Young people want and deserve a voice in their communities. City officials make decisions that affect youth on a daily basis. Yet young people often have no direct role in shaping or influencing local policies and programmes. Even well-intentioned efforts to work for youth\_”protecting” them from supposed threats or by “rescuing” those who already are in jeopardy\_can prevent us from recognizing the importance of working with youth to identify positive solutions and build stronger communities.

Nothing is more important to the health of democracy than the active engagement of young people in representative of government at the local level. For this reason alone, mayors and city council members are seeking creative and effective ways to ensure that youth have a “seat at the table” in their cities and towns.

Intensive efforts to encourage youth participation and involvement can also help municipal leaders make better decisions and wiser public investments. Youth frequently are seen as problems to be fixed, but they can be assets resources when mayors and city council members are seeking effective solutions to community ills. Young people are the primary experts on their experiences, needs and interactions with other segments of the community. Involving youth In local decisions-making taps this important knowledge.

Youth participation and involvement in local government promotes the full and healthy development of young people. Through civic engagement, young people gain work experience, acquire new skills, learn responsibility and accountability, develop a greater sense of confidence, empowerment, and forge meaningful connections with other youth and adults. Research also suggests young people who are involved in positive activities such community service and participation in civic affairs are less likely to pursue risky behaviours or get into trouble.

The most effective efforts to promote youth participation and involvement in local government begin with a heart-felt belief in its value and importance. Young people will quickly recognize and turn away from city initiatives that are not rooted in a genuine interest in their views and potential contributions. For this reasons, successful youth engagement often grows out of a large commitment by municipal leaders to seek to involve and listen to all citizens within their community, including but not limited to its young people.

When getting started, it is particularly important to reach out to individual or groups in the community that accustomed to working with young people and have a sense of their interests and needs. By creating opportunities for dialogue that constructive and favourable to honest exchange of ideas, it will quickly become apparent that youth have a lot to say about their communities and how they would like to become more involved.

**Comprehension questions**

1. In which paragraphs do the following ideas appear?
2. The youth don’t have a role in city councils yet. ………………………
3. It is thought that the youth are trouble makers. ……………………………
4. Answer these questions:
5. What are the benefits of youth participation in local government?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

1. How can the youth gain work experience and become responsible for their acts?

………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

1. What is the writer’s attitude towards youth participation in local governance? Choose the correct answer:
2. He is totally indifferent
3. He is not very enthusiastic about it
4. She advocates it
5. She is opposed to it
6. Complete these sentences with information from the text:
7. If young people are involved in public service, they will not……………………………………………
8. If young people feel that city officials do not have a genuine interest in their views, they will ……………………………………………………………………………………………
9. What do the underlined words in the text refer to?
10. Their (paragraph 5)………………………
11. 2. Their (paragraph 6): …………………….

**Task 3:** as young person in your community Tendite, how do you contribute to the social change? Do mayors and officials take young people into account in their local policies and programs? If yes, how? If no, what should they do to integrate youth in their future plans and policies?