

East Africa's Education Experts Convene in Kilimanjaro to Shape a Regional Research Agenda on Values and Life Skills

ALiVE Research and Assessment Planning Meeting | Machame, Kilimanjaro, Tanzania | 22–23 January 2026

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A group photo of education experts, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda

Education experts, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda convened in Machame, Kilimanjaro -Tanzania for the Action for Life skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE) Research and Assessment Planning Meeting from 22–23 January 2026. ALiVE is a programme of the Regional Education Learning Initiative Africa (RELI Africa) supporting education systems in Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda to integrate, nurture, teach and assess values and life skills that enable learners to thrive in school and beyond. Participants in the meeting included government officials from research, assessment and curriculum entities of the respective country Ministries of Education, together with implementing organisations and academic partners, including; Uwezo Tanzania, Uwezo Uganda, Zizi Afrique Foundation (ZAF), Milele Zanzibar Foundation (MZF), and academic institutions such as the University of Dar es Salaam, Kyambogo University and State University of Zanzibar.

The two-day gathering focused on planning and aligning a regional research and assessment agenda for ALiVE Phase III under its Data, Knowledge and Storytelling pillar that aims to strengthen how evidence is generated and utilised to support the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) implementation and integration of Values and Life Skills (Vali) across education systems in the region. In Phase I (2020–March 2023), ALiVE developed contextualised assessment tools for three key life skills – collaboration, problem-

solving, and self-awareness – and one value, respect, to measure these competencies among adolescents in the region. Phase II, spanning April 2023 to December 2025, focused on enhancing the capacity of education systems in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania to integrate life skills and values through improvements in pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and parental engagement. ALiVE Phase III sets an ambitious regional vision “*To embed life skills and values in every learner’s experience across East Africa, reaching 10 million children aged 4–17 across Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania (Mainland and Zanzibar by 2030.*” Within Phase III framework, the Data and Knowledge pillar is expected to coordinate research and strengthen evidence systems that ensure practical insights reach teachers, parents, and learners, moving beyond mere dissemination to influence real-world practice.

In his opening remarks, the host, Mr Baraka Mgohamwende (Executive Director of Uwezo Tanzania), warmly welcomed all participants to Machame, a place that is nestled at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa’s highest peak and Tanzania’s most treasured landmark. He invited everyone to enjoy the ideal setting for this important meeting because of its profound tranquility and atmosphere for focused thought and meaningful conversations.

Dr Mary Goretti Nakabugo, Executive Director of Uwezo Uganda and ALiVE Data and Knowledge Pillar Lead, welcomed participants and highlighted the meeting’s focus on research and assessment of life skills and values. She emphasised ALiVE Phase III’s aspiration to integrate these skills into large-scale national assessments and the generation of useful data.

ALiVE Principal Investigator, Dr John Mugo, offered an overview of the programme’s “system shift” approach, explaining that ALiVE was launched in August 2020 in response to the introduction of competency-based curricula in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. He observed that although these curricula aimed to broaden learners’ skills—often described as life skills, values, or social-emotional learning; these intentions were not yet consistently reflected in classroom practice. He further noted that, a scoping study showed that most assessment tools were imported and not fully suited to local realities, while local expertise to develop frameworks and assessments was also limited. To this end, ALiVE phase III has been grounded to focus on systems strengthening through government partnerships, collective impact among multiple actors, and an Africa-led approach to building local capacity, focusing on policy frameworks, curriculum support, teacher development, assessment, parental engagement, and quality assurance, alongside evidence use and storytelling.

Mr. Anthony Rwebanda, Assistant Commissioner for Research and Innovations in Uganda's Ministry of Education and Sports, articulated a comprehensive vision for data-driven policy. He framed Uganda's entire educational mission around the pillars of quality, equity, and access. Central to this mission, he stressed, is a rigorous commitment to research where data must serve a practical and transformative purpose. He emphasised: “*...data generation is a very important aspect in our policy formulation, dissemination and implementation, because we don't want to have data for the sake of it. Data must be used for improvement.*



Mr. Anthony Rwebanda, Assistant Commissioner, Research and Innovations, Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda



Dr. Shehe Abdalla Mohammed from the State University of Zanzibar delivering his remarks at the meeting on behalf of the delegation from Zanzibar

Similarly, Dr. Shehe Abdalla Mohammed from the State University of Zanzibar reaffirmed that research is a key priority across the Ministry of Education, the State University of Zanzibar, and the Zanzibar Institute of Education. He noted that government decision-making is increasingly evidence-driven, and that proposals must therefore be supported by credible and verifiable data. He further acknowledged ALiVE for strengthening their research capacity, and looked forward to gaining useful knowledge to apply in both ministry and university work.

In his remarks, Dr Alfred Mdima, Head of the Research and Evaluation Unit at National Examinations Council of Tanzania (NECTA), highlighted Tanzania's education philosophy that emphasises self-reliance and partnership between government and the private sector.



Speaking of CBC implementation, he cautioned against relying heavily on high-stakes, time-bound examinations to judge learning, and encouraged a shift towards school-based, continuous assessment that can capture learners' strengths and potential over time. He further emphasised that research is essential for sound decision-making, and called on partners to generate useful evidence and communicate it wisely to policy audiences.

Highlights and Key Outcomes from the Meeting

The Kilimanjaro meeting created a platform for partners to compare country priorities, identify high-impact research questions for 2026 and agree on standards for data and knowledge management. The meeting featured reflections on global, Low-and Middle-Income Country (LMIC) evidence for Values and Life Skills / Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and country research agendas. A virtual session with Centre for Effective Global Action (CEGA), University of California, Berkeley, USA, explored potential for co-creating a research fellowship and blended workshops focused on research capacity strengthening. In addition, the meeting featured hands-on sessions on prioritising research themes and research questions.

The meeting agreed on four priority themes to take forward, notably: Parental and Community engagement in Nurturing VaLi, Best Practices for Nurturing VaLi in a Whole-school Context, Best Practices for Assessing VaLi at Multiple Levels, and Teacher Training and Capacity Strengthening (pre-and in-service). These will form the basis for ALiVE research agenda whose development is underway.

Participants further refined research study questions per theme through group engagement and voted for the high priority research study question to pursue in 2026. Teacher training and capacity strengthening emerged top, based on its relevance and feasibility. Feedback was also gathered on the draft ALiVE Data and Knowledge Standards, which aim to ensure quality, comparability, and ethical data practices across countries. Furthermore, each country highlighted updates on their pathways for integrating VaLi into assessments - with Kenya exploring school-based tools and exam items; Tanzania seeing opportunities in both national and classroom assessments amid systemic constraints; and Uganda seeing potential in leveraging on its National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) and ongoing primary school curriculum review.

Final Remarks and Meeting Closure

The meeting concluded with closing remarks that recognised the strong participation and shared commitment of all partners.



Ms. Glory F. Mbwambo, Regional Chief, School Quality Assurance, Kilimanjaro Region delivering closing remarks

While officially closing the gathering, Ms. Glory F. Mbwambo, Regional Chief, School Quality Assurance, Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania, commended the organisers and reaffirmed a dedicated commitment to sustaining cross-border collaboration on Values and Life Skills across East Africa. She also encouraged partners to explore integrating ICT and emerging innovations like Artificial Intelligence (AI) to strengthen learning for future generations.

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