# The Afya Bora Consortium: An Africa-US Partnership to Train Leaders in Global Health

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• Global health • Africa • Education • Training • Research • HIV/AIDS • Leadership • Partnership

In the last 10 years, the sub-Saharan African AIDS epidemic has been a major stimulus for rapidly increasing investments in newly developed and existing health programs. These burgeoning programs have generated an increasing demand for African leaders in global health. The largest program is the President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), launched in 2003. Many other health programs have recently been launched in Africa, supported by national and international agencies, such as the Global Fund, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, United Nation (UN) AIDS, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, and others. In addition, there is a panoply of health programs supported by foundations, private philanthropy, and other nongovernment organizations (NGOs). It has been estimated that there are more than 1000 NGOs operating in Kenya alone.[1]

Rapid expansion of these programs has created a need for African medical, nursing, and public health professionals who can design, manage, and evaluate large health programs. Similar growth in the research arena has resulted in an increased demand for trained investigators to lead complex research programs. At present, too many programs depend on expatriates who have been recruited because of the shortage

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of local professionals with appropriate skills. Several independent groups have recognized the need for African leadership and have called for new training initiatives.[2–4] The Afya Bora Consortium is a response to this call to action. This consortium is founded on the premise that a consortium of African and international health institutions can pool resources to develop an innovative, robust, and sustainable program to train future leaders in global health. The authors present this interdisciplinary experiential approach to leadership training as a model that could be adapted to meet the needs of other regions and expanded to include additional institutional partnerships.

## HISTORY OF THE AFYA BORA CONSORTIUM

The vision for a consortium of US and African institutions dedicated to building leadership capacity in global health was born in May 2008 when a group of US faculty members, who are leaders of global health programs at their 4 institutions, met in Washington, DC. Each university has an established "twinning" relationship with an African academic health center, and all 8 institutions have both schools of medicine and nursing and many have schools of public health (**Table 1**). As a next step, it was decided to convene a workshop for an exploration of needs and opportunities.[5–7]

In April 2009, representatives of the 8 institutions met at a 2-day workshop in Nairobi, Kenya. After much collegial discussion, the group decided to create a Consortium to develop a 2-year Fellowship. This Fellowship was designed for medical, nursing, and public health professionals who had recently completed their training and were judged to have leadership potential. A 1-year fellowship and individual short modules for in-service training were also included in response to requests for options that would meet a broader array of leadership training needs. The following month, the proposal was presented to potential sponsors at a meeting in Washington, DC. A 1-year planning grant was funded by the Fogarty International Center of the US National Institutes of Health, beginning in September 2009.

This Africa-US partnership has been named the Afya Bora (Swahili for "Better Health") Consortium. At a meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, in January 2010, it was decided that a 1-year Pilot program of the Fellowship should be conducted to test its components, evaluate outcomes, and prepare for a sustainable program. In July 2010, a grant proposal for a Pilot program of the Afya Bora Leadership Fellowship was presented, a summary of which is the subject of this article.

**Table 1**
**The Afya Bora Consortium institutions and health sciences schools**

| Country | African-US Partner Institutions | Medical School | Nursing School | Public Health School |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Uganda | Makerere University | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| United States | Johns Hopkins University | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Tanzania | Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| United States | University of California San Francisco | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Botswana | University of Botswana | Yes | Yes | No |
| United States | University of Pennsylvania | Yes | Yes | No |
| Kenya | University of Nairobi | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| United States | University of Washington | Yes | Yes | Yes |