



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

## Combined fourth and fifth reports submitted by Singapore under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2017\* \*\*

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

\*\* The annexes and the appendices to the present report are on file with the Secretariat and are available for consultation. They may also be accessed from the Committee's web page.

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## Foreword

Every child is precious, and deserves to grow up in a safe and loving environment.

Singapore is committed to protecting and promoting the wellbeing of our children. Since our independence in 1965, Singapore has continually refined its policies to better meet the needs of our children. We are pleased to report our efforts since the last report in 2009. Singapore has strengthened legislation, systems and policies to improve protection for our children. We amended three pieces of legislation to do so: the Children and Young Persons Act to enhance the welfare and care of children, and the Women's Charter and the Administration of Muslim Law Act to better support children from divorced families. In 2014, Singapore also established the Family Justice Courts, which takes the best interests of the child into account in familial disputes.

We have increased our support for families with young children. We enhanced the Child Development Co-Savings Act in 2016 to provide more financial support for child-raising and improve leave schemes to enable working parents to manage both work and family responsibilities. We also provided assurance to parents with young children on the accessibility, affordability and quality of early childhood services. These measures reflect the commitment of the Singapore Government to give every child a good start in life, regardless of their background.

We will build on the good progress made, and invest even more to significantly expand the provision of affordable and quality early childhood services, and transform the early childhood profession. 40,000 or 30% more preschool places will be added in the next five years. Also, the Early Childhood Manpower Plan charts out a comprehensive suite of measures to attract, develop and retain quality early childhood educators. We will also put in more support for children from low-income and vulnerable families, so that they have better access to basic health, learning, and developmental opportunities in the critical early years. Furthermore, Singapore will extend compulsory education to children with moderate to severe special education needs from 2019. We are doing this because every child counts in our efforts to foster social mobility and sustain a fair and just society.

Singapore had a good review at our second Universal Periodic Review in 2016, with many states affirming Singapore's track record, social policies and pragmatic approach to realising human rights, including the rights of the child. Singapore recognises that protecting and promoting the wellbeing of our children is an ongoing effort. Our commitment is to continue to empower our children to achieve their full potential in a safe and nurturing environment.

Desmond Lee  
Minister for Social and Family Development

## Glossary of terms

ACWC	ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
AMLA	Administration of Muslim Law Act
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BPC	Beyond Parental Control
CCE	Character and Citizenship Education
CDA	Child Development Account
CDCA	Child Development Co-Savings Act
CE	Compulsory Education
CNB	Central Narcotics Bureau
CPF	Central Provident Fund
CPS	Child Protective Service
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CYPA	Children and Young Persons Act
CYPs	Children and Young Persons
DSSA	Divorce Support Specialist Agency
EA	Employment Act
ECDA	Early Childhood Development Agency
FSC	Family Service Centre
HDB	Housing Development Board
HPB	Health Promotion Board
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
IL	Information Literacy
ITE	Institute of Technical Education
IWCP	Inter-Ministry Workgroup on Child Protection
JRC	Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre
MINDEF	Ministry of Defence
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
MSF	Ministry of Social and Family Development
NAC	National Arts Council
NHB	National Heritage Board
NLB	National Library Board
NYC	National Youth Council
OPSC	Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography

PE	Physical Education
PHTA	Prevention of Human Trafficking Act
PSLE	Primary School Leaving Examination
SAF	Singapore Armed Forces
SCS	Singapore Children's Society
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SPED	Special Education (Schools)
SPF	Singapore Police Force
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TIP	Trafficking In Persons
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VWO	Voluntary Welfare Organisation
WC	Women's Charter

## I. Introduction

1. The Government of Singapore (the Government) presents Singapore's Fourth and Fifth Periodic Report (the Report) which includes Singapore's progress from 2009 to 2016 in relation to the 2011 Concluding Observations, implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC), and information on recent legislation introduced and initiatives taken to improve the living condition of our children. The Government has sought feedback from the public on the Report through the Government's online consultation portal REACH.<sup>1</sup> Key stakeholder engagements were also conducted with voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) and other agencies (see Annex A).
2. The Report follows the Committee's treaty-specific guidelines<sup>2</sup> and should be read with Singapore's Initial Report on the OPAC,<sup>3</sup> the Initial Report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,<sup>4</sup> and Singapore's National Report submitted to the Human Rights Council at the twenty-fourth session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in January 2016.<sup>5</sup> References are made to Singapore's previous periodic reports (reports) to the Committee on the Rights of the Child where relevant.
3. This Report has been published on the Ministry of Social and Family Development's (MSF) website. Hardcopies will be distributed to relevant stakeholders.

### Singapore's approach to child rights

4. Singapore adopts a practical approach to the realization of human rights. Human rights are realised within specific cultural, social, economic and historical contexts. In every country, accommodation must be reached among the competing rights of the individuals who make up the nation, and the interests of society as a whole. Singapore firmly upholds the rule of law to ensure stability, equality and social justice, which are necessary conditions for respecting the fundamental human rights enshrined in our Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We focus on delivering good socio-economic outcomes through pragmatic public policies.
5. The Government is fully committed to the protection and promotion of the human rights of our citizens, including children. Singapore enables the fulfilment of these rights effectively, bearing in mind Singapore's national circumstances and aspirations.
6. The Government has made significant progress in improving the rights of children, taking reference from the articles of the CRC and the 2011 Concluding Observations.
7. Since the last report, Singapore has enhanced legislation, systems and policies to better protect our children. The Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) was amended to enhance the protection and rehabilitation of children while other legislative enhancements were made to better enshrine the CRC's guiding principle that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. In 2014, Singapore established the Family Justice Courts (FJC) to ensure the best interests of the child is given consideration in familial disputes.
8. The Government champions and continues to make strides in building an inclusive society where children with disabilities can realise their potential as Singapore begins the implementation of our third Enabling Masterplan (2017 to 2021). To make Singapore more inclusive, we will extend compulsory education (CE) to children with moderate to severe special educational needs (SEN) from 2019.
9. We have increased support for the wider child population. To give every child a good start in life and support families with young children, we have enhanced the

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.reach.gov.sg>.

<sup>2</sup> CRC/C/58/Rev.3.

<sup>3</sup> CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/1.

<sup>4</sup> CRPD/C/SGP/1.

<sup>5</sup> A/HRC/WG.6/24/SGP/1.

accessibility, affordability and quality of early childhood services. We have increased the number of full-day preschool places by 50%, or almost 50,000, since 2012. We also enhanced subsidies for child care and kindergarten services and introduced initiatives to attract, develop and retain good teachers to uplift the quality of early childhood services. The Child Development Co-Savings Act (CDCA) was amended in 2016 to provide more financial support for children and improve leave schemes to enable working parents to better manage work and family responsibilities.

10. On the international front, Singapore has signed several human rights agreements affecting children (see paragraphs 104, 194 and 220).

11. The effect of these developments is reflected in the improved outcomes for children in Singapore. The Yearbook of Statistics Singapore 2017<sup>6</sup> and Annex C contain the relevant statistics.

12. Singapore's progress from the Third World to First ensured a broad-based social uplift for its citizens in one generation (see Singapore's National Report submitted to the Human Rights Council for our Second UPR in January 2016.) Despite our achievements, we do not take this development trajectory for granted. We recognise that we can still improve in many areas even while our fundamental political, economic and geostrategic constraints remain unchanged:

(a) Land scarcity. With a small land area of 719.7 km<sup>2</sup> (as at end 2016) and scarce natural resources, Singapore is one of the world's most densely populated city-states with 5.6 million people, comprising 3.4 million citizens, 0.5 million foreign citizens with Permanent Resident status, and 1.7 million foreign citizens living, studying or working in the country as at end June 2016;

(b) Diverse ethnic and religious population profile. The Pew Research Centre described Singapore as the most religiously diverse country in the world in 2014. Our resident population (i.e. citizens and foreign citizens with Permanent Resident status) is ethnically diverse, comprising 74.3% Chinese, 13.4% Malays, 9.1% Indians and 3.2% from other ethnicities (at end June 2016). We are also multi-religious, with a resident population aged 15 years and over that is 33.2% Buddhist, 14.0% Muslim, 18.8% Christian, 10.0% Taoist, 5.0% Hindu and the remainder from other faiths or without any religious affiliation in 2015. Maintaining racial and religious harmony has been the Government's top priority since our independence. We achieve this by enshrining and upholding the core principles of secularism, meritocracy and multi-racialism to ensure equal standing and opportunities for all citizens.

13. The Government provides support to families and children through their significant milestones and life-stages, especially to those who need help. Singapore wants every child to have a good start in life and become caring, resilient and engaged individuals in society. Starting early is key. While the Government continues to play a strong role in strengthening families to raise children, it is mindful that its role does not dilute the responsibility of individuals and the wider community.

## **II. General measures of implementation**

### **A. Declarations and reservations**

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 6, 7]

14. The Government appreciates and has carefully considered the Committee's comments relating to Singapore's declarations and reservations. We are however not ready to withdraw any. Nonetheless, we recognise our citizens' needs evolve over time and we constantly review our goals, policies and laws to meet these needs.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/publications/publications-and-papers/reference/yearbook-of-statistics-singapore>.

## B. Legislation (Article 4)

### **Ensuring principles and provisions of the CRC are incorporated in the legal system [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 9]**

15. The Singapore Constitution enshrines and protects fundamental liberties, including the right to life and liberty, freedom of speech, assembly and association of all Singaporeans. Similar to other national constitutions and human rights instruments, these provisions are not couched in absolute terms.

16. Singapore implements its obligations under the CRC through legislative and other measures and procedures. *Since Singapore's last report, there have been several amendments to Singapore's legislation to enhance children's rights.*

17. The CYPA was amended in 2011 to improve protection for children and young persons (CYPs). All CYP homes must be licensed. The licence's terms and conditions ensure high standards of care for children in these homes. Public officers are also empowered to obtain relevant information when there is reasonable cause to believe that a CYP is at risk of or has been abused/neglected. This enables officers to intervene early. The identity of the CYP subjected to an investigation or taken into custody is also better safeguarded. The CYPA is actively being reviewed to enhance care and protection options for CYPs.

18. The Women's Charter (WC) has been amended to improve support for children of divorcing parents. In 2011, we strengthened enforcement of maintenance orders, including child maintenance. Couples divorcing under civil law must attend mandatory mediation and counselling after filing for divorce if they have at least one child who is below 21 years old. In 2016, the WC was further amended to require divorcing couples who have children below 14 years old and are unable to reach an agreement on the divorce and ancillary matters to complete a parenting programme before filing for divorce. The Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) was also amended in 2017 to require couples divorcing under Muslim law to attend mandatory counselling before filing for divorce. If they have at least one child who is below 21 years old, they must also complete a post-divorce parenting plan to resolve care arrangements early and reduce acrimonious proceedings. Other AMLA amendments incorporated child-centric proposals, such as allowing the Syariah Court to refer divorcing couples for counselling or to participate in a family support programme at any stage of the divorce proceedings. We also enacted the Family Justice Act to set up the FJC to effectively resolve family disputes and protect the best interests of affected children.

19. New legislation has been introduced to safeguard all persons (including children) from harassment and to prevent trafficking in persons (TIP). The Protection from Harassment Act (POHA) came into force in November 2014 to enhance protection against harassment, including sexual harassment, and school or cyberspace bullying. The Act criminalises harassment and provides a range of self-help and civil remedies to victims. In 2015, the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (PHTA) was enacted to criminalise the trafficking of persons, including children. The PHTA also protects the welfare of trafficked victims and encourages reporting of trafficking or suspected trafficking.

20. We have progressively enhanced other legislation to raise the standards of care and protection for children and provide better support for families having children. The AMLA was amended in 2009 to raise the minimum age of marriage from 16 to 18 years. The Employment Act (EA) was amended in 2013 to extend maternity protection to the full duration of pregnancy, so that employers are required to pay maternity leave benefits to employees dismissed without sufficient cause, or retrenched at any stage of pregnancy. The 2016 CDCA amendments enhanced leave schemes and the Baby Bonus Scheme. The Early Childhood Development Centres Act introduced in 2017 brought child care centres and kindergartens under the same regulatory framework to ensure consistent and higher standards across the preschool sector.

### **C. Coordination and national plan of action**

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 11, 13]

21. Singapore notes the Committee's comments and agrees that national policies for our children should be implemented and monitored effectively. We therefore have in place a system to ensure that all agencies implementing national policies relating to children are accountable to meet measurable and time-bound targets.

22. MSF is the lead agency for Singapore's policies relating to children and maintains oversight of child rights issues. For child-related policies which cut across other agencies' areas of responsibility, inter-agency committees (or other effective means of collaboration) are formed to ensure the child's best interests are catered for. Each agency is required to report on the progress of policy implementation within its area of responsibility. We also collaborate with civil society to advance children's rights. Our approach ensures all agencies whose work affects children are actively involved and held accountable. This has worked well and proven effective for the purposes of implementing and monitoring Singapore's child-related policies, including the implementation of Singapore's obligations under the CRC.

### **D. Independent monitoring (Article 4)**

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 15]

23. We note the Committee's recommendation. While Singapore does not currently have a national institution envisaged by the Paris Principles, we have various independent monitoring mechanisms, as highlighted in previous reports. Singapore welcomes independent feedback to improve support for our children. We hold consultations with private and people sector representatives to shape policies and programmes for children. VWOs such as the Singapore Children's Society (SCS) play an independent role in monitoring and critiquing the work of government agencies relating to child welfare. SCS also conducts independent research on the state of children in Singapore. Our laws prevent and address the abuse of children and their rights.

### **E. Data collection (Article 4)**

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 16, 17]

24. Singapore collects and uses data to monitor the well-being of children and review existing policies. Data specific to children and youth<sup>7</sup> are collected. An example is the National Youth Survey which is conducted periodically and captures youth demographic and cultural indicators. Survey findings offer insights into emergent youth trends and the support youth require for societal engagement and individual development. SCS has also conducted research on the perceptions of child abuse and neglect. Findings are published on its website.

25. We note the Committee's comments. Singapore has a system to collect and analyse data on child abuse. Table 17 of Annex C provides disaggregated data on the child abuse cases investigated. Data on child victims of trafficking are collected, treated sensitively, and monitored closely by government agencies. Our current mechanisms to collect and analyse relevant data on child victims are sufficient for authorities to study and analyse relevant trends. Therefore, there is no current need for a national central database.

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<sup>7</sup> Youth here refers to persons aged 15 to 35 years.

## **F. Dissemination and awareness-raising (Articles 42 and 44(6))**

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 18]

26. Singapore's progress on the advancement of children's rights is published on MSF's website. We work with various partners, including preschools, schools and community agencies to extend distribution channels for public education resources on the CRC. As a result, these resources are disseminated to more families through religious and community events. In 2015, these partners collaborated to organise the CRC Logo Design Competition and a Creative Arts Competition to celebrate Singapore's 20th anniversary of accession to the CRC. See Annex B for details on our publicity efforts.

## **G. Training (Article 3(3))**

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 20]

27. Singapore has enhanced training for professionals working with children. Social service professionals can access specialised training to work better with children. The Social Service Institute's trainings include information on the CRC. Teachers are also trained to look out for and respond to students with special care and protection needs. Additionally, police officers and professionals handling criminal investigations involving children are trained to be child-sensitive.

## **H. Cooperation with civil society (Article 4)**

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 22]

28. Singapore recognises the importance of working with the private and people sectors to improve support for children. We collaborate with partners such as Families for Life,<sup>8</sup> universities, and think-tanks like the Institute of Policy Studies when formulating programmes. We also consult relevant stakeholders, including civil society, in policy formulation and legislative reviews. For example, Bills are typically released for public consultation and feedback.

## **I. International cooperation (Article 4)**

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 24] [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 73]

*Assistance to other countries*

29. Singapore has been providing technical assistance through the Singapore Cooperation Programme to help developing countries attain their development goals. This includes the Millennium Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Singapore has trained over 115,000 government officials from over 170 countries. Since 1999, we have partnered UNICEF to conduct early childhood education courses for participants from 23 countries. We have also conducted training programmes such as on pre and post natal healthcare for mothers and children. Singapore also contributes financially to the Commonwealth Youth Programme annually.

*Participation in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)*

30. In 2010, Singapore appointed its first representative for the protection of children to the ACWC. Singapore also sponsored and organised a training workshop on the CRC in 2017, bringing together representatives from ASEAN Member States working on the implementation and reporting on the CRC.

<sup>8</sup> The National Family Council, formed in 2006, was renamed "Families for Life" in 2014.

## **J. Resource allocation (Article 4)**

31. The Government continues to dedicate resources to child-related development. In 2016, government expenditure on social development was S\$34 billion (US\$25 billion).<sup>9</sup> This includes expenditure on education, health, community development, youth and sports, information, communications and the arts, amongst others.

## **K. Child rights and the business sectors (Article 4)**

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 26]

32. All corporations operating in Singapore are subject to Singapore's employment laws which protect the child (see paragraph 179). A contravention of these conditions constitutes an offence punishable under the law. Any person may report such breaches to the authorities.

33. Singapore has been a member of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) since its independence. To date, Singapore has 20 ILO Conventions in force, including core Conventions covering key areas of employment standards for children, such as C138 Minimum Age Convention and C182 Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention.

## **III. Definition of the child**

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 28]

34. Our previous reports reflected the definition of "child" and "young person" under Singapore law. We are reviewing the CYP Act and assessing, amongst other things, the timing of including young persons from 16 to 18 years old who may require care or protection. In the meantime, there are already robust programmes and services in place to support such children even without the legislation. Examples include access to early intervention programmes to address at-risk behaviours under the Youth-at-Risk Engagement Framework. Singapore's Penal Code also protects all minors under 16 years old from commercial sex activities and sexual grooming. The Probation of Offenders Act further provides for first-time offenders below 21 years old to be placed on probation. Those who complete probation successfully would not have a conviction record.

## **IV. General principles**

### **A. Non-discrimination (Article 2)**

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 30(a)–(e)]

35. As explained in previous reports, Article 12 of the Constitution guarantees all Singapore citizens (Singaporeans), including children, the right to equality, non-discrimination and equal protection under the law. The equal rights cover gender, religion, ethnicity and ability. In practice, even when resources are prioritised to first meet the needs of Singaporeans, we strive to treat all children, including non-citizens, equally.

36. Racial and religious harmony is important to Singapore. It is our national priority to combat discrimination on the grounds of race or religion. We have emphasised this and outlined the strong legal framework and safeguards in previous reports to the Committee and our UPR reports. Children are taught in schools to respect and celebrate the cultural and religious practices of different ethnic groups. Children from different racial and religious groups learn and play together and celebrate their different cultural and religious roots in schools. They are taught the origins of Singapore's major religions, the significance

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<sup>9</sup> Annex C, Tables 4 and 5. Conversion rates were calculated on 7 August 2017 using [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com).

of religious practices and ways to relate to people of different races and religions. This guards against the development of harmful prejudices and stereotypes.

37. Singapore's laws protect women and girls from discrimination. Singapore is ranked 11th out of 159 countries surveyed in the United Nations Gender Inequality Index 2015.<sup>10</sup> Multiple government agencies work together to monitor, prevent and address discrimination against women and girls. The relevant ministries coordinate strategies and collect data to track the development of women in the areas of education, health, labour force participation, decision-making positions, and protection against violence, amongst other social indicators (See our previous reports and Singapore's reports under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women).

38. Singapore nurtures an inclusive and enabling society for every child, including those with disabilities, to grow up in. By working closely with stakeholders to organise public awareness campaigns and movements (see Annex B), we celebrate the abilities of persons with disabilities and cultivate inclusive mind-sets. Feedback channels are available for persons with disabilities to challenge acts of discrimination. Amenities are also provided for children with different abilities to interact and learn together, including inclusive playgrounds where children with disabilities are able to interact and play together with fully able-bodied children.

## **B. Best interests (Article 3)**

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 32]

39. Singapore continuously enhances our practices and legislation in line with our belief that the child's best interests are paramount.

40. During police investigations, we ensure practices are child-sensitive. Recognising the needs of child abuse victims, we deploy officers trained in child-sensitive interviewing techniques and reduced the number of interviews required.

41. The Juvenile Court was renamed the Youth Court to avoid negative labelling of children involved in proceedings in this Court. To be sensitive to child abuse victims, we allow affidavits during Youth Court hearings to avoid subjecting the child to cross-examination. The Court can withhold information from persons if disclosure is assessed to be detrimental to the child. The use of video-recording as evidence for Court proceedings is being considered under the ongoing CYPA review. See paragraphs 17–20 for other examples of legislative enhancements promoting the child's best interests.

## **C. Right to life, survival and development (Article 6)**

42. Singapore continues to safeguard a child's right to life, survival and development, as elaborated in Sections VIII, IX and X. A strong network of community services provides accessible help to teenage mothers and mothers having difficulties during pregnancies or caring for their babies. The number of abandoned babies in Singapore remains low (average of two to three babies abandoned alive yearly from 2010 to 2016).

## **D. Respect for the views of the child (Article 12)**

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 34(a), (b), (c)]

*Declaration on respect for the views of the child [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 34(c)]*

43. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises there can be limits to individual rights to maintain public order, as well as to protect the rights of others. **Given** Singapore's multi-religious and multi-racial composition, we are unable to withdraw our declaration on Article 12. See paragraphs 95–99 of Singapore's 2016 UPR National Report.

<sup>10</sup> UNDP, 2015. Human Development Report 2015 (p. 224).

*Promote child's rights to be heard [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 34(a), (b)]*

44. Singapore has made progress in enhancing processes and facilitating opportunities for children to express opinions and participate in matters that affect them, where appropriate.

45. In the FJC, where appropriate, trained judges and court mental health professionals interview children to hear their views and concerns in determining custody and access in divorce cases. From 2014, lawyers with experience in family law work involving child issues ('child representatives') are appointed in appropriate cases to advocate for the child's interests during these proceedings. The 2017 AMLA amendments also allow the Syariah Court to appoint, in appropriate cases, a child representative for proceedings involving a child. Sector partners are guided to ensure the child's voice is represented when making decisions affecting children under state care. This is to ensure their best interests through a permanent care plan that meets their needs for safety, continuity in relationships and stability.

46. We proactively seek children's views on issues that affect them and shape their future. Through online consultation portals, forum discussions and panel discussions in post-secondary schools, students exchange ideas with political leaders and policy-makers on policy issues. In 2016, the SGfuture dialogue sessions invited youth to share their views directly with government and community groups on issues that affected them.<sup>11</sup> This series was complemented by the Young ChangeMakers scheme where young people congregate, connect and collaborate with like-minded individuals to make a difference in the community (e.g. organising community projects). SCS has also been organising the biennial Singapore Children's Forum since 2013 for school-going children to share views on issues that matter to them.

47. At the regional and international level, our children are given opportunities to express views and participate in decision-making forums. The Government, partnering SCS, hosted the second ASEAN Children's Forum in June 2012. In June 2016, child representatives from Singapore participated in the fourth ASEAN Children's Forum in Hanoi, Vietnam. Singapore also participated in the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum in February 2016.

## **V. Civil rights and freedoms**

### **A. Name and nationality (Article 7)**

**[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 36]**

48. Singapore has explained how a child acquires Singapore citizenship under its laws in previous reports. Eligibility for Singapore citizenship is set out in Singapore's Constitution, which states that citizenship may be acquired by birth, descent, registration or naturalisation. Only a child of a Singapore citizen can be a citizen by birth or descent.

49. We note the Committee's comments regarding stateless children. Singapore laws do not provide for the deprivation of citizenship of any child who is a Singapore citizen by birth or descent. Like any other person, stateless children may apply for Singapore citizenship in accordance with the law. Children born to Singaporean mothers before May 2004 may apply for Singapore citizenship by registration under Singapore laws.

### **B. Preservation of identity (Article 8)**

50. Please refer to Singapore's Initial Report.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> SGfuture is a platform to discuss youth's hopes and dreams for the next chapter of Singapore's story.

<sup>12</sup> CRC/C/51/Add.8: p. 41, para. 175–177.

### **C. Freedom of expression (Article 13), and freedom of association and of peaceful assembly (Article 15)**

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 37, 38]

51. The Government supports a youth's right to express his/her views, associate with others and assemble peacefully. We recognise that these rights nurture confident and resilient youth who can make a positive impact on society. These rights are protected under our Constitution. Singapore maintains its reservation in paragraph (3) of the Instrument of Accession. The freedom of speech must be balanced in a manner consistent with Singapore's Constitution, which recognises the need to respect the rights and reputations of others, to protect national security and friendly relations with other countries, and ensure public order or morality.

52. Our previous reports described how these freedoms are exercised in practice in accordance with the law. In addition, the National Youth Council (NYC) organises programmes, forums and dialogues for youth to network and participate in the development of the youth sector, and to expose youth to diverse causes and issues, foster understanding on Singapore's challenges and inculcate positive values. The National Youth Fund champions ground-up youth initiatives to support volunteerism, capacity building, and development of community partnerships. Youth.SG, an online content provider by youths for youths, continues to serve as a space for young Singaporeans to share issues that matter to them.

### **D. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14)**

53. We refer to our previous reports. Singapore continues to enhance efforts to foster an environment conducive for racial and religious harmony. All students learn Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) and Social Studies, which emphasise respect, empathy and responsibility in multicultural Singapore. Students are equipped with knowledge of beliefs, festivals and practices of different religions, and skills to understand issues from different perspectives.

### **E. Protection of privacy (Article 16)**

54. The privacy of children under investigation is protected. The CYPA was amended in 2011 to prohibit broadcasting or publishing information that identifies a CYP who is being investigated, taken into custody, or who is the subject of a court order under the CYPA.

55. Individuals are protected from harassment. The POHA was introduced in 2014 to send a clear signal that such acts will not be tolerated (see paragraph 19).

56. Individuals are protected from defamation and slander. The Defamation Act provides the framework for a civil action to be taken against libel or slander to vindicate one's reputation. Sections 499 to 502 of the Penal Code provide for the criminal offences of defamation.

### **F. Access to appropriate information (Article 17)**

57. Singapore ensures children have access to quality broadcasts and are protected from injurious material. The Info-communications Media Development Authority ensures that materials available are appropriate for children. There are also guidelines to ensure the protection of children, including measures such as movie and video game classifications, personal identification number locks for television subscriptions and internet filtering services (see Annex B).

58. With one of the world's highest wireless broadband penetration rates at 191.7% in 2016, Singapore encourages youth to become discerning consumers to evaluate internet and media content effectively, and use, create and share content safely and responsibly.

Information Literacy (IL) concepts are therefore embedded in the school curriculum. As of 2016, over 12,000 teachers have been trained to impart IL skills to students.

59. Singapore encourages good IL practices through funding and coordination efforts. Singapore established the Inter-Ministry Cyber Wellness Steering Committee in 2009 to coordinate the Government's efforts in funding and promoting cyber wellness programmes for youth. The Media Literacy Council, formed in 2012, works with the Government, industry and community to spearhead public education efforts relating to media literacy and cyber-wellness. The National Library Board (NLB) also drives the National IL Programme which launched a nationwide campaign and a resource portal<sup>13</sup> in 2013 to encourage good IL practices.

60. To encourage reading from a young age, the NLB provides an array of library services for children, including the Early Literacy Library and two mini-Mobile Library buses<sup>14</sup> (see Annex B).

## **VI. Violence against children**

### **A. Abuse and neglect (Article 19)**

61. As indicated in previous reports, Singapore believes that no child should be abused. We have been enhancing protection measures to better support child victims.

62. We enhanced measures for victims to seek early help. In addition to Family Group Conferences,<sup>15</sup> psychological programmes have been introduced to equip children with self-protection strategies, address trauma and assist recovery (see Annex B). Children in distress can call SCS' community helpline and online chat, Tinkle Friend Helpline, and Samaritans of Singapore's (SOS) 24-hour hotline. The National Family Violence Networking System links government agencies, police, schools, hospitals and VWOs to provide multiple touch points to render prompt assistance for those affected by violence.

63. We implemented the Structured Decision Making (SDM) system to improve early detection and intervention. From 2010 to 2011, Singapore reviewed the Child Protection System and MSF's Child Protective Service (CPS). Recommendations led to a revamp and formation of the Inter-Ministry Workgroup on Child Protection (IWCP)<sup>16</sup> in 2012, focusing on strategic planning for the child protection landscape and higher levels of stakeholder representation. Arising from the review, the SDM system<sup>17</sup> was adopted as a national framework for child protection in 2015. It helps the CPS and community partners (e.g. hospitals and Family Service Centres (FSCs)) better detect and manage child abuse early. SDM's tools include the Sector Specific Screening Guide (SSSG), a first-of-its-kind for any child welfare system globally, and the Child Abuse Reporting Guide (CARG). SSSG helps frontline professionals in schools and hospitals know when to escalate cases for specialised intervention. CARG assists sector partners to identify child protection concerns and decide whether to report the case to CPS or take another course of action.

64. There are community-based specialist services for earlier intervention. Enhanced referral processes have enabled children with low or moderate risk to receive help early from community-based agencies, such as Child Protection Specialist Centres, Family Violence Specialist Centres and FSCs. These agencies provide families with counselling and community support to enhance parenting capabilities. Children with high risks and needs are cared for through statutory intervention. As far as possible, Singapore's policy is to help children remain with their families while providing them with community support.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.nlb.gov.sg/sure/>.

<sup>14</sup> CRC/C/SGP/2-3: p. 43, para. 181.

<sup>15</sup> CRC/C/SGP/2-3: p. 57, para. 256-257.

<sup>16</sup> Previously named Inter-Ministry Working Group on the Management of Child Abuse.

<sup>17</sup> This is a research and evidence-based decision support system.

**Strengthen public education on abuse [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 51]**

65. Singapore has intensified public education on abuse and strengthened help channels for victims. Since 2008, we have provided funding to community partners to develop family violence public education initiatives. In 2015, we provided training to community partners on family violence prevention via “The A.C.T. Community Ambassador Programme”. We also encouraged the community and bystanders to report abuse through campaigns like the “Tell Someone” initiative in 2011. MSF also launched a three-year “Break the Silence | Against Family Violence” campaign in 2016, to renew and raise awareness of family violence, focusing on the role of bystanders. For this, MSF engaged community and corporate partners to equip and educate the public to help victims of family violence. MSF also disseminated specially-produced videos on preventing family violence via mass and social media platforms, to reach a larger audience. VWOs also engaged in public education against abuse. SCS started a sexual abuse prevention programme in primary schools in 2000. In 2011, this programme, called ‘KidzLive: I Can Protect Myself’, went further upstream to empower preschoolers to recognise and report inappropriate touches. SCS also started a course in 2017 to train preschool educators to handle suspected child sexual abuse and conduct KidzLive.

**Mandatory reporting of abuses [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 51]**

66. As previously reported, Singapore does not institute mandatory reporting of child abuse. However, persons are legally required to report suspected sexual abuse cases under the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC). The CYPA also provides that those, who in good faith, alert the police or MSF of children who they suspect need care and protection, shall not incur civil or criminal liability. We have studied the experience of other countries with mandatory reporting systems and decided that it is more effective to enhance capabilities of frontline professionals as they are best-placed to identify early warning signs and report abuse. These include those with regular contact with children, such as teachers, social workers and law enforcement staff (see paragraph 63).

**B. Early and forced marriages (Article 24, para. 3)**

67. The Government raised the legal marriage age for Muslims from 16 to 18 years under the AMLA in 2009 to better align with the legal marriage age for non-Muslims under the WC and the CRC.

**C. Torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including corporal punishment (Articles 37(a) & 28, para. 2)**

68. Singapore will act firmly against violence against children. Protection is provided under Singapore’s laws for the vulnerable. More special protection measures have been introduced recently. Appropriate Adults (AAs) may be activated to support children during police investigations (see paragraphs 198 and 212).

**Corporal punishment as last resort [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 40(a), (b), 69(b)]**

69. As stated in our previous reports,<sup>18</sup> Singapore does not view corporal punishment as torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Corporal punishment is not a common punishment in Singapore and is only conducted as a last resort with strict regulations, guidelines and procedures.<sup>19</sup>

70. The Child Care Centres Regulations prohibit staff from administering any form of corporal punishment. Teachers are trained to manage students and establish a safe,

<sup>18</sup> For example, see Singapore’s UPR A/HRC/18/11 and CRC/C/SGP/2-3: p. 43–44, para. 182–187.

<sup>19</sup> For example, all corporal punishments in Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres are properly recorded and conducted in the presence of another staff member.

inclusive and supportive classroom environment. Corporal punishment is used as a last resort for serious misdemeanours in schools. Misbehaving students are provided with school counselling to help them understand the consequences and take responsibility for their actions. Caning only applies to male students and parents are kept informed. Each case is evaluated thoroughly and there are clear procedures to prevent abuse of institutional authority in relation to corporal punishment. Such punishment as a disciplinary measure is carried out by either the Head of the school or a delegated senior staff member at an appropriate venue. One to three strokes of a light cane may be administered only on the palms or buttocks over clothing.

71. As indicated in our previous report<sup>20</sup> and replies to the list of issues concerning the report, caning, which is the only form of corporal punishment allowed, and solitary confinement, are only administered on young offenders undergoing institutional rehabilitation who commit serious institutional misconduct. The administration of corporal punishment and solitary confinement are governed by Regulations under the CYPA and there are proper checks to ensure adequate protection for the offender. In Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres (JRCs) and MSF Youth Homes, caning is used as a last resort and only for very serious misconduct after counselling and alternative disciplinary methods have repeatedly failed to address the misconduct. Corporal punishment in the institutions above is carried out only after a full inquiry is conducted. Caning is done in private and witnessed by another staff. A light rattan cane is used which is different from the cane used on adult offenders. Corporal punishment is strictly prohibited for residents with physical or mental disabilities.

**Public education on alternative discipline methods and positive parenting [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 40(c)]**

72. Singapore expanded the reach of structured family life education programmes to promote positive, participatory and non-physical forms of discipline. Under FamilyMatters@School, family life educators conduct parenting talks and training in schools. As of June 2016, over 47,000 family education programmes were conducted in 290 schools, reaching almost five million participants. We expanded two evidence-based parenting programmes, Triple P (Positive Parenting Programme) and Signposts, to about 150 schools in 2017 to support parents facing parenting challenges. Findings show significant improvement in perceived parenting competence and reduction in parenting stress. Schools are encouraged to guide students who misbehave and help them take responsibility for their behaviours. The Ministry of Education (MOE) provides schools with resources such as the Discipline Framework that outlines examples of this approach which schools can adopt. Staff are trained to adopt approaches to build positive school culture and behaviour management, such as Restorative Practices and Positive Education. These efforts emphasise relationship building and strengths-based approaches to encourage change rather than punitive action.

**Combating violence against children [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 41(a), (b)(i), (b)(ii)]**

73. Singapore adopts a multi-pronged and multi-stakeholder approach to combat violence against children (see paragraphs 61–66). Singapore established the multi-agency Family Violence Dialogue Group<sup>21</sup> to coordinate a national strategy to enhance provisions and services for families and children affected by violence. Six VWO-led Regional Family Violence Working Groups spearhead community activities to raise awareness of family violence, examine trends and find ways to help families affected by violence. There are also laws and policies that provide legal protection for women and girls, such as the WC.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> CRC/C/SGP/2-3: p. 43–44, para. 186, p. 96, para. 461.

<sup>21</sup> This Group is jointly headed by MSF and the Singapore Police Force.

<sup>22</sup> For example, under the WC, the Director of Social Welfare can place a vulnerable girl in a crisis situation in a place of safety or in a care of fit individual (i.e. relative or friend).

**Data collection on violence against children [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 41(b)(iii)]**

74. Singapore has a system in place to collect and analyse data on child abuse (see paragraph 25). Singapore conducts extensive research on child protection to inform policies. The IWCP conducted focus groups sessions and surveyed over 350 professionals from various sectors to identify research priorities for the 2015–2019 National Child Protection Research Agenda (see Annex B).

**Co-operation with independent experts [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 41(c)]**

75. Singapore is open to working and has worked with independent experts. In July 2017, Singapore invited representatives from UNICEF (East Asia and Pacific Regional Office) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Regional Office for Southeast Asia) to speak at a training workshop to deepen understanding of the CRC and its implementation and reporting among ASEAN government officials. Singapore, through the ACWC, held dialogues with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (SRSG-VAC) in 2012, 2016 and 2017. Singapore expressed commitment through the ACWC in 2016 to support the High Time Movement promoted by SRSG-VAC to mobilise social support to protect children from violence.

**D. Physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims (Article 39)**

76. Singapore advocates trauma-informed care in the out-of-home care sector because child victims deserve to be cared for and successfully integrated into the community. See paragraphs 90–93.

**VII. Family environment and alternative care****A. Family environment, parental guidance (Article 5) and parental responsibilities (Article 18)****Ensure a good start for every child [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 43]**

77. Singapore has expanded support for families to care for children because every child should have a good start.

78. Singapore provides financial support for parents to defray their children's educational, developmental and healthcare expenses. In 2015, we enhanced the Baby Bonus cash gift<sup>23</sup> for children born on or after 1 January 2015, by (i) increasing the quantum of the cash gift by S\$2,000 (US\$1,470) such that the first and second children receive S\$8,000 each (US\$5,880), 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, we enhanced the Child Development Account (CDA)<sup>24</sup> by introducing the CDA First Step for children born from 24 March 2016. This is an initial S\$3,000 (US\$2,200) balance that is put into each child's CDA.

79. Singapore believes in investing early in our children. We introduced a five-year Child Care Masterplan (2013-2017) to expand capacity for parents who need child care services. Since then, over 50%, or almost 50,000, full-day preschool places have been added. We have also expanded subsidies to ensure our children have access to affordable child care and kindergarten services.

<sup>23</sup> The Baby Bonus scheme was introduced in April 2001 to support parents by defraying the costs of raising children. It comprises the Cash Gift and the CDA.

<sup>24</sup> The CDA is a special savings account. Savings that parents contribute to the CDA will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Government, up to the maximum cap. Funds in the CDA can be used for the child's educational and healthcare expenses. It can also be used to purchase medical insurance.

80. We have parental leave schemes and flexible working arrangements. Singapore supports working parents in managing work and family responsibilities. Statutory leave provisions include Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave, Shared Parental Leave, Infant Care Leave, Child Care Leave, and Adoption Leave. To encourage active fatherhood, the second week of Paternity Leave was made mandatory since January 2017. From July 2017, Shared Parental Leave was increased from 1 to 4 weeks, and Adoption Leave from 4 to 12 weeks (see Annex B). Employers are encouraged to introduce family-friendly work practices such as flexible work arrangements (FWAs). A 2016 survey found that 82% of employees work in firms offering ad-hoc FWAs and 67% of employees work in firms offering formalised FWAs.<sup>25</sup> The Government works continually with partners to raise awareness and build up capabilities of employers and supervisors to introduce flexible work practices.

81. Additional support for low-income families:

(a) We provide financial support for school-going children. We revised the monthly household income eligibility criteria<sup>26</sup> for the Student Care Fee Assistance Scheme in 2016 to assist more children<sup>27</sup> with before and after school care. Families may also receive a start-up grant up to S\$400 (US\$294) per child to cover initial costs such as deposit, registration fee, uniform and insurance;

(b) There is proactive outreach to children from low-income and vulnerable families. We piloted KidSTART in 2016 to pro-actively identify children from low-income families and provide them with early support for health, learning and development, as well as monitor progress during their early years. Parents are provided with resources through home visits, parent education or family support programmes. The three-year KidSTART pilot programme is expected to reach about 1,000 children. The Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) works with the community to reach out to low-income families whose Singaporean children are not attending preschools by nursery level. ECDA's community partners, such as SCS and the Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA), work with these families to enrol their child in preschool.

82. We started specialist services to support children from divorced families. In 2015, four Divorce Support Specialist Agencies (DSSAs) were established to provide specialised services and programmes for divorcing and divorced families. DSSAs provide the Mandatory Parenting Programme, counselling, case management, family dispute management, and support programmes. Trained counsellors facilitate therapeutic and safe access for the child and their parents and help parents work out feasible access arrangements. The goal is to empower divorcing parents to undertake effective co-parenting and build secure parent-child relationships without compromising the child's sense of personal and emotional safety. We have also introduced schemes to enhance parenting capabilities of separated parents (see Annex B).

#### **Eligibility for child care subsidies [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 43]**

83. Singapore enhanced subsidies for kindergarten and child care services. Singaporean children are eligible for a Basic Subsidy of up to S\$300 (US\$220) or S\$600 (US\$440) per month when enrolled in child care or infant care centres respectively. Households with working mothers, in which the household income is up to S\$7,500 (US\$5,500) monthly, can apply for Additional Infant and Child Care Subsidies. Since the enhancement of Additional Infant and Child Care Subsidies in 2013, working mothers receiving the highest tier of support could pay as little as S\$3 (US\$2.20) per month for full-day child care. Low-income families with extenuating circumstances may apply for further child care financial assistance. They may also apply for a one-time Start-Up Grant of up to S\$1,000 (US\$740)

<sup>25</sup> Source: Conditions of Employment Survey, Manpower Research and Statistics Department, Ministry of Manpower. The survey covered private sector establishments with at least 25 employees each and the public sector comprising government ministries, organs of state and statutory boards.

<sup>26</sup> The monthly household income eligibility criterion was raised to S\$4,000 (US\$2,940). A per capita income not exceeding S\$1,000 (US\$735) is used as a parallel criterion for households with 5 or more members.

<sup>27</sup> Aged 7 to 14 years, or up to 18 years for children with special needs.

to cover the initial costs of enrolling a child in a centre (e.g. deposit, registration fee, uniforms and insurance).

84. Since 2015, the Kindergarten Financial Assistance Scheme was extended to families of Singaporean children with a gross household income of up to S\$6,000 or a per capita income of up to S\$1,500 (US\$1,100). Lower-income families receive a higher quantum of up to S\$170 (US\$125) in fee assistance per month, compared to S\$108 (US\$80) previously. Families receiving the highest tier of support could pay as little as S\$1 (US\$0.70) monthly. Those requiring additional financial assistance may apply for the Start-Up Grant of up to S\$240 (US\$176). About 45,000 children have benefitted from enhanced child care and kindergarten subsidies in 2017, more than double the 17,000 children in 2012.

## **B. Separation from parents (Articles 9, 10)**

### **[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 45]**

85. We refer to our previous reports to the Committee. Singapore maintains its reservations to Articles 9 and 10. Singapore maintains its immigration legislation and policies due to its limited land size and lack of natural resources. In a small number of situations, a child may have to be separated from his or her parents, for example, where children or parents are incarcerated and visitation rights are withheld by the institution due to the inmate's misconduct.<sup>28</sup> In addition, Singapore's regulations relating to a foreigner's pass or permit<sup>29</sup> impose restrictions which include conditions on employment and marriage within Singapore. Family reunification may not always be feasible due to public interest or where parents' violent behaviour poses safety risks to the child.

## **C. Children deprived of a family environment (Article 20)**

86. We believe children develop better in family-based environments. For child victims, our goal is to help them recover and reintegrate into the community. Children may be deprived of a family environment for many reasons. They may be victims of abuse or share a fractured relationship with their family. Singapore has put in place the following care and protection measures for children.

### **Beyond Parental Control (BPC) programme review [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 47(a)]**

87. A multi-agency committee, including VWOs, was set-up in 2013 to review the BPC regime to ensure institutionalisation remains a last resort. To implement the committee's recommendations, legislative changes may be needed to emphasise parental responsibility, the role of family, and promote community-based interventions in the first instance. The review's scope is consistent with the Guidelines of Alternative Care of Children.<sup>30</sup>

### **Research to address root causes of issues faced by children and their families**

#### **[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 47(b)]**

88. Consistent with our data-driven approach to policy reviews, we conduct research to understand the root causes of issues faced by children and families. For example, girls make up a majority of BPC cases because they emphasise maintaining good relationships with significant others. When they are unable to achieve this, they may face emotional difficulties and exhibit behaviours such as truancy and running away from home. We also found that male BPC children were at higher risk of engaging in offending behaviour. These research findings suggest differences between male and female children's criminogenic needs and pathways for offending. This indicates that policy-making and risk assessment needs to be gender-sensitive.

<sup>28</sup> Regulation 83(1) of the Prisons Regulation (see CRC/C/51/Add.8/p.53, para. 229).

<sup>29</sup> Under the Immigration Act and the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act, foreigners are required to be in possession of a pass or permit before they can enter, remain and/or work in Singapore.

<sup>30</sup> General Assembly resolution 64/142 of 2009.

89. Our research also found that institutionalised female CYPs who experienced multiple types of childhood abuse have more traumatic symptoms, self-reported delinquency and self-harming behaviour in the institutions. The findings were also useful in designing and reviewing policies and programmes, and determining appropriate treatment for their institutional stay.

**Family preservation and reunification and alternative care services  
[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 47(c)]**

90. Child abuse victims need a permanent care plan to develop healthily. Singapore has therefore strengthened family-based care and community support for vulnerable children.

91. To support the growth of children in families, we established the Safe and Strong Families (SSF) pilot in 2017, comprising family preservation service (SSF-P) and family reunification service (SSF-R). Through SSF-P, children at risk of being separated from their families because of safety concerns are provided with intensive support to remain safely in their families. For children placed in foster or residential care, SSF-R enables them to return to their families. Through the SSF pilot, families receive time-limited, intensive support to provide a safe and nurturing environment for their children. This includes counselling, improving parenting capacity and family functioning. Community resources are available for additional support.

92. As children develop best in family-based environments, kinship and foster care are preferred options for children unable to remain safely with their natural families. To expand Singapore's fostering capacity and build foster care capability within the community, MSF appointed a number of VWOs as Fostering Agencies (FAs). The FAs support foster parents to better care for foster children and broaden foster family outreach and recruitment efforts.

93. We have diversified residential care options to suit children's different needs. Children with higher needs are placed in Small Group Homes where they receive more intensive and specialised care in smaller residential home settings.

**Promote greater public awareness on strong families [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 47(d)]**

94. We continuously educate the public on the importance of building strong and resilient families. We work closely with partners such as the Families for Life Council and the Centre for Fathering to promote family bonding and positive parenting. The Families for Life Council engages Singaporeans through its 365-day engagement approach to build strong and resilient families in Singapore and brings families a variety of programmes to enhance family life and encourage family time.

## **D. Adoption (Article 21)**

**[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 49(a), (b), (c)]**

95. The Government has strengthened safeguards for children in the adoption process since the last report. Since 2012, all prospective adopters must attend a pre-adoption briefing on the adoption process, eligibility criteria and adoptive parents' responsibilities. This ensures prospective adopters are well-informed about adoption and are mentally and emotionally ready to care for the child.

96. The Government also regularly reviews the adoption process to further strengthen safeguards for children. In 2013, we standardised the requirement for foreign adopters adopting a foreign child in Singapore to obtain their embassy's endorsement of the adoption. We provided a customised letter template for foreign adopters to obtain their embassy's guarantee that their home country would recognise the adoption and the adopted child would be granted permission to enter that country.

97. We are reviewing accession to the Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC).

**E. Recovery of maintenance for the child (Article 27, para. 4)**

98. The WC was amended in 2011 to provide enhanced enforcement of orders to pay maintenance for the child (see paragraph 18). These measures include ordering defaulters to furnish a Banker's Guarantee, or attend financial counselling.

**F. Periodic review of placement (Article 25)**

99. We established the Review Board through the 2011 CYPA amendments. The Board reviews all cases of children admitted to a licensed CYP Home. This ensures early planning for each child and creates a multi-disciplinary platform to work towards a care plan that will best meet the child's long-term needs.

**G. Illicit transfer and non-return (Article 11)**

100. Singapore acceded to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction in December 2010. The International Child Abduction Act came into effect in March 2011.

**H. Protection of children with incarcerated parents**

101. We refer to our previous reports<sup>31</sup> on measures to ensure children of incarcerated parents are protected. SCS also works with the Singapore Prisons Service to support families of inmates, including arranging tele-visits and running parenting and family programmes.

**VIII. Disability, basic health and welfare****A. Children with disabilities (Article 23)****[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 53(h)]**

102. Singapore's vision is to be a caring and inclusive society where persons with disabilities are empowered to achieve their fullest potential and participate fully as integral and contributing members of society. See Singapore's Initial Report on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).<sup>32</sup>

103. Singapore has national blueprints for persons with disabilities via our five-year Enabling Masterplans (EMs). The first EM (2007–2011) charted out services and programmes in the disability community. The second EM (2012–2016) adopted a life-course approach (including emphasis on childhood years) and addressed cross-cutting issues such as technology, community integration and accessibility. The third EM (2017–2021) guides the development of policies, programmes and services in creating a caring and inclusive society where persons with disabilities will be able to realise their full potential. The Masterplan complements Singapore's efforts to realise our obligations under the CRPD.

**Ratification of international instruments [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 53(g)]**

104. Singapore signed the CRPD in November 2012 and ratified it in July 2013. The Initial Report was submitted in 2016.<sup>33</sup> Singapore also acceded to the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled in March 2015. The treaty entered into force on 30 September

<sup>31</sup> CRC/C/51/Add.8/para. 229–230; CRC/C/SGP/2-3/para. 205.

<sup>32</sup> CRPD/C/SGP/1: p. 17–19, para. 3.1–3.9.

<sup>33</sup> CRPD/C/SGP/1.

2016. Singapore's Copyright Act was also amended to facilitate greater access to copyrighted works for people with reading disabilities.

**Compulsory Education [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 53(a), (b)]**

105. Singapore believes in investing heavily in our people, regardless of their background, to enable them to realise their potential and achieve aspirations. All Singaporean Primary 1 children with moderate to severe SEN will be included in the Compulsory Education (CE) Act from 2019. Currently, the majority of children with SEN have access to education in mainstream or special education schools. MOE will continue to work with schools and parents to ensure that learning opportunities are accessible to all Singaporean children.

**Data on children with disabilities [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 53(c)]**

106. An estimated 3% of the resident population has some form of disability. This translates to about 116,000 individuals. The incidence rate of disability among children is 3.2% for those 0 to 6 years old, and 2.5% for those 7 to 18 years old. Data on the SEN of children and the types of schools they attend is in Annex C.

**Training [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 53(d)]**

107. We provide specialised training for professionals working with children with disabilities, which include elements on the rights of the child. Teachers in special education (SPED) schools undergo comprehensive training to manage students with disabilities.<sup>34</sup> These teachers are required to complete the Diploma in Special Education (DISE), which equips new SPED teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach children with a range of disabilities. SPED educators are also trained in domain specific areas, such as arts, physical education (PE) and literacy and in specific disability domains, e.g. autism spectrum disorders. At the preschool level, there are Learning Support Educators<sup>35</sup> (LSEds) who support children with mild developmental needs in kindergartens and child care centres. In addition, early intervention teachers are trained to work with children from 0-6 years old.<sup>36</sup> Continuing Professional Development is offered to early childhood teachers to help them support children with developmental needs.

**Early intervention and inclusive education [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 53(b), (e)]**

108. The Government provides early intervention and education for children with disabilities and has in place a continuum of support programmes to provide them with conducive and inclusive learning environments.

109. The Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) provides development and therapy intervention for 0–6 year olds at risk of moderate to severe disabilities. In 2016, EIPIC benefitted 2,900 children across 19 centres.

110. The Development Support Programme (DSP) provides targeted short-term learning or therapy support for children with mild developmental needs in preschools. In 2016, the DSP helped 1,300 children across 350 preschools.

111. SPED schools cater for children with severe disabilities and require specialised support. They are well-equipped with facilities such as hydrotherapy pools, sensory-integration rooms and special rooms for therapy and vocational training. Since 2010, all 20 SPED schools have adopted the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)<sup>37</sup> which guides service improvement.

<sup>34</sup> CRPD/C/SGP/1: p. 76, para. 19.26.

<sup>35</sup> LSEds are experienced preschool teachers trained through the Specialist Diploma in Early Childhood Learning Support (SDELS).

<sup>36</sup> They are trained through the Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Intervention (Special Needs).

<sup>37</sup> Key areas include leadership, resource management, family and community partnerships, and teaching and learning processes and outcomes. Periodic reviews ensure effectiveness of the framework.

112. There are support programmes and resources for children with SEN in mainstream primary schools, such as the School-based Dyslexia Remediation programme.

113. To promote inclusivity, MOE started satellite partnerships with mainstream schools to provide opportunities for social and academic integration between SPED and mainstream students. As at March 2017, 13 SPED schools have established partnerships with 18 mainstream schools.

**Strengthen support for families of children with disabilities [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 53(f)]**

114. Our Initial Report on the CRPD mentioned extensive support provided to parents. We have developed a guide for parents/caregivers, educators and practitioners offering practical suggestions on modifying play activities for children with different abilities.

**B. Survival and development (Article 6, para. 2), health and health services (Article 24)**

115. Singapore continues to have low child mortality rates in view of quality healthcare and advances in obstetric care. In 2016, the neonatal mortality rate was 1.4 per 1,000 resident live-births, and 3.0 per 1,000 live-births and still-births for perinatal mortality rate. Infant mortality rate was 2.4 per 1,000 resident live-births.<sup>38</sup>

116. Singapore systematically encourages preventive health measures such as immunisations, annual health screenings, basic dental services and health promotion activities for school children. Over 95% of children are immunised against infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis B and measles.<sup>39</sup> In 2015, 40,339 (98%) of the Primary 1 cohort (aged 7 years) and 39,573 (99%) of the Primary 5 cohort (aged 11 years) were screened. In addition, over 95% of primary and secondary school students screened were rendered dentally fit.

117. Singapore is committed to ensuring access to quality healthcare infrastructure, facilities and personnel. In 2016, there were 2.3 doctors and 0.4 dentists per 1000 population. There were also 34 hospitals and speciality centres and 18 polyclinics.

**C. Breastfeeding (Article 24, para. 2 (e))**

**[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 57]**

118. Singapore encourages mothers to breastfeed their children as this provides all the energy and nutrients needed for growth, development and protection against infectious and chronic diseases.

119. We recommend exclusive breastfeeding during the child's first six months of life and recommend both breastfeeding and complementary foods till 12 months. The Government works with the Association of Breastfeeding Advocacy (ABAS) to raise awareness on breastfeeding benefits among health professionals and provides workplace support for breastfeeding mothers. The Health Promotion Board (HPB) funds ABAS to train up to 200 doctors and nurses at polyclinics to provide breastfeeding support to mothers who bring their child for vaccinations and conducts a breastfeeding survey among these mothers. In addition, all government-funded hospitals that offer maternity services have met the World Health Organisation (WHO)/UNICEF standards of Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) and are BFHI-certified.

120. To protect and support breastfeeding, the Sale of Infant Foods Ethics Committee (SIFEC) Code of Ethics prohibits marketing and promotion of breast milk substitutes. The Code currently covers products targeted at infants 0–6 months. It will likely be extended to cover products targeted at children 0–12 months after review. The revised guidelines in the

<sup>38</sup> Annex C, Table 23.

<sup>39</sup> Annex C, Table 26.

SIFECS Code of Ethics will be in line with countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom. The Code is also generally aligned with the WHO Code.

121. There is support for mothers to breastfeed at the workplace. The EA stipulates the statutory basic terms and conditions of employment, which includes maternity breaks. Representatives from the tripartite partners — NTUC U Family, Singapore National Employers Federation and HPB — have jointly developed an Employers' Guide to Breastfeeding at the Workplace which provides employers with information on supporting employees to continue breastfeeding after returning to work. In addition, building owners and developers may tap on government grants to provide family-friendly facilities (such as lactation facilities) in their work premises.

122. Under the CDCA, all mothers of Singaporean children can qualify for 16 weeks of paid maternity leave. Mothers covered under the EA, but whose children are not Singaporean, can qualify for 12 weeks of maternity leave for all births, of which 8 weeks are paid for by the government for the first two births. Singapore has also enhanced maternity protection laws in 2013. Under the EA, an employer who retrenches an employee or dismisses her without sufficient cause at any point during pregnancy is liable to pay her maternity benefits if she had worked for the employer for at least 90 days. Previously, the employer was liable only if she was retrenched within the last trimester of pregnancy or dismissed without sufficient cause within the second and last trimester of pregnancy. Singapore has not acceded to the ILO Convention No. 183 because persons in managerial, executive and confidential positions, public servants, seamen and domestic workers, and whose children are not citizens, are not covered under the EA or the CDCA. For these mothers, their maternity provisions are negotiated as part of their terms and conditions of employment.

#### **D. Adolescent health (Article 24)**

##### **Promoting healthy adolescent lifestyles [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 55(a), (b), (e)]**

123. Singapore prioritises universal primary health and preventive health care to promote healthy lifestyles among children and youth. This is done through ingraining healthy habits from young. Efforts expand beyond schools to the community and homes to integrate health promotion into the daily activities of our young. To ensure policies remain relevant, HPB conducts a Students' Health Survey once every three years to monitor health trends of adolescents.

124. HPB engages preschools to cultivate healthy habits from young, and extends efforts to institutes of higher learning to sustain healthy habits into adulthood. The "Healthier Child, Brighter Future" project, launched in 2012, provides resources and practical tips to help parents inculcate healthy habits in their children from young. HPB has worked with schools to nurture healthier eating habits by improving the nutritional quality of meals served in child care centres, primary and secondary schools. In addition, nurses are also deployed to schools to provide support for at-risk children in areas such as weight management and smoking cessation.

125. Singapore embarked on a whole-of-nation effort, NurtureSG to enhance the health outcomes of our children and youth.<sup>40</sup> In 2016, an Inter-Ministry Taskforce was formed for this purpose. It consulted over 900 members of public comprising parents/caregivers, teachers, students, social workers, counsellors, preschool operators and educators from April to June 2016 to seek views on the health concerns pre-identified based on existing trends, and possible ways to address the gaps. The Taskforce's recommendations focused on three key areas, namely, physical activity and nutrition, mental well-being and sleep. Recommendations submitted to the Ministry of Health (MOH) and MOE in early 2017 have been accepted, and consolidated into an Action Plan available on [www.moh.gov.sg/nurtureSG](http://www.moh.gov.sg/nurtureSG).

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<sup>40</sup> Programmes conducted by the HPB in educational settings target those 4–23 years old.

**Reproductive health [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 55(c), (e)]**

126. We equip adolescents with knowledge about Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) and HIV/AIDS in schools and the community.

127. It is compulsory for schools to provide sexuality education. STI/HIV/AIDS are covered in the science curriculum and upper-primary health education syllabus. Students aged 17 and above in the Institutes of Technical Education (ITE) and Polytechnics and youth in institutionalised settings are provided with STI and HIV/AIDS prevention programmes. The Government collaborates with relevant organisations to develop age-appropriate information on STIs and HIV/AIDS, resources and teacher training.

128. There are complementary programmes in the community to raise awareness among youth about the risk of contracting STI/HIV through casual and unprotected sex. Examples include programmes about delaying their sexual debut or using effective STI/HIV prevention.

129. The STI numbers amongst 10-19 year olds have declined since 2008. In 2014, there were 391 persons aged 10-19 years old with STI, compared to 820 in 2007.

**Research on adolescent suicide [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 55(d), (e)]**

130. Adolescent suicide continues to be low, with slight fluctuations over the years. In 2014, the adolescent suicide rate was 0.9 per 100,000 youth aged 10 to 14 years and 4.0 per 100,000 youth 15 to 19 years<sup>41</sup> with a slight spike in 2015 to 8.2. Despite the low numbers, every suicide is one too many.

131. Therefore, Singapore has adopted an inter-agency, multi-pronged suicide prevention approach, in line with the WHO's Public Health Action for the Prevention of Suicide Framework's recommended approach. Part of the suicide prevention strategy involves building mental well-being and resilience. SOS's regular public education efforts also raised public understanding on suicides and avenues for help. There are programmes to reduce the stigma around seeking help for mental issues, which is correlated with suicide. For example, the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) organises annual World Mental Health day events to increase public understanding of mental health. There are complementary efforts by VWOs, such as Silver Ribbon (Singapore), which reach out to persons who need help to build mental wellness and encourage them to seek treatment early.

132. The HPB conducts psycho-emotional and change management programmes to help students better manage stress, regulate emotional responses to transitions and develop resilience to deal with adversities. Students are taught to look out for one another and seek help from trusted adults. Schools conduct talks and workshops to equip parents with strategies to support children's social and emotional development.

133. Accessible support services and programmes are available for those at higher risk. For instance, IMH has set up multi-disciplinary Response, Early Intervention, and Assessment in Community Mental Health teams to train and support partners, including school counsellors, to better identify and manage at-risk children and make appropriate referrals. Since 2008, every school is assigned at least one school counsellor. If necessary, the counsellors will refer students for further assessment at IMH's Child Guidance Clinic.

134. Singapore has sought public feedback on mental well-being issues. During the *NurtureSG* public consultations (see paragraph 125), participants acknowledged that a key contributing factor to stress in our youths arises from high expectations. Others attributed poor mental well-being to social factors such as poor family relationships, lack of parental involvement, financial problems and excessive time spent on digital devices. University students generally felt that there was lack of support in institutions for students who need help but may not know how or where to seek help.

135. The *NurtureSG* Taskforce also recommended the formation of the inter-agency research workgroup for youth suicides which was tasked to conduct a retrospective study to understand the existing landscape of available information, and identify the risk and

<sup>41</sup> Annex C, Table 25.

protective factors of suicide and self-harming behaviour in those below the age of 35 for national surveillance.

## **E. Measures to protect children from substance abuse (Article 33)**

136. The number of people below 20 years old arrested for drug addiction is generally low, at 8.5% of addicts arrested in Singapore in 2015. Measures to protect children from drug abuse are stated in our previous report. We have since enhanced our efforts to prevent drug abuse among children.

137. In 2014, a Taskforce on Youth and Drugs was established to address rising numbers of young drug abusers. It focused on targeted strategies such as prevention, upstream intervention and community engagement. For example, resource toolkits on engaging youth were distributed to parents and educators. Post-secondary education institutions incorporated anti-drug messages into the curriculum. In 2016, the Committee against Youth Drug Abuse was established to oversee implementation of the Taskforce's recommendations and serve as a platform to discuss issues such as changing global perceptions toward drug control policies.

138. We enhanced legal penalties for drug traffickers and recruiters. In 2012, we amended the Misuse of Drugs Act to target those who recruit young or vulnerable persons for drug trafficking and to mete out stiffer punishments to those who traffic drugs to young and vulnerable persons. A new offence was created for those who organise drug gatherings, with enhanced punishment for gatherings involving the young and vulnerable.

139. We improved the rehabilitation framework for youth to avoid institutionalisation and ensure successful reintegration. When a first-time young abuser below 21 years old is tested positive for drugs, we assess the risk of re-offending before deciding on referral:

(a) Low risk cases are referred to the Youth Enhanced Supervision (YES) Scheme. Established in 2013, YES introduces casework and counselling to supplement urine supervision for first-time young abusers. The urine reporting and drug supervision are conducted at the Young Person Reporting Centre (YPRC), a dedicated centre established in 2012 that protects young supervisees from being negatively influenced by older supervisees who are usually hard core addicts;

(b) Moderate risk cases are referred to a Community Rehabilitation Centre. Established in 2014, the Community Rehabilitation Centre is a step-down arrangement for new young drug abusers after a period of detention in a Drug Rehabilitation Centre. Its structured residential services allow them to continue education or employment and attend compulsory counselling sessions at the Centre after work or school.

140. We strengthened anti-drug and anti-smoking advocacy in the community. The Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) empowers key influencers such as educators, counsellors, parents and National Service Commanders to reach out to youth<sup>42</sup> under their charge and strengthen youths' resilience to lead drug-free lifestyles. Workplace talks, seminars and public exhibitions are held. CNB leverages social media platforms to engage youth and work with community organisations to reach the public. HPB has established comprehensive programmes and policies to discourage tobacco use<sup>43</sup> among youth,<sup>44</sup> under the National Tobacco Control Programme.<sup>45</sup>

## **F. Social security (Article 26)**

141. Singapore has a robust social security system (i.e. Central Provident Fund (CPF)) to provide financial protection to eligible working Singaporeans, Permanent Residents and their dependants. Children qualify for the following benefits under the CPF scheme:

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<sup>42</sup> CNB's Preventive Drug Education and outreach efforts target youth aged 7 to 30 years.

<sup>43</sup> CRC/C/SGP/2-3: p. 71, para. 320.

<sup>44</sup> Youth is defined as 13 to 23 years for the National Tobacco Control Programme.

<sup>45</sup> Previously the National Smoking Control Programme.

(a) MediShield Life Scheme replaced MediShield in 2015 as the mandatory basic insurance scheme to cover treatment costs of serious hospitalisations. All newborn citizens are automatically covered from birth, without assessment for pre-existing conditions. Financial assistance is available for needy Singaporeans to pay the insurance premium;

(b) Medisave, a national savings scheme, helps pay for medical care and hospitalisation expenses of CPF members and immediate family members. All newborn citizens born on or after 1 January 2015 receive a S\$4,000 (US\$2,940) grant deposited in their Medisave accounts, which helps parents defray the cost of MediShield Life premiums and other healthcare expenses;

(c) Medifund Scheme is a Government endowment fund to help needy Singaporeans unable to pay for their medical expenses. In 2013, we introduced the Medifund Junior to provide more targeted assistance for needy Singaporean children;

(d) Other measures that support families with young children include the Dependents' Protection Scheme<sup>46</sup> and the Home Protection Scheme<sup>47</sup> which were mentioned in our previous reports.

142. Low-income Singaporeans (including children) are provided additional assistance. The Community Care Endowment Fund (ComCare) provides funding for assistance programmes for low-income Singaporeans. These include subsidies for student care, short-to-medium-term and long-term assistance. The size of the ComCare fund has grown from S\$250 million (US\$184 million) in 2005 to S\$1.9 billion (US\$1.40 billion) today (see Annex B). There are also other financial assistance schemes for CYPs which we have previously reported on.<sup>48</sup>

## **G. Standard of living (Article 27, para. 1–3)**

143. Children in Singapore enjoy a high standard of living and access to quality education, housing and information technology. To better support lower-income families, the Government introduced a variety of schemes. Workfare ensures that children, no matter their family situation, have access to adequate services and care to meet their needs<sup>49</sup> (see Annex B). The Fresh Start Housing Scheme, introduced in 2016, helps parents with young children own a flat so that children grow up in stable home environments. The Scheme applies to lower-income families who had previously owned a Housing Development Board (HDB)<sup>50</sup> flat, but are now living in a public rental flat. Families who qualify may buy a new two-room HDB flat on a shorter lease, which makes it more affordable. Families are given a HDB concessionary-rate loan, priority to select a flat, and a Fresh Start Housing Grant of up to S\$35,000 (US\$25,700). At the same time, families are supported in efforts to stay employed, manage finances well, and ensure children attend school. The HDB and social service agencies also assist any other family facing housing instability, by providing counselling, financial assistance, employment support, and/or advice on their housing options. To help bridge the digital divide among the low-income families with school-going children, NEU PC Plus programme provided such families with subsidised computers with three years of free broadband to support the children's learning needs since 2006.

<sup>46</sup> CRC/C/51/Add.8: p. 89, para. 382; CRC/C/SGP/2-3: p. 74, para. 338.

<sup>47</sup> CRC/C/51/Add.8: p. 89, para. 382.

<sup>48</sup> CRC/C/SGP/2-3: p. 32, para. 119; p. 46, para. 198; p. 75, para. 341.

<sup>49</sup> CRC/C/SGP/2-3: p. 76, para. 347–348.

<sup>50</sup> HDB is Singapore's public housing authority.

## IX. Education, leisure and cultural activities

### A. Provision of quality education (Articles 28 and 29)

144. Singapore prioritises and invests heavily in education for the holistic development of children. We believe education is a social leveller that enables all Singaporeans, regardless of their background, to realise their potential and achieve their aspirations, therefore building an inclusive society. We want our children to acquire not just academic knowledge, but also cultural values, social responsibility and life skills.

145. To ensure that all children learn at their own pace, we have customised curricula for varying ability levels and provided educational pathways to recognise different aptitudes, talents and definitions of success. Progress has been made in these areas:

(a) Introduced applied learning options in mainstream schools so that students acquire skills and develop qualities based on practical applications. All secondary schools developed an Applied Learning Programme by 2017, which provides more varied learning opportunities;

(b) Set up four specialised Independent Schools<sup>51</sup> to provide opportunities for students with specific interests and aptitudes to further develop their passion;

(c) Established four specialised schools in 2013 and 2014, which feature an enhanced curriculum with more hands-on learning environment and provide work skills certification which allow graduates to proceed to the Institute of Technical Education (ITE), or to find gainful employment;

(d) Introduced two through-train pathways in 2013 for students who do well in their General Certificate of Education (Normal Level) to provide more progression pathways for Normal (Academic) students.<sup>52</sup>

146. Singapore respects the right of the parents to decide the best form of education for their children. Parents may enrol children in madrasahs (Islamic religious schools), or home-school them as alternatives to enrolling them in the national school system. To protect the educational interests of home-schooled children, parents must have requisite educational qualification and work experience, as well as furnish information on the curriculum and educational outcomes of the home-schooling programme to MOE. To ascertain the child's educational progress, home-schooled children must sit for the national Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) at age 12.

147. The CE Act ensures all Singaporean Citizens are enrolled in national primary schools up to Primary 6. Singapore's net enrolment and completion rates continue to be high.<sup>53</sup> The six-year education aims to provide a strong core foundation of knowledge, as well as a common educational experience for nation-building and social cohesion.

#### Early childhood development

148. Singapore believes strongly in early childhood development and has made significant investments to improve the quality of services for children below seven years old.

149. The Government uplifted the quality of early childhood development. The Singapore Preschool Accreditation Framework was introduced in 2011 as a voluntary quality assurance framework for preschools to raise the quality of their centres. The ECDA was formed in April 2013 for holistic oversight of the sector. The Early Childhood Manpower Plan charts out a comprehensive suite of measures to attract, develop and retain quality

<sup>51</sup> Singapore Sports School, National University of Singapore High School for Maths and Science, School of the Arts, and School of Science and Technology.

<sup>52</sup> Includes the one-year Polytechnic Foundation Programme, and the two-year Higher National ITE Certificate course. Students who do well can benefit from a Direct-Entry-Scheme to a Polytechnic programme.

<sup>53</sup> Annex C, Table 31.

early childhood educators. A new Early Childhood Development Centres Act was introduced in 2017 to bring child care centres and kindergartens under the same regulatory framework to ensure consistent and higher quality standards.

### **Sustaining children in schools**

150. Singapore continues to have a low school drop-out rate and has several programmes to address the needs of students at-risk of dropping out.<sup>54</sup>

151. The Committee for Monitoring Attrition (CMA) formed in 2008 continues the work of the Committee on Reducing Attrition in Education.<sup>55</sup> The CMA coordinates and streamlines programmes for students at-risk of dropping out of school and monitors attrition rates. Since 2010, more than 99% of the Primary 1 cohort completed secondary education. There are also several standing committees that coordinate support for low-achieving students and at-risk learners. The VWO-run Enhanced STEP-UP programme<sup>56</sup> introduced in 2010 provides holistic support for students at-risk of dropping out of school and out-of-school youth.

### **Compulsory Education and free primary school education [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 59(a), 59(b)]**

152. Singapore is unable to provide free education for all children as education is highly subsidised and a right of citizens. The provision of significant education subsidies is a key pillar of the benefits system designed for citizens. The Government has no intention of reviewing the benefit system in this respect. While Singapore's reservation to Article 28 remains, the exemption of non-citizen children from CE by no means implies that they have no access to primary education in Singapore. Many non-citizen children prefer non-national schools such as international schools. Non-citizen children who prefer to enrol in national primary schools, may do so with the payment of school fees.

### **Ensuring affordability**

153. We remain committed to providing quality, affordable and accessible education so that no Singaporean student will be left behind due to financial circumstances. Education is highly subsidised at all levels, and the Government provides a range of financial assistance schemes, including:

(a) Financial Assistance Scheme: Singaporean students from disadvantaged backgrounds need not pay school and standard miscellaneous fees and benefit from free textbooks and uniforms. The scheme was expanded in 2012 to benefit larger families and subsidise school bus and public transport fares in 2015;

(b) Edusave Merit Bursary: all Singaporean students whose monthly household income does not exceed S\$6,000 (US\$4,412) and who are not recipients of MOE's Edusave Scholarship, may qualify for the Edusave Merit Bursary, if they achieve and demonstrate good schools grades and conduct;

(c) Funding for school leaders: funding doubled from S\$5 million (US\$ 3.67 million) to S\$11 million (US\$ 8.1 million) per year from 2015 to 2017 to further target assistance to students from less advantaged backgrounds;

(d) Opportunity Fund: this fund is for schools and institutions to provide enrichment activities for Singaporean students from less advantaged backgrounds. From 2013, MOE raised the grant and extended the scheme to the polytechnics. For 2013 to 2015, S\$69 million (US\$ 50.6 million) was disbursed to schools.

<sup>54</sup> CRC/C/SGP/2-3: p. 81–82, para. 370–373.

<sup>55</sup> CRC/C/SGP/2-3: p. 81, para. 372.

<sup>56</sup> CRC/C/SGP/2-3: p. 81, para. 371.

**Review of school and academic system [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 59(c)]**

154. Singapore has made efforts to engender a less stressful and more creative learning environment for students. Singapore revamped the PSLE national examination and Secondary 1 posting. With effect from 2021, eight scoring bands, known as Achievement Levels, will replace the PSLE T-score system. Students' performances will no longer be ranked against their peers to reduce competitiveness and allow students to focus on their own learning. The new scoring system will also facilitate better matching of secondary schools that best fit the child's interests and learning needs.

155. Our schools provide a holistic education on both academic and non-academic areas. Schools and tertiary institutions are given greater flexibility to set criteria that recognise different merits in the students they admit through the Direct School Admission Exercise to secondary schools, and the Discretionary Admissions to the institutes of higher learning such as ITE, Polytechnics and Autonomous Universities. Co-curricular activities have also been broadened to recognise and give credit to student-initiated and community-based activities.

156. Singapore is keen to promote children's personalities, talents and abilities through culture, the arts and sports. See paragraphs 169–176.

157. Singapore has measures in place to ensure students are supported in dealing with school-related stress. See paragraphs 132–133.

**Human rights education [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 59(e)]**

158. All students are taught CCE and Social Studies (see paragraph 53). Both subjects inculcate values and build competencies in students to be informed and participative citizens, with respect for human rights. In secondary schools' CCE lessons, students learn the importance of respecting the law which protects human rights, respecting the diversity of the community, and contributing towards improving the lives of others. The Social Studies (Primary) curriculum provides opportunities for students to understand their identities, as well as their roles in the communities they belong to. Our school rules articulate a clear stand that any form of hurtful behaviours, including bullying, is not acceptable. Schools also have programmes to raise students' awareness of bullying and cyber-bullying. The SCS also conducts programmes, campaigns and school talks to promote a bully-free culture in schools.

159. Both pre and in-service training are provided throughout teachers' careers to equip them with necessary CCE knowledge and skills to nurture classroom environments where students learn to respect others' views and resolve conflicts appropriately.

**B. Children belonging to indigenous and minority groups (Article 30)****Support for students in academic development [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 59(d)]**

160. Singapore is committed to support children with weaker literacy and numeracy foundations. Early specialised interventions are in place through the Learning Support Programme for English Language and Mathematics for Primary 1 and Primary 2 in all primary schools. Weaker students receive support through structured remediation programmes beyond Primary 2.

161. Community Self-Help Groups provide community outreach programmes and subsidised educational programmes to help less advantaged children. In 2015, four self-help groups<sup>57</sup> set up a joint venture company to run 30 school-based student care centres for the holistic development of students, especially the less privileged.

162. Singapore provides programmes to help all academically weak students, regardless of race. Such programmes are complemented by community efforts. Community self-help

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<sup>57</sup> The Chinese Development Assistance Council, Yayasan Mendaki, SINDA and the Eurasian Association.

groups conduct various programmes for students, for example, tuition for slower learners. This is a sustainable approach that has worked well.

**Racial harmony [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 72]**

163. Singapore is committed to promoting racial harmony and has strengthened its efforts. Singapore's signing of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in October 2015 is consistent with Singapore's longstanding commitment since our independence to preserve a multiracial society where every person is equal, regardless of race, language or religion.

164. We have made efforts to ensure networks of trust are nurtured and community interactions strengthened at the community level. The National Steering Committee on Racial and Religious Harmony was convened for ethnic, religious, community and government leaders for these purposes. The Committee provides direction to the Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles (IRCCs) to nurture similar networks of trust at the local level. The IRCC Steering Committees, formed in 2011, oversee efforts to engage youth aged 15 to 35 years and organise major events to build inter-faith and inter-racial harmony.

165. Singapore has made significant investments to encourage racial harmony. In 2013, Singapore set up a S\$5 million (US\$3.67 million) Harmony Fund to encourage ground-up civic initiatives to raise awareness of the importance of racial and religious tolerance and understanding, deepen interaction between groups and reduce misconceptions about other communities.

166. Singapore has made efforts to ensure school curricula teach the importance of racial harmony. This is explicitly included in history, social studies and CCE lessons. Students are taught the major religions, how to appreciate different cultural practices and the consequences of prejudice. Non-curricular activities include the annual celebration of Racial Harmony Day and ethnic festivals, and Home Stay and Cultural Camps, for students to experience other races' lifestyles.

**Equal opportunities [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 72]**

167. The Singapore Constitution provides for equality of all persons before the law and equal protection of the law. It also prohibits discrimination against citizens on grounds of religion, race, descent or place of birth in certain situations, unless expressly provided by the Constitution. In regard to minorities, Article 152 of our Constitution provides for the Government to be responsible to care for the interests of racial and religious minorities in Singapore. Under the Constitution, all Bills passed in Parliament must be forwarded to the Presidential Council for Minority Rights to ensure that they do not discriminate against any racial or religious community before it is presented to the President for assent. This promotes equal opportunities for everyone, including children of minorities.

**Freedom to practice culture, religion, and language [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 72]**

168. The Singapore Constitution provides for the freedom of religion. All persons, including children, have the right to profess and practice his or her religion and to propagate it. The Constitution recognises the special position of Malays under Article 152(2) as "the indigenous people of Singapore" and requires the Government to protect, safeguard, support, foster and promote their political, educational, religious, economic, social, cultural, and language interests. Article 153 requires the Legislature to make provisions for regulating Muslim religious affairs and constituting a Council to advise the President in matters relating to the Muslim religion. This led to the establishment of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore.

## **C. Rest, play, leisure, recreation and cultural and artistic activities (Article 31)**

### **Sports**

169. Opportunities for leisure, play and participation opportunities in culture and the arts are provided through schools' co-curricular activities and the PE curriculum.<sup>58</sup> The revised PE syllabus was introduced in stages since 2014. It builds a strong foundation in fundamental movement skills and broad-based development of physical competencies through various activities. Outdoor education equips all primary and secondary students with outdoor living skills and imbues in them resilience, tenacity and teamwork.

170. Singapore encourages young talented athletes to pursue excellence in both academics and sports. The Singapore Sports School admits student-athletes, who benefit from its flexible academic setting. The school has significantly contributed to a pipeline of elite national athletes, who have performed well internationally. As at June 2016, the school has produced 10 World Champions, and several gold medallists at the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and Southeast Asian Games. The National Youth Sports Institute was also set up in 2015 to drive youth sports development.

171. The MOE Junior Sports Academy Programme was implemented in 2015 and identifies budding sporting talents in primary schools. Annually, around 1% of each cohort is selected to join this programme.

### **Arts education and festivals**

172. Singapore believes that the arts are a vital component of every child's holistic development and allows young people to voice their ideas and be engaged with their community.

173. The National Arts Council (NAC) is the lead agency to develop the arts. Various festivals are organised for children and youth, such as the Singapore Art Week and Noise Singapore. The latter offers music and visual art showcases and mentorship opportunities for the young. The NAC-Arts Education Programme, available to schools since 1993, covers dance, literature, music, theatre and/or visual arts. Annually, more than 340,000 students participate in one of over 2,000 programmes conducted by professional arts educators, artists and arts groups. In 2014, it was extended on a pilot basis to 14 preschools and increased in reach to 55 preschools in 2016 through partnerships with anchor operators. New arts education programmes were introduced in 2012, including arts for children and youth-at-risk.

174. A Children's Arts Centre was launched in 2016 to provide a dedicated space for schools, children and their families to enjoy the arts.

### **Grants**

175. Singapore supports the development of arts through financial disbursements and awards. The Arts and Culture Presentation Grant was introduced to provide schools with financial support to put on performances and exhibitions for public audiences. In 2015, S\$37.6 million<sup>59</sup> (US\$27.6 million) was disbursed as direct assistance to artists and arts organisations. In addition, the NAC confers the National Young Artist Award annually to recognise the artistic achievements and commitment of distinguished art practitioners below 35 years of age. With a grant of up to S\$20,000 (US\$14,700), the award supports recipients' continued artistic pursuits.

### **Heritage community programmes**

176. Singapore supports the development of a vibrant and inclusive heritage sector. The National Heritage Board (NHB) actively promotes a museum-going culture among the

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<sup>58</sup> CRC/C/SGP/2-3: p. 83, para. 384.

<sup>59</sup> Comprises operating grants, capability development grants, arts housing subsidies and funds for international showcasing.

young.<sup>60</sup> The NHB kick-started several heritage education programmes from 2014 for preschoolers and school-going children to foster greater interest in Singapore's multi-cultural heritage (see Annex B). NHB also launched a new cultural philanthropy initiative, HeritageCares, to reach out to children with special needs and from less privileged backgrounds through programmes at national museums, heritage institutions and sites.

### **Volunteerism and Community Service**

177. Children and youth are encouraged to volunteer, participate or lead in community programmes beyond the areas that they are interested in, such as sports and the arts. For example, MOE's Values in Action are learning experiences that support students' development as socially responsible citizens who contribute meaningfully to the community, through the learning and application of values, knowledge and skills. Youth Corps Singapore<sup>61</sup> provides breadth and depth of volunteering opportunities to cater to youth's diverse interests and commitment levels.

## **X. Special protection measures**

### **A. Asylum-seeking and refugee children (Article 22)**

#### **Legislative framework [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 61]**

178. There have been no cases of unaccompanied minors, asylum-seeking and refugee children in Singapore in recent years. As a small country with limited land, Singapore is not in a position to accept persons seeking political asylum or refugee status. Nonetheless, Singapore respects the principle of non-refoulement. Requests from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to not repatriate asylum seekers to their country of origin are assessed based on each case's circumstances.

### **B. Economic exploitation including child labour (Article 32)**

#### **[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 63]**

179. In general, Singapore does not have a problem with economic exploitation of children, including child labour. The EA prohibits children below the age of 13 years<sup>62</sup> from employment, while those between the ages of 13 to 15 years may only be engaged in light industrial undertakings where only members of the same family are employed. This addresses situations, more common in the past, where families running small family businesses sometimes engaged their children to help with light tasks under their family's supervision. The EA protects the child in respect of the maximum number of hours, time and types of work. Violation of these provisions is an offence. As the CE Act ensures that children attend school during the school term, incidences of children working is low. To date, there are no infringements regarding the employment or working conditions of children below the age of 16. While there is no specific additional statutory protection for persons from 16 to 18 years old, they are usually pursuing higher education or vocational training. Singapore will continue to monitor the minimum age of employment and adopt changes where necessary to ensure the continued protection of children.

180. Singapore conducts the Comprehensive Labour Force Survey annually to collect key information on demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population. This includes working and living conditions of workers regardless of age.

<sup>60</sup> CRC/C/SGP/2-3: p. 87–88, para. 404–411.

<sup>61</sup> A National Institution that empowers and supports youth who are keen to serve the community.

<sup>62</sup> The EA was amended in 2004 to raise the minimum age of employment from 12 to 13 years, in line with ILO Convention No. 138.

### **C. Children in street situations**

181. Singapore generally does not have children living in the streets as we have a strong social support system.

### **D. Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Article 34)**

#### **Strengthening legislation to criminalise sexual exploitation and abuse [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 65(a), (b)]**

182. As previously reported, Singapore has robust legislation that punishes perpetrators of sexual abuse.<sup>63</sup> Singapore's laws conform with international obligations in this respect, including Article 3(b) of the ILO Convention 182. Singapore has further strengthened our legislation to criminalise sexual exploitation and abuse. The PHTA was enacted in March 2015. It is an offence to recruit, transport, harbour, or receive any person including a child for the purpose of exploitation (see paragraph 189). It is also an offence under the WC to buy, sell, procure, traffic or bring in or out of Singapore any woman or girl for the purpose of prostitution. It is also an offence to make, reproduce, import, possess, sell or supply (including electronic transmission) any obscene or objectionable publication (including photos) for purposes connected therewith under the Undesirable Publications Act and the Films Act. Singapore is also currently reviewing our laws relating to child pornography and sexual offences committed on minors, including whether the sentences need enhancement or new laws need to be drafted.

#### **Support for victims [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 65(c)]**

183. Singapore has strengthened support for child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. See paragraphs 90 to 93.

#### **Monitoring mechanisms [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 65(d)]**

184. Singapore tracks relevant data to inform support programmes for victims. See Annex C for data on child abuse investigations involving sexual abuse.

#### **Protection of children from sexual exploitation in tourism [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 65(e)]**

185. As previously reported,<sup>64</sup> Singapore already has robust laws to address the protection of children from sexual exploitation in tourism. The laws were recently enhanced in 2016, when the WC was amended to make it an offence for a person in Singapore to operate or maintain a remote communication service in Singapore that offers or facilitates the provision of sexual services. This amendment addresses the problem of perpetrators of child sex tourism increasingly leveraging the use of internet to reach large numbers of clients.

### **E. Sale, trafficking and abduction (Article 35)**

#### **National plan to combat trafficking in persons**

186. To outline and implement key strategies to combat TIP in Singapore, we introduced the first National Plan of Action (NPA) in 2012. The roadmap also applies to children.

187. With the NPA, we have addressed immediate legislative and operational gaps to combat TIP. Our key progress areas include:

- (a) Enactment of the PHTA (2015);
- (b) Accession to the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (UN TIP Protocol) (2015); and

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<sup>63</sup> CRC/C/SGP/2-3: p. 101–102, para. 482–487.

<sup>64</sup> CRC/SGP/2-3: p. 101–102, para. 482–484.

(c) Ratification of ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP) (2016).

188. To further enhance measures to combat TIP, the Inter-agency Taskforce on Trafficking-in-Persons launched the National Approach in 2016 (see Annex B). The plan sets out key strategies and outcomes to guide the work of Government and community stakeholders.

**Investigation and penalties for trafficking [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 67(a)]**

189. Singapore laws set out appropriate penalties for all trafficking cases because we believe in promoting the child's safety. The PHTA adheres to an internationally-accepted definition of TIP and provides the legislative framework to deal with perpetrators, abettors and masterminds of trafficking. Upon conviction, perpetrators may face a mandatory prison sentence of up to 10 years and a fine of up to S\$100,000 (about US\$73,400) for the first offence. They may also be liable to caning of up to six strokes for the first offence. For a second or subsequent offence, perpetrators are punished with a prison sentence of up to 15 years, a fine of up to S\$150,000 (about US\$110,000) and caning of up to nine strokes. The PHTA prescribes a lower threshold for the TIP offence to be made out for child victims, given their vulnerability, pursuant to the standards in the UN TIP Protocol. In addition, our laws impose heavier penalties for cases with aggravating circumstances such as where the perpetrator is in a position of authority/dominion over the victim.

**Management of trafficking victims [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 67(b)]**

190. Trafficked victims are not treated as offenders. They are not deported at the first instance and are permitted to stay in Singapore to assist with investigations. The PHTA mandates the provision of shelter, food and counselling and avails other support measures customised to victims' needs. The CYPA provides for child victims of trafficking to be placed in shelters for their safety. Singapore also works with VWOs to facilitate reunification of trafficked victims with their families. As the number of international TIP cases are small, this is facilitated on a case by case basis.

191. We protect the confidentiality of the child victims and their identity, and also encourage reporting. The measures protect the victims' confidentiality and include mandatory in-camera court proceedings for child victims, media gag order for proceedings involving sexual exploitation and protection for informers reporting TIP activities.

192. We also invest in building up capabilities to ensure early detection by police officers. We have:

- (a) Set-up a dedicated sex TIP team in the Criminal Investigation Department;
- (b) Developed a 'TIP card' to help officers recognise signs of trafficking;
- (c) Provided regular trainings for officers alongside international counterparts.

**Studies and public education [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 67(c), (d)]**

193. We support studies and fund public education efforts to raise awareness to ensure early help for TIP victims. The National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Singapore Management University organised human trafficking conferences in 2014 attended by students, academics and non-governmental organisations. The Singapore Committee for UN Women also organised two "Business against TIP" conferences in 2014 and 2015 to engage businesses on the issue of TIP. Apart from the TIP Public Awareness Grant, the TIP Taskforce actively engages the media to highlight TIP cases. In 2016, the Singapore Police Force (SPF) featured the first sex trafficking case convicted under the PHTA on *Crimewatch*, a local TV series. The episode had a viewership of 1.16 million.

**International Cooperation to Prevent TIP [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 67(e), (g)]**

194. Singapore has strengthened international cooperation efforts to prevent TIP. Singapore ratified the ACTIP in January 2016. We proactively cooperated with international organisations such as the United Nations and ASEAN to develop safeguards

against trafficking. We work with international law enforcement counterparts for training purposes, such as partnering the French Embassy and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Toronto Police Service to build capacity for ASEAN law enforcement officers. Singapore is open to further cooperation with relevant international organisations to prevent TIP. Domestic partnerships with civil society organisations (CSO), embassies and businesses have also been crucial in areas such as public awareness and training. For example, we partnered a CSO, Hagar International, to train over 4,000 police officers to identify TIP victims.

**Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 67(f)]**

195. Singapore acceded to the UN TIP Protocol in September 2015.

**F. Protection for victims and witnesses of crimes (Article 39)**

**[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 70]**

196. We refer to our previous reports. In general, a child's best interests take precedence for investigations and court proceedings.

197. Care is taken during court proceedings to avoid embarrassment, shame and pressure on children involved. Usually, no family members are present unless the child feels more comfortable in the presence of an adult family member. Alternatively, a trained volunteer from the SCS can be assigned to accompany the child during the trial.

198. During police investigations, AAs<sup>65</sup> may be activated to support the child and aid communication, where appropriate. AAs are independent, trained individuals who are not family members. The AA scheme applies to individuals, including children with mental or intellectual disability.

199. Victims are also supported emotionally. Victim care officers are volunteers trained by the Police Psychological Services Department to emotionally triage and stabilise the victims during investigation. There are plans to activate such volunteers to help other groups of vulnerable victims.

200. Generally, the police initiates investigations when a police report is made. However, even if a report is not made, our laws allow the police to initiate investigations if there is reason to suspect injustices involving young or vulnerable victims. Investigations may commence upon receipt of credible information without requiring victims to lodge a report.

**G. Other forms of exploitation (Article 36)**

201. Singapore reviews our laws regularly to ensure that they are current in protecting children from all forms of exploitation.

**H. Children in conflict with the law (Article 40)**

**[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 69(f)]**

202. The Singapore youth justice system emphasises early identification and intervention for optimal rehabilitation. The National Committee on Youth Guidance and Rehabilitation<sup>66</sup> (NYGR) has taken on a more proactive and strategic role since forming a Steering Committee and Working Group in 2011. Beyond identifying service gaps for supporting offenders from 12 to 21 years old, NYGR effects systemic changes. The NYGR supported the introduction of the triage system for young offenders, where risk and needs assessments

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<sup>65</sup> CRPD/C/SGP/1: p. 48, para. 8.1–8.4.

<sup>66</sup> CRC/C/SGP/2-3: p. 91, para. 431.

are completed as part of the police investigation process (see paragraph 211). The NYGR is supported by the Central Youth Guidance Office, which coordinates multi-agency efforts to break cycles of offending.

203. The Youth GO! Programme is an upstream intervention to reduce youth crime, where mobile teams build social relationships with youth on the streets before providing intervention. Out-of-school youth above 16 years old may also access Workforce Singapore or Employment and Employability Institute career centres for vocational training and job placement. The Youth-At-Risk Engagement Framework introduced in 2016 enhances the sector's capability to identify and work with at-risk youth using evidence based/informed practices.

204. There has been a general fall in the number of youth, below 18 years old, arrested from 3,156 in 2009 to 2,025 in 2016. Young offenders are diverted from Court where possible. Youth justice in Singapore is premised on graduated intervention, based on rehabilitative needs of the young offender. Placing young offenders on pre-court diversionary programmes allows them to be accountable for their actions, but prevents disruption in other aspects of development such as education. If the young offender completes these programmes successfully, they would not be charged in Court. Such programmes include the Guidance Programme (GP) and Enhanced Streetwise Programme (ESWP). The GP is for young offenders up to 18 years old who committed minor offences, while the ESWP is for young offenders who played a minor role in gang-related offences. They are case management programmes which impart life skills to young offenders to minimise the risk of reoffending and steer them away from gangs. The young offenders' family and school are also involved. The types of offences eligible for the GP were expanded in 2012.

205. We emphasise community rehabilitation. Under the CYPA, children below 16 years who commit offences are charged in the Youth Court. The Youth Court employs Restorative Justice Principles while balancing the need for effective deterrence. Cases involving young offenders aged 16 to 18 years are handled by the Community Court. See Singapore's Initial Report<sup>67</sup> for the range of non-custodial options available to the Youth Court.

206. Singapore believes in reintegrating youth offenders into society. The Yellow Ribbon Project continues to create awareness, acceptance and inspire community action and the Yellow Ribbon Fund facilitates programmes that reintegrate ex-offenders into the community. Over S\$3 million was raised in 2015. More than half was disbursed to support the reintegration of ex-offenders with their families, with over 5,000 beneficiaries. The campaign has enhanced its digital presence to reach the online community.

207. We take note of the technical tools developed by the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice and its members. While we have not had the occasion to use these tools nor sought technical advice or assistance from members of the Panel, they remain avenues for us to turn to when needed.

**Minimum age of criminal responsibility and special protections under the CYPA  
[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 69(a), (e)]**

208. As previously stated in our reports, the minimum age of criminal responsibility is 7 years. This allows us to use a diversionary and restorative approach to address risk elements early in young offenders. In addition, the CYPA accounts for evolving maturity levels of children as they develop.

209. We have in place court diversionary measures for young offenders and a range of community and residential-based measures, depending on their needs and risks (see paragraphs 203-204). The words, "conviction" and "sentence", cannot be used in relation to offenders dealt with by a Youth Court to avoid criminalising them. The focus on rehabilitation to address delinquent behaviour early serves their interests in the long run.

<sup>67</sup> CRC/C/51/Add.8: p. 49–50, para. 216.

Singapore has implemented safeguards to ensure young offenders with intellectual disabilities are given appropriate consideration.

**I. Children deprived of their liberty including any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment or placement in custodial settings (Article 37 (b)–(d))**

**Deprivation of liberty [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 69(c)]**

210. Singapore is committed to ensure sentencing and detention take into consideration the best interests of the child. As stated in our previous reports, there is a range of sentencing options under Singapore laws. These options allow the Courts to calibrate the sentence by considering relevant factors, having regard to the welfare and interests of the child.

211. We have also made progress in our efforts to target vulnerable youth and divert them away from criminal activities and processes (see paragraphs 203 and 204). In 2016, we rolled out a triage system at police stations for youth aged up to 18 years in conflict with the law. As part of the police investigation, the triage officer (a social worker) interviews the youth with their parents to gain insight into their social background and links them to support services. This triage assessment helps police gauge the youth offender's suitability to be diverted from the criminal justice system, while the youth's social needs are attended to early. As a result, there was a general decline in admissions to the MSF Youth Homes, from 365 youth in 2009 to 244 youth in 2016 as more youth offenders are diverted from the Court system or rehabilitated within the community.

212. In 2017, an AA Scheme was introduced to enhance support for young suspects interviewed by the police and CNB. The Scheme is managed by an appointed VWO where independent and trained AAs accompany young suspects during statement-taking to provide emotional support or aid communication as necessary.

213. In 2013, we transformed the educational system in MSF Youth Homes. Full-time MOE teachers were seconded to the Homes to align their academic curricula to national standards. The libraries and science laboratories were also upgraded. Today, a vocational curriculum is provided to some residents to enable employability and increase their job competitiveness. Schools, training agencies and employers facilitate the residents' reintegration into the community through continuing education, vocational training and employment.

**J. The sentencing of children, in particular the prohibition of capital punishment and life imprisonment (Article 37(a))**

214. As mentioned in paragraphs 34 and 205, there are many community-based and residential orders that the Court may make for youth who are prosecuted. If deemed unsuitable for residential rehabilitation in a MSF Youth Home, the youth may be ordered to reformatory training or imprisonment. As far as possible, those under 21 years of age and sentenced to imprisonment are housed separately from adult offenders. From 2008 to 2015, the number of young offenders under 18 years who were sentenced to imprisonment or reformatory training fell by 65.1%.

**Sentence of life imprisonment [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 69(d)]**

215. Consistent with Article 37(a) of the CRC, a young person who has been convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment may apply to the Ministry of Home Affairs for his case to be reviewed and possibly released, after serving a minimum of 20 years of the prison sentence. In addition, youth below 21 years who are sentenced to life imprisonment will have opportunities to participate in rehabilitative activities during their institutional stay. Depending on progress and behaviour, they may work in workshops within the institution or are employed in vocational and educational programmes. They are also allowed family contact.

216. The CPC does not allow the death penalty to be imposed on a person under 18 years at the time of commission of the offence. While these persons will be sentenced to life imprisonment instead, they will be eligible for parole under the Prisons Act.

### **K. Training activities for professionals in youth justice system**

217. Staff in MSF and the JRCs are trained to use restorative practices when working with young offenders. Staff working in reformatory training centres undergo training on correctional rehabilitation.

## **XI. Ratification of international human rights instruments**

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 74]

218. Singapore engages seriously with treaty bodies, fulfils treaty obligations judiciously, reviews reservations where appropriate, and welcomes shared learning on implementing human rights. Singapore may not be party to certain human rights treaties, but our domestic policies are generally in compliance with their substance. Our policy is to keep core human rights treaties under review.

219. Singapore ratified the CRPD in July 2013. Singapore signed the ICERD in October 2015, and is expected to ratify the ICERD in 2017.

220. Singapore acceded to the UN TIP Protocol, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in September 2015.

## **XII. Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

### **A. Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (Articles 34, 35 and 36)**

221. Singapore is considering ratifying the OPSC. Current efforts are geared towards reviewing whether necessary legislation and resources are in place such that obligations may be implemented smoothly.

### **B. Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (Article 38)**

222. Please refer to Singapore's Initial Report for the OPAC. Singapore has not experienced armed conflict since its independence in 1965. No child has been recruited and used in hostilities by armed groups, placed in demobilisation and reintegration programmes, or charged with war crimes. There are no child victims of practices prohibited by the OPAC among the refugee and asylum-seeking children encountered by Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) troops deployed as part of UN peacekeeping operations. We have not had any unaccompanied minors in Singapore in the recent past (see paragraph 178). Nonetheless, if they are found within Singapore, the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority would work with the UNHCR to facilitate their resettlement.

223. The introduction of the CE Act in 2000,<sup>68</sup> made it mandatory for Singaporean children to attend a national primary school regularly. The high proportion of children aged below 18 years who are gainfully pursuing education<sup>69</sup> minimises the likelihood of them being recruited and engaged in hostilities. In addition, Singapore ensures relevant provisions under the various articles of the OPAC are provided for in our legislation.

<sup>68</sup> The CE Act took effect from the Primary 1 cohort in 2003.

<sup>69</sup> Annex C, Table 32.

**Domestic legal system [CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/CO/1, para. 6]**

224. Singapore implements our obligations under the OPAC through domestic legislation. The two key pieces of legislation are the SAF (Volunteers) Regulations and the Enlistment Regulations.<sup>70</sup> Any person may report violations of his/her rights under the OPAC to the Courts by citing relevant provision in the legislation implementing the OPAC.

**Complaint mechanism [CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/CO/1, para. 8]**

225. We note the Committee's comments regarding an independent complaints mechanism. Servicemen are briefed on the multiple channels of providing feedback, complaints and seeking redress during enlistment, all of which apply equally to early enlistees below the age of 18 years. These channels are covered in the Recruit's Handbook availed to all enlistees. The procedures for seeking redress are set out in the General Orders of the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF).

226. Servicemen are supported through the SAF Counselling Centre's 24-hour hotline availed to all servicemen and their families. All calls are confidential and callers may remain anonymous. Servicemen and their family members may also call the hotline to discuss concerns regarding issues pertaining to National Service.

227. The SAF has established procedures for servicemen to seek redress through the chain of command. If the serviceman is dissatisfied with the action taken by his commanders, he may raise the issue in writing to the Armed Forces Council, chaired by the Minister for Defence.

228. Furthermore, there is a confidential disclosure mechanism where disclosures are surfaced to senior MINDEF officials outside the chain of command. All such disclosures are treated with utmost confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the discloser, to the extent feasible and permissible under the law.

**Public education [CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/CO/1, para. 10]**

229. The obligations of the OPAC are disseminated to relevant departments of MINDEF and the SAF. SAF personnel deployed to international peacekeeping missions undergo pre-deployment training on human rights, Law of Armed Conflict, protection of civilians, gender awareness and Rules of Engagement to ensure they conduct themselves responsibly during their mission.

230. MSF has created a webpage on the OPAC (see paragraph 245).

**Voluntary enlistment [CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/CO/1, para. 12(a), (b)]**

231. The SAF aligns itself with the main OPAC provisions. SAF members under 18 years old do not take part in hostilities. The minimum age for compulsory recruitment into the SAF is 18 years and the minimum age of voluntary recruitment is 16 years and 6 months. The Voluntary Early Enlistment Scheme serves those who complete their basic educational qualifications before 18 years old and would like to enlist for full-time National Service earlier. It allows them to enter the workforce faster, or complete their full-time National Service before proceeding for university studies. Only a small number of such servicemen are enlisted.

232. All servicemen including volunteers between 16 and a half to 18 years are subject to military law under the Singapore Armed Forces Act to ensure equality of justice within the SAF. Safeguards are in place within the military justice system to ensure parity with the civil courts. For example, presiding judges of the subordinate military court are serving or former civil court judges. In addition, the military court of appeal consists of a president who is a Supreme Court Justice and includes two civilian lawyers.

233. As proper discharge of military duties is critical to the security and stability of Singapore, the notification period of three months for leaving the volunteer force is necessary to ensure proper handing over of duties, as well as allow sufficient time for a

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<sup>70</sup> These were amended in July 2008 to align with the obligations of the OPAC.

suitable replacement to be trained and deployed. The three-month notification period is applied consistently across military schemes for regular servicemen.

**Human rights and peace education [CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/CO/1, para. 14]**

234. Please refer to information under Article 14 for information on CCE and Article 30 for racial harmony.

235. Teachers are equipped with relevant skills and knowledge to facilitate discussions among students on issues related to human rights and peace education, such as rights and responsibilities of citizens in a country and tensions arising from maintaining security as well as the right of individuals to freedom of movement.

236. The Revised Social Studies Syllabus explores the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a country. An example highlights the efforts of Malala Yousafzai in championing the rights of children to education. Another section explores tensions arising from maintaining security and the right of individuals to freedom of movement, e.g. No-Fly lists developed by governments.

237. Social work students from the NUS must attend compulsory modules to learn about social work education, advocacy, social justice and human rights. The modules emphasise that human rights and social justice are fundamental values of social work. The Bachelor of Social Work programme offered by the Singapore University of Social Services includes an elective course on Social Advocacy anchored on the values of rights and social justice.

**Legislative safeguards [CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/CO/1, para. 16, 18]**

238. The penalty under Regulation 40 of the Enlistment Regulations for contravening Regulation 14<sup>71</sup> under the Enlistment Regulations is sufficient deterrence of conscription of children below the age of 16 years and 6 months or the involvement of enlistees in direct hostilities. To date, there have been no prosecutions made under Regulation 14. Hence, there is little impetus to amend legislation as recommended by the Committee. Singapore currently does not have any plans to accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

**Extraterritorial jurisdiction and extradition [CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/CO/1, para. 20(a), (b)]**

239. We note the Committee's recommendation for Singapore to have extraterritorial jurisdiction for all offences under the OPAC and to make the offences extraditable. The OPAC does not require States Parties to extend criminal jurisdiction extraterritorially to cover all offences therein nor to make these offences extraditable. Singapore does not consider it necessary to amend the relevant legislation at this time but will keep the necessity of amendment under review. To date, Singapore has not received nor made any extradition or mutual legal assistance requests relating to offences under the OPAC.

**Corporal punishment [CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/CO/1, para. 22]**

240. See paragraphs 69–71.

**Asylum-seeking and refugee children [CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/CO/1, para. 24(a)–(e), 25]**

241. See paragraph 178.

**Arms export and military assistance [CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/CO/1, para. 27]**

242. SPF regulates the export and import of small arms and light weapons through the Arms & Explosive Act. Licenses and permits are required to export or import such weapons. SPF scrutinises relevant documents from countries of origin and final destination before

<sup>71</sup> Regulation 14 of the Enlistment Regulations (Cap. 93, Reg. 1) permits any person below the age of 18 years but not below the age of 16 years and 6 months to apply to be enlisted in regular service in special cases. The safeguard under regulation 14 is that such an enlisted person shall not be permitted to take a direct part in hostilities until he has attained the age of 18 years.

issuing appropriate authorisations. There are measures to ensure that weapons being exported out of Singapore are meant for bona fide recipients and not diverted into illicit channels that may include supplying arms to child soldiers. SPF will not authorise arms exports to countries under the relevant sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council.

243. Singapore will consider the Convention on Cluster Munitions, and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction as part of its review of the international agreements to ratify or accede. Singapore will ensure that necessary legislation and resources are in place to implement its obligations immediately before ratification or ascension.

**Follow-up and dissemination [CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/CO/1, para. 29, 30];  
[CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/CO/1, para. 30]**

244. The Inter-Ministry Committee on the CRC is tasked to communicate and implement articles of the OPAC.

245. MSF has published information on the OPAC in a dedicated webpage on its corporate website, including an overview of the OPAC, a graphic in layman language on some OPAC articles, the Initial Report and the concluding observations.

**C. Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure**

**[CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/CO/1, para. 28]**

246. Singapore has in place a range of mechanisms to ensure access to justice for children, their parents and/or caregivers in Singapore if the rights afforded in the CRC have been violated. Redress is available through the Courts, relevant government ministries and Parliament. These mechanisms provide adequate recourse and are continuously reviewed to ensure compliance with the CRC. As such, Singapore is currently not considering ratifying the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure.

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