

Resource Center
for Women & Girls

ROWG

MACRO ECONOMICS

THROUGH OUR LENS

Girls + Power + Economy



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Background

In April 2025, the Resource Center for Women and Girls(RCWG) convened a retreat at Starling Resort in Machakos County. The venue, calm and tucked away from the noise of daily life, offered the Vipepeos a space to slow down and reflect. This was not the first time they had gathered. Many arrived with fresh experiences, stories, and questions shaped by the months since their last meeting. The retreat was designed as a moment of return, a chance to reconnect with one another, revisit past learnings, and explore more deeply the systems and structures that shape their lives. It was also a space for rest, creativity, and reclaiming power through reflection, dialogue and feminist joy.

Each session centred a shared commitment to learning and grounding theory in lived experience. The questions brought into the room were clear and urgent. What does it mean when students are sent home over unpaid fees? How does inflation show up when the cost of basic goods continues to rise? How does corruption affect a mother trying to access public healthcare? The retreat opened space to name these connections, ask better questions, and sharpen analysis. This report documents the moments, stories, and shifts that defined the sessions. It reflects the ongoing work to build feminist consciousness among the girls and build solidarity to think of alternatives.

This was a chance to build on the work the Vipepeos had already begun in earlier retreats and community sessions. Their voices reflected growth, shaped by past conversations on power, feminist care, and reimagining justice. This retreat offered space to go deeper, not to start over. The girls arrived informed, ready to lead, and grounded in lived experience. Their questions were sharper, their reflections more nuanced, showing that their feminist journey is ongoing and intentional.

Their previous engagement with school barazas, indabas, and learning circles had introduced key concepts around power and systems of oppression. This retreat allowed them to apply that knowledge in more complex ways.

They connected theory to their lives, naming systems, asking hard questions, and proposing alternatives. The shift was clear. They were learning about injustice, imagining and articulating what justice could look like in their own words and for their communities.

1

E-CON

101





VIPEPEO **REFLECTIONS**

On April 8th, the girls revisited the themes learnt during the December retreat, grounding their reflections in both personal and political realities, which would be key in the upcoming facilitation led by The NAWI Collective.

Sandra offered a key observation about the economy, noting the paradox that locally-produced goods are often more expensive, limiting profits that would ideally go to local businesses.

Angie shared how simply being among her sisters at RCWG brings her joy, especially as she copes with the stress of having her father in the hospital and the burden of hospital bills.

Jackline talked about the long-term cost of electing leaders along tribal lines, highlighting how such choices often compromise community needs.



Lavender Malkia shared her low and high moments. Her low moments were when her trainer did not allow her to perform her spoken word at the drama festival and took away her script. One of the participants shared their script, and she was the only girl able to perform and win. She feels sad that her phone got destroyed, and she almost missed an opportunity because of this.

She borrowed a phone to participate in a competition called Vitreous Woman, where she had a few Zoom meetings with the Director. She ended up being number 3. She is grateful to be at RCWG because the space is very peaceful, and she gets to be with her fellow sisters.

The reflections were very timely and seemed to preempt themes that would arise in the next session. The facilitators, Wangari Kinoti and Nzilani Simu, were introduced to the girls, kick-starting Macroeconomics 101! They introduced the girls to the concept of macroeconomics as the study of how governments generate and allocate money. This was contrasted with microeconomics, which deals with household-level financial decisions which a lot of the girls relate to. Drawing from the NAWI Collective's work, Wangari shared that economic systems are deeply political and inseparable from questions of justice and power. She emphasised that the personal and political cannot be separated.



MACROECONOMICS THROUGH A FEMINIST LENS

When the NAWI team began introducing macroeconomics, the room held a quiet buzz of curiosity. The girls leaned forward in their seats, notebooks open, pens tapping softly on pages. Some wore expressions of focused concentration, eyes fixed on the facilitators as unfamiliar words like inflation, austerity, and fiscal policy filled the space. Others glanced at one another, nodding slowly, trying to piece together what these terms meant for their lives. There was a sense of openness in the room. As the facilitators gently unpacked the layers of global and national economic systems, the air felt both electric and tender. It was clear that something was beginning to shift. The girls were beginning to see themselves as part of a much bigger story.

Macroeconomics is a branch of economics that studies the behaviour of the overall economy, which encompasses markets, businesses, consumers, and governments. Macroeconomics examines economy-wide phenomena such as inflation, price levels, rate of economic growth, national income, gross domestic product (GDP), and changes in unemployment.

Some of the key questions addressed by macroeconomics include: What causes unemployment? What causes inflation? What creates or stimulates economic growth? Macroeconomics attempts to measure how well an economy is performing, understand what forces drive it, and project how performance can improve.

The session started with a glossary of words that would be used throughout the conversation on Macroeconomics. These words included, but were not limited to, Neoliberalism, Austerity, Capitalism, Multilateral Institutions, Structural Adjustment Programs, Fiscal Policy, and Unpaid Care Work. Vipepeos had an idea of what most of the terms meant, as they had had some sessions with Nyawira Wahito to introduce the concepts to them.

Glossary Kona.

Neoliberalism

An economic philosophy that conceptually describes a move towards free markets, capitalism, and a diversion from government ownership into privatisation, and is often characterised by austerity.

Austerity

Austerity, the facilitators explained, is when governments spend less, leading to fewer jobs, reduced protections, and underfunded essential services.

Capitalism

An economic system characterised by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decision, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free market.

Multilateralism

Since lateral means "side", multilateral means basically "many-sided". The philosophy of multilateralism claims that the best solutions generally result when as many of the world's nations as possible are involved in discussions, and multilateralists often favour strengthening the United Nations. Today, multilateralism can be seen at work in, for example, the World Health Organisation, the World Trade Organisation, and the International Criminal Court

Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPS)

A structural adjustment program (SAP) is a set of economic reforms that a country must adhere to to secure a loan from the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank. SAPS often consist of economic policies such as reducing government spending and opening up to free trade, among others.

Intersectional Identities

Intersectional identities refer to the different parts of who a person is that shape how they experience the world. These include gender, race, class, age, disability, sexuality, and more. For example, a young girl living in a rural area may face barriers that are different from those of a woman living in an urban centre. Intersectionality helps us understand that people can be affected by more than one form of inequality at the same time. It reminds us that justice must consider the full picture of someone's life, not just one part of it.

Sweatshops

Sweatshops are workplaces where people, often women and children, work in poor conditions for very low wages. These factories are usually overcrowded, unsafe, and have long working hours. Workers are often not allowed to take breaks or speak out about mistreatment. Sweatshops are common in the fashion and electronics industries, especially in countries with weak labour laws. Even though they produce goods for large international brands, the people who make these products are often exploited and kept in poverty.



REFLECTIONS

CNTD'

The conversation turned to recent protests against the 2024 Finance Bill, with Ruth Mbaire offering to explain what she thinks the protest was about. She explained that the bill was met with resistance due to unfair taxes on essential goods, particularly those used by women, such as sanitary towels, imposed without public consultation. Young people took to the streets to question where their taxes were going, especially because there is a lot of corruption and external interference in the country.

Fatmah deepened this point, naming institutions like the IMF and World Bank as actors who influence domestic policy through hidden hands and heavy conditionalities, sometimes in the form of financial advice.

To illustrate the point further, an example of financial advice was given. It is like someone telling you that the red dress you are in is okay, but they would prefer that you wear a black one if you needed their help. In the same way, these multilateral institutions pretend to give impartial advice, yet this is an innuendo to influence financial policies, especially for countries in the global majority.

The girls examined the legacy of Structural Adjustment Programs SAPS introduced in Kenya and other African countries in the late 1980s and 1990s. These programs, while pitched as solutions to debt and a cushion to the economy post-colonialism, led to the erosion of even existing public services. What was once free, such as free education and other public services, continued to become inaccessible to most of the global majority. Governments were forced to privatise and reduce spending.

REFLECTIONS

CNTD'

The session then interrogated the notion of national debt. A question asked by Wangari was whether debt was bad. A few of the girls thought that debt was a bad thing and countries should not borrow from multilateral institutions. Wangari then explained that borrowing money is not inherently wrong, but becomes dangerous when used irresponsibly or tied to conditions that hurt the public.

The role of international financial institutions loomed large in this discussion, especially in how they subtly push countries toward neoliberal reforms like privatisation and deregulation. The example of Elon Musk in the U.S, a private actor influencing public policy despite not being elected, sparked reflection on how corporate power overrides democratic accountability. To bring it home, it was noted that there are 'Kenyan Elon Musks' in existence.

As the session drew to a close, the girls began to make connections between the global economy and their everyday realities. Naisherua reminded the group that taxes must serve the people; if citizens contribute to a system, they have a right to demand transparency and justice.



2

ECONOMIC JUSTICE



FEMINIST ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVES AND WHY LANGUAGE MATTERS

As part of deepening their understanding of economic justice, the girls engaged in a session facilitated by NAWI that introduced Feminist Economic Alternatives, often abbreviated as FEA. This conversation was important in distinguishing between the commonly seen Women Economic Empowerment programs and more radical, transformative and inclusive frameworks like FEA.

The NAWI team explained that women's Economic Empowerment programs often focus on integrating women into existing economic systems. These programs provide important tools such as financial literacy, microloans, or entrepreneurial training. While such efforts can be meaningful, they often leave intact the economic structures that continue to exploit care work, marginalise informal labour, and concentrate wealth among the few.

Feminist Economic Alternatives go beyond mere representation. They question and seek to transform the very systems that produce economic injustice. Instead of asking how to help women succeed in capitalist markets, Feminist Economic Alternatives ask how we can build economic models rooted in justice, care, equity, and sustainability.



FEMINIST ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVES AND WHY LANGUAGE MATTERS

During the session, the girls explored short videos and discussion prompts that helped them reflect on how the economy could look if it centred the needs of people rather than profits. They began to imagine economies where success is not measured by GDP but by wellbeing, solidarity, and community. One of the key lessons from the macroeconomics sessions was the need to move beyond using Gross Domestic Product, or GDP, as the main way of measuring a country's progress. The girls learned that while GDP shows how much money a country is making, it does not tell us whether people are doing well. It does not show if communities have access to healthcare, education, safe housing, or clean water. It also does not reflect the well-being of the environment. A country can have a growing GDP while women are still unpaid for their care work, children are dropping out of school, and rivers are being polluted. The group discussed the importance of measuring development through indicators that reflect both the health of the people and that of the planet. This includes access to public services, food security, environmental protection, and quality of life. The conversation reminded the girls that economic systems must serve people, not just profit.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMINIST ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVES:



- Prioritising the care economy, both paid and unpaid, and recognising it as the foundation of all economic life.
- Moving away from profit-driven models to systems that involve communities in decisions about land, labour, and resources.
- Designing economies that respect the planet, reduce dependence on extractive industries, and protect natural resources for future generations.
- Building networks of mutual support, where economic relationships are based on cooperation rather than competition.
- Challenging economic hierarchies and ensuring that resources are shared equitably across gender, class, and location.
- Recognising domestic, emotional, and community labour as essential and not secondary to formal employment.

Additionally, the session turned the group's attention to the global economic system and its impact on women and marginalised communities.

The conversation unpacked capitalism as a structure designed to prioritise the maximisation of profit, often at the expense of care, dignity, and collective well-being. Through careful facilitation and visual prompts, the girls began to see that capitalism is not just about money or markets, it is also about whose labour counts, whose voices are centred, and whose struggles are rendered invisible.

Globally, women and girls perform more than three-quarters of all unpaid care work. According to UN Women, women spend an average of three times more hours per day on unpaid care responsibilities compared to men. In some rural and low-income settings, this number is even higher.



In Kenya, women contribute an estimated 80 per cent of all unpaid care labour, including cooking, cleaning, child care, and supporting sick or elderly family members. This labour sustains households, communities, and economies, yet it remains invisible in most national budgets and policies. The time spent on unpaid care often limits girls' ability to attend school regularly, participate in leadership, or rest. During the retreat, this reality was felt and named repeatedly by the girls. They shared how care work is expected of them without recognition or support, and how this imbalance reinforces gender inequality across generations.

One of the most powerful parts of the conversation focused on unpaid care work. Girls explored how household chores, caregiving, and community work tasks that keep families and societies functioning are often performed by women and girls without recognition or compensation. They observed that activities that they often undertake at home without any pay collectively have a name. This labour, although invisible in official economic systems, is vital to sustaining life. Even in cases where care work is paid, such as in domestic work or nursing, the girls learned that these sectors are often heavily deregulated, underpaid, and unsafe.

Stacey shared how, during the COVID-19 period, she and her sister worked long hours on a farm to raise money for school fees. Even after putting in the labour, they were not paid because the harvest failed. Their father had to take out a loan with extremely high interest rates to keep them in school. Her story highlighted the exploitation of girls' labour, as well as the horrors of working in systems that treat both care and survival as costs that women and girls must absorb.

To deepen their understanding, the girls watched short videos curated by NAWI that introduced the idea of feminist economic alternatives. These frameworks offered a different way of thinking about the economy, one that centres the well-being of people and the planet rather than profit and extraction. The session offered space for reflection, imagination, and a deeper political awareness about what kind of economic systems are needed to truly support girls and communities.



3

CONNECTING THE DOTS

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THE INTERSECTION OF FEMINIST ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVES WITH THE ENVIRONMENT AND OUR EVERYDAY LIVES.

Feminist Economic Alternatives are inherently intersectional. They recognise that economic injustice does not exist in isolation but is deeply connected to systems of gender, race, class, ability, and environmental degradation.

The session invited the girls to consider how extractive economies not only exploit human labour, particularly that of women and girls, but also the planet. The same logic that devalues care work is the one that treats forests, rivers, and minerals as infinite resources to be used and discarded. Feminist economics insists on an economy that is regenerative rather than extractive, one that acknowledges historical injustices, centres communities most impacted by exploitation, and builds futures where people and ecosystems are treated with equal dignity.


FEA push us to see how our struggles are interlinked and how solutions must be holistic, rooted in care for both people and the planet.

LEARNING DOESN'T HAVE TO BE BORING.

This session, facilitated by Nzilani from NAWI, explored the powerful role that art plays in protest movements, community resistance, and collective memory. Through a wide-ranging and thought-provoking conversation, the girls reflected on how artists across generations have used creativity to speak truth to power and challenge systems of oppression.

Girls were given creative freedom to come up with plays and skits that speak about Macroeconomics interestingly and artistically. They took time to come up with concepts for their plays as well as allocate roles for different characters.





Group one chose to call themselves Hope and Demand, with their skit primarily talking about the effects of privatisation. The characters included The President from a country in the global majority, a big foreign corporation called “Adini”, a multilateral organisation called “IMJ”, a local Mama mboga selling omena and food commodities and a group of students.


In the skit, the president took a loan from “Adini” and was unable to repay, so the corporation demanded to take over an International Airport in that country. To repay this loan, the president sought another loan from IMJ to repay the initial loan from “Adini”.

IMJ advised that they would only be able to loan the 700 billion in exchange for a few things. The president had to cut down on spending, which ideally goes towards sustaining health education and public services in the country, as well as increase taxation to facilitate smooth repayment of the said taxes.

The following scene was on the group of students trying to purchase a few items from the local market, but were quickly met with the rude shock of a local food, omena, being sold at an exorbitant price. They all exclaimed “omena ni 100(read as soo in sheng)” to show the extent to which foods were becoming unaffordable. Students then decided to demonstrate the high cost of living, which was met by a lot of police brutality. This skit demonstrated their understanding of the themes in Macroeconomics. Their creativity was equally evident throughout.

The final group talked about the effects of heavy taxation on different groups. A mama mboga and bodaboda rider, talking about how the new taxation systems are unreasonable and repressive. The Bodaboda rider talks of how everything is being taxed, including his helmets and side mirrors.

Group 3, also known as The G.O.A.T.S, led by Marion Katunge, focused on a spoken word which similarly criticised the state of affairs in the country.





THE BIG PICTURE

BY MARION KATUNGE

It's not just Coins in Your Pocket
It's the way the whole System's rocking.
Macroeconomics big Picture vibes,
Where nations move in silent strides.
Inflation? Yeah, creeping slow or fast
Your paycheck is shrinking, trying to last
GDP grows, or maybe it dips
like a tide that changes with global shifts
Unemployment
Not just for People with work, but stories stuck
in Pause
Dreams gathering dust
But stories get stuck in a pause
Dreams gathering Dust
While the market decides who's worth what
Interest rates, rising like the sun
Or dropping low when the hard times come
Central banks dare to do their thing
Trying to keep balance
The government spends then taxes tight
All in the name of what feels right
But behind those numbers and clever debates
Are lives, are hopes, are future gates.
Macroeconomics
It's chill to talk, but deep when you feel it

It's not just money
It's Motion
it's Meaning
It's the rhythm of people dreaming.
I speak of systems,
Not just cents in a Jar, but a nation breathing
through inflation scars,
GDP rising or falling like rain, A country's Pulse
in economic pain.
Unemployment –
not just jobless hands
But dreams paused across the lands and interest
rates like whispers of fate.
Pulling borrowers into a debt-laden State.
Fiscal policy – the government's pen is in it.
Writing stories of tax again and gain Monetary
mores by central banks,
Pumping lifeblood through financial tanks.
This is Macroeconomics,
Where numbers dance with power,
Where every decision shapes the hour, it's not
just money – it's meaning.
Its movement
It's the mirror of our collective.





To close the learning session on a lighter note, the girls participated in a quickfire round of questions and trivia on macroeconomics. The activity was designed to test their general understanding of the concepts introduced throughout the retreat, including taxation, austerity, debt, and the politics of economic decision-making. The girls were divided into three teams: Chainbreakers, Baddie Bunch, and Blossom, with the trivia having five rounds, with each question building on earlier discussions and reflections. The competition was lively and energising, filled with confident answers, moments of second-guessing, and bursts of joyful cheers. In the end, Baddie Bunch emerged as the winning team, showing strong recall and a clear grasp of how economic systems connect to their everyday lives. What made the activity even more meaningful was the shared laughter, playful teasing, and mutual warmth that had grown between the NAWI team and the Vipepeos. It was a moment of lightness and fun that brought the group closer, showing that learning can happen through joy and fun.





4

THE INTERSECTION OF ART AND PROTEST





It opened with a reflection on the work of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, particularly his iconic play *I Will Marry When I Want*. Co-authored with Ngũgĩ wa Mĩriĩ, the play examined post-colonial exploitation and was performed in the Gĩkũyũ language, making it accessible to ordinary people. Its revolutionary message led to Ngũgĩ's detention by the state.

The discussion then moved to the legacy of feminist poet Micere Githae Mugo, whose activism during the Moi era forced her into exile in 1982. Her poetry continues to inspire feminist resistance and Pan-African solidarity.

The Vipepeos also examined how satire has served as a tool of protest. The comedy group Redykulass, through their impersonations and skits, created space for public laughter and political criticism during a tense and fearful political era. Today, comedians like Crazy Kennar continue that tradition, using humour to question authority and spotlight injustice, particularly police brutality.

The session also looked at music as a tool of resistance. King Kaka's viral track Wajinga Nyinyi was cited as a bold cultural moment. The song's lyrics exposed the corruption, broken promises, and inequalities entrenched in the Kenyan system. On Monday, December 16, 2019, a video of the rapper getting manhandled by two men dressed in police gear in what appeared to be an arrest was shared across multiple social media platforms. He reported continued harassment and unlawful arrest by the police even after this ordeal. Vipepeos agreed that the power of such a piece lies in its accessibility; it reaches people beyond academic or policy spaces and provokes critical thinking. The song brought up a lot of emotion in the room.

Many of the girls felt angry and frustrated because the issues King Kaka highlighted are still happening, and in some cases, have gotten worse. Corruption, poor leadership, and lack of accountability continue to affect people's lives every day.

The lyrics felt timely, especially with the 2027 general election coming closer. Some of the girls said the song felt like a warning that the country did not take seriously.

Other artists and forms of protest were also discussed. The work of Gideon Kibet, known for the Kasongo cartoon series, uses satire to address the failures of leadership and governance. Similarly, the track Anguka Nayo by Wadagliz KE was recognised as a form of creative resistance, boldly calling out economic injustices in Kenya. This made the conversation lighter as the vipepeos related to seeing the cartoons by Gideon. Unfortunately, the regime abducted him to silence his advocacy efforts.



WADAGLIZ KE - ANGUKA NAYO (Official Dance Video) | Dance Republic Africa
Dance Republic Africa · 4.7M views · 10 months ago



KING KAKA - WAJINGA NYINYI (Official Video) (For Skiza Dial *811*27)

King Kaka · 4.1M views · 5 years ago



The girls then discussed the recent staging of *Echoes of War* by Butere Girls High School. The play, a powerful commentary on violence, state failure, and the human cost of political conflict, was a mirror reflection of what is unfolding in Kenya today. The play resonated deeply, especially in the wake of the reported abduction of some of the students involved. This is after the girls were stopped from performing the play following the dramatic arrest of their Playwright, and their props were taken. The girls expressed both grief and rage, questioning how a country that claims to protect its youth can remain silent in the face of such blatant repression. They also empathised with their peers and celebrated their bravery. For them, the play was truth-telling, and the response to it exposed the real dangers faced by those who dare to speak that truth.

Nzilani also included international examples such as Iranian artist Atena Farghadani. Mentioned for her reminder of the real risks that artists often face when speaking out against oppressive systems. Her story resonated deeply, especially as a testament to the global nature of state censorship and the resilience of creative resistance.

BUTERE GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL
presents

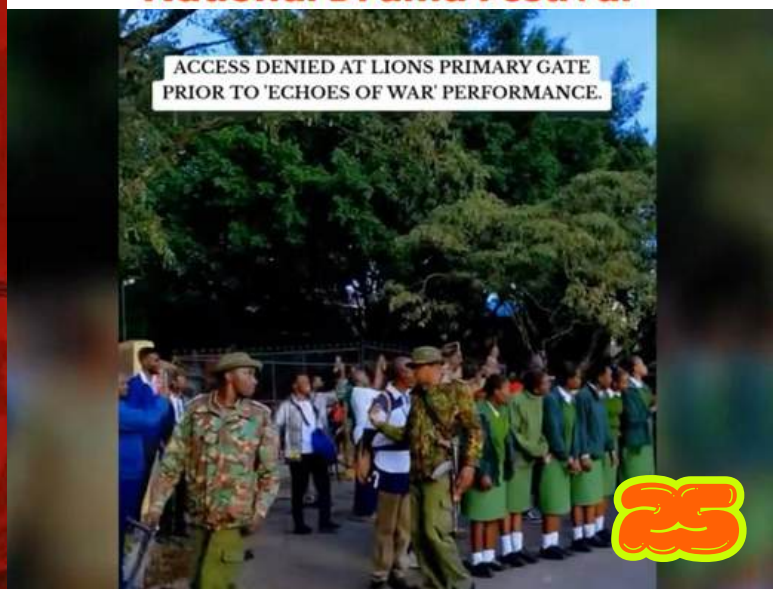
ECHOES OF WAR



Thursday 8:30 a.m.



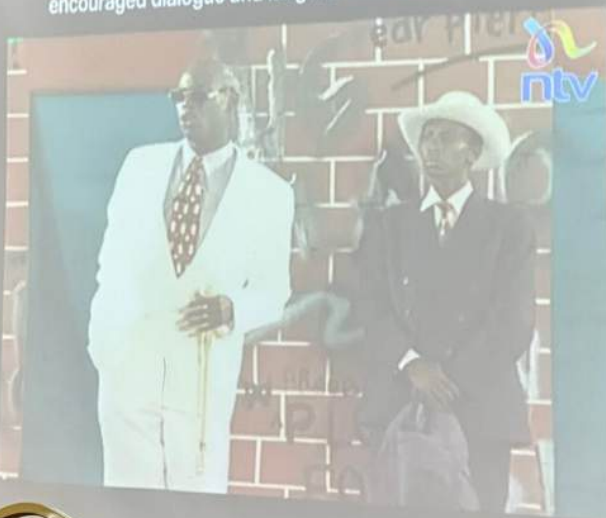
"The Police have harassed us. We are not going to perform," Butere Girls students stage a walkout from the National Drama Festival



The Medu Art Ensemble, a collective of South African visual artists active during apartheid, was also highlighted. Despite living in exile, they used their art to honour women who were at the frontlines of the anti-apartheid struggle. Their bold posters and prints became powerful visual weapons against systemic violence, reminding the girls that resistance can be both beautiful and revolutionary.

Tell your Papa Abulkareem Eedris from Nigeria also criticises the current regime in Nigeria. It was met with a lot of resistance from Tinubu's Government and banned even before the official release of the song. The girls were further directed to reflect on the quote by Amiri Baraka: "The artist's role is to raise the consciousness of the people. To make them understand life, the world, and themselves more completely." This sentiment was echoed in a brief activity on zine-making, where the girls were invited to imagine how they, too, could use art, through poetry, drawing, or music, as a form of protest. The session reminded everyone that artistic expression is not just a creative outlet but a vital political act, one that carries the power to heal, disrupt, and transform.

Redykulass comedy group ridiculed the government and encouraged dialogue and laughter after a scary Moi regime



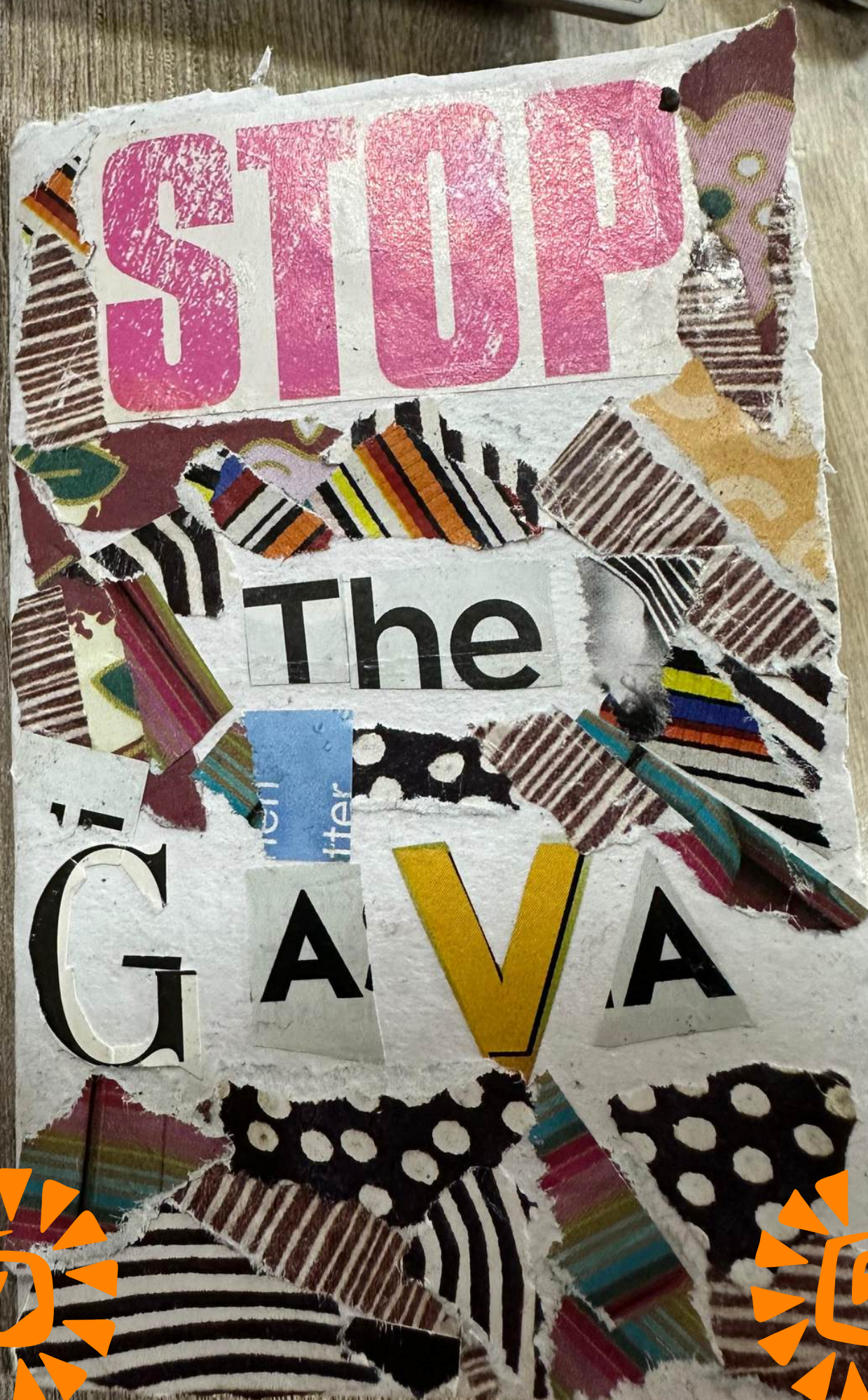
Mugo was harassed by
nt Moi and left to exile 1982

My submission
looks out
at past
I have long buried
marching under
drizzling rain
draining heat
heavy exert
fenced in on every side
by howling, vicious guards
at the crack of dawn
miles from home
an unknown file of men and women,
boys and girls
heading north
to Keringaya forest trench

- Muriel Mugo



ZINES FOR PROTEST



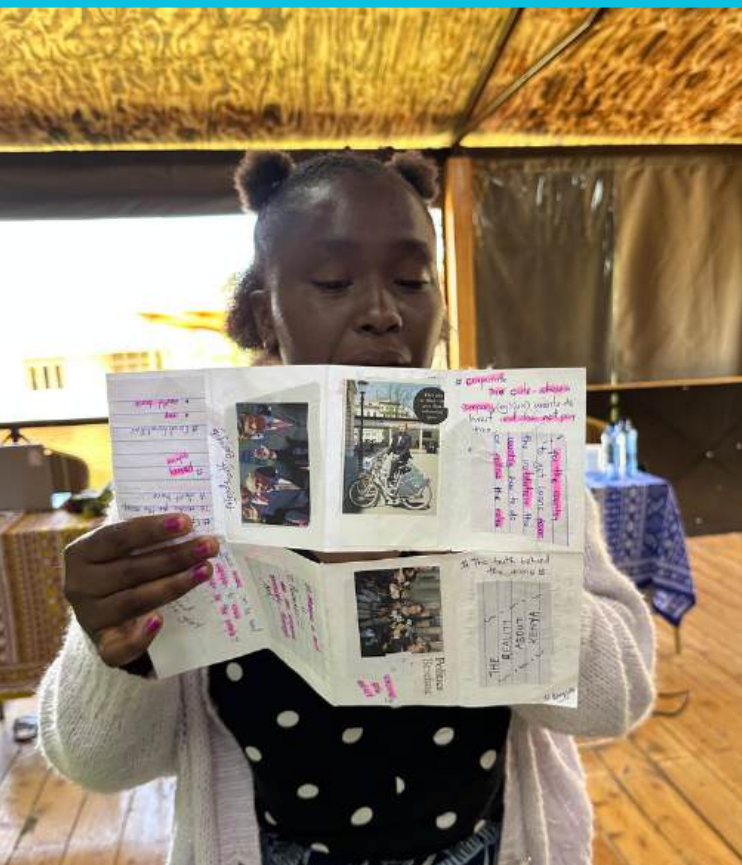
ZINES FOR PROTEST- VIPEPEO POLITICS ON PAPER



Nzilani introduced the concept of making small versions of magazines as a form of art to the girls. A zine (ZEEN; short for magazine or fanzine) is a small-circulation self-published work of original or appropriated texts and images, usually reproduced via a copy machine. Zines are the product of either a single person or of a very small group, and are popularly photocopied into physical prints for circulation.

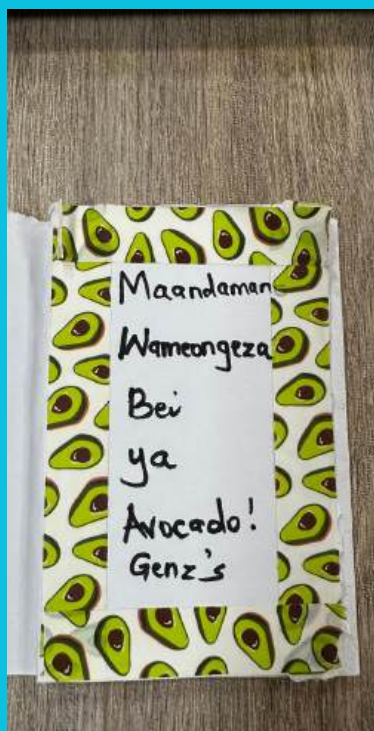
Historically, zines have provided a community for socially isolated individuals or groups through the ability to express and pursue common ideas and subjects. For this reason, zines have cultural and academic value as tangible traces of marginal communities, many of which are otherwise little-documented. Zines present groups that have been dismissed with an opportunity to voice their opinion, both with other members of their communities and with a larger audience.

The girls presented the zines they had been working on the previous day, instructed by Nzilani, each one a deeply personal and political expression of their thoughts, questions, and dreams. Although many shared that the language used in previous sessions, such as austerity and neoliberalism, felt difficult at first, they also spoke about the power of translating those concepts into art. The process of drawing, collaging, and writing helped make the abstract tangible. It turned unfamiliar words into tools they could use even after the retreat.



VIPEPEO POLITICS ON PAPER





ZINE'S EXPLAINED

Vipepeo Voices.



Jackline's zine reflected her learning journey. She focused on the difficult vocabulary and shared how satisfying it was to understand the meanings behind the terms. Through art, she found a way to personalise her learning and create something that reflected her new knowledge.



Fatumah created a zine centred on neoliberalism and how corporations often pressure governments in countries like Kenya to offer tax breaks in exchange for development. She critiqued this model, showing how it places the burden on citizens while enriching a few powerful actors.



Emmanuella's zine took a bold and direct approach, using images like expensive watches and luxurious cars to question how public funds are spent. Her zine critiqued politicians who use taxpayer money to live extravagant lives while communities suffer. She found the process enriching and powerful.

Esther explored women's leadership, imagining what her community could look like if more women were in positions of power. She spoke about feeling completely free during the process, without boundaries, and able to express herself fully.



Vipepeo Voices.

Naomi created a zine on the impact of privatisation on small businesses. Her reflections focused on how imported goods, although cheaper, often hurt local production. She was able to connect national economic policies with what she observed in everyday life.



Sandra used her zine as a glossary. She focused on explaining terms like austerity and neoliberalism, turning the project into a study tool she could use later. She shared that she might even use zines to revise for her school subjects.



Lydia addressed a more global issue. With the recent withdrawal of USAID support, she showed how the health sector in Kenya, especially HIV treatment programs, has been negatively affected. She found joy in being able to communicate this crisis through visuals and storytelling.



Mercy explored themes of corruption and inequality, highlighting how politicians often parade their wealth while failing to meet the needs of their constituents.





Jackline's zine captured frustration and urgency. She touched on corruption, economic injustice, and the reality of sexual harassment. Although she found the activity difficult, she was proud of what she created and the truths it represented.



6

LINKING THE MACRO TO THE MICRO.



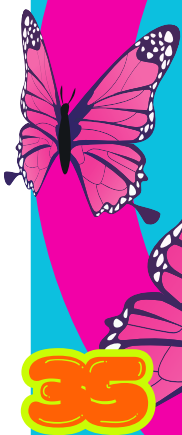



MAKING MACRO REAL FEATURING FRUSTRATED VIPEPEO VOICES

In one of the most urgent and reflective sessions of the retreat, the Director of RCWG, Nyawira Wahito, stepped in to support the girls as they struggled to link complex economic concepts to their everyday realities. The themes introduced by the NAWI Collective, such as macroeconomics, austerity, taxation, and neoliberalism, felt distant and abstract. Nyawira recognised that the girls needed to see how these ideas play out at the national, local, and household levels. She invited them to start from what they know.

They asked why sugar is suddenly more expensive, why hospitals are understaffed and poorly stocked, and why their teachers are often on strike. Slowly, through stories and shared examples, they began to connect the dots. The girls reflected on how taxation on essential goods makes basic items unaffordable, even when the government claims to have lowered prices. They spoke about how essential service providers go unpaid, leading to repeated strikes in schools and hospitals. They pointed out the growing number of young people unable to find jobs, even after completing school. Most of all, they talked about broken promises. Over and over, they shared how leaders make commitments during campaigns but disappear when the real needs begin to show.

Violet, in a quiet but firm voice, asked where the government is when women face injustice every day. Marion reflected on how cities are not designed with women in mind, and how development projects often ignore the environment. Many of the girls were frustrated that women are still not recognised for the work they do, both in public and at home.





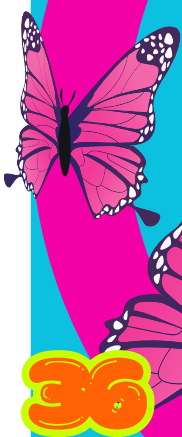
The conversation shifted to education. Stacey explained how teachers sometimes ask students to bring money for random things or pretend it came from them as students. Havillah added that when teachers are underpaid, they introduce extra charges like tuition, and students who do not attend risk losing marks. Ruth remembered a time when schools provided books and stationery, something that has now become the responsibility of struggling parents. Irene noted that even small repairs like fixing a desk are now impossible. Angie shared that the bursaries that used to help less privileged students have stopped, and no one explains why.


In smaller groups, the girls brought even more stories. Violet talked about caring for her mother and brother without any form of recognition or support.

Naom shared a personal story about trying to access maternity care through a national insurance program. She was asked to pay ten thousand shillings during delivery and another ten thousand in cash, even after paying into the scheme for three months. Her cousin faced a similar experience, despite paying for over a year. She lamented that the healthcare systems in Kenya never seem to work, especially with this new regime in place. It used to be free and accessible through the Linda Mama Program, but now that seems like an elusive reality.

Naom also expressed concern about the quality of infrastructure, pointing out that despite outsourcing labour from China, local engineers are underpaid and roads still flood due to poor design. She raised a difficult but necessary question: Who benefits from these contracts, and who suffers in silence?

Abigael narrated that there was a time she studied in West Pokot and lived in Turkana. During “back-to-school” season, she was asked to delay a little for two weeks before resuming because of insecurity in the area. There were raids taking place, and before this session, she did not understand the rationale for raiding and stealing cattle. She just knew the raiders were unemployed. She now knows the link between austerity and unemployment, which is a result of the minimal opportunities available for young people.





Christine shared that 5 years ago, bread was initially Ksh 40, and their family could easily afford it then... She and her family now do not eat bread as it is now Ksh 70. They have also been forced to reduce the number of meals they eat. They previously ate 3 meals a day, but now they have been forced to do 2 meals a day.

Fidelis shared,

“The new school funding model has affected a lot of students, including me. Even HELB has been cut. For me, I applied and I was given Ksh 20,000 for school fees. I am required to raise Ksh 60,000. They have used the money that would go into supporting education for something else, and now we have less in education.”

Nancy then observed that to get a bursary right now, you have to use backdoor means such as bribing school officials. Previously, it was a lot easier to get a bursary to assist with school fees.

Fidelis then added that deregulation of Labour has affected my mother, who is a mamamboga. Everything is so expensive and unpredictable. She is stressed about affording our school fees.

Wangari narrated that the bus she uses has constantly hiked prices due to using the expressway. She is glad to know the tolls imposed are paid to the government so that the government can pay the Chinese contractors.

Essy spoke about the rising cost of basic items like soap. Irene talked about the two hospitals in her area. In the public one, the only medicine available is paracetamol. She explained that even though the government allocates money for drugs, that money never reaches the people.

In their final reflections, the girls brought stories grounded in everyday economic strain. They saw how economic policy lives in their bodies, in their homes, in their schools, and their communities. The conversation turned frustration into clarity. By naming the systems that fail them, they moved one step closer to imagining what it would mean to build ones that do not.



RATING THE GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF MACROECONOMICS BY THE VIPEPEOS

One of the key learnings from the retreat was understanding how macroeconomics and microeconomics are connected. Macroeconomics looks at the bigger picture, including how governments make and spend money, national debt, taxation, and economic policies. Microeconomics focuses on individual and household decisions, such as what a family can afford to eat, how much they pay in school fees, or whether they can access healthcare. The girls began to see that decisions made at the top, like borrowing money from international lenders or increasing taxes, directly shape what happens in their homes and schools. When the cost of food rises or a local clinic runs out of medicine, it is often because of broader economic policies.

Nyawira Wahito asked the girls to rate their understanding of the content covered. Thirteen girls rated themselves at 8 out of 10, twelve girls gave themselves a 7, another five rated themselves at 6, and finally, seven girls rated themselves a 5 out of 10. While the overall comprehension was strong, many shared that their main challenge was connecting the economic concepts to their own lives and communities. Terms like austerity, inflation, and debt felt distant until they were grounded in the realities of schools, homes, and healthcare systems. Nyawira stepped in to support this connection, prompting them to think of their own lives and how the concepts work. That helped the girls see how these big systems directly shape their everyday experiences. Her facilitation helped shift understanding from theoretical to personal, making the learning process more meaningful and lasting.

Ruth shared that the session helped her build on what she had already read in the NAWI handbook. She felt grateful for the facilitation, noting that the retreat gave her a deeper understanding compared to the December retreat. The discussions added clarity to ideas she had been trying to grasp on her own.

For Irene, macroeconomics helped explain something she had been silently questioning. She now understands why her school can no longer afford to repair desks, something that used to be done without hesitation. She realised that it is not just about school budgets but part of a wider shift in how public institutions are funded.

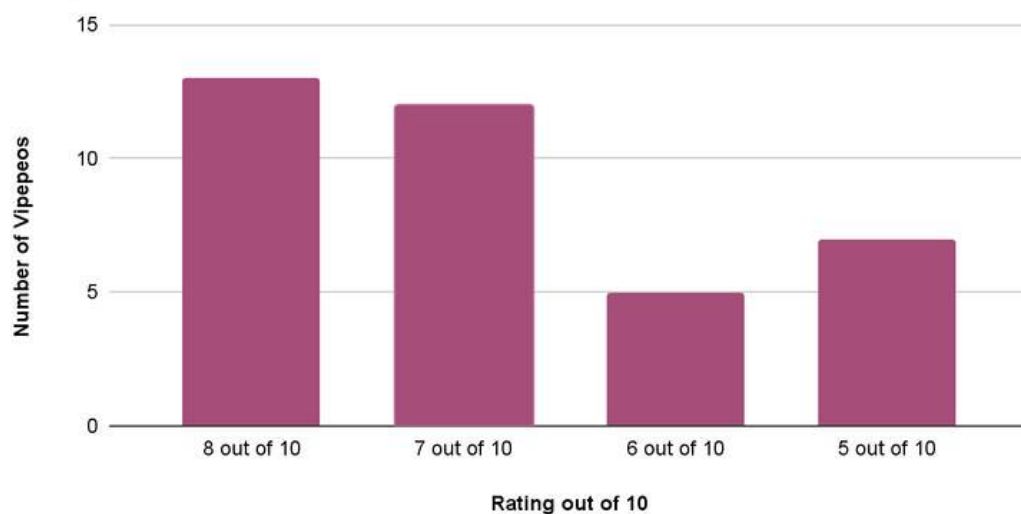
Naom admitted that she had not understood why essential services like healthcare often fail, even when people are paying for them.

After the session, she connected this to austerity measures that come from larger economic policies like neoliberalism. For her, it was a turning point in seeing how policy decisions affect basic needs.

Mercy found the session eye-opening. She now understands how taxation works, and more importantly, who pays and who doesn't. It shocked her to learn that wealthy individuals and large corporations are often exempted from the very taxes that burden ordinary citizens. She recognised this as one of the outcomes of neoliberalism, and it made her start questioning the fairness of the entire system.

General Understanding of Macroeconomics

Groups 12 and 13



CONCLUSION

As the retreat came to a close, Nyawira asked a powerful and timely question: how do we correct a system that continues to fail so many? The discussions that followed made it clear that while understanding the system is important, action is equally necessary. One of the pathways discussed was the power of voting. With the 2027 general election approaching, the girls reflected on how choosing the right leaders can shape the future of healthcare, education, employment, and justice in the country. They spoke about the need to look beyond campaign slogans and tribal affiliations, and instead choose leaders who listen, serve, and protect the public interest. The retreat ended with a strong message: change is possible, but it requires informed choices, active participation, and a collective voice committed to building a better future.

At the start of the retreat, many of the Vipepeos looked unsure. Some were quiet, their faces showing hesitation as they tried to grasp new and unfamiliar ideas. But as the days went on, their expressions changed. Curiosity replaced confusion, and silence gave way to questions and confident reflections. By the end, their faces were bright, their eyes focused, and their voices steady. What had begun with uncertainty ended with clarity, connection, and a stronger sense of power.





Thank you

Dear Nawi Collective Team,

Thank you for standing in your power and walking beside our girls during the retreat. Your facilitation was more than teaching—it was a radical act of feminist solidarity. You reminded our girls that macroeconomics isn't just numbers—it's about power, justice, and who gets to decide. You helped them see themselves not as future leaders, but as today's disruptors—already shaping the world around them. Because of you, they now know that building power is their right. That questioning is necessary. That their bodies, choices, and futures are political. We are endlessly grateful for your feminist wisdom, fierce love, and unwavering commitment to collective liberation. Thank you for being part of this revolution. In sisterhood, rage, and love.

From RCWG Team.

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