

NWO and the Programme Caribbean Research

Arnold Lubbers | NWO | June 18 2026



How does NWO invest in research with impact?

NWO invests around a billion euro in research every year. We do so through six complementary funding lines. Each line support a different aspect of research. Together, they ensure a strong, inclusive and innovative research landscape. This is how we build towards meaningful research – for the Netherlands and beyond.



Open Competition

Fundamental research for ambitious scholars from across the entire spectrum of scientific disciplines. From small, experimental projects to large consortia. For upcoming and established researchers.



For all disciplines



For researchers and consortiums



Room for innovation and excellence

Talent

From emerging talent to the pinnacle of research. Personal grants for individual researchers and their teams. Room for diversity, development and the transition to leadership.



Development of researchers



Diversity in careers and skills



From recently graduated to leading scientist

Collaboration

Research into major societal challenges. Collaboration with governments, businesses and other organisations to strengthen and accelerate societal and economic impact.



Transdisciplinarity and innovation for researchers



Collaboration with knowledge users



Societal challenges and economic growth

Innovation Accelerator

Researchers get to work with their research results. Space for the (further) development of innovative services and products based on knowledge. Accelerated transition from idea to implementation.



From research results to practice



Subsidies, loans and training



Innovations in both market and society

Research Infrastructure

A future-proof ecosystem for the entire research community. From specialised equipment to virtual facilities and digitisation. Joint investments and access to international facilities.



Large-scale collaborations and investments



For researchers in and outside of the Netherlands



A major contribution to innovation

Practice-oriented Research

Development of research at universities of applied sciences, focused on collaboration. Demand-driven and with a special focus on SMEs. Innovative, cross-sectoral and relevant in practice.



Demand-driven research



Innovation in practice



Collaboration between universities of applied sciences and SMEs

2013-2022 Programme Caribbean Research

- 2010
- Strategic goals determined
- Phase 1 execution
 - Two calls for proposals
 - 18 projects granted
- Phase 2 execution
 - One call for Program Chairs
 - 2 projects granted
 - A Joint Call - sargassum (Brazil, France, Mexico)
 - 1 project with Dutch co-applicant granted

However...



2023-2024

- Strategic goals achieved? Criticism led to:
- Phase 3
 - Recalibrating programme:
 - Evaluation Caribbean Netherlands Science Institute, assignment ministry of OCW for networking platform; knowledge mission ministry of OCW and sounding board
 - Assignment ministry of OCW for research agenda; public validation cycle
 - Start co-creating funding instruments



2025-2030

- Phase 3
 - Execution and implementation:
 - PhD Scholarships (3x)
 - Open Competition Caribbean (3x)
 - Launch **Foundation Caribbean Research Platform (CaRP)**
 - Launch physical/online ***A Caribbean Research Agenda (ACRA)***; thematic programming (3x)
 - Dutch Caribbean Research Week (2026); International Small Islands Studies Association side event (2027)



2026 Caribbean Research Platform

- Tasks:
 - Strengthening research career development through networking support and training;
 - Strengthening knowledge of identifying opportunities for and of applying for research funding in science wide perspective;
 - Strengthening the further realisation of societally embedded research and research with impact for communities, governments, education and businesses;
 - The development of a sustainable regionale research infrastructure, datamanagement skills, and the stimulation of regionally suitable Open Science practices;
 - The embedding of research skills, research awareness and research ethics in all forms of formal and informal education.



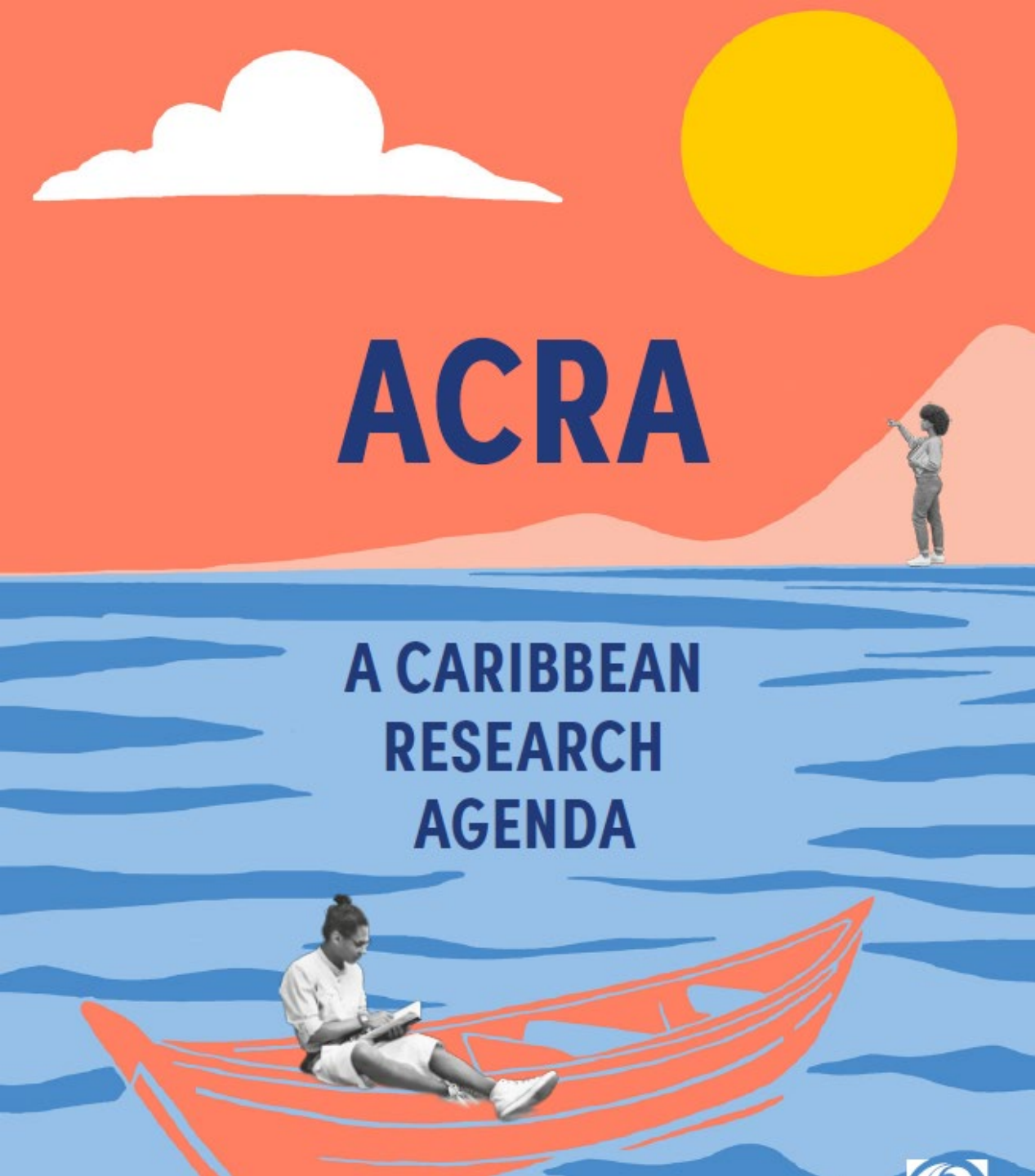
2018-2026 ACRA development

- 2018: assignment OCW
- First phase (2019-2021) surveys
- Second phase (2022-2023) analysis + concept
- Third phase (2024-2025) expert and community consultations
- Fourth phase (2025-2026) definitive text, graphic design, development website

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Take a look...





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COLOPHON

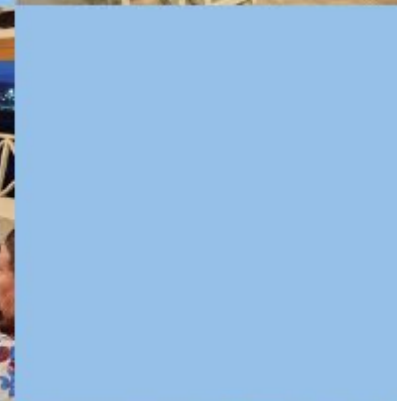
This Caribbean Research Agenda is the result of a collaborative effort by a diverse group of researchers, organizations, and community members across the SSSABC islands and their diaspora. To acknowledge, give credit to, and celebrate these diverse contributions, this colophon lists the names of all those who were involved in the development of this agenda and indicated that they wished to be credited as such. The names are listed in randomized order, and the colophon does not distinguish between different roles, as all individuals involved (including also those who chose not to be credited) provided valuable substantive contributions, without which this agenda would not be what it is.

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- **Local leadership and self-determination:** Research on the SSSABC islands must be guided by those who know the islands, their cultures, and the needs of their people. Local universities, civil society organizations, and citizen scientists should be supported to lead and sustain research on their own

terms. Visiting scholars may supplement when expertise or capacity is not yet available locally, recognizing the value of both insider- and outsider perspectives.



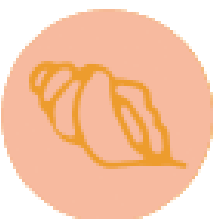
- **Transparency and accessibility:** Findings must be shared in clear, accessible ways that resonate with communities. This includes using local languages such as English and Papiamentu/o, hosting public events, publishing in local media, communicating through local channels, going into communities to share findings, leveraging arts and culture, and depositing results in community libraries or digital repositories.



- **Capacity building and mentorship:** This agenda calls for investment in the next generation of island-based researchers. This includes PhD programs, training opportunities, research fellowships, and mentorship initiatives tailored to the Caribbean context. Intergenerational research is vital, as elders carry deep historical knowledge and lived experience, while youth bring fresh perspectives and innovative approaches that together sustain communities and foster cultural continuity. Building capacity must therefore intentionally include mentorship and collaboration across generations, ensuring knowledge transfer and empowering both elders and youth as co-creators of research.



- **Attention to implementation:** Actionable knowledge is key for addressing societal challenges on the SSSABC islands, which requires that research projects are intentional about producing implementable knowledge already at their inception. Furthermore, adequate resources should be made available for the implementation of research results.



- **Multivocality and inclusion:** Research must reflect the diversity of the islands' voices and experiences. This means embracing multiple languages, methodologies, and ways of knowing, including those often excluded from academic canons.



- **Equity in funding and recognition:** Resources must be allocated in ways that align with island contexts and repair historical imbalances. This includes recognizing the labour of community members and ensuring fair recognition, compensation, infrastructure, and long-term support.

ECONOMY, CREATIVE INDUSTRY, WORK & MIGRATION

Across the SSSABC islands, communities are calling for economic futures rooted in fairness, local empowerment, and prosperity for all. Economic vulnerability, limited job opportunities, and persistent poverty – intensified by COVID-19 and climate challenges – remain major concerns.

Respondents called for research to better understand and address these challenges and emphasized the need to move beyond outdated economic models by investing in creative industries, supporting local entrepreneurs, and pursuing economic indicators that reflect true social well-being. There is also growing interest in economic models that are suited to small island states and respect the small scale and unique needs of each island.

Island communities called for research into inequality in the labour market, brain drain, and unpaid care work, as well as how to address these pressing challenges, wondering how

development with social cohesion, environmental sustainability, and health-focused public systems.

1. *What would an effective and equitable tax system look like for our island communities?*
2. *What is the financial impact of the current tax system – which is characterized by a series of tax exemptions for investors – on the islands' general economy and on the "small man"?*
3. *What alternative economic models exist that are suited to small island states and could serve as inspiration for economic development on the islands?*
4. *What impact will climate change have on working conditions for the dominant industries and sectors on the islands?*



6.1.2 TOURISM INDUSTRY

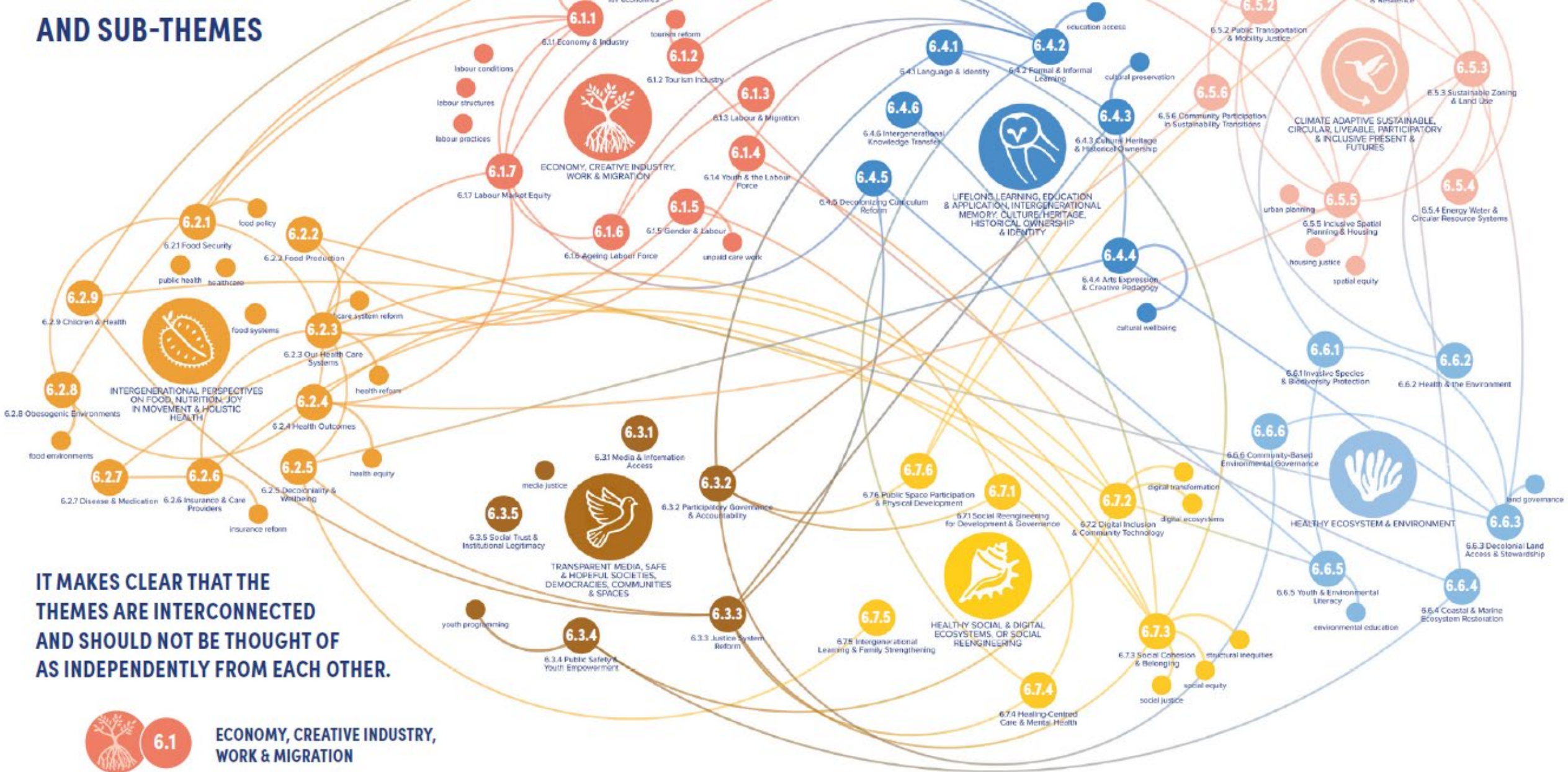
While tourism remains central to many island economies, communities voiced concerns about overreliance and its environmental and social costs. Participants emphasized a need to research how to shift toward sustainable, locally beneficial tourism models that respect cultural identity and ecological limits. This research theme connects to labour practices, urban planning, and food systems, highlighting its wide-ranging impacts. Research on strategic tourism reform must therefore align with efforts to protect natural resources, ensure equitable labour, and

6.1.3 LABOUR & MIGRATION

Migration patterns shape and reflect labour inequities across the islands. Participants therefore called for research on how brain drain, care work burdens, and restrictive emigration policies create systemic challenges. Participants urged research and reform that values both incoming and returning labour, addressing undocumented workers' rights while promoting inclusive mobility. This research subtheme links closely to education, health, and sustainable development – pointing to the need



AND SUB-THEMES



IT MAKES CLEAR THAT THE THEMES ARE INTERCONNECTED AND SHOULD NOT BE THOUGHT OF AS INDEPENDENTLY FROM EACH OTHER.



6.1

ECONOMY, CREATIVE INDUSTRY, WORK & MIGRATION



6.2

INTERGENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON FOOD, NUTRITION, JOY IN MOVEMENT & HOLISTIC HEALTH



6.3

TRANSPARENT MEDIA, SAFE & HOPEFUL SOCIETIES, DEMOCRACIES, COMMUNITIES & SPACES



6.5

CLIMATE ADAPTIVE SUSTAINABLE, CIRCULAR, LIVABLE, PARTICIPATORY & INCLUSIVE PRESENT & FUTURE



6.6

HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM & ENVIRONMENT

6.2.2 FOOD PRODUCTION

Revitalizing local food production was seen as crucial for autonomy, self-sufficiency, and ecological balance. Islanders advocated for research supporting small-scale, climate-adapted farming and reintroducing traditional, sustainable growing methods. Strengthening local agriculture can reduce reliance on imports, support livelihoods, and improve nutrition. This research subtheme is closely linked to education, land access, and health reform – reflecting a broader call for systems that respect local knowledge, promote economic inclusion, and rebuild connections between people, land, and culture.

50. *What could the impacts of introducing vertical farming be on the islands?*
51. *How can local food producers on the islands be better connected to local consumers?*
52. *How can food producers on the islands connect with regional knowledge banks with expertise on best practices for local food production?*
53. *What options exist for shortening food chains and what would their (social, financial and health) impacts be on island communities?*
54. *To which extent can local food production meet the islands' food consumption needs?*
55. *How can islanders be empowered to consume more locally grown and regionally accessible food options?*
56. *How can individuals on the island with limited mobility be supported in accessing healthy foods?*



59. *What is the efficacy, effectiveness, and efficiency of health care provision on the islands and how can this be improved?*
60. *How can the island's health care system best be financed?*
61. *What basic tariffs are required for providing equitable health care on each island?*

6.2.4 HEALTH OUTCOMES

Communities raised concerns about worsening health outcomes – especially non-communicable diseases like diabetes and obesity – shaped by limited access to nutritious food, education, and care. Participants called for research to support prevention, traditional remedies, and culturally relevant health education as key strategies. This research subtheme is deeply entangled with food environments, labour conditions, and structural inequities, underscoring the need for holistic public health interventions that centre dignity, healing, and wellbeing across generations.

62. *What is the prevalence of shame, fear, and secrecy around health behaviours and outcomes on the islands, and how can these best be addressed?*
63. *What are the main drivers of poor health on the islands?*
64. *How does the health outcomes of different generations compare between islands?*
65. *How can the current prevalence of poor health outcomes on the islands be reversed?*

6.2.5 DECOLONIALITY & WELLBEING

Wellbeing is not only a medical issue but a reflection of colonial legacies and structural injustices. Islanders highlighted how (historically or commercially) imposed diets, disrupted land

6.2.7 DISEASE & MEDICATION

Access to essential medications and effective disease management remains uneven across islands. Chronic illness burdens are exacerbated by supply chain

86. To which extent do infrastructure and mobility affect obesity rates on the islands?
87. To which extent does the fast-food culture on the islands correlate with the growing presence of (childhood) obesity?
88. What interventions could help reduce the prevalence of obesogenic environments on the islands?
89. How can the drivers of obesity on the islands be addressed?

6.2.9 CHILDREN & HEALTH

Children's health emerged as a major concern, with increasing rates of obesity, asthma, and developmental challenges linked to poor diets, limited recreation, and psychosocial stress.

Participants called for research on strategies to address this, such as integrated school-based interventions, culturally inclusive curricula, and family-centred care systems. This research subtheme intersects with lifelong learning, justice reform, and digital ecosystems, reflecting a broader need to build nurturing environments that support children's full development and uphold their right to health, identity, and opportunity.

90. How healthy are the islands' children?
92. What is the prevalence of non-communicable diseases among children on the islands?
93. What are the drivers of obesity – particularly under young children – on the islands and how can they be addressed?



6.3

TRANSPARENT MEDIA, SAFE & HOPEFUL SOCIETIES, DEMOCRACIES, COMMUNITIES & SPACES

Building safe, democratic, and hopeful societies across the SSSABC islands requires deep, systemic shifts rooted in transparency, accountability, and equity. Communities voiced frustration with favouritism in governance, weak public institutions, and a lack of (coherently communicated) long-term planning to tackle persistent challenges like crime, unemployment, and migration. There's a clear call for research to inform the modernization of public services, improve trust in institutions, and create strategies that are context-specific yet regionally aligned.

Media emerged as a foundational pillar of democracy and public safety, and a key topic that warranted further research. Across the islands, people emphasized the need for independent, trustworthy journalism that holds power accountable, represents diverse

ACRA implementation

- Thematic programming
- Together with communities, governments and other parties
- Connects to one or multiple themes or questions
- ACRA community website facilitates co-creation

Enables: stimulating research that is positioned on the cutting edge of societally urgent questions such as formulated by the SSS ABC communities and current policy themes simultaneously



Programme Caribbean Research

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