



Action for  
Life Skills and  
Values in East Africa



# STORIES OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGE THROUGH PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

## ALiVE PROJECT

FOCUS: Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar

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# MESSAGE FROM UWEZO DIRECTOR



Uwezo Tanzania is proud to have generated and stewarded evidence showing that empowered parents can drive measurable change in children's learning and behaviour. The parental engagement outcomes under ALiVE confirm that households are powerful sites of competency development and accountability. When parents understand their role and feel confident to act, they transform not only their children's experiences but also school community relationships. We remain committed to using evidence to advocate for parental engagement as a permanent feature of education policy, practice, and reform. This booklet documents the impact stories from parental engagement campaign which was carried out with the aim to create a generation of problem solvers through parents and community engagement. Action for Life Skills and Values (ALiVE) a flagship programme of RELI Africa, is implemented in partnership with Zizi Afrique, Milele Zanzibar Foundation, OCODE, and Uwezo Tanzania.

Phase II is anchored on three strategic pillars: System Shift, embedding life skills and values into curriculum, assessment, and teacher education systems; Assessment Shift, strengthening national and regional capacity for competency-based assessment; and the Learning Hub, advancing evidence generation, knowledge exchange, and practitioner leadership.

Across Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar, ALiVE has worked with government institutions, teachers, parents, and communities to ensure that children acquire the life skills and values required to thrive in school, work, and life. This booklet presents verified impact, real stories, and system-level change generated through this collaborative effort, reflecting a shared commitment to shaping a future where every learner is equipped not only with academic knowledge, but also with the competencies needed to navigate the demands of the 21st century.

This booklet is designed for policymakers, development partners, education system leaders, community stakeholders, local government leaders, and other like-minded actors. It highlights real stories of change, resilience, and impact. As we continue to strengthen systems and expand our reach, we remain committed to evidence-based programming, inclusive partnerships, and empowering communities across Tanzania. Together, we are shaping a future where every child and young person can reach their full potential. - Baraka Mgothamwende, Uwezo Tanzania Executive Director

**-Baraka Mgothamwende**

# MESSAGE FROM RELI & ALIVE LEADERSHIP

## Message from RELI Africa

Across East Africa, ALiVE has shown that meaningful system change does not begin only in policy rooms it begins in homes. The parental engagement results documented in this booklet demonstrate that when families are equipped, confident, and connected to schools, life skills and values move from aspiration to everyday practice. Parents are no longer peripheral actors; they are becoming co-educators and co-stewards of competency-based education. RELI Africa remains committed to advancing a systems approach that deliberately integrates households, schools, communities, and national institutions to build a coherent ecosystem where every child's holistic development is actively supported.

– **Gaudence Kapinga, RELI Africa, Tanzania Country Coordinator**

## Message from ALiVE System Shift Principal Investigator

-One of the most significant system-level insights from ALiVE Phase II is the confirmation that parental engagement is not an “add-on” intervention it is a structural component of system transformation. Evidence from Tanzania shows large-scale shifts in parental awareness, confidence, and daily practice, alongside strengthened parent-teacher dialogue around life skills. These changes reconfigure the education system by extending the learning environment beyond classrooms into households and communities. As we move forward, institutionalizing parental engagement within curriculum, teacher education, and assessment frameworks will be essential to sustaining competency-based education reforms.

– **Dr. Mary Goretti Nakabugho, UWEZO Uganda Executive Director, and ALiVE Regional System Shift Principal Investigator**

## Message from ALiVE Tanzania Project Director

-The parental engagement work under ALiVE Tanzania demonstrates what becomes possible when families are positioned as active partners in children's learning. Parents are now intentionally nurturing problem-solving at home, engaging more frequently with teachers, and contributing to school-level conversations on life skills. These shifts are reshaping the everyday functioning of the education system—strengthening the bridge between home and school and reinforcing life skills as shared societal priorities. This booklet captures a Tanzania-led pathway for embedding parental engagement as a core pillar of system change.

– **Khadija Shariff, Milele Zanzibar Foundation Executive Director, and ALiVE Regional Assessment Shift Principal Investigator**

## Message from OCODE

At OCODE, we believe that homes are the first places where learning begins and that parents are the first teachers. When parents have the right tools and support, real change can happen. The stories shared in this booklet highlight that education is not just about grades; it's also about building confidence, understanding others, being strong in tough situations, and holding onto hope. As you read through it, I encourage you to look beyond just the programs, see the families working to rebuild trust, the children finding their strengths, and the communities coming together to shape a brighter future. The future our children deserve won't just happen by accident; it will be created step by step, through meaningful talks, strong families, and brave actions.

– **Joseph Jackson, Executive Director, Organization for Community Development (OCODE)**



## ALiVE PROJECT SUMMARY

Action for Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE) is a RELI Africa collaborative initiative that aims to ensure children in East Africa acquire life skills and values in order for them to thrive both during and beyond schooling (lifelong learning). Initially (2020 – 2023) ALiVE program focused on enhancing the capacity of education system actors on life skills and values (Pedagogy, curriculum, and assessments), collaboratively develop/adapt contextualized assessment tools for 6–17-year-olds, generate evidence by conducting assessments and collating evidence from other life skills approaches (both in assessments and nurturing); then use the evidence for learning and public policy advocacy. Over 17,000 adolescents were assessed from 45 districts in Tanzania mainland and Zanzibar, generating evidence which positioned

Further, ALiVE Phase II (2023 – 2025) demonstrated that large-scale integration of life skills and values into education systems is both feasible and transformative when reform is pursued across policy, institutions, and everyday practice. Across Kenya, Tanzania Mainland, Uganda, and Zanzibar, the programme strengthened national readiness for life skills institutionalization by embedding competencies within curriculum frameworks, teacher education programmes, and emerging assessment systems.

Ministries, curriculum bodies, teacher training institutions, and assessment agencies increasingly collaborate around a shared vision of holistic learning. More than 1,000 system actors have been trained, over 120 school-based assessment tasks developed and validated, and life skills modules integrated into universities and teacher training colleges. These system-level shifts mark a transition from isolated pilots to institutionalized practice, where life skills and values are progressively becoming a normal and assessable part of schooling.

Within this broader system shift, ALiVE Phase II also confirmed a critical insight: education systems do not change through institutions alone—systems change when households change too. In Tanzania, the ten-week parental engagement campaign implemented in Bagamoyo District and Urban West Zanzibar became a practical demonstration of how system reform reaches into homes and communities. Parents moved from limited awareness of problem-solving as a life skill to near-universal understanding and confidence. Households shifted from largely adult-directed decision-making to participatory family practices, where children are routinely involved in solving everyday problems, making choices, and reflecting on outcomes.

These changes at home were mirrored in schools. Parent-teacher discussions increasingly focused on life skills and values, school meeting attendance rose sharply, and parents began initiating conversations with teachers and following up on learning at home. PTAs and school forums evolved from administrative spaces into platforms for substantive dialogue about children's holistic development. For children, early signs of impact include improved confidence, communication, collaboration, and willingness to engage in classroom and peer activities.

Together, these results illustrate how ALiVE Phase II's system shift is materializing at the most fundamental level of the education ecosystem. National policies and institutional reforms create the enabling environment, while parental engagement activates those reforms in daily life. The experience from Bagamoyo and Urban West Zanzibar shows that when parents are positioned as co-educators and co-owners of life skills development, system change becomes visible, lived, and sustainable one household, one school, and one community at a time.

# IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS – TANZANIA (AT A GLANCE)

## Key System Strengthening Achievements



01

### COLLABORATION

2 collaborations - with the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), and the Ministry of Education and Vocational Trainings (MoEVT) Zanzibar, to align life skills with teaching and assessment methods.



02

### NATIONAL-LEVEL PARTNERSHIP

3 national-level partnership strengthened with the Prime Minister's Office (Labour, Youth, Employment & Persons with Disability), Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) Mainland Tanzania, and Prime Minister's Office – Regional Administration and Local Government (PMO – RALG) to embed life skills in school systems and enhance youth skilling and employment programmes.



03

### MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

·25 Members of Parliament engaged in ALiVE capacity-building sessions on life skills and values.

## Capacity Building & Training

01



**231**

231 teacher educators from 4 Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) trained on life skills assessment, integration, and classroom practice.

02



**1039**

system actors reached regionally, with Tanzania contributing a significant share (curriculum developers, teachers, officers, and MPs). 161 training hours completed by master trainers who also supported Tanzania capacity-building efforts.

03



**161**

training hours completed by master trainers who also supported Tanzania capacity-building efforts.

## Community Engagement



**5556+**

community members reached through awareness campaigns in Zanzibar and Bagamoyo, (Coastal) Pwani Region.



**7966**

(3,085 males / 4,881 females) parents reached across Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar through parental engagement campaigns.

## Tools, Frameworks & System Materials



1

108 assessment tasks piloted nationally for children aged 6 – 13, reaching a total of 2,785 children in Tanzanian mainland and Zanzibar schools

2

Open-source platform launched (89 downloads, 90 users) adopted by Tanzanian educators and partners.

3

Teacher education curriculum contributions made to the ongoing national curriculum review by Zanzibar Institute of Education (ZIE) and Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) – including review of TIE Learning Management System (LMS) Materials

## Champions and Grassroots Mobilisation



130

community champions in Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania influencing over 5,556 community members



69

community champions in Zanzibar influencing over 7,966 community members. Multiple regional-level champions emerging from Tanzania Mainland through trainings and advocacy events.

## Policy Influence & Collaboration



Tanzania represented at:

- ALiVE Summit (cross-country platform)
- EAC Regional Education Conference
- Two AEAA Conference participation (1 in Cape Town SA, and another in Addis Ababa Ethiopia)
- World Youth Skills Day dialogues
- Comparative International Education Society (CIES) in the USA
- UKFIET in the United Kingdom
- Participation in the CASEL convenings in the USA
- eLearning Africa Conferenewc
- AJESR, 2025 - Zanzibar
- ADEA Conference for Foundational Learning in Zambia
- Utafiti Elimu Event \_ Zanzibar



Clear linkages established between ALiVE evidence and national curriculum reform processes (TIE, PMO, ZIE).



## Gender and Inclusion

ALiVE Phase II advanced gender-responsive system change by deliberately positioning both women and men as active co-educators of children's life skills. Endline evidence from the PTA Campaign shows that fathers' understanding of problem-solving as a core life skill increased from about 30% at baseline to over 85% at endline, while mothers' understanding increased from approximately 55% to above 90%, substantially narrowing the gender gap in parental awareness .

Similarly, the proportion of fathers reporting confidence to support their children's problem-solving at home more than doubled over the ten-week campaign, aligning closely with mothers' already higher confidence levels . Sessions also reached a wide mix of caregivers, including guardians and grandparents, using participatory Kiswahili-based methods accessible to parents with limited formal education. At the learner level, qualitative findings from the ALiVE Phase II endline evaluation indicate increased participation and confidence among girls in classroom and club-based life skills activities, including speaking in groups, taking leadership roles, and expressing ideas .

Teachers and parents reported that creative modalities (drama, poetry, music, and storytelling) enabled learners with weaker academic performance to demonstrate competence and engagement, promoting inclusion beyond exam-oriented measures . Together, these results show that ALiVE parental engagement approach contributed to more equitable household roles, more balanced parental participation, and more inclusive learning spaces.

# OUR STORIES OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGE





## Nurturing a Wise Leader: Ahmed's Story

"For a long time, I felt like my thoughts were locked inside me, feeling scared was normal to me," says 12-year-old Ahmed Omar, a Standard Six pupil at Kisiwa Ndui Primary School in Unguja, Zanzibar. "I could see problems around me, even simple conflicts at home, but I kept quiet because I didn't believe my ideas were good enough."

Ahmed lives with his parents, both retired but still working hard through small entrepreneurship activities to support their household. As the eldest boy, Ahmed helps with chores and often cares for his younger siblings. Though calm and observant, he carried a quiet fear of speaking in front of others especially adults.

At school, he rarely contributed during lessons. At home, he hesitated to intervene even when he could help resolve arguments among his siblings.

His father explains, "We always knew Ahmed was intelligent and thoughtful. He is that child who watches everything carefully. But he was afraid of stepping forward. He avoided making decisions, even small ones. We worried that he would grow into a shy young man who hides his abilities."

At school Ahmed joined the ALiVE project Life Skills program, that began to change. Over the course of ten weeks, he learned problem solving skills which influenced his communication techniques, confidence-building approaches, conflict resolution styles, and responsible digital habits.

These sessions gave him a new understanding of himself and a structured way of approaching everyday challenges. Ahmed still remembers the moment it clicked: "One day in class, the facilitator said something that stayed with me: 'Your ideas matter because they come from your experience.' That sentence made me realize that even as a child, I can contribute. I just needed to learn how."



*"I want to lead people with wisdom and kindness. I want to help solve problems in my community the same way I help at home now. Life Skills made me see that leadership doesn't start when you are grown, it starts with how you treat people every day. My dream is to become a political leader, Alive program has natured me well to make it happen"*

*Ahmed*



## Finding Strength and Hope: A Mother and Daughter's Journey

*For many parents, raising a child with special needs comes with unique challenges. For Mama Aksa (42) in Bagamoyo, Pwani, the journey began when her daughter, also named Aksa, was diagnosed with autism, which caused a delay in her speech at a very young age.*

*She recalls, "After I gave birth to Aksa and we discovered she had autism, I felt like my world had stopped. I was scared, confused, and didn't know how to help her. For a while, I even hesitated to have more children because I feared they might face the same challenges. But I realized that worrying wouldn't change anything. I had to be strong, to stay positive, and to find ways to support her, even if it meant learning everything from scratch."*

*Life was not easy. Aksa required constant attention, and her mother often felt overwhelmed. Everything began to change when Mama Aksa joined the ALiVE Life Skills sessions facilitated by Uwezo Tanzania and OCODE.*

*Through these sessions, she learned step-by-step problem-solving techniques which enhanced her ways to manage stress, and strategies to boost her daughter's learning. Inspired, she enrolled Aksa in the program at her school level so she could develop social and communication skills. The results have been remarkable. At first, 10-year-old Aksa was shy and struggled to express herself clearly. Over time, the classes boosted her self-confidence. She began articulating her thoughts more clearly, and her mother noticed a huge improvement in their daily communication.*

*"Now, when I ask her to do small chores at home, she listens and responds positively. She even starts conversations with me, telling me about her day and what she wants to do. The change is incredible, I feel like we finally understand each other. The sessions didn't just teach her; they taught me patience, problem-solving, and how to celebrate every small victory. I feel stronger as a mother and more hopeful for her future."*

*Aksa shares her admiration for her mother: "Before the classes, I was too shy to speak. I didn't know how to tell my mom what I wanted. Now I can say my feelings and thoughts. I like learning new things at ALiVE, and I feel happy when I can talk to my friends and my mom. My mom is my hero she always supports me, teaches me, and never gives up on me. I want to be brave like her."*



*“Now, when I ask her to do small chores at home, she listens and responds positively. She even starts conversations with me, telling me about her day and what she wants to do. The change is incredible, I feel like we finally understand each other. The sessions didn’t just teach her; they taught me patience, problem-solving, and how to celebrate every small victory. I feel stronger as a mother and more hopeful for her future.”*

Mama

Aksa

# Khadija's Story: A Girl Who Found the Confidence to Speak

At 14, Khadija Said from Lumumba Secondary School in Unguja, Zanzibar dreamed of becoming a journalist a dream she nurtured quietly, almost secretly. But for most of her life, she felt her voice was too small to matter. Growing up in a traditional coastal Islamic community where girls are expected to be calm, respectful, and silent, Khadija learned to speak carefully or not at all.

She often feared saying the wrong thing, being misunderstood, or being told she was “too loud” or “too forward” for a girl. Slowly, those fears dimmed her dreams.

“I wanted to be a journalist, but deep down, I felt like it wasn't for girls like me,” she says. “Every time I tried to speak, my voice would shake. I thought people would laugh, or tell me I don't know anything. I started to believe maybe my dreams were too big, too bright and that scared me.”


When her school introduced the ALiVE project Life Skills Club, she joined with hesitation. But week by week, the sessions changed her. She learned how identify problems, search information about them, and best ways to find solutions to an impeding problem. These aspects amplified her communication, self-esteem, and decision-making that started to breathe life back into her dreams.

I didn't know life skills could open your mind like this,” she says. “Before, every problem felt like a mountain. I used to panic, keep quiet, or wait for someone older to solve things for me. But the more I learned, the more I realized I have the ability to think, plan, and overcome things on my own. It was like someone slowly switched the lights back on inside me.”

Her turning point came before her Form Two NECTA exams when her watch essential for managing her study time suddenly broke. Her family couldn't afford a replacement. The fear came rushing back.

“When the watch broke, it felt like everything was falling apart,” she says. “I thought, ‘Here we go again I can't fix this, I can't control anything.’ The old doubt came back and it was heavy. But then I remembered what we learned about breaking a problem into steps. For the first time, I trusted my own thinking.”



The background of the page features a blurred photograph. On the right side, a person is riding a motorcycle, with their hand on the handlebar and a helmet visible. On the left and bottom, several people are wearing bright blue traditional clothing, possibly saris or dresses, and are walking. The overall scene appears to be an outdoor setting, possibly a street or a public area. There are decorative orange wavy lines in the corners of the page.

Her parents gave her 1,000 TZS a day for school. She decided to save a little daily until she had enough to buy a new watch. After two months, she saved 10,000 TZS and bought it herself.

“This watch is more than something I wear,” she says emotionally. “It represents the moment I realized I can take charge of my life. I can solve things. I can move forward. And that made me feel powerful in a way I had never felt before.”

The program didn’t just give her confidence it expanded her world. She made new friends, gained courage to speak in groups, and traveled outside Zanzibar for the first time, visiting Dar es Salaam and Bagamoyo.

“I never imagined I would stand in front of people and speak confidently, or travel to places I only heard about,” she says. “Life Skills Club helped me understand that being a girl does not silence my voice unless I let it. I have ideas, I have dreams, and they are valid.”

Today, Khadija sees her dream of becoming a journalist with new eyes. “For the first time, I believe my dream is possible. I can see myself interviewing people, writing stories, and sharing voices that are not heard. Before, my dream felt dark and far away. Now it feels close like something I can reach if I keep learning and believing in myself.”

She hopes the program reaches more young people across the country and create a generation of problem solvers.

“I want every girl who doubts herself to have this chance. When you learn these skills, you stop seeing yourself as weak or limited. You start to see your future clearly and you start walking toward it.”



*“Life Skills Club helped me understand that being a girl does not silence my voice unless I let it. I have ideas, I have dreams, and they are valid.”*

Khadija



## Lilian's Story: Rebuilding a Family, Restoring a Future

Lilian James, 43, is an entrepreneur and small-scale farmer in Bagamoyo, Pwani. She is a mother of three, a member of Upendo Kikoba, and a woman who once believed her marriage had reached its end. Behind her resilience was a long history of quiet struggle constant misunderstandings at home, financial tension, and the responsibility of raising children in an environment strained by conflict.

For years, Lilian and her husband lived through recurring arguments that slowly eroded their relationship. Neither of them had ever learned how to communicate, listen, or solve problems constructively. Small issues escalated into loud fights, and over time their home became a place of fear and emotional fatigue. The conflict didn't just affect them it deeply affected their children. Their eldest son, once a strong performer in school, saw his grades drop sharply. The younger children became withdrawn and lost interest in learning.

"As parents we thought we were fighting between ourselves," she recalls. "But the truth is our children were breaking silently. They carried our anger into their classrooms. They lost concentration. They stopped believing in themselves. I didn't realize how much damage we were causing."

Eventually, overwhelmed and exhausted, Lilian made the painful decision to walk away. She left her home and moved into a small rented room, leaving the children with their father. The separation brought new challenges. The cost of living doubled, her businesses weakened, and the home environment for the children became unstable. Emotionally and financially, everyone suffered.

Everything changed the day Upendo Kikoba was introduced to the Life Skills Program under the ALiVE project. During one of their Sunday meetings, the group facilitator introduced the concept of problem-solving, creativity, and confidence – as aspects which help youths and children to thrive in life. From the first module (problem solving) Lilian felt as if the facilitator was speaking directly to her heart.

As the facilitator explained how people often react emotionally instead of understanding the root of a problem, Lilian found herself reflecting deeply on her marriage.

She realized that throughout her life, she responded to conflict by shutting down or running away, simply because she had never learned any other way of approaching her challenges. That moment opened her eyes.

Armed with this new understanding, Lilian made one of the bravest decisions of her life: she chose to go back home and rebuild her marriage. The process was emotional and difficult. Years of unresolved conflict stood between them.

But this time, she approached things differently calmly, thoughtfully, and with accountability. "It wasn't easy to go back," she says. "But the life skills helped me talk, listen, and understand. Through the program, I reunited with my husband. We are still learning, but we are getting there. And I am truly happy."

The impact on her children was immediate. With peace restored at home, the children began to flourish again. Their eldest son improved dramatically in school within one term. The younger ones regained confidence, started doing their homework consistently, and became more active and joyful. Lilian describes it as watching her family breathe again.

She also used her new skills to support her Standard Seven daughter, encouraging her creativity by teaching her to sew mats and express herself through craft making something she had never considered before. Her daughter now spends more time creating than feeling lost or anxious. "She has changed so much," Lilian says with pride. "I'm so happy that I've brought meaning into her life at such a young age. All thanks to OCODE and Uwezo Tanzania. We women of the Coast really needed these sessions. I wish we could have them regularly."

With her home healed, Lilian's businesses also began to recover. She returned to farming and selling with renewed focus, supported by a more cooperative and communicative husband. The peace and structure in her home have restored her strength and clarity.





*"I'm so happy that I've brought meaning into her life at such a young age. All thanks to OCODE and Uwezo Tanzania. We women of the Coast really needed these sessions. I wish we could have them regularly."*

*Lilian*



## Ramadhan's Story: A Father's Lesson in Life Skills

"I grew up without choices. I watched my siblings go to school while I stayed home, working to help my family survive, and I promised myself that my children would never have to live the same life I did. I wanted them to dream freely and reach higher than I ever could." Ramadhani Khamis, 44, shared, his voice carrying both pride and reflection.


In Jan'gombe, Unguja Zanzibar, Ramadhani is a father of four who has always dreamed of a bright future for his children. When his eldest daughter, Khadija, completed Form Four last year, he wanted to ensure she stayed engaged and prepared to build a stable, successful life.

"I believed teaching was the safest and most respected path for her," he explained. "It was my hope that becoming a teacher would give her security, dignity, and the opportunities I never had. I enrolled her in college for education, thinking I was guiding her toward the best future." But months passed, and Khadija's performance and interest in the course did not improve. Concerned, Ramadhani began to wonder if she was struggling in silence. One afternoon, while passing through his community, he joined a discussion among youth and elders on social issues. The session focused on life skills, particularly problem-solving. Though he had heard of life skills before, this conversation struck him deeply.

"As they talked about identifying the root of problems and making decisions thoughtfully, I could not help but reflect on my own choices for my family," he shared. "I realized that I had decided my daughter's future without asking her what she truly wanted. I felt a mixture of worry and guilt."

That evening, he spoke with his wife, who shared her observation that Khadija seemed uninterested in the teaching course. Together, they decided to have an honest conversation with their daughter.

To their surprise, Khadija revealed her passion for beauty and cosmetology. She wanted to learn braiding and makeup.




“I was shocked at first,” Ramadhani admitted. “I had invested in her education and feared that pursuing beauty might not secure her future. But when I looked into her eyes, I saw determination and clarity I had never seen before. And then she said something I will never forget: ‘This is something I have been passionate about for a long time. If you believe in me and allow me to take this path, I will make you proud.’”

Her words stayed with him. After careful reflection, Ramadhani chose to support her dream. He enrolled Khadija in a beauty course and followed her progress closely. Today, she is thriving motivated, confident, and excelling in her studies.

“Through this experience, I have learned a powerful lesson,” he shared confidently. “Decision-making within families cannot be done alone. Traditionally, fathers or male elders make choices without consulting others. But by listening to my wife and daughter, I discovered better ways to support and guide them. I realized that empowering them to pursue their passions brings the best results.”

Ramadhani credits this transformation to the life skills training provided by SAZANI through the ALiVE project under Uwezo Tanzania. The program taught him step-by-step problem-solving, encouraged reflection, and gave him tools to engage his family democratically.

“I thank God for the bold step we took,” he said proudly. “I am proud of my daughter, and I believe this journey will bear fruits for her in the near future. All thanks to SAZANI and Uwezo Tanzania for showing us the importance of solving problems together and listening to each other.”



# Beyond the Classroom: Transforming Learning through Sports and Games

## Case study of Mataya, Primary School

### Context and Rationale

Tanzania has made major strides in expanding access to primary education, yet evidence continues to show that many learners struggle to develop the life skills and values that underpin successful learning and positive life outcomes. ALiVE's 2022 assessment across 34 districts in Tanzania Mainland, involving 14,645 adolescents aged 13–17 from 11,802 households, revealed that only 8% demonstrated proficiency in problem-solving. These findings reframed national conversations about learning success—shifting attention from academic attainment alone toward the broader competencies required for 21st-century living. Within this context, Mataya Primary School joined ALiVE's 10-week parental engagement campaign in Bagamoyo District, coordinated by OCODE and Uwezo Tanzania. The school became a testing ground for integrating games-based, low-cost, and contextualized pedagogies into everyday classroom practice, demonstrating how life skills can be nurtured even in resource-constrained settings.

### Approach Used

Teachers received practical orientation on using short, structured games and role-play activities aligned to specific life skills. These activities were embedded within existing lessons and routines rather than added as standalone sessions. Parents were sensitized through community dialogues to reinforce the same skills at home, creating consistency between school and household environments.

### Key features of the approach included:

- Simple physical and cognitive games using locally available materials
- Guided reflection after play (What happened? What worked? What can we improve?)
- Integration into subjects such as reading, mathematics, and group work
- Emphasis on participation, experimentation, and safe failure

This design ensured feasibility, low cost, and immediate applicability for teachers



## Skills Strengthened

Through regular practice, learners demonstrated growth in:

- Problem-solving and planning
- Collaboration and communication
- Self-confidence and leadership
- Emotional regulation and persistence

Yusra, a Standard Five learner, described how a bottle-collection game taught her to organize her peers and propose solutions. “That moment showed me my ideas matter. Now I speak in group work and guide my team.”

Akram, previously known for frequent anger, shared: “I learned to breathe, wait, and talk slowly. Now I don’t shout. I feel proud because I can control myself.”

Teacher Ziada observed that learners now persist longer on academic tasks, negotiate roles in groups, and encourage one another behaviours directly transferred from the games into classroom learning.

## Observed Outcomes

- Improved classroom cooperation and reduced conflict
- Greater learner engagement and task completion
- Increased learner confidence to express ideas
- Reduced teacher time spent on behaviour management

Academically, teachers reported that learners apply planning and persistence strategies from games when tackling reading and mathematics tasks, leading to deeper engagement rather than quick abandonment of difficult work.

## Scalability and System Relevance

The Mataya experience demonstrates a highly scalable model:

- Requires minimal resources
- Uses existing teachers and lesson time
- Aligns with competency-based curriculum aspirations
- Reinforced through parental engagement

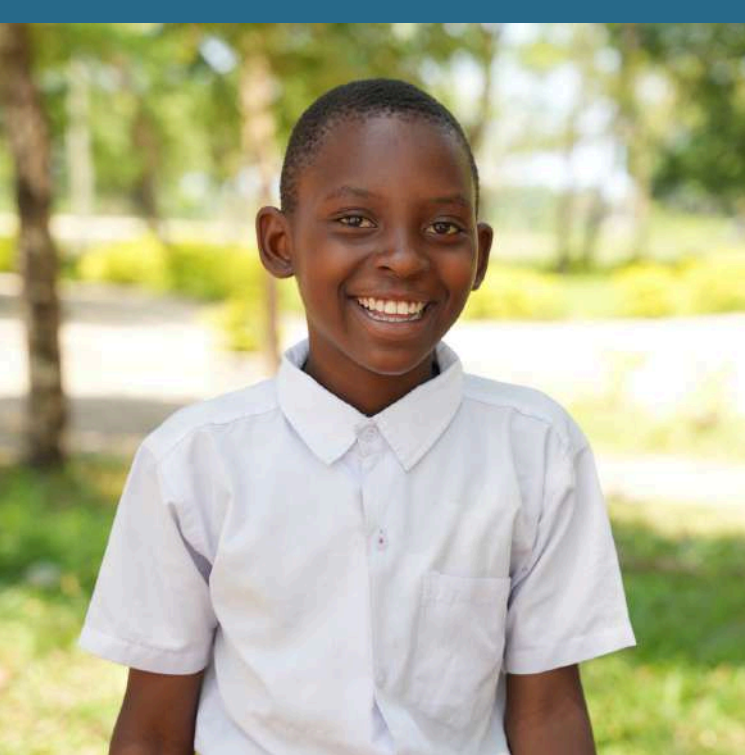
Because the approach is simple, contextual, and adaptable, it can be integrated into school routines across diverse settings. When supported by teacher training institutions, district education offices, and PTA structures, games-based life skills pedagogy can be scaled as part of Tanzania’s broader system shift toward holistic learning.

### Why This Case Matters

Mataya Primary School illustrates what ALiVE Phase II seeks to achieve at system level: classrooms that nurture not only academic knowledge, but also the minds, emotions, and social capacities of learners. As Teacher Ziada explains, “Before ALiVE, we taught content and hoped something would remain. Now, I see children growing not only in marks, but in how they think, how they treat others, and how they solve problems.”

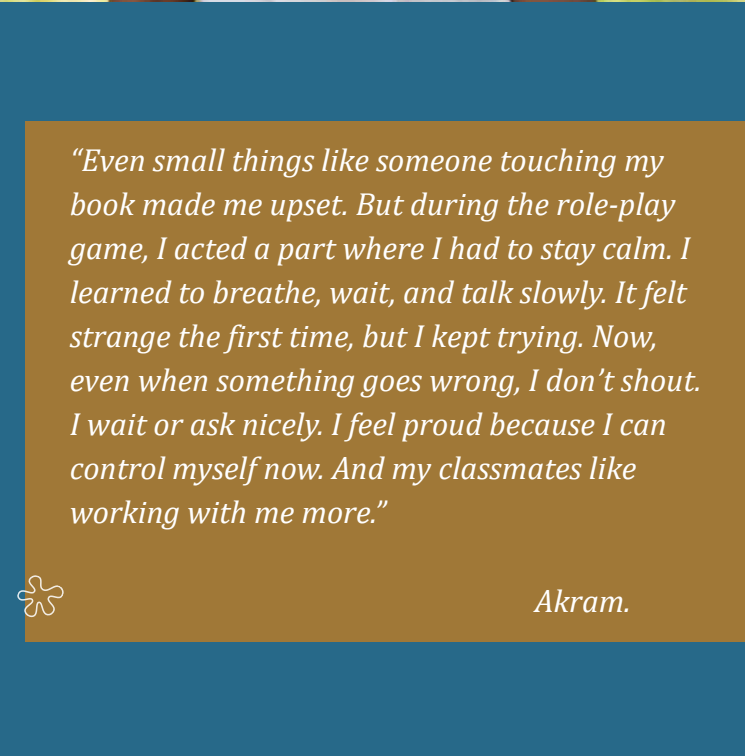
This case affirms that when children are given structured opportunities to think, collaborate, and reflect, learning becomes a pathway to both academic success and life readiness.





*"It looked simple, but it needed speed, balance, and quick thinking. At first we rushed, bumped into each other, and dropped the bottles. Then I suggested we organise ourselves one collecting, one arranging the crate, one guiding the path and everyone agreed. We worked faster and everything flowed. That moment showed me my ideas matter. Now in group work, I speak clearly and guide my team. I used to keep quiet, but the games made me brave."*

*Yusra.* 



*"Even small things like someone touching my book made me upset. But during the role-play game, I acted a part where I had to stay calm. I learned to breathe, wait, and talk slowly. It felt strange the first time, but I kept trying. Now, even when something goes wrong, I don't shout. I wait or ask nicely. I feel proud because I can control myself now. And my classmates like working with me more."*

*Akram.*



*"Now, I see children growing not only in marks, but in how they treat each other, how they think through problems, and how they behave. The games have shown us that learning is not just about books. It is about shaping a child's mind, heart, and ability to live with others."*

*Madam Ziada*





# Fostering Self-Reliance through Life Skills Education in Zanzibar

## Context

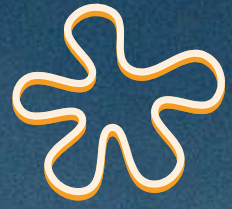
In Zanzibar, schooling has long emphasized academic theory over the practical competencies young people need to thrive. Although life skills are recognized in policy frameworks, the translation into classroom practice has been limited, inconsistent, and often disconnected from learners' realities. For many adolescents, especially those from low-income households, the absence of these skills narrows their prospects for employment, confidence, and long-term self-reliance. ALiVE assessment (RELI, 2022) indicated that, in Zanzibar only 14 percent of adolescents demonstrated proficiency in problem solving.



Moreover, it was evident, during parental engagement in Zanzibar, many girls appeared shy and hesitant at first, yet became expressive and confident when supported through interactive engagement. These insights strengthened the urgency to redefine learning success beyond literacy and numeracy. They highlighted the need for children to develop social and emotional competencies essential for navigating the demands of the 21st century. ALiVE initiative aims to make this shift systemic by integrating life skills into curriculum, assessment, teacher capacity building, and school culture.

## The Challenge

According to baseline assessment, parents and teachers across Zanzibar struggled to ground life skills in practical and relatable activities. Communication, creativity, and problem-solving remain abstract concepts that were difficult to translate into everyday teaching. For adolescents facing poverty, these skills were not simply academic outcomes, they were tools for navigating daily life and building future opportunities. Gender norms created additional barriers by limiting girls' opportunities to explore creative or entrepreneurial activities outside household responsibilities.



*“We were meeting children with extraordinary imagination and talent,” reflects Madam Sazia, Manager at SAZANI Trust. “But their potential is locked behind a system that does not give them room to try, fail, experiment, or even dream. We knew that if we could connect classroom learning with real-life experiences, these young people would not only build confidence but would begin shaping their own futures.”*

### **The Solution: Life Skills Clubs as Engines of Creativity**

Through Parental Engagement Campaign through UWEZO Tanzania coordination SAZANI Trust and Milele Zanzibar Foundation (MZF) partnered with more than 10 schools across Urban District, Unguja to establish Life Skills Clubs. These were safe, creative, and hands-on spaces where learners practiced life skills every day. For one hour daily, students explored communication, teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving through practical activities that allowed them to engage fully and confidently. With tools, training, and mentorship from SAZANI Trust and Milele Zanzibar Foundation, students began developing skills in handcrafting, natural product making, and basic entrepreneurship. They later formed an association called Diya Decorations Zanzibar. The group produced décor items such as mirrors, vases, and floral arrangements, along with natural products including soaps, coconut oil, and perfumes.

What started as a classroom activity quickly evolved into a pathway for self-expression and income generation. *“The clubs became more than after-school sessions,”* says Madam Sazia. *“They became incubators of identity and self-belief. When a learner holds a finished product in their hands, something they designed, shaped, and perfected, you can see the shift in their confidence. They stand taller. They begin asking bigger questions about their future. That is the power that support from partners and donors unlocks. It is the journey from hesitation to self-reliance.”*





## Breaking Cultural Barriers

*Introducing creative and income-generating activities, especially for girls, required meaningful community dialogue and trust-building.*

*“At first, many parents wondered why their daughters should spend time crafting or creating instead of doing house chores,” Sazia recalls. “But once they saw the quality of the products, the teamwork, and the confidence the children were gaining, everything changed. Parents began to celebrate their daughters’ creativity. Some even started placing small orders. That shift in mindset is a victory because when the community believes in girls, girls believe in themselves.”*

*A parent from Unguja echoes this shift in perspective:*

*“When my daughter first joined the club, I was not convinced it was useful,” says Fatma, a mother of three. “But then she started bringing home things she had made with her own hands. I saw her excitement and how she spoke with confidence. I realized she was learning skills I never had the chance to learn. Today, I support her completely because I can see she is building a future that belongs to her.”*





## LOOKING AHEAD

Building on the demonstrated success of the ten-week parental engagement campaign, the next phase of ALiVE will focus on institutionalizing parental engagement as a permanent pillar of the education system, to spear head mindset and cultural shifts - rather than a time-bound project activity. This means embedding parental engagement approaches within national and sub-national education policies, PTA and school governance guidelines, teacher professional development frameworks, and community education strategies. Parents will increasingly be recognized and supported as co-educators, with clear roles in nurturing life skills and values alongside schools.

Programmatically, ALiVE will work to scale the campaign model by identify and working with more champions using using a standardized but adaptable packages and monitoring systems: facilitator guides, community dialogue tools, games-based home activities, and digital monitoring tools. Emphasis will be placed on building district-level and school-level facilitation capacity, enabling local education offices, Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs), and civil society partners to independently lead implementation. Digital and print repositories of parental engagement resources will further expand reach at low cost.

Content-wise, future campaigns will broaden from an initial focus on problem-solving to a progressive suite of life skills and values including communication, collaboration, self-awareness, empathy, decision-making, and responsible citizenship sequenced across age groups. Stronger links will be forged between what children practice at home and what teachers nurture in classrooms, reinforcing coherence across learning environments.

Finally, ALiVE will strengthen evidence generation and learning loops, integrating simple monitoring tools into school and PTA routines, conducting periodic light-touch assessments, and documenting community-level innovations. This will ensure continuous improvement, policy-relevant learning, and sustained advocacy. Looking ahead, parental engagement will move from a promising intervention to a systemic engine for holistic learning, shaping how Tanzania defines, delivers, and measures educational success.

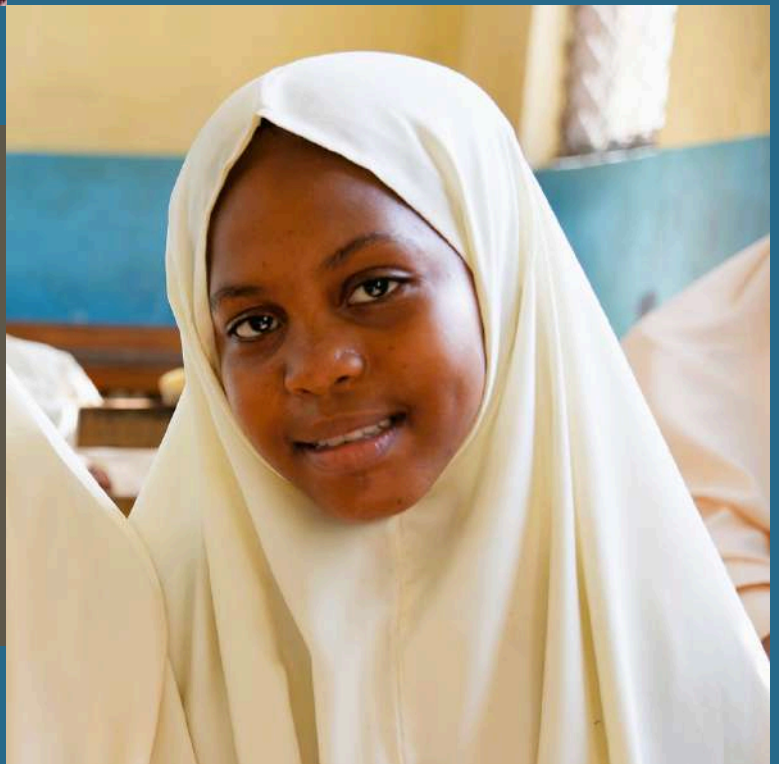


*"They became incubators of identity and self-belief. When a learner holds a finished product in their hands, something they designed, shaped, and perfected, you can see the shift in their confidence. They stand taller. They begin asking bigger questions about their future. That is the power that support from partners and donors unlocks. It is the journey from hesitation to self-reliance."*

*Madam Sazia*

*"Before the club, my father would spend 5,000 TSH weekly on my school needs. Now, my crafts earn enough for me I could sell my crafts and get a profit of 100,000tsh a month, this has helped in supporting myself and my four siblings. It has lifted a weight from my dad's shoulders,"*

*Mariamamu*



*"At first, many parents wondered why their daughters should spend time crafting or creating instead of doing house chores," Sazia recalls. "But once they saw the quality of the products, the teamwork, and the confidence the children were gaining, everything changed. Parents began to celebrate their daughters' creativity. Some even started placing small orders. That shift in mindset is a victory because when the community believes in girls, girls believe in themselves."*



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