

# Chapter 11

## Reflections on ALiVE's Collaborative Endeavour



Fergal Turner, Michael Babu, and Olivia McIntire

**Abstract** ALiVE's visible achievement has been to develop contextualised assessment tools for three life skills and one value, undertake a large-scale assessment program at household level across three countries, and engage with hundreds of stakeholders in the process. What is less visible is how this has been achieved, who is responsible for it, and what the motivating force behind it has been. This chapter describes reflections on the collaborative processes that underlie these activities. In so doing, the chapter locates that collaboration within the history of community and civil society contributions to education in East Africa, and more specifically within Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The chapter's reflections make explicit who the contributors were and how they were able to work together. In these reflections two factors are of particular interest. The first concerns the link between the way individuals and organisations worked together, and the actual life skills that were the object of their attention, in particular the skill of collaboration. The second is the constituting of the endeavour as a learning journey. The process is seen not merely as a production of an assessment tool and consequent results which can be used to advocate for life skills in education, but as a vehicle for equipping collaborators with the technical and work skills that they can take forward into future education spaces.

### 11.1 Introduction

Collaboration has many places in the heart of the ALiVE program. First, it sits at the heart of ALiVE's understanding of lifeskills and values, as one of the constructs contextualised and measured by the program. Second, it sits at the heart of ALiVE's

---

F. Turner (✉) · O. McIntire  
Oxford MeasurED, Oxford, UK  
e-mail: [fergal.turner@oxfordmeasured.co.uk](mailto:fergal.turner@oxfordmeasured.co.uk)

M. Babu  
Strathmore University, Nairobi, Kenya  
e-mail: [Mbabu@strathmore.edu](mailto:Mbabu@strathmore.edu)

original theory of change, as a prioritisation of collaborative action to develop contextualised assessments, evidence led advocacy, and a learning community. Finally, collaboration is the foundation which ALiVE stands on. ALiVE was conceptualised as a program of the East African Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI), which is a learning community of more than 70 organisations working on education in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. ALiVE has been put into action by the Values and Lifeskills cluster of RELI, meaning that it is not a program of one organisation, but of many working together.

This kind of collaborative action in assessment is new in many ways. It gives equal priority to contextual, experiential, and technical knowledge, rather than placing priority on the latter. It also prioritises negotiation and consensus. The hypothesis is that by working collaboratively, ALiVE can go further in achieving its three goals than it could ever have done if it had been delivered by one organisation. The successes of ALiVE in achieving its three goals is undisputed and is given space in the rest of this volume. In this chapter we explore what collaboration meant for ALiVE, and what the endeavour can tell us about the future of collective action in education.

### ***11.1.1 The Nature of Inter-Organisational Collaboration: Benefits and Challenges***

Dillenbourg (1999) holds that collaboration is more likely to occur in situations where the agents or partners have relatively similar levels of expertise and power relations. Collaboration should not be dominated by a single party's views since this can compromise mutual engagement, interdependency, and interactivity (Chrislip & Larson, 1994), and can also result in command and control behaviour instead of creating a shared vision and goals (Anslinger & Jenk, 2004). Mutual engagement and interdependency can only thrive if participants are willing to share their ideas, listen, and learn from others (Lai, 2011; Chrislip & Larson).

Inter-organizational collaboration offers various benefits, some of which are more explicit than others. Collaboration can provide a structure for transmitting knowledge and managing responsibilities, as noted by Kosmutzky and Putty (2016). In addition to these tangible benefits, collaboration can offer social benefits such as building professional networks, gaining friendships, and a sense of self-fulfillment for contributing to a common goal (Ulnicane, 2015).

The nature of collaboration itself can have a significant impact on a project's success. Ulnicane (2015) emphasized that regular communication among partners is crucial since the project outcomes depend on the contributions of partners with diverse expertise. Selden et al. (2006) observed that the greater and more intense the involvement of partners in collaboration, the better the implementation, and greater the ownership of the project objectives. Leahey (2016) notes that successful collaboration requires an organized series of activities that focus on interpersonal

relationships, as well as the operating systems of the partnering organizations. The crucial factor is the identification of a common purpose.

Collaborating across teams of experts can bring about various benefits, but it also comes with some drawbacks. One disadvantage is that individual contributions may go unnoticed as recognition is often given to the whole team (Kosmutzky & Putty, 2016). Moreover, collaborative processes can be time-consuming and require regular coordination and communication, which may be challenging for a diverse team that lacks intercultural and interpersonal competencies (Dusdal & Powell, 2021). Another challenge is the need for planning and technological support to promote trust and sensitivity among team members who might be working from different locations (Livingston, 2003). Cummings and Kiesler (2005) add that spatially spread networks require significant coordination efforts to bring together ideas and expertise.

Chrislip (2002) highlighted the importance of creating a collaborative environment that allows participants to be part of the process and gives them a sense of buy-in. This environment is characterized by three components: step-by-step discussion of goals and benefits, clarification of rules and guidelines around open communication to obtain feedback from each party, and anticipation of possible challenges. Finally, the different operating contexts of each partner can pose a challenge to collaboration, as socio-cultural, political, and economic differences may affect the partners' ability to provide resources and fully participate in project activities (Anslinger & Jenk, 2004). This challenge can be addressed by clearly defining and agreeing upon the requirements and expectations of each partner during the planning stage.

### ***11.1.2 Historical Context for Civil Society Collaboration in East Africa***

On a global scale, civil society actors have long been involved in the field of education. Between 1950 and 1990, there was an unprecedented expansion of international non-government and civil society action in the field (Mundy & Murphy, 2001). The World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held in Jomtien, marked a new age for non-government actors in international educational cooperation and a recognised role in the provision of global educational services. While the WCEFA is considered by many to have encompassed a Western-led agenda which emphasized a North to South delivery of education, the conference triggered an international network of civil society actors to come together to reshape the education landscape.

In 1999, the non-government organisations Oxfam, ActionAid and Education International formed the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) in preparation for the World Education Forum in Dakar which in part brought civil society organisations to the table to influence the global education agenda (GCE, 2022). Today, the

GCE comprises over 100 national and regional education networks and international organisations, representing thousands of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as well as women's groups, parents' associations, teachers' organisations, child rights campaigners, youth groups and academic institutions.

Since Kenya's independence in 1963, community-based organisations (CBOs) have been key players in the development of education provision in Kenya (Mundy et al., 2010). The period preceding the 1992 multiparty declaration was a significant time for civil society to unite as it rallied against the one-party state in power. Civil society such as the Women's Movement, Christian organisations, university students, and the rural poor, ran opposition campaigns, which when backed by the international community, brought about a historic multi-party election (Muthoni Githuku, 1993). In 1999, the ElimuYetu Coalition was formed, which brought together education-focused civil society and helped influence the abolition of elementary school fees (Mundy et al., 2010). The coalition is still active today and acts as the national platform for civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-state education stakeholders to lobby for education for all in Kenya (Elimu Yetu Coalition, 2022). Similarly, the 2002 elections also marked a major turning point where CSOs were permitted to develop and hold more recognized space in the Kenyan educational landscape. By 2005, the Kenya Education Sector Program aimed to bring local organisations and international organisations together under a government policy (Riddell, 2007).

After Tanzania's independence, the country entered a period of forming a new nation, guided by President Julius Nyerere's philosophy of African socialism, which focused on the creation of a self-sufficient welfare driven society. From 1960 to 1980, the government invested a lot into education initiatives to address the fact that only about 20% of the population had received or were in formal education. From 1990 to 2000, there was an unprecedented expansion of NGOs and CSOs addressing social issues, including educational provision. In particular, the multi-party elections in 1995 opened up space for civil society at the national level (Simon & Sikoyo, 2021). In 1999, the Tanzania Education Network/Mtandao wa Elimu Tanzania (TEN/MET) was founded to coordinate civil society stakeholders to influence basic education policy and practices. Notably, they joined the Global Campaign for Education in 1999. However, in 2010 there was a shift in the government's attitude towards civil society, which inhibited civic space and withdrew the gains that had been made over the previous 10 years. It has only been in the past 3 years that civil society and government have been in partnership to address social issues. During this period, TEN/MET continued to bring together CSOs in the educational sector and today are still the key network in Tanzania, comprising 158 education organisations which work together to improve education policy and practice (TEN/MET Coordinator, personal communication, 2022).

Civil society in Uganda played a critical role in the country gaining independence in 1962. However, not long after, civil society organisations were brought close to the state to ensure they were operating in the interest of the government (de Coninck & Larok, 2021). From 1986, Uganda saw a growth of civil society

organisations, backed by international donor funding. The government did not interfere with their work as long as they had non-political agendas and focused on the provision of social services including education. However, in the late 1990s, the state redefined the space that civil society was permitted to occupy, ensuring they operated under supervision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (de Coninck). Within this new restrictive civic space, education-focused NGOs still managed to form the Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda (FENU) in 2001 to bring together CSOs and CBOs, and other education stakeholders to advocate for quality education (FENU, 2022).

RELI was formed in 2017 as an innovative network that unites more than 70 East African organisations to strive for improved learning outcomes in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. RELI has a wide array of achievements such as increasing inclusion of learners from conflict-affected areas in Uganda, engaging in curriculum focused policy advocacy in Kenya, and building the capacity of Teacher Development professionals in Tanzania.

This historical context shows the long journey towards more collaboration in education by civil society actors in East Africa. It is this historical trajectory which created the fertile ground for ALiVE as a collaborative endeavour.

### ***11.1.3 Defining Collaboration in ALiVE***

The title of this chapter refers to ALiVE's collaborative endeavour. How can we define collaboration in the context of a program such as ALiVE? ALiVE is a project led and delivered by several organisations working together. These organisations range in size and mandate and are represented in the ALiVE program by individuals with diverse backgrounds and technical specialisations.

A study (Nansubuga et al., 2023) which looked at the inter-organisational collaboration in ALiVE asked the questions: what motivated collaboration in ALiVE? What challenges did the collaboration process face, and how were they mitigated? And, what matters most in ensuring and sustaining success in collaboration?

The findings show that motivation to collaborate requires clear vision, teamwork, learning, leadership, collective decision-making, and commitment. Challenges faced in collaboration were interdependence (and the pressure it entails), unlearning to re-learn (that is the process of moving away from bias and preconceived ways of doing), and joint ownership (the lack of independence). Finally, building on both the motivators and the challenges, the study showed that the three most important activities were defining goals, defining how (ways of working together), and maintaining consistency and continuity in participation. This framework is shown in Fig. 11.1.

Building on this framework and drawing from the technical discussion on collaboration as a skill, presented in Scoular and Otieno (2024; Chap. 6, this volume), an operational definition is used in this chapter:

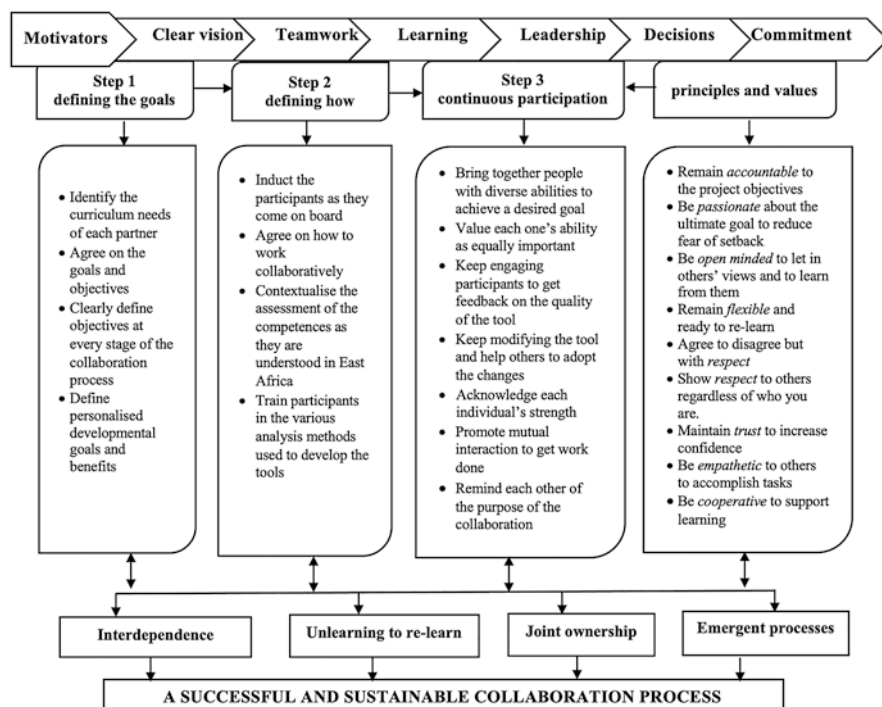


Fig. 11.1 Framework for collaboration in practice (Nansubuga et al., 2023)

Collaboration is the process of two or more people working together on a common task to realize shared goals, and involves a high level of negotiation, interactivity, interdependence, taking leadership, accommodating each other, consensus building, and division of labor in a group setting. (ALiVE, 2020)

### 11.1.4 Questions for the Chapter

Having reviewed the history and role of civil society in education in East Africa, we now turn to ALiVE. Using qualitative data gathered from a process of reflection engaged in by ALiVE members, the following questions are addressed:

- How is ALiVE aligned with collaboration and its subskills as they were defined by the contextualisation process?
- What were the perceived benefits of collaboration in achieving ALiVE's goals?
- What was learned about how to put collaboration into practice? This includes:
  - What worked for building collaboration in ALiVE?
  - What challenges were faced? How were they overcome?

## 11.2 Methods

### 11.2.1 Approach

Data were collected as outputs of a reflective exercise undertaken by the ALiVE team between July and November 2022. The purpose of the process was to articulate and document what had been learned during the first 3 years of the ALiVE program.

The learning process was directed by a steering committee consisting of Regional Learning Leads (Uwezo Uganda and Zizi Afrique), National Learning Leads (Strathmore University in Kenya, GLAMI in Tanzania, and Luigi Giussani Institute for Higher Education in Uganda), and an external Global Learning Partner (Oxford MeasurEd). The process was facilitated by the Global Learning Partner, but all key decisions relating to research questions, research design, analysis and synthesis were taken by the Regional and National Learning Lead organisations.

At the beginning of the process, the global learning partner developed a toolkit to structure individuals' reflections on the ALiVE program. This toolkit focused on defining and describing 'moments of learning'. These moments were defined as a specific incident or event which triggered a realisation or new insight. The toolkit was based on a short survey which was distributed by national learning leads to collect data from across the three countries. The result of this was over 100 insights reflecting what has been learned over the course of ALiVE's development and technical activities.

Analysis workshops were convened to analyse the data from the surveys. These workshops were attended by individuals who had been involved in the ALiVE process to varying degrees, from technical team members to government counterparts and other organisations working on similar programs. All who took part in the analysis workshops had also submitted their reflections, though not all who submitted reflections took part in the analysis.

Once detailed notes from the three analysis workshops had been collected, the national learning leads synthesised findings across the three countries.

### 11.2.2 Participants

The participants from whom data were collected were all individuals who had played an active role in the delivery of the ALiVE program. This included the technical team members, as well as national advisory committee members and others who had been involved during the process. A summary of these participants and their affiliations is shown in Table 11.1.

**Table 11.1** Participants in ALiVE reflective learning process

	Kenya	Tanzania	Uganda
<i>Engagement of contributors</i>			
Contributed data	39	28	27
Invited to participate in analysis	39	15	21
<i>Affiliations of contributors</i>			
Civil society Organisations	24	20	19
Government institutions	8	4	4
Academic institutions	3	2	7
Teachers	4	2	0

### 11.2.3 Study Limitations

It should be noted that this study did not constitute a formal evaluation of the effectiveness of the ALiVE program. Rather it was an exercise in collective reflection, which placed the experience of individuals at the centre of the data collection and analysis process. This approach was chosen to build a collective, shared understanding of the origins and path of the program, and where it might go in the future, rather than to build a robust evidence base on what had worked for ALiVE.

Questions of time and recall were important limitations to the data collected. Many participants struggled to recall precise details of events which had taken place in the past. This means that some of the broad findings presented here are missing fine grained explanations or examples.

## 11.3 Findings

Figure 11.2 presents the range of organisations and their roles in the ALiVE program. The figure is structured to show the comparative depth of collaboration of each of these groups, and they are categorised by those whose work is located in East Africa, and those whose support came from outside of East Africa.

### 11.3.1 Collaboration in East Africa

In each of the three countries, there were two important structures, technical teams and national advisory committees. The **technical teams** comprised individuals from the RELI member organisations, as well as individuals from other organisations working in each country. They worked nationally and led on the

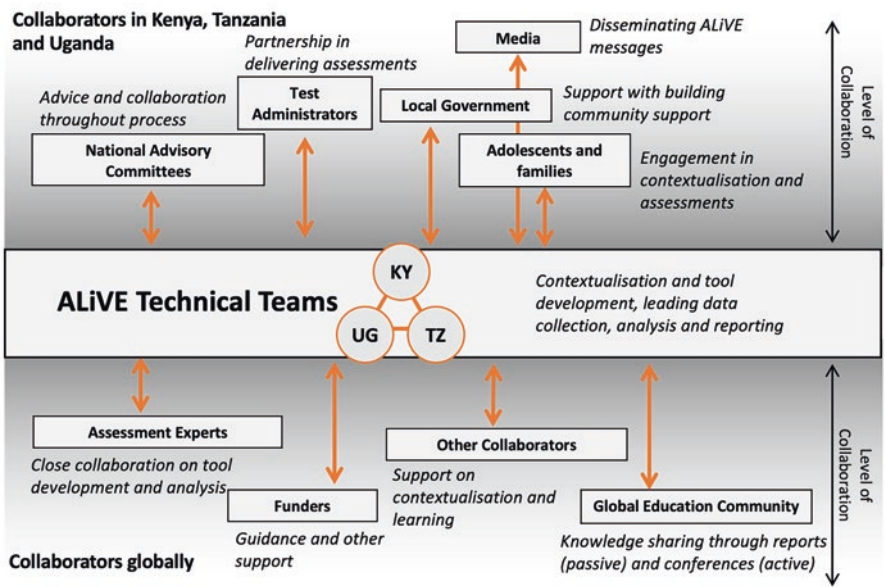


Fig. 11.2 Mapping ALiVE collaboration

contextualisation, tool development, and assessment process. Within these technical teams there were lead organisations at both the regional (Zizi Afrique) and national (Zizi Afrique, Milele Zanzibar Foundation, Luigi Giussani Institute of Higher Education) levels. The **National Advisory Committees** constituted a wider network of individuals involved in assessment in each country. This included representatives from government agencies and other organisations. National Advisory Committees had a non-executive role in delivering ALiVE. They took part in all activities, but their role was to provide advice, rather than to take decisions. The aim was that these committees would ensure that ALiVE was both benefitting from a wide range of expertise and experience in assessment, but also that the program was connected to wider trends in the education sectors in each country.

The organisations involved in the technical teams and national advisory committees (Table 11.2) demonstrates the breadth of collaboration involved in delivering ALiVE.

The regional nature of the ALiVE program is key to its vision. The structure of this initiative has largely followed a regional to national to regional pathway. A general strategic direction is first determined at the regional level. This is then adapted and implemented at the national level, before being brought back and reflected upon at the regional level.

**Table 11.2** Overview of technical team and national advisory committee membership

Tanzania	Uganda	Kenya
<i>Technical teams</i>		
Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) – Zanzibar	Teacher & Instructor Education and Training (TIET) Department	RELI Secretariat
Zanzibar Institute of Education (ZIE)	Makerere University	Amplify Girls
Uwezo Tanzania	National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC)	Secondary School Teacher
Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE)	Educate! <sup>a</sup>	Primary School Teacher
National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA)	Girls to Lead Africa <sup>a</sup>	Kenyatta University
Organisation for Community Development (OCODE) <sup>a</sup>	Uwezo Uganda <sup>a</sup>	Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC)
Global E-Schools and Community Initiative (GESCI) <sup>a</sup>	Foundation for Inclusive Community Help (FICH) <sup>a</sup>	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD)
In Depth Consulting <sup>a</sup>	Luigi Giussani Institute of Higher Education (LGIHE) <sup>a</sup>	Strathmore University
Girls Leadership and Mentorship Initiative (GLAMI) <sup>a</sup>		Kenya National Theatre
Tamasha <sup>a</sup>		Zizi Afrique
Archbishop Mihayo University College of Tabora (AMUCTA)		
University of Dar es Salaam		
Milele Zanzibar Foundation <sup>a</sup>		
<i>National advisory committees</i>		
MoEVT – Zanzibar	Uganda National Education Board (UNEB)	Teacher Service Commission (TSC)
Tanzania Institute of Education	Kyambogo University	Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC)
National Parliament (MP)	NCDC	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD)
Ministry of Information, Culture, Youth and Sports	Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU)	PAL Network
MoEVT – Education	Secondary School Headteachers Association	Jaslika
Student – Feza School	Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) – Private Schools and Institutions Department	Kenya Primary School Headteachers Association
MoEVT – Inspectorate Department	UNATCO – Secretary General's Office	Kenya Secondary School Heads Association

(continued)

**Table 11.2** (continued)

Tanzania	Uganda	Kenya
MoEVT – Inclusive Education and Life Skills	MoES – Commissioner Secondary Schools	Zizi Afrique
Prime Minister's Office (PMO) – Labour, Youth, Employment and People with Disabilities	MoES – Directorate Education Standards	RELI Secretariat
National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA)		
Zanzibar Examinations Council (ZEC)		
Zanzibar Teachers Union (ZATU)		
Uwezo Tanzania		
Femina		
Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Zanzibar		
University of Dar es Salaam		
MoEVT – Permanent Secretaries Office		

\*Denotes RELI Members involved in ALiVE

### 11.3.2 *Global Collaboration*

A central assumption for the ALiVE endeavour has been the autonomy to determine what gets measured and what the assessment data is used for within East Africa. This stands against a historical background in which how constructs are defined and tools developed has been dominated by research from the Global North. For this ambition to be achieved it was essential that the locus of control remained in East Africa. This, however, did not mean that ALiVE did not look to benefit from collaborations and exchange of ideas and experience with individuals and organisations globally.

This global collaboration can be broken down into three kinds of collaboration. Firstly, ALiVE collaborated with a community of funding organisations. These organisations were central in investing in the vision of ALiVE, providing not only funding but also guidance and networking to support the delivery of ALiVE. Secondly, ALiVE collaborated with several individuals and organisations who provided technical support or external facilitation on key activities such as the contextualisation research, tool development, and the learning process. Finally, ALiVE collaborated with the global education research community through conferences and publications.

### 11.3.2.1 How Did ALiVE Embody the Subskills of ALiVE as Defined by the Contextualisation Process?

ALiVE encompassed all of the elements that were identified in the operational definition of collaboration provided earlier in this chapter, throughout the contextualisation, tool development and assessment processes.

The issue of common task and shared goals are clear. Reflections from the learning process place strong emphasis on the collaboration being goal focused, with a clear end point of having collected, analysed and published the data from the assessment of lifeskills and values. The main focus for collaboration was in shared tasks related to this goal.

Looking at the traits of collaboration put forward by this definition, we see first **negotiation** throughout the process. The essential task of developing the assessment tools was to decide what should be measured and how, based on the outputs of the contextualisation studies. Participants in the reflection process frame this as a process of negotiation between different technical perspectives on the same challenge, for example between practitioners and academics, or those whose background is in lifeskills education, and those whose background is in statistics and research and so on. This negotiation was seen as an essential consequence of the diversity within technical teams. This process also accounts for the **consensus building** element of the definition.

The collaboration in ALiVE stretched across borders and involved more than 20 separate organisations. This required both **interactivity** and **interdependence**. The former was structured through regular meetings within and between national teams. The more than 40 individuals who comprised the three technical teams worked interactively on all tasks throughout the process. This was facilitated by technology, which became particularly important in the context of travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. This interactivity reflected the interdependence between individuals and teams. The diversity of the ALiVE collaboration was its strength. By having a diverse array of expertise, ALiVE could draw on a wide range of perspectives (see Table 11.2 for affiliations of technical team members). The final result depended on interdependence, since no one person held all of the skills needed to complete the tasks.

The ALiVE **leadership** structure centred around the co-Principal Investigators and the regional leadership team. This team was responsible for the overall agenda setting for ALiVE, as well as for building a culture of collaboration. The two main approaches used by leadership to create collaboration were *structural*, that is approaches which formally mandated time and resources for collaborative activities, and *cultural*, that is the active promotion and modelling of collaborative approaches to working.

The final component of ALiVE's definition of collaboration is **division of labour**. While there was some division of tasks in ALiVE, it is not an element which characterises the program. In comparison to other similar programs, ALiVE prioritised *working together* rather than allocating tasks to individuals or small teams.

Another way of looking at the concept of division of labour is to think of it as equal division of responsibilities between all participating organisations, rather than consolidating activities into smaller sub-teams with specific expertise. In this latter way of thinking about division of labour, ALiVE fits the definition more closely.

### 11.3.2.2 What Were the Perceived Benefits of Collaboration in Achieving ALiVE's Goals?

The reflective data show how participants see the role of collaboration in the ALiVE effort. The ALiVE goals were to (i) develop contextualised assessments, (ii) use assessments for evidence led advocacy, and (iii) to develop a learning community within the program.

For the first goal, collaboration was seen to be central in ensuring the **contextual relevance** of the constructs and tools. The process of working closely with adolescents, communities and government on the contextualisation process created new perspectives on what is important to measure. Working with adolescents to contextualise construct definitions forced the technical teams to confront and un-learn biases in how they perceived adolescence, life skills, and values.

The collaborative approach taken by ALiVE was found to have a strong practical benefit in creating an enabling environment for the **program's advocacy work**. National advisory committees involving government agencies and teachers was a feature of ALiVE from the beginning. Participants reflected that this allows for a greater ownership of the results of the assessment than could have been achieved otherwise. By providing government partners with the opportunity to 'get their hands dirty' and become involved with the assessment process from start to finish, it ensured that when results emerged, they were seen as legitimate and credible.

The potential for this advocacy work was also reflected in engagement with communities during the assessment process. This process provided an opportunity to engage with families on the importance of life skills and values. These opportunities were infrequent, but represent a potential opportunity afforded by the collaborative approach.

I was with a group of parents in the village in a collecting data about their understanding of life skills and values. It was a great concern for parents more than assessment. I realised that It was important to nurture life skills and values and that parents played a major role. ... Parents expressed the urgency of the need for support on how to nurture life skills and values, more than on how to assess them. The need was more than I knew before. (Learning Insight on Community Engagement in Tanzania)

Finally, the collaboration within the program was seen as central to the work on creating a **learning community** in ALiVE. Reflections emphasised the importance of diversity of opinions and experiences in creating an environment for organisational growth within ALiVE. This commitment to learning as a collaborative activity was manifested in the reflective process itself from which these findings are drawn.

### 11.3.2.3 What Was Learned About How to Put Collaboration into Practice?

***What Worked for Building Collaboration in ALiVE?*** Creating a collaborative and productive space within a collective of diverse individuals and organisations is not straight forward. Synthesising reflections from the first 2 years of the ALiVE program, three characteristics appeared central to collaboration; alignment of goals, principles and values, and leadership.

The first of these emphasises the importance of understanding alignment between programmatic, individual, and organisational goals. As no one organisation was fully dedicated to ALiVE, this alignment ensured that individuals and organisations would continue to prioritise ALiVE activities, alongside their other commitments. Establishing alignment starts with a shared vision and understanding of the purpose of what is being done. Secondly, it involved understanding what each individuals' and organisations' goals are and how the program will support them in achieving those goals. If each collaborating individual or organisation has a clear view of these two things, it was felt that they would stay committed to the collaboration.

During the reflection process, the importance of principles and values as foundations for collaboration emerged. The key principles and values that emerged were trust, transparency, and passion. Trust was defined as being important for establishing confidence in the fact that your collaborators share the same vision as you. This allowed individuals to seek and accept compromise. Transparency as a principle was important for establishing trust, as well as for ensuring that expectations are clear. Passion underpins these, with teams reflecting that it was a shared goal, and the passion for seeing that goal actualised which drove forward collaboration.

There was consensus that a program such as ALiVE, delivered by multiple organisations across multiple countries, requires strong leadership. The purpose of this leadership is not just to ensure that activities take place, but that they take place collaboratively. The reflections indicate that leadership that promotes collaboration has two key characteristics. The first is to lead by example when it comes to the values stated above, ensuring that leadership is based on trust, transparency, and passion of the shared goals. It also means placing importance on collaboration. Looking back at the first phase of ALiVE, it was felt that often when a decision was to be made between the 'quick' way and the collaborative way to complete an activity, the leadership of ALiVE prioritised collaboration.

***What Challenges Were Faced in Building Collaboration? How Were They Overcome?*** With the technical and advisory teams contributing to the project, most individuals also had full-time workloads that demanded their attention. This situation led to long hours for members of the technical teams as they sought to find balance and ensure the project was successful. Individuals' motivation and productivity can be affected by their perceptions of the contributions and participation of other group members, which creates more challenges the larger the collaborating team grows.

Beyond the practicalities of working in teams of individuals, reaching compromise on deeply held beliefs presented challenges. This was particularly evident throughout the process of defining constructs and deciding how they would be measured. The familiarity of team members with the competencies made it challenging to move beyond individuals' preconceptions to find a shared conception of what should be measured and how. This led to decision-making stalemates which caused delays and frustration. However, in teams' reflections it was felt that this slow road to consensus was an important process for addressing biases and moving beyond pre-conceptions. As outlined previously, principles and values such as trust, transparency, and passion were important in facilitating this consensus building.

Beyond the universal challenges associated with building collaboration between heterogenous individuals and groups, ALiVE faced practical, systemic challenges. A significant part of the ALiVE process took place when COVID-19 had major impact through lockdowns and restricted movement locally and globally. Physical meetings were scarce. Abiding by global precautions and restrictions, the natural order and work medium for workshops had to be redefined. This called for innovation, and the use of more virtual communications than would otherwise have been the case.

The crucial role that digital technologies play in human connections has been increasingly apparent as a consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak. Taking into consideration that ALiVE was a regional initiative, technology enabled the progress made by ALiVE. The various platforms that allowed for online meetings and workshops, the highly essential breakout rooms, the shared documents platforms which facilitated simultaneous editing, the shared drives which anyone could access at any time – all of these were both the tools for doing and the tools for communicating.

## 11.4 Discussion and Conclusion

Findings from the reflective study do not deviate from the definition of collaboration arrived at through the contextualisation process. The reflections presented in this chapter show a strong practical manifestation of the subskills identified by the ALiVE definition (negotiation, consensus building, interactivity, interdependence, leadership, and accommodating each other). This provides a helpful starting point for other organisations embarking on their own collaborative endeavours.

There is alignment between the findings from the reflection study and the framework presented by Nansubuga et al. (2023). The motivators which emerged most strongly were a clear vision and leadership. This focus on leadership may at first seem counter-intuitive, but the findings of this study reflect that in a complex program delivered by disparate and geographically separated organisations, a degree of centralised leadership is necessary. What is important is that this leadership prioritises collaboration. This reflects a saying used often by ALiVE 'if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together'. It shows that collaboration is not an automatic product of shared goals and principles, but something that takes

continuous work and leadership. There is also alignment in terms of the challenges derived through this reflection study and those identified by Nansubuga et al. (2023), with interdependence and the need to unlearn and re-learn through negotiation coming out in this study.

The findings of this study were intended to reflect on what has been learned through the ALiVE program. The data that support the findings were co-created by the ALiVE team members who took part in the data collection and analysis process. The findings that emerge closely reflect therefore the experiences of those involved, as well as their intentions and visions for the future. This is a process that in no way tries to provide a neutral, detached view of the collaborative processes of ALiVE, but rather a reflection by team members on their perceptions of successes and the lessons learned along the way.

The reflections from this learning exercise show the importance of collaboration across ALiVE's three programmatic goals. Collaboration was important for creating learning community, but working collaboratively also enabled the development of tools and ALiVE's work on advocacy. This shows the potential value of collaborative action in assessment development initiatives and can be a starting point for other organisations to think about how to make their work on assessment more collaborative.

## References

- Assessment of Life Skills and Values in East Africa. (2020). *Understanding collaboration in the Kenyan context: An ethnographic research*. Regional Education Learning Initiative, East Africa. <https://reliafrica.org/publication/understanding-collaboration-in-the-kenyan-context-an-ethnographic-study/>
- Anslinger, P., & Jenk, J. (2004). Creating successful alliances. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 25(2), 18–22. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02756660410525362>
- Chrislip, D., & Larson, C. (1994). *Collaborative leadership, how citizens and civic leaders can make a difference*. Jossey Bass.
- Chrislip, D. (2002). *The collaborative leadership fieldbook: A civic guide for citizens and civic leadership*. Jossey Bass.
- Cummings, J. N., & Kiesler, S. (2005). Collaborative research across disciplinary and organizational boundaries. *Social Studies of Science*, 35(5), 703–722. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312705055535>
- de Coninck, J., & Larok, A. (2021). *Uganda's civil society: History, challenges, prospects*. Fountain Publishers.
- Dillenbourg, P. (1999). What do you mean by collaborative learning? In P. Dillenbourg (Ed.), *Collaborative-learning: Cognitive and computational approaches* (pp. 1–19). Elsevier. <https://telearn.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00190240/document>
- Dusdal, J., & Powell, J. J. W. (2021). Benefits, motivations, and challenges of international collaborative research: A sociology of science case study. *Science and Public Policy*, 48(2), 235–245. <https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scab010>
- Elimu Yetu Coalition. (2022). *About EYC: Our vision, mission, and over-reaching goal*. [www.ElimuYetu.Net](http://www.ElimuYetu.Net)
- Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda. (2022). *FENU Uganda – About*. Retrieved May 25, 2023, from <http://fenu.ug/about>

- Global Campaign for Education. (2022). *Our story – Global campaign for education*. Retrieved May 25, 2023, from <https://campaignforeducation.org/en/who-we-are/our-story>
- Kosmützky, A., & Putty, R. (2016). Transcending borders and traversing boundaries: A systematic review of the literature on transnational, offshore, cross-border, and borderless higher education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 20(1), 8–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315315604719>
- Lai, E. R. (2011). Motivation: A literature review (Pearson research report). *Open Access Library Journal*, 3(3).
- Leahey, E. (2016). From sole investigator to team scientist: Trends in the practice and study of research collaboration. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 42, 81–100. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-081715-074219>
- Livingston, J. A. (2003). Metacognition: An overview. *Psychology*, 13, 259–266.
- Mundy, K., & Murphy, L. (2001). Transnational advocacy, global civil society? Emerging evidence from the field of education. *Comparative Education Review*, 45(1), 85–126. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/447646?origin=JSTOR-pdf>
- Mundy, K., Haggerty, M., Sivasubramaniam, M., Cherry, S., & Maclure, R. (2010). Civil society, basic education, and sector-wide aid: Insights from sub-Saharan Africa. *Development in Practice*, 20(4–5), 484–497. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614521003763046>
- Muthoni Githuku, A. (1993). *Kenya: Prospects for democracy following multi-party elections*. The South African Institute for International Affairs. <https://www.africaportal.org/publications/kenya-prospects-for-democracy-following-multi-party-elections/>
- Nansubuga, F., Ngina, P., Giacomazzi, M., & Mugo, J. K. (2023). Can collaborative action drive learning outcomes? A critical examination of the alive project in East Africa. In B. R. Jamil, F. J. Hevia de la Jara, I. Roy, I. I. Munene, P. Rose, & R. Sebates (Eds.), *Ensuring foundational learning: Insights from the Global South* (pp. 264–293). Vitasta.
- Riddell, A. (2007). *Education sector-wide approaches (SWAp): Background, guide and lessons*. UNESCO.
- Scoular, C., & Otieno, D. A. (2024). Collaboration in East Africa: A contextualised approach to defining the construct. In E. Care, M. Giacomazzi, & J. K. Mugo (Eds.), *The contextualisation of 21st century skills: Assessment in East Africa*. Springer.
- Selden, S. C., Sowa, J. E., & Sandfort, J. (2006). The impact of nonprofit collaboration in early child care and education on management and program outcomes. *Public Administration Review*, 66(3), 412–425. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00598.x>
- Simon, D. K., & Sikoyo, L. N. (2021). *Enhancing the role of civil society organizations in public education sector monitoring and accountability*. In International quality education conference.
- Ulinicane, I. (2015). Why do international research collaborations last? Virtuous circle of feedback loops, continuity and renewal. *Science and Public Policy*, 42(4), 433–447. <https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scu060>

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

