

The Action for Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE) Research Agenda (2026-2030)



About ALiVE

The Action for Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE) programme is a collaboration between organisations in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Established in 2020, ALiVE aims to ensure children in East Africa acquire the values and life skills (VaLi) needed to thrive in school, work, and society. Situated in global discussions of social-emotional skills, global citizenship, and 21st century skills, ALiVE uses the terminology, “life skills and values” ([Care 2024](#)). In Phase I (2020–2022), ALiVE developed the region’s first contextualised, household-based VaLi assessment for adolescents ages 13-17. The tool measures three life skills (self-awareness, collaboration, and problem-solving) and one value (respect), selected for their common occurrence in national curricula across the three countries. In Phase II (2023–2025), ALiVE focused on enhancing the capacity of education systems to integrate VaLi by improving curriculum, assessment, teacher training, and parental and community engagement.

Now in its third phase (2026-2030), ALiVE is renewing its commitment to systemic education transformation (“Systems Shift”) with a refined emphasis on strengthening Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) implementation through improved policy frameworks and integration of VaLi into teaching, learning, and assessment systems. Phase III is designed to

The ALiVE Vision and Mission

ALiVE envisions an education system that not only delivers literacy and numeracy but also equips children with life skills and values to navigate real-world challenges, build healthy relationships, and grow into ethical, empowered citizens.

By institutionalising VaLi across the education ecosystem, curriculum, teacher training, assessment, and community engagement, we seek to make life skills foundational to every child's learning experience.

support sustainable institutionalisation and scale of VaLi within national education systems through five interrelated levers of change:

1. **Translating policy into practice:** Collaborating with curriculum and education institutions to translate national policy guidelines into practical tools, routines, and resources that teachers and parents can use in daily learning interactions.
2. **Retooling teachers:** Working with government partners to strengthen pre-service and in-service teacher professional development systems to equip teachers with the knowledge, pedagogical skills, and assessment approaches required to nurture and measure VaLi in classrooms.
3. **Building accountability and feedback loops:** Integrating VaLi indicators and learning outcomes into school quality assurance tools, classroom observation frameworks, and national education reporting systems to strengthen monitoring, reflection, and continuous improvement.
4. **Advocating for sustainable investment:** Securing government commitment to allocate at least 5% of education development budgets toward strengthening VaLi integration and system-wide implementation.
5. **Shifting social norms:** Engaging parents, local leaders, and communities to champion VaLi at home and in society, especially in addressing harmful gender norms.

About the ALiVE Research Agenda

The ALiVE Research Agenda sets the strategic direction for research under ALiVE phase three. It outlines priority research themes designed to guide coordinated inquiry on values and life skills (VaLi) across East Africa for the ALiVE consortium from 2026-2030. The agenda focuses on strengthening evidence to support policy, practice, and system transformation affecting children aged 4–17 across early childhood development and education (ECDE), primary, and secondary education levels. The Research Agenda is built around four themes that correspond to three of ALiVE’s key levers of system change:

Theme	Lever
Parent and Community Engagement in Nurturing VaLi	Translating Policy into Practice
Teacher Training (pre- & in-service) and School Engagement in Nurturing VaLi	Retooling Teachers; Building Accountability and Feedback Loops
Best Practices for Assessing VaLi	Building Accountability and Feedback Loops
Learning Systems and Evidence Use for Scaling VaLi	Building Accountability and Feedback Loops

The Research Agenda intends to support ALiVE’s Theory of Change by generating evidence that enables actors to adopt practices with the potential to nurture VaLi, and ultimately foster improved VaLi in learners. It also aligns with the Harnessing Education Research for Impact in Africa ([HERI-Africa](#)) initiative’s goal of revitalising Africa-led, education research for

systemic transformation. In particular, the agenda advances the vision of the HERI Africa Research Chair on Life Skills and Values Education, of aligning research with national priorities and creating a coherent evidence base to inform the integration of life skills and values in formal education. As a living document, the research agenda remains open to ongoing research and will be periodically revisited to strengthen and advance VaLi in East Africa.

Goals and Use

The goal of the ALiVE Research Agenda is to catalyse systems change in the East Africa region and in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda through coordinated, practice-oriented research on VaLi. A key element in achieving the ALiVE Phase III theory of change, research generated under the Research Agenda is intended to provide practical answers that can inform both policy and practice change at the national level and elicit discourses at the regional and continental levels. Activities under the Research Agenda go beyond evidence generation and dissemination to application and use by ensuring the involvement of key stakeholders from research inception onward. Insights generated through the ALiVE research program, when synthesized and integrated, have the potential to inform curriculum reform and implementation including parental engagement, teacher professional development, and national assessments, three of the most critical priorities highlighted by stakeholders.

Development

The ALiVE Research Agenda was developed through a two-day workshop involving ministry of education representatives, national curriculum specialists, national assessment specialists, university representatives, and ALiVE partners from Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The process began by reviewing and mapping existing national education research priorities to ensure alignment with country-level research agendas. Participants then collaboratively identified cross-cutting research themes and questions that address both national priorities and ALiVE's Phase III system shift vision. The workshop culminated in consensus on a research agenda containing four thematic areas and ten tentative priority research questions, providing a shared regional framework to guide coordinated research and evidence use across participating countries.

Research Agenda Principles

While research agenda themes align to ALiVE Phase 3 key levers of change, several cross-cutting principles guide the design, implementation, and use of all studies under the Research Agenda. These principles ensure that research efforts remain coherent, policy-relevant, and aligned with ALiVE's systems shift ambition, regardless of whether a specific principle is explicitly referenced in a specific research question.

Gender, Equity, and Inclusion

ALiVE is committed to ensuring that not only are all learners treated equitably in its work, but also that they are treated more equitably in the systems through which it operates. Thus, ALiVE will seek to uncover, explore, and engage key system actors in remedying drivers of

exclusion through its research efforts. Specifically, ALiVE is committed to gender-transformative research that moves beyond gender disaggregation alone to investigate and advocate for systems that enable girls and boys to strengthen their VaLi. This is aimed at ensuring that our research champions girls and reinforces transformative home/school practices. Similarly, ALiVE is committed to examining how disability interacts with VaLi and using this information to support system shifts toward more equitable inclusion of learners with disabilities.

Usability and Practicality

ALiVE's vision requires research that is focused on bringing about real, practical change. Thus, ALiVE is committed to conducting research studies with clear, practical applications for education systems in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. While research studies will be grounded in clear conceptual and theoretical frameworks, study questions will be oriented toward practical application. To ensure that research findings are applied to systems change, ALiVE will ensure usability by undertaking study-specific stakeholder analyses, co-creating with key stakeholders along the way, and tailoring the research product and delivery timeline to stakeholder needs. We will seek to make 'policy work in classrooms' by turning findings into short, teacher/parent-friendly guides, routines, and checklists, integrated into training, observations, and assessments i.e. accompanying frameworks with usable tools.

Comparability

Leaning into its strength as a collaboration among several organisations across three countries, the ALiVE Research Agenda will, as much as possible, endeavour to produce study findings that are comparable across countries, enabling regional and country-level reporting and advocacy. At the same time, ALiVE recognises the importance of prioritising country-level needs, timelines, and political realities. This means the ALiVE consortium will strive to balance comparability with country-level needs by co-creating research study designs across countries and ensuring these designs allow for comparability, while contextualising data collection tools and timing as needed to ensure relevance and use at the country-level. This will enable coordinating partners to drive lasting change, share cross-country learnings, and align the coalition's efforts to scale and use evidence regionally.

Rigour and Appropriateness

ALiVE is committed to selecting the most appropriate research method to answer the given research question. Accordingly, ALiVE will prioritise rigorous and context-appropriate designs that match the purpose of each study (exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, and evaluative), combining quantitative and qualitative approaches where useful. At times, this may require experimental or quasi-experimental methods; at other times, non-experimental methods. Regardless of the research method chosen, ALiVE is committed to implementing studies with methodological rigour, recognising that all research methods—from an RCT to a qualitative case study—should be implemented with a high degree of rigour to ensure that findings may be used. In addition, when necessary or useful (e.g. in case of undertaking independent evaluations of our interventions), ALiVE will partner with external experts or institutions to benefit from their technical expertise and perspectives, ensuring careful stakeholder engagement that preserves methodological rigor and quality.

Commitment to Ethical Research

ALiVE is committed to ethical research practices across the research lifecycle. This includes ethics clearance such as institutional review boards, child safeguarding through adult consent and child assent, and application of the principles of “do no harm” to research tools and protocols. Further, ALiVE’s commitment to ethics means we investigate intersectionality, disaggregating by categories such as gender, urban/rural, disability, and more to shed light on potential inequities. Finally, ALiVE is committed to open-science and open-data practices such as sharing assessment tools, de-identified data, and authored reports with the general public for their use.

Co-creation

The research themes and approaches will be designed collaboratively with all stakeholders, including governments, researchers, teachers, practitioners, and communities. This is to ensure that all voices are included in the research process. Importantly, implementation of the research agenda will shift from traditional research and dissemination that emphasise ‘research on’ to embrace the concept of ‘researching with’ stakeholders, including teachers, policymakers, and practitioners.

The ALiVE Research Agenda

The ALiVE Research Agenda focuses on generating evidence that has the potential to advance learners’ VaLi in East Africa through 2030. Focusing on four themes that align with ALiVE’s Phase III levers of change, the Research Agenda balances methodical research into what works with practical inquiry into how best to implement it in the East Africa context.

Theme 1: Parent and Community Engagement in Nurturing VaLi

Parents and communities are essential to nurturing VaLi in children and youth, as reflected in several national policies around the East Africa region. ALiVE recognises “Translating policy into practice” as a key lever of change. The ALiVE’s parent and community engagement research theme is intended to contribute to translating policy to practice by producing the research findings necessary for evidence-based nurturing of VaLi at home and in the community. This theme is hoped to reinforce home and parenting practices, ensuring parents have simple routines, and believe in regular small actions/practices that complement school practices to promote the acquisition of VaLi, while tracking equity for girls and marginalised groups. Thus, research agenda questions under this theme focus on uncovering practical ways parents and communities can nurture learners’ VaLi:

1. What practices and approaches do parents and communities employ to nurture life skills and values? How do these vary across cultural, religious and spatial contexts? What support do parents need to nurture life skills and values?
2. What are the most effective approaches for parents and communities to nurture life skills and values? What factors influence the effectiveness of these approaches?

3. What factors influence or prevent parents and communities from nurturing life skills and values? Specifically, how do gender, culture, or intergenerational norms play a role?

Possible Research Outputs: Toolkit for parents and communities for nurturing VaLi; Evidence on tested approaches across contexts.

Theme 2: Teacher Training and School Engagement in Nurturing VaLi

Both teacher pedagogy and school-level factors are key drivers of learners' ability to strengthen VaLi in school. ALiVE's levers around "Retooling Teachers" and "Building Accountability and Feedback Loops" acknowledge this. The ALiVE Research Agenda seeks to surface effective approaches for nurturing learners' VaLi at school, and includes questions on teacher training, classroom pedagogy, and school environment:

1. What are the most effective teacher training approaches for equipping in-service and pre-service teachers with VALI content and pedagogy?
2. What are the most effective pedagogical approaches and practices for teachers to sustainably nurture VALI in the classroom? What support do teachers need to integrate these approaches in the classroom?
3. Which school-level approaches are most effective for nurturing VaLi in learners? What support do schools need to integrate these approaches? How, if at all, do classroom-level and school-level approaches reinforce each other?
4. How, if at all, do teacher beliefs and personal values influence their ability to model and teach VaLi in the classroom?

Possible Research Outputs: Evidence on tested approaches for teacher training; Evidence on tested approaches for classroom practice; Frameworks for skills integration

Theme 3: Assessing VaLi

Complementing teacher pedagogy and school factors is the use of formative and summative assessment to provide feedback to key actors and encourage accountability across the education system, as reflected in ALiVE's "Building Accountability and Feedback Loops" lever. The theme is hoped to turn assessment standards into progressions/tasks, ensuring curriculum and examinations bodies publish VaLi performance levels annually, and quality assurance directorates/inspections use feedback for continuous improvement. Research questions under this theme seek to generate evidence about the use of assessment from the classroom to the national level:

1. What is the landscape of VaLi assessment from the local school level to the national level? What are the challenges and opportunities for integrating VaLi assessments at all levels? How can these benefit from ALiVE's assessment tool?
2. How can teachers best use assessment approaches and assessment data to nurture VaLi in their students? To what extent is this already happening?
3. How can policy makers best use assessment approaches and assessment data to inform policy and support teachers to improve nurturing of VaLi?

Possible Research Outputs: Item bank for contextualised assessments; expert papers on contextualised assessments; Toolkit for formative and summative assessment of VaLi.

Theme 4: Learning Systems and Evidence Use for Scaling VaLi

Given the ALiVE phase 3 focus on system transformation, the ALiVE consortium is interested in understanding how learning within a system can influence policy and practice change. Evidence on how internal learning can strengthen policy and practice change can support the further integration and strengthening of VaLi interventions.

1. How do education actors and institutions learn from implementation experience, and how does this learning influence policy, practice, and scaling of VaLi interventions?
2. What institutional norms, rules, and practices influence VaLi integration into a national education system? How can ALiVE partners influence institutional norms to sustainably integrate VaLi into national education systems?
3. How can ALiVE strengthen VaLi evidence-to-action pathways at national and subnational levels?

Framework for Evaluating the Research Agenda

ALiVE will apply a structured evaluation framework to ensure the Research Agenda remains strategically aligned, conceptually coherent, methodologically rigorous, feasible to implement, and demonstrably useful for decision-making. The framework provides a shared set of criteria and a clear review process to support transparent prioritisation, quality assurance, and continuous improvement of the agenda over the 2026–2030 period.

The evaluation criteria will include:

- **Strategic alignment and relevance:** Alignment with ALiVE Phase III levers, national education priorities, and stakeholder demand, as well as a clear definition of the decisions the evidence is intended to influence.
- **Conceptual clarity and coherence:** Clear definitions of VaLi constructs, plausible causal pathways, and consistency across goals, themes, research questions, and intended users.
- **Equity, inclusion, and contextual responsiveness:** Explicit attention to gender, disability, language, rural/urban contexts, and other drivers of exclusion, including analysis of differential effects.
- **Feasibility and resourcing:** A realistic scope for 2026–2030, with attention to data availability, partner capacity, timelines, and cost (including value-for-money considerations).
- **Methodological rigour and ethics:** Appropriate designs for causal and implementation questions, high-quality measurement, robust ethical safeguards for children, and responsible data governance.
- **Usability and uptake:** Co-production with policymakers and practitioners, products and timelines aligned to decision cycles, and clear pathways for translating findings into practical tools and routines.

- **Learning and adaptation:** Clear mechanisms for synthesising evidence across studies, reflecting on implementation lessons, and updating the agenda iteratively as a living document.
- **Accountability and impact tracking:** Specific indicators for monitoring research progress and evidence use, including who will use findings, how they will be used, and by when.

Conclusion

The ALiVE consortium, including partners from Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, is committed to strengthening the nurturing of VaLi from home to school to national policy. Our Research Agenda outlines our strategic research efforts to strengthen systems for nurturing VaLi across the East Africa region from 2026-2030 through practical, inclusive, rigorous research. Our hope is that, while this research agenda informs policy and practice at the country level, it also serves as a model for regional collaboration and advocacy. This research agenda will be reviewed annually to identify new research areas, retire existing research questions, and take stock of learning of the previous year.

For more information, please contact:

Uwezo Uganda
Email: info@uwezouganda.org
Tel: +256-393-193-441