

Feminist Co-creation for Abortion Justice Fellowship
Fellowship Journey
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During the six months of the fellowship learning, I learned that doing abortion advocacy must not be as technical – the ways of our doing should be innovative, creative and sustainable — in a highly-stigmatized and politicized landscape of reproductive justice.

By challenging traditional fellowship models that prioritize static "products," I have adopted a feminist framework where the **process of community building** is the primary output. This journey has proven that relational infrastructures are not just a preliminary step—they are the very systems that sustain long-term advocacy.

Shift from product to infrastructure: Kiki Party - Maritesan sa Katanghalian

In restrictive environments, safely convening a community is a sophisticated political achievement. My fellowship centered on the **"Kiki Party: Maritesan sa Katanghalian"**—a name that reclaims local language (*Kiki* for vagina; *Marites* for a woman who gossips) to transform stigma into a fun, safe, and trust-based gathering.



Traditional fellowships value deliverables. In this context, the "output" is the relational infrastructure required to sustain advocacy. You cannot move the needle on bodily autonomy without a safe, resilient, and trust-based network. Therefore, the creation of a core group and a collective becomes the tangible output.

The metric becomes the "depth of alignment" and the "diversity of the core".



Thematic Analysis: Emerging Issues & Strategic Analysis

- **Bodily autonomy.** The journey toward full bodily autonomy is often hindered by a culture that polices women's behavior and health while entrenching deep inequalities within the home. Overcoming these barriers requires a radical reclamation of the right to self-govern one's own body and narrative, transforming personal agency into a foundation for collective liberation.
- **Community care and well-being.** Cultivating community care involves the intentional design of support systems that prioritize holistic well-being as a collective responsibility.

By grounding our movements in safe spaces, we create the necessary infrastructure for vulnerability and resilience to flourish alongside our advocacy.

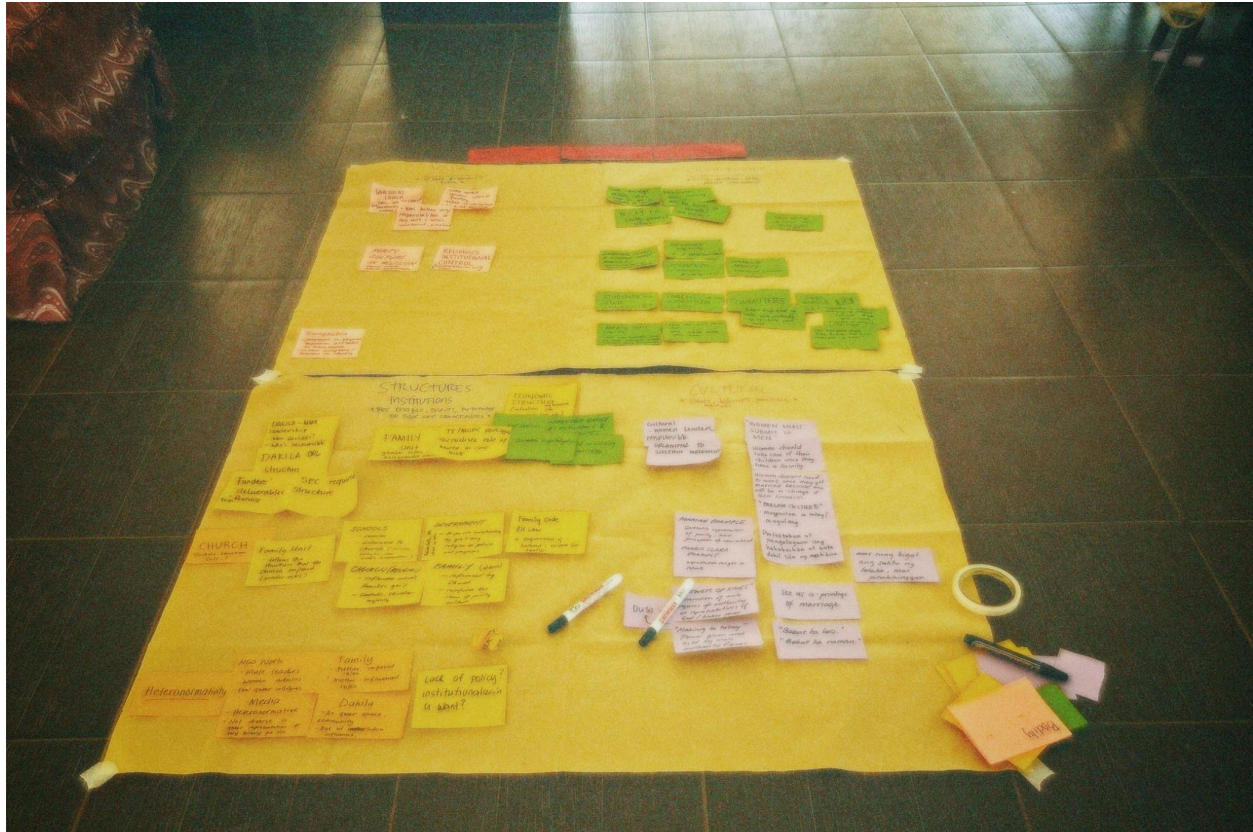
- **Violence.** Dismantling gender-based violence necessitates a profound shift in the social behaviors and attitudes that normalize and perpetuate harm against women. By confronting these systemic patterns, we can architect a society where safety and dignity are recognized as foundational, non-negotiable rights.

To deepen our strategic focus, emerging issues in abortion justice are analyzed through a 2-day planning session with the DAKILA Feminist Collective's Core Group. Serving as a community of practice, this group robustly analyzes the challenges and roots to reproductive stigma.



The initial results of these analysis are:

1. **On women's issue: Abortion justice cannot be achieved in a vacuum.** The same **"Purity Culture"** that controls modesty also controls reproductive choices. The same **"Unfair Care Work"** that exhausts women in the home also happens in activist spaces. Therefore, the **DAKILA Feminist Collective** acts as a "Community of Practice" by first addressing these internal inequalities—ensuring that the core group is a space where labor is shared and religious stigma is actively "wiped out" to make room for bodily autonomy.
2. **On the characteristics of the participants.** The participants from DAKILA Metro Manila-Rizal collective, are a young, largely cis-female and trans-inclusive working-class collective that navigates high economic precarity and institutional neglect, making mutual aid and community-funded care the most viable path for their abortion justice work.
3. **On the structures that enable/disable, empowers/disempowers.** The internal organizational landscape reveals a persistent tension where "macho" leadership and the burden of gendered administrative labor often clash with the need for flexible, feminist organizing. These challenges are compounded by extreme economic precarity, where inflation and job instability hinder the financial independence necessary for true reproductive autonomy. Systemic control is further reinforced by a "Holy Trinity" of Church, State, and Family that institutionalizes purity culture and heteronormativity through restrictive policies and domestic policing. Ultimately, this web of control is normalized by a dominant media machine, necessitating creative narrative interventions to dismantle institutional stigma and reclaim bodily sovereignty.



Conclusion

By establishing a strategic core of interdisciplinary advocates, this fellowship has successfully architected a **resilient relational infrastructure** capable of stewarding long-term interventions. This collective now serves as a grounded community of practice, utilizing our thematic analysis of communal barriers to transform systemic obstacles into a roadmap for sustained narrative resistance.

Ways forward and Next steps

The fellowship journey may end, but the strategy it ignited will continue. Our goal is to deepen the analysis of reproductive rights to create high-impact, strategic interventions across the country.

- **Expansion:** The core group intends to facilitate "Kiki Parties" with DAKILA regional collectives in **Laguna, Cebu, Bacolod, Iloilo, Dumaguete, and Cagayan de Oro**.
- **Sustainability:** While the roadmap is clear, the resources to carry out these nationwide activities remain a challenge we seek to address through continued solidarity and resource mobilization.

Additional inputs

1. What were your key takeaways and/or learnings while designing this learning space? What were your reflections after holding the space?

- The Kiki Party was an intentional experiment in moving away from rigid, overly structured program formats. We prioritize an informal and adaptable design that allows the program to bend and breathe according to the energy in the room. This flexibility didn't maximize the impact, proving that rigid agendas aren't a prerequisite for deep, meaningful outcomes.
- A key learning was that safe space is both physical and emotional. We purposefully curated a physical environment that felt comfortable, cozy, and non-institutional. This groundwork allowed the facilitator to smoothly establish an emotional atmosphere where participants felt secure enough to shed their guards and express themselves without fear of judgment.
- The true measure of the space's safety was the immediate trust it generated. Because participants felt genuinely seen and secure in the environment we built together, they didn't just participate—they actively committed on the spot to returning for the next Kiki Party. Trust is the glue of sustainable community building.
- By stepping back from a traditional "top-down" teaching model, we unlocked the power of organic, horizontal discussions. Participants learned *with* and *from* each other as peers. These unscripted exchanges often brought to light deeper nuances and shared experiences that a structured lecture never could have reached.
- When you trust an intentional but organic process, collective action surfaces naturally rather than being forced. The Kiki Party served as a fertile ground for spontaneous, community-led initiatives. A clear testament to this was the successful conceptualization and execution of the Slideshow event, as well as the organic strengthening of our internal MMR organizational processes.

2. What were the facilitation flow, agenda, and/or planning tools that this Kiki Party used? Would you be open to sharing them and the process with us?

The entire session was intentionally structured around the principles of **feminist facilitation**, which prioritizes non-hierarchical spaces, collective care, and political contextualization.

The facilitation flow and agenda followed this specific structure:

- **Objective Setting and Framing:** We initiated the space by establishing transparent goals. The primary objective was clearly communicated: to collectively map out the lived realities, systemic issues, and intersectional concerns of DAKILA women and queer women.
- **Political Contextualization & Historical Anchoring:** To ground our gathering within the broader framework of Women's Month, I provided a brief history of the women's movement in the Philippines. This helped contextualize the day's celebration as an

ongoing struggle for liberation, linking our personal experiences to a larger historical continuum.

- **Decentralized Breakout Discussions:** To ensure intimacy and safe dialogue, the facilitator divided the participants into three smaller breakout groups. Each group was given 2–3 targeted guide questions designed to surface two core areas: identifying the issues, barriers and concerns as women and queer women, and structural, emotional and organizational support they need to navigate through the challenges.
- **Plenary Synthesis:** The larger group reconvened to harvest the insights from the breakouts, identifying common threads and shared priorities that will help inform the collective's future advocacy, creative interventions, and internal community care mechanisms.

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