

Harry Ridgewell: You say in your report that Australia and the U.S.A. each should take responsibility of 10% of the overall global share of climate refugees, followed by Canada and Saudi Arabia, and then you go on to list the other countries and how much they should take. How did you arrive at these figures? And does it factor in standard of living or is it just on a polluter per person basis?

Bayes Ahmed: Hi, thank you. It's not only, it's a combination of four different variables. What we call it is the, of course, the countries that producing most carbon dioxide then the ecological footprint, gross national income and Human Development Index. If you analyse these four parameters and based on that I have calculated the total elevation for our climate refugees.

Harry Ridgewell: Right. And sorry. Wait. Does it factor in population in terms of ... I think, but I'm not sure, that China is the biggest polluter but per person it's very, you know, it's much better than the U.S. and Australia. Does it factor in population?

Bayes Ahmed: Yeah. It's our per person calculation, not the total.

Harry Ridgewell: Right. Okay.

Bayes Ahmed: So when I say China is producing most carbon dioxide, it's per person.

Harry Ridgewell: Right. Okay. You also say that as part of the Paris Agreement countries agreed to give \$100 billion each year from 2020 to finance projects that enable vulnerable countries to adapt with the impacts of climate change. And that this Agreement will enter into force once its ratified by 55 countries representing at least 55% of emissions. Have those vulnerable countries already received any of that money, and if not, when will they?

Bayes Ahmed: Not yet. None of those vulnerable countries have received anything because the U.S. pulled out from the Agreement. It's been a few months, or several months, and that's why the other countries are still committed. But nothing happened on producing funding or to help that countries vulnerable so that they can take projects and the funding can be come through those big chunk of central funding. But nothing happened yet. It's only on pen and paper.

Harry Ridgewell: Right. But hasn't ... I thought the U.S. even though Trump's announced that he's going to pull out, it won't be pulling out until 2020. Or, I think it's meant to be the day after the next U.S. election. So that funding isn't in place between now and then, until when they formally actually pull out?

Bayes Ahmed: That is still not clear but I know no funding is there yet. The plan was to, this Agreement, the basic plan was to create a funding source and help the countries those are really very poor, extremely hit by climate change impacts. And there can be some infrastructure, community resilience projects could be undertaken and those funding could come from that central funding. That was the basic mechanism to help the poor and victim countries. But still I want to recall the same thing. It's a very complicated political, international political decision. Yet

under construction, no concrete decision is made. And because of the U.S. government's decision, the recent decisions, things are more complicated. I hope other countries are working especially U.K. and France, they are really, they really want to implement the agreement.

Harry Ridgewell: Long-term do you think Bangladesh will become completely uninhabitable due to sea level rise and all of its citizens will have to migrate?

Bayes Ahmed: No, not the whole Bangladesh, of course. The coastal Bangladesh where right now 30 million people are living, and what we have calculated from our analysis, we are now trying to calculate the number of climate refugees. Because we need a figure. We are going to publish it soon. Following this article that should be the second part of our research. We have identified every decade near about three to four million people, they are forced to leave their home or their villages because of climate change. We call them climate refugees. That's permanent. Not temporary. When we say permanent climate refugees it should be at least 10 years or more. So it's every 10 years, only from Bangladesh we had calculated three to four million people, or four million climate refugees we have identified. That's a big number and if you consider coming next few decades until 2050, and about fourteen million climate refugees will be only from Bangladesh. And this is our research we have done, and also the World Bank has published a report in May, in April this year and their report also suggests something same. It validates our findings.

Harry Ridgewell: You say that Bangladesh is owed reparations. In your opinion does that extend beyond countries pledging to take Bangladeshi climate refugees?

Bayes Ahmed: Because I brought the historical analysis here, because we have to understand how a country becomes vulnerable. This is first thing we must have to admit and [inaudible 00:07:05]. Let me tell you after two or three centuries of whatever, invasion, our country really became vulnerable in terms of, I gave one very good example of 1970 cyclone. During that time we had no early warning system, I'm talking about 1970. There was no early warning system for cyclone, no disaster risk management, strategies, no [DRR 00:07:42] plan, we say a risk sensitive land-use plan. So the same cyclone killed near about three million people in the coastal Bangladesh.

Bayes Ahmed: But after Independence in 1971 gradually we have improved, and if you look at last, after 2009, you will not hear any massive casualty because of cyclone in Bangladesh. It's been almost eight or nine years. Because now we have proper cyclone early warning system, we have cyclone shelters, thousands of cyclone shelters in coastal Bangladesh, and we can evacuate them at least a week before or four or five days before. We had reduced the mortality because of cyclone disasters.

Bayes Ahmed: But that was absent during different ... you remember, the last 300 years it was, we were under the British colonisation followed by Pakistani dictators, the army dictators. And all this created massive vulnerability in our country. And that

forced us to go back. But now, after Independence, although there are so many problems we have improved ourselves. That's why I said other countries, their invasion and their illegal occupation to another country can really make the victim country extremely vulnerable to this kind of environmental hazards, climate change and [hydro-metallurgical 00:09:33] hazards. So that's ... and those countries should be responsible as well to build our country and to help the climate refugees.

Harry Ridgewell: How far back should we go when evaluating who has the largest moral responsibility for taking in climate refugees?

Bayes Ahmed: That's another good question. How far we should go back. I have analysed in my article since 1747. But it's highly political again, which country and they have to accept this because whether they have done something good why there was no early warning system or risk-sensitive land use plan for Bangladesh until I would say late 1980s? But if you look at other developed countries who ruled Bangladesh for 300 years or 200 years, they had it in their country. But why not in Bangladesh? Or in other colonised part of the world? That's clear identification or discrimination you can see. I think these kind of occupations can put the countries in real tragedy.

Harry Ridgewell: Currently what international legal rights does a climate refugee have? And do you think it's likely that climate refugees are going to be given any rights any time soon?

Bayes Ahmed: They have no rights, the climate refugees. Wherever they go they end up in detention camps or they at level best, legal migrants. And if you read the latest report from World Bank, in the coming 30 years they're estimating at least forty million in next three decades. There'll be forty million climate refugees. All around the world and out of that fourteen million is estimated in Bangladesh. That is huge. And where they will end up? Many of them try to cross the international boundary. Many of them become economic migrants because of climatic disasters you lost everything. Your household, your livelihood, your house, everything. And then you become economic migrant. But it is because of disasters.

Bayes Ahmed: But when they lost everything, become economic migrant and they want to migrate from one city to another city within the country or one country to another country, then the international governments doesn't recognise them as a climate refugee. Rather, they tell these people are economic migrants and there is, this is how they divert the climate migrants to economic migrants. And they don't allow any human rights options, any facilities to anyone. And just imagine in 30 years, forty million climate refugees all around the world. Where they will end up? That's why we propose just like the, we have some laws and regulations like the Geneva Convention, for the forced migrants. Migrants coming from conflicts and violence. They have refugee status although if you remember one million refugees, the Rohingya refugees, came from Myanmar to Bangladesh in the last six months. But they are getting all type of facilities, all

the international NGOs, donors, U.N., governments, are working and helping them, providing them food, medicine, education, all the facilities they are getting.

Bayes Ahmed: But now you see forty million climate refugees. No international organisations, government, are looking after them. I would say in the coming few decades this is going to be the biggest disasters in terms of dealing with climate refugees. There is no law, no regulations, no recognitions for them. And this is the high time to bring this debate to prepare some laws and regulations and get it approved by U.N. and this is the time to look, to start looking after them.

Harry Ridgewell: Left unchanged, if people in Bangladesh are given no ... if there's still no international rights for climate refugees, what will be the effects for Bangladeshis?

Bayes Ahmed: Okay. That's another ... then, now, we are calling them internally displaced climate refugees in Bangladesh. So when the coastal areas are unlivable, of course many of them is out of thirty million, every decade four million people, they just permanently leave the coastal Bangladesh. So where they end up? They end up in large cities like Dhaka, Chittagong, and if you remember, if you know the statistic there are near there about twenty million people are living in Dhaka city. This is the most densely populated city in the world. It's a very small area and twenty million people are living and many of them, from our findings, are almost 30% of them are climate refugees.

Bayes Ahmed: And Dhaka is one of the worst livable cities in the world. If you go in the city, so many high rise buildings. There to travel eight kilometre it takes you three, four hours. There is huge traffic jams, so many health problems, and this the, I think, third worst livable city in the world, what I remember. And consecutively six years it was the worst livable city. And this is what an impact how climate migrants or refugees when they come in large cities and making those cities unlivable.

Harry Ridgewell: Have you been to Dhaka or anywhere else in Bangladesh and seen the effects it's already, rising sea levels is already having?

Bayes Ahmed: Yeah. From. I was born and brought up in Dhaka. Can you repeat your question, what?

Harry Ridgewell: Oh, I was just wondering if, in Dhaka or anywhere else in Bangladesh, if you've already seen the effects that rising sea levels are having now, on people there?

Bayes Ahmed: It's rising sea level, when you say it ... you don't see it. You know, you don't see it's rising gradually. You see it through storm surges, cyclone impacts and it's a long-term process and gradually it's grabbing many costal lands that become saline, you know? People used to produce rice or other crops in one land. After five, ten years you will find this land is no more, you cannot cultivate any more because this is now salty, the soil. Because of the ground water intrusion, the salinity increment. Because the water is coming through ... I'll send you some

photographs to show how and the rice fields, paddy fields are becoming inundated by Bay of Bengal water, or sea water. And this is how we are losing agricultural lands in the coastal Bangladesh and more, less agriculture lands, people are forced to leave their villages and coastal areas. And I have been working in the coastal Bangladesh with the coastal communities. It's been three years. Directly I went to the communities and we did lots of research and publications on it. And this is clearly visible.

Harry Ridgewell: What legal rights should climate refugees be given, then? And how should this be done? What body do you think they should go through?

Bayes Ahmed: There can be two steps. One is the government itself, the Bangladesh government. They should have some clear planning in the next 30 years they are expecting fourteen million people to be displaced from coastal. Coast is in the south and is coming in the middle of Bangladesh and some are moving in the north. There should be guidelines, planning and strategies, policies, strategies, on how to accommodate them in other places and create alternative livelihoods. This is one. From the government of Bangladesh.

Bayes Ahmed: And also there are some international responsibilities that I want to, there is no legal documentation or international commitment. There should be some ... Two things can happen. One is they can again, the climate Paris Agreement, they can continue with this Agreement and create the central funding and compensate Bangladesh through projects. Projects to improve the infrastructure in the coastal Bangladesh. Let's say roads, more cyclone shelters, more infrastructure, so that it can create job opportunities. Also sea ports. We can establish a new sea ports or deep sea ports in Bangladesh. It will create jobs for the people. Let's say they are mostly agriculture dependent people. They depend on fishing and rice production.

Bayes Ahmed: But if we can create alternative livelihoods through infrastructure development and the funding coming through Paris Agreement, we can at least I would say, let's say three million in 10 years. We can create job opportunities for them so that those people can live in those areas. The coastal areas. They don't need to move and come to Dhaka or Chittagong, the second largest city. Or whenever they come to Dhaka right now they get no jobs, they are frustrated and try to go to India and in other Middle East countries illegally.

Bayes Ahmed: So alternative land work creations both government of Bangladesh should have some strategies, and the international communities to central funding, whatever the mechanism, one good initiative was Paris Agreement, which is still under review. And create alternative livelihoods. These are some realistic steps right now international governments can take in the long term if they agree they can share, take the share of climate refugees to relocate in their country.

Harry Ridgewell: India is building a fence on the Bangladeshi-Indian border which it says it's nearly completed. If climate change forces many from Bangladesh to migrate, do

you think there'll be violence on that border? And how likely do you think India is to accept climate refugees?

Bayes Ahmed: India is not, of course, ready at this moment and what I want to tell you, there are ten million, fourteen million, or millions of people and their livelihood is under threat. And they can be violent any time. You see what's happening in Bangladesh from Myanmar in Rakhine. One million people just came because of violence. And also another one million people, Rohingyas, are now internally displaced in Rakhine. One more yet to be added. And if you remember, in Indian government they have identified 0.3 million Bangladeshis, illegal Bangladeshis in [Asham 00:23:43]. And they're trying to force them back in Bangladesh. So, there is all political problems and building fence, they're the only, so many illegal Bangladeshis as mentioned by Indian government in India. And considering ... if you remember the Myanmar government is also saying that Rohingyas are illegal Bangladeshis. You know. That's the root cause of violence. But we are saying no, they are living in the Rakhine province for, at least for a few generations.

Bayes Ahmed: But there are some illegal migrants in India and in Myanmar. These are the two neighbouring countries of Bangladesh and they are not happy with it. And many of them are climate refugees. That is clearly, already there is violence with Myanmar and Bangladesh. Not in confrontation with armies but local people are suffering. Saying India have identified .3 million illegal Bangladeshis and they want to force them back to Bangladesh. And building fences in both countries. And considering that climate refugees have no help from the international governments through Paris Agreement and the two hostile, I would say two hostile neighbours, India and Myanmar, and what they're doing right now. I think that severe violence can trigger any time.

Harry Ridgewell: Considering that Europe has struggled dealing with the migration of over one million refugees and migrants since 2015, how do you think it will fare in the future with the predicted climate refugee crisis?

Bayes Ahmed: The biggest refugees right now, the forced migrants, are what we call them. They are forced to leave because of war or violence. People are already globally, everyone is struggling to accommodate them. Of course the U.S. has banned many countries recently from the Middle East to enter their country. Even they are ... it's kind of violation of Geneva Convention. If there is war and people are forced to leave their country, other countries are supposed to help them. Already globally developed countries are struggling and that's why the accommodating climate migrants can be a big challenge for those countries. But we have to acknowledge climate refugees are real. And they are being forced to leave their homelands because of the increase of greenhouse gas. And those developed countries are quite responsible for producing carbon dioxide. That is increasing global temperature and causing problems in different countries. I would say finally the international communities and countries responsible for all these problems should take equal share.

Harry Ridgewell: A Kiribati national lost his appeal for asylum in New Zealand in a case that would have made him the world's first climate refugee. Do you think this has set a precedent for other countries, that they don't need to accept climate refugees?

Bayes Ahmed: That is a big blow for establishing rights for the climate refugees. But we shouldn't be frustrated, we should move on through research, through evidence-based examples, through journalism, and I think there is hope. It doesn't mean there's no hope for them. We can still fight for them. There is U.N., Climate Change Cell and other organisations are quite aware of it, even World Bank. Their recent report clearly mentioned 40 million climate refugees are expected. So these organisations are quite aware of it and we must have to bring it before them. And we must have to fight. It's the long-term fight but not impossible, I would say.

Harry Ridgewell: And finally how hopeful are you that global sea level rise and climate change can be tackled before it creates millions of climate refugees?

Bayes Ahmed: I think in next, at least four or five decades, it's not possible. Because the countries are more, areas are becoming, are getting city-style living standard. And it will gradually increase and increase. There is no, unless you invent something, like now we are using oil for producing energy. If you can replace it with something else like with water or any other energy, safe energy source then that's possible that yet there is no such invention. It's a clear fate, it's a clear threat. Can you, can you repeat me again?

Harry Ridgewell: Yeah, sure. How hopeful are you that global sea level rise will be tackled before it creates millions of climate refugees? Basically how hopeful are you for the future that humanity can actually live up to the problem?

Bayes Ahmed: Not in the next few decades at least. There is no hope to reduce carbon dioxide and global temperature increase. But we can take strategies. You know, global strategies to accommodate them properly. But I say the national governments can take initiatives to create alternative livelihoods to accommodate them in other places. And the international global communities can find us victim countries through projects. And they can also take the share of the climate refugees. These are the three options left right now considering what is happening globally in contemporary time.

Harry Ridgewell: Okay. Thank you. That's all of my questions. Is there anything else that you want to add?

Bayes Ahmed: I finally say if you remember there was, if you go back 50 years, 100 years, you remember once you know the history in this country, in the U.K. the women were not allowed to vote in the national election. But we have overcome this problem. People fought for it. There was fight for getting back the human rights and people overcame so many problems through decades, centuries. I'm hopeful. Even though my country had so many problems, still they're having, but if you look back many problems were resolved. Some new problems are coming.

I would say climate refugees are a new problem. People are not recognising them but if we work together and bring evidence-based examples and fight for it I'm quite hopeful in next few decades we can establish rights and we can bring climate justice. It is possible. We made so many impossibles possible and right now this is possible. I am hopeful.

Harry Ridgewell: Okay. Thank you. And are you happy for me to quote you on all of that?

Bayes Ahmed: Yeah, sure. No problem. You can use my name and my designation and email I.D if you want.