

De Veilige Veste Curaçao

Impactplan



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VEILIGE VESTE CURAÇAO

De Veilige Veste Curaçao focuses on addressing violence in relationships of dependency, such as child abuse, incest, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and sexual exploitation. It provides a safe place where victims can receive protection and support.

Violence is deeply rooted within Curaçaoan society, partly because of the legacy of slavery and the effects of poverty, which increase stress and social tensions. De Veilige Veste is needed to create awareness, promote empowerment, and establish a strong and effective approach to violence.

The goal is not only to provide support, but also to prevent and stop violence through prevention, awareness, and collaboration between organisations and professionals.

The first De Veilige Veste was established in Friesland and opened in 2012. It has proven to be a highly successful concept. The Nationale Postcode Loterij made a major financial contribution towards its realisation. The second De Veilige Veste was established in Rotterdam–Rijnmond. Many charitable funds contributed to this project, including Porticus and the Nationale Postcode Loterij.

De Veilige Veste represented the next level in support and protection for young people and adults who are seriously threatened, abused, exploited, or subjected to violence.

The building itself is prominent, a statement: even in a wealthy country such as the Netherlands, children and adults are fleeing violence. We no longer hide them away in secret locations.

A clear message to perpetrators: we will no longer hide the victims. Perpetrators should be arrested and prosecuted.

Every year, approximately 2,000 young victims of violence receive support through the Veilige Vestes operated by Fier. In addition, more than 25,000 online chat conversations are conducted annually with young people seeking help online.

De Veilige Veste also houses a Knowledge and Innovation Centre that raises awareness within society and politics about the need to combat violence.

At the opening of De Veilige Veste Rotterdam–Rijnmond in 2021, Princess Beatrix was present. She had previously visited De Veilige Veste in Leeuwarden and a treatment group for girls who were victims of sexual exploitation and so-called “loverboy” abuse.



Opening 2^{de} Veilige Veste



Bezoek aan 1^{ste} Veilige Veste



Bezoek behandelgroep slachtoffers 'loverboys'

On Curaçao, we want to create another masterpiece like this. We are looking for a building that can be transformed into an inspiring, sustainable, and secure facility, situated in an environment that has a positive and motivating influence. A building that cannot be ignored. A powerful statement: **NO MAS NO MORE!**

The building will serve two functions.

First, it will provide a safe and sustainable shelter and treatment facility on Curaçao for children, young people, women, and families who are victims of violence, abuse, and exploitation. De Veilige Veste Curaçao will offer protection, support services, and pathways towards economic and social self-reliance.

Second, it will become a centre where “things happen”: a place where foundations, care organisations, the police, the Public Prosecution Service, educational institutions, the university, government bodies, activists, and others who want to make a difference come together to develop plans and create solutions. A place where societal challenges take centre stage and where people actively work together on meaningful change.

How Will We Make It Happen?

Great things are built together. We want to realise this initiative in partnership with the business community. The project involves acquiring and renovating a building and transforming it into De Veilige Veste Curaçao. Linda Terpstra and Anke van Dijke will lead the impact plan for *De Veilige Veste Curaçao*. They bring extensive experience in acquiring properties and transforming them into two Veilige Vestes and one Fiere Veste in the Netherlands.

Additional strengths include: their understanding of Curaçaoan culture; their many years of collaboration with organisations and professionals on Curaçao, Bonaire and Aruba; and a strong and determined “three-women partnership” formed by Sonia Baromeo, Linda Terpstra, and Anke van Dijke — together with their extensive social, professional, and business networks. We also have access to relevant contacts and networks within the construction and development sector. The project timeline depends on finding a suitable building.

We estimate the costs for the acquisition and/or renovation of a property at approximately XCG 1,500,000 (€742,000). Our ambition is to secure a building in full ownership, without a mortgage, rather than renting a property. We are seeking 10 companies willing to contribute €50,000 or XCG 100,000 each to support this initiative.

About operational expenses — including maintenance, staffing, utilities, and related costs — Fundashon Nos T'ei Pa Otro has been receiving government subsidy support from the Government of Curaçao for the past 45 years. The operational and running costs of De Veilige Veste can therefore be covered through this existing subsidy structure.

Cooperation within the Kingdom of the Netherlands

In this project, Curaçao and the Netherlands are joining forces. We believe in synergy — in the idea that collaboration creates a greater impact than working separately. We believe in “collective intelligence”: the principle that a group is smarter and more effective than an individual or a single organisation. The Kingdom of the Netherlands should be more than a constitutional union. It should be a community in which solidarity, equality, and shared responsibility are central values. We are proud to give concrete meaning to these principles through the project *De Veilige Veste Curaçao*.

Broad Support for the Initiative

The initiative for De Veilige Veste Curaçao is supported by a growing group of foundations, platforms, ambassadors, and advocates — people with authority and experience who are committed to this project. Their involvement demonstrates that this initiative has broad support across society.

An overview is included in the appendix *Support, Ambassadors, and Letters of Recommendation*. The message from these ambassadors, advocates, and supporters is clear: this is an important initiative whose time has come.

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations adopted seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the new global agenda for sustainable development for 2030. These goals are regarded as the worldwide framework for sustainable development. De Veilige Veste contributes directly to five of these goals, namely.

SDG 1: No Poverty

By promoting economic self-reliance and social participation.

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being

Through trauma treatment and working towards sustainable recovery.

SDG 4: Quality Education

Through the integration of education and work-experience programmes.

SDG 13: Climate Action

By creating a sustainable building and encouraging conscious use of energy and resources.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Through collaboration with local and international partners.

INITIATORS

Sonia Baromeo and Linda Terpstra are the initiators of this project.

Linda Terpstra was born and raised on Curaçao. Together with Anke van Dijke, she is the Founding Mother of Fier, the national expertise centre in the Netherlands specialising in violence in relationships of dependency. She also served as chair of the board of Fier for 22 years. Together with Anke van Dijke, she developed the *Veilige Veste* concept, which combines support at the intersection of care and safety; interdisciplinary collaboration; and a specialised department dedicated to reducing violence through research, innovative projects, campaigns, public education, advocacy, and evidence-based activism.

Sonia Baromeo is chair of Fundashon Nos T'ei Pa Otro, a foundation that has been providing crisis shelter and support for women — and their children — for 37 years. The organisation supports those dealing with the consequences of violence experienced either recently or earlier in life.

When Sonia visited Fier on a working visit and met Linda, she realised that twenty years earlier, in 2005, she herself — together with an architect — had developed a concept very similar to the *Veilige Veste*. It had been her dream. At the time, however, it was not possible to realise that vision.

Sonia and Linda then joined forces to bring a *Veilige Veste* to Curaçao.

As a *Yu di Kòrsou* (“child of Curaçao”), Linda Terpstra wants to dedicate her knowledge, experience, and passion to the children, young people, adults, and families of Curaçao.

Sonia and Linda are working on this impact plan on a voluntary basis, without financial compensation. The same applies to the core team supporting the realisation of the project.

In addition to Sonia Baromeo and Linda Terpstra, the core team also includes Karin Hermans and Anke van Dijke.

At this stage, we deliberately work with a small core team to maintain maximum decisiveness and momentum.

THE DREAM & THE IDEA

The Dream. The dream of Sonia Baromeo — chair of Fundashon Nos T'ei Pa Otro — is to realise a Veilige Veste on Curaçao. She asked Linda Terpstra and Anke van Dijke — the Founding Mothers of Fier — to support her in making a Curaçaoan Veilige Veste a reality.

Over the past 22 years, they transformed a small regional women's shelter with 30 employees into a national expertise centre with 500 staff members. De Veilige Veste is the result of their ambition to provide support to victims of violence that truly makes a difference.

The Idea (Substantive Vision). It became clear that simply removing victims of intimidation, violence, and exploitation from dangerous situations and bringing them to safety was not enough to ensure recovery. On the contrary: many victims became victims again (*revictimisation*); many perpetrators reoffended (*recidivism*); and many children continued to grow up in unsafe environments (*intergenerational transmission of violence*). Research shows that experiencing violence is one of the strongest predictors of becoming a victim of violence again. This is why it is so important not only to provide safe shelter, but also trauma treatment and recovery-oriented support. One of the consequences of violence is that victims often fail to complete their education or are unable to maintain employment because of the impact of their experiences. As a result, they frequently become financially and socially dependent on the person who abuses, exploits, or mistreats them. Without qualifications or work opportunities, the chances of independence and self-sufficiency remain limited. That is why social participation — education and employment — forms an essential part of the support approach: obtaining qualifications and finding meaningful work.

This vision resulted in three core pillars: High Intensive Care, High Safety & Intensive Education. Or, in other words: support and treatment; protection and safety; education and employment: participation in society.

Finally, the *Knowledge and Innovation Centre (KIC)* forms an integral part of the Veilige Veste concept. The KIC is tasked with contributing to the prevention and reduction of violence across society through research, public education, advocacy, policy influence, and innovation.

The Idea (The Building). As a building, De Veilige Veste is a symbol — a statement. We no longer wanted to hide victims away in secret locations. Society needed to see that even in a wealthy Western country like the Netherlands, people are forced to flee from violence. That is what De Veilige Veste was meant to make visible: *here are the victims, here they are safe, we will no longer hide them, a clear message to the perpetrators.*

At the same time, the building needed to serve a multifunctional purpose: a place where different disciplines collaborate; and a place that gives space to a broader movement that makes violence visible and challenges society to confront it.

Funding & Support. We wanted to do what was truly needed. We wanted to ask victims of violence: *What can we do for you?* That ambition does not always fit neatly within traditional healthcare funding systems in the Netherlands. The same applied to the Knowledge and Innovation Centre. For that reason, De Veilige Veste has always worked closely with charitable funds, businesses, and service clubs. Over the years, strong and lasting partnerships have been built. Two examples. The *Centre Against Child Trafficking and Human Trafficking*, which is part of De Veilige Veste (Fier), has received structural support from the Nationale Postcode Loterij for more than ten years. The Postcode Lottery supports organisations working towards a fairer, healthier, and greener world. Microsoft has included De Veilige Veste (Fier) in its *Microsoft for Nonprofits* programme. In addition, the organisation receives material and non-material support through the *Microsoft Employee Giving Campaign*. Every Christmas, children and young people staying at Fier receive gifts through the *Microsoft Giving Tree Programme*, through which Microsoft expresses its commitment to communities and support for vulnerable groups during the holiday season. Many companies contribute by working at reduced rates or by offering services voluntarily and without compensation. In this regard, we would specifically like to mention Bouwgroep Dijkstra Draisma and KAW Architecten, who were responsible for the design and construction of the first Veilige Veste. In addition, support services are financed through the Dutch Social Support Act (WMO), the Health Insurance Act, and the Youth Act. In 2024, the organisation's total revenue amounted to €41,000,000.

Violence concerns all of us. Violence is not solely a matter for healthcare or government institutions. Violence affects society as a whole, and everyone can contribute to building a society free from violence. That is also what we mean by *joining forces*.

FURTHER ELABORATION ON THE IMPACT OF DE VEILIGE VESTE

Building De Veilige Veste Together. Creating a Veilige Veste is not something we do alone. First and foremost, this project gives concrete meaning to solidarity within the countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. We make full use of the knowledge and experience of the Veilige Vestes in the Netherlands, Fundashon Nos T'ei Pa Otro, and other shelters on Curaçao, as well as organisations such as Bos di Hubentut, Skuchami, and many other partners. Our motto is simple: major societal challenges require strong connectedness to create real impact. That is where our energy is focused: on collaboration with relevant partners throughout the Kingdom and — especially — with partners on Curaçao. Partners who can move this issue forward and who can make a meaningful difference in the lives of young people, adults, and families affected by violence and its consequences.

Protection and a Future for Victims. Protection for young people, adults, and families facing violence in relationships of dependency is currently insufficient. In a small community such as Curaçao, providing effective protection is even more challenging than in the Netherlands. That is why we are building a Veilige Veste on Curaçao: a contemporary castle, a stronghold where people can be safe from those who threaten, abuse, exploit, or mistreat them. A clear message to perpetrators. If necessary, we close the gates and defend those inside. In De Veilige Veste, we provide support at the intersection of care and safety for children, adolescents, and young adults facing severe threats and violence. And above all: we work towards their future.

Turning Off the Tap. We do not want to keep “mopping the floor while the tap is still running.” De Veilige Veste Curaçao is also a place where things happen — an incubator for change. It is a place where foundations, care organisations, the police, the Public Prosecution Service, educational

institutions, the university, policymakers, and others come together to develop plans that create real impact. Because our goal is not only to respond to violence, but also to prevent and stop it. Key concepts include: prevention; awareness; empowerment; policy development; and a strong interdisciplinary approach to violence. This can only be achieved through collaboration.

Connecting People and Organisations. The people of Curaçao recognise violence as a serious societal problem. This is equally true for professionals, policymakers, politicians, journalists, and foundations across the island. There are activists, professionals, and many organisations already committed to addressing this issue. One of the major challenges, however, is fragmentation. Curaçao has many small foundations and organisations. The government has previously attempted to merge these organisations into one or several larger entities, but this proved unsuccessful because organisations strongly value their own identity and autonomy.

At the same time, there is broad recognition that this problem is too large for any single organisation to solve alone — that progress can only be achieved by joining forces.

The first step is therefore to create support and commitment among relevant stakeholders.

By working together — while respecting and preserving each organisation's own identity — and by achieving concrete successes together, new forms of collaboration will emerge: modern partnerships that fit the professional culture of Curaçao.

Working together within De Veilige Veste.

Experiencing the added value of collaboration.

Doing what is necessary.

We begin with a strong and committed core team and build around it a growing circle of collaborative partners — so that a small stream can grow into a broad and powerful river.

THE APPROACH TO VIOLENCE ON CURAÇAO

Safety & Protection. Several foundations on Curaçao provide shelter for women — and their children — who are affected by domestic violence, stalking, intimate terrorism, gang violence, or who have survived violent attacks and continue to face threats. However, for the most severely threatened young people and adults, these shelters are often unable to provide sufficient levels of safety and protection.

Support Services. Support for the consequences of violence — such as trauma treatment — remains limited and scarce. Karin Hermans, child and adolescent psychiatrist, advocates for greater support for children and young people traumatised as a result of violence in relationships of dependency. Recent research (May 2025) identified the expansion of preventive mental healthcare as a key priority, specifically: structural deployment of primary care mental health professionals (POH-GGZ); and the involvement of peer support workers with lived experience. De Veilige Veste Curaçao can provide an important impulse to this priority area.

Curaçao currently has a fragmented mental healthcare landscape, characterised by many separate organisations and limited coordination between services. Preventive services are scarce, and collaboration between organisations is often ad hoc. The island also faces: stigma surrounding mental health care; limited access to low-threshold mental healthcare services; insufficient services accessible without referral; and a lack of reliable data for policy development.

Broad Approach & Advocacy.

Aliansa Curaçao is a platform that brings together individuals and organisations with the aim of creating a safer and more just world — a society and future free from oppression.

Aliansa advocates for a systematic governmental approach to violence and social injustice. In addition, Aliansa and its members organise a wide range of activities, including: theatre productions; public education and awareness campaigns; empowerment activities; media engagement; symposiums; and professional training initiatives.

Over recent years, several conferences on violence in relationships of dependency have been organised for the six Caribbean islands under the slogan: **NO MAS — NO MORE**. The Dutch government has also been involved in these initiatives.

De Veilige Veste aims to create a turning point: from fragmentation towards a shared responsibility, and from isolated efforts towards the joining of forces.

BACKGROUND

Violence against children and women is a deeply rooted global problem. Ending violence against women and girls is included in one of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations: Gender Equality.

Slavery and Its Lasting Impact. In countries with a history of slavery — such as Curaçao — violence in relationships of dependency is even more complex. Violence formed the very foundation of slavery. Slavery was based on the systematic suppression of freedom and humanity; obedience was enforced through the threat and use of violence.

Punishments, corporal punishment such as whippings, murder, rape, and the forced separation of families through the sale of parents or children were all part of daily reality. During slavery, violence was deeply interwoven into everyday life.

Even after the abolition of slavery in 1863, many formerly enslaved people continued living in small huts on plantations in exchange for several unpaid working days for the *shon* (plantation owner). This *paga tera* system remained in place for a long time. As late as the 1950s, children were still being born on Plantation Savonet under this system. These children — now adults — describe experiences in which the *shon* would ask their mother what she was cooking and, when she lifted the lid of the pot, spit into the food.

Violence and strict obedience were — and in many ways still are — highly normalised within Curaçaoan society: a legacy of three centuries of slavery and the *paga tera* system.

Patriarchal structures, unequal power relations, and violence became deeply embedded in society and continue to contribute to inequality and insecurity today. While obedience and the “acceptance” of humiliation and violence may once have been survival mechanisms during slavery, they now undermine families and society as a whole.

Slavery has been described as: “The complete domination over the body of an enslaved person, granting unrestricted permission to kill, rape, mutilate, torture, and terrorise.”

During slavery, families were frequently separated by force. Corporal punishment was used as a tool of oppression and discipline. Obedience was enforced through violence, fear, and suppression. Independence, autonomy, and personal choice were systematically denied.

Strict obedience, silence, fear of violence, and acceptance of humiliation became survival strategies. Over generations, these patterns became embedded in the very fabric of Curaçaoan society and remain normalised to this day. The consequences — particularly for women and children — are profound. This makes addressing oppression and violence both highly complex and deeply urgent.

Poverty. There is also a strong relationship between violence and poverty. Curaçao has a relatively high number of households living below the poverty line: approximately one in four.

Poverty increases stress and tension, which can contribute to domestic violence and family conflict.

#MeToo. At the same time, violence is not limited to people living in poverty. More affluent circles are not immune to violence either — something the MeToo movement has made unmistakably clear. Increasing numbers of highly educated women are speaking openly about their experiences with sexual violence and abuse.

90% of the Population Considers Violence a Serious Problem. Recent research (2024) points to widespread indications of domestic violence, sexual violence, and incest on Curaçao. More than 90% of respondents identified violence as a major problem affecting children, adolescents, and women within their communities and families. More than half of the adults interviewed (55%) considered child sexual abuse to be a “common occurrence” within their communities and households. As is often said:

“The less we talk about sexuality, the more sexual violence exists.” And: “The greater the shame and taboo surrounding sexuality, the greater the level of abuse, and the lower the use of condoms and other forms of contraception.”

SUBSTANTIATION

Soleil Was Sexually Exploited. Soleil was sexually exploited. Soleil (21) moved to the Netherlands at the age of twelve. She was sexually exploited for four years. She describes one of her most traumatic experiences: *“I am in a garage. I’m lying on a table and there are four men standing around me. One start masturbating and begins breathing heavily. Then one man sits behind me, and two others hold my legs apart so I can’t close them anymore. One is wearing a T-shirt but nothing underneath, like some gym guy. He has an erection. The other man is completely naked, and he also has an erection. They are laughing.”*

Soleil could not escape the traffickers who were making large amounts of money from her exploitation. They knew where she lived and where she went to school. She was threatened, intimidated, and beaten whenever she did not comply with their demands. They threatened to harm her younger sister and her dog. She did not dare tell anyone.

Eventually, she was admitted to Fier, where she received protection and trauma treatment in De Veilige Veste for the consequences of four years of systematic rape. She was eventually able to return to school.

Mimi Became a Victim of Intimate Terrorism. Mimi (60), living on Curaçao, became the victim of intimate terrorism — also known as coercive control. *“He controlled everything. I had to call when I left the house, when I arrived somewhere, when I took a break; I had to inform him when I left work and when I got home. The monitoring was maddening. He checked my underwear and examined me internally to see whether I had been unfaithful.* In addition to this coercive control, there was physical abuse and sexual violence. Her daughter suffered nightmares for years because of the violence she witnessed. After violent incidents, her husband would say: *“Why did you push me so far that I had to do this to you?”* Mimi says: *“It was always my fault. I was desperate; I no longer knew what to do.”* Mimi attempted suicide several times — not because of psychiatric illness, but because she no longer saw any escape. She feared that if she left her husband, he would harm or kill her and their children.

The Pain of Silence. These are two examples of women who remained silent for a long time about what had been done to them. Silence is one of the defining characteristics of violence within relationships and families. Not only victims and perpetrators remain silent, but also bystanders — neighbours, relatives, children, and colleagues. Underlying this silence are mechanisms such as fear; power imbalance; dependency; self-silencing; self-blame; victim-blaming; and gaslighting. Writer Janine Meijns gave her novel about the silence of girls and women throughout history the title *Zwijgpijn* (“The Pain of Silence”). A word that captures what silence truly represents: pain. Silence keeps violence alive. As long as we remain silent about the violence inflicted on children and women — and about its consequences — violence continues. That is why De Veilige Veste not only offers protection and support but also functions as a breeding ground for social activism. Violence must leave our families and our relationships.

Violence as a Normalised Reality. Violence in relationships of dependency is so deeply rooted that it is often regarded as normal. Violence against women and children on Curaçao is widespread and severe, yet it frequently remains hidden. Victims and bystanders often do not seek help because of shame or fear, meaning that the true scale of the problem is likely far greater than official reports suggest.

Child Abuse. Based on research, Ton Liefwaard, professor of Children’s Rights, states that child abuse is so deeply embedded in society that it can even be perceived as normal.

The 28-year-old rapper Boechi has stated that if you ask young people whether they were beaten at home, the majority will answer yes.

Jeanne Henriquez, former chair of Aliansa Curaçao, also points out that many Curaçaoan children grow up experiencing corporal punishment or emotional abuse that is culturally perceived as “normal.”

When violence is normalised during childhood, there is a significant risk that these children, once adults, will also use violence against their own children and partners.

Social workers, teachers, and police officers indicate that women and children are in particularly vulnerable positions. They describe a troubling picture of child abuse, including sexual abuse, child prostitution, incest, and “loverboy” exploitation.

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome. Dr. Joy DeGruy developed the theory of *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, which explains how the trauma of slavery continues across generations and contributes to the normalisation of violence. “The normalisation of physical violence in child-rearing on Curaçao cannot be separated from the history of slavery, which left deep marks on the island’s social structures and cultural norms. During slavery, physical violence was considered a normal and accepted method of enforcing obedience and submission. These methods of oppression caused profound trauma and left

behind a legacy in which violence came to be seen as a legitimate form of discipline. The normalisation of physical and verbal violence is still visible on Curaçao today.”

Growing Awareness. Although awareness is growing on Curaçao that violence has no place within families and relationships, this awareness has not yet become fully embedded within society. Support for non-violent parenting is increasing, but these changes often remain limited to smaller groups and are not yet sufficiently supported by structural policies and systemic measures.

Cycles of Violence. American researchers describe child abuse as a “hidden epidemic” because it forms the basis of many societal problems. As a society, we still insufficiently recognise the extent to which addiction, physical illness, mental health problems, family dysfunction, violence in relationships, and other social problems are linked to adverse childhood experiences (*ACEs*).

Violence in relationships of dependency — such as child abuse, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, and intimate partner violence — contains characteristics that greatly increase the likelihood that victims will experience violence again. Trauma and violence damage the natural defence systems of human beings. This creates cycles of violence: across a person’s lifetime (*revictimisation*); from parents to children (*intergenerational transmission*); and through cultural and social norms.

As a result, violence often becomes a continuous thread throughout the lives of children, adolescents, and adults, manifesting itself in different forms at different stages of life.

Poverty & Violence. Curaçao has a relatively high percentage of households living below the poverty line (approximately 25%). Poverty increases stress and tensions that can contribute to domestic violence. At the same time, violence occurs across all layers of society — affluent families are not immune either.

INSPIRATION FROM THE NETHERLANDS: TRANSFORMING DERELICT BUILDINGS INTO A VEILIGE VESTE



A former police station — once scheduled for demolition — was transformed into De Veilige Veste for severely threatened girls, young women, and children.

What does the support look like? [Overview of the Support Approach](#)

Renovation of a former office building: [KAW – Veilige Veste Leeuwarden Project](#)



A deteriorated office building was renovated and transformed into a modern, sustainable Veilige Veste.

The opening of De Veilige Veste in Rotterdam–Rijnmond: [Opening of De Veilige Veste Rotterdam–Rijnmond](#)