

## Influential Women

Stories of Inspiring Women from Around the World



Have you met women recently who made you think, "She's really cool"?

All around the world, there are countless women who overcome the obstacles in front of them, often in ways we never even hear about.

Some have built schools entirely on their own. Some have saved children from drowning in rivers. Others have unraveled the mysteries of viruses at breathtaking speed. When we learn their stories, it feels as if our own sense of what is "normal" slowly begins to shift.

Today, I'd like to share a little about these "cool women" from around the world.



## Australia

Cathy Freeman is an Olympic gold medalist. As an Indigenous Australian, she became a symbol of reconciliation and diversity through sport.



## China

Zhang Guimei is the founder of a free girls high school. Through education, she expanded the options available to girls and gave them the chance to live an independent life.



## Vietnam

For over 20 years, Chang Thi Kim Thia has taught more than 4000 children to swim free of charge, continuing to protect lives from water-related accidents.



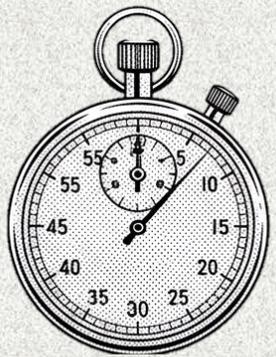
## Brazil

As scientists, Sabino and Jesus decoded the genome of COVID-19 in just 48 hours, dramatically accelerating the development of vaccines and treatments.



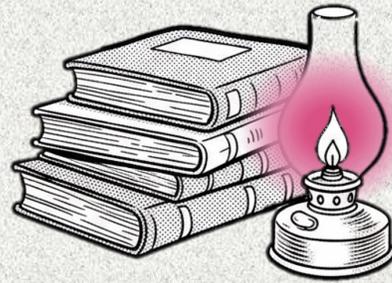
One of the women who made a significant impact in their country, Cathy Freeman is a track and field athlete from Australia.

She won the gold medal in the women's 400 meters at the Olympic Games held in Sydney in 2000, becoming a national hero in Australia. As a member of the Aboriginal community, she competed while carrying the weight of a long history of discrimination and inequality. After the final race, she ran around the track holding both the Australian national flag and the Aboriginal flag, and this moment attracted worldwide attention as a symbol of diversity and reconciliation. Cathy Freeman is a woman who has given hope and courage to society through sport.



In impoverished regions of China, girls long faced harsh circumstances that forced many of them to leave school. Without access to education, countless young girls had little choice but to leave home to work at an early age or marry young in order to support their families.

This vicious cycle of dropping out of school and becoming confined to life at home stripped them of opportunities and made it difficult for them to live independently in society.



Zhang Guimei's greatest achievement in establishing a completely tuition-free high school for girls was that she powerfully broke the cycle of what had seemed like an inescapable fate. She did more than simply create a place to study. By achieving a high rate of advancement to higher education, she enabled thousands of her students on to universities.

As a result, these young women were able to break free from lives dependent on others and gain the freedom to choose careers as teachers, doctors, civil servants, and more. The true significance of Zhang Guimei's work is that she gave women in harsh circumstances the opportunity to live by their own strength. Through her efforts, "women's independence" became not just an ideal, but a tangible reality. One built by their own hands, with dignity and stability.



In a rural town along the Mekong River in Vietnam lives an elderly woman named Tran Thi Kim Thia.

She is affectionately known by the locals as "Grandma Sau Thia". Although she lives in poverty, earning a living by selling lottery tickets, she has been teaching local children how to swim for free for more than 20 years. In the Mekong Delta region, water-related accidents in rivers are common. Driven by her wish that she would "never again hear the sad news of a child dying in a river", she built a handmade practice area in the river using bamboo and old fishing nets. To date, she has taught more than 4,000 children how to swim.

Her selfless and warmhearted efforts have moved people around the world. She was selected as one of the BBC's "100 Women of 2017" and was also awarded a Labor Medal by the Vietnamese government.

Her way of life teaches us that "true greatness lies not in what we possess, but in what we can give".

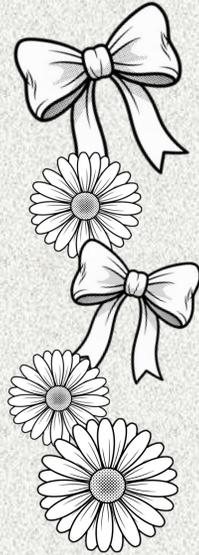
Brazil is home to many powerful and inspiring women, and today I would like to introduce two scientists who made outstanding contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

They are Dr. Ester Cerdeira Sabino, a professor in the Department of Infectious Diseases at the University of Sao Paulo's Faculty of Medicine, and Dr. Jaqueline Goes de Jesus, a Brazilian biomedical scientist who holds a PhD in Human Pathology.

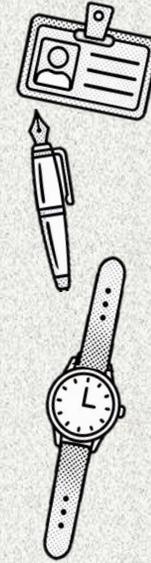
Just 48 hours after the first COVID-19 case was confirmed in Brazil, they successfully decoded the virus's complete genome sequence which was an achievement far faster than the global average of 15 days. Analyzing a virus's genome is essential for understanding how it spreads and how it functions in the human body, and for developing effective countermeasures. Their research greatly accelerated the development of testing methods, vaccines, and treatments, and played a crucial role in helping Brazil recover from the pandemic as quickly as possible.



All of these women shine in their own extraordinary ways, but true "coolness" is not defined solely by remarkable achievements. It lies in the attitude of continuing to walk forward, step by step, along a path one has chosen.



However achieving great success is not everything. Every woman who lives each day with dedication and faces her work and life with sincerity carries the same kind of brilliance.



All women who continue to move forward in their own way are truly cool. Even today, those small, steady steps are surely changing some part of the world.



To the cool women of the world