

FEMINIST RECLAMATION · BUILDING MATRIARCHIES SERIES

THE 12-MONTH MATRIARCHY

*A Practical Journal & Workbook
for Building Matrifocal Infrastructure*

*Drawn from what is working globally,
adapted for where you live right now.*

feministreclamation.com

How to Use This Workbook

This is the practical companion to the fifth installment of the Building Matriarchies series. Each of the twelve months is a worksheet. Each worksheet contains the same seven elements, in the same order, so you can navigate any month the same way you navigate any other.

What each month contains

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Overview & Purpose | what this month is for, in plain terms. |
| 2 | Step-by-Step Implementation | a numbered table of actions, with detailed how-to instructions and a column to mark each step done. |
| 3 | Common Pitfalls | specific failures other circles have already made, so you do not have to repeat them. |
| 4 | End-of-Month Milestones | a checklist to confirm the month's foundational work is complete before moving to the next. |
| 5 | Journal Prompts | reflective questions with space to write, intended for you to use privately over the course of the month. |
| 6 | Meeting Log | space to record meeting dates, attendance, what was discussed, and what was decided. |
| 7 | What You Are Building | the lineage your work is drawing from. Every month is rooted in a living tradition. |

How to move through it

Start at month one. Do not skip. Every month assumes the previous months have been done. Move at the pace your circle can sustain, if a month takes six weeks, take six weeks. What matters is that each foundation is solid before the next is built.

Write in this workbook. The checkboxes, writing lines, and meeting logs are not decorative. They are the material record of the year. At the end of twelve months, this workbook is an artifact, proof that the work was done and a document that can be handed to the next convener.

A NOTE ON STARTING

This framework assumes you are starting from scratch, no existing organization, no budget, no institutional backing.

If you have any of those things, you are ahead of schedule. Adjust accordingly.

This is designed for a woman with a living room, a phone, and the willingness to ask other women to show up.

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FEMINIST RECLAMATION · BUILDING MATRIARCHIES SERIES

MONTH 1

FORM THE CIRCLE

"Relational trust is the most important infrastructure you will build."

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Everything begins here. Identify five to twelve women in your immediate community, neighbors, coworkers, existing friends, women from your faith community, women you've met at school pickup, women you've been meaning to get to know. The criteria are simple: women willing to show up regularly and participate honestly. Do not rush past this month. Do not try to organize anything. Do not propose projects. The foundation of everything that follows is built through the practice of showing up and being witnessed.

What you are building, the yidu. The Mosuo have it by birth. You are building it by choice.

STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION

Work through these in order. Mark each step as you complete it. Not every step will happen at one meeting, some take weeks. The order matters.

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
1	Make your list	Write down 10–20 women you know or could reach. Include neighbors, coworkers, faith community members, school-pickup acquaintances, old friends. Cast wider than your closest circle.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Narrow and rank	Circle the 8–15 most likely to actually show up. Prioritize women who keep commitments, respect confidentiality, and can engage honestly. Look for a mix of ages, life stages, and backgrounds if possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Reach out individually	Phone call or in-person ask, not a mass text. Say: 'I'm starting a women's circle. We'll meet every two weeks for two hours. I'd like you to be part of it.' Be specific about dates, place, and format.	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
4	Choose your rhythm	Set a regular day and time, e.g., every other Sunday, 4:00–6:00 PM. Consistency matters more than timing. Lock the first four dates before anyone arrives.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Prepare your space	Arrange chairs in an actual circle (no furniture blocking sightlines). Choose a talking piece, a stone, a candle, something with weight. Have water and simple snacks. No agenda papers.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Open the first meeting	Welcome each woman. Name the purpose: building a circle of women who know each other's lives. State the four practices: show up, speak honestly, witness without advising, keep confidence. Have each woman briefly agree aloud.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Hold the talking piece protocol	Whoever holds the piece speaks. Others listen. No interruptions, no advice-giving, no fixing. When finished, pass to the next woman. Go around at least twice per meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	First meeting prompt	Ask: 'What brought you here tonight?' Let each woman answer without cross-talk. Do not rush or steer. The silences are part of the work.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Second meeting prompt	Ask: 'Tell us something about your life right now that we don't already know.' Same protocol. Trust deepens through specificity.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Third meeting prompt	Ask: 'Who has witnessed you in your life? Who still does?' This surfaces the relational landscape each woman is actually operating in.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Close each meeting the same way	Around the circle, each woman names one thing she is taking with her and one thing she is leaving behind. Thirty seconds each. This ritualizes closure.	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Protect the container	Do not propose projects, committees, or logistics this month. If someone pushes, say: 'We're building the foundation first. Projects come later.' Hold the line.	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Recruiting women who want to be invited but won't actually show up. Better to start with six committed than twelve ambivalent.

- Letting the circle become a venting session without structure. The talking piece and the protocol are what distinguish a circle from a gripe session.
- Skipping ahead to problem-solving. Month 1 is relational infrastructure only. Action comes after trust.
- Inviting men, even supportive ones, even briefly. This is a women's container. Mixed-gender is a different kind of gathering with different dynamics.
- Over-hosting. You are a convener, not a therapist or a facilitator-in-chief. Hold the frame, then speak as a peer.

END-OF-MONTH MILESTONES

Before moving to the next month, confirm each of these has been accomplished. If one has not, do not skip it, slow down.

- You have invited a specific set of named women.
- At least five women have committed to the full year.
- You have met at least three times in the first month (if meeting biweekly, adjust to your cadence, the point is frequency builds trust).
- Every woman has spoken substantively in at least two meetings.
- Confidentiality has held. Nothing shared in circle has leaked.
- You have a regular meeting day, time, and location set through Month 4 at minimum.

JOURNAL & REFLECTION

These questions are for you, privately. Write honestly. The point is not polished reflection, it is the practice of taking your own experience seriously enough to put it on a page.

✦ *Who are the women you want in this circle, and why each one?*

✦ *What is your own reason for starting this work? Write honestly, not the reason that sounds good, the real one.*

✦ *What are you afraid will go wrong? Name it.*

MEETING LOG, MONTH 1

Record each circle meeting this month. Attendance is for your records, do not share outside the circle. Decisions column captures what was agreed, not every conversation.

DATE	ATTENDING	TOPIC / PRACTICE WORKED	DECISIONS & NEXT STEPS

WHAT YOU ARE BUILDING

What you are building, the yidu. The Mosuo have it by birth. You are building it by choice.

MONTH 2

MAP THE NEEDS AND ASSETS

"We do this the way women have always done it: through conversation, not surveys."

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

By month two, your circle has met three or four times. Trust is forming. Now you introduce the first analytical element. In one meeting, ask each woman two questions: what is the hardest thing about your daily life right now, and what do you have to offer, skills, time, resources, connections, knowledge, that you are not currently using? Do not act on this inventory yet. The purpose of this month is to see, collectively, what is present in the room. The analysis will drive what comes next.

What you are building, collective sight. Seeing what is present in the room before deciding what to do with it.

STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION

Work through these in order. Mark each step as you complete it. Not every step will happen at one meeting, some take weeks. The order matters.

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
1	Prepare the frame	At the start of a meeting, explain: 'Tonight we're going to do an inventory, not a plan. We're listening for what's here.' Have paper and pen ready for each woman, and one notebook for the circle's record.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Ask the first question	Go around the circle: 'What is the hardest thing about your daily life right now?' Use the talking piece. No solving, no advising. Just listening and noting.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Write as you go	The convener (or a rotating scribe) takes notes on every answer in one circle notebook. Not verbatim, themes, specifics, emotional weight. 'Sarah: exhaustion from elder care, no one to relieve her.'	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
4	Pause for witnessing	After the first round, go around again with one sentence each: 'What did you hear in the room?' This is where patterns surface, the moment women realize they are not alone in what they carry.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Ask the second question	Go around again: 'What do you have to offer, skills, time, resources, connections, knowledge, that you're not currently using?' Push past modesty. 'I speak Spanish' counts. 'I have a truck' counts. 'I can cook for a crowd' counts.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Capture the assets in detail	For each asset, note specifics: not just 'handy,' but 'can fix plumbing, do basic electrical, hang drywall.' Not just 'knows people,' but 'has contacts at the school district, knows two lawyers.'	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Look for the absences	After both rounds, ask: 'What do we not have in this room that we might need?' Note the gaps. This tells you who you might need to bring in later, or what outside connections to seek.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Build the needs-and-assets document	In the week after the meeting, type up the inventory. Organize by woman (one page each) and by category (childcare, housing, skills, resources). Bring printed copies to the next meeting for corrections.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Circulate and correct	At the next meeting, pass out the document. Each woman reads her own page and edits. Add what was missed. This is a living document, it will grow.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Identify the strongest themes	As a circle, read the summary and name the three or four needs that showed up most often, and the three or four asset clusters that are strongest. Write these on one page.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Hold the inventory, do not act	Resist the urge to launch anything based on what you've learned. State explicitly: 'We're going to sit with this for two weeks before we decide anything.' Let the pattern work on the circle before the circle works on the pattern.	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Keep confidentiality absolute	The inventory is for the circle only. Never share names or specifics outside the room. This is the single most important rule: the more vulnerable the sharing, the more rigorous the confidentiality.	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Turning the inventory into a problem-solving session. Someone will say 'I need childcare' and someone else will jump in with a solution. Hold the listening posture, solutions are for later months.
- Skipping past emotional difficulty to get to the 'useful' information. The hardest things are often the ones women are most isolated in. The witnessing of them is as important as the data.
- Making it feel like a survey. If you pass out a questionnaire, the analytical work happens individually and the collective seeing is lost. Keep it oral, in circle, witnessed.
- Underestimating assets. Women chronically under-report what they have and what they can do. Push back gently: 'That counts. Write it down.'
- Losing the document. Store it somewhere safe. A physical binder that lives at the convener's house is simpler and more private than a shared drive.

END-OF-MONTH MILESTONES

Before moving to the next month, confirm each of these has been accomplished. If one has not, do not skip it, slow down.

- Every woman in the circle has shared at least one honest answer to the 'hardest thing' question.
- Every woman has named at least three assets she did not know she was naming.
- A written needs-and-assets document exists, has been reviewed by every member, and is stored in a secure, agreed-upon location.
- The circle has named, collectively, the three or four strongest themes, needs and assets both.
- The inventory has been shared with no one outside the circle.

JOURNAL & REFLECTION

These questions are for you, privately. Write honestly. The point is not polished reflection, it is the practice of taking your own experience seriously enough to put it on a page.

✎ What did you hear about your own life when you heard other women speak?

✎ What are you carrying that you did not know was being carried by other women in this room?

✎ What could you offer that you have never been asked for?

MEETING LOG, MONTH 2

Record each circle meeting this month. Attendance is for your records, do not share outside the circle. Decisions column captures what was agreed, not every conversation.

DATE	ATTENDING	TOPIC / PRACTICE WORKED	DECISIONS & NEXT STEPS

WHAT YOU ARE BUILDING

What you are building, collective sight. Seeing what is present in the room before deciding what to do with it.

MONTH 3

BEGIN RESOURCE SHARING

"Share what you have. Ask for what you need. Keep the ledger informal."

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

This is where the matrifocal economy begins. Based on your needs-and-assets map, identify one or two resource-sharing practices your circle can begin immediately. The most common starting points are meal sharing and childcare swaps. Other possibilities: ride sharing, bulk buying clubs, tool sharing, skill swaps. Start small, start concrete, start this month.

What you are building, the grandmother economy. The informal, relational, female-led economy that already runs most communities but is invisible because it is not monetized. You are making it visible, intentional, and systematic.

STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION

Work through these in order. Mark each step as you complete it. Not every step will happen at one meeting, some take weeks. The order matters.

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
1	Review the inventory together	Open the meeting with the needs-and-assets document. Read the top three or four themes aloud. Ask: 'Which of these could we actually do something about in the next thirty days?'	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Pick one or two practices, not five	Resist the urge to launch everything. Choose one resource-sharing practice that addresses a high-frequency need (meals, childcare, transportation) and, if the circle has capacity, one asset-based practice (tool sharing, skill swap, bulk buying). Two is a ceiling.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Design the meal-sharing rotation (if chosen)	Each household cooks one evening per week for the group or for a subset of the group. Set the portions expected ('enough for a family of four'), the handoff method (porch	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
		pickup, drop-off), and the day. Rotate so no household cooks more than once per week.	
4	Design the childcare swap (if chosen)	Pair parents and set a rotation: Family A watches Family B's kids Wednesday evening, Family B watches Family A's kids Saturday morning. Start with two-hour blocks. Agree on logistics: where, food, emergency contacts, pickup time.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Design a tool- or bulk-buying exchange (if chosen)	Designate one circle member's home as the 'library' for shared tools (power tools, canning equipment, a ladder). Or designate a bulk-buying coordinator who aggregates household orders for Costco, restaurant-supply, or direct-from-farm purchases, split at cost.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Set the governance up front	Write down the agreed terms in one paragraph, signed by participating members. Not for legal weight, for clarity. Example: 'Meal share begins March 1. Five households. Each cooks one Thursday night per month. Missed turns are made up, not compensated.'	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Define what happens when something breaks	Agree in advance: if a shared tool is broken, the borrower replaces it. If a meal turn is missed, it is made up within two weeks. If a childcare swap is cancelled, a makeup date is set before the original date passes. Write this down.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Begin, and document the first cycle	Run the first full cycle (one full rotation of meals, one full swap of childcare) and keep a simple log. Who did what, when. This is not surveillance, it is memory for later review.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Check in at the next circle meeting	Spend 15 minutes asking: 'What's working? What's friction?' Let women speak honestly, especially about inequities. Adjust the system before the next cycle.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Stay informal, stay relational	Do not introduce money, apps, or tracking software. The point of the grandmother economy is that it operates on trust and memory, not metrics. If someone is struggling to keep up, the circle absorbs it, that is the design.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Name the economic value	At the end of the month, calculate roughly what the practices are worth at market rate. Meal sharing: \$X per household saved. Childcare swap: \$Y in avoided paid care. Name this aloud. It makes invisible labor visible.	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
12	Invite the absent	If a circle member has not participated, check in privately. Often non-participation signals something, shame, capacity, a life event. Do not enforce. Ask what she needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Trying to launch too many practices at once. Meal share plus childcare swap plus bulk buying plus ride share in the same month is how things collapse. Two, maximum.
- Over-formalizing. The moment you introduce money, apps, or strict tracking, you replace trust with accounting. That is the opposite of what you are building.
- Under-communicating. If someone can't cook their meal week, they need to say so a day in advance. Silent drops are what erode these systems.
- Assuming every household can participate equally. A single mother of three and a childless woman with flexible hours have different capacities. Build the system around real capacity, not equal capacity.
- Letting one woman carry more than her share without addressing it. Pay attention to who is always cooking, always hosting, always driving. Name the imbalance before it calcifies.

END-OF-MONTH MILESTONES

Before moving to the next month, confirm each of these has been accomplished. If one has not, do not skip it, slow down.

- At least one resource-sharing practice is running, with a written agreement and a first full cycle completed.
- Every participating household knows its responsibilities and has executed them at least once.
- The circle has debriefed the first cycle and adjusted anything that wasn't working.
- Rough economic value of the practice has been calculated and named aloud.
- No one has been shamed for missing, and no one has quietly absorbed more than her share without the circle addressing it.

JOURNAL & REFLECTION

These questions are for you, privately. Write honestly. The point is not polished reflection, it is the practice of taking your own experience seriously enough to put it on a page.

✦ What did it feel like to ask for something this month? To offer something?

✦ Where did you notice yourself pulling back from participation, and what was underneath that?

✦ What does it change to know there is a meal you did not have to cook, a child you did not have to watch, a task you did not have to carry alone?

MEETING LOG, MONTH 3

Record each circle meeting this month. Attendance is for your records, do not share outside the circle. Decisions column captures what was agreed, not every conversation.

DATE	ATTENDING	TOPIC / PRACTICE WORKED	DECISIONS & NEXT STEPS

WHAT YOU ARE BUILDING

What you are building, the grandmother economy. The informal, relational, female-led economy that already runs most communities but is invisible because it is not monetized. You are making it visible, intentional, and systematic.

MONTH 4

ESTABLISH A SHARED FUND

"Mutual insurance is the oldest economic technology in human history."

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Introduce the concept of a giving circle, a shared fund to which each member contributes what she can, and from which any member can draw in times of need. This is not a loan. It is not charity. It is mutual insurance. In a country where the majority of Americans cannot cover a \$400 emergency expense, a \$2,400 collective fund is the difference between crisis and stability. The operating principle is trust, not bureaucracy.

What you are building, the matrilineal household's economic function. Pooled risk, shared resilience. Economic security that does not depend on any individual woman's relationship to any individual man.

STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION

Work through these in order. Mark each step as you complete it. Not every step will happen at one meeting, some take weeks. The order matters.

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
1	Propose the fund to the circle	At a regular meeting, name it directly: 'I want us to start a shared fund. Each of us contributes what we can each month. Any of us can draw from it when we need to. No interest, no loan structure. Mutual insurance.'	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Decide the contribution model	Two options. Equal contribution: everyone puts in the same amount (\$10, \$20, \$50). Sliding contribution: each woman contributes what she can, privately determined, range agreed collectively (\$5–\$50). Sliding is more matrifocal; equal is simpler to start.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Set the amount	Start small enough that no one is burdened and high enough to matter. Twenty dollars per person per month in	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
		a circle of ten is \$200/month, \$2,400/year. Most circles find \$20–\$50 per month works. Start low, you can raise it in month 12.	
4	Choose a treasurer, and a backup	Select one member to hold the fund. Criteria: trustworthy, organized, not in active financial crisis. Select a second member as backup and co-signer. Rotate this role annually.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Open a dedicated account	Open a separate checking account in the treasurer's name with the backup as co-signer, or use a credit union account that allows multiple signers. Do not mix with personal funds. Do not use Venmo as the primary holding, balance disappears visually and invites mistakes.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Set up the monthly contribution flow	Each woman sets up an automatic transfer to the account on the same day each month (e.g., the 5th). Automation prevents the awkwardness of reminders. Contributions are visible to members via a simple monthly ledger.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Write the disbursement rules	Three rules only: (1) Any member may request funds for any reason. (2) The circle votes at the next meeting; disbursement requires a simple majority. (3) Disbursements under a small threshold (e.g., \$100) can be approved by the treasurer and two members without a full vote for speed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Define what a 'need' is, and is not	Explicitly: emergencies (car repair, medical bill, rent shortfall), transitions (security deposit, first month's rent to leave a bad situation), and stabilizers (childcare gap, unexpected loss of income). Not: vacations, gifts, routine expenses. The circle will refine this with use.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Establish transparency, with privacy	The ledger shows contributions and disbursement amounts. It does not have to show who received a disbursement if the recipient wants privacy. Decide up front whether disbursement votes are held openly, anonymously (written), or with the recipient out of the room.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Handle the first request with care	The first request sets the culture. Treat it with dignity. No interrogation of why. The requester names the need; the circle votes; the fund disburses. This is how trust compounds.	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
11	Set a review cadence	Review the fund every six months. Check the balance, contribution health, disbursement patterns, and whether amounts need to change. Keep the review short, it is a ledger check, not a debate.	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Plan for the what-ifs	Write down in advance: what happens if a member leaves the circle (contributions are not returned, they have been mutualized), what happens if the fund runs out (pause disbursements, hold contributions until rebuilt), what happens if a member can't contribute this month (she skips, the fund is not a bill).	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Treating the fund like a loan fund with repayment expectations. It is not a loan fund. If you want a loan fund, build one separately and call it that.
- Letting shame drive the vote. If the circle interrogates the first requester, the second will not ask. The culture of the fund is set by the first three disbursements.
- Mixing the fund with personal accounts. Even if the treasurer is scrupulous, co-mingling creates confusion and legal exposure. Separate account, always.
- Scaling the contribution too high too soon. \$100/month feels ambitious in month 4 and punishing in month 8. Start conservative.
- Keeping no records. Even an informal fund needs a ledger, contributions in, disbursements out, balance. A notebook works; a shared spreadsheet works; nothing does not work.

END-OF-MONTH MILESTONES

Before moving to the next month, confirm each of these has been accomplished. If one has not, do not skip it, slow down.

- A dedicated account exists with a treasurer and backup.
- Every participating member has made her first contribution.
- Written disbursement rules and definitions are in the circle's records, agreed to by every member.
- The fund has been named, explained, and formally launched at a circle meeting.
- A ledger exists and is reviewable by any member at any time.

JOURNAL & REFLECTION

These questions are for you, privately. Write honestly. The point is not polished reflection, it is the practice of taking your own experience seriously enough to put it on a page.

✎ *What does it feel like to contribute to a fund that is not yours?*

✎ *What would you ask for, if you could ask without shame?*

✎ *How does economic dependence show up in your life right now, and what would change if one of those dependencies softened?*

MEETING LOG, MONTH 4

Record each circle meeting this month. Attendance is for your records, do not share outside the circle. Decisions column captures what was agreed, not every conversation.

DATE	ATTENDING	TOPIC / PRACTICE WORKED	DECISIONS & NEXT STEPS

WHAT YOU ARE BUILDING

What you are building, the matrilineal household's economic function. Pooled risk, shared resilience. Economic security that does not depend on any individual woman's relationship to any individual man.

MONTH 5

POLITICAL EDUCATION

"This is jineology on a living room scale."

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

By month five, your circle has relational depth, resource-sharing practices, and a shared fund. Now you add the analytical dimension that transforms a support circle into a political one. Introduce a reading and discussion element, not every meeting, alternating between personal sharing circles and study circles. The purpose is not academic enrichment. It is to develop shared language.

What you are building, shared analysis. When every woman in the circle understands why the nuclear family isolates women, why childcare is political, why economic dependence is designed rather than natural, the circle has a framework for understanding its own work.

STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION

Work through these in order. Mark each step as you complete it. Not every step will happen at one meeting, some take weeks. The order matters.

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
1	Name the shift	At the start of the meeting, say: 'We've built trust. We've built practices. We've built a fund. Now we build analysis. Once a month, we read together.' Be explicit that this is not book club, it is political formation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Set the cadence	One study meeting per month, alternating with personal sharing meetings. If you meet biweekly, you will do six study sessions per year. Keep the other meetings protected for circle work.	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
3	Build the starter reading list together	Bring four starter options and let the circle pick the first two: Silvia Federici's <i>Caliban and the Witch</i> ; Dean Spade's <i>Mutual Aid</i> ; adrienne maree brown's <i>Emergent Strategy</i> ; Cai Hua's <i>A Society Without Fathers or Husbands</i> . See the bibliography at the end of this workbook for the full reading list.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Make readings accessible	Order through a library, share PDFs where legal, pass around physical copies. If budget is a barrier, use the shared fund to buy a rotating set. Choose excerpts (one chapter, one essay) rather than whole books for the first year.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Structure the study meeting	Three parts. (1) Each woman names one passage that struck her and reads it aloud, 15 minutes. (2) Open discussion of patterns and disagreements, 45 minutes. (3) 'What does this mean for us?', 30 minutes of application to the circle's own life and context.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Designate a rotating facilitator	Different woman each month prepares three discussion questions and keeps the conversation on track. The facilitator does not lecture. She prompts and listens. Rotation spreads the labor and builds capacity.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Keep a shared language document	After each study session, the facilitator writes down three or four key terms or concepts the circle wants to carry forward. Over time, this becomes the circle's political vocabulary, 'reproductive labor,' 'mutual aid,' 'the isolation thesis,' 'witnessed speech.'	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Connect the reading to circle life	In every study session, spend time on this question: 'How does this show up in our own lives? In our circle? In our neighborhood?' Abstract theory without application is academic. Theory connected to lived experience is political education.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Welcome disagreement	Circles that agree too quickly are circles that have stopped thinking. When women disagree on a reading, let the disagreement breathe. Do not rush to consensus. Political sophistication comes from held difference, not smoothed-over unity.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Bring in outside voices selectively	Once or twice a year, invite an outside speaker, a local organizer, a scholar, a movement elder. Pay them (from	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
		the shared fund or a dedicated collection). But keep the circle's own intellectual work primary.	
11	Connect to the wider tradition	Periodically remind the circle: 'Women have done this before. The Combahee River Collective did this. Jineology does this. The Mosuo do it through daily life. We are not inventing, we are continuing.' This rootedness matters.	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Protect the study meeting from collapse	When a member is in crisis, the instinct is to suspend the study meeting. Resist. Have a brief check-in, then do the reading. The analytical work is how you understand the crisis, it is not separate from the crisis.	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Turning the circle into a graduate seminar. If the reading is too dense, too academic, or too Euro-centric, women disengage. Choose accessible, grounded texts first.
- Letting one or two members dominate discussion. The talking piece works here too. Use it.
- Treating the reading list as finished. It should keep growing. Add books by women of color, Indigenous women, women from the Global South, women who disagree with each other.
- Divorcing theory from practice. If your study meetings never change how the circle operates, the theory is not landing. Let the reading reshape the work.
- Assuming everyone has the same reading time. A woman with three kids has less reading time than a woman without. Choose shorter pieces, offer audio versions, let people come to the discussion having read less and still participate.

END-OF-MONTH MILESTONES

Before moving to the next month, confirm each of these has been accomplished. If one has not, do not skip it, slow down.

- At least two study meetings have happened this month, or one study meeting if cadence is monthly, with a rotating facilitator.
- A shared-language document exists with the circle's working vocabulary.
- Every member has read (or heard) and engaged with at least one full excerpt.
- A reading list for the next six months has been chosen collectively.

- The circle has made at least one change to its own practice based on what the reading surfaced.

JOURNAL & REFLECTION

These questions are for you, privately. Write honestly. The point is not polished reflection, it is the practice of taking your own experience seriously enough to put it on a page.

✦ What did you learn this month that you already knew but did not have words for?

✦ What reading unsettled you, and what did the unsettling reveal?

✦ How does the language you are building in this circle change what you can see in the rest of your life?

MEETING LOG, MONTH 5

Record each circle meeting this month. Attendance is for your records, do not share outside the circle. Decisions column captures what was agreed, not every conversation.

DATE	ATTENDING	TOPIC / PRACTICE WORKED	DECISIONS & NEXT STEPS

WHAT YOU ARE BUILDING

What you are building, shared analysis. When every woman in the circle understands why the nuclear family isolates women, why childcare is political, why economic dependence is designed rather than natural, the circle has a framework for understanding its own work.

MONTH 6

CONNECT OUTWARD

"Autonomous, self-governing circles connected to each other through shared principles."

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Six months in, your circle is strong enough to begin connecting with the wider community. Each member identifies one other woman who might benefit from a circle. The goal is not to expand your circle indefinitely, circles work best at five to twelve members, but to seed a second circle. Simultaneously, identify existing organizations aligned with your values and become a node in a wider network.

What you are building, the network structure the Haudenosaunee called the clan system and Rojava calls democratic confederalism.

STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION

Work through these in order. Mark each step as you complete it. Not every step will happen at one meeting, some take weeks. The order matters.

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
1	Name the expansion decision	At a circle meeting, be explicit: 'We are not growing this circle. We are seeding a second one.' This distinction matters, a 25-person circle loses the intimacy that makes the practice work.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Identify potential seed women	Each member names one woman outside the circle who could convene a new one. Criteria: the same criteria you used for your own members, reliable, honest, willing to hold confidence. Some members will have zero names; that is fine.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Document your own practice	Before inviting anyone to start a second circle, write down what has worked: meeting format, protocols, the talking piece, the first-three-months structure, the needs-and-	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
		assets process. A single document, 3–5 pages, that a new convener could use.	
4	Invite seed women individually	Each member reaches out privately to the woman she has identified. 'I've been part of a women's circle for six months. It has changed my life. I think you could convene one. Can I tell you how we do it?'	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Host a seed-circle orientation	If one or more women accept, hold a one-time gathering, either hosted by your circle for the seed women, or by each member mentoring her invitee individually. Walk through the practices. Share your written document.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Map the local ecosystem	As a circle, list every organization in your area that is doing adjacent work: mutual aid networks, food cooperatives, tenant unions, domestic violence shelters, reproductive rights groups, community land trusts, local political organizations, women-led nonprofits. This is your wider field.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Assign outreach partners	Pair each organization with one circle member who will attend a meeting, introduce herself, and report back. Do not send the whole circle. One person per organization. Rotate so everyone does one.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Report back to the circle	Over the next two meetings, each assigned member gives a 5-minute report: what the organization does, who runs it, what it needs, whether it is aligned with your circle's values. Not every organization is aligned, some are captured by grants, some are performative. Be honest.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Identify 2–3 aligned organizations	From the map, pick two or three that are genuinely aligned. These become your partners, not your parents. Your circle does not need to be absorbed into them. It connects to them as a node.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Build one concrete relationship	Pick one of the aligned organizations and take one concrete action: attend a meeting as a group, donate from the shared fund, volunteer at one of their events, invite their lead organizer to your study circle. One real action beats ten emails.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Plan for quarterly joint gatherings	If a second circle forms, schedule a joint gathering once per quarter, a shared meal, a joint study session, a	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
		collective work day. This is where the network becomes visible to itself.	
12	Keep the boundary firm	Joint gatherings are gatherings, not merges. After the joint meeting, each circle goes back to its own rhythm. The network is a constellation, not a super-circle.	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Trying to grow your own circle instead of seeding a new one. Past 12–15 members, the practice breaks. Seed, do not absorb.
- Treating partner organizations as the senior partner. Your circle is not a volunteer pool for their campaigns. It is a peer, with its own analysis, its own resources, and its own priorities.
- Over-promising to new seed women. Starting a circle is hard. Do not pretend it is easy. Tell them the first three months are the hardest and most important.
- Letting outward connection dilute inward depth. If the network work begins to eat the circle's own meetings, pull back.
- Getting recruited into an existing organization's structure. Some nonprofits will want to fold you in, credentialize you, or use you for optics. Decline politely. You are not personnel.

END-OF-MONTH MILESTONES

Before moving to the next month, confirm each of these has been accomplished. If one has not, do not skip it, slow down.

- A written document of your circle's practices exists and is shareable.
- At least one seed woman has been invited, with a clear path to starting her own circle.
- A map of local aligned organizations has been built, with circle members assigned to each.
- Every assigned member has attended at least one meeting at her paired organization and reported back.
- The circle has taken one concrete action in relationship with an aligned organization.
- A second circle is either forming, scheduled to form, or identified as next-quarter work.

JOURNAL & REFLECTION

These questions are for you, privately. Write honestly. The point is not polished reflection, it is the practice of taking your own experience seriously enough to put it on a page.

✦ What is different about being in the wider community now that you have been in this circle for six months?

✦ Who in your life needs a circle, and what holds you back from telling her?

✦ What does 'network' mean to you, and what is the difference between connection and absorption?

MEETING LOG, MONTH 6

Record each circle meeting this month. Attendance is for your records, do not share outside the circle. Decisions column captures what was agreed, not every conversation.

DATE	ATTENDING	TOPIC / PRACTICE WORKED	DECISIONS & NEXT STEPS

WHAT YOU ARE BUILDING

What you are building, the network structure the Haudenosaunee called the clan system and Rojava calls democratic confederalism.

MONTH 7

ADDRESS HOUSING

"A woman who cannot afford to leave is a woman who cannot afford to be free."

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Housing is the foundation of matrifocal life. The minimum viable matrifocal housing infrastructure is this: every woman in your circle has a place to go tonight if she needs to leave. Not a shelter. Not a hotel. A home, a room in another circle member's house, with a bed and a toothbrush and the knowledge that she will be welcomed without question. This month begins there, and looks toward the longer horizon of cohousing and cooperative ownership.

What you are building, the Mala Jin's structural alternative to the isolation that makes women vulnerable. In the Mosuo system, women own the houses. You are working toward a version of that reality.

STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION

Work through these in order. Mark each step as you complete it. Not every step will happen at one meeting, some take weeks. The order matters.

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
1	Name the housing inventory	At a circle meeting, each woman answers two questions privately on paper first, then shares what she is willing to: Do I have a room that could shelter another circle member for a week? Do I have a place I could go tonight if I needed to leave where I live?	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Map the available rooms	Make a list: which households have a spare room, a finished basement, an ADU, a couch, a garage apartment. Note capacity ('one adult, three nights'), access ('separate entrance'), restrictions ('no pets, small children OK'). This is your emergency housing grid.	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
3	Assign emergency-housing partners	Pair every circle member with at least one other member who has committed to receive her on 24-hour notice. Some members will have the same housing partner; some will have two. No one is unpaired.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Write the emergency-housing protocol	One page. Includes: how to initiate ('text or call your housing partner; no explanation required'), what is provided (bed, toothbrush, key, food access), duration (default one week, extensions by mutual agreement), confidentiality (no one tells anyone, including circle members, where a woman is unless she consents).	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Do a dry-run conversation	In pairs, rehearse the ask. One woman plays the role of someone who needs to leave tonight; her partner practices receiving her. Awkward, important. Rehearsal removes the hesitation in the moment of actual need.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Know your local resources too	Make a second list: the domestic violence shelter, the crisis hotline, tenant rights organization, legal aid clinics, women's shelters with space. Circle members may need more than a spare room. Have the numbers ready.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Research tenant rights for renters	Assign two members to research and summarize tenant rights in your jurisdiction: eviction protections, rent increase limits, security deposit law, habitability standards, lockout rules. Distribute as a one-page cheat sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Begin the cooperative-housing conversation	At a study meeting, discuss longer-term models: cohousing (private units, shared commons), housing cooperatives (collectively-owned multifamily), community land trusts (land held collectively, housing owned privately), intentional intergenerational women's communities. Choose one model to research deeply.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Identify local cooperative-housing examples	Research the nearest existing cohousing community, housing co-op, or community land trust. Visit if possible. Talk to members. Learn what it took to build, what it costs, what the governance looks like.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	For homeowners, consider the ADU question	Any circle member who owns a house should consider whether an accessory dwelling unit is feasible. A converted garage, a finished basement, a backyard cottage, these can become long-term matrifocal infrastructure, housing circle members in transition.	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
11	Build a housing fund line	Within the shared fund, consider a specific housing line, contributions earmarked for housing emergencies (security deposits, first month's rent, moving costs). If the main fund is at \$20/month, add \$5/month to the housing line. Small, steady, specifically purposed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Revisit annually	Housing situations change. One woman buys, another is evicted, another takes in a parent. Update the inventory and the partner assignments once a year. This is not a document you build and file.	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Promising housing you cannot actually provide. If your spare room is a storage closet with no bed, say so. Specificity protects everyone.
- Making the ask conditional on explanation. The protocol must be: the ask is enough. No justification required. A woman leaving an unsafe situation does not have time to perform credibility.
- Telling other circle members where she went. Confidentiality around location is life-or-death in some situations. Train yourself to say, 'She is safe. I will not tell you where.'
- Trying to solve the entire housing crisis in month seven. Cohousing is a 5-to-10-year project. Start the emergency infrastructure now, start the cooperative research now, but do not conflate the two timelines.
- Overestimating your own capacity. A full-time working mother with three kids and a one-bedroom apartment cannot be the primary emergency housing partner for four other women. Be realistic.

END-OF-MONTH MILESTONES

Before moving to the next month, confirm each of these has been accomplished. If one has not, do not skip it, slow down.

- Every circle member has a designated emergency-housing partner and knows how to activate the arrangement.
- A written emergency-housing protocol exists and every member has a copy.
- A local-resources sheet exists, shelters, hotlines, legal aid, tenant rights.
- At least one pair has done a dry-run conversation.

- Research on one cooperative-housing model (cohousing, co-op, CLT) has begun, with an assigned lead.
- A housing-specific line in the shared fund has been discussed and, if adopted, launched.

JOURNAL & REFLECTION

These questions are for you, privately. Write honestly. The point is not polished reflection, it is the practice of taking your own experience seriously enough to put it on a page.

✦ Where would you go tonight if you had to leave? What would it take for that answer to be: to one of these women?

✦ What does it mean that your housing security depends on a landlord, a partner, or an employer, and what would it mean to have it depend on a circle?

✦ What would you need to believe about yourself to receive, without shame, a bed in another woman's home?

MEETING LOG, MONTH 7

Record each circle meeting this month. Attendance is for your records, do not share outside the circle. Decisions column captures what was agreed, not every conversation.

DATE	ATTENDING	TOPIC / PRACTICE WORKED	DECISIONS & NEXT STEPS

WHAT YOU ARE BUILDING

What you are building, the Mala Jin's structural alternative to the isolation that makes women vulnerable. In the Mosuo system, women own the houses. You are working toward a version of that reality.

MONTH 8

COOPERATIVE CHILDCARE

"Humans evolved to raise children in networks of eight or more invested adults."

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

If your circle includes mothers, this month formalizes what may have begun informally in month three. Cooperative childcare is the single most impactful practical structure a matrifocal community can build, because childcare is the single greatest constraint on women's time, economic capacity, and freedom. The model: time is the currency, not money. For circles without young children, this month can focus on eldercare, pet care, or crisis-response capacity.

What you are building, the alloparenting that Sarah Blaffer Hrdy identifies as the human norm. The nuclear family's demand that two parents do the work of eight is recent, aberrant, and demonstrably harmful. The childcare cooperative restores the village.

STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION

Work through these in order. Mark each step as you complete it. Not every step will happen at one meeting, some take weeks. The order matters.

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
1	Assess the circle's caregiving landscape	Each member names every dependent she is currently responsible for: children (by age), elders, disabled adults, pets. Note needs: regular care, episodic care, overnight care, medical appointments. This is your caregiving inventory.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Decide the structure: co-op, swap, or hybrid	A co-op uses a time-currency system (every hour you give, you earn; every hour you use, you spend). A swap is bilateral (you watch mine Tuesday, I watch yours Saturday). A hybrid does both. Small circles can start with swaps; larger ones benefit from co-op structure.	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
3	Build the co-op framework (if chosen)	Each hour of care equals one credit. Caring for one child for one hour = one credit. Caring for two children from different families for one hour = two credits. Members earn credits by giving care, spend credits by receiving it. Track on a shared spreadsheet or simple notebook.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Set the minimum commitment	Each participating family commits to a minimum: e.g., four hours of care given per month, four hours of care received available. This keeps the system liquid. Below a minimum, the co-op can't function.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Define the care standards	Write down: minimum adult-to-child ratio, snacks and meals policy, screen-time agreement, outdoor play expectations, emergency contact process, medication protocols, drop-off and pickup procedure, how to handle a sick child. One page, signed by participating parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Handle the consent and safety questions explicitly	Before children are in any home other than their own, all parents meet all caregivers. Home visits are done. Any adult in the household who will be present is introduced to the children and parents. This is non-negotiable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Run a pilot week	Before full launch, do one pilot week with two or three families. Cycle through drop-offs, check in twice daily, debrief at the end. Surface what the written framework missed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Launch	Begin the full system on a named start date. Keep the first month in low gear, fewer hours, simpler swaps, and let the circle learn the rhythm before scaling up.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	For circles without young children: build care capacity	Each member names one caregiving burden she carries: aging parent, chronically ill spouse, disabled sibling, animal companion. The circle identifies where it can relieve: a Saturday so she can visit, a week covered so she can rest, a friend to sit with her during a medical appointment.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Establish a crisis-response protocol	For any dependent care situation, the circle knows: who can respond in 2 hours, who in 24 hours, who in a week. Write this down. When crisis hits, no one has to remember or negotiate, the tree is already built.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Acknowledge the unpaid labor	At a circle meeting, calculate the hours of caregiving the circle has provided this month at local market rates.	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
		Name the number. This labor has always been done; now it is being done in common, and its economic value is made visible.	
12	Protect the children's experience	Cooperative childcare should feel like extended family to children, not a babysitting gig. Cooperative caregivers remember the kids' names, the allergies, the favorite books, the fears. This is the village being rebuilt, not a transaction.	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Assuming all parents want the same thing. Screen-time rules, snack policies, discipline styles vary. Surface disagreements before launch, not after a conflict.
- Letting one or two families consume more care than they give. The credit system surfaces this; a swap system does not. If imbalance is persistent, the circle addresses it, not individual caregivers resenting in silence.
- Skipping the safety layer. Every adult in every home must be known and vetted by every participating parent. This is not over-cautious; it is baseline.
- Launching the co-op before relational trust is deep enough. Month 8 is the right time precisely because the foundation exists. Trying this in month 2 tends to collapse.
- Allowing the co-op to become the whole circle. Childcare is one layer. Women without young children must not be made peripheral by it. Protect the study meetings and the personal-sharing meetings as separate from the logistics of the co-op.

END-OF-MONTH MILESTONES

Before moving to the next month, confirm each of these has been accomplished. If one has not, do not skip it, slow down.

- A written caregiving inventory exists for the circle.
- A co-op or swap structure has been chosen, written down, and signed by participating members.
- Care standards, safety protocols, and emergency procedures are documented.
- A pilot week has been run and debriefed.
- The full system is operational with at least one full cycle of exchange completed.
- Market-rate value of care given has been calculated and named aloud at least once.

JOURNAL & REFLECTION

These questions are for you, privately. Write honestly. The point is not polished reflection, it is the practice of taking your own experience seriously enough to put it on a page.

✎ *What do you carry as a caregiver that you have never had named?*

✎ *Who has been the 'village' for you, and who has been absent who should have been present?*

✎ *What would it mean for your children (or your elder, or your dog) to be known and cared for by eight adults instead of one or two?*

MEETING LOG, MONTH 8

Record each circle meeting this month. Attendance is for your records, do not share outside the circle. Decisions column captures what was agreed, not every conversation.

DATE	ATTENDING	TOPIC / PRACTICE WORKED	DECISIONS & NEXT STEPS

WHAT YOU ARE BUILDING

What you are building, the alloparenting that Sarah Blaffer Hrdy identifies as the human norm. The nuclear family's demand that two parents do the work of eight is recent, aberrant, and demonstrably harmful. The childcare cooperative restores the village.

MONTH 9

SKILL-BUILDING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

"Every skill shared is a dependency eliminated."

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

By month nine, your circle has deep relational bonds, shared resources, a mutual fund, political education, a growing network, and practical support infrastructure. Now you invest in the economic capacity of your members. Identify skills within your circle that could generate income if developed or deployed collectively. Even if no formal cooperative launches this month, the skill-sharing and economic analysis strengthen collective capacity.

What you are building, cooperative ownership. The Rojava women's cooperatives, SEWA in India, post-genocide cooperatives in Rwanda. Shared risk, shared profit, economic capacity held in common.

STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION

Work through these in order. Mark each step as you complete it. Not every step will happen at one meeting, some take weeks. The order matters.

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
1	Revisit the asset inventory	Pull out the needs-and-assets document from month two. In the light of eight months of deeper knowing, update it. What skills have surfaced that weren't named in month two? What capacity has a member developed since then?	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Categorize the skills	Sort the circle's collective skills into three buckets: monetizable (could generate income), teachable (can be taught to other circle members), and load-bearing (carries the circle, facilitation, organization, conflict mediation). Every woman has at least one of each.	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
3	Identify skill-share opportunities	List skills one member could teach others: basic home repair, financial literacy, negotiation, gardening, cooking techniques, first aid, computer skills, legal rights, childbirth education, herbal medicine. Aim for one skill-share per month going forward.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Schedule the first skill-share	Pick one member, one skill, one two-hour session within the next three weeks. Small group, hands-on, materials provided (paid for by shared fund if needed). The teacher is compensated in time credits or a symbolic honorarium from the fund.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Identify potential cooperative enterprises	Look at the monetizable skills and ask: is there a two-or-three-person cluster here that could form a small cooperative business? A catering cooperative. A cleaning cooperative. A bookkeeping cooperative. A tutoring cooperative. A doula cooperative. Identify one real candidate.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Do a market-fit check	For the candidate enterprise, assess: is there a paying market within driving distance? What do competitors charge? What would the cooperative need to launch (equipment, insurance, licenses, capital)? This is a one-page analysis, not a business plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Decide on legal structure	Research worker cooperatives in your state. Options: LLC owned by members, worker cooperative corporation, unincorporated collective with profit-share agreement. Each has tax and liability implications. Consult a cooperative development organization, most regions have one.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Allocate startup capital thoughtfully	The shared fund can be a source but should not be the only source. Co-op members contribute sweat equity and small cash amounts. Small grants exist for women-owned cooperatives. Start with a tiny capital stack, less is more in month one of a cooperative.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Write the cooperative agreement	Even informal cooperatives need a document: who is a member, how decisions are made, how profits are distributed, how a member leaves, how a member joins, how disputes are resolved. Two pages. Sign it. Revisit annually.	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
10	For circles not ready for cooperatives: go deeper on skill-shares	If no cooperative emerges this month, make skill-shares a monthly practice. Over a year, the circle has shared twelve skills. Twelve dependencies eliminated, twelve new capacities built.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Build financial literacy collectively	Dedicate at least one meeting this month to money: what each woman knows about budgeting, debt, retirement, taxes, negotiation, investment. What she wishes she knew. Shared ignorance is often a gendered ignorance, deliberately produced. Close the gaps together.	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Name what you are building	At the end of the month, state aloud what is now true: 'We have moved from resource sharing to resource generation. We are not only supporting each other; we are becoming each other's economic infrastructure.'	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Launching a cooperative that no one actually wants to run. Cooperatives succeed on real entrepreneurial drive. If no one is the internal champion, do not launch.
- Turning skill-shares into lectures. A two-hour session with hands-on practice beats a four-hour session of watching one woman talk.
- Undercharging. Women systematically price their labor low. A catering cooperative that charges \$15/hour per member is subsidizing its customers. Research market rates. Charge them.
- Mixing cooperative money with the mutual aid fund. These are different purposes with different rules. Separate accounts.
- Skipping the legal structure. An informal cooperative with no agreement and no legal entity exposes members to tax and liability problems. Small investment in structure prevents large losses later.

END-OF-MONTH MILESTONES

Before moving to the next month, confirm each of these has been accomplished. If one has not, do not skip it, slow down.

- Updated skill and asset inventory exists.
- At least one skill-share session has been held, led by a circle member.

- One candidate cooperative enterprise has been identified and assessed for market fit.
- Legal structure options have been researched; a direction has been chosen (even if to stay informal).
- A financial-literacy session has been held.
- If a cooperative is launching, a written cooperative agreement exists and is signed.

JOURNAL & REFLECTION

These questions are for you, privately. Write honestly. The point is not polished reflection, it is the practice of taking your own experience seriously enough to put it on a page.

✎ What can you do that you have never been paid for?

✎ What would it mean to own something in common with these women?

✎ Where has economic dependence shaped your choices, and what would loosen if your income were held cooperatively?

MEETING LOG, MONTH 9

Record each circle meeting this month. Attendance is for your records, do not share outside the circle. Decisions column captures what was agreed, not every conversation.

DATE	ATTENDING	TOPIC / PRACTICE WORKED	DECISIONS & NEXT STEPS

WHAT YOU ARE BUILDING

What you are building, cooperative ownership. The Rojava women's cooperatives, SEWA in India, post-genocide cooperatives in Rwanda. Shared risk, shared profit, economic capacity held in common.

MONTH 10

COMMUNITY RITUAL AND CELEBRATION

"Every community needs shared stories and shared practices that bind its members to each other and to a larger purpose."

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Matrifocal communities are sustained not only by practical structures but by shared meaning. This month, your circle creates or claims rituals of celebration, transition, and mourning that center women's experience and your community's values. Rituals can take many forms: quarterly feasts, coming-of-age ceremonies for daughters, transitional rites for losses and beginnings, seasonal celebrations. Build yours.

What you are building, the cultural dimension of matrifocal life. The Mosuo have their Hua ceremony. Rojava has Newroz. Your circle's rituals should grow organically from your shared experience and values, they should feel like yours, not like a borrowed costume.

STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION

Work through these in order. Mark each step as you complete it. Not every step will happen at one meeting, some take weeks. The order matters.

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
1	Inventory the transitions in the room	Each woman names transitions she has been through that were not marked, or were marked badly. First period. Leaving a marriage. Entering menopause. Losing a parent. Getting free of a debt. Naming these surfaces the ritual absences in the culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Name the existing traditions each woman carries	What traditions, religious or cultural, does each woman already practice? What rituals are alive in her family or background? Honor what is already there before inventing anything.	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
3	Distinguish claim from appropriation	Write it plainly: the circle will not borrow Indigenous ceremonies, closed religious practices, or cultural rituals that are not our own to perform. This is not a constraint; it is an ethic. Be specific about what is off-limits.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Choose one seasonal marker to start	Equinoxes, solstices, harvest, new year, or a date meaningful to your location or circle's history. Pick one, for this year. Do not try to build the whole calendar in month ten.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Design the first ritual collectively	Four elements in any ritual: threshold (how you enter, a candle, a song, silence), content (what you do, reading, sharing, a symbolic act), witnessing (the circle sees each woman), closing (how you release, a toast, a blessing, a ringing of something). Design all four.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Build a feast structure	Even if the ritual is not primarily about food, food anchors it. Decide: potluck with assignments, shared cooking at one home, a prepared meal from the fund. A meal eaten together is half the ritual in every tradition.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Create a simple origin narrative	In one page, write the story of your circle. When it started. Who the founding members were. What the first meeting was like. What you built in the first year. This becomes part of every welcoming and every anniversary.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Plan a coming-of-age ritual for daughters (if applicable)	For circles with daughters entering adolescence, design a ritual honoring first menstruation or a chosen age of transition. Small, intimate, led by the mother with the circle as witnesses. The specifics are the mother's to shape with her daughter.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Plan for grief and loss	Matrifocal communities mark endings, not only beginnings. Design a basic practice for when a circle member loses someone, what the circle brings (meals, time, silence), how it shows up, how it marks the loss formally at the next gathering.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Hold the first ritual	Enact the ritual you have designed. It will feel awkward the first time. Awkwardness is the texture of new practice. Do it anyway. The second time will feel less strange. The fifth time will feel like the circle.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Debrief without over-analyzing	After the ritual, one round of 'what landed.' Not critique. Not editing. Witnessing the ritual the way you witness	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
		each other's speech. Next year's ritual will improve on this year's, that is the iterative logic.	
12	Document it for the next circle	Write down the ritual, what you did, why, what worked. Add it to your practice document from month six. Seed circles will borrow it; you will refine it; the tradition will be a tradition because it has been practiced.	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Over-designing. Rituals that take three hours to script and one hour to perform usually fail at the performance. Simpler is more durable.
- Performing other people's traditions. The line between honoring and appropriating is concrete: if the practice belongs to a living culture that is not yours to claim, it is not yours. Do not use it.
- Skipping ritual for grief. The temptation is to mark only good transitions. Matrifocal communities survive in part because they have practices for endings.
- Turning the ritual into a meeting with candles. A ritual is not a meeting. Protect the form, threshold, content, witnessing, closing, from creeping agenda.
- Assuming everyone wants the same level of spiritual or religious content. Some women come from religious traditions; some do not. Build rituals that are meaningful without requiring shared belief.

END-OF-MONTH MILESTONES

Before moving to the next month, confirm each of these has been accomplished. If one has not, do not skip it, slow down.

- An inventory of each member's carried traditions and unmarked transitions has been created.
- At least one seasonal or transitional ritual has been designed and performed.
- A written origin narrative of the circle exists.
- A protocol for responding to grief and loss in the circle has been discussed and documented.
- The first ritual has been debriefed and added to the circle's practice document.

JOURNAL & REFLECTION

These questions are for you, privately. Write honestly. The point is not polished reflection, it is the practice of taking your own experience seriously enough to put it on a page.

✎ What transitions in your life were never marked? What would it have meant to have them witnessed?

✎ What beauty do you want your circle to create, and why has beauty been absent from so much of women's organizing?

✎ What is the origin story of your circle, as you would tell it to a woman you were inviting in?

MEETING LOG, MONTH 10

Record each circle meeting this month. Attendance is for your records, do not share outside the circle. Decisions column captures what was agreed, not every conversation.

DATE	ATTENDING	TOPIC / PRACTICE WORKED	DECISIONS & NEXT STEPS

WHAT YOU ARE BUILDING

What you are building, the cultural dimension of matrifocal life. The Mosuo have their Hua ceremony. Rojava has Newroz. Your circle's rituals should grow organically from your shared experience and values, they should feel like yours, not like a borrowed costume.

MONTH 11

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

"When you speak, you speak from something, not just about something."

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Your network now has the relational infrastructure, economic infrastructure, and cultural infrastructure to engage with institutional power from a position of collective strength. This month, your circle and its sister circles begin engaging with local politics as a bloc. You are not an interest group. You are a functioning matrifocal community with shared resources, cooperative childcare, mutual economic support, and deep relational bonds. When you speak, you speak from something.

What you are building, what the Haudenosaunee clan mothers did, what Rojava's women's councils do. Political engagement backed by real community infrastructure, not performance.

STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION

Work through these in order. Mark each step as you complete it. Not every step will happen at one meeting, some take weeks. The order matters.

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
1	Revisit the needs-and-assets map	Pull out the inventory from month two and the themes from month nine. Identify which of the circle's needs are political, addressable by local policy rather than internal practice. Housing costs, childcare funding, DV services, zoning, labor protections.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Pick one local issue	One issue for this month. Not three. Choose where the circle's lived knowledge is strongest and where there is a concrete decision approaching (a budget vote, a zoning hearing, a school board decision, a pending ordinance).	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
3	Research the decision-makers	For the chosen issue, identify the body with authority (city council, school board, planning commission, state rep), the individuals who sit on it, how they have voted historically, and the next scheduled meeting where the issue is on the agenda.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Build a one-page position document	State what the circle wants, why, and what the circle has experienced that makes this position credible. Not a press release. A grounded document rooted in the specificity of the circle's lived knowledge.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Attend a meeting as a visible group	Go together. Sit together. Wear something that identifies you as a bloc (optional, but effective). Public meetings are shaped by who shows up. A circle of ten women who return three meetings in a row changes the room's dynamics.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Testify in public comment	Two or three members sign up to speak. Each prepares two minutes, not a speech, a statement. 'I am X. I live in this district. I am part of a circle of ten women. What we have learned is this.' Lived voice beats policy jargon.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Request a meeting with your representative	Email the council member, state rep, or board member. 'We are a group of constituents. We would like thirty minutes.' Go as a group of three. Come with the one-page document. Come with specific asks.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Build a coordinated contact push	Before the decision, every member (and every member of allied circles) makes a phone call and sends an email to the decision-makers. Coordinated, same day, specific ask. Twenty phone calls from the same neighborhood on the same morning gets noticed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Consider running a member	Identify the smallest elected or appointed position where a circle member could serve: school board, neighborhood council, planning commission, community advisory board. These are winnable. These shape real decisions. Begin recruitment for the next cycle.	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Build a legal and safety protocol	Before any public engagement, know: what rights you have in public comment, what to do if a meeting is hostile, who to call if police are involved, what a member who cannot risk arrest (for immigration, employment, custody reasons) should not do. Distribute as a one-pager.	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
11	Stay rooted in the infrastructure	After the political action, return to the circle's internal work. The external engagement is sustained by the internal practice. Circles that become pure political organizations burn out within two years. Circles that stay rooted sustain decades.	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Debrief honestly	Whatever the outcome of the political action, win, loss, mixed, debrief within two weeks. What worked? What did we learn about the body and the issue? What would we do differently next time? Political work is iterative; each engagement teaches the next.	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Speaking as individuals when you could speak as a bloc. The power of the circle is collective. A bloc of ten women at a meeting is not ten individuals; it is something different and more.
- Losing specificity in the move to the political. 'Women need support' is weaker than 'Ten women in our circle need X, and here is what has prevented that.' Keep the specificity.
- Burning out on electoral politics. Electoral cycles run on adrenaline and end in exhaustion. The circle's durability depends on not organizing like a campaign.
- Getting absorbed by a party, a nonprofit, or a movement. You can ally without being absorbed. Keep the boundary firm.
- Forgetting that legal risk is unequally distributed. A woman with undocumented family, active CPS involvement, or precarious employment faces different risks in political engagement than one without. Honor the difference.

END-OF-MONTH MILESTONES

Before moving to the next month, confirm each of these has been accomplished. If one has not, do not skip it, slow down.

- One local issue has been chosen and researched.
- A one-page position document exists.
- The circle has attended at least one public meeting as a visible group.
- At least one member has testified in public comment or met with a decision-maker.
- A coordinated contact push has happened around a specific decision.
- A legal and safety protocol exists for public engagement.

JOURNAL & REFLECTION

These questions are for you, privately. Write honestly. The point is not polished reflection, it is the practice of taking your own experience seriously enough to put it on a page.

✎ What would you say, in two minutes of public comment, if you stopped performing credibility and simply spoke from your life?

✎ What small political position could you run for, and what stops you, really?

✎ How does speaking from a bloc of ten women feel different from speaking alone?

MEETING LOG, MONTH 11

Record each circle meeting this month. Attendance is for your records, do not share outside the circle. Decisions column captures what was agreed, not every conversation.

DATE	ATTENDING	TOPIC / PRACTICE WORKED	DECISIONS & NEXT STEPS

WHAT YOU ARE BUILDING

What you are building, what the Haudenosaunee clan mothers did, what Rojava's women's councils do. Political engagement backed by real community infrastructure, not performance.

MONTH 12

ASSESS, CELEBRATE, AND COMMIT

"Matrifocal community is not a project with a completion date. It is a way of living."

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

The twelfth month is for looking back and looking forward. What have you built? What worked? What didn't? Conflict is not a sign of failure, it is a sign of genuine engagement. The question is not whether you had a perfect year but whether you built something real. Celebrate what you built. Then commit to the next twelve months.

What you are doing, what the Mosuo have done for centuries, what Rojava is doing under bombardment. You did it in your neighborhood. Now you continue.

STEP-BY-STEP IMPLEMENTATION

Work through these in order. Mark each step as you complete it. Not every step will happen at one meeting, some take weeks. The order matters.

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
1	Hold a full-day assessment gathering	Not a regular meeting. A three-to-six hour gathering, ideally at one member's home with food. Clear the afternoon. This is the year's work being taken seriously.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Open with the story of the year	The convener (or a rotating teller) narrates the year from month one. What happened, in order. Who joined, who left, what the circle built. This surfaces what has been collectively forgotten and collectively carried.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Inventory what has been built	On one large piece of paper, list every structure that exists now that did not exist twelve months ago. Resource-sharing practices. The fund balance. Political actions. Rituals. Relationships. This is the material record of the year.	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
4	Name what worked	Around the circle, each woman names one thing that worked for her this year. Specific. 'The meal share saved my Thursdays.' 'The housing partnership made me feel, for the first time in years, that I have somewhere to go.' Let each statement land.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Name what did not work	Same round, different question. What did not work? Where did we fall short? What was promised that was not delivered? Honesty here is harder and more important than celebration. Let the difficult statements be heard fully.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Address the conflicts	If there are unresolved conflicts in the circle, this is the meeting to name them. Not to resolve them in the moment, some conflicts need weeks of attention, but to name them openly so they can be worked. Conflict unnamed becomes rot.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Account for who is no longer here	Members who left. Members who were asked to leave. Members who died. Name them. Name what they contributed. Name, honestly, what was hard. Circles that do not honor their departed dilute their own seriousness.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Review the financials	The treasurer presents: total contributed to the fund, total disbursed, balance, pattern of use. What did the fund do that would not have been possible without it? Name the number of women the fund stabilized.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Review the political work	The circle's political engagement this year: what was attempted, what succeeded, what is ongoing. What shifts in the wider community did the circle contribute to? What is the honest assessment of our local political weight?	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Decide what continues, what changes, what stops	Go through each structure built over the year, meal share, fund, childcare co-op, study meetings, political work, and decide: continue as-is, modify, pause, or stop. Every practice should justify its continuation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Decide what to add in year two	Based on the year's learning, identify one or two new structures for year two. Cohousing research. A women-owned cooperative. A second sister circle. A policy campaign. Commit to the specific additions, not a vague 'go deeper.'	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	ACTION	HOW TO DO IT	DONE
12	Host the celebration	End the assessment with a feast, a ritual, a toast, a proper marking of the year. This is not performance. It is the honoring of a year of work that no one else was going to honor. If the circle does not mark it, no one will.	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Skipping the hard parts. If the assessment is all celebration and no reckoning, you have not assessed. You have performed assessment.
- Confusing conflict with failure. A circle that has never had a hard meeting has probably not gone deep enough. A circle that survived a hard meeting has strengthened.
- Burning the structures down in the name of 'revamping.' Twelve months of infrastructure should not be casually dismantled. Change what is not working; preserve what is.
- Skipping the financial and political reviews because they are dry. They are the material record. They are more important than the feelings-round.
- Not marking the end of year one. Without ritualization, year one blends into year two and the significance is lost. Mark it. Eat together. Name what you did.

END-OF-MONTH MILESTONES

Before moving to the next month, confirm each of these has been accomplished. If one has not, do not skip it, slow down.

- A full-day assessment gathering has happened.
- A written inventory of what has been built exists.
- Every member has spoken to what worked and what did not.
- Conflicts have been named, if not resolved.
- Financial and political reviews have been completed.
- Decisions have been made about what continues, changes, and stops.
- A commitment to year two has been made, specific, not vague.
- A celebration has happened.

JOURNAL & REFLECTION

These questions are for you, privately. Write honestly. The point is not polished reflection, it is the practice of taking your own experience seriously enough to put it on a page.

✎ *What did you build this year that you could not have built alone?*

✎ *Who are you now, in this circle, that you were not a year ago?*

✎ *What will you commit to for year two, knowing now, in specificity, what the commitment costs?*

MEETING LOG, MONTH 12

Record each circle meeting this month. Attendance is for your records, do not share outside the circle. Decisions column captures what was agreed, not every conversation.

DATE	ATTENDING	TOPIC / PRACTICE WORKED	DECISIONS & NEXT STEPS

WHAT YOU ARE BUILDING

What you are doing, what the Mosuo have done for centuries, what Rojava is doing under bombardment. You did it in your neighborhood. Now you continue.

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Sources and Further Reading

This bibliography grounds the twelve-month framework in the scholarship, ethnography, organizing tradition, and feminist theory it draws from. Every practice in this workbook has a lineage, a body of work by women (and a smaller number of men) who have thought and lived the questions this framework attempts to answer. The list below is extensive but not exhaustive; it is intended as a serious starting point for political education, research, and continued study. Works are organized thematically. Some works appear in more than one section when their relevance spans multiple months of the framework.

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ON THE SOURCES

Where possible, use a library. Many of these books are available through interlibrary loan even when they are out of print. Others are available as PDFs through academic archives, activist publishers, or the authors' own websites. Several of the key texts, particularly those by adrienne maree brown, Dean Spade, Silvia Federici, and Abdullah Öcalan, are available in affordable paperback or as free PDFs through radical publishing projects. The shared fund can cover a rotating set of copies for the circle.

Readings should be chosen collectively. This bibliography is a resource, not a prescription. Your circle will develop its own canon, and that canon should include voices this list has missed: elders in your own community, organizers from your own region, writers in the languages your circle speaks, works by women whose names this list does not know.

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