SALT/YAMEN Service Opportunity

**Assignment Title & Partner Organization:** SALT/YAMEN: Visibility and Communications Assistant – MIDI

**Term:** August 17, 2021 – July 21, 2022  
**FTE:** 1.0  
**Location:** Ngong, 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 with Maasai Integrated Development Initiatives (MIDI) assisting with the development and implementation of a communications plan to increase MIDI’s visibility on social and mainstream media. MIDI works with Maasai communities to improve agricultural, pastoral, and environmental practices in order to increase resilience in the face of droughts and climate change.

**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 the successful completion of a criminal background check.

- Bachelor’s degree in communications, public relations, community development, international relations, agriculture or related field.
- Strong oral and written skills in English.
- Knowledge and/or experience in producing success stories, promotional materials and working with social media is preferred.
- Experience in writing project proposals and concept papers is an advantage.
- Ability to work independently as assigned or cooperatively as a team member.
- Strong computer skills (should be well versed with MS Office, especially Word and Excel and electronic communication).
- Willingness to attend/participate in a local church.
- Willingness to live in a small-town environment with a host family.
- Cultural sensitivity and flexibility to live and work in settings with different cultural priorities and values.

**Assignment Narrative:**

Maasai Integrated Development Initiative (MIDI) is a non-governmental organization formed in the year 2000. The organization was founded by local Maasai leaders to address water & food insecurity needs. Their work has included education for needy children and environmental and drought interventions (including relief food assistance & goats restocking) and recovery. All their
work has the goal of enhancing the livelihoods of Maasai pastoralists in Kajiado County. More information can be found at www.midi.co.ke.

MIDI has been a long-term partner with MCC which has supported their work in food security programs as well as sand dams. MIDI has been focusing on their mission and desire to achieve results and therefore has not been able to devote much time to visibility and website updating. Visibility helps to effectively promote the work of NGOs in the public and in donor eyes but due to limited resources and human capacity, it is often ignored. Without a good communications plan, organizations tend to engage the general public and potential donors blindly. The world of community development in Kenya demands more in terms of visibility through pamphlets, newsletters, documentation of best practices and case studies, photos, use of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), mainstream media (e.g., radio, TV, and newspapers), and frequent updating of the organisation's website.

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 and half hour bus ride from Ngong, where the MIDI office is located. 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 defining and implementing the objectives and goals of a visibility and communication strategy.
- Assist in managing MIDI social media accounts.
- Assist in documentation and dissemination of project stories, including developing materials and mediums for communication and visibility.
- Assist in writing grant proposals and researching potential donors to partner with MIDI.
- Support evaluation processes and feedback for improvement.
- Assist with the climate change resilience project supported by MCC Kenya, particularly with data collection and analysis and reporting.
- Attend all MIDI 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 the annual retreat.

Location Description:

This assignment is located in Ngong town, approximately one and half hours by bus from Nairobi where the MCC Kenya office is located. The geography of the area where MIDI works in the Kajiado West District of Kajiado County is arid and semi-arid lands with temperatures ranging from
54 to 82 degrees Fahrenheit (11 to 28° C). Rains of 12-31 inches (305-787 mm) are received each year in two distinct seasons: March-May and October–December. Rainfall patterns are becoming more unreliable each year, a factor attributed by the climate change occurrences. Economically, the region is increasingly challenged by cyclic periods of drought with increased severity resulting in significant losses to both livestock and crops yields. The altitude varies from 1,300–2,600 feet (396-792 m) above sea level.

Water scarcity is one of the most pressing problems in this part of Kajiado County, where the pastoral Masaai reside. Cattle often have to be taken long distances for water. Women often walk several hours to fetch water for the family, and the water quality from rivers and springs is often poor. The Masaai keep herds of cattle, goat, sheep, and donkeys, but some households have also started cultivating crops recently with the support of MIDI program activities. Crops grown for the household include cowpeas, maize, common beans, and Irish potatoes. The Maasai are a traditionally patriarchal society, with men often having more say in household and community matters than women. In Kenya, transportation is via public means such as buses, small taxi “matatu,” and motorbikes. The country is primarily Christian, so the SALT/YAMENer will be able to find a congregation that they can worship at and associate with.

There will be a language barrier to begin with because the people that MIDI works with are in a rural area inhabited by the Maasai community. In the field, communication in English will be limited, and the SALT/YAMENer will want to learn the local language (Maa or Swahili) to be able to communicate more effectively with project participants. In the office, however, English will be the primary language used.

Nairobi is about a one-and-a-half-hour bus ride from Ngong. It is a large, vibrant, and multi-cultural city with many different kinds of things to do and many restaurants and shops including lots of shopping malls. All major religions are represented in Nairobi, but the majority of people are Christian, so there are many churches representing many different denominations of Protestants and Catholics. Healthcare in Nairobi is of high-quality with many private and public hospitals that can easily respond to emergencies as well as provide routine care. While traffic jams can be a problem in Nairobi, the roads are good with many public transportation options including buses, small taxi “matatu,” and motorbikes.

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.

- The participant will have to use public transportation to get to work and home. During the warm months, it can be a bit uncomfortable and in the rainy months, a bit hectic.

- Especially in the areas where MIDI works, there will be significant cultural differences. In these rural areas, the Maasai traditions and culture will take precedence. We ask the SALT/YAMENer 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."