MCC SALT Service Opportunity

Assignment Title & Partner Organization: SALT: Peacebuilding & Disaster Response Assistant – FDCD

Term: August 17, 2021 – July 21, 2022
FTE: 1.0
Location: Beirut, Lebanon
Date Required: August 17, 2021

SALT program information and policies can be found at mcc.org/salt

MCC is an equal opportunity employer, committed to employment equity. MCC values diversity and invites all qualified candidates to apply.

Synopsis:

The SALTer will be seconded to the Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue (FDCD), providing administrative and technical assistance to their humanitarian relief and peacebuilding programs targeting displaced persons and community members in both Lebanon and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. Under the FDCD Director’s supervision, the SALTer will help to aid FDCD in planning and directing disaster response, crisis management, interfaith peacebuilding, and early recovery activities that interact with MCC projects.

Qualifications:

All MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to a personal Christian faith and discipleship; active church membership; and nonviolent peacemaking.

An invitation to a SALT assignment is contingent on the successful completion of a criminal background check.

- Bachelor’s Degree in the social sciences, emergency response, international development, social work, peace and conflict studies, or related field preferred.
- Training in nonviolent conflict transformation is an asset.
- Experience with project planning and report preparation a strong asset.
- Strong writing, communication, and organizational skills essential.
- Ability to communicate effectively in English, both verbally and in writing.
- Acknowledgement of the complexity of the Syrian conflict, openness to listen to all perspectives without judgment, and ability to focus on a politically neutral, humanitarian response.
- Appreciation for the variety of faith perspectives in Lebanon and the region and ability to respectfully interact with people of all faiths.
- Willingness to learn about the Lebanese and other contexts.
- Friendly, faithful, respects the confidential information of the employees and association.
- Maturity, flexibility, sense of humor necessary.
- A capacity to show compassion in crisis situations, balanced with a capacity to be objective enough to overcome distress and adhere to stated program goals.
- Cooperative and comfortable in working as part of a team, in support of MCC’s mission.
- Able to get along where English is not the first language; willing to study and learn Arabic.
- Strong coping skills and ability to balance self-care with workload.

Assignment Narrative:

Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue (FDCD) works presently with emergency response, citizenship, peacebuilding and conflict resolution. FDCD is a regional organization which has been active in peacebuilding for more than a decade. FDCD is well respected for its inter-religious peacebuilding dialogue with Muslims and Christians in the MENA region, as well as its humanitarian disaster programs responding to the Syrian crisis. FDCD is very much involved in the MENA region on issues related to countering extremism and promoting peacebuilding and reconciliation, as well as responding to humanitarian needs in war affected communities.

As the Syrian crisis continues, FDCD has been supported by MCC, assisting in food assistance and humanitarian relief to communities in need. They presently work with a large Canada Food Grains Bank (CFGB) project as well as other smaller relief projects that respond to the unfolding escalation of violence and disaster in communities.

At the beginning of the assignment, the SALTer will have the opportunity to study Arabic in order to better engage with his/her work. Although the SALT participant will be able to study Arabic, much of the work will be in English. As many people in Beirut speak English and/or French, it may be difficult to find places to practice Arabic.

This assignment is supervised by the MCC LSI (Lebanon, Syria, Iraq) Representatives and the FDCD President/Director. Working with FDCD, s/he will support their emergency response and peacebuilding work through both administrative and technical hands-on tasks. The SALTer will assist FDCD in the preparation of plans and reports related to external partners such as MCC’s emergency and peacebuilding projects. Specifically, s/he will serve with the goal of acting as a liaison for FDCD with their implementing partners of emergency and relief projects (mainly CFGB and MCC).

The main goals of this assignment include English report and proposal writing assistance for peacebuilding programs which are empowering community members, youth and women, as well as relief programs which are meeting critical needs in conflict affected areas.

The SALTer will assist FDCD’s staff in various aspects of project planning and reporting, conducting needs assessments and situational analysis of the vulnerable and marginalized groups in the MENA (Middle East & North Africa) region. S/he will also have opportunities to attend and assist in peacebuilding workshops as well as exposure to interfaith dialogue.

The SALTer is expected to be present at all activities organized for FDCD staff after working hours. S/he is also expected to be present at the meetings where planning and evaluation of work occur as a team. All overtime days and hours worked by the SALTer during the week or on the weekend, may be taken off at other times as agreed upon by her/his supervisor.

Duties:

A specific schedule will be arranged, in collaboration with the MCC LSI Reps, between the SALT participant and their supervisor, so as to accommodate the SALTer’s individual strengths and interests.
Some possibilities are as follows:

- Assist with writing project proposals and reports in English (working with FDCD's program coordinators and project managers). This could also include assisting with MCC/FDCD projects.
- Assist with data input and analysis and food program monitoring.
- Assist with needs assessments and situational analysis tackling the main needs of the vulnerable and marginalized groups in the MENA region.
- Assist with drafting of proposals and designing new project ideas.
- Assist with drafting of budgets for new or continued projects.
- Research and apply for new sources of funding and calls for proposals.
- Introduce FDCD’s work to external parties and potential donors who are interested in supporting project ideas.
- Develop and implement the programs' monitoring plan, including measurement of indicators and results of each project.
- Assist in building and launching new programs based on the MENA context.
- Assist in preparations for regional conferences, including communicating with attendees, coordinating accommodations and flights, and preparing program schedules.
- Attend and take minutes for meetings with partners.

As an MCC worker seconded to FDCD, the participant shall:

- Communicate regularly with the MCC LSI Representative(s).
- Be based in the MCC Beirut office once a week.
- Attend regional and in-country retreats, weekly team meetings, partner conference and other possible MCC events.

Location Description:

Lebanon is a small but extremely diverse country in the heart of the Middle East. Beirut is Lebanon’s capital and largest city, home to 1.5 million of the country’s 4 million people. The city is composed of diverse faiths, including Shia Islam, Sunni Islam, Druze, and 17 different Christian communities.

Lebanon has a history of both civil war and regional war. Because of this, some old buildings still show signs of war, though these are quickly being outnumbered with large apartment complexes. Lebanon presently hosts over 2 million Syrian Refugees and many Palestinian refugees (some estimates show a half million Palestinian refugees). Due to the large population of refugees, the infrastructure is strained. There are also problems with social cohesion between the different populations.

The climate ranges from extremely hot and humid in the summer to very rainy and cold in the winter (homes do not have central heating).

MCC staff are expected to dress appropriate to the culture. This sometimes means wearing more modest clothing than would be the norm in Western countries.

Lebanese are extremely well-educated and often speak at least two languages (Arabic and either French or English), making it easy to navigate the city and most of the country in English. Very good health care is available, and it is easy to find most over the counter medications. Beirut has three
English-language churches in the Protestant tradition, as well as countless other Christian worship options (Orthodox, Maronite, etc.) in Arabic and other languages.

Local transportation by shared taxi or minibus is common in Beirut. There are also minibuses that go to other parts of the country.

The SALTer will be living in a seminary setting alongside other students from the region. S/he will be required to audit courses at the seminary during the term under their Studies in the Middle East program which will help broaden one’s knowledge as well as provide opportunities for informal relationship building with other students from the region.

Lebanese culture has certain expectations for the ways unmarried males and females relate to each other; spending time with the other gender in mixed groups is a safe way to steer clear of missteps.

Lebanon ranks as one of the most expensive cities in the Middle East. MCC covers basic living and assignment costs for simple and healthy living. SALTers should be aware that their monthly MCC stipend for personal expenses may not go as far as it would in other countries where MCC has programming.

Internet service is very expensive, can be slow, and is charged by the amount of data used. While email and occasional Skype calls are encouraged, the SALTer should not expect to spend large amounts of time on Skype calls or streaming music and videos.

Challenges:

- The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect countries around the world. While we remain hopeful that the pandemic will have stabilized by August 2021, to prioritize the well-being and limit risk to our participants and the local community, assessments of each assignment will continue on a regular basis. If it is deemed that an assignment is no longer viable, we will do our best to help you secure an alternative assignment.
- There may be hyperinflation within the country. This means access to imported goods (western coffee, cereal, and other food items) may be limited or expensive.
- If there are higher risks of COVID-19, the SALTer would be expected to abide by the host communities’ policies which may include a lockdown within the host community and remote working from the host community.
- There is political instability, frequent protests, and occasional possibility of armed conflict. The participant must be willing to adhere to security guidelines and heed the advice of the MCC Representative on security issues.
- Access to mental health services may be difficult though online options are available.
- Access to some medications is becoming challenging due to hyperinflation and limited supply; SALTers would be encouraged to bring needed medication with them for the duration of their SALT experience.
- Worker can expect to occasionally sit in rooms and meetings where others are smoking.
- Contact with people living in very difficult situations has the potential to bring about sadness and feelings of helplessness (Secondary Trauma). Strong coping mechanisms and balancing workload with self-care is needed.
- The SALTer will be eating many meals with the host community. Common foods served include wheat-based products and meat or chicken. Allergy or aversion to these foods would create challenges for the worker.
• Lebanon immigration law does not permit those who have visited or lived in Israel/Palestine to enter Lebanon. Questions about this restriction can be discussed with the SALT Coordinator in advance to placement.
• Beirut is a very congested city with a lot of traffic and noise. There are not many green spaces or parks in the city. The SALTer may need to be intentional about finding green spaces.
• In Lebanon, perceptions of LGBTQ+ individuals are predominantly negative, this is equally so in Christian communities. An openly LGBTQ+ individual may face significant challenges with acceptance in this context.
• Managing frustration when things don’t turn out as expected can be hard. While we do our best to determine and outline job responsibilities with our local partners, assignments really come alive based on the passions, skills, and giftings of an individual. Responsibilities may change or be refined over time in communication with supervisors to meet the ongoing changes and needs within a local context. As such, the greatest characteristics a participant can bring to an assignment are adaptability, flexibility, patience, a willingness to get your hands dirty, and humility to complete even mundane tasks.
• For those who are very task oriented, it can be a challenge to recognize the importance of “being” instead of always “doing” as building healthy relationships and mutually transformative learning is an important part of the participant experience. We hope participants will come with a desire to walk alongside local communities, rather than see the assignment solely to "get things done".