

An initiative to break the glass ceiling for women

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"There is no limit to what we, as women, can accomplish" - Michelle Obama

As humans, with reason and intelligence, the way of understanding the world is unique for each individual. Therewith, it is impossible for two people, to have lived in the same context, so every person has their thoughts, ideas, and perspective on different matters. Nowadays, many people may say that women do not face any obstacles in their lives. Some even think that now they have more privileges and that the fight for gender equality is not only for society.

We all have a sense of humanity's history, with over, but has turned the other way around leaving an unfair society for men. The truth is that achieving safe, fair, and dignified environments in all areas of development for women is not about promoting a war of the sexes. It is about unity and progress, an encounter and recognition of every human in this world as a valuable member of the rise of civilizations and the creation of the social order. It is no secret that over centuries, in most social hierarchies around the world, women have held lower positions than men. Women have been limited in an outrageous number of aspects throughout all periods, so the fight had to rise and women's voices had to be heard. The battle for gender equality has been ongoing and still is relevant and necessary. Women continue to be considerably underrepresented in numerous areas as diverse as politics and sciences, to entertainment.

According to data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in 1997 women represented only 11.7% of parliaments across the globe. More than 20 years later, in 2020, this percentage has only risen to 24.9%. In 2019, the American Fortune 500 list registered a historical maximum number of women with directive positions. Nevertheless, of the 500 people occupying executive leadership positions with a higher income, less than 7% are women. The gender gap in participation in the labor market has been practically stagnant for the last 20 years. From the year 1901, more than 900 academics have received a Nobel prize, and only 60 of these winners are women. This evident differential access to opportunities, leadership, and success extends to several other sectors.

Cinema and television entertainment constitute a fundamental part of the media and therefore reflect the current cultural agenda concerning gender equality. The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, UN Women, and The Rockefeller Foundation conducted the first-ever international study on gender images in global films. Popular movies from 11 countries were analyzed, and it was found that only 31% of characters with dialogues were women. Also, only 23% of the movies had a female protagonist; and the portion of female filmmakers was 21%. In the 94 years that the Oscars have been held, only 7 women have been nominated in the category for best director. In the 76 years that the Cannes Film Festival has taken place, only 2 women have won the Golden Palm.

The International Association of Football Federation (FIFA) released a statistic in 2019 that revealed that the average premium paid for the participation of teams in the World Cup is of 400 million USD for men and only 30 million USD for women. The stark difference is more than 1000%. There is so much more data on many other topics that exemplify the discriminatory and unfair conditions that women have to face in almost every dimension of their lives.

In the present era, the term *glass ceiling* refers to the invisible barrier women and other group minorities encounter when trying to escalate in male-dominated fields and corporations. These obstacles impede the rapid and sustained growth of women in the professional ambit, and sometimes even completely stall it. There are often unwritten rules found in commonly accepted social norms and implicit biases rather than defined policies of enterprises; nevertheless, they are real and highly detrimental. The statistics of feminine participation in directive positions are indignant, and they are not a result of less preparation or education. Studies conducted around the world demonstrate that qualities more dominant and frequent in women than in men, such as empathy, social awareness, and attention to detail, bring significant increases in the productivity and efficiency of a company. The inclusion of women in business leadership has proven to improve financial performance, innovation, insolvency risk, social responsiveness, and philanthropy. But still, feminine input continues to be scarce and underestimated because of the glass ceiling. Moreover, this problem acts like a vicious circle that keeps young women and girls from living their biggest dreams.

One of the main issues that cause the glass ceiling, is that women are obligated to fulfill higher and more stringent standards than men. Also, the standards are

frequently defined based on typically masculine characteristics; while the commonly attributed to feminine ones are disparaged. Due to persistent prejudice and discrimination, as well as the lack of effort in organizations to eradicate them, women are actively seeking to be a leader decreasingly in their careers. They begin to believe that their abilities or personalities are not suitable for positions of power. The lack of early exposure to education in leadership and the deficit of women role models and mentors, prevent girls from cultivating motivation and a leadership mentality.

Not letting women explore their full potential is damaging to society. This matter should concern any individual that values justice and equal opportunities. Women have come a long way, but we still have not gotten to the place we want to. Sexism continues to be a serious problem that affects both men and women. Who knows how much collective efforts were not able to meet the extraordinary and revolutionary ideas of a member of society whose voice was not heard because they were born a girl? Increased diversity in politics, economy, sciences, entertainment, and more is needed to combat the homogeneity of ideas. Battling against gender-based violence can drive us to a deep understanding of the real meaning of collaboration for evolution and positive growth.

When we question the meaning of the words said by Michelle Obama, when she assumed women's limits, we cannot ignore the glass ceiling proven to exist over years of history. However, although our lives as women encounter plenty of obstacles, there is one thing that truly has no permanent impediment: our potential. Women are untiring workers, strong and tenacious warriors. Even in a world full of limitations, there are truly no limits to what women can accomplish. This is why the feminine world population is uniting; creating, innovating, faithfully acting, and joining efforts to build what is needed for them to achieve their vision. Many initiatives to dignify and boost women's work are emerging. A very interesting one is the research and advisory service provider firm *Value for Women*.

Value for Women is a social enterprise focused on generating social transformation and increasing the active participation of women in business development.

Value for Women is a specialized advisory firm that helps organizations advance gender inclusion. It identifies women as essential pieces of businesses' performance in the economic and social aspects.

It integrates women into business and investment strategies Their headquarters are in London, United Kingdom; but their work and mission expand to Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Its areas of action include:

Agriculture & Food, Education, Energy, Gender, Supply Chain Services, Acceleration, Business Training, Capacity Development, Corporate Engagement, Digitalization, Entrepreneurial Ecosystems, Environmental Action & Climate Change, Gender, Impact Investing, Investment, Poverty/Inequality, Rural Development, Social Enterprise, Social Entrepreneurship.

As a social enterprise, it focuses on the Fifth SDG: Gender equality and women's empowerment.

According to each company's necessities, Value for Women proposes a plan to integrate inclusion into their business operations, so that more and more companies evolve to be more inclusive and diverse. The plan is determined by entrepreneurs who share at least the values of diversity and gender equality, so they can lead the changes by example. The big change comes when Value for Women analyzes the company's organizational culture related to leadership and diversity.

So, Value for Women serves to transform companies towards gender equality and diversity through reflection, information, and innovative thinking space.

Value for Women offers 4 value propositions:

- Client-centered coaching y capabilities development: direct long-term training to businesswomen and their organizations through certified and experienced trainers. Results in self-sufficient businesswomen: problem-solving and auto-control capabilities.
- Leadership and Network influence: Network generation and critique spaces.
- Long-term associations: Innovations and organization changes related to gender justice and economic development.
- Knowledge creation: shared values creation through a collection of created knowledge and the experience of leading.

Being an entrepreneur is tough, one becomes an expert in many fields, has to constantly adapt to new necessities, and obtain a really good revenue. But, being a

social entrepreneur is even harder, one must obtain the social impact desired with their proposed solution addressing the social issue chosen and prove itself is a good business. A big commented advantage of social entrepreneurship is that you do not need to be an expert in a certain topic(s), you only need passion and determination to solve the social issue you would like to solve. We would think that women would fit better for social entrepreneurship. And it's halfway true, the gap may be narrower than in the for-profit sector. Some researchers even suggest that women social entrepreneurs are likely to earn less than their male counterparts and their for-profit counterparts, and are unlikely to move into the for-profit sector.

Women are struggling to break the glass ceiling in many sectors. It has improved with time, there have been major advancements, and more people are conscious, and taking action, but it is still present. We are glad Value for Women exists, since it helps to integrate women in companies that are transforming into a gender-equality culture organization. Eventually, it could help the entrepreneurship ecosystem. Still, there is a long way to go to have a gender-equality world.

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