

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 Assistant – MIDI

Term: August 16, 2022 – July 15, 2023

Date Required: August 16, 2022

Location: Ngong, Kenya

Project Theme: FS Food Security and Livelihoods Salt/Yamen

Job Synopsis:

The SALT/YAMENER will serve alongside Maasai Integrated Development Initiatives (MIDI) to help improve food production and income generation among its farmers. MIDI works with community self-help groups to enable farmers to improve water supplies, food production, income, and health.

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.

- Minimum of a 3-yr post-secondary degree in agriculture, agribusiness, agricultural economics, or another related field.
- Strong English Language skills, both oral and written.
- Previous experience in farming/agriculture.
- Knowledge or experience in climate change and conservation agriculture an asset.
- Knowledge in grant and proposal writing an asset.
- Willingness to live in a small town or rural environment with a host family.
- Cultural sensitivity and flexibility to live and work in settings with different cultural priorities and values
- Willingness to study a new language.
- Willingness to attend/participate in a local church.

Key Responsibilities:

- Assist with the climate change resilience project supported by MCC Kenya, particularly with data collection and analysis and reporting.
- Share agriculture related knowledge and ideas with MIDI staff.
- Attend staff meetings and trainings.
- Observe and analyze good farming practices for upscaling purposes.
- Report farmer training needs to the field officers.
- Reporting on achievements and challenges during end month review meeting.
- Assist field officers in organizing farmer field days.

- 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.
- Attend all MIDI team meetings and activities.
- As a full member of the MCC Kenya team, actively participate in any MCC Kenya staff activities such as team meetings and the annual retreat.

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 to increase access to clean water. The SALT/YAMENER will assist the field officers as they work with the self-help groups and small-holder farmers in this rural community. They will assist the field officers at MIDI in the trainings and in also in determining training needs and effective mechanisms for improving farmer yields and profits.

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 local partner organizations to implement their programs.

Currently, the MCC Kenya staff composition is six program staff and two service workers, as well as host three to four SALT/YAMENERS each year. The participant will work closely with the MCC Kenya Representatives and MCC Exchange Coordinator who provide overall support and guidance. While the MCC Kenya team is spread out, they meet weekly for team devotions and a check-in via Zoom, and in-person for quarterly for meetings to share about our work and other emerging issues. 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.

Location Description:

MIDI works in the Kajiado West District of Kajiado County consisting of arid and semi-arid land. Temperatures range 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 Masai reside. Cattle are often 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.

The SALT/YAMENER will be based in Ngong town, approximately one and half hours by bus from Nairobi where the MCC Kenya and Tanzania office, MCC Reps and the MCC Exchange Coordinator are located.

Nairobi is a large, vibrant, and multi-cultural city with many kinds of things to do, many restaurants, shops, and shopping malls. All major religions are represented, 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. Most Kenyans are Africans, comprising four distinct linguistic groups: Bantu, Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic and Cushitic. The country’s geography encompasses savannah, lake lands, 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:

- 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 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.
- 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 is primarily used.
- 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.
- 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 neighbours and colleagues 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.
- A large majority of people hold negative views of LGBTQ+ people. Homosexuality is largely considered to be taboo and against cultural values and morality. Leaders within the dominant religions in Kenya: Catholic, Anglican, Pentecostal and Islamic all condemn LGBTQ+ identity as signs of corruption, disease, and immorality. The Kenya Mennonite Church holds the same view on the issue. Therefore LGBTQ+ individuals will find it difficult to find support within 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."

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