EPIC: A Policy-Data integration tool
(Version 1.2)

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 (EquiFrame)[1] 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), assumes that every public policy is connected to socio-economic wellness of people, the environment that they live in and underlying institutional arrangements that facilitate implementation of such policies. In turn these policies are connected by indicators that enable benchmarking of implementation progress. EPIC was developed in the context of achieving the 2030 Development Agenda. Importantly, it was developed based on the discussion that a sub-group of RSG members had during a workshop in November 2017 and subsequent trials across different domains during regional (Bangkok, April 2018[3]), sub-regional (Fiji, March 2018[4]) and national (Samoa[5], June and September 2018; the Philippines[6], August 2018) workshops.

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[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

[3] https://www.unescap.org/events/unescap-gender-policy-data-integration-initiative-inception-workshop

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

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

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

EPIC covers social, economic, environmental and institutional principles and aim 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).

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 for policy action 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 for action 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 development plans and sector plans, national budgets and national strategies for development of statistics (NSDS).

3. Objectives of EPIC

The tool 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 regards with addressing the 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 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 the 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.

4. Users of EPIC

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

- <u>National, sectoral and local policy makers</u>: Lead the review of all relevant policy/planning documents to ensure all relevant guiding principles are appropriately captured
- <u>National statistical offices</u>: 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 nationally relevant aspects of the SDG framework are captured
- **Other data producers**: Assist the NSO 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
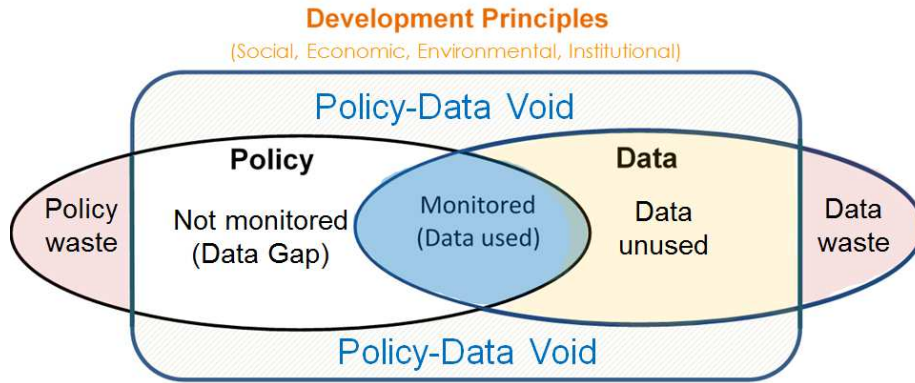
5. Conceptual framework

Detailed conceptual framework for the EPIC tool is provided in Bidarbakht (2018).[7] 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 also aims to integrate different policy domains in order to ensure that no one and no target group is 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 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.

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.

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

Development Principles
(Social, Economic, Environmental, Institutional)

Policy-Data Void

Policy

Data

Policy waste

Not monitored (Data Gap)

Monitored (Data used)
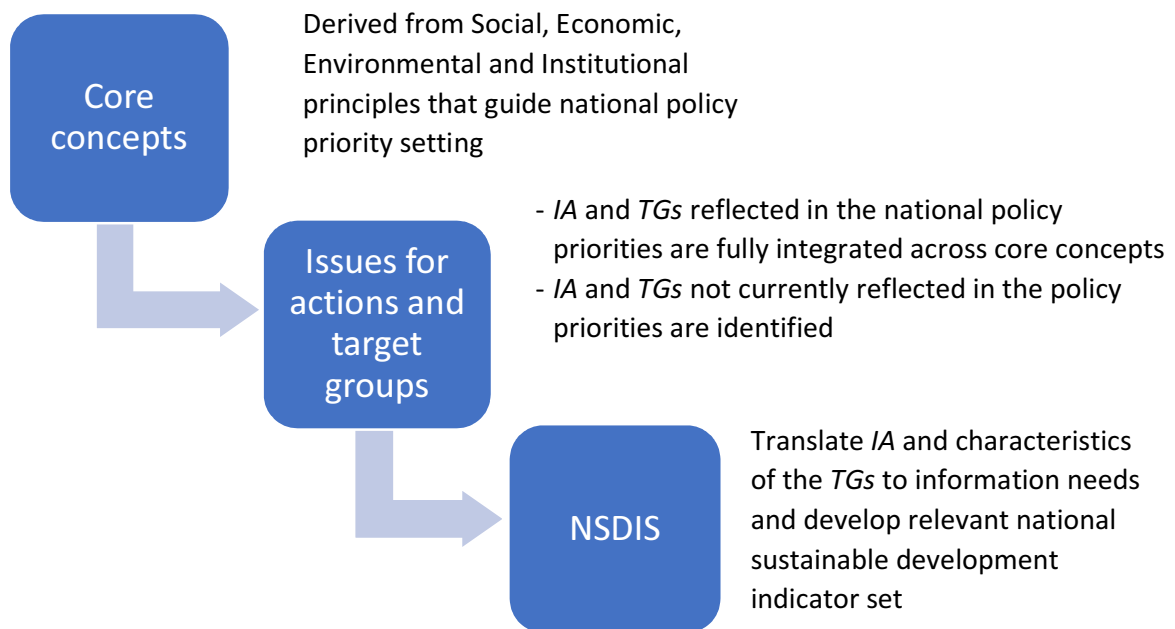
Data unused

Data waste

Policy-Data Void

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 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.

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 set that allows for as many issues for action 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 for action (IA) and target groups (TGs), and linking core concepts, IA and TGs in the development of national sustainable indicator set.*

Core concepts → Derived from Social, Economic, Environmental and Institutional principles that guide national policy priority setting

Issues for actions and target groups
- *IA* and *TGs* reflected in the national policy priorities are fully integrated across core concepts
- *IA* and *TGs* not currently reflected in the policy priorities are identified

NSDIS → Translate *IA* and characteristics of the *TGs* to information needs and develop relevant national sustainable development indicator set

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 Rights[8] (underlying principles for Social and Institutional Core Concepts), principles for inclusive economic growth[9] (underlying principles for Economic Core Concepts), Rio 92 Declaration on Environment and Development[10] (underlying principles for Environmental Core Concepts). The tool enlists key questions for each of the core concepts. The core concepts are often abstract and may not be intuitively understood and associated to the language that is used in the policy document. In order to overcome this challenge and help users to identify issues for action and their target groups that related to each core concept, key questions and examples are provided under each core concept in the Annex 1.

2. *Issues for action and target groups*: The policy-data integration tool enables the analyst to identify IA and TGs outlined in a policy. Here below are the definitions for IA and TGs.

Issues for action: A set of words identified in the policy document that states the problem that requires a policy intervention or 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), environmental (e.g. oceans, mountains, freshwater, cities, forests, species, etc.), or institutional (e. g. service providers, agencies, organizations, etc).

3. *Linking core concepts, IA and TGs in the development of indicator set*: The final component enables the analyst to link the core concepts, 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 core concepts. Understanding of the IA and TGs should naturally help in defining

[8] http://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] http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf151/aconf15126-1annex1.htm

measurable factors (parameters), features and characteristics of those factors that are liable to vary or change (variables) and subsequently standard measures that indicate 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.

Note: Core concepts play two pivotal roles in application of EPIC:
   a) Establishing interlinkages across four domains (social, economic, environmental, institutional). One issue for action (IA) may relate to more than one core concept. 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 core concepts, the analyst will realize that this IA relates at least to core concepts 4, 7, 8, 23, 24, and 27. The IA is addressing decent work issue, but also requires compensating for and protecting from the harm due to unhealthy working condition. It also refers to the negative impact that such condition has on the environment and may need to seek for solutions that create incentives or put sanctions on the employers that need to improve work condition. The IA in general is talking about not only availability of employment opportunity, but also "quality" of work. Therefore, this IA should be repeated under at least 6 core concepts and this will have implications in identifying relevant indicators. Because each aspect of the IA requires to be measured by different indicator.
   b) Identifying IA and TGs that are not explicitly reflected in the policy document but could be prioritized in the future planning. By answering the key questions for all core concepts (regardless of whether they are already covered by one or more IAs or not), the analysts can identify additional IAs that could potentially be a policy priority but not explicitly reflected in the policy document. This exercise creates a list of issues for action and associated target groups that may be considered for future policy reformulation.

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 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
- Step 2: Identify a policy document for the analysis
- Step 3: Identify sections of policy to analyze
- Step 4: Read and familiarize definition of issues for action, target groups, core concepts, and key questions
- Step 5: Prepare indicator sets for review: National indicator set (indicators from policy document, other relevant national indicator sets); and Regional/Global indicator set (Regional core sets, SDGs, Sub-regional indicators etc.)

Stage II: Carrying out the analysis

Phase 1: Review of issues for action (IA) and target groups (TGs) and establishing linkages across various dimensions of the policy through the core concepts

- Step 6: List IA and TGs reflected in the narrative and/or planning logic (log-frame and M&E section) of the policy document
- Step 7: Associate IA and TGs with core concepts

Phase 2: Towards the development of the national sustainable development indicators set

- Step 8: Map national indicators on IA to identify suitable indicators for monitoring
- Step 9: Map global/regional indicators on IA to identify suitable indicators for monitoring
- Step 10: Compare identified national indicators (step 8) with identified global/regional indicators (step 9) for consistency (matched, partially matched, not matched).

Phase 3: Identification of any additional issues for action (IA) and target groups (TGs) that should covered (for future planning and consideration)

- Step 11: Identify IA and TGs not included in the policy and align with core concepts (by referring to key questions)

Annex 1- Core concepts and Key questions

No.	Core Concepts	Key Questions
1	Access	What are physical, economic, and information requirements for full access to services by all policy target groups? *(e g. accessible transportation; physical structure of the facilities; affordability and understandable information in appropriate format)* What are mechanisms that ensure all beneficiaries of the policy implementation have equal access to services and entitlements *(including to justice system)*?
2	Accountable and transparent management	To whom, and for what, service providers are accountable? And what is the mechanism for beneficiaries to provide feedback and receive responses? Are the processes through which services are provided to target groups transparent to the beneficiaries? What are mechanisms for reducing any form of corruption in implementation of the policy or delivery of the services? Are data and evidence available to inform policy and track progress in delivery of priorities to beneficiaries and their intended impacts?
3	Capability based Services	What are capabilities and skills that target groups possess to absorb services and leverage to enhance the policy outcomes? *(e g. skill development among unemployed, farmers capacity to absorb new farming methods)*
4	Compensation	What are the compensations for the target groups that may be negatively affected by the impacts of the policy? *(eg. inflations after subsidy reforms, pollution from new industries, unemployment after introducing new technology, ...)* Is the economic value of impacts *(i e. environmental, economic and social)* determined? If so, how?
5	Cross-sectoral impacts	What are effects of the policy implementation from and on other sectors? *(e g. environmental impacts of agriculture sector policy, social impact of economic policy, etc)*
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?
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? *(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.)
8	Ecosystem Impacts	What are the impacts of policy on earth's ecosystem? *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* What are stocks and flows of natural resources and ecosystem renewable resources that may be affected by the policy?
9	Efficiency	Does policy maximize use of available resources for the most benefits to target groups at the minimum cost?
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? *(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)* How does the policy enable and monitor equal opportunities?
11	Exchange and Impact (International)	What are types and levels of exchange of products (goods and/or services) with outside the country's borders? What are effects of the policy implementation beyond national borders? *(i e. environmental, economic, social impacts)* How the policy implementation is affected by change in overseas conditions for deriving direct benefits to the target groups? *(e g. tourism arrivals depend on global and source market economic conditions)*
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? *(e g. resources held by household, characteristics of members, family/community members looking after the target groups, etc.)*
13	Generational impacts	What are the effects of the policy on future generations (including past trends and future projections)? Does the policy identify individuals or target groups who may by prone to generational impacts? Which parts of the society may be more vulnerable to potential negative externalities of the policy outcomes? (e g., multi-generational chronic poverty among women headed household/ethnic minorities)
14	Human Resources	What are the capacity requirements (skills and education) of the individuals that deliver and or produce goods or provide services? *(eg. skill requirements of social workers, teachers, family planning advisors, farmers, managers, engineers, long-term human capital development etc)*
15	Incentives and Sanctions	How policy creates incentives for target groups to − reduce potentially negative impact of their activities?

		– increase their productivity and efficiency for improving outcomes for the beneficiaries? How policy deal with target groups that are generating potentially negative impacts?
16	Income Distribution	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?
17	Infrastructure	What are the infrastructure requirements for production of quality goods and/or provision of services addressed in this policy? *(e g. roads, schools, hospitals, transportation, fiscal and financial infrastructure, banking system, utilities, ICT)*
18	Innovation	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?
19	Re-integration	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? (*e g. immigrants, ex-prisoners, etc.*)
20	Legal Infrastructure	Do necessary rules, regulations 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?
22	Partnership and Coordination of Services	What are the mechanisms for coordination among stakeholders that enhance partnerships for better policy outcomes?
23	People-nature harmony	Are there any 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? *(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)*
25	Production and 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 [both raw and intermediate] 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? *(e g.*

		protecting beneficiaries' privacy when their confidential information is necessary for service delivery, or protecting terrestrial sites)
27	Quality	What are different types of services that are provided under this policy? What quality dimensions of the services can be improved for better policy outcome?
28	Services and entitlements	What are the specific service needs and choices available to the target groups? What are the tailored services or entitlements made available to target groups by the policy?
29	Sustainable investment	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? *(including public, private and foreign investments)*