

Sample Application

What global challenge will your team address? We encourage student teams to consider the Global Goals as part of their strategic approach.

For this proposed idea, we will be approaching a combination of global challenges: gender inequality through sexual violence against women, limited access to sanitation, and subsequent barriers to good health. In order to address these different challenges, we will be approaching the issue of unsafe and unsanitary washrooms for women in refugee camps, in compliance with the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which outlines the inalienable rights to dignity and safety for all genders and sexes.

In approximately 300 words, describe the global challenge and explain why your team is interested in it and why it is important to resolve it.

The issues of violence against women, sanitation, and good health may often seem uncorrelated, but in refugee camps all over the world, these issues intersect and create an unsafe environment for several refugee women. For tens of thousands of women refugees living in refugee camps, this violence takes place in unsafe bathrooms. Refugee camps often have few bathrooms, which are typically mixed and unprotected. This makes bathrooms hotspots for sexual attacks on women and girls. Unfortunately, the fear and/or consequences of these assaults affect women in several ways. For instance, most of the refugees are from conservative countries where women often cover their hair and wear conservative clothing around strangers. Living and sleeping in the mixed quarters of overcrowded camps, many women are unable to take off their hijab for weeks, developing skin rashes, and avoiding food or drink so they don't have to use bathrooms at night, when they're most at risk of harassment. The stress of refugee life also takes its toll on the menstrual cycle, exacerbated by the stresses created by the lack of privacy in bathrooms. In addition, many of the women are used to using squat toilets with water for washing, and find the Western-style seats in the refugee camps unclean. In fact, the issue of unsafe, open washrooms is often a precursor to poor sanitation, which only adds to the daily list of indignities women face. Many camps lack adequate, sanitary bathrooms with access to water for hand washing. Adequate sanitation in camps is a major factor in the prevention of communicable illnesses.

In approximately 400 to 800 words, provide a brief outline of your team's unique solution to address the chosen global challenge.

With refugee camps being the location and means of both violence against women and poor sanitation and health, it is crucial to approach the issue in a two-fold manner that encompasses two core components: a potential resource that can be provided, as well as a way to introduce and adequately make use of that resource. For several refugee camps, temporary washroom facilities have been set up, and with the growing number of refugees fleeing various conflicts all around the world, a more permanent solution will be required soon. With our proposal we hope to integrate several solutions into one, and contribute to the efforts being made to better the lives of refugees. Before delving into each component, it is important to first outline the importance of each one. The first component will be the physical construction of segregated, concrete washrooms and washing areas for men and women, respectively. The second

component will be a brief education plan that introduces (or further elaborates on) concepts of health and sanitation, for men, women, and children, and supplements the new facilities with important sanitation guides, while also emphasizing the importance and necessity of respecting the boundaries that will be set up. Now, going into more detail, the first component of the proposal is a physical, improved washroom and sanitation system. Currently, the infrastructure of mixed-gender bathrooms indirectly enables sexual violence against women to take place, so the first step to work against this would be to build concrete, gender-segregated bathrooms in close proximity, preferably a central location, to the camps. The closer location and separation of men and women will act as a physical preventative measure to limit interaction and access to private facilities where both genders are present. These bathrooms will have both indoor and outdoor washing areas, for tasks such as washing clothes or cleaning off quickly. In terms of internal structure, both men and women's bathrooms will be divided into stalls, and will have showers, as well as high-rise seated toilets and low-rise squatting toilets, so that individuals of all physical abilities can more easily use the bathroom. For the women's washrooms in particular, there will be areas for mothers to clean and take care of their children, with facilities for diaper changing, baths, and breast-feeding. By building these concrete structures, we hope to establish a more long-term and safe area for both men and women to access and use the bathroom. However, if we are providing a variety of facilities, it is also important to share the intended usage and reasoning behind them. The second component of the proposal focuses more on the health and sanitation aspect of washrooms, and is more explanatory in nature. This education will entail instructors spending time with both men and women and engaging in discussion that explains some of the best ways to conduct personal hygiene. From washing hands to cleaning the body to making sure children are clean and healthy, the instructors will launch into a health and sanitation curriculum that is part hands-on and part instruction. In women's bathrooms especially, the instructors will be there to guide and support women as they manage children and their own personal health, assisting with processes such as menstruation. By building safer and cleaner washroom facilities, we hope to tackle the issue of sexual violence against women in bathrooms by reformatting the location in a way that physically attempts to disallow it. This will also improve the general health and well-being of refugees as they will have access to cleaner, more private washing areas, especially in the case of women that cannot remove their head coverings in public. Furthermore, by providing instruction on daily health routines, instructors will attempt to introduce clean alternatives that will create a safer and healthier environment for refugees to live in. Ultimately, through this two-fold proposal, we hope to create a more permanent solution for problems pertaining to violence and health that are affecting refugees in what is believed (and hoped) to be a temporary setting.