SALT/YAMEN Service Opportunity

Assignment Title & Partner Organization: SALT/YAMEN: Visibility & Communications Assistant – SASOL

Term: August 14, 2019 – July 11, 2020
FTE: 1.0
Location: Kitui, Kenya
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 with Sahelian Solutions Foundation (SASOL) by helping to develop and implement a communications plan to increase SASOL’s visibility on social and mainstream media.

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 the successful completion of a criminal background check.

- Bachelor’s degree in communications, public relations, or related field.
- Knowledge or experience in producing success stories, promotional materials and conversant with social networks.
- Demonstrated ability in identifying gaps and taking initiative.
- Ability to work independently as assigned or cooperatively as a team member.
- Willingness and motivation to prioritize learning a new language.
- Cultural sensitivity and flexibility to live and work in settings with different cultural priorities and values.
- Willingness to live in a rural environment with a host family.
- Willingness to attend/participate in a local church/Christian fellowship
- Willingness and ability to be flexible as assignment responsibilities may change or be refined over time.

Assignment Narrative:
Sahelian Solutions Foundation (SASOL) is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) registered in the Republic of Kenya. It was founded in 1990 by consultants from Kenya and the Netherlands who possessed diverse expertise in water, construction, environmental science, and the social sciences. Each consultant had worked previously in Kitui, and saw the challenges that the community faced. The four had a shared understanding that an integrated approach, with water as an entry point, was key to addressing the agricultural problems facing the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) of Kitui County. Their priorities are in the areas of community development, access to water, and food and income security. More information can be found at: [http://www.sasolfoundation.co.ke/](http://www.sasolfoundation.co.ke/)

Small organizations like SASOL are usually focused on their mission and desire to achieve results that they devote less time on visibility. Visibility helps to effectively promote the NGOs work in the public and donor eyes but due to limited resources and human capacity it is often ignored. SASOL suffers from the same challenge. Without a good communications plan, organizations tend to engage the general public and potential donors blindly.

The world of community development in Kenya demands more in terms of visibility – through websites, pamphlets, newsletters, documentation of best practices and case studies, photos, use of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), and in mainstream media (e.g., radio, TV, and newspapers).

**Duties:**

The SALT/YAMENer, together with the CEO and Program staff will work in the following areas.

- Defining the objectives and goals of visibility and communication strategy.
- Identifying target audience.
- Identifying relevant messages to disseminate.
- Determining materials and mediums of communication and visibility.
- Implementing the communications plan.
- Evaluation and feedback for improvement.
- Go to the field with program staff to collect stories or meet beneficiaries for media material.
- Attend all SASOL meetings and retreats.
- Attend MCC Kenya meetings (4x/year) and retreat.

**Location Description:**

Kitui town is approximately 3 hours by road from Nairobi where the MCC Kenya office is located.

Kitui district is a semi-arid area with a bimodal rainfall of 300 – 800 mm each year. The rains fall in two distinct seasons: March - May and October - December. Geographically the district’s topography is characterized by undulating land areas and a flat Yatta plateau. The altitude varies from 400 – 800 metres above sea level.
Agricultural production is basically subsistence and involves crops such as green grams, cowpeas, pigeon pea, millet, common bean, and sorghum. There is also agro-pastoral farming where crops together with animals such as small herds of cows (Boran cattle) and goats are kept.

Most of Kenya is accessible by public transportation, and the SALT/YAMENer would use public transportation to navigate throughout the area.

Challenges:

- Travelling rough roads in Kenya by public transportation.
- There will be a language barrier to begin with because the placement is in a rural area inhabited by the Kamba tribe of Kenya. Communication in English will be fine in the town and office but limited in the home and community, and the SALT/YAMEN will have to learn the Kamba language to be able to communicate more effectively.
- Insecurity is a reality in Kenya, limiting some activities, specifically use of public transport, to daylight hours.
- There will be limited contact with people outside of the local community. The area is far from the city in Kitui which is a small town compared to Nairobi. We advise the SALT/YAMEN to make connections with the people around the community so that they don’t feel isolated. The MCC Kenya staff in other locations will keep in touch as often as possible.
- There are some medical clinics in Kitui that offer basic medical care, but more serious medical issues are referred to Nairobi, a 3-hour drive away. Professional counselling and mental health services are not available in Kitui; however, counselling is available in Nairobi.
- The Kenyan society is highly conservative. A large majority of people hold negative views of LGBTQ+ people. Homosexuality is largely considered to be taboo and against cultural values and morality. Leaders within the dominant religions in Kenya: Catholic, Anglican, Pentecostals and Islam, all condemn LGBTQ+ identity as signs of corruption, disease, and immorality. The Kenya Mennonite Church holds the same view on the issue. Therefore LGBTQ+ individuals will find it difficult to find support within the local 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 our local partners, rather than see the assignment solely as a way to "get things done".