Distance learning can be both challenging and difficult, especially for some working adults. In recognition of this, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has established the award for an e-learning experience under difficult circumstances. This award identifies and celebrates learners from international organisations who have overcome significant challenges to successfully complete COL’s professional development e-learning courses.

Osman Ali Gema Eshag works for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He is based in Habillah, a remote field office without electricity or a telephone in the West Darfur region of Sudan. This is an area of armed conflict. As Mr Eshag’s supervisor explains, ‘threats of carjacking and kidnapping are constant’. During the time Mr Eshag studied *Writing Effectively for UNHCR*, he travelled frequently on field missions to assess significant influxes of refugees. In addition, he had to share a computer and email account with a colleague in his Habillah office.

Despite these challenges, Mr Eshag successfully completed his programme of study. His report writing has become so highly skilled that, as his supervisor explains, ‘his findings are often read aloud, and subject to round-table strategy discussions’ in the office. Mr Eshag has recently been promoted, and he has taken up further distance education study by enrolling on a Master’s programme in Peace and Development.

Through his assistance with refugee and displaced persons communities Mr Eshag has clearly shown his passion for education and desire to improve the human condition.