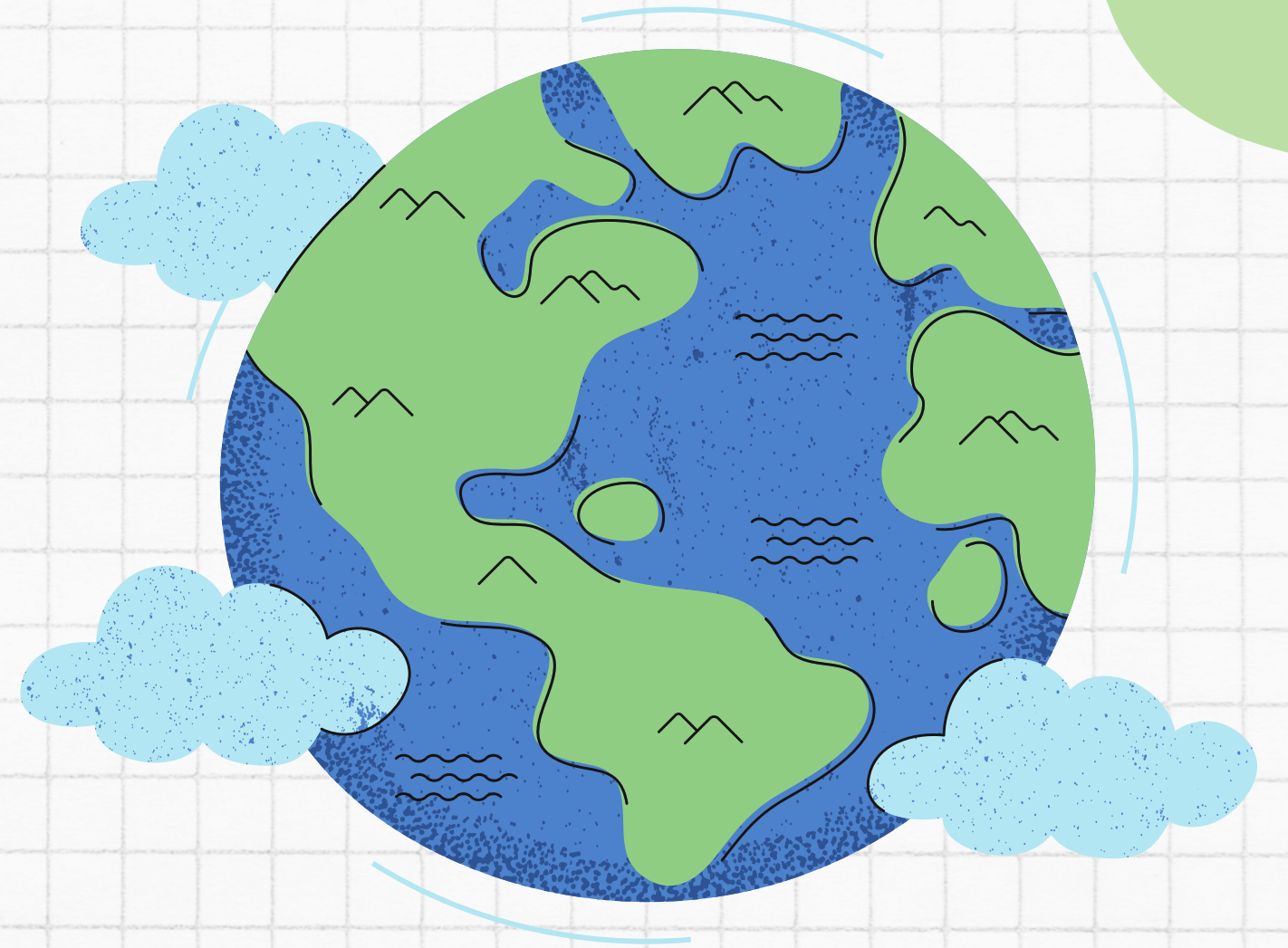


Adapting to Climate Change: Climate Refugees and Canada's Role

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Agenda

Issue Statement

Background

Key Considerations

Options and Recommendation



Climate Refugee?

“Those people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people) that jeopardised their existence and/or seriously affected the quality of their life” - Essam El-Hinnawi (UNEP)



Background

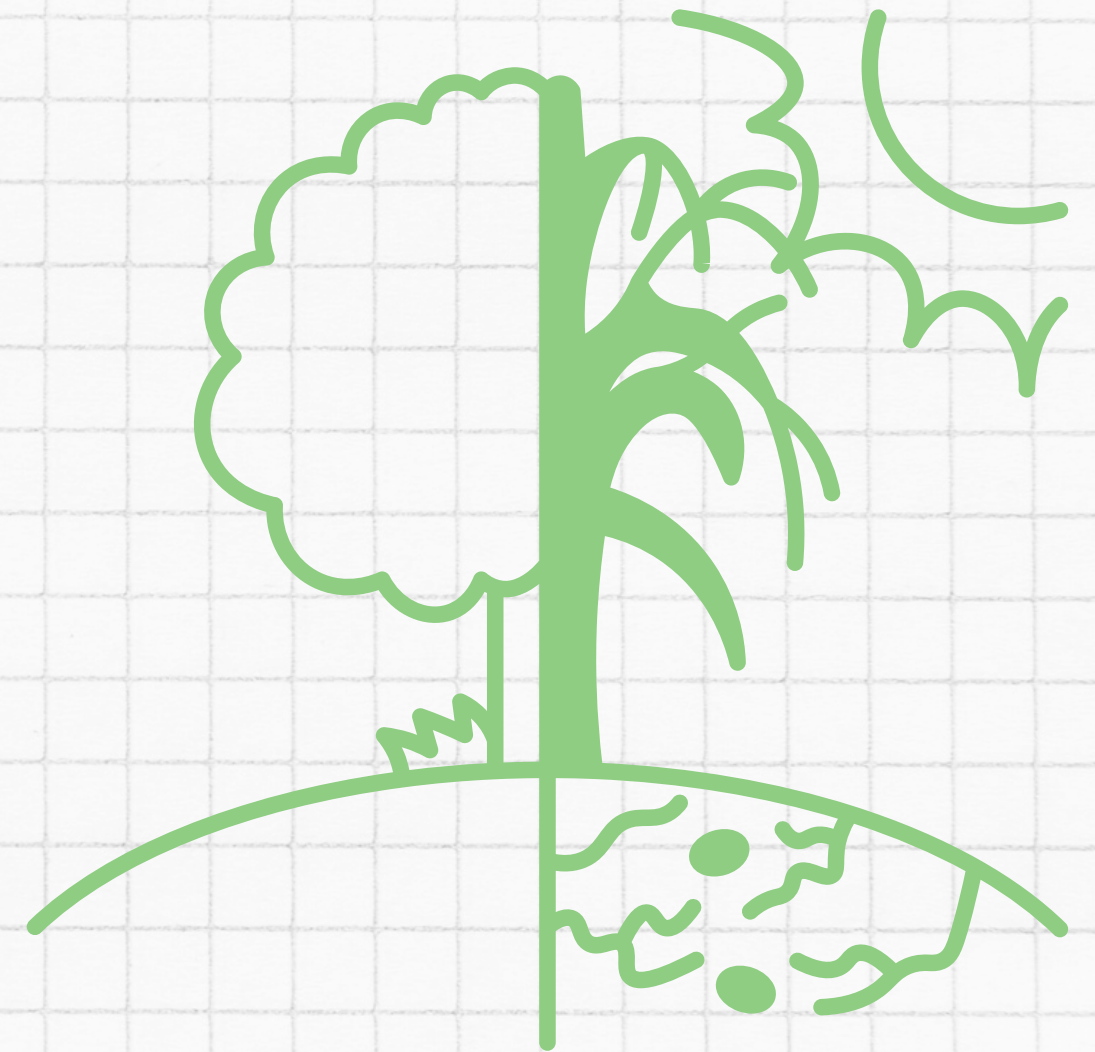
Issue: As more people are being displaced due to climate, how can Canada support these climate refugees and mitigate further increase in displaced people?

Climate change and its effects

Legal status of climate refugees

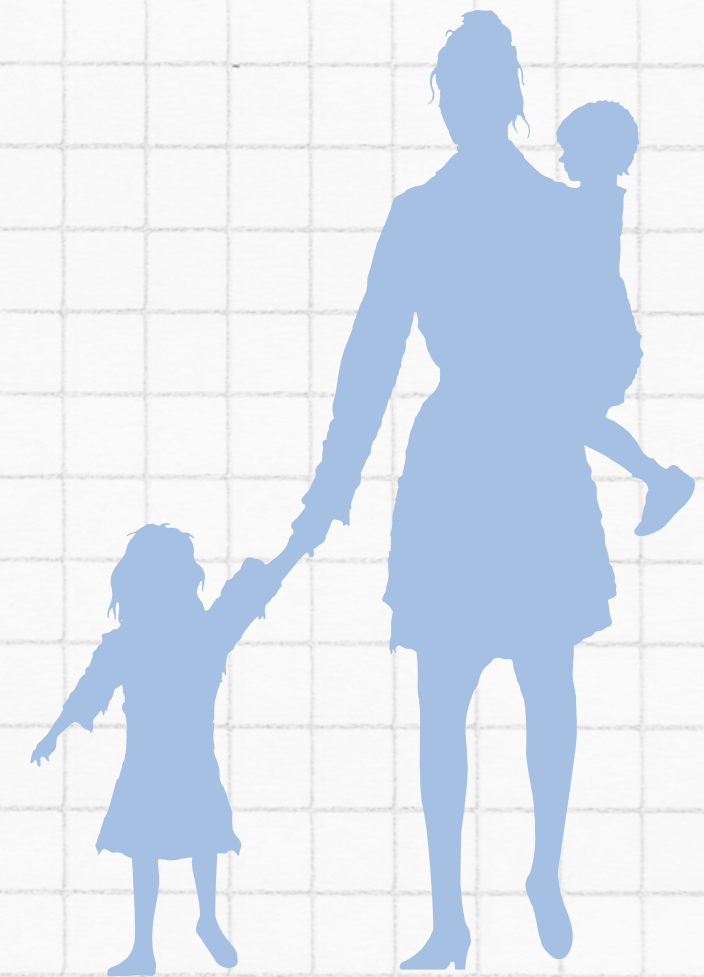
Background

- Climate change is worsening creating inhabitable environments
 - Extreme weather, failed agriculture, destroyed infrastructure, diseases
- By 2050, there could be up to 200 million climate refugees (IOM)
- This will disproportionately impact Global South countries.
 - Adaptation is expensive - how to build strong foundation



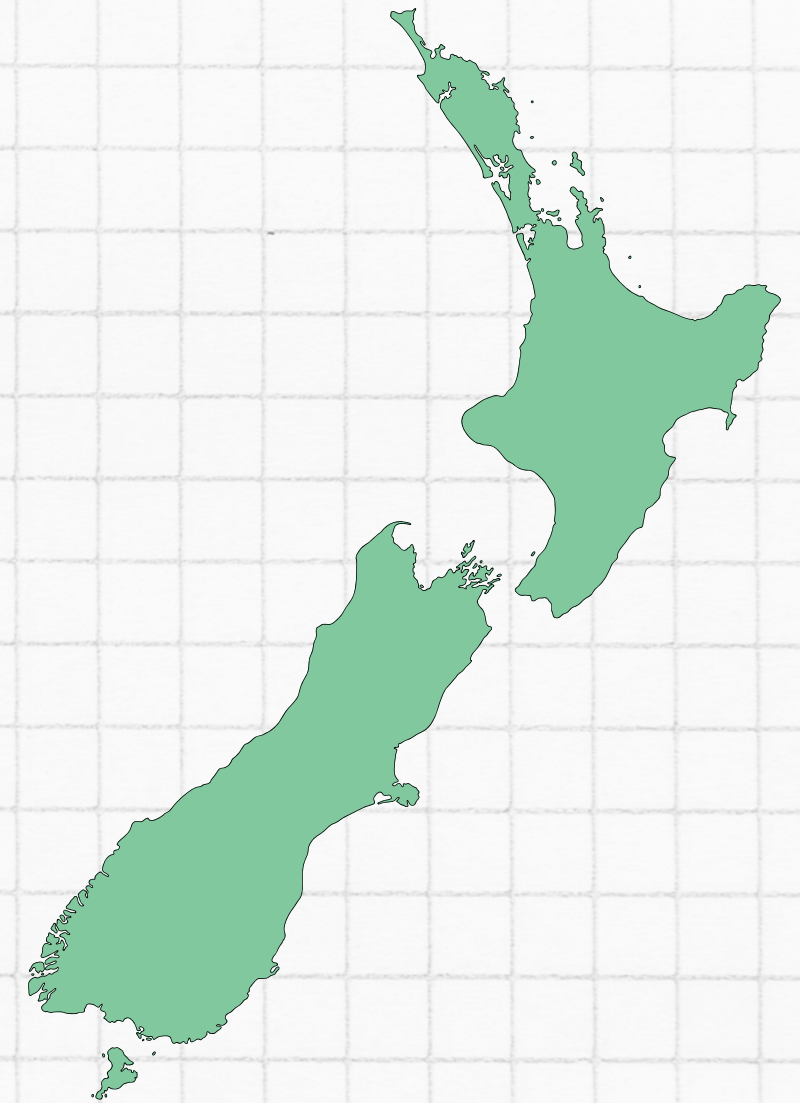
Background

- Climate refugees are not legally protected under the 1951 Refugee Convention.
 - Definition of a refugee: people who had to flee their homes due to fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.
- Government Assisted Refugee program (GAR)
 - Referral from UNHCR or state authorities of asylum destinations
- Private Sponsorship of Refugees program (PSR)
 - Canadian citizens and PRs can sponsor refugees with settlement assistance and financial support
 - Must qualify as refugees



Past Cases

- A Kiribati citizen was denied by New Zealand from seeking asylum as a climate refugee in 2016
 - Deported to Kiribati
- Difficulty accessing safe drinking water and faced land disputes due to climate change
- Appealed to the High Court but was denied since he was not subject to persecution as stated in the Refugee Convention.
- The court expressed concern about expanding scope of the Convention.



Key Considerations

Financial Consideration

Addressing climate refugees and mitigating forced climate migration will require significant financial resources

Legal Considerations

Many displaced by climate change do not meet the traditional definition of “refugees,” thus lacking access to legal protections against human rights violations, including deportation

Key stakeholders

Canada will need to cooperate and coordinate with various key stakeholders to address climate refugees and mitigate forced climate migration, including UN and its agencies

What is Canada's Role?

Policy Recommendations

Enhancing Localized Support

Option 1: Advocacy + Localized Support

Option 2: Exclusive Channel + Localized Support

Option 3: Advocacy + Exclusive Channel + Localized Support



Enhancing Localized Support

- Building resilience to climate change tackles the root of the problem
 - Adaptation is costly but necessary to build strong foundation of society
- Canada, as a Global North country, should partner with lower-income countries
 - Focus on sectors like agriculture and healthcare
 - Ex: Salt Solution - Netherlands
- Benefits:
 - Leverages local expertise - bottom-up aid
 - Offers sustainable solution to climate vulnerability and reduces the root issue
 - Aligns with commitment under Paris Agreement
- Risks:
 - Monetary investment can lead to power imbalance



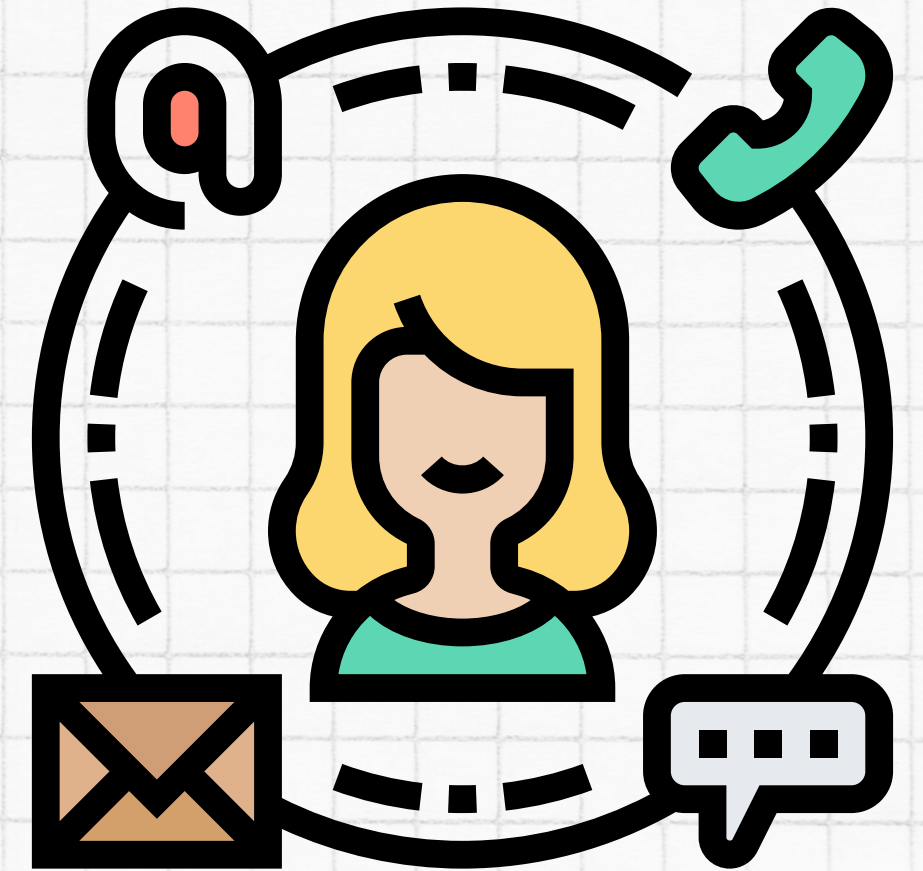
Option 1: Advocacy + Support

- Advocate to UNHCR to revise definition of refugees to better fit future needs with diplomatic engagement and public awareness. Changing the definition will expand the existing refugee pathway and provide climate refugees with legal protection.
- Benefits:
 - Low cost: Canada does not take a large amount of refugees in the first place
 - Change refugee pathways in other countries
 - An existing effort that has been discussed
- Risks:
 - Canada's current pathway may not be prepared to take in more refugees
 - Unclear what exactly climate refugees will entail, making it difficult to put into a legal framework
 - Requires international cooperation
 - Refugee taking countries will be opposed



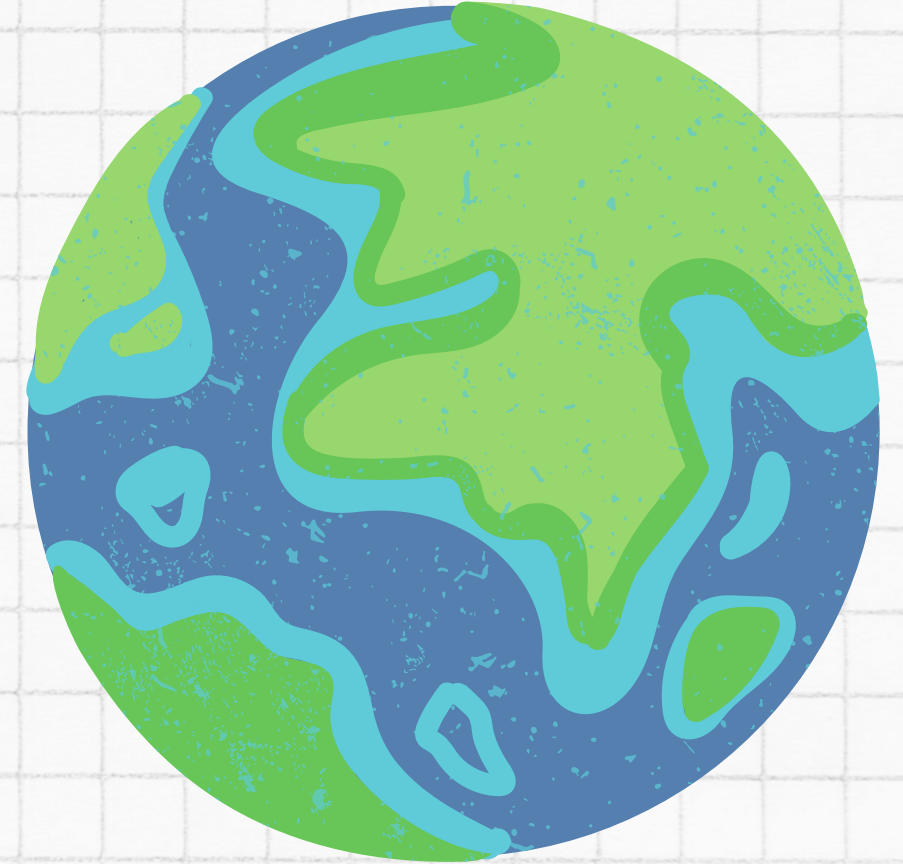
Option 2: Exclusive Channel + Support

- Opening an exclusive immigration channel for individuals displaced by environmental factors, referred to as "environmental immigrants."
- Benefits:
 - Streamlined process - efficient and responsive
 - Relocate in advance - proactive inclusion
 - Economic and cultural enrichment to Canada
- Risks:
 - Public perception
 - Integration Challenges
 - Security Concerns
 - Inequality

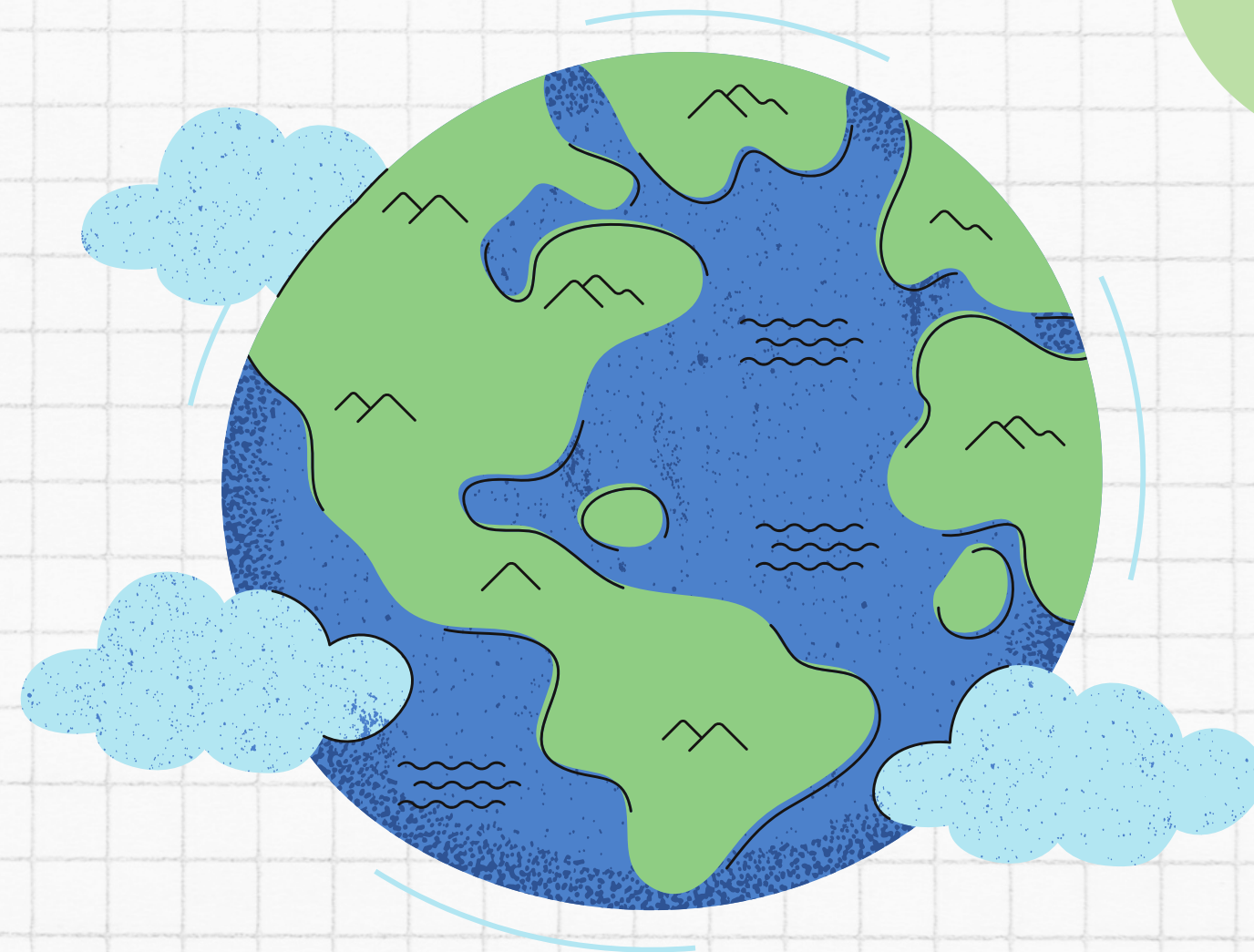


Option 3: Advocacy + Exclusive Channel + Support

- Expand the refugee definition to include climate refugees, coupled with the exclusive channel for environmental immigrants
- Benefits
 - Humanitarian implications - likely promote a global response
 - Potential Economic implications - long-term economic contributions of refugees
- Risks:
 - Political costs
 - Immigration rate impact
 - Infrastructure and integration - requires careful planning



**Thank
you very
much!**



Appendix

Slide 12:

- Current immigration target in Canada is 465,000 annually
- 30,000 refugees
- Study by Drabo and Mbaye finds: climate migration happens exclusively for those with a high level of education, depicting the inequity of climate migration. There is an over-focus on those who had the opportunity to move away, ignoring those who suffered from climate change but was forced to stay in the home country due to a lack of access to sufficient financial, social and human resource.