

Abstract

There are new challenges, facing the 21st century and one of them is the discussion around climate change and global warming. This phenomenon brings with it a deeper problem, which is the fact that millions of people have their lives strongly damaged as a consequence of the climate changes. There is no international instrument that protects these climate victims, which in this thesis are referred to as environmental refugees. This thesis focused on trying to evaluate solutions to the problem of environmental refugees. To achieve this we first had a look at the different types of forced migration since it would define which type of solution would suit this type of refugees the best. We had a look at the "Oustees" which are the people who are forced to move due to development projects in the different countries. Then we had a look at Bangladesh as one of the case studies since it is one of the countries at higher risk of suffering the adverse consequences of climate change, which forces many people to move internally or to cross the border to India. We were able to conclude that cross border migration increases tensions between countries and between social groups of the receiving communities. Since these people need protection and since these types of tensions threaten peace and security in some countries we had the need to have a look at The 1951 Convention to see if this instrument could in any way protect these types of refugees. Not only is this instrument outdated but we also realized that the definition of refugee cannot be interpreted in a way that it would protect environmental refugees. We then had a look at other major international instruments, however the conclusion is that there is no "one fits all" or an "easy" solution for the problem since we have "oustees", IDPs and international refugees that can fall into the category of environmental refugees. Having no instrument protecting these people governments play a crucial role to protect its people, protect its environment and to guarantee basic human rights to its citizens. We also had a look at the role of international organizations since their role is fundamental in helping people and governments in finding the best ways to address the problem and to adapt to the new realities. In this regard we presented a second case study as counter example to Bangladesh and finally. We wanted to evaluate if the attempts made by the young Eritrean government had helped people adapting better to the environmental and ecological problems that the country faces. Nevertheless the outcome was that both governments are unable to protect its people and that there is instability because of scarce resource. We finally got to the conclusion that the problem of environmental refugees is far from having a solution in sight since the idea of having a new type of migrants is not attractive for most of the international community. We were able to conclude that even if a healthy environment is a public good its value does not seem to be enough to unlock the Prisoner's Dilemma sub-optimal outcome. Countries use all resources without making a true commitment to reduce emissions and protect environmental refugees. Keeping the current trend of global "tragedy of the commons", the welfare of humanity could be undermined. The only solution to avoid it is collective action.