

# SANKOFA FACT SHEET

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## Research Synthesis

### THE MPOWERMENT PROJECT: A COMMUNITY-LEVEL HIV PREVENTION INTERVENTION FOR YOUNG GAY MEN

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**Intervention Goal(s):** To determine the effects of a community-level intervention to reduce HIV risk behaviors.

**Intervention Setting:** Mpowerment Center and other community venues where gay men congregated.

**Population:** Of the cohort of 300 young gay men who were evaluated after eight months of study, 4 percent were African-American, 7 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander, 6 percent were Hispanic, 81 percent were white, and 2 percent were of other racial/ethnic groups. The average age of the men was 23 years, and the median education level was some college.



#### Description of the Intervention: Mpowerment Project

This intervention was based on theories of peer influence and diffusion of innovations, which posit that people are most likely to adopt new behaviors when favorable evaluations of the behavior are conveyed to them by similar others whom they respect. The intervention was conducted over eight months and attempted to reach all young gay men in a Eugene, Oregon community.

A Core Group of young gay men designed and ran the intervention with input from a Community Advisory Board composed of “elders” from the AIDS, public health, gay and lesbian, and university communities. This engendered a personal commitment to HIV prevention, a sense of ownership of the prevention activities, and a willingness to carry out the activities.

This multi-component intervention included two types of formal outreach, informal outreach, peer-led small groups, and a small ongoing publicity campaign. One type of formal outreach activity was directed at venues where young gay men congregated. Volunteers dressed in costumes and distributed safer-sex materials. Another type of formal outreach activity took place at the Mpowerment Center. It consisted of safer-sex promotional events embedded in a series of fun social activities. Informal outreach consisted of peer-initiated communications among friends about the need for safer sex. Small groups, called M-Groups, lasted about three hours and were designed to be fun and interactive. They served as entry into the project addressed safer-sex concerns and skills, and motivated participants to invite their friends. The publicity campaign, which included articles and advertisements in gay newspapers and outreach materials, aimed to reinforce the norms for safer sex and spread awareness of the Mpowerment Project.

**Comparison Condition:** The intervention was given to comparison communities at a later time.

**Behavioral Findings:** Men who participated in the Mpowerment Project reduced their frequency of unprotected anal intercourse significantly more than the men in the comparison community.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HIV/AIDS Prevention Research Synthesis Project. Compendium of HIV Prevention Interventions with Evidence of Effectiveness. Atlanta, Ga.: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: November 1999, Revised, [1-16].

