

# 50 WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD WHO INSPIRED US IN 2020



**Kamala Harris**  
USA, 56  
**Vice President of USA**

Harris is the first woman, first Black woman and first Asian American to win the second highest U.S. office. She was the first woman and person of color to serve as the District Attorney of San Francisco and the Attorney General for California.



**Özlem Türeci**  
Germany, 53  
**Co-Founder and Chief Medical Officer @ BioNTech**

Özlem spearheaded the development of the world's first effective COVID-19 vaccine at pharmaceutical company BioNTech. She specialises in cancer immunotherapy. She also lectures at the University of Mainz.



**Jacinda Ardern,**  
New Zealand, 40  
**Prime Minister of New Zealand**

In October 2017, at age 37, Jacinda became the country's youngest Prime Minister in more than 150 years. She was sworn in for a second term in Nov 2020 after a landslide victory. She has garnered praise for her crisis management during the Christchurch mosque attacks, volcanic eruption at White Island and recent COVID-19 containment.



**Sahle-Work Zewde**  
Ethiopia, 70  
**President of Ethiopia**

Zewde is the first ever female President of Ethiopia after taking office in 2018 and Africa's only serving female head of state. In her first address to parliament, Zewde promised to be a voice for women and stressed the importance of unity. In March 2020, she granted pardon to more than 4,000 Ethiopian prisoners in an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19.



**Angela Merkel**  
Germany, 66  
**Chancellor of Germany**

A member of the Christian Democratic Union, Merkel is the first female Chancellor of Germany. Merkel has been widely described as the de facto leader of the European Union, the most powerful woman in the world and by many commentators since 2016 as the "leader of the free world".



**Chanda Prescod-Weinstein, USA, 38**  
**Cosmologist, Assistant Professor @ University of New Hampshire**

Award winning Chanda's research focuses on theoretical work at the intersection of particle physics, cosmology, and astrophysics. She is working on the NASA STROBE-X experiment. Whilst not in the lab, she is actively confronting racism in science and society through Strike for Black Lives, a high profile online campaign.



**Dr. Rasha Kelej**  
Egypt, 48  
**CEO @ Merck Foundation**

Dr. Rasha is working closely with 18 African First Ladies as Ambassadors of "Merck More Than a Mother" in their countries, to break the stigma around infertility and empower infertile women. She is an advocate for women empowerment and has won many accolades for her work.



**Zarifa Ghafari**  
Afghanistan, 28  
**Mayor at Municipality of Maidan Shahr**

One of the few female mayors in Afghanistan, Zarifa has been subjected to death threats and assassination attempts. She established a women-focused radio station and became mayor of Maidan Shahr, in conservative Wardak Province at the age of 26, defying her critics and their narrative that a woman is unfit to lead.



**Dr. Jemimah Kariuki**  
Kenya, 29  
**Founder @ Wheels for Life Obs/Gyn @ Kenyatta Hospital**

Jemimah launched Wheels for Life, a free ambulance service, to take women from their homes to the hospital in the wake of COVID-19 induced movement restrictions. She is also the founder of Public Health Club, an organisation instrumental in running cervical-cancer prevention and awareness drives.



**Anastasia Volkova**  
Ukraine, 29  
**Founder and CEO @ FluroSat**

An entrepreneur and agricultural innovator, Anastasia uses science and technology to tackle issues of food security. In 2016 she founded FluroSat, a company that uses drone and satellite data, along with algorithms and other tools, to help farmers maximise crop production.



**Dr. Lisa Su**  
Taiwan / USA, 51  
**CEO @ Advanced Micro Devices (AMD)**

Through her remarkable leadership, AMD has grown from struggling company to having the strongest performance in its 50-year history in 2019, after bringing to market several leading-edge technologies. She won the highest honors in the chip industry in 2020, the Robert N. Noyce award, and is the first female to ever win this award.



**Maggie Gobran**  
Egypt, 71  
**Founder and CEO @ Stephen's Children**

'Mama Maggie' as she is known, abandoned a life of affluence and a distinguished academic career to change the lives of hundreds of thousands of marginalised children. Stephen's Children, the charity she started, serves over 32,000 families each year. She has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020 and 2012.



**Christina Koch**  
USA, 41  
**Astronaut @ NASA**

In 2020, Koch landed in Kazakhstan after 328 days in space, the longest continuous spaceflight by a female astronaut. She is an expert in space science instrument development and in engineering. Her research during the mission included growing protein crystals for potential use as treatments for Alzheimer's and Parkinsons.



**Greta Thunberg**  
Sweden, 17  
**Activist**

At only 17, Greta is an environmental activist who is internationally known for challenging world leaders to take immediate action against climate change. She has received numerous honours and awards including an honorary Fellowship of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society.



**Sister Priscilla Busingye,**  
Uganda, 55  
**Missionary Doctor Obs/Gyn**

From being forced to drop out of school at age 14 to delivering over 3,000 babies to date, Sister Priscilla became the first African and first Woman to receive the prestigious AMH Gerson L'Chaim ("To Life") Prize for Outstanding Christian Medical Missionary Service for providing life-changing maternal and child care in rural Uganda.



**Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw**  
India, 67  
**Founder and CEO @ Biocon Ltd**

Kiran is an Indian self made billionaire entrepreneur. She is the chairperson and MD of Biocon Limited, a biotech company she founded in 1973 with \$500. In 2014, Biocon was India's first biotech company to go public. Biocon is leading the way on universal access to affordable life-saving medicine. It is also one of the companies advancing a drug for COVID-19.



**Brigid Kosgei**  
Kenya, 26  
**Athlete, Long Distance Runner**

Brigid is a Kenyan marathon runner who won the 2018 and 2019 Chicago Marathons and the 2019 and 2020 London Marathons. She is the current marathon world record holder for women running in a mixed-sex race, with a time of 2:14:04 achieved on 13 October 2019 at the Chicago Marathon.



**Dr. Antoinette Sayeh**  
Liberia, 62  
**Deputy Managing Director @ IMF**

Dr. Sayeh is a Liberian economist who led the country to clear its long-standing multilateral debt arrears. She served as Minister of Finance in post-conflict Liberia from January 2006 through June 2008, becoming the second woman in Liberia's history to hold that position after Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. She is currently the No. 2 at the IMF.



**Pocket Sun**  
China, 28  
**Co-founder & Managing Partner @ SoGal**

Sun co-founded SoGal Ventures alongside Elizabeth Galbut, the first female-led next-gen venture capital firm. Since 2015, the fund has invested in over 80 companies led by diverse founders across the globe revolutionizing how the next generation lives, works, and stays healthy.



**Andrea Thompson**  
UK, 38  
**Athlete, Strongwoman**

Andrea is a mum who joined gym to lose weight but ended up being crowned world's strongest woman in 2019. She went ahead to achieve the unimaginable by setting a world record twice in the same day on two different events in 2020.



**Dr. Snowy Khoza**  
South Africa, 62  
**CEO @ Bigen Group**

Dr Khoza is a seasoned executive, acknowledged strategist and activist in the infrastructure development space. In 2018, she received a Lifetime Achievement in Engineering from SA Professional Services Award sponsored by Sanlam. She is also President of Agape Christian Women.



**Yang Lan**  
China, 52  
**Co-founder and Chair @ Sun Media Group**

Yang Lan is one of the most powerful woman in the Chinese media. She not only founded the Sun Media Group but is also a journalist and talk show hostess having interviewed many famous faces, including Bill Gates, Hillary Clinton and Keanu Reeves.



**Ruth Bader Ginsburg**  
USA, Deceased  
**Supreme Court Justice**

Appointed in 1993, Bader Ginsburg became the second female Supreme Court justice ever. Her enthusiasm for women's rights saw her establish the Women's Rights Law Reporter in 1970, the first U.S. law journal focusing exclusively on women's rights.



**Cristina Fonseca**  
Portugal, 33  
**Venture Partner @ Indico Capital Partners**

Christina co-founded Talkdesk, Portugal's third unicorn, served on the Global Agenda Council on Europe and was recognised as a 30 under 30 in Enterprise Technology by Forbes. She is now Venture Partner at Portugal's largest independent private VC fund, Indico Capital Partners.



**Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez**  
USA, 31  
**Congress Rep for New York**

Taking office at age 29, Ocasio-Cortez is the youngest woman ever to serve in the United States Congress. She defeated a 10-term incumbent, in what was widely seen as the biggest upset victory in the 2018 midterm election primaries.



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**Luchita Hurtado**  
Venezuela, USA, Deceased  
**Artist**

Described as a hot discovery at the age of 97. Luchita was an artist whose paintings and drawings emphasized the interconnectedness of all living things. Her work spanned surrealism, muralism, feminism and environmentalism. She was named as one of Time magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2019.



**Bethlehem Tilahun Alemu**  
Ethiopia, 40  
**Founder and Executive Director @ SoleRebels**

From the humblest of beginnings, Bethlehem has built soleRebels into the fastest growing African footwear brand. She has created many jobs, empowered her community and country whilst presenting a galvanized, dynamic face of African creativity to the global market. In 2020 she started a snacks brand made with Teff, Ethiopia's staple cereal.



**Naomi Osaka**  
Japan, 23  
**Tennis Player**

Osaka has been ranked No. 1 by the Women's Tennis Association, and is the first Asian player to hold the top ranking in singles. She is a three-time Grand Slam singles champion, and is the reigning champion at the US Open. She also uses her platform to fight racial injustices.



**Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala**  
Nigeria, 66  
**Senior Adviser @ Lazard Chair of GAVI**

Dr. Ngozi is slated to be the next Director-General of the World Trade Organization, after garnering majority support. If appointed, she will be the first woman, and the first African, to lead the institution. She was also the longest-serving Finance Minister of Nigeria, the first Foreign Minister, and the first woman to ever hold those positions.



**Gitanjali Rao**  
USA, 15  
**Inventor and STEM Promoter**

Rao, an inventor, author, scientist, and STEM promoter, won the Discovery Education 3M Young Scientist Challenge in 2017, and was recognized on Forbes 30 Under 30 for her innovations. She has invented a device that can identify lead in drinking water, and an app that detects cyberbullying. She encourages others to "solve the world's problems".



**Cristina Junqueira**  
Brazil, 37  
**Co-Founder @ Nubank**

Cristina cofounded Nubank in 2013, an online Brazilian bank that has grown to serve more than 25 million customers. It is now the largest independent digital bank in the world and has attained a valuation of more than \$10 billion. She is the only female-founded company to reach that size.



**Mary Kom**  
India, 37  
**Amateur Boxer, Member of Indian Parliament, Rajya Sabha**

Mary ("Magnificent Mary") is the only female to become World Amateur Boxing champion for a record six times, the only female boxer to have won a medal in each one of the first seven World Championships, and the only boxer (male or female) to win eight World Championship medals. The Padma awardee is also a Member of Parliament.



**Senamile Masango**  
South Africa, 32  
**Nuclear Scientist and Founder @ Senamile Masango Foundation**

Senamile overcame race and gender bias to become the first African woman to be part of a first African-led experiment at CERN (European Organisation for Nuclear Research) in Switzerland. She was previously Deputy Secretary of Peace Aid International, Chairperson of Young African Women in Leadership.



**Alice Bentinck**  
UK, 34  
**Co-founder @ Entrepreneur First and Code First: Girls**

Alice co-founded Entrepreneur First, a world's leading company builder that has helped 2,000 individuals build 300+ companies. She also founded Code First:Girls, a free part-time course for female students, and was awarded an MBE by the Queen.



**Nadeen Ashraf**  
Egypt, 22  
**Founder @ Assault Police Egypt**

Frustrated that people's voices not being heard or taken seriously, Nadeen created Assault Police, an Instagram account where women in Egypt can share their stories of sexual harassment. The account has amassed over 70,000 followers. Nadeen is now seen as a linchpin for Egypt's Anti-Harassment Revolution.



**Aisha Yesufu**  
Nigeria, 45  
**Founder @ Citizens Hub**

Co-Convener of Bring Back Our Girls campaign, launched in response to the 2014 abduction of over 200 girls from a secondary school in Chibok, Nigeria, by the militant group Boko Haram. Aisha is also a prominent participant in the "EndSars" protests demanding greater accountability from the Nigerian Police Force.



**Njideka Akunyili Crosby**  
Nigeria, USA, 37  
**Artist**

Award winning Nigerian-born visual artist working in Los Angeles, Akunyili's art speaks to the cultural differences of her two worlds: Nigeria and USA. In May 2018, Akunyili set a new auction record with the sale of her painting *Bush Babies* for nearly \$3.4 million at Sotheby's New York. In 2020, her work was shown in solo exhibitions curated by Pulitzer Prize-winning author and critic Hilton Als.



**Nguyễn Thị Phương Thảo**  
Vietnam, 50  
**President and CEO @ VietJet Air**

Nguyễn is Vietnam's first self-made billionaire. She took her budget airline, VietJet Air, which she founded in 2011, public in February 2017. She has been included in Forbes' list of 100 most powerful women in the world, four times and was the only representative of Vietnam on the list.



**Joanna Rutkowska**  
Poland, 39  
**CEO and Founder @ Invisible Things Labs**

Joanna is one of the good hackers. She shocked the world when she demonstrated two simple methods for hacking into the Windows Vista beta in front of the crowd in August 2006. She founded Invisible Things Lab in 2007 which focuses on OS and VMM security research. She has introduced several breakthrough concepts and techniques on both the offensive and defensive side in this field and published several seminal papers.



**Garima Arora**  
India, 34  
**Chef and Founder @ Gaa**

Garima became the first Indian female chef to earn a Michelin star in 2018. She worked with Gordon Ramsay and René Redzepi of Noma in Copenhagen before opening her own restaurant, Gaa, in Bangkok in April 2017. Garima's cuisine is modern eclectic, and her dishes fuse Thai local produce with Indian technique. In June 2019, Gaa made its debut on the World's 50 Best Restaurants list at No. 95.



**Akiko Naka**  
Japan, 36  
**Founder and CEO @ Wantedly**

Akiko is the youngest female founder to take a company public in Japan. A self-taught coder and tech-enthusiast, Akiko was always fascinated by the world of tech. She launched Wantedly in 2012, after leaving Goldman Sachs. Wantedly is now the leading professional social networking and recruitment platform in Japan with more than 2.5 million active users monthly. Akiko was named as 40 under 40 leaders by Harvard Business Review Japan.



**Gita Gopinath**  
India, USA, 49  
**Chief Economist @ IMF**

Gita is the Economic Counsellor and Director of the Research at the IMF. She is on leave of public service from Harvard University's Economics department where she is the John Zwaanstra Professor of International Studies and Economics. In 2019, Foreign Policy named her one of the Top Global Thinkers. In 2014, she was named one of the top 25 economists under 45 by the IMF and in 2011 she was chosen a Young Global Leader (YGL) by the World Economic Forum.



**Ilwad Elman**  
Somalia, Canada, 31  
**CEO @ Elman Peace HRC**

Ilwad is a champion of building peace. Together with her mother, she built the Elman Peace Center in Somalia, an NGO with 172 employees and eight regional branches. Ilwad also established "Sister Somalia", as the first point of contact for victims of gender-based violence in Somalia. Ilwad's lobbying efforts have earned plaudits and in 2018, Somalia's government passed a law making sexual violence a criminal offence. She was awarded the 2020 German Africa Prize.



**Ameera Shah**  
India, 41  
**MD @ Metropolis Healthcare**

Amira is an Indian entrepreneur, admired for building her father's one lab operation into India's leading pathology lab company, listed on the Mumbai Stock Exchange, with a billion dollar valuation. Metropolis was the first private sector lab to have won government approval to test for COVID-19. She is among 4 Indian women on Forbes Asia's list of powerful businesswomen of 2020.



**Melanie Perkins**  
Australia, 32  
**Co-Founder, CEO @ Canva**

Perkins founded Canva, a free-to-use, online design platform in 2013. Within five years, she made headlines as one of the world's youngest female tech unicorn founders. Canva is now worth \$3.2 billion with a network of over 15 million Canva users. To get her first investors, she learnt how to kite surf to impress venture capitalist (and kite surfing connoisseur), Bill Tai, who eventually became an investor.



**Dr. Marie Roseline Bélizaire**  
Haiti  
**Doctor, Epidemiologist @ WHO**

Dr. Marie is a modern day SHERO. She has braved violent conflict in hotspots and risked everything to help communities fight outbreaks, including HIV, yellow fever, Ebola and now COVID-19 in Central African Republic. She was motivated to study medicine after both her parents died from unexamined causes in their community in Haiti.



**Fatima Zohra Ardjoune**  
Algeria  
**General Officer, Algerian People's National Army**

In 2010, Fatima made history when she became the first woman to obtain the rank of General in the history of Algeria. A medical doctor, she pioneered research in the field of hematology in the country in the 1980s. She serves as director-general of the army's central hospital.



**Elsa Majimbo**  
Kenya, 19  
**Comedian**

Student Elsa used the COVID-19 pandemic to carve her place in comedy. Referred to as the crisp-eating, straight-talking star of Kenya's Covid-19 lockdown, she won the 2020 E! People's Choice Awards in the African Social Star category. Elsa's hilarious videos have provided joy for millions around the world and she has over 1.3 million Instagram followers (from just 7,000 in March 2020!).



**Anuradha Koirala**  
Nepal, 71  
**Social Activist, Founder @ Maiti Nepal**

Known as the "Mother Teresa" of Nepal, Anuradha is the founder of Maiti Nepal, an NGO dedicated to helping victims of sex trafficking. She was appointed as 1st Governor of Bagmati Pradesh by the Government of Nepal. She has helped rescue over 12,000 girls in her 20-year journey. She won the CNN Hero of the Year award in 2010, and is a Padma Shri awardee (the highest civilian award by India).



**Chinwe Esimai**  
Nigeria, 52  
**MD - Chief Anti-Bribery & Corruption Officer @ Citi**

Chinwe is the first woman to ever hold the title in the history of Citi Bank. An award-winning lawyer, trailblazing corporate executive, writer, and speaker, she is passionate about inspiring generations of women leaders. She was a law professor at University of St. Thomas School of Law .