

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: IT Developer and Programmer – MKS

Term: August 16, 2022 – July 15, 2023

Date Required: August 16, 2022

Location: Bishoftu (Debre Zeit), Ethiopia

Project Theme: PS Peacebuilding Salt/Yamen

Job Synopsis:

The SALT/YAMENER will assist Meserete Kristos Seminary (MKS) in Bishoftu, Ethiopia in developing an online academic school management platform and working on other IT related needs according to the skills of the participant. Other projects include developing a library management system and creating a network to enable faculty to work together more efficiently.

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.

- Strong IT knowledge and skills required, a degree or certificate in IT or computer science preferred.
- Strong English language skills, with a commitment to study Amharic.
- Excellent (above average) computer skills and demonstrated proficiency in Microsoft Office required.
- Demonstrated experience in providing IT support.
- Strong troubleshooting and research skills.
- Proficiency in graphic and website design.
- High level of technical aptitude to assist with website development, databases, and connecting office departments to the network.
- Able to coach church IT volunteers to use IT effectively to communicate internally within MKC's structure and externally with partners.
- Knowledge of web-based fundraising platforms.
- Willingness to attend and participate in the activities of a local MKC church.

Key Responsibilities:

- Develop a plan for an online platform to support the academic programs at the MK Seminary. The school management system (full stack development) would be used for educational institutions to manage all student's data, including:
 - Registration of students in classes

- Documentation of student evaluation
- Manage Dormitory system
- Facilitate communication between teachers and students
- Management of plagiarism
- Documentation of final paper of graduate students.
- Develop a Library Management System
- Develop a faculty database system for streamlined activities, better communication, simplified admission process, faster attendance management and report management and increased data security
- Provide Network (internet system) support by helping to improve on LAN and wifi configuration to complete the above-mentioned responsibilities.
- Other similar responsibilities as assigned by the Office of the President.

Assignment Narrative:

The Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) is the largest single Mennonite denomination in the world and is affiliated with Mennonite World Conference. MKC and MCC have a long history of relationship, enduring even through the years of Communist oppression when the church was forced underground. After emerging in the late 1980s, the church developed an organizational structure and several institutionalized ministries in a relatively short time. In 2004-05, MCC and the MKC head office began a shift towards more focused partnerships in peace including trainings, prison ministry, Sunday school and youth ministry, women's ministry, and scholarships for studying conflict transformation.

Meserete Kristos Seminary (MKS) is affiliated with MKC as the major institution training pastors and leaders in the church. The Seminary would be grateful for some IT support, especially a programmer who could help develop a school management system. The MK College President is familiar with an academic platform called Blackboard. He would very much like a similar modern platform to help organize their courses, the work of the registrar, etc. It may be that this kind of program needs to be purchased, but an IT expert might be able to design something for their needs. In addition, they have started an online distance learning system, advised by a student who spent time in Japan. That could be improved and built upon. They already have some students enrolled in an online distance MA course, run by Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) located in the U.S., and they would like to learn from that example and imitate it more.

Location Description:

The SALT/YAMENER would be based at the MK Seminary in Bishoftu, a town located in the East Shewa Zone that sits at an elevation of 1,920 meters. Formerly known as 'Debre Zeyit' or the Mount of Olives, the town was renamed in the late 1990s. The town is located along the main highway, 40km south-east of Addis Ababa, about a 1.5-hour drive from the MCC office. Five crater lakes surround the town, which make it a tourist attraction for the region.

The Seminary itself is located in a quiet and rural part of the town. Students live on campus in dormitories and eat together in a cafeteria. Most of the students are from Ethiopia, but there are a few international students from other parts of East Africa, including Kenya and Tanzania. Most students attend one of the MKC churches nearby, with services in Amharic or Oromifa. A small international congregation (mostly supported by Dutch missionaries living in the area) worships in English at the seminary on Sundays.

Bishoftu is situated at a lower altitude than Addis Ababa (which tends to be quite cold at night), but it still has very moderate temperatures ranging from 9 degrees Celsius at night to 29 degrees Celsius during the hottest months. The rainy season is from June – September (it rains reliably every day) with occasional rains the rest of the year, generally in February and March.

Bishoftu is relatively close to Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, home to approximately eight million people (and five million donkeys!). There are many buildings and roads being constructed and, increasingly, the capital has a modern feel. A light rail system crosses the city North to South and East to West.

There are many products available in Addis including a variety of locally grown and imported food, technology, and hygiene products. Imported items are quite expensive. There are several malls and English movie theaters. Bowling, laser tag, and a skate-board park are available. There is a riding stables nearby with decent horses. Gyms are available although the membership is high. There is a vast botanical garden and arboretum at the edge of town, as well as lovely hiking possibilities in the hills that circle the city, although caution is always necessary when leaving downtown. Vandalism to vehicles and robberies have been reported in the mountains so it is important to go with local friends. Personal safety in the city is generally good, although pickpocketing and petty crime are increasing.

There are several English-speaking congregations in Addis Ababa with a variety of worship styles. Meserete Kristos Church (MKC) services are held in Amharic. Medical care to a Western standard is available at two recommended clinics in Addis. Dental care is adequate. Nairobi is a two-hour flight away and is recommended for major surgeries and/or medical issues.

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.
- Even with new 4G networks, internet is often very slow, and sometimes not available at all. This will be particularly challenging for this job placement. Even with its problems, internet is better in Addis than in the rest of the country. Ethiotel is the government-owned provider but has recently sold minority shares to external companies which should improve the situation. Currently the government can and does occasionally shut off communications in the interests of political security.
- Water often comes to a neighborhood for several days a week, but not all the time. Most residences have a water tank so water to the house is continuous. If water runs out, it can be bought very cheaply and can arrive in quantity by truck or in small containers.

- Electricity infrastructure is old and inadequate in many places, and power rationing sometimes occurs during the dry season. Many places of work and residences have generators.
- While the countryside has good air quality, high levels of pollution (vehicle exhaust) exist in the city streets. Plastic trash is abundant.
- Gastrointestinal issues are common, especially in the first months as bodies adjust to new flora and fauna. Medicine is readily available.
- Amharic is a very difficult language to learn but is necessary for communication outside of the office or seminary environment. Most Ethiopians speak a bit of English, but not many are fluent. However, more students will speak English and will be happy to practice.
- Political instability is a greater risk than theft or violence. However, Addis Ababa and the surrounding region (including Bishoftu) is generally safe even when other parts of the country are experiencing turmoil.
- Professional counseling and mental health are available but limited. If needed, on-line services with an MCC-recommended counselor might be a better fit than finding someone here.
- Ethiopia can be hard on a tender heart. Street kids and beggars are a common sight, and there is no shame in begging. Recently Addis passed legislation to make living on the street illegal. If that is enforced, who knows what the fate of the street people of Addis will be. Addis is full of animals, some for food, some for labor, and many simply strays. Often, they are abused or neglected. There are many NGOs that offer options to street kids (Make Your Mark and ReTrack are two) and employment to beggars, but there is not much assistance for the animals. Exceptions are The Donkey Sanctuary in Merkato and the Addis Animal Project.
- Significant cultural/religious differences exist regarding gender roles, interfaith relations, stereotypes, etc.
- In Ethiopia, perceptions of LGBTQ+ individuals are largely 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 or mcc.org/yamen