

**Indigenous Skills And Technology As A Tool For Achieving A Waste
Reduction And Sustainable Environment In Nigeria With Focus On
Weaving**

Presented by

LASISI, Adejoke Abiodun

The State of textile industry in Nigeria, their unique textile traditions, conditions prevailing for promotion of recycling products, how technology can improve weaving and what can be expected from international cooperation.

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Nigeria's textile industry is without a doubt one of the largest in Africa; it's obviously a feeder for the country's \$4.7 billion fashion market, which accounts for 15% of the continent's production. However, due to the closure of large manufacturers, the sub-sector is now a ghost of its former self, with the remaining businesses working at considerably below installed capacity. Nigeria had 175 plants in 1980, but only about 25 in 2019.

This decline in the industry contributed majorly to the folding up of most textile factories. For instance, I grew up in an environment that valued and promoted hand-woven textile, where it represents and depicts the core value as well as promotes the cultural heritage of the people of Yoruba-land. However, in Nigeria, especially in the early 2000s, the rate at which people demanded hand-woven textiles declined drastically due to the high level of importation and dependent on foreign textile products.

Most textile factories were forced to liquidate, which also automatically made many local weavers lose their major or if not their only source of income to the diminishing change. Nigerians drifted towards the imported textile products due to their durability and the diversity in their products. People opted for it and no longer patronizes the locally made ones.

However, Nigerians started to come up with innovations and also diversifying their products. For example, in Yoruba-land, the Yoruba cloth weaving, also known as Aso-Oke, is a traditional fabric that is quite popular due to its uniqueness. Although there are other ethnic groups in different communities across Nigeria that produces local textile, many of them have these innovations and diversities in their textile products when compared with their foreign counterparts.

The Aso-Oke, which is hand-woven, is usually made on the broadloom, and narrow-strip loom which is then weaved into local fabrics. With our innovative ideas, we have been able to transform this Aso-Oke into beautiful finished products such as bags, shoes, key holders, earrings, and so on.

According to the Global Waste Index, Nigeria produces around 60 million tonnes of waste each year, with less than 10% being recycled. One of the most serious environmental issues is the over 90% of garbage deposited on the side of the road and within drainage channels, particularly single-use plastics. It contaminates groundwater, pollutes the oceans, kills animals, and has a host of other severe environmental effects.

Climate change is here, and it is having a wide range of repercussions that will affect almost every human in the world in progressively severe ways unless quick action is taken.

You could be perplexed as to why she's bringing up the topic of waste. Isn't she an Aso-Oke weaver? What part does she play in making the world a greener and cleaner place? We must all work together to resolve the global catastrophe we have created. Our businesses must promote and profit from the 3Ps (People, Planet and Prosperity). We must all take action to keep our world safe for ourselves and future generations.

In my quest to have a greater impact and make the world a better place, I noticed that many people in my community dump textile and plastic waste along the roadside, clogging drainage and causing the ozone layer to deplete, both of which are harmful to our health and the environment. As a result, I decided to leverage my weaving skills to provide an innovative solution by launching the Planet 3R project.

In 2020, we came up with our most innovative idea by transforming waste nylons, especially disposed water sachet, generally called pure water nylon in Nigeria, into finished products such as bags, shoes, key holders, earrings, and many more, through the process of weaving. This pioneer innovative idea is the first of its kind in Africa. Thanks to the invention of Planet 3R with the initiative of REDUCE, REUSE, and RECYCLE.

Our vision is for the planet to be eco-friendly and safe for all mankind. Our innovations in transforming these locally made fabrics and wastewater nylons into beautiful finished products have brought many Africans and Nigerians back to their roots and have helped to rebirth the vision of our founding fathers by promoting our cultural heritage, through the use of our hand-woven fabrics. Locally made products are now on par or even better than the foreign-made ones.

I can boldly say Indigenous skill is really a great way to solve and reduce waste in our environment as many people relate more with what they are already used to. Bringing a new technic or skills to solve a problem could pull off people we want to create the solution for. Many see this as imposing something entirely new or taking their traditional method away from them especially if the idea is coming from a western country.

A few months ago, I was invited to Togo for a consultation to see how we can train indigenous weavers to convert waste into environmentally friendly products. After visiting some weavers, I

noticed a slight difference in our looms, but we'll be able to train them on ours as well. As this assured them that they would not lose their conventional skills while learning something new, I could see the pleasure on their faces.

Despite the enormous achievements, we still come short of our vision to impact up to 500,000 people with weaving skills out of over a 200million population in Nigeria. For instance, we have only been able to skillfully impact up to about 205 people in Nigeria, this is far below our target. With the limited human resources, achieving our vision will be a mountain to climb.

So, we might need to create a change in how we train to what we call training the trainers. With this, we can skillfully empower as many weavers as we can who will in turn train more weavers especially in the aspect of converting wastes into a fabric material. I believe possessing the specialized handloom weaving skills will attract the interest of a lot of people to weaving/recycling.

I believe bringing technology into our handloom weaving will lead NIGERIA towards expansion and massive production. Therefore, automating some of our weaving equipment will really help in converting more tonnes of wastes and thereby reduce waste in our country.

By the time technology is inculcated into our local weaving technics, Nigeria handloom will be able to provide jobs for about a 2.54million people with over a million handloom installed in the next 5years with modification making recycling effortless and more versatile.

In conclusion, focusing more on our indigenous skills and enhancing them with technology will create a sustainable environment and growth in Nigeria's Economy. As this makes people more comfortable and more productive.

Let us all be part of the solution and not the problem.