



**Convention on the Rights  
of Persons with Disabilities**

Distr.: General  
29 April 2021

Original: English  
English, French and Spanish only

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**Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

**Twenty-fifth session**

16 August–10 September 2021

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of reports submitted by parties to  
the Convention under article 35**

**Replies of Singapore to the list of issues in relation  
to its initial report\***

[Date received: 29 September 2020]

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



## Preface

1. Singapore strives to build an inclusive society where persons with disabilities are recognised as, and empowered to be integral and contributing members of society. Singapore has charted Enabling Masterplans (EMPs) which are five-year roadmaps to support persons with disabilities. Three EMPs have been released since 2007. Singapore is currently implementing the Third EMP (EMP3) from 2017 to 2021.
2. Since submitting our Initial Report, we have made early intervention (EI) programmes more affordable and better tailored to the varied needs of children, and strengthened the detection of developmental needs. The education system continues to be more inclusive, with improvements in quality and scope. We have facilitated a smoother transition for students with disabilities from school to employment, and strengthened support for jobseekers with disabilities. Singapore has become more accessible, with public transport almost completely barrier-free. Strides have been made in informational accessibility, and in growing inclusive spaces and opportunities for meaningful interactions through all stages of life. We have also strengthened the eco-system of support for caregivers and made information available and accessible for them.
3. Singapore continues to do well in international benchmarking studies, with the World Bank ranking Singapore as having the highest Human Capital Index (0.88) in 2020; and the EIU ranking Singapore second highest in Asia on the Inclusive Internet Index. Singapore also ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination on 27 November 2017.
4. Most recently, the world has been affected by COVID-19, and Singapore has not been spared. We have taken a human-centred approach to ensure that everyone receives help, and have worked closely with community partners to engage different disability communities, and provide them with the support they need.<sup>1</sup>

## Reply to question 1 of the list of issues (CRPD/C/SGP/Q/1)

5. The EMPs define “persons with disability” as those with substantially reduced prospects of securing, retaining places and advancing in education and training, employment and recreation, due to physical, intellectual, and sensory impairments, as well as developmental needs including Autism Spectrum Disorder. This definition was endorsed in 2004 by the first EMP Steering Committee, comprising representatives of the disability, private and public sectors. Singapore’s disability schemes and services are guided by this definition.
6. We determine eligibility using both medical assessments and examinations of socio-functional limitations faced by persons with disability. The EMP Steering Committee in 2004 assessed that the medical diagnosis ensured rigour in determining what constituted a disability, while the socio-functional examination ensured that economic, environmental and cultural barriers were considered. Medical certification of need and its degree also ensure that help is channelled to those with greatest need.

### Supporting persons with mental health conditions

7. Persons with mental health conditions are not excluded from government assistance. Support for such persons is focused on their recovery and reintegration into society, as outlined in the National Mental Health Blueprint and the Community Mental Health Masterplan.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Please refer to paragraphs 9, 51, 80, 90, 137, 139 for more details.

<sup>2</sup> These were developed with feedback gathered from a series of focus group discussions and joint forums, which involved persons with mental health conditions and partners from health and social care sectors, such as social service agencies (SSAs), mental healthcare providers, public hospitals and community care providers. Please refer to paragraphs 15, 29-31, 35, 66, and 116 for more details on support for persons with mental health conditions.

## Terminology

8. Singapore has taken steps to review legislative terminology, as language plays an important role in promoting inclusion. In the domain of criminal law, the term “unsoundness of mind” has acquired a specific legal meaning developed by our courts over decades, which is easily understood and has not posed any difficulties in practice. Hence the Penal Code Review Committee (PCRC) in 2018 recommended to retain the term “unsoundness of mind” in the Penal Code. Disability organisations were also consulted on the PCRC’s recommendations, and they did not raise any issues concerning this term.

9. Singapore has reviewed the use of the phrase “infant, lunatic, idiot, or insane person” in the Income Tax Act, and intends to remove it by end-2020. Singapore has also ensured that new legislation, including the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) (Control Order) Regulations promulgated in April 2020 under the COVID (Temporary Measures) Act,<sup>3</sup> does not contain derogatory terminology.

10. We will continue to review our legislation and update the terminology to be disability-inclusive, in consultation with stakeholders.

## Persons affected by leprosy

11. The number of leprosy cases in Singapore is very low.<sup>4</sup> Existing legislation, including the Railways Act, that refer to leprosy ensure that persons with leprosy are managed in accordance with public health principles, and are not intended to discriminate against them. The Infectious Diseases Act (IDA) allows for the prevention, surveillance and response for infectious diseases, including leprosy. Persons diagnosed with leprosy are not required to be isolated under the IDA. They generally receive outpatient treatment at the National Skin Centre, based on the World Health Organisation’s guidelines.<sup>5</sup> The Prisons Act and Internal Security (Detailed Persons) Rules is similarly based on the IDA and allows persons with leprosy to be moved from their current place of detention to any hospital or place specified by the Director of Medical Services, to ensure that they are provided with medical treatment.

## Reply to question 2 of the list of issues

### Consultation

12. Singapore is committed to partnering its people, including persons with disabilities, in the spirit of the Singapore Together movement<sup>6</sup> to design and implement policies. We conduct public consultation exercises before introducing major policies. Government agencies use diverse consultative methods, including Citizens’ Juries, Citizens’ Workgroups, and cross-sectoral taskforces.<sup>7</sup> Citizens also provide feedback through the Government online feedback portal, REACH, which is accessible to persons with disabilities.

13. The EMPs have also been a collective effort amongst Government agencies, private sector and people sector, including persons with disabilities, disability organisations, and

<sup>3</sup> The regulations permit individuals to leave their respective places of residence to assist “individuals with disability” in activities of daily living where no alternative care arrangements are available.

<sup>4</sup> Reported cases ranged between 3 and 7 cases annually for the past 5 years (2014-2018).

<sup>5</sup> Only those severely ill will be hospitalised for close medical care.

<sup>6</sup> At the heart of the Singapore Together movement is the vision for Singaporeans to partner with the government, and with one another, to own, shape and act on a shared future together. Launched by Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat in June 2019, the movement aims to open up many more partnership opportunities for Singaporeans to participate in, and provide support for more citizen-led initiatives.

<sup>7</sup> For example, the MOH set up a Citizens’ Jury for the War on Diabetes to mobilise citizens to raise awareness about diabetes and generate community-based recommendations on how to better prevent and manage diabetes as a nation. The Ministry of Education (MOE) set up the interagency UPLIFT taskforce to strengthen support for students from disadvantaged families, and worked with the community and stakeholders to make recommendations over two years. The government also set up a Citizens’ Panel on Work-life Harmony, which brings citizens together using the Citizens’ Panel method, which provides participants with resources and information to examine an issue deeply, and work together to develop solutions for better work-life harmony.

Social Service Agencies (SSAs). The EMPs' recommendations were drafted through a ground-up approach with a series of engagement sessions. The progress of each EMP is periodically shared,<sup>8</sup> and persons with disabilities can provide feedback.

14. As part of the continuing efforts under EMP3, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) has established three thematic cross-sectoral workgroups,<sup>9</sup> which include representatives of disability organisations, public agencies and private sector partners. As part of the Workgroups, MSF is organising engagement sessions with stakeholders to co-ideate, co-design and potentially co-implement solutions. The first phase of engagements from September to December 2019 involved 210 stakeholders, including persons with different types of disabilities.<sup>10</sup> Arrangements were put in place to meet participants' accessibility needs.<sup>11</sup> We will continue this collaborative approach and have collected feedback from the sessions to develop a guide on inclusive public engagement for public agencies.<sup>12</sup>

### **Training professionals and staff**

15. SG Enable, an agency which enables persons with disabilities, runs Consumer Inclusiveness Workshops that trains frontline officers in the public service to serve persons with disabilities.<sup>13</sup> A version of this Workshop is also available for private sector employers. Since 2018, the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) conducts mental health awareness training for frontline officers, including those in the police force and at immigration checkpoints.<sup>14</sup>

### **Implementation of the Incheon Strategy**

16. Singapore's efforts to build an inclusive society and enable persons with disabilities are aligned with the Incheon Strategy. MSF publishes relevant statistics annually through the Social Statistics in Brief publication,<sup>15</sup> in line with Target 8.A and 8.B.<sup>16</sup> For example:

- Target 1.B:<sup>17</sup> an average of close to 580 persons with disabilities were placed in employment from 2015-2018;

<sup>8</sup> For example, the Minister for Social and Family Development held a meeting in November 2018 to provide an update to the cross-sectoral EMP3 Steering Committee, which issued the EMP3 recommendations. The Steering Committee comprises representatives of disability organisations, persons with disabilities, government agencies and private sector partners. The thematic cross-sectoral workgroups (see paragraph 10) are also updated on the progress made under the EMP3 during their regular meetings. For the EMP2, a midterm progress report was published.

<sup>9</sup> Details about the three Workgroups are at paragraph 28 under Question 6 (Inclusive Preschools Workgroup); paragraph 87 under Question 20 (Independent Living Workgroup); and paragraph 117 under Question 26 (Employment Workgroup).

<sup>10</sup> Other stakeholders included caregivers, and representatives of 37 disability organisations and relevant social enterprises.

<sup>11</sup> This includes providing point-to-point transport where necessary, circulation of questions ahead of time, using spacious and fully accessible venues, providing alternative modes of communication (verbal, tactile, visual), live scribing and sign language interpretation, as well as providing opportunities for participants to indicate if they have any additional accessibility needs ahead of the sessions.

<sup>12</sup> The guide will be disseminated to all public agencies and eventually non-Government organisations.

<sup>13</sup> This Workshop trains officers to be familiar with different types of disabilities and accessibility considerations, to understand the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, and to communicate with them effectively.

<sup>14</sup> The training equips frontline officers with knowledge to identify symptoms of various mental health conditions, to engage persons with mental health conditions and connect them to services and resources.

<sup>15</sup> The Social Statistics in Brief publication is available at <http://public.tableau.com/profile/ssib#!/vizhome/SSIB-MSFStrategicThrusts/CoverPage>.

<sup>16</sup> Target 8.A is to produce and disseminate reliable and internationally comparable disability statistics in formats that are accessible by persons with disabilities. Target 8.B is to establish reliable disability statistics by the midpoint of the Decade, 2017, as the source for tracking progress towards the achievement of the goals and targets in the Incheon Strategy.

<sup>17</sup> Increase work and employment for persons of working age with disabilities who can and want to work.

- Target 1.C:<sup>18</sup> an average of 680 persons with disabilities were trained from 2015-2018;
- Target 3.C:<sup>19</sup> please refer to Question 21;
- Target 3.D:<sup>20</sup> the number of persons with disabilities supported by the Assistive Technology Fund (ATF) more than doubled from 790 to 2,037 from 2015 to 2018;
- Target 5.A:<sup>21</sup> the number of children supported by the Early Intervention programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) increased from 2,600 to 3,200 from 2015 to 2018;
- Target 5.B:<sup>22</sup> in 2016, an estimated 0.1% of each cohort of students were not receiving formal education as they had moderate-to-severe Special Educational Needs (SEN).<sup>23</sup> In 2019, following the extension of the Compulsory Education Act (CEA) to students with moderate-to-severe Special Educational Needs, only about 0.05% of students from the 2012 birth cohort were granted exemption due to complex or severe SEN needs.

### Reply to question 3 of the list of issues

17. With respect to Article 25(e), Singapore supports the principle of non-discriminatory treatment towards persons with disabilities and intends to incorporate the principle in guidelines that private insurers have to comply with by March 2021. Singapore will be consulting stakeholders on the guidelines. When the guidelines are finalised, Singapore intends to withdraw the reservation to Article 25(e).

18. While Singapore is maintaining our reservation to Article 29(a)(iii),<sup>24</sup> we are reviewing how we can better support voters with disabilities in elections.<sup>25</sup>

19. Singapore will maintain our reservation to Article 12(4).<sup>26</sup> Our current legislative framework is consistent with the spirit of the Convention and our domestic context. The appointment of donees, under Lasting Powers of Attorney (LPAs) to make decisions about the donor's welfare and affairs, relies on the social bond between the donor and his chosen donee(s). We have considered that regular reviews of decisions made under an LPA may undermine the assumption of trust and goodwill underscoring this relationship. Instead, we have ensured that the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) contains effective safeguards to protect vulnerable persons by limiting the acts or decisions of donees and court-appointed deputies and by providing powers to the Public Guardian to investigate complaints, as well as whistleblower protections. The LPA instrument must contain a certificate by a Certificate Issuer

<sup>18</sup> Increase the participation of person with disabilities in vocational training and other employment-support programmes funded by governments.

<sup>19</sup> Enhance the accessibility and usability of information and communications services.

<sup>20</sup> Halve the proportion of persons with disabilities who need but do not have appropriate assistive devices or products.

<sup>21</sup> Enhance measures for early detection of, and intervention for, children with disabilities from birth to pre-school age.

<sup>22</sup> Halve the gap between children with disabilities and children without disabilities in enrolment rates for primary and secondary education.

<sup>23</sup> Please refer to paragraph 97-102 under Question 23 for more details on the education system and SEN.

<sup>24</sup> As our reservation makes clear, in Singapore, to keep voting secret and to safeguard the integrity of voting, persons with disabilities can only be assisted in voting by an election official. The election official is obliged to mark the ballot paper in the manner directed by the voter and is under oath to keep the voting secret. For visually impaired voters, stencils are provided so that they can mark the ballot paper themselves without assistance.

<sup>25</sup> Please also refer to paragraphs 126-128 under Question 29 on measures to improve voting accessibility.

<sup>26</sup> The Republic of Singapore's current legislative framework provides, as an appropriate and effective safeguard, oversight and supervision by competent, independent and impartial authorities or judicial bodies of measures relating to the exercise of legal capacity, upon applications made before them or which they initiate themselves in appropriate cases. The Republic of Singapore reserves the right to continue to apply its current legislative framework in lieu of the regular review referred to in Article 12, paragraph 4 of the Convention.

(CI)<sup>27</sup> that, in his opinion, the donor understands the purpose and scope of the instrument and no fraud or undue pressure is used to induce the donor to create an LPA. Donees and court-appointed deputies are also equipped to support their principals in decision-making through workshops and guidance by the Office of the Public Guardian.<sup>28</sup>

20. The Optional Protocol will not be ratified at this time. In Singapore, there are existing mechanisms to address individual complaints from persons with disabilities, including legal action in court, and mechanisms within Government agencies, Parliament and media. These mechanisms are kept under continual review to ensure efficacy and compliance with the Convention. There has been no feedback of insufficient complaint channels so far.

### **Reply to question 4 of the list of issues**

21. By virtue of Article 12 of the Constitution of Singapore,<sup>29</sup> any person who is of the view that they are subjected to unequal treatment in legislation and/or executive decisions on the basis of their disability may bring the matter before the courts. Any person with disabilities aggrieved by an allegedly discriminatory law may apply to the courts to seek a judicial review of that particular law on the grounds that it is unconstitutional and inconsistent with Article 12 of the Constitution. Singapore has measures in place to ensure persons with disabilities can access these legal remedies.<sup>30</sup>

22. We have additional measures to provide persons with disabilities equal opportunity to participate in society. Singapore's education system plays a key role in setting the foundation for a national culture of care and inclusivity.<sup>31</sup> Singapore also has measures to prevent discrimination in employment.<sup>32</sup>

### **Reply to question 5 of the list of issues**

23. Women and girls with disabilities enjoy the same rights and recognition under the law as women and girls without disabilities. The Women's Charter provides a wide range of provisions which protect and advance these rights. Policies and programmes for persons with disabilities in Singapore are gender-neutral and seek to support and empower women and girls with disabilities on an equal basis as men and boys with disabilities.

24. We recognise that women and girls with disabilities can face additional challenges. In this regard, the Women's Charter accords protection to women and girls who are ill-treated, in need of protection and in moral danger. For example, the Women's Charter permits the Director-General of Social Welfare to admit such women under the age of 21 years into a place of safety if it is in their best interest. An independent Discharge Committee reviews such cases at least every six months to ensure that they do not remain in the place of safety unnecessarily.

25. Sexuality Education (SEd) in mainstream schools and Special Education (SPED) schools is designed to meet the needs of all students. In SPED schools, staff are trained to design SEd programmes that meet their students' specific needs, with separate classes for

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<sup>27</sup> The CIs may be lawyers, psychiatrists and accredited medical practitioners. Individuals seeking to make an LPA must attend in person before CI to obtain the LPA Certificate.

<sup>28</sup> This includes the "Code of Practice" (Available at: [https://msf.gov.sg/opg/Documents/CSC.MSF.OPGWebsite/Documents/Code\\_of\\_Practice\\_Oct16\\_final.pdf](https://msf.gov.sg/opg/Documents/CSC.MSF.OPGWebsite/Documents/Code_of_Practice_Oct16_final.pdf)) and "The Mental Capacity Act: A Donee's Guide" (Available at: [https://msf.gov.sg/opg/List/Guides/Attachments/24/10813\\_LPA%20Donee%20Guidebooks%20EL.pdf](https://msf.gov.sg/opg/List/Guides/Attachments/24/10813_LPA%20Donee%20Guidebooks%20EL.pdf)) which seek to ensure that court-appointed deputies understand their role and responsibilities, and equip them with skills to make decisions in the best interests of and to safeguard the welfare of the persons they are supporting.

<sup>29</sup> Article 12 of the Constitution of Singapore states that "All persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law".

<sup>30</sup> Please refer to paragraph 59-61 under Question 11 for more details on access to legal remedies.

<sup>31</sup> Please refer to paragraph 97-102 under Question 23 for more details.

<sup>32</sup> Please refer to paragraph 109-111 under Question 26 (preventing workplace discrimination) for more details.

male and female students when appropriate. Students learn about physiological, social and emotional changes during puberty, how to assert and protect themselves and to respect others, and how to make informed and responsible decisions on sexuality matters.

## **Reply to question 6 of the list of issues**

### **Early Intervention (EI) programmes**

26. Singapore has substantially increased our investment in EI since our Initial Report. Between 2018 and July 2019, the Government increased spending on EI services and subsidies by 30% to around S\$60 million (US\$43.9 million) per year. Children with developmental needs under the age of 7 are supported by a continuum of Government-funded EI programmes.

27. In 2019, MSF enhanced support by offering two new EI programmes. Under the new Development Support Plus (DS-Plus) programme, children with mild-moderate needs who made sufficient progress under the existing EIPIC can transit to receiving intervention in their preschools instead of EIPIC centres, thereby promoting inclusion in preschools. The new EIPIC Under-2s programme enables children under two enrolled in EIPIC to receive more targeted intervention, and equips their family members with skills to continue intervention at home for more sustained outcomes.

28. There are ongoing efforts to help more preschools cater to children with moderate to severe developmental needs. In 2019, MSF set up a cross-sectoral Inclusive Preschool Workgroup to study how to better support children with developmental needs within preschools. The workgroup aims to release their recommendations by early 2021.

### **Mental health in youth and children**

29. The Government takes a multi-pronged approach to address the complex underlying causes of mental health issues.<sup>33</sup> The Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Health Promotion Board (HPB) offer psycho-emotional programmes<sup>34</sup> and peer support in schools.<sup>35</sup> Singapore is on track to have a peer support structure and culture in all schools by 2022. All mainstream schools and Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) have counsellors to provide individualised social and emotional support.<sup>36</sup> MOH also set up Response, Early Intervention, Assessment in Community mental Health (REACH) teams<sup>37</sup> to provide school-based interventions to students with psychological, emotional and behavioural issues. For students with more severe issues, REACH arranges referrals to specialists.

30. Beyond schools, the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) set up the Community Health Assessment Team to raise mental health awareness and provide information on mental health assessments and treatment to youths. In 2019, the National Council of Social Services (NCSS)

<sup>33</sup> This includes: (i) building resilience and supporting mental well-being; (ii) raising awareness of mental health issues; (iii) reducing stigma and encouraging youths to seek help if they are experiencing mental health difficulties; (iv) identifying and supporting those at risk of suicide; and (v) intervening in crisis situations where urgent help is needed.

<sup>34</sup> For younger children, the focus is on learning about good mental health habits. Skits, quizzes and other forms of interactive educational activities are provided at the primary school level. A half-day interactive programme also students transiting to secondary school to cope with new stressors that they may encounter. In secondary schools, there are two programmes for the students: an interactive forum theatre that promotes positive emotional wellbeing and helps students better understand and manage challenging emotions; and a musical about handling conflicts and stress, as well as the consequences of using unhealthy coping mechanisms.

<sup>35</sup> The Peer Support Programme teach students about common mental health conditions, how to identify signs and symptoms, self-care strategies, the importance of destigmatising mental health challenges, and supportive behaviour to peers.

<sup>36</sup> HPB also organises capacity-building workshops to train educators in mental health literacy and emerging youth-related issues.

<sup>37</sup> The REACH teams comprise psychiatrists, occupational therapists and psychologists, and work closely with primary and secondary school counsellors, including in SPED schools.

launched the Youth Alliance<sup>38</sup> to promote mental wellness among youth and reduce mental health stigma. In 2020, the Youth Mental Well-being Network was formed with the Government's support, gathering more than 1,000 individuals, including youths, social sector and mental health professionals, and parents and caregivers to discuss, design and implement initiatives to improve mental well-being in youths.<sup>39</sup>

31. To support children in state care who suffer from mental health conditions caused by trauma, MSF runs various therapeutic interventions<sup>40</sup> that support their reintegration in the community.<sup>41</sup> AIC and NCSS also fund community-based trauma support and care programmes for SSAs.

### **Freedom of expression of children**

32. Singapore proactively seeks children's views through avenues such as dialogues with political leaders and policymakers in schools, youth forums, and the biennial Singapore Children's Forum (SCF). In 2019, the SCF focused on issues of inequality, where children shared their views on the topic of inclusion among others. The National Youth Council also organises events in partnership with disability organisations so youths with and without disabilities can share perspectives on disability issues.

33. In SPED schools, students are encouraged and supported to participate in planning their education (e.g. through Individual Education Plans) and their future pathways (through Individual Transition Plans). The curriculum covers skills of communication and social interaction, making choices and decision-making. Students who are less or non-verbal are provided augmentative and alternative communication devices.

### **Reply to question 7 of the list of issues**

34. Singapore takes a whole-of-society approach to inclusivity. At the broad societal level, NCSS runs an annual "See the True Me" public education campaign to nurture positive perceptions of persons with disabilities, and facilitate their social participation.<sup>42</sup> Persons with disabilities and their family members are involved as ambassadors in the campaign and related events.<sup>43</sup> NCSS has also run initiatives to raise awareness about the CRPD and the rights therein among the general public, and persons with disabilities through disability organisations.<sup>44</sup> Singapore also has initiatives in the areas of cultural life, recreation, and sport,<sup>45</sup> and in schools.<sup>46</sup>

35. In the area of mental health awareness, NCSS and IMH launched the "Beyond the Label" public education campaign in 2018 to address stigma and promote greater social inclusion of persons in recovery from mental health conditions. In 2019, NCSS launched

<sup>38</sup> The Youth Alliance – a network of agencies with representatives from government, healthcare and social service agencies, and institutes of higher learning – aims to promote mental wellness among youth by encouraging them to seek help early, provide peer support and catalyse change to reduce mental health stigma.

<sup>39</sup> The specific aims of the Youth Mental Well-being Network are to (i) assess the current landscape and identify key issues and gaps with impact on mental well-being amongst youths; (ii) define desired outcomes, and develop corresponding strategies and action plans to strengthen youth mental well-being; and (iii) build and strengthen mental wellness networks across Singapore.

<sup>40</sup> For example, Functional Family Therapy, Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Trauma Systems Therapy.

<sup>41</sup> These interventions are most often conducted together with family or caregivers.

<sup>42</sup> The campaign celebrates the strengths of persons with disabilities through various media, and by educates the public on communication and support strategies.

<sup>43</sup> For example, the "We Are Able!" Conferences and "Let's Chat" events.

<sup>44</sup> NCSS worked with SSAs and disability organisations to distribute a publication on "Understanding the UN CRPD" to their members and service users. The publication is available in both print and digital formats, and is written in Easy Read text.

<sup>45</sup> Please refer to paragraph 129-132 under Question 30 for more details on awareness-raising initiatives.

<sup>46</sup> Please refer to paragraph 29-30 under Question 6; and paragraphs 99 and 101 under Question 23 for more details on awareness-raising initiatives.



Belle, an interactive helpbot<sup>47</sup> to provide 24/7 access to information about helplines and mental health services. NCSS has also conducted Mental Health Public Education grant calls since 2017,<sup>48</sup> and AIC established community outreach teams to carry out public education programmes on mental health conditions and dementia.

36. Singapore promotes inclusive hiring and equips employers to make their workplaces inclusive. Besides trainings, workshops, and consultancy and advisory services, SG Enable worked with Cornell University on a Workplace Disability Inclusive Index. When employers are ready to hire, SG Enable and partner SSAs receive government funding to place and provide job support for persons with disabilities. Where employers have done well, SG Enable's biennial Enabling Employers Award recognises their commitment and achievements.

## Reply to question 8 of the list of issues

### Accessibility of the transport system

37. Singapore has continued to upgrade our public transportation system to be accessible to persons with disabilities since our Initial Report. All public bus services are now wheelchair-accessible. There is at least one barrier-free access route at all Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) and Light Rail Transit (LRT) stations and bus interchanges. Singapore is also progressively introducing priority use for persons with special needs at public transport nodes.<sup>49</sup>

38. All new public buses since 2018 are installed with a digital Passenger Information Display System, providing visual and audio alerts to inform passengers of the next bus stop. We are trialling a mobile application, "MAVIS", which gives persons with visual disabilities and wheelchair users personalised journey guidance on buses.<sup>50</sup> Since October 2019, those with invisible medical conditions can choose to get a sticker identifier to alert fellow commuters that they need a seat, without disclosing the individual's condition. The Land Transport Authority (LTA) will also be conducting a trial to designate priority cabins<sup>51</sup> for persons with disabilities among others.<sup>52</sup>

39. All taxi stands constructed after 2008 are barrier-free.<sup>53</sup> Street-hail operators are required to provide sufficient boot space in taxis to cater for wheelchairs. From October 2020, all ride-hail operators will be required to offer commuters an option in the booking app to book a vehicle that can cater for a foldable wheelchair in its boot.

40. Singapore extended the Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS) for persons with disabilities in August 2017 to more households,<sup>54</sup> and with a higher level of support of up to 80% subsidy. There are also other schemes to subsidise transport costs for persons with disabilities, such as discounted rates on public transport, subsidies for transport arranged by MSF-funded disability services, and subsidies to support persons with disabilities who require a vehicle to earn a living.

<sup>47</sup> Belle is available on Facebook Messenger and the iMessage app.

<sup>48</sup> So far, 25 projects by SSAs, IHLs and social enterprises have been supported through the grant.

<sup>49</sup> MRT and LRT stations will have priority use signs installed on wide fare gates, lifts, queue zones and platform screen doors by 2020, to remind commuters to give way to those who have greater need of such accessibility features. Priority queue zones will also be installed progressively from 2021 at all bus interchanges, where possible.

<sup>50</sup> The app also forewarns the bus captain that app users will be boarding or alighting at the next stop, and provides external audio announcements at the boarding bus stop to help guide visually-impaired commuters to the bus entrance.

<sup>51</sup> The priority cabins will be located near station lifts, where possible, for easier access and convenience.

<sup>52</sup> The priority cabins will also be for the use of elderly persons and families with young children.

<sup>53</sup> Where possible, taxi stands constructed before then are being retrofitted to be barrier-free too.

<sup>54</sup> The TSS provides means-tested subsidies for persons with disabilities who rely on taxi travel. The TSS was also extended to include those attending employment related training, as well as travel via registered private-hire cars.

41. To enhance accessibility on the roads, lifts have been installed at 47 pedestrian overhead bridges, and more will be upgraded progressively to provide barrier-free crossings.

42. Transport professionals are trained to assist commuters with special needs.<sup>55</sup> LTA will work with public transport operators (PTOs) to enhance the training of service ambassadors at MRT stations, bus interchanges and integrated transport hubs. PTOs have also taken the initiative to train and upgrade their workers' competencies, including collaborating with disability organisations.<sup>56</sup>

43. The Public Transport Council regularly consults commuters with special needs to make improvements to the transport system.<sup>57</sup> In 2018, LTA engaged more than 7400 Singaporeans on Singapore's future land transport system, resulting in the Land Transport Masterplan 2040 that incorporates recommendations for a more inclusive land transport system, especially to meet the needs of seniors, persons with disabilities and families with young children.

#### **Accessibility of the built environment**

44. Singapore periodically revises the Code on Accessibility, which sets out essential requirements for making the built environment accessible. The tripartite Code Review Committee includes disability organisations as members.

45. The latest Code on Accessibility in July 2019<sup>58</sup> included new mandatory requirements that improve the accessibility of toilets and parking lots, among others.<sup>59</sup> As at August 2020, around 150 private building owners have tapped on the Building and Construction Authority (BCA)'s Accessibility Fund to retrofit their buildings with accessibility features.

46. In response to feedback about accessibility challenges in the Central Business District, BCA launched a Community Workgroup in February 2020 comprising representatives from disability organisations, the private sector and public agencies, to study accessibility gaps and come up with solutions.

#### **Reply to question 9 of the list of issues**

47. The Singapore Civil Defence Force trains frontline responders to extricate or evacuate persons with disabilities. Fire evacuation drills with homes and hospitals are conducted regularly to familiarise responders and staff with evacuation methods and procedures. Premises classified as Mobility Risk Premises<sup>60</sup> are required to form a Tier 1 Company Emergency Response Team and develop contingency plans.

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<sup>55</sup> For example, the Singapore Bus Academy conducts an Enhanced Vocational Licence Training Programme that puts all newly-hired public bus captains through customised training on assisting persons with special needs, including disabilities, board and alight from the bus.

<sup>56</sup> For example, one PTO recently signed an agreement with five social service and disability organisations to obtain training for transport professionals.

<sup>57</sup> The LTA accepted all recommendations arising from such consultations between 2016 and 2018 and most have been implemented.

<sup>58</sup> The Code has been effective since 6 January 2020. All new building projects and existing buildings that undertake major addition and alteration works are required to meet the requirements under the prevailing Code on Accessibility.

<sup>59</sup> The new requirements include (i) accessible changing rooms for selected building types, to support adults with disabilities and elderly persons who may need the help of caregivers; (ii) larger accessible toilets for selected building types, to cater to users of motorised wheelchairs which require larger manoeuvring spaces; (iii) more accessible parking lots in hospitals; and (iv) reducing horizontal runs to no more than 6 meters for 1:12 ramps to enable wheelchair users to wheel up the ramp with less difficulty.

<sup>60</sup> These are premises with an occupancy load of more than 200 persons and intended to be used for the lodging of persons suffering from any sickness, disease, injury or infirmity which hinder their ability to self-evacuate in the event of an emergency. SCDF conducts operational surveys and enforcement checks at these premises annually and conducts an exercise to validate the response plans at least once every three years.

48. The Fire Code, which applies to most buildings, requires that special attention be paid to evacuate persons with disabilities. It also requires exit routes and fire lifts that are easy to see and accessible for wheelchair users, clearly marked designated holding points on each floor to serve as temporary safe spaces for persons with disabilities to await assistance, and visual alarms in designated locations to alert the deaf and hard of hearing. These requirements were incorporated after consultation with disability organisations.

49. If evacuees are rendered homeless in emergencies, MSF provides them with temporary relief shelter and coordinates re-housing.<sup>61</sup> The temporary shelters will take into account the needs of vulnerable persons wherever possible, such as providing larger areas for those with mobility challenges or who use mobility aids. Guidelines are given to staff on how to work with persons with disabilities.

50. The Government set up an inter-agency Haze Task Force (HTF) to oversee the work of minimising and managing the impact of haze on the public. The action plans and advisories rolled out by HTF agencies for the protection of the health and well-being of the public considers our vulnerable groups, including those with mobility issues and the very sick.<sup>62</sup>

51. Singapore has taken a human-centred approach in its COVID-19 response. We have strengthened our social safety nets over the years, and acted quickly to launch additional help schemes<sup>63</sup> to help lower- and middle-income households affected by the pandemic. We have been in active conversations with key disability stakeholders to identify challenges and address them together. This includes regular check-ins with clients of disability services, assistance for families who face caregiving challenges, food deliveries and cash support to vulnerable individuals and families.<sup>64</sup> At the frontline, we have spread awareness among enforcement officers on the challenges that persons with disabilities may face in complying with safe-distancing measures, and to exercise flexibility if necessary. We have also worked with partners to explore ways to enhance the accessibility of public communications, and have included persons with disabilities in broader national support measures, such as creating a dedicated workstream under the National Jobs Council on the employment of persons with disabilities. During the COVID-19 period, a 24-hour National CARE Hotline was set up to provide emotional and psychological support to anyone facing increased levels of distress, complementing existing phone and online counselling platforms.

## Reply to question 10 of the list of issues

52. The MCA strives to preserve a person's legal capacity through its key principles, including that all practicable steps to help a person make a decision must have been taken, without success, before treating them as unable to make that decision, and that any act done or decision made for or on behalf of a person must be in their best interests. In determining the best interests, the person's past and present wishes and feelings,<sup>65</sup> so far as are reasonably ascertainable, must be considered. Even where decisions are taken on behalf of a person who lacks capacity by a proxy decision-maker, the proxy decision-maker must, as far as is

<sup>61</sup> This involves working with agencies like the Housing and Development Board (for re-housing), People's Association (for community support) and MSF's Social Service Offices.

<sup>62</sup> For example, our mask distribution plan also includes the elderly, pregnant women, children, and those with chronic heart and lung diseases.

<sup>63</sup> This includes the Temporary Relief Fund, which provided one-off assistance in the month of April 2020; the COVID-19 Support Grant, which was available to affected employees from May 2020 onwards; and the Self-Employed Persons Income Relief Scheme, which supports self-employed persons. The Government has also enhanced support to low-income and vulnerable individuals and families under the ComCare scheme. All in, the Government has set aside S\$3.15 billion (US\$2.29 billion) thus far to provide financial assistance to Singaporeans who need help.

<sup>64</sup> Through MediCorp Enable Fund's C.A.R.E. initiative, SG Enable administered a one-time cash relief to families with multiple persons with disabilities, to help defray some costs for daily expenses and last-mile needs.

<sup>65</sup> In particular, any relevant written statement made by the person when he had capacity. As far as is reasonably ascertainable, the beliefs and values that would be likely to influence his decision if he had capacity and other factors that he would be likely to consider if he were able to do so should also be considered.

reasonably practicable, permit and encourage the person to participate, or improve his ability to participate, as fully as possible in any act done for and any decision affecting him. As at end June 2020, there were 2,237 court orders appointing 3,179 deputies under the MCA.

53. Singapore does not intend to remove provisions in the MCA allowing court-appointed deputies to take decisions on behalf of a person who lacks capacity, as this would lead to superficial equality and could critically affect decision-making.

54. Singapore's criminal procedure laws relating to accused or convicted persons with severe mental health conditions are intended to balance the rights and interests of these persons against the need to protect the public from serious crime. For example, under the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC), a person who is found to be of unsound mind and incapable of making his defence,<sup>66</sup> and who is accused of a bailable offence, may be released on sufficient security being given.<sup>67</sup> If sufficient security is not given, or the person is accused of committing a non-bailable offence, he may be confined in a psychiatric institution by order of the Minister for Law.

55. There are safeguards against abuse. An accused person who is found to be of unsound mind and incapable of making his defence, and who has been confined in a psychiatric institution, must be visited every six months to ascertain his state of mind, and a report must be sent to the Minister of Law. The person may be discharged by the Minister if assessed to be capable of being discharged without danger of injuring himself or any other person. Persons who consider that they have been wrongly confined in a psychiatric institution under the CPC may bring legal challenges against their confinement, such as by seeking judicial review of the Minister's confinement orders.

56. The Prisons Act permits the Commissioner to order the transfer of prisoners to a mental hospital or other fit place of safe custody if they are certified "mentally disordered" by a registered medical practitioner. In practice, prison inmates who are assessed to require mental healthcare treatment are usually referred to the prison psychiatrist. Subsequently, if required, they may be housed within the prison's Psychiatric Housing Unit for more dedicated treatment.

## **Reply to question 11 of the list of issues**

### **Access to justice and procedural accommodations**

57. There are procedural accommodations that facilitate effective access to justice for persons with disabilities at all stages of legal proceedings. The Police are trained to identify suspects and witnesses with mental disabilities and to take steps to reduce the trauma experienced by them throughout investigations. The Police interview these offenders to ascertain their intellectual ability, and speak to family members to find out more about their background, mental and medical conditions.

58. Singapore implemented the Appropriate Adult Scheme (AAS) for persons with mental disabilities nationwide in all law enforcement agencies in 2015. Under the AAS, law enforcement agencies may activate an "Appropriate Adult" to act as a bridge between the investigation officer and a person with suspected mental disability, regardless if the person is a suspect, victim, or witness. During the interview, the Appropriate Adult watches for signs of distress, supports the emotional well-being of the person, and assists in communications.

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<sup>66</sup> The CPC has procedures to determine if a person is incapable of making his defence. If the Court has reason to suspect that the accused is of unsound mind and consequently incapable of making his defence, the Court is required to investigate this. If the Court is not satisfied that the accused is capable of making his defence, the Court must postpone and remand the person in a psychiatric institution for observation for up to one month. A designated medical practitioner must keep the accused under observation, provide any necessary treatment during the accused's remand, and certify in writing to the Court his opinion of the accused's state of mind, or ask for a further remand of up to two months, if he is unable to form a conclusion within the period.

<sup>67</sup> The security required is that: (i) the person will be properly taken care of; (ii) he will be prevented from injuring himself or any other person; (iii) he will appear in court when required; and (iv) any other conditions that the court may determine must be met.

59. Legal aid is available to persons of limited means through avenues such as government-funded legal aid, and initiatives of the Law Society of Singapore and various SSAs. In assessing applicants for legal aid, special consideration may be given to persons with disabilities if they have additional financial needs. Applicants for civil and criminal legal aid use the facilities at the MinLaw Service Centre (MSC) and the State Courts respectively, both of which have barrier-free access. Two counters at MSC are also equipped with assistive technology for the deaf and hard of hearing.

60. To support access of inmates with disabilities to legal remedies, prison institutions facilitate the provision of assistive devices like walking and hearing aids, as well as access to sign language interpreters<sup>68</sup> engaged by inmates' counsels or embassies in the case of individuals who are foreign nationals.

61. There are provisions in the CPC such that those who are of unsound mind and incapable of making their defence in court are dealt with fairly, and have access to treatment.<sup>69</sup> Only persons who are fit to plead can be tried in court.

### **Access to justice system as professionals and witnesses**

62. Persons with disabilities can study law at the law schools, be called to the Bar and practise as lawyers just like any other person. All three autonomous universities offering law degrees in Singapore<sup>70</sup> provide disability services to all students, such as academic accommodations, examination arrangements, and access to campus facilities.

## **Reply to question 12 of the list of issues**

### **Consent in the provision of medical treatment**

63. When a doctor carries out treatment on a patient who lacks mental capacity, the provisions under the MCA apply.<sup>71</sup> In the specific case of sterilization of persons with disabilities, the Voluntary Sterilization Act (VSA) applies: a registered medical practitioner may only carry out sexual sterilization on persons if they consent. If the person lacks capacity to consent,<sup>72</sup> sexual sterilization is only permitted with a court order declaring that it is necessary in the best interests of that person.<sup>73</sup> Compelling or inducing a person by coercion or intimidation to undergo treatment for sexual sterilization is an offence under the VSA. Since 2012, there have been no court orders for the sterilisation of persons lacking mental capacity.

64. Detention of patients at the IMH under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) Act (MHCTA) is only exercised in very limited circumstance where a patient with mental illness is at risk of harm to self or others. There are safeguards to prevent unnecessary involuntary admission of patients. Only designated medical practitioners may recommend an individual for involuntary admission. Detained patients are also to be assessed by other designated medical practitioners for further involuntary admission. Any detention beyond six months requires the psychiatric institution's principal officer to submit a report to the Visitors,<sup>74</sup> and a Magistrate's order. The detention of a person in a psychiatric institution not in accordance with the MHCTA is a criminal offence punishable by fine or imprisonment.

<sup>68</sup> This can take place when determined by the prison doctor as medically necessary.

<sup>69</sup> Please refer to paragraph 54-55 under Question 10 (on the CPC).

<sup>70</sup> National University of Singapore, the Singapore Management University, and the Singapore University of Social Sciences.

<sup>71</sup> Please refer to paragraph 52-53 under Question 10 (on the MCA).

<sup>72</sup> A person lacks capacity to consent to sexual sterilization treatment under the VSA if they are unable to make a decision for themselves in relation to the treatment because of an impairment of, or a disturbance in the functioning of, the mind or brain.

<sup>73</sup> The best interests of that person are to be determined in accordance with the guidance set out in the MCA. Please refer to paragraph 52 under Question 10.

<sup>74</sup> Visitors are independently appointed by the Minister of Health to perform regular visits, review any patient detained under the Act, and inspect any part of the psychiatric institution.

**Efforts to reduce institutionalisation and support independent living**

65. Singapore strongly encourages community-based living for persons with disabilities, and provides government-funded living options like Community Group Homes<sup>75</sup> and Adult Disability Hostels<sup>76</sup>. There are also various subsidies available for transport and assistive technology that support the independence of persons with disabilities, and support for caregivers.<sup>77</sup> Persons with disabilities may voluntarily be admitted to Adult Disability Homes (ADHs) as a last resort. They may also be admitted by their caregivers, if assessed to lack mental capacity, or under a court order for committal to a place of temporary care and protection under the Vulnerable Adults Act (VAA).<sup>78</sup> Since 2019, over 800 clients have voluntarily entered the ADHs, with only 2 court-ordered admissions under the VAA.

66. Singapore has been ramping up community mental health services and strengthening post-discharge care for patients with mental health conditions under the Community Mental Health Masterplan. Mental health services have been set up in more than half of the national polyclinics, while allied health-led community intervention teams have been established to provide psycho-social therapeutic intervention, counselling and psycho-education services to the community.<sup>79</sup> In addition, MOH has provided additional resources to IMH to widen their case management support, so that more IMH patients would be supported post-discharge and transit well back home. These efforts resulted in a reduction of institutionalisation of persons with mental health conditions.

**Reply to question 13 of the list of issues**

67. Officers of the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) are trained to work with vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities. SPS also provides rehabilitation opportunities for offenders with intellectual disabilities where possible, especially in the area of life skills to enhance day-to-day functioning. All prison inmates are housed in units with ready access to medical personnel. Where necessary, prison doctors will admit inmates into medical wards for closer monitoring. Where possible, prison inmates with physical disabilities are housed at lower landings to avoid stairs. Suitable cellmates may also be selected as helpers to assist inmates with disabilities in their daily activities.

68. Prison inmates are not in the vast majority of cases subjected to involuntary treatment. If a prison inmate is assessed to be a danger to their own safety due to psychiatric reasons, they will be referred to the prison psychiatrist for further assessment so that they can receive the necessary mental health care.

**Reply to question 14 of the list of issues**

69. Singapore recently amended the Penal Code to ensure criminal laws take a robust approach to prevent and combat exploitation, violence and abuse of persons with disabilities.

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<sup>75</sup> Rental flats retrofitted with accessibility features for persons with disabilities who can otherwise live independently.

<sup>76</sup> The Hostels aim to help individuals to resume independent living back at their own homes or in alternative forms of assisted community living. They are situated in the community, provide residents with opportunities to take part in programmes and socio-recreational activities that encourage community integration, as well as basic training on independent living skills and residential-based training for work and life skills.

<sup>77</sup> Please refer to paragraphs 84-86 under Question 20 on support for assistive technology, paragraph 40 under Question 8 on support for transport and paragraphs 119-121 under Question 27 (access to social protection and support services) for more details.

<sup>78</sup> Please refer to paragraphs 76-77 under Question 16 for more details about the VAA.

<sup>79</sup> Apart from establishing the allied health-led community intervention teams which have supported over 26,000 persons as of 2019, AIC has also set up 43 community outreach teams and trained over 24,000 frontline staff from government agencies and community partners in Singapore, who have reached out to over 300,000 persons and provided assistance to more than 23,000 persons at risk of developing mental health conditions or dementia.

First, for certain offences committed against vulnerable persons,<sup>80</sup> the court may sentence the offender to enhanced punishments of up to twice the maximum penalties. Second, Sections 304B and 304C criminalise causing the death of a vulnerable person by sustained abuse, and causing or allowing the death of a vulnerable person in the same household.<sup>81</sup> Third, Section 376F criminalises the procurement of sexual activity with a person with mental disability.

70. Under the MHCTA, ill-treatment<sup>82</sup> of patients in psychiatric institutions by medical practitioners, nurses, attendants or any other employee of a psychiatric institution, is a criminal offence. The Protection from Harassment Act (POHA), enacted in 2014, provides enhanced penalties for offences of harassment and unlawful stalking against vulnerable persons.

71. To ensure accessible and prompt assistance, care and recovery services for victims of family violence, the National Family Violence Networking System links government agencies, police, schools, hospitals and SSAs to provide multiple touchpoints for those affected. Singapore has also intensified public education on abuse and strengthened help channels for victims through the “Break the Silence | Against Family Violence” campaign.

72. Judges and judicial officers in the Supreme Court, State Courts and Family Justice Courts undergo training in judgecraft and bench skills conducted by the Singapore Judicial College (SJC).<sup>83</sup> The SJC’s core curriculum features training on how to effectively engage litigants-in-person with personality disorders. The Supreme Court and State Courts also conduct regular training for Judicial Officers and Court Administrators, including legal developments and topics such as managing persons with mental health issues. The Family Justice Courts provide regular training for its Judicial Officers and staff in managing vulnerable court users including those with disabilities.

73. The Child Protective Service (CPS) uses a Structured Decision Making system to identify and take into account a child’s developmental and disability needs when developing a holistic intervention plan. CPS works with community service providers with expertise in supporting children with disabilities, and consults experts such as psychologists to ensure that CPS’ intervention is suited to the needs of the child.

74. Details on Singapore’s laws on the admission of patients into psychiatric institutions is described in paragraph 64 under Question 12.

### **Reply to question 15 of the list of issues**

75. Singapore’s laws addressing the protection of both women and girls, and persons with disabilities, from violence, exploitation and abuse are sufficiently extensive to provide protection to women and girls with disabilities. Perpetrators of violence against women may be charged generally under the Penal Code and the Women’s Charter.<sup>84</sup> The Women’s

<sup>80</sup> Vulnerable persons include those who by reason of their mental or physical disabilities are substantially unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect or self-neglect.

<sup>81</sup> These provisions came into force on 1 January 2020.

<sup>82</sup> Ill-treatment is defined under the MHCTA to include subjecting the patient to physical or sexual abuse, and wilful or unreasonable neglect of a patient in circumstances that are likely to endanger the safety of the patient; and cause the patient unnecessary physical pain, suffering or injury; emotional injury or injury to health.

<sup>83</sup> For example, in 2017, the SJC seminar on “Implementation of Human Rights Treaties in Dualist States” introduced judges to the: i) Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women; (ii) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and (iii) Convention on the Rights of the Child and how these treaties are implemented in Singapore. In 2018, SJC’s programme on “Understanding the Psychology of Sexual Assault Victims” introduced judges to the relevant social science research and empirical findings from trauma and victim psychology so that they can better understand common sexual assault misconceptions. The SJC also ran an international programme on “Singapore’s Experience: Protection, Rights and Obligations under the Women’s Charter” under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Singapore Cooperation Programme.

<sup>84</sup> The Women’s Charter also provides protection for women from family violence by allowing the Family Court to make protection orders restraining perpetrators of family violence from using further family violence. The Family Court may also order individuals affected by violence (victims, people

Charter was amended in February 2016 to enhance protection for victims of family violence and professionals engaged in protection work, as well as strengthen law enforcement against online vice. POHA was amended in 2019 to strengthen the range of self-help measures, civil remedies and criminal sanctions to better protect women from harassment and related anti-social behaviour.<sup>85</sup> Women and girls who are vulnerable due to a physical or mental disability are further protected under the VAA, which was introduced in 2018.

## Reply to question 16 of the list of issues

### Vulnerable Adults Act

76. The VAA seeks to safeguard vulnerable adults (VA)<sup>86</sup> from abuse, neglect or self-neglect. The VAA allows VAs themselves, their family members, or government social services, to apply for court orders for their protection, where they have experienced, are experiencing, or are at risk of abuse, neglect or self-neglect. These include orders restraining perpetrators of abuse from further abusing a VA, and orders prohibiting perpetrators from communicating with or visiting a VA.

77. The VAA sets out safeguards in the form of key principles that must be considered when an application is made for protective orders in relation to a VA who lacks mental capacity.<sup>87</sup>

### Adult Disability Homes and Hostels

78. The Government maintains oversight of service standards in Adult Disability Homes and Hostels. The Standards of Care for the Homes and Hostels sets out guidelines on residents' well-being and their protection against abuse, including respect for residents' privacy and dignity at all times, and robust procedures to prevent and recognise resident abuse, such as raising awareness among residents and staff on this topic and whistle-blower protection.<sup>88</sup>

79. The Homes' independent Board of Visitors (BOV) provides third-party oversight of residents by monitoring residents' well-being and living conditions through visits, and being an additional avenue for residents to raise concerns. The BOV observes a Code of Conduct<sup>89</sup> and includes members who are medically trained and/or of high professional standing.<sup>90</sup>

80. MSF is providing additional support to the Homes and Hostels in light of COVID-19. This includes funding for additional manpower to implement safe management measures, swab tests for residents and staff, support to continue services during the "Circuit Breaker"

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who abuse, and other family members) to undergo compulsory counselling to address their issues, such as safety planning and understanding the cycle of violence (the Mandatory Counselling Programme).

<sup>85</sup> This includes cyber bullying, stalking and sexual harassment. Unmarried victims of intimate partner violence may also access remedies under the POHA.

<sup>86</sup> Under the VAA, a vulnerable adult includes any individual aged 18 years and above who, by reason of their mental or physical disabilities, are incapable of protecting themselves from abuse, neglect, or self-neglect.

<sup>87</sup> These include the principles that: (i) the welfare and best interests of the VA must be the first and paramount consideration; (ii) any duty performed or power exercised under the Act must be for the purpose of protecting the VA from abuse, neglect and self-neglect; (iii) regard must be had to whether the purpose for which the duty is performed or the power exercised can be achieved in a way that is less restrictive of the VA's rights and freedom of action, and (iv) even if the VA lacks mental capacity, the VA's views, wishes, feelings, values and beliefs, where reasonably ascertainable, must nevertheless be considered.

<sup>88</sup> The Standards of Care also touch on support for residents to maintain links with their families, social and community networks, individualised care plans and support for residents to maintain or improve skills for independence.

<sup>89</sup> The Code of Conduct is established in the Standards of Care.

<sup>90</sup> The BOV visits the Homes at least twice a year, while MSF carries out voluntary inspections at least once in two years to assess adherence to the Standards of Care.



period,<sup>91</sup> and to provide limited services in community-based settings for clients with higher needs and for caregivers' respite.

### **Reply to question 17 of the list of issues**

81. Please refer to Question 12.

### **Reply to question 18 of the list of issues**

82. When a person of foreign nationality seeks employment in Singapore, they are not required to declare any disability in their application for employment passes or permits. There are no legal or administrative hurdles preventing a person from entering or leaving Singapore solely on the basis of disability. All foreign and local employees working under a contract of service are covered by the Employment Act or the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (EFMA). Foreign workers with disabilities have equal rights as others under the EFMA to obtain, possess and use identification documents, and to use immigration facilities to exercise their right to liberty of movement. These facilities comply with the Code on Accessibility, are barrier-free and have directions in Braille.

### **Reply to question 19 of the list of issues**

83. Please refer to Question 12 paragraphs 65-66 (de-institutionalisation), Question 20 paragraphs 84-86 (support for independent living), Question 1 paragraph 11 (persons affected by leprosy), and Question 21 paragraphs 89-91 (access to information).

### **Reply to question 20 of the list of issues**

84. There are subsidies, financial schemes and projects to facilitate the development and use of assistive technology. For those unable to afford assistive devices, the ATF subsidises up to 90% of the cost of such devices that support independent living. The specific device is not prescribed by the Fund but by the qualified medical professional assessing the individual's accessibility needs. Singapore has doubled the amount of subsidies to each person over his lifetime from S\$20,000 (US\$14,535) to S\$40,000 (US\$28,571). The Senior Mobility and Enabling Fund provides up to 90% of means-tested subsidies for assistive technology, home healthcare items and transport, to help seniors above the age of 60 remain mobile and live independently.

85. MOE's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Fund also funds suitable computing devices, related services and digital resources in SPED schools. MOE provides assistive technology devices in mainstream schools,<sup>92</sup> and funds purchases of education-related assistive technology devices and support services at the tertiary level. Singapore's autonomous universities provide similar or higher levels of financial support for their students in this regard.

86. There are multiple touchpoints<sup>93</sup> to allow persons to learn about assistive devices and relevant financial assistance. Tech Able, an MSF-funded facility providing information and

<sup>91</sup> Singapore entered the "Circuit Breaker" period in April 2020, which was approximately two months of enhanced safe distancing measures to slow local transmission of COVID-19. Schools were closed and instruction done via Home-Based Learning and physical workplace premises for non-essential services were also closed.

<sup>92</sup> These devices include frequency modulation equipment, Braille notebooks, computer systems with specialised features, talking calculators, voice synthesisers, customised furniture and specialised ICT software.

<sup>93</sup> Such as schools, local hospitals, community care providers, functional screening programmes and, acute and community hospitals.

resources on assistive devices and ICT to persons with disabilities, also provides consultation, assessment and training services.

87. In 2019, MSF announced the formation of a cross-sectoral EMP workgroup<sup>94</sup> to study how to promote independent living through design and technology. The Workgroup is conducting consultations with stakeholders and aims to release its recommendations by early 2021.

88. Subsidiary regulations under the Environmental Public Health Act, the Rapid Transit Systems Act and the Road Traffic Act allow guide dogs that are trained to aid persons with visual impairment to be brought into food establishments and on public transport respectively. The Government is currently reviewing these provisions in consultation with the disability organisation, Guide Dog Singapore, to see how to better support persons with disabilities.

### **Reply to question 21 of the list of issues**

89. Singapore adopts a multi-platform, multi-language and multi-format approach to ensure that government communications are effectively disseminated to different segments of society, including persons with disabilities. Official information is pushed out through multiple online and offline platforms,<sup>95</sup> and presented in various formats and in different languages. Government agencies are also required to implement the Digital Service Standards for designing government digital services.<sup>96</sup>

90. To support persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, Singapore adopts subtitling and captioning for non-live programmes, and live signing for key Government communications, including COVID-19 communications, on Free-to-Air television.<sup>97</sup> The Government also publishes content on digital and social media platforms using infographics and auto-captioning functions.<sup>98</sup>

91. Singapore is helping persons with disabilities acquire the skills to access the digital world, including through curriculum and courseware on basic digital skills for the elderly and students with disabilities,<sup>99</sup> and the setting up of Infocomm and Assistive Technologies loan libraries and curated workshops.<sup>100</sup> Going forward, students in mainstream schools and SPED schools will benefit from the National Digital Literacy Programme initiative, which will expose them to new technologies and provide lessons on cyber wellness.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> The Workgroup is co-chaired by the Minister for Social and Family Development and Ms Chia Yong Yong, president of SPD, a disability organisation.

<sup>95</sup> This includes Free-to-Air television, radio, print, digital display panels at public housing estates, social media, websites and online platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram and Twitter.

<sup>96</sup> These standards are in compliance with the World Wide Web Consortium Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1.

<sup>97</sup> These signing services are provided in collaboration with the Singapore Association for the Deaf, which is one of several service organisations for persons with disabilities providing live signing and note-taking on their social media platforms for major local events.

<sup>98</sup> For example, video extracts of the Committee of Supply and Parliament debates are published on the Government's YouTube channel. New initiatives are also shared, where relevant, on social media channels for all to access.

<sup>99</sup> A number of SPED schools have adopted and incorporated the course content in their academic curricula, starting in 2020.

<sup>100</sup> Such curated workshops teach persons with disabilities important digital skills and how to use everyday mainstream devices.

<sup>101</sup> The topics covered will include searching for information online, creating digital products, and using communication tools to chat online.

## Reply to question 22 of the list of issues

### Consent to marriage

92. An individual who is unable to provide free and informed consent in matters related to marriage is protected under section 26 of the MCA, under which a proxy decision-maker is prevented from consenting to marriage on the individual's behalf.

### Separation of children from parents

93. Children are never removed from their parents on the basis of their disability or their parents' disability alone. Children are only removed from their parents when they have been abused or neglected and it is no longer safe for them to remain with their parents, with the child's welfare as the paramount consideration. As far as possible, we help all children remain with their families while providing them community support.

### Support for parents

94. Singapore has a wide range of schemes to support families such that every child has a good start, regardless of whether the children or their parents have disabilities. This includes financial support for all new-born citizen children,<sup>102</sup> statutory leave for parents,<sup>103</sup> and support for flexible working arrangements.<sup>104</sup> Additional support is available for low-income families through financial assistance in schools, and the KidSTART programme, which provides children from low-income families with early support for health, learning and development, and helps parents keep track of their children's progress during their early years.<sup>105</sup>

95. EI programmes provide additional support to parents of children with disabilities through parent and caregiver training,<sup>106</sup> so that intervention strategies can continue in the child's daily routines within the home.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>102</sup> In 2015, Singapore enhanced the Baby Bonus scheme for Singapore citizen children born on or after 1 January 2015 by (i) increasing the quantum of the cash gift by S\$2,000 (US\$1,476) such that the first and second children receive S\$8,000 each (US\$5,906), and the third and fourth children receive S\$10,000 each (US\$7,350); and (ii) extending it to the fifth and subsequent children who will receive S\$10,000 each (US\$7,350). In 2016, Singapore introduced the CDA First Step for children born from 24 March 2016. This is an initial deposit of S\$3,000 (US\$2,214) that is put into each child's Child Development Account (CDA). In addition, the Government matches every dollar deposited by the parents into the CDA, up to a cap. The cap for the first and second children is S\$3,000 (US\$2,214) each; for the third and fourth child, S\$9,000 (US\$6,644) each; and for the fifth and subsequent children, \$15,000 (US\$11,073) each.

<sup>103</sup> For parents of citizen children, these include 16 weeks of Maternity Leave, 2 weeks of Paternity Leave, 4 weeks of Shared Parental Leave (from Maternity Leave), 6 days of Unpaid Infant Care Leave, 6 days a year of Childcare Leave (if any child is below aged 7 years old), 2 days a year of Extended Childcare Leave (if any child is between 7 to 12 years old, and none is below 7), and 12 weeks of Adoption Leave. Since July 2020, Childcare Leave and Extended Childcare Leave have also been extended to foster parents.

<sup>104</sup> The Government continually works with partners to raise awareness, encourage and build up capabilities of employers and supervisors to introduce flexible work practices. A Citizens' Panel on Work-Life Harmony was convened in 2019, where Singaporeans from different walks of life, including parents, made recommendations to strengthen support for Singaporeans in managing work and family commitments. These recommendations are currently being implemented by the Government, unions and employer federations.

<sup>105</sup> Parents in the KidSTART programme are provided with resources through home visits, parent education and/or family support programmes.

<sup>106</sup> This is done through regular workshops, parent-teacher meetings, and occasional home visits.

<sup>107</sup> For example, parents/caregivers of a child with cerebral palsy may be taught how to embed intervention strategies into the child's daily routines, e.g. positioning the child properly for functional activities (e.g. feeding/ swallowing), doing appropriate strengthening exercises and building in sensory and cognitive stimulation into the child's daily activities.

96. MSF and SG Enable also launched the Caregivers Pod in 2018, a space where caregivers can find peer support, attend training sessions, organise sharing sessions, and access caregiving resources.

### Reply to question 23 of the list of issues

97. Singapore is committed to providing an inclusive education for all children and youth, including those with disabilities and special needs. Singapore has extended the CEA to children with moderate to severe special needs,<sup>108</sup> such that it is compulsory for all children with disabilities to receive at least a primary-level education, unless an exemption is granted.

98. Singapore's inclusive education policy supports the education of children with disabilities and other developmental and learning needs (collectively referred to as SEN). Among school-going children, about 80% of students with SEN are enrolled in mainstream schools, and have access to the same provisions<sup>109</sup> as their peers. Students with SEN who would benefit from more intensive and specialised assistance, and a customised curriculum, are enrolled in SPED schools. Parents are advised by medical and allied health professionals who have observed or worked with the child to consider the most educationally appropriate setting that best meets the educational needs of their child.<sup>110</sup> To facilitate meaningful interaction opportunities between SPED and mainstream students, joint activities are organised through satellite partnerships<sup>111</sup> between SPED schools and mainstream schools.

99. Students with SEN in mainstream schools benefit from specialised manpower, such as Allied Educators (Learning and Behavioural Support) (AE(LBS))<sup>112</sup> and Educational Psychologists,<sup>113</sup> and intervention programmes and support services.<sup>114</sup> Mainstream schools take a coordinated approach to support SEN with structures such as Case Management Teams, and schools are provided the Support for Special Needs Grant.<sup>115</sup> Students in SPED schools benefit from specially trained teachers, a customised curriculum and pedagogy, and receive a wide range of support from allied professionals.<sup>116</sup> SPED teachers attend a specialised pre-service training,<sup>117</sup> the Diploma in Special Education, and can attend customised in-service courses by training institutions.

100. In higher education, every IHL has a SEN Support Office providing support<sup>118</sup> and funding<sup>119</sup> from pre-enrolment to graduation, in collaboration with the relevant academic

<sup>108</sup> With effect from the 2019 Primary 1 cohort.

<sup>109</sup> For example, school counsellors, support from teachers, and curricula.

<sup>110</sup> For instance, if it suits their educational needs, SPED students who have taken national examinations can join mainstream secondary schools or post-secondary institutions, with support to help them transition smoothly.

<sup>111</sup> The satellite partnerships' planned and gradual approach is an effective way of developing self-confidence and the needed social-communication skills to foster successful interactions between students with SEN and their peers. These interactions raise awareness of SEN and build empathy in mainstream students, while also allowing students to practice social and daily skills, and adapt to social mixing at a gradual pace.

<sup>112</sup> These Allied Educators provide in-class or pull-out learning and behavioural support to students with SEN.

<sup>113</sup> Educational Psychologists provide consultation advice and diagnostic assessment services.

<sup>114</sup> These include itinerant services from disability organisations and assistive technology to enhance accessibility to learning for students with physical and sensory impairments.

<sup>115</sup> Schools may use the Support for Special Needs Grant to purchase resources and fund learning activities that provide support for students with SEN, such as new teaching materials and subscriptions to online resources.

<sup>116</sup> Such as psychologists, therapists and social workers.

<sup>117</sup> This is provided at the National Institute of Education (NIE).

<sup>118</sup> Examples of support services include course counselling and access arrangements for classes, assessments and examinations.

<sup>119</sup> The Offices administer funding for students to purchase Assistive Technology devices and support services. This can include text enlargement software, frequency modulation systems and note-taking services.

department. IHLs also work with SSAs to run programmes that prepare students for the workforce.<sup>120</sup>

101. In support of the inclusive education policy, Singapore ensures that school personnel are well-trained to support students with SEN. This includes training on SEN and support strategies for all mainstream teachers;<sup>121</sup> on teaching students about inclusion and non-discrimination for all teachers; on managing bullying and youth sexuality for school counsellors; on building an inclusive campus culture for IHL staff and students; and additional training for AE(LBS) for deeper expertise in SEN support.

102. Singapore ensures that no child is denied access to education. Education in Singapore is heavily subsidised in mainstream schools and SPED schools. Children from low-income families, including those with disabilities, are supported via a broad range of financial schemes to ensure they can access quality education in an appropriate setting.<sup>122</sup>

## Reply to question 24 of the list of issues

### Accessibility of medical services and information

103. All government healthcare facilities have service ambassadors or volunteer guides who are trained to proactively assist patients, such as in navigating facilities.<sup>123</sup> Additional assistance a patient requires would be identified during registration and consultation, and documented in clinical notes to ensure they receive support at service touchpoints.

104. All polyclinics<sup>124</sup> are barrier-free and designed with accessibility features like wheelchair ramps, spacious toilets, widened doorways, grab rails along staircases and lifts, Braille lift buttons, visual stickers, sufficient lighting, non-slippery flooring and tactile tiles for users of walking sticks, and priority seats for persons with additional needs. Dental services in polyclinics are also equipped with wheelchair “tilters”.<sup>125</sup> Polyclinics may use pictorial aids and labels to explain medication instructions to patients and/or caregivers. Patient information leaflets and other educational material on health are given to patients, including those with disabilities as necessary.

### Training for medical staff

105. Medical staff are sensitised to the rights of persons with disabilities. In hospitals, staff receive training to render assistance where possible and needed. Hospitals may also utilise services of sign language translators, or use writing or pictorial aids as needed when engaging

<sup>120</sup> This includes mentorship programmes, internship placements and job matching programmes.

<sup>121</sup> The range of training opportunities provided are differentiated according to the role that the educator plays, for example, as a school leader, middle manager/ teacher leader or teacher.

<sup>122</sup> If such children are attending government and government-aided schools, they can receive a full subsidy for their school and standard miscellaneous fees, and transport subsidies, under the MOE Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS). Primary and secondary school students (including children with disabilities) on the MOE FAS also receive school meal subsidies as well as free textbooks and school attire, while pre-university students on the MOE FAS receive annual cash bursaries to cover their schooling expenses. Schools are also provided with a school-based financial assistance grant, which they can use to provide additional help to MOE FAS students requiring further financial assistance. If such children are attending SPED schools, they can apply for similar financial support under the SPED Financial Assistance Scheme. These students also receive public transport subsidies (if applicable) and can be placed on the School Meals Programme. For SPED students who require school bus fee subsidies, eligible students can apply for the VWO Transport Subsidies administered by SG Enable. SPED schools are also given a grant for Discretionary Financial Assistance, which they can tap on for further financial support.

<sup>123</sup> For example, this could include guiding patients with visual impairment and intellectual disabilities to the right locations, and alerting the relevant healthcare workers to patients’ needs.

<sup>124</sup> In Singapore, primary healthcare is provided by 20 government polyclinics as well as private general practitioner (GP) clinics. The polyclinics offer subsidised medical treatment for acute conditions, chronic disease management, women’s and children’s health services, allied health services and radiological, laboratory and pharmacy services. Some polyclinics also offer subsidised dental services.

<sup>125</sup> With the tilters, wheelchair users do not need to transfer to a dental chair to receive treatment.

the deaf and hard of hearing, or persons with speech impairment. Caregivers or spokespersons will be involved where possible.

106. MOH provides all General Practitioners (GPs) with a Disability Resource List so that they may refer patients with disabilities to suitable disability schemes and services. GPs are also provided referral protocols for children with developmental concerns. MOH is also working on a refresher course for GPs on Childhood Developmental Screening in 2020 to support case-finding of children at risk of developmental delays, and timely referral of the children for specialist assessment and early intervention. MOH has granted scholarships for Special Needs Dentistry to increase the number of trained professionals.<sup>126</sup>

107. To deliver customised medical services to persons with intellectual disabilities, a disability organisation, Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore, received government funding to open the Developmental Disabilities Medical Clinic in 2017, offering free specialised primary care and preventative health services to persons with intellectual disabilities.<sup>127</sup>

### **Reply to question 25 of the list of issues**

108. Disability support mentioned in this document applies to persons with acquired disabilities as well as persons with congenital disabilities. Singapore has also instituted additional measures to promote the rehabilitation of persons with acquired disabilities, such as in the areas of health,<sup>128</sup> employment,<sup>129</sup> education<sup>130</sup> and social services.<sup>131</sup>

### **Reply to question 26 of the list of issues**

#### **Preventing workplace discrimination**

109. Singapore takes a serious view of workplace discrimination. While there is no legislation in Singapore to specifically address workplace discrimination, the principle of equality is enshrined in the Constitution and is widely applied in the field of employment.

110. Singapore addresses workplace discrimination through a two-pronged strategy of education and enforcement. To guide employers, the Tripartite Alliance for Fair & Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) developed a set of Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices (TGFEP), supported by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), the National Trades Union Congress and the Singapore National Employers Federation. The TGFEP sets out fair employment practices to prevent discrimination at the workplace, which covers areas such as recruitment, performance appraisal and promotion. TAFEP works closely with MOM to investigate workplace discrimination and ensures that employers who are found in breach of the TGFEP are duly penalised.

111. Penalties for unfair practices were enhanced in 2020 to include debarment of work pass renewals and applications by the errant employer for at least 12 months, and legal prosecution of employers and key personnel who make false declarations that they have

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<sup>126</sup> Details of general dental practitioners trained in Special Needs Dentistry are also publicised on MSF's and AIC's websites. These resources can be found at:<https://www.msf.gov.sg/opg/Pages/Dental-Services-for-Patients-with-Special-Needs-and-the-Elderly.aspx> and [https://www.aic.sg/sites/silverpagesassets/SilverPages%20Assets/Publications%20\(NextStep\)/NEXTSTEP%202018%20Issue%2003.pdf](https://www.aic.sg/sites/silverpagesassets/SilverPages%20Assets/Publications%20(NextStep)/NEXTSTEP%202018%20Issue%2003.pdf).

<sup>127</sup> The clinic, along with MINDS' initiatives to promote fitness to persons with intellectual disabilities, received SGD2.9 million (US\$2.14 million) in funding from the Community Silver Trust, which is a dollar-for-dollar donation matching grant provided by the Government to enhance the services of SSAs. The clinic also enjoys a subsidised rental rate under the Housing Development Board's social communal facility scheme, with the support of MSF and MOH.

<sup>128</sup> Please refer to paragraph 103-107 under Question 24 for more details on health support.

<sup>129</sup> Please refer to paragraphs 113 and 118 under Question 26 for more details on employment support.

<sup>130</sup> Please refer to paragraph 97-102 under Question 23 for more details.

<sup>131</sup> Please refer to paragraph 119 and 121 under Question 27 for more details.

considered all candidates fairly. MOM also proactively identifies employers with indications of discriminatory hiring practices and places them on a watchlist for closer scrutiny.

### Promoting employment

112. According to MOM's Comprehensive Labour Force Survey in 2018, the resident employment rate was 28.6% among persons with disabilities in the working ages of 15 to 64.<sup>132</sup> Another 4.2% of persons with disabilities in this age range were without a job and actively looking for one, translating to a resident unemployment rate of 12.9%. The resident employment rates for persons with disabilities were 27.6% for those aged 15 to 39; 37.8% for those aged between 40 to 49; 26.1% for those aged between 50 to 64; and 5.9% for those aged 65 and above. The sectors employing the most resident persons with disabilities were community, social and personal services, food services, administrative and support services and manufacturing, which together accounted for more than half of employment among persons with disabilities.

113. To encourage employers to hire and retain persons with disabilities, the Special Employment Credit (SEC) provides wage offsets to employers hiring persons with disabilities earning below S\$4,000 (US\$2,952) a month.<sup>133</sup> In 2019, more than 5,900 employers hiring over 9,000 Singaporeans with disabilities benefited from the SEC.<sup>134</sup> The Enabling Employment Credit (EEC) will replace the SEC in December 2020. Under the EEC, employers hiring persons with disabilities who have not been employed for at least 6 months will receive an additional wage offset of up to 10%, for a period of 6 months.<sup>135</sup> The President's Challenge 2020 was also recently launched with the theme of empowering persons with disabilities, with 110 employers, including the public service, pledging to build a more inclusive workforce.

114. Employers and persons with disabilities can tap on employment support services and programmes under the Adapt and Grow initiative. This includes the Open Door Programme (ODP),<sup>136</sup> the ODP Training Grant,<sup>137</sup> and the ODP Job Redesign Grant.<sup>138</sup> To address the concerns of employers and persons with disabilities about job fit and the suitability of the work environment, the Career Trial provides an opportunity for jobseekers and employers to mutually assess job fit through a trial,<sup>139</sup> during which jobseekers receive a training allowance of up to \$15 (US\$10.90) per hour from the Government.

115. MOM and SG Enable launched the Job Redesign Guide for Inclusive Employers in 2019, which provides step-by-step information for companies on redesigning jobs to suit workers with disabilities.<sup>140</sup> SG Enable runs disability management workshops and a biennial Inclusive Business Forum to equip employers with knowledge and skills on how to recruit persons with disabilities and integrate them into the workforce. SG Enable also helps persons

<sup>132</sup> The remaining two-thirds of persons with disabilities aged 15 to 64 were outside the labour force, with most of them citing poor health or disability as the main reason.

<sup>133</sup> The SEC provides an automatic wage offset of up to 16% for persons with disabilities aged below 67, and up to 22% for persons with disabilities aged 67 and over.

<sup>134</sup> This number has increased from 2012, when SEC was paid to around 3,200 employers hiring about 5,000 Singaporeans with disabilities.

<sup>135</sup> The EEC also provides up to a 20% wage offset to employers that hire Singaporeans with disabilities earning below S\$4,000 (US\$2,952) a month.

<sup>136</sup> The ODP provides job placement and job support services for persons with disabilities and their employers, and grants for training and job redesign.

<sup>137</sup> The ODP training grant provides a subsidy of up to 95% of course fees, training allowance of S\$6 (US\$4.43) per hour, and a training commitment award of S\$100 (US\$73.82) per completed course for persons with disabilities.

<sup>138</sup> The ODP Job Redesign Grant provides employers with funding of up to 90% of the job redesign costs, capped at S\$20,000 (US\$14,763) per employee with disabilities, to help integrate persons with disabilities at the workplace.

<sup>139</sup> Such a trial can last up to three months in duration.

<sup>140</sup> Such "redesigning" can include changes to the physical environment, work processes or work arrangements.

with disabilities to look for employment through the Job Placement and Job Support Programme, and the Hospital-to-Work programme for persons with acquired disabilities.<sup>141</sup>

116. Jobseekers with mental health conditions can receive specialised job support services from the Job Club under the IMH, provided by a multi-disciplinary team,<sup>142</sup> or through community providers.<sup>143</sup> To empower persons in recovery to share their experience and provide support to other persons with mental health conditions, the IMH and NCSS run a programme that trains and employs them as Peer Support Specialists.

117. Inclusive employment requires collaboration amongst the public, private and people sectors. In 2019, MSF announced the formation of a cross-sectoral workgroup<sup>144</sup> to look at preparing persons with disabilities for the future economy by enhancing access to lifelong learning opportunities and employment pathways. The workgroup is conducting consultations and aims to release its recommendations by early 2021.

118. The Singapore Public Service facilitates the employment of persons with disabilities by working with SG Enable via the Public Service Career Placement programme.<sup>145</sup> As of December 2019, approximately 350 persons with disabilities were employed in the Public Service, ranging from policy roles to operational and administrative positions.<sup>146</sup> In addition to direct employment of persons with disabilities, public agencies also have contracts with disability organisations to engage persons with disabilities in work such as digitising documents, data entry, payroll and claims processing.

## Reply to question 27 of the list of issues

### Access to social protection and support services

119. An extensive range of financial support and subsidies is available to persons with disabilities across different life stages. Disability services are means-tested to ensure low-income families receive more subsidies. Depending on their financial circumstances, they may also qualify for national-level financial assistance schemes such as ComCare Long-Term Assistance, Short-to-Medium Term Assistance and Student Care Subsidies. SG Enable also administers several support schemes.<sup>147</sup>

120. At the preschool stage, all government-funded centres offering EIPIC have schemes to help families subsidise EIPIC fees. Parents with children enrolled in selected private

<sup>141</sup> Hospital-to-Work (H2W) case managers focus support on the client's skills enhancement or re-skilling, which are complemented with employment services such as job placement and job support. The H2W programme helps clients to identify personal goals that are achievable, with each goal further broken down into manageable steps that clients can feel confident in achieving.

<sup>142</sup> The multi-disciplinary teams include occupational therapists, medical social workers, case managers and job placement officers.

<sup>143</sup> This includes the Integrated Employment Services by the Singapore Anglican Community Services and the Singapore Association for Mental Health.

<sup>144</sup> The Workgroup is co-chaired by the Minister for Social and Family Development and Ms Denise Phua, president of the Autism Resource Centre, a disability organisation.

<sup>145</sup> SG Enable helps public agencies build their capabilities to train and hire employees with disabilities, through advisory and consultancy services, disability management workshops and online resources. Other initiatives include posting suitable vacancies on SG Enable's job portal and participating in SG Enable's career fairs and programmes. Such programmes include Job Shadowing Day, and IHL internship and mentorship programmes.

<sup>146</sup> As an example of inclusivity initiatives in the public service, the Singapore Government's shared services agency, Vital.org employs a number of persons with special needs in the Payroll and Claims division and provides opportunities for them to develop their skills. Some measures Vital.org has put in place include workplace adjustments to facilitate officers' movements (e.g. sensor door access), sign language interpreters during staff orientation as well as disability management courses for officers' supervisors and teammates. Another example can be found in the National Library Board, which regularly organises disability awareness workshops for staff, in addition to making workplace adjustments for employees with disabilities.

<sup>147</sup> Please refer to paragraph 84-86 under Question 20 on subsidies for assistive technology and paragraphs 40 under Question 8 for transport subsidies.



intervention centres can tap on assistance through the Enhanced Pilot for Private Intervention Providers scheme. Financial assistance is also available at the school level.<sup>148</sup>

121. After graduation, persons with disabilities who are unable to work can enrol in government-funded services such as Day Activity Centres (DAC) and Sheltered Workshops. Caregivers can tap on the Foreign Domestic Worker Levy Concession and the Foreign Domestic Worker Grant for persons with disabilities to defray the cost of employing a foreign domestic worker to look after family members with disabilities. Working caregivers to persons with disabilities may also qualify for tax reliefs.<sup>149</sup> Respite care services are provided by all ten ADHs and three Children Disability Homes, to support families of persons with disabilities who may need short-term care assistance.

### **Income support**

122. Lower-wage Singaporean workers with disabilities automatically benefit from two Workfare schemes to increase their wages, improve retirement adequacy and enhance their skills. The Workfare Income Supplement scheme<sup>150</sup> tops up the salaries and Central Provident Fund (CPF) savings of lower-wage workers, including those with disabilities. The Workfare Skills Support provides monetary awards, absentee payroll funding and training allowances to encourage lower-wage workers with disabilities to upgrade their skills. Lower-wage Singaporeans with disabilities can also tap on employment support services and programmes.<sup>151</sup>

### **Access to public housing**

123. Persons with disabilities have equal access to public housing programmes as individuals without disabilities. There are also programmes and schemes to support the independent living of persons with disabilities in the community.<sup>152</sup>

## **Reply to question 28 of the list of issues**

124. The well-being of migrant workers in Singapore is safeguarded by a comprehensive legal framework. Should a migrant worker acquire a disability in the course of his/her employment, the worker is entitled to compensation under the Work Injury Compensation Act.<sup>153</sup> Singapore will not ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families at this time.

## **Reply to question 29 of the list of issues**

### **Participation in the conduct of public affairs**

125. Persons with disabilities have made significant contributions to parliamentary and political debates in Singapore. For example, the Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) scheme has encouraged the participation of persons with disabilities in the legislative arena,

<sup>148</sup> Please refer to paragraph 102 under Question 23 for more details on financial assistance in schools.

<sup>149</sup> Caregivers who are supporting spouses, children, parents or siblings with disabilities can apply for these tax reliefs.

<sup>150</sup> The Workfare Income Supplement Scheme (WIS) encourages eligible lower-wage workers to build up their CPF savings by providing monthly cash supplements and CPF top-ups. WIS was enhanced in January 2020, with a raised qualifying income ceiling and higher payouts. WIS recipients can receive up to S\$4,000 (US\$2,953) annually, boosting their incomes by up to 30%.

<sup>151</sup> Please refer to paragraphs 113-115 under Question 26 for more details on employment assistance.

<sup>152</sup> Please refer to paragraphs 84-86 under Question 20 on support for assistive technology; paragraphs 40 under Question 8 on subsidies for transport; paragraphs 119-121 under Question 27 (access to social protection and support services); and paragraphs 65-66 under Question 12 for more details on efforts to reduce institutionalisation.

<sup>153</sup> The injured worker can claim medical expenses of up to S\$45,000 (US\$33,216) or one year from the date of accident, whichever is reached first. The worker can also claim medical leave wages, for up to one year from the date of the accident. If the worker suffers from a permanent disability, the worker may claim lump sum compensation of up to S\$289,000 (US\$213,321).

enabling them to represent the views of their community and make contributions to public policy. NMPs, who are appointed by the President<sup>154</sup> for a term of two and a half years, may raise questions, suggest legislation and vote on most matters presented in Parliament, with certain exceptions.<sup>155</sup> Between 2014 and 2020, two persons with disabilities<sup>156</sup> served as NMPs. Persons with disabilities have the same rights as other citizens to form social organisations and join political parties, and have also been nominated to run for political office.<sup>157</sup>

### **Electoral participation**

126. In Singapore, persons with disabilities are eligible to vote on an equal basis as persons without disabilities. Singapore adopts a number of measures to facilitate the voting process for voters with disabilities. There are accessible drop-off points at polling stations. Polling areas are barrier-free, and wheelchairs are provided for voters who need them. Within the polling area, priority is given to elderly voters and voters with disabilities. Voters who are visually impaired are provided stencils to mark the ballot paper without assistance, should they wish to do so. Alternatively, a person with a physical or visual disability can request an election official to mark his/her ballot paper in the manner directed by the voter.<sup>158</sup> The election official is under oath to keep the vote secret.

127. New accessibility initiatives are regularly introduced, taking into account feedback from the public. Since 2015, ballot papers have contained photographs to assist with candidate recognition, and have been redesigned with better contrast for those with visual impairment. During the 2020 General Election, portable lap voting booths were provided to wheelchair users to enable them to mark their ballot papers independently in private. Funnels were installed on ballot boxes to make it easier to slot ballot papers into the boxes, and voting pens were replaced with stamp-pens which made it easier to mark ballot papers.

128. Election officials at polling stations are trained to provide assistance and to explain voting procedures to voters, including voters with disabilities.<sup>159</sup> The Elections Department keeps voters with special needs informed about accessibility measures via various platforms.<sup>160</sup>

### **Reply to question 30 of the list of issues**

129. Singapore is committed to creating spaces and opportunities for persons with disabilities of all ages to participate in social and recreational activities, and to engage in meaningful interactions with other members of society from a young age. 17 inclusive playgrounds<sup>161</sup> across Singapore, and initiatives like NCSS' 'Children In Action'

<sup>154</sup> The President appoints NMPs on the recommendation of a Special Select Committee of Parliament. In assessing NMP candidates, the Special Select Committee considers whether they have rendered distinguished public service, brought honour to Singapore, or excelled in certain fields such as the arts, the sciences, business, community service or the labour movement, having regard to the need for candidates to reflect as wide a range of independent and non-partisan views as possible.

<sup>155</sup> NMPs can vote on all bills and motions except those concerning amendments to the Constitution and public funds (e.g. Supply Bills and Money Bills) as well as motions of no confidence in the Government or motions to remove the President.

<sup>156</sup> The two NMPs with disabilities are lawyer and disability advocate Ms Chia Yong Yong and three-time Paralympic gold medallist Ms Yip Pin Xiu.

<sup>157</sup> For example, Mr Muhammad Azhar Abdul Latip, a candidate with disabilities who campaigned on a platform of creating more opportunities for persons with disabilities, was nominated by his party to stand for the 2020 General Elections.

<sup>158</sup> This is provided for under section 42(5) of the Parliamentary Elections Act.

<sup>159</sup> This is provided for under section 42(4) of the Parliamentary Elections Act.

<sup>160</sup> Such as information on the Elections Department's website and through voter education collateral.

<sup>161</sup> These have inclusive play equipment such as wheelchair swings, accessible swings and accessible merry-go-rounds.

programme,<sup>162</sup> facilitate inclusive play between children with and without disabilities. Over the past year, over 1,000 children took part in inclusive play activities, and 78% of surveyed participants without disabilities indicated increased awareness of persons with disabilities. Libraries and their programmes have also become increasingly inclusive.<sup>163</sup>

130. In schools, Physical Education (PE) lessons are adapted as necessary so that students with disabilities can participate in PE with others.<sup>164</sup> MOE will continue to train more PE teachers in Inclusive PE. SPED schools have PE teachers who are trained in Adapted PE. Inclusive sports events also promote awareness and inclusivity among students.<sup>165</sup>

131. Under the Disability Sports Master Plan,<sup>166</sup> launched in 2016, sports have become increasingly accessible across the nation, with once-a-week sports participation rates among persons with disabilities increasing from 28% in 2015 to 51% in 2018.<sup>167</sup> Sports infrastructure is more inclusive,<sup>168</sup> with the aim for all ActiveSG gyms in Singapore to be inclusive by 2026. Sport Singapore runs programmes to encourage the participation of persons with disabilities in sports,<sup>169</sup> and there have been initiatives to build capabilities and enhance disability awareness amongst sports personnel, volunteers and caregivers to better support persons with disabilities in sports.<sup>170</sup> Launched in 2017, the 2019 Inclusive Sports Festival had about 25,000 participants with and without disabilities, and 30 different activities and workshops.<sup>171</sup> Since 2017, parasports have been introduced in the Singapore National Games. The 2019 Singapore National Games featured teams comprising individuals with and without disabilities.

<sup>162</sup> This programme encourages schools, childcare and early intervention centres as well as social service providers to bring children to the inclusive playgrounds and other suitable locations for play and meaningful interaction.

<sup>163</sup> For example, the National Library Board introduced Sensory Story Time in 2018, a pilot programme to allow parents and children of different abilities to enjoy stories in a multisensory approach. The upcoming Punggol Regional Library will offer customised services and calming zones for patrons with disabilities and children with special needs. Under NCSS' Inclusive Read program, events such as inclusive story-telling sessions were held at public libraries to encourage greater interactions between persons with and without disabilities through stories and the sharing of lived experiences.

<sup>164</sup> All mainstream schools have at least one PE teacher trained in Inclusive PE. As of March 2020, close to 600 PE teachers from Primary, Secondary and Junior Colleges and Centralised Institutes have been trained in Inclusive PE.

<sup>165</sup> Since 2018, Special Olympics Singapore and Sport Singapore, our national sporting agency, have been co-organising the annual "Play Inclusive" event, supported by MOE. SPED students team up with students from mainstream schools to train together for about six months in a variety of inclusive sports, before playing in the final tournament. Over 800 participants took part in "Play Inclusive" 2019.

<sup>166</sup> The recommendations of the Disability Sports Master Plan (DSMP) were based on consultations with over 500 children and adults with disabilities, and other stakeholders such as the Singapore Disability Sports Council.

<sup>167</sup> A National Sports Participations Survey is conducted annually.

<sup>168</sup> Four ActiveSG Sports Centres across the country have been designated as Centres of Expertise to date, and six ActiveSG Sports Centres have swimming pools with ramps into the pool as well as aquatic wheelchairs for use by persons with disabilities. Inclusive gyms with exercise machines suitable for use by persons with disabilities, seniors and other regular gym users have been installed in eight locations across the island.

<sup>169</sup> For example, the "Yes! I Can" programme includes courses in swimming, badminton, wheelchair rugby and goalball for persons with disabilities.

<sup>170</sup> For example, a partnership with the International Paralympic Committee was launched in 2016 to develop local coaching expertise as well as to train mainstream coaches in basic disability sports coaching. In addition, the PlayAbility programme provides recreational sports opportunities in water and court activities for groups with disabilities on a weekly basis. As of December 2019, more than 300 persons with disabilities had benefited from this programme, which is supported by over 50 volunteers.

<sup>171</sup> All volunteers and staff of the Inclusive Sports Festival (ISF) undergo disability awareness training. There was no ISF in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many activities were conducted online. An inclusive version of the GetActive! Singapore workout video (available at: <https://youtu.be/n0WdkpdyPs>) was also produced so that persons with disabilities could join in.

132. In the arts and cultural arena, under the National Heritage Board (NHB)'s "Our SG Heritage Plan" goal for more inclusive and accessible museums, several national museums and heritage institutions now have large-print format guides, sensory maps and access-friendly entry points. Following extensive engagements with persons with disabilities and other stakeholders, the National Museum of Singapore launched initiatives to support persons with sensory sensitivities.<sup>172</sup> Heritage institutions are engaging partners such as hospitals and the Geriatric Education & Research Institute to study the effects of museum-related reminiscing activity on seniors diagnosed with mild dementia. NHB also supported the formation of an Accessibility Community of Practice, launched in 2019, to promote the exchange of best practices on accessibility for museums. The National Arts Council co-organises a biennial Arts and Disability Forum with a disability organisation to facilitate knowledge-sharing and discussions on innovation in artistic practice, inclusive community engagement and multi-sectorial partnerships to advance inclusivity in the arts.<sup>173</sup> Cultural institutions also have inclusive venues and programmes.<sup>174</sup>

### Reply to question 31 of the list of issues

133. MSF works with service providers and SG Enable to maintain a database of persons with disabilities who are users of MSF-funded disability services. The system captures data disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographic location, and any other information relevant to the users' participation in the disability service. The Public Service Governance Act 2018 permits MSF to exchange data with other public agencies to improve disability services and policy outcomes, with the necessary data protections in place.

134. The Government monitors the number and progress of children with developmental needs in EI programmes, and students with disabilities through their years in the education system. MSF is establishing a set of standardised guidelines to identify and monitor the progress of children of preschool ages with developmental needs across the various EI programmes. The Government has also developed a preliminary map of the employment pathways taken by SPED students after graduation, and is working on a more comprehensive picture of their post-schooling outcomes.

135. The Government has provided public data on the prevalence rate of persons with disabilities disaggregated by population group and type of disability.<sup>175</sup> To better support persons with disabilities, MSF worked with the Department of Statistics to include questions related to disability in the Census 2020, based on the Washington Group's Short Set of Questions on Disability. MSF is also developing a system to capture data concerning persons with disabilities, beyond users of MSF-funded disability services.

### Reply to question 32 of the list of issues

136. Singapore supports the participation of persons with disabilities on the international stage. More than 130,000 government officials from over 170 countries have participated in the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP), Singapore's flagship technical assistance programme, including persons with disabilities or special needs, for which special

<sup>172</sup> This includes the 'Quiet Mornings' initiative, launched in December 2018, whereby the museum opens its doors three times a month an hour earlier and dedicates those mornings to visitors with sensory sensitivities so that they may experience the museum in a calmer environment. Other initiatives include quiet pods within its galleries, inclusive activities for families, resources such as sensory bags, and a Quiet Room launched in August 2019 to support persons with autism who may need a calming space while visiting the galleries.

<sup>173</sup> Participants, artists, speakers and panellists with disabilities take part in the Forum annually. Their access needs are supported to ensure inclusivity.

<sup>174</sup> For example, the Esplanade runs the PLAYtime! series, an interactive theatre series targeted at families and children affected by autism spectrum disorders and other sensory, social, and cognitive disabilities. This programme was brought online in 2020, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>175</sup> Singapore Parliamentary Debates, Official Report 19 November 2018, vol 94 at col 36, <[sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/fullreport?sittingdate=19-11-2018](http://sprs.parl.gov.sg/search/fullreport?sittingdate=19-11-2018)> at 85 (accessed 16 September 2020) (Ms Yip Pin Xiu, Nominated Member of Parliament).

arrangements were made to ensure their full participation in the programmes.<sup>176</sup> We run an annual SCP course on “Empowering Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs” since 2018,<sup>177</sup> and also include such information in other courses.<sup>178</sup>

137. Singapore is active in promoting awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities at international platforms. Singapore serves as Vice-President of the 12th and 13th Conferences of States Parties (COSP) to the CRPD, and has organised and/or supported disability-related side events at the COSP as well as at the Human Rights Council (HRC).<sup>179</sup> Singapore also regularly engages in HRC debates on issues related to the rights of persons with disabilities. In August 2020, Singapore co-hosted the virtual UN Global Forum on the COVID-19 crisis and persons with disabilities.<sup>180</sup>

### Reply to question 33 of the list of issues

138. In 2017, to drive Singapore’s efforts to fulfil the EMP3, three work streams on ‘maximising potential and opportunities’, ‘enhancing support for families’, and ‘inclusive homes and environment’ were identified by the Standing Committee on Disability (SCD). This resulted in the three cross-sectoral workgroups under the EMP3.<sup>181</sup>

### Reply to question 34 of the list of issues

139. Singapore welcomes independent feedback to improve support for persons with disabilities in Singapore, and regularly engages representatives of disability organisations and SSAs.<sup>182</sup> We have various monitoring mechanisms in place, which have worked well. In addition to the SCD, and an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) on Human Rights, the IMC on the CRPD monitors and coordinates the implementation of cross-cutting disability policies, such as how to best address the needs of persons with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we will continue to review these mechanisms within the context of Singapore’s national circumstances, we do not see a need to establish the institution envisaged in the Paris Principles to be able to implement our obligations under the Convention.

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<sup>176</sup> These included arranging for such participants to stay in accessible hotel rooms, sending course materials to participants with visual disabilities in advance and assigning staff to assist participants with support needs during the course.

<sup>177</sup> As at end-2019, 52 officials from 40 countries have attended the course.

<sup>178</sup> For example, the course on “Smart Mobility and Intelligent Transport Innovations” conducted by the LTA Academy introduces the designs and services for persons with disabilities and other accessibility needs in Singapore’s land transport system.

<sup>179</sup> At the 12<sup>th</sup> COSP to the CRPD in June 2019, Singapore organised side events to discuss best practices in implementing the Convention in two areas: (i) leveraging the power of technology and design to support independent living; and (ii) maximising potential and opportunities for persons with disabilities through early intervention measures, continuous learning and employment facilitation. These events were organised together with the co-chairs of the three Enabling Masterplan Workgroups, who are representatives of disability organisations and among which one is a person with disability, and who shared about their respective organisations’ experiences at the COSP to the CRPD. At the Human Rights Council, Singapore has co-sponsored and spoken at various side events in support of disability rights, such as a side event on the “Role of Assistive Technology in Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities” in March 2019, and a side event on the right to education for vulnerable children, including children with disabilities.

<sup>180</sup> Other co-hosts include Ecuador, Liberia and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

<sup>181</sup> Please refer to paragraph 14 under Question 2 for further details on the cross-sectoral workgroups.

<sup>182</sup> Please refer to paragraphs 12-14 under Question 2 for more details. Examples of consultations held with persons with disabilities and other stakeholders can also be found throughout this document.