



# Youthful Endeavours

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example... in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.  
1 Timothy 4:12

What makes us reach out to “youths at risk”? Frankly, some of the youths whom we meet, at first glance, do not look very approachable. Whether it's the tongue studs or tattoos, or simply an aura around them that seems to say “Don't touch me, don't mess with me!”, it can be somewhat daunting for the uninitiated. Let's face it- The youths we meet do not always appear the most adorable people on earth. Add to that the plethora of offenses they have committed, be it loan-shark activities, extortion, rioting, sexual offences, substance abuse, and it can become even more uncomfortable for some.

But once you get to know them, it's a different story. With the privileged few, they will share their lives- stories of abandonment and brokenness, abuse, rejection, shame. You will see in them beautiful qualities- creativity, generosity, fierce loyalty and genuine care. And if you care for them sincerely, they will realise it; and they will lay down their lives for you. **On several occasions as a youth social worker, I have been threatened by youths from gangs. And on each of those occasions, youths from the same gang stood up and told them, “Back off- he's on our side.”** Such is the privilege of caring for our youths, and gaining their trust.

We know that deep down inside each youth, there is a beautiful, God-given potential, and we have had the joy of seeing many of them transformed. One of our “gangster”

youths (complete with full-body tattoo) wrote to us several years after completing the Streetwise Programme. **“Thank you for caring for me and helping me to change. I've gone back to school. I've left the gang. I've completed my polytechnic diploma. I've reconciled with my parents.”**

Such is the indescribable privilege of working with “youths at risk.” I refer to them as “youths with great potential”. You just need to see it in them.

Thanks for your constant support and partnership. May God bless you as you bless others!

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