

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

BY XAVIER OH (AIRPORTS COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL - UNTIL FEBRUARY 2016)

For airport operators and other aviation stakeholders, community engagement is the link between environmental stewardship and mitigating environmental constraints to aviation operation and growth.

An adverse and confrontational relationship can result in political and social pressure against the operation and development of the airport. Engagement between aviation stakeholders and local and regional communities can foster understanding of aviation operations, the extent of environmental impacts, and their mitigation by aviation stakeholders. The importance of the economic and societal benefits of aviation should also be part of the broader understanding of how aviation can be sustainable. A well informed community that understands and trusts the information provided is more likely to make measured and appropriate response to aviation operations and development proposals.

## Case Studies of Community Engagement

In 2013 CAEP recognized the importance of community engagement, and undertook a task of collecting case studies of recent activities and developing a circular highlighting both lessons learned and good practices. The publication of the case studies would assist States and the aviation industry, in particular airports, airlines, and Air Navigation Service Providers (ANSPs), to engage local communities to help address environmental matters.

Over the course of 2015, a questionnaire was distributed to CAEP Member States and other aviation stakeholders, and a total of 48 case studies were submitted to CAEP. Of these, over 60% were submitted by operators of international airports, though in virtually all cases many other aviation stakeholders including airlines, ANSPs, government departments and civil aviation authorities were also involved in the studies. The findings below were identified in the case studies.

The most common form of community engagement consisted of the aviation industry providing information to community groups and individuals on aviation operations and development plans, and communicating the current and future environmental, social and economic benefits and impacts. Community members were often able to provide feedback and express their views by means such as mail, telephone, e-mail, websites and meetings.

Environmental issues usually dominated community feedback and, most often, it was the impact of aircraft noise that was the issue of concern. However, increasingly other environmental issues such as air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, land use, and waste management also needed to be addressed during these interactions.

Public consultation was often required as part of the process to gain consent or approval for infrastructure development including both on-airport projects and airspace changes. However, communities' views were not systematically taken into consideration in the decision-making processes.

The responses also showed that many airport operators and other aviation stakeholders had taken their community engagement efforts beyond communications and consultations on environmental issues. Recognizing that the three pillars of sustainability are commonly considered to be environmental, social and economic, aviation stakeholders were increasingly implementing social programs, often as a part of their corporate social responsibility or similar initiatives.

Two examples from *Corporación Quiport S.A.*, the operator of the new Mariscal Sucre International Airport (MSIA) in Quito, Ecuador are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. The first is from a public consultation and disclosure program and the second is from a scholarship program for children in "social risk" groups living in the vicinity of the airport. The Consultation and Disclosure Plan involved the parishes and local neighborhoods, educative centers, MSIA's commercial operators, health centers, businesses, Quito Municipality's zonal administration office, social organizations, and other social actors influenced by the airport's operations. Quiport implemented the "David Cachago" Scholarship Program for social risk groups and students from public educative institutions in the MSIA's surrounding areas through the annual scholarship's disbursement. From 2007 to 2015, 547 scholarships were delivered.

## Lessons Learned and Good Practices

Some important lessons learned and good practices contained within the case studies submitted for the circular can be summarized as follows.

- Starting early and being proactive using a well-planned strategic approach that includes continuing engagement over the long term, not just during the planning application process.
- Providing an open and transparent exchange of information as the basis for building long-term trust.
- Ensuring the process is as inclusive and collaborative as possible,

## CHAPTER 2

### AIRCRAFT NOISE

informing and seeking input from as many stakeholders as appropriate and practicable, and taking into consideration the scale and scope of the project.

- Using new technologies to provide different ways to present information and interact with community members. Social media is a crucial means for reaching a wider audience and yet traditional print and broadcast media should not be ignored.
- Community engagement cannot guarantee that all parties will be pleased with the outcome, so it is important to manage the expectations of all stakeholders.

While many aviation organizations have conducted successful community engagement efforts, including providing information and consulting on development projects, publicly available information to help aviation organizations effectively engage with communities is limited. Therefore, CAEP developed a circular to share lessons learned and good practices to assist States and the aviation industry to engage communities and to address environmental questions/matters. The ICAO Circular *Community Engagement for Aviation Environmental Management* was delivered at the CAEP/10 meeting.

Photos from Quito International Airport:



**Figure 1.** Quito International Airport community engagement meeting



**Figure 2.** Quito International Airport scholarship recipients