

# RWANDA COUNTRY STRATEGY

## *Executive Summary*

Volcanoes National Park (VNP) is home to the endangered mountain gorilla, a species representing one of conservation’s great successes. Where the iconic apes once numbered fewer than 400, concerted conservation efforts have increased the population to over 1,000.

In part thanks to the Rwandan government’s revenue-sharing program (10% of tourism revenues go to the people), Rwandans today regard the gorillas as a valued resource and cause for national pride. However, the gorillas and the people near the park now face a new challenge: limited space. Gorilla families frequently roam outside VNP, creating risk of disease exposure and conflict with people. In response, Rwanda plans to enlarge the protected area, building on an earlier expansion made possible by AWF’s donation of 27 hectares along the park border in 2018.

The expansion project scales the approach to community-led entrepreneurship pioneered by AWF with its investment in Sabinyo Silverback Lodge. AWF is partnering with the government to support the expansion and help ensure communities in the landscape benefit.

**THE GOAL OF THE PARK EXPANSION IS TO IMPROVE THE CONSERVATION AND BIODIVERSITY OF THE PARK WHILE BUILDING THE RESILIENCE OF THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY.**

Recognizing the need to expand Volcanoes, the Rwandan government, with AWF’s support as technical advisor, has developed a pioneering program to benefit mountain gorillas and communities.

This innovative new strategy is projected to:

- Increase the park by 3,740 hectares (37.4 square kilometers)
- Expand mountain gorilla habitat to support a 15-20% increase in population and reduce the number of human-wildlife conflicts by half
- Improve conservation-based tourism, resulting in a 15-20% increase in mountain gorilla viewing opportunities
- Increase the quality of life for more than 17,000 Rwandans living around the national park through improved livelihoods, with a \$70-million investment in essential infrastructure and small business
- Provide skills development and jobs for more than 7,500 Rwandans within the tourism, construction/trades, agriculture, and service sectors

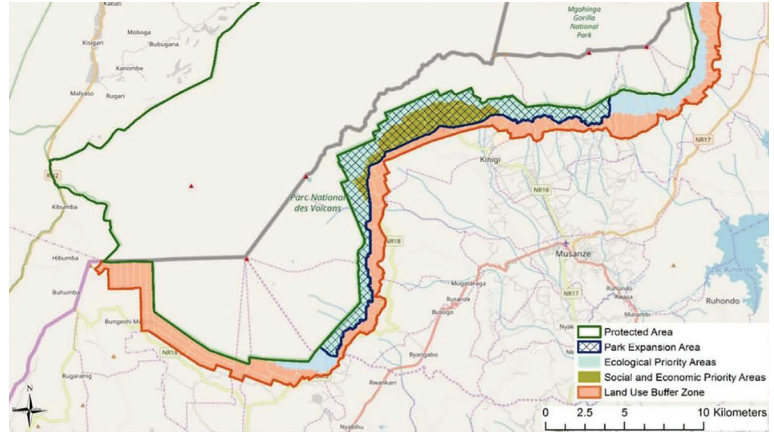
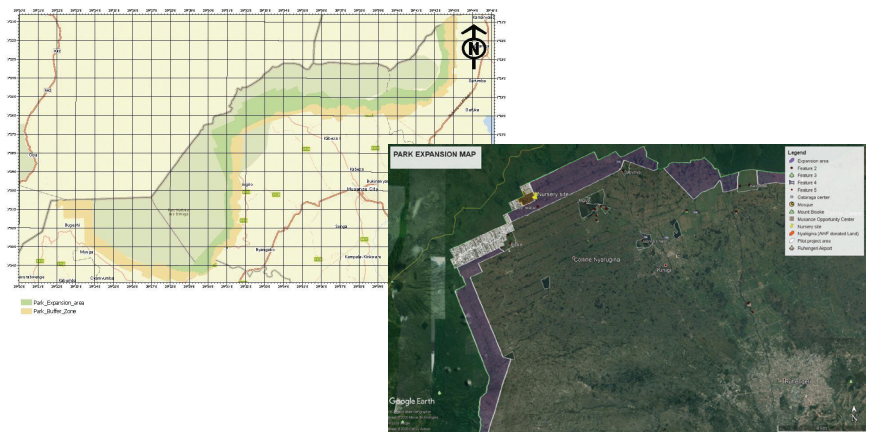
### **THE WORK AHEAD**

We are working with communities, the Rwandan government, the private sector, and civil society partners to design and deliver a pilot program as proof of concept—to show that efforts to expand gorilla habitat can incorporate equal investments to ensure people around the park benefit. This means involving communities in expansion planning, providing housing and

social benefits to affected communities, and investing in inclusive green growth to create jobs and opportunities. This phase is engaging 500 families to expand the park by an additional 450 hectares, easing population pressure in the high-density Bisoke area. It includes the following components:

- Park expansion, including removal of infrastructure and alien species and restoration of indigenous species
- Development of a green village—a smart village housing the community, with essential infrastructure including a school, a health post, and a small market
- Smart-agriculture production and other income-generating activities for the community and support of conservation enterprise plans developed by the community

The pilot will also establish the governance frameworks, procedures, rights safeguards, and learnings required to apply for international funding for the complete park expansion. This work is informed and guided by a rigorous set of ecological, social, and economic studies and international gold standards to ensure the rights of communities are at the forefront of the entire process, resulting in a plan embraced by all key stakeholders—and a model expansion plan for the world.



### PILOT PHASE

The full expansion plan has support from the World Bank, GCF and FONERWA contingent on the successful delivery of a pilot phase. The pilot phase will test the model in an area of 450 ha and build the capacity and systems to deliver according to international standards and rights-based approaches. An ecological impact study, socio economic impact assessment, and project management framework have been completed.



### PILOT PHASE COMPONENTS

<p><b>LAND ACQUISITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase of 450 ha</li> </ul>	<p><b>GREEN VILLAGE RESETTLEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction of a smart green village for 500 households with community amenities</li> </ul>	<p><b>ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Native species seedling production and planting</li> <li>• Site decontamination</li> <li>• Park boundary wall design and build</li> <li>• Exotic species and existing infrastructure removal</li> <li>• 5-year management</li> </ul>
<p><b>SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD DEVELOPMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smart agriculture development: 30 nurseries for bamboo, pyrethrum and flowers for tourism</li> <li>• Other business development to decrease dependence on forest resources</li> </ul>	<p><b>APPLIED RESEARCH AND MONITORING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership with African Leadership University (ALU)</li> <li>• Sustainable finance framework</li> </ul>	



The African Wildlife Foundation's mission is to ensure wildlife and wild lands thrive in modern Africa.

**COUNTRY DIRECTOR:** Belise Kariza

**AWF, RWANDA**  
Kigali Heights Building  
2nd Floor  
KG 7 Ave Kigali, Rwanda  
+250 788309960

African Wildlife Foundation  
Headquarters  
AWF Conservation Centre  
Ngong Road, Karen  
P.O. Box 310, 00502  
Nairobi, Kenya  
+254 711063000

🌐 [awf.org/facebook](https://www.awf.org/facebook)  
📷 [awf.org/instagram](https://www.awf.org/instagram)  
🐦 [awf.org/twitter](https://www.awf.org/twitter)

[africanwildlife@awf.org](mailto:africanwildlife@awf.org)  
[www.awf.org](http://www.awf.org)