

Q&A

Hoima International Airport to employ locals

Construction of the much awaited Hoima International Airport has started. Mildred Katusabe, the project co-ordinator of Talk-MUD, a Hoima-based company doing the communications and stakeholder engagement for SBC, the contractors of the airport spoke to John Odyek about the project.

Q: Can you explain how the construction will be done and the funds required?

A: Construction of the airport is scheduled to take place in phases. Phase I of the project will see the establishment of the airport serving mainly cargo aircraft and small passenger aircraft for the construction-phase of the refinery and the oil-fields -infrastructure.

Phase II will facilitate increased commercial passenger flights, support services among the local population and incoming tourists and other industries that might be set up nearby such as the fish and flower industries. Parliament recently approved sh1.3 trillion for the first phase of construction.

What are the timelines for the completion of the project?

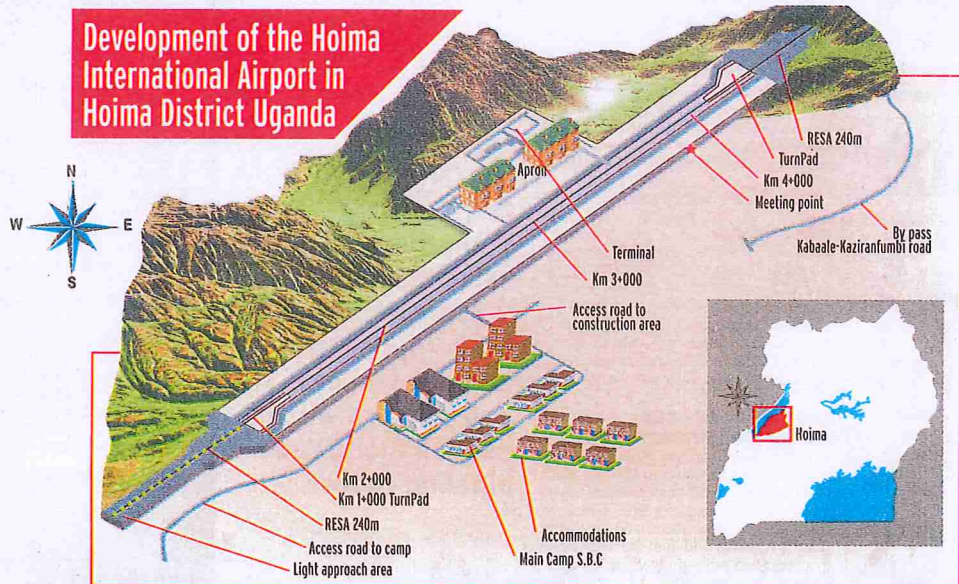
The main construction works are scheduled to start in May 2018 and the runway is scheduled to be completed by May 2020. The whole project is due to be completed in 36 months.

What works are the contractors currently undertaking?

Contractors SBC are now mobilising and currently carrying out preparatory quarry work and site clearance. The Master plan and detailed engineering designs for Phase I are ready.

Paint me a picture: What will the airport look like?
The airport will cater for large aircraft such as the Antonov

Development of the Hoima International Airport in Hoima District Uganda



Hoima Airport artistic plan. The airport will support the oil and gas sector development in the region

124-100 capable of carrying outsized cargo. There will be one runway with a total length of 5kms although the operational length will be 3.5km

Do you think the airport will become a hub, linking the region considering its proximity to Rwanda and DR Congo?

In the longer term, the potential for the airport to support tourism and non-oil-related industries will also contribute significantly to the development of the region.

Its position in the centre of Uganda's most bio-diverse areas along the Albertine Graben, and as a facility for the west of the country which will be well connected by the forthcoming oil roads to Rwanda, South



Mildred Katusabe

Sudan and DR Congo will help to make it a success.

The airport is just the first step in the development of the oil fields, installation of the crude oil pipeline and the refinery.

Concerns have been raised in the past about the proximity of the airport to the refinery in the industrial park. Were the worries justified? Have the issues been ironed out?

Working together with the International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO), the Ugandan Civil Aviation Authority design considerations have taken care of this concern to provide for equipment as part of the airport design that allows for high precision approach and landing. This is standard procedure to mitigate effects of obstacle limitation surfaces.

How is SBC involving the community in the construction?
SBC will seek to keep all

affected people and the wider population well informed during the airport construction.

SBC knows that there are concerns about how many people from the area will benefit from employment. It is committed to employing local people from the area. In fact, local people have already been employed to do ground clearing and provide various services during this mobilisation phase.

Certain specialist skills needed for this phase are currently being provided by other Ugandan staff brought in from other company projects in Uganda. SBC will provide regular updates on progress and community-related issues throughout the construction phase.

Hoima International Airport brings a variety of business opportunities

By Denis Nsubuga

The people of Buseruka sub-county in Hoima district are witnessing increased activity in the area because Hoima airport construction works have begun.

When completed, Hoima will be Uganda's second international airport, after Entebbe International Airport.

As an international airport with the regulation of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), it will have direct flights coming in from international space. The airport is expected to bring business opportunities to the locals.

Where to focus investment
James Abola, a business consultant with

Akamai Global, emphasises that anyone willing to set up business around an airport should keep in mind that the main population are the travellers, which should be the target customers for the businesses.

He thinks it is wise to invest in hospitality and transport industry. "Travellers are likely to need places for rest after long journeys. Another is transport because the airport is likely to be a distance away from the commercial centres," he says.

Newton Butereba, a business consultant and CEO of House of Wealth likens an airport to a taxi or bus park, saying business that runs around a taxi park can operate near an airport.

Focus

Invest in hospitality and transport industry

Booming business

Besides transport, which mainly involves cab services and hotels, vicinities of airports usually have, among others, cafes, forex bureaux to retail stores and Internet services, to take a leaf from our very own Entebbe, a busy locality, booming with businesses.

With such a status and it being part of the infrastructure for Uganda's preparation to develop its nascent petroleum industry, the airport provides

a variety of monetary opportunities, including jobs.

To set a business around an airport, Abola explains, one ought to visualise the likely customers, with a central focus on their preferences.

"You should know how many are they likely to be, their purchasing power, which kind of products and service are they likely to consume and which way would they want the products to be delivered to them," he emphasises.

Butereba thinks the Tours and Travel companies should wake up to grab the opportunity of numbers that will flock in to make money off tourism, with the various tourist attractions around, including Lake Albert, Budungo Forest and Murchison Falls National park.