



An artistic impression of the expanded Aircraft Parking Apron and airside view of the new terminal building on completion in 2021.

By Geoffrey Mutegeki

Air transport is one of the most essential forms of international travel today. Apart from enabling easy movement in and out of the country, it also opens up the country's trade and tourism. To many air transport is a key driver of globalisation.

Uganda has its main airport at Entebbe being managed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). There are several other small airports/ fields like Soroti, Kisoro, Masindi, Gulu, and Kasese which are also managed by CAA.

According to CAA's managing director, David Mpango Kakuba, the Government acknowledges the importance of air transport in the development of the country thus CAA's efforts in improving the infrastructure at the airports/ fields.

Kakuba points out at a number of infrastructural upgrade projects taking place at the Entebbe International Airport in order to address the country's growing passenger and cargo traffic.

The upgrade and expansion project forms part of a 20-year National Aviation Master Plan (2014-2033) unveiled by the CAA in January 2015.

Currently, the main works for the expansion and upgrading of Entebbe International Airport started in 2016 are being undertaken by China Communication Construction Company (CCCC).

CCCC is also handling the on-going construction of a new 100,000 tonnes capacity cargo centre.

The expansion project aims to increase the passenger terminal's capacity from the current 410 arriving and 320 departing passengers to 930 arriving and 820 departing passengers during peak hours.

"Having happy travellers is our key objective. We are improving on the hardware and the software (management) to address the increasing numbers of travellers," Kakuba says.

Within the next two years, Entebbe should have capacity to handle about 3

Expansion of Entebbe airport takes shape

million passengers every year.

Facilities like the departure and arrival immigration counters have also been improved and increased in number.

Since 2017, departure counters have increased from six to eleven whereas arrivals immigration counters increased from 14 to 20.

"This has drastically enhanced efficiency in service provision and reduced on long queues at peak time," Kakuba says.

He explains that in the arrivals hall there is a special counter specifically dedicated to handling passengers with special needs, crew business and first class passengers.

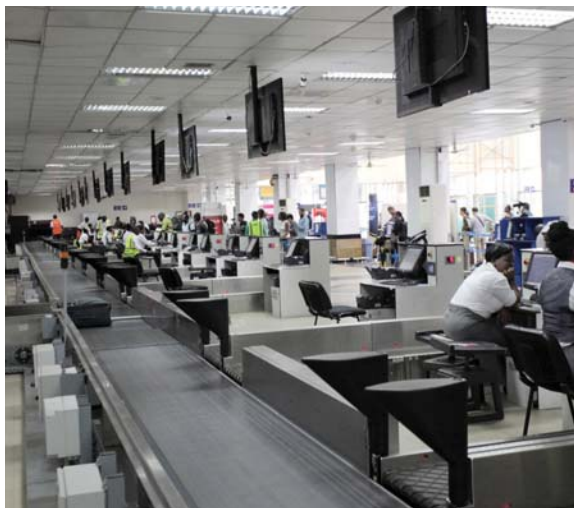
"Our airport is small but manageable. All airdromes have been maintained operated and kept in serviceable status," Kakuba says.

He acknowledges that the road transport has rendered various aerodromes not commercially viable since many people can easily make it to major towns in a few hours on the road.

"Unlike other countries, Uganda is small and can easily be accessed by road cheaply. We are maintaining these airfields mainly for tourism purposes," Kakuba says.

Entebbe Airport and CAA received the ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management Systems (QMS) certificate making Uganda the third country in Africa after Ghana and Tanzania to receive the internationally recognized certification by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS).

Entebbe is among the oldest airports



Entebbe uses a modern system to handle luggage

in Africa having been established in 1951.

The Principal Immigration Officer Robert Kanuma, says the airport renovation will also facilitate increase in the availability and frequency of international flights.

"There is a lot of progress going on and this is good for the country and our passengers. All we can do is keep improving on the quality of services we offer," Kanuma says.

Vianney Luggya, the CAA spokesperson, reveals that 42 housing units were completed for the relocation of Aviation Police officers'

families whose previous homes were demolished to pave for the ongoing expansion. A new automated baggage handling system was also put in place.

"The new baggage system can handle 1,800 bags per hour compared to the old one that could manage only manage 400 to 500 bags on the hour," Luggya said.

The air traffic control radar has also recently been upgraded, giving it an extended lifespan of 10 more years.

Daniel Ogwang the senior civil engineer at Dar Al-Handasah Shair & Partners the supervising consultant says works on the one of the oldest

runways 20/30 is progressing well.

The runway which is at the old airport is 2.4km long and is important in acting as an alternate runway in case of a problem.

"Works are now at 30% and we hope to complete by the end of next year," Ogwang says.

The passenger terminal building that is being constructed has three levels and comprise a total floor area of 20,000m².

The building's ground level will be allocated for an automated baggage sortation system and goods delivery facility, while the second level will house new check-in and boarding areas. The top level of the terminal building will accommodate offices.

New arrivals and departure blocks will be built to handle the increased level of passenger traffic, while the cargo building will house various facilities required for the import and export cargo.

Entebbe International Airport is anticipated to handle 6.1 million passengers and 172,000t of cargo a year by 2033. There are plans to also revive the national airline.

Airport expansion

- Cargo Apron at 82%
- Cargo terminal at 30%
- Access road is at about 95% complete
- Apron 1 expansion is at 73%
- Taxing way extension is about 80%
- Service road 83%
- Works on runway 12/30 is at 30%
- Improvement of departures at EIA-Ground, first, second and third floor construction over 30% complete.