



*Center for Renewable Energy and Appropriate  
Technology for the Environment*

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**Year One Program Progress Report  
Dining for Women  
August 2014**

**A. Organization Information**

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*Organization Website:* <http://www.createaction.org>  
*Program Title for grant request:* Self-Sufficiency for Village Women  
*Grant Amount requested:* US \$50,431  
*Two-year grant:* Yes

**B. Program Objective and Description**

**Program Objective:**

*Provide a brief description of the program objective pertaining to your DFW program grant request. Describe any changes to your objective from the Letter of Intent (LOI) previously submitted.*

Consistent with the Millennium Development Goals, the objectives of our program are to reduce poverty, promote self-sufficiency, and improve opportunities for women and girls and in the village of Thieneba in Southern Senegal by using appropriate and sustainable technologies and participatory methods to provide protected access to potable water; establish a community garden for year-round crop production; reduce firewood consumption; create income-generating opportunities; and develop the leadership capacity of women and girls.

**Program Description:**

*Provide an overview and brief description of your program and describe any changes to the Letter of Intent (LOI) previously submitted:*

To achieve the objectives of our program as described above, we will work with the community of Thieneba to install a solar powered pump and gravity fed irrigation system to access, store, and distribute ample quantities of free, potable water from a hand-dug well at the cooperative garden site; provide fencing, materials, tools and training in sustainable year-round crop production in cooperative community gardens, using locally provided, non-GMO seeds, organic fertilizers, and compost; teach women and girls to build their own fuel-efficient cook stoves from free local materials, thereby reducing firewood consumption by at least 50 per cent; teach women to plant and

maintain fruit and nut trees for income generation; provide materials and training for a poultry raising project; and conduct leadership training to support self-sufficiency for women and girls.

### **Progress Report Content**

Please answer the questions as completely as possible:

1. *A brief description of what has been accomplished so far, including progress on the goals and objectives of the program DFW is funding. What impact has been made through DFW's funding?*

*CREATE!* programs in Thieneba, Senegal are thriving due to funding from DFW. This report describes the progress of *CREATE!* programs in Thieneba during our first year of funding from DFW. With access to clean and abundant water, the community's 2,500 square meter vegetable garden continues to flourish even in recent drought conditions. Since March, cooperative members have grown crops of lettuce, tomatoes, turnips, okra, eggplants, and peppers. Women have sold almost 200 kilograms of tomatoes and eggplant at local markets during the past few months. In July, *CREATE!* field technicians worked with cooperative members to start rainy season vegetable nurseries. Nearly 200 women participate in Thieneba's agricultural cooperative. Cooperative members work in groups of 45 and divide watering and weeding responsibilities, making the labor very manageable with respect to the members' other household commitments.



*Agricultural cooperative members sort eggplants that they recently harvested from their garden.*

Women in Thieneba now regularly use improved cookstoves that they built for their households, thus reducing the demand for firewood from local trees. Many cooperative members are now expert cookstove trainers, and have assisted *CREATE!* technicians in leading training sessions in other communities. In June, Thieneba cooperative members started over 400 tree seedlings, which they will plant with the assistance of *CREATE!* field technicians during the rainy season. These trees, including acacia, papaya, mango, and cashew, will shade the garden and provide additional sources of food, income, and firewood in the future.



*Seedlings in Thieneba's tree nursery are thriving. Cooperative members will soon plant the seedlings in locations around their community.*

In March, *CREATE!* field technicians led a three-day training in Thieneba on Voluntary Savings and Lending Associations (VSLA). For rural residents who may not be able to read and write and whose needs are rarely met by for-profit financial institutions, VSLA provides an appropriate and transparent system for group saving, lending, and social insurance. Association members save small amounts of money each week and then make loans to each other to cover business, personal, and household costs. In Thieneba, 183 *CREATE!* beneficiaries organized themselves into six VSLA following the initial training. Each VSLA developed its own procedural rules, elected officers, and set an initial share price. By July, each of the VSLA in Thieneba was meeting weekly and granting loans to participants.



*Women in Thieneba attended VSLA training sessions in March. CREATE! field technicians led these trainings.*

All of the accomplishments described above and shown in the accompanying photos have been made possible thanks to funding from DFW. At the end of this report, you can read testimonials from cooperative members in Thieneba.

2. *Has anything changed in regard to the original program goals and objectives? If the budget has changed, please include the new program budget.*

Nothing has changed with respect to the original program goals and objectives or to the budget since our proposal was submitted and approved.

3. *Have you experienced any significant challenges or obstacles in implementation? If so, how are you addressing them?*

As with any project in rural Africa, *CREATE!* programs met some challenges since our last progress report. In each case, *CREATE!*'s Senegalese field technicians were able to work with beneficiaries to find creative solutions to these obstacles. *CREATE!* trains our staff to ensure that they are able to successfully meet any challenges head on.

As addressed in the last report, our Thieneba cooperative has been able to use a well belonging to the village religious leader when well diggers encountered difficulties in excavating a new well.

This spring, many communities in rural Senegal suffered crop loss from hungry locusts. *CREATE!*'s field technicians engineered an ingenious solution to combat locust infestations in Thieneba. The cooperative garden in Thieneba is especially tempting for locusts because it is a green oasis in Senegal's arid landscape. Most farmers treat locusts with chemical pesticides, but our staff found that recycled mosquito nets are very effective locust deterrents. Cooperative members and their neighbors recycled their old mosquito nets, or purchased nets from a local health clinic, and used this netting to cover garden plots. Mosquito nets are a locally and culturally appropriate solution to protect crops from pests. Once community members put the mosquito nets in place, the locusts abated and left the region without causing major damage to crops in *CREATE!* community gardens.



*Recycled mosquito netting protects crops from hungry locusts.*

In early August, two days of heavy rain following a long drought led to some flooding in the Thieneba garden. The flooding destroyed some of the garden's recently transplanted seedlings. Following the flooding, Thieneba residents and *CREATE!* field technicians immediately mobilized to dig additional drainage ditches and plant vetiver, a grass species that can quickly stabilize soils. *CREATE!* anticipates that these interventions will lessen the damage from flooding in the future.

In June, at the end of the long dry season in Senegal, Thieneba residents noticed that the well was not producing sufficient water for garden irrigation. After studying the well, cooperative members chose to hire a well digger to deepen the well by two meters. Now, the well is producing abundant supplies of water. In the future, it may be necessary to deepen the well again if water supplies are low at the end of the dry season.

Generally, these types of challenges are motivating for *CREATE!* field technicians and beneficiaries. Through *CREATE!* training, staff and cooperative members feel prepared to confidently address and resolve any programmatic issues.

4. *Has the timeline for the program changed from the original funding application?*

Our original project dates were shown in the budget as 7/1/13-7/31/15; however, these dates were modified to 8/15/13-8/14/15 to coincide with the timing of the disbursement of grant funds. Please note that we actually received our check on September 3, 2013, and began implementation immediately.

5. *Has funding changed for this program? For example, have you received unexpected funding from another source?*

Funding for this program has not changed.

6. *How much of the original DFW restricted funds have been disbursed and how much remain?*

Of our total two-year grant request of \$50,431, we received \$25,215 in September 2013 for the first year of implementation. Of these funds, all \$25,215 will be disbursed by August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014.

7. *Is your organization or program situation different than presented in the approved proposal? For example, new executive director, significant program staffing changes or NGO affiliation, loss of large funding, or other significant changes?*

Our organization and program situation are substantially the same as presented in the approved proposal and six-month progress report. We have since added one new member to our Board of Directors and made small staffing changes in our US office. *CREATE!* has also recently hired Djibil Diop, a graduate of the Center for Professional Training in Horticulture in Camberene, Senegal, as an Agricultural Field Technician Trainee.

**Additional Project Information**

*Photos of current participants and personal experiences from anyone involved in the program.*

Thieneba cooperative President Mere Top is very appreciate of *CREATE!*'s programs in her community, noting, "Before *CREATE!* installed the pump we women would spend from morning until afternoon drawing water by hand. Now we all come to the garden site in the evening and take water to our homes just by turning on the tap. We are so happy!"



*Thieneba cooperative President Mere Top sits in the garden that she helps manage.*

Thieneba resident and cooperative member Seynabou Diop is pleased that working in the cooperative garden gives her easy access to fresh vegetables. She told us, “Before lettuce cost us 200 CFA a bunch (about 40 cents) and we had to walk to the neighboring town of Gossas to buy it. Now, with *CREATE!*’s help, we produce our own high-quality lettuce in sufficient quantities. Produce is now accessible for everyone and provides a good business opportunity for cooperative members, who can grow it year round.”

Anta Baba and Ndeye Top, both members of the agricultural cooperative in Thieneba, are also pleased with the progress of their cooperative garden. Anta told us, “Through *CREATE!*, we see our savings grow and our living conditions improve with the sale of vegetables.” Ndeye added, “With the help of *CREATE!* technicians, we have the training and practical experience to manage garden activities ourselves.”



*Members of the Thieneba cooperative group share their thoughts about garden programs with *CREATE!*’s field technicians.*

Beneficiaries in Thieneba also appreciate the security and ease of the *CREATE!* VSLA program. Awa Diouf notes, “VSLA is participant-focused and really addresses the needs of women in our community. I also appreciate the added security of the lockbox and three separate key holders.”



*During the training in Thieneba, women learned about the procedures and strategies used in VSLA.*

On his visit to Thieneba in April, *CREATE!* Executive Director Barry Wheeler asked a gathering of 60 cooperative members if they had built an improved cookstove in their homes. Barry notes, “an enthusiastic sea of hands was raised, waving, laughing, and happy!” The women also cheered the savings in wood they realized by using the improved cookstoves. After words of appreciation on all sides, the women sang and danced to a song including the lines, “Many thanks to *CREATE!* *CREATE!* brought us a pirogue (African canoe) and taught us to fish!”



*CREATE!* Executive Director Barry Wheeler meets the Thieneba cooperative President, Mere Top.

*A blog-style summary of impact to be used in our communications.*

With a DFW grant of \$50,431, *CREATE!* is helping women and girls in the village of Thieneba establish cooperative community gardens that produce tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, potatoes, and lettuce year-round for home use and sale. Garden cooperative members now have access to abundant quantities of affordable water pumped using renewable solar energy. Cooperative members use basins and a gravity-fed irrigation system to maintain the adjacent 2,500 square meter vegetable garden. *CREATE!* has also provided training to women in Thieneba on the construction and use of fuel-efficient cook stoves - these stoves have helped women reduce their firewood use by half. Women are also caring for thousands of tree seedlings that they will plant, with the assistance of *CREATE!* field technicians, during the rainy season this year. Through Voluntary Savings and Lending Associations (VSLA), women in Thieneba are able to save some of their profits they make by selling produce grown in their vegetable garden.

*Any message you would like us to convey to our membership and donors about the impact our grant is having on those being served and/or your organization and its mission.*

The mission of *CREATE!* is to help rural populations in the developing world cope with water, food, and fuel shortages resulting from the impact of climate change on their communities. In the village of Thieneba, *CREATE!* is using a participatory approach to meet the needs of local women in the areas of water, food, and fuel resources.

After *CREATE!* provided access to clean water through the rehabilitation of an existing well, Thieneba residents have initiated several programs to contribute to their own development. Village women, with guidance from *CREATE!* Agricultural Technicians, have established a 2,500 square meter vegetable garden. For the first time ever, year-round vegetable cultivation is possible with access to a reliable source of affordable water pumped using renewable solar energy. The vegetable garden produces tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, potatoes, and lettuce that will improve nutrition and provide income generation opportunities.



*Thieneba cooperative members work in shifts to water crops, such as these tomatoes.*

*CREATE!* field technicians have also trained women in the construction, use, and maintenance of fuel-efficient cook stoves. These stoves, which cost nothing and are constructed from local materials, reduce firewood consumption by half. In addition to improving the health and safety of the home, the use of these cookstoves allows women to avoid daily searches for firewood and the high costs of purchased firewood. *CREATE!*'s programs are sustainable because our staff members include beneficiaries at each stage of the development process, including planning, implementation, and monitoring. By empowering women to fully participate in development programs, *CREATE!* ensures that beneficiaries "own" the project in perpetuity.



*CREATE! Chief Operating Officer Louise Ruhr shares tea with Thieneba cooperative members.*

*CREATE!* Executive Director Barry Wheeler visited Thieneba in April. This was his first visit to the Thieneba site since *CREATE!* field technicians installed the integrated water system in the Thieneba community garden in December 2013. During his visit, Barry spoke with the President of the Thieneba Women’s Cooperative, Mere Top, and former and current village leaders. Thieneba residents expressed their appreciation to Barry and the *CREATE!* team for all that they have done in collaboration with the community to provide them with access to abundant quantities of fresh, clean water from their well, thanks to the solar powered pumping system that provides more than 2000 gallons of water daily.



*CREATE! Executive Director, Barry Wheeler, discusses garden watering schedules with cooperative members and CREATE! field staff.*

This spring and summer, *CREATE!* introduced additional income generating projects and leadership training for women and girls. *CREATE!* field technicians helped cooperative members establish fruit and tree nurseries – thereby introducing other means of income generation. In addition, *CREATE!* staff members held trainings on Voluntary Savings and Lending Association (VSLA) procedures. VSLA permits women to help each other save money and make small investments in various community endeavors.

After one year of successful agricultural and cookstove-based programming, *CREATE!* still has work to do in Thieneba. The next stage of our DFW-funded program includes introducing poultry raising initiatives to Thieneba's garden cooperatives. Cooperative members will be able to raise and sell poultry to supplement their incomes and the diets of their families. Thieneba cooperative members are currently drafting a business plan for their poultry project and are excited about this new opportunity! *CREATE!* field technicians will continue to provide ongoing training and assistance for Thieneba cooperative members.

*CREATE!*'s field team has done exemplary work in Thieneba, realizing the vision and bringing the philosophy, theories, and goals of *CREATE!* into action. With the assistance of our field staff, women in Thieneba are empowered to improve their lives and the lives of their families. Community residents are so pleased with the success of the project so far that village leaders are currently planning to expand the gardens and other programs. This renewed commitment will permit the expansion of existing cooperative groups — allowing more women to participate — and will ensure that *CREATE!*'s programs in Thieneba will thrive for years to come.

#### **High-resolution JPG formatted photos**

We have attached to this document high-resolution JPG formatted copies of the photos that we embedded in this report.