

# AWF in Volcanoes National Park Landscape

## A Conservation Model for Africa



The Volcanoes National Park landscape is a model of coexistence, where Rwanda's national strategy places conservation at the heart of the development agenda, creating a prototype for a green economy intentionally built to benefit people and wildlife.

As Rwanda embraces the 21st century, it faces a challenge seen throughout Africa: how to promote development while protecting natural systems that sustain people, allowing nature to flourish. Rwanda's answer is conservation investment that builds community resilience, creates jobs, and grows the economy.

AWF is the Rwandan government's partner of choice in its flagship program centered around **Volcanoes National Park (VNP)**, home to one of two remaining mountain gorilla populations. This iconic subspecies represents one of conservation's most notable successes: Where the apes once numbered only a few hundred or even fewer at their lowest point, concerted conservation efforts have increased their population to over 1,000.

The Rwandan government has reinforced this conservation success, developing mountain gorilla tourism into a world-class product vital to Rwanda's economy. However, the gorillas and communities outside VNP face a new challenge: **limited space**. Gorilla families now frequently venture outside the protected area into human settlements, creating risk of disease

exposure as well as conflict with people. At the same time, farms in this area are under 0.15 hectares, about a third the size of a football field—not sufficient to feed an average family. The rural, agrarian economy of the Volcanoes landscape must diversify and expand in the next decade.

**The way forward is to continue to put people at the center of a pioneering plan that will enhance community livelihoods and resilience while restoring the park to give gorillas more room.**

People living in the landscape will benefit from **3,400 modern homes** linked to new social infrastructure including **schools, health clinics, and community spaces with information and communications technology**. Other benefits will include flood protection, access to green jobs and training, and a projected 80 percent reduction in human-wildlife conflicts. Rwanda and the world will benefit from a 23 percent increase in the size of the park, a 50 percent reduction in gorilla infant mortality, and a 20 percent increase in opportunities to view gorillas. All of which aligns with economic ambitions projected in the Rwandan National Strategy for Transformation. That strategy includes goals such as creating 1.5 million off-farm jobs, with specific interventions outlined such as development of mechanisms to support at least one model income and employment-generating project in each Rwandan community.

## Putting the Foundation Stones in Place: The Pilot

In restoring part of the park while centering investments to achieve real benefits for people, AWF is showcasing one of its core principles: that conservation and development can go hand-in-hand. Currently, we're working with communities, the Rwandan government, the private sector, and civil society partners to design and deliver a pilot program as proof of concept.

Building on approaches we pioneered for community ownership, benefit sharing, and habitat restoration, AWF is leading a pilot project focused on:

- ▶ Developing a conservation and development master plan for the landscape.
- ▶ Using the global standard of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) to engage affected community members who have the opportunity to relocate.
- ▶ Building an investment pipeline of green businesses.
- ▶ Mobilizing climate financing for investments in a green economy and harnessing climate-adaptation funding for households on the front lines of conservation efforts.
- ▶ Securing funding to acquire privately held land adjacent to the current park boundaries.

## Pilot Timeline

AWF has purchased 50 hectares of land for the smart green villages and construction will begin in 2025. As community members relocate to the new green villages, they will be compensated for their land which will be a part of the VNP restoration. AWF and its partners are continuing to raise \$5 million to support the livelihood improvement plan.

AWF's \$13.6 million investment will unlock \$214 million for the overall strategy fulfillment from the World Bank Group, European Investment Bank, Nordic Development Fund, Wilderness Safaris, Rwandan Development Bank, PROGREEN, the Rwandan Green Fund, and others.

**The pilot, which sets the stage for the entire transformational vision for the landscape, has a total cost of \$48,348,633.**



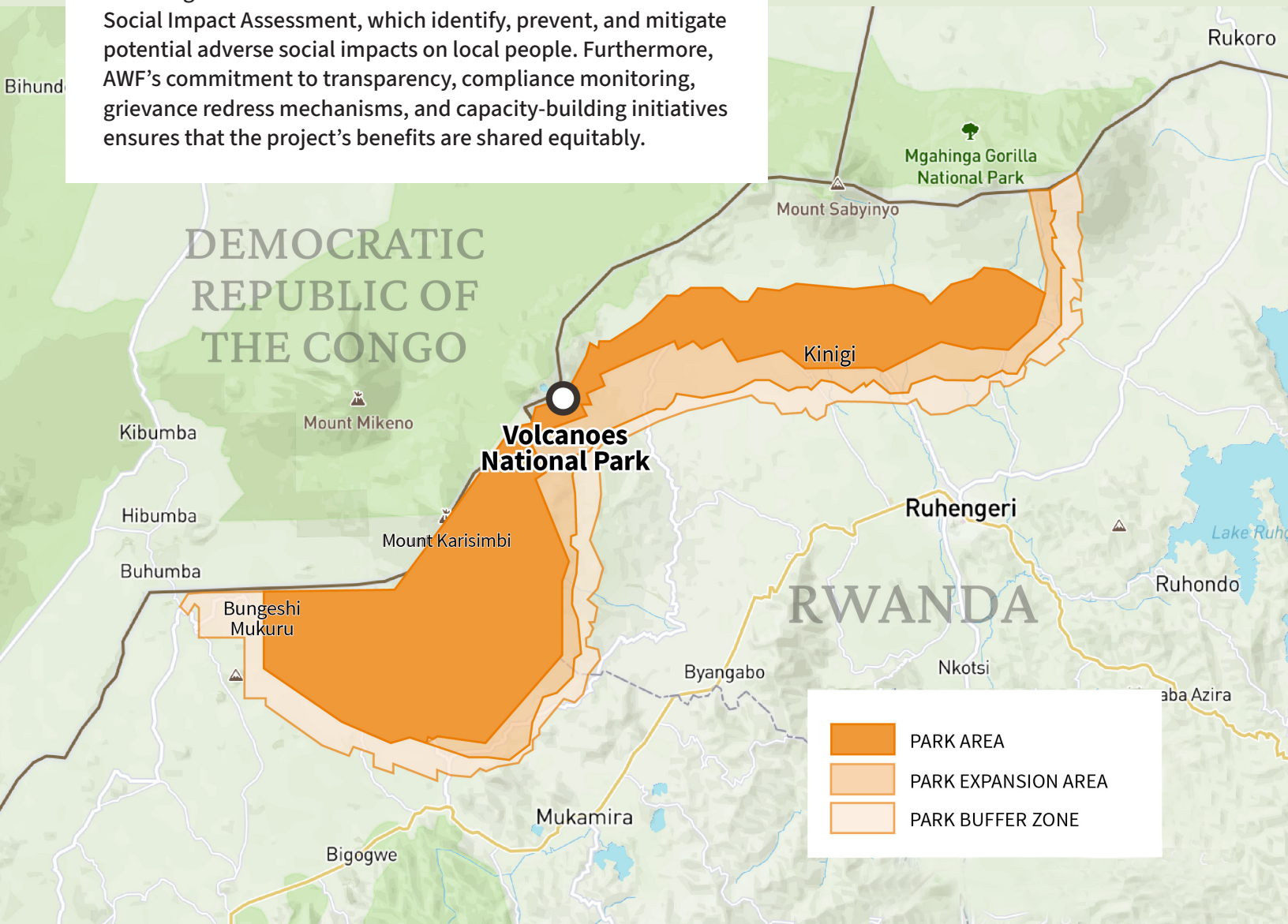
## Proposed Solutions

- ▶ Transition the economy of the Volcanoes landscape through investments in agriculture, tourism, forestry, and other nature-based industries.
- ▶ Restore degraded portions of Volcanoes National Park (approximately 3,740 hectares).
- ▶ Improve the socioeconomic opportunities and benefits for more than 17,000 Rwandans (3,400 families).
- ▶ Improve sustainable, conservation-based tourism experiences and economic benefits for Rwanda and Rwandans.
- ▶ Create a land-use buffer of 6,620 hectares.
- ▶ Foster synergies between conservation and development objectives through participatory planning and benefit-sharing.



## Respecting the Rights of Local Communities

AWF takes a multi-pronged approach to prioritizing community engagement that upholds trust, shares ownership, and ensures individual and community rights. We involve local communities in decision-making while maintaining robust safeguards, including the Resettlement Action Plan and Environmental and Social Impact Assessment, which identify, prevent, and mitigate potential adverse social impacts on local people. Furthermore, AWF's commitment to transparency, compliance monitoring, grievance redress mechanisms, and capacity-building initiatives ensures that the project's benefits are shared equitably.



# AWF in Volcanoes National Park: BY THE NUMBERS

## The Full Project

**23%**

Increase by  
park size  
(37.4 square km)

**80%**

Reduction in  
human-gorilla  
conflict

**50%**

Reduction in  
gorilla infant  
mortality

**3,400**

Families resettled in smart  
green villages

**\$294 MILLION**

Total investment required

**7,500+**

Rwandans to gain skills development and  
jobs with the tourism, construction/trades,  
agriculture, and service sectors

**15% -20%**

Increase in population size  
of mountain gorillas

**\$140 MILLION**

Investment in livelihoods  
and infrastructure  
required

## The Pilot

The pilot phase shapes how the full  
strategy will be delivered. The total  
cost of the pilot is \$48,348,633, which  
entails the following:

▶ **\$8.4 MILLION**

(AWF commitment: \$5 million)

Seeding of income-generating  
activities in agroforestry,  
small business development,  
agriculture, food processing, and  
other areas

▶ **\$22.7 MILLION**

Building of smart green village  
for 510 families

▶ **\$4.91 MILLION**

Restoration of 732.5 hectares

▶ **\$12 MILLION**

(AWF commitment: \$8.6 million)

Purchase of 475 hectares

All monetary references are in US Dollars



### HEADQUARTERS

AWF Conservation Centre, Ngong Road, Karen  
P.O. Box 310, 00502, Nairobi, Kenya

### RWANDA OFFICE

Kigali Heights Building, 2nd Floor  
KG 7 Ave, Kigali, Rwanda | +250 788309960

f [awf.org/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/awf.org)

@ [awf.org/instagram](https://www.instagram.com/awf.org)

in [awf.org/linkedin](https://www.linkedin.com/company/awf.org)

[www.awf.org](https://www.awf.org)

October 2024