MCC YAMEN Service Opportunity

Assignment Title & Partner Organization: SALT/YAMEN: Refugee Program Assistant – The Key Ministry International

Term: August 14, 2019 – July 11, 2020
FTE: 1.0
Location: Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
Date Required: August 14, 2019

Program details and polices 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 alongside the team at The Key Ministry International helping to provide much needed support services to the refugee community of Pietermaritzburg arise act as the office administrator.

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.

- Background in office administration
- English fluency, both spoken and written
- Ability to develop and analyze community development plans
- Ability to facilitate diverse group gatherings
- Computer competent especially with Microsoft Office
- Ability to communicate well with people from various backgrounds
- Analytical and problem-solving skills
- Ability to effectively demonstrate presentation and listening skills
- Effective negotiation and mediation skills a plus
- Background in peace and conflict resolution
- Knowledge of the dynamic needs of refugees and asylum seekers
- Willingness to learn either isiZulu or Swahili

Assignment Narrative:

The SALT/YAMENer will be seconded to The Key Ministry International (KMI). The focus of the work will be to serve alongside Key Ministry staff in various capacities to help implement the numerous programs that they offer.
KMI began in 2004, responding to the needs and challenges faced by many refugees and asylum seekers living in Pietermaritzburg. Refugee concerns were especially highlighted in 2008 when a rise of xenophobic attacks spread throughout South African communities. Currently the organization aims to assist refugees, foreign nationals and asylum seekers to meet their spiritual, social and economic needs, as well as to advocate for their rights and integration into communities.

KMI works tirelessly for the legal rights of refugees and foreign nationals. Since many refugees and foreign nationals are denied work, children are denied the right to education, and many more are denied the right to health care. They also undertake initiatives to change the stigma of refugees and the misinformation about their legal rights in South Africa.

Duties:

- Contribute to organizational development by contributing ideas and thoughts, attending meetings, collaborating with KMI staff and working as an active member to bring positive change and strengthen the organization
- Advocate for peace and the rights of refugees and asylum seekers by attending advocacy meetings, taking notes, and participating in advocacy workshops
- Participate in activities of Key Ministries such as attending events, conferences, meetings, presentations, community projects, and activities
- Assist with office administration through tasks such as filing reports, planning events, taking meeting minutes, managing office email and calendar, and bookkeeping
- Play an active role in The Key Ministry International and its objectives by being an active member of the team and contributing innovative ideas and collaborating in development of programs, office administration, and advocacy in order to serve the refugee community
- Assist with proposal writing, editing, and reports
- Create and regularly update KMI social media
- Perform any other organizational duties as reasonably requested by the Directors and Project Managers
- Attend MCC meetings and events as requested by the SwaLeSA Representatives upon consultation with the KMI
- Stay abreast and informed of MCC’s vision and operating principles and be prepared to interpret these to the administration of KMI as needed.

Location Description:

The SALT/YAME Ner will live and work in Pietermaritzburg (PMB) which is located in the province of Kwa Zulu-Natal (KZN). PMB is nestled in the mountains about an hour’s drive from the coast of the Indian Ocean. The Key Ministry International office is just a few blocks from the small but bustling downtown. Pietermaritzburg is the second largest city in the province of KZN after Durban.

Surrounding PMB is stunning scenery and rich history. There are great opportunities and community events in and around KZN including hiking, marathons, craft and farmers markets, game viewing, stunning mountains, and beautiful beaches. Throughout KwaZulu-Natal the mix of cultures is evident in the cuisine; one can enjoy Indian curries, traditional Zulu fare, and the ubiquitous South African braai (similar to a Canadian/U.S. BBQ).
Since the fall of the Apartheid government in 1994, the honeymoon period is over for the new South Africa, and the country is struggling to carry on with its economic and social development. Though Apartheid has been abolished for 20+ years, the repercussions of it are still evident. The fallout from Apartheid, combined with the social-economic inequality, contributes to a hurting society. Personal safety should always be considered and not taken for granted. The SALT/ter/YAMENer will need to look to MCC Service Workers and Representatives for guidance on appropriate behavior and precautions. Strong character and sensitivity are needed in light of the country’s history of apartheid and continuing lack of socio-economic equality between the races.

One of the greatest health risks facing the southern Africa region is the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Approximately 25% of all South Africans are living with HIV/AIDS. The socio-economic and psycho-social fabric of the nation is greatly affected by this disease.

Pollution, as in many world cities is a problem, however environmental issues (such as recycling, clean water, etc.) are now general public issues with citizen awareness on the rise. The vitality of efforts to move ahead, to deal with the big issues, to grapple with questions previously hidden is, however, evident and energizing. The commitment of people of faith to finding their role in this new arena is inspiring. South Africa is a naturally beautiful country which offers an extensive sea coast, mountain ranges and desert areas. The people and cultures of South Africa are vibrant, and the music, song and dance enthralling. The spiritual and political dynamics of daily living are full of passion and energy. It is an intensely engaging location in which to serve.

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Most amenities and consumer items are available in Pietermaritzburg as well as modern hospitals and clinics with sophisticated medical treatment available. The MCC SwaLeSA Reps live in Pietermaritzburg where the MCC office is located.

Challenges:

- High levels of pollution.
- Prevalence of Xenophobia.
- Significant cultural religious differences i.e. gender roles, interfaith relations, stereotypes, etc.
- One challenge in the Pietermaritzburg area, and elsewhere in South Africa, is personal security. Almost all houses are surrounded by walls, fitted with burglar bars on all windows and doors, and most cars and houses have security alarm systems as a common feature. All precautions have to be taken in public spaces to ensure that one’s self and valuables are secure. The SALT/ter/YAMENer will need to adhere to advice from local staff and MCC Reps/Connecting Peoples Coordinator for guidance on appropriate behavior & precautions to mitigate risk.
- Public transportation is available but limited and only during the day time. In many ways, living in this area would be a cultural adjustment even if one is coming from a rural community in North America and even more so if they come from an urban community. While running water, electricity and telecommunications are widely available, one can expect to have shortages of all these things from time to time.
- South Africa’s constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and protects the human rights of LGBTQ+ people. However, homosexuality is still largely
unaccepted throughout most of society, especially conservative religious and traditional communities. The majority of churches would not be comfortable or welcoming to an openly LGBTQ+ individual. Therefore, it may not only be difficult to find support within the local context, it may also be dangerous.

• 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".