

SALT/YAMEN Service Opportunity

Assignment Title & Partner Organization: SALT/YAMEN: Peacebuilding Assistant – Grassroot Development Initiative

Term: August 17, 2021 – July 21, 2022

FTE: 1.0

Location: Kisumu, 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 support the Grassroot Development Initiative (GDI) in the implementation of a peace project in western Kenya. The duties will include assisting in the training of peer mediators and peer helpers and the training of teachers in conflict resolution (and social interactions); assisting with child protection and restorative discipline initiatives; and encouraging support and cooperation from school administrators and community members.

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.

- Bachelor's degree in peace and conflict studies, law, psychology, or any other social science degree (master's degrees in relevant fields are welcome).
- Strong oral and written English skills.
- Previous experience and/or interest in training youth or leading youth activities.
- Knowledge or interest in child protection and alternative forms of discipline.
- Strong computer skills (should be well versed with MS Office, especially Word and Excel and electronic communication).
- Willingness to live with a host family.
- Willingness to attend/participate in a local church.
- Cultural sensitivity and flexibility to live and work in settings with different cultural priorities and values.
- Willingness to study a new language.

Assignment Narrative:

The project is located in Kisumu county in Western Kenya and seeks to address the culture of violence in Kenyan schools through a school-based violence prevention program which also discourages corporal punishment and promotes restorative discipline. The project activities include the formation of peace clubs in schools, training of peer mediators and peer helpers, training of teachers in conflict resolution (and social interactions), child protection and restorative discipline;

and encouraging support and cooperation from school administrators and community members. The project targets 1,200 learners, 30 teachers, 12 administrators, and 30 parents' association representatives in six public and private primary and secondary schools.

Grassroots Development Initiative (GDI), a community-based organization (CBO), was founded in the year 2008 in response to post-election violence in Kenya. The violence rocked many parts of the country, with Kajulu, where GDI is located, greatly affected. This made some community members and local government administrators think about a local initiative to help stabilize the volatile situation among the different communities living in the area. This team, after tirelessly working and achieving a measure of stability, realized the necessity of establishing a body that would contribute towards bringing the Kajulu people together, reconcile them, and empower them with conflict resolution skills for positive participation in a politics for development. The founding members together with the area administrators mobilized community members and leaders in Kajulu West and after numerous meetings GDI was founded.

GDI began operating in 2009, and in 2010, GDI partnered with MCC to widen its scope in terms of the area of coverage and the target population. Since then, with the financial and capacity-building support of MCC, GDI has been able to work with 26 schools in Kisumu (training both teachers and learners) initiating and helping run peace clubs to address the problem of the culture of violence in Kenyan schools. In the community, GDI has worked with community opinion holders, village women, youth groups, youth sports clubs, youth in the public transport business, and political party leaders. These activities are for the ultimate goal of enabling the community to embrace democratic principles and to use peaceful means to settle conflicts which will lead to peaceful coexistence.

The SALT/YAMENers will want to learn a new language (Swahili) for more effective communication with more people, but in the office and in the schools, English will be the primary language used. Locally, the predominant ethnic group in the area also speak Luo.

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/YAMENers 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 an eight-hour bus ride from Kisumu. The SALT/YAMENers will live with a host family identified before their coming by the MCC office and the partner organization where the participant will be serving. 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 with training teachers in child protection and positive discipline using a government-recommended training manual.

- Attend and assist with the training of peace club members and peer mediators in the six schools.
- Assist in collecting and sharing resources (online) on child protection and positive discipline.
- Assist with the review of GDI's peace club manual (depending on the qualifications of the SALT/YAMENer).
- Assist with processes of planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting, particularly collecting and analysing data and assisting with reports.
- Assist with the implementation of the programme strategies for achieving GDI's outcomes as well as collecting and incorporating feedback for improvement.
- Assist in documentation and dissemination of project stories.
- Assist with increasing GDI's visibility on social media.
- Assist in grant proposal writing and researching potential donors to work with GDI.
- Attend all GDI 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 Kisumu, which is the third-largest city in Kenya with a population of about 720,000. It is inhabited by Kenyans from many different ethnic groups, including a sizeable Asian population, but the Luo ethnic group dominates culturally and numerically. The major economic activities include small-scale farming and fishing, commercial sugarcane growing, rice farming, stone mining, sand harvesting, building and construction industries, plastic manufacturing industries, service providing business (hotels), and small-scale businesses. The poverty rate is estimated at 45%. Unemployment remains high in the city, which provides economic challenges, particularly for youth and women.

Kisumu is on the shores of Lake Victoria, Africa's largest lake, with an elevation of about 3,800 feet. The main type of vegetation is savannah woodlands. Kisumu has an average yearly temperature of 70 degrees Fahrenheit (21° C) and two major seasons. The wet season which runs from April to November and the dry season which runs from December to March. The average yearly rainfall is about 52 inches (1320 mm).

The Mennonite church has a vibrant community in Kisumu, and the GDI office is located on the compound housing the headquarters of the Mennonite Diocese of Kisumu West. There are also churches of different denominations, both Protestant and Catholic. There are good roads and many public transportation options including buses, small taxi "matatu," and motorbikes. Cell reception is good, and one can access the internet via cellular service. Healthcare services are available in Kisumu with more specialized care available in Nairobi.

While Kisumu is an eight-hour bus ride from Nairobi where the MCC Kenya office is located, there are two other MCC staff persons who are much closer. One lives in Kisumu and the other, who is the staff person who relates to GDI, lives just two hours away in Eldoret. 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.

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.
- In Kisumu, like any city, there is some insecurity, but normal measures can be taken to reduce risk. 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 colleagues and neighbours 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.
- There will be significant cultural differences, and in this region Luo traditions and culture will take precedence. We ask the SALT/YAMENers to keep an open mind and always seek clarification if they are unsure of how to act.
- 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 as a way to "get things done."