SALT/YAMEN Service Opportunity

Assignment Title & Partner Organization: SALT/YAMEN: Visibility & Communications Assistant – Maasai Integrated Development Initiatives

Term: August 11, 2020 – July 17, 2021  
FTE: 1.0  
Location: Ngong, Kenya  
Date Required: August 11, 2020

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 Maasai Integrated Development Initiatives (MIDI) by helping to develop and implement a communications plan to increase MIDI’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, Development, International Relations, Agriculture or related field.  
- Strong oral and written skills in English is required.  
- Knowledge and/or experience in producing success stories, promotional materials and working with social networks is required.  
- Some experience in writing project proposals and concept papers is an advantage.  
- Willingness to live in a rural environment with limited amenities with a host family.  
- Cultural sensitivity and flexibility to live and work in settings with different cultural priorities and values.  
- Willingness to write and/or edit a wide variety of communication materials and documents on and about the work of MIDI

Assignment Narrative:

Maasai Integrated Development Initiative (MIDI) is a non-governmental organization formed in the year 2000 and registered on 10th May 2001 under the NGOs Coordination Act of Kenya. The organization was formed by local Maasai elites to address water & food insecurity needs. Other encounters include but not limited to education for needy children and environment, drought interventions and recovery (relief food assistance & goats restocking) all to enhance livelihood among the Maasai pastoralists in Kajiado County. More information can be found at www.midi.co.ke
MIDI is usually focused on their mission and desire to achieve results and therefore they devote less time on visibility and website updating. 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. MIDI 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), mainstream media (e.g., radio, TV, and newspapers) and frequent updating of the organisation websites.

Duties:

- Defining the objectives and goals of visibility and communication strategy.
- Managing MIDI social media accounts.
- Identifying target audience.
- Identifying relevant messages to disseminate.
- Helping to develop materials and mediums for communication and visibility.
- Implementing MIDI communications plan.
- Evaluation and feedback for improvement.
- With help of program staff attend some training related to community work.
- Attending all MIDI team meetings and activities.
- Being a part of the MCC Kenya Team and being fully involved in any activities that are required of the MCC Kenya staff, Such as team meetings and annual retreat.

Location Description:

Ngong town is approximately one and half hours by road from Nairobi where the MCC Kenya office is located.

The geographical condition of our area of operation of Ewuaso division in Kajiado West District of Kajiado County is arid and semi-arid lands with high temperatures. The rains of 300 – 800 mm are received each year in two distinct seasons: March - May and October - December Rainfall patterns becoming more unreliable each year, factor attributed by the climate change occurrences. Economically, the region is increasingly challenged by the cyclic drought strikes with increased severity making huge losses to both human, livestock and crops yields. The altitude varies from 400 – 800 meters above sea level.

Water scarcity is one of the most pressing problems in this part of the Maasai land, pastoral community in Kajiado County. Cattle are often taken far to drink. Women walk several hours to fetch water for family, the water quality from rivers and springs is poor and there is never adequate water at home.

This county is inhabited by pastoralist community keeping large herds of cattle, goat, sheep, and donkeys. Some households have started cultivating crops recently with the intervention of MIDI program activities. Crops grown basically for subsistence involves cowpeas, maize, common beans and Irish potatoes. Most of Kenya is accessible by public transportation, and the SALT/YAME Ner would use public transportation to navigate throughout the area.

Challenges:
• The candidate will have to use public transportation to get to work and home. During the hot months it can be uncomfortable and hectic in the rainy months.

• There will be a language barrier to begin with because the placement is in a rural area inhabited by the Maasai tribe of Kenya. Communication in English will be limited, and the SALT/YAMENer will have to learn the Maa language to be able to communicate more effectively.

• There may be challenges with internet connection and speed for personal and work use.

• There will be limited contact with people outside of the local community. The area is far from the city and the closest town is Ngong which is a small town compared to Nairobi. We advise the SALT/YAMENer 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 will be significant cultural differences such as gender roles and stereotypes. This being a rural area, the Maasai traditions and culture will take precedence when it comes to how to act and will impact living conditions. We ask the SALT/YAMENer to keep an open mind and always seek clarification if they are unsure of how to act.

• There are some medical clinics in Ngong, one being Government sub county hospital but majority of them are private hospitals that offer basic medical care, but more serious medical issues are referred to Nairobi, a 1-hour drive away. Professional counseling is not available in Ngong town; however, counseling 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".