

***Nation Building; the use of Organization  
Development in the Emerging Pacific Island  
Government of the Republic of Palau***

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**FOREWORD**

It is both with pride as a newly free nation and with the humility of the great task of nation building before us that we share with the nations of the Pacific Basin community our experiences in emerging as a nation among you.

Haruo Remeliik President  
Republic of Palau

***Abstract:** This paper is an account of the process they used to develop the transition of the governance of Palau, a U N Trust territory to a newly elected government of the Republic of Palau. Palau had been administered by Spain, Germany, Japan, and the U S successively since the 18th century. The authors used the Action Training and Research approach developed by Neely Gardner for the State of California to help Palauans to make this development transition to the administration of their own self-governance. The process was based on the skill-transfer concept where those involved in the change, in this case the Palauans, gain the skills to conduct their action research to design, implement, and manage the change within their cultural values. The objective of the first phase, Data Gathering & Values Research was to research current Palauan values in terms of the key issues Palauans saw for themselves in the transition to self government. The*

*second phase, Building Institutions focused on framing the national goals and policy around these key issues. This phase also focused upon finding the best ways to organize the new public administration in order to implement policy and achieve the goals. Phase Three, National Development & Planning dealt with establishing a strategy and process for national development based upon the Palauan values identified in the first phase, and the public administration institutions developed in the second phase. The objective of Phase Four, Human Resource Planning and Development was to develop a way the Palauans themselves could acquire the skills and knowledge they needed in order to perform most of the work as their nation develops. Although human resources could have been dealt with in the third phase with the other national resources, it was separated out because it was the paramount issue and concern raised by most Palauans in Phase One and Phase Two. The results of Palau's organization and resource development effort in its transition and nation building can be characterized as: helping define and expand national goals; developing national policy based upon Palauan values, issues and concerns; organizing public administration to incorporate the traditional Palauan consensus; focusing the organization as the institution for change in implementing the national policy of nation building; reorienting economic development strategy to include Palau's enriched subsistence economy and culture as the main strength and foundation for national development; and outlining a realistic human resource development strategy to assure Palauan self reliance and control in their future. Principally these results are embodied and documented in Palau's, "Ministers' Portfolio Guide" which is presently serving the president's cabinet as a resource for nation building. This guide is also a documentation of what nation building looked like to those Palauans first charged with the task of transition to the new nation. This guide may serve as a blueprint and map, or perhaps it can serve at least as a channel marker in the reef to help other Palauans who must come this way in the future.*

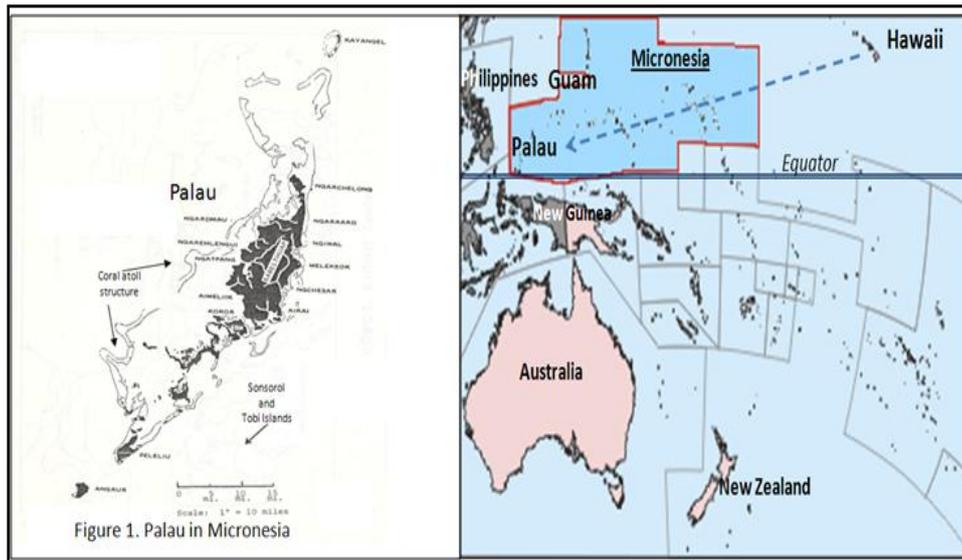
**Keywords:** *nation building, action research, organization development, sustainability, resource development*

### **Introduction**

The people of Palau, nearly fifteen thousand strong, reside on a group of some two hundred islands. Most of these islands are set in a clear lagoon surrounded by a barrier reef of living coral. Palau is located in the Western Caroline Island group, north of New Guinea, some seven degrees above the equator, and several hundred miles east of the Philippine Islands as shown in *figure 1*. Palau in Micronesia. The objective of the first phase, Data Gathering & Values Research was to research current Palauan values in terms of the key issues Palauans saw for themselves in the transition to self government. The second phase, Building Institutions focused on framing the national goals and policy around these key issues. This phase also focused upon finding the best ways to organize the new public administration in order to implement policy

and achieve the goals. Phase Three, National Development & Planning dealt with establishing a strategy and process for national development based upon the Palauan values identified in the first phase, and the public administration institutions developed in the second phase. The objective of Phase Four, Human Resource Planning and Development was to develop a way the Palauans themselves could acquire the skills and knowledge they needed in order to perform most of the work as their nation develops. Although human resources could have been dealt with in the third phase with the other national resources, it was separated out because it was the paramount issue and concern raised by most Palauans in Phase One and Phase Two.

*Figure 1. Map of Palau and Micronesia*



From the beginning of their time Palauans have conducted their own affairs as loosely confederated groups of clans and villages. Each group was administered by their own council of chiefs. (Force, 1972) For the past hundred years Palau's external affairs as a nation have been administered successively by Spain, Germany, Japan, and United States. (Smith, 1977, p1) In anticipation of the election of a constitutional self government the Palauan leaders in their Committee for Political Status & Transition, along with the Acting District Administrator of Palau for the U.S. Trust Territory High Commissioner decided to use organization development resources to assist them in preparing for the new government. They saw that the basic steps in the transition from a U S Trust Territory administered from Saipan to a republic under self rule was in fact a transfer of political power and responsibility. This transfer or

devolution of power and responsibility had already been accomplished in the other entities of the Trust Territories of Micronesia: the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas.

Palau's search for organization development resources with experience in devolution in a public administrative setting led them to Neely Gardner's *Action Training & Research* (Gardner, 1974) work at the State Compensation Insurance Fund in California. The State Fund was a pioneer in this field when it decentralized into nineteen district offices throughout the state in the '60s. (Berkley, 1971) the State Fund agreed to make their internal organization consultant Raymon Bruce available to the Palau's transition project and to share the State Fund's organization development research findings as well. (Kirkhart, 1972)

The U S Trust Territory Palau District Administrator Kim Batchellor appointed Yoich Renguil was to work with the organization development consultants. This would also facilitate the skill transfer aspects of organization development methods to Palauans. The primary objective of using organization development resources was to assure that the new public administration would be established upon Palauan values and needs rather than upon those of the United States.

This approach combined organization development as a method, Institution Building (Esman 1972) as a model, and resource development as a process toward nation building. The approach was implemented in four phases shown in *Table 1*. Palau Nation Building Project.

### **Palau Nation Building Project**

**Table 1**

<b>PHASE</b>	<b>PHASE FOCUS</b>
<i>ONE</i>	<i>Data Gathering &amp; Values Research</i>
<i>TWO</i>	<i>Building Institutions</i>
<i>THREE</i>	<i>National Development &amp; Planning</i>
<i>FOUR</i>	<i>Human Resource Planning &amp; Development</i>

The objective of the first phase was to research current Palauan values in terms of the key issues Palauans saw for themselves in the transition to self government. The second phase focused on framing the national goals and policy around these key issues. This phase also focused upon finding the best ways to organize the new public administration in order to implement policy and achieve the goals.

Phase Three dealt with establishing a strategy and process for national development based upon the Palauan values identified in the first phase, and the public administration institutions developed in the second phase. The

objective of Phase Four was to develop a way the Palauans themselves could acquire the skills and knowledge they needed in order to perform most of the work as their nation develops. Although human resources could have been dealt with in the third phase with the other national resources, it was separated out because it was the paramount issue and concern raised by most Palauans in Phase One and Phase Two.

### **Phase One: data gathering & values research**

Organization development is an approach to planning and managing change in social institutions. (Bennis, 1969) The importance of values in this approach was established early in the evolution of this action research science by one of its founders, Kurt Lewin (Benne, 1976). He included values along with knowledge and practice in his core triad for people managing change. Also, Erik Jantsch in his recent research in corporate and long range planning methods has also highlighted the formative role of values in planning change. ". . . Above the strategic Level (of planning) there is the policy level at which the dynamics of the system in question (e.g., corporation) are viewed in the context of all-embracing socio-cultural dynamics. And a higher even is the level of values which is not subject to rational elaboration, but always plays a decisive role, whether implicitly or explicitly." (Jantsch, 1978, 3-38)

The value research of Phase One was used to build a data base of problems, opportunities, and possible actions which Palauans foresaw as potential issues for their new government in the transition to self rule. An organization development resource group was comprised of the organization development consultant Raymon Bruce from the State Compensation Insurance Fund, Sharon Bruce, an interview specialist in personnel from Marnik Personnel Services, Inc., and Yoich Rengiil the Palauan specialist. They interviewed a broad spectrum of Palauans, other Micronesian leaders in the Marshall Islands, Ponepe, Truk, and Yap, as well as staff from the High Commissioner's Headquarters of the U.S. Trust Territories in Saipan. The basic principles of the interviews were shared with all of the interviewed people. Namely, the resource group believed that a group with a problem usually has within that group the solution to the needs and problems of their communities. It is just that for some reason they cannot quite get to assembling some of their needs, issues, nor their solutions to their problems. This organization development resource group explained that it did not have any solutions. What the resource group had were some methods and techniques to assist Palauans in identifying their problems, and opportunities, as well as identifying the possible action options Palau's new government might have to meet its new needs. The interview was designed to probe two open ended areas

of values and knowledge: what issues do Palauans think the new public administration should consider in setting up the new government when it is elected; and what things do Palauans think the new government should consider doing differently when they get in power?

Each interview was typed and returned for the person interviewed to edit as they saw fit. These interviews resulted in over a hundred pages of ideas, issues, concerns, problems, and possible solutions which Palauans thought that their new government should consider when setting up the new public administration. Besides making this information available to the new government when it was elected, the organization development group analyzed the data and formulated it into statements about the key issues which concerned Palauans.

These issues were:

1. How will we get the skills and knowledge we will need to do everything for ourselves?
2. How are we to go about developing our nation's resources to achieve self reliance without really becoming more dependent to foreign aid?
3. What standard-of-living level or level of infrastructure services should be available in the community?
4. How much are we to develop our national leadership, our management, and our development talent among resident Palauans?
5. How do we assure that the national government supports and shares the resources, public
6. Service responsibilities, and funds with the states in a fair and equitable manner?
7. How do we assure that our cultural identity will not get lost in the shuffle between self reliance and economic development?
8. How do we assure that the development of national resources are for the benefit of the whole community, yet still reward the entrepreneurial few who take the risk to develop resources on their own?
9. How are we to promote and control our finance in the face of economic development and foreign investment?
10. How can we build on the strengths of our tradition's economy, government, culture, and justice instead of replacing them?" (Bruce, 1981, 21)

These key issues were organized into a report for the new constitutional government which was to be elected and inaugurated within six months. The report combined the key issues and potential action options into strategic areas of concern for action. The report was to assist the new government in identifying national issues, goals, policy, and in organizing the new public administration. Bruce, 1-6

### **Phase Two: building the institutions of governance**

Institution building evolved from two directions. First, the constitutionally democratic process proceeded to elect and install the public officials based upon the current political dynamics of Palauan needs, values, and choices. Secondly, the newly elected administration established their own transition team to provide a smooth assuming of public administration powers and responsibilities from the Trust Territory Administration. This transition team ultimately enfolded the organization development group into the president's office. The values research and key issues identified in Phase One were used by the president and his advisors as a resource to help them define the national goals and to frame the new administration's broad policy for nation building. President Remeliik said in his inauguration speech:

These islands, this new nation, we people of Palau: Are we to set out in our new canoe as a sovereign nation without any destination?... Building our nation is now our national destination, but this destination has many goals. *Self-Reliance* is one of these goals, where Palauans turn more to our own resources to meet our needs . . . Another goal is *Economic Prosperity* through the full utilization of our national and human resources as Palauans. A third goal is *Cultural Well-being*, not only in terms of health, education, and public services, but also in recognizing that our traditions are our most potent resource to help us achieve our other national goals. Another goal is to work toward these goals in a manner which will promote the *Political Stability* necessary for the many voices of Palau to reach the most constructive consensus for action. This consensus approach, so much a part of the traditions of Palau can apply at all levels of national policy making and planning. (Remeliik, 1981: 2)

These national goals identified in President Remeliik's inauguration speech put the key issues identified in Phase One into the perspective of national policy issues. He and his advisory transition team redefined the key issues in light of the president's platform and position which led to his election by the people of Palau. It became apparent that these issues were grounded where the multiple goals had to compete for the same resources, or where they were not very complimentary to each other. For example, the nation could achieve its Economic Prosperity goal through a massive investment of foreign funds and people. However, such an influx of foreign workers and business could easily overwhelm the Palauans and their culture. The result, while achieving the one goal of Economic Prosperity, could be injurious to the national goal of Cultural Well-being. The president's policy sought to reconcile the national goals in terms of these national policy issues. Policy was evaluated and defined along the lines of

the key issues and referenced in terms of the national goals. But how was this policy to be implemented? And by whom?

A spectrum of public administration organization models were sketched out and evaluated against the national goals, policy, and viability within Palauan traditions and customs. Each of the alternative public administration organization models were different, not only as to their internal institution variables of leadership, doctrine, programs, resources and structure, but the models also assumed different linkages and attitudes with the elements in its environment. (Esman, 1972)

The function of using a spectrum of organization models was to allay the search for an ideal public administration organization structure to be set once and for all time. (Kirkhart, 1971) The spectrum of models highlighted the evolutionary prospect of organizing for national development. The ideal public administration organization model to be used when and after the national goals are achieved, may not be the best public administration model to use in the process working to achieving them. (Bruce., 1981 1-6) Also, the spectrum of organization models helped assure that modern public administration methods and practices would be adapted to Palauan traditional culture and not the reverse as was done by previous 'off island' administrations.

Finally, the spectrum of models provided a choice rather than a recommendation. The continuum of models invited a 'fourth' or 'Palauan' model which the new administration would design as the best way for Palauans to organize their public administration to meet present needs and future ambitions. This choice provided the important ingredient of commitment when Palau built the institutions and had to stand by them in adverse situations. (Argyris, 1970)

This choice allowed the new administration to design their new public administration to include the unique duality dynamic which permeates Palau's traditional social systems. In Palau all social units split internally into two opposing parts which interact as equals to provide a synthesis through consensus. Each family, clan, informal play group of children, village, community club, council of chiefs, and the confederation of villages itself naturally divides into two sections referred to as 'This side of our village and our other side of our village to emphasize the shared identity between the opposing parts. (Stumpf, 1970: 17-20) This dialectical duality feature of Palau's traditional social structure effectively avoided the "Them and Us" polemic division and paved the way for consensus. It was incorporated into the new administration cabinet and the national development process.

The national goals, policy, and the organization of the public administration were then shared with the people of Palau by President Remeliik in his "State of the Nation Address" presented to Palau's legislative bodies, *Olbiil Era Kelulau*. Included in this address was the basic

strategy for achieving the national goals, as well as laying the groundwork for the overall national development effort of nation building. Also included in the president's address was a narrative of guidelines indicating how he intended to organize the public administration to implement national policy and development programs.

Thus, the president's Inauguration Speech and his State of the Nation Address became the public foundation-documents of nation building. These two public speeches included: the national goals established from the constitution and the president's platform, broad national policy, the organization of the public administration, basic strategy for national development, and the president's specific policy guidelines as to how the public administration was to function in the process of nation building.

As a final step of Phase Two, a Ministers' Portfolio Guide Bruce, 1981 was compiled to give continuity of the Phase One and Phase Two efforts and for the use by the ministers at that time they would be appointed. This Guide included the president's two speeches as the public foundation of national goals, policy, and doctrine. The president's advisors developed specific guidelines as to how the ministers would work together, how they would implement the policy and how they would operate the new public administration. Also included in this Guide were many of the supporting research documents from Phases One and Two. This Guide would be both a direction and a training instrument for the new public administration and its ministers to be appointed in the near future.

### **Phase Three: national development & planning**

One of the more difficult areas for the new administration to grapple with was resource development in general and economic development in particular. This was because there were no viable development models which could apply to Palau's unique situation as an emerging island national economy. The typical top-down approach used in Third World developing countries for the past two decades or more, centralizing development planning and project implementation in national government, has been less than successful. Recent research has indicated that this centralized national administration itself was a major contributing factor to the lack of success in rural development projects around the Third World. (Rondinelli, 1979)

This research showed that a decentralized or devolved resource development approach seemed more promising. (Rondinelli, 1981) Our research in Palau supported these findings as well. Those projects controlled and implemented through the Trust Territory High Commissioner's Headquarters in Saipan, except for public works infrastructure construction

projects, tended to become 'exercises' in project funding and administration. The projects in Palau which did develop into substantial economic entities were planned and implemented through the communities themselves or through and NGO organizations like the Palau Community Action Agency (PCAA), which were more independent of strong central government control.

The PCAA became the prototype of a devolved resource development approach. The agency itself had explored ways to devolve its power and responsibility down into the communities to improve its success rates with development projects. Supporting this devolved approach are the traditional values and customs of Palau. The values research in Phase One indicated that the dualistic socio-cultural structures, the councils of chiefs, decision by consensus, the strong village ties, and the reciprocal obligation system of the subsistence economy, would all support a devolved resource development approach. Indeed, it was the Palauan way in the past. (Stumpf, 1970)

However, the national public administration was the only institution large enough to administrate resource development on a national scale. President Remeliik made this point clear in his State of the Nation Address, "It is important to keep in mind that the present government operations is the only institution available to us now which we can use to begin our national development toward self-reliance. We should make no mistake about that. Either we remake this into an institution which will take us on our way to our goals or we must dismantle it and try to build a better one. We have decided to use this government institution, but to focus it on resource development and in dispersing (the delivery of) public services to state, community and private sector managements." (Remeliik, 1981: 23-24) The development issues became: Can it be done here? Can we do it? Can we sustain it? (see *Figure 2*. Palauan Resource Development Issues).

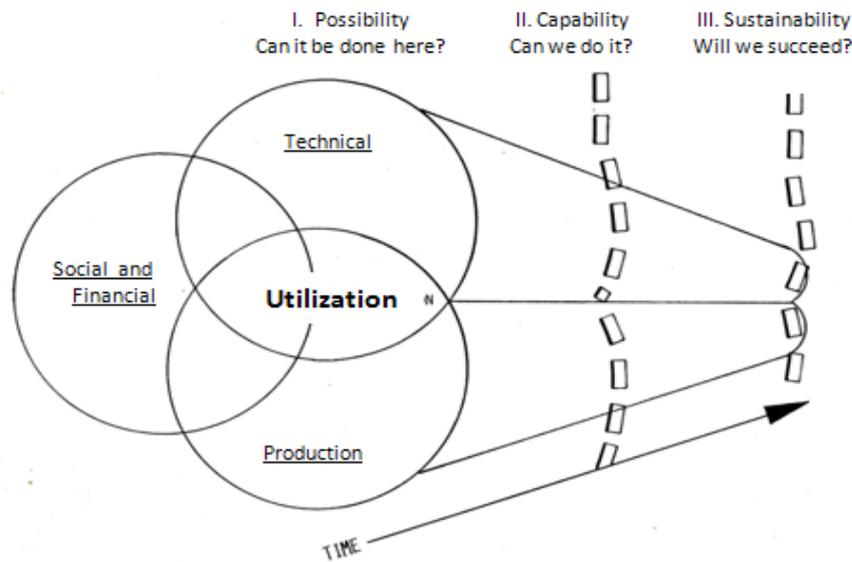
Another fundamental dilemma faced in organizing national resource development was the inability of Western market economic theory and methods to function in Palau's economy.

The economy in Palau is bifurcated into a market economy and a subsistence economy. (Herskovits, 1952) The market economy is driven almost entirely by the US Trust Territory Budget funds to Palau from the U.S. Department of Interior as well as special funding from a variety of other U.S. Federal Agency Funds. (Bruce, 1981: 30-36)

Palau's subsistence economy is enriched by a favorable climate, ecology, and ratio of population to land. Palau's traditional culture includes a highly developed and sophisticated resource distribution system based on reciprocal social obligations. (Smith, 1977) This system along with their own money system has produced a flexible and pervading enriched subsistence economy which protects the people as a whole against poverty and want in their basic needs. The resource dilemma is described in the problem of

improving the market economy presently furnished by the United States without destroying the enriched subsistence economy already in place. In fact the centralized top-down economic resource development of the Western market approach is usually founded upon replacing the subsistence economy with a viable market economy.

**Figure 2. Palauan Resource Development Issues**



Again, the values research in Phase One indicated that the enriched subsistence economy furnished Palauans with the significant share of their values and norms. Their village and clan culture is embedded in their subsistence economy. The culture and the economy are interwoven into the experience of Palauan life. It is like the warp and the woof of their traditional *pandanus* mats. There is no practical way to separate one from the other as is done in the public markets of Western economies. Each 'economic' transaction is equally a 'cultural' transaction in Palau's subsistence economy, binding human relationships and clans far beyond the economic aspects of that specific transaction.

A national economic development plan which envisions replacing the economic/cultural transaction of the subsistence economy with a public market would remove the 'economic' warp from the pandanus mat of Palauan identity. The remaining 'cultural' woof strands could easily fall into disarray. (Bruce, 1981: 1-21)

Palauan life, of course, is certainly more than a pandanus mat. It is a living, growing developing thing. To try to preserve traditional village life against any and all change, the so called 'human zoo' strategy, is not realistic nor is it desired by Palauans. Palauans are aware of the problems of growth and the modern sector. (Soedjatmoko, 1980) They are prepared to take a place in the world community of nations, especially with those here in the Pacific Basin. For example, President Remeliik attended the South Pacific Conference (SPC) where Palau officially joined the membership of the SPC.

However, any national resource development approach must provide equally for the people to choose where and how to develop their traditions and culture, and to choose compatible changes in developing their resources. There must be a process built into resource development where the culture can reweave itself with the changes in the economy. Otherwise the national development plan may set up an economy which is not only alien to the people of the nation, but by unraveling their present cultural/economic matrix could leave the society in shambles.

Palau's national development strategy attempts to deal with this dilemma by combining both a top-down and a bottom up development approach. Included in this development strategy is an overall direction of moving the development resources and responsibilities into the communities and villages to build and sustain the development.

President Remeliik outlined this dualistic planning approach in his address to the legislature, "First, we must always keep in mind that the nation's resources are not found in the national government. They are found in the individual communities around Palau. Therefore, any development of national resources must occur in these communities, or rather; the people of these communities must develop their resources for themselves first, and come to the national government for help second, if the efforts are to succeed for Palauans and their culture is to thrive and grow." (Remeliik, 1981: 20-26)

Top-down development gives the national government the role of furnishing ready support resources to the communities' resource development efforts, but not to manage the efforts. This ready support may include: funds, developing infrastructure, finance and banking institutions, and otherwise managing the affairs of the nation. The bottom up approach focuses on specific economic resource changes which the villages choose in accordance with what changes they are willing to make and sustain in their village life. The subsistence economy is maintained in an evolutionary fashion and remains always a support foundation against the vast fluctuations of a world economy which could otherwise wash them away. The top down approach serves as a support to the village resource development efforts, providing the added security during the formative stages of any development project. At the same time the top down approach

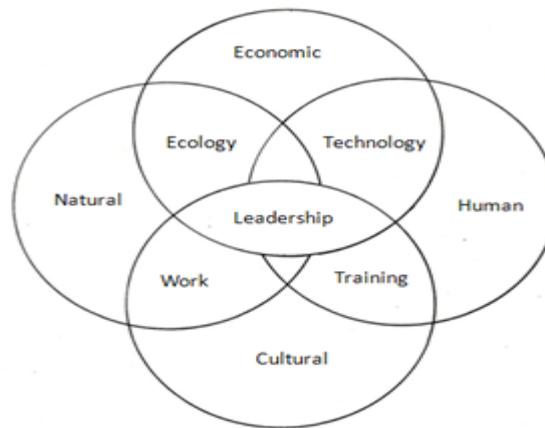
coordinates resource development efforts on a national scale. However, the major responsibility for sustaining the project's success is to remain with the village. The failures will come to nothing new while the success will be theirs.

#### **Phase Four: human resource planning & development**

Sustainable national resource development was described by President Remeliik as different categories for planning purposes depicted in figure 3. Palauan Resource Domains. "In fact they are each really different views of the same thing -- Palau as a nation. These resource domains of national resources are:

1. Human resources--our people as workers,
2. Natural resources--of our land & our sea,
3. Economic resources--our production of wealth,
4. Cultural resources--our way & values as Palauans." (Remeliik, 1981: 20)

**Figure 3. Palauan Resource Domains**



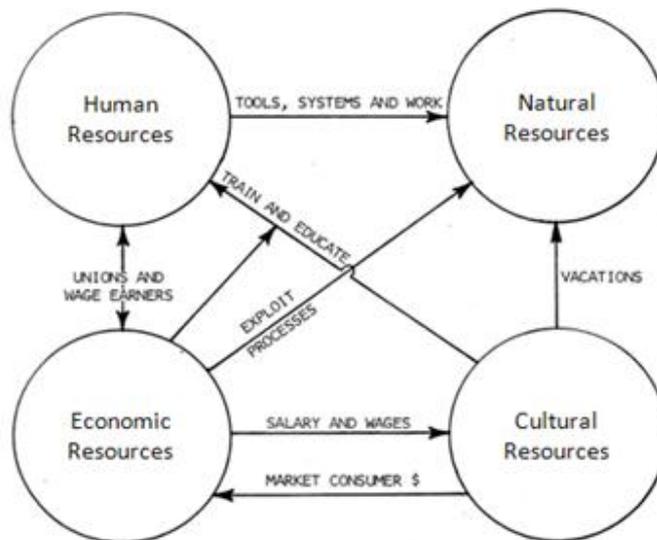
The new administration realized that they can define national goals and policy, design top-down and bottom up planning processes, organize public administration, plan resource development and devolve power to the communities. But unless there is a working program for Palau to train themselves in the basic skills and trades needed for the nation to operate for itself, any plan for national development would be unsustainable and a fantasy.

There already exist stacks of thick 'indicative plans' made for Palau by the Trust Territory, the United Nations as well as other various 'off

island' economic planners. The plans have resulted in big government contracts for foreign infrastructure construction firms. However, none of these plans have developed a significant independent private sector economy. Nor do they show much hope of developing any in the future.

The president saw that if Palauans do not train themselves in these basic skills and trades of the private sector, then any economic development will have to come in the form of foreign aid, investment, and control. This situation is not news to the Palauans. Indeed, during the values research of Phase One this situation was their over-riding concern, "How will we get the skills and knowledge we will need to do everything for ourselves?" (Remeliik, 1981: 8)

**Figure 4. Palauan Key Resource Development Model**



In order to breathe credibility into the national development effort the new administration considered a reorganization of the occupational center in Koror in order to utilize it in an apprenticeship training approach. This human resource development strategy envisions a coordinated effort between the emerging private sector and a comprehensive apprentice training program. The program would be designed to combine classroom teaching at the occupational center with on-the-job training in the private sector as depicted in *Figure 4. Resource Development and Training Model*.

The training would focus on developing a few already skilled Palauans in the private sector as trainers in the various key trade and business areas needed to develop Palau's economic self reliance. Some of these key areas are:

- Building trades & shipwrights

- Stationary, marine & energy engineers
- Auto and marine mechanics
- Business administration & management
- Purchasing, procurement & shipping,
- Light industry manufacturing
- Tourism & hotel management

These Palauan trainers would then teach their skills to working apprentices and the teaching would be in Palauan. The program would teach English, Japanese or other languages as a foreign language in conjunction with applied science, math, and the technical journals required to learn the skills involved.

This approach would require two or more years lead time and would need to be designed to grow over a period of five or more years. The objective of the apprentice program would be to provide the skills and knowledge required to perform the trades and to manage the business Palau will be developing on its way to self reliance.

### **Summary and conclusions**

The results of Palau's organization and resource development effort in its transition and nation building can be characterized as helping:

- ✓ Define and expand national goals
- ✓ Develop national policy based upon Palauan values, issues and concerns
- ✓ Organize public administration to incorporate the traditional Palauan consensus
- ✓ dynamic throughout, and to focus the organization as the institution for change in implementing the national policy of nation building,
- ✓ Reorienting economic development strategy to include Palau's enriched subsistence economy and culture as the main strength and foundation for national development
- ✓ Outline a realistic human resource development strategy to assure Palauan self reliance and control in their future
- ✓ Principally these results are embodied and documented in Palau's, Ministers' Portfolio Guide" (Bruce, 1981) which is presently serving the president's cabinet as a resource for nation building. This guide is also a documentation of what nation building looked like to those Palauans first charged with the task of transition to the new nation. This guide may serve as a blueprint and map, or perhaps it can serve at least as a channel marker in the reef to help other Palauans who must come this way in the future.

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