YMCA on Youth Voices from Senegal and Colombia

My name is Shana and I work in the international program in the YMCA of greater Toronto, and in my work I support community development programs in our international partner YMCAs. And I also support international youth exchange programs and a public engagement program as well.

Hi my name is Deborah, I am a member of YMCA in Medellin, Colombia, in a group of health and education.

Hi my name is Benoit, I am from Senegal, I am a member of the YMCA of Senegal since 2009. I am co-chairperson of youth leadership sub-committee and responsible of another sub-committee of the youth leadership committee that's called EPAM, I am responsible for that program.

Shana: So in respect to Istanbul principle number three, we believe that people's participation and ownership of community development programs is vital to the success of community programs. At the YMCA of Greater Toronto, as well as in our international partners, think about our community development work in terms of accompanying the youth and our partners and the community members in the process of building their own communities. and in this way, instead of us coming in and making decisions for people in the communities. We’ve seen young people, who know their communities, be able to look around and dream of the changes they want to make. And work hard to plan and implement programs to respond to those needs. And in that way, not only are they responding to the issues that face their community, but they're also developing leadership skills, and becoming community leaders themselves.

Deborah: my message for the Canadians, is for me being part of my YMCA in Medellin, Colombia has been experience wonderful. Because and for my life like my family, my community. For me the YMCA is my second home. In my country all people, young people are the future for the change.

Benoit: my message to the Canadian public is that you people maybe should think about learning other languages. as I noticed people here are - they speak one language. but if you speak another language, you'd be maybe they have a problem to understand you. so, i have met many many many many young people, and the first thing i told them was; if ever you could learn one more language it will be useful for you. and i told them also, as a joke, that I would like you to call me one day to send me a message telling me 'OK, Benoit, I can speak Spanish, or I can speak French. Be bi-lingual or even three languages or more than that because I do speak around fourteen languages. And the other message also is that youth in the street - at least there are works that are done for helping these people in the street. but people would maybe see another way also of coming and helping these people from in the street. Because I see that there are many drop-in centres, and I see what they do. But i would like maybe to see again maybe if they could improve this and help people on the street because they don't deserve the street is not their home.