

## **AIR TRANSPORT**

Uganda Airlines was formed in 1976 and became the sole national carrier with the collapse of the then East African Community and the East African Airways.

### **CURRENT STATUS**

- ✓ Air transport is the quickest means of transport for perishables and high import value goods like medicines.
- ✓ It is dominated by foreign companies like Aero link and Eagle air.
- ✓ There were also a few private airstrips like Kakira airstrip.
- ✓ The volume of cargo offloaded at Entebbe international airport has declined.
- ✓ There is a complete lockdown of passenger air traffic.
- ✓ Air transport which is run by the Civil Aviation Authority.
- ✓ The total aircraft movements in Uganda have increased by close 50% over the last 5 years.
- ✓ 13 aerodromes have been rehabilitated.
- ✓ Some airstrips are to be upgraded to airport status.
- ✓ The national carrier has been revived (2019) thus Uganda air line.
- ✓ Five upcountry airports like Arua, Gulu, Kasese, Pakuba and Kidepo are gazetted as entry-exit points.
- ✓ There are 60 licensed airfields around the country, only about 30 are in use, with 19 having regular services
- ✓ Entebbe international airport is being expanded and modernized.
- ✓ There is currently has only one international airport at Entebbe.
- ✓ There is construction of a second international airport at Kabaale in Hoima.

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### **AIR TRANSPORT ROUTES**

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East African flights like Entebbe-Nairobi, Entebbe-Dar es-salaam, Entebbe-Juba, Entebbe-Kigali, Entebbe-Mwanza, etc. Flights with in Africa like Entebbe-Johansburg, Entebbe-Addis-Ababa, Entebbe-Cairo, Entebbe-Tripoli, etc. Internal flights like Entebbe-Brussels, Entebbe-Dubai, Entebbe-London, Entebbe-Dehli, Entebbe-Sydney, etc. Domestic flights such as Entebbe-Kimaka, Entebbe-Arua, Entebbe-Pakuba, Soroti-Moroto, Entebbe-Gulu, etc. See figure 19:5

### **SKETCH MAP SHOWING THE AIR TRANSPORT ROUTES**

## **IMPORTANCE OF AIR TRANSPORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF UGANDA**

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### **POSITIVE IMPORTANCE OF AIR TRANSPORT**

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Air transport facilitates international relations between Uganda and other countries through use of Entebbe international airport. Most of the airlines are foreign based for instance Ethiopian airline, Brussels airline, etc leading to peace and harmony.

Air transport promotes internal and external trade, for example, Entebbe international air port has enhanced inter-territorial and international trade through importation and exportation of goods leading to the generation of foreign exchange. Pakuba air strip and Kimaka air strip have enhanced internal trade.

It has facilitated labour mobility from one area to another, for instance, many expatriates connect to other areas through air transport routes like Entebbe-Dubai and Entebbe-Cairo air routes.

Air transport complements other means of transport such as water and railway transport. For example, Entebbe international air port has promoted the development of water transport on Lake Victoria.

They have promoted the development of tourism, research and education. Entebbe international airport and Kasese have facilitated transportation of tourists to Queen Elizabeth and Mt. Rwenzori National parks. Pakuba air strip enhances easy access to Murchison falls national park.

They promote the exploitation of natural resources like forests, minerals and fisheries. For example fish from Lake Victoria is exported to European Union countries through Entebbe international air port. The construction of Kabaale international airport in Hoima has stimulated oil drilling in the Albertine Graben.

Air transport facilitates the development of agricultural sector since it provides the quickest means of transport of perishable products like flowers and sale of fresh fish through Entebbe international airport.

The development of airports and airstrips leads to development of urban centres, for instance, Entebbe town near Entebbe international air port, Jinja due to Kimaka air strip and Kasese town near Kasese air strip due to air related advantages like infrastructural development.

It enables diffusion of ideas like agriculture modernization and new technology, for instance, air transport routes like Entebbe-Dubai, Entebbe-London and Entebbe-J.F Kennedy air routes have enhanced globalisation.

It has provided employment opportunities to many people working as air hostess, pilots and captains in the airlines traversing in and out of the country like Entebbe-Arua route, Entebbe-Kasese route, Entebbe-London and Entebbe-Dubai air routes.

Air transport leads to the generation of internal revenue through taxation of air line companies for instance British airways, Ethiopian air ways and Kenyan airways which operate through Entebbe international airport. This is in form of corporation tax, income tax and national insurance. This revenue is used in the development of infrastructure.

It has led to diversification of the economy leading to a reduction in the over dependence on a few sectors such as agriculture, tourism and mining but also on air transport via Entebbe international airport, Arua air strip and Soroti air strip. This has created alternative sources of income.

It stimulates infrastructural development especially transport routes connecting to air ports and air strips like Kampala-Entebbe express road linking Entebbe international air port and Packwach-Arua road connecting Arua air strip.

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## **NEGATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF AIR TRANSPORT SECTOR**

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It leads to destruction of the vegetation cover, for instance, the construction and expansion of air strips like Kimaka, Kasese, Arua and Entebbe international airport saw the clearing of the vegetation leading to loss of biodiversity.

It is associated with accidents due to plane crashes connected to bad weather and mechanical problems before landing at air ports like Entebbe international airport resulting into loss of lives and destruction of property.

Air transport is greatly responsible for the easy spread of diseases, for example, Entebbe international airport registered many cases of COVID 19 victims in 2020.

Air transport causes air and noise pollution, for instance, air transport causes a lot of noise in areas around air ports and air strips such as Entebbe international air port and Pakuba airstrip. This partly contributes to global warming.

The development and rehabilitation of air transport facilities is not only expensive but also difficult. For instance, the construction of Hoima international airport at Kabaale and expansion of Entebbe international airport were too costly.

It leads to the displacement of some people, for example, the construction of Soroti air strip and Entebbe international airport resulted into displacement of many people. The construction of Kabaale international airport in Hoima led the destruction of many people in Kabaale.

Air transport encourages smuggling of goods and drug trafficking. This is common at Entebbe international airport leading to loss of government revenue.

Air transport is associated with urban-related problems such as drug abuse, traffic congestion and prostitution as seen at Entebbe town due to existence of Entebbe international airport.

It leads to diversion of labour from other sectors like agriculture. These work at airstrips and airports such as Pakuba, Kimaka, Kakira and Kasese.

It has led to profit repatriation due to dominance of private airlines which are foreign based for example Brussels airline and Ethiopian airways. This has limited re-investment in the rehabilitation of airstrips such as Tororo airstrip, Kakira airstrip and Arua airstrip.

### **SELF EVALUATION EXERCISE 19:13**

1 Assess the impact of air transport on the environment in Uganda.

## **PROBLEMS FACING AIR TRANSPORT IN UGANDA**

Limited capital to invest in the air transport explains why airstrips like Kasese air strip, Tororo airfield and Soroti air strip have not been rehabilitated.

Political instability caused by rebel activities. The LRA rebels in Northern Uganda undermined the use of Arua air field, Gulu air field and Pakuba air strip.

The overdependence on foreign airlines which overcharge customers leads to decline in passenger traffic like Entebbe-Pakuba and Entebbe-Johansburg air routes.

Poorly developed infrastructure that cannot handle big planes explains why air strips like Kisoro air strip and Kidepo air strip are remote.

Restrictions when allocating air routes for instance Kabaale international airport in Hoima and Bakaasa air port in Kampala.

Weather changes in form of fog have adverse affects on visibility causing plane crashes along Entebbe-Dubai and Entebbe-Nairobi.

Competition with other cheap means of transport due to improvement in those means of transport. Roads such as Kampala-Kisoro road and Mbarara-Kasese road have undermined the use of Kisoro air strip and Kasese air strip.

Corruption and embezzlement of funds meant to modernize air ports and airstrips like Soroti air strip and Tororo air field.

The low passenger traffic due to high transport fares. This explains why air strips such as Soroti air strip and Kimaka air strip are not fully used.

Disease outbreaks limits the use of air transport, for instance, the outbreak of COVID 19 Pandemic put air transport at a stand still at Entebbe international airport leading to loss of government revenue.

Rising fuel costs of air crafts leading to use of old air crafts at Kisoro air field and Kasese airstrip. This has led to increase in the cost of air tickets causing limited traffic at Entebbe international airport.

Competition with other land-uses such as agriculture and settlement. This has limited the expansion of Entebbe air port, Tororo air strip and Mbarara air strip.

Profit repatriation since the air transport is dominated by foreign firms like Aero and Eagle. These limit re-investment in the rehabilitation and expansion of Entebbe international air port, Arua airfield and Kidepo air field.

The collapse of national airlines has led to limited use of Entebbe air port and Arua port between 1987 and 2018.

The existence of low value bulky produces which cannot be airlifted at the air ports and airstrips like Entebbe international air port and Gulu air strip.

The limited interconnections among internal flights have made it very difficult and expensive to connect to air strips like Gulu, Moroto and Kisoro airstrips.

Air crafts on internal flights like Kakira air strip, Kajansi airstrip and Pakuba airstrip are small and can only take a few members.

The limited skilled labour leading to underdevelopment of Kasese air field and Tororo air port,

The low level of technlgy as well as limited limited spare parts leading to poor quality services at Entebbe ait port and Kasese air field.

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### **SELF EVALUATION EXERCISE 19:14**

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1. (a) Explain the contribution of air transport to the development of Uganda.  
(b) Outline the problems affecting air transport in Uganda.

### **STEPS TAKEN TO IMPROVE AIR TRANSPORT IN UGANDA**

Restoration of peace in war torn areas such as Gulu, Kitgum and Kasese. This has been achieved by use of UPDF and peace talks hence facilitating the use o airstrips such as Kasese, Pakuba and Gulu airstrips.

There is use of traffic officers along road transport routes such as Kampala-FortPortal road and Tororo-Soroti road so as to curb reckless driving so as to curb road accidents.

Liberation and privatisation of air transport. This has attracted many foreign firms such as British airways, Eagle, Emirates air and Ethiopian airline leading to increase in passenger traffic.

There is rehabilitation of airstrips such as Pakuba and Arua airstrips and expansion of Entebbe international airport

There is training of labour force in form of pilots at Soroti flying school so as to boost air transport.

There is construction of another international airport at Kabaale in Hoima so as to boost trade in petroleum.

A national carrier has been revived (2019). This is managed by Uganda Civil Association leading to increase in passenger traffic and cargo at Entebbe international airport.

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### **SELF EVALUATION EXERCISE 19:15**

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1. (a) Account for the low level of development of air transport in Uganda.  
(b) Outline the steps taken to improve air transport in Uganda.