



# Education

In conflict-afflicted countries around the world, 38 million children and young people are not in school. Very few of the children who do attend schools in developing and war-torn countries learn even the basic skills of reading and maths. For more than 30 years, the IRC has been helping these young people obtain a better education.

## The IRC's approach

In times of conflict, children are vulnerable to displacement, abuse and exploitation. Schools are often not safe havens, and can become places where children are forcibly recruited into the army or sex trade. With education programmes in 16 countries, the IRC ensures children and young people traumatised by conflict or natural disaster have access to a quality education in a safe environment.

## Early education

We focus on children early in their academic development, helping them to read and write and develop the social skills they need to succeed in school and life.

## Healing classrooms

The IRC works with schools to put in place programmes that prevent violence, abuse and exploitation. We have created Healing Classrooms, which provides a safe learning environment staffed by teachers who are trained to respond to the educational, social and emotional needs of children living in crisis.

## Education for girls

In many countries girls' education is not a priority for families. In all our programmes, the IRC works to address barriers to girls enrolling, attending and completing their schooling.

In 2010, the IRC gave some 400,000 students affected by conflict the opportunity of a better education. We also supported over 2,000 schools and trained over 6,000 teachers.

The IRC works directly with children and young people, as well as teachers, community-based groups, governments, and local, national and international organisations.

For example:

- > In **Côte d'Ivoire**, the IRC worked with children to design latrines for the mobile schools they were attending during the recent crisis.
- > In **Afghanistan**, the IRC supports community schools that are within walking distance of girls' homes, which has proven to be an effective way to increase their enrollment and attendance.
- > In **Sierra Leone**, the IRC is working with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to train junior secondary school teachers.
- > In **Iraq**, the IRC is working with several national organisations to improve Parent Teacher Associations in government schools in 11 areas of the country.



Today there are more unemployed young people than ever before. Many of them are living in areas affected by conflict or natural disaster, where they are vulnerable to recruitment into the armed forces or exploitative labour. The IRC is helping young people in countries including Burundi, Sierra Leone and Uganda build better futures for themselves and their communities.

## The IRC's approach

Our programmes aim to help young people meet their financial needs, while at the same time encouraging them to identify future aspirations. Through our Youth and Livelihoods programmes, we help young people to set goals, increase their income and savings, and improve their self-esteem.

Crucially, the IRC provides young people with a variety of choices for their future — from returning to school to completing a training course, getting a job to setting up a business.



## How does the IRC achieve this?

The IRC offers apprenticeships, business training and access to financial services for young people. Through mentorship, counselling and the use of technology, the IRC supports young people's professional and personal growth.

- > **Partnering with young people's networks**  
Young people often rely on local organisations for access to services and to connect with other youth. The IRC works with these networks to learn about the issues that are affecting young people.

- > **Working with the public and private sectors**  
In crisis areas, creating job opportunities is as important as helping young people to access them. The IRC engages with community groups, schools, businesses, financial institutions and governments to create such opportunities.
- > **Working with markets** The IRC's programmes are based on thorough market assessments, so that the skills trainings we offer young people correspond to demand. We involve businesses and financial institutions in mentoring programmes, and support those which employ young people.
- > **Creating safe environments** IRC programmes ensure that young people are safe in school and at work. This means putting codes of conduct in place for employers, educating young people on workers' rights, and establishing legislation to protect them from unsafe work.
- > **Providing opportunities for girls** The IRC prioritises the empowerment of girls and recognises the key role they can play in the development of their communities. We ensure that they have equal access to opportunities, and an equal say in the issues that affect them.

In February 2009, the IRC launched YouthWORKS, an innovative project in Freetown and Kenema, Sierra Leone. Run in conjunction with existing local businesses, YouthWORKS provided jobs for 100 young people, giving them an income, independence and optimism for the future. We have since expanded the project in Sierra Leone and launched it in Egypt and Kenya, and today many thousands of youth are enrolled.