

Workshop 3: Policy and advocacy

Purpose of the workshop

The third and final workshop explored how psychosocial wellbeing informs policy and advocacy within the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Building on the experiences of Colombia and South Sudan, the session examined how community-based mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) efforts can influence institutional frameworks, national policies, and broader peacebuilding agendas, placing women's wellbeing at the centre of sustainable peace.

Key discussion areas

- How CSOs and women-led groups **translate local psychosocial experiences into policy advocacy.**
- The role of **evidence and storytelling** in influencing decision-makers.
- **Barriers and enablers** for integrating MHPSS into national WPS and GBV strategies.
- The contribution of **collective healing and empowerment** to social transformation and civic participation.
- Opportunities for **cross-country learning** to strengthen advocacy around MHPSS as a peacebuilding tool.

From psychosocial wellbeing to systemic change

Both projects show how psychosocial recovery can open pathways to policy engagement and structural transformation, moving from individual healing to changes in laws, norms and governance.

In Colombia (WAP)

- Workshops link emotional recovery with rights and policy literacy, translating frameworks like Law 1257 and UNSCR 1325 into accessible tools through participatory exercises and infographics.

- Women are supported to organise forums with local authorities, question electoral candidates, and participate in municipal and national spaces.
- Advocacy is woven throughout the process, not added at the end: collective care, feminist analysis, and safe spaces build the confidence and organisation needed for women to act as advocates for peace and social justice.

In South Sudan (LOP)

- Uses a tiered advocacy model:
 - At community level, PFPs and women's groups work with chiefs, ABC Courts and Special Protection Units to promote gender-sensitive bylaws and enforcement of women's rights.
 - At county and national levels, partners engage councils and ministries, while Annual Women's Gatherings in Juba bring women leaders together with high-level officials to present joint communiqués.
 - Regionally, selected women participate in African Union spaces, connecting grassroots realities to continental WPS discussions.
- Through this model, psychosocial support and strengthened relationships become the basis for legitimate, locally owned advocacy that can influence policy and shift social norms.

