



# **Pink Orange Alliance**

*for LGBT emancipation  
in the Dutch Caribbean*



## Pink Orange Alliance: for LGBT emancipation in the Dutch Caribbean

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# Introduction

The Pink Orange Alliance is a collaboration between Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) organizations on Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao, Sint Maarten, Sint Eustatius, Saba and COC Netherlands aimed at improving the position of the LGBT communities in the Dutch Caribbean. The Pink Orange project is a three year project initiated in 2012. In 2015 the project entered into its second phase, which will run until 2018. The initiative to start up a formal collaboration between LGBT organizations in the Kingdom of the Netherlands came from Fundashon Orguyo Korsou (FOKO), the LGBT organization based on Curacao. FOKO and COC Netherlands together with representatives from the LGBT communities on Saba and St. Maarten spearheaded the development of a *'Pink Orange Accord'*. The Pink Orange Accord, signed in 2010, was the first step towards forming a strong network of LGBT organizations committed to work towards the emancipation of LGBTs in the Dutch Caribbean. The Pink Orange Accord was signed by 6 of the ultimately 7 partners<sup>1</sup> in the alliance. The seven partners currently partaking in the Pink Orange Alliance are: *Alternative Lifestyle Aruba/ALFA (Aruba)*, *E.Q. Bonaire (Bonaire)*<sup>2</sup>, *Fundashon Orguyo Korsou/FOKO (Curacao)*, *St. Maarten/St. Martin Alliance for Equality/SAFE (St. Maarten)*, *Born this way/BTW (Sint Eustatius)*, *Body, Mind & Spirit<sup>3</sup>/BMS (Saba)* and *COC Netherlands*.

The kingdom of the Netherlands is characterized by the uniqueness of the four independent countries and the three oversee territories it consists of. Since 2010 Aruba, Curacao, Sint Maarten and the Netherlands are independent countries within the Kingdom. Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius together form the Caribbean Netherlands, which constitutionally are a part of the Netherlands. Even though these four countries together are one sovereign country, there are many differences. The parts of the Kingdom which are located in the Dutch Caribbean<sup>4</sup> are well known for their sandy beaches and the laid-back mentality of their inhabitants. The Netherlands, located in Europe, is characterized by its fast-pace and progressive laws and practices when it comes to sexual orientation and gender identity. Especially the latter is interesting when compared to the situation in the other parts of the Kingdom. In the Caribbean Netherlands<sup>5</sup> civil partnership and marriage has been opened up for partners of the same sex. Since 2010, several LGBT have chosen to marry on Bonaire and Saba. Interestingly enough none of the newly-weds were locals of the islands. Couples are often non-Dutch or residents from Curacao, Sint Maarten or Aruba where marriage has not yet been opened up for same sex couples. The LGBT organizations on Aruba, Curacao and Sint Maarten have been very vocal against this inequality in rights and advocate for marriage equality for LGBT on their islands. Social acceptance of LGBT identities and lack of education around sexual diversity are pressing issues in the whole of the Dutch Caribbean.

<sup>1</sup> At the time of signing no LGBT representative from Sint Eustatius had been identified

<sup>2</sup> E.Q. Bonaire is the new LGBT organization on Bonaire, which was established in January 2015. Prior to E.Q. Bonaire's involvement in the Pink Orange Alliance, Bonaire was represented by Diversity Bonaire (DIBO). DIBO was involved in the Pink Orange Alliance as from 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Formerly Aids Support Group Saba

<sup>4</sup> Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao, Saba, Sint Maarten and Sint Eustatius

<sup>5</sup> Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius

While there are several avenues for progress, such as at the one hand the Gay Pride Parade which has been held on Curacao for three years now, there are many challenges remaining, such as backlash experienced by LGBT on Bonaire when being open about their sexual orientation at the workplace.

In this publication an overview will be given of the activities undertaken by the organizations in the Dutch Caribbean to strengthen the LGBT community on their island, raise awareness about sexual diversity and liaise with relevant stakeholders. This publication is not a complete list of all the work undertaken by LGBT organizations in the Dutch Caribbean. These organizations consist of volunteers that are committed to representing the LGBT community and advocating for their needs and rights. Providing a safe-space, agenda setting and offering counselling to the LGBT community are crucial tasks which are undertaken in-between the regular day jobs. The LGBT movement in the Dutch Caribbean is young but characterized by strong leaders, who are intensively working towards equality and emancipation for LGBT in the Dutch Caribbean.

# Aruba

The LGBT organization *Alternative Lifestyle Federation Aruba (ALFA)* on Aruba was established in 2005. Maikel Kelly, the founding father of the organization decided to start the organization after returning to his home island after a long stay in the Netherlands. He came back to find an island with a thriving but secretive LGBT community. In the 90's the LGBT community on Aruba was already very thriving. There were four 'gay' friendly bars on the island. One of them was 'Jimmy's Place' which is the oldest gay-friendly bar on the island.



In 2002 when Maikel and his spouse returned to settle on Aruba, they became the owners of Jimmy's Place. Around that time, after marriage was opened up for same-sex couples in the Caribbean Netherlands, the attitude and tolerance from the general population towards LGBT hardened a bit. Many of the gay bars closed their doors. In this period Jimmy's Place joined forces with other LGBT front liners on the island and established ALFA. Jimmy's Place became a physical location where LGBT could meet up and also discuss their opinions with other likeminded people. ALFA started offering psychosocial support for LGBT and became the leading voice when it came to advocating for equal rights for LGBT.

At present-day Aruba is seen as one of the most tolerant Dutch Caribbean islands when it comes to sexual orientation and gender identity. LGBT on Aruba feel that they can be open about who they are. There are several well-known LGBT on the island, including Desiree Croes-de Souza an member of parliament who is married to her female spouse and an advocate for LGBT issues.

ALFA has developed into a strong organization characterized by its good working relationships with its many stakeholders. The organization is well-known on the island and it often contacted by the media, primary and secondary schools and by individual members of the government about issues concerning the LGBT community on the island.

ALFA has undertaken several activities aimed at creating more visibility for the LGBT community on Aruba. An limited overview of the activities undertaken by ALFA with support from COC within the Pink Orange Alliance are:

## Gay Pride Aruba

In 2013 ALFA organized the very first Gay Pride on Aruba. The Gay Pride was an unofficial event consisting of six LGBT related workshop sessions on the island. This unofficial Gay Pride on Aruba took place in the same year that the very first official Gay Pride was organized on Curacao.



## *Petition for opening up same-sex marriage on Aruba*

During all Gay Pride activities held on Aruba there was the possibility for attendances to sign the petition for opening up same-sex marriage on Aruba. The petition was signed by 55 people. The original idea was to hand over the petition to the new prime minister of Aruba. The elections were won by the political party of the sitting prime minister Mike Eman. Ultimately ALFA chose not to hand the petition over to the prime minister since the he had just indicated not being open to opening up marriage for same-sex couples on Aruba because according to him the society was not ready for this step yet.

## *Attention for LGBT during International Human Rights Day Aruba*

In 2014 ALFA became a member of the Human rights commission of Aruba and was intensively involved in the organization of the 'Walk for Liberty / Peace Walk' event on **Human Rights day**.

The Human right commission organized a peace walk from Aruba's Linear Park to the Wilhelmina Park to commemorate the ongoing challenges in the world regarding Human Rights. At the end of the walk there were several speeches by local human rights activists about the challenges minority groups on the island face and how these challenges relate to human rights. ALFA front man Maikel Kelly delivered a **speech on the position of LGBTs on the island and the challenges they face**. He explained that LGBT rights are not special rights but human rights that pertain to any individual despite their sexual orientation or gender identity. After the speeches all participants were invited to the LGBT hang-out café Jimmy's place for a de-briefing and drinks. It was the first time that the human rights commission of Aruba included LGBT people in their program.

In 2014 ALFA produced a **movie focusing on sexual diversity in the Aruban society**. The title of the movie is 'Un Hangua den Hooi' (A needle in a Haystack). For the production of the movie ALFA partnered up with Art Rap foundation.

The focus on the movie is on how an Aruban family deals with homophobia and the fact that two their children are different from what they expected them to become. By using symbolic and making reference to many religious and cultural practices on Aruba, the movie seeks to pinpoint how hypocrisy on the society leads to damaged relationships between parents and children.

One interesting scene in the movie is a scene depicting the funeral of the transgender daughter (born male) of the family. The father wants his son to be buried as male, but the funeral director wants to pay his last respect and makes sure the body is dressed-up in female clothes. The secret lover of the deceased daughter, a well-known police officer, visits her body to pay his last respect and gives her a passionate kiss as a good-bye.

This movie will be the first Aruban movie explicitly dealing with sexual diversity and gender orientation and how this affects the lives of LGBT and their environment.



un película di  
Nelson Gonzalez - Gloria Bryce  
Musical Nelson Gonzalez - André LeGrand - Tereza Costa

Movie about sexual diversity in the Aruban society

Ceremony at the Wilhelmina Park during the Human rights day Walk (photo by Nelson Gonzales)

Vrouwenavond Aruba  
filmavond



With every heartbeat

Waar: Jimmy's Place  
Wanneer: zondag 23 juni  
Tijd: 1 uursel 45 min  
Wie: start met Aruba  
Aruba: Aruba en de wereld

"With Every Heartbeat" will  
beheld in "Hooi", in een  
Paradise film uit 2014 van  
Alexandra Thomas Koning.  
De film werd de  
"Bestthrough Award" op  
het 2014 AFI Festival.

## Support group for lesbian and bisexual women on Aruba

In 2012 ALFA supported the establishment of an informal lesbian support group. The LGBT hang-out café Jimmy's place offered the support group a space to meet regularly and organize their movie nights.

## 'Purple Roulette' - first Purple Friday organized at a vocational school on Aruba



In 2014 ALFA supported students at a vocational training school on Aruba (Colegio E.P.I.) to organize the first ever Purple Friday on the island. It was the first time that the Purple Friday (in line with the Dutch concept) was organized at a school outside of the Netherlands. Purple Friday is an intervention introduced by COC Netherlands. All over the Netherlands, Gay-Straight Alliances / GSA's ask their fellow peers to wear purple as a statement against homo- and transphobia. 500 schools joined in in 2014. GSA's campaign in their schools and hand out purple bracelets.

ALFA supported the students to organize a GSA and supported them to develop a program for the day. ALFA made an Aruban version of the Purple Friday renaming it 'Purple Roulette'. The program of the day consisted of many workshops dealing with sexual diversity, sexual health, life skills, family planning etc.

An adapted version of the Purple Friday 2014 Poster developed by COC was made for Aruba and disseminated there at the school, but also at public spaces. ALFA made a short video documentary on how the day went. The video clip can be viewed online on You Tube and found under 'Purple Friday Aruba'.

## *ALFA's mainstream partners on Aruba*

ALFA is a very active organization on Aruba and has managed to start up **collaboration with many stakeholders**. In 2012 ALFA linked up with the International Planned Parenthood Foundation (IPPF) on Aruba named Famia Plania. Famia Plania was in the course of developing and implementing their sexual health program for youth named 'I love my Body'. The program consists of a jingle, video-clip, merchandise, folders, flyers and teaching material aimed at motivating youth to be mindful of their sexual health. Famia Plania collaborates with many partners on the island in order to reach the whole youth population. Famia Plania also started collaboration with ALFA in order to incorporate a sexual diversity component to this program. ALFA holds lectures on sexual diversity and sexual health within the 'I love my Body' program. In this way ALFA reached a great number of youth in schools and provides them with information on sexual diversity. ALFA has been collaborating with Famia Plania on this project since 2013.



*Students of Colegio E.P.I. with lecturer on sexual diversity Dudley Ferdinandus*



*Team of students at Colegio E.P.I who approached ALFA to organize the Purple Friday at their school*

# Bonaire

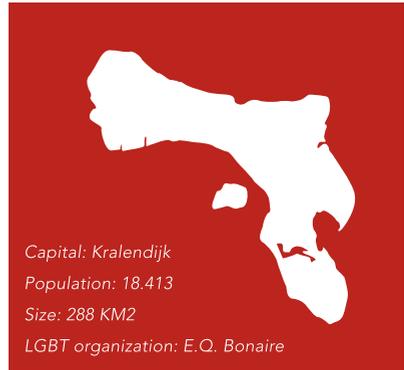
*Diversity Bonaire (DIBO)* was the first organization on Bonaire to focus on the sexual health of LGBTI on the island and to raise awareness for sexual orientation and human rights. DIBO front man Lloyd Obispu established the organization in 2011.

Bonaire is one of the Dutch Caribbean islands where marriage equality is a fact. Despite this progressive legal environment there is little social acceptance of LGBT identities.

Bonaire has a very-closed community and LGBT are not very comfortable with being open about their sexual orientation and gender identity. The younger generation is found to be more tolerant, but LGBT still experience pressure from within families and social circles to conform to the norm.

In 2015 a new community based LGBT organization was established named *E.Q. Bonaire*. E.Q. was established by five of its core members who are currently on the board of the organization. EQ has a strong focus on empowering the LGBT community, peer to peer counselling and education around sexual diversity. The two organizations are complementary to each other. Since its establishment in 2015 E.Q. has become a partner within the Pink Orange Alliance.

DIBO has been a partner in the Pink Orange Alliance since 2012 until 2015. The activities undertaken by DIBO strongly focused on sexual health. An overview of the activities undertaken by DIBO are:



## *Condom hand-out during Carnival and Regatta by DIBO*



*DIBO representative handing out condoms*



*DIBO representatives at the Regatta in 2014*

One of the main activities DIBO had been undertaking since its establishment was the handing-out of condoms during Carnival and Regatta. Since procurement of condoms is outside the scope of Pink Orange COC linked DIBO with the Aids Healthcare foundation (AHF) who offers trainings and provides barrier methods to community based organizations.

DIBO disbursed these condoms accompanied by safer-sex instructions during the Regatta. An radio interview was given by DIBO front man about the purpose of handing out this condoms and the importance of sexual health. DIBO representatives handed-out 3000 condoms that were given in sets of two, reaching a total of 1500 people.

## ***Reception first same-sex marriage on Bonaire and press conference reception on Aruba***

Alex Gonzales, an Aruban inhabitant, married his spouse on Bonaire in 2012. DIBO organized a small reception for the couple after their marriage. There was a lot of press coverage of this first same-sex marriage on Bonaire. Pink Orange representatives from Curacao, Bonaire and Aruba were present during the marriage.

ALFA as the LGBT organization also organized a small public reception for Alex and a press conference in order to draw attention to this event. The mother of groom gave a open-hearted speech about how she dealt with her son's sexual orientation and that she was happy to have an additional son. The couple also gave an speech on why they chose to get married and stressed the point that that LGBT youth on the island should feel that there is nothing wrong with the way they are.



*Marriage of Alex Gonzalez and his spouse on Bonaire*

*Mario Kleinmoedig (FOKO), Alex Gonzalez (groom), Lloyd Obispu (DIBO), groom and Maikel Kelly (ALFA) at the reception.*

## Activities by E.Q. Bonaire in 2015

Despite being a young organization E.Q. has been very active since its inception early 2015. Besides the board, the active core of the organization consists of 15 members. The group has undertaken several activities such as an **LGBT only launch party**, which was visited by over 50 LGBT. Shortly after a **Straight friendly party** was organized, which brought together 60 people.

E.Q. has formed **support groups** for her members and is organizing social and thematic meetings. Specific attention is paid to 'Religion' and 'Coming Out' since these have been identified as important themes for the LGBT community on the island.

In June 2015 E.Q. organized an **unofficial Gay pride** gathering consisting of a boat trip to Klein Bonaire.

In August 2015 a representative of E.Q. attended a **capacity building training in Amsterdam during the Gay Pride week**. The training program included media training, advocacy skill building, theoretical knowledge about sexual orientation and gender identity and linking with relevant stakeholders. E.Q. visit to Amsterdam during the Gay Pride attracted a lot of media attention on Bonaire, including interviews on the radio and television. This helped in giving EQ an face as the LGBT organization of Bonaire.



▣ E.Q. logo

∧ E.Q. launch party

< E.Q. crew during the LGBT launch party

## Curacao



Curacao, the largest island in the Dutch Caribbean, has the eldest LGBT organization. Since the establishment of FOKO the situation on the island has improved greatly for LGBT. At present-day Curacao is the only island where an official Gay pride is organized. LGBT feel that they can be more open about who they are. However intolerance of LGBT identities is still very vocally uttered. A prominent MP of the ruling party regularly voices her opinions about LGBT in very derogatory terms.

FOKO was one of the initiators of the Pink Orange Accord. The Pink Orange Accord was an agreement between the LGBT organizations on Curacao, Aruba, Saba, Bonaire and COC Netherlands to join forces in working towards the emancipation of LGBT in the whole Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Pink Orange Accord was the predecessor the Pink Orange Alliance Project.

FOKO has been a partner in the Pink Orange Alliance as from 2012 and was the coordinator of the alliance in the first year of the project. FOKO organized several conferences and activities within the Pink Orange Project. An overview of these activities are:

### *The first Gay pride on Curacao*

In 2013 the first ever Gay Pride event took place on Curacao. The Gay Pride was organized the Curacao Gay Pride of which FOKO is a board member. An organizing committee consisting of several organizations took the lead in this project. The Floris Suit Hotel (a LGBT friendly resort) took the lead in organizing most of the logistics. FOKO contributed with a content program by organizing the first **Women Diversity Conference for Lesbian, Bisexual and transgender women**, together with the LGBT organization of St. Lucia. The conference took place during the Gay Pride on Curacao.



*Lloyd Obispo (DIBO), Glen Hellberg (OCAN), Mario Kleinmoedig (FOKO) and Maikel Kelly (ALFA) at the Curacao Gay Pride in 2013*



## Training Life counselling & support for Pink House Youth coordinators

Life counselling of LGBT is one of the main activities of FOKO and their Pink House. In order to make the counselling more sustainable and more affordable, FOKO trained volunteers of the Pink House to offer these services. FOKO's LGBT counsellor, Dudley Ferdinandus, set-up a **10 week training** for the volunteers with practical components in order for them to **acquire the knowledge and skills needed to provide initial counselling**. The training was offered to 9 volunteers and fully attended and completed by all of them. All participants received an certificate and support FOKO with life counselling and support to LGBTs when needed.



LGBT counsellor Dudley Ferdinandus training the group at the Pink House



Group of participants in life-counselling training

## Radio interviews

The FOKO LGBT counsellor and FOKO's PFLAG representatives have a weekly slot at the **Radio station MAS** to discuss sexual diversity issues, tolerance and challenges. They discuss a particular topic every week and answer questions from listeners.



Ad for the radio interview on sexual diversity by FOKO



FOKO representatives Glenda Ottenheim (left) and Dudley Ferdinandus at Radio station MAS

# Sint Maarten

St. Maarten/St. Martin Alliance for Equality (SAFE), the grassroots LGBT organization on Sint Maarten was established in 2013. At the start of the Pink Orange program the Sint Maarten Aids foundation (SAF) was the main contact point for LGBT on the island. Through their sexual health focused activities they came into contact with LGBT youth. However, there was no support group for LGBT on the island.

Capital: Phillipsburg

Population: 74.884

Size: 87 KM2

LGBT organization: SAFE



One of the employees of SAF spearheaded the start of the first LGBT support group on the island. A board of seven committed LGBT activists was established to run the organization for the first two years. On December 10 2013 the organization was officially launched with a celebration at Eros, the only LGBT club on the island. The gathering was well attended by around 40 people.

Since then SAFE organized many social events and discussion evenings ranging in topics from religion, LBT women in the movement, being LGBT on the workplace and the need for education on sexual diversity. The first official awareness raising activity conducted by SAFE was during the annual Lions Health Fair on Sint Maarten. Recently SAFE conducted a survey amongst LGBT on the island and is currently drafting a survey for teacher's in order to collect information on their attitudes and practices related to LGBT issues.

At present day LGBT on Sint Maarten mostly indicate having a relatively positive experience of being LGBT on the island. This is indeed the case when compared to other islands in the region. However, SAFE regularly receives indications of verbal and physical violence against LGBT, especially LGBT youth. SAFE is currently looking into ways to effectively record these abuses and to offer assistance to victims of these abuses.

## LGBT community building activities



With the limited amount of funds obtained during their launch/fundraising party SAFE has organized several small-scale social activities for the LGBT community on the island. Through their very active Facebook page SAFE informs their constituents about upcoming activities. Aside from discussion evenings, SAFE also organizes 'active' social events such as monthly walks.

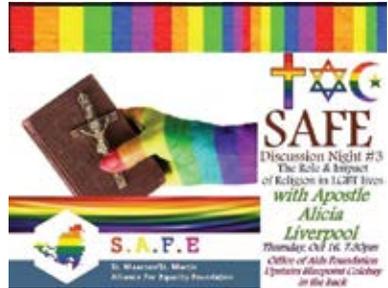
An LGBT retreat day was also organized in 2014 and was well attended by the members of SAFE.



Discussion evening on Religion and sexual orientation ↴



SAFE's support group picnic ↵



## SAFE's participation in the 2nd Annual Caribbean Women and Sexual Diversity Conference

In 2014 SAFE's chair attended the second Caribbean Women and Sexual Diversity Conference which was held in Suriname and hosted by Caribbean LGBT organizations United & Strong (St. Lucia), Women's Way (Surinam) and CARIFLAGS.



The Caribbean Women and Sexual Diversity Conference offered Caribbean women the opportunity to network and share best practices with regional partners. Participants in the conference were educated on a range of topics including, resource mobilization, human rights documentation and its importance, sexual violence and sexual health. The conference also encourages the women present to collaborate in a more efficient and effective way. One of the outcomes was a proposed Caribbean Lesbian Affairs E-Magazine to be launched in 2015.

Three main learning points that the SAFE participant took away from the conference were:

- Documentation of human rights violations of the LGBT community is important for case building
- Networking with more established regional organization is critical for individual LGBT organizations in the Caribbean
- More effort is needed to reach the transgender community in the Caribbean, since they are currently under represented

## 'Don't be Afraid of Rainbows' first ever LGBT theatre production on Sint Maarten

SAFE co-produced, together with Director Clara Reyes, the first-ever LGBT theatre production on Sint Maarten portraying lived realities of LGBT on the island. With a mixture of song, poetry, humor and dance many issues that influence the lives of LGBTs on the island were tackled. The influence of culture, the church and family was made clear. Pre-conceived ideas about LGBTs were put to discussion and a lesbian women sang about how she felt in a society in which being herself meant being something evil. A group of professional actors and dancers of which many were not necessarily out about their sexual orientation contributed to the production. The evening was well attended and notable guest were two Ministers in the sitting government.



- Advertisement for LGBT play
- LGBT Play on Sint Maarten 'Don't be Afraid of Rainbows'

## Public Human Rights Lecture on LGBT rights on Sint Maarten

On December 10 2014 SAFE in collaboration with the University of Sint Maarten hosted the first International Human Rights day lecture. The lecture was presented by Denise Vijber an sociologist and cultural anthropologist from Curacao and focused on the origins of Human rights, their applicability to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, limitations in the Sint Maarten context and the way forward for minority groups including LGBT people. The lecturer concluded that in order for LGBT persons to move forward there would have to be space for participation, accountability and non-discrimination, equality (amongst other groups) and empowerment. She stressed the importance of collaboration with likeminded groups as it is essential in order for there to be real strength.

The event was scheduled to take place at the same time as a media campaign set-up by SAFE in collaboration with **Body, Mind and Spirit on Saba**.



□ Poster for Human Rights lecture in collaboration with the University of St. Martin

∧ Audience at the Human rights lecture by SAFE

## Sint Eustatius



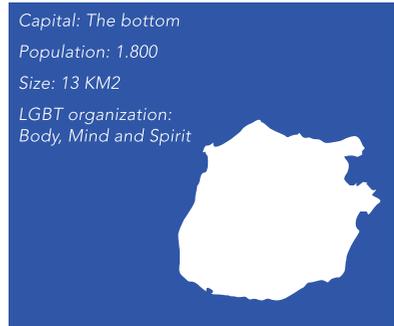
Sint Eustatius is the most challenging island when it comes to supporting the LGBT movement on the island. As the smallest island of the Dutch Caribbean, inhabitants of Sint Eustatius know each other well, which leads to close family ties and social pressure. In early 2014 COC supported the LGBT initiative group 'Born This Way' in organizing an LGBT launch party during Easter. At that time the group consisted of a total of five potential members.

The idea was to organize a party for LGBT and allies with two Dj's from neighbouring Sint Maarten to attract as many people as possible. The party was well attended and the purpose was to promote Love & Equality with a special focus on the sexual diverse community on Sint Eustatius.

This activity, with a strong social focus, was the first activity by the support group. It has a strong focus on the general community. The public focus of the launching party was a good start since it made the broader community on Sint Eustatius acquainted with the new LGBT organization.

## Saba

The AIDS Support Group Saba (ASGS) was established in 1990, following the first report of HIV infection on Saba in late 1989. This was called for, because people living with HIV (PLHIV) and the connected LGBT community had to deal with aggressive stigmatization and discrimination due to ignorance in a large part of Saba's population. The lack of knowledge about HIV/AIDS and the trouble many of Saba's residents had, accepting a LGBT-community, led to many instances of discrimination.



Since then however, a lot of progress has been made. During the course of the first decade the organisation developed extensive outreach programs in education and entered the school community on a regular basis. During the second decade ASGS embraced the well-being of not only the PLHIV community, but also focused on other marginalised groups, including the LGBT community, shifting its specialized focus on HIV/AIDS to general well-being and human rights. The professionalization of ASGS in supporting vulnerable minorities on Saba has resulted over the years in a society that is much more tolerant.

During the last 5 years the organisation went through a rebranding process resulting in the new name Body, Mind & Spirit (BMS) in 2014 in order to stress its broader scope. At the moment the organization is mostly known as a HIV/Health organization. Saba is a small island and relatively tolerant to LGBT.

Saba is one of the Dutch Caribbean islands where marriage has been opened up for same-sex couples. Up to date a total of six same-sex marriages have taken place on Saba. Even though there is no overt discrimination of LGBT on Saba, LGBT on the island deal with a lot of self-stigmatization. In general the society on Saba does not voice their opinion about LGBT, leading to a situation in which nobody knows whether someone is against homosexuality or not. An example is the fact that there was no opposition at all to the introduction of same-sex marriage on Saba, as opposed to the very negative reactions from the community on Bonaire. The general community on Saba might talk among each other about the fact that homosexuality is not correct, but would never discuss this publicly.

*An overview of recent activities undertaken by BMS for the LGBT community on Saba are:*

## **Assessment of LGBT-community**

Under the umbrella of the Body, Mind and Spirit (a.k.a AIDS Support Group Saba Foundation), the initial task for data collection and assessment of local needs was implemented on Saba through an informal Pink Orange LGBT soirée on November 30th 2012. The stakeholders' consultation was held at El Momo Cottages, secluded yet public relaxed location, hosted by Dirkjan Jansen and his partner Joost de Jong. The goal of gathering was to obtain insights from the LGBTI community of **Saba, their interests, challenges and hopes**. The group had a work-dinner together discussing the issues mentioned in the baseline. Eight of the outspoken members of the LGBTI community joined the discussions which included the **issue of passivity with regards to known youth members in the community**.

## **Diversity as part of the school curriculum**

BMS continues to work on **improving the situation of LGBT people by implementing workshops on bullying and stigmatization the schools**. In the past this has been done on an ad hoc basis. Today we can proudly state that the topics related to bullying, stigmatization, sexual diversity and orientation are part of the curriculum at our local high school, commencing this school year (2015-2016).

## **Joint event with the Saba University School of Medicine (SUSOM) on Saba**

In 2014 BMS and the **LGBT support group of the Medical University** organized a small LGBT event which was well attended and also attracted many young local LGBTs (5), a group that never shows up at events organized by BMS.

## Linking with the International LGBT movement

In 2014 BMS represented the Pink Orange Alliance at the Latin American and Caribbean LGBT conference organized by the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA – LAC). As a strong Pink Orange partner BMS explored possibilities at the conference for Pink Orange partners to link up with the regional LGBT movement in the broader Caribbean.

BMS attended the ILGA-LAC conference on Cuba with a delegation of two people. The primary objective of attendance by BMS of ILGA-LAC was to explore whether consequent participation in ILGA LAC conferences would be relevant and useful for the Pink Orange Alliance.

The BMS delegation noted that the scope of particular equality rights discussed during the ILGA-LAC conference was very broad. The tone was set by the situation in Latin American countries where the agenda is starting to focus on marriage equality. This is interesting for the Pink Orange partners. On the other hand there also was a lot of focus on decriminalization of same-sex practices, which is relevant on many British Caribbean islands, but not for the Pink Orange partners. The conclusion of the BMS delegation were that at the moment it was wise for the Pink Orange Alliance to only opt for 'stripped-membership' of ILGA LAC meaning that the alliance would be listed in the directory without having to pay full membership fees. Participation in the next planned ILGA LAC conference in Costa Rica in 2016 is advised to secure presence and keep linking with what is happening on that field.



Mariela Castro Espin and BMS representative Bastiaan Janssens



Several members of the Caribbean Caucus at the VI ILGA-LAC conference

May 10th 2014: Thousands of Cubans and foreigners, who belong to sexual diversity communities or their alliances, marched through the center of Havana to denounce homophobia. The anti-homophobic Conga takes place every year and forms across Avenida 23, in El Vedado.



## Human Rights day media campaign on Saba and Sint Maarten



The poster features three flags at the top: the flag of Sint Maarten, the flag of the Netherlands, and the flag of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Below the flags, the text reads "International Human Rights Day 2014" and "BULLYING VIOLATES BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS". The poster lists various forms of bullying and their consequences, and includes a call to action: "We can end bullying. Stand up for others. Report incidents when you see them. Speak Up Speak Out. A LIFE FREE FROM BULLYING THAT'S OUR HUMAN RIGHT!!". At the bottom, there are logos for BMS (Bonaire, Sint Maarten, and Sint Eustatius) and S.T.E. (Sint Maarten Education Authority).

**International Human Rights Day 2014**  
**BULLYING VIOLATES BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS**

Violence against people and their children in schools, in the workplace, in the home, in the community, in the workplace, in the workplace, in the workplace.

Bullying can cause psychological pain and lead to:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Low Self-Esteem
- and in worse case scenarios Suicide.

Bullying can take on the shape of:

- Verbal and Physical Violence
- Teasing
- Hitting
- Blaming
- Other Abuses.

Bullying can happen to anyone,

- Children at home or at school
- Men and Women at work or in public
- Ethnic or Sexual minorities.

**BUT,**  
We can end bullying. Stand up for others.  
Report incidents when you see them.  
Speak Up Speak Out.  
**A LIFE FREE FROM BULLYING  
THAT'S OUR HUMAN RIGHT!!**

**BMS** Bonaire, Sint Maarten, Sint Eustatius  
**S.T.E.** Sint Maarten Education Authority

The human rights media campaign consisted out of an poster advertisement placed in local newspapers on Saba and Sint Maarten. The advert highlighted the issue of bullying from a human rights point of view. The aim of the advert was to increase sensitivity to bullying from a holistic human rights standpoint in the general population.

# Regional linking and learning in the Dutch Caribbean

## *Annual Pink Orange Alliance meeting*

The collaboration between the Dutch Caribbean LGBT organizations and COC Netherlands was launched to the public during the very **first Pink Orange Alliance conference on Aruba in 2012**. This first meeting on Aruba had a very strong emphasis on showcasing the work being done on the islands. At that moment there was no LGBT-representation from Sint Maarten and Sint Eustatius. The Pink Orange partners present took the opportunity to discuss a joint way forward and challenges that they had encountered up to then.

The **second Pink Orange Alliance conference** took place on **Bonaire in 2013** and brought together LGBT representatives from all six islands for the first time. During the conference on Bonaire Pink Orange partners discussed topics such as addressing the government, the added value of collaboration within the Pink Orange Alliance, a possible regional agenda and how to manage their activities. During this meeting the Pink Orange partners decided on the topics that they would want to focus on in the future. These topics were Youth, education on sexual diversity, (Sexual) Health, Documenting human rights violations.

After the conference on Bonaire both Sint Eustatius and Sint Maarten started activities on their islands. SAFE on Sint Maarten developed fast into a strong organization that took lead in hosting the conference on **Sint Maarten in 2014**. The **(closing) conference of the Pink Orange program** build forward on the focal topics mentioned above and sought to assist partners in making clear plans for joint collaboration in the future. Partners discussed how they would want to tackle the issues and with which other Pink Orange partners they would want to collaborate on that. Additionally, it was agreed upon that future collaboration would take place in a more structured way.



1. First Pink Orange Alliance meeting on Aruba (2012)

2. & 3. Participants during the Pink Orange Alliance conference on Aruba (2012)

4. Delegation Pink Orange Alliance Conference 2013 (Bonaire)

5. Delegation Pink Orange Alliance Conference 2014 (Sint Maarten)

6. 7. 8. 9. Pink Orange Alliance Meeting Sint Maarten (2014)

# Towards full LGBT emancipation - 2015 and onwards

The overview of activities presented in this publication are indicative of the energy and commitment invested by the local LGBT organizations to strengthen the LGBT communities in the Dutch Caribbean. On all islands improvements and progress is visible on several levels. LGBT feel more empowered to articulate their needs and rights, there is more information about sexual diversity, allies have been identified and solid partnerships have been formed and the LGBT organizations are vocal when it comes to LGBT issues ensuring that there is an recognizable LGBT representation on each island.

Despite these gains there are still many challenges that need to be tackled. First and foremost the LGBT organizations all still struggle to be acknowledged as important and crucial organizations with a strong social role by their governments. These are organizations that provide psychosocial support for the LGBT community and provide education around sexual diversity in schools. The necessity to provide these services arise from the needs that are voiced by the LGBT community. This is all done on a voluntary basis by the organizations.

Furthermore the LGBT organizations intensively advocate for equal rights with regards to marriage and social services and demand that the government ensures that sexual diversity is included in education on sexuality. The organizations advocate for more tolerance and acceptance and engage in dialogues with religious leaders and family members. Exclusion of LGBT by their families and the religious communities is still prevalent.

In the second phase of the Pink Orange project the Pink Orange partners will keep working to achieve the ultimate goal of a more inclusive society for LGBT on each island.

2015 started with a demand by the LGBT organizations on Curacao, Aruba and Sint Maarten to open up marriage on their islands for same-sex couples.

In this same year representatives of all the Dutch Caribbean LGBT organizations were present in the Netherlands to attend the Gay Pride which had a special focus on *"Equal rights for LGBT in the whole Kingdom"*. There was a Kingdom Boat partaking in the Canal Parade and there were several discussion events around ensuring equal rights for LGBT in the whole Kingdom. The Kingdom Boat won the 2015 Amsterdam Gay Pride award for the best representation of the Gay pride theme 'Share'.



The Pink Orange Alliance is a collaboration between LGBT organizations on Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao, Sint Maarten, Sint Eustatius, Saba and COC Netherlands aimed at improving the position of the LGBT communities in the Dutch Caribbean. The kingdom of the Netherlands is characterized by the uniqueness of the four independent countries and the three oversee territories it consists of. In this publication an overview is given of the activities undertaken by the organizations in the Dutch Caribbean to strengthen the LGBT community on their island, raise awareness about sexual diversity and liaise with relevant stakeholders. The LGBT movement in the Dutch Caribbean is young but characterized by strong leaders, who are intensively working towards equality and emancipation for LGBT in the Dutch Caribbean.

COC Netherlands and the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science have been partnering with and supporting the LGBT movement in the Dutch Caribbean since 2012.

The Pink Orange Alliance partners are based in the whole Kingdom of the Netherlands.

## Aruba:



*Alternative Lifestyle Aruba (ALFA)*  
Facebook/Alternative Lifestyle Aruba

## Bonaire:



*E.O. Bonaire (E.O.)*  
Facebook/EQBonaire

## Curaçao:



*Fundashon Orguyo Korsou (FOKO)*  
Facebook/ PINK House Center Curacao

## Saba:



*Body, Mind and Spirit (BMS)*  
Facebook/Body, Mind & Spirit Foundation - ASGS  
[www.bmssaba.org](http://www.bmssaba.org)

## Netherlands:



*COC Nederland (COC)*  
Facebook/ COC Nederland  
[www.coc.nl](http://www.coc.nl)

## St. Martin:



*St. Martin Alliance for Equality (SAFE)*  
Facebook/ Safe Sxm

## Sint Eustatius:

*Born this Way (to be reached through COC)*

