

# Research in Belize

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## Volunteering at the Caribbean Community Climate Change Center



The Slosberg grant gave me the opportunity to participate in a two-month volunteer position with a regional NGO, Caribbean Community Climate Change Center (CCCCC) in Belize.

The CCCCC coordinates the Caribbean region's response to climate change, working on effective solutions and projects to stabilize, and ultimately reverse, the environmental impacts of climate change and global warming. It provides climate change-related policy advice and guidelines to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Member States through the CARICOM Secretariat and to the UK Caribbean Overseas Territories and serves as the archive and clearing house for regional climate change data and documentation.

The CCCCC's mission coincided seemingly with my MA thesis topic which discusses the application of international refugee law on climate migrants in the Caribbean, particularly small island states that are completely independent from a mother country. Small island developing states (SIDS) in the Caribbean are unevenly impacted by the effects of climate change because they cannot depend on a mother country to assist with for financial, economic, and structural challenges. Owing to such fact, these islands run a bigger risk when confronting the projected impacts of climate change to the region, including but not limited to: more frequent and more severe hurricanes, sea level rise, floods and drought. Considering climate change is already a very real and threatening issue, there is a growing need for fast and effective action from the international community. Unfortunately, the urgent need for quick and efficient international action to protect vulnerable populations in these small island states is not reflected in

international conventions. As with many other international topics, there is much debate among academics and politicians about the difficulties of addressing internal versus cross-border migrations, slow-onset versus rapid-onset migration and the lack of adequate terminology to define the types of migrants caused by 'climate-change related movements'.

I was accepted as a volunteer in January 2017 and moved to Belize for two months starting on February 14th. While volunteering at the Caribbean Community Climate Change Center in Belmopan, Belize, I conducted research on the effects of climate change on the local population of Belize. My assignment was centered around collecting data about the people who are directly affected by climate change every day, and their possible future migration patterns. As part of my research, I visited the town of San Pedro and the village of Monkey River where I conducted 5 individual semi-structured interviews in each town about the impacts of climate change on their daily lives. Moreover, I co-conducted a series of focus groups, where 8 women in the town of Sarteneja were interviewed on the impact of climate change on their health and daily life. I also assisted a colleague as a translator for three of the four interviews she recorded for her research in various towns around Belize, providing me with a wider scope of information on the link between climate change, health and gender. My research reinforces the second chapter of my thesis which will examine the effects climate change on the small island developing states (SIDS) in the Caribbean while attempting to identify the different types of migration patterns involved within a wider range of social and political concerns. The chapter will compare available data on preventative and mitigation policy action in the SIDS without any colonial mother country. I will be using Belize, specifically San Pedro and Monkey River, as proxies for the possible effects of climate change on small island states. I will do so while keeping in mind that climate change migration in Belize will mostly consist of internal displacement, considering it is a country with extensive rural topography.

The CCCCC graciously hosted me during these two months and presented me with the opportunity to conduct my own field assessments, possibly influencing policy as my research highlights an unstudied but important aspect of climate change. The CCCCC will be using my final research project along with the project of the other volunteers in a proposed work to be published next semester.

CCCCC Co-Workers



Town of San Pedro



Village of Monkey River

