

QUARRAISHA ABDOOL KARIM

UNAIDS SPECIAL AMBASSADOR
FOR ADOLESCENTS AND HIV

“AS WE INCREASE OUR UNDERSTANDING
OF THE HIV EPIDEMIC AND THE DYNAMICS
THAT MAKE YOUNG PEOPLE AT HIGHER RISK
OF INFECTION, ALL SECTORS OF SOCIETY
MUST WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE SURE
ADOLESCENTS HAVE ACCESS TO THE INFORMATION
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SAFE AND WELL THROUGH A CRUCIAL PERIOD
OF THEIR LIVES AND INTO ADULTHOOD.”

PROFESSOR QUARRAISHA ABDOOL KARIM,
UNAIDS SPECIAL AMBASSADOR FOR ADOLESCENTS AND HIV



Q&A

What motivated you to become
a scientist?

Probably for most of my life I thought about science and its application to leaving people better off. So, I wanted to be a scientist and I wanted to do something that would help people.

How do you think your experience
as a woman has influenced your work?

My very first study, when I was 28, showed that the data were very clear. That young women had a four-times higher infection rate than young men and that women acquired HIV about five to seven years earlier than men. And that intrigued me a lot and I spent the next 20-odd years trying to really understand that better.

What are the factors making young
women at higher risk of HIV infection?

I've learned that the vulnerability of young women is very much tied into gender power differences in society and these disparities are very important for perpetuating the vulnerability of young women socially, economically and politically. And that extends way beyond HIV.

QUARRAISHA ABDOOL KARIM, UNAIDS SPECIAL AMBASSADOR FOR ADOLESCENTS AND HIV

Quarraisha Abdool Karim, PhD, is one of the world's leading AIDS researchers, with pioneering contributions in understanding the evolving HIV epidemic among young women, while also advocating for the rights of people living with and affected by HIV.

As UNAIDS Special Ambassador, her focus is on adolescents and HIV, while also championing young women and STEM—the fields of science, technology, engineering and math.

She is the Associate Scientific Director of CAPRISA. As an infectious disease epidemiologist, her main research interests are in understanding the evolving HIV epidemic in South Africa including the factors influencing acquisition of HIV infection in adolescent girls; and sustainable strategies to introduce antiretroviral therapy in resource-constrained settings.

As a powerful and inspiring speaker, she is a champion for women in science and for encouraging young women to pursue studies and careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

She holds Professorships in Clinical Epidemiology at the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, USA and in Public Health at the Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine, University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa.

She is also a visiting scientist at Massachusetts General Hospital and Visiting Lecturer at Harvard University. Since 1998 she has played a central role in building the science base in southern Africa through the Columbia University - Southern African Fogarty AIDS International Training and Research Programme that has trained over 600 scientists in southern Africa.

She was the Principal Investigator of the landmark CAPRISA 004 tenofovir gel trial which provided proof of concept for Microbicides, highlighted by Science as one of the Top 10 scientific breakthroughs in 2010. Professor Abdool Karim has more than 170 peer reviewed publications and has authored several books and book chapters.

Professor Abdool Karim is currently a member of the UNAIDS Scientific Expert Panel and Scientific Advisor to the Executive Director of UNAIDS.

She is a Scientific Advisory Board member of the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Chair of the PEPFAR PrEP Expert Working Group, Advisory Group member of the Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESA), a member of the HIV Centre Strategic Advisory Committee, Deputy Chair of the South African Medical Research Council Board and the NIH OAR Microbicides Planning Group. She is currently Vice-President (Southern African Region) of the African Academy of Sciences.

610 000

THE NUMBER OF NEW HIV INFECTIONS AMONG YOUNG
PEOPLE AGED 15 TO 24 IN 2016

59%

THE PROPORTION OF NEW INFECTIONS AMONG YOUNG
WOMEN OF AGE GROUP 15 TO 24.

6900

THE NUMBER OF YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS WHO BECOME
INFECTED WITH HIV EVERY WEEK.