

Rwanda is bringing together a group of local and regional banks, with support from international development partners, to help push forward the construction of the New Bugesera International Airport—one of the nation’s most ambitious infrastructure ventures.

The East African nation is looking for fresh financing options for the airport project as it grapples with a sharp rise in public debt.

The IMF praised Rwanda’s strong economic growth but warned that large-scale infrastructure investments are adding pressure to the country’s finances. The Fund projects public debt will peak in the 2025/26 fiscal year, with levels expected to remain high until gradually easing toward the IMF’s debt ceiling by around 2033.

The Rwf699 billion (\$499 million) airport project is, a joint venture between the Government of Rwanda and the State of Qatar, and it is central to Rwanda’s Vision 2050 strategy, which aims to position the nation as a regional logistics hub and propel it to upper-middle-income status by 2035.

Originally launched in 2017, the airport project’s completion date was pushed back from 2026 to mid-2028 due to delays in the delivery of construction materials. It is being developed in two phases: Phase 1 is set for completion in 2027, with the full build-out expected by 2032.

A group of four banks—BPR Bank Rwanda Plc, Bank of Kigali (BK), the Development Bank of Rwanda (BRD), and KCB Bank Kenya—has issued more than \$322 million in guarantees to support construction.

The package is further underpinned by an \$84 million counter-guarantee from the African Trade & Investment Development Insurance (ATIDI), enabling the lenders to provide larger guarantees than their standard limits allow.

BPR Bank Rwanda Plc is leading the financing effort as the Mandated Lead Arranger and Facility Agent. “This collaboration with ATIDI and our partner banks reflects our firm commitment to financing national development priorities and enabling long-term value through strategic infrastructure,” said Patience Mutesi, Managing Director of BPR Bank Rwanda Plc.

ATIDI’s Chief Executive Officer, Manuel Moses, hailed the project as “a catalytic investment” for both Rwanda and the continent. “The new airport is not just about

infrastructure; it's about unlocking regional value chains and ensuring Africa trades more with itself," he said

Once operational, the New Bugesera International Airport is expected to handle 7 million passengers annually in its first phase, eventually doubling capacity to 14 million. Designed to align with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) objectives, the airport is projected to enhance intra-African trade, attract more investment, and strengthen Rwanda's position as a gateway for both passenger and cargo traffic.

The guarantees provided by the banking consortium, supported by ATIDI's de-risking solutions, will cover performance and advance payment obligations for contractors, ensuring steady project progress.

ATIDI, of which Rwanda is a founding member, currently has a gross exposure of more than \$611 million in the country across agriculture, energy, construction, communications, and transport sectors.

With an estimated total cost exceeding \$2 billion, the Bugesera Airport project is poised to become a transformative aviation hub for East Africa, supporting Rwanda's ambitions to be a key player in global and continental connectivity.