



RISING TIDES AND THE WORLD'S NEXT REFUGEE CRISIS

SECONDARY RESOURCES



Many homes in Bangladesh have already been lost due to river erosion. (Photo credit: Getty Images, Barcroft Media)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- According to Environmental Justice Foundation, ten percent of the global population is at risk of forced displacement due to climate change. ([The Guardian](#))
- Certain regions in the world are particularly susceptible: a one meter rise in sea level in Bangladesh would result in a loss of nearly 20 percent of its land mass, river bank erosion, floods and rising salinity. ([The Tyee](#))
- Of the many causes for the Syrian Civil War, analysts point to the huge numbers of internally displaced farmers flocking to the urban centres following serious draughts. ([Scientific American](#))
- With the melting of the Greenland and Antarctic ice shelves, ocean levels are expected to rise by three to six feet by 2100; there is already severe flooding in south Florida where sea water is

inundating the porous limestone bedrock. ([Think Progress](#))

- Since 2009, an estimated one person every second has been displaced by a disaster, with an average of 22.5 million people displaced by climate or weather-related events since 2008. The droughts in Somalia in 2011 and 2012, and the floods in Pakistan between 2010 and 2012 are two such examples. ([UNHCR](#))
- Scientists fear severe long term effects of climate change, including destabilized governments in the face of waves of refugees, a sixth mass extinction of plants and animals and flooding of most of the world's coastal cities. ([New York Times](#))
- Hurricane Sandy resulted in 147 deaths across the Northeast United States, Canada and the Caribbean. ([CNN](#))
- A recent \$48 million grant for Isle de Jean Charles in Louisiana is the first allocation of federal tax dollars to move an entire community struggling with the effects of climate change. ([New York Times](#))

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects.

Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. The activity is structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Students are encouraged to further reflect on the issues.

Core Skill Sets:



These icons identify the most relevant core skills students will develop using this resource. Learn more about the WE Learning Framework at www.WE.org/we-at-school/we-schools/learning-framework/.

KEY TERMS

Climate change—A change in global climate patterns the vast majority of scientists attribute to human behaviour, particularly the burning of fossil fuels resulting in carbon emissions.

Climate refugees—While not a legally recognized class of refugees, this term generally refers to people displaced by the negative effects of climate change, including when natural resources become too scarce, regions too hot or too cold, floods too severe, etc.

Earth Day—Recognized in 192 countries, April 22 is celebrated as Earth Day and features environmental and climate literacy events.

THEMES AND COURSE CONNECTIONS

- **Themes:** Environment, Global Issues, Local Issues, Natural Disasters
- **Course Connections:** Canadian and World Studies

MATERIALS

- Front board
- Paper and writing utensils
- Computer/tablet with Internet access
- Art supplies

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Develop an understanding of the effects of climate change on populations around the world
- Investigate what it means to be a “climate change refugee”

DISCUSS

1. Why was Lizabeth ashamed of asking for help?
2. How would you react and respond if you found yourself in Lizabeth’s position?
3. Why have some populations around the world been forced to leave their homes as a result of climate change?
4. What do the authors mean when they say, “But as with most climate issues, prevention is best”?

MAP IT

Have students locate the following locations that were mentioned in the Global Voices article “Rising tides and the world’s next refugee crisis” and the video “Which Countries Already Have Climate Change Refugees?” to help them understand the geographical perspective of the events.

- Brooklyn, United States
- Alaska, United States
- Bangladesh
- Tuvalu
- Kiribati
- Miami, United States
- Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- Hamburg, Germany
- Lisbon, Portugal

DIVE DEEPER

Show students “Which Countries Already Have Climate Change Refugees?” www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJufw587tzQ (4:00). As they watch the video, ask students to use words and images to create a mind map of the concept of “climate change refugee.” Consider allowing students to create digital mind maps if the technology is available.

Once students have had an opportunity to create their own mind map, ask them to share it with a partner and discuss what they already know about the concept and what they learned from the video.

Read the *Global Voices* article and discuss the questions from the Discuss section. Encourage students to continue adding to their mind maps as they read and discuss.

In small groups, students will select a city or country discussed in the video or article and investigate how it is being directly affected by climate change. Each group will construct a three-dimensional model of the city or country to depict the impact that climate change has had on the environment and the people who live there.

Use the gallery walk strategy to give students an opportunity to view each other’s models.

To conclude, students will write a persuasive essay addressing the question: “Should people displaced by climate change be considered refugees and receive legal protection?”

RESOURCES

“Which Countries Already Have Climate Change Refugees?” www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJufw587tzQ (4:00)

Climate Change and Disasters www.unhcr.org/climate-change-and-disasters.html

“Mary Robinson: Why climate change is a threat to human rights” www.ted.com/talks/mary_robinson_why_climate_change_is_a_threat_to_human_rights (21:47)

“Climate change refugees: Caught in the undertow” *Global Voices* www.cdn.we.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/GV-November-25-2013.pdf