

## **MCC SALT/YAMEN Service Opportunity**

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

**Assignment Title & Partner Organization:** SALT/YAMEN: English Assistant – Americas Unidas

**Term:** August 16, 2022 – July 15, 2023

**Date Required:** August 16, 2022

**Location:** Cali, Colombia

**Project Theme:** ES Education Salt/Yamen

### **Job Synopsis:**

The SALT/YAMENER will accompany the work of the Mennonite Brethren Regional Council and its social ministry by supporting Americas Unidas, a Mennonite Brethren secondary school, in strengthening its English language program.

### **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.*

- Intermediate or higher level of English language proficiency.
- Disposition to work with secondary students in language instruction and cross-cultural exchange, as well as elementary students in language instruction as needed.
- Experience with teaching or managing large groups of children and youth is an asset.
- Positive attitude, tolerance, and patience with a collaborative spirit.
- Creativity in organizing activities for conversation and cultural learning.
- Disposition to work in a team setting.
- Willingness to live in a bustling, urban setting.
- Ability in Spanish language an asset, but not required. Willingness to learn Spanish is required.

### **Key Responsibilities:**

- Assist the language coordinator and other English language teachers as needed.
- Carry out activities in the language lab and assist in English language classes.
- Help organize an English conversation club.
- Help strengthen the language department.
- Assist the bilingual project of the Americas Unidas school.
- Help students who will participate in the exchange program improve their oral and written English.

### **Assignment Narrative:**

SALT/YAMEN assignments in Colombia place a priority on building relationships, participation in the life of a local church, and community involvement. It is the goal of MCC Colombia-Ecuador that the SALT/YAMEN programs will result in a stronger commitment to the world-wide church family, both for the congregations and families that send the young people and for the churches and families that host them in Colombia. Through living with host families and participating in host churches and service assignments, participants will:

- Realistically test their gifts, limitations, and their call for further training and longer-term cross-cultural service.
- Grow spiritually as their faith is challenged and nurtured in a cross-cultural setting.
- Broaden their understanding and appreciation of the lives of their brothers and sisters in their host country and further mutual trust, relationships, and caring.
- Help to dismantle the stereotypes and prejudices that exist between cultures both during the exchange year and upon their return to their home communities.

Colombia has suffered greatly as a result of a long internal armed and social conflict inflamed by U.S. military assistance and foreign economic interests. In response, the Colombian Anabaptist churches and institutions have been working to transform the realities of injustice and violence into seeds of hope, justice, and lasting peace through different sectors of society at a local, regional, and national level. For this reason, MCC Colombia-Ecuador works very closely with these churches and NGOs supporting their peace efforts.

Peacebuilding is the focus MCC Colombia-Ecuador programs which is done through areas such as education, community development, advocacy/justice, and agriculture, amongst others. Although the majority of MCC's work in Colombia and Ecuador has focused on institutional projects, MCC understands that the transformation of society needs to occur at all levels. It is for this reason that MCC Colombia-Ecuador works through programs like SALT/YAMEN to broaden its relationships and participation with local churches and communities.

The Mennonite Brethren have a significant presence in Cali and the Valle del Cauca region; the Americas Unidas School is one of the denomination's ministries and the school's vision, mission, and philosophy follow the primary global Anabaptist principles, although the school accepts students from different faiths. The school seeks a language assistant to help with the English classes, conversation clubs, and tutoring.

The SALT/YAMENER will work full-time at the school and will have a school staff member as their placement supervisor. The SALT/YAMENER will also receive supervision and support from an MCC staff member (Connecting Peoples Coordinator, Country Representative, or Education Coordinator).

The SALT/YAMENER will be a part of the larger MCC Colombia-Ecuador team which is made up of 12-15 international and national staff, Seed participants (a two-year program) and other SALT/YAMEN participants. The SALT/YAMENER will join the MCC Colombia-Ecuador team for scheduled staff meeting retreats (2-3 per year), which may involve traveling to various locations in the country.

Although the participant will be teaching English, learning Spanish is required to communicate well with others and to function day-to-day. Spanish language classes will be provided.

## **Location Description:**

The SALT/YAMENer will live in the city of Cali. Cali is a city of 2.5 million people in the Pacific region of Colombia with a dynamic culture. It offers many modern conveniences including markets with local fare, modern shopping centers with access to imported goods, good health facilities, various educational opportunities, cultural events, international restaurants, museums, and parks. Upper-class communities and commercial centers coexist alongside marginalized communities and limited infrastructure. Violence/insecurity, gangs, lots of traffic and air pollution are growing problems.

The Americas Unidas School is located in a relatively safe part of the city, although it is still necessary to be mindful about personal security when out in public, especially at night. There is one other long-term MCC staff member living in Cali, while the rest of the administrative staff, including the country representatives, work out of the Bogotá office, approximately 10 hours away by road (1 hour flight). Other MCC service workers seconded to different local partner organizations are in dispersed locations around the country.

Colombia has two seasons: dry (summer) and wet (winter). The dry or "hot" seasons normally occur December-January & July-August. The rainy or "wet" seasons normally take place from April-May & October-November. Cali's climate tends to vary between temperate and hot with temperatures between 16°C (61°F) to 30°C(86°F). During the "summer" season, it can get quite hot and humid even when it rains.

There are more than a dozen Mennonite Brethren churches in the city of Cali, and the denomination has its office on the property of the Americas Unidas school. The SALT/YAMENer will live with a local family connected with a Mennonite Brethren church.

Homes in the city are generally made of cement block structures and either tile or cement floors with tin or cement rooftops. Iron grates cover the doors and some windows, and nearly all urban homes have walls and gates. Electricity is generally dependable but can cut out on occasion, especially during thunderstorms. Most families have internet at home, however, its strength and dependability may vary. The SALT/YAMENer will most likely attend their host family's church on a regular basis.

Cali has a modern airport and easy access to public transportation which is available through a fairly organized city bus system. Buses can be overcrowded at certain times of day but very reasonable in cost. Taxis are abundant and readily available. Cali is a transportation hub for the region and offers a variety of cross-country bus transport options.

There is generally cell phone access in the area, enabling regular contact with MCC staff, partners, and loved ones back home. Most MCCers use WhatsApp for communication and texting, including communicating internationally. WiFi is also available in some business/restaurant establishments.

## **Challenges:**

- COVID-19 remains unpredictable both at home, and around the world. MCC strongly recommends vaccination against COVID-19. Safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19 are a vital part of prevention, by reducing individual risk of disease and risk of transmission to others. Vaccination is particularly important for those who are interacting closely with members of the community, those staying with host families, who

are traveling, who live in contexts with limited healthcare resources, or who are at higher risk of serious disease. Proof of vaccination may be required in individual cases to fulfill job expectations, for example, if it is required for travel by an airline, a government requirement to enter a country, required by a local partner organization, etc.

- To prioritize wellness and limit risk to our participants and the local community from COVID-19, assessments of each task will continue on a regular basis. If an assignment is found to be no longer viable, we will do our best to help you secure an alternative assignment.
- Living in Colombia involves some risks due to unstable conditions resulting from armed conflict and civil unrest. In the case of large cities in Colombia, the level of risk is comparable to other large cities in the world. Rarely are large cities affected by armed conflict, although they are generally focal points for unrest. There may be risks related to land travel between cities. This does not mean that participants cannot travel outside of their service locations; it just means that they must take care in following security guidelines and ask for advice from local churches/communities and MCC.
- Cali is a relatively unsafe city with a high risk of theft and muggings; it is not recommended to travel at night except in authorized taxis.
- MCC staff depend on their partners, communities, and Colombian staff members to make decisions about when and where to travel. The participants should be willing to accept the decisions of the community in terms of security procedures. MCC will not place participants in a location that does not offer adequate security conditions.
- Adapting to living with people from a different culture, integrating into the local community, and adopting its customs and patterns.
- Balancing maintaining good relationships with the students while also maintaining a position of authority and supervision.
- Participants will also have to confront the reality of being in the presence of people with very profound needs. This can be very emotionally exhausting at times. The community leaders and the members of the MCC team will serve as support to confront these dilemmas and emotions that may emerge under these circumstances.
- Local area not supportive to LGBTQ+ persons: perceptions of LGBTQ+ individuals are generally negative, and more strongly so in Christian communities. An openly LGBTQ+ Christian would face significant challenges with acceptance in this 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".

### **Benefits:**

For all SALT/YAMEN assignments, MCC provides:

- All basic needs related to assignment i.e., travel to and from assignment, food & household costs, housing, in-country transportation, etc.
- Modest monthly personal allowance
- Modest monthly worker care allowance
- Full medical coverage—no co-pay
- Educational loan reimbursement
- Vacation days
- Orientation and Re-entry Retreat costs
- MCC in-country meetings and retreat costs
- End-of-term benefits

*For more information, see [mcc.org/salt](http://mcc.org/salt) or [mcc.org/yamen](http://mcc.org/yamen)*