

Workshops on cause of death data and CRVS strengthening in the Republic of Marshall Islands

(18–20 March 2024)

CONCEPT NOTE

Overview

The Pacific Community (SPC) in collaboration with Pacific Island Health Officers Association (PIHOA), Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), other Brisbane Accord Group (BAG) partners, and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) will run workshops in the Republic of Marshall Islands to build capacity in medical certification of cause of death and strengthen CRVS systems. These workshops will build on previous workshops¹ and are funded by Vital Strategies Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative and SPC/ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The workshops will comprise:

1. Training in medical certification of cause of death
2. Drafting action plans to improve medical certification of cause of death, verbal autopsy, coding support, vital statistics
3. Reconvening the CRVS committee and updating the CRVS Improvement Plan

The specific workshop design is based on consultation with local island officials. Specific objectives and expected outcomes are provided in this document.

Certificates of attendance will be awarded to participants of the medical death certification training. The workshops will make use of existing training materials and support tools developed by BAG partners and Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative.²

Local and regional priorities

These workshops will respond to local and regional priorities identified at meetings of the BAG, US-Affiliated Pacific Islands CRVS Technical Working Group³, and ASTHO. Besides these, local participants will be able to highlight CRVS data capacity needs specific to their contexts and work on improvement plans.

The Action Plan for Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APPCRVS)⁴ provides the mechanism by which the BAG partners coordinate, plan and manage the implementation of technical activities at national and regional level to improve national CRVS systems and the quality and routine availability of vital statistics data derived from these systems. There are 5 key priorities of the APPCRVS 2023–2026: Priority 4 is *Strengthening Cause-of-Death Certification and Coding*. Under this action area, the objectives are:

- Sustainable national and regional capacity in cause-of-death certification training for new graduates and doctors already practicing in the country;
- High-quality coding of cause-of-death data, including regional coding capacity for countries unable to sustain expertise internally;

¹ See [Regional Training Workshop on Medical Certification of Cause of Death | Statistics for Development Division](#) and [Regional Training Workshops on ICD Mortality Coding | Statistics for Development Division \(spc.int\)](#)

² See above footnote 1.

³ [USAPI CRVS Technical Working Group meeting](#)

⁴ See [Action Plan for Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics](#)

- Data quality audits and improvements.

Priority 5 of the APPCRVS 2023–2026 is *Data analysis, reporting, dissemination and use for policy and planning*. For this action area, the objectives are:

- National data analysis capacity through regional capacity building activities
- National and regional levels platform for data dissemination.

At the USAPI CRVS Technical Workgroup meeting, 15 regional priorities were identified and mapped to the APPCRVS priorities. One of these was for *Regular training and education to be provided* in relevant CRVS areas for CRVS administrative personnel as well as clinicians, such as in use of birth and death forms, data analysis, reporting, ICD-10 (eventually ICD-11) coding, MCCD, peer learning from successful projects. Some training may be supplemented or supplanted with regional capacity (e.g., regional hubs for coding). Another priority was to *Leverage CRVS data to their full potential* – improve the collection, analysis, reporting, and use of CRVS data.

ASTHO have prioritized efforts to increase Pacific Island inclusion in federal CRVS-related public health datasets to promote improved public health policy, planning, and programming⁵. This includes efforts to ensure island capacity for vital statistics and mapping federal and multilateral agency data collection efforts.

Participants and facilitators

Each workshop day will have a different target audience from national health departments, statistics, and civil registration offices.

- **Days 1 and 2 on MCCD training is aimed at:**
 - Certifiers of cause-of-death including doctors and nurse practitioners
 - Hospital administrators and senior Ministry of Health staff
- **Day 3 a) on workshopping action plans for death certification, coding support, verbal autopsy improvements is aimed at:**
 - Representatives from Ministry of Health including PH secretary, Vital Statistics Office, Health Information System Unit, National Referral Hospital, Planning and Policy Unit, Maternal and Child health
 - Representatives from Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics Office
 - Representatives from other departments engaged with mortality data.
- **Day 3 b) on reconvening CRVS committee and workshopping CRVS improvement plan is aimed at:**
 - Representatives from Ministry of Health
 - Representatives from Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics Office
 - Representatives from Ministry of Internal Affairs (includes Civil Registry Office)
 - other CRVS agencies; development partners; and academic institutions.

Facilitators and contributors for all workshops are specialists working with relevant BAG partners involved in building capacity in cause-of-death certification, ICD coding and CRVS.

- Facilitators:
 - SPC
 - Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
 - PIHOA
 - ASTHO
 - Previously-trained individuals where possible

⁵ See [Including Island Areas in Federal Public Health Datasets Report](#) (Oct 2022)

- Other contributors:
 - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) which hosts the WHO-FIC Collaborating Centre and the Pacific Health Information Support Hub (PHISH)
 - Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

Days 1 & 2 – Medical certification of cause of death workshop

Objectives

- Provide training to physicians on medical certification of cause of death in accordance with International Classification of Diseases (ICD) standards and best practice
- Assist participants to build proficiencies required to conduct training

Workshop design and materials

Two training programmes will be held: one on Day 1 and repeat on Day 2. This allows two groups of authorised certifiers of deaths (physicians and senior nurse practitioners) and senior health staff, to attend.

The workshop will include a mixture of:

- Experts' presentations
- Group exercises and presentations on medical case vignettes scenarios from MCCD certification work and answer books

Participants will be required to bring to the workshop:

- A copy of the forms for the medical certification of deaths [Adult, child, perinatal deaths] currently used in the country
- Laptop
- Materials downloaded from a link to be given closer to the date.
- Completed pre-workshop questionnaire/survey

Day 1 & 2 agenda for MCCD training is being finalised and will be provided separately.

Expected Outcomes

On completion of the training in MCCD, the participants should be able to:

- Explain the importance of correct medical certification of cause of death in producing accurate reliable cause of death statistics.
- Describe and apply the concept of underlying cause of death and the sequence of events leading to death.
- Correctly complete standard Forms of Medical Certificate of Cause of Death
- Demonstrate the skills needed to train other practitioners in correct medical certification of cause of death practices

Day 3 – Renewing CRVS improvement plan

Objectives of the meeting

- Develop action plans to improve medical death certification, verbal autopsy and coding practices and data quality
- Outline action steps to revitalise the national CRVS Committee (or Technical Working Group)

- Review and update the existing CRVS improvement plan and agree to its finalisation, endorsement and implementation.

Design and materials

This workshop will include group facilitation, discussion, and feedback.

Participants will be required to bring to a laptop to the workshop.

Participants will be provided with electronic copies or links to relevant resources and references.

Day 3 agenda is being finalised and will be provided separately.

Expected Outcomes

By the end of the meeting, the participants will have:

- Provided feedback on quality of mortality data and importance for vital statistics.
- Developed a draft action plan for improving MCCD practices and data
- Improved awareness of coding capacity needs and opportunities of regional coding support
- Reengaged the CRVS committee and updated the CRVS improvement plan
- Agreed on action steps for the finalisation, endorsement, publication and implementation of the CRVS improvement plan

Funders

