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**QUESTION**: WHAT IS GLASS CEILLING? IS BREAKING THE GLASS POSSIBLE IN AFRICA AND WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES.

WHAT IS GLASS CEILING?

The ‘‘glass ceiling,’’ the invisible barriers that block women from the most senior positions in the corporate world, seems to prevent women from moving into the executive levels of corporations worldwide. The phrase “glass ceiling” is an invisible barrier to the professional advancement of women and minorities—barriers to high-paying careers, promotions, leadership positions, equal pay, and freedom from workplace discrimination. According to a 1995 United Nations (UN) Report entitled The World’s Women, only about 2% of senior managers worldwide were women (UN, 1995).

The phrase has been around since the 1970s and is now part of the cultural lexicon. Women and minorities face a long list of de facto practices that prevent their success in the workplace: occupational sorting, inequality of work share in the home, the motherhood penalty, covering, as well as gender, race, and disability discrimination, just to name a few.

IS BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING POSSIBLE IN AFRICA?

Even though women make up a little over half of Africa’s growing population, they have had little, albeit increasing, involvement in power and strategic decision-making. The Glass ceiling is very possible to break in Africa. The relevance of the age-long conundrum known as the glass ceiling has become ever more questionable for a number of compelling reasons. First, its root in the invisible barriers (push factors) facing women’s career progression prospects in the corporate world is ever-changing at a rapid pace across every region of the globe. Second, research shows some evidence of a major dramatic increase in women-owned businesses as being attributable to women’s desire to gain more flexibility in their work arrangements (pull factors). In Nigeria, reports show that women have long shattered the glass ceiling, especially in journalism, finance, and other government leadership roles affecting business (Weekly Trust, 2007).

Breaking the glass ceiling in Africa is very possible, but it will take a lots to be accomplish. We have some strong women in Africa who has/ is breaking the glass ceiling. Evidence of women who have ‘‘made it’’ irrespective of the glass ceiling

NAMES CONTRIBUTIONS

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| Moji Makanjuola | A household name in the Nigerian broadcast industry. A mother ofthree, she has been a newscaster and presenter at the NigeriaTelevision Authority (NTA) for decades. She was the first televisionannouncer of the then National Television Broadcast, Kwara State andone-time president of Nigerian Association of Women Journalists(NAWOJ). Her contribution to the industry and the participation ofNigerian Women in journalism (Weekly Trust,2007). |
| Aralola ‘‘Ara’’Olamuyiwa | Talking drum player, Ara, the wonder girl, stunned Nigerians when sheemerged playing the talking drum with such dexterity that surprisedmany, especially men, who view the talking drum as an exclusivepreserve of male musicians.  |
| Christina Anyanw | Editor of The Sunday Magazine, she is renowned for publishing a reportabout the arrest of members of an attempted coup in March 1995. InDecember 1995, she was awarded the Reporters Sans Frontie`resFoundation de France annual prize amidst tribute by Professor WoleSoyinka. Among her other achievements are Winner of the Courage in Journalism Award (from the African Women’s Media Centre), the 1997 CPJ International Press Freedom Award, and an award from a U.S.-based women’s media foundation for her courage on the job in 1998. |
| Ngozi OkonjoIweala  | Mrs. Okonjo-Iweala is held by many Nigerians to be a selfless, hardworking, and dedicated person who gave up her cozy World Bank jobin Washington to become the first female senior member of theNigerian government. With a doctorate in economics from MIT in theUnited States, she was Nigeria’s finance minister in 2003 to 2006. Shehas won many awards across the world, including the EuromarketsForum Award for Vision and Courage in 2005, and was named Heroof the Year by Time Magazine in 2004. She was a trusted cabinetminister of former President Obasanjo. |
| Catherine Okpareke | President and council chair of ICAN since January 2007, she is also asCEO of Geez Management Services Ltd., Hi-Star Marine & ShippingServices, and Crown Star Ltd. |
| Dora NkemAkunyili | Married with six children, she is the director general of National Agencyfor Food and Drug Administration & Control and is an internationallyrenowned pharmacist, pharmacologist, scholar, and administrator.She was formerly a professor and consultant pharmacologist at theCollege of Medicine, University of Nigeria Nsukka. She has over 260Awards and recognitions locally and internationally. |

With these power names of women in Africa breaking the glass ceiling it is possible in Africa to be able to break he glass ceiling.

**WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES.**

GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Although many business constraints are shared by both men and women entrepreneurs, the latter face additional impediments or road blocks due to deeply rooted discriminatory that are embedded in the policy and legal environment and in institutional support mechanisms. That the greatest challenge for Africa women in business is being taken seriously by their male counterparts, as well as by society in general. The greatest reward of business ownership for women, however, is in ‘‘gaining control over their own working lives.’’ In many instances, women are unable to benefit from services, and most struggle to circumvent discriminations in business circles (UNIDO,2001). Nonetheless, research shows that women have been able to create their own enterprises, even in countries where economic decisions would normally be taken by men. Nigeria is a good example of this phenomenon.

CULTURES AND TRADITIONS VALUES

Until Africa reduces the way they believe in some harm traditions and culture practice, the glass ceiling will not be broken completely. For example, in many African countries’ women have been viewed as inferior and have been looked at as people who are meant to be submissive to the will of men and totally under the control of men. This thinking in African societies has led women to a point of irrelevance in the society, also they believe that women are not to be to be a holder of official positions not only that some cultures and traditions even go further to the extent of saying that it is a taboo of allowing a female to rule over a male in official position. Some of these cultures and traditions has made some women not to be able to follow their dreams of become an entrepreneurs or even holding some official positions. Until we drop these dirty cultures and traditions, they will be no way that glass ceiling will be broken completely in Africa as a whole.