

EPIC: a generic tool for policy-data integration**

ESCAP, together with members of the Regional Steering Group (RSG) on Population and Social Statistics, has developed a generic tool for policy-data integration. EPIC (Every Policy Is Connected) is a tool to facilitate user-producer dialogue for developing a sustainable development indicator set for national and sectoral policies. EPIC is helping producers of official statistics to actively engage with users to understand data needs and gaps. Furthermore, it helps policy makers to review policy documents to identify monitoring and evaluation requirements as well as considerations for future priority setting. The tool aims to increase mutual understanding among users and producers, enhance ownership of indicators by policy makers and increase political and financial support to development of statistical system in the longer term.

I. Background

1. Under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Committee on Statistics, the Regional Steering Group (RSG) on Population and Social Statistics at its August 2017 meeting, agreed on a work plan to achieve three goals in implementing the regional strategy to improve population and social statistics in Asia and the Pacific. The first of these goals is:

Enabling policy environment to maintain demand for population and social statistics. Supportive and well-coordinated policy environment is in place to ensure effective demand for the production and dissemination of the core set of population and social statistics to support Sustainable Development Goal implementation.

2. A key activity to support the achievement of this goal was to develop and pilot a generic tool to support national statistical systems in engaging with their policy counterparts in identifying and prioritizing statistical information needs, including disaggregated statistics. The tool aims to enhance producer-user engagement in different policy contexts.

3. Subsequently, ESCAP initiated three pilot studies to assess the feasibility of applying an existing rights-based tool for assessing policy inclusiveness (EquiFrame)¹ in three policy areas (poverty, women empowerment, and disaster risk management) in two countries (Mongolia and Sri Lanka).² The pilot studies showed the tool can be expanded in terms of domains and components to serve as a data needs assessment, and also facilitate the policy-data integration process through development of a national sustainable development indicator set.

¹ www.hhrjournal.org/2013/08/equiframe-a-framework-for-analysis-of-the-inclusion-of-human-rights-and-vulnerable-groups-in-health-policies/.

² www.unescap.org/events/regional-workshop-%E2%80%98understanding-data-needs-inclusive-development%E2%80%99.

** Modified and adapted for the Technical meeting to strengthen gender indicators and related data production and use in response to policy demands in Viet Nam, 19 – 22 March 2019

4. The first draft of the policy-data integration tool, hereafter called EPIC (Every Policy Is Connected), assumes every public policy is connected to socio-economic wellness of people, the environment they live in and underlying institutional arrangements facilitating implementation of such policies. In turn, these policies are connected by indicators enabling benchmarking of implementation progress. EPIC was developed in the context of achieving the 2030 Development Agenda. Importantly, it was developed based on a discussion a sub-group of RSG members had during a workshop in November 2017 and subsequent trials across different domains during regional (Bangkok, April 2018³), sub-regional (Fiji, March 2018⁴) and national (Samoa⁵, June and September 2018; the Philippines⁶, August 2018) workshops.

5. EPIC covers social, economic, environmental and institutional principles and aims to assess policies and data and official statistics for inclusive development (i.e. inclusive of all target groups and consistent with commonly agreed development principles).

II. Expected Outcomes

6. The two key outcomes from the application of EPIC include:

(a) A national sustainable development indicator set (NSDIS) addressing the need for monitoring of national and sectoral policies, and providing full coverage of the issues for policy action and target groups that in principle must be covered by such policies; and

(b) A set of recommendations for policy makers to review the coverage of issues for action and target groups in the existing policies, and to promote better integration between policy programmes.

7. Ideally, the exercise should also feed into revision/formulation of national development plans and sector plans, national budgets and national strategies for development of statistics (NSDS).

III. Objectives of EPIC

8. EPIC facilitates a participatory and principle-based review of policy and data through fostering dialogue between policy makers, data producers and other relevant stakeholders with the objectives to:

- understand gaps in policy and data in addressing issues related to all relevant target groups as suggested by commonly agreed principles;
- integrate the social, economic, environmental, and institutional principles into every policy and associated monitoring framework, where relevant;
- identify tailored indicators that allow for effective monitoring of policy and planned development priorities, consistent across

³ www.unescap.org/events/unescap-gender-policy-data-integration-initiative-inception-workshop.

⁴ www.unescap.org/events/pacific-workshop-developing-generic-tool-policy-data-integration.

⁵ www.unescap.org/events/samoa-workshop-applying-generic-tool-policy-data-integration-across-all-sectors.

⁶ www.unescap.org/events/national-workshop-gender-policy-data-integration-context-women-s-economic-empowerment-issues.

national planning and resourcing mechanisms;

- create a common platform for effective user-producer dialogue in an equal environment where both policy and data are being benchmarked against a set of principles agreed upon by national stakeholders. Such principles are normally guiding the policy making processes and are also reflected in international conventions; and
- in the longer term and if practiced regularly, increase ownership of indicators and statistics among policy makers and enhance political and financial support to development of national statistical systems.

IV. Users of EPIC

9. The EPIC tool, applied correctly, should involve a range of stakeholders including:

- National, sectoral and local policy makers: Lead the review of all relevant policy/planning documents to ensure all relevant guiding principles are appropriately captured
- National statistical offices: Guide policy makers in the development of appropriate indicators to monitor progress of policies
- Planning and budgeting organisations: Assist in the identification of key priority policies
- Sustainable Development Goal implementation focal points: Guide the process to ensure nationally relevant aspects of the Sustainable Development Goal framework are captured
- Other data producers: Assist the National Statistical Office to guide the process of developing appropriate indicators (including identification of data needs)
- Other stakeholders including civil society and private sector: Assist policy makers in identifying priority issues and strategies to address such issues

V. Conceptual framework

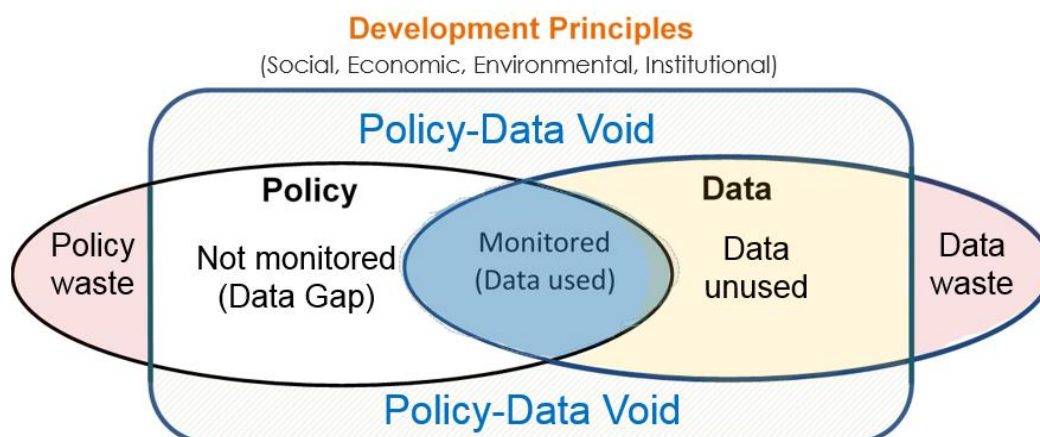
10. The detailed conceptual framework for EPIC is provided in Bidarbakht (2018).⁷

11. The four development pillars, namely social, economic, environmental, and institutional, are interlinked with each other in ‘leaving no one behind’ yet have distinctive data demand and supply. Therefore, any tool that aims to facilitate strengthening the linkage between policy and data need to take a holistic approach which provides emphasis on foundational principles of all four domains.

12. Such a tool has to provide a framework and language for effective and objective communication of both policy and data strengths and challenges. It has to facilitate participatory process and engage all relevant stakeholders. Given the nature and multidimensionality of policy issues, the tool has to

⁷ www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/SD_Working_Paper_no.7_Apr2018_Policy-Data_Integration.pdf.

facilitate integration at two levels: across policy domains/sectors, and between policy and data. As illustrated in the diagram below, the tool needs to take into account not only the existing demand for data, whether being addressed (monitored policy) or not being addressed (data gap), but also identify what data is available and not being used. Furthermore, the tool needs to capture what are the potential demands not reflected in the policy and therefore not reflected in the current data ecosystem (policy-data void). Such assessment will also help further investigation by both policy makers and data producers to not only understand possible gaps in policy and data but also reduce the waste; meaning unnecessary or overlapping actions.



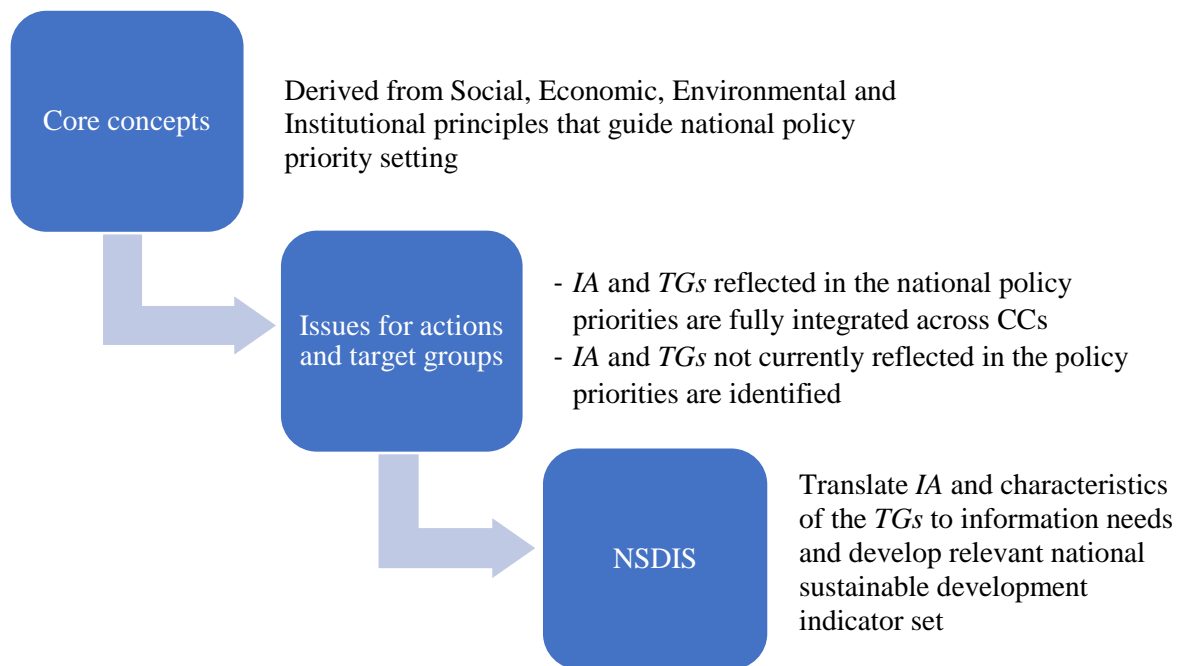
13. Thus, EPIC has been developed with an aim to provide a comprehensive principle-based framework to facilitate cooperative and inclusive dialogue among all stakeholders. It provides a common language for stakeholders to strategically focus on issues addressed by the policy and the impact issues have on relevant target groups mentioned by the policy. To achieve these goals, target groups and issues have to be identified within and outside the policy documents under each of the social, economic, environmental, and institutional principles.

14. Utilizing EPIC allows for a participatory process for stakeholders to map policy onto data availability and enables articulation of new data requirements as well as an opportunity to strengthen content of policies. The tool is developed to identify existing unmet demand for data, lack of demand and potential demands for the future, and mismatch between data demand and supply.

15. EPIC does not intend to pronounce a policy to be superior or inferior. It is not intended to compare one sectoral policy with another but to develop a national sustainable development indicator set that allows for as many issues for action to be monitored, if not all.

VI. Architecture

16. EPIC consist of three major components: core concepts (CCs), issues for action (IA) and target groups (TGs), and linking CCs, IA and TGs in the development of national sustainable indicator set.



(a) *Core Concept (CC)*: Refers to a fundamental concept that is being addressed by one of the social, economic, environmental and institutional principles. The principles may be national guiding principles normally embedded in international conventions ratified by the UN Member States such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁸ (underlying principles for Social and Institutional CCs), principles for inclusive economic growth⁹ (underlying principles for Economic CCs), Rio 92 Declaration on Environment and Development¹⁰ (underlying principles for Environmental CCs). EPIC enlists key questions for each of the CC. The CCs are often abstract and may not be intuitively understood and associated to the language used in the policy document. In order to overcome this challenge and help users to identify IA and the TGs related to each CC, key questions and examples are provided under each CC in the Annex.

(b) *Issues for action (IA) and target groups (TGs)*: EPIC enables the analyst to identify IA and TGs outlined in a policy.

- **IA**: A set of words identified in the policy document that states the problem requiring a policy intervention or articulating the scope of thought, action or influence.
- **TGs**: Those impacted upon by the selected policy. TGs can be social (e.g. elderly women, children in primary school, unemployed youth, households in rural areas, etc.), economic (e.g. enterprise, establishment, sector), environmental (e.g. oceans, mountains, freshwater, cities, forests, species, etc.), or institutional (e.g. service providers, agencies, organizations, etc).

(c) *Linking CCs, IA and TGs in the development of an indicator set*: The final component enables the analyst to link the CCs, IA and TGs in development of a national sustainable development indicator set. Each IA or TG in the policy may correspond to one or more CCs. Understanding of the IA and TGs naturally help in defining measurable factors (parameters), features

⁸ www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf.

⁹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=893&menu=1561>.

¹⁰ www.un.org/documents/ga/conf151/aconf15126-1annex1.htm.

and characteristics of those factors that vary or change (variables) and subsequently standard measures indicating the state of change in those features will be used for policy monitoring (indicators). The resultant analysis enables identifying policy and data strengths as well as gaps.

CCs play two pivotal roles in the application of EPIC:

i. *Establishing interlinkages across development domains* (social, economic, environmental, institutional). One IA may relate to more than one CC. For instance, “providing healthy working environment” is an IA that may be prioritized only once in the policy document but by mapping this IA against all CCs, the analyst will realize this IA relates at least to CCs 4, 7, 8, 23, 24, and 27 (see Annex). The IA is addressing decent work, but also requires compensating for and protecting from harm due to unhealthy working conditions. It also refers to negative impacts such conditions have on the environment and may need to seek for solutions that create incentives or put sanctions on the employers needing to improve work conditions. The IA in general is not only talking about availability of employment opportunity, but also “quality” of work. Therefore, this IA should be repeated under at least 6 CCs and this will have implications in identifying relevant indicators because each aspect of the IA requires measurement by different indicators.

ii. *Identifying IA and TGs not explicitly reflected in the policy document but could be prioritized in future planning.* By answering the key questions for all CCs (regardless of whether they are already covered by one or more IA or not), analysts can identify additional IA that could potentially be a policy priority but not explicitly reflected in the policy document. This exercise creates a list of IA and associated TGs that may be considered for future policy reformulation.

VII. Steps involved in applying EPIC

17. EPIC involves two stages. Stage I relates to preparing for the analysis and Stage II involves the content analysis. Stage I involves five steps and Stage II involves seven steps. Detailed description of each of the steps are provided in a separate guidelines document.

Stage I: Preparing for the analysis

- Step 1: Identify potential members to form a team for analysis
- Step 2: Identify a policy document for the analysis
- Step 3: Identify sections of policy to analyze
- Step 4: Read and become familiar with the definitions of issues for action, target groups, core concepts, and key questions
- Step 5: Prepare indicator sets for review: National indicator sets (indicators from policy document, other relevant national indicator sets); and Regional/Global indicator sets (Regional core sets, Sustainable Development Goals, Sub-regional indicators etc.)

Stage II: Carrying out the analysis

- Step 6: List issues for action (IA) reflected in the narrative and/or planning logic (log-frame and M&E section) of the policy document

- Step 7: Associate each IA with CCs to create an IA/CC combination
- Step 8: Identify target groups (TGs) for each IA/CC combination
- Step 9: Map national indicators on each IA/CC combination to identify suitable indicators for monitoring
- Step 10: Map global/regional indicators on each IA/CC combination to identify suitable indicators for monitoring
- Step 11: Compare and reconcile identified national indicators (step 9) with identified global/regional indicators (step 10) for consistency (matched, partially matched, not matched)
- Step 12: Identify IA and TGs not included in the policy and align with CCs (by referring to key questions)

Annex

Core concepts and Key questions

No.	Core Concepts	Key Questions
1	Access	<p>What are physical, economic, and information requirements for full access to services by all policy target groups? (<i>e.g. accessible transportation; physical structure of the facilities; affordability and understandable information in appropriate format</i>)</p> <p>What are mechanisms to ensure all beneficiaries of the policy implementation have equal access to services and entitlements (<i>including to justice system</i>)?</p>
2	Accountable and transparent management	<p>To whom, and for what, service providers are accountable? And what is the mechanism for beneficiaries to provide feedback and receive responses?</p> <p>Are the processes through which services are provided to target groups transparent to the beneficiaries?</p> <p>What are mechanisms for reducing any form of corruption in implementation of the policy or delivery of the services?</p> <p>Are data and evidence available to inform policy and track progress in delivery of priorities to beneficiaries and their intended impacts?</p>
3	Capability based services	<p>What are capabilities and skills that target groups possess to absorb services and leverage to enhance the policy outcomes? (<i>e.g. skill development among unemployed, farmers capacity to absorb new farming methods</i>)</p>
4	Compensation	<p>What are the compensations for the target groups that may be negatively affected by the impacts of the policy? (<i>e.g. inflations after subsidy reforms, pollution from new industries, unemployment after introducing new technology, ...</i>)</p> <p>Is the economic value of impacts (<i>i.e. environmental, economic and social</i>) determined? If so, how?</p>
5	Cross-sectoral impacts	<p>What are effects of the policy implementation from and on other sectors? (<i>e.g. environmental impacts of agriculture sector policy, social impact of economic policy, etc.</i>)</p>
6	Cultural responsiveness	<p>How does the policy include cultural aspects (<i>such as beliefs, values, gender, interpersonal styles, attitudes, cultural, ethnic, or linguistic</i>) that may influence lives and livelihood of individuals and members of target group in service delivery of public goods?</p>
7	Decent employment	<p>How does this policy enable decent employment to individuals and target groups?</p> <p><i>(note: according to ILO work is decent if it is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions</i></p>

No.	Core Concepts	Key Questions
		<i>that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men)</i>
8	Ecosystem impacts	<p>What are the impacts of policy on earth's ecosystem?</p> <p><i>Note: When there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation</i></p> <p>What are stocks and flows of natural resources and ecosystem renewable resources that may be affected by the policy?</p>
9	Efficiency	Does policy maximize use of available resources for the most benefits to target groups at the minimum cost?
10	Equal opportunities	<p>Who are the target groups (including disadvantaged groups) that need equal opportunity of access to public goods and services provided by the policy? (<i>Example of selection of target groups: such as people living in poverty, women, groups living away from services, persons with disabilities, ethnic minority or elderly</i>)</p> <p>How does the policy enable and monitor equal opportunities?</p>
11	Exchange and impact (international)	<p>What are types and levels of exchange of products (goods and/or services) with outside the country's borders?</p> <p>What are effects of the policy implementation beyond national borders? (<i>i.e. environmental, economic, social impacts</i>)</p> <p>How the policy implementation is affected by change in overseas conditions for deriving direct benefits to the target groups? (<i>e.g. tourism arrivals depend on global and source market economic conditions</i>)</p>
12	Family/group resource	How does the policy consider family and or representative organization of target group as a resource in enabling themselves to access public goods and services? (<i>e.g. resources held by household, characteristics of members, family/community members looking after the target groups, etc.</i>)
13	Generational impacts	<p>What are the effects of the policy on future generations (including past trends and future projections)?</p> <p>Does the policy identify individuals or target groups who may be prone to generational impacts?</p> <p>Which parts of the society may be more vulnerable to potential negative externalities of the policy outcomes? (<i>e.g., multi-generational chronic poverty among women headed household/ethnic minorities</i>)</p>
14	Human resources	What are the capacity requirements (skills and education) of the individuals that deliver and or produce goods or provide services? (<i>eg. skill requirements of social workers, teachers, family planning advisors, farmers, managers, engineers, long-term human capital development etc</i>)
15	Incentives and sanctions	How policy creates incentives for target groups to

No.	Core Concepts	Key Questions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reduce potentially negative impact of their activities? - increase their productivity and efficiency for improving outcomes for the beneficiaries? <p>How policy deal with target groups that are generating potentially negative impacts?</p>
16	Income distribution	<p>Income refers to any economic profit gained from provision of goods and/services by implementation of this policy. How income is being distributed across all the beneficiaries and target groups?</p>
17	Infrastructure	<p>What are the infrastructure requirements for production of quality goods and/or provision of services addressed in this policy? (<i>e.g. roads, schools, hospitals, transportation, fiscal and financial infrastructure, banking system, utilities, ICT</i>)</p>
18	Innovation	<p>What are the capacity requirements for this sector to embrace innovation and adopt new technologies? What are types of innovations promoted by the policy to increase quality of services/products?</p>
19	Re-integration	<p>What are the means by which target groups who need to be re-integrated into society due to change in their status, receive tailored services or opportunities? (<i>e.g. immigrants, ex-prisoners, etc.</i>)</p>
20	Legal infrastructure	<p>Do necessary rules, regulations and legislation exist that support implementation of the plan?</p> <p>What are mechanisms that ensure enforcement of laws and compliance with existing legislations that are put in place for implementation of this policy?</p> <p>What are mechanisms that ensure all beneficiaries of the policy implementation have equal access to justice system?</p>
21	Participation	<p>What are ways that policy target groups can participate in the decisions that affect their lives?</p>
22	Partnership and coordination of services	<p>What are the mechanisms for coordination among stakeholders that enhance partnerships for better policy outcomes?</p>
23	People-nature harmony	<p>Are there any environmental impacts of the policy on peoples' healthy lives? Which groups are beneficiaries (<i>e.g., types of water users, land holders, small farmers...</i>)?</p>
24	Prevention	<p>What are the mechanisms (if applicable, primary, secondary and tertiary) for preventing beneficiaries from vulnerability? (<i>e.g. issues for action that prevent target groups from diseases, violence, losses from disasters, becoming poor or losing jobs, disaster risk management, climate change adaptation etc.</i>)</p>

No.	Core Concepts	Key Questions
25	Production and productivity	<p>How does this policy enhance economic value (value add) by producing goods or delivering public goods and services?</p> <p>How does this policy assess productivity of the inputs (financial, material [both raw and intermediate] and human resources) per value added units produced?</p>
26	Protection from harm	<p>What are potential harms (physical and none- physical) to policy target groups during their interaction with service providers? <i>(e.g. protecting beneficiaries' privacy when their confidential information is necessary for service delivery, or protecting terrestrial sites)</i></p>
27	Quality	<p>What are different types of services that are provided under this policy?</p> <p>What quality dimensions of the services can be improved for better policy outcome?</p>
28	Services and entitlements	<p>What are the specific service needs and choices available to the target groups?</p> <p>What are the tailored services or entitlements made available to target groups by the policy?</p>
29	Sustainable investment	<p>What are different types of investment that are required for increasing quality and range of products (goods and/or services) produced by implementation of this plan? <i>(including public, private and foreign investments)</i></p>