

On International Women's Day, UNODC (Listen First) Call for Gender and Social Equity to Prevent Substance Use

On a day that celebrates women's achievements, the United Nations Office on Drug & Crime's 'Listen First' campaign is creating materials to help.

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- The roots of International Women's Day go back to women striking for better conditions, an end to discrimination in garment factories, and the struggle for the right to vote. These days were first celebrated in the United States and Europe. To mark this day,

[UNODC/'Listen First'](#) advisers also call for gender equity in the home to create a more equitable world for women and children.

Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, children and their parents have been forced to stay at home, creating ever more difficulties, especially for vulnerable families.



Maria Melchior (INSERM)

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Maria Melchior is Research Director, Pierre Louis Institute of Epidemiology and Public Health at [INSERM](#) and Sorbonne University in Paris, as well as an adviser to UNODC. She highlights both the gender and social inequities in regard to substance abuse. "We know that many problems in the area of substance use and mental health begin early in life and that children who come from less advantaged backgrounds are at higher risk. Those problems also influence their education and socio-economic situation in the longer term. And though it still is

the case in most countries that young men are more likely to smoke, drink, and use illegal drugs,

young women are also more likely to use different types of substances if they have been victims of violence or have psychological difficulties.”

However, she notes that there are evidence-based solutions, as science demonstrates that staying busy can decrease inattention, hyperactivity, defiance, aggression, and substance use. This is where men can play a key role in both gender and social parity. “There is extensive research showing that positive recreational activities in childhood and adolescence are related to lower risks of substance use and mental health problems,” she points out. “However, creating positive activities for children is not only women's job, but it's also a job for the family. Any policies that support the involvement of fathers raising their children can change the dynamics and the family in a way that is positive for raising healthy children.”

Laura d'Arrigo is the Diplomatic adviser at the French Interministerial Mission to Combat Drugs and Addictive Behaviors ([MILDECA](#)), which sponsors the innovative UNODC ‘Listen First’ program: “The pandemic has changed our way of living in many ways. Many young people cannot go to school and are deprived not only from an education but also from a social life.

And in this particular context, listening within the family is even more important.”

To that end, 'Listen First' is an initiative based on science to invest in the well-being of children and youth, their families, and their communities. It proves that listening to children and youth is the first step to help them grow healthy and safe, as well as encouraging other positive behaviours to keep them occupied especially now. Laura d'Arrigo notes: “Scientific evidence clearly shows that developing life skills, such as intellectual autonomy, self-esteem, critical



The Science of Keeping Busy



Laura d'Arrigo (MILDECA)

thinking and the ability to resist peer pressure is the most effective prevention of risky behaviours. It also improves performance at school and has a positive effect on the school climate. This is why France is strongly committed to promoting life skills both at the national and international level.

To that end, the United Nations Office on Drug & Crime (UNODC) 'Listen First' is releasing its latest video about the 'Science of Keeping Busy', for parents, caregivers, educators, and prevention workers to help children worldwide.

The materials, including scientific resources, are available to parents and caregivers in English, Spanish, and French at <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/listen-first/the-science-of-keeping-busy.html>

To watch the new video created by Ethan Films visit this youtube link:
<https://youtu.be/tOQNidwOYfY>

For any visual materials or interviews with Elizabeth Mattfeld, UNODC Program Manager, please contact: miles@ethanfilms.com

To see the complete interviews quoted in this article visit
www.unodc.org/listenfirst

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