

**QUESTIONNAIRE TO GOVERNMENTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

SINGAPORE'S RESPONSE

**Part One: Overview of trends in achieving gender equality and
women's advancement**

1 As a small nation with no natural resources, Singapore has to make the best use of its people to develop, create wealth and progress in a competitive global economy. Making up almost half of the population (49.75% in June 1997), women are an integral part of the country's human resources. Women's rights are ensured through legislation and an equal opportunity policy based on the principle of meritocracy. This policy is incorporated in the planning and implementation of policies and programmes across government ministries. There is no special policy for women as they are not perceived as a minority or advantaged group warranting special attention. Details on these provisions and the achievements made by women and for women can be found in our response to Part 3 of the questionnaire (see attached Annex C).

2 Many of the recommendations for government action in the Beijing Platform For Action (POA) have been implemented and in place for Singapore and are on-going. As such, we do not have a national plan of action for the Beijing POA.

3 The government's role is to provide an enabling environment for women to achieve their potential in the social, economic and political life in society based on a principle of meritocracy. This policy will continue to the year 2000 and we do not envisage a need to initiate affirmative action

for women to advance their status or for government bodies to embark on special training on gender sensitivity to mainstream women.

4 Besides legislative provisions to protect the rights of women, this support from government includes the following:-

- a) special schemes for working mothers in the Civil Service, a major employer of women, to help them balance family life and work commitments (married women made up 55.1% of the total female work force in 1997);
- b) family life education programmes promoting the concept of shared responsibilities of both sexes, amongst others;
- c) special health services for aging women and women-related illnesses (on the average, women outlive men by 4.2 years in 1997);
- d) tax incentive schemes for married women; and
- e) the promotion of a comprehensive range of community-based services and programmes for the elderly and the disabled that will assist women, the principal caregivers in families.

5 Our efforts in ensuring equal access for women to basic social services and an equal opportunity for both sexes based on the principle of meritocracy have enabled women to reap equitable benefits of national development as the men. Singapore was ranked 28th out of 174 countries by the Human Development Index (HDI) in the Human Development Report of 1998. The HDI ranks each country according to

its score on a composite index comprising the per capita GNP, life expectancy, literacy and educational levels. Singapore was also ranked 42nd out of 102 countries by the Gender-Empowerment Measure (GEM) in the same Report. The GEM measures women's participation in decision-making i.e. in the professional, economic and political domains as compared to men. Singapore is first on the GEM ranking among the ASEAN nations, followed by Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia.

6 Education, training and upgrading of skills are underpins of economic progress in a competitive global economy and these are given great emphasis by government. The budgetary allocation of government expenditure for education, for example, have not been reduced as a result of the economic crisis, making up 20.95% of the national budget allocation to Education for Financial Year 1998/99 (for S\$5.7 billion). Women are given equal opportunities to training and upgrading. In 1997, women made up 45.2% of the 13,127 participants of the courses conducted by the Singapore Productivity and Standards Board's Institute for Productivity Training (This figure matches the overall participation rate of female workers in the workforce in 1997 which was 41%).

7 On the effects of the global financial crisis, in terms of government support, welfare provisions and benefits, women are not more, or less, discriminated or marginalised as compared with the men. Special measures introduced by government to help Singaporeans cope with the effects of the economic slowdown are accessible to both genders. These include rebates for utilities, service and conservancy charges and average reductions in hospital bills of 5 to 10% (from January 1999). To help women from low-income families, a Back-to-Work Child Care Scheme was implemented in July 1998 to help them meet the costs of starting their children off on a child care programme to enable them to take up full-time

employment. Details can be found in our response to Part 3 of the questionnaire under "Women and Poverty" (Annex C).

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SINGAPORE'S RESPONSE

Part Two: Financial and institutional measures

1 Allocation of national budget for women

1.1 As explained in Annex A, we do not see the need to have a separate policy for women and a special fund to be set up for women. The national budget is allocated based on the relative merits of the various programmes and our national needs and priorities. We do not see the need to establish a national machinery to advance the status of women. The Family Services Branch, Family Development Division of the Ministry of Community Development, serves as the national focal point for women's matters and works closely with 13 other Ministries and agencies concerned with women's matters. Each Ministry is responsible for the planning and implementation of its policies and programmes. None of our programmes implemented by government for women such as crisis shelters, upgrading of skills, promotion of women's health and etc, are funded by international or bilateral donors.

1.2 As a pro-family society, many of our policies are designed for families and these invariably benefit the women. Such schemes relate to housing, tax incentives, family life education and family support services. Examples of family support services that come under the Ministry of Community Development's purview are the Child Care Programme and the Student Care Centres Programme (SCCs). Government's expenditure on childcare subsidies totaled S\$48,745,575 in Financial Year 1997/98 and is expected to reach S\$55,914,800 in Financial Year 1998/99.

1.3 Non-profit making organisations are encouraged to set up SCCs to prevent young children from falling into bad company when left unattended before and after school hours by working parents. These organisations are provided funding support from government for renovation costs for converting void deck spaces to such centres and for the purchase and equipping of new centres. From December 1996 to December 1998, a total of S\$778,007 was disbursed by government for this purpose.

2 Follow-up on 4th UN World Conference on Women, Beijing, September 1995 and the World Summit For Social Development, Copenhagen, March 1995.

2.1 Two Inter-Ministry Committees have been set up under the Ministry of Community (MCD) to monitor Singapore's implementation of the UN Conventions on the Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The recommendations of the Beijing POA and the Declaration of the World Summit for Social Development have been used as reference points in the formulation of our policies.

2.2 The progress of the implementation of the Beijing POA is also being monitored at the highest level in ASEAN. Singapore signed the Declaration for the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region on 5 July 1998. Together with its ASEAN neighbours, the progress of implementing the Beijing POA is being monitored at the annual meetings of the ASEAN Sub-committee on Women. The first regional report on this Declaration was presented to the First ASEAN Informal Summit held in Jakarta, Indonesia in 1996. The second regional report is expected to be published next year.

2.3 As the National Focal Point, MCD is consulted by other Ministries and local and foreign agencies on gender issues. MCD maintains close links with key government ministries and other agencies including the women's organisations to monitor and address emerging issues that effect women and their families.

3 Role and Participation of NGOs

3.1 The Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO), the umbrella body for women's organisations has 39 affiliates and about 100,000 membership. SCWO's views are often sought in the preparation of country reports on women.

3.2 On the Beijing POA, SCWO has identified 3 priorities to work on i.e. Economic Empowerment of Women; Stop Family Violence; and Women and Health. The SCWO and its affiliates are actively engaged in collaborative activities with government agencies and community organisations to address these issues and make recommendations on them. SCWO is represented in the Committee on Women and Family Violence (chaired by the Ministry of Home Affairs), the National Healthy Life-Style Committee (chaired by under the Ministry of Health) and the Committee on the Family (chaired by MCD).

3.3 Examples of SCWO's collaborative activities with government agencies were:-

- a) a public forum on 10 May 1997 to promote public awareness and advocacy of the rights of women and to deliberate on the amendments to the Women's Charter. The amendments provided, amongst other things, wider protection to victims of domestic violence and came into force on 1 May 1997;

- b) a seminar on "Education of Women in the 21st Century" in October 1997 involving educationists, parents and teachers; and
- c) a series of talks, "Know Your Health" from March to November 1997 which focussed on health and health-related topics relevant for women.

3.4 SCWO is also a member of the ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organisations (ACWO) which has formal recognition and affiliation to ASEAN since 1984. ACWO is the ASEAN women's regional grouping comprising the respective recognised national women's councils of the ASEAN member countries. ACWO is represented at the annual meetings of the ASEAN Sub-committee on Women, a committee set up in ASEAN with the primary objective of advancing the status of women in ASEAN.

3.5 A 2-year action plan to be implemented is adopted at ACWO's bi-annual meetings. SCWO hosted the 8th General Assembly and Conference of ACWO from 17th to 21st June 1998 in Singapore on "ASEAN Women: Vision and Action for the 21st Century". The ACWO Plan of Action for 1998-2000 called for more progress for women in 7 areas:-

- (i) Information and technology; (ii) Sustainable Development;
- (iii) Industrial Economy; (iv) Poverty Alleviation; (v) Politics; (vi) Social Impact Assessment; and (vii) Government and Non-government Partnerships.

ACWO's members would report on the implementation of the ACWO's Plan of Action at the next General Assembly, in the year 2000 to be hosted by Malaysia.

ANNEX C

Critical Areas of Concern	Examples of successful policies, programmes and projects to implement the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (Indicate any targets and strategies set and related achievements)	Examples of obstacles encountered/lessons learned	Commitment to further action/new Initiatives	Other
I. Women and Poverty	Please see Appendix 1.		Programmes that benefit women and their families will be reviewed as when necessary.	
II. Women and Education and Training	Please see Appendix 2.	Please see Appendix 3.	Both male and female students have equal access to a common education system in which Information and Technology skills and creativity in addition to the teaching of the sciences, the arts and moral education are given emphasis. The resources to enhance the opportunities for female students to go further are common to those pertaining to male students. By the year 2000, it is expected that the level of instruction and	

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<p>III. Women and Health</p>	<p>Please see Appendix 4.</p>	<p>Singapore has attained parity with the advanced industrialised countries in the health status of its population including women. Female life expectancy at birth has reached 79.2 years, compared to 75.0 for men. Women have equal access to nutrition, education and health programmes in Singapore. The Female Infant Mortality Rate has fallen from 11.6 to 3.1 per thousand resident live births in 1980 and 1997 respectively. The Maternal Mortality Rate is one of the lowest in the world. It has fallen from 0.05 to 0.00 per</p>	<p>training for all male and female students in schools and the institutes of higher learning will be upgraded.</p> <p>An International Conference with a special focus on older women, "Women's Health: The Nation's Gain" will be held in Singapore on 5 to 7 Jul 99. This is organised with the support of the Ministry of Health by the Tsao Foundation Ltd, a non-profit making organisation and an affiliate of the National Council of Social Service of Singapore.</p>	

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IV. Women and Violence	Please See Appendix 5.	thousand live and still births in 1980 and 1997 respectively.	Copyright privilege was granted to the Commonwealth Secretariat on 14 October 1998 to use the Revised Manual on Guidelines for Police Training on Violence Against Women and Child Sexual Abuse as a Source Document. The Manual was produced and used by the Singapore Police Force. A manual on the procedures for managing family violence is being developed by the Ministry of Community Development for front-line officers, doctors, social workers and medical social workers.	

Critical Areas of Concern	Examples of successful policies, programmes and projects to implement the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (Indicate any targets and strategies set and related achievements)	Examples of obstacles encountered/lessons learned	Commitment to further action/new initiatives	Other
V. Women and Armed Conflict	Not applicable to Singapore.			
VI. Women and Access to Resources	In addition to Appendix 2, please see Appendix 6.			
VII. Women and Decision-Making	Please see Appendix 7.	Though the representation of women in politics is low, this has not resulted in less rights for women in Singapore.	Please see Appendix 8.	

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<p>VIII. Women and Advancement of Status</p>	<p>Women have made significant progress over the decade. Singapore's achievements in life expectancy at birth, literacy rate and income share has been ranked 27th out of 146 countries in the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) in the UN Human Development Report 1997. The Report singled out Singapore as one of the top eight developing countries which had done quite well in the GDI ranking. Singapore was described as one of the countries which had "succeeded in enhancing the basic human capabilities of both women and men".</p>	<p>1. Adequate channels of communication are in place to provide women the opportunity to give their views and feedback on government policies, such as the women leaders in Parliament, trade unions, judiciary and grassroots organisations.</p> <p>2. The Feedback Unit set up by the Ministry of Community Development (MCD) is another avenue of communication for women whereby ad-hoc sessions are conducted to gather feedback on areas of concern affecting working mothers. It has a</p>	<p>Please see Appendix 9.</p>	<p>Vision for Women's Advancement and equality for women in the new millennium</p> <p>Our vision is as follows:-</p> <p>1 Women can count on men to play an equal role in family and household responsibilities.</p> <p>2 More women to share in the belief that they have the potential and capability to succeed in whatever careers, or endeavours they choose to pursue in life.</p> <p>3 Seeing more women assume prominent leadership positions in all sectors.</p>

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		<p>Feedback Group on Families and Children and is chaired by a woman.</p> <p>3. A practical approach is adopted to address the responsibilities/roles of both men and women and how best to help them balance their obligations towards their families whilst participating in the market economy. Examples include family life education programmes introduced in schools and the general public to create awareness of changing values and expectations and to promote the concept of shared responsibility of both sexes, amongst other</p>		

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		things. The programmes are on-going.		
IX. Women and Human Rights	Please see Appendix 10.			
X. Women and the Media	Please see Appendix 11.		The Ministry of Information and the Arts is not currently actively engaged in any advocacy role with the media on public awareness programmes on gender sensitization. The Ministry	

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			would, as and when the occasion arises, advise or prompt the media on the coverage of news and issues concerning women.	
XI. Women and the Environment	Please see Appendix 12.			
XII. Women and the Violation of the Rights of the Girl-Child	In addition to Appendices 2, 4, 5 & 10, please see Appendix 13.			

Women and Poverty - Initiatives/programmes that address Poverty Alleviation with a gender perspective

1 The Small Families Improvement Scheme implemented by government in January 1994 is an example of an initiative containing a gender perspective. The objective of the scheme is to help low-income families with low education levels to provide a good home environment for their children to do well in school and in the long run, break the poverty cycle. It helps to pay for the children's education and for the family to buy their own public housing flat. The scheme aims to help the low-income families to intend to stay together and keep the family small. One of the criteria for the scheme is that the family must be intact, consisting of husband and wife and 1 or 2 child/children. The wife also has to be aged 35 years or below. Under the Scheme, families will receive an annual Education Bursary for their children's education from Primary 1 to Pre-University or Polytechnic level. An annual Conditional Housing Grant of S\$800 will be paid into the woman's account in the Central Provident Fund (CPF) for 20 years or until she reaches 45 years, whichever is earlier. Up to S\$16,000 will be given. The money can be kept in the CPF account or be used to buy a flat with the Housing and Development Board, the government authority on public housing. The scheme was extended to widows in September 1995.

2 Another example is the "Back-to-Work: Child Care Scheme" implemented by government in July 1998. This is to assist mothers from low-income families to take up full-time employment by relieving them of their problems in child care. Government gives a grant to pay for the enrollment fees, uniforms and etc involved for children in child care centres. The quantum of the grant per child is up to S\$1,000 and will be given up to two children per household and extended once to each eligible child in the household. As at 15 February 1999, 22 households had benefited from the Scheme.

Women And Education And Training

1 Singapore has been placing a high premium on education on our young. Both female and male students have equal access to a common education system in which Information and Technology skills and creativity in addition to the teaching of the sciences, the arts and moral education are given emphasis. By the year 2000, it is expected that the level of instruction and training for all male and female students in schools and the institutes of higher learning will be upgraded.

2 There is almost even enrollment of both sexes in the school enrollment and this has led to an increase of number of females enrolling in tertiary institutions. Both male and female students are given equal access to educational institutions that offer the same academic standards and have the same teachers teaching them and using the same resources. Male and female students have equal opportunities to compete for scholarships at the tertiary level. The most prestigious scholarship in the land, the President's Scholarship, is awarded to male and female students, purely based on merit. From 1995 to 1998, 6 out of 15 such Scholarships (or 40%) were awarded to female students.

3 From 1997, both Home Economics and Technical Studies were being offered to all lower secondary pupils, both males and females. This is part and parcel of a conscious effort not to gender-type roles in schools and will help to reinforce the concept of shared responsibility that is promoted in the national family life education programme.

4 For Singapore to compete in the global market, upgrading the quality of the workforce through continual training is of paramount importance. Opportunities for upgrading the skills and education of workers are available to both men and women. In 1997, 45.2% of the 13,127 participants of the courses conducted by the Productivity and Standards Board's Institute for Productivity Training (PSB) were females. This figure matched the overall profile of the female participation rate in the workforce in 1997 which was 41%.

5 Equal opportunities are also provided by the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) for working adults, both male and female, to upgrade their general education on part-time basis to the General Certificate in Education (GCE) Normal, Ordinary and Advanced levels. At the workplace, the ITE provides literacy and numeracy skills primarily for male and female workers who through the lack of opportunities in the early years of Singapore's development, missed out on a basic education. To help these workers, IT launched two national workers' educational programmes, viz, the Basic

Education for Skills Training (BEST) programme in 1983 and the Worker Improvement through Secondary Education programme (WISE) in 1987. In 1997, the enrollment of female participants in the BEST and WISE programmes constituted 67% and 62% of the intakes respectively.

6 The Skills Redevelopment Programme under the National Trade Union Congress to help mature workers to stay employable in the future was launched in Dec 96. This benefits both genders. Employers who sponsor workers (Singaporeans and Permanent Residents) for approved courses are eligible for a 80% Skills Development Fund reimbursement of the course fees if their trainees fulfill at least 75% course attendance and sat for course examinations. If training is conducted during working hours, the employers will also receive a 70% absentee payroll grant (up to S \$ 4.20 per trainee hour). If training is conducted off working hours, the employers should pay the trainees S \$ 6 per training hour, of which the Skills Redevelopment Programme (under NTUC) will reimburse S \$ 4.20 out of the S \$ 6 to the employer. Training in computer engineering is one of the approved courses. The participation rate of women in the Skills Redevelopment Programme was 76% in 1997.

Women And Education And Training – Example of obstacle/lesson/learned.

1 Since 1994, more than half of the annual intake of undergraduates were women. Over the last two years, more women have been encouraged to join the engineering courses, a traditionally male domain, to meet the increasing demand for engineers. The intake of first year engineering students has risen from 1 in 8 to 1 in 4 in just two years. Currently, only one third of the total intake of students into the Medical Faculty are women. This should be interpreted in the light of the high cost in training medical students (a significant proportion of which is subsidised by tax payers) and the tendency for female doctors to stop practicing medicine compared to male doctors. This trend has placed a strain on our health services in terms of decreased availability of doctors. A review to increase the intake of women into the Medical Faculty will take place when a solution can be found to minimise this trend among female doctors. However, there is no quota in the number of women doctors who practise medicine in Singapore. Women are also not prevented from enrolling in medical courses overseas and qualifying as doctors.

Women And Health

1 There has been an increasing government budgetary allocation for health. 0.78% of the GDP and 4.52% of the national budget was allocated to the Health Sector for Financial Year 1998. Women's health needs are included in the health policies for the general population. The exception is maternal health and family planning issues, which specifically address issues concerning women.

2 There are legislation to ensure that women are equally protected and compensated for work-related injuries. These are :-

- i) the Workmen's Compensation Act and its subsidiary legislation to enable an employee, who comes under the definition of "workman" under the Act, to claim for compensation in a work-related accident. There is no discrimination in terms of race, sex and religion and etc in the definition of a "workman";
- ii) the Employment of Female Workmen Regulations which prohibit the employment of a female worker who is pregnant during the night, i.e. from 11 pm to 6 am the next day unless she has given her consent to work in writing and is not certified medically unfit for work by a medical practitioner or medical officer;
- iii) the Factories (Medical Examination) Regulations which requires workers employed in hazardous occupations to undergo periodic medical examinations.

3 There is a hospital for women and children. A National Committee on Women's Health has been set up since 1997 to address five areas concern to the health of women in Singapore. These are :-

- i) women & cancer;
- ii) women & osteoporosis;
- iii) health of older women;
- iv) health of working women; &
- v) reproductive issues.

4 On-going programmes are organized on reproductive health to educate women on the use of contraceptives, avoidance of casual sex, prevention of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, abortions, cervical and breast cancer screening, antenatal/postnatal care & compulsory child immunization programme, genetic counselling and the spacing of children.

- 5 School children during their primary and secondary school years are taught a wide range of health topics such as growth and development, nutrition, exercise, dental health, avoiding smoking and other substance abuse, mental health, sexually transmitted disease/AIDS, female cancers and breast self-examination, preparation for puberty and family life. These topics are covered in subjects such as health education and science in primary schools and home economics, civics and physical education, general science and biology in secondary schools. The Ministry of Health's Resource Centre provides a variety of audio-visual aids and displays that are available for loan to schools for teaching, free of charge.
- 6 Extra-curricular programmes on these topics like talks, exhibitions, health fairs, quizzes, competition and education through drama are organized regularly by the schools with the assistance and resources from the Ministry of Health and non-governmental organizations like the Singapore Cancer Society and the Singapore Planned Parenthood Association.
- 7 Education on health issues and special concerns for women like family planning, antenatal care, women's cancers and menopause continue into adulthood through programmes in healthcare institutions, the workplace, community centres and places of worship. All couples registering for marriage are invited to talks on human reproduction, contraception and family relationships. In the government polyclinics, health education sessions for pregnant women on antenatal care, preparation for childbirth, and care of the infant are available. Under the Well-Women Programme, women are taught breast self-examination and screened for hypertension, diabetes, breast and cervical cancers.
- 8 Health education and health promotion for all Singaporeans is a priority concern of the Ministry of health, The National Healthy Lifestyle Programme and the National Smoking Control Campaign and education on diabetes, cancer, mental and dental health and AIDS are major programmes reaching all adults.

9 Women and voluntary welfare organisations have been actively engaged in collaborative activities with the Ministry of Health to address issues and make recommendations concerning the health of women. Examples are :-

- i) a series of talks, "Know Your Health", in 1997 on health and health-related topics relevant for women organised by the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations; and
- ii) The Third Heart Health Conference organised by the Singapore National Heart Association with a public lecture on "Heart Health in Women" held in Singapore from 30 August 1998 to 2 September 1998.

Women and Violence

1 Legislation, police mechanisms and administrative measures are in place to punish those who commit crimes against women and to provide extensive protection to women from violence committed against them.

Legislation

2 The legal provisions can be found in the Penal Code (Chapter 224) and the Women's Charter (Chapter 353). Provisions for child abuse and the protection of children can be found in the Children and Young Persons Act (Chapter 38).

3 General provisions provided under the Penal Code make unlawful, the causing of hurt, murder, wrongful constraint, wrongful confinement, criminal force and assault. The Penal Code also contains provisions specifically related to violence against women such as causing miscarriage without a woman's consent (section 313), outrage of modesty (sections 354 and 354A) and rape (sections 375 and 376).

4 The Women's Charter was reviewed and amended in 1996. The new amendments came into force on 1 May 1997. These amendments provide, inter alia, the enhancement of the provisions concerning family violence. In relation to family violence, the amendments cover the following areas:-

- a) widening the scope of family violence beyond physical violence or threats of physical violence;
- b) extending protection to other family members other than spouses and children whom the Court regards as family members;
- c) empowering the Court to issue a Personal Protection Order (PPO) on the principle of "balance of probabilities" rather than "beyond reasonable doubt";
- d) empowering the Court to make additional orders, apart from a PPO, such as ordering the abuser/perpetrator to attend counselling;
- e) stipulating penalties for breach of the PPO; and
- f) allowing applications for PPOs to be made on the behalf of incapacitated adults and children by third parties.

5 The figures appended below show that these amendments have been effective in addressing to some extent, the issue of violence against women. The number of applications for PPOs increased 20.3% for the period May to December 1997 (1571 cases) as compared to the year 1996 (1306 cases). The number of PPOs issued also increased 9.5% from the period May to December 1997(1168 cases) as compared to the year 1996 (1067 cases).

6 A Family Court has been set up since March 1995 to deal with applications for PPOs in addition to dealing with the maintenance of wives and children.

7 The laws and mechanisms on sexual harassment relate generally to the prohibition of harassment, although some may identify the prohibition of conduct of a sexual nature. For example, under the Penal Code, doing an obscene act in a public place or singing of obscene songs in or near a public place, to the annoyance of others, are unlawful (section 294), as is uttering of any word, making any sound or gesture, or exhibiting any object, intending such word or sound shall be heard, or that such gesture or object shall be seen by a woman, with the intention to insult her modesty (section 509). The Penal Code also makes it unlawful the intrusion upon the privacy of a woman with the intention to insult her modesty (section 509). The general prohibition of harassment is provided under the Miscellaneous Offences (Public Order and Nuisance) Act (Chapter 184), which makes unlawful, acts intended to cause harassment, distress or alarm within the hearing or sight of any person likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress (section 13 B).

8 The Women's Charter also contains provisions that make unlawful, the trafficking of women, where there is intention to traffic (section 141) or for the purposes of prostitution (section 142). Under the Penal Code, selling or buying a minor for the purposes of prostitution is also unlawful (section 371). Under the First Schedule of the Extradition Act (Chapter 103), trafficking in women for immoral purposes is a returnable offence. These wide-ranging punishments providing fines to mandatory imprisonment are available to the courts.

9 A new Section 364A in the Criminal Procedure Code, enacted with effect from 2 January 1999 allows for evidence to be given through live-video or live-television link in proceedings involving witnesses below the age of 16 years for certain criminal offences. This is to protect vulnerable victims including young girls from having to confront their assailants in court and hence, reduce the trauma of testifying against the accused of the offences committed against them.

10 In April 1998, the Penal Code was amended to include a section on "Enhanced penalties for offences against domestic maids" (section 73). Upon conviction, the court may sentence the employer of the domestic maid or the member of his household, as the case may be, to one and a half times the

amount of punishment to which he would otherwise have been liable for that offence. The offences are, causing hurt or grievous hurt to any domestic maid employed by the employer; wrongfully confining any domestic maid employed by the employer; assaulting or using criminal force to any domestic maid employed by the employer; doing any act that is intended to insult the modesty of any domestic maid employed by the employer; or an offence of attempting to commit, abetting the commission of, or being a party to a criminal conspiracy to commit, an offence described above.

Police mechanisms and administrative measures

11 Two committees, i.e. the Criminal Procedure Code Review Committee and the Penal Code Review Committee chaired by the Attorney-General's Chamber's have been established and tasked with the responsibility of reviewing and proposing reform. The Ministry of Community Development reviews the Women's Charter as and when the need arises.

12 An Inter-Ministry Work Group on Spousal Violence chaired by the Ministry of Home Affairs with representatives from the Ministry of Community Development, the Police and Women's Organizations was set up in April 1994 to look into immediate and long term measures for the better management of spousal violence. Many of these recommendations have either been implemented and are on-going or in the pipeline. Examples are:

- a) the National Networking System for Family Violence linking the police, the social service agencies and the hospitals implemented on an island-wide basis in July 1996 to provide emotional support and information to such victims and their family members to make informed choices;
- b) the medical report form has been re-designed to enable speedier assistance to victims to file a complaint report and to facilitate more expeditious issuing of PPOs by the Courts.
- c) A Task Force has been set up by the Ministry of Community Development to look into the development of a database on family violence that can be accessed by the Ministry of Community Development, the Police and hospitals to facilitate the management of family violence and child abuse cases. The database will cover information on spousal violence, elderly abuse and child abuse.
- d) The police has incorporated the management of spousal violence into the training syllabus for their trainees and family violence workshops were held for front-officers.

- e) Training is also provided to other front-line personnel including doctors and social workers handling such cases;
- f) The Ministry of Community Development with social welfare agencies and other government bodies are engaged in public education programmes to promote public awareness on family violence; These include pamphlets and a guide for professionals who may come into contact with such victims, These have been distributed to all government agencies and grassroots organizations;

13 The Rape Investigation Squad was set up on 1 October 1997 by the Ministry of Home Affairs, as a specialised branch of the Criminal Investigation Department to investigate cases of rape, incest, carnal connection and unnatural offences.. The Squad has both male and female officers who are specially selected and trained for such investigations.

14 On Child Abuse , an Inter-Ministry Committee on Child Abuse was set up in January 1997 under the Ministry of Community Development to monitor, review and improve the inter-ministry procedures and guidelines on the management of child abuse cases. These include :-

- a) identifying the Violent Crime Squad of the Police to be responsible for the investigation of child abuse cases;
- b) forming an inter-agency working group on the Child Abuse Manual in November 1997 to scrutinize the protocols for Child Abuse of the Ministries of Community Development, Health and Home Affairs
- c) providing front-line officers with specialized training.

Women and Access to Resources

1 Singapore is a city-state and has no natural resources except a fine harbour. Women are given equal access to basic social services and equal opportunities to education and training, upgrading of skills, promotion based on merit and equal employment opportunities. This equal opportunity policy has been in place since Singapore became a sovereign state in 1965. In fact, women were given the right to vote at the same time as men in 1948. Another example is the principle of equal pay for equal work adopted by the Civil Service since 1962.

2 The principle of equality and meritocracy in employment has been firmly enshrined in our Constitution which states in Article 12(1) that "all persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law", and is widely practiced and implemented in the public and private sectors.

3 Both genders are given equal remuneration for doing the same job. With equal opportunities for education, female entrants into the labour market are able to compete with their male counterparts on an equal footing. The wage gap between the two genders has also narrowed significantly over the years. The Female Average Monthly Earnings was 68% of the males in 1986 and this has improved to 76% in 1997. The existing wage differential is not due to discrimination at the work place but rather because of work-related factors such as job experience.

4 In our efforts to promote the adoption of non-discriminatory recruitment practices, the Ministry of Manpower together with its social partners formulated and issued a set of tripartite guidelines to assist employers in putting up non-discriminatory job advertisements. The Guidelines have been disseminated to employers since 12 March 1999.

5 The national budget is allocated based on the relative merits of the various programmes and our national needs and priorities. The Ministry of Community Development's budgeted expenditure as a percentage of the GDP has increased over the last 3 financial years, from 0.29% for Financial Year 1996 to 0.34% for Financial Year 1998. Women are not perceived as a minority or marginalised group needing a special fund to be set up for them.

6 Many programmes and schemes have been designed with the family in mind and these have benefited women as well. Such schemes relate to housing, tax incentives and family life education and family support services. Examples of family support services that are under the purview of the Ministry of Community Development are the Child Care Programme and the Student

Care Centres programme. Government's expenditure on child care subsidies totaled S\$48,745,575 in Financial Year 1997/98 and is expected to reach S\$55,914,800 in Financial Year 1998/99. This reflects government's strong support for working mothers.

7 Non-profit-making organizations are encouraged by government to set up Student Care Centres to prevent young children from falling into bad company when left untended before and after school hours by working parents. These organizations are provided funding support from government for renovation costs for converting void deck spaces to such centres and for the purchase and equipping of new centres. From December 1996 to December 1998, a total of S\$778,007 was disbursed for this purpose.

Women and Decision – Making

1 We prefer to adopt a principle based on meritocracy rather than to adopt affirmative action to increase women's representation in politics and in decision-making positions in government and public bodies.

2 There are no restrictions on the basis of gender on participation in the formulation and implementation of government policy. In the Singapore Civil Service, a major employer of women, more than half, 56.7 per cent of the Super scale and Division I officers were women in 1998. This reflects the absence of social prejudice of women in public affairs.

3 In the judiciary, the participation of women has shown an improvement. A woman High Court judge was appointed for the first time in 1994, and as at December 1997, 2 out of the 21 High Court judges were women. In the Subordinate Courts, 30 out of the 68 judges were women in 1997 as compared to none in 1980.

4 As at 14 April 1999, 4 out of the 84 elected Members of Parliament are women and 2 of the 9 Nominated Members of Parliament are women. All 16 Ministers in Cabinet are men. 1 out of 3 Senior Ministers of State is a woman. The qualifications of a candidate to be elected at the Presidential Elections are applicable to both men and women as in accordance to Articles, 19, 44 and 45 of the Singapore Constitution.

5 Currently, 4 out of 21 members of the Central Committee of the National Trade Union Congress (NTUC) are women as compared to only 1 out of 26 such members in 1980. The NTUC Central Committee is the highest policy-making level in the trade union movement.

6 Women are increasingly participating in community development and made up of about 23.5% management of the various grassroots organizations under the People's Association in December 1997. Women are also involved in most of the voluntary welfare organizations in Singapore providing a wide range of welfare and community-related services and programmes to the less fortunate in society such as managing homes for the aged and the disabled. As at May 1997, women made up 27.5% of the 238 management committees of the affiliates under the National Council of Social Service, an umbrella body for voluntary welfare organizations.

Women and Decision - Making – Commitment to further activities/New Initiatives

1 The low representation of women in politics and in the higher leadership levels of the Trade Unions for example, are not due to the lack of opportunities for women but rather due to stereotyped attitudes on women's role in society and a matter of personal choice.

2 More women will be encouraged to participate in politics when men change their attitudes towards women's role as wife and homemaker and help out in housework.

3 Some measures have been put in place to promote women's participation in leadership positions. The National Trade Union Congress (NTUC) Women's Committee has jointly with the Singapore Institute of Labour Studies, designed a structured and progressive training course to develop effective women leaders. The programme, "Training To-day's Women for To-morrow's Leadership Roles" is a three-phased programme touching on topics such as Leadership, Team-Building, Self-confidence and the Legal Framework affecting women.

4 The Civil Service College runs a 2-day course, "Communicating from the Head and Heart" for female Division II officers in the Civil Service since September 1996. The College noted that women officers often communicate in a style that sets them apart from the men. The objectives of the course are to help participants handle people situations with confidence, sensitivity and assertiveness.

Women and Advancement Status– Commitment to further activities/New Initiatives

1 Singapore is committed to the advancement of the status of women. Together with its ASEAN neighbours, Singapore signed the Declaration for the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region on 5 July 1988, the implementation progress of which is monitored at the highest level in ASEAN. The first regional report on this Declaration was presented to the First ASEAN Informal Summit held in Jakarta, Indonesia in 1996. The second regional report is expected to be published in the year 2000.

2 Under the Ministry of Community Development (MCD), there is an Inter-Ministry Committee (IMC) on the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), an IMC on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), an IMC on Aging and a Committee on Family Life.

3 Other national advisory bodies formed that address policies and make recommendations affecting women and their families include (a) IMC on Health Care for the Elderly (chaired and co-chaired by the Ministers of Health and Community Development) (b) the National Committee on Women's Health (under the Ministry of Health) and (c) the Women and Family Violence Committee set up under the Ministry of Home Affairs with representation from the Singapore Council of Women's Organizations, the umbrella body for women's organizations in Singapore.

4 As the National Focal Point, the MCD is consulted by other Ministries and local and foreign agencies on gender issues. The MCD will continue to work in close consultation with key government ministries and other agencies including the women's organizations to monitor and address emerging issues that affect women and their families.

Women and Human Rights

1 Though there are no special laws or mechanism to promote women's rights as human rights per se, Singapore does incorporate many measures aimed to promote or protect women's right in specific areas. Examples are as follows:-

- a) protecting the right not to be sterilized on the basis of a conscientious objection, which is provided for under the Voluntary Sterilization Act (Chapter 347, Section 10);
- b) securing certain employment benefits under the Employment Act (Chapter 91) by making unlawful employment of a pregnant female worker during the night (Employment of Female Workmen Regulations), employers giving notice of dismissal during a woman's absence whilst on maternity leave (section 81) and knowingly employ a female employee at any time during the period of 4 weeks immediately following her confinement (section 82). Any employee covered under the Act who considers himself/herself wrongfully dismissed by the employer, which includes discrimination of any kind, has recourse to appeal to the Minister for Manpower (section 14(2)); and.
- c) ensuring the rights of women in marriage and upon divorce as provided in the Women's Charter (Chapter 353) which, amongst other things, outlaws polygamy and provides for the maintenance of wives and children during marriage and divorce besides the provisions for the protection against family violence mentioned in Appendix 5.

2 Women are eligible for legal aid on the same basis as men. They are also treated equally in all stages of procedures in courts and tribunals in Singapore.

3 Two committees have been set up by the Attorney-General Chambers with the responsibility of reviewing and proposing reform to legislation. These are the Criminal Procedure Code Review Committee and the Penal Code Review Committee. The Ministry of Community Development reviews the Women's Charter as and when the need arises.

Women and the Media

1 There is equal portrayal of women in leadership roles in the media. Many examples of successful women are often made well-known by the media.

2 Women play a significant role in the media in Singapore. Prominent newscasters on the national television network are women. Many women also occupy senior editorial positions in the English, Chinese and Malay language newspapers.

3 Pornographic materials are banned in Singapore. The ban serves to inhibit the industry on promoting the exploitation and stereotyping of women. As at 31 August 1997, ten out of the 16 members of the Board of Film Censors appointed by the Ministry of Information & the Arts were women.

4 The only area in the media where sex role stereotyping is likely to exist is in the advertising industry. The Ministry of Information & the Arts does not have the jurisdiction over the advertising industry but will intervene in cases where advertisements infringe upon the censorship criteria and where moral standards are threatened.

5 A self-regulatory mechanism on the contents of advertisements in print and television is provided by the Advertising Standards of Singapore (ASAS), a non-profit and independent organisation affiliated to the Consumer Association of Singapore. The ASAS comprises of 15 organisations including the Ministries of Health, Environment and the Television Corporation of Singapore. Though there is no specific code on sex-role stereotyping in its Code of Advertising Practice, the Code provides that "no advertisements should, by claim or implication unfairly discriminate against, cast in a poor light or denigrate any race, religion or sex". Also, under its rule on Discriminating Employment Advertisements, "Advertisements offering employment should not, by claim or implication, discriminate on racial, religious or sexual grounds unless any requirement as to race, religion and/or sex is inherently justified by the necessities of the job concerned".

Women and the Environment

1 Singapore does not face the problem of displacement of communities due to deterioration of natural resources, nor is there a problem of public health risk posed by industrial pollution. Singaporeans, men and women alike, enjoy a high standard of public health and are well-protected from occupational health hazards at their workplace.

2 Women in Singapore participate on an equal footing as men in policy formulation and decision-making in environmental matters. In fact, women play prominent roles in local environmental NGOs.

3 Singapore has not introduced any legislation on the practice of traditional medicine. As such, there is no inequality practised between the genders on the intellectual property rights of the practices and knowledge of women in such fields.

Women and Violations of the Rights of the Girl-Child

Child Welfare in General

1 An Inter-Ministry Committee on the Rights of the Child has been set up under the Ministry of Community Development to look at Singapore's position in relation to the Convention. The government and non-governmental sector have policies and programmes at their respective agencies that promote and safeguard the rights of the child. In general, the approach taken by Singapore to human rights and other conventions is to ensure that domestic legislation, policies and practices comply with the convention prior to ratification.

2 Singapore has a good track record in child welfare, and does not have a problem with commercial exploitation of children. Virtually all children below 18 years are pursuing their education in school or learning a skill in a vocational institution. If these children do work, it will be mainly during the school holidays to supplement their pocket money as well as to spend their holidays meaningfully. The employment terms of children (between the ages of 12 & 14) and young persons (between the ages of 14 & 16) in regards to the nature, place and hours of work are regulated by Part VII of the Employment Act and the Employment of Children and Young Persons Regulations. Slavery and forced labour are prohibited under our Constitution. Commercial sexual exploitation of children is also not rife in Singapore. There has only been one case of teenage prostitution since June 1995.

3 Besides legislation, there is network of services and programmes where children of such circumstances can be assisted. Medical services, counselling, psychological and psychiatric services and residential care are available and are provided by the government and non-governmental bodies.

Right to name and nationality

4 The Registration of Births and Deaths Act provides for, amongst other things, the registration of every child born alive in Singapore. The penalties imposed on parents for failing to register the child's birth without reasonable excuse, range from a fine not exceeding S\$100 to a further fine not exceeding S\$40 for every day during which such failure persists after conviction.

5 The rights to nationality for children born in Singapore and of Singapore citizens as well as foreign-born children to Singapore citizens are provided in the Constitution of Singapore.

6 A child born in Singapore to a person who is a Singapore citizen shall acquire Singapore citizenship by birth.

7 Article 122 of the Constitution allows a foreign-born child to be registered as a Singaporean citizen by descent if the father is a Singapore citizen. A foreign-born child of a female Singapore citizen may be granted citizenship by registration under Article 124(2) of the constitution.

Minimum age of marriage

8 Provisions in the Women's Charter requires a minimum age of marriage of 18 years (section 9). The Minister for Community Development has the discretion to permit a person below 18 years to marry on application to him (section 20). Any party to be married, if aged 18 years to less than 21 years, will need the consent of parents or other legally approved persons (as provided under the Second Schedule of the Charter) before a marriage licence could be issued by the Registrar of Marriages.

9 Under the Muslim Law, generally, the minimum age of the bride and bridegroom is 16 years.

Human rights education schools

10 There is no human rights education per se in schools. However, some elements of this are incorporated in the curriculum of subjects like civics and moral Education, English and the mother tongue languages, and through the schools' extra-curriculum activities.

Equal opportunities for promotion for females in the teaching profession

11 There is no discrimination against the promotion of females in the teaching profession. The statistics in the table appended below show that in 1997, female education officers in fact account for more than 50 per cent of the Vice-principals and Principals in the schools, junior colleges and centralised institutes, particularly among the graduate teachers.

Qualifications	Teachers		Vice-Principals		Principals	
	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female
Graduate	9,148	6,432 (70.3%)	133	83 (62.4%)	162	91 (56.2%)
Non-graduate	12,714	9,045 (71.1%)	143	86 (60.1%)	176	87 (49.4%)