



THE PENNINGTON SCHOOL

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PENNINGTON, N.J., March 2022 --- The Pennington School’s Women in STEM Solving Problems (WISSP) group was selected as one of twenty finalists in the MIT Solv[ED] Youth Innovation Challenge. The competition invited international participants 24 and younger to submit tech-based solutions that address one of their four pillars: learning, health, sustainability, and economic prosperity, as well as other unmet needs around the world. WISSP’s submission, entitled “Hybrid Sanitary Napkin for Economic Change,” detailed the initiative they have been engineering since spring 2019: a part disposable/part reusable product. This hybrid design keeps menstruating girls in the Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi from missing school while also offering refugees the opportunity to work towards economic independence through the making and selling of the reusable pads.

The MIT Solv[ED] Youth Innovation Challenge application process required the Pennington group to answer questions about their problem, propose a solution, and describe future plans, as well as pitch the solution to judges and complete a Q & A interview. The competition received over 800 submissions from 148 countries.

Over thirty current Pennington students and eight Pennington alumni have contributed to the project this school year, with four girls — eleventh-graders Frani Pendus, Gloria Liu, and Maygala Selvisudhakar, and tenth-grader Mia Seyfarth — taking the lead on the MIT Solv[ED] application. The faculty advisor for the group is Susan Wirsig, the director of Pennington’s Applied Science Certificate Program.

The Pennington School is an independent coeducational school for students in grades 6 through 12, in both day and boarding programs. The curriculum is college preparatory, with an emphasis on individual excellence, fostering the development of the whole student through academics, athletics, community service, and the creative and performing arts. More information about The Pennington School can be found at <https://www.pennington.org/>, and more information about WISSP’s initiative can be found at bit.ly/PenningtonWISSP.

Caption for photo: Members of The Pennington School’s Women in STEM Solving Problems club with materials used for their “Hybrid Sanitary Napkin for Economic Change” initiative.