**Presentations on Good Governance in Micronesia**

***General Format***

The presentation will consist of five segments, each of which begins with a short video clip (5-8 min) followed by a Powerpoint Presentation showing how this applies concretely to the situation in Micronesia today. Each segment ought to end with time allotted for discussion so that the audience can react to the questions presented.

***1) Beginning of Self-government***.

Video:

Brief history of the evolution of TT into self-government in photos, with emphasis on the glory days of the 60s and 70s, and the legacy of early leadership to Micronesians today. There should be shots of individuals who were leaders in those days. The sequence should reflect the new photo album “Coming of Age”: old TT headquarters on Saipan, shots of the early Congress of Micronesia, negotiations with the US over political status, Constitutional Convention in 1975, first elected executive officials and full legislatures in the late 70s. Mention the split up of the TT into four separate entities. Perhaps quote from the preambles of the constitutions as ideals that guided these governments. [Purpose is to provide information on the background, while evoking an emotional response of pride.]

Presentation:

* *Shape of the different governments*, and the basic ways in which they differ from one another (look at 4 features of government: relationship between executive and legislative branches; choice of president; selection of department heads; oversight mechanism)

[Note: we will use the single appropriate slide describing the features of the government for the place in which we give the presentation, with others not presented. Then we will highlight some of the differences between this government and the others.]

* CNMI: basic US system.

executive-legislative branches entirely separate

governor elected by popular vote (same ticket as Lt Gov?)

dept heads picked by governor, approved by legislature

Public Auditor (but how independent?)

* ROP:

executive and legislative branches entirely separate–bicameral legislature

president elected by popular vote, but separately from VP

department heads picked by president (congress approval?)

Public Auditor, refers problems to Special Prosecutor

* FSM:

two branches, but intertwined at the head

president chosen by the Congress from among its at-large members: no popular vote

department heads picked by president by confirmed by congress

Public Auditor, who refers problems to AG’s office

* RMI:

parliamentary system, with executive leaders picked from the congress

president chosen by congress

department heads (ministers) chosen by president with counterpart (secretary) at the office level

Public Auditor, also Public Service Commission

* *Layers and levels of government*:

Federal and state in FSM, US & territorial in case of CNMI, perhaps not as difficult in RMI and ROP since their “states” or “municipalities” are so much smaller and given less authority.

* Tension between the levels recurs in FSM and CNMI, since their constitutions concede much more authority to the lower level. FSM’s case complicated by the cultural differences between states.
* *Purposes of the government*:

+ provides basic public services: especially health, education, and transportation

+ keeps public order–balance between different interest and groups in the nation: through creation of laws and enforcement of the laws.

+ represents the people abroad.

* *Quality of the government* depends on the people: “by the people, for the people, of the people” Refer to the preambles for reflections on this. Point to be emphasized: the government is OUR government. [This is the purpose of government, not the maintenance of control by any one administration.]

***2) The Good of the Entire Society***

Video:

Government official awards the bid for a construction project for a new school to a man who offers him a little kickback, even though there were two lower bids. Not only is the cost of the project higher, but the contractor given the job has defaulted on the last two projects he has been awarded. It is doubtful whether this one will even be completed. Emphasize the importance of this school for the community.

Presentation: (examples of ethical dilemmas: what’s good for me and what’s good for all the people)

* Custom is to repay a favor with another. So what the US calls “bribes” is really just a legitimate customary repayment for a favor. (Tell the story of Santi returning the pink envelope to foreign investors looking for a permit. Emphasize why he did it–his desire to keep the public trust.) Dilemma: Do I take a “gift” for myself and compromise the common good?
* Suppose I find out that land is being sought for a public project. Should I use this information, which I have received because of my official status as a government official? Should I buy the land on the side with the intention of reselling to the government for a profit, thus increasing the cost of the government purchase? Or should I let the opportunity for a good profit pass? Why shouldn’t I be able to use inside information to benefit myself or my family? Isn’t this is what anyone would do in such a situation?
* Is it proper for me to withhold private land from the government which is needed for a public project if the government will not meet the price I arbitrarily set for the value of the land? It’s my land and I have a right to make as much profit from it as I can. On the other hand, the community presumably needs the school or dispensary that is planned for building there. Discussion of eminent domain.
* Hiring relatives is just a way of discharging traditional obligations to those in my family. Besides, it’s easier for me to exercise authority over my own kin. So, nepotism shouldn’t be seen as negative. Should I, as head of a government office, hire a relative simply because he is related to me even if I have doubts about whether he can do the job well? (Example of Seinwar ES, a good school that depends on close-knit ties between staff)
* Voting: Even if we know who is the best candidate, we may wind up voting for someone who is relative because of a sense of obligation. Should family ties trump civic obligations? Or should I vote for the person best qualified for the position, even if he is running against a person to whom I am indebted?

***3) Effective enforcement of the Law***

Video:

“The First Day in the Office” A new employee, a zealous young man or woman who has transferred from a private business to a government job, is at work for the first day. He is taken around to meet people, passes some empty desks and wonders where the employees are. “It’s Monday!” someone tells him with a wink. After the tour around the office, his boss wants to send him out on an errand and asks about the office car. He hears that it has been wrecked in a crash on the weekend by an employee who took the car home. He wonders how the employee was allowed to use a government car on the weekend and gets another funny smile from someone. The boss takes him to see his immediate supervisor, but the man is not there. He has been absent all week, as it comes out in conversation. Is he on sick leave? No, he’s used that all up in his first month. But he’s a relative of someone high up in government, so everyone just shrugs and lets it go. Disillusionment begins to set in during the first morning on the job. (Perhaps should be filmed at FSM National Government)

Presentation:

* The police chief of a place is called on to remove squatters from land that has been leased to a foreign company. The company is Korean, so he doesn’t know any of the company’s officials. On the other hand, some of the squatters went to school with him and he knows their families well. Should he evict the squatters or not? What are the consequences of his failure to evict them?
* A customs inspector at the airport is checking the bags of a friend who has just returned from a trip to Asia. He has been tipped off in advance that this passenger might be carrying drugs. He makes a cursory check through his bags, but finds nothing. Should he do a thorough search of his friend’s baggage?
* A man who has borrowed a large sum of money from a bank or other lending institution has defaulted on his loan when his business failed. By the terms of the loan, his land should be taken by the bank for leasing, but the bank does not call in his bad loan or deprive him of his land.
* What do we do with an inept or lazy government employee? Since it’s embarrassing to be fired, it’s easier simply to move him to another job outside his present department. Then he’s someone else’s problem.
* We Micronesians can’t seem to find ways of enforcing the laws that we know we need. We seem to need a neutral party, usually foreigners, to make us comply. (“Killer George” strategy; businessman who hires Filipino or American manager because he can’t enforce the law against his family)

 ***4) Keeping the Public Informed***

Video:

A young man or woman, a news reporter for a local paper or radio station, is trying to get information on a new controversial piece of legislation. He goes to one or two offices, including the legislature, to get information on the bill, but finds roadblocks up everywhere he goes. “Why do you need this?” he is asked. At another office, he is flipped off with the excuse that the supervisor is not back and no one in the office can authorize the release of the information he requires. Finally, he decides to make an interview with the legislator who proposed the bill. After some difficulties in getting the interview, he meets the congressman. Early in their conversation, the legislator expresses surprise that the news reporter is so interested in the details of the legislation. The legislator wonders why the young man doesn’t adopt the same attitude as everyone else–just trust him to do the job for which he was elected.

Presentation:

* Years ago, when MicSem wanted to run a conference on political status, we received a letter from a congressman suggesting that we leave the matter to those members of congress who knew something about it. “Don’t meddle in things you don’t know anything about,” he warned.
* Old model of government representation going back to days when most people knew nothing about government. Congressman’s attitude: “People have elected me because they trust me to make decisions. They don’t want to bother with the details of government. They rely on me to make good choices for them.”
* This theory of representation offered payback for the people, but not necessarily good government. “Let them eat cake” approach: give the people what they want–boats, a few jobs and some cash–and they’ll be happy. They’re not interested in more long-range goals anyway. There’s lots of truth in the old saying “All politics is local.”
* Reactions of government: There’s no point in making this information on government actions known to people. They wouldn’t understand it anyway, and someone would probably just misinterpret it and upset others in the community.
* Another government reaction to media: They always seem to emphasize the negative in what they publish. They bring shame on the government in public, and thereby cause harm to our nation or state.
* A new generation has grown up with an interest in what their government is doing. To participate actively in their government, people need information on what is happening.
* How do we get the information we need to keep an eye on what our government is doing? Media? Direct approach to elected officials?

***5) Exercise of Control over Government***

Video:

Short segment on how traditional rule worked. There is narrative over a re-enactment of a traditional scene in which a chief has made a decision that others, dissatisfied with the decision, would like to modify. Show the roundabout feedback of even lowly people to the chiefly decision, leading to its modification. Eg, man hears the rumor that the chief is planning something. He reacts by telling someone his doubts, and this second person goes to someone else. A discussion on the controversial decision is carried on in the small community meeting house. The word is carried from there to someone else, who goes to the chief. The latter modifies his decision because he senses that it is unacceptable to his people. All of this happens in a short segment. The point is that even in a traditional society, there was room for input into decisions from ordinary people.

Presentation: How should people exercise control over today’s government, even as they exerted influence in the past?

* Keep in touch with what’s happening: getting the facts on government conduct, setting up watchdog groups, sending out information to others via coconut telegraph or Internet. (eg. reaction to the FSM Amnesty Bill)
* People could demand regular briefings from high government officials on current issues and what the government is doing about them. (eg, President of Palau’s weekly radio broadcasts to the people)
* Voting: How effective is this as a check? Is there any point in voting if we know that congressmen can’t lose their jobs anyway because of the prestige they enjoy and the favors they have done people. There’s no point in trying to replace them. Or is there? (eg, turnover of Palau Congress in recent elections, same in RMI some years ago)

***6) Conclusion***

* The government is OUR government.
* There are real cultural challenges to effectively running a modern government in Micronesia.
* Micronesians are becoming educated and experienced in dealing with issues facing their government.
* Many educated Micronesians these days aspire to a role in shaping their government.
* The people of Micronesia–CNMI, FSM, RMI, ROP–should take a major role for piloting their country into the future.

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