



Learning Brief: Engaging Parents in Children's Problem-Solving in Uganda

Assessment of Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE)
Learning Brief: Uganda, December 2025

Introduction

In alignment with the Uganda competency-based curriculum's focus on life skills and values (VaLi), Uganda's [National Parenting Guidelines](#) highlight the provision of life skills as a key parenting issue. Given the Guidelines' charge to civil society to contribute to implementation and resource mobilisation, the ALiVE Uganda consortium implemented and evaluated a 10-week campaign to enhance parent engagement in children's VaLi in Uganda, with a focus on problem-solving. The consortium was led by Uwezo Uganda and the Luigi Giussani Foundation, in alliance with six partnering organisations¹. The goal of the evaluation was to uncover best practices for parents to build children's VaLi in order to develop guidelines and resources. This brief presents evaluation findings and emerging best practices from Uganda.

About the Intervention

The campaign held weekly, theme-based dialogues on the importance of children's VaLi and problem-solving to achieve three key objectives (see Figure 1). Implemented in an urban and rural community in each of six districts (Kampala, Kanungu, Mukono, Oyam, Sheema, and Tororo) between May and August 2025, dialogues targeted parents, caregivers, and community members. ALiVE Uganda engaged national and sub-national media to document and feature the dialogues in order to increase the campaign's reach.

**Figure 1: Parental Engagement
Campaign Objectives**

-  To raise awareness among parents about the importance of life skills and values, specifically problem-solving in particular.
-  To develop and enhance capacities through equipping parents with practical tools and strategies for fostering problem-solving skills among children and young people.
-  To foster collaboration and strengthen partnerships between families, schools, and the community to create a supportive ecosystem for nurturing life skills and values.

¹ ALiVE Uganda recognises the invaluable contributions of partnering organisations: Kukuza Education (Mukono), Girls to Lead Africa (Kanungu), Foundation for Open Development (Tororo), Foundation for Inclusive Community Help (Oyam), Help the Crying Voices (Sheema), and Forum for Early Childhood Development Association (Kampala).

About the Evaluation

ALiVE Uganda implemented a one-group pretest-posttest design by surveying participants about their perceptions and practices before and after the dialogues. Given its focus on perceptions, the evaluation provides information mostly on objectives one and two (see Figure 1) and should be used to understand the campaign's possible influence, not its causal effect. The key questions of this evaluation are as follows:

- Did participants perceive they improved their awareness of problem solving between baseline and endline?
- Did participants perceive they improve their capacity to foster problem solving in children between baseline and endline?

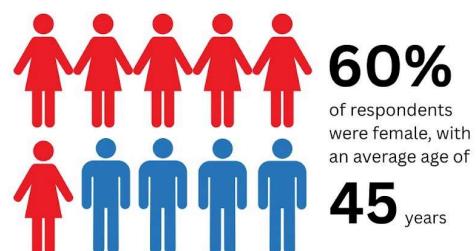
Sample and Limitations

While the evaluation aimed to obtain baseline and endline data from the same participants, only 80 respondents provided both baseline and endline data (panel data), with an additional 257 participants providing either baseline or endline data. The analysis in this report focuses on the 80 participants who provided panel data, so ALiVE Uganda investigated if there are significant differences between those with panel data and those without to determine if conclusions drawn from panel data might be biased. While these groups were statistically similar in terms of some demographics (gender, age, and number of children in their households²), those with panel data had slightly different relationships with the children in their homes, were spread differently across districts³, and attended $\frac{1}{2}$ a session more, suggesting that the analysis below is likely biased toward more engaged participants. Thus, findings should be interpreted as an indication of how more engaged participants benefit from the intervention.

Demographics

In Uganda, 147 men and 221 women participated in the parental engagement campaign. Sample data from the 80 participants with both baseline and endline data was weighted to represent this population. Thus, the population who participated in the intervention as well as the weighted sample skewed female, with an average age of 45 years (see Figure 2). The majority of respondents were mothers (48%) and fathers (37%), followed by guardians and grandparents.

Figure 2: Participant Demographics



Findings

Evaluation findings reveal that **respondents perceived the ALiVE Uganda parent engagement campaign to strengthen their understanding and capacity to foster VaLi**,

² Using a significance level of $p < .05$

³ Only 5/6 districts provided baseline and endline data, explaining this different distribution across districts.

and problem-solving in particular, in children. While not the specific focus of the evaluation, **findings suggest the potential to strengthen the community engagement aspect of the campaign.**

Participants Perceive Improved Understanding of Problem-Solving

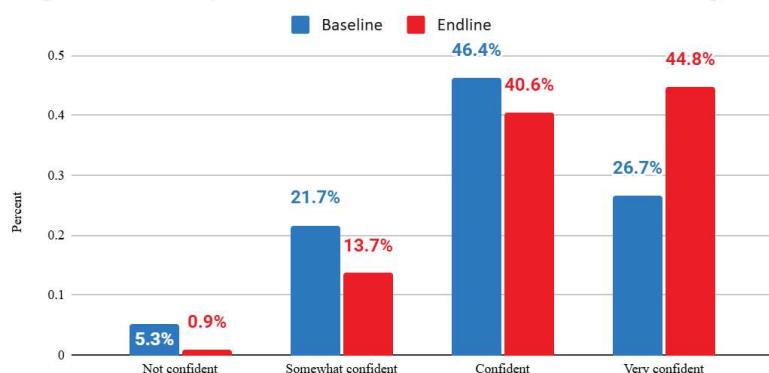
While 16% of respondents had not heard of problem-solving as a life skill for children before the dialogues, all respondents noted that they learned more about problem-solving because of their participation. Notably, 100% of participants stated that their understanding of their role in supporting children's problem-solving had improved after the dialogues. Indeed, participants' qualitative responses revealed a shift in their understanding of problem-solving from adult-centered to child-centered, with caring adults as guides and sounding boards to support children's own problem-solving. Respondents overwhelmingly perceived that an improvement in parent-child communication was a key outcome of the dialogues.

Participants Perceive Improved Capacity to Foster Problem-Solving

Over the course of the 10-week campaign, parents and caregivers reported strengthening not only their own confidence and skills to support problem-solving, but also their children's problem-solving skills.

Respondents' self-reported confidence was higher after dialogues, with 85% of respondents indicating they felt confident or very confident helping their children develop problem solving skills (see Figure 3), a statistically significant increase from respondents at baseline, where 69% felt confident or very confident⁴.

Figure 3: Participants' Confidence Before and After Dialogues



►►►►►►►►►► Participant Testimonials

The testimony of one father from Mukono highlights parents' evolving understanding of their role as a guide in strengthening children's problem-solving skills. He asked his daughter to retrieve a jar of honey from a high shelf, hoping she would use a stool to reach it. Instead, she used a broom to push the honey off the shelf, and it fell to the floor and broke. When she came running to her father, upset, he asked her what she could do differently next time and listened to her ideas instead of telling her what to do. The next day, he gave her an opportunity to try her ideas when he asked her to get salt from the same high shelf. This time, she stood on a jerry can to reach the shelf. When that was not tall enough, she found a stool, reached the salt, and gave it to her father. This story highlights many parents' growing understanding of their role as a guide and support to strengthen children's problem-solving skills.

⁴ Weighted mean difference; p<.05

Respondents also put their newfound learning to practice, with all respondents reporting involving children in solving everyday problems at home often after the dialogues compared to 88% before the dialogues. While this difference is statistically significant⁵, the high rate of practice at baseline (88%) reiterates that only more engaged participants participated in the evaluation. In addition to discussing problem-solving, respondents reported providing three types of opportunities for children to strengthen their problem solving skills: parents engaged children in *executing* daily household and livelihood activities; parents engaged children in *managing* household and livelihood activities; and parents encouraging children in *making decisions* about their own food, dress, or tasks.

While respondents highlighted key challenges to strengthening children's problem-solving skills – including children's reluctance to engage, communication limitations, and resource constraints – respondents also reported their perceptions of improvements in children's skills as a result of parents practicing their skills. Notably, while parents reported improvements in children's problem-solving skills, they also reported improvements in related skills such as responsibility, decision-making, communication, discipline, and confidence (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Parents Perceive Improvements in Several Skill Areas



Participants Request More Community Engagement

While the evaluation focused mostly on parents' knowledge and practice, parents reported a statistically similar⁶ incidence of talking to teachers or schools about VaLi before and after the dialogues. In sharing feedback with AliVE, many parents suggested more community engagement, noting an area of growth for the parental engagement campaign activity.

Emerging Best Practices

Respondents shared their perceptions of what did and did not work from the dialogue sessions. Consistent with the literature on adult learning, respondents shared several aspects of the dialogues that were most helpful to them:

- Dialogues were focused on building **relevant** and **practical** knowledge and skills
- Dialogues used **hands-on learning** and encouraged **active participation**
- Facilitators served as **guides** and made space for **peer interaction and sharing**

⁵ Weighted mean difference; p<.05

⁶ Ordered probit test with weighted data; p=0.591

Respondents also shared their ideas for sustaining caregiver support for nurturing VaLi:

- Provide ongoing training and refresher courses to support continued caregiver progress.
- Provide additional resources and materials to support practice at home.
- Involve children in dialogues to strengthen children's skills
- Strengthen community engagement to sustain caregiver learning and child development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Caregiver reports suggest that the 10-week campaign may have strengthened caregiver knowledge and skills to nurture problem-solving in children, especially amongst more engaged parents and caregivers. Caregivers were clear in desiring more assistance to develop a supportive ecosystem for nurturing VaLi in their communities.

These findings suggest key recommendations for strengthening the parental engagement campaign:

1. Scale and rigorously measure costs and effects of the ALiVE parental engagement program to demonstrate its effectiveness for potential government adoption.
2. Enhance the program by adding community-based peer learning networks to strengthen and expand teaching and practice of VaLi.
3. Provide learning resources and aids to reinforce and sustain VaLi skills at home.
4. Enhance dialogues by explicitly addressing parent/child communication skills.

The ALiVE Uganda consortium will continue to advance VaLi assessment and engagement throughout Uganda in accordance with these recommendations.



Participant Testimonials

One father from Kampala shared that dialogue sessions emphasizing the importance of children continuously learning at home strengthened his connection with his son. "Before I started learning," he said, "there was a big gap between me and my son." The dialogues, he shared, helped him to be open to his son asking him questions. Now, he says, "whenever I am doing something he has to ask me why I am doing it like that...and I also ask him what he thinks could have been done."