

IN 1991, CAA WAS FORMED TO TAKE OVER MANAGEMENT OF ALL AIRPORTS, WRITES EDWARD KAYIWA



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CAA stands the test of time

Aviation activity in Uganda was first witnessed in the early 1930s when a flying boat landed at Port Bell on the shores of Lake Victoria, to deliver mail.

The mail delivery service had earlier started in neighbouring Kenya in 1929 by Wilson Airways, to facilitate communication between the colonial centres in the region.

In 1947, Entebbe was identified as the most suitable location for Uganda's airport, as it provided easy navigation services across the lake.

The airport was commissioned in 1951, with the splendour and presence of the Queen of England.

From the early 1970s to the late 1980s, air transport in Uganda witnessed unprecedented decline due to prevailing insecurities in the country at the time.

According to former Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) managing director, Ambrose Akandonda, a lot of systems at the Entebbe airport broke down during that time.

"The airport infrastructure, such as the runways, were not serviceable, the airport security equipment broke down, the personnel had lost morale because of low and irregular payments, the air traffic services at the tower were not dependable and so airlines started to withdraw their operations at Entebbe," he said.

The only airlines that remained at that time were,

according to Akandonda, were Sabena, Kenya Airways, Ethiopian Airlines, Aeroflot and sometimes, a few none scheduled carriers.

The gradual pull out of airlines from Entebbe, eventually led to the collapse of vital industries and the fall in import and export volumes.

"As a landlocked country, there was urgent need to review the macro-economic policy. This was made possible by the advent of the NRM government in 1986, and shortly after, efforts to rejuvenate the airport started," he says.

In 1991, CAA was formed to take over management of all airports, including Entebbe. However, its formalisation came later by an Act of Parliament in 1994.

Before then, the aviation business was totally in the hands of the Government, handled by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry Works and Transport.

The decision by the Government to divest itself from the operations of the airport gave the newly-created CAA access to funds that came from the activities of the airport and the financial autonomy needed to plan and deploy collected funds, according to previously planned programmes.

"At the time, the biggest issues we faced included lack of finances and lack of office space, although the political leadership had the vision and the will to see us forward," Akandonda says.

With the new CAA in place, the new leadership moved to evaluate the staff on the

Regional and global carriers returned to Entebbe after CAA was established in 1991



ground and recruit people who were qualified and committed to provision of services.

Their pay was augmented to the level of their counterparts in the region and the continent, which lifted their morale. And once airlines realised that a new body, which was also supported by the International Civil Aviation Organisation, had come into place, most airlines resumed their operations.

Currently, CAA has started on works that will see the expansion, modification and upgrade of Entebbe International Airport's departures and arrivals terminals to handle 1,750 passengers simultaneously.

According to Dr Rama

BEFORE CAA WAS FORMED, AVIATION WAS IN THE HANDS OF THE GOVERNMENT

Makuza, the CAA managing director, the civil works are part of their 20-year master plan that was launched in January and at the completion of the project, the airport will be handling 930 arriving passengers and 820 departing passengers during peak hours.

"This is one of the several projects that are going to concurrently be implemented

at Entebbe over the next couple of years. This particular project focuses on landside expansion covering construction of new departures and arrivals blocks and strengthening of the terminal building's roof structure," Makuza says.

He said the modification will cost \$12.5m (sh42.6b) and is being financed through CAA's

internally-generated funds.

This, according to Makuza, will see the creation of additional office space on the third floor, expansion of the passengers check-in area and modification of the passengers' departure road.

"The existing passenger terminal was opened in 1974 for planned peak hour traffic of 250 arriving and departing passengers. The terminal got some limited improvements as the country prepared for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2007 that elevated it to the current capacity of 410 arriving and 360 departing passengers," Makuza said.

According to the authority's publist, Ignie Ingundura, the new changes are meant to uplift the image of the airport to international standards.

According to the Uganda Tourism Board, the airport handled approximately 1.2 million arrivals Last year, a slight decrease from 1.3 million tourists that were received in 2014.

"By 2018, we are projected to handle about 3.5 million arrivals and five million by 2020. The airport, therefore, is very important in adding to the tourists' experience in the country. For this, we expect 80% of all adverts at the airport to be digital by 2018, and as we speak placing of adverts on walls has been discontinued," Ingundura explained.

He added that the authority plans to spend approximately sh223b next financial year on procurement as ongoing works for the expansion of the airport take root.