



**Convention on the Elimination  
of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination  
against Women**

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties  
under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of  
All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

**Fourth periodic report of States parties**

**Singapore**

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*Note:* The present report is being issued without formal editing.

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## Foreword

I am pleased to present, on behalf of the Singapore Government, Singapore's fourth periodic report on the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Singaporean women have continued to enjoy all the privileges and benefits of the nation's development and growth, alongside men. For example, girls are given equal access as boys to quality education, scholarships, bursaries and financial assistance. Women benefit from excellent yet affordable healthcare services and receive attention and support from the government for women-specific health issues. Women are also eligible to purchase and own property on similar terms as men. As stated in Article 12 of the Singapore Constitution, all Singaporean women enjoy equal rights as men.

For the reporting period, 2004 - 2008, considerable progress had been made in addressing Singapore's obligations to the Convention.

The Constitutional Amendment in May 2004 accorded the same citizenship rights to the children of Singaporean women as of Singaporean men. With this amendment, Singapore withdrew our reservation to Article 9.

Relevant legislation and policies have been reviewed and revised to improve the position and rights of women in Singapore. This included the amendment to the Penal Code to make non-consensual sexual intercourse between estranged married partners an offence. Estranged wives now receive legal protection from their husbands' unwanted sexual advances. And to protect young persons against commercial sex exploitation, commercial sex with persons under 18, both within Singapore and overseas, has been made an offence. More comprehensive work-life measures to support women have also been implemented.

Singapore recognises that enhancing the status of women is an on-going process. It is important for all stakeholders to work together to enable and empower women to harmonise their personal, family, community and work commitments so that both women, and men, can achieve their full potential. We remain committed to advancing the interest, support and contributions of women in Singapore.

The Women's Desk, set up by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, continues to work closely with Government Ministries, Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Businesses and Employers to enhance the status, contributions and well-being of women in Singapore.

This report includes Singapore's response to the Committee's Concluding Comments at the 39<sup>th</sup> CEDAW Session. I would like to thank women's groups, government agencies, VWOs, NGOs and individuals for their inputs as well as those who have contributed to the preparation of this report.

Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon  
Minister of State  
Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports

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## **Executive Summary**

This Fourth Report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (the Committee) covers the key legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures introduced in Singapore during the time frame of 2004 to 2008. Previous reports on the Convention can be downloaded at [www.mcys.gov.sg](http://www.mcys.gov.sg).

The Republic of Singapore acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (the Convention) on 5 October 1995. The Convention came into force for Singapore on 4 November 1995.

## **SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 2004**

The Singapore Government's goal for gender equality remains unchanged - equal opportunities for men and women on the basis of meritocracy. Built upon that is the availability of fundamental resources such as education and healthcare for all citizens so that men and women have the same opportunities to pursue their personal goals and gain access to all spheres in society.

Since the last report in 2004, the Government has made significant strides in the advancement of women's issues and rights in Singapore. The key ones are:

- Change in citizenship law and the subsequent lifting of reservation to Article 9.
- Amendments to the Penal Code to provide greater protection for girls and married women.
- Increase in the number of women in politics.
- Reduction in the income gap between males and females.
- Development of enhanced measures to support women in their role as mothers as well as to encourage shared parenting.
- Raising the minimum age of marriage for Muslim girls.

### **Change in Citizenship Law**

In April 2004, the Singapore Parliament passed a bill to amend the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore to allow overseas-born children to acquire Singapore citizenship by descent from their Singaporean mothers. Singapore deposited the notification to lift the reservation to Article 9 in July 2007.

### **Penal Code Amendments**

The following amendments to the Penal Code came into force on 1 February 2008.

#### **Protection of young persons against sexual exploitation for commercial sex**

To enhance the protection of young persons against sexual exploitation for commercial sex in Singapore and in other countries, it is now an offence for a person (male or female) to purchase sexual services from another person (male or female) who is under 18 years of age.

To combat child sex tourism, it is an offence for a Singapore Citizen or Permanent Resident to purchase sexual services from a minor under 18 overseas. It is also an offence for a person to organise child sex tours or print, publish or distribute any information that is intended to promote sexual exploitation of minors under 18.

#### Withdrawal of marital immunity under certain circumstances

It is now an offence for a husband to engage in non-consensual sexual intercourse with the withdrawal of marital immunity under certain prescribed circumstances which signal a break-down in the marriage and consent to conjugal relations. Further elaborations on this Penal Code Amendments are in the sections on Articles 6 (Suppression of the Exploitation of Women) and 16 (Marriage and Family Life).

#### More Women in Politics

Following the May 2006 General Election, there are now four women political office-holders, up from three in the third reporting period.

As of July 2008, 17 of the 84 elected Members of Parliament (MPs) are women. Four of them hold political office. In addition, there is one female non-constituency MP, and five out of nine Nominated MPs (NMPs) are women. In April 2008, two women political office-holders were promoted to Senior Minister of State positions.

Based on data compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), as at 31 May 2008, Singapore was ranked 36 out of 188 countries in terms of the percentage of women in the Lower or Single House. Singapore's 24.5 percent of women in Parliament currently exceeds IPU's world average of 18.2 percent (both Houses combined).

#### Equal Pay for Equal Work

In May 2006, the Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices (TAFEP) was formed to encourage employers to adopt fair and responsible employment practices. The Tripartite Guidelines for Fair Employment was launched in January 2007 and the Tripartite Centre for Fair Employment was established in November 2007 to promote awareness of fair employment practices amongst employers and the general public.

The income gap between males and females has narrowed. The median monthly income for full-time employed females was 86% that of males in 2006, up from 83% a decade ago. However, female employees within the age group of 25-29 years earned more than males in occupations such as managers, technicians and associate professionals.

#### Enhanced Package of Measures to Support Parenthood

An enhanced package of measures to support parenthood was introduced in August 2008. The measures included longer maternity leave, extended childcare and infant care leave for both parents, infant and childcare subsidies, and financial support for the family. These measures enable parents to strike a better balance between work and family life, pursue a range of childcare options and ease the overall financial costs on the family.

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Details on the Marriage and Parenthood package are in the section on Article 16, “Marriage and Family Life”.

### **Amendment to Minimum Age of Marriage**

In 2008, amendments were made to the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) to raise the minimum marriage age from 16 to 18 years for Muslim females. Like their non-Muslim counterparts, a Muslim below 18 years of age who wishes to marry will have to apply for a Special Marriage Licence.

### **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

In preparing this Report, the inputs of relevant government ministries and agencies have been sought to give a comprehensive update on the developments concerning women.

Inputs were also sought from various women’s groups in Singapore. On 6 October 2008, the Women’s Desk of the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, and the Singapore Council of Women’s Organisations (SCWO), consulted women’s groups on the contents of this report. Another consultation session with the Ministry’s Government Parliamentary Committee members and women Members of Parliament was held on 15 October 2008.

## **PART I**

### **GENERAL BACKGROUND**

#### **Physical Environment**

A.1 The Republic of Singapore consists of one main island and about 60 small ones, covering a total land area of 682.7 square kilometres. It is located between Peninsular Malaysia and Indonesia, being separated from them by the Straits of Johor and the Straits of Singapore respectively. Owing to its small land area, optimisation of land-use is of paramount importance. Singapore enjoys a tropical climate of abundant rainfall and high humidity throughout the year.

#### **Demographic Characteristics**

##### Population Trends

A.2 With no natural resources, the Government invests heavily in the development of its citizenry and encourages its people to work hard and be adaptable to changes in the global environment. This philosophy is pervasive and underlies Singapore's approach to national development.

A.3 As at end June 2007, the resident population was 3,583,100, an increase of 6.4% from 2003. Its growth can be attributed to the increase in the number of permanent residents. From 2000 to 2005, the number of permanent residents increased by 8.7% per annum.

A.4 Of the total resident population in 2007, 18.9% (678,400) were aged below 15 years, 72.5% (2,599,100) were aged 15 to 64 years and 8.5% (305,500) were 65 years and above. The median age of the resident population was 36.4 years compared to 35.0 years in 2003. Males made up 49.6% (1,775,500) of the resident population and females made up 50.4% (1,807,600).

A.5 The ethnic composition remains largely the same as the last census in 2000, with 75.2% Chinese, 13.6% Malay, 8.8% Indian, and 2.4% comprising other ethnic groups.

A.6 Population density increased from 5,903 persons per square kilometre in 2003 to 6,489 persons per square kilometre in 2007.

##### Marriage and Divorce Rates

A.7 The marriage rate for females decreased from 47.6 per 1000 unmarried resident females in 2002 to 43.8 in 2007. Many women are choosing to delay marriage. Over the period 1990-2006, the median age at first civil marriage for brides increased from 25.8 years to 27.3 years.



- A.8 The divorce rate has increased from 7.1 per 1000 married resident females in 2002 to 8.1 in 2007. In 2007, divorcees aged 25-29 years formed the largest proportion of female divorcees. In the previous 3 years, the 30-34 years age group formed the largest proportion of all female divorcees.

### Fertility and Mortality Rates

- A.9 Singapore has one of the lowest birth rates in the world. The total fertility rate per resident female was 1.29 in 2007, compared to 1.27 in 2003. There were 39,490 live births in 2007, of which 51.8% were males, and 48.2% were females.
- A.10 Singapore's infant mortality rate was 2.1 per 1,000 live births in 2007 compared to 2.5 per 1,000 live births in 2003. In 2008, our infant mortality rate was ranked by UNICEF's "State of the World's Children Report" as the lowest in the world. Maternal mortality rate remains low at 0.08 per 1,000 live births in 2007.

### Life Expectancy

- A.11 Life expectancy at birth continues to increase from 79.1 years in 2003 to 80.3 years in 2007. Females have a longer life expectancy of 82.9 years compared to 78.2 years for males.
- A.12 Singapore defines "aged" as those who are 65 years and above. This group is projected to increase from 13.5% in 2015 to 22.8% in 2025<sup>1</sup>. The proportion of older women aged 65 years and above has also increased from 3.3 per cent in 1990 to 4.7 per cent in 2007.

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL INDICATORS**

### Standard of Living

- B.1 The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) for 2007/08 ranked Singapore 25th out of 70 countries classified as having High Human Development. In the Mercer Worldwide Quality of Living Index 2007, Singapore was ranked first for quality of life in Asia.
- B.2 Singapore's socio-economic performance can be attributed to continued political stability, quality judicial performance, and high integrity of government. In 2007, the Political and Economic Risk (PERC) Consultancy ranked Singapore as the most politically stable country in Asia, and second out of 14 jurisdictions in Asia for quality of the judicial system. Singapore scored highest in terms of integrity of government, with the corruption level of 1.3, the lowest in the region.
- B.3 In 2007, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was S\$243 billion while GDP per capita was S\$52,994. Singapore's economy continues to do well, with a real growth of 7.7% in 2007.

<sup>1</sup> Taken from the United Nations World Population Prospects (2006 Revision).

B.4 Singapore has a relatively equitable distribution of income. The median monthly earnings of full-time employed residents in Singapore was S\$2,300 in June 2007, compared to S\$2,100 in 2003. This represents a 2.7 % increase per annum.

#### Rate of Inflation

B.5 The annual inflation rate for 2007 was 2.1%.

#### External Debt

B.6 Singapore has no public sector external debt.

#### Rate of Unemployment

B.7 Singapore's labour force comprised 2,751,000 people in June 2007. The resident labour force participation rate was 65.1%. In 2006, 54% of the resident female population aged 15 and over were in the workforce, up from 50% in 1996. The average unemployment rate for 2007 was 2.1%, which had declined from 4.0% in 2003.

#### Literacy rate

B.8 The literacy rate for the population aged 15 years and older is 95.7% in 2007, with the mean years of schooling at 9.4 years. Among residents aged 25-34 years in 2007, 59% have Polytechnic or University qualifications.

#### Religion

B.9 The main religions in Singapore are Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Christianity and Hinduism. The 2000 Census showed that 85% of Singapore residents professed to have some religious faith or spiritual belief. 43% were Buddhists, 15% were Muslims, 15% were Christians, 9% Taoists and 4% were Hindus.

### **SINGAPORE'S POLITICAL SYSTEM**

#### History of Singapore's Independence

C.1 Singapore was a British colony for about 140 years before it was granted independence in 1959. Thereafter, it merged with the Federation of Malaysia for a short while before becoming a fully-independent and sovereign nation on 9 August 1965. On 21 September 1965, Independent Singapore was admitted to the United Nations. On 22 December 1965, Singapore became a republic, with Mr Yusof bin Ishak as the first President of the Republic of Singapore elected by Parliament.

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## Framework of the Singapore Government

- C.2 Singapore is a republic with a parliamentary system of government. It has a written Constitution that provides for the three main organs of state of the executive, the legislature and the judiciary.

### *Parliament<sup>2</sup>*

- C.3 Parliament is unicameral and consists of Members from single-member constituencies and Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs). Members of Parliament (MPs) could be elected, non-constituency or nominated Members (NMPs). There were 14 GRCs in the 2006 General Election and 9 Single Member constituencies. As Singapore is a multi-racial country, GRCs field between three to six candidates to ensure that minority races are represented. NMPs are appointed by the President of Singapore for a term of two and a half years on the recommendation of a Special Select Committee of Parliament chaired by the Speaker of Parliament. NMPs are not connected to any political parties.
- C.4 In addition, the Constitution provides for the appointment of up to three Non-Constituency Members of Parliament (NCMPs). NCMPs are individuals from opposition political parties who were not voted in at a General Election. This ensures that views other than the Government's can be expressed in Parliament.

### *Cabinet<sup>3</sup>*

- C.5 The Head of State is the President. The administration of the Government is vested in the Cabinet which is responsible for all government policies and the day-to-day administration of the affairs of the state. It is accountable to Parliament. The Cabinet is led by the Prime Minister, who is appointed by the President. The members of Cabinet comprise ministers in charge of the ministries of Community Development, Youth and Sports, Defence, Education, the Environment and Water Resources, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Health, Home Affairs, Information, Communications and the Arts, Law, Manpower, National Development, Trade and Industry, and Transport.

### *The Executive*

- C.6 The President has the authority to examine how the Government exercise its powers under the Internal Security Act and religious harmony laws, as well as cases of corruption. In this way, the Executive branch of the government acts as a check-and-balance system vis-à-vis the Cabinet. The President is aided by a Council of Presidential Advisors, whom he/she must consult before making decisions within his/her purview.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: <http://www.parliament.gov.sg>.

<sup>3</sup> Source: <http://www.cabinet.gov.sg>.

### *The Legislature*

C.7 The Singapore Legislature is made up of the President and Parliament.

### *The Judiciary*

C.8 The Supreme Court and the Subordinate Courts are the national judicial bodies. The Supreme Court consists of the Chief Justice, the Judges of Appeal and judges who are appointed from time to time. There are special provisions in the Constitution that protect the integrity and independence of judges at the Supreme Court.

## **SINGAPORE’S APPROACH TO SAFEGUARDING THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN**

D.1 Singapore subscribes to the philosophy that the family undergirds society and that closely-knit and supportive families make for a cohesive nation. Therefore, many policies in Singapore are designed to promote the healthy development of families.

D.2 Women form about half<sup>4</sup> of Singapore’s population. They receive equal opportunities as men. This has been made possible by upholding the principle of meritocracy, which underlies the planning and implementation of policies and programmes across government ministries.

D.3 Besides the Singapore Council of Women’s Organisations which encourages women to take lead positions in the community, the National Family Council is another platform where issues concerning women are raised. This people-led advisory and consultative body was formed on 1 May 2006. One of its concerns is the promotion of support services and programmes to enable women to harmonise their work, personal and family responsibilities.

## **THE WOMEN’S CHARTER IN SINGAPORE**

E.1 The principle of equality for women is entrenched in Article 12 of the Constitution of Singapore which states that “all persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law”. For example, the right to vote was given to men and women at the same time in 1948.

E.2 The Women’s Charter governs matters related to marriage and divorce.<sup>5</sup> Enacted in 1961, it is a landmark piece of legislation that provides the legal basis for equality between husband and wife. Its comprehensive coverage includes the following:

- a. Polygamy: it forbids a Singaporean man from taking more than one wife;

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<sup>4</sup> As at June 2007, women made up 50.4 percent of the entire population.

<sup>5</sup> The other law that governs marriage and divorce is the Muslim law or the Syariah Law.

- b. Management of Household: it gives equal rights and responsibilities to both husband and wife in the care of their children and home;
- c. Matrimonial property: it entitles the wife to a share of the matrimonial property even though she may not have contributed directly to it financially;
- d. Maintenance by Husband: it makes it obligatory for the husband to maintain his wife and children during marriage and upon divorce; and
- e. Family Violence: it protects the wife and children from a violent husband to the extent of removing him from the matrimonial home.

E.3 In August 1996, the Women's Charter was amended to cover four key areas, i.e.

- a. Protection of the family from domestic violence;
- b. Division of matrimonial assets;
- c. Enforcement of maintenance orders;
- d. Legality of marriages.

E.4 Under the Women's Charter, the minimum legal age of marriage in Singapore is 18 years with parental consent. A person below 18 years of age wishing to get married has to apply for a Special Marriage Licence from the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports before he/she can marry.

### **SINGAPORE'S WORK IN THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

F.1 The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (hereafter referred to as the Convention) came into force for Singapore on 4 November 1995. However, the principles of gender equality had been in place prior to Singapore's accession to the Convention. These provisions can be found in the Constitution of Singapore and other relevant legislation such as the Women's Charter mentioned above.

F.2 Singapore's Initial Report, Second Periodic Report and Third Periodic Report were submitted to the UN Committee on the CEDAW in January 2000, April 2001 and November 2004 respectively.

F.3 On 1 August 2007, Singapore presented the Third Report to the Committee. The delegation was led by Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Minister of State for Community Development, Youth and Sports.

F.4 As a responsible member of the international community, Singapore takes a serious view of its international obligations to treaties such as the CEDAW. Apart from this Convention, Singapore is also a signatory to various other international human rights instruments, some of which are specific to women (See list at Annex 1). Singapore is also a member of the

Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) wherein women's issues attract major concern and discussions.<sup>6</sup>

- F.5 Treaties and Conventions do not automatically become part of the laws of Singapore unless they are specifically incorporated into the legal system. As such, an aggrieved party cannot invoke the provisions of the Convention in the law courts in Singapore.

## **INSTITUTIONS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN'S STATUS IN SINGAPORE**

- G.1 Singapore continues to have two main national bodies overseeing women-related matters. They are the Inter-Ministry Committee (IMC) on CEDAW which was set up in 1996 to monitor Singapore's implementation of the Convention and the Women's Desk, which was established in 2002 as the national focal point for women matters. The Women's Desk is also the secretariat for the IMC on CEDAW.
- G.2 The Women's Desk conducts gender analysis and analyses trends to ensure appropriate and timely implementation of gender-sensitive measures and policies. Gender-disaggregated data is collated from Ministries and agencies and published on the Women's Desk webpage. These readily-accessible statistics are a valuable resource for gender research and informs the public about the state of women locally.
- G.3 Apart from national machineries, there are the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO), the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) Women's Development Secretariat and the People's Association (PA) Women's Integration Network (WIN) Council. The Women's Desk works closely with these strategic partners. Please read Article 7 on "Political and Public Life" for more detailed updates.

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<sup>6</sup> Declaration on the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region, Bangkok 5 July 1988; The Jakarta Declaration for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific; Jakarta, 14 June 1994 in relation to the Second Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development.

## PART II

### Article 1: Discrimination

*For the purposes of the present Convention, the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.*

- 1.1 The Constitution of Singapore is the supreme law in Singapore. Article 12 of the Singapore Constitution enshrines the principle of equality of all persons before the law and it specifically provides that "All persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law." This principle continues to be upheld.

### Article 2: Policy Measures

*States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:*

- (a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;*
- (b) To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women;*
- (c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;*
- (d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;*
- (e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise;*
- (f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;*
- (g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.*

### Milestones

- 2.1 The following paragraphs provide updates on significant policy changes Singapore has made during the reporting period.

### Nationality Law

- 2.2 In April 2004, the Singapore Parliament passed a bill to amend the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore to allow overseas-born children to acquire Singapore citizenship by descent from their Singaporean mothers.
- 2.3 Singapore withdrew our reservation to Article 9 in July 2007.

### **Complaints Procedure With Respect to Violations of Constitutionally-Guaranteed Rights to Equality**

- 2.4 Although there is no specific gender equality and anti-gender discrimination legislation in Singapore, the principle of equality of all persons before the law is enshrined in the Singapore Constitution. This provision encompasses the non-discrimination of women.
- 2.5 In Singapore, provisions have been made to allow any aggrieved woman to seek redress according to the laws applicable to that area. The rights of Singapore women are protected under the Constitution as well as in other legislation like the Employment Act, the Women's Charter, and the Penal Code. Women can report violations to the relevant authorities, which will look into the complaint, and take action to enforce the laws as appropriate. An affected victim, or someone on her behalf, can also lodge a police report.
- 2.6 Besides the legal channel, there are various other channels for women and women's groups to reflect their views and complaints, including views on the Convention. All Ministries and government agencies have formal channels for the public to raise complaints and to comment on policies that have an impact on them. All public complaints are recorded and the agencies' responses are monitored.
- 2.7 Citizens can write to the forum pages of local newspapers to express their views and debate policy issues. Members of Parliament hold regular dialogue sessions with women's groups on issues concerning women. Women's issues and concerns are openly debated in Parliament. In the public service, female officers can lodge complaints about unfair treatment to the independent Public Service Commission and its various appeal mechanisms.
- 2.8 REACH (short for "Reaching Everyone for Active Citizenry @ Home") organises regular dialogue sessions, tea sessions and policy forums to actively obtain the public's views on policies and legislative changes. One such comprehensive consultation exercise was on the draft Penal Code (Amendment) Bill, where members of the public were invited to give their comments and feedback on how the Code could be made more effective in maintaining a safe and secure environment. The e-consultation paper was posted online for a period of one month, starting from 9 November 2006.
- 2.9 So far there had been no complaint of insufficient grievance procedures available for women to challenge acts of discrimination. Singapore will continue to monitor closely and review this if necessary.



## Gender Analysis

- 2.10 In the formulation and review of policies, Singapore adopts a stakeholder approach which analyses the policy impact on affected groups. As many policy issues are cross-cutting, a “whole of government” approach is adopted whereby consultation with other relevant ministries are done before government agencies submit policy papers to Cabinet for consideration.
- 2.11 This stakeholder approach encompasses taking a gender-sensitive perspective on issues that have differing impacts on women and men. An example is in the treatment and response to Singapore’s ageing population where health-related issues differ for men and women. Another instance is that older women tend to have fewer financial resources as a result of their lower educational levels and the tendency to disrupt their careers or drop out of the labour force for family reasons.
- 2.12 The perennial problem of low fertility rates has been an issue which is high on the Government’s agenda. In 2008, the Government introduced a suite of marriage and parenthood measures to promote marriage and to boost the low birth rates. Views from various stakeholders were sought through public dialogues, feedback and focus group discussions. On 6 May 2008, the National Family Council (NFC) organised a focus group discussion with women’s groups to seek their views on Singapore’s marriage and parenthood concerns and measures. Areas for discussion covered marriage, work-life and childcare support.

### Article 3: Guarantee of Basic Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

*States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.*

- 3.1 The guarantee of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms is provided in the Constitution of Singapore. They are :
- No person shall be deprived of his life or liberty save in accordance with the law;
  - Prohibition of slavery and forced labour;
  - Equal protection under the law for all;
  - Prohibition of banishment and freedom of movement;
  - Freedom of speech, assembly and association;
  - Freedom of religion; and
  - Equal rights to education.
- 3.2 Statistical studies have shown positive signs that women enjoy access to these basic rights. For example, the literacy rate for women in 2007 was 93.8%, a significant increase from 89.7% in 2001. In addition, 47% of Singaporean women were in professional, managerial or technical positions in 2007. The corresponding percentage for men was 50%.

- 3.3 Women have attained prominent positions in the area of sports, the arts and culture. For more details, please refer to Article 13 on “Economic and Social Benefits”.
- 3.4 Another area that reflects women’s progress is their increased representation in the political sphere. The proportion of female Members of Parliament has risen dramatically from 4.8% in 1999 to 25% in 2008.
- 3.5 Following the 2006 General Election, there are now four women political office holders. More updates on women’s participation in politics and civil society are detailed in Article 7 on “Political and Public Life”.

#### **Article 4: Special Measures**

- 1. Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.*
- 2. Adoption by States Parties of special measures, including those measures contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory.*

- 4.1 No update.

#### **Article 5: Sex Role Stereotyping and Prejudice**

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures:*

*(a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;*

*(b) To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.*

#### **Progress in Eliminating Gender Stereotypes**

- 5.1 The Singapore Government continues to address and eliminate gender stereotypes in education and mass media.
- 5.2 The following highlights the efforts taken so far:

## Education

- 5.3 Special attention has been given to educational materials and curriculum to ensure that gender stereotypes are not perpetuated and that girls and boys have equal access to various resources and opportunities. For example, textbook illustrations depict a balanced image of men and women, where women engage in activities and occupational groups commonly associated with the male gender (for instance, science, engineering, medicine, soccer).
- 5.4 In terms of curriculum, girls and boys alike are free to choose either the science or arts stream in secondary school; while in primary school, all students take similar subjects.
- 5.5 Home Economics is taught at lower secondary while Food & Nutrition and Design & Technology are electives at the upper secondary levels for both girls and boys.

## Media

- 5.6 The Media Development Authority of Singapore (MDA) sets clear media guidelines prohibiting the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and sexually-discriminating values. In the case of broadcast media, the guidelines state that programmes should not make careless discriminating references to any class or group of people, whether based on race, gender, disability or occupational status. In addition, the guidelines regulate the behaviour of broadcasters by disallowing the use of insensitive jokes that might cause hurt to any persons.
- 5.7 The Free-to-Air Television Programme Code requires that programmes send a strong signal against any form of non-consenting sexual relations (e.g. rape or indecent assault). It disallows demeaning and hurting sexual stereotypes. Besides content guidelines that safeguard the interests of women, MDA also supports programmes that cater to women. Some examples are:

- ***Aura Femina (Feminine Aura)***  
This 12-episode info-ed series on local women's issues and lifestyles was broadcast in 2006.
- ***Dewi (Goddess)***  
The 10-episode info-ed series showcased women's lifestyles and highlighted dynamic ladies in South East Asia, such as Malaysia's Camelia, Indonesia's Ibu Martha Tillar and Singapore's Dr Fatimah Lateef. It was shown in 2006.
- ***Penmani (Lady)***  
This informational series was broadcast in 2007, and featured women's views on parenthood, health and medical matters, as well as interviews with women in various industries.
- ***Rouge***  
A women's weekly talk show which focuses on issues and trends concerning Singaporean women (and men). Hosted by Nominated Member of Parliament, Ms Eunice Olsen, the 13-episode series was telecast in 2008.

- ***Women on Top***

The talk show, aired in 2008, invites female celebrities and politicians to share their views and thoughts on current affairs, politics, entertainment and social issues.

- 5.8 The Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore (ASAS) sets similar standards as MDA. There are guidelines that prohibit negative stereotyping that could potentially hurt any segment of society.
- 5.9 ASAS has tightened advertising guidelines in matchmaking advertisements in March 2008. Lewd slogans and suggestive pictures used to promote matchmaking services had already been axed from Singapore's newspapers and magazines in 2007. ASAS introduced stricter guidelines in March 2008 to specify that matchmaking ads must be in text (without pictures); the ads have to state that marriages are not guaranteed; and the ads are restricted to a certain section (classified section for advertisements) of the newspapers and magazines. Only dating agencies accredited by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports were exempted from the guidelines.

#### Public Education Programmes – Engaging Men and Boys in the Promotion of Gender Equality

- 5.10 Singapore recognises that men cannot be alienated in the process of promoting gender equality education. Public education programmes involve men and boys and highlight their role in eradicating gender stereotypes and violence against women.
- 5.11 The Association of Devoted and Active Family Men (ADAM) and the Centre for Fathering, Singapore, promote such desired mindsets and behaviour. ADAM, registered in 2004, is committed to raising awareness of men's responsibilities and roles in the society, as fathers, husbands and individual members of the family. This vision is shared by the Centre of Fathering, which was formed in 1999. In 2007, it launched initiatives such as "10,000 Fathers Reading to their Children", "Back to School with Dad" and the "Great Dads of the Year" Competition.
- 5.12 In 2007, the White Ribbon Campaign, which was launched in Singapore in 2003 to eliminate violence against women, called for men to "Break the Silence, Stop the Violence".
- 5.13 In January 2008, the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE) sponsored Singapore's first Men's Gender Awareness Group (GEMS ) to encourage men to become part of the dialogue on the issues of gender equality and understanding.

#### **Riding on the Power of Images in the Media**

- 5.14 An increasing number of successful women are being featured in the media. Their very success as individuals challenges gender stereotypes.

## Personal Accomplishments

- 5.15 In recent years, we have witnessed the rise of many prominent women to top positions in the public, private and people sectors.
- 5.16 For example, we have Mrs Fang Ai Lian, the Chairman of Great Eastern Holdings Ltd. In April 2007, Ms Chua Sock Koong took over the reins at Singapore Telecommunications Ltd (Singtel), Southeast Asia's largest phone company, as Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
- 5.17 Women are also increasingly making their mark in other conventionally male-dominated fields such as the aviation industry. Ms Anastasia Gan became the first female Qualified Flying Instructor, before going on to train other pilots. As a Major in the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF), the mother of three earned her stripes as the first Female Category "A" Operational Pilot, and is now the first Singaporean female pilot with commercial carrier, Jetstar Asia. Ms Chong Phit Lian, who was President and CEO of Singapore Precision Industries and Singapore Mint, joined Jetstar Asia as its CEO in 2006.
- 5.18 Ms Saw Phaik Hwa is President and Chief Executive Officer of SMRT Corporation Ltd, Singapore's premier multi-modal public transport service provider. Prior to joining SMRT, she served as Regional President for DFS Venture Singapore (Pte) Ltd, and was in charge of businesses in Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia. Ms Saw was conferred the Leading CEO Award in 2005, organised by the Singapore Human Resource Institute.
- 5.19 At the Entrepreneur of The Year Award ceremony organised by the Rotary Club of Singapore and the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (ASME) in 2007, Ms Annie Yap, CEO of the GMP Group, received the Enterprise Award 2006.
- 5.20 The International Management Action Awards (IMAA)<sup>7</sup> is an annual award that recognises senior executives who have achieved outstanding and long-lasting results for their organisation, society or the nation, through excellent management skills. Mrs Helen Khoo of Wing Tai Retail Pte Ltd was one of the three award recipients in 2006. Under her leadership, sales turnover increased from S\$27 million in 1996 to S\$140 million in 2006.
- 5.21 At the international level, Mdm Halimah Yacob, a veteran unionist, qualified lawyer and a Member of Parliament, was re-elected into the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for the term 2008 – 2011. Mdm Halimah was elected as Deputy Secretary General of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) in 2007. She is a trustee of seven unions affiliated with the NTUC, Co-Chairperson for the Tripartite Alliance on Fair Employment Practices, and Chairperson for the Tripartite Workgroup on Enhancing Employment Choices for Women.
- 5.22 Another distinguished Singaporean - Ms Noeleen Heyzer, was appointed Under-Secretary-General to head the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

<sup>7</sup> This award has been jointly administered by the Chartered Management Institute, Singapore and the Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board (Spring Singapore) since 2000.

(ESCAP). Ms. Heyzer is the first woman to head ESCAP, which is the biggest of the UN's five regional commissions, both in terms of population served and area covered. Ms Heyzer was formerly the Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

- 5.23 Dr Aline Wong received an International Women's Forum (IWF) Award for "Women Who Make a Difference" in October 2006. The former Chairperson for Singapore's Housing and Development Board (HDB)<sup>8</sup> was recognised for her efforts in championing issues affecting women, the elderly and the less fortunate.
- 5.24 In October 2006, UNIFEM Singapore honoured three local women for their achievements and contributions to society. Consultant orthopaedic and hand surgeon, Dr Kanwaljit Soin, was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award for her work in helping to make a difference in the lives of Singaporeans. Ophthalmologist and President of the Nature Society, Dr Geh Min, was bestowed the "Successful Women who Contributed to Society" award for her commitment in championing environmental causes and the arts. Former President of Netball Singapore, Mrs Ivy Singh-Lim, received the Stylish Achiever Award.
- 5.25 Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Minister of State for Community Development, Youth and Sports was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Education degree by Wheelock College, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, in May 2008. She was honoured for her strong advocacy and longstanding commitment to the well-being of children, women and families in Singapore. Wheelock's honorary degree recipients are exceptional leaders and role models, with a lifelong commitment to service with distinguished reputations in policy, education and civil service.
- 5.26 In May 2008, Member of Parliament, Ms Lee Bee Wah, became the first Asian to be made an honorary fellow of the elite Institution of Engineers (IStructE), which is the world's largest body for structural engineers. The prestigious award has been given to only 33 other fellows since inception in Britain in 1958, and honours luminaries who have contributed to the institution and the profession. Ms Lee has broken other barriers in a traditionally male-dominated profession by becoming the first woman president of the Institution of Engineers Singapore.
- 5.27 Named the third most powerful woman in Forbes Magazine's "100 Most Powerful Women" in 2007, Mdm Ho Ching is the executive director and chief-executive-officer of Temasek Holdings, an investment company owned by Singapore. Under Mdm Ho Ching's leadership, the net value of Temasek's portfolio grew 27% to S\$108 billion from S\$80 billion in 2006, reaching unprecedented heights.
- 5.28 For more information on women in political and public life and the representation of women at the international level, please refer to Articles 7 and 8 respectively.

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<sup>8</sup> Dr Aline Wong was the chairperson of HDB from 2003 to 2007. Mr James Koh Cher Siang has since taken over this position from 1 October 2007.

## Public Debate

- 5.29 Since the last government elections in 2001, when a record number of 10 women Members of Parliament (MPs) were elected, women MPs have shown their mettle when debating government policies cutting across various ministries. For example, in response to the rise in terrorism in recent years, Mdm Ho Geok Choo raised the issue of enforcing a greater level of security in army camps. Another example is Dr Fatimah Lateef, who was the winner of the Outstanding Young Person of The World Award 2006 (Junior Chamber International) and Woman for Peace Award 2006 (Soka Gakkai). With over 20 years of experience in community and humanitarian work, she continues to be the voice of the poor in Singapore, highlighting their plight during parliamentary debates.
- 5.30 The presence of these women in the Singapore government ensures that women's issues and the woman's perspective are given due and thorough discussion in the formulation of policies and national directives.

### **Article 6: Suppression of the Exploitation of Women**

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.*

- 6.1 Singapore remains committed to suppressing the trafficking and exploitation of women in Singapore. Legislation and devoted law enforcement resources have been put in place.
- 6.2 Substantiated cases of trafficking in persons are very rare. In 2007 there were 28<sup>9</sup> reported cases of forced prostitution and importation of women by false pretences but none was substantiated. Singapore's laws<sup>10</sup> to prosecute those involved in different aspects of trafficking include the Penal Code which covers a wide range of criminal offences, the Women's Charter and the Children and Young Persons Act which provide for, inter-alia, the punishment of offences against women and girls. The Penal Code<sup>11</sup> criminalises the selling

<sup>9</sup> One of the 28 cases reported in Dec 2007 is still under investigation.

<sup>10</sup> Examples of our legislation include:

- (i) Sections 363 - 369 of the Penal Code which criminalise the act of kidnapping and abduction. In particular, Section 367 criminalises the kidnapping/abducting of a person in order to subject him to grievous hurt, slavery, etc;
- (ii) Section 370 of the Penal Code which criminalises the buying or disposing of any person as a slave;
- (iii) Section 371 of the Penal Code which criminalises the habitual dealings in slaves;
- (iv) Sections 372 and 373 of the Penal Code which criminalise the selling and buying of minors for the purpose of prostitution;
- (v) Section 373A which criminalises the importation of women by fraud with intent that such woman may be employed or used for prostitution, and Section 374 Unlawful Compulsory Labour;
- (vi) Section 140 of the Women's Charter which prohibits a wide range of conduct, including the sale, hire or possession of women for the purpose of prostitution, and the procurement of women, the bringing into, receiving or harboring of such procured women and the detention of women against their will [Specific sections are Section 140(1)(c) and 140(1)(f)];
- (vii) Section 141 of Women's Charter prohibits trafficking in women; and
- (viii) Section 142 of the Women's Charter prohibits trafficking in women under false pretence.

<sup>11</sup> Sections 372 and 373 of the Penal Code.

and buying of a minor defined as a person below 21 years old, for the purpose of prostitution. The penalty is an imprisonment term of up to 10 years, and a fine. The Penal Code also makes it an offence to assist in bringing into Singapore any women with the intent to sell her for prostitution. This is punishable with imprisonment of up to 10 years and a fine. The Women's Charter contains similar provisions on trafficking of women for prostitution and other related offences.

- 6.3 Singapore law enables us to target traffickers who operate from overseas as well. The laws on abetment and criminal conspiracy cover all acts leading up to the commission of the primary offence in Singapore, even if such acts were committed overseas, i.e. the same penalties apply whether the offences were committed in Singapore or overseas.

### **Amendments to the Penal Code**

- 6.4 To enhance the protection of young persons against exploitation for commercial sex in Singapore and in other countries, the following amendments, effective from 1 February 2008, were made to the Penal Code :

- a. to make it an offence for a person (male or female), to purchase sexual services from another person (male or female) who is under 18 years of age (punishable by up to 7 years' imprisonment and/or fine); and
- b. to combat child sex tourism, it is an offence for
  - (1) a Singapore Citizen or Permanent Resident to purchase sexual services from a minor under 18 overseas (punishable by up to 7 years' imprisonment and/or fine); and
  - (2) a person to organise child sex tours or print, publish or distribute any information that is intended to promote commercial exploitation of minors under 18 (punishable by up to 10 years' imprisonment and/or fine).

### **Enforcement Actions and Checks**

- 6.5 The Singapore Police Force has a dedicated unit for vice issues, including trafficking of women for commercial sexual exploitation. Officers in the unit are experienced, trained and competent to handle such cases. Their training includes specialised interview techniques. Translators are present during interviews with foreign sex workers to facilitate the interview process. Interviews and screenings allow officers to identify information on potential sex trafficking activities or syndicates involved.
- 6.6 Officers in the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) overseeing border security are trained in profiling techniques. Their training in fraudulent travel document detection, interviewing and search techniques form a strong deterrence at border checkpoints against illegal migration.



- 6.7 Singapore adopts a multi-pronged approach comprising enforcement actions and security checks at the various checkpoints to detect and deter the smuggling of illegal immigrants in and out of Singapore. In addition, with its intensive patrols around Singapore territorial waters, the Police Coast Guard's presence is strongly felt. These enforcement actions are complemented by the stringent laws against immigration offenders and those who traffic, harbour or employ them. The various measures are widely publicized in the media, during parliamentary debates and in numerous public education efforts to raise public awareness. These efforts have borne fruit as seen from the improving immigration offenders' situation in Singapore in recent years.

### **Assistance for Victims of Trafficking and Violence**

- 6.8 Victims of trafficking and violence can approach any of the Family Service Centres, which are neighbourhood-based social service agencies, for assistance. Three selected Family Service Centres with crisis shelters provide victims with temporary accommodation, protection, practical assistance programmes and emotional support. Professional social workers at the Centres are trained to respond to crisis and victims of violence. Victims can call the National Family Service Centre Helpline, or the Police, if they need help or wish to be admitted to a crisis shelter. The Police and Family Service Centres are linked to other assistance services, such as medical and psychological services, via the Family Violence and Child Protection networking systems. These networking systems ensure that appropriate and timely referrals are made.

### **Ratification of the UNTOC**

- 6.9 Singapore recently ratified the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC). The instrument of ratification for the UNTOC was deposited in August 2007 and came into force on 27 September 2007.

## PART III

## Article 7: Political and Public Life

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:*

- (a) *To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;*
- (b) *To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;*
- (c) *To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.*

## More Women in Politics

- 7.1 Female representation in Parliament has been increasing. In 2004, 12 percent or 10 out of 84 elected Members of Parliament (MPs) and 5 out of 9 Nominated Members of Parliament (NMPs) were women. Following the May 2006 General Election, 23 of 93 MPs, or 25% are women. They comprise 17 elected MPs, one Non-Constituency MP (NCMP) and 5 women NMPs.

## Members of Parliament (Elected and NCMP)

	June 1999	Sep 2004	May 2006	July 2008 <sup>12</sup>
Female	4	10	17	18
Total	83	84	84	85
Proportion of Female MPs	4.8%	11.9%	20.2%	21.2%

## Nominated Members of Parliament (NMP)

	Jun 1999	Sep 2004	May 2006	July 2008 <sup>13</sup>
Female	2	5	2	5
Total	9	9	9	9
Proportion of Female NMPs	22.2%	55.6%	22.2%	55.6%

<sup>12</sup> Source from <http://www.parliament.gov.sg>.

<sup>13</sup> Source from <http://www.parliament.gov.sg>.

- 7.2 There are four women political office-holders:
- Mrs Lim Hwee Hua, Senior Minister of State for Finance and Transport (2 portfolios);
  - Ms Grace Fu, Senior Minister of State for National Development and Education (2 portfolios);
  - Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Minister of State for Community Development, Youth and Sports; and
  - Dr Amy Khor, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Environment and Water Resources, Mayor of South West CDC and Chairperson of REACH Supervisory Panel (2 additional portfolios).
- 7.3 The women MPs have been active in Parliament, and have debated on a wide range of issues and topics. Their competence has earned them the respect of their fellow Parliamentarians, the public and the media.
- 7.4 Singapore hosted the 29th ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) General Assembly meeting from 19 to 24 August 2008. One of the AIPA Committees is the Women Parliamentarians of AIPA (WAIPA), which was formed in 1998 following the growing number of women elected as parliamentarians. WAIPA aims to further increase the representation of women in parliament throughout ASEAN; to ensure that matters of specific concern to women be put on the agenda of AIPA's General Assembly; and to establish networks with other women's associations and women's meetings within international organisations such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Member of Parliament (MP) Dr Lily Neo was the Chairperson of WAIPA in 2008.

### **Women and Public Life**

- 7.5 Women are now occupying several important leadership positions in various capacities as Judges, senior Civil Servants, Diplomats (see Chapter 8 on Representation), Commanders of army and air force units and trade union leaders.

### **Judiciary**

- 7.6 In the Judiciary, women judges made up 52% and 20% in the Subordinate Courts and Supreme Courts respectively in 2008.

### **Military Court of Appeal**

- 7.7 Two prominent lady lawyers were recently re-appointed to the panel of legally-qualified persons of the Military Court of Appeal. They were Ms Deborah Barker, a Senior Counsel from the law firm Khattar Wong & Partners and Ms Foo Tuat Yien, Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Enforcement), with the Competition Commission of Singapore. Both were appointed for another two years, from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2010.

## Women in the Public Sector

7.8 Recruitment into the public sector is open and transparent, and the development and advancement of every officer is based on merit. There is a higher proportion of women in the Civil Service. As at December 2007, women constituted 56% of the Civil Service and formed 63% of the total number of officers in the Division I and Superscale categories, which are the top two categories of officers in the Civil Service. In the Superscale category, women make up 40% of the total number of officers. This is a significant increase from 28.5% in 2000.

### Staff Strength by Division<sup>14</sup> in the Civil Service (as at 31 Dec 2007)

Division	Female	Male	Total
00	286 (40%)	426 (60%)	712
01	20,862 (63%)	12,203 (37%)	33065
02	9,610 (57%)	7,198 (43%)	16808
03	4,704 (41%)	6,654 (59%)	11358
04	1,684 (43%)	2,205 (51%)	3889
Grand Total	37,146 (56%)	28,686 (44%)	65832

7.9 In April 2008, Ms Yeoh Chee Yan, former Deputy Secretary (Policy), Ministry of Defence, was promoted to 2<sup>nd</sup> Permanent Secretary of Education. As of 1 October 2008, there are five female Permanent Secretaries out of a total of 19 Permanent Secretaries. In addition, there are seven female Deputy Secretaries out of a total of 30 Deputy Secretaries in the Civil Service.

## Non-Governmental Organisations and Associations Concerned with the Public and Political Life of Singapore

7.10 The following 3 key women bodies represent more than 90% of women's groups in Singapore:

- (i) The Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO), which is the umbrella body for women's organisations in Singapore;
- (ii) The Women's Integration Network (WIN) Council under the People's Association, which runs programmes for women at the community level and provides leadership opportunities at the grassroots level; and

<sup>14</sup> Div 0 (Superscale) and Div 1: generally refer to graduates.

Div 2: generally refers to diploma holders.

Div 3: generally refers to corporate support functions, e.g. secretarial roles.

Div 4: generally refers to those involved in operational support e.g. mechanics, cleaners.

(iii) The National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) Women's Development Secretariat, which represents the labour movement and champions women's interests pertaining to labour issues.

7.11 The People's Association WIN Council and the NTUC Women's Development Secretariat are affiliates of the SCWO. These 3 key organisations are a powerful resource as well as an important change agent for women in Singapore.

7.12 The Women's Desk of the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, partners and works with these apex bodies to address issues facing women in Singapore.

### The Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO)

7.13 In June 2006, the SCWO and the Tsao Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation, launched a new one-stop education, referral and counselling centre for older women called WINGS, which stands for Women's Initiative for Ageing Successfully. WINGS aims to empower older women and help them take personal responsibility for their health and finances, and to age successfully. With funding from the Singapore Government, WINGS organises programmes on preventive healthcare, financial planning, as well as courses on new job skills.

7.14 In March 2007, SCWO launched the Women's Register, [www.womensregister.org](http://www.womensregister.org), a secure on-line database portal, where women can register their profiles and avail themselves to take up leadership appointments in public, private and non-profit organisations, at both the national and international levels. As at August 2008, there were 372 individual members and 30 organisational members.

7.15 One of the non-profit affiliates of SCWO is the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE). Its three main areas of focus are - Support, Research and Advocacy. They reach out to several thousand women through their telephone counselling Helpline, face-to-face counselling programme and free legal clinics. AWARE also runs public education programmes to raise awareness on gender equality. Recent AWARE programmes and initiatives include Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Financial Intelligence Training, the White Ribbon Campaign, Research Study on Workplace Sexual Harassment, as well as ongoing lectures at educational institutions. Other SCWO's affiliates include the Society Against Family Violence (SAFV), the Asian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA) and the Singapore Association of Women Lawyers (SAWL).

### CEDAW Discussion Sessions

7.16 The Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) and SCWO have thus far jointly organised four sessions on CEDAW for women's groups. The latest session on 6 October 2008 was held to consult women's groups on Singapore's implementation of CEDAW and to obtain feedback on the draft Fourth Report. The members of the Inter Ministry Committee on CEDAW updated participants and clarified on policies and measures pertaining to women under their purview.

- 7.17 Two consultation sessions were also held with Government Parliamentary Committee members and female Members of Parliament to share what Singapore has done to ensure the de jure and de facto equality of women. The sessions, held on 19 June 2007 and 15 October 2008, saw frank exchanges among the parliamentarians on challenges facing women and what remains to be done.

#### People's Association Women's Integration Network (WIN) Council

- 7.18 WIN Council is formed under the People's Association (PA) as the central body of the Women's Executive Committees (based at community centres/clubs). The Executive Committees organise programmes for women and their families and provide leadership opportunities at the grassroots and community level.
- 7.19 The grassroots activities provide women with a common platform to meet and exchange ideas and views.

#### The National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) Women's Development Secretariat

- 7.20 Formerly known as the NTUC Women's Committee, the NTUC Women's Development Secretariat (WDS) represents the labour movement and champions women's interests pertaining to labour issues.
- 7.21 Of the 500,000 workers represented in the trade unions affiliated to the NTUC, as at September 2007, 48% were women. 4 out of 21 members appointed to the NTUC Central Committee (for the term 2007 to 2011), the highest policy-making body of the labour movement, were women. They are Mdm Halimah Jacob, Deputy Secretary-General and Secretary of NTUC WDS; Ms Josephine Teo, Assistant Secretary General; Ms Diana Chia, Central Committee Member and Chairperson of NTUC WDS; and Ms Nora Kang, Central Committee Vice President and Vice-Chairperson of NTUC WDS.
- 7.22 The NTUC WDS recently commissioned a survey on "Usage and Attitudes on Work-life Harmony". The survey measured work-life harmony practices such as Leave Benefits, Flexible Working Arrangements, and Employee Support Schemes.
- 7.23 WDS has been working on various initiatives and one such initiative is the NTUC Women Interactive Series (WISE). NTUC WISE, jointly run by the NTUC WDS and NTUC Legal Services Department, addresses the concerns of women at the workplace, home and society through enhanced engagement and networking. The topics include CPF Minimum Sum top-ups for spouses, continuing education and training, healthcare and ageing as well as legal advice on the Penal Code and Employment Law. For information on NTUC's efforts to attract women to return to the workplace, see Article 11 on Employment.

#### Young Women Muslim Association/Persatuan Pemudi Islam Singapura (YWMA/PPIS)

- 7.24 There are various organisations that help empower Muslim women and one such organisation is the YWMA/PPIS, which is an affiliate of the SCWO.

- 7.25 Through its well-established social, educational and community-based projects, YWMA/PPIS has been empowering Muslim women on their rights under Syariah laws. YWMA/PPIS set up a Committee for the Empowerment of Muslim Women (CEMW) in March 2004. In 2006, the PPIS AnNisaa Centre for Women was set up to empower and enrich Muslim women with the knowledge and skills to deal with issues pertaining to their multiple roles in society. Since then, focus group discussions, training workshops as well as public seminars on the 'Rights of Muslim Women' have been organised.
- 7.26 YWMA/PPIS has organised various activities for women including talks on Leaving a Will, Health and Wellness, Elderly Abuse Prevention and Grandparenting.

### **Article 8: International Representation and Participation**

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.*

#### **Increased Participation in International Women's Meetings**

- 8.1 Singapore women continue to participate actively in regional and international meetings, including UN conferences. Examples include:
- (i) Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs (WAMM);
  - (ii) Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Gender Focal Point Network and Women Leaders' Network;
  - (iii) Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Committee on Women (ACW);
  - (iv) Women Parliamentarians of AIPA (WAIPA) Meeting, a committee of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) General Assembly;
  - (v) United Nations Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Its Regional and Global Outcomes;
  - (vi) UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women;
  - (vii) World Family Summit; and
  - (viii) East Asia Gender Equality Ministerial Meeting.
- 8.2 Where appropriate, representatives from women NGOs are included in government delegations as Government recognizes the close partnership with NGOs, their expertise and contributions.
- 8.3 On 2 and 3 November 2006, Singapore organised and hosted delegates from the 10 ASEAN countries and the ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organisations (ACWO) to the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW). A Work-Life Harmony Workshop was held on 1 November 2006 to generate greater awareness and understanding of work-life harmony concepts and best practices.

- 8.4 Singapore hosted the 29th ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) General Assembly meeting from 19 to 24 August 2008. One of the AIPA Committees is the Women Parliamentarians of AIPA (WAIPA). WAIPA aims to further increase the representation of women in Parliaments throughout ASEAN, ensure that matters of specific concern to women are included in the agenda of AIPA's General Assembly, and to establish networks with other women's associations and women's meetings in international organisations.
- 8.5 The Women's Desk is organising the APEC Women Leaders' Network and the Gender Focal Point Network Meetings when Singapore hosts APEC in 2009. The Women Leaders' Network meeting will involve prominent women leaders from business, academia, government and non-government agencies from the 21 APEC Economies.

### **Participation in the Work of International Organisations**

- 8.6 Singapore women continued to participate in a number of international organisations. Government's support of candidates for international bodies is based on the merits of the individuals.

#### UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

- 8.7 Dr Anamah Tan, a high-profile family lawyer and veteran women's rights activist, was elected to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for a four-year term from January 2005 to December 2008, making her the first Singapore woman to serve on the Committee. Dr Tan is also in her second term as the President of the International Council of Women (ICW). She has delivered speeches and participated in various CEDAW and human rights-related forums and conferences.

#### International Labour Organization

- 8.8 Mdm Halimah Yacob, a qualified lawyer and Member of Parliament, was re-elected as a Deputy Member in the Workers' Group of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Governing Body for a third three-year term in 2005. In 2006, she was the vice-chairperson representing the Workers' Group in the Committee on "The Role on ILO in Technical Cooperation". In that same year, at the 14th ILO Asian Regional Meeting, Busan, she was chosen as the Chairperson for the Workers' Group.

### **Foreign Service**

- 8.9 Gender is not a determinant in the assignation of jobs in the Foreign Service. The following chart shows the gender distribution of officers in the Singapore Foreign Service for the period of 2005 to 2008.



Category	Diplomatic Positions	July 2004 - July 2005			1 April 2006			1 April 2007			1 April 2008		
		Total Officers		Ratio	Total Officers		Ratio	Total Officers		Ratio	Total Officers		Ratio
		Male	Female	F/M	Male	Female	F/M	Male	Female	F/M	Male	Female	F/M
		(M)	(F)		(M)	(F)		(M)	(F)		(M)	(F)	
1	Senior Mgmt	55	7	0.13	60	9	0.15	60	8	0.13	63	9	0.14
2	Middle Mgmt	55	21	0.38	56	23	0.41	53	28	0.53	50	26	0.52
3	Officers	134	88	0.66	143	100	0.70	150	113	0.75	138	117	0.85

Senior Management: Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Directors.

Middle Management: Deputy Directors and Senior Assistant Directors.

Officers: Assistant Directors and Foreign Service Officers.

- 8.10 Singapore has several women Heads of Mission. They include Professor Chan Heng Chee, Singapore's Ambassador to the United States of America, based in Washington (Prof Chan was formerly Singapore's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York and the High Commissioner to Canada); Ms Seetoh Hoy Cheng, High Commissioner to New Zealand, who was formerly the Ambassador to Lao People's Democratic Republic; Ms Karen Tan, Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, who was formerly the Ambassador to the Lao PD; Ms Lim Kheng Hua, Ambassador to the Philippines; Mrs J. Mohideen, non-resident Ambassador to Finland; Ms Tan Yee Woan, Ambassador to Cambodia; Mrs Mary Seet-Cheng, non-resident Ambassador to Panama and Cuba (Mrs Seet-Cheng was formerly Singapore's Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the European Commission and the Holy See); and Ms Jennie Chua, non-resident Ambassador to the Slovak Republic.

### Women's Representation in the United Nations

- 8.11 There are almost equal numbers of female and male Singaporeans working in the UN Secretariat. As at July 2007, 13 (48%) out of a total of 27 Singaporean staff were female. In August 2007, Ms Noeleen Heyzer, a Singaporean, was appointed Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). In 2004, UN appointed Ms Christine Lee as a member of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring team. It is a panel of experts convened by the UN Secretary-General dealing with sanctions against the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and their associates.

**Article 9: Nationality**

*1. States parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband.*

*2. States parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.*

**New Nationality Law**

- 9.1 Previously, a child born overseas could acquire Singapore citizenship by descent only if his or her father was a Singaporean. A child born overseas to a Singaporean mother and a non-Singaporean father could only acquire Singapore citizenship by registration upon the mother's application.
- 9.2 In April 2004, the Singapore Parliament passed a bill to amend the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore to allow overseas-born children to acquire Singapore citizenship by descent from their Singaporean mothers. Hence, Article 122 of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore is now gender neutral. A child born on or after 15 May 2004 shall be a citizen of Singapore by descent if at the time of his/her birth, either his/her father or mother is a Singapore citizen by birth, registration or descent.
- 9.3 In July 2007, Singapore deposited the notification to lift the reservation to Article 9.

**PART IV****Article 10: Education**

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:*

- (a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;*
- (b) Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality;*
- (c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;*
- (d) The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;*
- (e) The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;*
- (f) The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely;*
- (g) The same Opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education;*
- (h) Access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.*

**The Government's Continuing Commitment to Education**

- 10.1 The Government remains committed to providing all Singaporeans, both girls and boys, with equal access to quality education.
- 10.2 To realise this aspiration, the Government invests a sizeable amount for education annually. For example in 2007, 3.4% of Singapore's GDP (S\$7.5 billion or US\$5.5 billion) was allocated for education.

**Achievements**

- 10.3 During the current reporting period, the Government has developed a number of strategies to improve access and participation at all levels in the field of education.

Removal of Intake Quota for Female Medical Students

- 10.4 In 1979, the National University of Singapore (NUS) set a one-third quota on the intake of female medical students because more female doctors leave the profession prematurely or switched to part-time work. This quota was lifted at the start of the 2003 academic year and now both men and women have equal opportunity to read medicine in NUS based on individual merit.
- 10.5 The policy change has resulted in a significant rise in the number of women enrolling in medical school. In 2007, 115 women were admitted to the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine at the NUS – making up nearly half of the cohort. In addition, three in four of the first batch of 26 new Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School students were women.

Setting up of Specialised Independent Schools

- 10.6 The Government has set up specialised independent schools to cater to students who are talented in other areas such as sports, mathematics, science and the arts. The Singapore Sports School and the NUS Maths and Science High School began operations in 2004 and 2005 respectively, while the School of the Arts opened in 2008. A new School of Science and Technology will open in 2010. These schools determine their own specialised curriculum and programme to develop the special abilities of children. Their admission criteria are transparent and merit-based.
- 10.7 The Singapore Sports School provides talented student athletes with an opportunity to balance both elite sports and studies. Mrs Deborah Tan took over the reins as principal of the Singapore Sports School from Mr Moo Soon Chong in 2008.
- 10.8 The gender profile of students at the Singapore Sports School and the NUS High School of Mathematics and Science, as of 2007, is as follows:

	No. and percentage of students enrolled in	
	NUS High School	Singapore Sports School
Females	275 (41%)	147 (40%)
Males	391 (59%)	217 (60%)
Total	666 (100%)	364 (100%)

*Achievements of the Girls at the Singapore Sports School and NUS High School of Mathematics and Science.*

- 10.9 The girls at the Singapore Sports School have done well in various sports, both nationally and internationally. In 2007, the girls clinched awards in several categories as summarised below:

Sport	Name	Games	Achievements in Event
Swimming	Tao Li	12th FINA World Swimming Championships, Melbourne Australia	First Singapore female swimmer to make a final at World Championships and qualify for the Olympics
		24th SEA Games 2007 Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand	4 times gold medalist
Wakeboarding	Sasha Christian	2007 Wakeboard World Championship - Doha, Qatar	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Sailing	Rachel Lee	24th SEA Games 2007 Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand	Optimist Girls Champion
		IODA Asian Championship 2007, Singapore	Girls Optimist Asian Champion
Silat	Nurindah Binte Mursani	2nd World Junior Pencak Silat Championship 2007, Singapore	Female Class A – Gold

10.10 The girls in the NUS High School of Mathematics and Science have also performed well. Its students were among the highest scorers in the 2007 Rio Tinto Big Science Competition (formerly known as the Australian Science Challenge). Of the 18 who achieved perfect scores in the competition, 9 were girls.

#### *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)*

10.11 Of the 46 countries which participated in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 2003, Singapore was ranked first in Mathematics and Science. There was no significant difference between the performance of Singapore boys and girls in either Mathematics or Science in the TIMSS exercise.

#### **Statistics**

10.12 Singapore has attained a high literacy rate for women. The literacy rate for resident females aged 15 years and over has improved from 89.7% in 2001 to 93.8% in 2007.

10.13 Singapore's drop-out rate in primary and secondary schools is generally very low. In 2007, the cohort drop-out rate for primary school and secondary school was 0.2% and 1.0%

respectively. The rates for females and males were similar for both primary and secondary schools. Please see table on the following page for an overview.

<b>Drop-out Rate, 2007</b>			
	Males	Females	Total
Primary	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Secondary	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%

Note:

1. The drop-out rates for 2007 essentially capture the total number of students from the 1998 Primary 1 cohort who have dropped out of school over the past 10 years. 10 years is used as a mark because it is the minimum number of years a student in Singapore would need to complete primary and secondary school education.
2. Total drop-out rates at the primary and secondary level are computed by taking the total number of drop-outs, at the primary or secondary school level respectively, as a percentage of the 1998 Primary One Cohort.
3. Drop-out rates for males and females are computed by taking the number of males/females drop-outs (at either the primary or secondary level) as a percentage of the total number of males/females of the entire cohort.

#### Primary, Secondary and Pre-University Education, 2006

- 10.14 In 2006, 354 schools offer primary, secondary and/or pre-university education. Please see the following table:

#### Schools by Type and Level

Type of School	Primary	Secondary	Mixed Level	Junior College/ Centralised Institute	Total
Total	172	155	13	14	354
Government	131	109	3	9	252
Government-Aided	41	20	-	4	65
Autonomous	-	21	5	-	26
Independent	-	5	5	1	11

Note:

- 1) The category Mixed Level includes Full Schools (P1-S4/5), 6th Form Schools (S1-JC2) and JC-plus (S3-JC2). Full Schools are classified by type according to their secondary sections.
- 2) Includes Specialised Independent Schools.

Source: 2007 Education Statistics Digest<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> This digest captures the latest available statistics on education by the MOE.

- 10.15 In 2006, the total enrolment in these schools was 530,423, of which about half was female. Nearly three-quarters of the teachers are female while two-thirds of the vice-principals and nearly two-thirds of the principals are female. Please see table below:

Enrolment, Education Officers and EAS by Level

	Primary		Secondary		Mixed Level		Junior College/ Centralised Institute		Total	
	Total	Female (% of total)	Total	Female (% of total)	Total	Female (% of total)	Total	Female (% of total)	Total	Female (% of total)
Enrolment	277,291	133,026 (48.0)	200,291	97,643 (48.8)	29,176	14,041 (48.1)	23,665	12,752 (53.9)	530,423	257,462 (48.5)
Teacher	12,268	10,162 (82.8)	10,570	7,060 (66.8)	2,131	1,405 (65.9)	1,835	1,080 (58.9)	26,804	19,707 (73.5)
Vice-Principal	188	139 (73.9)	201	113 (56.2)	28	16 (57.1)	18	11 (61.1)	435	279 (64.1)
Principal	172	114 (66.3)	153	89 (58.2)	15	7 (46.7)	14	10 (71.4)	354	220 (62.1)
EAS	1,695	1,210 (71.4)	2,413	1,488 (61.7)	420	267 (63.6)	331	214 (64.7)	4,859	3,179 (65.4)

Note: Executive and Administrative Staff (EAS) includes Vice-Principal (Admin), Administrative Manager, Administrative Executive, Full-Time School Counsellor, Special Needs Officer, Technical Support Officer, Operations Manager, Operations Support Officer and Corporate Support Officer but excludes contract cleaners and security guards.

Source: 2007 Education Statistics Digest

- 10.16 In 2006 the average class size for primary and secondary schools was 35 and 36 respectively, while the average class size for junior colleges/ centralised institutes was 23. Please see table below:

Enrolment, Number of Classes and Class Size

Level	Enrolment	No. of Classes	Average Class Size
Overall	530,423	15,475	34.3
Primary	284,600	8,235	34.6
Secondary	215,097	5,904	36.4
Junior College/ Centralised Institute	30,726	1,336	23.0

Source: 2007 Education Statistics Digest

ITE, Polytechnic and University Education, 2006

- 10.17 Women make up 50.7% of the full-time student intake at the universities, 46.7% at the polytechnics and 36.9% at the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) (an institution offering technical-vocational courses for pupils with GCE 'O' or 'N' level certificates) in Singapore for 2006.
- 10.18 The intake levels of females at our polytechnics and universities have increased steadily, from 42% and 50% respectively in 1990/91 to 46.7% and 50.7% respectively in 2006.
- 10.19 Women are well-represented in traditionally male-dominated subjects. The intake of females to the following courses in 2006 reflect this:
- at the universities, women made up 67.6% of the natural, physical and mathematical science courses and 59.6% of the accountancy courses;
  - at the polytechnics, women made up 57.4% of the architecture and building courses, 57.8% of the science and related technologies courses and 43.5% of the information technology courses; and
  - at the ITE, women made up 36.1% of the info-communication technology courses.
- 10.20 The following tables and charts show the distribution of female students across the courses offered at our ITE, polytechnics and universities.



Intake, Enrolment and Graduates of ITE in 2006 (Full-Time)

Courses	Intake		Enrolment		Graduates	
	Total	Female (% of total)	Total	Female (% of total)	Total	Female (% of total)
Total	13,645	5,035 (36.9)	23,636	8,052 (34.1)	10,056	3,724 (37.0)
Applied and Health Sciences	941	583 (62.0)	1,815	1,173 (64.6)	625	433 (69.3)
Business and Services	3,636	2,700 (74.3)	5,041	3,697 (73.3)	2,646	1,973 (74.6)
Engineering	6,581	906 (13.8)	12,315	1,545 (12.5)	5,015	585 (11.7)
Info- Communications Technology	1,973	712 (36.1)	3,783	1,454 (38.4)	1,565	684 (43.7)
Technical Skills	514	134 (26.1)	682	183 (26.8)	205	49 (23.9)

Source: 2007 Education Statistics Digest

Intake, Enrolment & Graduates of Polytechnics in 2006 (Full-Time)

Courses	Intake		Enrolment		Graduates	
	Total	Female (% of total)	Total	Female (% of total)	Total	Female (% of total)
Total	22,276	10,394 (46.7)	62,962	29,742 (47.2)	16,638	8,100 (48.7)
Applied Arts	1,300	742 (57.1)	3,255	1,894 (58.2)	542	319 (58.9)
Architecture and Building	596	342 (57.4)	1,622	955 (58.9)	394	233 (59.1)
Business and Administration	3,944	2,487 (63.1)	10,869	7,225 (66.5)	3,046	2,208 (72.5)
Education	266	209 (78.6)	614	545 (88.8)	131	128 (97.7)
Engineering Sciences	8,209	2,108 (25.7)	23,713	6,197 (26.1)	6,415	1,786 (27.8)
Health Sciences	1,955	1,554 (79.5)	5,607	4,428 (79.0)	1,328	1,080 (81.3)
Humanities and Social Sciences	75	66 (88.0)	153	136 (88.9)	0	0
Information Technology	3,972	1,728 (43.5)	11,753	5,134 (43.7)	3,351	1,477 (44.1)
Legal Studies	116	70 (60.3)	353	221 (62.6)	88	63 (71.6)
Mass Communication and Information Science	450	310 (68.9)	1,428	1,019 (71.4)	416	296 (71.2)
Science and Related Technologies	1,184	684 (57.8)	3,063	1,777 (58.0)	761	460 (60.4)
Services	209	94 (45.0)	532	211 (39.7)	166	50 (30.1)

\* Intake includes direct entry to second year

Source: 2007 Education Statistics Digest

Intake, Enrolment & Graduates of Universities in 2006 (Full-Time)

Courses	Intake		Enrolment		Graduates	
	Total	Female (% of total)	Total	Female (% of total)	Total	Female (% of total)
Total	13,733	6,963 (50.7)	46,479	22,992 (49.5)	10,427	5,428 (52.1)
Accountancy	934	557 (59.6)	2,844	1,819 (64.0)	644	468 (72.7)
Architecture and Building	379	226 (59.6)	1,336	810 (60.6)	329	193 (58.7)
Business and Administration	1,772	1,035 (58.4)	5,490	3,297 (60.1)	1,250	818 (65.4)
Dentistry	42	26 (61.9)	148	78 (52.7)	32	14 (43.8)
Engineering Sciences	4,101	1,025 (25.0)	16,663	4,694 (28.2)	3,811	1,137 (29.8)
Fine and Applied Arts	233	137 (58.8)	557	334 (60.0)	24	13 (54.2)
Health Sciences	240	201 (83.8)	583	489 (83.9)	81	57 (70.4)
Humanities and Social Sciences	2,573	1,813 (70.5)	7,532	5,282 (70.1)	1,758	1,298 (73.8)
Information Technology	728	185 (25.4)	2,505	796 (31.8)	540	139 (25.7)

Law	238	102	872	463	204	134
		(42.9)		(53.1)		(65.7)
Mass Communication	180	153	685	555	141	108
		(85.0)		(81.0)		(76.6)
Medicine	251	119	1,188	503	229	94
		(47.4)		(42.3)		(41.0)
Natural, Physical and Mathematical Sciences	1,994	1,348	5,899	3,755	1,384	955
		(67.6)		(63.7)		(69.0)
Services	68	36	177	117	0	0
		(52.9)		(66.1)		

Source: 2007 Education Statistics Digest

### Singapore's Masterplan for ICT in Education

- 10.21 Singapore's first Masterplan for ICT in Education was launched in 1997 to provide a comprehensive strategy for creating an IT-based teaching and learning environment in every school. Under the first ICT Masterplan, the Government committed S\$2 billion from 1997 to 2002 to provide computers, full networking of the schools, physical renovations, software and courseware and teacher training.
- 10.22 By the end of the first MasterPlan, core training for teachers in all schools was completed. All primary schools had attained a pupil-to-computer ratio of 6.6:1 while all secondary schools and junior colleges had attained a ratio of 5:1.
- 10.23 Building on this foundation, Masterplan II for ICT in Education (2003-2007), encourages the pervasive and effective use of ICT for teaching and learning.
- 10.24 The priorities are to:
- set standards to ensure that all schools achieve a baseline level of ICT use;
  - fully support selected schools that are ready to achieve higher levels of ICT use in education;
  - develop schools' capacity to take full ownership of their schools' ICT implementation; and
  - strengthen the integration of ICT in the curriculum and assessment.

- 10.25 Today, all Singapore schools are equipped with computers and pupils have easy access to technology and online resources. The Ministry of Education (MOE) has also provided funds to support schools to achieve a 6.5:1 pupil-computer ratio in primary schools and 4:1 pupil-computer ratio for secondary schools and junior colleges.
- 10.26 Through support from the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (iDA) and industry partners, there is a scheme to enable needy families to have Internet-ready computers at highly subsidised prices. More than 14,600 families have benefited from the scheme.
- 10.27 All teachers were encouraged to engage in active research on the use of ICT for teaching and learning. To support schools in their efforts, the Lead ICT@Schools Scheme and Future Schools@Singapore programme, were launched in 2006 and 2007 respectively.
- 10.28 With effect from January 2008, all Primary, Secondary schools and Junior Colleges/Centralised Institutes are expected to implement Baseline ICT Standards for pupils. This ensures that all pupils are equipped with a set of baseline ICT skills at the end of their primary and secondary education.

### **Qualitative Shift in the Education System**

- 10.29 In his 2006 Teachers' Day Rally Speech, Singapore's Prime Minister, Mr Lee Hsien Loong, spoke about the Ministry of Education's (MOE's) targets of achieving many peaks of excellence for children with different abilities, aptitudes and interests, and levelling up standards for the whole education system. To this end, MOE has created many pathways for children with different talents and interests.
- 10.30 MOE is reaching out to children of different socio-economic status as well. The target is to halve the attrition rate of students who do not complete secondary school education from 3% to 1.5% in five years. MOE is working with students, parents and families to achieve this target. The attrition rate as of March 2008 is 1.6%.

## Article 11: Employment

*1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:*

- (a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;*
- (b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;*
- (c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;*
- (d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;*
- (e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;*
- (f) The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.*

*2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:*

- (a) To prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;*
- (b) To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;*
- (c) To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities;*
- (d) To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.*

*3. Protective legislation relating to matters covered in this article shall be reviewed periodically in the light of scientific and technological knowledge and shall be revised, repealed or extended as necessary.*

### Achievements

#### Promoting Fair Employment Practices

- 11.1 In February 2006, the Industrial Arbitration Court (the certifying board of all collective agreements) allocated a special section on “Equal Remuneration” on its website to publicise and encourage the incorporation of a clause on equal remuneration in collective agreements.

The tripartite partners (i.e. workers' unions, employer organisations and the Government) encourage negotiating parties to include such a clause in their collective agreements.

- 11.2 In May 2006, the Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices (TAFEP) was formed to encourage employers to adopt fair and responsible employment practices. The Alliance formulates guidelines for fair employment practices for workers of all ages, gender, races and religion and adopts a concerted promotional and educational approach to raise awareness and share knowledge on fair employment practices. The Tripartite Guidelines of Fair Employment Practices were launched in January 2007 to replace the Code of Responsible Employment Practices issued by the Singapore Business Federation, the Singapore National Employers Federation and the National Trades Union Congress in 2002.
- 11.3 In November 2007, the Tripartite Centre for Fair Employment (which is jointly funded by the tripartite partners) was established to promote awareness of fair employment practices amongst employers and the general public. The Centre provides advisory services to employers to assist them in adopting fair employment practices. It also takes feedback from employers and the public on ways of improving fair employment standards in Singapore.

#### Protection against sexual harassment

- 11.4 Singapore takes a serious stand against sexual harassment through a range of laws that guard against various forms of sexual harassment, including workplace sexual harassment. Where the harassment is of a criminal nature, reports are investigated by the Police, and when proven, appropriate action is taken. For example, outrage of modesty is chargeable under the Penal Code, and behaviour likely to cause harassment is taken under the Miscellaneous Offences (Public Order & Nuisance) Act. For cases that do not involve a criminal breach, workers can seek redress directly from their management or through their unions. The Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) is open to employers who need advice or help in dealing with complaints of sexual harassment. Workers are also encouraged to seek advice from the Ministry of Manpower.

#### Principle of Meritocracy in the Civil Service

- 11.5 Civil Service remunerations and bonuses are based solely on merit and work performance.

#### *Equalising Medical Benefits for Dependants of Civil Servants*

- 11.6 On 1 January 2005, the medical benefits for female civil servants on the Medisave-cum-Subsidised Outpatient (MSO) scheme were equalized, so that both male and female civil servants can claim medical benefits for themselves and their dependents. Female officers on the MSO scheme can also claim medical benefits for their unmarried children below the age of 18 years, and for their spouses. This helps to foster the sharing of care-giving responsibilities between spouses.

*Wage Differentials in the Civil Service*

- 11.7 The table below compares the median salaries of male and female civil servants as at January 2008, with a breakdown by age groups:

Age Group	Median Salary for Male Civil Servants	Median Salary for Female Civil Servants	Median Salary for all Civil Servants
<21	\$1,432	\$1,509	\$1,509
21-25	\$2,008	\$2,473	\$2,147
26-30	\$2,796	\$3,116	\$2,939
31-35	\$3,388	\$4,100	\$3,748
36-40	\$4,314	\$4,733	\$4,534
41-45	\$3,823	\$4,750	\$4,282
46-50	\$4,101	\$4,894	\$4,503
51-55	\$3,712	\$3,348	\$3,458
56-60	\$3,886	\$4,737	\$4,191

- 11.8 As shown by the table above, female civil servants are earning more than the median salary for all civil servants, as well as their male peers, at every age group, with the exception of those aged between 51 to 55 years.

**Women and Employment**

- 11.9 Although the female labour force participation rate (LFPR) still lagged that of males (77%), the gap has narrowed over the decade. In 1996, the LFPR was 50% for the resident female population aged 15 and over in Singapore, and in 2007 the corresponding LFPR was 78% for males and 54% for females.
- 11.10 There were a total of 353,000 dual-career couples in 2005, which is an increase of 18% over 2000. Dual-career couples accounted for 44% of married couples, up from 41% in 2000. The traditional working arrangement where the husbands were the sole bread-winners had become less prevalent, with the proportion declining from 40% in 2000 to 36% in 2005. The proportion of wives who were the sole bread-winners, increased from 4.7% in 2000 to 5.5% in 2005.
- 11.11 The educational profiles of women have been improving in recent years, and consequently the proportion of women corporate managers has also risen from 24% in 1994, to 35% in 2007. The number of complaints by women on employment discrimination remains very low. Women's participation rate in the traditionally male-dominated IT industry has increased. In 2005, women made up 33% of all IT professionals.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> These are the latest figures available.



11.12 Please see Appendix 1 for statistics on the following information:

- Table 1: Resident Labour Force Participation Rate by Sex, 1991 – 2007
- Table 2: Age - Sex Specific Labour Force Participation Rates, 1994 – 2007 (total, males and females)
- Table 2A: Age - Sex Specific Labour Force Participation Rates, 2000 and 2007 (total, males and females)
- Table 3: Age - Sex Specific Labour Force Participation Rates by Marital Status, June 2004
- Table 3A: Age - Sex Specific Resident Labour Force Participation Rates by Marital Status, June 2007
- Table 18: Employed Residents Aged Fifteen Years and Over by Industry and Sex, June 1994 – 2007 (total, males and females)
- Table 19: Employed Residents Aged Fifteen Years and Over by Occupation and Sex, June 1997 – 2007 (total, males and females)
- Table 25: Employed Residents Aged Fifteen Years and Over by Age and Sex, 1997 – 2007 (total, males and females)
- Table 30: Employed Persons Aged Fifteen Years and Over by Age, Sex and Type of Employment, June 2004
- Table 30A: Employed Persons Aged Fifteen Years and Over by Occupation, Industry and Sex, June 2007
- Table 40: Employed Residents Aged Fifteen Years and Over by Occupation, Industry and Sex, June 2007 (total, males and females)
- Table 50: Resident Unemployment Rates by Sex, Age and Highest Qualification Attained, 1997 – 2007 (annual average)

### *Wages*

11.13 The income gap between males and females has narrowed as the educational profile of women continues to improve and women take on higher skilled and better-paying jobs, typically in the services sector. The median monthly income for full-time employed females was 86.7% that of males in 2007.

11.14 As in many other countries, females in Singapore generally earn less than males across occupational groups. In June 2006, the gender wage difference<sup>17</sup> ranged from 5.7% for professionals to 46% for plant & machine operators in the age category of 35 – 39 years. The statistics are affected by the educational profile of the older women in the work force. They also have a greater tendency to disrupt their careers to raise or take care of children and family. Other possible reasons contributing to the gender wage differential include differences in skills, qualifications, job nature/level and working experience.

11.15 The gender wage differential was less pronounced among the younger age group 25 – 29. In fact, for this younger cohort, females earned a higher median gross wage than males by as

<sup>17</sup> Gender Wage Difference =  $(1 - (\text{Female Median Gross Wage} / \text{Male Median Gross Wage})) \times 100\%$ .

much as 31% for those in sales & services jobs to 11% for managerial posts and 6.7% for professionals. However, in manual occupations such as production craftsmen and plant & machine operators, females generally earned less. This could reflect the tendency for males and females to hold different jobs within the same occupational groups. For instance, among plant & machine operators, females tend to concentrate in jobs such as electronic equipment/component assemblers which typically pay less than the male-dominated crane & hoist operators.

11.16 Please see Appendix 2 for statistics on the following information:

- Table 10A: Median Monthly Gross Wage by Gender and Occupation for Workers Aged 35 – 39, June 2007
- Chart 3: Gender Wage Difference by Occupation and Selected Age Groups, June 2007
- Table 1: Median Gross Monthly Income of Resident Full-Time Employed Persons 1996 – 2007 (As at June 2007)

11.17 Please see Appendix 3 for statistics on the following information:

- Table 2.1: Monthly Basic and Gross Wages of Selected Occupations in all Industries, June 2007 (Males)
- Table 2.2: Monthly Basic and Gross Wages of Selected Occupations in all Industries, June 2007 (Females)

## **The recent Economic Climate and Measures Taken**

### *The Economy*

11.18 The economic climate of Singapore improved through 2005 and 2006. From the middle of 2007, rising oil prices on a global scale began to push up food prices worldwide. The spike in food and fuel prices has accelerated the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation in Singapore. In the face of economic uncertainty worldwide, Singapore's GDP growth for 2008 is estimated at 2.5%.

11.19 During the period under review, the Singapore job market continued to show signs of improvement in spite of the volatility of the economic climate. In 2007, the unemployment rate averaged a ten-year low of 2.1% overall and 3.0% for the resident population, down from 2.7% and 3.6% respectively in 2006. Employment grew by 70,600 in the second quarter of 2008.

### *Recent Measures Taken*

11.20 While Singapore as a price taker cannot avoid the effects of global inflation, the Government has taken measures to minimize the impact of inflation on the population. One such measure is the stronger Singapore dollar that helps to reduce imported inflationary pressure from higher food and oil prices.

- 11.21 In response to a strong economy and Singapore's ageing population, the Government announced changes to the Central Provident Fund (CPF) system in February 2007. The CPF is a comprehensive social security savings plan to take care of the retirement, medical and housing needs. The employers' CPF contribution rate, which stood at 13%, was raised by 1.5 percentage points with effect from 1 July 2007. Low wage workers aged above 35 years who earn total wages of S\$1,500 or less per month were excluded from this increase in employers' CPF contribution rate so as not to discourage employers from hiring them.
- 11.22 The Goods and Services Tax (GST) was increased from 5% to 7% from 1 July 2007 and the revenue from the GST is channelled into education, health care, and the Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) scheme. The WIS scheme aims to encourage older low wage workers to work by supplementing their income and making up for the reduction in their CPF.
- 11.23 In this period of economic volatility, the Government is committed to the promotion of capacity-building as companies must continue to upgrade their business capabilities in order to maintain their competitive edge. The National Wages Council (NWC) has recommended that companies grant sustainable wage increases that commensurate with performance and productivity.
- 11.24 The Workforce Development Agency (WDA), which was established in 2003, has been enhancing employability and competitiveness of the Singapore workforce. The main strategy of this agency is to create a Continuing Education and Training (CET) system that will, inter alia, allow workers, including women, to acquire workplace skills that are relevant to industries and required by employers.
- 11.25 The WDA has made notable progress since its establishment, including the following:
- a. WSQ Framework: Set up a national framework for skills development and certification using the Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) System. Within the period of 2005 to 2007, WDA developed 19 WSQ frameworks that provide practical, competency-based training courses in various sectors such as aerospace, community and social services, manufacturing, healthcare and information communication technology.
  - b. Employability Skills System (ESS): The ESS was first implemented in November 2004, and has since gained recognition amongst both employers and workers. The Singapore public sector, for example, is using ESS qualifications to recruit its Division III positions (clerical/administrative positions) and Division IV officers (operational positions).
  - c. Adult CET Centres: WDA has to date established 19 CET Centres for training adult workers. Another 215 training organizations have been accredited towards delivering WSQ training to workers.
  - d. Trained workforce: In 2007, WDA helped 68,000 workers to upgrade and certify their skills, with about 140,000 WSQ Statements of Attainment awarded. Another

168,000 workers have been sent for training by their employers, with support from the Skills Development Fund.

- e. Skills Development Fund (SDF): SDF's scope was expanded from 1 October 2008 so that more employers can tap on this fund to invest in and upgrade the skills of their employees.
- f. Lifelong Learning Endowment Fund (LLEF): The LLEF was established in 2001 with an initial capital of S\$500 million and to date the capital sum stands at S\$2.2 billion. The long-term target amount is S\$5 billion. The interest earned from this capital endowment fund is for lifelong learning initiatives.
- g. Flexi-Works!: Flexi-Works! is an initiative by WDA and the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) for companies to hire new workers on part-time or flexible work arrangements. Flexi-Works! aims to bring those who have not been working, or who have been economically inactive for at least the past six months, to return to the workforce; and ultimately to increase the employment rates of women and mature workers. This scheme offers a grant of up to S\$100,000 to support a company's efforts in recruiting workers on part-time or flexible work arrangements. The programme began in January 2008, and as of September 2008, a total of 550 women had been recruited on part-time or flexible work arrangements under Flexi-Works!
- h. Unemployed Workers: WDA is currently working with NTUC and the Community Development Councils (CDCs) to help unemployed Singaporean women and men find jobs. Their services include helping the unemployed assess their employability, facilitating training, and providing career guidance and placement services. In 2007, this partnership helped to place 16,691 job seekers, of whom 8,715 (52% of the total) were women.

### **Employment Act – Managers, Executives, Confidential Staff, Domestic Workers, and Seamen**

- 11.26 The Employment Act does not cover executives, managers, confidential staff, domestic workers and seaman. The basis for the exclusion is not gender-biased. The Act provides for the minimum terms and conditions of employment in Singapore, and personnel in managerial and executive positions are excluded as they are in a better position to negotiate their terms and conditions of employment. In the case of seamen and domestic workers, the provisions in the Act are difficult to enforce due to the nature of their work.
- 11.27 Though the Employment Act may exclude certain occupations, employees may approach the Labour Relations Department of the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), which provides free voluntary conciliation services, for assistance in resolving disputes with their employers. Executives who are unable to resolve their cases at MOM may also pursue their claims at the civil court.

## Foreign Domestic Workers

- 11.28 Singapore adopts a multi-faceted approach in safeguarding the well-being of foreign domestic workers (FDWs) as well as protecting their interests. The key measures undertaken by MOM in this regard are:

### *Employer Education*

- 11.29 To educate the employers of FDWs, MOM produces an information kit comprising an employer guidebook, "Employing Foreign Domestic Workers, A Guide for Employers", which spells out the responsibilities of employers as well as ways to better manage their workers. The guidebook contains guidelines for a written agreement between employers and FDWs. Important work permit regulations are also highlighted. The aim is to help employers develop a close and cordial working relationship with their FDW based on mutual respect and understanding. The guidebook was sent to all employers starting December 2006.
- 11.30 To reduce conflicts arising from cultural differences and to help employers overcome the language barrier with their FDWs, the guide for employers includes a "Cultural Guidebook" on norms and customs as well as everyday vocabulary of workers from the 3 largest source countries: Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Philippines.
- 11.31 The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) has introduced an electronic newsletter aimed at raising employer awareness to worker issues and the importance of cultivating a good working relationship with their workers.
- 11.32 With effect from 1 April 2004, MOM requires all first-time employers of FDWs to attend a half-day Orientation Programme as a processing criteria for their FDW's work permit application. The programme provides advice on cultivating a good working relationship between employers and their FDWs based on mutual understanding and respect.
- 11.33 With effect from October 2004, MOM requires all employers who change their FDWs 5 or more times within a one-year period to attend the FDW Employers' Orientation Programme. They may also be required to attend an interview with a Ministry official to better understand the circumstances behind the frequent changes in FDWs. Applications from employers who persist in changing FDWs frequently without satisfactory reasons may be rejected.

### *Worker Education*

- 11.34 MOM circulates an advisory booklet to all foreign workers, including FDWs who are coming to work in Singapore for the first time. The advisory booklet highlights their rights and obligations while working here. It also provides useful telephone numbers which foreign workers can call in the event of an emergency. These are the contact numbers for medical help, one-stop social service, the Samaritans of Singapore, the Labour Relations and Welfare Department, the Work Permit Department of MOM as well as various embassy

helpdesk lines. This advisory booklet is in English and 9 native languages of foreign workers.

- 11.35 In October 2006, the Ministry launched a free 6-monthly newsletter which is sent to all FDWs.
- 11.36 MOM requires all newly-arrived FDWs (i.e. those with no prior working experience in Singapore) to attend a compulsory half-day safety awareness course before the issuance of their work permit card. FDWs are advised on the necessary safety precautions when performing domestic duties, their employment rights, and the avenues to seek help if they encounter employment problems. To ensure that workers comprehend the important messages, the programme is conducted in the native languages of the FDWs.
- 11.37 Since October 2006, MOM started to interview randomly-selected FDWs who are working for the first time in Singapore during their initial months of employment. The purpose is to check if they are facing adjustment problems in Singapore.

#### *Enforcement and Persecution*

- 11.38 The Government takes a serious view of employers who ill-treat or abuse their FDWs. Such employers are dealt with severely. The police conduct prompt and thorough investigations into all such cases, and errant employers are prosecuted in the courts. Heavy sentences such as jail, fines and/or canings are meted out to those found guilty of physical abuse or ill-treatment of their FDWs.
- 11.39 In 1998, the Penal Code was amended to enhance penalties committed by employers of FDWs or members of the employers' household against their FDWs by one and a half times the amount of punishment he or she would otherwise have been liable for that offence. Convicted employers and spouses will also be permanently barred from employing another FDW. The number of substantiated abuse cases handled by the Police has accordingly fallen from 157 cases in 1997 to 68 cases in 2007 in spite of a growing FDW population. From 2001 to 2007, 28 employers, spouses or household members have been jailed for FDW abuses. Employers who are convicted of abuse are permanently barred from employing another FDW.
- 11.40 Employers who do not take the necessary measures to ensure the safety of the FDW can be charged in court for criminal negligence.
- 11.41 For FDWs who are required to assist in the investigations, arrangements will be made to facilitate their stay in Singapore. FDWs are allowed to seek employment during this period.

#### *Medical and Personal Accident Insurance*

- 11.42 Employers are required to take up a Personal Accident Insurance policy for their FDW. The minimum sum assured is S\$10,000, and any compensation payable is made to the FDW or her beneficiaries. This was increased to S\$40,000 on 1 July 2008. From 1 January 2008,

employers are required to purchase medical insurance for their workers, with coverage of at least S\$5,000 for the FDW's inpatient care and day-surgery during his/her stay in Singapore.

### *Proper Repatriation*

- 11.43 To ensure that employers repatriate their FDWs at the end of their contracts and do not leave them stranded in Singapore, MOM requires employers to furnish a security bond of S\$5,000 for every foreign worker. Should the employer fail to repatriate the employee, the bond is confiscated and the monies will be used to assist the worker to return to his/her country of origin.

### *Conciliation*

- 11.44 MOM assists employers and employees to resolve employment disputes amicably through conciliation. A Well-Being Department under MOM's Foreign Manpower Management Division and a special toll-free FDW hotline have been set up. In situations where conciliation does not lead to a satisfactory outcome and the employers are at fault, MOM will not hesitate to prosecute the errant employers. 85% of employment disputes are settled amicably through conciliation.

### *Employment Terms*

- 11.45 All foreign workers, in Singapore, including FDWs, are governed and protected under Singapore's rules and regulations without prejudice. They are accorded additional protection under the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (EFMA). Work permit conditions are imposed on employers of FDWs under this Act to make them responsible for the well-being of their FDWs. These conditions include provisions on personal safety, proper housing, prompt salary payment and adequate food and rest. Employers who breach these conditions can be punished with a fine of up to S\$5,000 and/or a jail term of up to 6 months. The work permit conditions were further revised on 1 February 2005 to specifically require employers to pay salaries regularly, within 7 days of the calendar month. Employers who default on salary payments will be ordered by the courts to make payment, in addition to a fine and/or jail sentence. From 2004 to 2007, MOM successfully prosecuted 13 errant employers for failing to pay wages, of which 5 were eventually jailed.
- 11.46 The Foreign Manpower Management Division (FMMD) of MOM enforces the work permit conditions covering FDWs as well as the employment contract. The Work Permit Condition 7 states that "The employer shall ensure that the worker is not ill-treated, exploited, willfully neglected or endangered. This includes providing the worker with adequate rest, as well as rest day(s) in accordance with the terms of the employment contract".
- 11.47 FDWs are currently not covered under the Employment Act. There is no discrimination based on nationality or gender because both local and foreign domestic workers (irrespective of gender) have been excluded from the Employment Act since its enactment in 1968. Given that FDWs work in a home environment and domestic arrangements vary in

different households, it is not practical to regulate specific aspects of domestic work as prescribed under the Employment Act, including hours of work, rest day, and work on public holidays. Instead, FDWs are protected under the EFMA for issues ranging from salary payment and housing conditions to the cost of medical expenses, and days of rest.

- 11.48 MOM provides advice to FDW employers on what constitutes acceptable accommodation. The FDW should be given a separate room where possible, failing which the employer should respect the FDW's need for privacy and ensure that sufficient private space for sleep is provided. The employer is expected to provide basic needs such as a bed with mattress, a blanket, towels and bathroom amenities. The advisory is disseminated through multiple channels as detailed in Paragraphs 11.29 to 11.33 above, on Employer Education.
- 11.49 The Government encourages employers and FDWs to enter into employment contracts through accredited employment agencies. In 2006 the accreditation bodies introduced a standard employment contract for FDWs. The standard contract requires the employer to provide at least one rest day a month, which the FDWs could choose not to take and obtain compensation in lieu of the rest day(s). Part of the accreditation criteria for employment agencies requires that they facilitate the signing of this standard employment contract between all the FDWs they place and their employers.
- 11.50 MOM raised the minimum age (from 18 to 23) for FDWs and introduced minimum education requirements for new FDWs with effect from 1 January 2005.

#### *Regulating Employment Agencies (EA)*

- 11.51 Under the Employment Agencies Act, owners of errant EAs can be fined up to S\$5,000 and/or imprisoned for up to 2 years. Contraventions of the Act, Rules or Licence Conditions can lead to revocation or non-renewal of licenses. For instance, anyone who is found guilty of withholding the passport or work permit of any foreign worker can be fined up to S\$1,000 and in the case of subsequent convictions, can be fined up to S\$2,000 and/or imprisoned for up to 6 months.
- 11.52 EA license applicants are screened for previous court convictions and are required to maintain a security deposit of S\$20,000 with the Ministry. This deposit is forfeited upon licence revocation. To raise the professionalism of local EAs, MOM made the accreditation of FDW-placing EAs compulsory from June 2004. To be accredited, EAs must fulfil certain requirements, including providing for the proper orientation of FDWs, educating employers on their obligations for the welfare of FDWs, and the facilitation of written employment contracts between FDWs and their employers. This serves to ensure EAs take ownership of the training and quality of FDWs they help to place.
- 11.53 Since 1 February 2006, MOM has introduced a demerit point system (DPS) for the EA industry. This system provides early warning for EAs that have breached minor infringements so that they may improve. At the same time, it helps consumers to identify EAs that flout MOM's rules. Under the DPS, EAs that breach the EA Act, Rules or Licence Conditions will be issued with 3, 6 or 12 demerit points depending on the severity of the



infringements. EAs will be placed on surveillance when they accumulate 12 demerit points – they risk losing their licences and their security deposits if they commit another breach. From 2004 to 2007, MOM revoked the licences of 10 EAs and did not renew the licences of 18 others.

### *Partnerships*

- 11.54 MOM works closely with unions, NGOs, the media and foreign embassies to recognize the contributions of FDWs and to promote their social welfare and learning. For instance, in collaboration with the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics and a committee of volunteers from various organisations such as the National Safety Council, MOM catalysed the formation of a FDW Association for Skills Training (FAST) in March 2005. The aim of FAST is to provide development courses for FDWs to enhance their employability and to promote social integration and community building amongst FDWs.
- 11.55 In summary, Singapore has a comprehensive set of legislative, administrative, and educational measures to protect all FDWs. MOM reviews the foreign worker management framework regularly to further enhance the protection and well-being of all FDWs in Singapore. The 2005 Trafficking in Persons Report released by the US Department of State in June 2005 lauded Singapore’s recent efforts to curb FDW abuses, and has featured them under the “International Best Practices” section of the report.
- 11.56 As a testament to Singapore’s pro-active and comprehensive approach in safeguarding the well-being of FDWs, large numbers of FDWs seek employment or extend their employment period in Singapore. A survey conducted in April 2006 by REACH (formerly known as Feedback Unit), found that 90% of the FDWs are happy working in Singapore. As such, any reports of isolated cases of FDW abuse should not obscure the fact that the majority of FDWs in Singapore are well-treated and happy.

### **Child Care Centres**

- 11.57 The Government will continue to encourage the development of child-care centres to support parents in their family care responsibilities while they work. As at July 2008, there were 748 child care centres in Singapore, with a total capacity of 63,530 and an enrolment of 52,757.
- 11.58 As announced in its latest slew of measures to promote marriage and parenthood, the Government will
- a) provide recurrent funding to voluntary organisations wishing to set up centres;
  - b) support the training and development of pre-school teachers;
  - c) increase childcare subsidies; and
  - d) free up more land for the building of centres.
- 11.59 For more details on the marriage and parenthood package, please read Article 16 on “Marriage and Family Life”.

**Work-Life Harmony**

- 11.60 The Government continues to promote work-life harmony for all Singaporeans, irrespective of gender, marital status or age.
- 11.61 The Promotion Section of MOM's Quality Workplaces Department has made notable progress in promoting work-life strategy with employers, the key milestones being:
- 1) Getting CEOs to persuade other CEOs of the benefits of work-life strategy. A MOM-commissioned study showed that CEOs are most effective in persuading their peers. The Ministry funds the Employer Alliance, which is a group of like-minded CEOs from best practice companies who promote work-life harmony to their peers. Their aim is to make work-life harmony an integral part of the corporate landscape.
  - 2) Building local capability by training HR practitioners and work-life consultants. In October 2004, MOM introduced the Work-Life Works! Fund to help companies implement effective work-life strategies. To date, the Fund has attracted nearly 300 companies. Over 40 work-life consultants have been trained.
  - 3) Communicating the benefits of work-life strategy to employers. In 2005, the Tripartite Committee on Work-Life Strategy (TriCom) organised the Work-Life Harmony Week, which included a series of seminars, workshops and company visits that involved 1,000 participants. This led to greater awareness of work-life strategy. In 2006, the TriCom organised the first Work-Life Excellence Award, in which 70 successful employers were recognised for their effective work-life strategies. Company success stories and best practices are regularly featured in newspapers, television documentaries and HR magazines.
  - 4) Initiating research on work-life strategy and building the business case. The Ministry commissioned studies to establish the link between work-life programmes and business performance and publicised the results to persuade employers to implement work-life strategies.
- 11.62 In a Work-Life Conference held on 24 July 2007, the Minister in charge of the Civil Service announced a new Work-Life Advocate programme, where the Deputy Secretary of Ministries and CEO of Statutory Boards were tasked to actively promote Work-Life Harmony in their organizations. As of 19 February 2008, the network consisted of 77 Work-Life Advocates and 80 Work-Life Ambassadors.
- 11.63 Other initiatives to help civil servants achieve work-life harmony include Civil Service College courses on Achieving Personal Work-Life Effectiveness for individuals and Essential Managerial Skills for Work-Life Integration for supervisors; the setting up of a project team to identify and design jobs suitable for part-time work; cross-agency social interaction activities; and collaboration with the National Voluntary and Philanthropic Centre to match interested employees to community work.

- 11.64 The Singapore Civil Service has various flexible work policies, leave benefits and employee support schemes to assist officers in achieving work-life balance. These include:

#### Flexible Work Arrangements

- (i) **Part-time employment:** The key features are:
  - a. Open to all officers, on flexible durations.
  - b. Ministries have the flexibility to customise work options between 11 and 29 hours per week.
  - c. Officers are eligible for pro-rated salaries and benefits according to their work schedule.
- (ii) **Telecommuting:** Ministries are given the flexibility to implement tele-commuting arrangements for their officers where the nature of their jobs allows for it.
- (iii) **Flexi-time:** Ministries can implement flexi-time or staggered work hours, whereby officers can opt to start work any time between 7.30 am to 9.30 am.
- (iv) **Five Day Work Week** (introduced in 2004).

#### Leave Benefits

- (i) **Marriage Leave:** Both male and female officers are eligible for 3 days of marriage leave for their first marriage.
- (ii) **Maternity Leave:** Under the latest measures on marriage and parenthood (M&P) implemented on 17 August 2008, married officers are eligible for the following:
  - a. Paid maternity leave for 16 weeks, for all citizen births, with the option of the last eight weeks of maternity leave being taken flexibly over 12 months.
  - b. 6 days of unpaid infant-care leave per year per parent until the child turns two.
  - c. The Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sport (MCYS) and the Public Service Division (PSD) revised the policy such that single female officers who marry the father of their Singaporean child within 6 months of delivery will be eligible for paid maternity leave. This policy change took effect on 1 March 2007.<sup>18</sup> Under the new 2008 M & P package, the 6-month duration has been extended to 12 months.

<sup>18</sup> Previously, female officers had to be legally married in order to enjoy paid maternity leave. This benefit applies up to the 4<sup>th</sup> confinement.

- (iii) **Paternity leave:** Married male officers enjoy three calendar days of paternity leave for the birth of their first four children. This is a clear signal of the importance of shared responsibility in parenting.
- (iv) **Unrecorded childcare leave:** All married officers are eligible for full pay unrecorded childcare leave to look after his/her child below 12 years old when the child falls sick. Such leave is limited to 5 days per year for each child, up to a maximum of 15 days per year if the officer has 3 or more children below 12 years old. Officers with children below 7 years old have the flexibility to take 2 days of unconditional childcare leave, which are not predicated on any condition, e.g. illness of the child. This was increased to 6 days under the 2008 M & P package.
- (v) **No-Pay Leave:** The Public Service Division reviewed the No-Pay Leave (NPL) policy in August 2007. While formerly only married female officers were eligible for up to 4 years of NPL for each child below 4 years of age, now both male and female officers may be granted NPL of up to 2 years at each instance to care for their children during their early formative years. The NPL may be extended beyond 2 years, subject to Ministry's approval. In addition, an officer can apply for no-pay leave to accompany his/her spouse who is on overseas duty or study.

### Article 12: Health

*1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.*

*2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of this article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.*

### Healthcare as a Priority

12.1 The Government ensures that Singaporeans have access to good and affordable healthcare and promotes the pursuit of medical excellence. Women have equal access to healthcare resources with special attention paid to the healthcare needs of women. The high standards of Singapore's healthcare system is demonstrated through the following indicators:

- Life expectancy at birth for women increased from 80.0 years in 2001 to 81.8 years in 2006;
- Maternal Mortality Rate dropped from 10 per hundred thousand live and still births in 2001 to 5 in 2003. It rose to 10 per hundred thousand live and still births in 2006. The seemingly large increase was due to the small sample size<sup>19</sup>;
- Infant Mortality Rate stands at 2.6 per thousand resident live births in 2006; and

<sup>19</sup> The seemingly large increase is due to our small sample size as a small country.

- Mortality Rate for children aged under 5 years stood at 2.3 per thousand live births in 2005. UNICEF ranked Singapore as having the lowest Under-5 Mortality Rate in 2005<sup>20</sup>.

12.2 The total government health expenditure per resident has increased from S\$479 in 2001 to S\$535 in 2006. The total government health expenditure for Fiscal Year 2007 was S\$1.9 billion. A total budget of \$2.6 billion has been allocated to the Ministry of Health in Fiscal Year 2008. MOH has identified low infant and maternal mortality as one of its desired health outcomes.

### **The Healthcare System in Singapore**

12.3 Singapore has a dual system of healthcare delivery, comprising public and private institutions. Patients are free to choose their providers within the dual healthcare delivery system.

12.4 Healthcare in public institutions is heavily subsidised and affordable to all Singaporeans.

12.5 Singapore has a dedicated hospital for women and children. The KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH) has 16 medical specialties for women and 17 medical specialties for children. The total number of hospital beds at KKH is 830. KKH has the first 24-hour children's emergency service in Singapore and the largest Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) in Singapore. The hospital's perinatal mortality rate of 4.92 per 1,000 live births and neonatal mortality rate of 1.99 per 1,000 live births are rated in the league of leading medical centres in the world.

### **Preventive Programmes**

12.6 The Government plays a major role in educating and encouraging the public to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Numerous programmes and health promotion activities are organised annually and are available to both genders. The Government pays special attention to female illnesses and special programmes are organised for women.

#### *Programmes*

12.7 Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in Singapore. About 1,100 women are diagnosed with breast cancer each year. Through regular mammography screening, breast cancer can be detected early where treatment is generally more successful.

12.8 BreastScreen Singapore, a government-subsidised national breast cancer screening programme started in January 2002 to reduce the mortality rate of breast cancer through screening mammography. It is targeted at women aged 50 to 69 years, and the aim is to

<sup>20</sup> In UNICEF's 'The State of the World's Children 2007' report, Singapore was ranked alongside three other countries – San Marino, Iceland and Andorra – as having the lowest under-five mortality rate.

screen up to 70% of those in this group by 2008. The long-term objective is to reduce breast cancer mortality by 10% by 2010. Women aged 40-49 years are screened annually while those aged 50 years and above are screened once every two years. According to a National Health Survey (NHS) carried out in 2004, 50.9% of Singaporean women aged 40 to 69 years had gone for mammography at least once. As at March 2006, 186,472 women have been screened and 840 cancer cases were detected. Of these, 34% were early cancers where the prognosis was good.

- 12.9 The national cervical cancer screening programme, Cervical Screen Singapore, was implemented in August 2004 for Singaporean women aged between 25 and 64 years. Women are encouraged to go for screening once every 3 years. The National Health Survey of 2004 showed that 70.1% of women aged 25 to 69 years had undergone Pap smear tests. As at December 2006, 54,000 women have been screened and 98 pre-invasive cancers and 16 invasive cancers were detected.
- 12.10 The nation-wide community health screening programme called “Check Your Health” was launched in 2000 to screen Singaporeans aged 50 years and above for hypertension, diabetes and high blood cholesterol. As at end December 2006, more than 146,000 persons have attended the screening sessions held at community venues near homes. Women made up 54% of the total number screened.

## HIV/AIDS

- 12.11 In 2006, 357 Singapore residents were reported with HIV infection. About 9% of the cases were females and 91% were males. The incidence per million by gender was 17.6 for females and 181.8 for males.
- 12.12 The National HIV prevention and control programme was established under the Ministry of Health (MOH) in 1985. It adopts a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach, involving the active participation of all relevant government agencies, community groups including NGOs such as Action for AIDS (AfA), Women for Action and Research (AWARE) and UNIFEM. The programme encompasses education, legislation, protection of blood supply, surveillance of the disease, training of personnel, counselling and management of the infected, their contacts and others who have been exposed to the infection.
- 12.13 Programmes for the general population (including women) include:
- a. An educational package, RESPECT (Rallying Employers to Support the Prevention, Education and Control of STI/HIV/AIDS) for the workplace was launched in August 2006. This was developed in partnership with a tripartite committee comprising representatives from the local and multinationals companies, government agencies, employees’ and employers’ unions called the AIDS Business Alliance, which was set up in November 2005.

- b. HIV/ AIDS awareness education, including public exhibitions, forums, talks and distribution of educational materials.
- c. HIV Testing is made a standard of care in Singapore to facilitate early diagnosis and prevent further transmission. The testing is done whenever there is medical indication and when knowing the HIV status will lead to a better clinical outcome for the patient. Anonymous HIV testing is available for those who believe that they are at risk but prefer not to be identified to healthcare workers.
- d. Counselling of sex partners of persons with HIV is carried out. Screening is available for those who have been exposed to HIV infection.

12.14 Women-specific programmes include:

- a. Targeted HIV / AIDS education for at-risk groups such as sex workers, masseuses and lounge / bar / night club hostesses. The focus of the messages is on the dangers of casual sex, that HIV persons cannot be identified by appearances, promotion of family values, avoidance of irresponsible pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relationships, HIV and STI, and the practice of safe sex using condoms.
- b. Other outreach activities such as Women Wellness Clinic for HIV testing and an outreach programme at pubs.
- c. Antenatal HIV screening is included in the routine antenatal screening package offered to all pregnant women since December 2004. Women who do not wish to be screened for HIV can choose to opt out. The take-up rate for antenatal HIV screening in public hospitals and polyclinics was approximately 99% in 2006. Both mothers and babies detected with HIV infection received antiretroviral therapy.

12.15 A behavioural intervention programme was introduced in 2007 to empower women with the knowledge and skills to take greater control over their sexual health. Participants are taught skills such as gender-specific communication, decision-making and problem-solving.

## Smoking

12.16 The prevalence of daily cigarette smoking among adults (18-69 years) declined significantly from 15.2% in 1998 to 12.6% in 2004<sup>21</sup>. Daily cigarette smoking was much more prevalent among men (21.8%) than women (3.5%).

12.17 The proportion of women smokers remained at about the same level (3.2% in 1998 and 3.5% in 2004). The proportion of young women (18-29 age group) who were daily smokers rose from 5.2% in 1998 to 6.6% in 2004.

<sup>21</sup> National Health Survey, conducted in 1998 & 2004.

- 12.18 Singapore ratified the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in May 2004. The objective of the Convention is to provide a framework for integrated tobacco-control measures to reduce the prevalence of tobacco use.
- 12.19 To curb the rising trend of young female smokers in Singapore, the Fresh Air for Women (FAFW) programme was implemented in August 2004. The programme took an integrated marketing and communications approach, encompassing advertising, public relations, direct marketing, events and partnerships with commercial and community organisations.
- 12.20 In 2005, the FAFW programme introduced a network of high profile ambassadors to champion the smoke-free-for-women cause. Ambassadors included Member of Parliament Dr Lily Neo; Ms Claire Chiang, Senior Vice President, Banyan Tree Holdings; Ms Jamie Yeo, ESPN sports presenter; and Nominated Member of Parliament Ms Eunice Olsen. Female-specific quit smoking intervention programmes, such as the “Shop and Step In” programme was introduced to provide personalised face-to-face quit advice to females who are thinking of quitting smoking.
- 12.21 To extend the outreach, a highly-publicised website ([www.getfresh.com.sg](http://www.getfresh.com.sg)) was introduced in 2006. The website serves as a portal for quit smoking information and offers round-the-clock personalised advice tailored to young female smokers. To reach out to young female smokers at the workplace, the “Get Fresh in 40 mins” workshop was introduced, using new approaches, such as positive reinforcement and visualisation techniques to encourage young female smokers to quit.
- 12.22 A new FAFW campaign was launched in July 2007 to encourage young women to quit smoking by empowering them with life skills and by providing them with social support to help them resolve or cope with their life issues, build self-confidence and develop self-discipline.
- 12.23 Recent events included the following:
- Launch of the Stub Out Concept House in Orchard Road, Singapore’s famous shopping belt, in June 2007. The Stub Out Concept House is a larger-than-life outdoor walk-in wardrobe filled with an array of the ‘most wanted’ fashion items, priced according to the number of cigarette packs.
  - Launch of the REVEAL software in town and in the heartland. Research had shown that the risk of moderate or severe facial skin wrinkling is three times higher for women smokers than non-smokers. Visitors to the event get a peek into the future of their skin in 5 minutes.
  - Cheyenne @ The Glasshouse (April 2008). Cheyenne is a female smoker who has been smoking for 12 years. She declared her intention to quit smoking and spent three smoke-free days in a glasshouse in Orchard Road.



- 12.24 Youths in the juvenile justice system with a history of smoking are asked to attend smoking cessation programmes organised by the Child Guidance Clinic. Anti-smoking camps are also organised as part of the community-based supervision programmes for these youths.
- 12.25 To keep our air cleaner and protect the public from the harmful health effects of second-hand smoke, the National Environment Agency (NEA) is widening the list of smoke-free places from 1 January 2009 to include indoor public places, lift lobbies, entrances and exits to buildings and facilities where smoking is already prohibited, playgrounds and exercise areas.

### **Drug Abuse**

- 12.26 Drug abuse among females is not a serious problem in Singapore. The number of female abusers has decreased from 513 in 1994 to 177 in 2006. The decrease in the number of female abusers is due to the integrated approach of:
- a. intensive anti-drug enforcement;
  - b. high profile preventive drug education programmes; and
  - c. a system of through-care introduced in 1994.
- 12.27 The Central Narcotics Bureau works closely with schools at all levels, as well as with self-help groups and voluntary welfare organisations to educate young people about the dangers of drug abuse.
- 12.28 The penalty for drug consumption is a maximum of 10 years or a fine not exceeding S\$20,000, or both, for first-time offenders. For repeat offenders, the minimum sentence is not less than 3 years' imprisonment.

### **Healthcare Financing**

- 12.29 The Singapore healthcare financing system is based on individual responsibility, coupled with government subsidies available equally to men and women to keep basic healthcare affordable for all.
- 12.30 In addition to the 3Ms, i.e. Medisave, Medishield and Medifund, Eldershield, which is a national insurance scheme to provide the elderly with coverage against severe disabilities, was introduced in 2002. As at December 2006, there are about 420,000 males and 330,000 females covered by the scheme.
- 12.31 To help the public choose their insurance plans, the Ministry of Health publishes the premiums of the various private insurance plans that can be paid using Medisave, as well as their respective service standards e.g. how long insurers take to process claims.

## Pregnancy Services and Benefits

- 12.32 The Government has introduced enhanced benefits for women undergoing childbirth or who desire to have children.
- 12.33 Existing policies allow couples to use their Medisave to pay for pre-delivery, delivery and ante-natal care expenses under specific conditions. In addition, couples could use an increased amount from their Medisave for Assisted Conception Procedures (ACPs), up to a maximum of 3 cycles.
- 12.34 From 1 September 2008, the government will co-fund 50% (capped at \$3,000) of each cycle of ACP conducted at public hospitals, for a maximum of 3 cycles. Couples who have no more than one living child and the wife is below 40 years old are eligible.
- 12.35 In addition, women who conceive under ACP will qualify for subsidized ante-natal care, delivery and post-natal care under the same qualifying criteria for women who conceive naturally<sup>22</sup>.
- 12.36 These new provisions are part of the recently-announced marriage and parenthood package. More details on this package are found in Article 16 on “Marriage and Family Life”.

### Article 13: Economic and Social Benefits

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:*

- (a) The right to family benefits;*
- (b) The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;*
- (c) The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.*

## Economic Support and Benefits for All

- 13.1 Singapore restructures its economy continually in order to adapt to changes and uncertainties in the external environment. It continues to care for its citizens by reviewing and introducing socio-economic policy initiatives. The initiatives and policies are gender neutral and are available to both men and women.

<sup>22</sup> Patients should be from the usual referral sources (e.g. polyclinics) to qualify for subsidised care. Those who have opted for private wards would be allowed to downgrade to subsidised wards provided they pass a means-test or if their hospital bill exceeds \$15,000.

### Recent Budget Initiatives (2007 – 2008)

#### *2007: GST Increase and Workfare*

- 13.2 GST was increased from 5 to 7% on 1 July 2007 and to help citizens cope with the increase (especially those from the lower-income brackets), the Government introduced a GST Offset Package. Costing S\$4 billion over 5 years, the Package offers GST credits of up to \$1000 to all Singaporeans. The amount varies according to household income and housing type.
- 13.3 To encourage low-wage workers to continue working and to improve their employability, the Government introduced the Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) scheme. Under this scheme, the Government tops up a low-wage worker's take-home pay and Central Provident Fund (CPF)<sup>23</sup> account. This complements the reduction of a low-wage worker's and his/her employer's contribution to his/her CPF account. WIS will be reviewed in two years' time to ensure currency and relevance.

#### 2008: Surplus Sharing and LIFE Bonus

- 13.4 The two key announcements during the 2008 Budget Speech were the distribution of Growth Dividends and launch of the new LIFE Bonus.
- 13.5 The Growth Dividends come from the Government's budget surplus and were given out in two instalments in April and October 2008. The amount varies according to household income and housing type, with the less well-off receiving more. The Dividends cost S\$865 million.
- 13.6 While the Growth Dividends are for the short-term, the LIFE Bonus offers an incentive for Singaporeans to opt into the new CPF LIFE scheme – a savings scheme to assure Singaporeans of a steady stream of income for their entire life. To help those with low CPF savings, including homemakers, the Government provided a one-off bonus of up to S\$4,000, depending on their Minimum Sum balances. This is to incentivise spouses, children and other family members to top-up the accounts of family members who are homemakers.

### Liberalisation of the CPF Minimum Sum Topping-Up Scheme

- 13.7 The family is a building block of our society. It provides social and financial support to dependents. The CPF Minimum Sum Topping-Up Scheme allows CPF members to top up the CPF Retirement Account of their family members using CPF savings or cash. Top-ups using cash will enjoy a tax relief of up to S\$7,000 per calendar year. Husbands who top up the accounts of their spouses will therefore enjoy tax relief on these top-ups.

<sup>23</sup> The Central Provident Fund is Singapore's national social security savings plan.

- 13.8 The topping-up rules have been relaxed over time and more incentives have been introduced to encourage voluntary top-ups for family members. With effect from 1 November 2008:
- a) the top-up limit will be raised. Previously, the cash top-ups to recipients below 55, when combined with other CPF contributions, cannot exceed \$26,393 a year. This annual cap has been removed on the amount of cash top-ups received;
  - b) more people, including extended family members, will be able to make cash or CPF top-ups to members who are above or below age 55; and
  - c) if the member makes cash top-ups to his/her family members, he/she can receive up to an additional S\$7,000 tax relief a year.

#### Existing Measures

- 13.9 CPF members may use their CPF savings to purchase term life insurance (under the Dependants' Protection Scheme) and mortgage reducing insurance (under the Home Protection Scheme) to protect their family members in the event of an unexpected loss of income should the breadwinner pass away or become permanently incapacitated.
- 13.10 CPF members can nominate their non-working spouse to be the beneficiaries of their CPF savings in the event of their deaths. For those who did not make a nomination, their CPF savings would be distributed by the Public Trustee to their next-of-kin under the intestacy laws.

#### Housing Grant

- 13.11 The Government encourages home ownership. To achieve this, the CPF board offers housing grants to all Singaporeans who wish to purchase Housing Development Board (HDB) flats.
- 13.12 For single men and women, they may receive a CPF housing grant of S\$11,000 to buy a resale flat. Starting 1 April 2008, this CPF housing grant has been increased to S\$20,000 for singles who wish to purchase a resale flat to live with their parents. This is a pro-family initiative to encourage family togetherness and support children in caring for their parents.

#### Measures to Support Parenthood

- 13.13 In August 2008 measures to support Parenthood were further enhanced. The measures, which included financial support through tax rebates and cash hand-outs, provide women with more care options for their children and the flexibility to pursue both their careers and to start or raise a family if they choose to do so. More details on this Package are found under Article 16 (Marriage and Family Life).

#### **Sports**

- 13.14 In Singapore, the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) oversees all sports-related matters. The Singapore Sports Council (SSC), a statutory board

under MCYS, focuses on three main areas: Sports Excellence, Sports for All and Sports Industry.

- 13.15 The Singapore Disability Sports Council (SDSC)<sup>24</sup> promotes the well-being of the disabled through disability sports<sup>25</sup>.

#### Prominent Women in the Sporting Arena

- 13.16 The women's table tennis team of Li Jia Wei, Feng Tianwei and Wang Yuegu, made history when they bagged a silver medal at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. A first for table-tennis, and Singapore's second Olympic medal after 48 years, the women have done Singapore proud.
- 13.17 Sportswoman of the Year (2007), Tao Li, brought Singapore glory by coming in second in the 100-metre butterfly event at the 12th FINA (Federation Internationale de Natation) World Cup in Melbourne (Australia). She became the first (and only) Singaporean to ever reach the finals of the 50-metre butterfly event at the same tournament. At the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Tao Li became the first Singaporean to reach the finals of an Olympics competition. She clinched the fifth place overall.
- 13.18 At the 13<sup>th</sup> Paralympic Games, Swimmer Yip Pin Xiu won a gold and silver medal while Laurentia Tan was the Double Equestrian bronze winner.
- 13.19 In September 2007, Jessie Phua was elected president of the Federation Internationale des Quilleurs (FIQ) – the bowling world's controlling body. Besides being the first Singaporean to head an international sporting body, she is the first woman president of the FIQ, which was founded in 1952.
- 13.20 Singapore's flag-bearer for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing was a woman – table-tennis player Li Jia Wei.

#### **Cultural Life**

- 13.21 Women in Singapore participate in and contribute to all aspects of Singapore's cultural life.

#### *Achievements by Women in the Arts*

- 13.22 Stephanie Sun was the biggest female winner at the 7th Global Chinese Music Awards on 7 October 2007, taking home a total of five awards. She bagged the "Favourite Female Singer" title for the fifth year, solidifying her position on the international music scene. Another notable female performing artiste was Tanya Chua, who won Best Female vocalist at the prestigious 17<sup>th</sup> Golden Melody Awards in both 2006 and 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Source: [www.sdsc.org.sg](http://www.sdsc.org.sg).

<sup>25</sup> Disability sports are opportunities given to persons with physical, sensory and learning impairments to play sports or engage in physical activities both competitive and recreationally.

- 13.23 Besides international awards, many Singaporean women have received recognition and funding support by the National Arts Council. One of the recipients of the Council's 2006 Young Artist Award was Beatrice Chia-Richmond, one of Singapore's most versatile theatre director and actress. Natalie Henedige, Artistic Director of Cake Theatrical Productions, won the award in 2007. Natalie has established a reputation for being an outstanding theatre practitioner of her generation. She represented Singapore in the ASEAN Theatre and Multimedia Workshop on Ancestral Roots to New Artistic Routes of Expression Reflecting the UN Millennium Development Goals, 2007.
- 13.24 In the 2008 awards, three out of five recipients were female - Aidli Mosbit, an actress, playwright and director, was recognised for making an indelible impact on the Singapore theatre scene in both the English and Malay language mediums while Cai Bi Xia and Xia Haiying were recognised for their contributions to the theatre and dance scenes respectively.
- 13.25 The Cultural Medallion is Singapore's highest honour given to individuals who have achieved excellence in artistic fields. Women have been recipients of this award since its launch in 1979. The most recent female recipient of the Cultural Medallion was Ms Lynette Seah, the Co-Leader of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO). The outstanding violinist has performed with numerous famous international orchestras. In June 2006, she represented Singapore in the World Philharmonic Orchestra, which consisted of accomplished musicians from top orchestras all over the world. Ms Seah is the first Singapore violinist to have a concerto written specially for her.

#### **Article 14: Rural Women**

- 1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.*
- 2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:*
  - (a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;*
  - (b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;*
  - (c) To benefit directly from social security programmes;*
  - (d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;*
  - (e) To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self employment;*

*(f) To participate in all community activities;*

*(g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;*

*(h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.*

14.1 This Article is not applicable to Singapore as we are a city state.

**PART V****Article 15: Law**

- 1. States Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law.*
- 2. States Parties shall accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity. In particular, they shall give women equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property and shall treat them equally in all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals.*
- 3. States Parties agree that all contracts and all other private instruments of any kind with a legal effect which is directed at restricting the legal capacity of women shall be deemed null and void.*
- 4. States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile.*

**Equality for Men and Women**

- 15.1 Article 12 of the Constitution of Singapore states that ‘all persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law.’

**Overview of Recent Amendments**

- 15.2 The following is a summary of the changes made to Singapore’s laws since the third periodic report:
- Amendment to the Penal Code to enhance the protection of young persons against exploitation for commercial sex in Singapore and in other countries (please refer to Article 6 on “Suppression of Exploitation of Women” for more details).
  - Amendment to the Central Provident Fund (CPF) Act on the division of matrimonial assets (please see Article 16 on “Marriage and Family Life” for more details).
  - Amendment to the Penal Code on the creation of exceptions in the area of marital immunity (please see Article 16 on “Marriage and Family Life” for more details).

**Singapore’s Judiciary System**

- 15.3 Singapore has the international reputation of having a clean and efficient judiciary system, which has significantly contributed to its economic success by boosting investor’s confidence in the country. For example, the Swiss-based Institute for Management Development (IMD) World Competitiveness Yearbook has consistently ranked Singapore in the top two positions under the “sound legal framework” component. The Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Ltd in Hong Kong has rated Singapore as the economic entity



with the lowest risk in Asia. And since 1966, Singapore has been in the top two positions for “quality of judicial and legal systems”.

- 15.4 The direct and indirect benefits of having a sound, corruption-free and efficient system are available to all Singaporeans, regardless of sex, age or ethnicity.

### **Key Bodies Overseeing Law-related Matters**

- 15.5 In Singapore, there are two key bodies that deal with matters of the law. One is the Ministry of Law, which helps to create, maintain and enhance Singapore’s excellent business climate, through the implementation of sound and transparent legal policies.
- 15.6 The other is the Law Society of Singapore, which serves its members and the community by sustaining a competent and independent Bar to uphold the rule of law and ensures access to justice by the public. The Society has recently launched a directory of lawyers and law practices in Singapore, thereby making it very convenient for citizens to search for lawyers.

### **Family Court**

#### Social, Legal and Medical Services

- 15.7 The Family and Juvenile Justice Centre (FJJC) was set up in March 2002 to provide counselling services and to conduct programmes for individuals and families. The Centre is run by professionals from various disciplines (social workers, psychologists, counsellors and interpreter-mediators) in the areas of marriage, divorce, family violence, substance abuse, violence elimination and youth care. In addition, it has a one-stop service centre - the Family Transformation and Protection Unit (FTPU) – that provides specialised services and assistance to victims of family violence.

#### Accessibility

- 15.8 The Family Court has made it more convenient for members of the public to access their services. For example, the Family Registry is open on Saturdays to cater to working people. Another example is the video-link service at three designated community-based agencies for persons who are unable to visit the Family Court to file complaints.
- 15.9 The Family Court’s website provides one-click-away resources on procedures, common law issues, as well as updates on hearings. In addition, there is a litigants-in-person package that provides key information on court etiquette and procedures that is useful to parties who are not represented by lawyers. This package and the Court’s website information are available in hard copy.

### **Singapore Association of Women Lawyers (SAWL)**

- 15.10 Besides the Family Court, the Singapore Association of Women Lawyers (SAWL) plays an instrumental role in promoting public education on legal issues. It continues to demystify

the law for lay persons by conducting talks, seminars, forums and free legal clinics, as well as by contributing advice and insight at community dialogue sessions.

- 15.11 In 2005, SAWL published a book entitled, 'Teens and the Law'. With the support of the Ministry of Education, SAWL interviewed more than 100 secondary school students and incorporated their concerns about and feedback on the law in this publication. On 13 July 2007, a book entitled "Dear Mom and Dad, Don't Make Me Feel Bad – A Child of Divorce Speaks Up" was launched at a legal talk on divorce organised by SAWL. The book was distributed to the Courts, Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs), schools and law firms.
- 15.12 SAWL provides free legal counselling at 11 community centres and the Family Court. A public seminar was organised by SAWL in July 2007 at the Subordinate Courts. The two-hour free legal seminar saw lawyers and family counsellors discussing the laws on divorce, and dispensing legal advice on custody and dispute matters.
- 15.13 SAWL answers legal queries from the public via legal columns in the media and in publications such as Lianhe Wanbao, Tamil Murasu, Her World, Singapore Women's Weekly and on a radio programme "You & the Law" on Mediacorp Radio 93.8 LIVE.

### **Launch of the Community Legal Clinics**

- 15.14 In September 2007, the Ministry of Law, together with the Law Society of Singapore, the Singapore Academy of Law, and the South East and North West Community Development Councils (CDCs) launched a pilot project to provide free legal advice to needy Singaporeans and permanent residents.
- 15.15 Named the "Community Legal Clinics", these legal clinics are staffed by volunteer lawyers from the Law Society. The Community Legal Clinics provide free basic legal advice on personal matters (e.g. family law, juvenile law, criminal law and bankruptcy).

### **Article 16: Marriage and Family Life**

*1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:*

- (a) The same right to enter into marriage;*
- (b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;*
- (c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;*
- (d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;*
- (e) The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;*

*(f) The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;*

*(g) The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;*

*(h) The same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration.*

*2. The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.*

### **State of the Family in Singapore**

- 16.1 The family unit in Singapore remains strong. Most people surveyed in the 2005 Social Attitudes on Singaporeans (SAS) say that their family is still close-knit despite having to shoulder the increasingly heavier demands of daily life. In general, Singaporeans continue to possess pro-family attitudes and values.
- 16.2 However, there are a few emerging trends which are cause for some concern. The first is that more Singaporeans are choosing to remain single, and for those who marry, are doing so at a later age. Married couples are also delaying parenthood.
- 16.3 Another trend is that the number of divorces has been on the increase. The rise is mainly contributed by marriages that end before their fifth anniversary or by “empty nester” marriages (i.e. older married couples whose children have grown up).

### **2008 Marriage and Parenthood (M & P) Package**

- 16.4 Marriage and family are personal choices. In order to enable Singaporeans to make informed life choices and support the family in its roles and functions, the Government has initiated many policies and programmes aimed at supporting family formation and development. The M & P package is part of the Government’s efforts to support Singaporeans in their efforts to form a family.
- 16.5 The measures are as follows:
- Enhanced social interaction opportunities for singles;
  - Enhanced financial support for parents;
  - Enhanced leave options (please refer to Article 11 on ‘Employment’ for more details);
  - Quality and affordable early childhood education and care (please refer to Article 11 on ‘Employment’ for more details); and
  - Support for fertility treatments (please refer to Article 12 on ‘Health’ for more details).

### Enhanced Social Interaction Opportunities for Singles

16.6 Facilitating more social interaction opportunities is instrumental to helping single women and men widen their network of contacts and friends, and find a suitable life partner<sup>26</sup> if they so wish. The following initiatives were introduced from August 2008 to work towards this end:

- Merger of two existing government agencies which provide dating and matchmaking services - the Social Development Unit (SDU) for graduates and the Social Development Service (SDS) for non-graduates – in order to leverage the synergies between the two. The new merged entity will nurture and develop the private dating industry, by raising standards of professionalism and establishing best practices.
- Introduction of programmes early in educational institutions such as junior colleges and institutes of technical education to inculcate positive mindsets towards self, respect for the opposite gender and family relationships. They will learn to understand, appreciate and respect gender differences and partnership.
- Establishment of a strong network of Social Development Officers (SDOs) to facilitate social interaction opportunities for singles at various touch-points, such as at government agencies, community organisations and private firms.

### Enhanced Financial Support for Parents

16.7 The improved measures are as follows:

- Introduction of the Parenthood Tax Rebate (PTR) of S\$5,000 for the first child; keeping the S\$10,000 PTR for the second and S\$20,000 for the third and fourth child; and extending the S\$20,000 PTR to each child beyond the fourth.
- An increase in Child Relief (CR) from the current S\$2,000 per child to S\$4,000 per child and the Handicapped Child Relief (HCR) from the current S\$3,500 per child to S\$5,500 per child for all birth orders.
- An increase in the Working Mother's Child Relief (WMCR) to 15%, 20%, 25% and 25% of the mother's income for the first to fourth child respectively (up from 5%, 15%, 20% and 25% currently), extending to each child beyond the fourth at 25%. The total relief cap for WMCR and CR/HCR was raised from the current S\$25,000 to S\$50,000 per child<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> In MCYS' "Study on Singles' Attitudes towards Courtship and Marriage", 72% of singles indicated that they wanted more opportunities to meet new friends of the opposite gender.

<sup>27</sup> For those with more than four children, the cumulative WMCR percentages will be capped at 100%. However, for the higher income earners who have big families, because they are limited by the dollar cap and will not reach 100% of their income, they can continue to claim the WMCR relief for their fifth child and beyond (subject to the dollar cap per child).

- A raise in the Baby Bonus<sup>28</sup> cash gift for the first and second births from S\$3,000 to S\$4,000.
- An extension of the Baby Bonus Children Development Account (CDA)<sup>29</sup> to first births, with government co-funding capped at S\$6,000.

### Enhanced Leave Options

16.8 The latest M & P measures which were implemented on 17 August 2008 are as follows:

- Paid maternity leave for 16 weeks for all citizen births, with the option of the last eight weeks of maternity leave being taken flexibly over 12 months. This gives working mothers more time to recuperate from childbirth, bond with their newborns and settle new domestic arrangements before returning to work. This is an improvement from the previous measure where mothers were entitled to 12 weeks of paid maternity leave for the first four confinements.
- 6 days unpaid infant-care leave per year per parent until the child turns two. This will give both parents additional time to spend with and care for their young children. As important, is the fact that the father has the opportunity to share the care responsibility and support the mother during this period.
- Single women who marry the father of their Singaporean child within 6 months of delivery will be eligible for paid maternity leave. The policy change took effect on 1 March 2007. Under the new 2008 M & P package, the 6-month duration was extended to 12 months.
- Paid childcare leave was extended from two days to six days per year per parent until the child turns seven, with the last three days paid by the Government. As both working parents can take the leave, the mother will have the benefit of her spouse's support to care for their child when their regular childcare arrangements are disrupted or when the child falls ill. The family has the option to decide whether one or both parents should take the leave depending on their work commitments.

### **Laws Governing Marriage and Divorce**

16.9 As a multi-religious society, Singapore has two separate laws that govern marriage and divorce: the Muslim Law (legislated under the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA)); and the Women's Charter (please read Part I on "Women's Charter in Singapore" for more details).

<sup>28</sup> The Baby Bonus scheme, introduced in April 2001, helps families lighten the financial costs of raising children. It comprises a cash gift and a co-savings component.

<sup>29</sup> The Baby Bonus Child Development Account is a co-savings account that parents can open for their children at designated banks. The government matches dollar-for-dollar the amount that parents deposit in the account, up to a cap.

Amendment to CPF Act: Division of Matrimonial Assets

- 16.10 Changes to the Central Provident Fund (CPF) scheme have made it easier for divorced couples to divide their matrimonial assets equitably. From October 2007, an ex-spouse no longer has to wait for her husband to turn 55 years before withdrawing his CPF monies. The immediate transfer of CPF monies to the ex-spouse's CPF account can now be done.

Amendment to Penal Code: Exceptions to Marital Immunity

- 16.11 Given the changed status of women, the evolving nature of the marital relationship and the trend in many countries towards abolition of marital immunity, the retention of marital immunity was reviewed. With the amendment of the Penal Code, which came into force on 1 February 2008, Singapore has adopted a calibrated approach by making it an offence for a husband to engage in non-consensual sexual intercourse, i.e. withdraw marital immunity, if:
- (a) the wife is living apart from her husband under an interim judgment of divorce/nullity not made final;
  - (b) the wife is living apart from her husband under a judgment of judicial separation or a written separation agreement;
  - (c) the wife is living apart from her husband and proceedings have commenced (but not terminated or concluded) for divorce, nullity or judicial separation;
  - (d) A court injunction to the effect of restraining the husband from having sexual intercourse with his wife is in force;
  - (e) A protection order or expedited order against the husband for the benefit of his wife is in force; or
  - (f) The wife is living apart from her husband, and proceedings have commenced (but not been terminated or concluded) for a protection order or expedited order for the benefit of the wife.
- 16.12 The previous law was lacking as a husband is given unconditional exemption from the offence of rape of his wife regardless of how unreasonably he may have conducted himself. However, the amendment recognised that a balance needs to be struck between the needs of women who require protection, and the general concerns about conjugal rights and the expression of intimacy in a marriage. Abolishing marital immunity entirely may change the whole complexion of marriage in our society. Hence, the Penal Code amendments afford the necessary protection for women whose marriages are, in practical terms, on the verge of a break-down or have broken down. These clearly signal that her consent to conjugal relations has been withdrawn.

- 16.13 This approach allows us to retain marital immunity in a marriage, while at the same time, make it an offence for a husband to force unwanted sexual intercourse on his wife under the abovementioned exceptions.
- 16.14 This new provision for women is available to all, whether they are in Muslim or non-Muslim marriages. In addition, the reference to matrimonial proceedings in the exceptions refers to both local and foreign matrimonial proceedings.

### **Muslim Law in Singapore**

- 16.15 The Muslim community in Singapore is committed to progressive Islamic practices as part of their religious identity in contemporary Singapore. In tandem with this mindset, the Muslim Law, or Syariah Law, is continuously developed as Singapore society changes.

#### Amendment to Minimum Age of Marriage

- 16.16 In 2008, amendments were made to the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) to raise the minimum marriage age from 16 to 18 years for Muslim females. This aligns the minimum marriage age for Muslims with that for non-Muslims. Like their non-Muslim counterparts, a Muslim below 18 years of age wishing to get married will have to apply for a Special Marriage Licence before he/she can marry.

#### Flexibility in Legal Administration

##### *Maintenance/Protection Orders*

- 16.17 With regards to maintenance during marriage for the wife and her children, a Muslim woman has the choice to either apply to the Syariah Court or to the Family Court. She may also apply to the Family Court for a Personal Protection Order, Domestic Exclusion Order or Expedited Order against her violent husband.

##### *Custody of Children/Disposition or Division of Property on Divorce*

- 16.18 The same provision to choose between approaching the Syariah Court or the Family Court has also been made available to Muslim women who need to settle divorce-related matters. If a woman chooses to settle issues at the Family Court, she may apply to the Syariah Court for leave. However, if both she and her partner wish to have matters heard by the Family Court, no leave is required.

##### *Enforcement of Syariah Court Orders*

- 16.19 The AMLA was also amended to make it easier for Muslim women to enforce Orders made by the Syariah Court. Syariah Court orders will no longer need to be registered in a District Court before they are enforceable. The removal of the registration process will save Muslim women time and money. Like non-Muslim women, they may commence enforcement proceedings at the Family Court without any further registration against their ex-husbands

who have defaulted on payments ordered by the Court. The Singapore Government will continue to review and amend the laws whenever necessary.

- 16.20 Individuals can lodge a Magistrate's complaint at the District Court for breaching Syariah Court orders. Breach of orders of the Syariah Court is an offence and the offender is liable, on conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months.

#### Appointment of Women to Important Positions

- 16.21 In August 2006, a fatwa (Muslim religious ruling) was issued by the Fatwa Committee allowing the appointment of women as members of the Syariah Appeal Board. On 1 January 2008, three Muslim women were appointed as members of the Appeal Board: Mdm Harinah Bte Abdul Latiff, Head of Department for Syariah, Madrasah Aljunied Al-Islamiah; Mdm Hamidah Bte Ibrahim, District Judge of the Subordinate Courts; and Mdm Faridah Eryani Bte Pairin, Senior Executive Legal Officer of the Housing and Development Board. They have been appointed for a two-year period from 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2009.
- 16.22 In addition, on 2 May 2007, Mdm Animah Binte Abdul Gani, was appointed as the Registrar of the Syariah Court.
- 16.23 The inclusion of women as members of the Appeal Board and the appointment of a woman Registrar of the Syariah Court allow for women's perspective in matrimonial and divorce cases. This marks the significant entry of women into the Islamic judiciary system in Singapore. The inclusion of women in the highest Syariah judiciary system also sets the tone for the inclusion of women in the lower courts.
- 16.24 A milestone has also been recently created in Muslim policy-making. For the first time, a Muslim woman has been appointed as a member of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore or MUIS (the highest policy making authority for Singapore). Mdm Zuraidah Bte Abdullah, former Commander of the Singapore Police Force Jurong Divisional Headquarters, is currently the CEO of Yayasan Mendaki<sup>30</sup>. She is also a member of the National Council Against Drugs Abuse. Her appointment is a very positive development as women's perspective will now be better reflected in policy-making for the Muslim community in Singapore.

#### Keeping Abreast of Changes: the Fatwa Committee

- 16.25 The practice of Muslim law varies among countries and MUIS monitors these variations and developments. The Fatwa Committee<sup>31</sup> of MUIS meets regularly to discuss points of Muslim law and to make recommendations on new measures that would both meet the challenges of these changes and uphold Islamic principles and legal philosophy.

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<sup>30</sup> Yayasan Mendaki is a Malay-Muslim Self-Help Group (SHG). In Singapore, there is one SHG for each ethnic group.

<sup>31</sup> The Fatwa Committee is an independent body of Muslim scholars, appointed by MUIS to deliberate on new issues affecting the administration of Syariah law.



## PART VI

### Article 24: Commitment of States Parties

*States Parties undertake to adopt all necessary measures at the national level aimed at achieving the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Convention.*

#### Women and Family Violence

- 24.1 The Singapore Government does not tolerate family violence. Through the “Many Helping Hands” approach, Singapore seeks to nurture a violence-free environment for families - an environment that is safe, stable and supportive.
- 24.2 Over the last ten years, Singapore has transformed the way it has managed family violence. Today, there is a comprehensive and holistic network of services which has enabled us to build a safe and nurturing environment for our families and children. In 2006 Singapore’s efforts in tackling family violence was documented in the publication “Protecting Families from Violence: The Singapore Experience”. It marks the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Singapore’s accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the establishment of the National Family Violence Networking System. The 2007 edition of the publication is available at [http://app.mcys.gov.sg/web/serv\\_reports\\_faml.asp](http://app.mcys.gov.sg/web/serv_reports_faml.asp).

#### Legislation on Marital Rape

- 24.3 In September 2007, the Penal Code was amended to criminalise forced sex on a spouse who had been issued with a Personal Protection Order against the offending spouse. The law provided additional protection for victims of spousal violence and came into force in February 2008.

#### Inter-agency platforms

- 24.4 A key platform for the management of family violence in Singapore is the Family Violence Dialogue Group, established in 2001. The Group is headed jointly by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) and the Singapore Police Force. The Dialogue Group comprises the Courts, the Prisons, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, the National Council of Social Service<sup>32</sup>, and social service agencies such as the Society Against Family Violence. The Dialogue Group has to facilitate work processes amongst the agencies, coordinate public education efforts and develop new ideas for collaboration on family violence.
- 24.5 In 2003, six Regional Family Violence Working Groups, led by non-government organisations, were set up to harness community energy to spearhead regional activities, examine new trends at the grassroots level, and seek new ways to help families affected by

<sup>32</sup> The National Council of Social Service is an umbrella body for social service agencies in Singapore.

violence. The Chairpersons of the Working Groups are appointed as members of the Dialogue Group to provide feedback to the Dialogue Group on gaps in services.

- 24.6 The Singapore Police Force continues to conduct regular dialogues and consultations with social workers based in Social Service Agencies. These dialogues, aimed at improving joint working processes and providing co-ordinated assistance to family violence victims, have resulted in joint public education efforts in the community and increased rapport between police officers and social workers. The results can be seen in the increase in the police referrals of family violence victims to Social Service Agencies (from 171 referrals in 2001 to 866 referrals in 2007). This resulted in timely interventions to provide support and care to victims, who are largely women and children.
- 24.7 Since 2001, on an annual basis, the MCYS and its partners organise the National Family Violence Networking Symposium to strengthen partnerships and to share best practices in policy, practice and research. In 2006, distinguished speakers from neighbouring countries were invited to share their laws, programmes and services for families living with violence. In May 2007, the Symposium had as its theme “Men and Family Violence: Mobilising Men; Mobilising Resources”. A distinguished keynote speaker from the United States as well as local experts were invited to share their programmes and services with the aim of understanding, engaging and mobilising men to end family violence. This was followed by a two-week publicity campaign in November where print, television, radio and poster publicity, roadshows and outreach talks at workplaces were organised to reach out to men.

#### Role of the Subordinate Courts

- 24.8 The Family and Juvenile Justice Centre of the Subordinate Courts of Singapore also play a significant role in the systemic approach in handling family violence cases in Singapore. The Family Court of Singapore was set up for family members to seek legal redress for all family-related disputes. As a unified family court dealing with all family proceedings in Singapore, its jurisdiction covers adoption proceedings, guardianship, divorce, personal protection orders, and enforcement of maintenance orders.

#### Specialised Services

- 24.9 In March 2005, the Elder Protection Team was formalised as an on-going committee for elder abuse cases. It plays a pivotal role in providing multi-disciplinary assessment and intervention for the benefit of families and the community.
- 24.10 The number of reported cases of elder abuse is small. About 100 alleged abuse cases are reported annually. Public education efforts were stepped up to educate the elderly on their rights and inform them of the avenues for help. An elderly person requiring help can access services through any contact points through the National Family Violence Networking System, including the Family Service Centres, the police, hospitals and the Family Court.

- 24.11 Service providers undergo regular training to help them detect and intervene in elder abuse cases. A booklet on elder abuse and neglect has been developed to guide service providers on the signs and symptoms of abuse and how to help the elderly.

### Public Education

- 24.12 MCYS works with the media and magazines to educate the public on family violence through articles and advertisements. The focus has largely been preventive in nature, emphasising the identification of signs of family violence and the need to seek help early. Public education materials like pamphlets and collaterals have also been distributed widely through polyclinics, social service agencies, police, libraries and schools. Information on help on interpersonal violence is available on the e-citizen website ([www.family.gov.sg/stopfamilyviolence](http://www.family.gov.sg/stopfamilyviolence)).
- 24.13 Efforts have been made to educate the young on healthy dating relationships beginning with upstream initiatives. MCYS collaborates with the Institutes of Higher Learning (polytechnics and universities) to jointly develop elective modules on mindsets and skills for healthy relationships, as well as train lecturers, students, counsellors and mentors with soft skills to handle students' relationship issues through regular Train-the-Trainers sessions. MCYS has been working with partners to raise awareness of family violence and avenues for help in schools through skits and video clips.
- 24.14 MCYS funds social service agencies for their public education projects, which include roadshows at shopping centres, polyclinics and primary schools.
- 24.15 To establish a baseline and understand the gaps in existing public messaging, MCYS commissioned a study to gather public perception on their awareness of family violence from December 2002 to January 2003. The Public Perception Study on Family Violence showed that more media publicity was needed to increase awareness of family violence. Therefore, since 2003, greater publicity through the mass media has been generated via advertisements and editorial write-ups in newspapers and magazines.
- 24.16 The follow-up study conducted in 2007 indicated positive shifts in public perceptions of family violence. The public became less tolerant towards spousal violence compared to 2003. More respondents felt strongly that physical violence was an unacceptable part of married life and would count slapping, pushing, and threatening to hurt a spouse as acts of abuse regardless of the frequency of occurrence. More respondents were also aware of what constitutes emotional violence, suggesting that there is heightened awareness of the protection offered under the law.

### Mandatory Counselling Programme

- 24.17 Under section 65(5) of the Women's Charter, when making a Personal Protection Order (PPO), the Court can order the perpetrator, victim and/or family members of a victim to attend counselling. Attendance is compulsory and non-compliance can constitute a contempt of Court.

- 24.18 The Mandatory Counselling Programme (MCP) supports victims and their children to ensure their safety and protection, while rehabilitating the perpetrator. Social service agencies are appointed and funded by MCYS to provide mandatory counselling. Recidivism studies on the effectiveness of the programme have shown positive results. In 2007, the Mandatory Counselling Programme Practice Guide was developed for counsellors. The Guide details the operational and philosophical aspects of mandatory counselling, as well as the professional standards expected of agencies.
- 24.19 In the same year, a training roadmap to guide MCP practitioners identify training needs on family violence was put in place. To raise the competency of counsellors in dealing with family violence cases, a Family Violence Mandatory Counselling Certification Programme, comprising both basic and intermediate training courses, was developed. All MCP practitioners are required to obtain the certification by 2009 before they are allowed to provide counselling. In April 2008, the first batch of 148 practitioners was presented with their certificates after undergoing 82 hours of training under the Certification Programme. The Certification Programme marks another milestone in the achievements of the MCP and our commitment to provide better service for our clients.

#### Statistics on Family Violence

- 24.20 The number of applications for PPOs has seen a gradual decline from 2003 – 2007. Please see the table below for the number of applications for PPOs per year:

	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
PPO Applications	2,783	2,522	2,691	2,667	2,554

Source: Subordinate Court, Singapore

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