SALT/YAMEN Service Opportunity

**Assignment Title & Partner Organization:** SALT/YAMEN: Early Childhood Teacher Assistant – St. Monica Pre-Primary School

**Term:** August 17, 2021 – July 21, 2022  
**FTE:** 1.0  
**Location:** Juju, Kiambu, Kenya  
**Date Required:** August 17, 2021

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 St. Monica pre-primary school to assist in teaching the Kenyan National Curriculum and other relevant topics like self-esteem and crafts (e.g. card making, painting etc.) to students at the school. The school is run by the Dominican Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus who are involved in the education and support of orphan, needy, and vulnerable children of Juja Constituency.

**Qualifications:**

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

*An invitation to an assignment is contingent on a successful criminal background check.*

- A bachelor's degree in education, preferably in early childhood or primary education. A bachelor's in social work or child psychology will also be considered.
- Experience in providing instruction and/or implementing programs for vulnerable children preferred.
- Leadership and problem-solving skills.
- Competent in prioritizing work, self-motivated, and creative.
- Team player yet able to work with little supervision.
- High level of integrity and ability to maintain a high level of confidentiality.
- Strong communication skills in English, both verbal and written.
- Sensitive to the unique needs of orphans, abused and abandoned children.
- A pastoral heart specifically geared toward spiritual discipleship and relationship-building.
- Willingness to play a mentoring role and ability to identify leadership skills in others.
- Willingness to live in a hostel-like setting in an urban environment.
- Willingness to attend/participate in a local church.
- Cultural sensitivity and flexibility to live and work in settings with different cultural priorities and values.

**Assignment Narrative:**

The Dominican Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus founded St. Monica Pre-Primary School under the late Sr. Louise Radlmeier O.P. This nursery school was established to provide education to children in the neighboring Gachoro slum. The school has been in existence since 2005.
St. Monica Pre-Primary is situated in Juja sub-county in Kiambu County. Kiambu County is one of the neighboring counties to Nairobi City.

The school is located within St. Monica’s Children’s Home which is about 600 metres away from Emanuel Center where the Dominican sisters have their base for helping vulnerable children in the community. This nursery school was initially founded to provide education services to the orphaned children in St. Monica’s Children’s Home. The pre-school soon allowed vulnerable children from the neighboring Gachoro slum to join the school. The school’s vision is “Education that incorporates holistic child development” and the mission statement is “To provide a safe and caring learning environment for children, unleash their potentials and become responsible citizens.”

Juja sub-county is densely populated and is considered peri-urban with many informal settlements. Gachoro slum is one of the informal settlements neighboring St. Monica Pre School. The economic activities of this neighborhood include stone mining, food hawking, farming, and casual labour in construction sites. The children came from struggling household families in Gachoro slum. The parents earning are as low as Kshs 200 (less than 2 USD) per day. Juja sub-county has a population of 156,041. Most of the parents do manual work like washing clothes (laundry) for students at the nearby university and the few rich families in the neighborhood. Others do stone mining and hawking food items in the neighborhood. What these parents earn is hardly enough to cater for food, rent, and other family basic needs.

The participant will work with one of the classes for an entire academic year and will assist with creating lesson plans and teaching a wide range of subjects from the Kenya National Curriculum. The individual will work as a team member within the wider school staff, and, as required, liaise with other relevant individuals including staff of the St. Monica’s Children’s Home and the Dominican Sisters of Emmanuel Center.

The SALT/YAMENer will live within the Emmanuel Centre with the Dominican Sisters in a hostel-like environment. They will live in the wing of the children’s home where the older children are housed but will have their separate room. This is ideal as it will be close to where the participant will be working and also because they will be expected to also work with the children in St. Monica’s Children’s Home as part of their assignment.

The successful candidate must be able to exemplify the following:

- **Communication Skills:** Ability to speak clearly to students, other teachers, parents and administration officials.
- **Instruction Skills:** Ability to explain new ideas and unfamiliar concepts with authority and clearly and concisely so that students can understand, working to keep the students’ attention.
- **Writing Skills:** Teachers write progress reports, notes home. Writing skills are critical.
- **Patience:** Teachers deal with students of different backgrounds and abilities as well as those who act out or have trouble following the material.
- **Creativity:** Teachers have to find ways to involve students in their lessons. Additionally, teachers may have to work with different learning styles to get the most out of each student.
- **People Skills:** Engaging parents and creating healthy relationships with students will help create a quality learning environment.

The SALT/YAMENer will want to learn a new language (Swahili) for more effective communication with more people, but in the schools, English will be the primary language used. Other local languages are also commonly spoken in the community.

MCC has been working in Kenya since 1974 and implements projects through local partner organizations in food-security, education, health, and peace. MCC Kenya offers capacity building and funds to help partner organizations to implement their programs. Currently, the MCC Kenya staff...
composition is seven program staff and two service workers, and in addition, each year there are usually two to three SALT/YAMENers in the program.

The SALT/YAMENer will work closely with the MCC Kenya Representatives and the MCC Exchange Coordinator who will be in charge of making sure that they are doing well at work and in other aspects of their lives. The Reps and Exchange Coordinator live in Nairobi and work out of the MCC Nairobi office, which is about a one-hour bus ride from Juja. While the MCC Kenya team is spread out, we meet weekly for team devotions and check-in via Zoom and quarterly for meetings in-person to share about our work and other emerging issues in MCC. There is also an annual retreat where the whole team and their families go to relaxing locations within Kenya for team building and to rejuvenate and reflect on the year. While based in Nairobi, the MCC Exchange Coordinator will also stay in regular touch through WhatsApp and email.

Duties:

- Assist in the instruction of students on subjects such as English, mathematics, reading, science and social studies based on the Kenya National Curriculum.
- Assist in the creation of lesson plans which will include classroom work, class instruction, tests, and quizzes.
- Assist with assigning homework to students to reinforce the lessons learned in the classroom.
- Assist in scheduling and organizing fun activities for students during the year to provide learning experiences outside of the classroom.
- Work with children in small groups or with individual students who may be struggling with the classroom material.
- Motivate and inspire young children to develop a lifelong love of learning and education.
- Assist in organizing activities for and developing relationships with children living at the St. Monica’s Children’s Home.
- Attend all Emmanuel Centre team meetings and activities.
- Be part of the MCC Kenya team and fully involved in any MCC Kenya staff activities such as team meetings and an annual retreat.

Location Description:

This assignment is located in Juja Town, about 48 kilometres northeast of Nairobi, Kenya where the MCC Kenya office is located. Emmanuel Centre is located along Gachororo Road, opposite Gate B of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, in Juja Town, Kiambu County.

The Juja area is densely populated, because of the university, with a population of 50,641. About 24.2% live below the poverty line. The children served by St. Monica’s Pre-Primary School fall under this population. The goal of the Emmanuel Center is to ensure that poor and orphan children get primary, secondary, and tertiary education so that they can be successful and productive adults.

The climate of Juja Sub-county is classified as warm and temperate with average temperatures of 77 degrees Fahrenheit (25°C). In winter there is much less rainfall than in summer. The annual average rainfall is 31 inches (787 mm). Most of the population is Christian. Transportation is via public means such as buses, small taxi “matatu,” and motorbikes. The location is about one hour by bus from the MCC office, which is in the capital city of Nairobi. Cell reception is good, and one can access the internet via cellular service. There is easy access to every kind of healthcare service as Juja is near Nairobi.

MCCers have typically found Kenyans to be hospitable and friendly, and English is spoken by many, especially in urban areas. Geographically, Kenya is an equatorial country in East Africa bordering the
Indian Ocean. It had a population of 47.6 million by 2019. The country is home to more than forty ethnic and language groups, with rich and diverse cultural, religious, and social practices. The vast majority of Kenyans are Africans, comprising four distinct linguistic groups: Bantu, Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic and Cushitic. The country’s geography encompasses savannah, lakelands, the Great Rift Valley and mountain highlands. Kenya is also home to wildlife such as the Big Five found in many national parks from Nairobi National Park within the city to the Maasai Mara Reserve, known for its annual wildebeest migrations. There is also Amboseli National Park, offering views of Tanzania’s Mt. Kilimanjaro, which at 19,340 feet (5,895 m) is the highest mountain in Africa. One can also go to the coast to enjoy the shores of the Indian Ocean or enjoy the thrill of climbing Mt Kenya and other smaller mountains like Mt Longonot, Kilimambogo, and many others.

In 2019, Kenya's economic growth averaged 5.7%, placing Kenya as one of the fastest-growing economies in Sub-Saharan Africa. The recent economic expansion has been boosted by a stable macroeconomic environment, positive investor confidence and a resilient services sector. However, four-fifths of workers are in the informal economy, and 9.3% of the workforce is unemployed. Kenya's HDI ranking in 2018 was 0.579 which put the country in the medium human development category, positioning it at 147 out of 189 countries and territories.

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 is a certain level of insecurity during times of election when ethnic tensions are high. MCC regularly assesses these issues of security but also relies on Kenyan neighbours and colleagues for advice and support. Adhering to advice from MCC, the local partner, and the host family will help to mitigate any threats posed to individual security. The next general election will be in August 2022.

- A large majority of Kenyans hold negative views of LGBTQ+ people, largely perceiving homosexuality as taboo and against cultural values and morality. Leaders within the dominant religions in Kenya—Catholic, Anglican, Pentecostal and Islamic—all publicly condemn LGBTQ+ identity as signs of corruption, disease, and immorality. The Kenya Mennonite Church holds the same view on the issue. Therefore, openly LGBTQ+ individuals will likely find it difficult to find support among those from 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 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 their 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 to "get things done."