

EPIC: A Policy-Data integration tool (Version 1.1)

1. Background

Under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) 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 the 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 SDG implementation.

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.

Subsequently, UNESCAP initiated three pilot studies to assess feasibility of applying an existing rights-based tool for assessing policy inclusiveness (EquiFrame¹) in three policy areas (poverty, women empowerment, and disaster risk management) in two countries (Mongolia and Sri Lanka.²) The results of pilot studies showed that the tool can be expanded in terms of domains and components to serve as data needs assessment, and also facilitate policy-data integration process through development of a national sustainable development indicator set.

The first draft of the policy-data integration tool, hereafter called EPIC (Every Policy Is Connected to People, Planet and Prosperity), assumes that every public policy is connected to socio-economic wellness of people and the environment that they live in. In turn these policies are connected by indicators that enable benchmarking of implementation progress. EPIC is being developed in the context of achieving the 2030 Development Agenda. Importantly, it is being developed based on the discussion that a sub-group of RSG members had during a workshop in November 2017 and Pacific Workshop on Developing a Generic Tool for Policy–Data Integration (19 – 21, March 2018, Nadi, Fiji).

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

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

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

2. Expected Outcomes

The two key outcomes from the application of the tool include:

- I. A national sustainable development indicator set (NSDIS) that addresses the need for monitoring of national and sectoral policies, and provide full coverage of the issues and target groups that in principle must be covered by such policies; and
- II. A set of recommendations for policy makers to: review the coverage of issues and target groups in the existing policies, and promote better integration between policy programmes.

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

3. Objectives of EPIC

The tool facilitates a cooperative and principle-based assessment 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 regards with addressing target populations as suggested by commonly agreed principles;
- integrate the social, economic, environmental, and institutional principles into every policy and associated monitoring framework, where relevant;
- 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 the international conventions; and
- increase ownership of indicators and statistics among policy makers and enhance political and financial support to development of national statistical systems.

4. Users of EPIC

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
- SDG implementation focal points: Guide the process to ensure capture of nationally relevant aspects of the SDG framework are captured
- Other data producers: Assist the NSO guide the process of developing appropriate indicators (including identification of data needs)

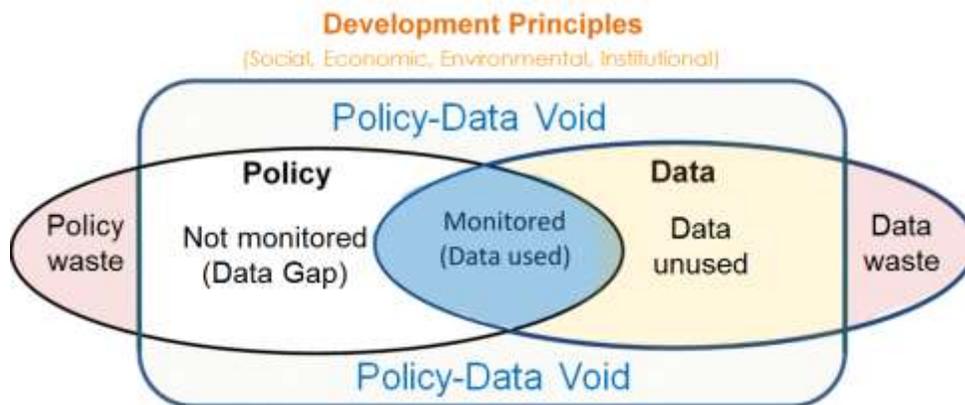
- Other stakeholders including civil society and private sector: Assist policy makers in identifying priority issues and strategies to address such issues

5. Conceptual framework

Detailed conceptual framework for the EPIC tool is provided in Bidarbakht (2018)³. The tool is developed to help governments and their development partners in enhancing monitoring framework of (sub)national and sectoral policy programme through a participatory and principle-based exercise. The tool is also aims to integrate different policy domains in order to ensure that no one and no target group in left behind in policy making process. The major issues regarding policy monitoring and nexus between statistics and policy are lack of clear and effective demand for statistics, unmet data needs, mismatch of statistical production and monitoring data requirements and lack of effective and systematic communication between producers of official statistics and policy makers.

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 aim 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.

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 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 that are 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.

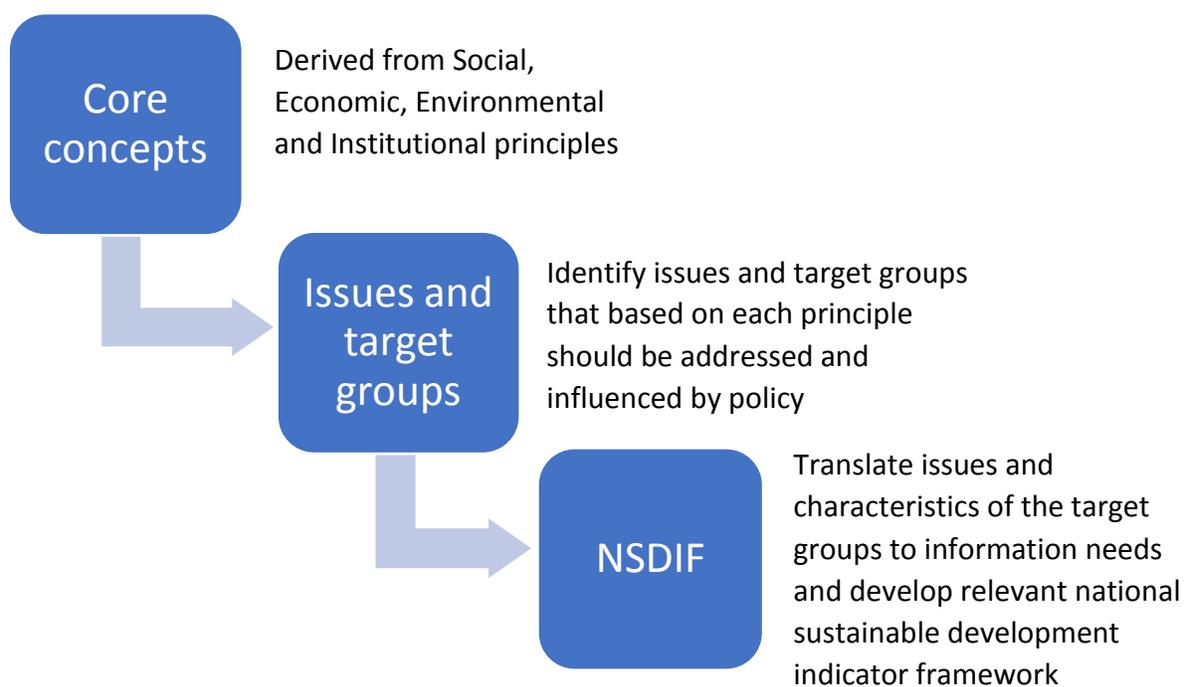
³ http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/SD_Working_Paper_no.7_Apr2018_Policy-Data_Integration.pdf

Thus, EPIC has been developed with an aim to provide a comprehensive principle-based framework that facilitate cooperative and inclusive dialogue among all stakeholders. It provides common language for the stakeholders to strategically focus on issues addressed by the policy and the impact policy actions 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.

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 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. 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 that allows for as many policy actions to be monitored if not ALL.

6. Architecture for policy-data integration tool

The proposed architecture for EPIC consist of three major components. They include: *core concepts (Annex 1), issues and target groups, and linking core concepts, issues and target groups in the development of national sustainable indicator framework.*



1. *Core Concepts*: 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 that are normally embedded in international conventions ratified by the UN Member

States such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁴ (underlying principles for Social and Institutional Core Concepts), principles for inclusive economic growth⁵ (underlying principles for Economic Core Concepts), Rio 92 Declaration on Environment and Development⁶ (underlying principles for Environmental Core Concepts). The tool enlists key questions for each of the core concept. The key questions enable the analyst to associate language used in policy to corresponding core concept.

2. *Issue and target groups*: The policy-data integration tool enables the analyst to identify issues and target groups outlined in a policy. Here below are the definitions for issue and target group.

Issue: A set of words identified in the policy document that articulates the scope of thought, action or influence.

Target groups: The target groups in EPIC context refer to those impacted upon by the selected policy. Target groups can be social (e.g. women, children, unemployed, poor, families, households, etc.), economic (e.g. enterprise, establishment, sector) and environmental (e.g. oceans, mountains, freshwater, cities, forests, species, etc.).

3. *Linking core concepts, issues and target groups in the development of indicator framework*
The final component enables the analyst to link the core concepts, issues and target groups in development of a national sustainable development indicator framework. Each issue or target group in the policy may correspond to more than one core concept. Understanding of the issues and target groups should naturally help in defining measurable factors (parameters), features and characteristics of those factors that are liable to vary or change (variables) and subsequently standard measures that indicates 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. The next section lists the steps involved in applying EPIC.

7. Steps involved in applying EPIC

The following steps are involved in applying EPIC. It involves two stages. Stage I relates to preparing for the analysis and Stage II involves the content analysis. Stage I involves four steps and Stage II involves six 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

⁴ http://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf

⁵ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=893&menu=1561>

⁶ <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf151/aconf15126-1annex1.htm>

Step 2: Identify a policy document for the analysis

Step 3: Identifying sections of policy to analyse

Step 4: Read and familiarize definition of issues, target groups, core concepts, and key questions

Stage II: Carrying out the analysis

Step 5: List issues and target groups reflected in the policy document

Step 6: Associate “issues” and “target groups” with core concepts

Step 7: List issues and target groups not included in the policy

Step 8: Identify a list of indicators for the issues identified in the policy

Step 9: Map the indicators to the existing regional/international indicator set(s)

Step 10: Develop a matrix illustrating policy as well as indicator strengths and gaps

Annex1- 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 that ensure all beneficiaries of the policy implementation have equal access to justice system?</p>
2	Accountability and transparency	<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>What are mechanisms for reducing any form of corruption in implementation of the policy or delivery of the services?</p>

3	Capability based Services	What are capabilities and qualifications that individuals and target groups inherently possess that the policy builds on (Example- Resilience; Resourcefulness)
4	Compensations	What are the compensations for the people, groups or other entities that are negatively affected by the impacts of the policy? Is the economic value of impacts (<i>i.e. environmental, economic and social</i>) determined? If so, how?
5	Cross-sectoral impacts	What are negative impacts 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>)
6	Cultural Responsiveness	How does the policy include cultural aspects (such as beliefs, values, gender, interpersonal styles, attitudes, cultural, ethnic, or linguistic) that may influence lives and livelihood of individuals and members of target group in service delivery of public goods? or their access to services provided by policy?
7	Decent employment	How does this policy enable decent employment to individuals and target groups? Is the quality of employment for those groups or individuals that produce goods or provide services that are subject of this policy? (<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 that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men. </i>)
8	Ecosystem Impacts	What are the impacts of policy on earth's ecosystem? <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> What are stocks and flows of natural resources and ecosystem renewable resources that may be affected by the policy?
9	Efficiency	What are mechanisms and criteria for efficiently matching the limited resources to the needs of target groups?
10	Equal Opportunities	Who are the target groups (including disadvantaged groups) that need equal opportunity of access to public goods and services provided by the policy?

		<p><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 negative impacts of the policy implementation beyond national borders? <i>(i.e. environmental, economic, social impacts)</i></p>
12	Family/group Resource	<p>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></p>
13	Generational impacts	<p>What are the negative impacts 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 negative externalities of the policy outcomes? <i>(e.g., multi-generational chronic poverty among women headed household/ethnic minorities)</i></p>
14	Human Resources	<p>What are the capacity requirements (skills and education) of the individuals that delivery and or produce goods or provide services? <i>(eg. skill requirements of social workers, teachers, family planning advisors, farmers, managers, engineers etc)</i></p>
15	Incentives and Sanctions	<p>What are incentives for agents to reduce negative impact of their activities?</p> <p>What are sanctions for agents that are generating 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.</p> <p>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)</i></p>

18	Innovation	What are the capacity requirements for this sector to embrace innovation and adopt new technologies?
19	Integration	What are the means by which target groups are mainstreamed in the process of receipt of services and entitlements? <i>(e.g. economic empowerment of women includes women with disabilities, women headed households, ethnic minority women)</i>
20	Legal Infrastructure	Do necessary rules and legislation exist that support implementation of the plan? What are mechanisms that ensure enforcement of laws and compliance with existing legislations that are put in place for implementation of this policy? What are mechanisms that ensure all beneficiaries of the policy implementation have equal access to justice system?
21	Participation	What are ways that policy target groups can participate in the decisions that affect their lives? How does the policy enhance their empowerment, or increase their access to services provided by the policy?
22	Partnership and Coordination of Services	What is the mechanism that coordinates and enhances partnerships among service providers?
23	People-nature harmony	What are the environmental impacts of the policy on peoples' healthy lives? Which groups are beneficiaries (e.g., types of water users, land holders, small farmers...)?
24	Prevention	What are the mechanisms (if applicable, primary, secondary and tertiary) for preventing beneficiaries from vulnerability? <i>(e.g. policy actions that prevent target groups from diseases, violence, losses from disasters, becoming poor or losing jobs, etc)</i>
25	Productivity	How does this policy enhance economic value (value add) by producing goods or delivering public goods and services? How does this policy assess productivity of the inputs (financial, material and human resources) per value added units produced?
26	Protection from harm	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)</i>

27	Quality	What are different types of services that are provided under this policy and how are quality dimensions of the services provided monitored by the policy?
28	Services and entitlements	<p>What are the specific service needs and choices available to of target groups?</p> <p>What are the individuals that require tailored services or entitlements made available to target groups provided by the policy?</p> <p>Are those services tailored according to the individual's needs?</p>
29	Sustainable investment and infrastructure	What are different types of investment (Stable and long-term) that are required for increasing quality and range of products (goods and/or services) produced by implementation of this plan?