UNHCR and the IRC are pleased to introduce you to the Creating Safe Learning Environments e-course (SLE). This comprehensive e-course is built on UNHCR’s guide, Safe Schools and Learning Environments: How to Prevent and Respond to Violence in Refugee Schools, and on IRC's Healing Classrooms materials, as well as both organizations’ cumulative years of experience working with conflict and disaster-affected populations.

Why do we need to create safe learning environments?

Education is the right of every child and is essential for holistic personal growth and development. In addition, numerous studies have shown the important role that schools can play in promoting students’ protection and psychosocial well-being during and after traumatic events. Schools can create a climate where learners heal and have their emotional needs met.

Unfortunately, learning environments are not always safe, positive places for children. Violence, abuse, and exploitation are a sad reality of school life for many boys and girls. Unsafe learning environments can cause students physical, emotional, and psychological harm, and prevent them from attending school. Sexual exploitation of students, particularly girls, is a major concern. In order to ensure that children and young people are enrolling in and attending quality schooling that promotes their learning, social and emotional development, and well-being, it is critical to ensure that learning environments are equipped to both prevent and respond to instances of violence.

What are the learning objectives of this e-course?

The overall goal of the SLE e-course is to increase staff capacity to design, implement, and monitor safe, protective and peaceable learning environments in the contexts in which they work. The primary audiences for SLE include UNHCR and IRC personnel, as well as international, intergovernmental and local NGO partners and government officials responsible for education, child protection, youth and livelihoods, or community service programs. Designed for conflict and crisis settings, the SLE e-course can be used for independent self study, in a workshop or training, or in small groups to
help learners develop the knowledge and skills to:

» Assess and analyze challenges and issues in making learning environments safe for boys and girls, specifically by identifying types of violence and root causes;

» Identify and define the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in creating and maintaining safe learning environments;

» Create and implement strategies for promoting safe learning environments and responding to violence, abuse, and exploitation;

» Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programs designed to ensure that learning environments are safe, secure, and protective.

What was the process of developing the e-course?

In 2009, the IRC and UNHCR conducted a series of participatory workshops on promoting safe learning environments in Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Uganda. These workshops allowed the piloting of a variety of training materials on preventing and responding to violence in order to test and verify the relevance of the materials. In 2010, the IRC and UNHCR built on this foundation to develop the initial SLE e-course. The SLE e-course was then reviewed by key stakeholders in the fields of education, child protection, youth and livelihoods, and community service programs through a three-step process. The e-course was tested during a face-to-face workshop in July 2010 in Ethiopia with over 30 participants from the IRC, UNHCR, Save the Children, Catholic Jesuit Services, and the Ethiopian government agency responsible for refugees and returnees. The e-course was additionally reviewed as an individual self-study course by IRC staff in Iraq, Cote d'Ivoire, Pakistan, DRC, and Haiti, and by technical experts in New York, Washington DC, London, and Geneva from Save the Children, World Vision, the Refugee Education Trust, USAID, and New York University. Feedback from all of these stakeholders was analyzed and used to inform the final design of the SLE e-course. The e-course was completed in August 2011.

How do you access the e-course?

The e-course can be found at:

  After logging in, select the "courses" tab on the left, and type CSLE in the search box.

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- The Learning for NGOs (LINGOs) site: [http://lingoscatalog.org/home](http://lingoscatalog.org/home).

- It is also available on CD-ROM.

For more information, please contact

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