

The African Development Bank Group (AfDB) has approved a \$23.6 million loan for the construction and equipment of a new aviation training facility in the Rwandan capital, Kigali.

The proposed Centre of Excellence for Aviation Skills (CEAS), including an aircraft hangar, will partner with higher learning institutions to produce a skilled workforce to meet global aviation training standards and industry demands.

“The Bank’s financial support for this Centre of Excellence speaks to our commitment to investing in human capital to meet demands for the jobs of today – and tomorrow – in Africa’s aviation and related industries,” said Dr. Beth Dunford, the Bank’s Vice President for Agriculture, Human and Social Development, following the approval on 29 September 2023.

The project will boost Rwanda’s ambition to become a regional aviation hub and draw international investment from the aviation industry. It aligns with the country’s Vision 2050 to improve human capital by providing high-quality training, upskilling labour, and transforming the workforce for higher productivity.

The Centre is expected to enrol up to 500 students starting from 2025 when it becomes partly operational. It will offer training for pilots, maintenance and cabin crew. There will also be dispatch and ancillary courses, including in airport emergency operations services.

The facility will also provide drone piloting training, flight simulator recurrent training, and other advanced pilot training for specialized missions.

Industry watchers estimate that Africa needs over 50,000 aviation professionals in the next two decades, including 15,000 pilots, 17,000 technicians and 23,000 cabin crew members.

Nnenna Nwabufu, the Bank’s Director General for East Africa, said the Centre will enable opportunities for skills building for the youth in Rwanda and across the East Africa region. “Overall, the project aligns with the Bank’s Skills for Employability and Productivity in Africa Action Plan, which stipulates ways of elevating the skills level of Africa’s workforce,” she added.

Dr Martha Phiri, the Bank’s Director for Human Capital, Youth, and Skills Development, said: “There is a diversity of skilled and sustainable employment in

the aviation industry that should be on the radar of Africa's youth. We aim to scale up the infrastructure needed to increase access to the aviation sector skills training to succeed in securing decent jobs."

The project's construction phase will require up to 1,000 workers, and the operation phase is expected to create 98 jobs. The proposed site is close to other related structures, connecting project components to Kigali International Airport's existing services and facilities.