



Albertine Rift Conservation Society

Great Lakes Freshwater Programme



Freshwater ecosystems provides vital resources for our existence. Everyone's effort is needed to safeguard these ecosystems for our present and future generations.

Background

Freshwater ecosystems are subdivided into three groups: lakes and ponds, streams and rivers, and wetlands. They cover roughly 20% of the Earth and are widespread all over the world.

Freshwater ecosystems are inhabited by a big number of animal and plant species; they are home to more than 40 percent of the world's fish species. Also, freshwater ecosystems provide services essential for human survival such as drinking water, and they are a major source of water for hydropower, irrigation, and to major towns and various industries. Specifically, the African Great Lakes region has a big number of freshwater ecosystems and some of them are of global importance. These include Lake Victoria, the second largest fresh

water lake in the world, and Lake Tanganyika, the world's second largest in volume as well as the second deepest. The large rift lakes of Africa are the ancient home of a great biodiversity; 10 percent of the world's fish species are found there. Lakes Victoria, Tanganyika, and Malawi hold a quarter of the planet's freshwater supply.

Despite their value and importance, many lakes, rivers, and wetlands in the African Great Lakes region are being severely degraded by human activities and are declining at a much faster rate than terrestrial ecosystems. Non-sustainable exploitation of freshwater resources is a primary cause of various issues such as soil erosion and sedimentation, pollution, conflicts and inefficient water allocation and use. ARCOS believes that, addressing the problems affecting freshwater ecosystems in the Great Lakes region is complex and requires multi-stakeholders interventions.

Programme Objectives

- To promote the integrated management of Freshwater Ecosystems, enhance freshwater biodiversity conservation, community livelihoods, ecosystem services and human well-being.
- To reduce environmental threats through the promotion of more effective policies, planning and practices on freshwater ecosystems.
- To enhance knowledge of environmental status in the great lakes freshwater and disseminate information through a regional participatory information system.

Approaches to achieve the objectives



ARCOS mission is "To enhance biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of natural resources through the promotion of collaborative conservation action for nature and people".

Projects under the program

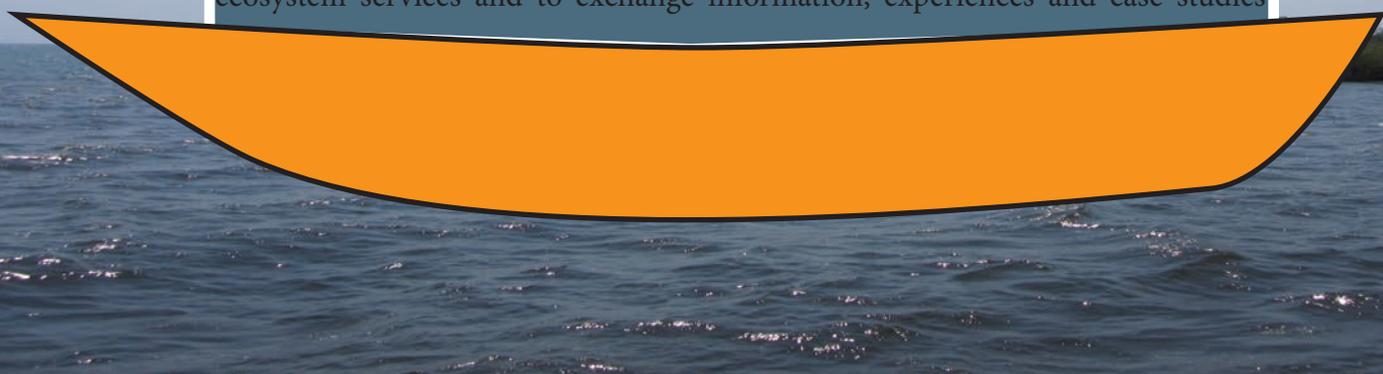
“Stakeholders Engagement for Informed Decision-Making, Threats Mitigation and Sustainable Freshwater Services Management in the Great Lakes Region of East and Central Africa”

Develop mechanisms to access information and best practices and share them in a simple format to guide the decisions and sustainable actions

Support local actions at selected watershed level involving civil society organizations directly involved with communities

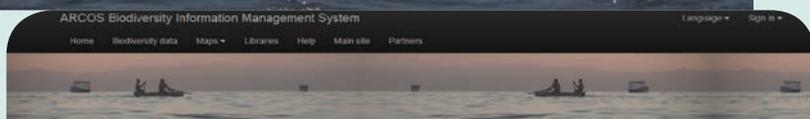
Promote collaboration among regional institutions in the Great Lakes region and provide support in networking and information management

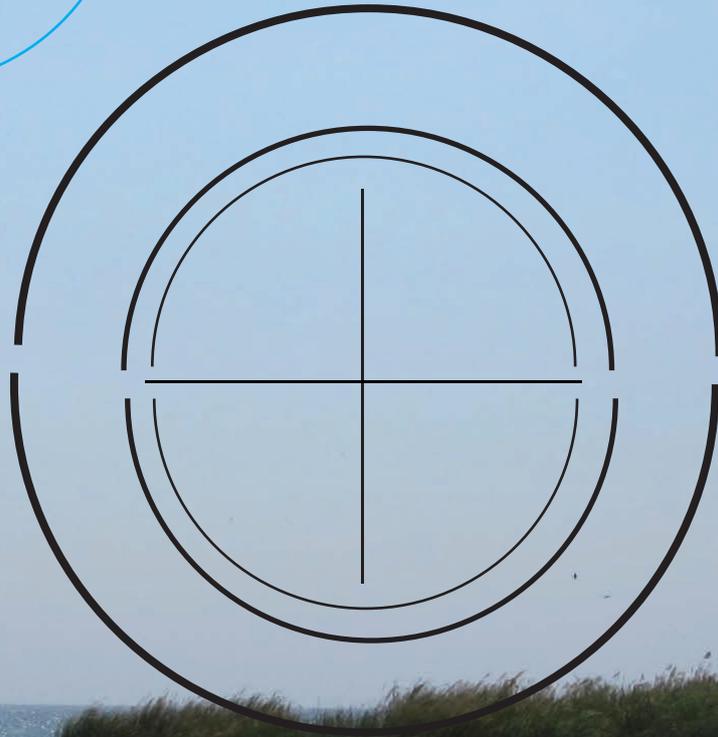
Initiate a regional forum bringing together the policy-makers, the private sector and civil society representatives to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss common challenges and development pressures affecting ecosystem services and to exchange information, experiences and case studies



Some of the project's achievements so far

1. Conduct of a regional institutional assessment to determine training and capacity needs in terms of freshwater management
2. The First Great Lakes Regional stakeholder Forum
3. The Launch of Web portal with Great Lakes Freshwater component
4. Capacity building in integrated watershed management
5. Support to local NGOs through small grants to undertake community activities
6. Great Lakes Freshwater status report
7. Launch of a special newsletter “Great Lakes Waves”
8. Policy brief raising the issue of wetlands conversion
9. The first Regional Training Workshop





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