

**ALBERTINE RIFT CONSERVATION SOCIETY**  
**ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2016**



**Collaborative Action for Nature and People**

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# 1. ARCOS Mission and Governance Structure

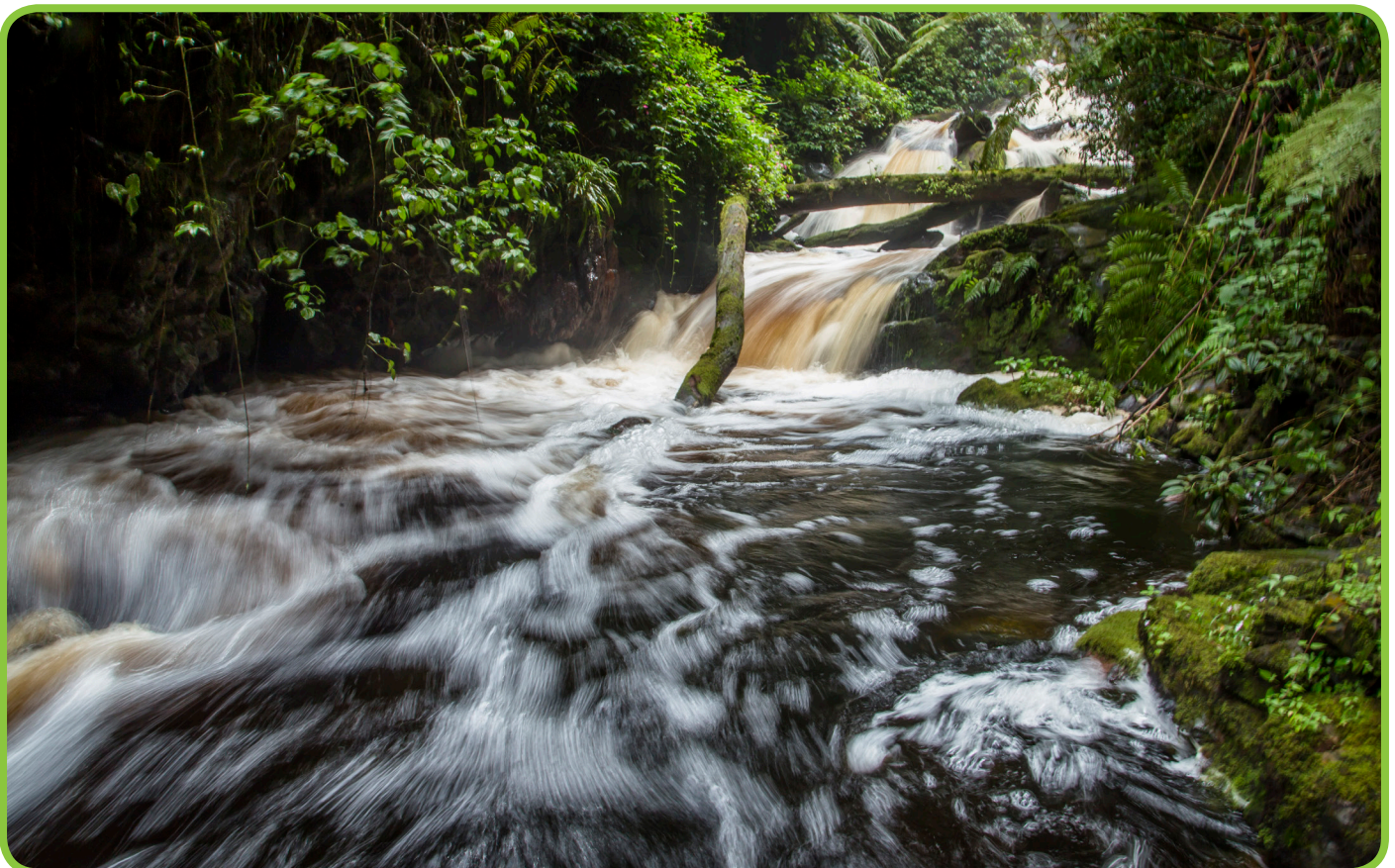
**ARCOS Mission:** ARCOS was established in 1995 with the mission to “enhance biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources through the promotion of collaborative conservation action for Nature and People.” Today, ARCOS has programmes extending beyond the Albertine Rift, including 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 Uganda and Rwanda as International NGO, and is registered in the UK as a Charity and Company Limited by Guarantee. ARCOS has office in Kampala (Regional Office) and Kigali. ARCOS has a Board of Directors and Trustees comprised of appointed Board members. These board members include representatives from the Albertine Rift countries, Africa 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, whose responsibility is to ensure the day-to-day management of the organisation.



## 2. Message from the Chairman and Executive Director



After concluding with the Strategic Plan 2011-2015, we are now implementing the new Strategic Plan 2016-2020 focusing on five programme areas (Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Climate Change, Water, Energy and Food Security). Our Programme is built around three pillars: Networking, Empowering and Ground Action; and three Strategic Approaches including Information and Advocacy; Partnership and Community Development. Our work extends to three geographical areas including the Albertine Rift

region, the Africa Great Lakes region and African Mountains.

Throughout the year 2016, the big shock was the departure of our Board Member, Professional and Friend, Mr Jean Gapusi. Otherwise, the year 2016 has been dominated by the organisation of the World Mountain Forum 2016, that was successfully held in October 2016 in Mbale, Uganda, and whose outcomes are recognized at regional and international level (Browse the event page for more details: <http://wmf.mtnforum.org/WMF16/en>).

We have continued to engage our dynamic network of stakeholders in the Africa Great Lakes region through our regional Newsletter “Great Lakes Waves”, and our work to promote Nature Based Community Enterprises (NBCEs) has moved to another level through a project funded by Rwanda’s



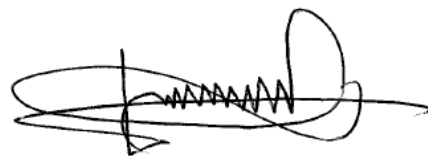
Green Fund (FONERWA) and the Sustainable Mountain Development for Global Change Programme (SMD4GC) funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). ARCOS has developed also a model called “**BEST Approach**”, that supports Nature Based Community Enterprises (NBCEs) in Building strong institutional management, enhancing Environmental Resilience, Sustainable Businesses and bring Transformation on ground.

On partnership side, we are pleased to announce the new partnership with the Government of Uganda and with Global Nature Fund (GNF) which will take our work to another level during the years to come.

We are grateful for our donors and the contributions of our partners towards achieving ARCOS’ goals.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. King'.

**Prof Nicholas King**  
Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam Kanyamibwa'.

**Dr. Sam Kanyamibwa**  
Executive Director



## 3. Geographic Areas of Engagement

### 3.1. Albertine Rift



*Rwenzori Turaco, an endemic bird species in the Albertine Rift region. Photo credit: ARCOS*

In the Albertine Rift region, much effort was invested in designing different approaches for landscape restoration, catchment management and community based adaptation in the agro-ecosystem landscapes. Through the creation of a regional community learning network composed of 25 Nature Based Community Enterprises (NBCEs) that are working with ARCOS in Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, the engagement of communities is progressing well. To ensure sustainability in focal landscapes, ARCOS has established, in late 2016, the Nature Based Community Fund (NBCF) that aims to support community investments in improving

their livelihoods and environmental sustainability through community loans, incentives, common activities and financial sustainability. The Fund is first being tested and implemented with NBCEs in Rwanda but with the target to upscale it along the Albertine Rift Region. ARCOS is also facilitating a regional Environmental Impact Assessment Group, “*Albertine Rift Environmental Assessment and Leadership Alliance (AREALA)*” in promoting transparent and participatory Environmental Impact Assessments prior to the proposed development projects targeting Key Biodiversity Areas in the Albertine Rift region.

### 3.2. Africa Great Lakes



In enhancing information dissemination on sustainable management of freshwater resources in great lakes region, one new edition of a Great Lakes newsletter, “*Great Lakes Waves*”, was published and various topics related to the status, trends and threats of freshwater in the Great Lakes region were discussed.

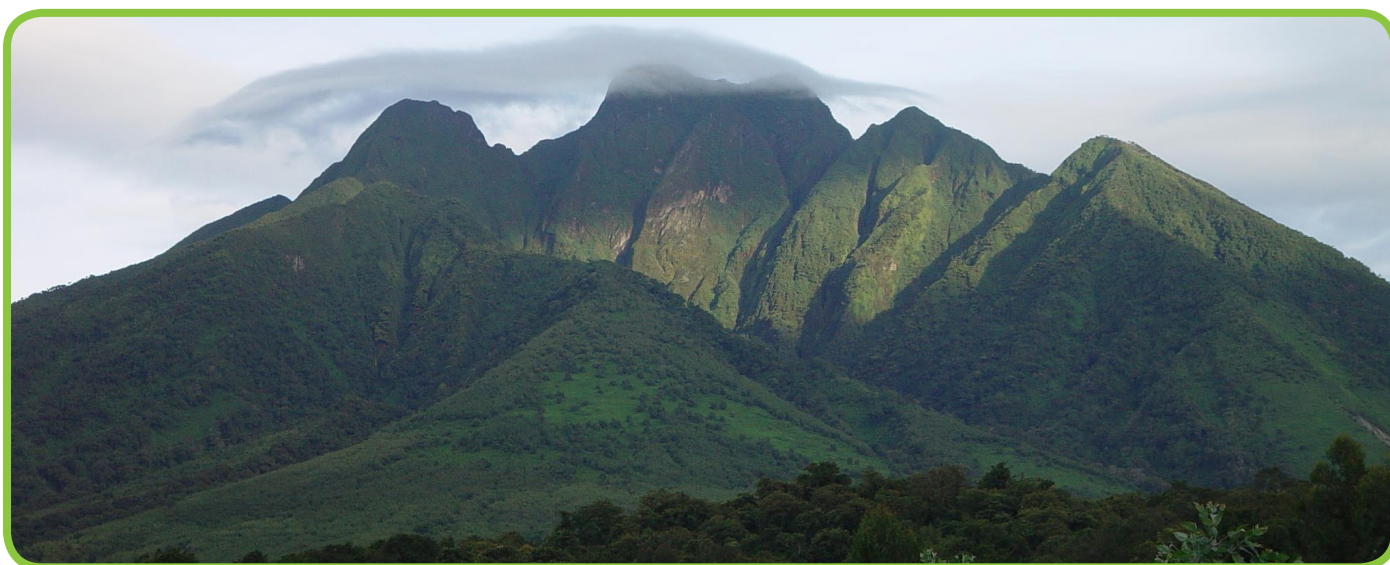
In view of the importance and on-going freshwater ecosystem deterioration, the Albertine Rift Conservation Society and Global Nature Fund (GNF) have started a collaboration towards solutions for those challenges in the African Great

Lakes region. In this framework both parties, on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016, signed a Memorandum of Understanding in order to collaborate in projects related to the management of freshwater ecosystems and ecosystem services, water, hygiene, renewable energy and food security; biodiversity conservation, NGO capacity building and advocacy; and climate resilience.

ARCOS is supporting GIZ/Uganda to conduct a study on “Stakeholders mapping for water

stewardship in Kiiha Watershed, Masindi District”, with main aim to identify key civil society, government and private sector stakeholders that may have positive or negative impact on water stewardship in Kiiha watershed. The work on Great Lakes is boosted by inclusion of our project on Lake Victoria (*Engaging stakeholders in using future scenarios to analyze the potential impacts of agricultural development in the Lake Victoria Basin*) with UNEP-WCMC

### 3.3. African Mountains



Mount Sabyinyo in Greater Virunga Landscape

In the year 2016, ARCOS made a commendable progress with the implementation of the Sustainable Mountain Development for Global Change (SMD4GC) Programme activities. Below are some of the key achievements; 1) ARCOS and the Government of Uganda with financial and technical support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), UNEP and other Partners, jointly organised the third World Mountain Forum (WMF2016) from 17<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016 in Mbale under the main theme of “Mountains for our Future”. The main outcome of the WMF2016 is summarized in the Mbale Call for Up-Scaling Action entitled “Don’t leave mountains behind (See the outcomes via this link: <http://wmf.mtnforum.org/WMF16/en>). 2) ARCOS supported the Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Water and Environment to develop a Uganda National Sustainable Mountain Development Strategy after Madagascar who ARCOS supported to developed one, in 2015. The Ugandan strategy

was launched by the Vice President of Uganda His Excellency Mr Edward Sekkandi, during the World Mountain Forum 2016. 3) As result of the MoU with the East African Community, UNEP, GRID-Arendal, Government of Austria, ARCOS and EAC, have implemented an inter-regional project entitled “Climate change action in developing countries with fragile mountainous ecosystems from a sub-regional approach”. Jointly with UNEP, GRID-Arendal, Government of Austria, ARCOS and EAC produced a Report “Sustainable Mountain Development in East Africa in a Changing Climate”. The publication contains practical policy recommendations and documents best practices for issues such as soil conservation and landscape conservation. 4) ARCOS has produced a special edition of the African Mountains Echo Newsletter giving highlights on what transpired on both the technical and lighter side of the World Mountain Forum 2016.



## 4. Strategic Program Areas

### 4.1. Sustaining Biodiversity Conservation and Ecosystem Services



*Biodiversity team collecting data during ILAM in Kirehe*

Sustainable management of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems and their services, for community livelihoods and human well-being constitute a main programme area for ARCOS. It is implemented at different levels, from policy to community actions. Some of the activities in 2016 include the support to coffee farmers, organized into three coffee stations in Rwanda. The latter obtained an international certificate from Rainforest Alliance. This initiative was implemented in partnership with the Conservation International (CI), and using the Conservation Agreement Model, the model which inspired ARCOS to develop its Sustainability Agreement model. Under sustainability agreement, ARCOS signed 12 years agreements with 15 NBCEs together with local authorities to promote sustainable practices and business enterprises in three landscapes (Bugesera, Kirehe and Rutsiro) along Akagera Basin. ARCOS conducted the Integrated Landscape Assessment and Monitoring

(ILAM), a science based approach through which we assessed and produced technical status reports presenting the baselines on biodiversity, ecosystem services, and socioeconomic status in Rutsiro, Bugesera and Kirehe landscapes in Rwanda. As part of sustainable use of ecosystem services, later in September, ARCOS in partnership with the Stockholm Environment Institute started the compilation of data from different government and private institutions on the use of water, land and biomass in Rwanda to produce the current account showing the demand and supply capacity of the country so that different scenarios are developed to serve as baseline for the projection to 2050. All this was conducted under the project termed 'Using Water-Energy-Food Security (WEF) Nexus to Promote Climate-Resilient Decisions and Model Actions in Selected Landscapes along Akagera Basin', funded by The Rwanda's Green Fund (FONERWA).



## 4.2. Building Resilience to Climate Change



ARCOS provided clean water to communities in both sites serving more than 1000 households.

ARCOS' climate change programme aims to support national and regional mechanisms for assessing and understanding the impacts of climate change and promote grassroots actions to build community and ecosystem resilience. In 2016, ARCOS focused on enhancing community adaptation in focal landscapes through the NBCEs Programme. In addition, in partnership with Sus-watch Kenya and with funding from PREPARED-USAID, ARCOS completed a project entitled 'Assessment of community climate change adaptation in selected hotspots in East Africa', with the overall goal of enhancing climate change adaptive capacity of

selected community groups. ARCOS contributed by focusing on two community groups in eastern and central Uganda (Bugiri and Gomba Districts respectively). The project involved the in-depth analysis of climate change risks and communities adaptive capacities at EAC level, which is supposed to inform EAC and Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC) in developing a Lake Victoria Basin Climate Change Adaptation strategy and Action Plan. A follow up initiative was the provision of clean water to communities in both sites serving more than 1000 households.





### 4.3. Supporting Efforts for Integrated Water Resources Management



*Participants posing during WEAP and LEAP training held in Kigali*

ARCOS' Freshwater Programme aims at facilitating stakeholders' dialogue for integrated water resources management and promote actions that enhance availability and sustainable use of water resources. In this framework, ARCOS has continued to engage the "African Great Lakes Conservation Network" through information sharing scheme. In addition, as part of the project entitled "Using Water-Energy-Food security nexus to promote climate resilience decision and model actions in selected landscape along Akagera Basin", ARCOS has identified six Nature Based Villages (NBVs) in three landscapes of Kirehe, Bugesera and Rutsiro, to serve as demonstration sites for community development,

sound environment management including integrated freshwater management and resilience to climate change. Also, in December 2016, ARCOS in partnership with the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), has trained 10 technicians, from water sector working for different government institutions, in water scenario development using a tool called WEAP (Water Evaluation and Planning System). The main objective was to enhance capacity of technicians to critically assess the current model and water resources use under different scenario and be able to use these important tools in the planning of water resources sector in Rwanda for 2050.

## 4.4. Promoting Energy Efficiency and Access to Clean and Renewable Energy



*ARCOS is exploring options to support community farmers for solar powered irrigation and biogas production (to start next year in Bugesera and Kirehe).  
Photo: Greentechlead*

Under the energy programme, ARCOS works with different stakeholders to advocate and find innovative solutions that promote the access to affordable and sustainable energy services.

In this framework, ARCOS in partnership with the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) is assessing the risks and opportunities in regard to the accessibility of clean and affordable energy for Akagera Watershed under different development trajectories. The results from LEAP (Long-range Energy Alternatives Planning System), will identify sustainable and agreeable development pathways in terms of energy resource use for the current and future situations. The results will also inform decision making at district level in the project sites of Rutsiro, Bugesera and Kirehe and serve as model for the whole country.

Under the same framework, ARCOS has trained ten technicians (working in energy sector) from government institutions, in the use of LEAP tool.

The main objective was to enhance capacity of technicians to critically assess the current model and energy scenarios and be able to use these important tools in the planning of energy sector in Rwanda for 2050. The tool will also help to track energy consumption, production and resource extraction in all sectors of economy in Rwanda. The training was facilitated under the project termed 'Using Water\_Energy\_Food Security (WEF) Nexus to Promote Climate-Resilient Decisions and Model Actions in Selected Landscapes along Akagera Basin'.

Furthermore, under the same project, ARCOS has started a process to support local communities through established nature based community enterprises, with clean energy sources such as solar power and biogas and energy saving options such as cooking stoves. The activity which will continue in 2017 is targeting 300 households in the three landscapes targeted by the project.



## 4.5. Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Improved Food Security



*Twigire Muhinzi Cooperative members happy for the step made towards being a certified cooperative for production and distribution of Irish potatoe seeds in Rutsiro*

ARCOS work with different partners to promote sustainable agricultural practices that increase productivity and ecosystem resilience. In 2016, our work focused on supporting Nature Based Community Enterprises (NBCEs) to efficiently promote sustainable agriculture to ensure food security. We provided training to our NBCEs partner in cooperative management, business development, and environment protection which are also key to reducing poverty and ensuring food security. We continued with supporting NBCEs business activities with return on environment protection. Those include the construction of additional three coffee washing pits as well as additional 20 coffee drying beds for the Coffee Washing Station of KOAKAKI in Kigarama Sector of Kirehe District; purchase of a 2.5 ha land that will serve as the model banana field for banana farmers' cooperative (KOAUKI) in Kigarama Sector, Kirehe, Rwanda planting elephant grasses in preparation of 10 cows that will be donated by ARCOS to support organic farming and biogas production (done also for KABONYA in Bugesera, JYAMBERE Munyarwanda and TWIGIRE MUHINZI in Rutsiro); renovation of 10 ha banana fields for members of KOAUKI; land of 5ha in Kabungeri village of Kirehe district and the latter was given to women cooperative from this village to promote horticulture in the village and neighbourhoods; construction of four pig shelters and one goats shelter for KOAMI cooperative, Mutubehafi cooperative, Jyambere Munyarwanda cooperative, KOIMIZANYA and Kabungeri women respectively.

We have also supported farmers to get good seeds including two cooperatives (KOIMIZANYA and KABONYA) supported with 500 kg of maize seeds each to grow on more than 16 ha consolidated land in Bugesera. We also provided 7.2 tons of Irish potato seeds to Twigire Muhinzi Cooperative in Rutsiro. The latter was expecting to be certified by Rwanda Agriculture Board later this year as a specialised cooperative to produce and distribute Irish potato seeds in Rutsiro District.

Finally, ARCOS in partnership with UNEP-WCMC have been implementing a project entitled "Engaging stakeholders in using future scenarios to analyse the potential impacts of agricultural development in the Lake Victoria Basin". This project aims to ensure that land-use related decision-making in the Lake Victoria Basin (LVB) takes into consideration biodiversity and ecosystem services and is based on sound information and on the consideration of trade-offs between food production and conservation goals. Under this project, the year 2016 was marked by a regional policy harmonization workshop in Kigali, Rwanda. This workshop consisted of analysing and reviewing country policies/strategies related to agriculture and natural resources management which are likely to be reviewed in recent future. Gaps were identified and recommendation made to be submitted ( in form of a concept) to institutions responsible for those policies for possible consideration.

## 5. Strategic Program Approaches

### 5.1. Regional Hub for Information Capacity Building, Advocacy and Policy Dialogue



*Participants during the training in data standards and publication*

ARCOS' information systems programme has grown over the year 2016. The number of visitors accessing 4 thematic libraries of ARBIMS portal continued to increased reaching over 2,500 people. This emphasized our belief that information sharing is a significant and relevant area where organizations like ARCOS can contribute in the effort to promote collaboration and capacity building around sustainable development initiatives in the region. Through a project termed "Strengthening collaboration for increased biodiversity mobilization on key biodiversity ecosystems of the Albertine rift Region", a project supported by the GBIF under its Biodiversity Information for Development (BID) programme; ARCOS in partnership with the National Biodiversity Data Bank (NBDB) in Uganda, the Centre for Geographical Information Systems (CGIS) in Rwanda, and the Centre National pour la Recherche Scientifique (CRSN) in DRC are stepping up effort in biodiversity data mobilization in the region through new approaches such as

citizen science and data papers.

In collaboration with the same BID programme, ARCOS also hosted an African continent level training event on biodiversity data standards and publication, a training which saw a participation of 20 trainees from 8 countries and 6 trainers from both Africa, Europe and America. In terms of facilitating policy dialogue, the year 2016 was mainly dominated by the organization of the 3rd World Mountain Forum. This gave ARCOS an opportunity to revamp and improve its Event Management system and the web application has now been enhanced to conform with modern industry standards and include new features that will allow it to be used by any big event organized by ARCOS under its Event Management Service. Finally, the process to update the ARCOS main website has also been initiated and the new website will provide an integrated platform for all ARCOS communications efforts through mailing lists, social media, blog, galleries, etc.



## 5.2. Networking, Partnership and Membership



*His Holiness Skyabgon Chetsang Rinponche from India thanking ARCOS and partners for organizing the World Mountain Forum 2016 and agreed to explore partnership in sustaining mountain communities in East Africa*

ARCOS believes that engaging partnerships with leading players (communities, governments, NGOs and private sector) and facilitating collaborative action are critical for achieving our objectives. In 2016, our partnership was extended to a new established group on Nature Based Community Learning (NBCEs) Learning Group, joining the existing five networks (Albertine Rift NGOs Network, African Regional Mountain Forum, Albertine Rift Environment Assessment Leadership Alliance, Africa Great Lakes Conservation Group, ARCOS Members and Albertine Rift Information Management Group). The NBCE Learning group was launched during the first Mountain Community's Exchange Workshop that was held

in Mbale, Uganda from 29 to 31 August 2016 and is composed of 25 NBCEs: 2 in Burundi, 5 in Uganda and 18 in Rwanda. Additionally, we are happy to report on the signing of the MoU with the Government of Uganda and with Global Nature Fund (GNF). Finally, we should not forget to mention that the World Mountain Forum 2016 was a great example of bringing various partners together and good opportunity to build new relationships such as His Holiness Skyabgon Chetsang Rinponche from India, with whom we discussed the way forward for sustaining mountain communities in East Africa. I am also happy to report that ARCOS membership increased from 168 to 210 members.



WMF 2016, group photo. Credit: ARCOS



His Holiness Skyabgon Chetsang Rinponche receiving ARCOS team during WMF 2016. Credit: ARCOS



## 5.3. Promoting Nature Based Community Enterprises



*Community groups visit to one farmer in Bugesera to identify the challenges and the best practices after a training in BEST approach used by ARCOS for on-ground interventions. Photo credit: ARCOS (2016)*

ARCOS has strengthened its Nature Based Community Enterprises (NBCEs) programme through which it channels collaborative actions with communities. Up to now, ARCOS is working with 25 NBCEs across the region (18 in Rwanda, two in Burundi and five in Uganda). ARCOS developed an approach named BEST (Building leadership and sustainable institutions, Enhancing environmental resilience, Sustainable business solutions, and Transforming and Inspiring others (see details via ARCOS' NBCEs Programme flyer via this link: [http://arcosnetwork.org/uploads/2017/07/NBCES\\_2pgs\\_flyer\\_final.pdf](http://arcosnetwork.org/uploads/2017/07/NBCES_2pgs_flyer_final.pdf))) Through Sustainability Agreement Model, 15 NBCEs among 25, together with local leaders were engaged to use BEST Approach in Building strong institutional management, enhancing Environment resilience, Sustainable businesses and bring Transformation on ground. In the framework of transforming and inspiring others ARCOS selected six Nature Based Villages (NBVs) in Rwanda as pilot and model demonstration sites incorporating community development, sound environmental management and resilience to climate change. For the year 2016, we focused on building the foundation for this initiative, including training over 120 community members (and local leaders) in best practices that enhance community and climate resilience through ARCOS' BEST Approach. Also, 15 NBCEs were guided to produce the action plan, annual reports, cash flow projection and developed draft cooperatives' business plans. From these skills and financial support acquired, eight among 15 NBCEs were able to increase their annual net profit (of between Rrwf 100,000 and Rwf 3000,000 depending on their activity) from their businesses.

Most of on-ground achievements include those mentioned under section on sustainable agriculture and food security. Besides, through NBCEs program, ARCOS has facilitated a regional community exchange workshop in Mbale/ Uganda. From this visit, a community learning group involving 25 NBCEs from Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi was created. The group visited different sites and learnt from local communities about biogas plant installation, sustainable agriculture and animal husbandry (sustainable banana production and processing, horticulture, sustainable coffee production and processing), bamboo handcrafts making , food processing and beekeeping.

Another community exchange was conducted at national level, where 15 NBCEs in Rwanda were facilitated to visit a Model Village in Bugesera where sustainable energy, rainwater harvesting sustainable agriculture practices are promoted. During this visit, community also visited ecotourism site along Nyabarongo river and they participated in identifying environmental threats of the natural ecosystem and gave recommendations to address the identified issues.

Under this programme area, ARCOS also supported some NBCEs to get offices and collection centers. For instance, Bamboo handcraft cooperative (COABA) in Rutsiro was supported to renovate its building to serve as cooperative office and training center, for local community, in bamboo handcraft making and processing. The cooperative was as well supported with high-standard bamboo processing equipment to help them improve the quality of their products. In the same framework, three plots were purchased for three cooperatives in Bugesera, (Rwanda), in which their selling points and offices shall be built to enhance the development of the value chain ( promote sustainable fishing practices, horticulture, handcraft and ecotourism enterprises).

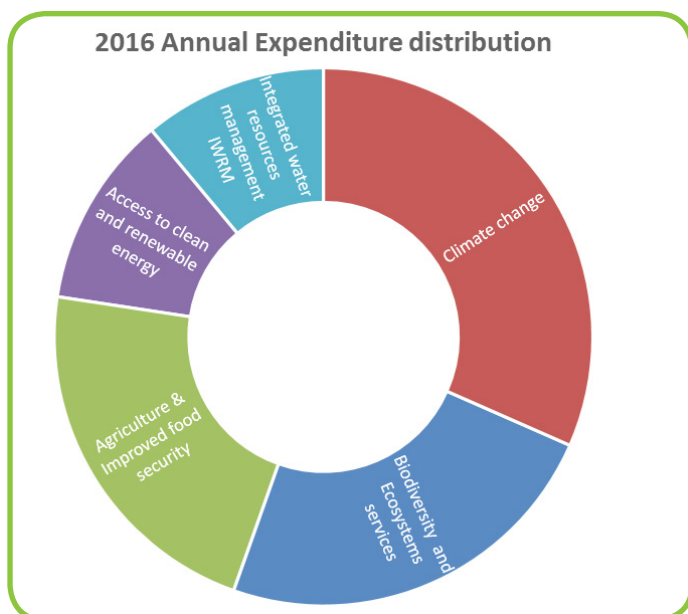


*Participants during regional community exchange workshop*



## 6. ARCOS Funding 2016

ARCOS' annual grant income for the year 2016 amounted to USD **956,666.05** and total expenditure to USD 991,497.02. We are very grateful for the financial support from our donors including SDC, FONERWA, CEPF, GBIF, USAID/PREPARED among others.



<b>Income (US\$)</b>	
Income Brought forward	71,968.72
Grants	954,633.26
Interest and exchange/Others	2,032.79
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>956,666.05</b>
<b>Expenditure (US\$)</b>	
Biodiversity and Ecosystems services	397,383.57
Climate Change	210,158.21
Agriculture & Improved food security	170,837.25
Access to clean and renewable energy	64,228.23
Integrated water resources management (IWRM)	67,269.93
Administration, Management, M&E and Development	62,085.07
Staff costs	8,135.17
Finance charges	6,762.46
Other Finance charges Exchange loss	4,637.13
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>991,497.02</b>
<b>Balance carried forward</b>	<b>-34,830.97</b>

## 7. Facing the Future



As we implement our Strategic plan 2016-2020, we will keep the momentum, building on the achievements of 2016 to attain even greater results of our interventions in the Albertine Rift region, Africa Great Lakes region and in African Mountains. We will build on sustainable agreements we have with our community partner to improve community livelihoods while we ensure environmental sustainability. We will ensure that our on-ground activities shows impacts in terms of climate change adaptation, biodiversity

conservation and poverty reduction. We will put collaboration at the center of our work for good delivery at local level while engaging broadly in national and regional development priorities. We will strive to put different stakeholders for dialogues that frame shared agenda in regard to environment and development while advocating for reduced threats to the biodiversity and ecosystem services. We will also engage private sector in corporate social and environmental responsibility while investing in climate change adaptation.

We welcome all interested stakeholders to partner with ARCOS in finding sustainable solutions for development and environmental sustainability.



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