



Community Level Data Capture

Learning objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe the process for initiating a Verbal Autopsy in the MPDSR
- List basic principles of good VA
- Identify some of the ethical and logistical challenges of VA

Verbal Autopsies

- Collect data from family members, friends, neighbors, and potentially HEW on circumstances around death
- Help construct the “pathway to death” including background factors
- Investigates
 - the woman’s or the babies health issues,
 - decisions about care,
 - services received, and
 - community factors (e.g. Transportation)

Community Data Collection - process

Any community member can alert HEW about deaths of women 15-49

- HEW identify deaths, report them as part of PHEM, screen for maternal causes, and notify HC
- Data from VA presented at the HC review committee

Logistical Issues

- Timing is important – VA should be conducted after the mourning period, but before key details are forgotten (roughly 2 weeks after the death)
- Important to find respondents familiar with the case and events leading up to it
- Families may have separated or moved

Ethical Issues

- Maternal deaths are emotional events
- Grief of the family must be respected
- Information provided must be voluntary
- There should be no repercussions for family members' actions
- The VA process can raise sensitive issues requiring support (disagreements, abortion, lack of available care)

Informed Consent

- Formally establishes voluntary participation
- Reassures family members
- Can offer legal protection to communities
- Builds rapport and trust before starting data collection

Informed Consent:

When obtaining Informed Consent, remember to mention ...

- Purpose of the VA interview
- What will happen during the interview
- Risks involved (feeling uncomfortable, sad)
- Benefits (avoiding future deaths)
- Confidentiality
- Voluntary participation

Steps in Conducting VA:

- Planning a community visit
- Approaching the household
- Selecting the best respondent(s)
- Obtaining Informed Consent
- Conducting the VA interview
- Recording the information accurately
- Submitting the filled format to the Health Centre

Best Practices for Verbal Autopsy (1)

- Friendly approach – Explain the purpose of your visit in positive terms
- Ensure privacy – Interviews will go more smoothly if you are undisturbed
- Speak slowly & clearly – explain anything that the respondent doesn't understand
- Probe for detailed information

Best Practices for Verbal Autopsy (2)

- There are NO “right answers” - let respondents tell their story in their own words
- Take notes – write down additional relevant information in the blank spaces of the VA form
- Pay attention – show that you are listening & aware of respondents’ emotions

