July 19, 2020

Nurturing Minds/SEGA Continued Support During a Pandemic: Education, Hygiene, Food and Social Measures

We are thrilled to announce that SEGA has reopened as of June 29th, in accordance with the Tanzanian government authorization. New measures to prevent COVID-19 spread on campus have been carefully planned and executed. All public and private school systems in Tanzania were closed for a total of 3.5 months. SEGA, together with NM, throughout this period, pursued a holistic approach to ensure students, graduates, staff, the girls in the Modern Girl community outreach program, and their families were informed of the COVID-19 pandemic, maintained connection with SEGA for support, students had education continuity, and all received masks and soap to help maintain good hygiene.

Action and Impact

SEGA and Nurturing Minds have developed together tools to monitor and support the SEGA students, and girls participating in the Modern Girl program during the ongoing pandemic. During their time off campus, we aimed to remind the adolescent girls in our SEGA network that this crisis is temporary and that they should maintain their educational aspirations, which requires that they return to school when schools reopen. Additional resources were provided through phone counseling and educational packages reminding them of their rights.

All together, we have reached over 1,200 girls and several hundred of their family members spread over 25 different communities in Tanzania. This line of support ensured monetary, educational, and health-related sustainability to the SEGA community. It included:

- Educational material for remote learning.
- Educational material on COVID-19 prevention and response in Swahili.
- Weekly phone calls by matrons and/or school counselors, or the local chairperson.
- 3 cloth masks per family and soap.
- Funding support for food and medicine to avoid risky behavior such as trading food for sex.

Health, Hygiene, Food and Social Measures

- In mid-April, the 1st package went out to all 260 SEGA students, 900 girls participating in the Modern Girl program and their 38 mentors. This package included:
Information on COVID-19 prevention and response in Swahili.

- 3,600 cloth masks, thus providing each girl with 3 masks.
- Soap
- Funds given to 33 SEGA families known to be in the greatest need of support for food. 12 additional families were subsequently given support in mid-May.

- By mid-May, we had learned that all students were in dire need of extra support of funds for food which SEGA provided by early June.

- Throughout these months, weekly phone calls from matrons and/or counselors with students was being conducted. This allowed an opportunity for students to share challenges, update on rising needs and mentors to provide positive support and reinforcement of SEGA life skills values.

- Personal letters to the SEGA students were sent in early June from volunteers, sponsors, and US based SEGA clubs reinforcing support and solidarity.

- For onsite campus use, 12 WAND no touch digital forehead thermometers, 200 pairs of gloves, floor tape to help with social distancing and 60 face shields were shipped to SEGA from the USA in mid-June.

**Education**

- Mid-April, academic material, tailored per grade, covering up to 11 subjects was sent to every student to cover the educational curriculum for the April, May duration.

- Material completed by the students was sent back for teachers for grading. Most girls were busy with house chores (cleaning, washing, cooking, gardening, or farming) leaving little time to complete their academic work.

- Early June, a pamphlet with information on women’s health (Education for Life) was provided to all SEGA girls, Modern Girl participants and graduates, reinforcing life skills learned at SEGA.

**School Reopening**

- On 6.26.20, students were picked up from their local communities by private transportation organized by SEGA and transported to school, with an average of 15 students per bus. Buses were allocated to 15 different sites around the country.

- We are thrilled to announce that by Monday, 6/29/20 255/260 students and all staff members returned to SEGA. By early July 259/260 students returned.

- Upon entry to campus every student received a set of 4 masks and toiletries.

- Temperature of all students and staff was checked upon entry to school and daily, for the first 4 weeks.

- 23 hand washing stations with liquid soap were installed around campus.

- A quarantine room has been prepared for students that show COVID-19 symptoms. In which case students will be observed by school nurse. If symptoms continue, school will communicate with Municipal physician for next steps.

- Tanzania Government has mandated the addition of two class hours per day to compensate for the time lost when school was closed.

**Steps to Support COVID-19 Prevention on Campus**
● Students and staff maintain social distancing (2 meters) to the best of their ability at all times, apart from mealtimes.

● School is enforcing a policy of “staying at home if unwell” for staff and “reporting to nurse if unwell” for students.

● **Masks** are worn by all staff, students and visitors at all times. Excluding eating, showering and sleeping.

● **Hand washing** is required before entry to class, upon leaving classrooms, before eating and after restroom.

● Density in **dorms** was reduced by relocating a bunk bed from each dorm, and repopulating these into a new dorm. Thus, reducing density in each dorm. Curtains were removed from large windows to enhance ventilation. Bunk Bed buddies orient themselves in a “head to toe” positioning.

● **Dining modifications** included adding 2 open tents for students to dine at 3 separate locations, thus reducing density during this time (6 students/table instead of 12).

● **Diet** will be supplemented with oranges, baobab juice and ginger. **Cooks** will wear masks and gloves when handling food, serving food in the dining area.

● **Teachers** are wearing overcoats and masks, using projectors, observing social distance and once available will be equipped with 3D printed face shields.

● **Visitors** will be asked to remain outside.

**Supporting SEGA’s COVID-19 Emergency Fund**

● The COVID-19 Emergency Fund has been instrumental in enabling support of our students, partners in the community, staff and campus modifications as we adjust to this new unprecedented reality. Despite the drastic change in circumstances, our goal remains to continue providing quality, holistic education to vulnerable girls in TZ.

● Over $90,000 has been raised through US-based individual contributors, foundations, school partnerships, and two informational webinars. We estimate needing approximately $150,000 to cover all COVID-related emergency needs. This funding is crucial for covering
  
  o Food and medical supplies for individual families in need.
  o Funds for adjusting campus infrastructure to support a COVID free environment (tippy taps, soap, projectors for socially distanced teaching, additional masks, thermometers, etc.).
  o Transportations for returning the students to SEGA safely.
  o Shipment costs for the education packages.
  o Printing materials and development of the education/health materials.
  o Masks, soap.
  o SEGA may purchase tablets to assist with distance learning on campus or if school should be closed a second time during a potential future spike in the virus.
  o Cleaning and sanitizing supplies

Nurturing Minds is a US-based nonprofit whose mission is to educate Tanzanian girls who are poor, marginalized and at-risk of becoming involved in exploitative forms of child labor by providing support to SEGA (Secondary Education for Girls’ Advancement) for the development and operation of a quality secondary boarding school and community outreach program for vulnerable Tanzanian girls. To support NM, go to https://www.nurturingmindsinafrica.org/donate.