

The impact of Covid-19 on African aviation is worsening

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) released new data indicating that the impact of Covid-19 on Africa's aviation industry and economies has worsened sharply since the previous assessment in April.



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- Job losses in aviation and related industries could increase by up to 3.5 million. That is more than half of the region's 6.2 million aviation-related employment and 400,000 more than the previous estimate.
- Full-year 2020 traffic is expected to plummet by 54% (more than 80 million passenger journeys) compared to 2019. Previous estimate was a fall of 51%.

GDP supported by aviation in the region could fall by up to \$35 billion. IATA previously estimated a \$28 billion decline.

"Covid-19 has devastated African economies and brought air connectivity across the continent to a virtual standstill. And the situation is getting worse. The economic consequences resulting from a disconnected continent are severe. Millions of jobs and livelihoods are at risk in family-run enterprises and large corporations along the entire travel and tourism value chain. For Africa's economic recovery and future prosperity, it is essential to expedite the safe restart of the industry," said Muhammad Al Bakri, IATA's Regional Vice President for Africa and the Middle East.

Restarting African Aviation

To minimize the impact on jobs and the broader African economy an accelerated recovery of air transport across the continent is vital. This can be achieved through government action in two priority areas:

1. Harmonizing the restart of air transport in Africa

The harmonized adoption of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council's Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) Take-off guidance – the global biosafety framework for the safe restart of aviation - is critical for the safe resumption of air transport.

To avoid conflicting measures, disruptions and inefficiencies, all countries, including those in Africa, must apply these recommendations consistently and uniformly, without imposing unnecessary border constraints such as quarantines, which deter passengers and suppress the demand for air travel.

According to ICAO, Rwanda is amongst the first countries in the world to have fully complied with ICAO's biosecurity recommendations.

Barry Kashambo, Regional Director, ESAF speaking on behalf of the ICAO Regional Offices accredited to African States ICAO said: "We recognize the efforts and actions by Rwanda and some other States, to fully implement the provisions of ICAO CART recommendations and Take-off guidance and measures. We encourage all Governments in Africa to prioritize the restart of aviation and to tap into its potential as an enabler to Africa's economic recovery post Covid-19. Air connectivity is critical to economic and sustainable development and the movement of persons across the continent."

2. Stepping up efforts to support the industry

Continued financial and regulatory support, particularly financial relief - that does not increase industry debt levels - through direct cash injections, credit or loans and deferrals or discounts on user charges are essential to support airlines over the restart and recovery period.

"We are grateful to the few African governments that have provided relief to aviation so far - Rwanda, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and recently Cabo Verde. Their actions have helped save thousands of jobs and will enable some airlines to restart and support the wider economies they serve. But the situation is worsening. Continued relief measures are essential to minimize job losses and ensure that connectivity can be restored. We urge African governments and the development institutions who have committed funding to provide it urgently in a structure that does not weaken already stressed airline balance sheets, before it is too late," said Albakri.

Country level impact

IATA Economics' latest outlook for key national markets in Africa has worsened since the previous assessment in June. For example, passenger numbers, jobs at risk and GDP impacts for the five biggest African markets have declined across every metric:

Country	June Pax Estimate (millions)	August Pax Estimate (millions)	June Jobs at risk	August Jobs at risk	April GDP (US\$ billions)	August GDP (US\$ billions)
South Africa	-15.6	-16.6	269,900	287,700	-5.1	-5.8
Nigeria	-5.3	-5.7	139,500	149,400	-0.9	-1.1
Kenya	-3.8	-4	207,800	223,600	-1.6	-1.8

Rwanda	-0.47	-0.5	17,300	18,500	-0.06	-0.07
Ethiopia	-2.6	-2.8	530,400	564,100	-1.9	-2.1

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