

ALBERTINE RIFT CONSERVATION SOCIETY (ARCOS)

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2015



Collaborative Action for Nature and People

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1. ARCOS Mission and Governance Structure

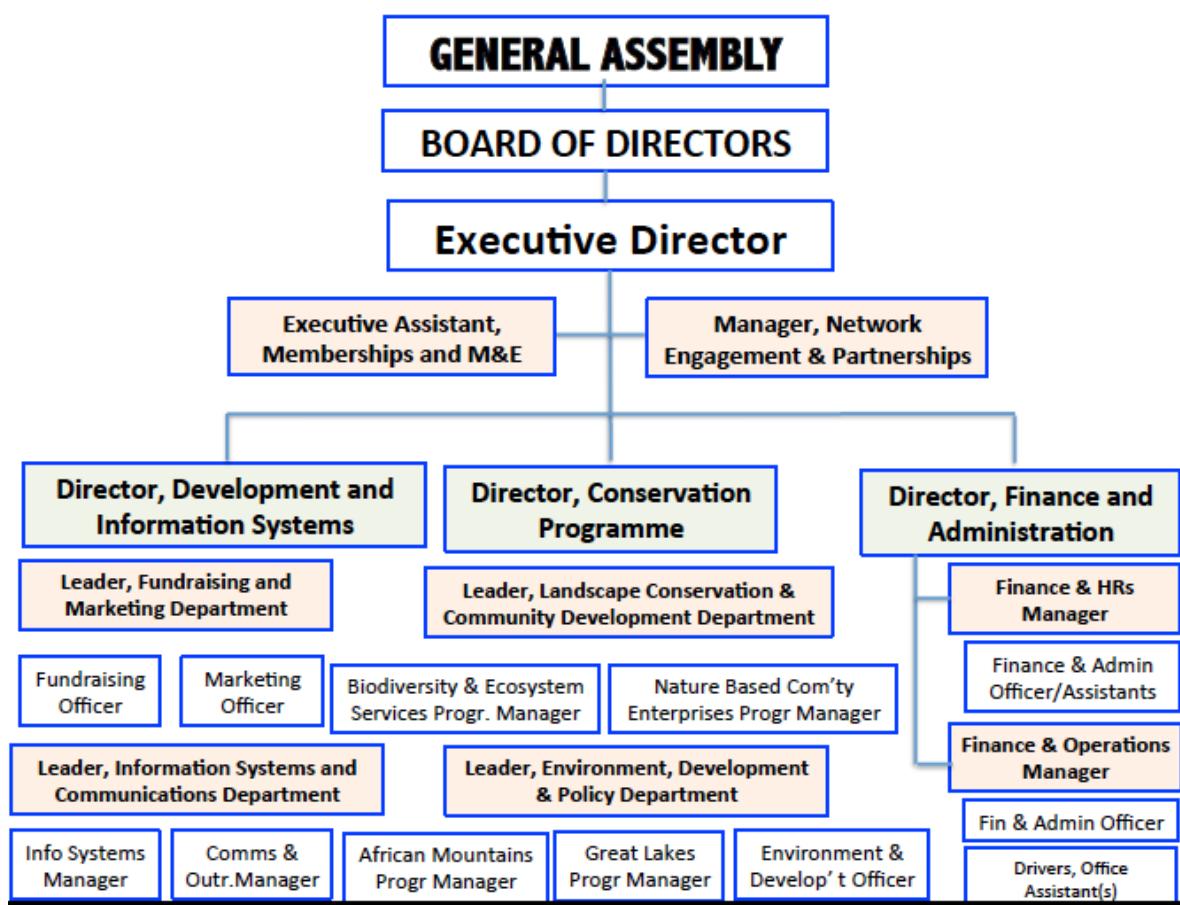
ARCOS Mission: ARCOS was established in 1995 with the mission to “enhance biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources through the promotion of collaborative conservation action for Nature and People.” Today, ARCOS has programmes extending beyond the Albertine Rift, including the Great Lakes region and the African Mountains.

To achieve its mission, ARCOS builds on the following pillars of its approach:

- We facilitate networking with local, national and international players to enhance sustainable development through information and experience sharing,
- We empower our network through policy dialogue, capacity building and policy engagement when implementing our work. We work with all kinds of organizations – NGOs/ CBOs, academic institutions, governments and increasingly business;

- Our activities on the ground take an integrated landscape approach focusing mainly in protecting biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem services, building Nature Based Community Enterprises (NBCEs) and building shared vision among stakeholders to address threats.

Legal status: ARCOS is registered in the UK as a Charity and Company Limited by Guarantee. It is also registered in Uganda and Rwanda, and has offices in Kampala, Kigali and Bujumbura. ARCOS has a Board of Directors and Trustees comprised of appointed Board members. These board members include representatives from the Albertine Rift region, the United Kingdom (UK) and other international experts. Within the Board of Directors, a Management Committee is responsible for overseeing and reviewing ARCOS progress. The Management Committee is comprised of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and the Executive Director.



ARCOS Organisational Structure

2. Message from the Chairman and Executive Director



The year 2015 coincided with our 20th anniversary, we celebrated our achievements and growth that are translated into the extension of our activities from the Albertine Rift region to Africa Great Lakes region and African mountains. This year marked also the end of our Strategic plan 2011-2015 and thus the year we developed our new strategic plan 2016-2020.

Throughout 2015, ARCOS continued to enhance biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources through capacity building,



information sharing and networking.

ARCOS values collaboration in finding sustainable solutions to environmental issues and development at all levels. In 2015, we engaged in different partnership where we signed MoU with East African Community to join efforts in enhancing environment and sustainable natural resource management in Albertine Rift region and other transboundary ecosystems of East Africa. We also signed MoU with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) on collaboration in supporting conservation efforts in Africa Great Lakes and the Albertine Rift regions. We cannot forget the work done to enhance partnership with community groups as well as the new partnership initiated.

In 2015, we invested in empowering our networks and in this framework the second training in Integrated Freshwater Ecosystems Management was organized and facilitated. ARCOS also organized the first Regional Conservation and Development Dialogue on Freshwater. We are very grateful to the freshwater stakeholders who contributed to the success of the above events and we believe the outcomes (established "Africa Great Lakes Conservation Network" and the recommendations from the dialogue) mark a good step and a lever to sustainable management of freshwater ecosystems in Africa Great Lakes region. In terms of capacity building, ARCOS also organised a training in Sustainable Mountain Development awareness and advocacy. ARCOS has also invested in capacity building of its NBCES network through trainings in sustainable agriculture and environmental practices as well as in Institutional management, business planning, marketing and

income management. We are very happy for the results of implementing sustainable agriculture which was translated in receiving Fairtrade certification for some coffee farmer groups. Throughout 2015' over 60 institutions representatives (Gouvernement, civil society) from Rwanda and DR Congo were trained in Environmental Impact Assessment.

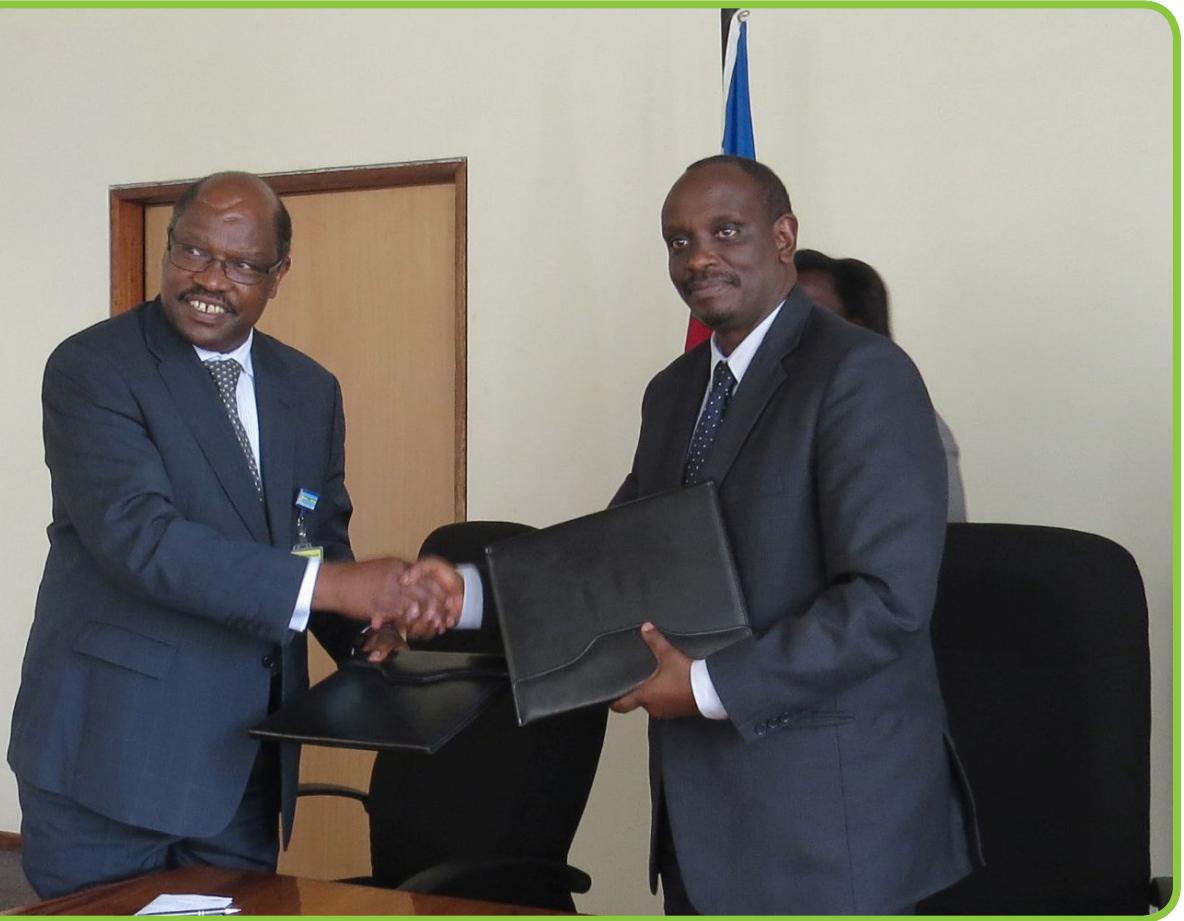
Building on the ARCOS Biodiversity Information Management System launched last year, ARCOS strived to be a source of Biodiversity Data and information in the region. Our communication channels were populated with relevant news and we kept producing and disseminating our five newsletters (Backbone/ Le Pillier, Great Lakes Waves, Africa Mountains' Echo, AREALA news and Turaco Note). We contributed to the implementation of Convention on Biological Diversity through active participation in Clearing House Mechanism Workshops and through information sharing.

We are happy for 2015 achievements and we value the good working relationships we have developed with our staff, ARCOS members and various partners. These would not have been achieved without the funding support from our various funding partners, particularly the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation in promoting sustainable mountain development in Africa, the MacArthur Foundation for the Great Lakes, CEPF for the EIA, Conservation International(CI) for Conservation Agreements and FONERWA for Water-Energy and Food Security Nexus.

Prof Lars Kristoferson, Chairman

Dr. Sam Kanyamibwa Executive Director

3. Partnerships and Collaborative Action



Dr. Sam Kanyamibwa, Executive Director of ARCOS and Dr. Richard Sezibera, the East African Community General Secretary, after signing the MoU

As embedded in its motto, “collaborative Action for Nature and people”, collaboration is the key ingredient for all ARCOS’ activities. In 2015, ARCOS has engaged in many collaborative actions with different partners and started new partnerships with regional governmental body, international CSOs, private sector and community groups.

At local level, ARCOS maintained its relationship with partner community groups in different landscapes within the Albertine Rift namely, Kibira-rusizi, Mukura and Echuya. ARCOS initiated new partnership with community groups in Gitarama landscape and Nyungwe landscape in Rwanda through conservation agreements. We engaged private section (Urwego Opportunity Bank (UOB) in this case) in facilitating farmers loan access throughout the implementation of Conservation agreements.

At regional level, ARCOS signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the East African Community (EAC) to join efforts in enhancing environment

and sustainable natural resource management in Albertine Rift region and other transboundary ecosystems of East Africa. This MoU was signed at Arusha/Tanzania, on 27th July, 2015 by the Executive Director of ARCOS, Dr. Sam Kanyamibwa and the East African Community General Secretary, Dr. Richard Sezibera. The parties agreed to join efforts for collaboration in areas of common interest especially in promoting sustainable mountain development, information sharing, civil society engagement and supporting sustainable community livelihoods in the region. This agreement builds on good existing relationship between EAC and ARCOS, including the joint organisation of the Africa Regional Mountain Forum, held in Arusha, October 2014. More about the signing here: <http://arcosnetwork.org/index.php/en/latest-news/347-arcos-and-eac-join-efforts-to-ensure-healthy-environment-and-wellbeing-of-the-communities-in-east-african-region.html>

Later on 17th December 2015 at Nairobi the Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS)

and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on collaboration in supporting conservation efforts in Africa Great Lakes and the Albertine Rift regions.



The objectives of this MoU include the development of synergies between the interventions of both parties in the African Great Lakes region, financial and technical complementarity between the two organizations, as well as reduction of duplication of effort and resources to ensure optimal and efficient use of funds, equipment and human resources. Through this MoU, ARCOS and TNC will collaborate in activities related to Biodiversity and wildlife management, water resources and freshwater ecosystems management, climate change, land use management, and information systems. More here: <http://www.arcosnetwork.org/index.php/en/latest-news/391-arcos-and-tnc-signs-an-mou-to-collaborate-in-supporting-conservation-efforts-in-africa-great-lakes-and-albertine-rift-regions.html>

In a bid to enhance collaboration between the governmental institutions and civil society organizations, on 29th January 2015, ARCOS organized and facilitated a workshop in Burundi that



put together the Ministry of Water, Environment and Development through the Burundi National Environment Protection Authority (Office Burundais pour la Protection de l'Environnement - OBPE) and the civil society organizations operating in the field of environmental conservation and sustainable development.

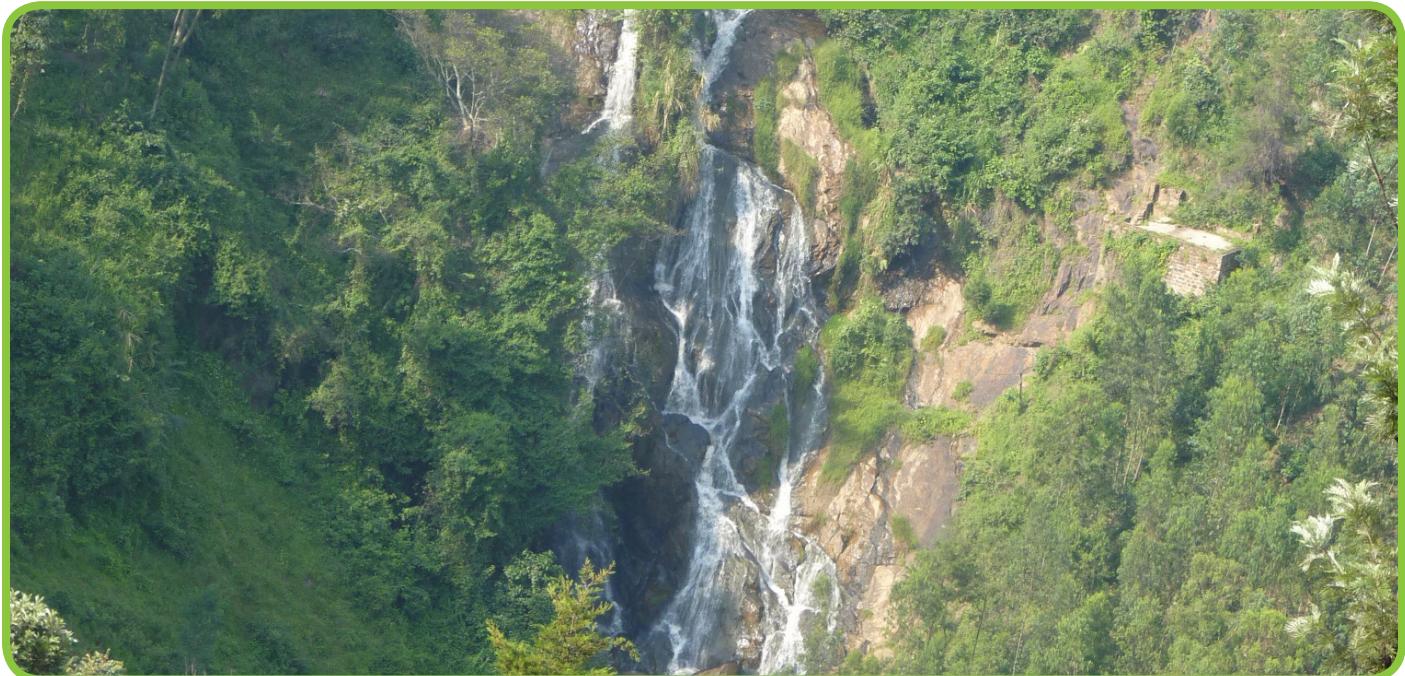
In the same year, ARCOS joined the Environment and Natural Resources CSO Network in Uganda and now holds the position of Vice Chair of the Network. We cannot forget to mention the increase of our members to 168 members.

Under ARCOS' education programme we value the work done in 2015 by two volunteers joined in the framework of the MoU we have with a German institution., "ARTEFACT" namely Mr Mathias Wassmut and Ms Christina Lebert. Under the same programme Mr Murinda Jean de la Paix (Rwandan) also served ARCOS in the same year.

ARCOS value the collaborative contribution provided by its NGO network towards the success of its mission. The regional NGO Network plays a big role in influencing change by contributing articles to various ARCOS' newsletters and website, by actively participating in various regional meetings organized by ARCOS, such as the Regional Great Lakes Forum and the Africa Regional Mountains Forum, Community to community exchange training workshops, etc. The NGO Network contributes also to addressing conservation and development issues on the ground, through ARCOS Small Grants Programme, implemented with support from the MacArthur Foundation and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.



4. Enhancing Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services



Ecosystem services are key to communities' livelihoods and economic development of countries

The year 2015, was marked by finalizing and disseminating the results of the TEV studies that were conducted in previous year as per the recommendations from the results sharing workshop organized in previous year. The reports were designed and a summary flyer produced (in user friendly way) from each landscape (Kibira-Rusizi, Echuya and Mukura landscapes). ARCOS and stakeholders have been advocating for sustainable management of Mukura Forest Reserve in Rwanda which contributed to its designation as National Parks (Combined with Mukura to make Gishwati-Mukura National Park).

ARCOS has actively been involved in supporting the Convention on Biological diversity implementation framework in Rwanda through providing advice during the Clearing House Mechanism workshops and through information sharing under CHM online platform.

In a bid to keep the momentum and integration of stakeholders in biodiversity monitoring, the Integrated Landscape Assessment and Monitoring(ILAM) indicators we revised and made easy to be used by other stakeholders in the region.....

We cannot forget to mention that ARCOS secured fund from Rwanda Environment and Climate Change Fund (FONERWA) to implement a project

entitled "Using Water-Energy-Food security nexus to promote climate resilient decisions and model actions in selected landscapes along Akagera Basin." The objective of this three years project is to provide evidence-based policy guidance and promote local actions that foster climate resilience and participatory sustainable development along the Akagera Basin.

MUKURA FOREST RESERVE PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN COMMUNITIES' LIVELIHOODS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY

SUMMARY REPORT



Results from the Total Economic Valuation studies (details on page 3) indicate that Mukura Forest contributes a lot to the livelihoods of the local communities and in form of ecosystem services that benefit other people beyond the landscape such as water catchment protection and carbon storage and sequestration. The Total Economic Value (TEV) of Mukura Forest was estimated at a total of 981,266,600 FRW equivalent to 1,443,039 US\$ per year. The monetary benefits from Mukura translate to a value of US\$803 per hectare per year a value comparable to most productive forest landscapes. The study was conducted by ARCOS in collaboration with Nyungwe and Ruhengeri districts, INRA, RDB, ACNR, ROKA, and local communities with funding support from MacArthur Foundation



MacArthur
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COLLABORATIVE ACTION FOR NATURE AND PEOPLE

5. Building Nature Based Community Enterprises



Dr Kanyamibwa congratulating coffee farmers partner from Shangi for working very hard to receive RainForest Alliance certicate for their coffee

In terms of building Nature Based Community Enterprises (NBCEs), the year of 2015 was highlighted by the activities related to building sustainable community institutions, enhancing community institution governance, enhancing environmental resilience, and innovation of sustainable business solutions for community groups' business in the Albertine Rift.

In Building sustainable community business solutions, ARCOS invested in capacity building of its NBCEs network. In this case two coffee farmers' associations (Nyamasheke-Shangi group and Karongi-Gitesi group) were initiated to cooperative registration process and at the end of the year, both were registered at District level. Moreover, from June-August 2015, three coffee cooperatives from three Districts, namely Nyamasheke, Karongi and Muhanga were trained in Institutional management, business planning, marketing and income management. The training involved 1609 farmers,

whose 45% are women. The cooperative members were then trained in sustainable agriculture and environmental management practices.

In terms of enhancing environmental resilience, we invested in enhancing freshwater ecosystems, reducing erosion and river bank protection. In this regards we supported coffee farmers' groups in building wastewater treatment systems for treating water used from their coffee washing stations which has potential pollution to rivers where it is poured. We have also promoted and supported tree planting through financially supporting the establishment of tree nurseries and on-farm (shaded coffee) tree planting and tree planting along the river banks. We have also supported the organic farming by supporting farmers in establishing organic fertilizers (compost) making systems and training coffee farmers in transforming organic waste into organic fertilizers.



6. Supporting Integrated Freshwater Ecosystems Management



Group photo, participants at Integrated Freshwater Ecosystems Management Training. Pioneer of Africa Great Lakes Conservation Network

This year marked the end of a project funded by MacArthur Foundation entitled “Stakeholders Engagement for Informed Decision-Making, Threats Mitigation and Sustainable FreshWater Services Management in the Great Lakes Region of East and Central Africa” being implemented by the Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS) in collaboration with its partners Lake Tanganyika Authority (LTA), Ramsar Secretariat and Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa (RAMCEA), Nile Basin Discourse (NBD), BirdLife International (Africa Partnership Secretariat) and International Union for Conservation of Nature through its Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (IUCN-ESARO).

The activities of the year 2015 focused on Enhancing and supporting a regional network of watershed and wetland managers, NGOs and Community groups in integrated watershed and wetland management, Enhancing institutional collaborative framework for the coordination of regional freshwater ecosystem and Enhancing information dissemination on freshwater issues for the general public, the media and decision-makers for awareness raising and

behavioural change in the region.

ARCOS organized the first regional conservation and development dialogue in a bid to engage different stakeholders to tackle challenges facing freshwater ecosystems and explore the opportunities for the preservation of their vital services. The dialogue focused on debate on emerging issues affecting freshwater in this region and assessed conservation development challenges and opportunities that are available to achieve sustainable management of these ecosystems. You can find the recommendations from this dialogue here (http://www.arcosnetwork.org/images/GL_Forum/Regional_Dialogue/Regional_conservation_dev_Dialogue_highlights_Final.pdf)

In terms of building the capacity of stakeholders in integrated freshwater management, we organized and facilitated the second regional training workshop on Integrated Freshwater Ecosystems Management (IFEM) which was held in Kigali from 19th-20th August 2015. This second training involved stakeholders in freshwater management

in the African Great Lakes region including Burundi, Democratic republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, as well as regional NGOs/ institutions such as the East African Community, Lake Tanganyika Authority, Ramsar Centre for Eastern Africa and Nile Basin Discourse and focused mainly on addressing the drivers of change affecting Great Lakes Freshwater ecosystems. The training came up with the establishment of a dynamic network to advocate for sustainable freshwater resources management in Africa Great Lakes Region, "Africa Great Lakes Conservation Network."

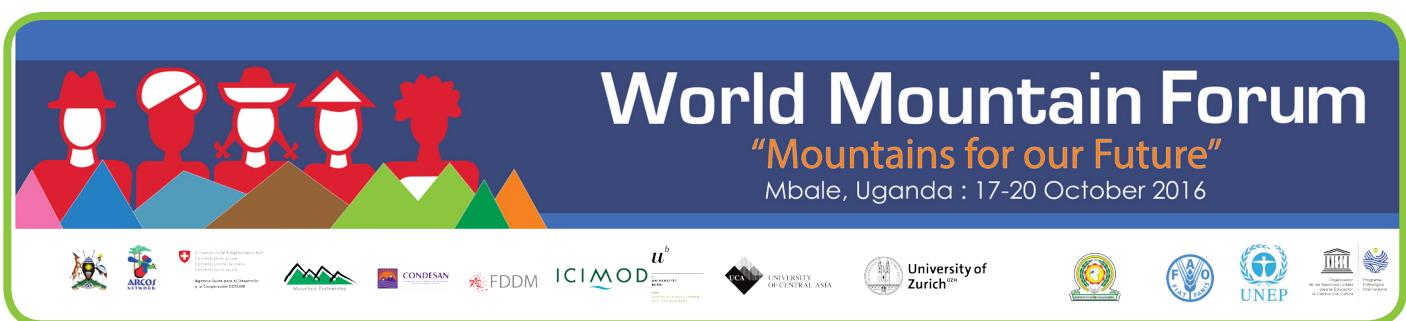
In enhancing information dissemination on sustainable management of freshwater resources in the African Great Lakes region, a newsletter named "Great Lakes Waves" was initiated and two editions published in 2015 (http://org/images/Newsletters/Great%20Lakes%20Waves_2ndIssue_Final.pdf). We have also mapped the threats to Great Lakes Freshwater ecosystems as well a policy brief produced to advocate for wetlands conversion in the region. Building on the ARCOS Biodiversity Infomation Management System launched in

2014 during Africa Regional Mountain Forum, the featured library on Great Lakes Freshwater Ecosystems were populated with relevant publication in relation to freshwater ecosystems (<http://arbmis.arcosnetwork.org/>).

In the same year, 2015, ARCOS secured fund from Rwanda Environment and Climate Change Fund (FONERWA) to implement a project entitled "Using Water-Energy-Food security nexus to promote climate resilient decisions and model actions in selected landscapes along Akagera Basin." The objective of this three years project is to provide evidence-based policy guidance and promote local actions that foster climate resilience and participatory sustainable development along the Akagera Basin.

Under our Small Grant Programme and part of the Great Lakes Programme, ARCOS provided small grants to 3 local NGOs to support collaborative conservation actions addressing major issues affecting the Great Lakes ecosystems. Those include Network for Community Development in Uganda, Ecofinder in Kenya, and Africa Partnership on Climate Change Coalition in Tanzania.

7. Catalysing Africa's Sustainable Mountain Development



World Mountain Forum
"Mountains for our Future"
Mbale, Uganda : 17-20 October 2016

Logos of partner organizations: UNEP, FAO, IUCN, University of Zurich, University of Central Asia, CONDESAN, FDDM, ICIMOD, Mountain Partnership, and ARCOS.

The key activities of this programme in 2015 include a regional training workshop in raising awareness and building capacity of stakeholders on Sustainable Mountain Development in Africa. This training held in Rwanda from 24th to 25th August 2015 engaged government representatives, the civil society organizations and different categories of the media. The main objective of the workshop was to create awareness and build capacity of participants from different categories of stakeholders on Sustainable

Mountain Development and emerging issues such as climate change, food security and green economy in African mountains.

In terms of mainstreaming SMD in national policy, ARCOS supported the development of National Sustainable Mountain Development for Madagascar (completed) and Uganda (to be launched during the coming World Mountain Forum 2016). In the same year we have actively participated in COP21 in Paris and with other stakeholders organized a side event to

raise the awareness for SMD. It is in the same year that Africa Regional Mountain Forum was endorsed by Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN).

In terms of supporting knowledge generation, Africa Mountain Research Conference was held at Addis Ababa in June 2015. It was facilitated by AfroMont.

In the same context, Africa Mountains Atlas and Africa Mountains Status Reports were launched in collaboration with UNEP during the AMCEN in March 2015. In collaboration with UNEP Vienna and GRID Arendal, the East Africa Mountains Assessment Report was produced and the preliminary results were presented at COP21.

In addition to the above activities we kept producing awareness materials on the importance of mountains including our newsletter, "Africa Mountains' Echo", policy briefs and populated our online Library for mountains (<http://arbims.arcosnetwork.org/library-mnt/out/>)

[out.Dashboard.php](#)) with different materials to raise awareness and for information sharing purpose.

In terms of collaboration with other SMD stakeholders, we supported the project on technology transfer in the mountains of western Rwanda. ARCOS also continued providing support to its Natur Based Community Enterprises (NBCEs) and 15 new community groups joined with five among them operating in mountains.

It is good to note that it is in 2015 that we started the preparation of the World Mountain Forum 2016 which will be held in Mbale, Uganda from 17th to 20th October 2016 under the main theme "Mountains for our Future" (wmf.mtnforum.org).

ARCOS is very grateful for the financial support from Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

8. Influencing Sustainable Environment and Development Nexus



Participants posing during the Training in EIA held at Bukavu

Under this area, the year 2015 was highlighted by capacity building workshops, active participation in EIA report and production of awareness materials. We have also involved in international events such as COP21 together with other stakeholders advocating for the importance of mountains and investments in the later especially in terms of climate change

adaptation and impacts mitigations.

ARCOS organized and facilitated a training in Environmental Impact Assessment for civil society organizations in Rwanda. The training took place in Kigali on 27th-28th January 2016 and resulted in the establishment of a national branch of the Albertine

Rift Environmental Assessment Leadership Alliance (AREALA) was initiated in RWANDA. AREALA is a coalition of NGOs, EIA professionals, as well as representatives of governments in the Albertine Rift region with the goal to promote open and transparent EIAs as well as support the public to be engaged in the EIA process.

Later on in Bukavu on 24 September 2015 the same training was organized jointly by ARCOS and Horizon Nature. This training brought together the representatives of civil society organizations in Eastern Congo and also resulted in the establishment of branch of the Albertine Rift Environmental

Assessment Leadership Alliance (AREALA) in Eastern DR Congo.

In order to support information sharing and capacity building, ARCOS continued to produce the Alliance Newsletter to promote sustainable development responsibility, "AREALA news." The alliance members kept providing comments to some few available EIA reports in the region.

ARCOS is very grateful for the support from CPEF in all the mentioned activities in this section.

9. Supporting Informed Decisions



Building on the portal (ARCOS Biodiversity Information Management System (ARBIMS)) built last year, we invested much effort in biodiversity data mobilization and the regular updates of the media libraries featured there in a bid to support the informed decisions towards biodiversity. One project has been developed and submitted to GBIF's EU-funded programme called Biodiversity Information for Development (BID) and the project is undergoing review now.

In terms of outreach, we kept the momentum to produce and disseminate our 5 newsletters including the leading newsletter Backbone/Le Pilier, Touraco Note Newsletter for ARCOS Members, Great Lakes Waves for the Great Lakes Region, African

Mountains' Echo for the African Mountains, and AREALA News for EIA practices; not forgetting our social media. We regularly updated our website and social media with concise and informative news about conservation and development in the region and worldwide.

As we are growing in bringing stakeholders together we revamped our Events Website (<http://wmf.mtnforum.org/WMF16/en>) to ease the event management process in the future workshops and trainings we organize. We have also solved the issue of managing our contact by developing the ARCOS Contact Management System.

As we are developing the new Strategic Plan 2016-

2020, to start next year (2016) we will need to update our communication strategy to align it with the new strategy, we plan also to revise our website which is not now on acceptable standards in regard to the quickly evolving technology. We will also

10. ARCOS Funding 2015

Resource mobilization is always at the core of ARCOS activities. Every staff, especially programme managers, is encouraged to keep updated on the opening opportunities in terms of donors' calls for proposals as well as other programmes coming in our region which represents a considerable opportunity for collaboration and strategic partnership. A system of tracking funding opportunities has been established and aligned with different programmes

keep mobilizing biodiversity data in the region, produce and disseminate awareness materials and keep serving as the regional hub of information.

Figure 1: Income contribution (2015)

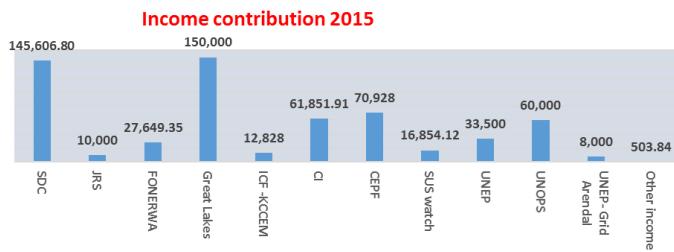
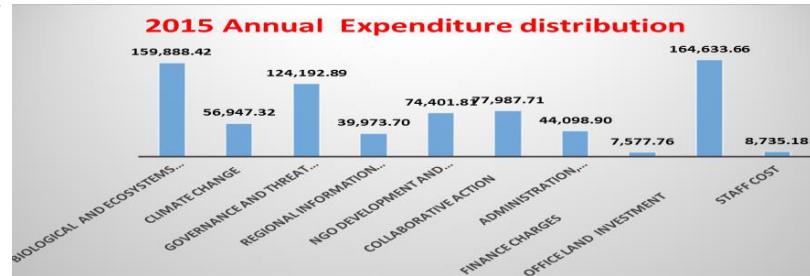


Figure 2: Annual Expenditure Distribution (2015)



11. Facing the future



As ARCOS ended its strategic plan 2011-2015 and developed the new strategic plan 2016-2020, we would like to thank all our partners from governments, conservation partners, local communities, national and international organisations, the private sector and our funding partners, for their concerted efforts in pursuing the conservation and development agenda at all levels. We invite you all to be part of ARCOS' new phase in conservation and development.

The new strategy will be used as a tool to face the future challenges and embrace the opportunities as its development is based upon careful analysis of the challenges and opportunities arising in the political, social, technological and environmental areas. It features strategic goals and objectives as guided by local, national and regional priorities

as well as global challenges, particularly the post-2015 development agenda as articulated in the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Climate Change Agreement.

During the new strategic plan period, ARCOS Network will always strive to attain greater results in the field of biodiversity conservation and sustainable benefits from ecosystem services, against the backdrop of climate change. We will put community benefits and community participation at the centre of our conservation interventions, and pay special attention to sustainable provision of human basic needs of water, energy and food security, we will do so as to ensure sustainability and demonstrate conservation impact.

You can download a copy of ARCOS strategic plan 2016-2020 [here](http://arcosnetwork.org/images/ARCOS_Docs/ARCOS_STR_PLAN_2016-2020_Final_signed.pdf) (http://arcosnetwork.org/images/ARCOS_Docs/ARCOS_STR_PLAN_2016-2020_Final_signed.pdf).



2015 coincided with ARCOS' 20th Anniversary and the end of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015



ARCOS Strategic Areas 2016-2020 at a glance



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