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## UN women seek greater peace role



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Unifem says women should lead peace initiatives



**By Greg Barrow**  
BBC correspondent at the UN

An international women's organisation has urged the United Nations to do more to ensure that women play a central role in attempts to build peace and security around the world.

The United Nations women's fund-Unifem- chose this first anniversary of a Security Council resolution on women's role in peace and security to look at what steps the world has made towards bringing women into the process of peace building.

And they spoke of the need to involve women in peace keeping operations, and to consult them on initiatives to end conflicts.

### War and suffering

One delegate, an Afghan woman who works in refugee camps in Pakistan said women have to challenge the illusion that peace and security is men's work.

The role of women is nowhere more difficult than in Afghanistan, where they face cultural exclusion and the physical threat of war.

“ Just because we wear the veil, it doesn't mean we don't have a voice ”  
Jamila  
Afghan refugee worker



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Jamila, the founding member of an Afghan women's network in refugee camps in Pakistan, said that for the past 20 years of her life, the leadership of men had brought only war and suffering.

She and other delegates who have worked in Afghanistan and Pakistan said people should not assume that women have no influence in Afghan society, even under the Taliban.

"Just because we wear the veil," Jamila said, "it doesn't mean we don't have a voice".

### Victims

Unifem says that women have the greatest interest in preventing conflicts and building peace, because it is they who are the likeliest victims.

Caught between groups of armed men in countries at war, it is women who are more likely to be raped, killed or captured.

Unifem and other women's groups aim to build on UN support for a greater involvement of women in peace-building operations.

Where women's voices are heard, they say, priorities that would otherwise be left out of peace processes are strongly reflected.



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