

Working Group I contribution to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report

GENERAL GUIDANCE NOTE ON THE USE OF LITERATURE IN IPCC REPORTS

Introduction

The Technical Support Units (TSUs) of the three IPCC Working Groups drafted this guidance document to recall the Principles Governing IPCC Work, particularly the “Procedure for using non-published/non-peer-reviewed sources in IPCC Reports”, and to enhance implementation of the underlying principles by posing questions whose answers will help ensure that the requirements are met. Following these principles will ensure that all relevant statements and lines of discussion are properly substantiated by adequate literature, and that all relevant text undergoes appropriate review.

These guidelines will be presented and discussed at Lead Author meetings and supported by further training as needed.

Guidance on the use of non-published/non-peer-reviewed (“grey”) literature

1. Overview of current Principles Governing IPCC Work

Appendix A, Section 4.2.3, to the Principles Governing IPCC Work states:

Contributions should be supported as far as possible with references from the peer-reviewed and internationally available literature

Extract from Annex 2 of Appendix A to the Principles Governing IPCC Work:

Procedure for using non-published/non-peer-reviewed sources in IPCC Reports

Because it is increasingly apparent that materials relevant to IPCC Reports, in particular, information about the experience and practice of the private sector in mitigation and adaptation activities, are found in sources that have not been published or peer-reviewed (e.g., industry journals, internal organizational publications, non-peer reviewed reports or working papers of research institutions, proceedings of workshops etc) the following additional procedures are provided. These have been designed to make all references used in IPCC Reports easily accessible and to ensure that the IPCC process remains open and transparent.

1. Responsibilities of Coordinating, Lead and Contributing Authors

Authors who wish to include information from a non-published/non-peer-reviewed source are requested to:

a. Critically assess any source that they wish to include. This option may be used for instance to obtain case study materials from private sector sources for assessment of adaptation and mitigation options. Each chapter team should review the quality and validity of each source before incorporating results from the source into an IPCC Report.

b. Send the following materials to the Working Group/Task Force Bureau Co-Chairs who are coordinating the Report:

- *One copy of each unpublished source to be used in the IPCC Report*
- *The following information for each source:*
 - ✓ *Title*
 - ✓ *Author(s)*
 - ✓ *Name of journal or other publication in which it appears, if applicable*

- ✓ Information on the availability of underlying data to the public
- ✓ English-language executive summary or abstract, if the source is written in a non-English language
- ✓ Names and contact information for 1-2 people who can be contacted for more information about the source.
(...)

5. Treatment in IPCC Reports

Non-peer-reviewed sources will be listed in the reference sections of IPCC Reports. These will be integrated with references for the peer-reviewed sources¹. These will be integrated with references to the peer reviewed sources stating how the material can be accessed, but will be followed by a statement that they are not published.

The two distinct but related principles that are at the core of these procedures are (1) to ensure the quality, robustness and validity of the information assessed and (2) to ensure the accessibility of the sources for reviewers of the report drafts.

2. Questions to help determine the appropriateness of including a non-published/non-peer reviewed reference

Non-published/non-peer-reviewed sources are often called grey literature. Although highly relevant information can be contained in the grey literature, use of this literature brings with it an extra responsibility for the author teams to ensure the quality and validity of cited sources and information. Authors need to be clear why a particular source is used and in some circumstances may need to explain this in the text.

Considering the following questions will help ensure that the principles underlying the IPCC Rules and Procedures are properly implemented.

- a) Who (e.g., what organization) is the source of the grey literature citation?
- b) What information does the citation add to the assessment?
- c) Is the information cited available from a peer-reviewed journal source? If yes, is the citation needed?
- d) Are there lines of evidence from other (peer-reviewed or non-peer-reviewed) sources that support the citation or reach different conclusions? If yes, is the citation needed?
- e) What are the qualifications of the author(s) of the document?
- f) Was there any review of the material presented? If so, how wide or extensive was that review? How credible are the reviewers?
- g) Why was the document written? How was the research funded? Could the researcher and/or publisher of the document be perceived as having a particular bias or agenda? If yes, what caveats are needed?
- h) Why wasn't the information published in a peer-reviewed journal?

3. Acceptability of sources in IPCC Reports

Since the development of the Principles Governing IPCC Work, there has been a rapid growth in new forms of communication and media in which the public finds climate relevant information. The IPCC principles for use of non-published/non-peer reviewed sources do not change with this move to more electronic communication. Blogs, social networking sites (e.g., Twitter, Facebook), and visual media do not currently meet the standards for use in scientific assessments and developing key findings in IPCC Reports, and are therefore **not acceptable** for use. In the absence of other sources, newspapers and magazines may provide limited ancillary information for an assessment, but not for key findings.

Personal communications of scientific results are also **not acceptable** sources.

¹ Non-published sources also will be listed in the reference sections of IPCC Reports.

4. Accessibility of non-published/non-peer reviewed references

Non-published/non-peer-reviewed references need to be accessible by the reviewers at the time of the review. In order to ensure a minimum level of accessibility of all sources used in the report, **authors MUST provide a copy of each source of information that is not publicly available** (preferably as a non-editable electronic document) and the additional information specified in the IPCC principles. These must be received by the TSU by the time that the First Order Draft (FOD) and Second Order Draft (SOD) respectively are due to the TSU.

5. Guidance on the use of sources going through peer-review and literature cut off dates

After the distribution of the SOD, authors may only include additional literature that further supports statements that have already been substantiated by one or more references. Authors may not introduce new information in the Final Draft (FD) that substantially alters the content and conclusions of the report compared to the SOD.

In order to be included in the respective chapter drafts, literature must meet the following requirements:

- For inclusion in the First Order Draft (FOD): submitted for peer-review and a copy provided to the TSU prior to the date when the FOD is due to the TSU;
- For inclusion in the Second Order Draft (SOD): submitted for peer-review and a copy provided to the TSU prior to the date when the SOD is due to the TSU;
- For inclusion in the Final Draft (FD): accepted for publication and a copy provided to the TSU prior to the date when the FD is due to the TSU. **Acceptance for publication MUST be substantiated by (i) letter from the editor, (ii) DOI-Nr., or (iii) published as accepted on the journal's website.**

The specific cutoff dates will be provided to the authors by the TSU early in the assessment cycle.

Any reference that does not fulfill these criteria will be removed from the draft contribution together with the statement(s) that it supports if there are no other supporting references. It is therefore not advisable to base a line of argument or conclusion on a single, not-yet accepted paper.