

Introduction to Verbal Autopsy

Webinar upon the release of
2022 WHO verbal autopsy instrument

Robert Jakob, Team Lead - Classifications and Terminologies Unit WHO/HQ
Carine Alsokhn, Classifications and Terminologies Unit WHO/HQ

6 April 2022



World Health
Organization

Definition



Image conceded with permission by Greg Kabadi

Verbal autopsy is a structured interview with the caregivers or next of kin of the deceased that can be used to determine the most likely cause of death.

Where no physician sees the dead

Purpose of this WHO verbal autopsy instrument



Routine use at the **population** level
usable with software algorithms



Determining causes of death in settings
without physician certification in routine CRVS.



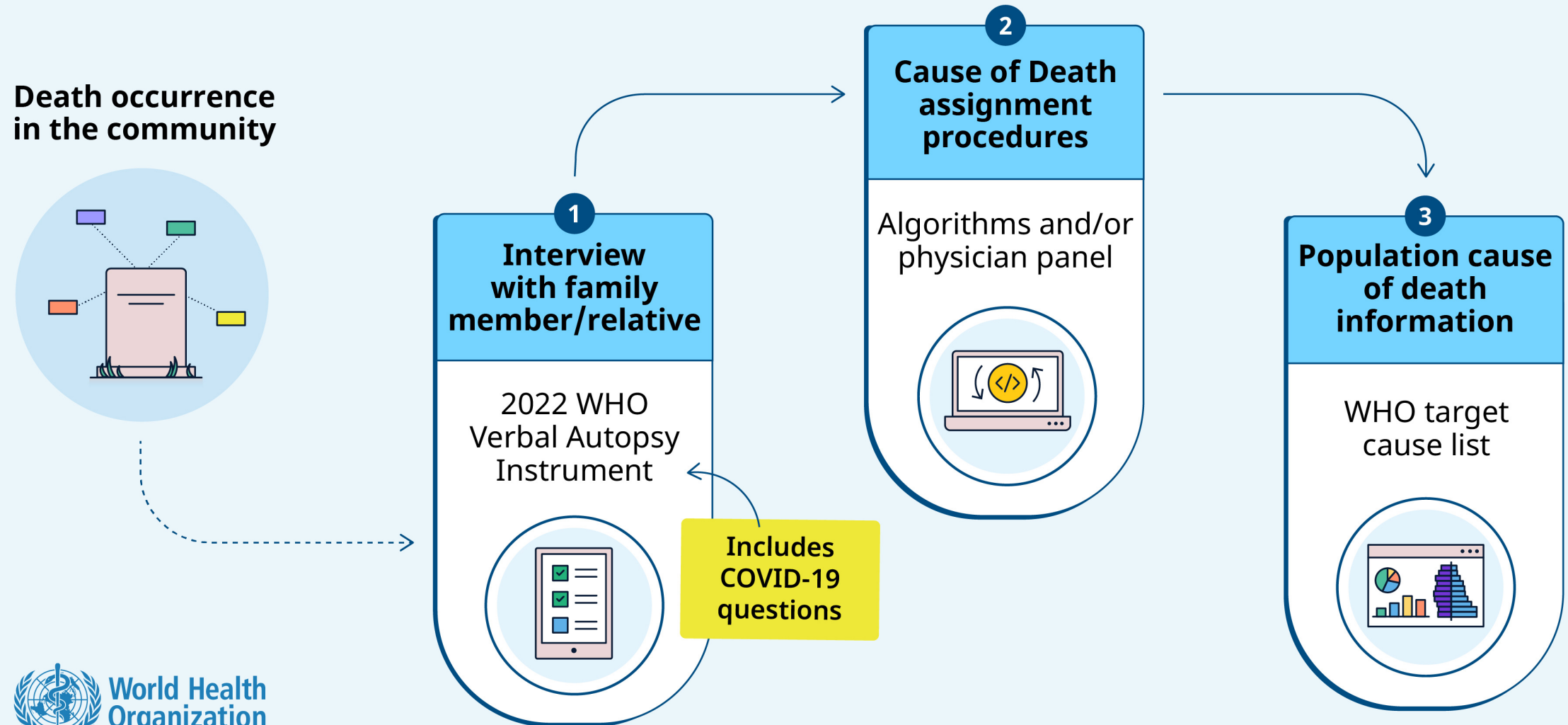
Common base extendable for research purposes



Do not replace physician-certified cause of death.



The Verbal Autopsy (VA) System: tools and process overview



VA Interview

VA questionnaire
Interviewers
Guidance manuals



VA Cause of death assignment methods

1. PCVA
'Physician Coded Verbal Autopsy'
2. CCVA
'Computer Coded Verbal Autopsy'
 - SmartVA-n
 - InterVA-n
 - InsilicoVA

OpenVA
Platform

WHO does not recommend any particular software algorithms

Physician assessment remains the gold standard

Aggregate to CSMFs

'Cause-Specific Mortality Fractions'

Causes of death tabulation list
Data analysis programmes



Application of WHO VA Tools in CRVS systems



Death notification system



VA System – population sample

- ❖ VA CoD list: 66 CoD mapped to ICD-10
- ❖ WHO VA questionnaire: Personal & vital registration information of the deceased

Digital Data Collection

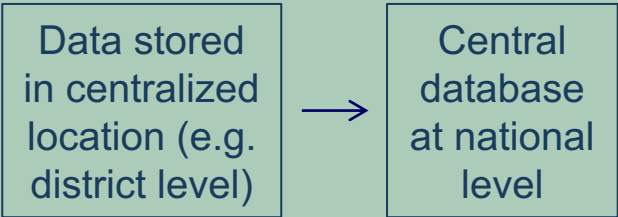
- ❖ Data collection software
- ❖ ODK version of WHO VA questionnaire for CRVS
- ❖ VA data quality assurance system



Data analysis and Cause of Death assignment



Data storage – national setting



Statistical office; Ministry of health; Ministry of justice; Ministry of Interior

Data management & analysis capacity using

InterVA; SmartVA; InsilicoVA; OpenVA

and
or

Physician review

2022 WHO verbal autopsy instrument

WHO simplified VA instrument for routine use, within CRVS systems

Short list of causes of death

- Feasible to certify from VA
- Public health importance

WHO standard VA questionnaire

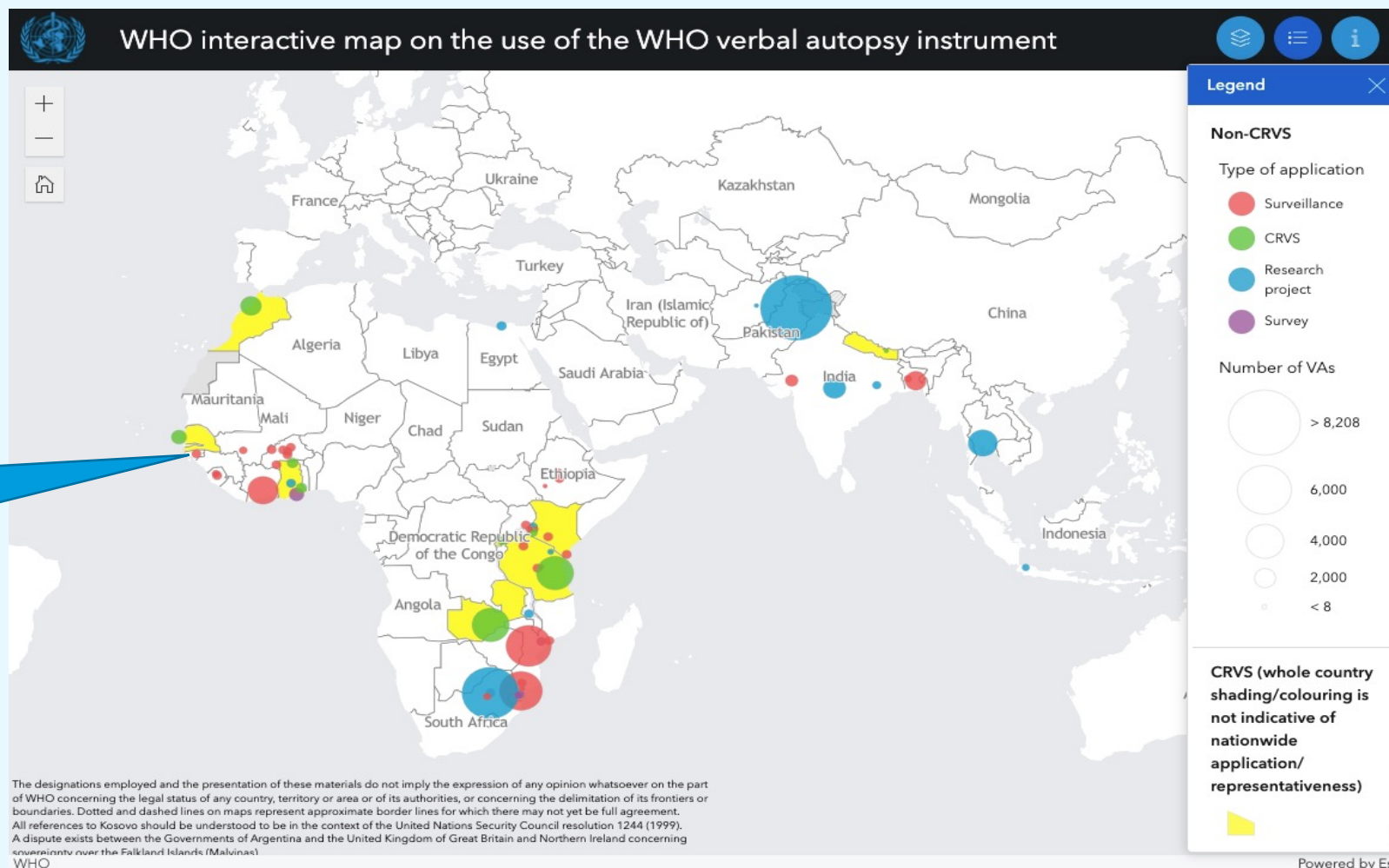
- Relevance for diagnosing the target causes of death
- Feasible to recognise, recollect and report in VA interviews
- Short interviews
- Suitable for software

Release of the 2022 WHO VA instrument

The revision of the 2016 WHO Verbal Autopsy (VA) instrument is the result of the comprehensive inputs of the full WHO Verbal Autopsy Reference Group (VARG) with the support of WHO regional and country offices, the tireless efforts of the Small Revision Task Group, and the contribution of many countries with data and expertise.

The development of the 2022 WHO VA instrument would not have been possible without the collaboration and support of numerous countries, organizations, institutions and individuals.

WHO interactive map on the use of the WHO verbal autopsy instrument



Guinea Bissau
1st user of 2022
VA Instrument

Map of use of WHO Verbal Autopsy in research, surveys, demographic surveillance and in CRVS systems, and contribution to the 2022 revision

Acknowledgements



WHO Verbal Autopsy Reference Group (VARG) Revision Task Group:

Aurelio Di Pasquale, Swiss TPH;

Daniel Chandramohan, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine;

Samuel J. Clark, The Ohio State University;

Daniel Cobos, Swiss TPH;

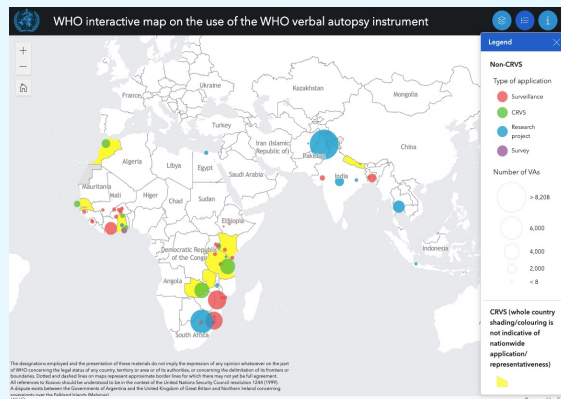
Don de Savigny, Swiss TPH;

Erin Nichols, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), D4H;

Jordana Leitao, Angola;

Peter Byass, Umeå University Centre for Global Health,

Robert Mswia, Vital Strategies, D4H.



Support by countries
with data and
expertise

Other WHO VA Reference Group members:

Chalapathi Rao, Australian National University;

Carla Abou-Zahr, D4H;

Riley Hazard, Sonja Firth, CDC Foundation;

Tita Rosita Wiguno, Indonesia Agency for Health Research and Development;

Shams El Arifeen, International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research;

Henry Kalter, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHBSPH);

Lalit Dandona, Public Health Foundation of India;

Samuel Cheburet, Ministry of Health, Kenya;

Arvind Pandey, National Institute of Medical Statistics, India;

Vishnu Rao, National Institute of Medical Statistics, India;

Soewarta Kosen, National Institute of Health Research Indonesia;

Debbie Bradshaw, Pamela Groenewald, South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC);

Edward Fottrell, UCL Centre for International Health and Development;

Martin Bratschi, Philip Setel, Vital Strategies, D4H;

Financial support: Bloomberg Data for Health (D4H)

WHO Verbal Autopsy Standards



Access all information at
<https://tinyurl.com/WHO-VA2016>



... or use the QR code



...or email us on
verbalautopsy@who.int

Agenda of the webinar



01

Release of 2022 WHO VA instrument

02

Give an overview of the development of
The WHO verbal autopsy instrument

03

The methods used to improve the current WHO
VA standards. A catalogue of the changes and
improvements in the instruments

04

Verbal autopsy implementation and
application in the field. Information on how to
access the available tools and guidance
needed for VA implementation

05

A quick demo of electronic tools for 2022
WHO verbal autopsy instrument

06

Questions and Answers