

THE ALBERTINE RIFT CONSERVATION SOCIETY



ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2017



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.

ARCOS Strategic Areas 2016-2020 at a glance



2. Message from the Chairman and Executive Director



We are proud of the achievements of the second year of our Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and committed to achieve more in coming years. The year 2017 was characterized by tremendous achievements and impact through the implementation of the integrated community development approach developed last year (2016). ARCOS' BEST Approach has known many admirations as the best approach to improve livelihoods and environmental sustainability. The achievements presented in section 4.2. left us with the challenge on how to sustain what has been achieved and scale up the



initiative in more areas and regions in the Albertine Rift and beyond.

We are very proud of the results of our effort in supporting strategic planning in the region. This year, we facilitated different strategic planning exercises including the development of Gishwati-Mukura National Park Ten-Years Management Plan and Three-Years Action Plan. We also conducted the review of policies, programs and investment incentives for Forest Landscape Restoration in Rwanda. As far as research and strategic planning is concerned we have also facilitated the Stakeholders Mapping for water stewardship in Kiiha Watershed, Masindi District in Uganda, not to forget the annual Integrated Landscape Assessment and Monitoring (ILAM) conducted in different landscapes in Rwanda.

We, at ARCOS strives to act locally while engaging broadly and we particularly value on-ground actions that improves community livelihoods and environment sustainability. In this regard, we embarked on a journey to resilience with different community partners and the achievements are so promising and inspiring. We are very proud of the results of the education and training activities provided to community groups in leadership and governance as well as environment conservation. In 2017, a total of 2,740 ha of degraded watershed were restored and their agricultural production tripled, mostly due to best agricultural practices. We have put much efforts in understanding the requirements for community adaptation to climate change in East Africa,

to mention few, we have been part of a Community Climate Change Adaptation Assessment (C3A2), which was carried out in five East African Countries.

As a Regional Centre for Knowledge, we supported information sharing through our Newsletters ARCOS Biodiversity Information System and other channels and we invested in training a range of people including senior officials and rural communities. We have kept our pace in engaging the Private Sector through a platform for stakeholders' dialogue on Conservation and Development agenda where this year, in collaboration with GIZ and REMA, we organised a climate change dialogue focusing on identifying risks and leveraging the opportunities for investing in Climate Change Adaptation and integrating private sectors in implementing NAPs and NDC. At community level, we also organized the second regional Community-to-Community Exchange to facilitate community experience sharing and learn by doing.

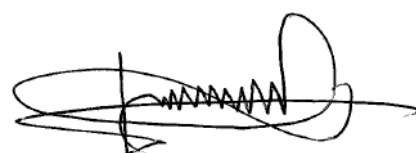
We are very grateful for the support from different donors, partners, ARCOS members and tireless effort from ARCOS staff. Without you, we would have not achieved this much this year.

We welcome your continuous collaboration as we also welcome new partnership in our road to resilience.

Thank you very much!



Prof Nicholas King
Chairman



Dr. Sam Kanyamibwa
Executive Director

3. Geographic Areas of Engagement

3.1. Albertine Rift Region



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

The year 2017 was marked by a set of high level stakeholder's engagement events to contribute to sustainable management of natural resources including: 1) Regional Environment and Development Dialogue to promote the consideration of the Environment and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) studies and public engagement before any development initiative is implemented, 2) Environment and Sustainable Business Development Dialogue with the target to raise awareness of private companies to join a platform for Leveraging Adaptation Opportunities, Involving the Private Sector in Implementation of the NDCs in Rwanda; and 3) actively participated in the African Great Lakes Conference that was organized by The Nature Conservancy in May 2017 in Uganda.

A lot of work was completed through various consultancies carried out including: 4) the preparation of the Gishwati-Mukura National Park 10 years Management Plan and 3 years action plan, and 5) the review of policies, programs and investment incentives for Forest Landscape Restoration in Rwanda.

ARCOS has invested much efforts in sustaining its on-ground collaborative conservation actions

mainly focussing on forest landscape restoration and investment whereby 15 Nature Based Community Enterprises (NBCEs) were supported to enhance their governance and capacity in building environmental resilience with restoration of 2,740 ha of degraded watershed using agroforestry and other plantations that provide permanent vegetation cover and improve nutrition and food security.

To enhance cultural learning, experience and lesson sharing among partner NBCEs in the Albertine Rift Region, ARCOS has organised the second annual regional Community to Community Exchange visit that gathered 30 NBCEs from Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda. That event offered to ARCOS an opportunity to showcase communities' achievements and their involvement in sustainable environment conservation, and communities learnt a lot from their colleagues, and were inspired by different cultures that aim at the same target, and gained some profit through the exhibition of their products. The event was attended also by donors and other stakeholders.

3.2. Africa Great Lakes



As part of enhancing information dissemination on sustainable management of freshwater resources in great lakes region, the 4th edition of “Great Lakes Waves”, was published and various topics related to the status, trends and threats of freshwater in the great lakes region were discussed and the newsletter was shared to various stakeholders.

In addition, ARCOS participated in the first African Great Lakes Conference held on 2-5 May 2017 in Entebbe, Uganda and an abstract entitled “Nature-based actions as a suitable solution for sustainable management of freshwater ecosystems” was accepted and later presented during the conference. As a result, this abstract emerged as the best and received a recognition award.

Under support of GIZ/Uganda, ARCOS finalized a consultancy entitled “Stakeholders Mapping for water stewardship in Kiiha Watershed, Masindi District”, the report identified, mapped and categorized key stakeholders in Kiiha watershed that are relevant for water stewardship related activities. The mapped stakeholders included civil society, government and private sector stakeholders positively or negatively impacted on the watershed. In order to showcase ARCOS interventions in the African Great Lakes a leaflet that describes what is being done, strategies used and other issues of focus under the Great Lakes program was developed.

3.3. African Mountains



In 2017, ARCOS made commendable progress with the implementation of the Sustainable Mountain Development for Global Change (SMD4GC) Programme activities. Below are some key highlights.

ARCOS kick started the process of institutionalizing the Africa Regional Mountain Forum (ARMF) beginning with development of content for the governance document to be binding for all parties and stakeholders. The Africa Regional Mountain Forum was officially endorsed by the AMCEN in Cairo in March 2015 as a regional exchange forum to promote Sustainable Mountain Development agenda, information exchange and policy dialogue. ARCOS was confirmed as interim Secretariat for the ARMF hence formalising the process of getting a formal host.

ARCOS organised a community to community exchange meeting in Rwanda from 27th to 30th November 2017, gathering more than 60 participants, with 30 being representatives of all Nature Based Community Enterprises supported by ARCOS and mostly operating in mountain ecosystems of the three countries of the Albertine Rift Region (Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi): See details in the link downloadable through the link:

http://arcosnetwork.org/uploads/2018/04/C2C_Exchange_Report2017_Final.pdf

ARCOS attended the Mountain Partnership Global Meeting, held at FAO headquarters in Rome on 11 – 13 December 2017 and particularly facilitated a session titled “*The Mountain Partnership looks ahead: setting priorities and identifying the main areas of work for the next biennium*”.

ARCOS catalysed the process of promoting Sustainable Mountain Development in Malawi. The government of Malawi under the Land Resources Conservation Office, Department of Land Resources Conservation, has consequently formed a national committee on Mountains, composed of key stakeholders from both government and Non-Governmental Organizations in Malawi. The committee is expected to guide the SMD

process in the country. The department also started the process of developing a Sustainable Mountain Strategy for Malawi beginning with a road map for the development of the same. The National Mountain strategy will hopefully define mountains in Malawi, highlight priority Sustainable Mountain Development issues and concerns, provide strategies and interventions for achieving Sustainable Mountain Development in the country, among other things. Moreover, AfroMont and partners including ARCOS under the SMD4GC Programme, organized a research meeting named the “AfroMont-Mt Kilimanjaro Mountain Research Conference” in Moshi, Tanzania from 22nd to 26th February 2017, under the main theme: “*African mountain ecosystems under global change: Linking biodiversity, biotic interactions and biogeochemical ecosystem processes*”. The general consensus of the conference was the need for stronger collaboration and increased research funding for African mountain research. A set of expanded abstracts from the conference can be downloaded through the link: <http://mri.scnatweb.ch/en/afromont-research/afromont-mtkili-research-conference>

To enhance bio-culture, ARCOS mobilized financial support from New Field Foundation, to implement a 1 year project titled “Enhancing Bio-Cultural Knowledge and Eco-Agricultural Practices for Mountain Community Livelihoods and Climate Change Resilience in Rwanda and Uganda”, the project is under implementation. ARCOS published the 7th Edition of its bilingual African Mountains Echo Newsletter downloadable through the link: (http://arcosnetwork.org/uploads/2017/07/African%20Mountains%20Echo%20-%207th%20Edition_Final.pdf). Know more about ARCOS as a hub for sustainable mountain development in the article published in the MRD Journal downloadable through the link: <http://www.bioone.org/doi/pdf/10.1659/MRD-JOURNAL-D-17-00044.1>

4. Strategic Program Areas

4.1. Sustaining Biodiversity Conservation and Ecosystem Services



Since 1995, ARCOS Network has committed to enhance biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of goods and services provided by natural ecosystems of the Albertine Rift Region, African Mountains and Great Lakes region. One of the tools that helps ARCOS to meet this target is the Integrated Landscape Assessment and Monitoring (ILAM), a periodic survey that ARCOS conducts in selected landscapes of Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda. In 2017, ARCOS team conducted the survey in three landscapes namely Mukura Forest Landscape (in Rutsiro district), Akanyaru Nyabarongo Wetlands landscape in Bugesera District and Akagera-Rusumo Landscape in Kirehe District along Kagera basin in Rwanda. The technical reports provide the updated status, threats and possible conservation responses on biodiversity, ecosystem services and socio-economic situation.

The findings of 2017 show that drivers of threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services include high population growth, poverty of communities and low level of awareness on climate resilience and limited

adaptation options. This leads communities to depend on ecosystem services 100% with the most needed being water, agricultural land and forest resources for energy source.

In collaboration with Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) and with funding from Rwanda Green Fund (FONERWA), ARCOS conducted the scenario modelling for Water-Energy-Food Security along Kagera Basin and the findings were used to inform decision making at district level to look for possible solutions or initiatives that should facilitate reduction of threats and promote community development. As part of this study, ARCOS facilitated two districts (Bugesera and Kirehe) to mainstream the Water-Energy-Food Security Nexus in their District Development Strategies and supported communities with pilot community climate resilient projects that benefit biodiversity and livelihoods of communities at both household and Village levels.

4.2. Building Resilience to Climate Change



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. At international level, ARCOS was officially registered as an observer to the climate change negotiation under UNFCCC and has participated in the COP 23 in Bonn. This was an opportunity to share what ARCOS does towards climate change adaptation at community level and advocate for the recognition of mountain ecosystems and mountain communities in the climate change agenda.

At East African level, ARCOS was part of a Community Climate Change Adaptation Assessment (C3A2), which was carried out in five East African Countries under USAID-PREPARED project (<https://www.usaid.gov/documents/1860/support-planning-resilience-east-africa-through-policy-adaptation-research-and>). Its goal was to establish and enhance climate change risks and adaptive capacities of community groups in Selected Hotspots in East Africa. The assessment results informed the development of a Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC) Climate Change Action Plan and Strategy thereby enhancing decision-making processes considering the current and future climate change scenarios and variability.

At national level, ARCOS in partnership with GIZ and REMA organised a climate change dialogue focusing

on identifying risks and leveraging the opportunities for investing in Climate Change Adaptation and integrating private sectors in implementing the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). This dialogue provided a platform where stakeholders especially the private sector discussed and had a common understanding on the evolving climate change impacts affecting private companies in Rwanda. The outcomes of the event are also expected to inform the on-going policy processes to address climate change issues (implementation of NDC/development of NAP). The dialogue came up with a platform, named “ Private Sector and Climate Change Adaptation Platform”, that will facilitate companies in Rwanda to share information and experiences on issues related to climate change adaptation and corporate social and environment responsibility (<http://arcosnetwork.org/en/article/environment-and-sustainable-business-development-dialogue-concludes-with-a-private-sector-and-climate-change-adaptation-platform>).

At local level, ARCOS, through its Nature Based Community Enterprises Programme(NBCEs), focused on building community resilience to climate change by improving their livelihoods through small and medium businesses. ARCOS supported different community based projects ranging from climate smart agriculture, livestock rearing and other small businesses that aim to build resilience of both communities and environment. See details in section 4.5.

4.3. Supporting Efforts for Integrated Water Resources Management



ARCOS' Freshwater Management 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.

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", funded by Rwanda's Green Fund (FONERWA), ARCOS partnered with 15 community groups (Nature Based Community Enterprises (NBCEs)) for sustainable catchment management along Akagera basin where 2,740 hectares were restored in in selected sites of Bugesera, Kirehe and Rutsiro landscapes. In addition, ARCOS supported two NBCEs, KOAKAKI (Coffee farmers cooperative operating in Kirehe District)

and Cooperative pour la Multiplication des Fruits et Legumes de Kigarama (COMUFLEKI) and communities in villages where they operate, in accessing clean water for domestic use and coffee washing as well as for irrigation purpose. One thousand five hundred households got access to clean water using one water-well constructed in Nyamiyaga village of Kigarama sector in Kirehe district while 54 hectares of land will be irrigated using the gravity water supply in Kigende village of Kigarama sector in Kirehe district.

Furthermore, in a bid to advocate for the sustainable management of freshwater ecosystems in the Great Lakes Region, ARCOS produced an Environmental status report of Akagera Basin which analyses the status of the ecosystems in the basin, trends and threats and the role of different stakeholders including policy-makers to stabilize the negative effects.



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



Under 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 in the year 2017, through a joint action with Bugesera and Rutsiro Districts, ARCOS has supported 86 households to access biogas cooking system in a bid to provide an energy alternative to firewood and reduce tree cutting, while

improving livelihoods of communities.

As incentive to the well management of lakes and rivers as well as their buffer zone, two solar irrigation systems were installed, one at Cyohoha lake in Bugesera and another at Akagera river in Kirehe with capacity to help rural farmers to irrigate 16ha beyond the buffer zones (More details in the next section).



4.5. Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Improved Food Security



ARCOS work with different partners to promote sustainable agricultural practices that increase productivity and ecosystem resilience. In 2017, ARCOS Network has promoted sustainable agriculture practices which contributed to enhancing production and at the same time restore the landscape. These include for instance agroforestry on over 2,700ha, where communities have produced over 274,000 seedlings of which 210,000 seedlings were planted on farm land. Among them 71,500 seedlings were fruit species that apart from providing other trees' services, they also ensure food security and income generation when sold on market.

In addition, ARCOS Network has promoted livestock (cattle and small livestock) among farmers' NBCEs, where 30 cows and 80 pigs were given respectively to 3 NBCEs and 4 NBCEs in Rutsiro, Bugesera and Kirehe districts; and 24 goats were given to one women NBCE in Kirehe, for organic manure, food and income generation.

ARCOS Network has promoted horticulture in Rutsiro, Bugesera and Kirehe districts by supporting six partner NBCEs (one in Rutsiro, three in Bugesera and three in Kirehe) with different vegetable and fruit seeds and by applying good practices, the average production was 8 tons per hectare.

In collaboration with KOAUKI cooperative in Kirehe, 20 ha of banana plantation were restored. Soil conservation practices were implemented (erosion

control by digging trenches and planting fodder grass on edges, mulching, use of manure, etc.); the cumulative surface of banana plantation restored is 30ha. The banana production increased from 5 tons per hectare up to 7 tons per hectare on restored farms. According to farmers, the production was not very high as expected due to long drought period, however better than before and increasing.

Through the Nature Based Community Fund (NBCF), ARCOS Network has supported 98 small projects in 6 focal villages, of which 45 are on crop production (potatoes, banana, maize, cassava, fruits and vegetables), 44 are on livestock rearing (goats, cattle, sheep and pigs) and 9 remaining are for other activities (tree nursery development and rain water harvesting). In these focal villages, ARCOS Network has also promoted kitchen gardens, where 171 kitchen gardens were established in Rutsiro, Bugesera and Kirehe and awareness raising is ongoing.

ARCOS Network has supported communities with irrigation infrastructures on over 30 ha in Kirehe and Bugesera. Two irrigation systems using solar energy to pump water from Akagera river in Kabungeri village in Kirehe and from Cyohoha North lake in Rugarama village in Bugesera were established, and gravity water supply system established in Kigende village in Kirehe district.

5. Strategic Program Approaches

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



The year 2017 for ARCOS' information systems programme was marked by different research to support decision-making especially for on-ground interventions with rural communities. The year also was highlighted by different information packaged and disseminated among the stakeholders. We cannot forget capacity building conducted this time with focus on local communities.

In 2017, ARCOS conducted a research on Nature Based Products Value Chain Analysis with the aim to identify key promising nature-based products value chains and related constraints and opportunities in the three landscapes of Akagera basin namely Bugesera, Kirehe and Rutsiro in order to inform future subsequent project's community interventions. This research findings were supplemented by the results of the annual research "Integrated Landscape Assessment and Monitoring (ILAM)" conducted in the same landscapes (above) for a well-informed decision on the future community development trajectories and interventions. ILAM include components on Ecosystem Services, Socio-economy and Biodiversity assessment. In a bid to enhance knowledge of environmental status of the Albertine Rift, African Great Lakes region and African Mountains, the fourth issue of "Great Lakes waves", a newsletter that supports information and experience sharing on the sustainable management of freshwater resources in African Great Lakes region was produced and disseminated to more than 2,000 people. The issue focused on the main theme "Sustaining freshwater - A must for our survival". You can download a pdf copy here (http://arcosnetwork.org/uploads/2017/07/Great%20Lakes%20Waves_4Edition_Final.pdf).

In supporting "Nature Based Community Learning Group", through regional information sharing as resolved during the Regional Community Exchange Workshop

held in Eastern Uganda from 29th to 31st August 2016, the first issue of community newsletter named "ENDOKWA News" was produced and disseminated as a mean to facilitate the rest of the world to know the efforts of community groups in environmental safeguard and poverty reduction. Download a pdf copy of ENDOKWA News here (http://arcosnetwork.org/uploads/2017/08/ENDOKWA_News_Final.pdf). In the same framework of nature-based community learning platform, the Second Regional Community to Community exchange was organized to facilitate communities to exchange knowledge and experience and learn by doing. (See the report here: http://arcosnetwork.org/uploads/2018/04/C2C_Exchange_Report2017_Final.pdf). Also, a series of training in leadership and governance, Business planning, sustainable agriculture and forest landscape restoration were conducted and a training manual, to be used by trainees in training neighbours in villages and fellow cooperative members, was developed. The year 2017, was marked also by the upgrade of ARCOS' communication channel where the main website was revamped, and it is now improved and functional (<http://arcosnetwork.org/en>). Moreover, the social media channels were promoted, and followers increased. which in turn increase the organization's visibility and branding as social media becomes very popular nowadays.

On advocacy, ARCOS has developed and finalised its advocacy strategy and was involved in different advocacy, especially in Rwandan Districts, to mainstream water-energy and food security Nexus in the District Development Plan. Under this aspect different policy briefs were produced and disseminated apart from direct involvement in strategic planning meetings at national and District level

5.2. Networking, Partnership and Membership



In terms of partnership development, the year 2017 has been marked by two Memoranda of Understanding officially signed with Bugesera District, Rwanda (on 30th January 2017) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The MoU with Bugesera entails collaborative arrangements to achieve sustainable development of Bugesera District and maximize synergies between both parties. The second MoU was signed on 26 April 2017 with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), to set motion on collaboration under both parties programmes on Private Sector Adaptation to Climate Change (PSACC) in East African Region.

ARCOS Network strengthened its collaboration with different networks through participating in different events and activities organized by partners. Among the events, ARCOS Network attended 53rd council CSO-GEF meeting held in Washington DC in November 2017. ARCOS also participated in and contributed to the Environmental National Resources - Civil Society Organization-CSO network meetings in Uganda. In addition, ARCOS facilitated different meetings in Rwanda. New partnerships have been explored with World Resources Institute, New Field Foundation, SORWATHE Ltd and Swedish Embassy.

Briefly in 2017, ARCOS mobilized many partners and network members through different events and activities at national and regional levels. In collaboration with IUCN, Water for Growth, Rwanda (W4GR) and Private Sector Federation (PSF) Rwanda, ARCOS has put in place a platform for private sector knowledge sharing and synergy in climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives in Rwanda.

As far as corporate social and environmental responsibility is concerned, in partnership with Rwanda Environment Management Authority (REMA), ARCOS organized the 2017's edition of the Regional Dialogue on Environment and Development with the main theme "Balancing Environment and Development through ESIA in the Albertine Rift". The event was funded by Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) among others.

Furthermore, under ARCOS membership Program, the Board meeting of May 2017 has offered life membership to 18 former board members as recognition of their contribution to the development of the organization. In total the number of ARCOS members has increased from 240 members to 259 members.

5.3. Promoting Nature Based Community Enterprises



ARCOS' work to promote sustainable Nature Based Community Enterprises is guided by its BEST Approach (Building leadership and sustainable institutions; Enhancing environmental resilience; Sustainable business solutions and Transforming and inspiring others). Cemented on Sustainability Agreement that involves communities and government, this approach is built on community participation, ownership and mind-set transformation.

BEST Approach

ARCOS' community development programme adopts a holistic understanding of the socio-ecological system of community and helps the community latter to build vision of success based on sustainability principles and rooted in the cultural heritage. ARCOS works with Nature Based Community Enterprises (NBCEs) through a model structured around four but interrelated components that make the situation more approachable.

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

B: Building leadership and sustainable institutions. Cooperative management, governance, setting targets and work plans, gender and youth inclusiveness.

E: Enhancing environmental resilience. Promoting Community Based Adaptation through sustainable agriculture, enhancement and protection of soil and water ecosystems and biodiversity, forest landscape restoration, ecosystem based adaptation, promotion of green energy technologies.

S: Sustainable business solutions. Assisting NBCEs in business planning, value addition, private sector engagement, market linkages and quality certification.

T: Transforming and inspiring others. ARCOS and empowered NBCEs focus on Nature Based Village (NBV) to concentrate efforts as demonstration site in integrating sustainable environment and livelihoods practices. This is supported through a Nature Based Community Fund (NBCF) established to support sustainability actions in each NBV through community loans, incentives and activities with common benefits. ARCOS also promotes community to community exchange through training workshops, exhibitions and exchange visits where communities share knowledge and experience and learn by doing

The following are achievements segregated according to four pillars of BEST:

B: Building leadership and sustainable

Governance and strategy of NBCEs has significantly improved. By end of the year 2017, 22 out of 30 NBCEs were registered at national level. Governance structures and leadership are in place and stable, and NBCEs membership has significantly increased to include men, women and youth.

E: Enhancing environmental resilience

Skills and capacity of community in tree nursery development and management has enhanced, and community awareness and understanding on environmental sustainability has significantly increased. Types of training offered (Training in grafting, onsite training in establishment and use of vermi-composts). Over 1000 ha of watershed was protected and restored through tree planting, soil conservation and agroforestry interventions. In addition, ARCOS team in collaboration with local authority, supported NBCEs and local communities to reinforce protection of riverbanks. In this regard, in Kabungeri village (Kirehe), the buffer was restored by reintroducing indigenous aquatic vegetation in 2km along Akagera river; and in Kagoma village (Bugesera), the buffer was demarcated with indigenous and fruit tree species in 3km along Akanyaru river.

The integration of water-energy-food nexus was made operational at community level. Gravity water supply for irrigation and domestic consumption in Kirehe; two solar water pump systems for irrigation in Kirehe and Bugesera, spring water supply for domestic use in Kirehe; waste water treatment at KOAKAKI coffee washing station in Kirehe to reduce water pollution at downstream level, 37 rain water harvesting at household level and 7 rainwater harvesting system at NBCE level; biogas provision at household level (87 biogas in Rutsiro and Bugesera).

Sustainable agriculture practices were promoted through livestock provision for manure production, promotion of water and soil conservation practices and agroforestry at community level. A number of NBCEs have completely shifted to the use of manure and generally production has increased (eg: KABONYA (onions) from 0 to 24 tons per season on 2 ha, TWIGIREMUHINZI (potatoes) from 5 to 38 tons per season on 3.5 ha, KOAUKI (organic banana), from 158 to 290 tons on 40ha per season and KOAKAKI (coffee) has increased from 180 tons to 400 tons/season.

A number of green jobs were created through tree nursery development and management (21), coffee processing (33), over 400 working in farming, 457 working in fisheries, around 30 working in handcraft and 67 working in marine transport).

S: Sustainable business solutions

Business management systems in place for 28 NBCEs out of 30; NBCEs have earned assets including land, livestock and livestock shelters, fishing boats, buildings including NBCEs selling points, training and collection centers and post-harvesting infrastructures; production and processing equipment. NBCEs have increased production (as mentioned above) and annual turnover increased (see examples below):

- KABONYA from 1.92 million. to 14 million.
- KOIMIZANYA from 9 to 29 million.
- KOAKAKI from 38 million to 80 million
- TWIGIREMUHINZI from 1 million to 11 million
- Market secured for coffee, potatoes, maize, vegetables, fisheries and bamboo handcraft NBCEs

T: Transforming and inspiring others

Over 274,000 seedlings dominated by grafted fruit trees were produced and planted in community farms, public places like schools, cells and sector offices and along the roads.

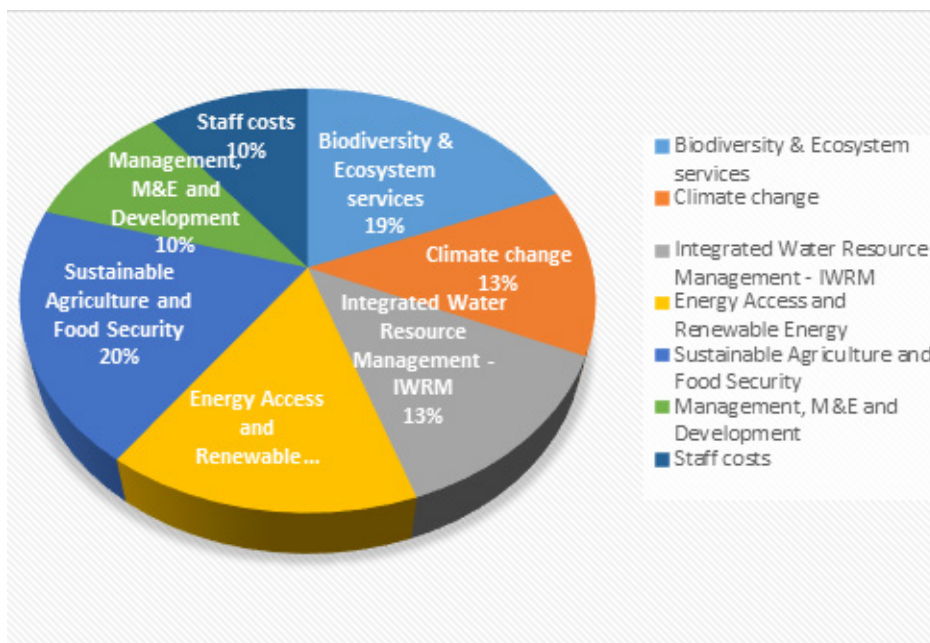
Nature Based Community Fund (NBCF) established in each focal village and operational with governing structures and documents in place, communities and local government involved in NBCF management and operations. By the end of 2017, 98 loans were already disbursed to beneficiaries. In terms of experience sharing, the second Community-to-Community Exchange was organized and a regional community newsletter "ENDOKWA news" was launched. The Community-to-Community Exchange brought together 41 participants from partner NBCEs from Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi to share knowledge and experience on NBCEs operations building on 4 pillars of BEST Approach. The Community-to-Community Exchange took place on selected sites in Kirehe and Bugesera district in Rwanda and it resulted into "ARCOS' NBCEs BUGESERA CHARTER of 30th November 2017".

The Community-to-Community Exchange was concluded by an open day where in addition to 41 community participants, over 80 participants including representatives of donors, civil society, government and private sector institutions came together to discuss on possible opportunities to scale up community initiative and explore NBCEs achievements through NBCEs mini exhibition.

6. ARCOS Funding 2017

For the year 2017, the total funds received amounts to USD 605,336.37 (70% of the year 2016). In terms of expenditure per programme area, the distribution is as follows: 19% were spent on Biodiversity and Ecosystems services Programme; 13% on Climate Change Programme; 13% on Integrated water resources management (IWRM); 15% on Access to clean and renewable energy; 20% on Agriculture & Improved food security. Other expenses relate to Management, M&E and Development (10%); Staff costs (10%).

We are very grateful for Rwanda's Green Fund (FONERWA), the Swiss Agency for Development and



Cooperation (SDC), World Resources Institute (WRI), Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) and New Field Foundation. We also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to different other partners who contributed both technically and financially to the success of the year 2017.

7. Facing the Future



With reference to the presented achievements in 2017 and looking ahead in 2018 when we will reach the half way in the implementation of our Strategic Plan 2016-2020, we will put much effort in scaling the initiative under our Community Development Programme. We will engage more partners and collaborators to join the initiative and use the integrated community development approach "BEST Approach. We will also support dialogues for sound decision making in the Albertine Rift region,

Africa Great Lakes and African Mountains. We will invest efforts in supporting informed decision making through providing facts (Research), supporting strategic planning exercises in the region and maintaining platforms to put together stakeholders for dialogue on environment and development. As more resources are needed to sustain the great on-ground interventions done and scale up them to improve people's livelihoods and environmental sustainability, we will double efforts and diversify our fundraising activities to include crowdfunding and events fundraising. As part of our programme on Sustainable Mountain Development for Global Change (SMD4GC), two major events are planned in 2018: Coordinating the organisation of the 2nd Africa Regional Mountains Forum 2018, which will bring together stakeholders interested in promoting mountains as key pillars for sustainable development agenda in Africa, and African participation to the World Mountain Forum 2018, scheduled to take place in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.



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