



GORILLA HIGHLANDS BATWA JAMBOREE

Bunyonyi Safaris Resort, Lake Bunyonyi, Uganda, 19-22 April 2019

CONCEPT PAPER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

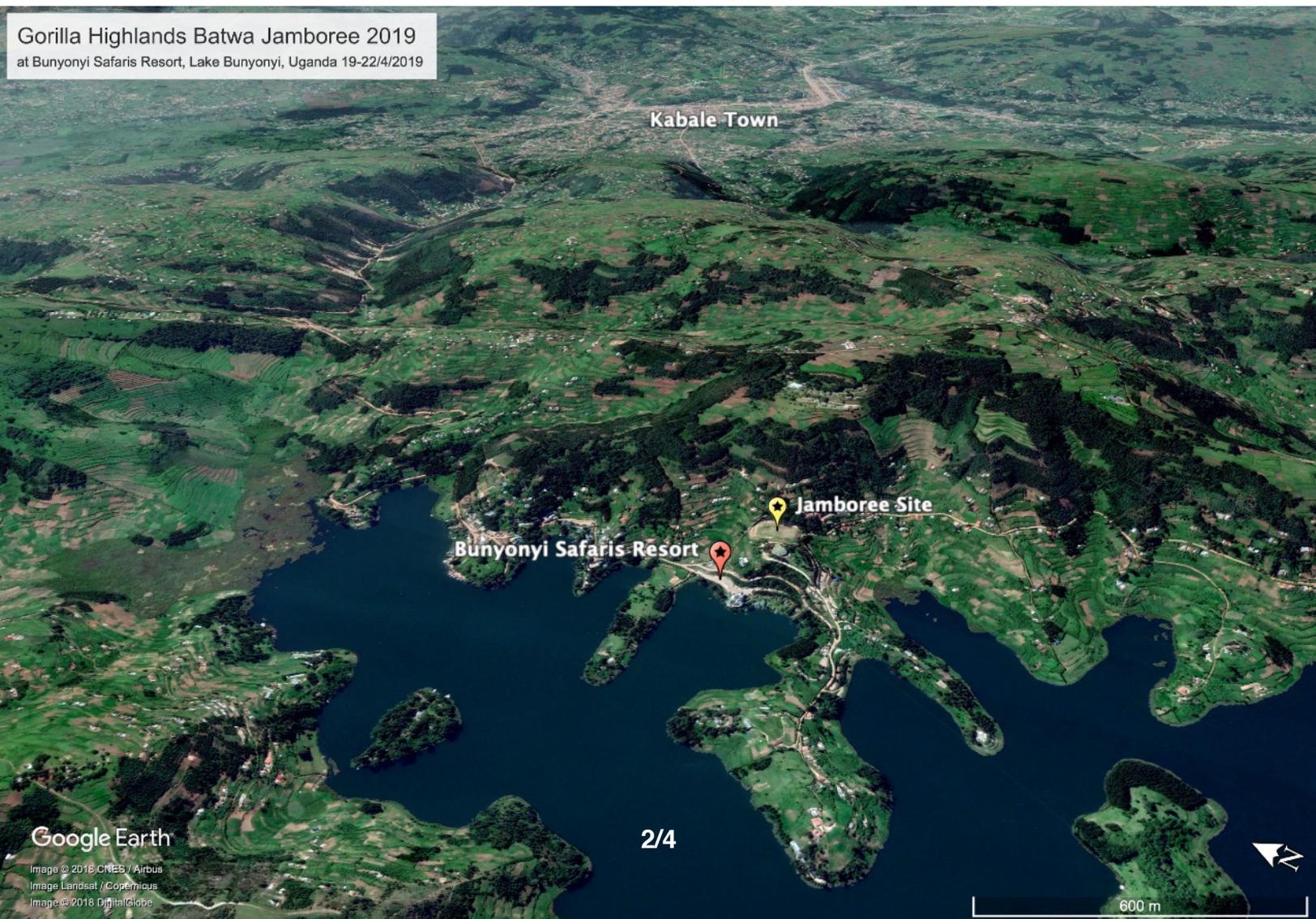
The Gorilla Highlands Batwa Jamboree (GHBJ) is the first ever gathering of the Batwa “Pygmies” of Uganda, Rwanda, DR Congo and Burundi organised during Easter 2019 (19-22 April). Prepared by the Batwa community of Rwamahano with the help of Edirisa, a Ugandan social enterprise, it is expected to bring together 300 Batwa. The 4-day program will offer the Batwa opportunities to share experiences, learn new skills, compete in cultural activities and present their heritage to the general public (open day on Easter Sunday). The venue will be an attractively laid-out tented camp hosted at Bunyonyi Safaris Resort.

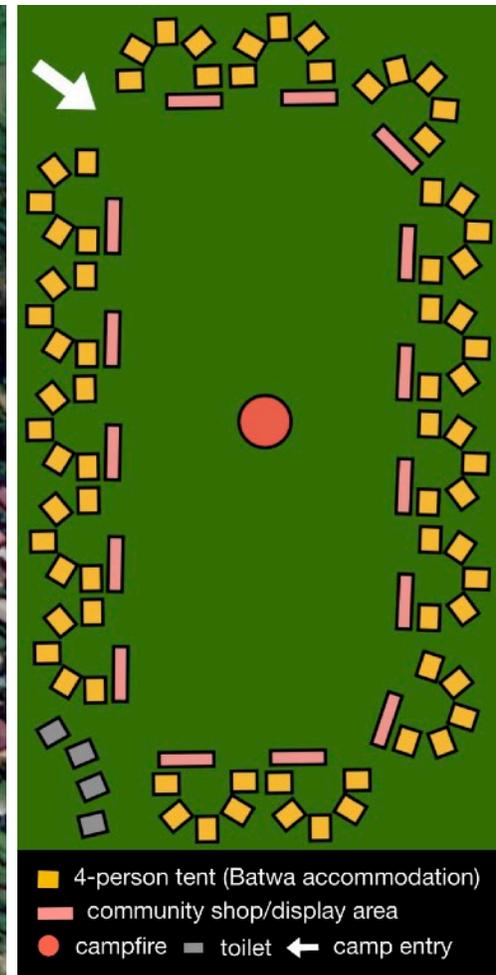
BACKGROUND

The estimated 80,000 Batwa living in Uganda, and DR Congo and Burundi are the original inhabitants of the Gorilla Highlands region (www.gorillahighlands.com). These indigenous hunters and gatherers have been evicted from their natural habitats, generally without any compensation. They are now the poorest of the poor but their problems go beyond that; known as “Pygmies” they are perceived by other ethnic groups as uncivilised, somewhat sub-human magical beings.

Edirisa (www.edirisa.org), a social enterprise based at Lake Bunyonyi (Uganda), has been working with three nearby Batwa communities for over a decade. At the annual meeting on 1 January 2018 one of these groups, the Batwa of Rwamahano near Echuya Forest, proposed a cultural competition during which Batwa could showcase their dancing, singing and more.

This is the origin of the GHBJ idea; the word “jamboree” means a large festive gathering and it may have originated from the Swahili greeting “jambo”.





OBJECTIVE

The objective of GHBJ is to provide a conducive environment for the Batwa to create solutions for their own challenges, boost cultural pride and personal dignity, share lessons learned in different countries, develop networks, explore shared history (drawing of family trees) and collaborate to increase the impact, income-generation and sustainability of their initiatives.

SITE AND PROGRAM

Bunyonyi Safaris Resort (www.bunyonyisafarisresort.com) has accepted to host the jamboree on their football pitch, with the nearby covered Hilltop Arena serving as the main stage on Easter Sunday.

Arriving on Thursday 18 April and departing on Tuesday 23 April 2019, the Batwa will be housed in 4-person tents arranged in groups of 5. That will provide accommodation for up to 20 participants (at least 7 of them female) from up to 15 communities. Each community will also get a display area in front of their sub-camp where they will be able to present products for sale.

The communities will compete in archery, craft making, fire making, dancing, honey making, pottery, singing (original compositions about famous Batwa). The grand finale of the competition will be on Easter Sunday 21 April 2019, the day open to non-Batwa visitors to the jamboree.

The non-competitive side of the event will be in a form of a variety of workshops led by East African expert volunteers. They will be organised around the following themes: creativity, presentation, leadership, inclusivity, localisation and collaboration.

PREPARATIONS AND BUDGETING

Prior to GHB, the Batwa of Rwamahano will participate in a volunteer-designed English language program. The training started in December 2018 and will take place over numerous months.

The #IAmGorillaHighlands campaign (www.gorillahighlands.com/iam) will look for volunteers and other supporters to help make GHB a reality. We welcome individuals, private, public and civil sectors to engage and invest in Batwa social innovations and economic empowerment. Partners that can contribute to a fun, informative, and memorable experience are invited to share their ideas about how to enrich the event.

The budget for GHB is USD 65,000. To date (2019-1-3) we have assured USD 10,800 with a balance of USD 54,200 that still needs to be raised with your help.

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photo: jamboree site by Miha Logar; others by Marcus Westberg

