Background

The overall goal of the Arcus Great Ape Program (GAP) is to achieve conservation and respect for great apes and gibbons. The program focuses most of its work on apes living in their natural habitat in range states (i.e., countries in the tropical belt of Africa and Southeast Asia), strategically directing resources to “landscapes” where it has been determined that effective funding can help mitigate threats to the apes and their habitats. In addition, the program supports efforts to ensure the survival and well-being of apes in captivity—which include providing optimal care and identifying appropriate methods for release back into the wild where that is feasible.

The program’s strategy comprises three primary goals: (1) reconcile socio-economic development and conservation in ape habitats and surrounding landscapes, (2) build an integrated and coordinated conservation movement to address current and emerging threats, and (3) ensure respect for the rights and values of apes so that their exploitation is diminished and they are provided appropriate care in captivity. The Theory of Change presented in the appendix (p.8) includes a series of intermediate outcomes identified under these goal areas, as well as a defined strategic direction that the program is undertaking to achieve these outcomes. A detailed evaluation framework identifies indicators¹ as well as quantitative targets and timelines.

¹ SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
Great Ape Program Learning

We continually track and assess the progress and effects of the Great Ape Program through a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system that enables us to gather and analyze data from a variety of sources—grantees, conservationists in the field and in academic research settings, and relevant databases—to measure progress along specific indicators and milestones to assess the status of goals, outcomes, and targets. The M&E system outlines the optimal time intervals for reporting on indicators to ensure that progress can be appropriately measured and assessed.

The 2016 Monitoring and Evaluation report presents the program’s progress against baselines set in 2010 and follows from a similar report developed in 2013, focusing on areas of the strategy that are due for assessment under this timeline.

The 2016 Report – an Introduction

As an integral part of the Arcus M&E system, the 2016 report is a necessary component for measuring the impact of Arcus GAP investments both directly (in terms of funded projects) and also within the global context of broader ape conservation and environmental change. As such, the report:

- highlights important issues derived from M&E that should be taken into account when assessing the broader strategy of the Great Ape Program
- provides an indication of impact since the previous 2013 evaluation and 2010 baselines.

This ongoing process of measuring impact not only provides an opportunity for the GAP team to assess progress against outcomes and goals; it also provides an opportunity to assess whether the indicators originally proposed are still relevant and measurable, require revision, or (as has occurred in a few cases) require removal or disaggregation altogether. It also allows the GAP program staff to reflect on the implications of the data in order to better inform the direction of their strategic grantmaking.
Those landscapes that have seen an increase in total ape population numbers tend to be small, often isolated (Cao Vit, Hainan), and therefore easier to protect and monitor. While effective law enforcement is probably the most significant factor in these increases, focused protection in subsections of larger landscapes can also have an impact on ape numbers in these spaces e.g., Virunga. This is also likely the case for gibbon populations in Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary in Myanmar and for bonobo populations in both Tshuapa–Lomami–Lualaba National Park (TL2) and Lomako-Yokokala Faunal Reserve in the DRC, where a focus on law enforcement, capacity building, monitoring, and community engagement now suggests that these populations are stable or increasing. It is also important to note that with the exception of the Grauer’s gorilla in the eastern DRC, there have been no major negative impacts to populations in Arcus priority landscapes.

Analysis of the eastern DRC landscape indicated a dramatic decline in the Grauer’s gorilla population, although it is thought that the decline relates as much to improved data collection as it does to a real decline in numbers. Indications of an increase in the population of Grauer’s gorilla in the mountain sector of Kahuzi-Biega National Park were also documented.

3. Sustainable Funding: The Virunga landscape and Tri-National Sangha (TNS) landscape have in place long-term and sustainable financing for habitat conservation, but in those landscapes that are beginning to show improvement, (e.g., East Kalimantan, Leuser, Tai-Sapo) Arcus continues to align its own grantmaking with the broader economic context. Arcus has also leveraged significant extra support through its grants, both directly, as was the case with U.S. debt swaps to Indonesia, and indirectly, through building a consortium approach to a given landscape that then allowed partners to access more funds (the eastern DRC and Leuser, Sumatra, Indonesia).
4. Integrated Sustainable Development: There has been no significant change in the number of focal landscapes where integrated sustainable development is positively and demonstrably impacting both human livelihoods and great ape conservation. In 2016, five landscapes showed increases in their Composite Sustainable Development Indicator (CSDI) scores, and four showed decreases since 2013. Landscapes that indicate an improvement include TL2 (where there has been a reduction in commercial hunting) and Cao Vit (improved resource management). Landscapes exhibiting a decline include the TNS, as a result of increased agriculture and infrastructure development, and northern Laos through increased collection of forest products and limestone extraction. The GAP continues to monitor metrics for this indicator—a critical component of reconciling conservation with economic development (Strategic Goal 1). Furthermore, the GAP is supportive of engagement with development and rights-based organizations to improve thinking and practice.

5. Monitoring: The monitoring of ape populations is improving, although not as fast as anticipated. Landscapes where significant improvements have been made (partly through Arcus support) include eastern DRC, Leuser, and Hainan. As aforementioned, an increasing commitment to both SMART and performance-based monitoring is providing timely information on ape population numbers.

6. Integration of Biodiversity Conservation:
At the national level, 75% of range states are integrating biodiversity conservation into their development strategies, and improvements on the 2013 data do suggest that good practice is at least being discussed or demonstrated around key issues.

7. Contextual Issues: In terms of the global picture, the GAP evaluators aim to remain abreast of the changing socioeconomic context within which our grantees work. Some issues of interest over the last three years include diseases and zoonoses, such as the Ebola outbreak and its impact on how we and our partners engaged in West African range states (specifically Guinea and Liberia), the unprecedented pace of infrastructure expansion in developing nations, the dynamics of the trade in great apes, and ongoing civil instability in a number of range states where Arcus funds work (DRC, Myanmar). While Arcus may not be engaging directly with all of these issues, they are part of a changing political and socioeconomic context that has a significant impact on both grantees and the landscapes where they work.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the Arcus response to this report is ongoing, an initial critical assessment of the findings from the report have focused on the following areas:

1. In response to the differing scales and myriad ways in which threats impact apes and their conservation, consider engagement across these various levels. Through its monitoring of priority landscapes in conjunction with the broader context, the GAP team acknowledges that for conservation to be sustainable/effective in the long-term it must address threats across three levels:
   - **Proximate or immediate threats** (e.g., ape population declines through wild meat hunting, disease). Arcus is addressing these through site-focused grants across the majority of its 20 priority landscapes, as seen in TL2, Leuser, and East & West Kalimantan, etc., and through listening, learning, and leadership activities around issues that include capacity building, conservation education, and culture.
   - **Distal threats** (e.g., habitat loss through infrastructure, increasing consumption of palm oil, armed conflict). Arcus addresses these through site-focused grants—such as those to Eastern Sabah and the Cross River landscape in Nigeria/Cameroon—addressing particular thematic issues, such as oil palm development and biodiversity offsetting.
Ultimate drivers of threats (e.g., globalization and a neoliberal economic model that prioritizes growth at all costs and often allows preferential access to foreign investors over local populations and local needs). This is an area in which the Arcus Foundation has not previously sufficiently or explicitly engaged, although these connections have been acknowledged via the State of the Apes publication series. This area will require further thought going forward as well as engagement with multiple sectors.

While Arcus’ three strategic goals focus on all of these levels, there is a need to balance financial support on the ground with a focus on broader-scale drivers and to test assumptions and the paradigms that underlie them.

2. A response to some of the threats lies outside the scope of Arcus intervention—such as addressing root causes of armed conflict or the future of globalization and human population growth. Arcus should engage, however, in a process of consultation with relevant stakeholders around the ultimate drivers of biodiversity loss, with an emphasis on climate change and economic development paradigms. This would not detract from ongoing engagement in response to threats such as disease, habitat destruction, and hunting.

3. Broaden its network of partners at all levels to further strengthen and leverage support for conservation, strengthen integrated conservation and development, and improve monitoring of ape populations and forest habitats. These steps could include closer collaboration with state partners, such as the German investment bank KfW and the Norwegian government, social justice and development organizations, and data platforms such as Global Forest Watch.

4. Broaden its networks within specific focal landscapes to strengthen conservation programming in particular contexts. Some preliminary support for initiatives exists for TL2, where additional partners are engaging in the landscape to further strengthen conservation planning and engage more directly with communities.
The creation of species-appropriate criteria for standards of care in captive situations by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) has led to an increased adoption of standards across all captive geographies including range countries. GFAS verification status focuses on minimum standards of care and is now being used to monitor this indicator.

1. **U.S. Context:** The most significant progress for captive apes since the 2013 report has been the decision of the National Institutes of Health to close down its chimpanzee research program (2015–16), as well as the decision of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to “uplist” captive chimpanzees in the United States to endangered status so that any invasive research on chimpanzee subjects can take place only in service of advancing *in situ* conservation of the species. This combination of increased federal protections has led to a significant decrease in chimpanzees in research labs and other exploitative situations as they transfer to sanctuary. Although we projected that 998 chimpanzees would be in exploitive situations in 2016, in actuality the number is fewer than 889. (Of course, it’s important to note when considering this indicator that mortality has also played a role, given an aging laboratory population.)

Moreover, in most situations, these significant improvements in U.S. federal policy for chimpanzees supersede U.S. state laws, likely explaining why there have been no reported increased laws or regulations at the state level.

2. **Africa Context:** Projected numbers for captive-ape populations in 2016 were based on an analysis of demographic population modeling that incorporated immigration, emigration, deaths, and births. Our finding is that the projected target of 1,291 has not been reached. In fact, the rate of arrival has slowed for most sanctuaries in Africa. It should be noted, however, that many sanctuaries located in priority landscapes (e.g., GRACE and Lwiro in eastern DRC) are beginning to experience a more significant increase due to improved enforcement efforts. This trend is expected to continue within priority landscapes, especially in Africa, as law enforcement actions increase. Based on these developments, the target of 1,706 for Africa for 2020 remains the same.

3. **Asia Context:** Fewer data are available for the sanctuaries and numbers of apes in captivity in Southeast Asia, and in particular on mainland Asia (for the gibbons). The foundation is working with sanctuaries, conservation organizations, and law-enforcement agencies to understand the trends and the drivers leading to the capture and holding of apes in captivity across the region.

**KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **Strengthen Arcus’ role of convening grantees and partners who are working to decrease exploitation and increase the number of apes transferred into sanctuaries while maintaining standards for existing residents.** Annual convenings have been key to continued partnerships and information-sharing—especially with regard to specific rescues and placements and to overall sector capacity as well as to each sanctuary’s plans where confidentiality can be upheld.

2. **Discontinue use of the U.S. state policy indicator.** When M&E baselines were established, and there was a dearth of protection for U.S. captive apes, an indicator was included to track state-level protection increases even though the captive program has not focused its efforts at the state level due to funding limitations. Given progress noted above at the U.S. federal level, it is recommended that this indicator now be removed.
3. Partner with an organization to develop a unified sanctuary database that can help manage and prioritize support and collaboration among sanctuaries. Securing an accurate census of captive range-country apes continues to be a time-consuming and challenging task for the program. Neither the Great Ape Survival Partnership (GRASP), Section on Great Apes (SGA), Pan African Sanctuary Alliance (PASA), North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA), Wild Animal Rescue Network (WARN), nor other alliances or sanctuary support groups have created a permanent database of sanctuary apes; data have been collected from a range of sources.

4. Engage in conservation planning processes. Finally, as more landscape-level planning is funded and implemented, sanctuary capacity needs will increase significantly to manage the influx of apes resulting from increased enforcement activities. Not only will sanctuaries need to be included in the formulation of outcomes that increase their captive populations, they hold valuable information to contribute about their communities. The captive sector must be engaged in the planning process in order to manage the increased conservation interventions in their respective landscapes likely to result in increasing captive populations. As Arcus moves toward the next three-year assessment of its work, building bridges between its conservation and captive programs will be a priority.
Great Ape Program Theory of Change

**Ultimate goal**

**Conservation and respect for apes**
Viable populations are protected from extinction and living in habitats managed sustainably
International commitment to effectively support captive care of apes in sanctuaries and not tolerate their exploitative use

**Desired State**
- Natural habitats protected and respected as having critical value
- Populations of apes effectively protected by local conservationists, government, industry and public
- Apes seen as species deserving of respect
- Reduced poverty and improved social empowerment and justice for people in ape range-states

**Strategy to overcome the barriers**
- Reconciling conservation and development
- Building an effective movement
- Increasing respect and value

**Barriers to achieving the Ultimate goal**

- Apes hunted for food and live trade
- Habitat is destroyed for industrial and subsistence agriculture
- Habitat is destroyed/degraded for extractive industries & infrastructure development
- Disease decimating ape populations and increasing morbidity
- Apes exploited in entertainment industry & attractions
- Apes exploited in science
- Apes exploited for economic gain
Arcus is among the largest funders of efforts to ensure that our fellow apes can thrive—living full lives on their own terms in their natural habitats.