



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Solar Electric Light Fund Selected as a Finalist in the  
Women | Tools | Technology Challenge**

*Ashoka Changemakers Identifies Solar Market Garden as Empowering Innovation*

**Washington, DC – June 10** – The Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF) has been announced as a finalist in the [Women | Tools | Technology Challenge](#) sponsored by [Ashoka’s Changemakers](#) and [ExxonMobil](#) in partnership with [The International Center for the Research on Women](#) (ICRW).

The Challenge received 268 entries, each of which use transformative technologies to catalyze the economic advancement of women. An expert panel of judges selected SELF’s Solar Market Garden project in Benin, West Africa, as one of ten finalists based on three criteria: innovation, social impact and sustainability.

“I immensely enjoyed reading and evaluating this high-caliber pool of transformative innovations,” said Geeta Rao Gupta, former President, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and one of the competition judges. “It was exciting and inspiring to see such a diverse range of initiatives tackling these social issues around the world. I look forward to seeing these innovations grow, scale, and maximize their social impact in advancing women’s economic livelihoods.”

Between June 2 and June 16, anyone can vote for their favorite finalists. Visit [www.Changemakers.com/TechnologyWomen](http://www.Changemakers.com/TechnologyWomen) to view SELF’s entry and the others and to vote. The winners will be announced June 23 and will be invited to participate in collaboration workshops later this year.

To vote:

1. On the above page, simply scroll down and you will see a list of entries with grey checks – you can read short descriptions about the projects by clicking “Preview” next to the titles;
2. Choose your 3 favorite entries – you will be prompted to create a new profile or, if you’re already registered, sign in. There’s a very simple email verification step that helps them prevent voter fraud.

Robert Freling, SELF’s executive director, visited Benin in 2009 to view the project’s progress. Mr. Freling said: “Last June I had a chance to see the remarkable transformation that has taken place in the villages of Dunkassa and Bessassi since the launch two years ago. I immediately noticed a difference in the women, who have filled out since our last encounter. Not only are the women better fed, but so are their families and the rest of the villagers who now have year-round access to a steady supply of highly nutritious fruits and vegetables. To have a recognized institution such as Ashoka Changemakers validate the importance of SELF’s work is a tremendous honor.”

SELF is a Washington, DC-based nonprofit working to reduce energy poverty and combat climate change by bringing solar power and wireless Internet access to remote rural villages in the developing world. SELF has pioneered innovative applications of solar power for drip irrigation in Benin, telemedicine in

the Amazon rainforest, vaccine refrigeration in Rwanda, online distance learning in South Africa, and microenterprise development in Nigeria. These successful pilot projects culminated in SELF's whole-village approach, or Solar Integrated Development model. Since 1990, SELF has completed projects in 20 countries, making it a leader among non-governmental organizations in realizing practical and cost-effective alternative energy solutions for rural villagers.

**About SELF**

The Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF) is a Washington, DC-based nonprofit organization working to end global poverty by bringing solar power and Internet access to the world's poorest people in remote rural areas. SELF utilizes clean, renewable electricity to reduce greenhouse emissions while improving the health, education and welfare of the two billion people living in energy poverty. Since its founding in 1990, SELF has launched sustainable projects in 20 countries, including Benin, Brazil, China, Haiti, India, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. For more information, please visit [www.self.org](http://www.self.org).

Contact:

Lauren Taylor, Communications Director  
Solar Electric Light Fund  
(202) 234-7265  
[lauren@self.org](mailto:lauren@self.org)

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