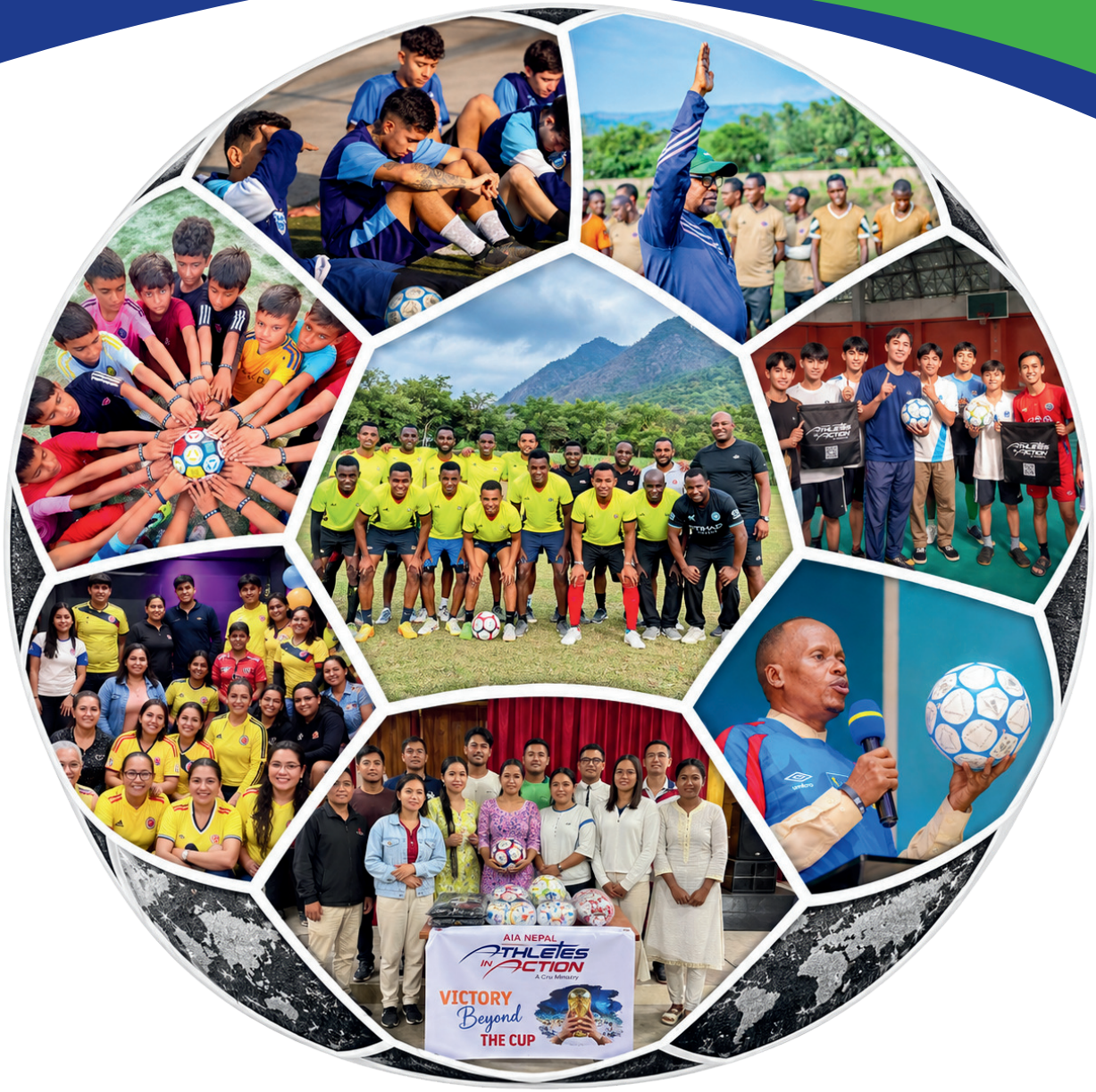


2026 FIFA WORLD CUP

PROJECT REPORT

*Turning **Moments***
*Into **Movements***

ATHLETES IN ACTION® GLOBAL

A Global Mission

At the heart of Athletes in Action is **a vision to build movements of multiplying disciples everywhere, in sport and through sports.** The World Cup presented a unique opportunity to pursue that mission on a global scale. The goal was never simply to create a series of large events, but to use this cultural moment to launch spiritual movements that last long after the final whistle.

Globally, Athletes in Action **focused on equipping local leaders** with training, tools, and resources for spiritual multiplication. These leaders were equipped to host their own World Cup outreaches to grow their local ministry or start ministries amongst new audiences.

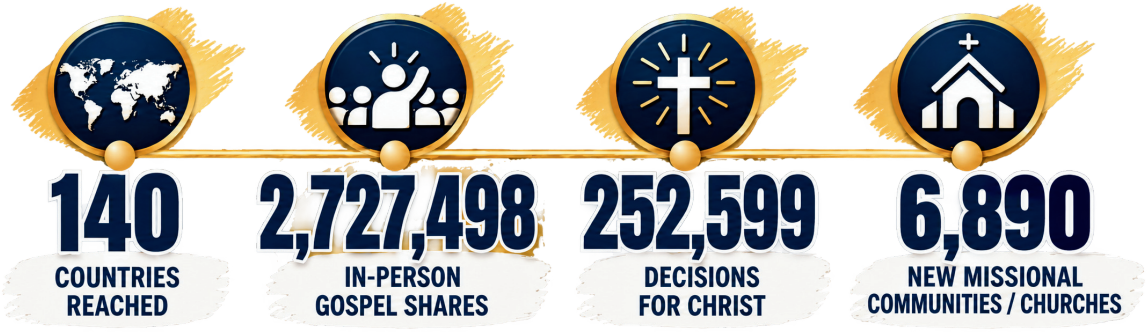
The goal was to mobilize and equip 10,000 multiplying leaders across 100 countries who would use the World Cup to raise up other leaders, share the Gospel and grow the local ministry. **What God did went far beyond what we ever imagined!**





Grassroots Impact

Around the globe, the World Cup Project came to life through local leaders, athletes, churches, and ministries equipped to reach people in their own communities. Training events prepared leaders to intentionally use sport for ministry. Movement Maker Kits including Jesus Loves You Soccer Balls, Gospel wristbands, Bibles, and training booklets gave them practical tools to begin conversations and share the Gospel. From soccer fields and training rooms to churches and neighborhoods, these resources were placed in the hands of people who already knew the language, culture, and communities they were seeking to reach.



In The Field

When Francis, a 21-year-old Muslim in Malawi, attended a Champions training, he heard about Jesus in a way he said he had never understood before and placed his faith in Jesus. But what began at that training didn't stop with him.

Francis returned home equipped with a Gospel wristband and began sharing what he had learned with his friends and family. He then started his own football team and shared the Gospel with all 20 players.

A local training reached one young man, placed a simple ministry tool in his hands, and equipped him to begin reaching others through the relationships and sport already part of his life.



Francis wasn't simply reached. He was equipped to reach others.

The global interest in the World Cup created opportunities for ministries to work together around a shared mission. **Athletes in Action, Campus Crusade for Christ (Cru), Power to Change, Global Church Movements, Jesus Film Project, ExploreGod, Student-Led Movements, Jesus Loves You Ball, and several other ministries** brought together their resources, expertise, and networks to equip ministry leaders around the world.

Partnership in Action

Back in 2020, Sergio Rivero founded Club Apasionado to use soccer to reach underserved young people and their families with the Gospel in Argentina. One of the athletes reached through this ministry was professional futsal player Emmanuel Martínez, who encountered Christ during a difficult season and has since become increasingly involved in reaching others.



Through the World Cup Project, Athletes in Action partnered with Apasionado to equip Sergio and Emmanuel with evangelism and discipleship tools co-developed by Jesus Film Project and Athletes in Action, strengthening the ministry already rooted in their community. With new tools and training in their hands, they are equipped to use opportunities surrounding the World Cup to engage more athletes and families, deepen relationships, make disciples, and equip others to do the same.

A Growing Global Movement

What began as a shared global opportunity became a growing movement across countries and communities around the world. Millions heard the Gospel both in person and digitally, people responded to Christ, leaders were raised up, and new communities of faith began to form—each number representing real people, real relationships, and stories of God at work.

One Decision for Christ

Among Millions



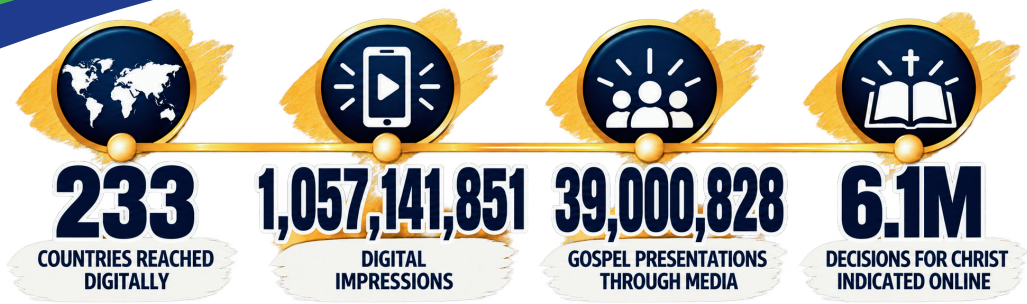
For years, local leaders in Mymensingh, Bangladesh, had struggled to establish a team and consistently share the Gospel in areas they hoped to reach. During the World Cup initiative, a new door opened. During this season, Dipa, a young woman from a Hindu background, was reached through Gospel outreach and the relationships being developed. She began thinking seriously about Jesus and eventually made the decision to receive Christ, publicly expressing her faith. Dipa's story is one life behind the millions of decisions represented in these numbers.

One New Community

Among Thousands

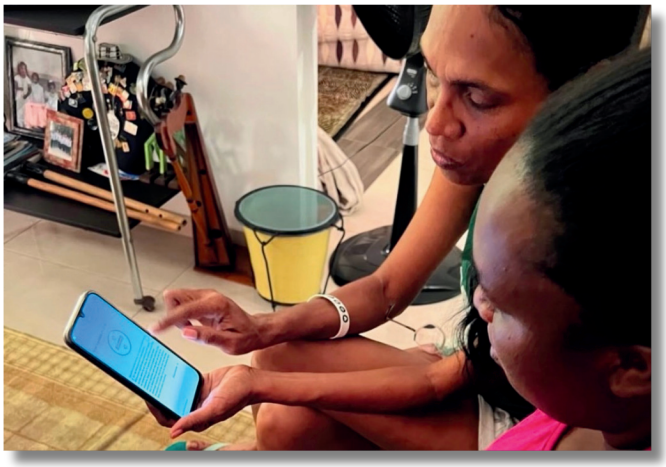


After attending a ministry training in the Central African Republic, one participant began playing soccer with children and young people in his community. Through this outreach, 10 people made decisions for Christ and two were baptized. He then started a small Bible study group with the children and young people he had reached, allowing the ministry that began through soccer to continue beyond the field.



Extending the Reach

The World Cup also created opportunities to engage audiences through online content. In partnerships with **Jesus Film Project, YouVersion, Victory Beyond the Cup, ExploreGod, and others**, people were engaged with the Gospel, devotionals featuring professional players, and opportunities to get connected to discipleship opportunities. **These efforts generated over 7,000,000 engagements with YouVersion Bible reading plans and 614,534 verified new contacts who responded to the posts** seeking ongoing connection and creating pathways for continued relationships.





From Digital Connection to Personal Conversation

When plans for in-person World Cup outreach in Tirana, Albania, were disrupted by public protests, local leaders found another way to connect with students. Alongside their physical events, they launched an online campaign using football-themed content to engage young people and invite them into personal conversations.

More than 471 students engaged with the platform, and 160 signed up for a one-on-one coffee conversation. During one of those conversations, a young woman made the decision to follow Jesus. The story shows the potential of digital ministry: not simply reaching people on a screen, but creating pathways to personal relationships, Gospel conversations, and life-changing decisions.

Only the Beginning

The final whistle didn't mark the end of the ministry. Around the world, local leaders are continuing to disciple new believers, equip others, form new communities, and use sport to reach people in their communities.



Nepal

What began as an effort to train local leaders expanded beyond the original goal. The team initially hoped to train 100 people but ultimately trained 382. The multiplication extended to 21 cities across Nepal with hundreds receiving the opportunity to hear the Good News of Christ.

Bulgaria

On the evening of June 14, while they were watching the match between Germany and Curacao in the church, the door was opened and a Japanese family came in. While they waited for the match to start, they spoke with the family. It led to the pastor sharing his story, speak to them about Christ and invite them to accept Jesus. They prayed and shared contact info. After two days they left Bulgaria, but remain connected.





Burundi

Following a World Cup watch party, Bernard Barengayabo connected with a local soccer team and shared the Gospel. All 25 players prayed to receive Christ and committed to meeting every Friday as a sports-focused fellowship. That same day, 22 under-13 players also responded to the Gospel and formed a second Friday discipleship group. What began around the World Cup is now creating an opportunity for ongoing fellowship and discipleship through two new groups of young athletes.

THE WORLD CUP CREATED A MOMENT.

THE MOVEMENT CONTINUES.

Scan the QR code to read a few of the ministry stories:

TO GOD BE THE GLORY

ATHLETES IN ACTION® GLOBAL