently developing an interface between the e-data collection tools and the data analysis. **Contact: Kristine ALBREKTSEN** kristine@validinternational.org

Sampling Methodology

- First stage: Systematic sampling of 16 clusters (or primary sampling units), list-based or map-based
- Second stage: sampling households in the PSUs in order to interview at minimum of 12 individuals in each PSU: depends on the shape of the village: systematic sampling for ribbons or random walk for clusters

What if a village has more than 12 segments? In this case, divide the village in quarters and sample 3 households in each quarter.

How difficult is it to identify segments and clusters in a village? It is not difficult. You either do it on the day of survey, by discussing with the village officials and asking them to draw a map of the village and its boundaries, or by exploring the village; alternatively, it can be done prior to the survey by getting detailed maps of the selected villages, official maps or man-made maps from key informants.

Why don't you recommend systematic sampling of households (in the second stage), both for ribbons and for clusters? The method is rapid, and thus uses simplified procedures. It would be too long to count all the houses in a cluster, and the random walk is as effective and faster. Additionally: Systematic sampling is an obvious choice for a ribbon segment. You can do it with a little counting and a little arithmetic. It is not an obvious choice for a cluster segment (though sometimes a cluster is a circular ribbon and systematic sampling is simple to do). The simplest approach is to use simple EPI sampling. This is not ideal as it results in a sample with low variance compared to simple random sampling. EPI3 and EPI5 do a much better job.

What about surveying pastoralists, or populations in movement (such as the refugees in Eastern Europe)? RAM-OP might not be the best method for assessing the needs of pastoralists (nor is SMART). ACF has developed a method specific to pastoralist populations. The important thing is to know where the people are moving to and where they are at a given time.

What about slums and urban areas? RAM-OP works well in urban areas. The household sampling is based on a type of systematic sampling (explained page 29 of the manual).

How do you collect population data for the sampled communities? The population data might be available from a census. Alternatively, when visiting the village on the day of the survey, local key informants such as chiefs, committee chairmen or health workers might know this population figures. If this is not available, estimation can be obtained by counting the number of doors in the village, and checking some households to get an average number of people living in each household.

Indicators

Do we need more evidence about the MUAC cut offs used to estimate the prevalence of malnutrition in older people? No, the thresholds used in RAM-OP, and endorsed by HelpAge, are widely used in adults, and have shown to be linked with mortality.

Why is there no mortality indicator in RAM-OP? We decided not to include mortality indicators for the moment, and to focus on the needs of older people. It is difficult to properly measure mortality over a small time scale.

How can you modify or include a new module of questions in RAM-OP? As the RAM-OP questionnaire is modular, you can either use it in its entirety or chose not use some of the questions or module, depending on your resources, your objectives or your constraints.

- First you need to modify the data entry files, by modifying the .qes file, as well as creating a new .rec file and .chk file in EpiData Entry.
- Then you need to modify the R data flow by adding the new module. If you wish to use a simplified version of the questionnaire by deleting module, it is easy to modify R accordingly by eliminating the modules from the data flow analysis.

RAM-OP: the future

There were suggestions to create a RAM-OP users' group, with a shared dropbox where additional documents would be available.

Also suggestions to elaborate joint proposals between agencies interested in RAM-OP in order to implement more surveys with the method.