

# SOP 1: Overview of the ESPEN Collect Platform

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide detailed information on ESPEN Collect, an essential platform for data collection as part of the elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases with Preventive Chemotherapy (NTD-CP). This document will serve as a comprehensive guide for anyone involved, even minimally, in surveys using ESPEN Collect.

ESPEN Collect is a free mobile platform designed for national programmes (Ministry of Health), neglected tropical disease NGOs, and other partners in the World Health Organization (WHO) African Region [1]. It is simple to use and train and works even in areas with little or no Internet connection [1].

Since its launch in August 2018, the ESPEN Collect platform has been adopted by more than 30 African countries, supporting more than 200 surveys through to 2024 [1]. This extensive use has provided valuable data and developed best practice for every aspect of a survey. The experience gained over the years has helped to refine processes and ensure efficient and reliable data collection.

The ESPEN Collect platform plays a crucial role in the elimination of NTD-CP. By facilitating the collection of accurate, real-time data, it enables decision-makers to take informed action to combat neglected tropical diseases such as lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, schistosomiasis, and soil transmitted helminthiasis [1]. The data collected through this platform contributes to improving the quality of life of millions of people.

This document covers all the essential aspects of using the ESPEN Collect platform. By following the guidelines and best practices described, users will be able to conduct surveys efficiently and obtain high-quality data. This data is crucial for planning targeted interventions and evaluating the impact of healthcare programmes.

In summary, this document describes and presents best practices for each stage of a survey, including questionnaire design, use of smartphones, interviewer training, survey organization, data monitoring, data cleaning and submission of results to WHO.

By using this guide, users of the ESPEN Collect platform will be able to maximise the effectiveness of their surveys and make a significant contribution to improving public health in Africa.

## 2. Overview of Related SOPs

This document is part of a comprehensive set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) designed to guide users in the effective use of the ESPEN Collect platform. Below is a list of the associated SOPs, each covering a specific aspect of the data collection process:

- SOP 1: Overview of the ESPEN Collect Platform (this document)
- SOP 2: Procedure for Requesting Access to the Platform
- SOP 3: ESPEN Collect Step-by-Step Guide
- SOP 4: Training Manual for Instructors
- SOP 5: Organizing Surveys
- SOP 6: Guide to Metabase, Monitoring, and Supervising Results
- SOP 7: Data Cleaning and Validation Procedures

Each SOP is designed to be used in conjunction with the others, providing a comprehensive framework for the effective use of the ESPEN Collect platform. Users are encouraged to refer to the relevant SOPs as needed to ensure compliance with best practices and to achieve the highest standards of data quality.

## 3. Users and responsibilities

Here are the categories of people involved with ESPEN Collect surveys:

### a. Data Collector:

- **Role:** The user of the ESPEN Collect mobile app. They are responsible for going to the field, collecting information, and uploading it to the server.
- **Responsibilities:** Data collectors must understand every aspect of the ESPEN Collect mobile app to ensure accurate and efficient data collection.

### b. Trainer of Data Collectors:

- **Role:** A person with a deep understanding of the ESPEN Collect platform. Their role is to train data collectors during training sessions.
- **Responsibilities:** Trainers must not only understand the ESPEN Collect platform but also how the data collection activities will be organized. They ensure that data collectors are well-prepared for fieldwork.

### c. Supervisor/Data Manager:

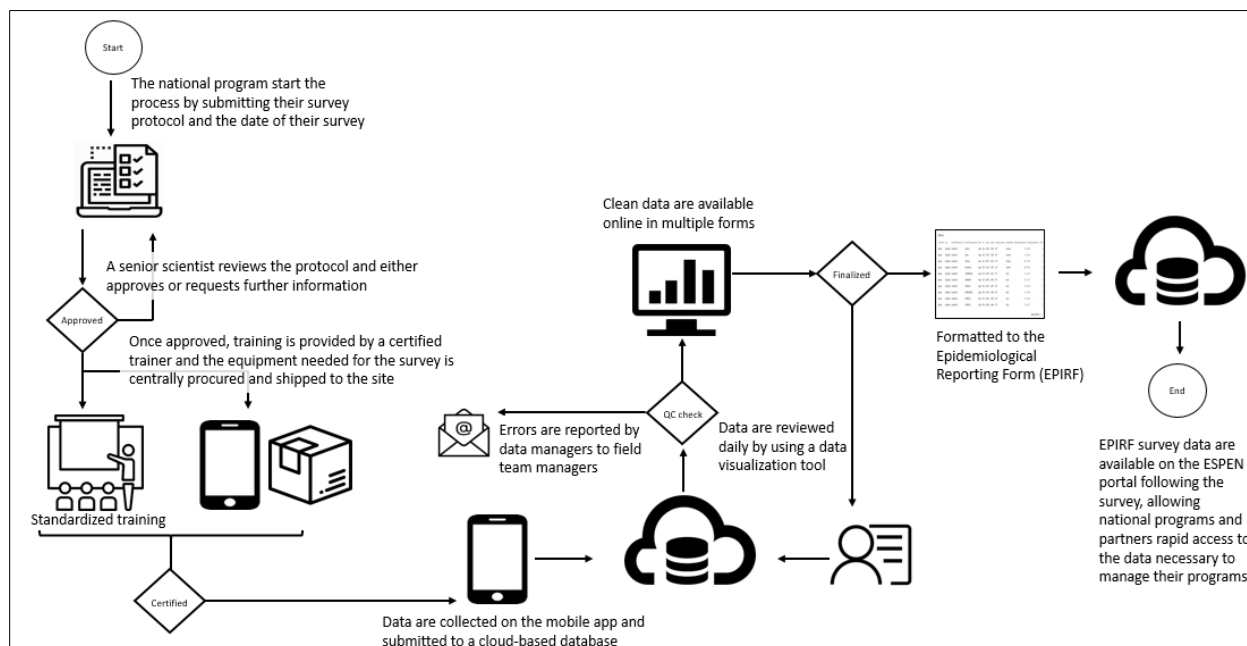
- **Role:** A person working within the Ministry of Health (MOH) or with partner organizations. Their role is to ensure the integrity and quality of the data collected and to address any issues that arise in the field.
- **Responsibilities:** Supervisors/Data Managers must be knowledgeable about the ESPEN Collect mobile app and data visualization tools used for data cleaning. They are responsible for verifying that there are no discrepancies in the collected data.

#### d. ESPEN Collect Data Manager:

- **Role:** The administrator of the ESPEN Collect platform. Their role is to facilitate the use of ESPEN Collect by countries and partners.
- **Responsibilities:** ESPEN Collect Data Managers handle requests, prepare forms, assist countries with training, and ensure the quality of the data collected through ESPEN Collect.

## 4. Description of the platform

The ESPEN Collect system comprises several components and services. This section focuses on the essential components necessary for a successful survey. The five main components are: registration, training, data collection, the online dashboard, and the generation of the Epidemiological Data Reporting Form (EPIRF). Each component is crucial for the survey process.



#### a. Registration:

- **Description:** The first step in using ESPEN Collect is for a country or partner to request to use the platform for a survey that ESPEN Collect supports. This process is detailed in SOP 2.
- **Importance:** Registration ensures that the survey is officially recognized and that the necessary resources and support will be allocated.

#### b. Training:

- **Description:** Training prepares data collectors on how to use ESPEN Collect. It can be conducted remotely or in person. SOP 4 provides more information on the training process.
- **Importance:** Proper training ensures that data collectors know how to use the platform and understand the data collection process.

### c. Data Collection:

- **Description:** This involves the actual collection of survey data in the field. It begins after the training is completed.
- **Importance:** Accurate data collection is critical for generating reliable survey results.

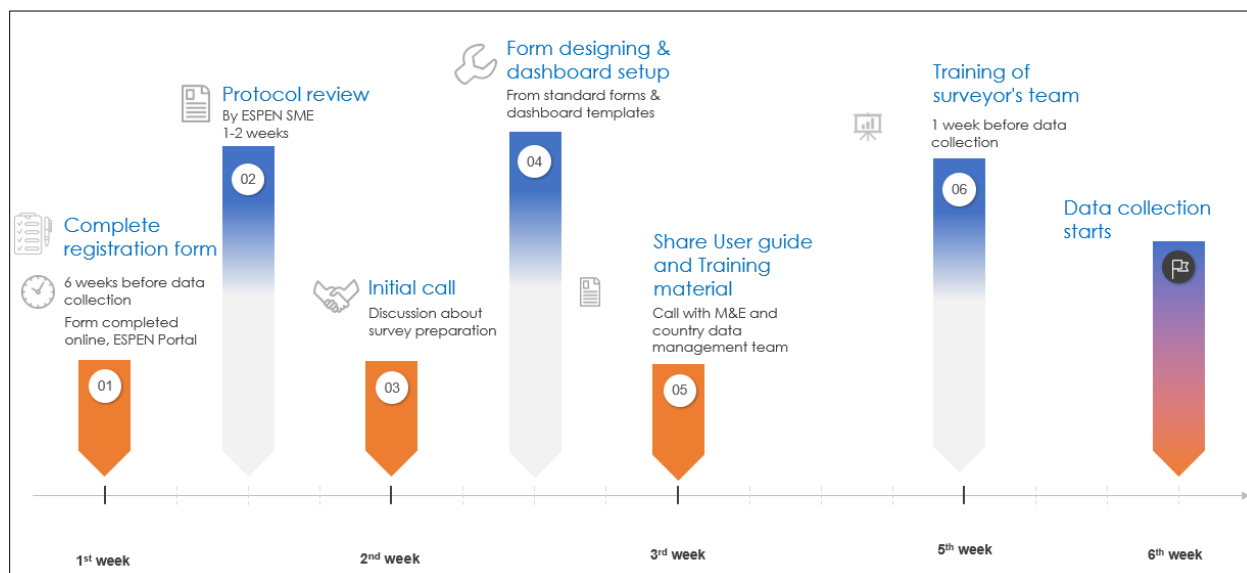
### d. Online Dashboard:

- **Description:** The dashboard is used to monitor data quality, address discrepancies, and clean the data.
- **Importance:** The dashboard provides real-time information into the data collection process, ensuring data integrity and quality.

### e. Generation of the EPIRF:

- **Description:** Once the data is cleaned, the Epidemiological Data Reporting Form (EPIRF) is generated. The country will review and submit it officially to the World Health Organization (WHO).
- **Importance:** The EPIRF is a critical document for reporting survey results and informing MOH, WHO and partners.

The request to use ESPEN Collect must be submitted at least six weeks before the start of the survey. During this period, the survey protocol is reviewed by disease experts, the national ethical authorisation is reviewed, and WHO AFRO grants ethical approval. At the same time, forms are prepared, teleconferences are organised to coordinate the survey, and electronic forms are developed. In addition, training sessions are organised to ensure that data collectors are fully equipped to use the tool, and requests to purchase telephones are processed if necessary. The image below gives more details of this process.



## 5. Security and Confidentiality

The data collected by ESPEN Collect are not publicly accessible and belong to the country where the survey is conducted. Access to the data is restricted to individuals specified by the

country during the survey registration process. Countries can grant or revoke access to the data at any time by sending an official email request. This ensures that only authorized personnel can view and manage the data.

To ensure confidentiality, all data collected are anonymized, meaning no personal identifiers, such as names, are collected. This protects the privacy of individuals participating in the survey. By adhering to these security and confidentiality protocols, ESPEN Collect ensures that the data remains secure, and that the privacy of survey participants is protected.

## 6. Conclusion

This document has provided an overview of the ESPEN Collect platform, its components, and the essential practices for ensuring data security and confidentiality. By following these guidelines, users can effectively utilize the platform to conduct high-quality surveys and contribute to public health improvements.

For detailed instructions on specific processes, please refer to the associated SOPs. The next document, SOP 2: Procedure for Requesting Access to the Platform, provides step-by-step guidance on how to register and request the use of ESPEN Collect.

## References

- [1] ESPEN, "ESPEN Portal - ESPEN Collect," 2025. [Online]. Available: <https://espen.afro.who.int/tools-resources/data-collection-tools/espen-collect>. [Accessed 6 January 2025].