

Dr Olive Shisana

Dr Olive Shisana is the Chief Executive Officer of the South African Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). She holds a BA (Social Sciences) degree from the University of the North, South Africa, a Masters in Clinical Psychology from the Loyola College, USA and a Doctor of Science degree (Sc.D) from the Johns Hopkins University, School of Hygiene and Public Health. In 1999 she was admitted into The Johns Hopkins University Society of Scholars for her outstanding contribution to public health.

Dr Shisana is a public health professional and brings to her task a wealth of research, management and policy development experience. Her vast local and international experience has been instrumental in her expansive career, spanning over 30 years. Prior to taking on the role of CEO, she founded and served as executive director of the HSRC's Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS and Health (SAHA) programme, where she also headed a national programme and Africa-wide network called the Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS and Health Research Alliance (SAHARA). She served as professor and Head of Department of Health Systems Management and Policy at the Medical University of Southern Africa, where she was a leading founder of a post-graduate diploma on the management of HIV/AIDS in the world of work in 2001. She was the first woman to be appointed as Director-General for the National Department of Health and served as a specialist scientist at the South African Medical Research Council. Dr Shisana was instrumental in the establishment of the School of Public Health at the University of the Western Cape, which has been in operation since 1993.

Her international credentials include having served as chief statistical advisor to the District of Columbia with responsibility for public health, mental health and social services research. She later served as executive director of the World Health Organisation's Family and Community Health cluster in Geneva, where she oversaw programmes dealing with HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, women's health and child and youth development. In the latter portfolio, she established the WHO HIV/AIDS/STI initiative that united 23 departments under four strategic themes and became a founding member of the Partnership on AIDS in Africa.

Dr Shisana is a leading author of several reports emanating from large studies, and has written numerous chapters in books and articles in scientific journals. She was and continues to act as a principal or co-principal investigator on a number of ground-breaking national and provincial studies aiming to improve our understanding of HIV/AIDS dynamics in South Africa, studies such as the Nelson Mandela/HSRC study of HIV/AIDS, the impact of HIV/AIDS on the health sector, the health of our educators, missing women in HIV prevention, HIV risk exposure in children and research interventions for care of orphans and vulnerable children. Her extensive list of publications also includes articles on social epidemiology of HIV and national health insurance. She currently serves as Chairperson of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on National Health Insurance.

Dr Shisana was elected President of the International Social Science Council in 2010 and also serves on the UNESCO Director-General's High-level Panel for Science and Technology for Development, both in Paris.