

Rwanda marked the 20th annual **Kwita Izina** ceremony Friday, naming 40 mountain gorillas from 15 family groups in a celebration of conservation, community, and culture.

Prime Minister Dr. Justin Nsengiyumva said naming a gorilla is more than a ceremony. “It is a symbol of love, commitment, and hope shared within families and communities,” he told thousands of attendees, including Rwandans and international visitors, gathered in Kinigi Sector, Musanze District.

Dr. Nsengiyumva praised local communities for their role in protecting Volcanoes National Park, home to more than 600 mountain gorillas, up from near extinction decades ago. “To ensure their future, Rwanda has expanded Volcanoes National Park by nearly 25%, creating a safe habitat for gorillas and improving livelihoods for nearby residents,” he said.



*Prime Minister Dr. Justin Nsengiyumva*

The ceremony highlighted the link between conservation and community development. Jean-Guy Afrika, CEO of the Rwanda Development Board, said 10% of park revenues are invested in local projects, totaling 18 billion Rwandan francs. “These projects build schools, health centers, markets, and housing, reducing human-wildlife conflict and benefiting communities.”

Since 2005, 400 gorillas have received names through Kwita Izina. In 2024, visitor numbers to Volcanoes National Park rose 10.7%, with total tourism revenue up 8.5%, including a 27% contribution from gorilla tourism.

This year’s ceremony attracted global figures, including Princess Ingeborg Zu Schleswig-Holstein, Tunku Ali Redhaudin ibni Tuanku Muhriz, Sang-Hyup Kim, CEO of the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), David S. Marriott of Marriott International, director Michael Bay, and Nigerian musician Yemi Alade.

Kim named his gorilla Impuguke, calling it “my child and a child of GGGI.” Marriott named his gorilla Rugwiro, praising Rwanda for its wildlife conservation efforts.

RGB CEO Irène Murerwa said the event honors both gorillas and the families who protect them. “Through initiatives like Kwita Izina, tourism revenues benefit communities and show that when the environment thrives, people thrive,” she said.

Among the gorillas named this year were Mwizerwa, Kundwa, Ntarungu, Burere, Rugwiro, Impuguke, Tekana, Ntavogerwa, Nyunganizi, Umurage, Rwogere, Inyunganizi, Mutobo, Atete, Mwungeri, Garuka, and Iwacu. Since 2012, the Volcanoes mountain gorilla population has grown from 880 to 1,060.