



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

Distr.: General
17 December 2019

Original: English
English, French and Spanish only

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

Seventy-fifth session

10–28 February 2020

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

**Follow-up to the consideration of reports submitted by
States parties under article 18 of the Convention**

**Information received from Singapore on follow-up to the
concluding observations on its fifth periodic report***

[Date received: 16 November 2019]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Introduction

1. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women considered the fifth periodic report of Singapore (CEDAW/C/SGP/5) on 25 October 2017. In its concluding observations (CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/5, para. 51), the Committee requested Singapore to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 17 (b) and 21 (a) and (b).

2. Singapore remains fully committed to building an environment where there are equal opportunities for women and men to contribute to, and to exercise fundamental freedoms in the political, economic and social spheres. This is so that current and future cohorts of women can achieve their fullest potential and be assured that their rights are protected. We take a practical and outcomes-based approach to the promotion of human rights. We focus on delivering positive socio-economic outcomes through pragmatic public policies that best suit Singapore's national circumstances and aspirations. While some changes take time, Singapore remains committed to improving and enriching the lives of women in Singapore.

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 17 (b) of the concluding observations (CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/5)

3. Singapore remains committed to protecting women against discrimination and ensuring the achievement of substantive equality of women and men in the enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. Singapore's approach to gender equality is based on Singapore's constitution that states men and women are equal before the law. Singapore believes that every society should be given the time and space to advance human rights, including women's rights, in its own way, taking into account its unique and evolving social and cultural context. In Singapore's experience, women have made significant progress over the last few decades, empowered by an enabling environment and collective efforts to advance women's rights.

4. We invest substantially in education. In 2017, women made up 48 per cent and 50 per cent of the full-time student enrolment at local polytechnics and universities respectively. Women in Singapore have been able to exercise their choice to participate fully and equally in all spheres of life and at all levels. Singapore is ranked 12th out of 160 countries in the United Nations Gender Inequality Index 2017.

Participation in public and political life

Women in politics

5. Singapore actively supports women's participation in politics. The various political parties consciously and continuously seek and involve women in discussion on political issues. Women in Singapore enter politics based on their own merits.

6. Female representation in the Singapore Parliament is increasing. Women in parliament currently occupy 24 out of 100 seats (24 per cent). This percentage is in line with the Inter-Parliamentary Union's world average of 24.3 per cent. In 2019, Singapore has its first woman President and seven women political office holders, out of which 3 are full ministers. The President and one of the full ministers are also women from ethnic minorities. We are confident that we will see more women involved in politics in time to come.

Women in the Public Service and the Judiciary

7. Women are well-represented in the Singapore Public Service. Women made up 53.5 per cent of the Public Service, including civil service and statutory boards in 2018. 6 out of the 25 Permanent Secretaries (who report to ministers) and 11 out of the 40 Deputy Secretaries (equivalent to chief executive officers) are women as of October 2019. The Government is also confident that more women will take up leadership roles in the public sector.

8. In addition, women made up 27 per cent of Judges in the Supreme Court, 46 per cent of Judicial Officers in the State Courts, 47 per cent of Judicial Officers in the Supreme Court and 38 per cent of Judicial Officers in the Family Justice Courts, as at December 2018.

Encouraging more women in the economy

9. The female employment rate for those aged 25 to 64 has increased from 65 per cent in 2008 to 72 per cent in 2018. In terms of female full-time employment, we are ranked 7th among the 36 OECD countries.

10. Singapore ranked 1st in Asia in fostering growth for women entrepreneurs according to Dell's 2019 Women Entrepreneur Cities Index. Singapore also tied with Italy for having the highest proportion of companies with women as chief executive officers (15 per cent), according to Credit Suisse's Gender 3000 2019 report.¹

11. Women's representation on the boards of the top 100 primary-listed companies increased from 13.1 per cent in 2017 to 15.7 per cent in June 2019. The Government also believes that women contributes to the mission of statutory boards and non-profit organisations. As at June 2019, the representation of women board members is at 24.5 per cent for statutory boards and 27.4 per cent for the Top 100 Institutions of Public Character (IPCs).

12. To accelerate the percentage of women on boards, the Government formed the Council for Board Diversity (CBD) in January 2019, which comprises eminent leaders from the corporate, public and people sectors, to promote and achieve sustained increase in the number of women on boards of listed companies, statutory boards and non-profit organisations. The CBD engages stakeholders on the appointment of women onto boards, carries out activities to raise public awareness of the importance of board diversity through having women directors, works with partners to develop a pipeline of board-ready women and partners the Government in developing policies and programmes that impact women on boards.

Empowering women with choices

13. To encourage equal participation of women and men in the economy, Singapore will continue to eliminate barriers for women at the workplace, within the community and at home. The Government's approach is to empower women with choices and encourage men to play their part at home, so that women can pursue both family and career aspirations – without having to sacrifice one over the other.

Encouraging greater shared parental responsibilities

14. Women in Singapore often juggle multiple roles, both at work and at home. Culturally, women tend to bear the brunt of domestic and family responsibilities. For

¹ Credit Suisse Gender 3000 report analysed over 3000 companies stretching over 56 countries. Singapore is tied for 1st place with Italy (out of 25 countries) for highest proportion of women CEOs.

women to progress in the workplace and in society, a cultural shift and mind-set change need to take place. Therefore, the Government has taken steps to promote a more balanced share of parental responsibilities.

15. Singapore has progressively enhanced leave provisions over the years. Today, fathers have two weeks of paid paternity leave and can share up to four weeks of their wife's maternity leave. Including paid childcare leave and unpaid infant care leave provisions, fathers can enjoy a total of about 8 weeks of leave to care for their children in the first year of birth.

16. The Government also works closely with community partners such as Families for Life and Centre for Fathering to raise awareness of men's responsibilities and roles as fathers, husbands and individual members of the family. By encouraging men to step up and take a more active role at home, women need not forego their careers in order to meet their family responsibilities.

Facilitating women to return to work

17. Some women may have chosen to take a break from work to focus on their families, but would like to return to the workforce after some time. The Government has in place programmes to facilitate their return to work. For example, the Adapt and Grow initiative, which was introduced in 2016.

18. Under the Adapt & Grow initiative, Workforce Singapore and the National Trades Union Congress' Employment and Employability Institute (e2i) offers employment facilitation services such as career coaching, employability workshops, job fairs and job matching. This initiative also includes a suite of programmes to help jobseekers, which includes women, overcome job mismatches in terms of skills, wage and job expectations. For example, the Career Trial programme helps jobseekers, including back-to-work women, to try out new jobs and assess new careers.

19. There are also community-level efforts such as Mums@Work, an organisation that provides support for mothers who are re-joining the workforce. Mums@Work organises career fairs and programmes to better equip mothers with skills to return to the workforce and match them with suitable employers.

Promoting Family-Friendly Workplaces

20. The Government also provides support in the form of introducing measures to encourage more flexible work arrangements ("FWA") to enable more women to remain in the workforce, while managing their responsibilities at home.

21. Today, about 9 in 10 employees are working in companies that offer unplanned time-off and/or ad-hoc teleworking. To encourage more companies to adopt more sustainable FWA for their employees, the Government introduced the Work-Life Grant in 2013. It was enhanced in July 2018 to make it easier for employers to qualify and to raise the quantum that can be claimed per employee. In March 2019, the budget for Work-Life Grant increased from S\$30 million to S\$100 million to keep the momentum of flexi-work arrangements going.

22. The Government also introduced the Tripartite Standard on Flexible Work Arrangements ("the Tripartite Standard on FWAs") in October 2017. Tripartite Standards define verifiable and actionable practices that employers are committed to implement at their workplaces. The Tripartite Standard on FWAs sets out specifications for employers to provide FWAs and train their supervisors on managing FWA applications objectively.

23. Adoption of the Tripartite Standard on FWAs has been encouraging. As of end January 2019, about 1,300 employers with a total of 400,000 employees have adopted

the Tripartite Standard on FWAs. Key adopters of the Tripartite Standard on FWAs include those in the public sector.

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 21 (a) of the concluding observations

Monitoring key violence statistics

24. The Government reiterates that it does not tolerate any form of violence against women.

25. The Government confirms that data, which is disaggregated by age, nationality and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, is collected for cases involving rape and outrage of modesty. Other key statistics relating to violence against women include: the number of applications for Personal Protection Order (PPO)/Expedited Order (EO)/Domestic Exclusion Order (DEO); the number of reports of outrage of modesty; and the number of reports of rape. Such data is used for our assessment of crime trends and policy reviews.

Follow-up information relating to paragraph 21 (b) of the concluding observations

Capacity-building

26. The Government believes that mandatory and recurring capacity-building programmes are important to equip relevant officers with the skills necessary to apply relevant criminal law provisions strictly in cases of gender-based violence against women and to treat victims in a gender-sensitive manner.

27. All appointed Judges and Judicial Officers undergo a mandatory Induction Programme and continuing judicial education at the Singapore Judicial College (SJC) and at the courts to which they are appointed. Such training includes the development of knowledge and skills to equip them to deal sensitively and appropriately in cases involving violence against women, relational and family issues.

28. The SJC also organises periodic training workshops and lectures for Judges and Judicial Officers on these same areas. For example, in 2018, the SJC worked with senior forensic and clinical psychologists to deliver a workshop on “Understanding the Psychology of Sexual Assault Victims”. This workshop specifically addressed the misconceptions surrounding sexual offending and victim behaviours. Such capacity building programmes will continue to be held in the future.

29. Police officers are trained to respond to and support victims of crime in general, as part of their basic police training. During frontline police training, officers are sensitised to the vulnerabilities of sexual crime victims and are taught to provide victims of crimes, particularly women, with the support and care that they need. Police officers also attend briefings facilitated by members of the regional Family Violence Working Groups that equip officers with the theoretical knowledge and skills to professionally and effectively manage victims of crime. The key areas covered include (a) profiles and types of victims; (b) theory of victim trauma; and (c) needs of a victim of crime.

30. Police officers also attend conferences conducted by international experts to learn best practices on gender-sensitive interview techniques or supporting victims of human trafficking. In addition, to enhance local professional competency, overseas experts are engaged regularly for Train-the-Trainers programmes. For example, trainers from the Home Team School of Criminal Investigation and Police Training

Command attended specialist trainings in November 2018 by overseas experts to gain a better understanding of the legal and practical issues typically involved in cases of neglect. Participants also learnt about the rationale behind internationally recognised standards, practices and strategies used in assessing and evaluating cases of neglect for early intervention.

31. A specialised group of prosecutors undergo training, both locally and internationally, on dealing with cases involving violence against women and girls. In 2019, the Attorney-General's Chambers, which houses the central prosecuting agency of Singapore, held special training sessions to educate prosecutors on the short-term and long-term effects of sexual assault on victims, as well as to inform them of trauma-informed practices that can better support victims of sexual assault. Prosecutors are also trained to adopt appropriate and gender-sensitive techniques when interviewing victims of sexual crimes.

32. In addition, the Government recognises that women are disproportionately affected by serious crimes such as human trafficking. Our law enforcement officials and judicial officers are trained to handle trafficking cases. Prosecutors and law enforcement officers also attend conferences/workshops conducted by international experts in order to learn best practices in the handling of such cases. Such training platforms help officers to develop a better understanding of the legal and practical issues typically involved in human trafficking cases. Participants also learn about the rationale behind internationally recognised standards, practices and strategies used in the prosecution of trafficking cases. To promote exchanges and networking, Singapore also conducts trainings for our international partners.

33. Gender-sensitive capacity-building programmes are included in the pre-service and in-service training of medical professionals, to help them respond effectively to cases of gender-based violence against women. The curriculum looks at the theoretical approaches of violence and neglect, as well as the management of physical abuse, neglect and sexual abuse. The training is spread across the curriculum of different years and specialties, and medical professionals are generally equipped to identify red flags for patients who present with multiple or repeated occasions of injuries.

34. Medical Social Workers (MSWs) are trained to respond to gender-based violence as they often attend to the family violence cases presented at hospitals. The key topics and areas covered in MSW's training programme include (a) understanding where and how to enquire about violence; (b) best ways to respond to disclosure of violence; (c) offering information about violence against women; and (d) addressing providers' attitudes towards survivors and gender equality. Modules such as "Gender Issues in Social Work Practice" and "Family and Interpersonal Violence" are also included as part of the curriculum for them to attain MSW certification.

Public Education and Community Awareness

35. The Government recognises that gender-based violence occurs in all spaces and spheres of human interaction, whether public or private, including in the context of the family and the community. It is not enough to just equip frontline officers and officials with the skills to deal with cases of gender-based violence against women.

36. The Government's view is that effectively protecting women from violence requires a strong partnership between Government agencies and community partners, such that no one suffers in silence. We seek to foster a violence-free environment through multi-agency collaborations, with government agencies working closely with non-governmental agencies and the community.

37. As part of this collaborative effort, Singapore has strengthened our public education efforts aimed at raising awareness against family violence. Since 2016, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) has embarked on the “Break the Silence | Against Family Violence” campaign to raise awareness on family violence. The campaign aims to (a) encourage conversations on family violence and what it constitutes; (b) educate the public that family violence is not a private matter; and (c) equip bystanders with resources on how to safely step in to help those who may be affected by it.

38. The campaign includes mass and social media engagements, community engagements and outreach to schools. Since the launch, we have received more than 16.8 million online views across six ‘Break The Silence’ videos. The videos aim to get members of the public to step in, offer help and report family violence occurrences.

39. The Government has been working closely with community partners such as grassroots organisations and religious organisations to train their volunteers and befrienders on how to detect and provide help to victims experiencing family violence. The Government continues to partner community agencies to train women volunteers and befrienders in 2019. The ‘Break The Silence’ outreach efforts include roving community roadshows, family violence awareness training sessions, forum theatre sessions, Getais (‘community concerts’) and collaterals distribution. Total outreach from 2018 to-date is about 88,000 people.

40. The Forum theatre pilot programme was launched in schools, residential homes and tertiary institutions in 2018 to cultivate respectful relationships among the youth and encourage them to think about what they can do to prevent disrespect from escalating into violence. The Forum theatre pilot programme portrayed various scenarios of disrespect and how both the victim and bystanders could intervene and stop such behaviours from escalating.

41. Persatuan Pemuda Islam Singapura (PPIS) also developed and piloted a “Respectful Relationships” preschool curriculum in six of their child care centres in Singapore. The programme sought to: (a) embed principles of positive relationships early on; (b) heighten awareness of potentially unsafe situations; (c) teach children to set safe boundaries when interacting with people in a variety of situations; and (d) equip children (as young as 5 years old) with help-seeking knowledge, resources and behaviour for themselves and others. This ground up initiative by PPIS has reached out to about 80 children across their six childcare centres.

42. To better address and respond to domestic violence, which often involves gender-based violence, Singapore also has social service agencies specialising in such intervention. Family Violence Specialist Centres include PAVE, TRANS SAFE Centre and Care Corner Project StART. As a specialist service, these centres have staff who are skilled to manage domestic violence cases with a gender-sensitive approach. These centres also provide a one-stop range of services, including facilities for the application of Personal Protection Orders through video-conferencing, case management, counselling and link-ups with medical services and legal advice. The Government also lends support to community initiatives and projects, such as the “#YouCanSayNo” campaign and “In Her Stride” event, organised by Singapore Council of Women’s Organisations (SCWO) and their partners. Both initiatives raised awareness for gender-based violence against women such as domestic violence, workplace sexual harassment and date rape.

43. The Singapore Government remains committed to providing effective legal protection from domestic and sexual violence for women in Singapore. We will also continue to work closely with the private and people sectors to strengthen Singapore’s efforts in addressing gender-based violence against women.

Annex

1. The number of applications for protection orders filed by women decreased by 17 per cent from 2009 to 2018.

Table 1
Number of applications for Personal Protection Orders (PPOs)/Expedited Orders (EOs)/Domestic Exclusion Orders (DEOs) filed by women

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total¹	2 268	2 332	2 223	2 334	2 383	2 194	2 180	2 130	2 081	1 875

Table 2
Number of Female Rape Victims

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total	203	165	150	138	123	166	167	149	189	216

Table 3
Number of Female Victims whose Modesty was outraged

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total	1 253	1 437	1 400	1 417	1 349	1 365	1 279	1 249	1 556	1 750

2. Outrage of modesty (OM) cases increased by 11.9 per cent to 1,747 cases in 2018, from 1,561 cases in 2017. Public transport and entertainment night spots remain key hotspots. As a key component of the Police's strategy, the Police work closely with its community partners to prevent, detect and deter these crimes.²

¹ Includes PPO only; PPO and Expedited Order (EO); PPO and Domestic Exclusion Order (DEO); PPO, EO and DEO. Depending on the situation, one or multiple orders may need to be in effect at the same time. When applying for an EO or DEO, a PPO must be applied at the same time. In cases where there are further incidents of family violence before the first court mention (and with affirmation of complaint before a duty judge) or after the PPO was issued; the complainant may apply for a DEO. Where there are further incidents after an application for a PPO is filed, the complainant may apply for an EO where there is imminent danger, if an EO had not been issued on the earlier application.

² The Police have enhanced their presence at public transportation nodes through stepped-up patrols. The Police also work closely with the Land Transport Authority (LTA) and public transport operators to reach out to commuters by distributing anti-OM advisories. Public education videos with anti-OM messages are screened at train stations and bus interchanges. These advisories and videos educate the public on what they can do when they encounter such a crime, and remind them to stay vigilant.