

## PRESS STATEMENT

### **UNAIDS is deeply saddened by the death of pioneering HIV scientist and researcher Gita Ramjee**

**GENEVA, 2 April 2020**—UNAIDS is shocked and saddened by the sudden death of Gita Ramjee, who died of COVID-19 related complications on 31 March 2020. Her death is an immense loss to the HIV prevention research community. UNAIDS offers its full support to all efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19 and prevent more loss of life.

“I am deeply saddened at the news of the passing of Gita Ramjee,” said Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “She was an eminent scientist who dedicated her life to HIV prevention for women and girls in Africa. Her death is a huge loss at a time when the world needs her most. My condolences to her family, friends and colleagues.”

Ms Ramjee is globally recognized for her ground-breaking research in the field of HIV prevention technologies for women. In 1996, she led a trial on vaginal microbicides for the prevention of HIV among a group of sex workers in Durban, South Africa. The trial was her introduction to the HIV community and was the beginning of her commitment to women-initiated HIV prevention technologies that she pursued with unwavering dedication and commitment for more than two decades.

She held the position of Chief Specialist Scientist at the Aurum Institute, where she worked to improve the health of people and communities through HIV prevention, research and innovation. She previously held the positions of Chief Specialist Scientist and Director of the South African Medical Research Council’s HIV Prevention Unit and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Global Health, University of Washington. She was also an Honorary Professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Population Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Ms Ramjee received several distinguished awards and accolades for her scientific contributions. In 2018, she was awarded the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership/European Union Outstanding African Female Scientist Award. She also co-chaired the Microbicide Conferences in 2006, 2008 and 2010 and in 2012 was honoured with the conference’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

UNAIDS mourns her untimely passing and will endeavour to honour her memory by continuing to support global efforts to find methods that enable women to take control of their HIV prevention and reproductive health and rights through informed choices.

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## **UNAIDS**

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Learn more at [unaids.org](https://unaids.org) and connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.