

Dissemination, Awareness Building & Advocacy in ALiVE

Assessment of Lifeskills and Values in East Africa

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Introduction

In this brief we will outline what we have learned from the ALiVE programme about **dissemination, awareness building and advocacy**. This learning has been collected over the course of nearly two years of programme implementation and has been gathered and synthesised by the ALiVE team as we move forward into our next phase.

ALiVE is a 5-year collaboration between seven organisations in East Africa focusing on understanding, assessing and enhancing of life skills¹ and values. The evidence generated through the National Assessments hopes to: **i)** Generate interest of the various government education stakeholders to explore how best to enhance these competencies through enactment of policies. **ii)** Ignite a public conversation on the importance of enhancing these competences and the role of parents and communities in enhancing them.

We are now moving to the second phase of the projects where we explore the possibility of conducting classroom assessments through the various ministries of education but also how we can use the evidence already generated to advocate for systemic change.

Goals for ALiVE

Develop context-relevant, open-source tools for assessing life skills and values in East Africa	Undertake a household assessment targeting adolescent (13-17 years) both in and out of school	Use the evidence to draw attention to and increase awareness	Enhance peer learning and feedback among the RELI member organizations
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Achievements so Far

Tools developed for Respect, problem solving, Self-Awareness and Collaboration	National Household surveys carried out in 3 countries, reaching 46,000 adolescents	16 Papers published authored, 3 academic papers published, 10 blogs written, and 10 learnshops held
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¹ Alternatively known as soft skills, core-competencies, non-cognitive and social emotional learning

Defining Dissemination, Awareness Building and Advocacy

A key goal for ALiVE is to use evidence to draw attention to and increase awareness of lifeskills and values. This in turn should lead to a great focus on how these lifeskills and values can be nurtured, both in schools as well as at home by parents and households.

Within this aim of “drawing attention” we infer three distinct activities. **Dissemination** refers to the sharing of information or evidence from the programme. This sharing can be informal (e.g., word of mouth) or formal (e.g., reports or conference presentations). **Awareness building** is the aim of ensuring that individuals or organisations understand and are familiar with the programme, its goals, approaches and demonstrated results. **Advocacy** is the activity of using evidence to influence governments to enact changes in their policies or practices.

Over the course of the programme’s lifetime so far, there have been a wide range of formal or informal activities conducted which fall under the categories of dissemination, awareness building and advocacy. The following lessons outline and reflect upon these activities.

Key Lessons on Dissemination, Awareness Building and Advocacy

1



Dissemination leads to awareness-building, which opens opportunities for advocacy

Dissemination, awareness-building and advocacy are activities which build on each other. For each one to occur, the previous need to have been accomplished. In order for awareness to be built, information regarding the programme and its results need to be disseminated. In order to provide opportunities to advocate for concrete changes in policy, there needs to be sufficient awareness of what the programme has achieved so far.

So far ALiVE has shown successes, most strongly in dissemination and awareness building. The first stages of the programme have focused on dissemination and awareness building. This has been important in spreading the understanding of what ALiVE is and what it intends to do. This has reflected the need to wait for evidence from the large-scale assessments to become available before embarking on advocacy activities.

2



Partnership and deep involvement of government opens advocacy windows.

Obtaining buy-in and support from government requires proactive effort. For ALiVE effective partnership with government has been fostered by a process of networking. This led to the engagement of various stakeholders throughout the process not only at the end of it. A key step in this process is being intentional about building relationship with the local politicians or government officials. Although they are influential in policy making, sometimes they benefit from obtaining and being part of a process that obtains evidence-based ideas that will transform society. By involving government officers in meetings, workshops and learn-shops, they were immersed in the ideas that they would be best placed to sell to policy makers.

Other partnerships that have proven to be critical in the process include the involvement of global experts whose ideas were blended with local expertise to create local contextualisation. Building partnerships with relevant bodies was therefore a key lesson learnt.



Household surveys an important tool for building awareness for lifeskills and values with households

Household surveys go beyond being a source of primary data to an agenda setting platform for discussion on values and lifeskills at the local level. The surveys facilitated a relationship with the community. Parents, adolescents, and community leaders were engaged in discussions about what constitutes life skills and values and why they are important for learners. The process of developing rapport and seeking consent from parents, adolescents and community leaders during the assessment exercise increased awareness, strengthened community support and enhanced the active engagement and participation of various grassroots stakeholders. The conversation with guardians and parents introduced the importance of life skills while their children were assessed. While parents were able to articulate and understand the ALiVE process, adolescents reflected on their roles in improving their skills.

Key to building awareness at the local level was using locally sourced data collectors. This enhanced meaningful engagement with the local communities in which they worked. The visual aids used during assessment were very helpful in increasing awareness and understanding among the local communities on what life skills and values are and why they are important. The household discussions and involvement of local communities in data collection were therefore key in creating awareness about life-skills.



ALiVE has done a lot of work at the local, national and global level to disseminate learning from the programme.

As a build-up to the data collection and during data collection, we focused on disseminating information on ALiVE to households, local community members, education policy actors including policymakers, and the global education community. Diverse media channels were used to share awareness of the ALiVE process, the tool, and the components of the ALiVE tool. We used mass media (both radio and television), printed calendars, and distributed them to the households while we conducted the assessment. The calendars included a call to action that included asking parents six questions that allow for reflections on how values are nurtured at the household level.

We used social media to engage with the public. We made use of Twitter and Facebook to engage with the public by sharing updates on our work. We used the word of mouth, attended workshops, and responded to media invites to share on the ALiVE process, share updates and describe the rationale for our assessment. On some occasions, we called for press conferences. Specifically, we engaged in conferences with national and international audiences to share our work with the academia. This sharing allowed us to reflect on our work.



Advocacy for what? The importance of being able to capitalise on windows of opportunity

Effective advocacy requires clarity on the call for action. As advocates, we know that information spurs action from those in a position to take action. In ALiVE, we are clear that creating awareness is the first level of advocacy. To do this is important in mapping the ecosystem for assessing and nurturing values, developing appropriate messages, deciding on the channels of communication, the timing of the messages. All of this allows for consistency in what we are asking of key partners in the nurturing and assessing life skills and values. For example, for local communities and households (parents), it may be about interpreting the realities of defining life skills and values as well as calling them to take an active role in nurturing values.

Having confidence in our message results in faster and increased uptake of citizen-led and household-based assessments as an approach to assessing life skills and values. By sharing with the global community of knowledge, we seek feedback on our interpretation of life skills and values in our contexts, begin to “interest others” in our approaches, and share illustrative results for those interested.

Ultimately, the big question that lingers is; “assessments for what?” gets responded to when interventions and actions supporting the nurturing of values and development of life skills get feedback on their work and increase the pool of tools to measure the impact of their work. Eventually, the stories that reveal personal transformations based on interacting with the process tell the commitment to build more “ambassadors” of life skills and values.

Where to from here?



Putting this into practice for ALiVE

How will we act on what we have learned? Through our reflection workshops we considered the following actions which we could prioritise in future programming:

- ▶ **Disseminating results from assessments:** 2022 marks the point at which the results of the first large scale assessment will be ready for sharing. The learning from this brief should help inform how this dissemination can link with awareness building and advocacy.
- ▶ **Focus on the “so-what” of advocacy:** once the window for advocacy has been opened we need to be ready with the answer to the question of “so-what” – having clear messages on why the results are important, and what policy makers and practitioners can use them for.
- ▶ **Increase engagement with government:** The next phase involves expanding into the classroom. This brings an opportunity for closer engagement with government, and a chance to use what we know about life-skills and values to inform policy and practice



What do we still need to learn?

What questions remain unanswered? ALiVE is a programme that will always continue to learn, and we hope that some of these questions can be answered not just by us, but can be taken up by other researchers.

- ▶ **Understanding our audience:** during the next phase we will focus on learning more about the individuals and systems we want to engage with. This will help us answer the question of how understanding life skills and values can help them in their work.
- ▶ **What channels work?** Looking at the range of audiences we engage with, what are the channels of dissemination that have been most effective, and how can we ensure that the key messages from the assessment are spreading widely?