

Orientation

Why teach EHL?

Exploring humanitarian law (EHL) is made up of a series of explorations that aim to improve understanding of humanitarian issues related to situations of conflict. It thus contributes to education in global citizenship, rights education and the development of life skills. It may also contribute to learning in specific academic subject areas such as law, history, social studies and philosophy at the secondary level. States party to the Geneva Conventions have an obligation to spread knowledge of international humanitarian law (IHL) as widely as possible, including to civil society and youth. IHL can contribute to the common “international” core of basic education. IHL education has a unique contribution to make to citizenship education at the local, national and international levels.

What EHL is and is not

EHL focuses on IHL as a basis for further learning. Respect for IHL may help to contain the escalation of violence and the destruction and suffering that result from armed conflict. It may also hasten the return to peaceful modes of conflict resolution that avoid unnecessary suffering and uphold respect for human dignity. EHL is about protecting life and human dignity in times of war and, by extension, in all our experiences. As one Moroccan schoolgirl stated after participating in a pilot EHL programme: “I have learned to see the human side in everyone, including my enemy.”

EHL promotes a humanitarian perspective. Political and ideological discussions about the causes of specific conflicts are not part of EHL.

Your role as an EHL teacher or discussion leader

Teachers normally teach subjects they have studied and become thoroughly familiar with over a period of time. As an EHL teacher, you will be teaching a subject in which you are not an expert. Not only is the subject matter new, but the active teaching methods of the course may also be new to many teachers and discussion leaders. A Moroccan teacher put it this way: “The course does not use conventional ways of teaching. You have to have the attitude ‘we’re learning together.’”

Since you will play the role of teacher, discussion leader and learner as you participate in EHL, you can prepare by asking yourself a few questions:

- What are my hopes? Begin to identify some of your expectations for yourself and your learners.
- What are my fears? Name some issues related to teaching the course that might cause anxiety, and identify appropriate responses.
- What will I do if learners raise questions that I cannot answer? Because of the nature of the course, there will not always be quick or easy answers to all questions. Some ways of responding are presented in “Notes to teachers 3: On ‘no easy answers’”

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One intention of the materials is to help teachers and pupils become learners together. When an answer is not readily available, your role will be to help learners find information to answer their questions. Such questions will also allow you and your pupils to bring your own experiences to the study of EHL. Keep in mind that the questions that you and your learners find difficult are also debated among political leaders and legal experts all over the world.

Teacher-education programme rationales

- ▲ An effective teacher-education programme combines the major concepts and explorations of EHL with specific teaching techniques.
- ▲ Like most learners, teachers learn by doing; hence, the activities they explore during their training will tend to be the ones they introduce in class.
- ▲ Like skilled composers, teachers create variations once they have mastered the major themes.
- ▲ Since the content and often the methods of EHL may be new to teachers, they will need time to learn, practise and reflect on the programme.
- ▲ Teachers learn by watching examples of the actual classroom teaching of others.

Objectives for teachers

- ▲ to gain an understanding of the major concepts and activities of the curriculum
- ▲ to expand their teaching repertoire to include a variety of strategies, such as discussion, role playing, small-group work and the use of videos and dilemmas
- ▲ to increase their competence in the curriculum and improve their teaching abilities

Adapting the programme to your needs

EHL is designed for teaching young people ages 13 to 18. It can be adapted for use both in schools and in informal groups, with any level of technology available, in any language and in any country regardless of the extent of its experience with armed conflict. Because EHL is intended for use across the world, it relies on teachers and discussion leaders who are familiar with its concepts and techniques to adapt it to local contexts.

Before teaching the course, read through the materials to become familiar with the programme. Bear in mind who your learners are and how you might want to adapt EHL. One part of your task is to select the materials and activities you wish to use; another is to identify local resources that can be used. The explorations are like chains and the activities like chains within the explorations. Through their choice of activities, teachers can thus create sequences of their own. First-time teachers may prefer to follow the standard programme without introducing changes.

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Before teaching the course:

- ▲ Contact international humanitarian organizations in your country, region and local community for materials and speakers.
- ▲ Identify local resources and information on some of the issues in the course (e.g. child soldiers and anti-personnel landmines).
- ▲ Determine the situation of your country with regard to the topics addressed in the programme.

By starting from local, regional and national examples of the humanitarian perspective and IHL, learners can move from familiar to more global concepts. A range of stories, photos and dilemmas is included in EHL. Choose those that are appropriate for your learners. Also, have the young people contribute stories and sayings that reflect their local context.

The level of activities can be adjusted for age and academic skills:

- ▲ When using stories, photos and videos with younger learners, first ask questions aiming at clarification and comprehension — e.g. what is taking place in the photo, what happened in the story, what do certain words or phrases mean — before going on to the analytical aspects of the exercise.
- ▲ For groups with limited reading skills, read the story aloud. Pause at points in the story. Review by asking comprehension questions.
- ▲ For more advanced learners, promote discussion and debate by posing provocative questions and using dilemmas and issues that need to be approached from a variety of perspectives.

EHL can be adapted to other subject areas. Activities in EHL can be linked, for example, to history, mathematics, writing and literature. Suggestions of links to various subject areas are also provided in the “Activity extensions” that follow some explorations.

Some of the explorations have accompanying videos and/or materials that need to be photocopied. If you do not have access to the equipment needed to use these, note that you can accomplish the same objectives by using photos, photo collages and posters, and by reading aloud transcripts and stories.

A short pathway

Exploring humanitarian law is a set of resources that can be used on their own or that can be integrated into existing educational programmes. These learning resources can be used in classroom settings as part of academic subject areas, as well as in a wide range of extracurricular settings and venues outside of the school.

The full set of EHL materials represents some 20 hours of instruction which may be extended using supplemental materials and activities or longer discussion sessions. The overall structure of EHL, however, is a flexible one, and it is possible to select activities that best meet your learning objectives and time constraints.

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The short pathway of explorations required to ensure a broad, yet comprehensive understanding of the fundamental issues involved in protecting life and human dignity in situations of violence and conflict includes the following:

Introductory exploration: Images and perceptions

Exploration 1A: What can bystanders do?

Exploration 2A: Limiting the devastation

Exploration 3A: Identifying violations

Exploration 4A: Rationales for justice

Exploration 5A: Needs that arise from the devastation of war

This short pathway may be extended depending on instructional time available to you and your learners, as well on the learning objectives of educational programmes within which *Exploring humanitarian law* is integrated.

Assessing learning

In addition to written forms of assessment, EHL provides teachers with daily opportunities to find out what learners are learning and what misconceptions they may have. Active learning methods, such as class discussion, small-group work, brainstorming and role playing, provide such opportunities.

Specific assessment techniques and questions are suggested at the end of

- ▲ each module of EHL
- ▲ each teacher workshop
- ▲ each “Note to teachers”

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As you teach, ask yourself:

- Am I seeing progress over time?
- Do learners apply course concepts (such as “chain reaction”) to events in the news and in their own lives?
- Do learners spontaneously bring in articles from newspapers, stories from radio or experiences from friends and family?
- Do they see more in the photographs the second or third time they look at them?
- Are they becoming more aware of the multiple points of view involved, particularly those of the victims of armed conflict?
- Are they able to step into the shoes of others and spontaneously to adopt another perspective?
- Are they coming to understand the need for humanitarian action on behalf of the vulnerable?

Organization of this *Methodology guide*

The *Methodology guide* is both a reference for teaching methods and a plan for training workshops. The written guide includes:

- ⤴ an orientation to teaching EHL
- ⤴ “Notes to teachers” on 10 different teaching strategies

Each of the “Notes to teachers” takes a particular teaching technique and gives suggestions on: **objectives, getting started, leading the group, dealing with difficulties** and **assessing learning**.

- ⤴ agendas for 10 teacher-preparation workshops