



## **Healing Classrooms Initiative**

### **Why is the Healing Classrooms Initiative Needed?**

While education has enormous healing potential in conflict and post-conflict contexts, war is not kept out of classrooms. There is much evidence to show that in practice schools can be targets during conflict for attacks and for recruitment of students, sometimes forcibly, into armed forces. Teachers can abuse and exploit students, from household labor, drastic disciplinary measures to sexual abuse. Girls are often especially vulnerable to this. The journey to and from school is can be dangerous, especially for minorities. Curriculum can be manipulated to advocate messages of hate and violence.

IRC believes that even though education during and after conflict has the very real potential to put students in harm's way, this should not be seen a reason for not providing education in these contexts. Rather every effort should be made to create safe and healing classrooms for children and youth affected by conflict so they can fully benefit from education.

In recognition of the number of ways that in practice attending schools and other non-formal learning programs can potentially put children and youth at risk of harm and abuse, IRC has developed its Healing Classrooms approach to education programming in conflict contexts. This approach is based on the past 30 years of education work in conflict affected countries and was developed, starting in 2004, through a systematic, 4-year process of literature review, research, and field testing. Recognizing and building off existing good practices such as UNICEF's child-friendly schools model, IRC found that in order for education programs in conflict settings to be healing there was a need to develop program strategies and tools that are:

- Specifically adapted to conflict contexts
- Able to be adapted by diverse populations to support culturally appropriate methods
- Using innovative and flexible training delivery methods to reach educators who normally do not have access to capacity building opportunities, such as those in rural government offices or local NGOs (rather than solely relying on in-person workshops)
- Focused on understanding the specific wellbeing needs of students and learners in particular
- Focused on teachers' own wellbeing and motivation
- Focused on gender dynamics (rather than just girls empowerment)
- Focused on comprehensive school safety (specific to conflict settings)

### **How does IRC Create Healing Classrooms?**

To meet the gaps listed above, IRC has developed an English language Healing Classrooms Toolkit, which includes program guidance and training materials in the form of manuals, videos, and an electronic distance learning course. IRC trains its staff and partners on how to create healing classrooms. Governments, partner NGOs, universities, and schools have expressed

great interest in using the Healing Classrooms materials in the short time since they have been developed and IRC is working with many of them to infuse healing classrooms approach into their work. The Healing Classrooms Toolkit includes:

- **Guide for Teachers and Teacher Educators** – a basic manual for teachers and teacher educators to orient themselves to creating healing classrooms and supporting student well-being. Available at: <http://www.theirc.org/resources/hci-teachers-guide.pdf>
- **Tools for Teacher and teacher Educators** – a compendium of resources, documents and approaches used in IRC education programs to implement the Healing Classrooms Initiative. Available at: <http://www.theirc.org/resources/hci-tools.pdf>
- **Video & Video Guide for Teachers and Teacher Educators** – a video show casing the implementation of the Healing Classrooms Initiative in Afghanistan with an accompanying guide
- **eLearning Distance Learning Program** - a distance learning program to train field staff and partners on the core concepts of the Healing Classrooms Initiative

### How can you help IRC Create Healing Classrooms?

IRC developed the Healing Classrooms Toolkit in 2007. Based on the numerous requests from staff and partners for training on how to create healing classrooms, IRC seeks to expand the toolkit and share its content widely. Existing areas in need of expansion or new areas in need of being developed are marked by an “\*”.

