



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

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

**Pre-session working group**

**Thirty-ninth session**

23 July-10 August 2007

**Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to the  
consideration of the third periodic report**

**Singapore\***

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\* The present report is being issued without formal editing.



## General

1. **The report states that input for its preparation was sought from relevant Government ministries and agencies as well as from women's groups. Please provide further information as to which ministries and other Government bodies were involved in the process; the role played by the Inter-Ministry Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Women's Desk; the outcome of consultations with non-governmental organizations; and whether the report was adopted by the Cabinet and presented to Parliament.**

The Inter-Ministry Committee (IMC) on CEDAW was formed in 1996 to ensure Singapore's implementation of the Convention.

The terms and reference of the IMC are:

- i) To review and formulate policy in relation to CEDAW and to coordinate and monitor the status of the Convention,
- ii) Monitor the views and issues raised by the relevant Ministries on the recommendations made by the United Nations Committee which have implications on States Parties, and
- iii) Prepare periodic reports on Singapore's position on the CEDAW and to process attendance at regional and international forums on the CEDAW.

The IMC on CEDAW comprises officials at all levels from the various Ministries. These are;

- Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports
- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Home Affairs
- Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts
- Ministry of Law
- Ministry of Manpower
- Ministry of National Development
- Prime Minister's Office (Public Service Division)

- Attorney General's Office
- Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (Islamic Religious Council, Singapore)
- Syariah Court
- People's Association

Members are responsible for implementing and coordinating initiatives within their own organisations' purview to better address the needs of women.

The IMC on CEDAW is led by the Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports. The IMC reports to the Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports, who keeps Cabinet informed of developments affecting women's well-being and advancement. Singapore's periodic reports are tabled to the Cabinet, the highest political decision-making body in Singapore.

The Women's Desk, which is Singapore's national women's machinery, acts as the Secretariat to the IMC on CEDAW.

For the preparation for Singapore's third periodic report, inputs were sought from IMC Members. Other agencies consulted included:

- Ministry of Trade and Industry
- Central Provident Fund Board
- Health Promotion Board
- Immigration and Checkpoints Authority
- Media Development Authority
- Singapore Sports School

In addition, inputs were sought from the non-governmental women's groups in Singapore on matters relating to the CEDAW.

The Women's Desk and Singapore Council of Women's Organisations, a Non-Governmental Organisation, had jointly organised a dialogue session on 20 October 2004, where various women's groups were consulted on the contents of the Third Report before submission to the United Nations.

The most recent dialogue session was held on 21 April 2007. The Women's Desk and SCWO collaborated again on a dialogue session to gather feedback on Singapore's progress to CEDAW. The session was also a useful platform for women's groups to seek clarifications from the Inter-Ministry Committee (IMC) on CEDAW on their policies and measures pertaining to women within their own organisations. These sessions generated much discussion on the progress of women in Singapore and the issues that women continue to face. More importantly, the feedback received were a valuable

takeaway for IMC members to understand the “on the ground” concerns and problems relating to women highlighted by the women’s groups. The comments were taken into consideration in Singapore’s report. More importantly, the comments are useful in reviewing and strengthening policies affecting women in Singapore.

As highlighted earlier, Singapore’s periodic reports are tabled to the Cabinet, the highest political decision-making body in Singapore, for adoption, before submission to the CEDAW Committee. While our laws do not require our CEDAW reports to be presented to the Parliament, these reports have nonetheless been published and questions relating to CEDAW have been raised by Members of the Parliament during the Parliamentary Debates. Two questions on Singapore’s progress under CEDAW have been raised by a Member of Parliament for the May 2007 session, and the Minister of State for Community Development, Youth & Sports provided Parliament with a progress report at that session. In addition, copies of CEDAW reports are given to Cabinet members and briefings are conducted for new parliamentarians on an ad hoc basis to ensure that they are kept aware of Singapore’s obligations under CEDAW. To ensure that members of the public are also kept informed, CEDAW reports and the Committee’s concluding comments are posted on the MCYS website.

**2. The Committee requested the wide dissemination in Singapore of the concluding comments on the consideration of the second periodic report.<sup>1</sup> The report indicates (para. 7.15) that the concluding comments were shared with women’s groups at an event in May 2003. Please provide information about what has been done to make governmental administrators and parliamentarians aware of the steps that have been taken to ensure the de jure and de facto equality of women and what remains to be done.**

Upon the delegation’s return to Singapore, a memorandum was submitted to the Cabinet on 17 September 2001 to inform them of Singapore’s participation at the 25<sup>th</sup> Session. The memorandum included the Committee’s specific concerns over Singapore’s reservations as well as general comments, observations and recommendations. It also detailed Singapore’s progress in eliminating gender discrimination.

Subsequently, the Cabinet has also been kept informed of Singapore’s progress in CEDAW. Copies of CEDAW reports are given to Cabinet members and briefings are conducted for new parliamentarians on an ad hoc basis to ensure that they are kept aware of Singapore’s obligations under CEDAW.

The delegation also briefed the IMC about the discussion with the CEDAW Committee and highlighted the Committee’s concluding comments to the IMC for the members of the IMC to take note of, disseminate and take the necessary actions within their respective ministries. A media briefing and TV interview were organised to inform the public and women’s groups of the Committee’s concluding comments and concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/56/38)*, part two, chap. IV, sect. B, para. 96.

To ensure that members of the public are also kept informed, CEDAW reports and the Committee's concluding comments are posted on the MCYS website. The Women's Desk and IMC will continue to explore additional ways to disseminate the reports and concluding comments.

**3. In its previous concluding comments, the Committee considered that the State party's reservations impeded full implementation of the Convention.<sup>2</sup> Does the Government of Singapore intend to remove its reservations, as recommended by the Committee within a specific time frame?<sup>3</sup> Has the Government of Singapore continued the process of law reform with a view to withdrawing reservations to articles 2 and 16 of the Convention and, if so, has the process included consultations with members of different ethnic and religious groups, as well as women's groups and organizations?**

The Singapore Government has considered very carefully the possibility of withdrawing these reservations in the context of our existing laws, values and practices, but found it necessary and important to retain them in order to:

- (a) Protect the rights of minorities in the practice of their personal and religious law. This is necessary to maintain the delicate balance in Singapore's multi-cultural society.
- (b) Safeguard the welfare of women and their unborn children from certain hazardous occupations. This is also necessary in light of Singapore's small population and low total fertility rate. For that reason, women are, for example, excluded from certain hazardous occupations in the military to avoid deploying women in combat roles in time of hostility.
- (c) Maintain Singapore's rights to its domestic policies, which is expressly permitted by Article 29 (2).

With regard to our reservation on Article 2 and 16, consultations with MUIS, the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, Syariah Court and the Registry of Muslim Marriages were conducted. Consultations were also held with women's groups and Muslim women's groups to seek their views on Singapore's reservations as well as the interests and concerns of Muslim women in Singapore generally.

However, after careful consideration and review, Singapore remains of the view that it is still necessary and important to retain these reservations. Singapore assures CEDAW that we will continue to monitor and review these reservations periodically to meet the needs of the changing population.

An example of Singapore's efforts to continuously review our policies is the passing of a fatwa (Muslim religious ruling) in August 2006 to allow the inclusion of women as members of the Syariah Appeal Board Panel. Members of the Appeal Board Panel are appointed by the President of Singapore. On any appeal, an Appeal Board may confirm, reverse or vary the decision of the Syariah Court, exercise any such powers as the Court could have exercised, make such order as the Court ought to have made or order a retrial, or award costs if it thinks fit.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., para. 72.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., paras. 74-76.

The inclusion of women as members of the Appeal Board Panel is to seek women's perspectives in matrimonial and divorce cases. This is a significant progress in Singapore's Islamic legal system as it is the first setting in which women can be a part of the Islamic judiciary system. The inclusion of women in the highest Syariah judiciary system also sets the tone for the lower courts to include women in the legal proceedings.

With regards to our Reservation on Article 9 (2), the Singapore Constitution was amended in April 2004 to allow Singaporean women to transmit citizenship by descent to their foreign born children. Singapore is currently reviewing this Reservation.

### **Constitutional, legislative and institutional framework**

**4. Since the initial report, no information has been given that would indicate that the Convention has been incorporated into the legal system or that any definition of discrimination against women modeled on article 1 of the Convention has been included in the Constitution or in other legislation. Please provide information as to whether the Government of Singapore intends to incorporate the Convention into its domestic legal system and/or include a definition of discrimination against women in relevant legislation and, if so, what steps has it taken in this regard.**

Although there is no specific provision on gender equality under our laws, Article 12(1) of our Constitution guarantees equality to all Singaporeans, and this would include both men and women.

The rights of Women are protected in Singapore not only under the Constitution but also in other legislation like the Women's Charter, the Employment Act and the Penal Code.

The Singapore Government assures the Committee that Singapore is open to constructive suggestions that forward the objective of and Singapore's obligations under CEDAW. But before any amendment to the law is proposed, careful consideration of the need and implications of such amendment would have to be made.

**5. What action has been taken to improve the State party's complaints procedure with respect to violations of the constitutionally guaranteed right to equality so that acts of discrimination can be challenged by women, as recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding comments<sup>4</sup> and what has been the impact of any measures that might have been taken in this regard?**

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.

In Singapore, provisions have been made to allow any woman so aggrieved 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 respective authorities, which will look into the

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., para. 89.

complaint, and take action to enforce the laws as appropriate. An affected victim, or someone on her behalf, can also lodge a police report.

Besides the legal channel, there are many 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 impact them. All public complaints are recorded and the agencies' responses are monitored.

Citizens can write to the media, express their views and debate policy issues in the "Forum Page" of the local newspapers. Members of Parliament hold regular dialogue sessions with women's groups on issues concerning women. And women's issues and concerns are openly debated in Parliament. In the public service, female officers can make complaints about unfair treatment to the independent Public Service Commission and its various appeal mechanisms.

Formerly known as the Feedback Unit, REACH, which is short for Reaching Everyone for Active Citizenry @ Home, organises regular dialogue sessions, tea sessions and policy forums to actively solicit the public's views on policies and legislative changes. One recent 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 for everyone. The e-consultation paper was posted online for a period of one month, starting 9 November 2006.

Based on the consultation and dialogue sessions, there had been no indication that there were insufficient complaint procedures available for women to challenge acts of discrimination. Nevertheless, Singapore will continue to review this.

**6. The report notes that the Women's Desk of the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports is to serve as Singapore's National Women's Machinery. Please provide further information on its mandate, financial and human resources, and whether it has sufficient capacity and authority to influence policies in various areas of Government from a gender perspective?**

Recognising the need for a national women's machinery to better address women's issues, the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports set up the Women's Desk in May 2002, with the full support of the Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports. The Women's Desk acts as the national focal point on gender policy matters and for international cooperation pertaining to women.

The Women's Desk works closely with the following apex organizations to address women's issues:

- (a) the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations, the umbrella body for women's organisations,
- (b) the Women Integration Network Council under the People's Association, which runs programmes for women at the community level and provides leadership opportunities at the grassroots level, and

- (c) the National Trades Union Congress Women's Committee, which represents the labour movement and champions women's interests pertaining to labour issues.

Together, these three agencies represent more than 90 per cent of women's groups in Singapore.

However, as issues affecting women are cross-cutting, an Inter-Ministry Committee on CEDAW was formed comprising officials at all levels from the various Ministries. IMC members are responsible for implementing and coordinating initiatives within their own organisations to better address the needs of women and to ensure Singapore's implementation of the Convention. The Women's Desk, as the national women's machinery, drives and recommends government policies relating to women through the IMC. The Women's Desk also monitors and collates gender disaggregated data from Ministries and other agencies. The statistics have been posted on the MCYS website to disseminate gender-relevant information for research and general information. To this effect, personnel, time and financial resources allocated to address women's issues as well as on research and policy review are not confined to MCYS but across other Ministries and agencies as well.

The Singapore Government supports and facilitates the strengthening of institutional capabilities of the various agencies to enhance the status of women. We believe that gender training is necessary to build capacity in gender analysis and planning as well as to increase gender awareness and sensitivity. Besides strengthening inter-Ministry cooperation through regular exchanges, IMC members are also invited to conferences and seminars on gender mainstreaming and CEDAW both locally and overseas to enable them to share their experiences and learn from the best practices of other economies. The Women's Desk has conducted briefings on Singapore's commitments to CEDAW. Gender awareness training in human resource management was conducted to human resource practitioners to raise awareness of the gender components that could be incorporated into human resource management processes to enable women and men to contribute fully in the workplace.

**7. Considering the Committee's concern about the lack of a clear understanding by the Government of Singapore regarding gender mainstreaming,<sup>5</sup> please provide information on what steps the Government is taking to make sure that legislation, policies and programmes that various Ministries initiate, formulate and implement incorporate a gender perspective and guarantee substantive gender equality?**

Singapore takes a stakeholder approach with regard to policy analysis and formulation. This involves taking into account, where appropriate, the impact of policies on different stakeholder groups, including women and men. In submitting Cabinet memorandums, a ministry is required to consult appropriate ministries to ensure relevant views and concerns are reflected and taken into account in policy formulation.

As explained earlier, the Women's Desk works with the IMC members who are responsible for implementing and coordinating initiatives within their own organisations to address the needs of women and to ensure Singapore's implementation of the Convention.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., para. 83.

One example of our gender sensitive approach can be seen in the way Singapore embarked on measures to address the rapidly ageing population, which is a key social concern. Ageing with regard to women and men throws up different concerns. Older women for example have had shorter or no careers due to their educational level and employment opportunities, as well as family care-giving decisions when they were younger, resulting in different levels of financial resources. Thus the policy and programme formulation require a gender-sensitive approach. Examples can be seen in our measures to address the economic security of the elderly which are highlighted in our response to Question 24.

## Violence against women

**8. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, acknowledged the many initiatives taken to reduce domestic violence but considered that it was still a problem faced by many women (E/CN.4/2003/75/Add.1, para. 1180). The report describes that when making a Personal Protection Order, the Court can order the perpetrator, victim and/or family members of a victim to attend counseling or any other related programme such as a rehabilitation or recovery programme for perpetrators or victims of trauma which is compulsory. Please provide information on the number of such court orders for counseling, contents and duration of the counseling over the years, and evaluate the effects in reducing violent behaviour of the perpetrators on the one hand, and trauma of the victims on the other.**

From the years 2004 to 2006, an average of 473 Counselling Orders (involving 800 persons) were issued yearly for perpetrators and victims of family violence to undergo the Mandatory Counselling Programme. Depending on the needs (as assessed by the counsellors) of the perpetrators and victims, they may attend up to 18 sessions of individual and groupwork counselling. Some of the core topics covered under MCP include risk and needs assessment; formulating safety plans; dynamics and education on violence; challenging beliefs about violence; relapse prevention; communication/conflict resolution skills; and information on community resources.

A qualitative study conducted by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports on the effectiveness of MCP in 2005 revealed that a majority of victims and perpetrators experienced positive changes after MCP. 90 per cent of perpetrators and 60 per cent of victims reported no violent behaviour after completion of MCP. The majority of perpetrators also exhibited desirable behaviour and used the knowledge gained during MCP. Seven out of 10 victims said their lives had improved after MCP and that they had learnt safety plans that they could use for protecting themselves against violence. However, about half of the victims reported that they were still subjected to verbal abuse.

The recidivism rate for perpetrators who have undergone the MCP since 1997 has been encouraging. The recidivism rate for the cohort who underwent MCP from 1997 to 2003 was 6.5 per cent. The recidivism rate is defined as those who had breached the Personal Protection Orders within one year of completion of the MCP.

9. Please provide information that would allow the Committee to gain insight into the extent and prevalence of various forms of violence against women in Singapore, including rape, marital rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment. Please include the results of any population-based surveys on violence against women or through any other available statistical data or information.

Statistics on Personal Protection Orders and Domestic Exclusion Orders, 2003 – 2006

(Source: Subordinate Court, Singapore 2006)

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006
PPO/DEO Applications	2,783	2,522	2,692	2,667

The trend for the application of Personal Protection Orders and Domestic Exclusion Orders has been fairly stable in the last three years. In Singapore, spousal violence is the most widespread form of family violence. In 2006, 58.5 per cent of the applicants were wives of perpetrators while 11 per cent were made by husbands. Ex-spouses accounted for 7 per cent of the applications, while the remaining 23.5 per cent of the applicants were made up of other family members such as siblings or parents of perpetrators. (Source: Family Court of Singapore, 2007) More statistical data related to family violence can be found in the following websites:

(a) <http://app.subcourts.gov.sg/Data/Files/File/Research/RB38.pdf>

(b) [http://app.mcys.gov.sg/web/serv\\_reports\\_faml.asp](http://app.mcys.gov.sg/web/serv_reports_faml.asp)

**No. of Reported Cases for Rape, Outrage of Modesty & Serious Hurt involving female victims aged 16 years and above**

**For Year 2004 -2006**

OFFENCE	YEAR		
	2004	2005	2006
Rape	73	51	63
Outrage of Modesty	801	911	913
Serious Hurt	70	78	60

In keeping with Singapore's stance to enhance the protection of young persons against exploitation for commercial sex in Singapore and in other countries, the following legislative amendments would be introduced:

- (a) 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; and
- (b) to combat child sex tourism, Singapore would also make it an offence for:
- (i) a Singapore Citizen or Permanent Resident to purchase sexual activities from a minor under 18 overseas; and
  - (ii) a person to make or organise child sex tours or print, publish or distribute any information that is intended to promote commercial exploitation of minors under 18.

These measures will be introduced as part of the legislative changes that will be introduced when the review of the Penal Code is completed in 2007.

### **Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution**

10. **With respect to trafficking of women, the Committee urged the Government of Singapore in its previous concluding comments to enforce strictly its criminal law against traffickers and called upon the State party to include information on trafficking in its next periodic report.<sup>6</sup> Little information was included in the report in response to the Committee's request. Please provide information about the trafficking cases which were successfully prosecuted and the sentences imposed on the perpetrators as well as on the provision of adequate assistance and remedies to women victims.**

As reported in Singapore's Third Report, there were two substantiated cases of forced prostitution in 2004. The details are as follows:

- (a) In June 2004, three Sri Lankan victims were assaulted and forced into prostitution. One of the victims was brought into Singapore under the pretext of finding a job as a maid. The two culprits were convicted and imprisoned: one, who was a first offender, was sentenced to 8 months imprisonment and other, a second offender, was convicted for 12 months, plus \$800 fine in default of 1 week's imprisonment.
- (b) In April 2004, there was a case of forced prostitution. A Thai who was promised a job in Singapore, was forced into prostitution upon her arrival in Singapore. The culprit was charged under the Women's Charter and for immigration offences. He was sentenced to two years and two months imprisonment, plus four strokes of the cane.

Since 2005, there have been no substantiated cases of trafficking or forced prostitution.

Singapore's laws protect women against exploitation and abuse, as well as against trafficking and prostitution. Examples of our tough legislation against trafficking and exploitation of women include:-

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., para. 91.

- (i) 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, the procurement of women, the bringing into, receiving or harbouring of such procured women and the detention of women against their will;
- (ii) Section 141 of the Women's Charter specifically prohibits trafficking in women; and
- (iii) Section 142 of the Women's Charter prohibits trafficking in women under false pretence.

The above three offences are punishable with imprisonment of up to five years and/or fine of up to S\$10,000.

- (iv) Sections 372 and 373 of the Penal Code criminalize the selling and buying of minors for the purpose of prostitution; and
- (v) Section 373A criminalizes the importation of women by fraud with intent that such woman may be employed or used for prostitution.

The above two offences are punishable with imprisonment of up to 10 years and/or fine.

In relation to prostitution and the running of brothels, Section 146 of the Women's Charter prohibits living off the earnings of a prostitute and is punishable with imprisonment of up to five years and/or fine of up to S\$10,000.

Victims can approach any of the Family Service Centres, which are neighbourhood-based social service agencies, if they require temporary crisis accommodation or other types of assistance. Crisis shelters provide victims with temporary accommodation, protection, practical assistance, programs and emotional support. Professional social workers at the Family Service Centres are trained to respond to crisis and victims of violence. Victims can also 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 to meet the varying needs of victims.

**11. The Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (E/CN.4/2005/78/Add.3, para. 117) and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (E/CN.4/2005/72/Add.1, para. 192) refer to cases of trafficking of pregnant women so that their babies can be sold after they are born and provide some details about how the network operates. Both rapporteurs report that for one trip to Singapore with babies for sale, the trafficking network reportedly receives around US\$ 3,000-3,500. Has the Government of Singapore prosecuted any such cases and, if so, please provide information about them, as well as about other strategies to prevent this type of trafficking.**

There were no substantiated cases of trafficking since 2005. Singapore has no knowledge of this incident mentioned by the Rapporteurs. Singapore requests the Committee for more information

to enable us to look into this matter. We would not hesitate to take strong action against any trafficking networks found operating on our shores.

The Singapore Government has a multi-agency system to ensure that the adoption process in Singapore is lawful and we protect the interests of the adoptive children within the scope of our laws. This system involves agencies such as the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, the Family Court, the Immigration and Checkpoint Authority, and accredited Non-Governmental Agencies. MCYS, which oversees the adoption process, requires all adoptive parents to sign a statutory declaration that the child has not been obtained through child trafficking or other illegal means. Home Study Reports are also required for all overseas adoptions. The report examines whether the prospective adopters are able to provide the basic needs required for the physical, emotional and social development of the child. If there are reports of child trafficking or other illegal activities, the relevant authorities will investigate the case.

**12. The report states (para. 6.3) that substantiated cases of forced prostitution are very rare (two out of 26 cases between 2002 and 2004). Please provide an explanation for the low success rate in prosecuting such cases and provide information as to whether the trend has continued in 2005 and 2006.**

Singapore wishes to clarify that the “substantiated cases of forced prostitution are rare” is not a case of ‘low success rate in prosecution’. Rather, police investigations revealed that an offence of Forced Prostitution or False Pretence,<sup>7</sup> under Section 140(1)(c) and Section 142 of Women’s Charter respectively, were not made out in most of the few cases reported. For example, investigations revealed that in some instances, complaints were made on behalf of other persons without providing contact details of the alleged victims or were anonymous complaints. As a result, Police was unable to follow up on the cases. Others were false complaints for which when raids were conducted, there was no victim forced into prostitution. We take a serious view of reports of such cases and all reported cases are followed up on. For example, for the 2 cases of forced prostitution in 2004, the perpetrators were subsequently charged in court and sentenced to imprisonment terms ranging from 8 months to 2 years 2 months. For reported cases where there is prima facie evidence that an offence has taken place, Police would still investigate even if the complainant is not contactable or decided that she does not want to pursue the case anymore.

<sup>7</sup> The importation of a woman or a girl by false pretences is defined in Section 142 of the Women's Charter as “any person who by or under false pretence, false representation or fraudulent or deceitful means made or used either within or without Singapore brings into, or takes out of, or assists in bringing into, or assists in taking out of, Singapore any woman or girl -  
 (a) with intent that she shall be employed or used for the purpose of prostitution either within or without Singapore;  
 (b) knowing or having reason to believe that she will be so employed or used; or  
 (c) whether or not for the purpose of present or future prostitution,  
 shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years and shall also be liable to a fine not exceeding \$10,000.”

The statistics of cases reported from 2002 to 2006 are tabulated as follows:

<b>Year</b>	<b>No of cases reported</b>	<b>Substantiated cases of Forced Prostitution Sec 140(1)(c) , Cap 353</b>	<b>Substantiated cases of False Pretence Sec 142, Cap 353</b>
2002	11	0	1
2003	7	0	1
2004	15	2 <sup>8</sup>	1 <sup>9</sup>
2005	35	0	0
2006	33	0	0

The larger number of cases reported over the last two years can be attributed to the higher awareness of our stance in taking harsh enforcement action against forced prostitution. There were also sex workers, who, following a dispute with the vice operators, lodged reports of alleged trafficking to 'get even' with them. These cases were subsequently found to be unsubstantiated, that is, the sex workers were not forced into prostitution.

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 and competent in handling such cases. They are trained in specialised interview techniques and translators are present during interviews with foreign sex workers to facilitate the interview process. Interviews and screenings conducted on the foreign sex workers allow officers to identify information on potential sex trafficking activities or syndicates involved.

Officers in the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) overseeing border security are trained in profiling techniques designed to equip them with the skills to conduct profiling of persons, goods and conveyances. Hence, persons of interest, such as potential sex workers and possible victims of trafficking, will be referred for secondary examination by trained and experienced officers. To date, ICA officers at the land, air and sea checkpoints have not detected any cases of female travellers being trafficked into Singapore for vice purposes.

<sup>8</sup> These two cases of forced prostitution occurred in April and June 2004. The first involved a Thai victim, while the second involved three Sri Lankan victims.

<sup>9</sup> This refers to the same case in June 2004, where the offenders were charged with both forced prostitution and false pretence.

## Participation in political and public life

13. In its previous concluding comments,<sup>10</sup> the Committee recommended that the Government enhance its efforts to increase women's representation in politics and decision-making through a gender-sensitive application of the meritocracy principle and by taking measures to guarantee the equal opportunity of women to participate in these areas. Despite the appointment of three women political office-holders by the Prime Minister in August 2004 and some gains in the numbers of women in Parliament, women continue to be under-represented in political life and there have been declining numbers of women in senior positions in the diplomatic service. Please indicate whether there has been any discussion on the use of temporary special measures to allow for preferential treatment of women, including through quotas, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations Nos. 23 and 25.

Singapore has seen more female candidates contesting in the General Elections (GE) in 2006, as compared to 2001. In 2001, the number of female candidates fielded by the People's Action Party and the opposition parties stood at 10 and one respectively. These figures rose to 17 and five respectively in 2006.

Similarly, female representation in Parliament has been increasing since the last few elections. In 2004, when the Third Report was submitted, 12 per cent or 10 out of the 84 elected Members of Parliament were women and 3 out of the 9 Nominated Members of Parliament were women. Following the May 2006 General Elections, 17 of the 85 MPs, or 20 per cent of them, are women. This is an increase of eight percentage points. And of the 17, 4 hold political office. On top of that, 5 out of 9 NMPs are women.

The ruling PAP has a women's wing to talent spot and develop promising women candidates. The PAP invites potential candidates from all walks of life, to join MPs in their constituency work, for example, regular meet-the-people sessions, to better understand grass-roots concerns and appreciate how they can make a difference to the lives of Singaporeans. The PAP has a mentorship scheme to guide new candidates. The PAP consciously and continually seeks out women who could be potential MPs.

At the Workers' Party, a leading opposition party in Singapore, five out of 13 of their Executive Council members are female. The Chairperson of WP became the first female Non-Constituency Member of Parliament after the General Elections in 2006.

However, despite these measures by the political parties, they have not yet been able to persuade more women to come forward and serve in politics. Part of the reason for this is that while women are now more highly educated and are increasingly holding their own in the economic sphere, many still chose not to enter public life.

Similar to vocations in other sectors, gender is not a determinant in the assignation of jobs for officers in the diplomatic service. The number of female officers in all three categories, namely senior management, middle management and officers, has increased in recent years. The number of female

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., para. 88.

officers in senior management has increased from 8 (as at July 2004) to 9 (as at July 2006). More women have also risen through the ranks and occupied middle management positions, from 19 as at July 2004 to 25 as at July 2006. The number of female officers in the same time period has also grown from 88 to 104.

Further work needs to be done to analyse the reasons for the low level of political representation by women and discuss the possible implications of this trend for society. At the moment the introduction of quotas in Parliament is not a favoured option to boost female representation, as Singapore operates a system based on meritocracy.

With more higher educated and professional women, we are optimistic that we will see more women entering politics in the coming years. We will continue to review our measures and programmes and learn from other countries on how to encourage more women participation in politics.

### **Education and stereotypes**

**14. The report states that conscious attempts are made to ensure that all textbooks and other educational materials approved by Ministry of Education do not stereotype the position of women in a derogatory manner. It also states that “sexual stereotyping which can be hurtful and/or demeaning must be avoided.” Please describe any specific efforts that have been made to project a positive image of women in textbooks, other educational materials and in the media, and the impact of such measures.**

Conscious efforts have been made to ensure that a balanced image of both men and women is portrayed in all textbooks and other educational materials produced and/ or approved by the Ministry of Education. For example, school girls are illustrated playing soccer, and female Members of Parliament are shown debating on Bills in Parliament together with their male counterparts. Women are also presented as holding managerial and professional positions.

There are clear media guidelines against gender stereotyping and sexual discrimination. For example, for broadcast media, there are guidelines which state that "programmes should not make careless references to any class or groups of persons as being inherently inferior. The guidelines provide that the programmes should not encourage or in any way discriminate against any section of the community on account of gender, age, disability or occupational status" and "broadcasters must exercise sensitivity and avoid humour which offends good taste and decency, (where) examples include jokes based on race, gender, disability as such humour... can easily cause hurt or humiliation".

In addition to content guidelines that safeguard the interests of women, Singapore also supports programmes that cater to women. Recent examples include Penmani (Lady) (2007), an information series which features women's views on parenthood, health, medical matters, as well as interviews with women in various industry sectors. Dewi (Goddess), featured from 5 April 2006 to 7 June 2006, was a 10-episode info-ed series featuring women's lifestyle and highlighting dynamic ladies in South East Asia, such as Malaysia's Camelia, Indonesia's Ibu Martha Tillar and Singapore's Dr Fatimah Lateef.

**15. What has been the impact of the lifting of the quota on the intake of female medical students at the National University of Singapore with effect from academic year 2003?**

In 2002, there were 83 female medical students at the National University of Singapore, forming 35.9 per cent of the total intake. With the lifting of the quota on the intake of female medical students at NUS, women now have an equal opportunity to read medicine at NUS based on their individual merit. There has been an increased intake of female medical students at NUS. In 2006, there were 116 female medical students, accounting for 46.4 per cent of the total intake.

**16. Please provide information about any study or discussions on the potential relationship between the legal status of the husband as head of household and gender role stereotypes in the family and in society.**

There is no provision in Singapore law which entrenches the husband as the head of household or any gender stereotype. Admittedly, there is still gender role stereotyping in some sectors of the society, which stemmed from culture and inherited past practices rather than any legal provision. Society is, however, changing. With higher education, there is less gender stereotyping.

In a study conducted in 2004 on attitudes towards marriage and divorce in Singapore, we found that egalitarian marriages, or marriages that practised shared-responsibility towards domestic duties, were more likely to remain intact than those where the wife takes on the greater domestic burden. This is reflective of the younger generation of couples in Singapore and is indicative of the changes in younger generation households.

The Singapore Government has continuously urged men and women, husbands and wives, to share equal responsibilities in the home, not just in terms of sustaining household duties and providing for day-to-day needs, but also in parenting.

The Singapore Government has also partnered NGOs such as the Centre for Fathering (Singapore), to increase awareness on the importance of fathers' involvement in the upbringing of the young. The Centre for Fathering, a non-profit organisation, has been working with individuals, corporations and community groups to champion the role of responsible fatherhood as well as equip fathers with parenting skills through fathering seminars.

While younger men are becoming more involved than their fathers were in the home, Singapore recognises that the situation can be improved as many women still feel the pressures of juggling home and work responsibilities. In August 2004, the Singapore Government introduced a slew of measures to support parenthood. To rope in more fathers to play an active role in parenting, working fathers are granted the same childcare leave benefits as working mothers. Any working parent, whether father or mother, with any child below seven years of age, are eligible for two days of employer-paid childcare leave per year.

The Singapore Government will continually review our policies and measures to eradicate gender role stereotypes.

## Employment and reconciliation of work and family life

17. **Please provide information about any follow-up action in response to the Committee's previous concluding comments pertaining to women domestic workers.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, has the Government of Singapore put in place any mechanisms to monitor the situation of women domestic workers, and what are its experiences in the implementation of such efforts?**

Singapore has not included domestic workers under the Employment Act because it is not practical to regulate specific aspects of domestic work, such as hours of work or work on a rest day and on public holidays given that domestic workers work in a home environment in which the arrangements within every household vary. This exclusion is gender neutral as it does not make a distinction between male and female domestic workers. However, this does not mean that domestic workers in Singapore do not receive legislative protection or are subjected to poorer employment conditions compared to their counterparts in other countries.

Under the Employment of Foreign Workers Act (EFWA), the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) imposes work permit conditions which bind all employers to look after the well-being of their foreign domestic workers (FDWs). Employers who breach these conditions can be fined up to S\$5,000 and a jail term of up to six months. The work permit conditions were further revised on 1 February 2005 to specifically require employers to pay salaries regularly, within seven days of the calendar month. From 2004 to 2006, MOM successfully prosecuted 11 errant employers for failing to pay wages, of which four were eventually jailed. Singapore changed its Penal Code in 1998 to increase by one-and-a-half times the penalties for acts of abuse against FDW by their employers or household members. The number of substantiated abuse cases handled by the Police has accordingly fallen from 157 cases in 1997 to 23 cases in the first three quarters of 2006 in spite of a growing FDW population. From 2001 to 2006, 27 employers, spouses or household members have been jailed for FDW abuses. Employers who are convicted of abuse are permanently barred from employing another FDW. Employers who do not take the necessary measures to ensure the safety of the FDW can be charged in court for criminal negligence. In a landmark case in February 2006, one employer was jailed for endangering the life of her FDW. Further, all foreign workers in Singapore are governed and protected under our laws, without prejudice.

Additionally, Singapore adopts a multi-faceted approach to safeguard the well-being and protect the interests of FDWs. The measures and initiatives which MOM enforces are highlighted as follows:

### (a) Raising Entry Requirements

The minimum age of new FDWs was increased from 18 to 23 years with effect from January 2005. FDWs must have completed at least eight years of formal education. In addition, an entry test was introduced in April 2005 to validate the linguistic, numerical and practical abilities of the FDWs. Besides raising the overall quality and maturity of FDWs in Singapore, such FDWs are better able to understand and exercise their rights.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., paras. 77 and 78.

## (b) Education

Mandatory training courses were introduced to educate both the employer and FDW. From April 2004, all first time employers must attend a compulsory employers' orientation programme (EOP) aimed at educating employers on their obligations towards the FDW.

With effect from October 2004, employers who change FDWs five or more times within a year are required to attend the EOP. Employers who continue to change FDWs frequently will be interviewed by the Ministry, and may be barred from further changes.

MOM regularly distributes advisories to FDWs in their native languages to educate them on their rights and obligations. It provides useful telephone numbers which they could call in the event of an emergency. Since April 2004, MOM has required all first-time FDWs to attend a compulsory safety awareness course (SAC) conducted in their own language.

In October 2006, the Ministry launched a free biannual newsletter to all FDWs. A guidebook was also sent to all FDW employers in December 2006 to enable them to better understand their roles and responsibilities. Since October 2006, MOM interviews selected FDWs who are working for the first time in Singapore during their initial months of employment to check if they are facing any adjustment problems.

## (c) Regulating Employment Agencies (EA)

Employment Agencies (EA) provide recruitment and placement services. MOM regulates the agencies through legislation, licensing and accreditation (for FDW-placing EAs).

The EA legislative framework encompasses the Employment Act (EA), the Employment Agency Rules and the Employment Act Licence Conditions. Under the EA Act, errant EAs could be fined up to S\$5,000 and/or imprisoned for up to two years. Contraventions of the EA Act, Rules or Licence Conditions could 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 could be fined up to S\$1,000 and in the case of subsequent convictions, could be fined up to S\$2,000 and/or imprisonment for up to six months.

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 accreditation of FDW-placing EAs compulsory from June 2004.

Starting 1 February 2006, MOM has introduced a Demerit Point System (DPS) for employment agencies. Under the DPS, EAs which breach the EA Agency Rules or Licence Conditions will be notified and issued with three, six or 12 demerit points depending on the severity of the infringements. EAs will lose their licences if they accumulate 12 or more demerit points within a one-year licensing period. Over the three years period from January 2004 to January 2007, MOM revoked the licences of six EAs and did not renew the licences of 15 others.

**(d) Conciliation**

MOM assists employers and employees in resolving employment disputes amicably through conciliation. A Well-Being Department under MOM's Foreign Manpower Management Division and a special FDW hotline have been set up to help FDWs in need. More than 90 per cent of employment disputes are settled amicably through conciliation.

**(e) Partnerships**

MOM works closely with unions, NGOs, the media and foreign embassies to recognize the contributions of FDWs and promote their social welfare and learning. For instance, in collaboration with the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME) and a committee of volunteers from various organizations such as the National Safety Council, MOM catalysed the formation of a FDW Association for Skills Training (FAST) in March 2005. FAST provides development courses for FDWs to enhance their employability and to promote social integration and community building amongst FDWs.

**(f) Administrative Measures**

MOM requires employers to purchase a Personal Accident Insurance policy with a minimum assured sum of S\$10,000 for each FDW.

To ensure that employers repatriate their foreign workers at the end of their contracts and not leave them stranded in Singapore, MOM requires employers to furnish a security bond of S\$5,000 for every foreign worker.

**Change of Employment**

For FDWs who lodge complaints of abuse, salary non-payment and other offences, MOM will facilitate a temporary change of employers for FDWs for the duration of the investigations and criminal proceedings. Such change of employment can be effected without the consent of their employers. The FDW has the option to convert the temporary employment to permanent employment when the case is concluded.

**Mechanisms to Monitor the Situation of FDWs**

MOM has implemented several measures to ensure that FDWs are aware of the various avenues and the ease of reporting their grievances.

Through MOM's extensive education and outreach efforts which have been highlighted earlier, FDWs are informed of the avenues available, including (i) a toll-free FDW helpline manned by MOM officers; (ii) feedback forms in prepaid envelopes that are distributed to FDWs at the Safety Awareness Course (SAC); and (iii) random interviews conducted by MOM with FDWs working for the first time in Singapore during their initial months of employment. Some 900 workers have been

interviewed since the initiative was implemented in October 2006. MOM will also investigate complaints, including referrals by NGOs and Embassies.

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 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.

As a testament to Singapore's pro-active and comprehensive approach in safeguarding the well-being of FDWs, large numbers of FDWs continue to seek employment or extend their employment period in Singapore. In a survey conducted in April 2006, 90 per cent of the FDWs surveyed indicated that they are happy working in Singapore.

**18. What action is being taken to address the wage gap between women and men, which is said (para. 11.4) to have remained at a steady rate since the previous reporting period? Furthermore, what are the reasons for this lack of progress?**

The wage gap between women and men has narrowed. The median monthly income for full-time employed females was 86 per cent that of males in 2006, up from 83 per cent a decade ago. Also, the existing wage gap between women and men is not a result of discrimination against women. Instead, it is due to the tendency, especially in past years, for women to leave the workforce by choice to take up childcare and household roles within the family. This reduces their average years of service and working experience, which in turn is reflected in lower average salaries for females. This is substantiated in the wage differentials which varies by age and is much smaller for the younger cohorts of workers. In fact, based on Singapore's Occupational Wage Survey of June 2005, for the age group of 25 – 29, females in full-time positions earned more than males in three major occupational groups, namely managers (6.4 per cent more), professionals (2.5 per cent more), and sales & service workers (27 per cent more).

Notwithstanding the above, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) has been working closely with the social partners (i.e. unions and employers) in the Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices (TAFEP) to develop and promote a set of guidelines on fair employment practices. Under these guidelines, employers affirm their commitment to recruit, select, and reward employees on their merits regardless of gender, race, or other discriminatory considerations. As of 15 March 2007, more than 340 companies have signed the Employers' Pledge of Fair Employment Practices.

Separately, the Government is also actively involved in the promotion of family-friendly working arrangements (or Work-Life Harmony). This includes the creation of a Work-Life Works (WoW!) Fund with an initial S\$10 million in funding (with an additional S\$10 million top up in 2007) to help companies defray the cost of investing in family friendly working arrangements. The WoW! Fund covers items such as training in work-life strategy implementation, one-time infrastructure costs in implementing flexible work arrangements, the engagement of work-life consultants, or the employment of staff dedicated to driving work-life implementation. A Tripartite Committee on Work-Life Strategy engages employers, unions and the HR industry in actively promoting the adoption of flexible work arrangements by employers. Over time, these efforts will make it easier for women to remain or re-enter the workforce.

**19. Has the Government of Singapore analyzed the recommendations of the Economic Review Committee on the country's development strategy and the changes made to the Central Provident Fund system from a gender perspective and possible implications for the implementation of the Convention and, if so, what have been the findings and action taken in response?**

The Economic Review Committee was set up in December 2001 to review Singapore's development strategy, and to formulate strategies to revitalise the economy in the face of the economic downturn.

The ERC comprised representatives from the government, labour movement and the private sector, both male and female. To ensure that the views of all sectors of the population were sought, the ERC solicited feedback from female and male workers, employers, and representatives from labour unions and financial institutions. A website was also set up to provide information and updates as well as for the public to give its views and suggestions to the Committee.

While the ERC had not explicitly considered the changes from a gender perspective, in accepting the recommendations, the various Ministries and agencies had, in line with Singapore's stakeholder approach, considered carefully the impact of the recommendations on both men and women before the implementation process.

**20. Please provide information about the prosecution of employers who ill-treat or abuse their women foreign workers, including the sentences imposed as well as on the provision of assistance and support to the women victims.**

Complaints of physical and sexual abuse by Foreign Domestic Workers (FDWs) on their employers are referred to the Police for investigation. During the course of the investigations, these FDWs would be housed in shelters run by voluntary welfare organisations or their respective Embassies, where counselling is provided to the victims. These FDWs are also offered the opportunity to work if they wish. Upon conclusion of the investigations, they would be free to choose whether to continue working in Singapore. And if they decide to return home, the Ministry of Manpower would require the employer to bear the cost of their repatriation.

Foreign workers have full access to justice and may initiate legal proceedings against their employers or other parties in civil court for damages and other remedies (e.g. injunctions for personal safety). In addition, the government takes a firm position against employers who physically abuse their maids. As explained in the report, the maximum penalties for acts of abuse against Foreign Domestic Workers are one and a half times of such abuse against other victims. 27 employers or their household members were jailed for abusing their FDWs in the period of 2001 to 2006. The jail terms ranged from one week to 15 months. Employers who have been convicted of abuse are permanently barred from employing another FDW.

Crisis Shelters provide victims with temporary accommodation, protection, and emotional support. Social workers at Family Service Centres are trained to respond to crises and victims of violence. Victims can also 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 help to check with NGOs if a shelter is recommended. The victims' consent is sought before they are referred to these NGOs. The Police and

Family Service Centres are also 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 referrals are made to meet the varying needs of victims.

**21. Has the Government of Singapore considered allowing married male officers to take unpaid leave for children below the age of four – as it does for married women officers (para. 11.64) in enhancing efforts to promote gender equality and assist couples in reconciling work and family life?**

The Singapore Civil Service Instruction Manual provides for married women to be granted unpaid leave for children. Although no similar policy has been taken and provided for in the Instruction Manual for married male officers, there is no policy prohibiting a married male officer from being granted similar leave on a case by case basis if an application is made to the Public Service Division (PSD).

## Health

**22. Please provide statistical data about the incidence of HIV/AIDS, broken down by sex and ethnicity, and indicate what national programmes are in place to prevent and combat HIV/AIDS among women, including awareness-raising and preventive measures.**

In 2006, a total of 357 Singapore residents were reported with HIV infection. About 9 per cent of the cases were females and 91 per cent were males. The incidence per million by gender was 17.6 for females and 181.8 for males (see Table 1)

**Table 1: HIV/AIDS by gender in 2006**

Number of cases by gender		Total number	Incidence per million population by gender		Total incidence per million population
Male	Female		Male	Female	
325	32	357	181.8	17.6	98.9

Chinese Singaporeans made up the largest proportion of HIV infected Singaporeans. The distribution of HIV infection rates among the ethnic groups remained broadly constant from 2004 to 2006.

**Table 2: HIV/AIDS Infected Singaporeans by Gender (2004-2006)**

Gender	2004		2005		2006	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Male	290	93.2	287	90.5	325	91.0
Female	21	6.8	30	9.5	32	9.0
Total	311	100.0	317	100.0	357	100.0

**Table 3: HIV/AIDS Infected Singaporeans by Ethnic Group (2004-2006)**

Ethnic Group	2004		2005		2006	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Chinese	261	83.9	252	79.5	291	81.5
Malay	29	9.3	48	15.1	46	12.9
Indian	16	5.1	12	3.8	12	3.4
Others	5	1.6	5	1.6	8	2.2
Total	311	100.0	317	100.0	357	100.0

There are general HIV/AIDS programmes in place for the population. 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, counseling and management of the infected, their contacts and others who have been exposed to the infection.

Programmes for the general population (including women) include:

- (i) 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. This committee is called the AIDS Business Alliance and was set up in November 2005.

- (ii) HIV / AIDS awareness education, including public exhibitions, forums, talks and distribution of educational materials.
- (iii) HIV Testing is made a standard of care in Singapore to facilitate early diagnosis and prevent further transmission of the disease. 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 (just like any other clinical tests). Anonymous HIV testing is also available for those who believe that they are at risk of HIV infection but who prefer not to be identified to healthcare workers.
- (iv) Counselling of sex partners of persons with HIV is carried out. Screening is carried out for those who have been exposed to HIV infection.

Women-specific programmes include:

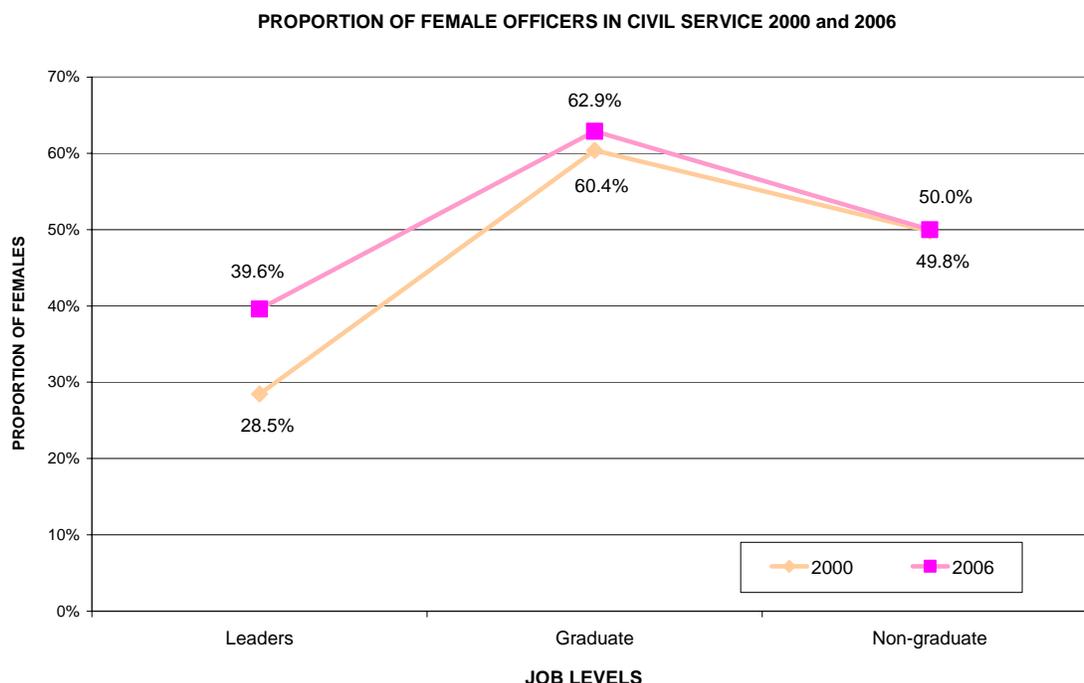
- (i) Targeted HIV / AIDS education for at-risk groups such as sex workers, masseuses and lounge / bar / night club hostesses. The focus of the messages is on the dangers of casual sex, the fact that HIV persons cannot be identified by appearances, promotion of family values, and avoidance of pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relationships, HIV and STI, and practice of safe sex using condoms.
- (ii) Other outreach activities such as Women Wellness Clinic for HIV testing and an outreach programme at pubs for single women were held.
- (iii) 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 per cent in 2006. Both mothers and babies detected with HIV infection received antiretroviral therapy.
- (iv) A behavioural intervention programme is planned for 2007 to empower women with the knowledge and skills to take greater control over their sexual health. Participants will be taught skills such as gender specific communication, decision-making and problem-solving.

### **Situation of particular groups of women**

**23. Please provide statistical information on the different groups of Singaporean women, including those of Malay and Indian descent, in the civil service, and on their participation in political life, including in Parliament and describe trends in their participation since the second periodic report.**

Within the public sector, as at January 2006, women constituted 56 per cent of the Civil Service and 54 per cent of them were in the Division 1 and Superscale categories. In the Superscale category, 40 per cent were female officers. As at February 2007, 4 of the 18 Permanent Secretaries were female and there were 8 female Deputy Secretaries out of a total of 27.

The proportion of female officers has increased across all job levels in the Civil Service between 2000 and 2006 [see trend chart below]. The most significant increase was at the leadership level<sup>12</sup>, which saw an increase of 11.1 percentage points. There have always been a high proportion of females within graduate jobs<sup>13</sup>, and this increased further by 2.5 percentage points between 2000 and 2006. Within non-graduate jobs<sup>14</sup>, the increase in proportion of females has resulted in an equal ratio of males to females in 2006.



The distribution of female officers by ethnic grouping between 2000 and 2006 is as follows:

**Proportion of Females by Division Status by Ethnic Group 2000 and 2006**

	Ethnicity	2000	2006	Change
<b>Superscale<sup>15</sup></b>	Chinese	26.2%	35.9%	↑
	Malay	0.4%	1.3%	↑
	Indian	1.6%	2.1%	↑
	Others	0.4%	0.3%	↓
	<b>Total</b>	<b>28.5%</b>	<b>39.6%</b>	<b>↑</b>

<sup>12</sup> Leadership level refers to officers in Superscale schemes.

<sup>13</sup> Graduate jobs refer to Div I jobs.

<sup>14</sup> Non-graduate jobs refer to non-Div I jobs.

<sup>15</sup> Superscale officers are in leadership roles.

<b>Div I<sup>16</sup></b>	Chinese	50.4%	50.9%	↑
	Malay	4.3%	5.8%	↑
	Indian	5.1%	5.7%	↑
	Others	0.6%	0.5%	↓
	Total	60.4%	62.9%	↑
<b>Div II<sup>17</sup></b>	Chinese	41.3%	35.3%	↓
	Malay	11.2%	14.0%	↑
	Indian	7.4%	7.6%	↑
	Others	0.6%	0.5%	↓
	Total	60.5%	57.5%	↓
<b>Div III</b>	Chinese	18.9%	18.5%	↓
	Malay	12.3%	14.9%	↑
	Indian	6.8%	7.7%	↑
	Others	0.2%	0.2%	-
	Total	38.3%	41.4%	↑
<b>Div IV</b>	Chinese	17.3%	17.3%	-
	Malay	11.5%	11.0%	↓
	Indian	15.3%	15.0%	↓
	Others	0.1%	0.2%	↑
	Total	44.2%	43.5%	↓

Female representation in Parliament has been increasing since the last few elections. In 2004, when the Third Report was submitted, 12 per cent or 10 out of the 84 elected Members of Parliament (MP) were women and 5 out of the 9 Nominated Members of Parliament (NMPs) were women. Following the May 2006 General Elections, 17 of the 85 MPs, or 20 per cent of them, are women. This is an increase of eight percentage points. And of the 17, 4 hold political office. Three are ministers of state and one is a district mayor. There is one female Non-Constituency Member of Parliament (NCMP) and 5 women NMPs out of a total of 9. Of these 17 women parliamentarians, one is of Indian descent while two are of Malay descent.

<sup>16</sup> Div I officers are in graduate-level jobs.

<sup>17</sup> Div II, III and IV officers are in non-graduate-level jobs.

Members of Parliament			
	June 1999	Sep 2004	May 2006
Female	4	10	17
Total	83	84	84
Proportion of Female MPs	4.8%	11.9%	20.2%

Nominated Members of Parliament			
	Jun 1999	Sep 2004	Jan 2007
Female	2	5	5
Total	9	9	9
Proportion of Female NMPs	22.2%	55.6%	55.6%

24. **The report indicates (para. 2.9) that the rapidly ageing population is a key social concern. Please describe the policies or programmes that have been designed to address the economic security of the elderly and assess their impact on older women.**

The issue of an ageing population has been on Singapore's national agenda since the 1980s. Over the past 20 years, various high level committees had been tasked to deliberate on the issues and to recommend appropriate policy directions. In March 2007, a Ministerial Committee on Ageing was set up to spearhead a whole-of-Government response to the opportunities and challenges presented by the ageing population. The three basic pillars that have been identified for successful ageing are – Participation, Health and Security. To achieve this, Singapore is pursuing four strategic thrusts – employability and financial security, holistic and affordable healthcare and eldercare, ageing-in-place<sup>18</sup> and active ageing.

The Singapore Government recognises that the financial security of women is a concern, given that many leave the workforce to care for their children, and because women, on average, live longer than men. The Government has been encouraging and facilitating women to remain or to return to the work force, particularly married women, which, as per 1998 data, was only at 49 per cent. The rate of

<sup>18</sup> *Ageing-in-place* refers to growing old in the home, community and environment that one is familiar with, with minimal change or disruption to one's lives and activities. Singapore's strategic thrust is to provide a barrier-free built environment and public transport system with essential services for the elderly to age-in-place in the community.

working married women in Singapore has since gone up from 49 per cent in 1998 to 53 per cent in 2005. More is being done to help women remain in the workforce by addressing their work-life balance concerns by ensuring adequate childcare and elderly support, and facilitating flexible/part time work for those who need it. There is also a need to facilitate their re-entry into the workforce for those who have left work.

Singapore seeks to address the economic security of the elderly through measures to enhance their lifelong employability and retirement adequacy. These measures are:

(i) Lifelong Employability

The Tripartite Committee on Employability of Older Workers, comprising key representatives from the Singapore Business Federation (SBF), the Singapore National Employers Federations (SNEF), the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and the government, was set up in March 2005. It had recommended various initiatives to enhance the employability of older workers. A key programme is the ADVANTAGE! Scheme, which promotes the adoption of age-friendly practices by companies. As of January 2007, more than 300 companies have come onboard ADVANTAGE! to implement age-friendly practices. These practices include job redesign to make them more suited for older workers, change of benefit and wage structures to facilitate the employment of more older workers, and the continuation of employment of older workers beyond the retirement age of 62. These companies have committed to hire more than 2,500 additional mature workers and re-employ more than 3,400 workers beyond the retirement age.

The efforts of the tripartite partners as well as the strong economic growth and employment creation in the past year, have increased the employment rate of older residents aged 55 to 64 rising. In 2006, the employment rate (ER) for residents aged 55 to 64 was 53.7 per cent, a significant 6.7 percentage-points higher than that in 2004. In absolute terms, 40,000 more older people were in employment. The 2006 ER was comparable to those of the OECD countries in 2005. In addition, the ER for residents aged 55 to 59 (61 per cent) met the 61 per cent target set by the Committee while the ER for those aged 60 to 64 (42 per cent) exceeded the target of 40 per cent. Although the Employment Rate (ER) for women in these categories (at 42.9 per cent and 25.2 per cent for females aged 55-59 and 60-64 respectively) still lag that of men (at 78.0 per cent and 59.5 per cent), it has improved significantly from ten years ago, when the ER for these groups of women were 28.2 per cent and 14.3 per cent respectively.

Singapore is looking at ways to keep older women in the workforce. In this regard, the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) set up a "Women Back to Work" Committee, comprising members from Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA), Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) and the self-help groups, to identify the key barriers that women face in returning to the workforce and to help them overcome these obstacles. Additionally, MOM is also promoting family-friendly employment practices among employers to encourage more women to go back to work.

(ii) Retirement Adequacy

The Central Provident Fund covers all Singaporean Citizens and Permanent Residents, who are employees or self-employed. The Central Provident Fund (CPF) is the main pillar of Singapore's social security system. It is a comprehensive social-security savings scheme, which is designed to take care of a member's retirement, home-ownership and healthcare needs. It also provides financial protection to members and their families through its insurance schemes. From time to time, when the fiscal budget permits, the Government also makes cash or CPF distributions to older Singaporeans to help improve their retirement adequacy.

All Singaporeans and Permanent Residents can open CPF accounts, including husbands or wives who are not working. Rather than legislate contribution, the Singapore Government encourages families to consider CPF adequacy of their family members. For this reason, the Government implemented the CPF Minimum Sum (MS) Topping-Up Scheme to help those who do not have enough CPF of their own, to set aside the MS in their Retirement Account (RA). Singapore citizens and Permanent Residents can top up their own, spouses', parents' or grandparents' CPF RA using their CPF savings or cash. The recipient of the top-up must be at least 55 years old. To further encourage voluntary top-ups to family members, changes will be made in the later part of 2007, to allow top-ups in more cases. Members will be allowed to make top-ups to siblings, as well as siblings and spouses who are below 55 years old. Members will also be allowed to top-up their grandparents' CPF accounts using their own CPF savings. In addition, the limit for top-ups will be raised. This scheme would also be extended by January 2008 to the allow spouses to top up each other's Special Account. Spouses who are not working (the majority of whom are women) are expected to benefit from this.

In addition, the government has recently introduced the Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) scheme which provides an income supplement to older low wage workers. The WIS scheme is being introduced in conjunction with changes to the CPF system for workers earning S\$1,500 a month or less. Under the new scheme, older low wage workers will see a reduction in their employer CPF contributions to help improve their employability, and a reduction in employee CPF contributions to increase their take-home pay. To complement these CPF changes, Government will implement a new Workfare Income Supplement Scheme (WIS) which will make up for the reductions in their CPF contributions. To this effect, not only will the employability of these older workers be enhanced, they will be encouraged to work because they will be rewarded with higher take home income.

**25. Please provide information on disabled girls and women and on measures taken to deal with their particular situation, as recommended in the Committee's general recommendation 18 on disabled women. This information should describe any proactive measures taken to ensure that the dropout rate of disabled girls from primary and secondary schools is reduced.**

Regardless of their disability, women and girls in Singapore are given the same opportunities as men and boys to exercise and enjoy their rights and develop themselves in the various aspects of life. The Singapore Government's commitment to gender equality remains unchanged - equal opportunities for men and women on the basis of meritocracy. Girls and women with disabilities are given equal access to programmes and services catering to persons with disabilities in areas such as education, employment, and health services.

The policies and provisions for special education are guided by the children's needs, rather than gender. Girls and boys with mild to moderate disabilities attend mainstream schools, while those with more severe disabilities attend Special Education Schools. Provisions for additional support, and efforts to encourage them to remain in school, are made based on the needs of the student. Both male and female pupils have equal access to the additional provisions.

Some examples of MOE's measures to support disabled students (both boys and girls) in our mainstream schools are:

- (i) The deployment of Special Needs Officers (SNOs) to support children with mild to moderate dyslexia and autism in mainstream schools. More SNOs will be recruited and trained to support children with other types of learning disabilities beyond mild to moderate dyslexia and autism, to include disabilities such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).
- (ii) The retrofitting of close to 60 mainstream schools to facilitate access for children with physical disabilities. There are currently two designated schools for the hearing impaired and four for the visually impaired, catering to students who need specialised support.

In recognition that female students with intellectual disabilities are vulnerable to abuse, schools that serve them have included sexuality education in their curriculum. Girls are taught body awareness, appropriate sexual behaviours and their right to say "No". The Social Service Training Institute (SSTI) has also engaged overseas experts to organise an introduction and intermediate course on "Managing Sexuality in the Intellectually Disabled" to equip local NGOs with the basic knowledge and skills to manage sexuality issues concerning those with intellectual disabilities under their care. These efforts empower NGOs to protect vulnerable girls and women with disabilities.

Typically, for victims of physical or sexual abuse, the Police do not allow another person to be present in the interview session. However, for a female victim of abuse with disabilities, the Police may allow another person whom the victim is familiar with to sit in through the interview process.

### **Marriage and family relations**

**26. Please provide clarification about the scope of the Women's Charter, in particular which of its provisions can be/ have been applied to Muslim women in the areas of division of matrimonial assets, enforcement of maintenance orders, legality of marriages and protection from domestic violence. Are Muslim women given a choice as to whether the Administration of Muslim Law Act or the Women's Charter should apply in a given situation or generally?**

Generally, as long as a marriage was contracted in accordance with Muslim law, or where the parties are Muslims, the Syariah Court would be the default Court which deals with matters of divorce. With regard to division of matrimonial property, a provision similar to Section 112 of the Women's Charter has been incorporated almost word for word into Section 52 of the Administration of Muslim Law Act. This was done in the 1999 amendment to the Administration of Muslim Law Act. With the amendment, when a matter on the division or disposition of matrimonial assets is being decided by the Syariah Court, it applies the same principles as the civil divorce court.

Regardless of whether or not a case has been commenced in the Syariah Court, Muslim women have recourse to apply for maintenance for herself and her children from their husbands or the fathers of their children at the Family Court. This is provided under Section 69 of the Women's Charter. They also have recourse to obtain Personal Protection Orders, Domestic Exclusion Orders and Expedited Orders against violent husbands under Sections 65 and 66 of the Women's Charter from the Family Court.

When there is an ongoing case in the Syariah Court, a Muslim woman may apply for leave under Section 35A of the Administration of Muslim Law Act to commence civil proceedings in the civil court on matters relating to disposition of matrimonial properties and custody of the children despite having commenced an action for divorce in the Syariah Court. The Syariah Court will hear the case and decide whether to grant leave for these matters to be heard in the civil court. The decision of the Syariah Court to grant or to refuse leave can be appealed against by the aggrieved party. The Syariah Court will also allow these issues to be heard in the civil court in instances where both parties agree to have them dealt with by the civil court.

### **Optional Protocol**

**27. Please indicate any progress made towards ratification of/ accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention. Please also describe progress towards acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention.**

The Singapore Government has considered this issue carefully and decided that we would not accede to the Optional Protocol at this point in time.

In Singapore, the government ministries, the Courts and ultimately Parliament are well able to investigate complaints of discrimination, provide redress, and ensure a legislative and policy framework that ensures that women enjoy full and equal rights. There is still work to be done, but we will do it within this legislative and policy framework.

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