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# Ashoka's Changemakers, ExxonMobil and International Center for Research on Women Announce Three Winning Solutions to Transform Women's Lives Through Technology

- Women | Tools | Technology Challenge winners are Bicycling Empowerment Network Namibia (Namibia), Lua Nova Association (Brazil) and Solar Electric Light Fund (Benin)
- Challenge received 268 solutions from 67 countries to advance women's economic opportunities through technology
- ExxonMobil and Ashoka's Changemakers to support follow-up activities including collaboration workshops to connect innovators with potential partners

IRVING, Texas--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- Ashoka's Changemakers, ExxonMobil and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) announced today the three winners of the Women | Tools | Technology: Building Opportunities & Economic Power Challenge. The winners were selected from 268 project entries from 67 different countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

The winning entries came from [Bicycling Empowerment Network Namibia](#), Namibia, [Lua Nova Association](#), Brazil and [Solar Electric Light Fund](#), USA (working in Benin).

"It is inspiring to see such a wide range of innovative solutions catalyzing women's economic advancement through technology around the world," said Diana Wells, Ashoka's Changemakers' president. "We are thrilled to have received so many worthwhile ideas through this Challenge, and we are honored to be able to support the groundbreaking work being done by the winning innovators."

The three winners are changing women's lives in a variety of ways. The Solar Electric Light Fund USA (working in Benin) has designed solar-powered drip irrigation systems that enable women farmers in Benin to grow crops during the African nation's annual six-month dry season, boosting their family income and nutrition. Bicycling Empowerment Network Namibia is providing training and equipment for women to run community-based bicycle workshops in Namibia, allowing them to become adept at bicycle mechanics - traditionally a male-dominated field. The Lua Nova Association is providing underprivileged and abused women with the skills they need to help sustain themselves and their families by designing and building their own homes.

The public was invited to vote online for the three best solutions from a group of 10 finalists previously selected by an expert panel of judges for excelling in the areas of innovation,

social impact and sustainability.

"The innovative concepts from the Challenge will make significant improvements in the lives of women in developing countries, allowing them to become key economic players in their communities and better provide for their families," said Suzanne McCarron, president of the ExxonMobil Foundation. "We look forward to helping these innovators gain traction for their ideas so they can ultimately reach more people with their Challenge solutions."

Each winner will be featured on Changemakers.com as one of the strongest ideas for catalyzing women's advancement through technology. The winners will also be invited to participate in collaboration workshops hosted later this year by Ashoka's Changemakers and ExxonMobil. The workshops will include discussions on how to broaden the reach of proven concepts, connect innovators with potential partners and funding opportunities and include site visits to promising projects.

Direction and focus for the Challenge was provided by a research study entitled, "Bridging the Gender Divide in Technology," which was conducted by ICRW and funded by the ExxonMobil Foundation. The paper highlights what needs to be done to improve the way technologies are developed and deployed so they benefit women, enabling them to be more successful in their local economy, stronger leaders and greater contributors to their families.

"These innovations meet women where they live. They are practical, and they will be catalytic in addressing the demands women have in their home life, in their work life and in their community life," said Anju Malhotra, vice president of research, impact and innovation at the International Center for Research on Women. "We're excited to see how these creative ideas will trigger generations of change for women and economies. This is a teachable moment for the world."

#### About Ashoka and Ashoka's Changemakers

Ashoka is the global association of the world's leading social entrepreneurs - men and women with system-changing solutions for the world's most urgent social problems. Ashoka's Changemakers creates opportunities for organizations and individuals to drive meaningful and measurable social change. Through collaborative competitions, Changemakers connects Ashoka's elite fellowship, an online community of social innovators, and pioneering investors to inspire and drive innovative solutions to the world's most pressing challenges. By focusing on how leading social entrepreneurs, government agencies, corporations and citizens solve vital problems and build their communities, Changemakers and its partners spark promising ideas for further development and investment. Learn more at [www.changemakers.com](http://www.changemakers.com).

#### About Exxon Mobil Corporation

[Exxon Mobil Corporation](http://www.exxonmobil.com) (NYSE:XOM) and ExxonMobil Foundation, the primary philanthropic arm of Exxon Mobil Corporation in the United States, engage in a range of philanthropic activities that advance education, health, [women's economic leadership](#) and public policy in the communities where ExxonMobil has significant operations. In the United States, ExxonMobil supports initiatives to improve [math and science](#) education at the K-12 and higher education levels. Globally, ExxonMobil provides funding to help women fulfill their economic potential and combat [malaria](#) and other infectious diseases in developing

countries. Additional information on ExxonMobil's community partnerships and contributions programs is available at [www.exxonmobil.com/community](http://www.exxonmobil.com/community).

About the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)

The [International Center for Research on Women](http://www.icrw.org) is a leading international research organization that works to empower women, advance gender equality and fight poverty in the developing world. To accomplish this, the International Center for Research on Women works with partners in the public and private sectors and civil society to conduct empirical research, build capacity and advocate for evidence-based practical ways to change policies and programs. Learn more about the International Center for Research on Women and its work at [www.icrw.org](http://www.icrw.org).

Photos/Multimedia Gallery Available: <http://www.businesswire.com/cgi-bin/mmg.cgi?eid=6341748&lang=en>

Source: Exxon Mobil Corporation