A Running Start is a turnkey program designed to be championed and supported by community development organizations and implemented by local church partners.

Originally developed by Micah 6:8 Foundation in partnership with World Relief, it started as a pilot program to test whether physical activity paired with social, spiritual, and educational engagement could significantly contribute to the well-being of children.

That pilot program led to the development of a program model that is holistically beneficial to the growth and development of children; low-cost and sustainable for local community partners, such as churches; and scalable for development organizations to introduce in various contexts with numerous partners to reach many children and families.

Our hope is that across the Great Lakes Region of Africa, children ages 8-13 will grow in relationship with God, see themselves as leaders, find healing from trauma, and gain knowledge that helps them flourish.
Organization develops partnerships with churches. Churches recruit coaches who either volunteer or receive small compensation.

Trainers teach coaches the vision, purpose and curriculum. Youth are recruited and engaged. Vision is shared with parents.

Coaches gather with youth and lead them in 22+ lessons. Parents are visited at home. Youth graduate from the program.

Learnings from implementation and assessments are applied to next round of the program. New geographic area is identified for program introduction.

Local churches are now prepared to implement and ownership is handed over. Graduates are given assessments to determine success.

**THE PILOT PROGRAM HAS DEVELOPED INTO:**

1. **A 22-34 LESSON CURRICULUM** spanning hygiene to self-esteem, with the ability to adapt the lesson plan based on the context and children being served.

2. **A PRACTICED METHODOLOGY FOR TRAINING** coaches who lead running clubs at local churches.

3. **A RECOMMENDED STRUCTURE & LIFE CYCLE** for introducing running clubs in communities and ensuring they can be sustained long-term.

4. **A GROWING NETWORK OF ORGANIZATIONS** who have implemented or are currently implementing this programming for shared learning and continual improvement.
As of September 2021, 4 development organizations in 14 countries in partnership with more than 127 churches have trained 564 coaches and implemented the programming with over 10,000 children.

Partners report that the connection between physical activity and knowledge gained through lessons leads to significantly more impact on holistic wellness than programs that focus only on knowledge.

**Knowledge, Attitude & Practice**

KAP was measured in a quiz format with participants scored on how many questions they answered correctly.

Before the program, the majority (67%) of children scored between 40-69% on the KAP quiz. After the program, the majority (64%) of the children scored between 65-94% on the quiz, an increase of 25%.

In measuring impact on HIV/AIDS knowledge, 48% of children scored in the highest range of 6-10 before the program. After the program, 70% of children scored in the highest range, an increase of 22%.

**Trauma Healing**

The well-documented link between physical movement & trauma healing means this programming creates significant reduction in symptoms of trauma.

The program has been shown to increase the % of participants reporting slight or no levels of trauma symptoms from 48% before graduation to 77% after graduation, effectively reducing trauma symptoms for 29% of children.

If you want to learn more or connect with others who have implemented this programming in their local context, please contact:

Dana Doll
MICAH 6:8 FOUNDATION DIRECTOR
via email at dana@micah-68.org
Before my son joined the YRC program, my life was a mess. All I did was drink alcohol and in turn, my children, especially my son, lost respect for me. I knew that my son’s behavior was because of my own unacceptable behavior, but I wasn’t ready to quit drinking.

I was very surprised to see the same child who was very disrespectful towards me advising me to stop drinking alcohol and change my ways.

He started to give me hope that things would get better for us and all our hardships would end by the grace of God.

Hearing my son say those words to me restored my life. I chose to stop drinking and gave my life to Jesus.”

– Amani, PARENT OF YRC PARTICIPANT

[The Youth Running Club] was the turning point in my life.

When I started attending the YRC sessions, especially the sport drills and jogging, my mind started to get liberated. I was excited when I learned that God created us in his image, and that I am unique and have special talents and abilities to be creative and achieve what I want. That day, I returned home with my head held high.

Many YRC lessons have inspired me positively. I discovered myself and gained strength. I dropped the hurtful feelings and decided to undertake more useful activities like doing home chores and participating in church activities.

My parents gained confidence in me and my grades improved in school. I now know that despite the ongoing pandemic which has interrupted schools, I have a bright future because I am bold and can set a goal for my life.”

– Baraka Benjamin, YRC PARTICIPANT