MCC SALT/YAMEN Service Opportunity

Assignment Title & Partner Organization: SALT/YAMEN: Peace Museum Assistant – Cambodia Peace Museum

Term: August 14, 2019– July 11, 2020
FTE: 1.0
Location: Battambang City, Battambang Province, Cambodia
Date Required: August 14, 2019

Program information and policies can be found at mcc.org/salt or mcc.org/yamen

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

Synopsis:

The SALT/YAMENer will serve at The Cambodia Peace Museum, helping to support the activities and events such as facilitating tours for educational groups, organizing workshops and community events, and developing new materials for the museum.

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 an assignment is contingent on a successful criminal background check.

- Bachelor’s degree or higher in peace studies or related field.
- Self-motivated, detail-oriented, and well organized.
- Ability to meet short- and long-term deadlines without direct supervision.
- Ability to edit and proof-read a wide-range of documents.
- Strong written and verbal communication skills.
- Strong proficiency in English.
- Demonstrated interpersonal and negotiation skills.
- Ability to adapt in cross-cultural settings, including working within multiple cultural contexts simultaneously.
- Proficient in information technology and application of digital communication platforms.
- Ability to undertake Internet research.
- Ability to keep sensitive information confidential.
- Willing to learn Khmer language and live with a local host family.
- Willing to take motorcycles and bicycles for travel.
- Cooperative spirit and commitment to being involved in the lives of both the Cambodia Peace Museum team and the MCC Cambodia team.
- Flexible and ready to adapt to changing project needs.

Assignment Narrative:

Founded in 2008, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) is a Cambodia based non-government organization, working in the field of peace building and conflict transformation in Asia. Their mission is to strengthen strategic intervention into armed conflict, with the overall goal
of reaching sustainable and positive peace in the Asia region. CPCS focuses its interventions on influencing Asian peace processes, building capacities for conflict analysis and conflict intervention strategies, and influencing theory, policy and practice through research and publication.

The Cambodia Peace Museum tells the story the country’s transition from war to peace. It highlights the resiliency of the Cambodian people and what the world can learn from these experiences. The museum’s mission is to expand how Cambodian history is viewed and contribute to a culture of peace where people have a deeper understanding of conflict. This understanding creates the capacity to enable choices that support a positive future. In addition to the exhibits, the museum hosts educational courses designed specifically for Cambodian university students. The museum also hosts a wide range of events and special programs that promote peace-building and display the lessons learned within the context of Cambodia.

The SALT/YAMEN participant will report to Cambodia Peace Museum Director, Nikki Singer, and to the MCC Exchange Coordinators.

Holidays for this position will follow the Cambodia Peace Museum calendar. (Please note this calendar allowance might differ from the MCC Cambodia calendar.) In addition, this position will receive 10 days of vacation, which must be approved in advance by supervisors at the Cambodia Peace Museum and MCC.

An important component of the MCC SALT/YAMEN term is life with a host family. During your year in Cambodia, you will be expected to enter into the life of your host family, including church, home, and social life. You will be living as an “adult son or daughter” and the goal is for you to be considered as a member of the host family for the assignment.

Duties:

Primary Duties

- Facilitate visits to the museum with student groups, workshop participants, and general visitors.
- Coordinate group visits to the museum, including longer educational trips around Battambang and Cambodia.
- Conduct research to continue building archival collections.
- Writing and editing in support of museum promotional materials, exhibits, and publications.
- Document museum activities and draft materials for social media and the website.
- Draft reports on the implementation of museum activities, as per donor guidelines, using indicators listed in project proposals.
- Perform other duties as may be assigned by Peace Museum Director and Director of CPCS for the development of the organization.

Location Description:

Cambodia is located in Southeast Asia between Vietnam and Thailand and bordered on the north by Laos. The population is about 15 million, with about 80% living in rural areas.

The SALT/YAMENer will be based in Battambang, the second largest city in Cambodia, and the capital of Battambang province. The population of Battambang is estimated to be around 196,709. Battambang has numerous busy markets where people buy rice, fruits, vegetables, clothing, DVDs, and housewares. It also has a few modern supermarkets where North American foodstuffs are available. Battambang continues to become more cosmopolitan, with new restaurants, stores and coffee shops opening every day.
Electricity in the city is prevalent and usually consistent; however, power outages do occur somewhat regularly during the hot season (March-May), though, these usually only last for a few hours at a time. Most homes do not have phone lines; however, MCCers are provided with basic cell phones.

Daily, scheduled buses travel between Battambang and the capital, Phnom Penh where the MCC Cambodia office is located (295km away). Buses to other provincial capitals are also available. Bicycles are the main mode of transport at the disposal of SALT/YAMEN participants. On occasion, SALT/YAMEN participants may need to ride in a tuktuk or on a motodop, both of which are readily available.

95% of Cambodians are Buddhist, 4% are Muslim, and about 1% is Christian. SALT/YAMENers are expected to go with their host family to church or connect with an alternative Cambodian church. (If the host family is not Christian, the understanding will be that the SALT/YAMENer will regularly attend a local Christian church.)

There is a growing expatriate population living in Battambang, comprised of development workers, missionaries, businesspeople, government personnel, and long and short-term volunteers.

Medical facilities outside of Phnom Penh and Siem Reap are well below international standards and are absolutely not recommended. Medical care is continually improving in Phnom Penh. Recently, two hospitals affiliated with Bangkok Hospital Medical Center have opened in Cambodia. Both branches provide reputable, basic care: one in Phnom Penh and one in Siem Reap. Additionally, there are a number of clinics with expat doctors. In the past, MCC workers have traveled to Thailand for more extensive and specialized treatments. Major health concerns in Cambodia are malaria, dengue fever, typhoid fever and Japanese encephalitis. However, the most common illnesses are from food and water. Bouts of diarrhea may occur occasionally throughout the MCC term. Most prescriptions can be filled in country.

The Cambodian diet consists primarily of rice, soup, vegetables, fish, meat, and fruit. It can be challenging to find vegan/vegetarian dishes, as almost all dishes contain meat or fish in some form or another. A well-balanced diet will ensure SALT/YAMEN participants stay healthy and strong throughout their MCC terms in Cambodia. Particularly while living with a host family, the expectation is that the SALT/YAMENer will eat the meals that have been provided. Keeping an open-mind and an open-palate while trying new Cambodian dishes and delicacies is advisable.

There are many national holidays, which provide plenty of opportunities for visiting and exploring Cambodia. The Temples of Angkor near Siem Reap are a must-see and will give some perspective on the great history of art and culture of Cambodia.

Challenges:

- Living with a host family can be challenging for young adults who have experienced independence. Most host families are very protective of both their biological and host children, particularly daughters. (For example, many host families do not feel comfortable if their host child is out past 8pm.) Patience, understanding, and mutual respect are needed as you navigate your life within a Cambodian family.
- You will be the only MCC staff member living in Battambang. The MCC office is in Phnom Penh, which is roughly a 5-hour ride by private taxi and a 7-hour journey by bus.
- Professional counseling and mental health services are limited. Professional physiotherapy is limited, and reputable chiropractic services are not available. Medical facilities outside of
Phnom Penh and Siem Reap are well below international standards and are absolutely not recommended.

- Finding appropriate spiritual support may be a challenge. Some MCCers have found they need to seek additional spiritual nurturing and support outside of regular church attendance. Small groups and house churches are available and can help fill this need.

- MCC service workers have been able to form meaningful relationships with MCC national staff, Cambodian staff at partner organizations, their host family, and other Cambodians in general. These relationships can take time to foster, and in the meantime, you may experience significant periods of time alone. Learning Khmer will help to enrich relationships with Cambodian people and is an important tool for building deeper connections. MCC provides 60 hours of language study at the beginning of your term, and continued study after this is encouraged.

- Significant cultural/religious differences i.e. gender roles, interfaith relations, stereotypes, etc. Generally, perception of LGBTQ+ individuals are negative and more so in Christian communities. An LGBTQ+ Christian may face challenges in feeling supported in this context.

- Modern Battambang is a very dynamic place to live, as everything seems to be changing at a very rapid pace. A common challenge in most large Cambodian cities is the growing traffic congestion, as more and more people are purchasing cars. Traffic in the cities can initially seem very chaotic and potentially life-threatening, but quickly you will learn that it does have its own set of unwritten rules and ebb and flow. Developing strong bicycle-riding skills will be imperative to your safety, as a bicycle will be the main mode of transport provided for navigating the hectic traffic.

- Corruption is rampant, and can be seen in daily life, but violence in Cambodia is rarely a problem and usually easy to avoid. Within Battambang, there is the occasional mugging or theft, but these are not usually violent. You should be diligent in keeping wallets, cameras, purses, backpacks, etc. under personal control; and, if possible, you should avoid carrying these items with you after dark. Even in an office or house, you should secure your valuable items. (MCC can provide a locked cabinet, if needed, to store valuables).

- 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 gifts 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 our local partners, rather than see the assignment solely as a way to "get things done".