

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: Agriculture and Nutrition Researcher – SAHAS

Term: August 15, 2023 – July 13, 2024

Date Required: August 15, 2023

Location: Kathmandu, Nepal

Project Theme: FS Food Security and Livelihoods Salt/Yamen

Job Synopsis:

The SALT/YAMENER will serve alongside the Group of Helping Hands (SAHAS) Nepal with a focus on the areas of small-scale agriculture, kitchen gardening, and/or nutrition. The SALT/YAMENER is required to complete formal research through a local university on a relevant topic agreed upon by both SAHAS and the participant. Potential topics include research on how to increase food security and/or how to build climate resilience for marginalized farmers in Nepal. The participant may also assist SAHAS with English-language editing, documentation, reporting and grant writing, as needed.

Qualifications:

All MCC workers are expected to exhibit a commitment to a personal Christian faith; actively participate in a Christian church or community; and dedicated to nonviolent peacemaking.

An invitation to an assignment is contingent on the successful completion of a criminal background check.

- Post-secondary degree in nutrition, food security, agriculture, environmental studies, or another related field is required.
- Fluency in English, both oral and written is required. Willingness to learn Nepali.
- Previous studies and/or knowledge in international development preferred.
- Strong research skills, analytical, and skilled in both writing and editing research findings.
- Documentation of best practices and publication skills, including proposal/grant writing and report writing is an asset.
- Willingness and ability to travel on rough, unpaved roads by public bus and/or motorcycle (as a passenger).
- Ability to walk long distances, up to one day on steep trails, is required for this position.
- Willingness to live in simple accommodations where water and electricity may be rationed.
- Demonstrated ability to have sensitivity and relate to a wide variety of people from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds.

Key Responsibilities:

- Display a learning attitude and develop healthy working relationships with SAHAS staff and members of the community.
- Learn Nepali language and Nepali culture, respecting different Nepali cultures and values.

- Develop and maintain healthy relationships with host families in Kathmandu/Lalitpur.
- Conduct field research on a specific topic within the fields of agriculture, nutrition and/or climate change.
- Observe and support SAHAS's trainings in nutrition and food security.
- Assist SAHAS with documenting best practices, case studies, and lessons learned.
- Assist with editing English-language reports and proposals/grant applications under the guidance of SAHAS staff.
- Undertake other assignments as assigned by the Executive Director of SAHAS and agreed upon with the MCC supervisor.

Assignment Narrative:

The Group of Helping Hands (SAHAS) Nepal is a non-profit organization that has worked with marginalized communities in remote areas of Nepal since 1996, in the areas of health, education, peace and food security and livelihoods/agriculture.

The SALT/YAMENer will begin the assignment with six weeks of orientation and Nepali language learning at MCC's office in Kathmandu before moving into a host family located near SAHAS's office.

The SALT/YAMENer will be on a research visa through a local university while in Nepal. Thus, a major part of the role will be to develop a proposal, conduct primary field research, and write a short research paper on a specific topic within the field of education that is of interest and relevance to both the SALT/YAMENer and to SAHAS. The final research results will be shared with the university, SAHAS, MCC, and MCC's other partner organizations. This is a unique opportunity, especially for those who wish to pursue graduate studies, as it allows the participant to gain tangible experience in skills that are desirable to institutions of higher education.

In collaboration with SAHAS staff and MCC advisors, the SALT/YAMENer will also assist SAHAS with English-language reporting and proposal writing, while learning from SAHAS's work in promoting healthy nutrition, food availability, kitchen gardening, income generation opportunities, and access to maternal and child healthcare services.

Location Description:

SAHAS's main office is in Kathmandu within walking distance of the MCC office. SAHAS's project areas are in a variety of locations throughout Nepal including remote, rural areas that can take days to access by vehicle/motorcycle and/or on foot.

Kathmandu is a bustling city with a population of 1,183,000 (2.5 million if combined with adjoining cities of Lalitpur and Bhaktapur) that enjoys a range of temperatures throughout the year, from cold winters to hot summers. Nepal has a monsoon climate of two seasons. The dry season is from October to May and the wet season is from June to September. Average temperatures in Kathmandu range between 2 to 30 Celsius (35-85 Fahrenheit).

The city enjoys good health facilities for routine health care. Bangkok or Delhi, which are relatively close to Nepal, also have good facilities for major health concerns. There are several Christian churches in Kathmandu Valley, some with services in English as well as Nepali. There are also opportunities for small group involvement for Christian fellowship.

As the biggest city in Nepal, Kathmandu serves as a transportation hub to different parts of the country, and local buses leave several times each day from Kathmandu for other cities and districts in Nepal. Within the city, transportation by taxi is readily available and cars can be hired for longer trips. There is also an extensive bus system throughout the country, as well as numerous local and international flights from Kathmandu each week.

As an international city, Kathmandu offers many different types of cuisine, and European, Middle Eastern, and North American fare can also be found in Thamel and Jhamsikel, popular areas for expats and tourists. Nepali people generally eat rice, lentils, and vegetables twice each day. SALT/YAMENer will be staying with Nepali family and will be expected to eat the same food as the host family.

Kathmandu's long historical association with Buddhism, Hinduism, and other local religions contributes to its beautiful architecture, rich culture, and numerous sites for learning about and interacting with other faiths.

Nepal is full of opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts, from trekking in the Himalayas to rafting in glacier-fed rivers. The Kathmandu Valley itself offers endless opportunities for hiking, trekking, and mountain biking and is bordered on all sides by green hills, national parks, the national botanic garden to the south, and of course, the picturesque Himalayas to the north, which can be seen clearly from the city in the dry season. From Kathmandu, the scenic towns of Pokhara, Chitwan, Dhulikel, and Nagarkot can all be reached by local bus.

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.
- The level of air pollution in the city of Kathmandu has reached very high levels in recent years. In addition, in the dry season, Kathmandu can become very dusty.
- Water is regularly rationed because supply is low during the dry season throughout much of Nepal.
- Nepal has faced some political instability in recent years. There may be times when political strikes will close parts of the country, and travel to and from those areas are not available.
- Especially in project areas, few people will be able to converse in English. Learning Nepali as an ongoing activity is very important for this assignment.
- LGBTQ+ individuals in Nepal have legal protection and are generally accepted in most organizational contexts. However, an openly LGBTQ+ person may face challenges in feeling accepted and supported by the local church and local communities.
- 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