
Economic Sustainability in John 6:12-13 for Empowering the Typical Nigerian (Yoruba) Woman and Her Household

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Abstract

This article proposes empowering the typical Nigerian (Yoruba) Woman for managing waste and promotes value for the discarded in view of John 6:12-13. It sees the valuability, vitality and economic benefit in the management of left-overs than as it were. The typical Nigerian (Yoruba) woman, wrongly termed in the 20th century as docile, in the 21st century is prized because of her contribution to the family, society and national economy. Traditionally and domestically not minding hard economic times, she is at the repose to fend for the family's food and consumables, while the management of table wastes and left-overs in the home-front is also her concern. Providentially, biblical attestation to management and valuability of left-overs in John 6:12-13 would be a useful key to her exploring left-overs for family economy sustainability even in the face of societal hardship. An analysis of John 6:12-13 is also a leeway for the typical Nigerian (Yoruba) woman for pursuit of SDG goals within the family unit.

Key Words and Phrases: - SDG Goals; Socio-Economic; Left-overs; Food-Waste; the Nigeria (Yoruba) Woman and her household

Background

Economizing for the reason of meeting household needs/use has been a preserve of the typical Nigerian (Yoruba) woman in her household. For instance, one grew up to see one's mother

and as observed in others, conservation of food plus other consumable items and safekeeping them for subsequent time of usage. One could also remember and with mixed feelings that even when you are not fully satisfied at table, the typical Nigerian (Yoruba) woman will rather keep a reserve, that no one may touch until who knows time! Hence, the typical Nigerian (Yoruba) woman has an imbued culture of sustaining her family, for as long as man could remember. Usually, the Nigerian (Yoruba) woman keeps her home duly fed from such reserves and as the primary caregiver in the family.¹⁰² In fact, she could go hungry, than for her household not to be fed!

At times, the typical Nigerian (Yoruba) woman¹⁰³ have abundant left-overs in her household particularly at harvests times and at every level of food production. At such periods much left-overs are generated which could go for other useful purposes, or given for the care of the needy, the neighbours or as stewards of God's bountiful harvest, donated to religious houses. Mostly however, leftovers that could not be kept are sold off at give-away prizes and or eventually disposed-off as waste. Instead for this latter option to constitute environmental risk and health hazard to the community, it could be preserved and or converted for its economic values. As it is, one can argue that the preservative capacity of the Nigerian (Yoruba) woman in sustaining her available consumables is directly proportional to her little ability. Thus, in pursuit of economic enablement, it becomes imperative to seek for ways to assuage the Nigerian (Yoruba) woman burdens and pave a safe-way for her life sustainability. Accordingly, this paper proposes Jesus' management of leftovers in John 6:12-13 as a discretionary

¹⁰²Nwudego N. Chinwuba. "Woman and her role in modern Nigeria" accessed from <https://guardian.ng/opinion/woman-and-her-role-in-modern-nigeria/> on 15th March 2023.

¹⁰³See Cheneson Mukora-Mangona, "Do we need to define who the African Woman is?" in <https://www.linkedin.com/uas/login?> of 17th July 2019 and accessed on 11th March 2023

mark 'semeia' for the Nigerian (Yoruba) woman attain her household SDGs.

Key words interpretation: - SDG Goals; Socio-Economic; Religious; Left-overs; the Nigeria Woman and her household

SDG Goals

It is the commissioned projection for global pursuit of development among subscribing nations of the United Nations. It was declared in September 2015 as attainable by 2030 along with sustainability of the creation system in shape and place. The SDG (Sustainable Development Goals), replaces the former MDGs (Millennium Development Goals).¹⁰⁴ SDG developmental goals are categorized into 17 which must be carried out without endangering the environment and viable for future usages. The aim is to pursue developmental goals without compromising the capacity of upcoming generations at meeting their needs.¹⁰⁵ At the premium, SDG campaigns and aims at actualizing liveability¹⁰⁶ for all humanity and creation both now and in the future.¹⁰⁷ Fundamentally also the Nigerian (Yoruba) woman, within her household and premised on John Chapter 6 verses 12 and 13, could play significant role for the household socio-economic sustenance of the SDGs.

Socio-Economic...

The term "socio-economic" in this article describes the intertwined nature of the social life of any community and its

¹⁰⁴Amy Jadesimi. "Nigeria and the Sustainable Development Goals: Setting the Course to 2030" in *Forbes* Nov. 26 accessed from <https://related.forbes.com/search.cfm?> on 10th February 2023.

¹⁰⁵Matijevic Dalia. "A Sustainable Development Concept in the Light of the Kingdom of God" in *KAIROS: Evangelical Journal of Theology*. Vol. XIV, No. 2, 2020; p.70.

¹⁰⁶Somewhere in the paper, I call this "live and let live".

¹⁰⁷Viktorija Skvarciany, Daiva Jureviciene and Gintare Volskyte. "Assessment of Sustainable Socioeconomic Development in European Union Countries" in *Sustainability*, 2020. 12, 1986: p.1 accessed from doi10.3390/su12051986 on 2nd March 2023.

economic dynamics. Herein, it is posited that socio-economic well-being will be in place where the driving force is a prudent management of the available resources of God by clinical economic factors, and that with the upcoming generation in view. Fortunately, the Nigerian (Yoruba) woman, placed in her little corner subscribes to the axiom of 'live and let live' for humanity and habitat in contemporary generation and for the upcoming ones. She ardently defends her household and would prefer to be hungry on their behalf.

Left-overs

In this context are the food wastes and remains of food products, processed and end-products of foods left after human consumption at the tables and or in the farms. Particularly the typical Yoruba woman at the tables and in the harvest seasons of the husband's farm engages in the care of end-products and left-overs. The left-overs could result due to overabundance yields consciously or unintentionally, and sometimes due to mismanagement of food resources available. Hence, left-overs or food waste do arise

...as a result of the raw or cooked food items before, during and after meal preparation in farmlands, households, manufacturing points, in retail and food services sectors. These are often left to rot away....They are the avoidable food excesses often thrown out, be it edible or uneaten portion of lunch or those allowed to spoil...¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸www.ecoissues.ca/The-Environmental-Costs-of-Throwing-our-Food-Away last modified 15 May 2015 and accessed 19/9/2016. See also "Food Waste Management: Working Together for a Cleaner South Africa" www.environment.gov.za accessed 19/9/2016 as cited by Samson O. Dada in "The Economic And Ecological Implications Of John 6:11-13 For Church And Civil Leadership In Recession Times" *Journal of African Society for the Study of Sociology and Ethics of Religions (JASSOSER)* Vol. 5&6, June and Dec. 2019: 135-152.

So, left-overs and food waste in this context speaks of the by-products of foods during processing and/or consumption activities on-going daily in the homes and households of Nigerian (Yoruba) woman.

The Nigeria (Yoruba) Woman and her household

The Nigerian woman is not docile as the 20th century historical literature would want one to believe. To categorise her as such is flagrantly erroneous as Falola in her piece noted. In “The role of Nigerian Women” Falola posited that to present Nigerian woman as poor and living at the threshold of poverty is a misconstrued view. The negative view according to Falola came with the 20th century coloniality and the patriarchy attached to it, which attempted to alter the gender relations in the society. Falola noted that in the pre-colonial times, the Nigerian woman played significant roles in her household and sometime held significant title in public and civil leadership.¹⁰⁹ As at then, the Nigerian woman was wealthy and command commercial relevance in the community. According to her, in the pre-colonial era the Nigerian woman even has access to landed properties despite the patrilineal family system. Falola cited coloniality as responsible for the gender imbalance in the pretense of civilization, to which this writer would want to agree. Falola’s description aligns with Mukora-Mangona’s presentation of the African woman,¹¹⁰ (of which the Nigerian (Yoruba) woman is a major part). Mukora-Mangona a social change agent, involved in women empowerment, present the African woman as a creative, multifaceted being, who is bold, beautiful and brilliant. According to her, the African woman

¹⁰⁹Toyin Falola, “The role of Nigerian Women” in *The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica* accessed from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/role-of-nigerian-women-1360615> on 15th March 2023.

¹¹⁰Cheneson Mukora-Mangona, “Do we need to define who the African Woman is?” in <https://www.linkedin.com/uas/login?> of 17th July 2019 and accessed on 11th March 2023.

should no longer be symbolized as poor, powerless, pitiable and rural; citing Everjoy Win (2009), African women are cultured and values customs, moral dignity, mannerism and having unique lifestyles belonging to them.

Interestingly the African woman, (i.e. the Nigerian (Yoruba) woman) is also entrepreneurial in character. Accordingly, Nevin¹¹¹ wrote that her entrepreneurial spirit in her is strong and account for 41% of microbusinesses, which amount to 23million female entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Even then, the Nigerian woman pursues all available means to sustain her home within her reach. Hence, empowering her will greatly enhance the economy of the society and contribute to realizing of the UN SDG goals. This makes the “Durian” initiative in Imafon, Ondo State Nigeria comes handy as one of the means of reference and enablement. The pioneer program “Durian” is aimed at equipping the womenfolk in learning cropping and livestock farming. In it, women learn various crafts and particularly the conversion of waste materials to wealth for sustainable livelihood.¹¹² Durian trains women and leverage on their creative minds. It enlightens the women on the positive use of wastes in wooden materials, fabrics and foodstuffs. In essence, the initiative has become a life-saving avenue out of the despondent and powerless African woman portrayal of the 20th century, and as such lifting community women out of subjugated poverty and giving them hope for a sustainable future.

¹¹¹A. S. Nevin, “Impact of Women on Nigeria’s Economic Development” in *Economic Impact of Good Governance* accessed from www.pbc.com/ng on 14th December, 2022.

¹¹²Susan Galer. “Sustainable Business Innovation from Rural Women in Nigeria” in <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sap/2023/02/08/sustainable-business-innovation> of 8th February 2023 and accessed on 16th March 2023.

Furthermore, acknowledging the innate capacity of African woman is in the story of Adejoke (female) as told by Opara.¹¹³ Adejoke grew up with her mother in the local part of Yorubaland where weaving of traditional Aso-Oke is the trade. While young, she participated in art and trade and during her education days was committed to learning it. At the completion of her tertiary education, Adejoke went for her One-Year national service obligation for all the graduating Nigerian youths (popularly referred to as NYSC). Meanwhile during the compulsory camping period for all new entrants into the NYSC scheme Adejoke became reckoned by the authorities, for her skills and was engaged to train many others through the NYSC skill acquisition programme. On the completion of her one-year NYSC she fully began the Aso-Oke trade and proceeded to register her own weaving and Aso-Oke trading company. For some time she has found repulsive the indiscriminate dumping of wastes in her community and had been seeking for ways out of the mess. Consequently, she took steps to register a waste conversion company - (Planet 3R, with 3R representing reduce, reuse and recycle). Meanwhile she was hesitant in commencing operations until the shut-down of the Covid-19 era forced her Aso-Oke business to collapse. Thereafter, Adejoke became forced to look for an option of survival, wherefore she turned to collection of sachet water disposed nylons. In the course of time, this nylon wastes were reprocessed with bits of cotton thread and soon became her resource materials for her new products.

The initiative became a mind-boggling way-out for her sustainability and addressing indiscriminate waste disposal and particularly nylon in her community. Besides, it is an attestation to the tenacity, resilience and adaptability of the Nigerian (Yoruba) Woman for sustainability. Currently, Adejoke exports her products and has become sustained, also

¹¹³Gabriella Opara, "How Adejoke Lasisi's Passion for Aso-Oke turned into a Sustainable Solution for Her Community's Waste Problem" from <https://bellanaija.com> of 1st April, 2023.

contributing to the welfare and economy of her community by rescuing her society from abuse of environment that causes ill-health. This writer hence wishes to submit that aside religious passion, inert sustainability creativity and initiative is endowed in the Nigerian (Yoruba) woman. This is her characteristics for sustenance in life, home and family affairs.¹¹⁴ Accordingly, the Nigerian (Yoruba) woman by her vision, mission and aspiration pursues the economic sustainability of her family and community. In actual fact, she cares and live for the others in her home to stay alive and by this commands respect among her peers in the society. Meanwhile, the spiritual fervor of the Nigerian (Yoruba) woman will also be a contributory factor and beneficial for her economic sustainability.

John 6:12-13 in its Contextual Background

The Gospel of John and its background

The author of John's gospel had a rich description and mastery of Palestine and Jerusalem in his accounts.¹¹⁵ The Gospel of John may also be essentially described as gospel of sustainability. This is because it is filled with pragmatic events which laid hope-filled foundation for readers' foreseeable future experience that find direction in the Messiah. Lewis posit that the content of John's gospel is full of ironical expressions that is loaded with layers of meanings,¹¹⁶ and which according to Barclay, has the most penetrating gaze into eternal mysteries and the mind of God. The author of John's Gospel achieved this by exempting some earlier stories in the synoptic gospels,

¹¹⁴Nwudego N. Chinwuba. "Woman and her role in modern Nigeria" accessed from <https://guardian.ng/opinion/woman-and-her-role-in-modern-nigeria/> on 15th March 2023.

¹¹⁵T. N. Akinola, *Bright Future Bible Commentary on the Gospel of John*. (Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria: Publications Department of the Nigerian Baptist Convention), 2018: p. 2.

¹¹⁶S. M. Lewis, "The Gospel according to John and the Johannine Letters" in *New Testament New Collegeville Bible Commentary*. Vol. 4. Series Editor: Daniel Durken. (Collegeville Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2005), p.5.

and introduced new ones presented in vivid details of an eye witness, consequently channeling its uniqueness among the gospels.¹¹⁷ Therefore, the gospel of John cannot be read without a careful understanding of the ‘sustainable’ literary expressions and chosen words that marked its purpose, content and context of the gospel which generally is agreed was written about AD100 and from Ephesus.¹¹⁸ At that time, the gentile world have embraced Christianity, and the religion was no longer more Jewish but overwhelmingly gentile with Hellenistic background. In essence, the gospel of John must be understood as casted in the concept and premise of truth that is familiar to the world of the author’s addressees and context. Moreover, it has been the tradition of the Church from ancient times that the author of the gospel of John was referred to as John the beloved, to which this writer also subscribe.

i. *John Chapter 6 verses 12 and 13 in its pericope*

In an earlier article, Dada had acknowledge that the Chapter 6 of John enjoyed the privilege of being the longest chapter in this gospel account.¹¹⁹ The book featured Jesus ministry within the Galilee whose inhabitants are peasants, and as such that sustainable means of livelihood is arable farming for food. In essence, the text-of-study pericope is embedded in the account of the feeding of 5000 men at a stand (a miracle that appeared across all four Gospels), and very significant for sustainable care and empowerment in such environment. The verses under study:-

¹¹⁷William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, (Edinburgh, Scotland: The Saint Andrew Press, 1955), xxiv.

¹¹⁸Ibid, p.5. See also William Barclay, p. xxi.

¹¹⁹Samson O. Dada in “The Economic and Ecological Implications Of John 6:11-13 For Church And Civil Leadership In Recession Times” *Journal of African Society for the Study of Sociology and Ethics of Religions* (JASSOSER) Vol. 5&6, June and Dec. 2019: 144-145.

were preceded by Jesus test posed to Philip (who comes from the area) about feeding of crowd coming towards them (v.5-10). Philips' response and backed up by Andrew was skeptical but with a proviso from Andrew that a lad was there having five barley loaves and two small fishes! (V.5-10).

Nevertheless in verse 11, Jesus took the bread and gave thanks to God for its provision; in the same manner he took the fishes, blessed and distributed it to the people. By this singular act, this writer in alliance with biblical faith perspectives, wish to surmise that, little could be much when received with grateful heart of thanksgiving to the divine. It stands eternally true in the law of sowing and reaping which often become a basis for witnessing greater exploits in faith journey and economic empowerment. Even then, the evidence that over five thousand men (aside women and children were fed) shows the miraculous power of Jesus at work. Meanwhile, when source of blessings increases, how it is dispensed and consequently managed is the major concern of this study as found in verses 12 and 13 of John Chapter 6.

John Chapter 6 verses 12 and 13 (Text Transliterated)

¹² Ōs de eneplēsthēsan, legei tois mathētais autou. Synagagete ta perisseusanta klasmata, hina mē ti apolētai. ¹³ Synēgagon oun kai egemisan dōdeka kophinous klasmatōn ek tōn pente apton tōn kpithinōn ha eperisseusan tois bebrōkosin.

Literal Translation:-

Verse 12: - When they were all satisfied, he ordered the disciples to gather together the abundant broken pieces so that nothing will be wasted;

Verse 13: - Therefore they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with the barley loaves left-over of those who had eaten.

*Contextualising John 6 verses 12 and 13 for Nigeria (Yoruba)
Woman household economic empowerment goes thus -*

a. In verse 12, *Synagagete ta perisseusanta klasmata* - means “gather together the abundant broken pieces.” This was an imperative instruction from the Lord to his disciples; it is an act of conservation and with keen foresight for economic sustainability and empowerment. Keener¹²⁰ commenting on the verse noted that in the Greco-Roman world and among the Jewish teachers, wasting of resources is abhorred. However, Jesus motive was beyond abhorrence and repugnance of wastes but care of the earth and for sustainable further usage, which is economic in nature. So, it is instructive that the concern of Jesus was not limited to meeting the appetite of the crowd of people that have gathered to him. Actually, Barclay commenting on the event rightly observed, that this act of Jesus was part of the signs (*semeia*) of the real world of the unseen God,¹²¹ which to this writer substantiate Jesus’ Messiahship and as Bread of Life.

For the Nigerian (Yoruba) woman, it is no longer enough to labour to meet the household appetite but purposefully plan the management of the leftovers for sustainable purpose and possible economic empowerment. The grace of provision coming from the Lord must be acknowledged, but the ethical, economic and religious notion of caring for leftovers will sustainably be of help in other vital ways. This would impact the UN SDG goals of 2030 and ensure that oncoming generations are equipped for the future. Thus, the sign of the miracle in John 6:12-13 was not just for then and reality of the unseen world of the unseen God, but indicates that God has plan for the future sustainability of humanity (usually referenced SDG goals) and as noted inter-alia. The Nigerian (Yoruba) woman’s conservatory effort will safe for

¹²⁰Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background- New Testament*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Electronic Copy.

¹²¹William Barclay referred to this as “*semeia*”, indicative of the sign of the real world of the unseen God.

other days and by other forms what is not utilized at the moment, could go for economic empowerment instead of wasting away and could further raise environmental issues.

b. However, the above is not just instructive for the Nigerian (Yoruba) woman and her household, but all believers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and in whatever vocation. This writer may like to say that there is no food remainder/leftovers, too small a piece, which cannot be valuably utilized in another way or form or turned to economic value. In addition, though the Yoruba woman in her household is often reckoned as prudent sustainer and administrator of her household resources, the duty becomes highly instructive for all Christian household. In essence resources and leftovers are to be sustainably managed as valuable ethics of faith, with economic foresight and from the religious perspectives.

c. As observed yet in verse 12, *hina mē ti apolētai*, that is, “so that nothing be wasted” – indicates that the gathering of the pieces was to avoid it being wasted. No waste is a waste! As part of the SDG goals, humanity generally ought to explore and educate themselves about the good and economic means of utilizing leftovers in such a way as to benefit the society. The household of every Nigerian (Yoruba) woman should educate themselves on alternative usages of leftovers for economic empowerment and to partake of the SDG goals and mission.

d. Yet in verse 12, Jesus’ directive also becomes significant, not just for the disciples, but for all. That the womenfolk and children (in Yoruba woman household) are often designated to care for the domestics and packing leftovers is ancient and cultural. The pursuit of sustainability close to Sustainable Development Goals and Vision 2030, from available leftovers is a solemn invitation of all and sundry, irrespective of gender, status, race or tribe, to economic empowerment.

e. In verse 13, *sunegagon oun* means, “so they gather together”. The word, *sunegagon* is verb indicative aorist active in 3rd person plural form. Hence, “so they gathered together”, and that is in reference to the crowd for the gathering of the piece of leftovers. Even though the disciples were instructed of the Lord, but the eventual acts was carried out by the crowd of people. Of course, in attendance besides the twelve disciples would have been other followers of Jesus Christ also, but principally the women and children. Nevertheless, the sustainable care of leftovers goes beyond the Nigerian (Yoruba) woman, or a few individuals in a particular household. All members of the household must embrace the care of leftovers, for the reason of its socio-economic empowerment and environmental values but also for ecological and ethical pursuits which are part of the sustainable socio-economic SDG goals. Beside the household and Nigerian woman, the national leaders in the country, professional bodies, business executives, the religious leaders, the civil society, eating outlets and confectionary bodies, the rich, the poor, high and low of the society, irrespective of gender, tribe and location must embrace the care of leftovers for its socio-economic values and for empowerment.

Economic Benefits in John 6:12-13 for the Nigerian (Yoruba) Woman towards SDG Goals

In the light of the foregoing, the Nigerian (Yoruba) Woman appropriating economic values in John 6:12-13 could address the following deducible SDG goals 1, 2, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15, and 17 of the UN Commission within her household:-

Goal 1. Mitigate poverty;

Goal 2. Reduce hunger, pursue food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable Agriculture;

Goal 6. Work for availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation;

Goal 8. Pursue sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth;

Goal 11. Ensure her settlements are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable;

Goal 12. Work towards sustainable economic consumption and production patterns in the home;

Goal 13. Would have participate in combatting climate change and its impacts, even economically;

Goal 15. Contribute to protecting, restoring, promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, reduce biodiversity loss; and benefit economically; and

Goal 17. Will work for household economic implementation and revitalization from biblical perspectives.

Conclusion

This study has deduced a scope in John 6:12-13 for sustainable economic empowerment of the typical Nigerian (Yoruba) Woman in her household. It has seen the passage as model for surplus harvest management of leftovers and partially fulfilling the UN Commission SDG Goals. In essence, the miracle of surplus provision in John 6:12-13 is in purview for sustainable end and in addition could be economically beneficial. Meanwhile, it does not bring sustainability in the home-fronts when not complemented in valuable management of leftovers which mostly are the preserve of the Nigerian (Yoruba) woman.

Consequently, this paper also serves as a clarion call to all and sundry to nurture and empower the womenfolk, and the households for sustainable economic management of the contemporary household and the generations yet unborn.

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