

Dr. Elona Toska is a Senior Research Officer at the Centre for Social Science Research, where she leads the UCT team of the Accelerate Hub, a research fund awarded by the UK Global Challenge Research Fund to a joint UCT-University of Oxford team, and a portfolio of associated studies. Her research has contributed to two inter-connected yet standalone research areas: (1) adolescent HIV and (2) adolescent mothers and their children –very important, yet under-researched topics with implications for many generations and our society at large. She is the co-PI of two large social science cohorts: Mzantsi Wakho and HEY BABY and PI of the UPLIFT study, a collaboration with the National Institute of Communicable Diseases/ National Health Laboratory Services. She obtained her BA from Princeton University in 2005, completed her PhD at the University of Oxford in 2017, then was a postdoctoral researcher at UCT until mid-2019.

Dr. Toska's research provides insights into the health of adolescents living with HIV in South Africa and the region, particularly, sexual and reproductive health and adolescent motherhood. As a result of her scientific contributions, Dr Toska is a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee for the Social Impact Bond on Adolescent Girls and Young Women, led by the South African Medical Research Council's and an academic representative in the HIV Prevention Task Team of the South African National AIDS Council. She was a lead author for a report on adolescent mothers and their children which was used as the background note for a high-level learning meeting of the World Health Organization and the Coalition for Children Affected by HIV on adolescent mothers affected by HIV. In early September 2020, she was part of UNAIDS-led high-level consultations on the next HIV global strategy.

Dr Toska's research has resulted in 40 high-impact peer reviewed publications in international journals in the last 5 years, 12 first-authored, over 50 conference presentations, and a dozen webinars. Dr Toska holds official several advisory posts, including the UN Inter-Agency Task Team on HIV and Social Protection, and is a member of the Steering Committee of the Adolescent Treatment Coalition, hosted by the International AIDS Society. She regularly advises colleagues at the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Officers for UNICEF, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), World Food Programme, and international NGOs including Paediatric Adolescent Treatment for Africa and the Elizabeth Glaser Paediatric HIV Foundation.