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## Climate Change Refugees: Five Steps to Address an Often Overlooked Consequence of Global Climate Change

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Former President Barack Obama said, "We are the first generation to feel the effect of climate change and the last generation who can do something about it." According to the UNHCR, one person every second is displaced by climate or weather related events since 2008. (1) We are starting to see the effects of climate change all around us. And because of the time that we live in, we have been given a responsibility to ourselves and to future generations to do something about it before it's too late.

There will be many consequences as a result of climate change such as rising temperatures, poor air quality, vector borne disease expansion, and extreme weather events. (2) But the most harmful and often most overlooked effect we will see is the increase of climate change refugees. The UN estimates that there are over 25 million climate change refugees with that number is expected to double over the next 5 years. (1) And climate change refugees have one of the worst times of any refugee group. Climate change has made refugees' homes uninhabitable and unsustainable. Climate change can cause drought, desertification, flooding, famine, lack of clean water, loss of crops and deforestation forcing refugees to flee due to lack of resources needed to adapt or recover. But the issues don't stop once they flee. Many of these refugees work in agriculture so they are farmers or sheep herders, but these skills are practically useless in urban areas. And Climate change refugees don't fall under the traditional definition of refugee so they are not able to receive the money and assistance that many other refugees are eligible for, and they have a much greater risk of being sent back to their homelands.

Still, many people have the delusion that the effects of climate change are far away, or that it doesn't matter because it's not affecting them right now, or that they can't help. But that's not true. To help, we as a community, as a nation, and as a world need to build up our climate resilience. Through 5 steps we as a world can achieve this. The first step is to share responsibility. Climate resilience only works if collaborated on at an international, state, and local level. Secondly, Climate change must be factored into decision making

worldwide from now on. All decisions should weigh current costs and benefits as well as risks regarding climate change. Thirdly, we ensure all decisions are evidence based and practically risk free. We must make sound decisions by applying physical, economic, and social science, while keeping in mind that we cannot deter efforts to adapt because perfect science doesn't exist. Next, we must ensure that the indigenous people of the climate change affected areas are brought into the conversation as well. Lastly, we must support the vulnerable and those affected in any way possible. We have to keep those 5 things on our mind and work to help solve climate change now while we still can.

#### Footnotes

1. <https://www.unhcr.org/environment-disasters-and-climate-change.html>
2. <https://www.climaterealityproject.org/blog/wait-why-climate-change-bad-thing>