3.4: INCLUSION OF MACRO-MESO-MICRO LEVEL INSTITUTIONS

"The answer to community empowerment is not in delivering preconceived packages but in real institution building at different levels" (Ullah Jan, undated)

What is macro-meso-micro?
Macro-meso-micro refers to the level of policy and institutions that govern and influence development activities in all sectors. Development and growth is typically associated with macro-level economics and ‘top-down’ approaches, but this has more recently been superseded by poverty reduction approaches from the ‘bottom-up’, with an emphasis on community empowerment and capacity building at the grass roots. Broadly speaking, the following definitions describe each of these levels:

- **Macro**: large in scope or extent – global/national level institutions and policies
- **Meso**: intermediate/in the middle – provincial/district level institutions and policies
- **Micro**: the grass roots – community level institutions and policies

In road safety, policy and institutional decision making tends to take place at the macro level, with legislation being adopted, and often transferred from good practice cases in other countries (such as introducing alcohol breathalyzers to reduce drink-driving). Yet, the legislation and interventions implemented may not be suitable for a given population. However, macro policy continues to be developed in isolation from the people it affects. The isolation of rural areas has frequently led to an underestimation of the impact upon rural people of policies and events emanating from the capital city or further afield at international levels. The focus of rural development has therefore tended to remain quite micro and local.

The importance of micro-meso-macro level linkages in any community road safety education programme cannot be overstated. At the macro level, holistic national strategies are required on issues such as poverty, rural development, and local economic development for the planning and development of programmes that will be appropriate for poor road users. The meso interface between the micro-level understanding of road user behaviour interspersed with macro-level policies is best managed at district level, where services can be much more responsive. For this to be effective decentralised policies and action are required.

**Practical application of CRSE programmes at macro/meso/micro levels**
Participatory processes at the macro level involve three key transitions. The first transition is from participation in a micro (project) context to a macro (policy and program) context. Secondly, this involves moving from community consultations to civic engagement with local and national stakeholders, parliamentarians and various government institutions. Finally, participation has advanced from using participatory methods to influencing poverty reduction outcomes. These approaches involve going beyond a consultation process for producing a document (i.e. Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) to a process that focuses on formulation, implementation and monitoring of poverty reduction strategies.
Participation at the macro level can increase the transparency of decision-making, improve government accountability to the citizens, and as a result, increase the overall governance and economic efficiency of developmental activities. Participation is the process through which stakeholders’ influence and share control over priority setting, policy-making, resource allocations and access to public goods and services. Such participation helps produce poverty reduction outcomes (Goldman, 2000).

The following checklist could be adopted for all CRSE programmes to ensure that the critical linkages between each institutional level are considered and adopted:

**Micro level**
- Are rural people active and involved in managing their own development?
- Is there a dispersed and active network of local service providers?

**Meso level**
- Are district (lower meso) services effective, coordinated and responsive?
- Is the region/province (upper meso) level supportive and supervising the districts?

**Macro level**
- Is the centre (province or nation) providing strategic direction, redistribution and oversight?

**Macro level road safety considerations**
Jacobs et al (1999) list the following as key requirements for road safety actions at the national level:
- Establishment of road safety action plan with funding
- Trained road safety teams
- A reliable and accurate road accident information system
- Road safety audits, which should be the norm for all road improvement schemes, with vulnerable road users taken into account at the design and construction stages
- Co-ordinated road safety action plans with realistic targets
- A road safety management system with responsibilities and accountability clearly identified
- Road accident and injury information systems
- Road safety funding
- Safe planning and design of roads including road safety audit of new schemes
- Improvement of hazardous locations
- Urban safety and traffic calming
- Road safety education of children including school programmes and parent to child advice organised through community information networks
- Driver training, testing and licensing with priority on professional drivers and high risk drivers
- Road safety publicity campaigns
- Traffic legislation
- Traffic law enforcement
• Emergency assistance for road accident victims
• Road accident costing and decision making systems
• Evaluation and research and development

**Meso/micro level road safety considerations**
Top priority should be given to understanding the problems of pedestrians and public transport operations and developing and evaluating the following improvements (Jacobs et al, 1999):

• Road safety education in schools
• Road safety information for parents via existing community communication systems e.g. women's groups and health centres
• Footpath and pedestrian crossing facilities
• Traffic calming and speed limits
• Urban safety management
• Driver training to agreed standards
• Improving enforcement of e.g. speed, dangerous overtaking, driver stopping behaviour at crossings, limiting working hours, and drug/alcohol controls
• Training, testing and screening of professional drivers
• Management of safety of bus operations including vehicle maintenance
• Medical care particularly at the scene of an accident

Decentralised approaches are needed, in which the district level acts as the interface between micro-level understanding of clients, with macro-level policies, and provides the key intermediation in terms of matching poor peoples' preferred outcomes and strategies with appropriate service delivery. At levels higher than district the complexity of achieving effective coordination and integration of services and programmes becomes too great (Goldman, 2000).

Above all, national strategies are needed on poverty, rural development, local economic development and decentralisation, whose design and implementation are based on a real understanding of micro-level realities.

**References**


