



M•PACT
GLOBAL ACTION
FOR GAY MEN'S HEALTH & RIGHTS

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings!

Thanks for the warm welcome in 2021. It was a year full of transitions, ups and downs. At MPact: Global Action for Gay Health & Rights, it was no different.

On March 1, 2021 I joined Mpact as Executive Director. After collaborating with MPact since it was the Global Forum on MSM & HIV, I was proud – and a little nervous - about stepping into the role. I have seen this organization grow into a powerful and trusted partner in global, regional, and national HIV advocacy tables. MPact takes an intersectional approach to our advocacy, and our partners reflect that. We recognize how interrelated the fights are for human rights for all of us: gay and bisexual men, queer people, people of transgender experience, sex workers, people who use drugs and migrants. And I am eager to continue this work.

We are strongest when we are together as a community. We have learned this by surviving homophobia, violence, criminalization, and all the various ways we are excluded from public life. We still find each other. My vision of MPact is to be three clicks away for any queer person who needs to feel in community with others. We aren't quite there, but we are moving in the right direction. Our social media has blossomed and our "Right To" campaign demonstrates what is possible for our community.

Community is valuable and important. I am a gay man living with HIV and have been working in HIV advocacy since the early 1990s. Gay, bi, queer and trans folks have been disproportionately impacted by this pandemic since the very beginning – and no matter our countless losses, we remain underserved in the HIV response. Many governments still do not acknowledge our humanity and others imprison or murder us. Yet it is through our community that we find our resilience, our strength, and meaningful connections. This is at the core of the work we do at MPact.

2021 was another year of COVID-19. One of the lessons of this pandemic is how vulnerable we still are in so many ways. But our communities remain adaptable. This is not our first pandemic: we know how to navigate risk; we have managed loss; we know how to mobilize when governments ignore us. The COVID-19 vaccines are a great advancement, but they only highlight the ongoing disparities in access to healthcare. Once again, we learned we must do it ourselves. This is why community-led work is necessary across the spectrum of human rights and public health.

MPact came through 2021 stronger. We are working more closely with our global partners; we continue supporting grassroots organizing and have expanded our efforts; we have released campaigns and media that expand the narratives about gay, bi and queer life; and we have produced tools to increase our capacities to mobilize and advocate.

Thank you for an amazing first year at MPact. I look forward to continuing our work together!

Sincerely,
Andrew Spieldenner, Ph.D.



IMPACT OF COVID-19



Nationally and internationally the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been sobering. The pandemic has had a major effect on MPact's role as advocates for human rights of all men who have sex with men. The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global health emergency in January 2020. Data from the World Health Organization show the pandemic being responsible for over 5.8 million deaths and 408 million cases globally (WHO, 2022). At the time this report was written, the number of deaths has escalated in the US to 918,000, with 77.6 million confirmed cases (WHO, 2022), of which a disproportionate number are among underserved, marginalized, and compromised individuals. The brunt of COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly challenging for individuals from Black, Latino/a/x and Indigenous people groups (these groups were disproportionately infected, hospitalized, and dying), those living with pre-existing, long-term health conditions, first response workers, and those living in multiple family households.

COVID-19 pandemic strained public health infrastructures around the world and put their communication systems in the spotlight. Strict stay at home 'lockdown' mandates, vaccine mandates and protocols for vaccination rollout have been the key focus of several national media outlets receiving critical commentary and responses on many levels.

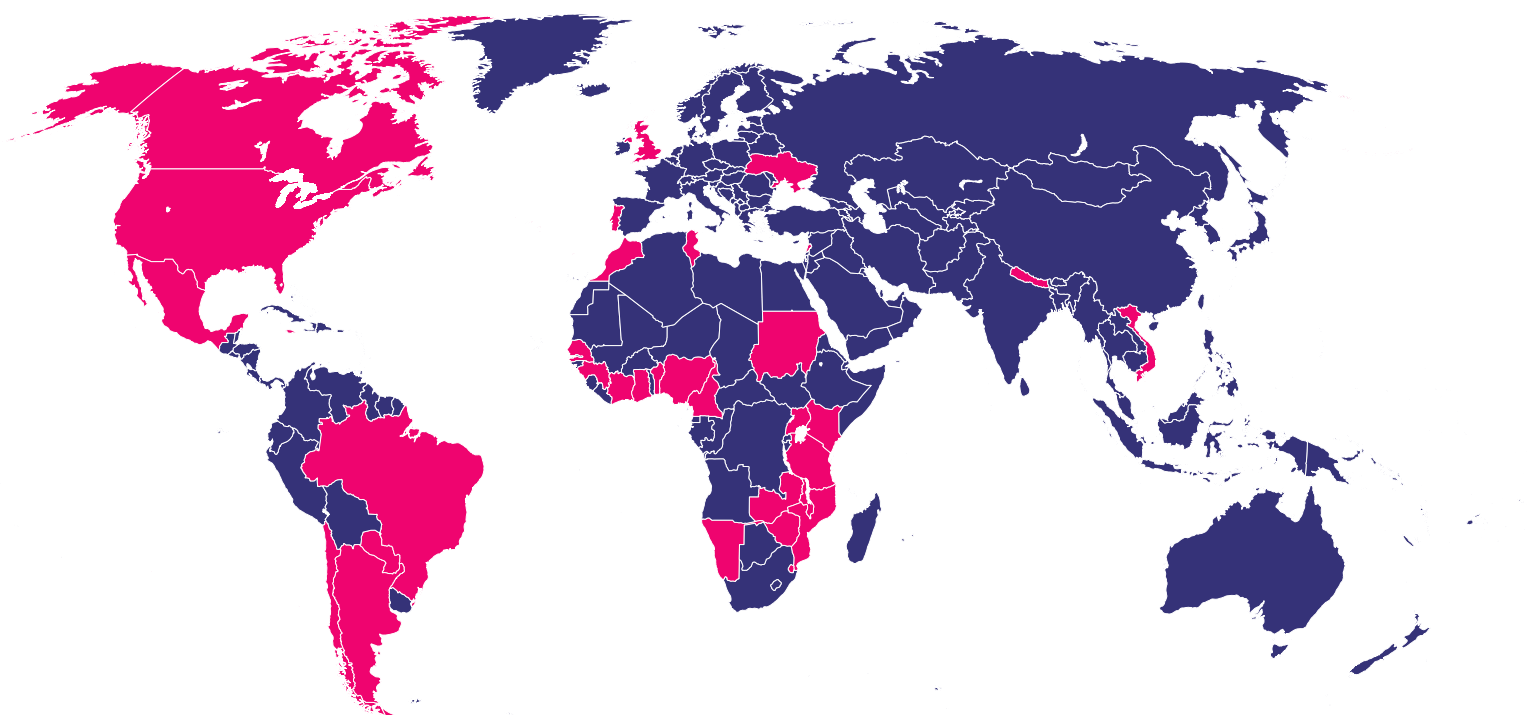
The mitigation of the COVID-19 virus with vaccine mandates put the world into multiple divisive and conflicting tailspins. Miscommunication about the nature of the virus, strained communication, and information about wearing masks, types of masks, or social distancing mandates were preeminent. The communication of information was quickly politicized, polarizing, and not always accurately or speedily disseminated.

LGBTQ people experienced the pandemic differently than non-LGBTQ people. Many were hit harder economically and experienced extensive mental health disparities above and beyond other societal issues. Rebuilding individuals, families and communities has been difficult and will continue to be over the next decade. Loss of homes, family members, jobs, safe community spaces and other social capital has been extensive.

2021

WORK BY REGIONS AND COUNTRY

MPact's work has been along three themes – Advocacy, Convening, and Catalyst. We maintain our advocacy voice at global, regional and national levels. We convene our communities – in all their diversity – even in online spaces. Finally, we act as a catalyst to supporting community actions and organizations. The following map reflects the places MPact was present in 2021.



North America	Europe	Africa		Middle East & North Africa	Asia Pacific
Canada United States	Portugal United Kingdom Ukraine	Cote D'Ivoire Benin Ghana Cameroon Guinea Uganda Eswatini Nigeria Uganda	Kenya Namibia Malawi Mozambique Senegal Tanzania Zimbabwe Zambia	Lebanon Tunisia Sudan Morocco	Viet Nam Nepal
Central & South America	Caribbean				
Brazil Chile Mexico Paraguay Argentina	Jamaica				



ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHT



Global AIDS Strategy and the United Nations High Level Meeting on HIV

MPact contributed to both the development of the Global AIDS Strategy and the United Nations High Level Meeting on HIV. After months of engagement with UNAIDS, the Global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026 focuses on inequalities. This critical reframing of the epidemic helps highlight how some communities – including gay, bi and queer men- continue to be left behind in the global HIV response. Even with the disproportionate HIV burden in our communities, there remains a dearth of policies and funding to adequately address that in community-led organizations and groups. MPact will continue to use the Global AIDS Strategy with our partners to push a more accountable HIV response.

MPact was the community co-chair of the Multistakeholder Task Force on the United Nations High Level Meeting on HIV. We were able to shape some of the Civil Society Summit and push for a human rights framework in the High-Level Meeting. The Political Declaration – while a few countries refused to sign – did articulate the needs of key populations, including gay, queer and bi men. Also, it stressed the importance of the science of viral suppression – that those of us living with HIV cannot transmit the virus if we are virologically suppressed (“undetectable”). In the face of rising regressive policies, these two wins count. And we will always push for more.

PEPFAR

The United States President’s Emergency Plan For Emergency AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is a multi-billion dollar investment in the global HIV response. MPact uses its unique situation as a US-based agency to maintain engaged with USAID, CDC and Office of Global AIDS Coordination in order to advance concerns about where key populations fall in the portfolio. This year MPact’s Human right advocacy PEPFAR partnered with Key Population Investment Fund (KPIF) to advocate that more communities receive funding and that monies go directly to communities.

MPact had a few successes with PEPFAR this year:

- Increased community led monitoring of our implementation and index testing – this was important as some communities were forced to give out names of partners before they get the results of their test.
- Increase in PrEP particularly for those who have had difficulties accessing it throughout the pandemic.
- Assessment of KPIF. Even as KPIF ended, MPact took part in assessing the amazing work and the multiple barriers in KPIF implementation.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

Anal About My Health and “Right To” Campaigns

We are proud that the Sexual Health and ‘Right To’ campaigns have been in place since 2018 – each year both campaigns have yielded new innovations. In 2021, these initiatives produced several pieces, including a video about PrEP and the Right to Sex. The Anal About My Health comic book and the “Right To” campaign in Mexico and South America were major accomplishments.

Anal About My Health

The Anal About My Health comic books brought 9 illustrators and artists together to develop stories about butts, anuses and the accompanying pleasure, health and personal concerns. The objective was to break down stigmas, address taboo topics, and offer the community a space to have open honest conversations about sex. Anal About My Health is available for digital download on the MPact website.

Right To Campaign

The ‘Right To’ campaign was centered on the fundamental right to sex and sexuality for PLWH. The campaign addressed 4 tenets: 1) the right to sex, 2) the right to body autonomy, 3) the right to community, and 4) the right to freedom of expression. We worked in collaboration with partners in Mexico City for World AIDS Day to create a Expozicition to maximize community engagement. The Spanish language campaign was launched in Mexico and occurred in the context of ongoing violence and discrimination against PLWH. In June 2021, a queer person living with HIV was murdered in Cancun, Mexico after he disclosed his HIV status at a party. Working with local activists about the murder and its impacts, MPact wanted to utilize the energy from the activism to help amplify the voices of community members working on these issues. The campaign and videos are provocative and sexy to highlight the concerns of gay, bi and queer men living with HIV in Mexico and throughout the world.

The campaign served as an example of working with the community and reflecting on the experiences of the community to increase visibility, decrease stigma of folks living with HIV, and utilized social media and gay social networking apps.

Finally, the campaign offers an opportunity to talk about some taboos in the community as well as offering a meaningful relationship with the community members, especially those who were young and could see themselves reflected in the campaign.



RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

ACT Research Project

The Act Project was an innovative and ambitious project! The objective was to address barriers to health care including stigma and discrimination or violence in countries that have been hostile to LGT people by using innovation advocacy initiatives that were home grown.

The project focused on countries that have traditionally not had funding directed toward gay men and transgender women. The project also used the opportunity to build partnerships in the Caribbean which has not been a strong focus of past work.

Locally generated advocacy plans which made sense to the contacts and their constituents' needs and concerns were central to the project. The partners were told their mission was to target stigma, discrimination, and violence. Partners came up with their ideas and MPact helped shape those plans so they could be powerful and as feasible as possible.

Four countries were picked to follow intensively and document their work on the ground. Dr. Robin Miller visited the countries multiple times over the course of the project which allowed her to give a fair amount of feedback to support their success locally and make sure the project they engaged in were tailored to suit where the partners were.

Dr. Miller notes that “being involved from start to finish was an amazing privilege and being able to put herself into the shoes of the community members while seeing the project unfold was transformative”.

Lockdowns occurred in the middle of the final data collection so the ability to collect thoughtful content in person was thwarted particularly because most didn't have the basic infrastructure to complete the workshops. Even though the work in some countries like Zimbabwe did not get fully captured, there were still some important outcomes that emerged. One was a case study and wrap up workshop video [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COHDdB264ZM>]. This is important because if you look at the literature there are very few studies in the world that look at this structural work specifically as it models the countries we partnered with - it rare to be able to study focus demonstration project with the groups we partnered with.

Another powerful outcome was receiving the Engage Research 2022 Award for Project Act. The award went to MPact and Dr. Miller. Winning this university level award at Michigan State University opens the opportunity for a book that is in the works with Oxford University Press. Also, Dr. Miller was the recipient of the 2022 All University Community Engagement Scholarship Award from Michigan State University and the 2022 Distinguished Partnership Award for Community-Engaged Research from the Office of University Outreach and Engagement at Michigan State University.



2021 DONOR LIST

Individual Donors:

Andrew Spieldenner
Anna Maul Ripley
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Funders:

Aidsfonds
AVAC
FHI360
Gilead
The Global Fund
ITPC
Lazy Bear Fund
PEPFAR
Robert Carr Fund
UNAIDS
USAID
VIIV Healthcare
World Health Organization



MPACT PUBLICATIONS 2021

HIV and LGBTQ organizing have taught us that – if we do nothing, no one will remember or record our communities. MPact believes in the power of community knowledge and using research as advocacy interventions. Writing is a way of making sure we can control our stories, as well as record our history. In 2021, MPact had the following publications in professional, academic and public venues:

Ayala, G. & Spieldenner, A. R. (2021). HIV is a story first written on the bodies of gay and bisexual men. *American Journal of Public Health*, e1-e3. <https://doi.org/10.2105/A-JPH.2021.306348>

Ayala G, Sprague L, van der Merwe LL-A, Thomas RM, Chang J, Arreola S, et al. (2021) Peer- and community-led responses to HIV: A scoping review. *PLoS ONE* 16(12): e0260555. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0260555>

Cooke-Jackson, A., Rubinsky, V., Spieldenner, A., Hudak, N., Gunning, J. & Aragón, A. (2021). Researching marginalized populations in intimate health communication: Observations from the field, in A. Cooke-Jackson and V. Rubinsky (Eds.), *Communicating intimate health* (p. 227-250). Lanham, MD: Lexington Press.

Laffrey, K. & Spieldenner, A. (2021, December). Molecular HIV surveillance. *HIV Specialist*, (13), 24-27, available at: <https://ygsgroup.com/pubs/AAHIVM/2021/Dec/>

Miller, R.L., Rutledge, J. & Ayala, G. Breaking Down Barriers to HIV Care for Gay and Bisexual Men and Transgender Women: The Advocacy and Other Community Tactics (ACT) Project. *AIDS Behav* 25, 2551–2567 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-021-03216-w>

Santos, GM., Ackerman, B., Rao, A. et al. Economic, Mental Health, HIV Prevention and HIV Treatment Impacts of COVID-19 and the COVID-19 Response on a Global Sample of Cisgender Gay Men and Other Men Who Have Sex with Men. *AIDS Behav* 25, 311–321 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-020-02969-0>

Spieldenner, A. R. (2021). To say goodbye, in M. B. Sycamore (Ed.), *Between certain death and a possible future: Queer writing on growing up with the AIDS crisis*. Vancouver, Canada: Arsenal Pulp Press.

Spieldenner, A. R. (2021, September 3). To say goodbye. *Boston Review*. <https://bostonreview.net/arts-society-gender-sexuality/andrew-spieldenner-say-goodbye>

Spieldenner, A. R. (2021). Popping the bubble: Escaping the United States in a pandemic. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 14(2), 339-342.

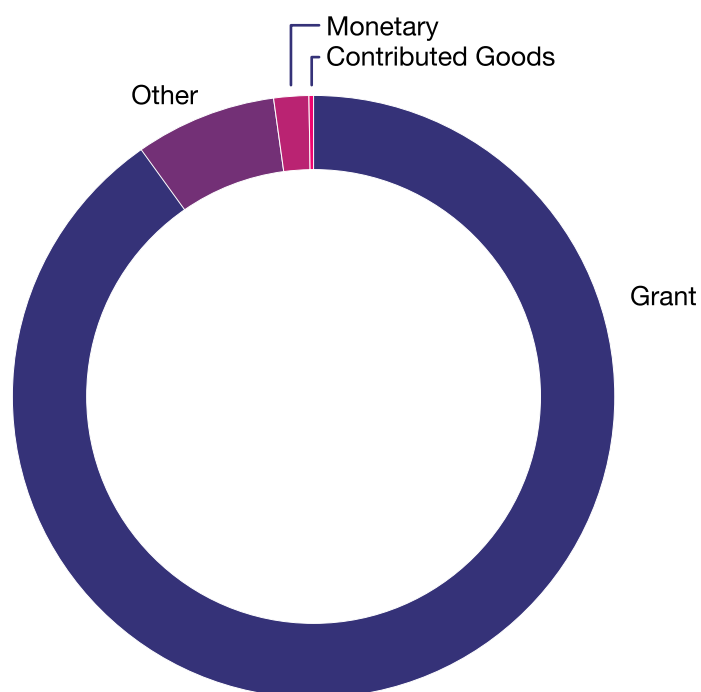
Spieldenner, A. R. & Johnson, J. (2021). The subjects of impolite conversation: Towards queer and trans politics of pleasure. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 8(2) 161-176.



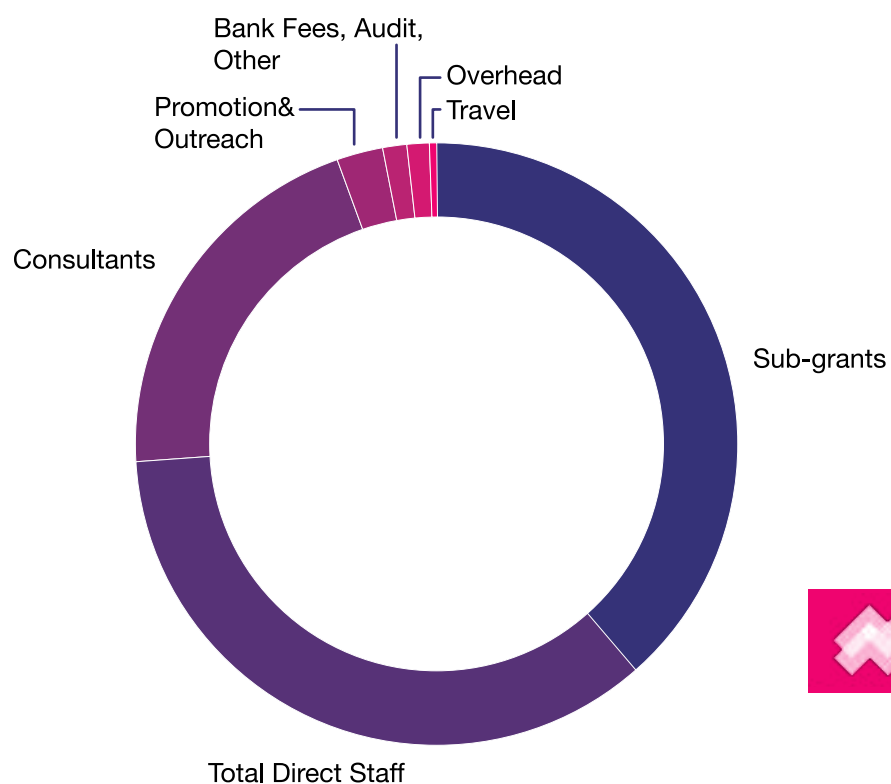
AUDITED FINANCIALS



INCOME



EXPENSES



MPACT STAFF



Andrew Spieldenner, PhD | Executive Director

A longtime HIV activist, Andrew Spieldenner currently serves as vice-chair of the United States People living with HIV Caucus and as the North American Delegate to the UNAIDS Program Coordinating Board. Dr. Spieldenner has worked as a nonprofit leader and an academic professor for nearly a decade, focusing his research on the intersection of health and intercultural communication surrounding HIV and the LGBTQ community.



Alex Garner | Director of Community Engagement

Alex Garner was most recently the Senior Health Innovation Strategist at Hornet, the gay social networking app. He crafted all sexual health messaging, developed social marketing campaigns, created digital content for a global audience, and led Hornet's research efforts. Alex has over 25 years of experience working as a community organizer. He has been a freelance writer for over two decades, capturing the experiences and perspectives of the queer community. As a writer and an artist, he has utilized the cultural arts to advance the narratives of LGBT communities.



Johnny Tohme, MS | Senior Community Mobilization Manager

Johnny comes to MPact from directing M-Coalition (the first network of MSM & HIV activists in the MENA region) in Beirut, Lebanon. Started as an LGBT rights activist, he's a clinical psychology graduate who worked in sexual health service delivery, community behavioral research and community organizing. As part of the policy department, Johnny will be working on the consortium of MSM and Transgender networks, the youth reference group of MPact and will be involved with the programs departments.



Lily May Catanes, MBA | Director of Operations & Finance

With foundations in international business, leadership, and marketing, Lily May brings experience ranging from event, project, and office management to bookkeeping and instructional design for online education and training. At MPact, she monitors administrative, financial, and reporting requirements outlined by funders.



Daniel Mansour | Senior Communications Manager

Daniel Mansour is a creative and communications specialist who is a veteran of Ogilvy and Burson-Marsteller. He has also worked at the Los Angeles LGBT Center as a youth advocate where he helped LGBT youth that were experiencing homelessness. Daniel was part of a team that provided help and guidance that supported the youth to acquire the tools and resources to help change their lives for the better. Daniel also worked with UCLA to produce educational material around PrEP and other HIV prevention options. He is also a part of the LGBT entrepreneurial community and started his own advertising company in 2017. His career has spanned across the Middle East and the US.