

The background of the slide is a photograph of a tropical coastal area. In the foreground, there is a calm body of water reflecting the sky. The middle ground shows a sandy beach with some sparse vegetation and several palm trees. In the background, more palm trees and some buildings are visible under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. A semi-transparent dark grey rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the title and subtitle text.

CLIMATE REFUGEES

A Sociological Analysis of Environmentally
Driven Migration from Kiribati to New Zealand

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Mentored by Professor Stephen Ostertag

IOANE TEITIOTA



<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34674374>

- Emigrated to New Zealand in 2007 fleeing the effects of sea-level rise
- Visas ran out in 2009 and faced deportation back to Kiribati
- Filed an asylum claim under “climate refugee”
- Each level of New Zealand courts rejected his claim
- Deported in 2015
- 2020 United Nations ruling

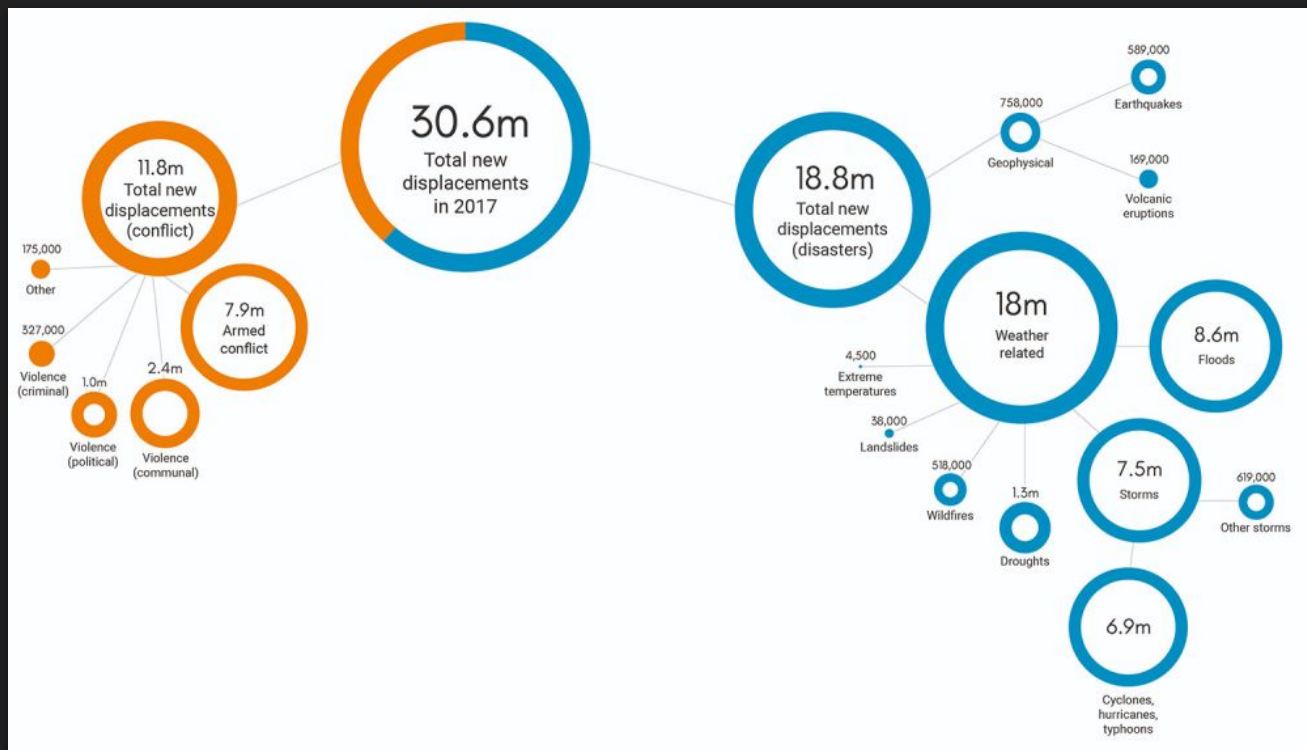
KIRIBATI: "THE ISLAND AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD"

- Population around 100,000
- "Least Developed Country" classification
- Fishing and subsistence economy
- Maximum elevation of 3-4 m above sea level
- Threatened by sea level rise, heat waves, droughts, floods, and storms
- Poor infrastructure and vulnerable economy



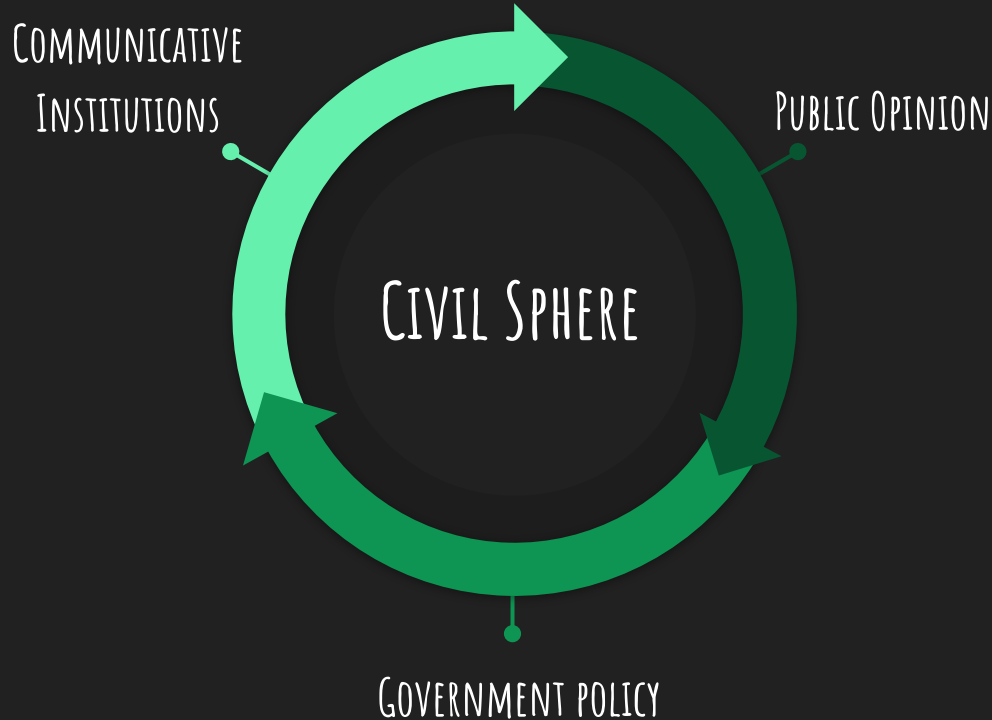
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/10/kiribatis-presidents-plans-to-raise-islands-in-fight-against-sea-level-rise>

THE FUTURE OF CLIMATE MIGRATION



- Sea level rise projected at 0.44 m by the end of the century
- Increasing natural disasters
- Resource exploitation and degradation

CIVIL SPHERE THEORY



- Solidarity vs. assimilation
- 3 elements in conjunction create solidarity
- The civil sphere may expand to include groups or contract to exclude them
- Climate change is a new and evolving challenge to the bounds of existing civil spheres

KIRIBATI IN THE NEWS

- Publications analyzed: Stuff, NZ Herald, Otago Daily times
- Few anti-Kiribati articles but majority support for accepting refugees of climate change
- Most coverage of the Teitiota case
- Legitimization of climate as a valid asylum claim

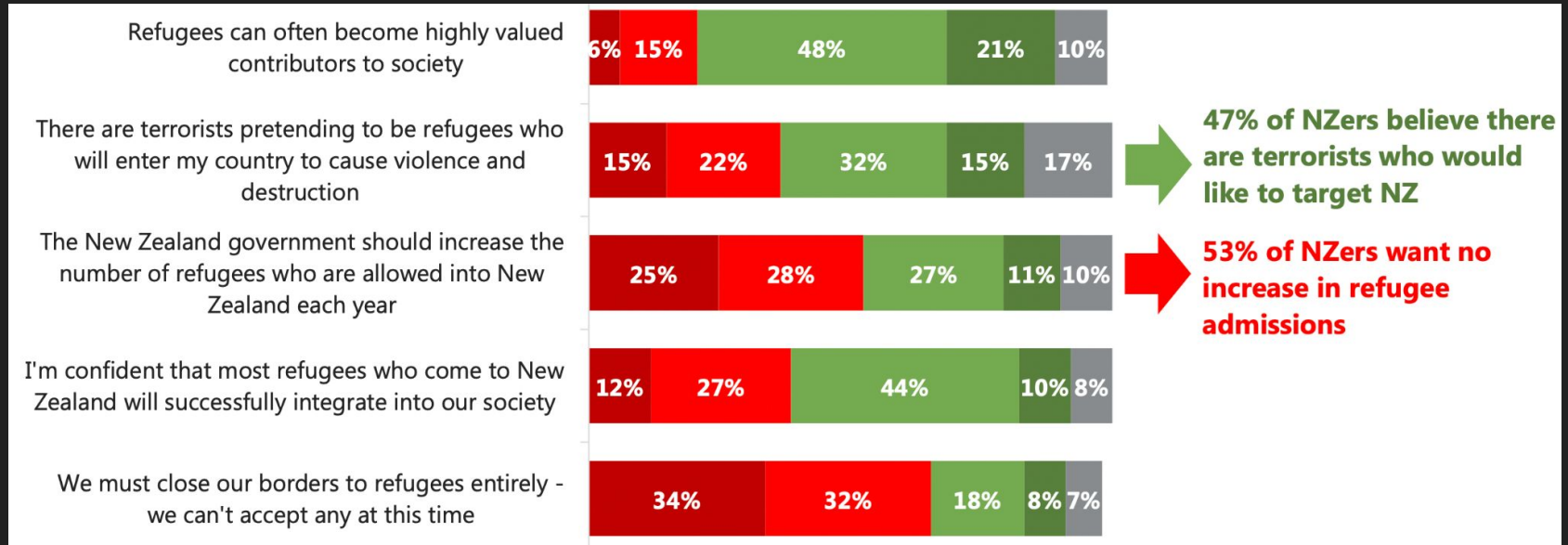
Kiribati children at the mercy of climate change - Unicef

Isabelle Austin, Unicef Pacific · 20:54, Nov 27 2015



<https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/climate-news/74490358/kiribati-children-at-the-mercy-of-climate-change---unicef>

PUBLIC OPINION IN NEW ZEALAND



<https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/publication/documents/2017-08/Ipsos-New-Zealand-Immigration-Refugees-and-Brexit-Survey-Report-2016.pdf>

- Economic concerns as reasoning against accepting refugees
- General public support for allowing in refugees

NEW ZEALAND REFUGEE POLICY



- Refugee Quota Programme of 1500 per year
- Slowly increased from 750, reassessed every three years
- Small additional categories
- Pacific Access Category visa
- Experimental humanitarian visa category failed
- Pacific Islanders prefer to keep refugee status a last resort

The world is running out of options to hit climate goals, U.N. report shows

With the world on track to blaze past its climate goals, only immediate, sweeping societal transformation can stave off catastrophic warming

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/04/04/climate-change-report-united-nations-ipcc/>

- The UN creates its own policies and media
- Highly influential across a wide variety of climate situations
- Still bases decisions on outdated 1951 convention
- Must also expand to account for contemporary problems and new populations of refugees

CONCLUSIONS

- The media and public opinion show general support for climate refugees
- Still extremely limited numbers of visas with high competition and restrictive age limits
- The civil sphere has begun to expand but there is not enough solidarity yet
- The United Nations must play a role in the continued incorporation of climate refugees



<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/383656/nz-calls-for-action-around-kiribati-climate-challenges>

QUESTIONS?

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROFESSOR OSTERTAG