



# THE UNDERSTANDING OF RESPECT IN KENYA, TANZANIA, AND UGANDA

A Report for the Assessment of Life Skills and Values in East Africa  
(ALiVE) Project



**RESPECT - KENYA, TANZANIA, AND UGANDA**

This report is a product of the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI). RELI, through the Values and Life Skills (VaLi) thematic group, aimed to collaborate with local leaders to cocreate and develop contextualized assessments in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The RELI project, Assessment of Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE), has three main objectives: (a) develop contextualized, open-source tools for the assessment of life skills and values in the East African context; (b) generate large-scale data on life skills and values across the three countries; and (c) use this data to inform change and build capacities within the VaLi-ALiVE member organizations.

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### **Suggested citation**

Ariapa, M., & Akongo, S. R. (2021). The understanding of respect in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. A report for the Assessment of Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE) project.

### **Acknowledgements**

RELI and the ALiVE initiative gratefully acknowledge the support provided by Echidna Giving, Imaginable Futures, and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.

RELI recognizes that the value it provides is in its absolute commitment to quality, independence, and impact. Activities supported by its donors reflect this commitment, and the analysis and recommendations are not determined or influenced by any donation.

RELI is also profoundly indebted to Zizi Afrique, the regional coordinator of the ALiVE initiative, and its implementing partners: the Milele Foundation and GLAMI in Tanzania, and the Luigi Giussani Institute of Higher Education and Uwezo in Uganda.

ISBN 978-9914-9643-7-0



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## 1 BACKGROUND

The Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI), through the Values and Life Skills (VaLi) thematic group, intends to work with local leaders to cocreate and collaboratively develop contextualized assessments in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The initiative, Assessment of Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE) has three objectives: gathering information (and knowledge), building community, and advocacy. These three broad objectives mirror RELI's three pillars: being a hub for knowledge, transforming member organizations, and influencing policy. Over a period of three years (2020–2023), ALiVE will do the following: (a) develop contextualized, open-source tools to assess life skills and values in the East African context; (b) generate large-scale data on life skills and values across the three countries; and (c) use this data to inform changes and build capacities within the VaLi-ALiVE member organizations. These organizations will advocate for the three national education systems to focus on and produce these competencies, to inform regional policy throughout the East African Community, and to inform global thinking on how to measure life skills and values as *relevant and effective* learning outcomes.

ALiVE will be a context-relevant, summative assessment. The assessment will target adolescents from 13 through 17 years of age, both girls and boys, and both in school and out of school, focusing on three competences and one value: self-awareness, problem solving, collaboration, and respect.

The first phase in developing the contextualized assessment tools was to conduct ethnographic interviews at different sites (rural and urban) in the countries. Conducted in November 2020, the studies targeted three categories of informants: adolescents, parents, and key persons (e.g., teachers, social workers, youth patrons/matrons, religious leaders, etc.). The studies aimed at determining participants' perceptions and understandings of the selected ALiVE competences.

The aim of phase 1 of the study is to achieve a **contextualized understanding of respect** in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda in order to determine the best tools for a large-scale assessment of *respect* in the three countries. Therefore, the main scope of this report is to present a comparative analysis of the findings obtained in the individual country reports in order to identify the commonalities and divergences between the three countries.

## 2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

- i) What are the **common facets of the definition** of *respect* in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda?
- ii) What are the **differences** between the definitions of *respect* in the three countries?

- iii) What are the most common **subskills** highlighted by adolescents, parents, and key persons, considering gender and location, in the three countries?
- iv) Which subskills are unique to the countries?
- v) What are the common **dispositions** and **values** identified by the participants based on their categories (adolescents, parents, and key persons), genders, and locations in the three countries?
- vi) Which dispositions, behaviours, and values are **unique** to each country?
- vii) Which **support systems** and other **factors** that help the adolescents to grow in *respect* are identified in the three countries?
- viii) What are the common methods identified by the participants of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda to **assess** *respect* in adolescents?

## 2.2 Methodology

The comparative method was used to prepare this report, paying special attention to gender analyses in the different categories analysed. Regarding the study design, a qualitative approach and an ethnographic design were used to explore and collect participants' perceptions and understandings of respect in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. It was conducted in 5 districts of Kenya (Rongo, Mwea East, Kibra, Narok South, and Tana Delta), 5 of Tanzania (Ilala, Mvomero, Ngorogoro, North-A, and Uyui), and 5 of Uganda (Jinja, Kikuube, Moroto, Kampala, and Oyam), which were sampled based on their status as rural or urban, their economic activity (pastoralist, core-urban, or agricultural), and their distance from the respective capital cities.

Two villages in each district were randomly sampled. In each sampled village, researchers targeted at least 4 interviews with adolescents (2 of each gender, including those in primary, secondary, vocational training centre, and out of school); 4 interviews with parents (2 of sampled adolescents, and 2 of non-sampled adolescents, including fathers as well as mothers); and 4 interviews with key persons (teachers, social workers, and others who consistently work with adolescents, from both genders). This resulted in a target of 24 participants per district for the one-on-one interviews. The total target sample was then approximately 120 participants in each country. Given the prevailing challenges, however, the study reached 116 participants in Kenya, 132 participants in Tanzania, and 120 participants in Uganda, for the one-on-one interviews. It should be noted that not all these participants were interviewed on *respect*: only 83 participants in Kenya, 57 participants in Tanzania, and 94 in Uganda were interviewed on it.

In addition to the one-on-one interviews, researchers conducted 21 focus group discussions (10 for adolescents and 11 for parents) in Kenya, 20 FGDs (10 for adolescents and 10 for parents) in Tanzania, and 20 FGDs (10 for adolescents and 10 for parents) in Uganda. To constitute the FGDs, 3 participants in each village (adolescents or parents) were selected to join the other 4 who participated in the interviews. FGDs in each village ultimately consisted of 5 to 7 participants.

### 3 FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Definition

The following codes emerged in the theme of definition: valuing others, knowing or understanding self, taking care of self, fearing God, and being a good person.

*Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of the Codes Identified in the Definition of Respect in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda*

CATEGORY: DEFINITION CODES	KENYA		TANZANIA		UGANDA	
	PARTICIPANTS		PARTICIPANTS		PARTICIPANTS	
	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
Valuing others	22	26.51	19	33.33	26	27.66
Fearing God	13	15.66	7	12.28	10	10.64
Taking care of self	8	9.64	4	7.02	3	3.19
Knowing or understanding self	6	7.23	6	10.53	6	6.38
Being a good person	4	4.82	0	0.00	6	6.38
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>83</b>		<b>57</b>		<b>94</b>	

Valuing others emerged as the most prominent definition of respect, stated by over 25% of the participants in each of the countries studied. Valuing others includes honouring others, taking care of others, and considering others as important and needed. It also means treating others such as adults and elders with dignity. Treating others with dignity is a typical behaviour that younger people ought to show toward adults. Analysis of this code by participants' gender revealed that in Tanzania, more men than women prominently mentioned valuing others, while in Uganda, more women prominently mentioned this aspect. No substantial gender differences were observed in Kenya in regard to valuing others as a definition of respect.

While valuing others was the prominent code that defined respect, it is also clear from the analyses that respect has many different meanings depending on the culture and prevailing social norms. A proper understanding of one's community and how to live in it, along with an understanding of the language used in the community, is key to a proper and contextualized understanding of respect and of how it is shown. The contextual factors often set the social parameters within which a person operates and interacts with others in a way that will be considered socially acceptable and respectful. To this end, other aspects such as taking care of oneself, knowing or understanding oneself, and being a good person also emerged as defining respect.

Most participants' definitions of respect hinged on a person's conduct and behaviour such that greeting others, appropriate or decent dress code, obedience or following instructions, refraining from wrongdoing, being disciplined, and demonstrating exemplary character, are all taken as signs of respect.

Last but not least, another important aspect that came up in the definition of respect across the three countries is fearing God. This includes aspects such as obeying the commandments and being prayerful. Further insights into this definition of respect by participants' genders revealed that in Kenya and Tanzania, more women than men prominently mentioned fearing God while in Uganda, more men than women mentioned this aspect.

*Table 2: Similarities and Differences between Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda in Defining Respect*

<b>CATEGORY: Definition SIMILARITIES</b>	<b>DIFFERENCES</b>		
	<b>KENYA</b>	<b>TANZANIA</b>	<b>UGANDA</b>
Valuing others appeared as the most important aspect for understanding the meaning of respect in the three countries. With low but significant frequencies, participants also defined respect as exhibiting fear of God, taking care of self, knowing or understanding self, and being a good person. All these are demonstrated by someone's conduct and behaviours, which also depend on culture and prevailing social norms.	Respect begins with oneself—the way someone talks, communicates, walks, and socialises with others.	Emphasis given to self-awareness or knowing oneself.  Fearing God was mostly emphasised by the adolescents and key persons.	Fearing God was emphasised by the key persons.  Understanding each other and valuing others were also identified in a family setting.

### 3.2 Subskills

In the context of this study, subskills are understood as the skills that are part of and/or necessary for the value of respect. The following codes emerged in the theme of subskills: expressive communication, receptive communication, relationship skills, guidance and counselling, empathy, self-regulation, teamwork/cooperation, self-confidence/self-esteem, and planning.

*Table 3: Frequency and Percentage of the Codes Identified as Subskills of Respect in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda*

<b>CATEGORY: SUBSKILLS OF RESPECT</b>	<b>KENYA</b>		<b>TANZANIA</b>		<b>UGANDA</b>	
	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>		<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>		<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	
	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>%</b>
Expressive communication	23	27.71	25	43.86	20	21.28
Relationship skills	20	24.10	3	5.26	18	19.15
Receptive communication	19	22.89	12	21.05	47	50.00
Guidance and counselling	15	18.07	12	21.05	16	17.02
Empathy	6	7.23	0	0.00	3	3.19
Self-regulation	6	7.23	1	1.75	2	2.13
Teamwork/cooperation	5	6.02	12	21.05	16	17.02



CATEGORY: SUBSKILLS OF RESPECT	KENYA		TANZANIA		UGANDA	
	PARTICIPANTS		PARTICIPANTS		PARTICIPANTS	
	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
Self-confidence/self-esteem	4	4.82	5	8.77	6	6.38
Planning	0	0.00	2	3.51	0	0.00
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>83</b>		<b>57</b>		<b>94</b>	

Across the three countries, expressive communication, receptive communication, relationship skills, guidance and counselling, and teamwork or cooperation emerged as the most important subskills of respect. The participants understand receptive communication as the ability to listen to others and follow instructions, while expressive communication means speaking well with others, communicating clearly and appropriately, being able to interact freely with others, and using appropriate expressions and body language. Both receptive and expressive communication skills belong to the broader subskill of relationship skills, which several participants understand as social skills or interpersonal skills.

Teamwork or cooperation was highly mentioned in Tanzania (21%) and Uganda (17%) but not in Kenya (6%). To the participants, this skill draws adolescents together and provides them with opportunities to learn from one another. As they cooperate, they help each other, guide themselves, and look out for each other's wellbeing.

Further insights into the subskills of respect by gender revealed that in all the three countries, more men than women prominently mentioned teamwork. In Uganda alone, more women than men prominently mentioned expressive communication, relationship skills, and guidance and counselling while in Kenya and Tanzania, more men prominently mentioned receptive communication.

Table 4: Similarities and Differences between Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda in Subskills

CATEGORY: Subskills SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES		
	KENYA	TANZANIA	UGANDA
Expressive communication, receptive communication, relationship skills, guidance and counselling, and teamwork or cooperation emerged as the most important subskills of respect.	Effective communication skills enhance calmness in an individual.	Teamwork or cooperation prominently emerged as a subskill.	Teamwork or cooperation prominently emerged as a subskill.
With low but still relevant frequencies, empathy, self-regulation, and self-confidence also emerged as the subskills of respect.	Planning did not emerge as a subskill.	Expressive communication enhances effective interpersonal relationship skills.	Receptive communication is linked to obedience.
	Self-regulation was emphasised by the participants.		

### 3.3 Dispositions and Values

Dispositions can be defined as the person's inherent qualities of mind and character that influence human behaviours. These are some aspects of a person's character that help to enhance and nurture the exercise of a value like respect. The following codes emerged in the theme of dispositions: responsibility, kindness, willingness to be advised, passion, patience, hardworking, positive attitude, and leadership.

Table 5: Frequency and Percentage of the Codes Identified as Dispositions of Respect in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda

CATEGORY: DISPOSITIONS CODES	KENYA		TANZANIA		UGANDA	
	PARTICIPANTS		PARTICIPANTS		PARTICIPANTS	
	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
Responsibility	18	21.69	18	31.58	26	27.66
Kindness/friendliness	15	18.07	10	17.54	23	24.47
Willingness to be advised/corrected	12	14.46	11	19.30	31	32.98
Passion	8	9.64	1	1.75	9	9.57
Patience/time	6	7.23	5	8.77	1	1.06
Hardworking	5	6.02	3	5.26	12	12.77
Positive attitude	4	4.82	1	1.75	9	9.57
Leadership	3	3.61	0	0.00	7	7.45
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>83</b>		<b>57</b>		<b>94</b>	

Across the three countries, most participants consider a respectful young person one who is willing to be corrected or advised, takes responsibility, and exhibits kindness or friendliness. Willingness to be advised is characterised by having a positive attitude when advised or corrected, being willing to consult others or ask for advice, asking for forgiveness, listening to advice, and acknowledging mistakes.

Further insights into this disposition in terms of gender revealed that in Tanzania and Uganda, more men than women prominently mentioned willingness to be corrected while in Kenya, more women than men prominently mentioned this disposition.

Responsibility was understood as dedication to one's work and tasks, fulfilling or performing one's tasks as assigned, doing what is supposed to be done, accepting work, completing household chores, and handling others' responsibilities as your own.

To several participants, *kindness or friendliness* means courtesy, generosity, being on good terms with others, being hospitable, being gentle, being compassionate, having a good heart, and being able to make friends. They are those habits of the heart that make relationships trusting and honest.

In regard to gender analysis, substantial differences were observed only in Kenya, where more men prominently mentioned kindness and responsibility as dispositions of respect.

Table 6: Similarities and Differences between Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda in Dispositions

CATEGORY: Dispositions SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES		
	KENYA	TANZANIA	UGANDA
<p>Willing to be corrected or advised, responsibility and kindness or friendliness emerged as the most important dispositions of respect.</p> <p>With low frequencies but still important, passion, patience, hardworking, positive attitude, and leadership also emerged as dispositions of respect.</p>	<p>Willingness to be advised helps to restore a broken value.</p>	<p>Leadership did not emerge as a disposition.</p> <p>There was emphasis on the correlation between listening to teachers or parents and staying on track—academics and life goals.</p>	<p>Respectful young people also advise others.</p> <p>Responsibility co-occurred with obedience.</p>

### 3.4 Values and Behaviours

During the interviews, participants were asked to identify the characteristics, skills, attitudes, or behaviours that can be observed in a respectful young person. The codes *positive conduct*, *discipline*, *obedience*, and *exemplary* emerged in the theme of behaviours; while *humble*, *love*, *honest*, and *wisdom* emerged in the theme of values.

Table 7: Frequency and Percentage of the Codes Identified as Values and Behaviours Related to Respect in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda

		KENYA		TANZANIA		UGANDA	
CATEGORY: BEHAVIOURS AND VALUES		PARTICIPANTS		PARTICIPANTS		PARTICIPANTS	
		NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
Behaviours	Positive conduct	64	77.11	53	92.98	85	90.43
	Discipline	15	18.07	31	54.39	21	22.34
	Obedience	61	73.49	31	54.39	41	43.62
	Exemplary	3	3.61	1	1.75	12	12.77
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>83</b>		<b>57</b>		<b>94</b>	

		KENYA		TANZANIA		UGANDA	
CATEGORY: BEHAVIOURS AND VALUES		PARTICIPANTS		PARTICIPANTS		PARTICIPANTS	
		NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
Values	Humble	25	30.12	17	29.82	21	22.34
	Love	16	19.28	10	17.54	11	11.70
	Honest	17	20.48	4	7.02	11	11.70
	Tolerance	6	7.23	0	0.00	1	1.06
	Wisdom	3	3.61	6	10.53	0	0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>83</b>		<b>57</b>		<b>94</b>	

As highlighted in the definition of respect, across the three countries, respect is viewed and understood through the lens of positive behaviour. Behaviours show a person's way of life and are important qualities for young people to have in order to be considered respectful. Positive conduct, obedience, and discipline were the top ranked aspects that described the behaviour traits that characterise a person with respect.

Further insights into these behaviours by gender revealed that in all three countries, more men than women prominently mentioned obedience. No substantial gender differences were observed in positive conduct and discipline.

The intrinsic values of love, humility, and honesty or trust were captured by several participants in the three countries as key values that embody respect. Being humble was associated with being calm, down to earth, talking politely without using abusive language, and communicating clearly with others. Respectful people are also described as showing love, which is also linked with helping others.

Analysis of these values by gender revealed that in Kenya and Tanzania, more men than women prominently mentioned love and honesty, while in Uganda, more women prominently mentioned these aspects.

Table 8: Similarities and Differences between Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda in Behaviours and Values

CATEGORY: Dispositions SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES		
	KENYA	TANZANIA	UGANDA
<p>Positive conduct, discipline, and obedience emerged as the most important behaviours for a respectful young person.</p> <p>Love, humility, and honesty emerged as the most important values for a respectful young person.</p>	<p>Honesty was more highly emphasized in Kenya than in Tanzania and Uganda.</p> <p>Putting hands together and bowing is a sign of respect.</p>	<p>Discipline was more highly emphasized in Tanzania than in Kenya and Uganda.</p>	<p>Parents and key persons emphasised <i>honesty</i>, which they also described as <i>trustworthiness</i>, <i>transparency</i>, and <i>integrity</i>.</p> <p>A humble young person makes friends easily.</p> <p>Kneeling down while greeting elders or serving food is a sign of respect.</p>

### 3.5 Support Systems and Enabling Factors

During the interviews, participants were asked to elaborate on the systemic aspects that enable young people to acquire respect. In this regard, the following codes emerged: school/training, family, community/development partners, friendship/peers, place of worship, media, reading, and experience, as per the table below.

Table 9: Frequency and Percentage of the Codes Identified as Support Systems and Enabling Factors for Respect in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda

CATEGORY: SUPPORT SYSTEMS	KENYA		TANZANIA		UGANDA	
	PARTICIPANTS		PARTICIPANTS		PARTICIPANTS	
	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
Family	68	81.93	41	71.93	72	76.60
School/training	38	45.78	43	75.44	74	78.72
Community/development partners	13	15.66	11	19.30	33	35.11
Friendship/peers	12	14.46	8	14.04	21	22.34
Place of worship	10	12.05	12	21.05	15	15.96
Media, TV, Radio	0	0.00	1	1.75	1	1.06
Reading	2	0.00	1	1.75	1	1.06
Experience	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	1.06
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>83</b>		<b>57</b>		<b>94</b>	

Across the three countries, family, school/training, community/development partners, friendship/peers, and place of worship, emerged as the most stated support systems that help a young person become more respectful. Most participants, however, emphasised the complementarity of these support systems, as young people often interact with all of them. Specifically, they mentioned that both the family and school should work together help young people develop respect. When either the parents or teachers do not play their role properly in a young person's life, their development of the value of respect is compromised.

It is also important to highlight the roles of the community/development partners and peers/friendships, as emphasized by most of the participants from Uganda. Various stakeholders in the community need to be role models in order for young people to appreciate the importance of being respectful.

Further insights into the support systems by gender revealed that in Kenya and Uganda, more women than men predominantly mentioned community/developmental partners while more men than women mentioned places of worship. In Tanzania, more men than women prominently mentioned school/training, community/development partners, and friendship.

### 3.6 Assessment Methods

The following codes emerged in the theme of assessment methods: task performance, observation, interviews, and staying with people, as per the table below.

Table 10: Frequency and Percentage of the Codes Identified as Assessment Methods of Respect in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda

CATEGORY: ASSESSMENT METHODS	KENYA		TANZANIA		UGANDA	
	PARTICIPANTS		PARTICIPANTS		PARTICIPANTS	
	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%	NUMBER	%
Observation	35	42.17	28	49.12	35	37.23
Task performance	25	30.12	18	31.58	40	42.55
Interviews	9	10.84	7	12.28	8	8.51
Staying with people	7	8.43	3	5.26	3	3.19
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>83</b>		<b>57</b>		<b>94</b>	

Across the three countries, *task performance* and *observations* emerged as the most prominent methods one can use to test whether a young person is respectful. To several participants, task performance involves asking someone to perform an activity.

Observation entails observing someone's conduct and behaviours such as communication and dress code, how they handle visitors at home, how they treat elders, their daily interactions, and their emotions.

Notably, in most cases participants linked task performance with observation as a way of looking at someone's behaviours while they perform the task, to gauge whether they exhibit respect.

Further insights into the support systems by gender revealed that in Kenya, no substantial differences existed in the percentage of women and men who mentioned task performance and observations. In Tanzania, more men predominantly mentioned task performance while more women prominently mentioned observations. Finally, in Uganda, more women prominently mentioned task performance.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

When comparing the findings of the contextualization studies on respect in the three countries, one can observe major similarities and only minor differences. What emerges from the interviews is that the most common understanding of respect relates to honouring and valuing others as exemplified by behavioural traits and values defined by society. These behaviours and values include proper dress code, greeting elders, obedience and submission to authority, humility, and having a sense of responsibility, along with values such as love, honesty, and humility.

The participants see a respectful young person as one who exhibits the following characteristics: kindness and friendliness, willingness to learn from others, responsibility, and accountability to others.

The study also revealed that respectful young people do exhibit certain subskills that ultimately enhance both their self-respect and their ability to respect others. These include relationship skills, communication skills, guidance and counselling skills, teamwork or collaboration skills, self-confidence, empathy, and self-regulation skills.

To help young people become respectful, it is important to appreciate the interactions between support systems such as family, school, places of worship, friends/peers, and community or development partners. These support systems should work together, standing strong in helping and offering children the support they need to develop and become respectful. This interaction points to a sense of community or belonging that young people ought to demonstrate. They are expected to help others in the community, appreciate others' perceptions, share with them, work or stay together, and maintain a sense of community.

In regard to assessment methods to test whether a young person is respectful, great emphasis is placed on the use of task performance and observations. These, according to the findings, could be used alone or simultaneously. Other assessment methods suggested by participants include interviews and staying with people.



