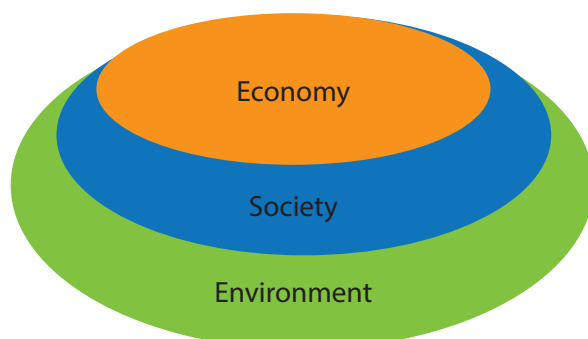


Partnering for improved livelihoods and environmental sustainability



1. Introduction

ARCOS Network's local interventions for climate resilience and sustainable development focuses on building socio-ecological systems at grass-root level as foundation for long-term success. ARCOS works in partnership with over 600 local community groups in Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi. The integrated approach (BEST Approach) is built on community partnership and ownership of interventions, cemented by a Sustainability Agreement involving communities, local government and ARCOS Network. The BEST Approach is based on four pillars: Building leadership and sustainable institutions, Enhancing environmental resilience, Sustainable business solutions and Transformation and inspiring others). The figure below and on the right summarizes ARCOS' BEST Approach:



2. ARCOS' BEST Approach

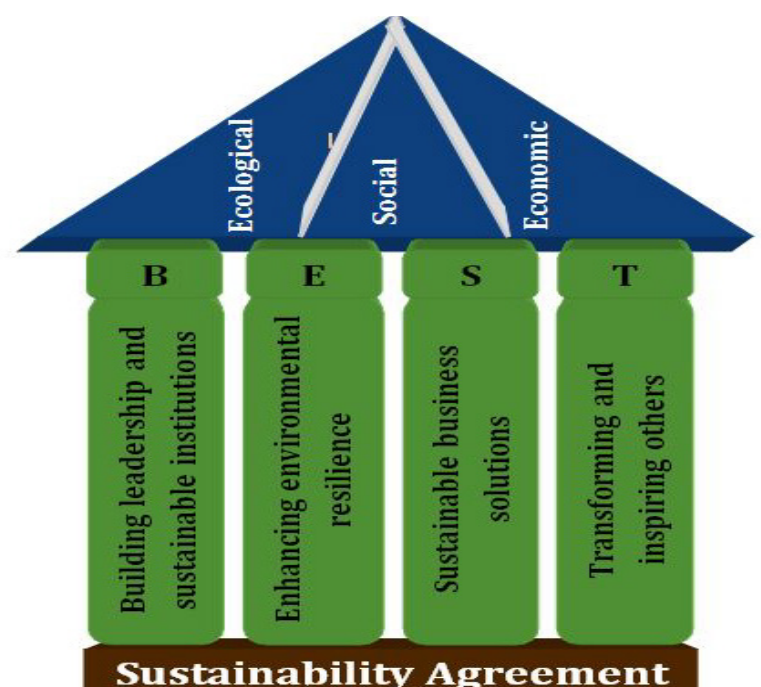
The BEST Approach (ARCOS 2015) focuses on four key areas:

B: Building leadership and sustainable institutions: ARCOS builds capacity of partner community institutions in leadership, governance and institutional management tackling targets and priority setting, action planning, gender and youth involvement as well as communication.

E: Enhancing environmental resilience: ARCOS promotes Ecosystem-Based Adaptation (EBA), and Community-Based Adaptation (CBA) through sustainable agriculture, forest landscape restoration, water use efficiency and green energy solutions, among others.

S: Sustainable business solutions: Under this pillar, ARCOS strengthen the business aspect of nature-based community enterprises through business planning, sustainable production, value addition, market linkage and public-private-partnership (PPP).

T: Transforming and inspiring others: This pillar is about building community-mindset towards sustainability and engaging them into transformational and inspirational actions at household and village level. Under this pillar, ARCOS uses the "Nature-Based Village (NBV)" as a model for transformation by promoting sustainable practices, village cohesion and visioning through village-based initiatives for sustainable land management and inclusive development. To support this process, ARCOS establishes a Nature-Based Community Fund (NBCF) that sustain this transformation through small loans, incentives and actions with common benefits for the village. Furthermore, ARCOS facilitates community-to-community exchange where members of the ARCOS' community network in the region gather on annual basis to share knowledge and experience.



3. Achievements

3.1. (B): Building leadership and sustainable institutions

The success of any institution depends on its governance. In building sustainable community institutions, we conducted capacity building in leadership, cooperative management, setting targets and business plan, supporting gender balance and youth involvement in community based organizations.

- Governance and strategy of NBCES significantly improved: All big cooperatives involved (32) registered at national level and all the village-based associations involved recognised at cell and sector level;
- Governance structures, leadership, transparency, planning, reporting and record keeping system in place;
- The Membership strategy for all NBCEs in place and diversified to include men, women and youth;
- Women involvement in NBCE governance considerably improved from 10% to 50% of women engagement in decision-making process;
- All NBCEs committed to adhere to BEST principles and NBCE training & mentoring is an ongoing process
- 20 NBCEs members trained in water hyacinth harvesting and treatment



3.2. (E): Enhancing environmental resilience

Achievements among others under E component:

- Over 3,000 people including 40% Women and youth from NGOs, local government and private sector, trained in water catchment management and natural resources protection. 8,000 community members of which 50 % are women and 35% are youth trained in tree nursery development for business purpose. Additionally, over 100 people trained in vermi-composting.
- Over 600 community groups of which 20% are women-based, engaged and supported in ecosystem restoration through long-term sustainability agreement.
- Over 400 people of which 45% are women and 70% are youth trained as trainers in climate change adaptation through the Eco-schools Programme.
- Over 20,000 hectares of watershed under restoration through community awareness and understanding on environmental sustainability significantly increased (Awareness raising campaigns on BEST approach)
- Over 2,770ha of watershed protected and restored through tree planting, soil conservation and agroforestry interventions Over 1,500,000 trees produced in over 70 tree nurseries and planted by communities every year. These include over 500,000 seedlings produced in over 40 community-managed tree nurseries serving as community bio-learning centers.



3.3. (S): Sustainable Business Solutions

- Integration of Water-Energy-Food Nexus operational at community level
 - 5 water supply systems for irrigation and domestic use,
 - 37 rain water harvesting systems at household level & 9 at NBCE level,
 - 87 biogas plants at household level)
 - Waste management promoted at NBCE level (CWS, Kirehe)
- Sustainable agriculture promoted at community level (provision of organic manure through small and large livestock (Over 300 goats and over 200 pigs, now with rotational distribution of siblings, reaching over 1,000 beneficiaries within 3 years); provision of seeds, equipment and post-harvest facilities)
- Over 5,000 jobs created (nursery technicians, working in coffee processing, working in potato farming, working in banana farming, working in fisheries, working in horticulture, taking care of livestock)
- Business plans & management systems in place for the big cooperatives & CBOs involved, & mentoring on business development is an on-going process for the small village-based associations
- NBCEs capital increased as direct investment and assets
- Office buildings (6 NBCEs)
- Post harvest infrastructures (3 NBCEs)
- Livestock and livestock shelters (200NBCEs)
- Various equipment (boats, beehives, handcraft equipment, etc. (200NBCEs)
- Increased production (see below) and annual turnover increased for all NBCEs. E.g.:
 - KOAKAKI: Turnover increased from 38 M in 2016 to 100 M in 2020
 - KOIMIZANYA: turnover increased from 1.5M in 2016 to 25M in 2020
 - KABONYA: Turnover increased from 1.5M in 2016 to 15 M in 2020
 - Jyamberemunyarwanda: Turnover increased from 500,000 Rwf in 2012 to 8M in 2020
- Market secured for all big cooperatives involved, & stakeholder engagement for market security for the village-based associations is undergoing.



3.4. (T): Transformation and Inspiring Others

- Over 250 villages involving over 100,000 people as secondary beneficiaries
- Now over 24 NBCF established at cell level involving partner NBCEs in focal landscapes & 10 NBEF (Nature-Based Eco-Schools Fund) established at sector level involving all schools involved in ARCOS' Eco-Schools Programme
- Now over 300 small loans issued through the 7 NBCF initially established within the last 3 years
- Community awareness & capacity considerably enhanced through peer learning organised at local level, community-to-community exchange organised at regional level, community newsletter & exhibitions
- Village cohesion and joint visioning enhanced through awareness campaigns and other events organised for bio-cultural knowledge exchange and overall village development



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