

ANNUAL 20 IMPACT 20 REPORT 24

"Collaborative Action for Nature and People"



Table of Content

I. About ARCOS	3
2. ARCOS Vision and Mission	4
3. Message from the Chairman & Chief Executive Officer	6
4. Addressing Global Issues through ARCOS Strategic Programme Areas	8
4.1. Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Ecosystem Restoration	11
4.2. Building Social Capital and Sustainable Community Livelihoods	14
4.3. Promoting Education for Sustainable Development	17
4.4 Promoting Eco-Agriculture and Sustainable Food System	20
4.5 Building Resilience to Climate Change and Promoting Green	
Development	23
5. ARCOS Finance and Operations in 2024	24
6. Gratitude to our Partners	25
7. Facing the Future	26



1. About ARCOS

The Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS) was founded in 1995 as a regional conservation organisation with the sole focus on the Albertine Rift biodiversity conservation. ARCOS has grown and upscaled its geographic areas of intervention from the Albertine Rift region to Africa Great Lakes and Africa Mountains.

To achieve its mission, ARCOS builds on its Theory of Change:

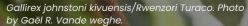
- We facilitate networking with local, national, and international players to enhance sustainable development through information and experience sharing,
- We empower our network through policy dialogue, capacity building and policy engagement when implementing our work. We work with all kinds of organizations— Non Government Organization(NGOs)/Community-Based Organizations (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 in the UK as a Charity and Company Limited by Guarantee. ARCOS has offices in Kampala and Kigali (Head Office) and Cambridge. In addition, 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 Chief Executive Officer, whose responsibility is to ensure the day-to-day management of the organization.



Our Vision

Our Ecosystems are
Healthy and Provide
Sustainable Benefits for
Nature and People.





Our Mission

To Build a
Sustainable Future for
Nature and People
through the
Promotion of
Collaborative Actions.



2. Message from the Chairperson & Chief Executive Officer

The year 2024 was a landmark year for the Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS), marked by significant strides in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration, all contributing to improved livelihoods for communities. A key highlight of 2024 was the prestigious Albert Mountain Award 2024 bestowed upon ARCOS by the King Albert Memorial Foundation (KAMF) in Switzerland, recognizing the organization's impactful conservation work.

ARCOS also experienced substantial growth in its membership base, expanding from 187 members in 2023 to 1,790 in 2024, representing 22 African countries. The General Assembly in August 2023 was a testament to this growth, convening 1,400 members.

In terms of environmental impact, ARCOS's tree planting initiatives reached new heights, with 3,080,662 trees planted in 2024, bringing the total to 11,580,662 trees since 2021. These efforts are projected to sequester over 6.5 million tons of CO₂ over the next 30 years. ARCOS also deepened its engagement with communities, reaching 24,133 households in 2024, leading to a cumulative total of 80,000 households and establishing 801 new Friends of Nature Associations (FNAs), bringing the total to 2,110 active FNAs. The Nature-Based Community Fund, commonly known as Umusave Fund, played a crucial role, investing \$509,423 in 2024 and supporting 461 community green projects bringing the cumulative investment of the Umusave Fund to \$823,000.

The organization's strategic direction was a focus, with a review of the strategic plan and preparation of a draft report for board consideration. This progress was supported by significant financial growth, with ARCOS's budget increasing by 296% to \$14.33 million, and a substantial increase in staff to 216 full-time members. ARCOS successfully implemented 13 projects in 2024.

The management of ARCOS extends sincere appreciation to the dedicated staff, donors, stakeholders, partners, board members, and the global ARCOS community. Their collective efforts and support have been instrumental in achieving these milestones, reflecting ARCOS's commitment to Collaborative Action for Nature and People."





Mr John YONAZI SALEHE Board Chair

Dr Sam Kanyamibwa Founder & CEO







ARCOS NETWORK







3. Acting Locally to Address Global Issues Through ARCOS Strategic Programme Areas

The year 2024 marked the fourth year of the implementation of the ARCOS 2021-2030 strategic plan based on 6 strategic areas. The strategic plan has Enhancing **Biodiversity Conservation and Ecosystem Restoration, Building** Social Capital and Sustainable Community Livelihoods, **Promoting Education for** Sustainable Development, **Promoting Eco-Agriculture and** Sustainable Food System, **Building Resilience to Climate Change and Supporting Green** Development Agenda as pillars.



In the year 2024, ARCOS accomplished remarkable milestones in various areas to further its conservation efforts. From expanding full-time staff to extensive reforestation initiatives and the mobilization of biodiversity data, ARCOS displayed a deep commitment to preserving the rich biodiversity of the Albertine Rift, Africa Great Lakes and Mountains Region.

29

Years of Transformation











210

ARCOS full-time employed staff by the end of 2024.



49,915

Hectares under restoration in the region.



80,000

Households
engaged by ARCOS
in sustainable
landscape
restoration and
biodiversity
conservation.



\$823,000

Injected in Village-Based
Saving and Loan
Associations (VSLAs)
enabled communities to
finance micro-project and
save about \$300K per year
on their return on
investment.



65.119

Through participation



3,400,000

Biodiversity data mobilized and hosted on ARCOS Biodiversity Information System (ARBIMS) to guide informed decision making.



11,580,662

11.5 Millions trees planted between 2021-2024. By 2030, 100 Millions trees will be planted and grown.







3.1. Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Ecosystem Restoration



Indicators

Number of trees planted and grown, hectares restored and abundance of species in the restored areas as a result of rehabilitation activity.

On the ground, our actions yielded impactful results. We significantly increased tree planting, growing a total of 3,080,662 trees this year, contributing to a cumulative total of 11,580,662 trees planted since 2021. Nearly 41 of the 59 planted species were indigenous, reinforcing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. Restored areas expanded by 9,915 hectares, increasing the total restored land to 49,915 hectares. These efforts enhanced soil fertility, improved local water cycles, and provided essential ecosystem services that benefit both nature and local communities.

This year also saw substantial progress in strengthening our network for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration. We developed six remnant forest management plans in Rwanda. These important documents will ensure long-term sustainability in ecosystems restoration efforts.

Additionally, we empowered staff and community members by enhancing our Biodiversity & Ecosystem Restoration Strategy. Over 70 staff members and 25,000 community representatives participated in capacity-building sessions, fostering greater local engagement and expertise in environmental conservation.



11,580,662

3,080,662 trees, planted and grown making 11.5 Millions trees planted between 2021-2024. This increased variety of species (including fruits, agroforestry, woodlot and fodder trees). Thus, increased this availability of vital resources such as food, fuelwood, medicine plants plus the abondance of insect species.



49,915

Number of hectares under restoration increased from 40,000 to 49,915 hectares. This increased soil fertility. Households testify that since they started practicing conservation practices their yield doubled.



59

The rehabilitation efforts were significantly enhanced by the contribution of 41 indigenous species. The 18 remaining species were fruits and non-native.







80,000

Empowering community members through training sessions has enhanced local expertise, strengthened community engagement, and improved capacity for sustainable environmental practices. Engaged community households increased from 54,000 to 80,000.



\$823,000

Injected in Village-Based Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs) enabled communities to finance micro-project and save about \$300K per year on their return on investment.



115,421

98,421 Green jobs through various initiatives such as tree nursery development &value chains development, tree painting and maintenance surging to total of 115,421 jobs created between 2021-2024.



461

Project proposals from community were awarded grants or loans, further promoting entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods at the community level which reduced poverty and increased food security at household level.



2,110

Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) through FNAs surged from 900 to 2,110, accumulating a total of 97.2 million RWF, empowering communities economically with 60% participation of women in leadership.

3.2. Building Social Capital and Sustainable Community Livelihoods



In 2024, ARCOS made significant progress in fostering social capital and promoting sustainable community livelihoods through widespread engagement and empowerment initiatives. We reached 24,133 households (HHs) this year, bringing the total number to nearly 80,000 households engaged from 2021 to 2024. Our efforts to strengthen community networks were further supported by the formation of 801 new functional Friends of Nature Associations (FNAs), contributing to a cumulative total of 2,110 FNAs across all ARCOS focal landscapes. These FNAs play a vital role in facilitating local collaboration and ensuring the sustainability of community-led initiatives.

In 2024, we also operationalized 53 new Nature-Based Community Funds (NBCFs), known as Umusave Fund, bringing the total number of operational NBCFs to 115. These funds have been instrumental in supporting local green projects and facilitating environmental conservation activities. This year, 461 green projects were supported, with a total investment of 720,614,608 Frw (\$509,423), bringing the cumulative investment in green projects since 2021 to 1,142,953,660 Frw (\$823,000) in 2024. These investments are critical in supporting sustainable livelihoods, improving local economies, and empowering communities to take ownership of their environmental resources.

Finally, our initiatives generated 98,421 green jobs in 2024 alone, elevating the cumulative total to 115,421 green jobs, further demonstrating our commitment to sustainable livelihoods and environmental stewardship.





3.3. Promoting Education for Sustainable Development



Indicators

Increased knowledge of sustainable development concepts, Improved understanding of environmental issues, Improved teaching competencies, Validated training manual and Number of schools engaged.

In 2024, the Education for Sustainable Development Program entered a new phase (2024–2027) after successfully completing the 2020–2023 phase. A major milestone was securing and launching the "Integrated Action for Climate Change Resilience and Livelihood in Mountainous Rwanda" (CCAM project), further strengthening the program's impact. A significant achievement was the approval of the Eco-Schools training manual and its guide by the Rwanda Education Board, leading to the training of 1,602 teachers and 48 Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) tutors in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

These efforts have been instrumental in mainstreaming environmental education and climate action into lesson plans and teaching methodologies. Additionally, 35 new schools, including 17 (TTCs), joined the program, bringing the total number of engaged schools to 75 since 2020.

In 2024 alone, the environmental education initiatives reached 16,250 students, 7,000 parents, and 450 teachers, contributing to a cumulative reach of 65,119 students, 38,001 parents, and 2,052 teachers between 2021 and 2024. Furthermore, 11 schools successfully completed the evaluation process and are qualified to receive the prestigious Green Flag Award, recognizing their commitment to sustainability.



65.119

Through participation in 25 Eco-Schools, 65,119 students have gained an improved understanding of environmental issues, fostering a more environmentally conscious generation.



75

Number of schools that are part of the Education for sustainable development through the Eco-Schools Programme. 35 New schools have improved knowledge and understanding of ecothinking, eco-citizenship.

38,001

Parents have been empowered with the Eco-Schools approach, gaining valuable knowledge in climate change adaptation strategies, environmental awareness, and eco-thinking, contributing to more sustainable practices within their communities.



2,052

The quality of education enhanced as 2,052 teachers were equipped to integrate ESD into the competence-based curriculum. This empowers students with the knowledge and skills needed to address environmental challenges.







49,915

Hectares of agro-systems under restoration, leading to enhanced community resilience to climate change. Households have experienced improved nutritional status, and there has been a significant increase in knowledge and adoption of sustainable agricultural practices within the community.



280,000

Training 280,000 individuals from 2,110 community groups in Sustainable Agricultural Land Management (SALM) has transformed landscapes and notably empowered women and youth, with 65% of beneficiaries from these groups, leading to increased sustainability and community empowerment.



Communities have been empowered through the distribution of 21,310 agricultural tools, enabling farmers to improve productivity, reduce labor intensity, and adopt climatesmart agricultural techniques.



Enhanced community resilience to climate change has been achieved through the distribution of 1,900 livestock to farmers. Manure from the livestock enriches soil fertility, boosting crop yields and providing a stable income for farming communities, thereby supporting sustainable agricultural practices.



15,300

The distribution of 15,300 tons of organic manure, 1,760 tons of lime, 52,478 kg of maize seeds, and 79,516 kg of bean seeds improved soil health and boost crop yields, leading to an estimated 23.3% potential revenue increase relative to the seed value.

3.4. Promoting Eco-Agriculture and Sustainable Food System

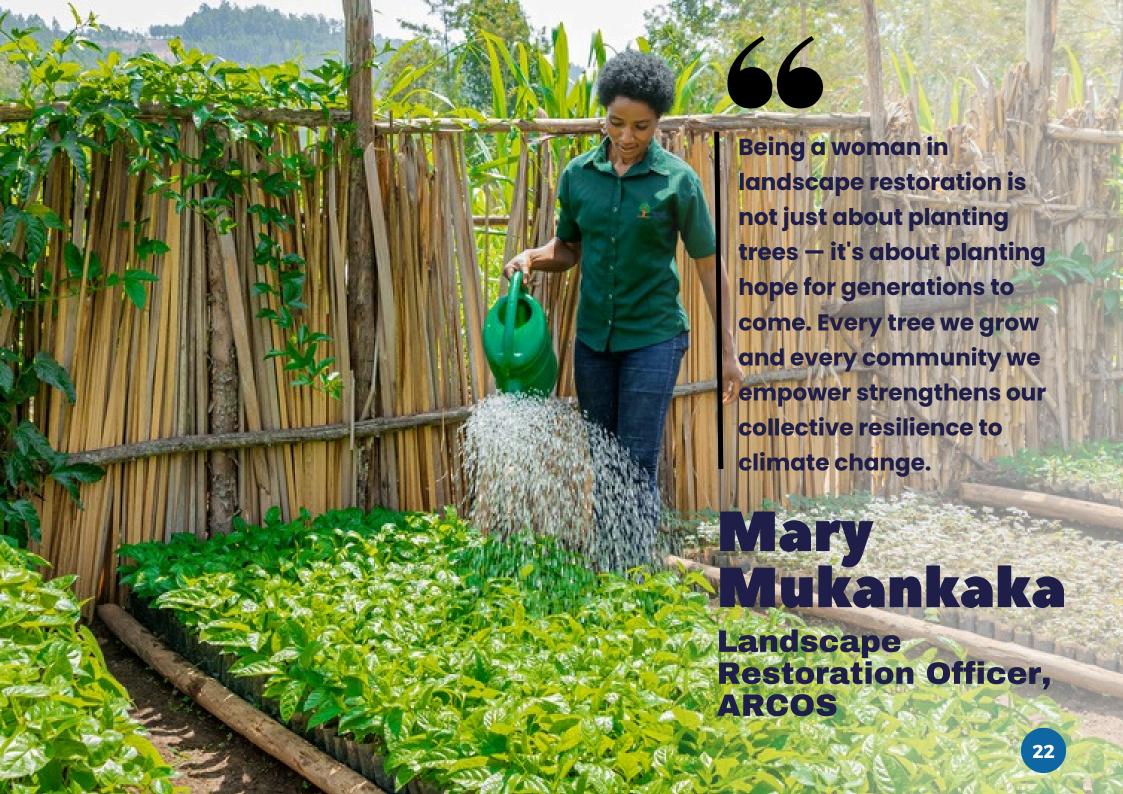


In 2024, ARCOS made remarkable progress in advancing eco-agriculture initiatives, equipping communities with tools, resources, and knowledge for sustainable agricultural practices. A major milestone was the distribution of 21,310 agricultural tools and the planting of 3,080,662 trees, safeguarding an estimated 105,000,000 tons of soil from erosion and ensuring long-term agricultural viability.

To further support sustainable farming, ARCOS distributed 1,900 small livestock to enhance soil fertility and trained 280,000 community members in land management and value chain development. Additionally, 15,300 tons of organic manure and 1,760 tons of lime were provided to improve soil health, alongside 52,478 kg of maize seeds and 79,516 kg of bean seeds to boost productivity. Sustainable land management efforts included the establishment of terraces, trenches, and small-scale irrigation systems.

In line with strategic goals, ARCOS introduced key frameworks such as the Incentive Strategy and the revised Community Development and Ecological Agriculture (CDEA) Strategy, reinforcing long-term sustainability. To support local economies, ARCOS built a new selling point in Bugesera, adding to existing facilities in Rulindo and Rutsiro districts. Finally, investments in value chains and the establishment of BEST sites positioned ARCOS' landscapes as models for ecosystem and landscape restoration.







3,080,662

Trees have been planted with an expected sequestration of approximately 2.5 Million tons of carbon dioxide in 30 years.



Coffee seedlings for shaded coffee plantations, projected to generate \$658,658 for local farmers. Combined with 175,000 seedlings donated in 2023, the total economic benefit is estimated at \$881,682.

347,419,860 tons

With 3,080,662 trees planted in 2024, an estimated 92,419,860 tons of soil could be protected from erosion, based on the proportional impact observed in 2023.

Considering the cumulative 11,580,662 trees planted between 2021 and 2024, the total estimated soil protection impact would be 347,419,860 tons of soil safeguarded against erosion.

3.5. Building Resilience to Climate Change



In 2024, ARCOS made significant progress in climate resilience and green development, reinforcing commitments at national, regional, and global levels. The planting of 3,080,662 trees is expected to sequester 2.5 million tons of CO₂ over the next 30 years, contributing to Rwanda's climate action goals and global mitigation efforts under the Paris Agreement.

At the regional level, ARCOS commissioned Oxfam to assess sustainable food systems in response to climate change across East Africa's transboundary mountains. Additionally, ARCOS played a key role in revitalizing Uganda's Environment and Natural Resources Network, strengthening governance by facilitating two steering committee meetings and technical support for general assemblies.

Globally, ARCOS contributed to COP29 by publishing two position papers on sustainable mountain development and climate change, with one paper featured in negotiations. ARCOS also renewed its membership in the UNFCCC Nairobi Working Group, ensuring continued participation in a global knowledge hub of over 450 organizations focused on climate adaptation.

To promote green development and sustainable livelihoods, ARCOS donated 517,000 coffee seedlings for shaded coffee plantations, projected to generate \$658,658 for local farmers. Combined with 175,000 seedlings donated in 2023, the total economic benefit is estimated at \$881,682.

Further strengthening climate resilience, ARCOS secured four new climate adaptation projects, bringing the total to ten ongoing initiatives. Among them, the SUNCASA project will green Kigali City by restoring degraded areas, stabilizing high-risk zones, protecting infrastructure, and expanding urban green spaces, aligning with global efforts to combat climate change and enhance urban resilience.

For the period of January-December 2024, ARCOS experienced significant organizational growth. Staff growth has been a standout achievement, with the number of employees rising from 48 in 2021 to 210 in 2024, comprising 62 women and 148 men, reflecting a diverse and growing team. This expansion was accompanied by targeted capacity building initiatives, with training sessions focused on GIS and data management, project management, financial management, effective communication, and ARCOS values, empowering staff with the skills needed to excel in their roles

In 2024, ARCOS strengthened its financial sustainability through key strategic initiatives. The organization developed and implemented essential financial policies, including the Financial Management Policy, Cost Recovery Policy, Reserves Investment Policy, and the Reserve Management Plan for 2025, ensuring long-term financial stability.

ARCOS secured a total annual budget of USD 14,616,213, a substantial increase from USD 3,611,586 in 2023, reflecting strong financial growth. By the end of the year, 98% of the budget (USD 14,302,226.66) had been successfully received, demonstrating effective financial planning, compliance and donor confidence.

These strategic financial measures have positioned ARCOS for continued growth and impact in 2025 and beyond.

4. ARCOS Finance and Operations in 2024

16%

26%

Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation and Ecosystem Restoration

Building Resilience to Climate Change

30%

O 10%

Building Social Capital and Sustainable Community Livelihoods Promoting Eco-Agriculture and Sustainable Food Systems





Promoting Education for Sustainable Development

Supporting Governments and Private Sector to Enhance Green Development Agenda



Development, Administration and Operation Costs

5. Gratitude to Our Partners

Our work is possible thanks to the financial support of our Funding Partners and the collaboration of our Strategic Partners. In 2024, we have worked closely with a range of local, regional and international organizations/institutions to deliver our projects with the greatest potential impact. Our gratitude goes also to our strategic partners that accompany ARCOS with guidance towards a smooth implementation of our initiatives.

Funding Partners

- AFR100_One tree Planted
- AstraZenaca/Reforest Action
- Bezos Earth Fund
- Danish Civil Society in Development (CISU)
- Federal Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection/IKI
- Fondation Audemars-Watkins (FAW)
- GEO Mauntain-Mountain Research Initiative
- Government of Canada
- IIISD
- Livelihood Funds
- · Netherland Embassy RVO
- New Field Foundation
- · One Tree Planted
- Rwanda Green Fund (former FONERWA)
- Sweden Government
- The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)
- UN Environment Programme
- UN High Commission for Refugees
- Van Tienhoven Foundation(VTF)
- World Resources Institute

Strategic Partners

- ASSOPTHE
- Danish Outdoor Council
- dipcoop intl
- Global Nature Fund
- East African Community, Secretariat
- European Forest Institute
- Foundation for Environmental Education
- GRID-ARENDAL
- L'Autorité du Bassin du Lac Kivu et de la Rivière Rusizi
- · Ministry of Environment Rwanda
- · Ministry of Water and Environment, Uganda
- · Nature Tanzania
- NAEB
- Rwanda Forest Authority
- · Rwanda Water Resources Board
- SORWATHE
- The International Union for Conservation of Nature
- University of Rwanda



6. Facing the Future

As we step into 2025, a milestone year marking 30 years of ARCOS' dedication to conservation and sustainable development, we are not only celebrating our legacy but also scaling up our impact across Africa. With renewed energy and a bold vision for the future, this year presents an opportunity to amplify our efforts in landscape restoration, community resilience, and environmental education, while showcasing our leadership in regional collaboration and nature-based solutions. Our focus will be guided by a series of high-impactful collaborative initiatives all contributing toward our 2030 goals for people, nature, and climate.

The key targets that ARCOS plans to achieve will mainly include the following:

- We will thrive to maintain ARCOS' position of a champion in landscape restoration across Africa through the delivery of
 impactful projects and fostering strategic partnerships. ARCOS targets to plant around 6 million trees on 20,000 Ha with
 focus on agroforestry trees, fruit trees, with the promotion of climate resilient indigenous species as a measure to address
 biodiversity loss.
- ARCOS will continue to lead the change at local, national and regional levels in environmental conservation and community empowerment, with a plan to engage and support over 80,000 community households or over 320,00 people as direct beneficiaries.
- We will upscale the established African NGOs Alliance for Environmental Sustainability (ANAES) to 20 African countries and will build the capacity and resilience of 35 member NGOs engaged in this platform and work together in bringing nature-based solutions.
- We will also build on ARCOS' leading role in Africa Sustainable Mountain Development to increase efforts in Africa Mountain ecosystems conservation and mountain communities' development, through advocacy activities such as the Africa Mountain Community-to-Community Exchange and the Africa Regional Mountain Forum.
- Finally but not least, the Year 2024 will constitute a bridge to the Year 2025 when ARCOS will celebrate its 30th Anniversary, an opportunity to bring together all members, partners and supporters in this memorable event.



Contact Us

UK Office

C/o BirdLife International The David Attenborough Building Pembroke Str, Cambridge CB3oPE, UK info@arcosnetwork.org

Kigali Head Office

KN 14 Avenue, No. 47 Kimihurura P.O Box: 1735 Kigali, Rwanda info@arcosnetwork.org

Uganda Office

78 Semawata Rd, Ntinda P.O. Box 9146, Kampala Kampala, Uganda info@arcosnetwork.org