



BOY WITH A BALL

LOVE YOUR CITY IN AFRICA

A Movement of Changemakers is Born in Kenya

In the darkest days of COVID-19, in the Kawangware slum in Nairobi, Kenya, a group of parents gathered around the gates to the Kawangware Lutheran Church where **FIKISHA/Boy With a Ball Kenya**, a youth, family and community development organization were running a program to help street kids escape addiction and the streets to graduate from high school. With schools shutting down, these parents of more than 100 teenagers had heard of **FIKISHA's** other efforts in their community, called, "**Love Your City.**" They knew that this group had been walking out into Kawangware's neighborhoods to meet and build relationships with each resident. They were aware that the leaders within **FIKISHA** were mobilizing businesses, churches, university students to give what they could, their time, their resources, to help young people in slums graduate and reach their dreams. *"We need your help,"* they said. *"Please help our children continue to learn."*

After much prayer and watching God's hand provide the people and space necessary, the **FIKISHA** team was able to provide these more than one hundred students with tutors for the twelve subjects normally offered in their schools Monday through Thursday. Over lunch, the students were provided with time in small groups and with mentors, talking about their development as leaders. Every Friday the students were provided with training and team building activities around the person of Jesus to help them grow as leaders. In exchange for all of this, this group, who began to call themselves, "**Changemakers,**" joined the **FIKISHA** team in going out into **Love Your City** walkthroughs. The darkest moment of a pandemic had sparked a fire, an explosive movement of young leaders who were turning to love, to give back and to create lasting change.



A Miracle in Nigeria

Across the continent, a similar story unfolded in the Ikirike slum in Enugu, Nigeria. A group of volunteers, very much like the group in Nairobi, were finishing a community walkthrough, around 5 pm in the evening. As they entered one of the homes, they found a little girl who was very sick with a fever. They felt the families concern for their daughter and the Holy Spirit directed them to pray for her. Neither doubt nor fear of the crowd around kept them back. A young woman on the team got close to the child to hug her, to lay hands on her and pray for her. Then the team left the house to continue on to the other homes in the community. To their great surprise, as they were getting ready to head home two hours later, the little girl they had prayed for came running across the community toward them, jumped into the arms of the young woman who had prayed for her and exclaimed, "I am healed!"

The young woman picked her up, cradled the little girl in her arms and wiped her cheeks as she cried. The miracle drew the attention of many to the **Boy With a Ball Nigeria** team, bringing on many questions which they answered by the grace of God. The young leader went back home that night, in awe of the God who answered their prayers, who had healed the little girl with His miraculous power.

[Boy With a Ball](#) is a 21 year old international non-profit membership organization working in Africa, Latin America and the United States to better cities by reaching at-risk young people and to equip them to turn and transform economically disadvantaged communities. Our central mission is to follow Jesus into learning how to reverse the reality of the enemy having the opportunity to seduce and damage millions of young people without them being given any chance to hear and respond to the Gospel.

In pursuit of solutions that could be scaled and contextualized across the world, we learned through experience that young people are most effectively reached and discipled as they are launched out into action. Faith is better developed in action than in an auditorium. Jesus's model of discipleship, of developing leaders while walking out into active ministry together, is a powerful, universal approach for launching Gospel city movements that focus their efforts on

We Found Something: Love Your City

In 2006, **Boy With a Ball** launched what turned out to be a game changing innovation for transforming slums called, "[Love Your City](#)," in the El Triángulo de la Solidaridad precario, or squatters settlement, in San Jose, Costa Rica. At the time, this precario housed a population of 3,000 people living on three acres where the average income per household was \$200 per month and the average resident had only a 3rd grade education. Lack of opportunities due to low levels of education created a fertile breeding ground for gangs, crime and drug and sex trafficking to occur producing a community overcome by fear.





Love Your City outreach efforts began building relationships with every resident in El Triangulo, leading to the launch of mentoring relationships and small groups across the community. Specifically, a weekly women's group, weekly tutoring center, a dental clinic and an annual school supply drive served as catalysts in helping the community rise. These early efforts paved the way for local churches, businesses and multinational corporations to give their time and funds to provide mentoring, scholarships and career counseling for an emerging generation of high-performing students within El Triangulo.

By 2009, **Love Your City's** impact had led to 40% of the community rising out of poverty to leave the precario for regular, middle class housing. By July of 2019, the El Triángulo precario was razed as each family had grown out of living there. **Love Your City** had lifted an entire slum out of poverty. In 2016, Boy With a Ball was invited to share the story of **Love Your City** lifting the El Triángulo precario out of poverty at the Annual Meetings of the World Bank.

Beyond its game changing impact on slums, **Love Your City** creates three additional levels of Kingdom impact:

1. Love Your City Builds a Diverse, Dynamic Ministry Team to Reach a City's Youth

First, **Love Your City** slowly but dynamically builds a central ministry team of emerging young leaders who are tasked with leading the work. In order to be effective, these leaders are required to grow in following five key areas:

- **Hearing and obeying God's voice** - Young leaders have little chance of growing a personal relationship with God if they have not learned to hear and obey His voice. Hearing and responding to His voice guide them into reaching people's hearts. (**John 10:27**)
- **Living in moment to moment intimacy with the Lord** - Whether we read of Moses refusing to go without God's accompanying presence or of Jesus warning us that we could bear no fruit without abiding in the vine, young leaders must learn to stay close to Jesus as they walk into their days if they are to bear much fruit. (**1 Thessalonians 5:17, John 15:1-8**)
- **Embracing lives of faith and pain** - Helping young leaders rise beyond goose bump-producing, smoke machine-enhanced worship concerts to learn to live by faith in the face of suffering and discomfort is critical to following Jesus into effective ministry. (**1 Corinthians 4:8-9**)
- **Finding and fulfilling God's purpose for our lives** - Young leaders who know God's purpose for their lives find it easier to sidestep temptation and to pursue God's power in the face of the God-sized challenges they face along the way. (**Proverbs 29:18**)
- **Life in the power of the Holy Spirit** - Jesus invested in 12 younger leaders who, even after losing one, would go on to turn the world upside down by the power of the Holy Spirit. Effective outreach and ministry require the power of the Holy Spirit. (**Acts 17:6**)

Additionally, early experiences helped us see that young leaders require three tools in order to grow into these **Five Things**:

- A coach:** Young people need an older, more experienced believer who is living these five things themselves to be a continual part of their lives. Much more than simply getting coffee together once a month, we have found that this discipleship relationship involves the "coach" inviting the disciple into their lives to witness their own journey as well as going out into active ministry to learn together.
- A team:** Young people with only a coach can become narcissistic, focused only on their own individual journey. By requiring young people to grow within a committed "team" or small group of other leaders involved in Kingdom impact, young leaders receive the benefit of "iron sharpening iron" helping them mature faster. Like athletes competing or even practicing next to better athletes, young leaders grow more rapidly and more fully within a cohort of other growing young leaders.
- A playing field:** Without engaging in a common Kingdom mission, young leaders can fall into a comfort zone formed by even the best coach and team. **Love Your City** launches these young leaders out into community outreach as a place to practice the five key areas above including hearing and obeying God's voice. Opportunities to put their faith into practice, and even to fail, create a hunger within young leaders to grow closer to Jesus. Over time, leaders within **Love Your City** learn to minister as Jesus did including *incarnation*, living out the Gospel, *demonstration*, helping people in the community in practical ways that demonstrate God's kindness and His power, and then, *proclamation*, helping people hear what God's Word is to them to help them come into His Kingdom.





2. Love Your City Reaches and Develops Those Who Will Go: Volunteers

Love Your City goes beyond building a central ministry team to recruit hundreds of volunteers to join the work. These volunteers include many high school and university students who may never have had an encounter with Jesus prior to getting involved. After weekly orientations and trainings, young volunteers, drawn by their desire to learn to make a difference, are separated into teams under the leadership of Jesus following team leaders. This setup allows the team members to incarnate, demonstrate and proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom not only to the community members engaged by **Love Your City** activities but to the volunteers standing next to them at the same time. While some volunteers may only come once, we have found this approach to most often lead to a rich harvest or pipeline of young volunteers opening their hearts to Jesus as tears stream down their faces.

3. Love Your City Reaches and Develops Those Who Will Give: Marketplace Leaders

Finally, **Love Your City** invites marketplace leaders and businesses to join with volunteers to create a bridge for youth living in slums to walk across and into their dreams. Major corporations like Western Union, Intel, IBM and HP, under the leadership of their Human Resource departments have found ways to encourage employee volunteerism and employee giving that then can be backed by corporate grants or donations. Multinational corporations and local businesses have learned to co-create job skills programming and scholarships that provide a pipeline of future employees, transforming their business while lifting a generation out of poverty. Companies learn, both corporately and for their employees, that the bridge from success to significance is built by growing generosity.



The Movement App: A Mobile App to Equip Local Teams in Africa and Beyond

Love Your City is a way to launch 1.8 billion youth into a force for transforming slums. Over the past two decades of helping local teams grow to impact their own cities, **Boy With a Ball** has learned the importance of providing young leaders with the tools they need to reach maturity as quickly as possible and accomplish exponential impact.

Iron Man had J.A.R.V.I.S. to help him change the world. What if local leaders fighting poverty had the necessary technology they needed at their fingertips? With that in mind, **Boy With a Ball** launched a project to create a platform that would house all the validated learning gathered worldwide and place it in the hands of leaders through their cell phones. **The Movement App** will be developed into a mobile-centric technology, providing all of its powerful resources to leaders in some of the most challenging cities in the world. We are currently seeking an \$900k USD investment to help us build **The Movement App** out, to provide local teams with the following advantages:

- **Scaling Love Your City to Transform Slums - The Movement App** puts powerful training and assessment tools in leader's hands to help them build each element of **Love Your City** in their cities with the highest level of implementation fidelity and, as a result, impact.
- **Creating Sustainable Local Not-for-profit Organizations - The Movement App** provides leaders with the secret sauce or the essential business knowledge and disciplines necessary for building a sustainable non-profit including financial management, evaluation and fundraising.
- **Unleashing Exponential Accessibility - The Movement App** creates an exponential increase in accessibility by putting these tools in the palm of a leader's hand in a mobile-centric app.
- **Leveraging Exponential Technology to Provide Insights, Learning - The Movement App** multiplies the impact of data, creating an innovation flywheel where every interaction with users generates information and data (qualitative and quantitative) to provide insights on where and how new value can be created. This in turn drives the next round of innovation, which leads to deeper user engagement and, as a result, better outcomes. Wisdom and experience from all teams is distilled and made available to each team including those most recently launched.

We believe **The Movement App** will help us to take **Love Your City** as a game changing innovation and scale it across the globe, resulting in exponential impact. By 2030, **The Movement App** will allow us to scale from:

- The nine current sites in which local **Boy With a Ball** teams are implementing **Love Your City** to between 30 cities being impacted.
- One current non-**Boy With a Ball** implementation of **Love Your City** to 100 implementations by churches and other groups across the world.
- 19,390 individuals currently being directly impacted by **Love Your City** to 126,950 individuals.





Love Your City Successes in Africa

The strength of the **Love Your City** community development model, as it relates to expanding into new continents, countries, cities, and populations, is its liquid, relational nature that comes into a community open-handedly, looking for culturally contextualized practical solutions as an avenue to see the seeds of discipleship sprout. Rather than coming into an area with a pre-prescribed solution—the team, who are indigenous leaders to the area, mobilize local churches, corporations, and educational institutions to be change-makers in their own culture.

Within Africa, we have found this to be a successful and potentially exponential platform for change. Within the slums of Enugu, Nigeria and Kawangware in Nairobi, Kenya there are over 3.5 million young people living in households that have an average of 10 other family members. Considering that most families in these areas receive a household income that can support an average of three people, according to Nigeria's most recent Population and Housing Census, many of the children routinely go hungry for days at a time. In an effort to desensitize themselves to the physical and emotional pain that many of the young people are facing, drugs and alcohol are used as band-aids to numb their sensitivities. As the young people in these communities fall into at-risk behaviors, the families in these slums weaken, and then more present negative youth influencers (gangs, witch doctors, etc.) are able to pick off insecure kids and derail their futures.

Our African **Boy With a Ball** teams engage young people by providing positive discipleship, care, resources, and opportunity. Families are intentionally connected to the work we are doing with their young people, rallying the community around the future generation.





The roadblocks we have faced in each country differ- in Nigeria we are pushing through the popular belief that the Christian faith is one of poor character and manipulation, whereas most Nigerian's in the areas we work in believe that the Muslim faith is typically more altruistic. Many of our team members in Enugu have described the culture as "notoriously self-interested." This originally posed challenges for us, as we are a model reliant on mobilizing volunteers. However, God has helped us build partnerships with many schools and universities which have remedied that issue.

In Kenya, we have faced the challenge of identifying local funding partners. While many groups care to invest in Nigeria due to its geographical location in 10/40 Window, we have seen that the team in Kenya is often neglected by major funding streams. With that in mind, we have pressed the team to identify local Rotary Clubs, multinational corporations, and Embassies to build indigenous funding.

Love Your City is successful within African contexts, as it's easily graspable by a culture that prioritizes solidarity. We have seen our teams in Africa to be among our most explosive teams with some of the most dynamic stories of the Holy Spirit moving in their areas.

A Final Story of Love Your City in Nigeria

In the end, beyond any fancy statements of missiological strategy, **Love Your City** is a powerful way to reach marketplace leaders, leaders within churches, university students and youth and their families growing up in slums and to form them together into city changing movements. As the team finished a **Love Your City** community walkthrough in the Ikirike slum in Enugu, Nigeria recently, a volunteer named Rita told the team she was moving to another state to attend a little known university due to some family pressure. The team was immediately concerned and began asking questions; whether she's thought it through, and whether the school is accredited. Rita had been a volunteer since 2017 and has a special place in all of the team member's hearts. They have witnessed first-hand her growth in her interpersonal skills.



As the team talked with Rita , the team leader, Emeka sensed in his spirit to ask her whether she'd made the decision to invite Jesus into her heart. To that she answered, "No" outrightly. However, with a little more description of what it really means to invite Jesus into one's heart, she remembered a time she said such a prayer at her church but it didn't mean much to her after that. The team, led by the Holy Spirit, began to talk with Rita until she became overwhelmed with emotions, vividly breaking down with tears running down her cheeks. She confessed as she prayed loudly in the office asking Jesus to forgive her, save her and come into her heart.

We are excited to see how the collaboration, co-creation and community-building within **Love Your City** will transform Africa's growing cities, slums and the millions of young people within them. We face a mission that has not changed, a mission to go and make disciples but also to love the Lord God with everything that we are while loving our neighbors as ourselves. **Love Your City** is an opportunity to reweave the social fabric of entire families who have migrated from their rural tribal lands and then landed in the midst of the disconnection and decay of slums. **Love Your City** creates opportunities for a rising generation of Kingdom-centered marketplace leaders to build not only their own profits, but the cities where they hope to grow their businesses. **Love Your City** is reaching and mobilizing a next generation of youth as changemakers in a way that parallels how Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., learned to form a history shaping movement from the example of a former South African young lawyer named Gandhi who himself learned to form a history shaping movement from the example of Jesus. May the Lord give us wisdom for this exciting moment.

For more glimpses of **Love Your City** in Africa, please click on the following videos:
[Love Your City in Africa 2020](#) | [Love Your City in Africa 2021](#)



