SDK's Field Preparation Guide

The nature of field work is that it's unpredictable! Secure Data Kit is built especially to work well in a variety of situations, but it's always wise to have plans in place should there be any surprises.

Testing your forms and devices

Before you go into the field, it's imperative that you test the forms on the devices that you plan to use in the field. We have a list of supported devices and minimum system requirements that can be found here. Here are a few best practices we've found helpful when testing your forms and devices.

- Test the forms for accuracy and functionality on the same devices you plan to use in the field. It's helpful to also test the devices while totally offline, since it's common to lose internet access in the field.

- Test the forms with the population you are serving to ensure the language is culturally appropriate and that questions and answers are interpreted as you intend.

Training your field team

In addition to training for the specific work you're doing, it's also helpful to host a technical training with your field team to ensure they know how to use the Secure Data Kit technology. We provide setup instructions for each project, and can also host the training in person anywhere in the world! We recommend having the following standard operating procedures in place with your field team to ensure the data collection process is a smooth one.

- **Regular Syncing** — Depending on the location of your field work, it may be difficult to sync multiple times throughout the day. Choose a syncing interval that you feel would work for your project's purposes, and make sure your team has the resources they need to do so. For some teams this may syncing

weekly from your field offices, for others you may require that they sync at the beginning and end of every day. Whatever you choose, stick to it as best you can so you're always aware of when to expect data from your field team.

- **Communication Methods** — Set up communication lines with your team so they can be in touch with you from the field. WhatsApp groups work really well for this.

- **Do Not Tamper Rule** — Secure Data Kit is designed to safely collect and store data offline in difficult environments. When the device is not tampered with, this works really well. There are two specific things we do not allow during the duration of your project to ensure your data stays safe on the device. Make sure your team is aware of these rules.

  - Do **not** take the sim card out of the device.

  - Do **not** explore the device's file system when it's plugged into a computer.

- **Backup Plan** — Make your team aware of the backup plan should anything go sideways in the field. See the last section of this document for a backup plan checklist!

Bringing the right gear

- It's important that you work with devices that meet our minimum system requirements and are on our supported device list. You can find that list here.

- It's always good to have portable chargers along with the supported devices you've chosen for your field work, especially if you plan to be in the field for more than a few hours at a time. Solar chargers work well in certain cases but are dependent on the weather, so we recommend good old fashioned portable chargers that don't rely on solar energy.

- If your form contains a question asking for GPS coordinates, note that getting these coordinates works off satellite regardless of internet connection or data availability. However, GPS is dependent on the weather. It is not as effective indoors, under trees or on cloudy days. We recommend carrying a GPS with you to use as a backup if the devices fail to get the coordinates in a timely manner, or to have another way to track location that's not GPS (like

capturing addresses, marking your location on a paper map to later get coordinates from, using What3Words, etc.

Having a backup plan

We always hope for the best, and plan for the worst. Our technology is designed to work in the most difficult of environments, but sometimes surprises happen — devices get dropped in raging rivers, trampled by a herd of buffalo, or disappear out of thin air. It's best to have a backup plan in place in case anything goes wrong. Here's our backup plan checklist to ensure nobody is pulling their hair out!

- ☐ If you are using the Secure Data Kit mobile device on iPhone or Android, it's best to *also* have our Legacy application installed on all Androids. This legacy application has been around for years, and serves as a really wonderful safeguard if the Secure Data Kit app fails for any reason.

- ☐ As a safeguard to your safeguard, it's also a great idea to have paper forms designed and a plan in place to print and distribute them if you need it. If you know printing will be difficult or impossible in the environment you're working in, print out a weeks worth of forms ahead of time and ensure your data collectors have them on hand.