

**EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES**  
And Strengthening Conservation & Health Education

**Save The Forests Briquette Initiative**

In collaboration with local partners, we support community conservation initiatives, including an alternative to cutting down trees for charcoal, a primary fuel source for Rwandans in the mountain gorilla habitat.



Exposure to charcoal smoke can cause respiratory illness in humans, which can be transmitted to mountain gorillas. Alternatively, our Save The Forests

Briquette Initiative offers a more environmentally friendly cooking fuel that is cheaper than purchasing charcoal, emits less smoke, provides a source of income for local briquette producers, and perpetuates our conservation messages.

**Sports for Gorillas Activities**

We also establish and coordinate sports activities, including our annual 3k Gorilla Fun Run and Ibirunga Children's Tennis Tournament, which encourage healthy living habits and unite communities in safeguarding Rwanda's national parks and wildlife.



[www.art-of-conservation.org](http://www.art-of-conservation.org)

*"AoC taught us a lot about taking care of the environment and protecting forests because they are the mountain gorilla's habitat."*

-Uwiduhaye Claudine, AoC student graduate

Art of Conservation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, educating local communities about conservation and health.

One of our core objectives is to work with other organizations, local leaders and educators, and the Rwandan government to find solutions to shared challenges. Some of our partners include the Ministry of Education, Rwanda Development Board, District of Musanze, Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project, Houston Zoo, and the United States Tennis Association, among others.



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**Art for Gorillas Blog**  
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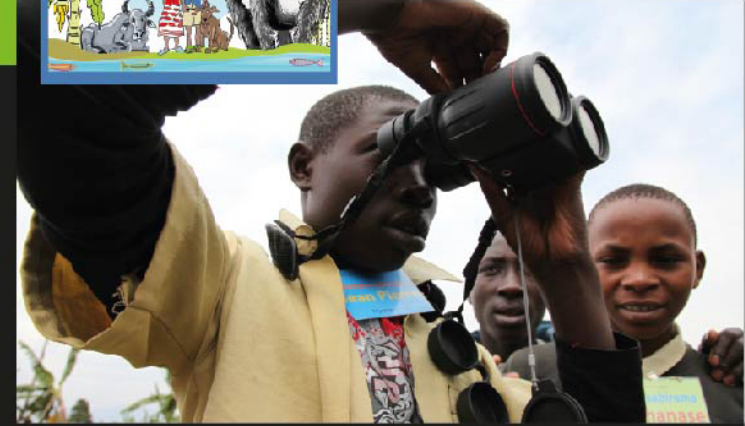
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*Thank you for your support!*



**ART OF CONSERVATION**



**Educating Local Communities About Conservation and Health**

# OUR WORK



Art of Conservation (AoC) is dedicated to educating and empowering local communities bordering Volcanoes National Park. The park lies in northwestern Rwanda and is home to the critically endangered mountain gorilla.

## Rwanda's National Treasure

AoC's conservation lessons focus on the importance of protecting the environment and wildlife, with a special emphasis on Rwanda's national treasure, the mountain gorilla. Our students learn about mountain gorilla behavior, conservation status, and their genetic similarity to humans. Given the high probability of disease transmission between humans and mountain gorillas living side-by-side at Volcanoes National Park,

we start the year with lessons on staying healthy and why it matters for conservation.



# EDUCATING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Our students learn inside and outside the classroom through art projects, nature films, visits from national park guides and mountain gorilla veterinarians, tree planting, theatrical performances, and other interactive activities with a conservation theme.

## Inside the Classroom

AoC provides a year-long innovative and comprehensive conservation and health education program for children. We partner with local schools to teach lessons in English and Kinyarwanda (Rwanda's official language).

Our conservation lessons instill in students an understanding of and compassion for nature and wildlife, particularly in Rwanda. Staying healthy lessons focus on hand washing, preventing germs from spreading, and eating a healthy diet. AoC students are taught about the importance of practicing good hygiene to prevent themselves (and animals) from getting sick, so that they can stay in school and strive for a bright future.

AoC students serve as conservation ambassadors in their communities. At the end of every school year, our students celebrate their accomplishments with their families at our Parents as Partners Open House event.



## Outside the Classroom

AoC students apply what they learn inside the classroom through various outdoor activities. As part of our conservation curriculum, we teach students about the important role they play in the environment and show them how to properly plant and care for tree seedlings. Our students learn that trees prevent soil erosion and provide windbreaks and animal habitat.

Following lessons on exploring our world through geography and the theory of evolution, including the emergence of great apes, we take students outside and guide them along an interactive timeline, called Safari Through Time.

AoC students are also given an exciting opportunity to express themselves through music, song, and dance, while wearing colorful animal masks made by AoC staff artists and performing to *Heroes of the Forest* and *In Virunga*, heartening songs with conservation messages.

## Conservation Workshops

We provide monthly conservation workshops to other remote schools located near the national park and for members of the AoC Ibirunga Tennis and Running Club. During our workshops, we teach students about protecting mountain gorillas in their natural habitat and staying healthy, then we plant trees together.

