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**QUESTION**

**WHAT IS GLASS CEILING? IS BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING POSSIBLE IN AFRICA AND WHAT ARE THE CHALLNGES.**

Glass ceiling refers to those Invisible but real barrier through which the next stage or level of advancement can be seen, but cannot be reached by a section of qualified and deserving employees. It is an intangible barrier within a hierarchy that prevents women or minorities from obtaining upper-level positions.

According to the United States Federal Glass Ceiling Commission defines the glass ceiling as "the unseen, yet unbreachable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements

The term “glass ceiling” was popularized in the 1980’s. The term was used in a 1984 book “The Working Woman Report” by Gay Bryant. Later, it was used in a 1986 “Wall Street Journal” article on barriers to women in high corporate positions. The Oxford English Dictionary notes that the first use of the term was in 1984. In “Ad week;” “Women have reached a certain point I call it the glass ceiling. They are in the top of middle management and they are stopping and getting stuck”. Glass ceiling is a metaphor for the hard-to-see informal barriers that keep women from getting promotions, pay raises, and further opportunities. The “glass ceiling” metaphor has been used to describe the limits and barriers experienced by minority racial groups. A related term to “glass ceiling” is “pink-collar ghetto”, referring to jobs to which women are often relegated

**Is breaking the Glass ceiling in possible in Africa and what are the challenges.**

The struggle for gender equality has to an extent closed the large gap of gender inequality in Africa and the rest of the world although African women continue to be marginalized from attaining leadership positions in organizations despite the numerous efforts that have been made to achieve equality.  African countries like Liberia have managed to sustainably elevate their women with an estimated 30% of companies being led by a female Chief Executive. More so, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the country’s former President rewrote world history by becoming the first female President in Africa. Central African Republic’s Catherine Samba Panza and Malawi’s Joyce Banda followed soon after to further cement the rise of the modern woman in Africa. It is easy to assume that with this, African women are taking a large stand but there are 52 countries in Africa and only 3 have had female head of state. It is better than nothing but this still shows we have a very long way to go and that the society is not yet fair and equal as it should be. Also country’s like Rwanda and Namibia are making great impact when it comes to gender inequality and women participation in politics, but there is still a lot that has to be done in Africa.

The greatest battles the African woman has had to fight are those against widely held convictions that have always relegated her to a second class citizen whose forte is the kitchen. But in recent days it gets better with rise of gender study, women are also getting to learn that leadership roles are not only for men that they can also be at the top, there are lots of women who would have the desire to pursue top positions in their organizations and in politics but because they feel there would be no support from both the men and women in the society they let go of their dreams and then believe that they are not just good enough. There should groups which support these women, for example leadership trainings and organization that basically take up girls and teach them, make them understand that the fact that the men are doing this doesn’t mean that they cannot do it to. They need to go through the process of unlearning the fact that men are the only ones that can handle leadership positions, sometimes we find out that in organizations some women do better than men but when it’s time for promotion to some particular positions women never get it ( the glass ceiling we talk about). When it comes to the political aspect they feel that these games are not for women it should be left to the men. Politics shouldn’t always have to be a dirty game the women should know that if they believe they have something to offer they should go for it and make the country better. The western countries that have females in top positions are doing very well.

Also women should not have to choose between career and their family they should understand that they can do both depending on the choices they make. A career woman should not be expected by her husband to cook and clean the house 24/7 there should be an understanding between both of them that she would not always be around sometimes he would have to take care of the children and cook for them, this doesn’t make him less of a man than other men he is simply also performing his duty he also has a responsibility to take care of his children and his home. So there can be a balance between work and family these women should know that they can do both. On the issue of maternity leave that women are given men should also be given paternity leave too this makes it equal and the men can also be of help to their pregnant wives at home. There should also be a 50:50 ratio between men and women for these top positions this would enable women know that they have a place in the society, that there is a gap they have to fill in the society just like the men and they would not feel that they are struggling with men for their position it will simply be seen as a duty everyone has to perform to make their society better. And when the 50% slot for the men is full they cannot encroach into the 50 for women with this the women know they have to step up and take up their duty.

In conclusion, Is breaking the glass ceiling in Africa possible? I say yes it is possible, are African women making progress towards breaking the glass ceiling? Yes they are, however it would take a really long time and there is still so much work to be done we can’t even say we are close because there is still a lot to do in Africa. Many African countries still believe that women are to be seen and not heard, they still believe that the place of women is in the kitchen and at home bearing and raising children etc we can’t even start comparing Africa to the west over there they have better women representation than in Africa.