Arcus’ Great Apes & Gibbons Program strategy is driven by its mission to ensure conservation and respect for the world’s gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, orangutans, and gibbons, all of whom are under threat in every country in which they live.

The program’s 10-year strategy, from 2016 to 2026, focuses on ape-range landscapes across 18 countries in Africa and Asia, as well as two countries, the United States and Kenya, in which apes are held in captivity outside their range.

The 2016-2026 strategy aims to:
1. Reconcile socio-economic development and conservation activities in priority ape landscapes;
2. Build an effective movement of organizations and advocates addressing current and emerging threats to apes;
3. Increase respect for the intrinsic value of apes, diminishing their exploitation and ensuring they are provided appropriate care.

The program currently prioritizes 24 landscapes based on ape habitat size, the distribution and density of ape populations, species diversity, threat level, current conservation efforts, and the existence of supportive institutions and legislation. Twelve of those landscapes are in pristine areas; four are in frontier areas; and two are in isolated areas.

Across these landscapes, we support holistic, collaborative, and long-term approaches by a range of actors from the conservation movement and other sectors to promote behavior change, including policy and legal challenges, increased in monitoring and law enforcement efforts, expansion of sustainable economic opportunities for local communities, and development of strong public awareness of the issues, including through thought leadership.

The naming and boundaries of the following landscapes are defined by Arcus in accordance with strategic priorities.

1. Trinational Sangha (Congo, Cameroon, Central African Republic); Virungas (Rwanda, DRC, Uganda); Eastern DRC (DRC); the Greater Mahale Ecosystem (Tanzania); Lomako (DRC); Tshuapa-Lomami-Lualaba (DRC); Northern Republic of Congo (Congo); Leuser (Indonesia); Central Kalimantan (Indonesia); Arabella-Schwaner (Indonesia); Gunung Palung (Indonesia); the Hukaung-Htamanthi landscape (Myanmar).

2. Batang Toru (Indonesia); Eastern Sabah (Malaysia); Western Java (Indonesia); The Mentawai Islands (Indonesia); Fouta Djallon (Guinea); Cross River (Nigeria, Cameroon); The Northern Annamites (Lao PDR); Van Kham-Pang (Cambodia); Ta-Sap (Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia); East Kalimantan (Indonesia).

3. The Cao-vit Landscape (Vietnam-China); Hainan (China).

Source: United Nations Geospatial Information Section.
PROGRAM GOALS

1 Reconcile conservation and development

Work supported under this goal aims to reduce threats to apes in their natural habitat from extractive industries, infrastructure development, industrial agriculture hunting, illegal trade, disease transmission from humans, and any other unsustainable—and often inequitable—exploitation of natural resources.

We work with our partners to address the multifaceted drivers of conservation threats, develop locally appropriate solutions that benefit apes, their habitats, and all the other species—including humans—that depend on those habitats, and monitor and assess impact while recognizing the interconnected and interdependent role played by sanctuaries¹ within and around the priority landscapes.

² For captive apes in range states, the foundation focuses on sanctuaries that take steps to prevent breeding, provide lifelong care and rehabilitation for apes, and, when possible and appropriate, return residents back to their natural habitats.

2 Build effective conservation movement

Work supported under this goal aims to ensure that sanctuaries and conservation organizations and advocates are able to effectively address current and emerging threats in a sustainable, just, and holistic way, based on strong evidence, joint action, and sustainable funding.

We work with our partners to strengthen capacity and extend networks for captive care monitoring and assessment; to engage in strategic planning at local, national, and regional levels; and to establish a well-resourced, diversified, and long-term funding base.

3 Increase respect and value for apes

Work supported under this goal aims to diminish the exploitation of great apes and gibbons, and ensure they are provided appropriate care in captivity and protection in the wild by increasing recognition of our inextricable links with other apes, strengthening our respect for their intrinsic value, and shifting our behavior toward them.

We work to understand and support those cultures and behaviors that already hold a deep respect and value for apes, while challenging those cultures and behaviors that exploit apes.

We partner on initiatives that increase knowledge and awareness of how humans treat other apes; and with organizations and individuals working to improve their safety and well-being, and halt their use in entertainment, as pets, in the illegal trade, and in invasive medical research.