

**Singapore's Second and Third  
Periodic Report to the  
United Nations Committee  
on the Rights of the Child**



**January 2009**





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Periodic Report to the  
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Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports  
Republic of Singapore  
January 2009

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MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, YOUTH AND SPORTS  
REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **1 Introduction**

1.1 The Republic of Singapore acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on 2 October 1995. The Convention came into force on 4 November 1995. This second and third Periodic Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child covers the developments which enhance the protection and promotion of children's rights in Singapore during the time frame of 2003 to 2007.

1.2 The Government of Singapore is committed to making Singapore a great place for children and families to thrive and grow in. Children in Singapore continue to enjoy high standards of care. They are protected by law, have access to a high quality healthcare system, and education system and receive family and community support. They live in a society rich in a shared diverse inter-racial and inter-religious culture.

### **2 Key Developments**

2.1 Since 2002, the Government has taken various initiatives to advance children's rights in Singapore. Government policies relating to children are based on the key principles of child-centricity, integration, early intervention, specialised help for vulnerable groups and a shared sense of responsibility amongst Government, community and individuals in realising the needs of children.

2.2 The key areas of development are highlighted in the following sections of this Executive Summary. They are elaborated in the Report.

### **Legislative Enhancements**

#### **Constitution**

2.3 In April 2004, the Singapore Parliament passed a bill to amend Article 122 of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore to allow overseas-born children to acquire Singapore citizenship by descent from their Singaporean mothers. Previously, a child of a Singaporean mother born overseas could only acquire Singapore citizenship by registration upon the application of the mother. With the amendment of the Constitution, a child born on or after 15 May 2004 shall be a citizen of Singapore by descent if at the time of his or her birth, either his or her father or mother is a citizen of Singapore, by birth, registration or descent.

## Penal Code

2.4 The Singapore Government completed its review of the Penal Code (Cap. 224) in October 2007. The amendments to the Penal Code (Cap.224) came into force on 1 February 2008. The review process, which resulted in amendments being made to the Penal Code (Cap.224), was robust, involving public consultation, inputs from members of the public, professional organisations as well as stakeholders of the criminal justice system.

2.5 The amendments to the Penal Code (Cap.224) enhance the protection of young persons against exploitation for commercial sex in Singapore and in other countries by making it an offence for:

- (i) a person (male or female), to obtain for consideration sexual services from another person (male or female) who is under 18 years of age;
- (ii) a Singapore Citizen or Permanent Resident to obtain for consideration sexual activities from a minor under 18 overseas; and
- (iii) a person to make or organise child sex tours or print, publish or distribute any information that is intended to promote commercial sex with minors under 18 outside Singapore.

2.6 The amendments also created a new punishment section for abduction. The offence is now punishable with up to 7 years imprisonment, or fine, or caning, or any combination of the three penalties.

## Employment Act

2.7 The definition of a child under the Employment Act (Cap. 91) was amended in 2004. A “child” is defined as a person who has not completed his 15th year of age (raised from the previous 14th year of age). A “young person” is a person who has completed his 15th year of age but who has not completed his 16th year of age.

2.8 The minimum age of employment of children was also raised in 2004 from below the age of 12 years to 13 years. While a child, who is above 13 years of age but has not completed his 15<sup>th</sup> year, or a young person is allowed to work under the law, Singapore’s labour legislation restricts the type of work and maximum hours the child or young person may be employed.



### Children and Young Persons Act

2.9 The Children and Young Persons Act (Cap.38) is currently being reviewed with a view to furthering protective and rehabilitative measures for children and young persons. The review is expected to be completed in 2009.

### Initiatives in Legal Proceedings

2.10 Singapore has, in recent years, introduced various initiatives in legal proceedings to better safeguard the interests of children and young persons in the justice system. One such initiative is the Community Court, established in June 2006, as a specialist court combining criminal justice and community resources for a comprehensive rehabilitative response to select cases. The Court deals with, among other groups and cases, youth offenders aged 16 to 18 years of age. From May 2008, the Community Court also deals with cases where the offenders are aged up to 21 years of age. Offenders are rehabilitated in the community, where possible.

2.11 A Children Care Court was established on 15 May 2008 to oversee legal proceedings pertaining to the care and protection of children under the Children and Young Persons Act (Cap.38). The Children Care Court provides for dedicated processes to consider the needs of children in need of care and protection, including placements and assessments by in-house counsellors and psychologists.

2.12 The Family Court has also introduced changes to the judicial process for custody and care and control issues. The CHILD (CHildren's Best Interests, Less ADversarial) programme provides for the resolution of custody disputes in a less adversarial manner through a dedicated and appropriately configured Family Court, to be named the Family CHILD Court, presided by a senior Family Court judge. This process is quasi-inquisitorial. Parties are discouraged from taking overly contentious positions and instead focus on sensible and viable parenting arrangements.

### Strong Inter-Ministry Collaboration

2.13 The Government continues to adopt a partnership approach in policy and programme development. In end 2007, the Government set up an Inter-Ministry Committee (IMC) to review the help for dysfunctional families with children. Chaired by the Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports, the committee aims to enhance assistance to dysfunctional families and to develop long-term resiliency in these families and their children.

2.14 The IMC on Dysfunctional Families comprises the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of National Development (MND), the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), social work agencies, Self-Help Groups

and other people sector representatives who work with dysfunctional families. The committee has identified the following key thrusts for implementation:

- (i) better identification of at-risk and dysfunctional families;
- (ii) prevention;
- (iii) effective intervention; and
- (iv) social service sector capability.

The IMC on Dysfunctional Families will complete its review in end 2008.

### **Promoting Health, Education and Culture**

2.15 Children in Singapore continue to enjoy high standards of healthcare and education and vast exposure to culture and the arts. In the area of health, our infant mortality rate has consistently been low. Singapore's infant mortality rate was ranked by UNICEF's "State of the World's Children Report" from 2005 to 2008 as the lowest in the world. In 2007, the infant mortality rate was 2.1 per 1,000 live births.

2.16 In regard to children's education, the introduction of the Compulsory Education Act (Cap. 51) in 2003 ensures that all children born after 1996 residing in Singapore and are Singapore citizens are enrolled in national primary schools up to Primary 6. The 6-year education aims to give all our children a common core of knowledge that will provide a strong foundation for further education, and a common educational experience which will help to build national identity and cohesion. The Singapore Government also continues to seek ways to promote diverse educational pathways for all children through alternative schools and the provision of a wider range of curricula for children of various abilities and talents.

2.17 The provision of leisure, play and participation opportunities in culture and the arts continues to be a priority for the Singapore Government. Arts programmes for children including the annual Singapore Youth Festival, Noise Singapore (a media-based Arts Festival), Heritage Education programmes and reading programmes provide exposure to various artistic mediums and inculcate in children an appreciation for diverse platforms for expression.

### **International Commitments**

2.18 Singapore ratified the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Minimum Age Convention 1973 (No. 138) on 7 November 2005, extending our commitment to protecting children against economic exploitation.

2.19 In March 2008, Singapore announced its intention to sign on to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction by, underscoring

Singapore's commitment to working in the best interests of children in situations of abduction.

### **3 Consultations**

3.1 In the preparation of this Report, the inputs of relevant government ministries and agencies have been sought in order to provide a comprehensive update on developments affecting children in Singapore.

3.2 A consultation session on 2 July 2008 was also jointly organised by MCYS, NCSS and a local non-governmental organisation providing child-focused programmes and services, the Singapore Children's Society. Over 250 policymakers, social service professionals working with children, educators, academics, child delegates and representatives from the UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office attended the session.

3.3 The draft periodic report was also placed online for a month after the forum for the public's comments and feedback. Comments from the consultations were considered by the Inter-Ministry Committee on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (IMC-CRC) and have been incorporated in this Report. There are also some comments that require further study; the IMC-CRC will look into them going forward, in its continuous mission to make Singapore a great place for children to grow up in.

## **Glossary of Terms**

AGC	Attorney-General's Chambers
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BFA	Barrier-Free Accessibility in Buildings
BPC	Beyond Parental Control
CARE	Community Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex-Offenders Network
CPC	Criminal Procedure Code
CPO	Child Protection Officer
CPS	Child Protection Service
CYPA	Children and Young Persons Act
FSC	Family Service Centres
GP	Guidance Programme
HPB	Health Promotion Board
IMC-CRC	Inter-Ministry Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child
IMC-DF	Inter-Ministry Committee on Dysfunctional Families
IMH	Institute of Mental Health
LTA	Land Transport Authority
MCYS	Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports
MDA	Media Development Authority
MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MICA	Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts
MND	Ministry of National Development
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOM	Ministry of Manpower
NAC	National Arts Council
NCPC	National Crime Prevention Council
NCSS	National Council of Social Service
NFC	National Family Council
NVPC	National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre
NYC	National Youth Council
NYGR	National Committee on Youth Guidance and Rehabilitation
SCS	Singapore Children's Society
SHS	School Health Services
SPED	Special Education
SSC	Singapore Sports Council
SSTI	Social Service Training Institute
VWO	Voluntary Welfare Organisation
WC	Women's Charter
YHD	Youth Health Division
YRP	Yellow Ribbon Project





## INTRODUCTION

1 Singapore acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 2 October 1995. The convention came into force for Singapore on 4 November 1995.

2 Singapore submitted its Initial Report in March 2002 (“the Initial Report”). This Report by Singapore is submitted as required under Article 44, paragraph 1(b) of the CRC. It consists of the 2nd and 3rd Periodic Report and covers the period from 2003 to 2007.

3 This Report follows the guidelines in the **UN Document CRC/C/58 Rev.1** titled **“General Guidelines regarding the Form and Content of Periodic Reports to be Submitted By State Parties under Article 44, paragraph 1(b), of the Convention”**, dated 29 November 2005.

4 Part One of this Report provides general information on Singapore since the last report in 2002. Part Two sets out the progress which has been made in the various areas covered by the CRC and Singapore’s positions in relation to these articles.

5 The Report also addresses the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights on the Child (“CRC Committee”) at the thirty-fourth session, as recorded in the **UN Document CRC/C15/Add.200** titled **“Consideration of Reports Submitted by State Parties under Article 44 of the Convention, Concluding Observations: Singapore”**, dated 27 October 2003.

## PART ONE

### UPDATES TO GENERAL INFORMATION

#### 1 Demographic Characteristics

##### (A) Population Trends

1.1 As of end June 2007, the resident population was 3,583,100, a growth of 6.4% from 2003. Of the total resident population in 2007, 18.9% (678,400) were aged below 15 years, 72.5% (2,599,100) were aged 15 to 64 years and 8.5% (305,500) of the population were aged 65 years and above. The median age of the resident population was 36.4 years compared to 35.0 years in 2003. Males made up 49.6% (1,775,500) of the resident population while females made up 50.4% (1,807,600).

1.2 The ethnic composition for the population remains largely the same from the last census in 2000, with 75.2% Chinese, 13.6% Malay, 8.8% Indian, and a growing proportion of 2.4% comprising other ethnicities.

1.3 Population density increased from 5,903 persons per square kilometer in 2003 to 6,489 persons per square kilometer in 2007.

Table 1: Resident Population Aged Below 20 Years by Age Group (in thousands)

		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
0 - 4 years	Male	108.6	105.6	102.7	99.7	99.1
	Female	101.4	99.2	96.9	94.7	94.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>210.0</b>	<b>204.8</b>	<b>199.6</b>	<b>194.4</b>	<b>193.6</b>
5 - 9 years	Male	127.3	124.2	122.3	121.4	118.4
	Female	119.7	116.3	114.9	113.8	111.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>247.0</b>	<b>240.5</b>	<b>237.2</b>	<b>235.2</b>	<b>229.5</b>
10 - 14 years	Male	133.4	132.3	133.0	131.7	131.4
	Female	125.7	125.0	125.6	124.7	123.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>259.1</b>	<b>257.3</b>	<b>258.6</b>	<b>256.4</b>	<b>255.3</b>
15 - 19 years	Male	110.3	117.1	120.9	126.6	131.6
	Female	103.7	110.3	114.0	119.9	125.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>214.0</b>	<b>227.4</b>	<b>234.9</b>	<b>246.5</b>	<b>257.3</b>

*Source: Department of Statistics*

##### (B) Life Expectancy

1.4 Life expectancy at birth continues to increase. It increased from 79.1 years in 2003 to 80.6 years in 2007. Females have a longer life expectancy of 82.9 years compared to 78.2 years for males.



### (C) Fertility Rates and Infant Mortality

1.5 The total fertility rate per resident female was 1.29 in 2007, compared to 1.27 in 2003. There were a total of 39,490 live births in 2007, of which 51.8 % were males, and the 48.2% were females.

Table 2: Resident Total Fertility Rates (per resident female)

2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
1.27	1.26	1.26	1.28	1.29

Source: Department of Statistics

Table 3: Infant Mortality Rates (per 1,000 live births)

2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
2.5	2.0	2.1	2.6	2.1

Source: Ministry of Health

1.6 Singapore's infant mortality rate was 2.1 per 1,000 live births in 2007 compared to 2.5 per 1,000 live births in 2003. Our infant mortality rate was ranked by UNICEF's "State of the World's Children Report" from 2005 to 2008 as the lowest in the world.

## 2 Socio-Economic and Cultural Indicators

### (A) Standard of Living

2.1 Singapore was ranked 25th out of 70 countries classified as having High Human Development by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) for 2007/08. In the Mercer Worldwide Quality of Living Index 2007, Singapore was ranked first for quality of life in Asia.

2.2 Singapore's socio-economic performance can be attributed to continued political stability, quality judicial performance, and high integrity of government. In 2007, the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC) ranked Singapore as the most politically stable country in Asia, and second out of 14 jurisdictions in Asia for quality of the judicial system. Singapore also scored highest in terms of highest integrity government, with the corruption level of 1.3, the lowest in the region.

2.3 In 2007, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was S\$243 billion (US\$174 billion<sup>1</sup>) while GDP per capita was S\$52,994 (US\$37,853). Singapore's economy continues to do well, with a real growth of 7.7% in 2007.

2.4 Singapore has a relatively equitable distribution of income. The median monthly earnings of full-time employed residents in Singapore was S\$2,300 (US\$1,643) in June 2007, compared to S\$2,100 (US\$1,500) in 2003. This was a 2.7 % increase per annum.

<sup>1</sup> Conversion rate used for all figures in this Report: S\$1.40=US\$1.00 (As of September 08)

**(B) Rate of Inflation**

2.5 The annual inflation rate for 2007 was 2.1%. The 2008 inflation rate is expected to be higher in line with increasing inflation worldwide.

**(C) External Debt**

2.6 Singapore has no public sector external debt.

**(D) Rate of Unemployment**

2.7 Singapore's labour force comprised 2,751,000 people in June 2007. The resident labour force participation rate was 65.1%. The average unemployment rate for 2007 was 2.1%, which had declined from 4.0% in 2003.

**(E) Literacy rate**

2.8 The literacy rate for the population aged 15 years and older is 95.7% in 2007, with the mean years of schooling at 9.4 years. Among residents aged 25-34 years in 2007, 59% have Polytechnic or University qualifications.

**(F) Religion**

2.9 The main religions in Singapore are Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Christianity and Hinduism. The 2000 Census showed that 85% of Singapore residents professed to have some religious faith or spiritual belief. 43% were Buddhists, 15% were Muslims, 15% were Christians, 9% Taoists and 4% were Hindus.

**3 General Legal Framework for the Protection of Children**

3.1 As reported in the Initial Report, the key pieces of legislation for the protection of children in Singapore are the Children and Young Persons Act (Cap.38) (CYPA), the Women's Charter (Cap.353) (WC), the Penal Code (Cap.224), the Adoption of Children Act (Cap.4) and the Guardianship of Infants Act (Cap. 122).

3.2 The Penal Code (Cap.224) was reviewed in 2007. Key amendments included the extension of protection for children, in relation to sexual crimes and commercial sex involving minors. The Penal Code (Amendment) Bill was passed by Parliament on 23 October 2007 and came into force on 1 Feb 2008. These are captured in greater detail in Section VIII. Developments Under Special Protection Measures. Related amendments to the WC and the CYPA were also made.

3.3 The Children Care Court was established on 15 May 2008 to oversee legal proceedings pertaining to the care and protection of children under the CYPA. This function had historically been undertaken by the Juvenile Court. The Children Care Court

provides for dedicated processes to consider the best interests of children in need of care and protection, including placements and assessments by in-house counsellors and psychologists.

3.4 The Government of Singapore is currently reviewing the CYPA to better protect, rehabilitate and enhance the welfare of children. The review is expected to conclude in 2009.

#### **4 Singapore's approach to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and working in the Best Interests of Children**

4.1 Singapore takes a holistic approach in ensuring the well-being and development of children. We are committed to making Singapore a great place for children and families to thrive and grow by:

- (i) ensuring strong legislation;
- (ii) promoting health;
- (iii) providing quality education;
- (iv) securing safety;
- (v) nurturing strong families;
- (vi) embracing diversity; and
- (vii) ensuring inclusion of all our children.

4.2 Policies for children with respect to the different aspects of a child's life continue to be integrated into key policies and programmes of relevant government agencies, a reflection of the collective ownership of children's issues within the Government and its partners.

4.3 MCYS continues to be the lead agency for the welfare, protection, rehabilitation and development of children. Together with the Inter-Ministry Committee on the CRC (IMC-CRC), MCYS continues to monitor the implementation of the CRC in Singapore. MCYS works with the other ministries, the Courts, the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC), government and non-governmental agencies to ensure the well-being of children in Singapore.

#### **5 Dissemination of Information on the CRC**

5.1 The Government continues to consult the public and persons concerned with the welfare and interest of children extensively and regularly on issues relating to children. Many of these consultations have been with children and youth themselves. In recent years, more community and ground initiatives have emerged, highlighting the fact that the principles of the CRC have been embraced by the general public. More information on publicity, education and consultation on the CRC can be found under Section I. Developments Under General Measures of Implementation.

## **PART TWO**

### **I. DEVELOPMENTS UNDER GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION**

#### **1 Preamble**

1.1 This section highlights key updates and new initiatives related to general implementation of our obligations (including legislative protections, inter-agency mechanisms, international partnerships and publicity). These pertain to Articles 4, 42 and 44(6).

#### **2 ARTICLE 4 – IMPLEMENTATION OBLIGATIONS**

*The State must do all it can to implement the rights contained in the Convention.*

##### **(A) Coordination and Monitoring**

2.1 As reported in paragraph 57 of the Initial Report, there is an Inter-Ministry Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (IMC-CRC), set up in 1996, which continues to coordinate and monitor Singapore’s implementation of the CRC. The IMC-CRC provides the platform for mutual exchange of information, including aggregate and specific data that respective agencies collect, and fosters dialogue amongst members in the consideration of the welfare and best interests of children in Singapore. The IMC-CRC is premised on Singapore’s approach of “Many Helping Hands” in policy and programme development for children.

2.2 This approach of collective ownership and the “Many Helping Hands” is also used to co-ordinate and monitor specific issues relating to children, including family development and support, child abuse, child sex tourism and early childhood education.

2.3 In May 2008, a National Family Council (NFC), comprising public and people sector representatives was established as an advisory and consultative body for family-related policies, issues and programmes. NFC also seeks to make Singapore a place for children to play and grow through promoting resilient families. It works through consulting the public and providing feedback to the Government on family policies, programmes, research and services, as well as engaging stakeholders to create a conducive environment for children and families.

2.4 In end 2007, the Inter-Ministry Committee on Dysfunctional Families (IMC-DF) was set up to review the assistance required for dysfunctional families with children. Chaired by the Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports, the committee aims to identify ways in which to enhance holistic help to such families and to develop long-term resiliency. The IMC-DF comprises representatives of MCYS, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of National Development (MND), the National Council of Social Service

(NCSS), social service agencies, self-help groups and other people sector representatives who work with dysfunctional families. The IMC-DF will complete its review in end 2008. A series of public consultations on the recommendations will take place before the IMC-DF's report is finalised.

2.5 NCSS, the umbrella body for Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) in Singapore, including children's organisations, continues to play a key role in leading and directing the social sector, enhancing the capabilities of social service organisations, and promoting strategic partnerships for social services. NCSS actively promotes the principles found in this Convention through platforms such as the Voluntary Children's Home Network, Youth Services Network and the Research Network. In 2002, NCSS, in consultation with non-governmental groups in Singapore, submitted a Shadow Report on Singapore's Initial Report. MCYS continues to dialogue with NCSS and the various VWOs serving different interest groups. This is in line with our partnership approach to ensure that the best interests of the child are met.

2.6 The collective work of agencies represented on various IMCs and Non-Governmental Organisations involved in child services reflects Singapore's commitment to children, aligned to attaining outcomes reflected in "A World Fit For Children" and the UN Millennium Development Goals.

2.7 The Singapore Government's basic approach to human rights has been to concentrate on improving the substantive quality of life in Singapore. We remain committed to ensuring a high degree of peace, freedom, prosperity and personal security for all Singaporeans, especially children. The Government pays special attention to the protection and welfare of vulnerable or special groups through such institutions as the Presidential Council for Minority Rights and will continue to focus our efforts on strengthening these existing mechanisms.

2.8 Some independent monitoring mechanisms to safeguard the welfare of children are currently in place. These take the form of the Board of Visitors for Children and Young Persons' Homes, and the Advisory Board for all cases of juveniles placed under statutory orders for residential rehabilitation. A Panel of Advisors consisting of individuals from different disciplines and with various expertise in child welfare and development areas, also advises the Juvenile Court Magistrate on the best outcome for all cases that go through the Juvenile Court.

2.9 The Singapore Government also works closely with VWOs such as Singapore Children's Society. As a non-government organisation, Singapore Children's Society plays an independent role in monitoring and critiquing the work of government agencies for the welfare of children and works closely with them to implement timely services and programmes for children in Singapore.

## **(B) Legislation**

2.10 As demonstrated in the Initial Report, the principles and provisions of the CRC are implemented in practice and supported by legislation. Singapore conducts comprehensive reviews of key legislation protecting children, to enhance the protective mechanisms and ensure that they are current.

2.11 Singapore completed its review of the Penal Code (Cap.224) in October 2007. The amendments to the Penal Code (Cap.224), which came into force on 1 February 2008 were refined through a robust process of public consultation, with inputs from members of the public, professional organisations as well as stakeholders of the criminal justice system. Amendments included provisions to better protect minors from sexual exploitation and sexual offences. Details on the amendments can be found in Section VIII. Developments Under Special Protection Measures.

2.12 Extensive consultations on the Penal Code (Cap.224) amendments were conducted through multiple points of engagement, such as the national feedback portal (i.e. REACH e-portal), letters and articles to the media, e-mail messages, as well as inputs received at various focus group discussions with people from different walks of life. In addition, institutions such as the Law Society of Singapore, the Subordinate Courts and the Singapore Academy of Law provided valuable inputs. Every feedback received was considered carefully. MHA held discussions with relevant agencies to explore the ideas, suggestions and views that were surfaced. About 30 provisions were further amended as a result of suggestions received.

2.13 An extensive review of the Children and Young Persons Act (Cap.38) (CYPA) is currently underway. Among others, the following enhancements are being considered to better protect children:

- (i) Licensing of Children and Young Persons Homes
- (ii) External periodic review for all children and young persons admitted to reside in Children and Young Persons Homes

The review would be completed in 2009. Public consultation on the proposed amendments will take place as part of the review.

## **(C) Resources**

2.14 The Government continues to dedicate resources for the development of its people and children. In 2007, government expenditure on social development was S\$11 billion (US\$7.9 billion). Social development expenditure includes education, health, community development, youth and sports, information, communications and the arts, environment and water resources, and public housing.

Table 4: Government Expenditure on Social Development

	2003 (million)	2004 (million)	2005 (million)	2006 (million)	2007 (million)
<b>Total Government Operating Expenditure</b>	S\$19,236.2 (US\$13,740.1)	S\$19,935.8 (US\$14,239.9)	S\$20,674.6 (US\$14,767.6)	S\$23,463.0 (US\$16,759.3)	S\$24,351.7 (US\$17,394.1)
<b>Total Expenditure on Social Development</b>	<b>S\$8,202.0 (US\$5,858.6)</b>	<b>S\$8,985.2 (US\$6,418)</b>	<b>S\$8,548.1 (US\$6,105.8)</b>	<b>S\$9,684.7 (US\$6,917.6)</b>	<b>S\$10,995.9 (US\$7,854.2)</b>
– Education	S\$4,875.6 (US\$3,482.6)	S\$5,161.9 (US\$3,687.0)	S\$4,980.7 (US\$3,557.6)	S\$5,684.6 (US\$4,060.4)	S\$6,566.8 (US\$4,690.6)
– Health	S\$1,655.1 (US\$1,182.2)	S\$1,889.9 (US\$1,350)	S\$1,670.7 (US\$1,193.4)	S\$1,764.4 (US\$1,260.3)	S\$2,015.6 (US\$1,439.7)
– Community Development, Youth and Sports	S\$581.5 (US\$415.4)	S\$808.0 (US\$577.1)	S\$817.7 (US\$584.1)	S\$898.0 (US\$641.4)	S\$832.9 (US\$594.9)
– Information, Communications and the Arts	S\$228.2 (US\$163)	S\$272.4 (US\$194.6)	S\$274.5 (US\$196.1)	S\$320.3 (US\$228.8)	S\$351.6 (US\$251.1)
– Environments and Water Resources	S\$451.6 (US\$322.6)	S\$460.0 (US\$328.6)	S\$442.7 (US\$316.2)	S\$418.1 (US\$298.6)	S\$436.3 (US\$311.6)
– National Development	S\$410.0 (US\$292.9)	S\$393.0 (US\$280.7)	S\$361.8 (US\$258.4)	S\$599.3 (US\$428.1)	S\$792.7 (US\$566.2)

Source: Department of Statistics

2.15 On child specific expenditures, the following allocations apply:

### Health

Table 5: Expenditures for Health for School Children (in Primary and Secondary Schools)

	2003 (million)	2004 (million)	2005 (million)	2006 (million)	2007 (million)
Youth Health Division Budget Allocation for School Children	S\$23.5 (US\$16.8)	S\$20.3 (US\$14.5)	S\$23.2 (US\$16.6)	S\$22.1 (US\$15.8)	S\$27.0 (US\$19.3)
School Dental Services Budget Allocation for Children	S\$19.8 (US\$14.1)	S\$22.2 (US\$15.9)	S\$23 (US\$16.4)	S\$22.5 (US\$16.1)	S\$23.8 (US\$17)

Source: Department of Statistics

Education

Table 6: Expenditures for Education

	<b>2003</b> (million)	<b>2004</b> (million)	<b>2005</b> (million)	<b>2006</b> (million)	<b>2007</b> (million)
Primary	S\$368.5 (US\$263.2)	S\$195.0 (US\$139.3)	S\$125.8 (US\$89.9)	S\$72.3 (US\$51.6)	S\$78.4 (US\$56)
Secondary	S\$272.9 (US\$194.9)	S\$248.1 (US\$177.2)	S\$233.3 (US\$166.6)	S\$131.2 (US\$93.7)	S\$106.4 (US\$76)
Junior College / Centralised Institute	S\$89.7 (US\$64.7)	S\$41.5 (US\$29.6)	S\$64.6 (US\$46.1)	S\$46.2 (US\$33)	S\$148.11 (US\$105.8)
Institute of Technical Education	S\$120.8 (US\$86.3)	S\$130.5 (US\$93.2)	S\$103.2 (US\$73.7)	S\$37.6 (US\$26.9)	S\$70.2 (US\$50.1)
Polytechnic	S\$308.9 (US\$220.6)	S\$146.4 (US\$104.6)	S\$183.4 (US\$131)	S\$262.9 (US\$187.8)	S\$152.8 (US\$109.1)
National Institute of Education	S\$7.7 (US\$5.5)	S\$0.2 (US\$0.14)	S\$28.9 (US\$20.6)	-	-
University	S\$384.1 (US\$274.4)	S\$302.3 (US\$215.9)	S\$453.9 (US\$324.2)	S\$247.4 (US\$176.7)	S\$137.5 (US\$98.2)
Special Education	S\$2.4 (US\$1.71)	S\$6.3 (US\$4.5)	S\$6.4 (US\$4.6)	S\$1.2 (US\$0.86)	S\$2.0 (US\$1.43)
Others	S\$36.1 (US\$25.8)	S\$67.8 (US\$48.4)	S\$23.6 (US\$16.9)	S\$23.3 (US\$16.6)	S\$4.7 (US\$3.36)
<b>Total Developmental Expenditure</b>	<b>S\$1,591.1</b> <b>(US\$1,136.5)</b>	<b>S\$1,138.1</b> <b>(US\$812.9)</b>	<b>S\$1,223.1</b> <b>(US\$873.6)</b>	<b>S\$822.1</b> <b>(US\$587.2)</b>	<b>S\$700.11</b> <b>(US\$500.0)</b>

(Includes primary and secondary education, institutions of higher learning and special education)

Source: Ministry of Education



Social Service

Table 7: Expenditure on Social Services and Support for Children and Families

	2003 (million)	2004 (million)	2005 (million)	2006 (million)	2007 (million)
<b>Social Assistance Schemes (including ComCare schemes)</b>	S\$26.0 (US\$18.6)	S\$33.1 (US\$23.6)	S\$38.8 (US\$27.7)	S\$42.2 (US\$30.1)	S\$47.9 (US\$34.2)
<b>Programmes for families</b>					
Baby Bonus	S\$81.4 (US\$58.1)	S\$205.3 (US\$146.6)	S\$192.8 (US\$137.7)	S\$199.9 (US\$142.8)	S\$220.5 (US\$157.5)
Child Care Subsidy	S\$62.0 (US\$44.3)	S\$65.4 (US\$46.7)	S\$68.1 (US\$48.6)	S\$69.8 (US\$49.9)	S\$70.1 (US\$50.0)
Infant Care Subsidy	-	S\$0.9 (US\$0.6)	S\$2.6 (US\$1.9)	S\$3.2 (US\$2.3)	S\$3.4 (US\$2.4)
Govt-Paid Maternity Leave <sup>2</sup> (GPML)	-	S\$32.5 (US\$23.2)	S\$50.0 (US\$35.7)	S\$47.3 (US\$33.8)	S\$57.6 (US\$41.1)
Family Welfare Programmes	S\$2.2 (US\$1.6)	S\$2.2 (US\$1.6)	S\$2.2 (US\$1.6)	S\$3.2* (US\$2.3)	S\$3.6* (US\$2.6)
Family Service Centres (Government funding only. Does not include donated funds)	S\$8.7 (US\$6.2)	S\$10.5 (US\$7.5)	S\$11.0 (US\$7.9)	S\$11.3 (US\$8.1)	S\$13.0 (US\$9.3)
Public education on families / children	S\$5.7 (US\$4.1)	S\$5.8 (US\$4.1)	S\$7.1 (US\$5.1)	S\$6.8 (US\$4.9)	S\$5.8 (US\$4.1)
<b>Total</b>	<b>S\$162.6 (US\$116.1)</b>	<b>S\$ 355.7 (US\$254.1)</b>	<b>S\$372.6 (US\$266.1)</b>	<b>S\$383.7 (US\$274.1)</b>	<b>S\$421.9 (US\$301.4)</b>

\*Figures from 2006 onwards include expenditures for the Adoption Service owing to reorganisation of the Family Welfare Service.

Source: Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports

<sup>2</sup> Implemented in 2004.

Table 8: Expenditure on Disability Programmes for Children

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Early Intervention Programmes for Infant and Children (EIPIC)	S\$2,679,580 (US\$1,913,986)	S\$2,485,904 (US\$1,775,646)	S\$3,452,126 (US\$2,465,804)	S\$3,770,067 (US\$2,692,905)	S\$3,611,919 (US\$2,579,942)
Integrated Child Care Centres	S\$349,335 (US\$249,525)	S\$558,936 (US\$399,240)	S\$763,193 (US\$545,138)	S\$798,444 (US\$570,317)	S\$824,247 (US\$588,748)
Special Student Care Centres	-	-	S\$27,915 (US\$19,939)	S\$15,967 (US\$11,405)	S\$38,552 (US\$27,537)
Disabled Children's Homes	S\$685,381 (US\$489,558)	S\$782,463 (US\$558,902)	S\$512,907 (US\$366,362)	S\$629,186 (US\$449,419)	S\$515,605 (US\$368,289)
Community Integration Support	S\$743,232 (US\$530,880)	S\$1,126,479 (US\$804,628)	S\$1,238,847 (US\$884,891)	S\$1,311,302 (US\$936,644)	S\$1,426,501 (US\$1,018,929)
<b>Total</b>	<b>S\$4,457,528</b> <b>(US\$3,183,949)</b>	<b>S\$4,953,782</b> <b>(US\$3,538,415)</b>	<b>S\$5,994,988</b> <b>(US\$4,282,134)</b>	<b>S\$6,524,966</b> <b>(US\$4,660,690)</b>	<b>S\$6,416,824</b> <b>(US\$4,583,446)</b>

Source: Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports

Table 9: Government Expenditure on Alternative Care and Special Protection Measures

	2003 (million)	2004 (million)	2005 (million)	2006 (million)	2007 (million)
<b>Alternative and Institutional Care for Children</b>					
Children's Homes	S\$5.3 (US\$3.8)	S\$5.8 (US\$4.1)	S\$6.3 (US\$4.5)	S\$6.4 (US\$4.6)	S\$9.5 (US\$6.8)
MCYS Homes	S\$12.8 (US\$9.1)	S\$13.4 (US\$9.6)	S\$13.4 (US\$9.6)	S\$14.6 (US\$10.4)	S\$15.6 (US\$11.1)
<b>Child Protection and Child Welfare</b>	S\$6.0 (US\$4.3)	S\$7.1 (US\$5.1)	S\$8.5 (US\$6.1)	S\$6.9 (US\$4.9)	S\$7.2 (US\$5.1)
<b>Juvenile Justice and Rehabilitation</b>					
Probation Services	S\$5.0 (US\$3.6)	S\$5.4 (US\$3.9)	S\$5.7 (US\$4.1)	S\$7.3 (US\$5.2)	S\$8.0 (US\$5.7)

Source: Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports

2.16 Annual funding under the Community Chest, a donated fund administered by NCSS, for Children and Youth Services has increased about 56.3% from the period 2003 to 2007. The amounts funded for Children and Youth Services (including children and youth with disabilities) are as follows:-

Table 10: Funding from Community Chest for Children and Youth Services

2003 (million)	2004 (million)	2005 (million)	2006 (million)	2007 (million)
S\$15.1 (US\$10.8)	S\$17.7 (US\$12.6)	S\$18.8 (US\$13.4)	S\$20.5 (US\$14.6)	S\$23.6 (US\$16.9)

Source: National Council of Social Service

**(D) Involvement of Voluntary Sector and Civil Society**

2.17 As detailed in Singapore's Initial Report, the Government encourages the 'Many Helping Hands' approach to address the needs of the disadvantaged and needy in the community. The social service sector, corporate groups and the community come together to provide resources, programmes and services for these individuals and families.

2.18 The social service sector has been active in providing services and programmes to cater to a variety of needs. As of May 2008, 383 VWOs were members of NCSS. Besides funding its members, NCSS also carries out service planning and development for the social service sector, and sets service standards for the various sectors.

2.19 NCSS actively engages in information gathering, environmental scans and research to identify areas and means for effective service delivery. NCSS shares its findings with VWOs through various platforms to enhance their knowledge of the best practices, research and trends, and methods of service delivery. Service reviews are also conducted as part of service planning to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of VWO programmes, as well as to enhance and strengthen these programmes, to ensure that the services provided are meeting the needs of the targeted groups.

2.20 NCSS encourages VWOs to pioneer programmes to meet critical needs that have been identified, and collaborates with VWOs to implement new and needed services, by helping to develop service models and assessing VWOs' proposals.

2.21 Since 2005, NCSS has also implemented the outcome management framework to help VWOs better assess the effectiveness and impact of their services on its clients, including children and their families. The framework focuses on the benefits that a programme brings to the client such as helping to improve his or her knowledge, skills, behaviour or condition.

2.22 The involvement of the social service sector goes beyond non-profit organisations. The child services sector has benefited greatly from the contributions of individuals and private organisations for the benefit of children. The National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC), the national body that promotes and develops volunteerism and philanthropy across all sectors and at all levels of society in Singapore, helps corporations channel their resources according to their giving interests. For corporations who have expressed interest in giving towards child and youth-related causes, NVPC has helped structure strategic community partnerships with non-profit organisations serving this group, from teaching children and youth functional skills like IT literacy, to financial management and entrepreneurship; or by sharing life skills like teamwork, self-confidence, social interaction and communications. On an individual level, NVPC's online platform eMatch enables individuals and small groups to easily search for causes, including child-related causes, to support.

2.23 The voluntary sector also plays a critical role in the publicity of the CRC. I Love Children (ILC), a VWO led by a group of individuals that believe children bring joy and

meaning to our lives, advocates a higher priority to having children and promotes a society where children are loved and a part of the community. ILC, since its setup in September 2005, has been galvanising support from the private, people and public sectors, and spreading the message on the joy of children through numerous activities and programmes. ILC also receives funding support from MCYS to carry out their initiatives. From September 2005 to April 2008, ILC conducted 59 activities and programmes, reaching out to more than 380,000 individuals.

### **(E) Support to International Community**

2.24 Singapore strongly supports the work of the United Nations specialised agencies. For the period 2000 to 2007, Singapore contributed a total of US\$3.15 million in voluntary contributions to the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Since 1999, Singapore has also partnered UNICEF to conduct courses in early childhood education for more than 200 participants from 19 countries, under the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP).

2.25 Through the SCP, Singapore offers a wide range of training programmes, both bilaterally and in partnership with other countries and international organisations, to meet the development needs of developing countries. Since the establishment of the SCP in 1992, Singapore has conducted training courses and study visits for more than 56,000 officials from 169 countries. For the period from 2000 to 2007, more than 30 training programmes were conducted in areas directly relating to children, such as paediatrics, midwifery and training of teachers for work with children with special needs.

2.26 In the aftermath of the tsunami on 26 December 2004, Singapore provided relief assistance such as potable water and medical supplies to affected countries. Singapore also facilitated the relief efforts of international relief agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and World Vision. Singapore's assistance extended to the reconstruction phase with projects such as the construction of a Singapore-styled integrated school for primary and secondary students in the Maldives and the refurbishment of three tsunami-affected schools in Sri Lanka. These projects were complemented with training courses conducted in Singapore under the SCP to enhance the pedagogical skills of the teachers.

### **(F) Declarations and Reservations**

2.27 When Singapore acceded to the CRC in 1995, Singapore made certain declarations and reservations. Singapore takes the Committee's comments very seriously and has considered the comments in consultation with key agencies and stakeholders. Singapore has considered the declarations and reservations very carefully and has decided that Singapore still needs to maintain them. The declarations are necessary to explain the context in which Singapore interprets the provisions. With regard to the reservations, whilst Singapore can largely comply with these provisions, Singapore wants

to be cautious and not be left wanting in the implementation of its obligations under this Convention.

2.28 Notwithstanding Singapore's position to maintain the declarations and reservations, Singapore continues to review the relevance and necessity of our declarations and reservations periodically.

### **3 ARTICLE 42 – PUBLICITY**

*The State's obligation to make the rights in the Convention widely known to both adults and children*

#### **(A) Publicity Efforts**

3.1 The Singapore Government publicises the CRC and its principles to children and adults in Singapore.

3.2 Since 2001, MCYS has been producing and distributing a booklet containing all the CRC Articles visually presented in a child-friendly manner to all Primary 3 students (students aged 9 years). Brailled copies were also distributed to visually impaired children. MCYS also regularly distributes CRC collaterals bearing public messages on children's rights at events where children, parents, caregivers or professionals working with children are in attendance.

3.3 From 2003 to 2006, MCYS supported the annual Children First! International Festival for Children, for children aged 2 to 12 years. The annual festival included drama, dance, music, puppetry and outdoor theatre. The festival enhanced children's awareness of different cultures and global concerns such as world peace and environmental conservation, whilst instilling values such as respect, courage and trust. About 8,400 children, mostly from low income families and who had little or no exposure to the arts attended the festival and learnt about the key values of expression and participation.

3.4 In 2006, in commemoration of Singapore's 10th year of accession to the CRC, two series of postcards were commissioned. The first series featured 6 areas of achievements for children in the areas of protection, legislation, healthcare, arts and culture, employment and education. The second series of four postcards were designed such that children could pen down their wishes for children in Singapore. The postcards were distributed to students in all primary and secondary schools in Singapore. Members of the public could also pick up the postcards at racks in cafes, restaurants and other public venues. 63,000 postcards and 300 email responses were collected, expressing a range of wishes for children in Singapore, from children as young as 3 years old.

3.5 These wishes, which articulate Singapore's priorities for children in the areas of health, inclusion, education, protection, culture and leisure, were shared with key persons working with children at the Singapore Children's Society Inaugural Lecture on Children and through the ensuing media coverage of the event in September 2007. The insights

gleaned from the responses have helped stakeholders better frame their work with children from a child-centric perspective.

3.6 In 2006, MCYS also commissioned a local drama company, Act 3 International, to conduct workshops to educate children aged 8 to 12 years on their rights. Over 1,000 children attended these workshops. Pre-workshop training sessions were also organised for 100 workers from VWOs to prepare them for their role as facilitators for these workshops.

3.7 In 2007, MCYS collaborated with the National Book Development Council of Singapore to publish four story books targeted at children aged 7 to 9 years old. The stories revolve around key themes of non-discrimination, survival and development, the best interests of children and encouraging expression. Professional storytellers were subsequently engaged to visit schools to bring these messages to children.

3.8 Publicity on the CRC and its core principles are also emphasised for adults, particularly adults working with children. The National Institute of Education (NIE), the premier training institute for educators in Singapore, offers the following modules, under the Psychological Studies Academic group, that address the rights of a child:

- (i) Youth at Risk: From the Classroom to the Courtroom
- (ii) Maladjustment in Children
- (iii) Working with Children
- (iv) Working with Systems

3.9 In addition, the courses under the Early Childhood and Special Needs Education group address the rights of children in relation to the care, education and support of young children and people with special needs.

3.10 Information on the CRC is also disseminated to key social service practitioners by foregrounding the specific articles from the Convention that apply directly to the care, education and support of young children and people with special needs. The Social Service Training Institute (SSTI), the training arm of NCSS, organises a comprehensive range of training programmes for professionals and volunteers in the social service sector. In Financial Year 2007/2008, SSTI organised a total of 390 courses of which 46 of these courses, consisting of 1,735 training places, were tailored for those working with children and people with disabilities. Participants for these 46 courses comprised mainly special education teachers and teacher aides, social workers and training officers. 17 of these courses were also conducted for professionals working with children and young persons.

**4 ARTICLE 44(6) – CIRCULATION OF CRC REPORT**

**(A) Circulation of Initial Report**

4.1 Since the submission of Singapore's Initial Report in 2002, copies of that Report have been made available to VWOs, academics partners and other interested members of the public. An online copy can also be downloaded for free at the MCYS website ([www.mcys.gov.sg](http://www.mcys.gov.sg)). Information on the CRC, Singapore's Oral Presentation to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Concluding Remarks of the Committee can also be found on the website.

## II. DEVELOPMENTS UNDER DEFINITION OF THE CHILD

### 1 Preamble

1.1 As detailed in Singapore's Initial Report, there are various legislation in Singapore that define the child differently. In general, the age of maturity applicable in Singapore is 21 years as provided by common law. However, the different legislation have different age references in the definition of a child. This difference is necessary to ensure that the objective of a particular legislation is effectively implemented and tailored to account for the evolving capacities of children and young persons. This section highlights key updates where they relate to legal definitions of a child under Article 1.

### 2 ARTICLE 1 – DEFINITION OF THE CHILD

*A child is recognised as a person under 18, unless national laws recognise the age of majority earlier.*

#### (A) Protection and Rehabilitation of Children

2.1 The Children and Young Persons Act (Cap.38) (CYPA) provides for the care and protection of children and young persons who are below 16 years of age. The Act protects them from abuse, neglect and abandonment and institutes punishment when adults are careless or neglectful. It also provides for the rehabilitation of children and young persons who commit offences or are beyond parental control. The Act serves to strike a balance between parental responsibility and those of the State. It also takes into account the evolving maturity levels of children in their phases of development.

2.2 There are safeguards and protective mechanisms within Singapore's legislative framework to provide added protection to young offenders between 16 and 18 years of age. The Women's Charter (Cap. 353) accords protection to women and girls up to 21 years of age who are in moral danger and protects them against sexual exploitation. Diversionary programmes, such as the Guidance Programme (as captured in paragraphs 5.11 to 5.13 in Section VIII. Developments in Special Protection Measures of this Report), have also been extended to youth up to 19 years old, to provide them with rehabilitative options.

2.3 The Community Court was established in June 2006 to fulfill the dual principles of restorative justice and rehabilitation. The Court deals with, among other groups and cases, youth offenders aged 16 to 18 years.

2.4 The Community Court is a specialist court that is responsive to the needs of the individual and community. It takes a problem solving rather than punitive approach and combines criminal justice and community resources for a comprehensive rehabilitative response to these cases. Offenders are rehabilitated in the community where possible. Some of the options available to the Community Court in terms of sentencing include ordering the offender to:



- (i) Attend counselling programmes or undergo treatment programmes;
- (ii) Be attached to an appropriate agency to perform community service;
- (iii) Attend victim-offender mediation; or
- (iv) Attend such other programs which the Court may think appropriate in rehabilitating or to assist in the rehabilitation as well as preventing the recurrence of the offence.

2.5 The amendments to the Penal Code (Cap. 224) (see paragraph 10.3, in Section VIII. Developments Under Special Protection Measures of this Report) also accord protection to minors up to the age of 18 years against commercial sex. Gender neutrality within provisions of the Penal Code (Cap. 224) ensures that young males are accorded protection where the Women's Charter (Cap. 353) may not apply.

### **(B) Age of Culpability for Offences Committed**

2.6 The Committee is referred to paragraphs 92 to 97 of Singapore's Initial Report in regard to Singapore's position on the age of criminal responsibility. Singapore is of the view that retaining the current age of criminal liability as above 7 years, and responsibility based on sufficient maturity of understanding for children aged above 7 years and below 12 years, provides for optimal early intervention and rehabilitation and prevents children from committing more serious offences later. It also serves to protect young children from being exploited by adults for criminal activities. In practice, young children that offend are not prosecuted in court, but are placed in diversionary and rehabilitative programmes (see paragraph 5.11 to 5.14 in Section VIII. Developments Under Special Protection Measures).

### **(C) Employment**

2.7 The definition of a child under the Employment Act (Cap. 91) was amended in 2004 in accordance with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Minimum Age Convention 1973 (No. 138), which Singapore ratified on 7 November 2005. A "child" is defined as a person who has not completed his 15th year of age (raised from the previous 14th year of age). A "young person" is a person who has completed his 15th year of age but who has not completed his 16th year of age.

2.8 The minimum age of employment of children was also raised in 2004 from below the age of 12 years to 13 years. While a child or a young person is allowed to work under the law, Singapore's labour legislation restricts the type of work and maximum hours the child or young person may be employed. The Committee is referred to paragraph 85 of Singapore's Initial Report for a summary of Singapore's employment laws.

### **(D) Marriage**

2.9 Under the Women's Charter, the minimum legal age of marriage for non-Muslims in Singapore remains at 18 years old, provided there is parental consent. Any person who

is below the age of 18 and who wishes to be married must apply for a special marriage license from MCYS.

2.10 The Singapore Government, in March 2007, announced its intention to raise the legal marriage age for Muslims, which is governed by the Administration of Muslim Law Act (Cap. 3) (AMLA), from 16 to 18 this year. This move, when implemented, will make the legal marriage age for Muslims consistent with the legal marriage age under the Women's Charter.

### III. DEVELOPMENTS UNDER GENERAL PRINCIPLES

#### 1 Preamble

1.1 This section highlights key updates in Singapore's commitment to the general principles of the CRC, namely non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development, and respect for the child's views in relation to the situation in Singapore. These concern Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12 specifically.

#### 2 ARTICLE 2 – NON-DISCRIMINATION

*All rights apply to children without exception. It is the State's obligation to protect children from all forms of discrimination and take positive action to promote their rights.*

2.1 As indicated in the Initial Report, Article 12 of the Constitution of Singapore guarantees all Singapore citizens, including children, the right to equality and non-discrimination. Article 12(1) of the Singapore Constitution states that, "All persons are equal before the law and entitled to equal protection of the law".

2.2 The Singapore Government remains committed to ensuring that there is no systematic discrimination against any vulnerable groups, including women and persons with disabilities in Singapore. While Singapore does not have any specific gender equality or anti-gender discrimination legislation, the provisions under the Constitution necessarily encompass non-discrimination against women and persons with disabilities.

##### (A) Women and Girls

2.3 The Singapore Government's approach to gender equality remains unchanged, which is to provide equal opportunities for men and women on the basis of meritocracy. Built upon that is the availability of fundamental resources such as education and healthcare for all citizens so that men and women have the same opportunities to pursue their personal goals and gain equal access to all spheres in society.

2.4 The Women's Desk within MCYS, set up in 2002, continues to serve as Singapore's national women's machinery. It is the national focal point on gender policy matters and for international cooperation. It is also the Secretariat to the Inter-Ministry Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women which monitors Singapore's implementation of the Convention (IMC-CEDAW). In May 2007, MCYS provided the Singapore Parliament with a report on the progress achieved in eliminating discrimination against women. Singapore's Periodic Reports on CEDAW were also presented to the Cabinet, the highest political decision-making body, for adoption, before submission to the UN CEDAW Committee.

2.5 Singapore recently presented its Third Periodic Report at the UN Headquarters in New York on 1 August 2007. A media briefing was held in October 2007 to disseminate

the CEDAW Committee's Concluding Comments to the media and members of the public. The Concluding Comments of the CEDAW Committee were also presented in Parliament in October 2007.

2.6 Singapore's Fourth Periodic Report details the progress achieved in eliminating discrimination against women during the period November 2004 to October 2008. In October 2008, the IMC-CEDAW held consultation sessions with the women's groups as well as women Members of Parliament and members of the Government Parliamentary Committee for Community Development, Youth and Sports to gather feedback and views on the draft Report and Singapore's progress on CEDAW.

2.7 The Singapore Government will continue to organise regular consultations and feedback sessions with women's groups and stakeholders to better understand their needs and concerns so as to aid better policy formulation.

### **(B) Children with Disabilities**

2.8 In 2004, the Disability Awareness Public Education (DAPE) campaign was launched to address the attitudes and perceptions of Singaporeans towards persons with disabilities. DAPE is held annually to showcase the abilities of persons with disabilities so as to facilitate their employment, and to continue efforts on general education on the integration of persons with disabilities into society.

### **(C) Racial and Religious Harmony**

2.9 The Singapore Government is committed to embracing the diversity of racial and religious affiliations to engender greater social resilience, particularly amongst children and youth. In 2006, the Singapore Government appointed a National Steering Committee (NSC) on Racial and Religious Harmony to be the national forum for apex ethnic and religious groups to dialogue and build greater trust across racial and religious groups in Singapore. The Steering Committee supports the work of the Community Engagement Programme (CEP), which has a larger goal of coordinating and mobilising the support of various segments of society in promoting racial and religious harmony. The Programme is led by the Ministerial Committee for Community Engagement chaired by Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs.

2.10 Complementing the work of the CEP and NSC on Racial and Religious Harmony are local level initiatives. The Inter-Religious Harmony Circle (IRHC), a network of representatives from national/umbrella bodies of various religious groups was formed in 2002. Headed by MCYS, it consulted major religious groups in Singapore and considered ideas from the public through letters, e-mails and the media between November 2002 and February 2003, to draft a Declaration on Religious Harmony. The draft was presented to grassroots and community leaders, as well as religious bodies, before it was officially launched in June 2003.

2.11 The IRHC continues to propagate the Declaration on Religious Harmony, and the spirit behind the Declaration. A series of three storybooks 'Colours of Harmony' (2005), 'Colours of Love' (2006) and 'A Giving Heart' (2007) revolving around common values shared universally across different religions was created for schoolchildren. The IRHC also held a nationwide design competition in 2007 on the theme of religious harmony, which created much public awareness for the Declaration of Religious Harmony.

2.12 Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles (IRCCs) were also formed in 2002 to provide local-level inter-racial and inter-religious platforms for community leaders to promote understanding, trust and respect among different races and religions during peace time and to respond quickly to incidents with racial and religious undertones during a crisis. Members of IRCCs include leaders from religious, ethnic and community-based organisations. There are 84 IRCCs throughout Singapore, one in every constituency.

2.13 In 2007, as part of a rebranding exercise, the public was invited to help create an identity for the IRCCs through a logo and slogan competition. The competition was open to children and youth, exemplifying the belief that children and youth are key conduits by which an appreciation for diversity can take place and form strong foundations for the future.

2.14 Schools commemorate Racial Harmony Day on 21 July each year, the anniversary of communal riots that occurred in 1964. It is a day for children to reflect on, and celebrate our success as a harmonious nation and society built on a rich diversity of cultures and heritages. Many schools involve parent volunteers in events commemorating Racial Harmony Day. The Ministry of Education also hosts a website dedicated to racial harmony to promote discussion and understanding of racial harmony amongst children.

### **3 ARTICLE 3 – BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD**

*All actions concerning the child shall take full account of his or her best interests. The State shall provide the child with adequate care when parents, or others charged with that responsibility, fail to do so.*

3.1 Singapore is committed to working in the best interests of the child. Singapore's laws and practices take into account and place emphasis on the best interests of the child. We continue to abide by the principles of the Convention as enshrined in Singapore's national Statement on the Best Interests of the Child, which seeks to translate the ideal of the Best Interests of the Child into operational principles so that there can be conscious reference to these principles through our strategic plans, policies and service delivery channels. The Statement remains a common reference for agencies and persons working with children.

3.2 The Singapore Government regards the family as the foundation of Singapore society, and the best source of love, care and support for children. Those entrusted with

the care of children have a critical role to play in ensuring the welfare of children. This is further elaborated in this report under Article 5. Singapore had entered a declaration to state our understanding that the rights under this Convention, especially those defined under Article 12 to Article 17, are to be read in accordance with the best interest of a child and respect for the responsibilities, rights and duties of his or her parents, family or guardians, as provided in Article 3 and Article 5 respectively.

**(A) Legal Protections for Children**

3.3 As illustrated in the Initial Report, the following pieces of domestic legislation continue to take into account and place emphasis on the best interests of the child:

- (i) The Children and Young Persons Act (Cap. 38) is a dedicated piece of legislation which consolidates the law relating to children and young persons;
- (ii) Women's Charter (Cap. 353) is devoted to the welfare of children.
- (iii) The Adoption of Children Act (Cap.4) and Section 3 of the Guardianship of Infants Act (Cap. 122) provide for consideration to the welfare of the infant/child as the first and paramount consideration in any court proceeding involving adoption and custody or upbringing of a child respectively;
- (iv) The Criminal Procedure Code (Cap.68) provides for special legal protection of children in the criminal justice system;
- (v) The Evidence Act (Cap.97) provides special protection and privilege to child witnesses in judicial hearings;
- (vi) The Child Care Centres Act (Cap.37A) safeguards the interests of children within childcare facilities; and
- (vii) The Penal Code (Cap.224) provides for special protection of children in situations of injury to an unborn child, incest, commercial sex and statutory rape.

**(B) Ensuring the Best Interests of the Child in Civil Disputes**

3.4 In civil and legal disputes involving families and children, it is the Court's primary responsibility to protect the interests of children. The Court encourages conciliation and cooperation to achieve a consensual outcome which focuses on the welfare of children. The Family Court retains a Family and Juvenile Justice Centre (FJJC) with Court counsellors offering conciliation counselling to couples to help them resolve custody or access disputes. Mediation takes a pre-eminent role, and is integrated into the

judicial processes. Mediation in disputes for custody, care, control, and access issues are holistically dealt with at the Family Relations Chambers.

3.5 For especially difficult custody cases, there is a joint conference process where the case is mediated before a multidisciplinary team comprising a Resolution Judge and a psychologist or counsellor from the FJJC. This allows conflicts to be dealt with therapeutically for the parents as well as the child. Other possible solutions at mediation include referrals, in appropriate cases to both internal facilities and outside agencies. The Court advocates that litigation, which tends to escalate the acrimony between parties, only be used as a last resort.

3.6 To protect the interests of the child, a dedicated court process called CHILD (CHildren's Best Interests, Less ADversarial), for dealing with custody disputes in a less adversarial manner was implemented from 1 July 2008. This process is quasi-inquisitorial and parties are discouraged from taking overly contentious positions and instead focus on sensible and viable parenting arrangements. They are facilitated in this process by a qualified Family Counsellor. Even if a case proceeds for a hearing or trial, the Family Court generally does not involve children at the actual hearings. Custody and Access Evaluation by trained professionals are provided to resolve custody and access disputes.

3.7 The Court also provides a customised parenting program, also known as IMPACT, for divorcing couples to reinforce the importance of attending to the needs of children and to recommend solutions for cooperative parenting. Concurrently, a workshop on children in divorces is also offered to the parents.

3.8 In acrimonious disputes involving access to children, the Court also provides interim off-site assisted transfer or access at a specialised Family Service Centre where trained social workers would also provide counselling to the families to work through their difficulties in this area. A progress report is submitted to the Court to ensure that the child's issues are also addressed in the process.

3.9 The Family Court also produces KIDSLINE (Kids in Difficult Situations), a CD ROM that is targeted towards helping children caught in the midst of their parents' marital breakdown, family violence or other family disputes. It provides basic information on how children can cope with their difficulties and where they can seek help.

3.10 The physical set up of the Court also takes into account the needs of children. A children's room with a child minder is available at the Family Court where parents can leave their children while they attend hearings in other parts of the building. This helps to shield children from disputes in Court. The Court also has a child friendly counselling room equipped with therapeutic toys and story books to provide a conducive environment for interviews with children.

**(C) Ensuring the Best Interests of the Child in Situations of Abuse**

3.11 In cases where a child or a young person is in an unsafe environment or where his or her parents are unable to provide adequate care, the CYPA provides for the removal of that child or young person to a Place of Safety or an Approved Home, or the placement of the child or young person under the care of a suitable person. Alternative care options, like the FamCare Scheme, which is based on kinship support to provide care for child abuse, are also preferred. Care provided by relatives can often reduce the fear and anxiety of the child as the child is usually more familiar with relatives than with an unrelated family. Like foster parents, relatives who are willing to provide care for the child will be assessed based on the standard criteria for selection of alternative caregivers. Relatives are also supervised and supported by the Child Protection Officers (CPOs).

Table 11: New Placements on FamCare Scheme

2005	2006	2007
20	18	19

\*Figures before 2005 are not available

Source: Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports

3.12 Victims of child abuse often have to re-live the trauma of their experiences during the investigation period. Repeated interviews can confuse a child victim and retard his or her recovery. To ease the trauma of repeated interviews, Police and MCYS have embarked on joint interviews of child victims of sexual abuse to investigate the case and determine the care and protection plan for the child respectively. A training video on joint investigative interviewing of child sexual abuse victims for Police Investigation Officers and CPOs, was created for this purpose. Training of Police Investigation Officers and CPOs in the skills of joint investigative interviewing began in July 2005.

**(D) Ensuring the Best Interests of the Child in Situations where the Child is a Witness**

3.13 The Subordinate Courts administers the Vulnerable Witness Support Programme in collaboration with the Attorney-General's Chambers and the Singapore Police Force. A vulnerable witness is a person who is aged below 16 years, or with a mental capacity of under 16 years of age, and is required by the Police or Public Prosecutor to give evidence in criminal cases in Court. This programme allows for identified cases to be referred to the Singapore Children's Society, who will arrange for a Volunteer Support Person (VSP) to give the witness, their parents or caregivers information on the court procedures and provide social and emotional support. The VSP will also arrange for a visit to the Courts Complex to help the witness familiarise himself or herself with the environment and court procedures. During the hearing, the VSP will accompany the witness while he or she is waiting to testify. The VSP may also be permitted by the Judge to sit behind the witness, as he or she testifies in Court via real time video-link in a separate room. The VSP only provides emotional and practical support to the vulnerable witness, and not legal advice.



#### **4 ARTICLE 6 – RIGHT TO LIFE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT**

*Every child has the inherent right to life, and the State has an obligation to ensure the child's survival and development*

4.1 The child's right to survival continues to be provided for through strong legislation and programmes. In addition to affordable and accessible health care, early intervention for mothers in crisis is also an important part of the national machinery safeguarding the health and survival of children.

##### **(A) Infanticide and Abandoned Babies**

4.2 Strong community initiatives provide support for young teenage mothers and mothers who cannot care for their babies and face difficulties in handling their pregnancies. MCYS streamlined the pregnancy crisis services to a single helpline, the National Pregnancy Helpline in 2004. The Babes Network, comprising of nine non-governmental agencies and shelters, and the KK Women's and Children's Hospital, provide a network of services for mothers to seek help without having to resort to abandoning their babies. These entities also provide assistance on adoption placement for unwed or needy mothers. In addition, these agencies also run public awareness programmes, provide counselling and shelter for unwed mothers. For teenagers in pregnancy crises, the Babes service offers help through short message service (SMS) and e-mail.

4.3 Cases of infanticide and child abandonment remain low in Singapore. From 2003-2007, there were a total of 2 cases of infanticide. From 2005 to 2007, 7 abandoned babies were found alive and 5 abandoned babies were found dead. They were mainly stillborns. There is an established protocol to ensure the safety and security of abandoned babies. Priority is placed on locating parents or next of kin of the baby. If found, MCYS would work with the family to ensure the safety and well being of the child. If the parents or next of kin cannot be found, adoption, long term placement in foster care and legal guardianship are amongst the options considered, depending on what is best for the child.

##### **(B) Health Care Provision**

4.4 Preventive health care for pre-schoolers is provided at the polyclinics. Immunisation against vaccine-preventable diseases and monitoring of growth and development through health screening form the major components.

4.5 The Health Promotion Board (HPB) was inaugurated on 1 April 2001 to spearhead health promotion initiatives. In May 2006, following a strategic review of its functions and services, the Board underwent an organisational restructuring to reflect its priorities in reaching out to all Singaporeans based on their health status, encompassing the healthy, those at-risk and the unhealthy segments of the population. The School Health Service Division, which was responsible for reaching out to the young was renamed the Youth Health Division (YHD) and was expanded to support the Board's

enhanced focus on youth health promotion while continuing the work of its Preventive Health Services.

4.6 The School Health Service (SHS) Department, under the YHD, conducts school-based health screening programmes for early detection and management of common health problems among school children. Annual health screenings are carried out at all schools by health teams comprising nurses and doctors. In 2007, 47,512 or 99% of the Primary 1 cohort (students aged 7 years) and 50,308 or 99% of the Primary 6 cohort (students aged 12 years) were screened. In addition, 360,810 students of other levels (Primary 2 to 5 and Secondary 1 to 4) were seen for selected health screenings, such as vision screening and scoliosis screening. SHS also provides booster immunisations against diphtheria, tetanus, poliomyelitis, measles, mumps and rubella. YHD also provides vision screening for all preschool children in K1 and K2 through its National Myopia Prevention Programme.

4.7 The School Dental Service (SDS) Department, under the YHD provides school-based basic dental services to school children. In 2007, of the 248,732 primary school students who were screened, 240,996 (97%) were rendered dentally fit. Of the 98,388 secondary school students who were screened 95,281 (97%) were rendered dentally fit.

4.8 Health promotion activities for youth cover a wide range of health issues such as physical activity, healthy nutrition, mental wellness, smoking control, sexually transmitted infections and AIDS prevention, myopia prevention, oral health and childhood injury prevention. Mental health and well-being programmes for youth emphasise on encouraging help-seeking behaviour. Avenues for professional help are made known in these programmes and materials. Through school counsellors and outreach programmes, youth at risk are identified and attention given to their needs. More information on the YHD and health services for children can be found in Section VI. Developments Under Basic Health and Welfare.

### **(C) Education**

4.9 Singapore continues to believe in and invest heavily in education for the whole-person development of our children. Our education system strives to develop and harness the talents and abilities of each child. An ability-driven education ensures that all children learn at their own pace and ability.

4.10 The Compulsory Education Act, in place since 2003, ensures that our children minimally receive 6 years of primary school education. Within the formal school system, MOE is also working to better the educational outcomes of our children through customised curriculums for varying levels of ability and to provide greater educational pathways to recognise different talents and widen the definition of success.

4.11 The Singapore Government also believes strongly in early childhood development to support children's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. To that end,

the Government has focused its efforts on investing in the supply, accessibility, quality and affordability of early childhood education facilities.

4.12 More information on developments in education can be found in Section VII. Developments Under Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities.

#### **(D) Social Services**

4.13 The Singapore Government recognises that social services play an important role in the development of children. To that end, MCYS and NCSS work closely to ensure adequate and optimal provision of social services to children in need. MCYS and NCSS oversee, administer and fund more than 50 VWOs delivering school social work programmes and services in schools, 36 Family Service Centres which provide casework and counselling, as well as preventive and developmental programmes targeting children and youth, and institutional care services. NCSS also administers various social assistance schemes such as The Straits Times' School Pocket Money Fund for children from low-income families to help them with school-related expenses. Between 2001 and 2007, more than 50,000 children have benefited from the fund. More information on developments in social services can be found in Section VIII. Developments Under Special Protection Measures.

#### **(E) Physical planning and design**

4.14 The average living space per person (including children) in public housing in Singapore is currently 27 square meters. This is comparable to the average living space per person of other developed countries. Under the current design guidelines, there is a playground in public housing estates for every 600 dwelling units, to allow children access to facilities for play. This is in addition to the play facilities for children in schools, child care centres, student care centres. These educational and social institutions are also co-located in public housing estates for the convenience of the children living there.

4.15 The urban design in Singapore is increasingly focused on providing barrier-free accessibility so that it is more convenient for wheelchair users, elderly and children to move around without impediment. This includes the building of lifts, lower bus platforms and lower public phones.

4.16 The provision of community spaces ensures that our children can have shared experiences as they organise and participate in social, recreational and cultural activities. These spaces are integrated into all community centres in Singapore. These centres, which are conveniently located throughout Singapore in all residential areas, provide facilities for various community activities and cater to various groups of people, including children and youth.

4.17 Children and youth organisations and VWOs in various residential estates have also set up dedicated centres in various areas of Singapore to provide additional community spaces for activities. A wide range of sports facilities catering to the general

community is also easily accessible by children and youth as well. MCYS is also building the 1.2 ha \*scape Youth Space. This is a new youth community space to be built in the heart of town and is an expansion of the existing National Youth Centre, Youth Park and Skate Park. \*scape will offer facilities for various youth community, recreational and cultural activities such as performances, carnivals, exhibitions and youth outreach activities. The park will be ready by 2009.

4.18 There are children's playgrounds in National Parks in Singapore such as Pasir Ris Park and West Coast Park. Asia's first children's garden, the Jacob Ballas Children's Garden was launched in the Singapore Botanic Gardens on 1 Oct 2007. It provides a place for children to play, explore and have fun in and to cultivate an appreciation for plants, nature and the environment among the young. As with all public parks, admission to the Children's Garden is free to allow all children to enjoy the facilities.

## **5 ARTICLE 12 – RESPECT FOR THE VIEWS OF THE CHILD**

*The child has the right to express his/her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child*

### **(A) Legislative provisions**

5.1 Singapore recognises that the voices of children and youth should be heard. Legislatively, the rights of a child to express his or her own views are provided for on issues of custody, care, education, abortion and sexual sterilisation, amongst other provisions. The following is a list of legislative provisions ensuring that the views of children and young persons be heard :

- (i) Right to participation in court proceedings – Children and Young Persons Act (Cap.38) and Probation of Offenders Act (Cap. 252) ;
- (ii) Right to participation in custody proceedings – Women's Charter (Cap. 353);
- (iii) Right to expression of views in relation to abortion - Termination of Pregnancy Act (Cap. 324) ; and
- (iv) Right to expression of views in relation to sexual sterilisation – Voluntary Sterilisation Act (Cap. 347).

### **(B) Judicial and administrative proceedings**

5.2 The views of children continue to be sought through the following mechanisms :

- (i) Court-Appointed Counsels for Children : to interview the child to ascertain his/her views and other factors relevant to his/her well-being in custody cases.

- (ii) Individualised Care Plans : children’s views are sought prior to the determination of an individualised care plan for a child who enters the care, protection or rehabilitation of the state.
- (iii) Permanency planning : children’s views are sought in the determination of a permanency plan for the continuity of care of children who have been abused.
- (iv) In appropriate circumstances, where the child is of age to express himself or herself, Family Court Counsellors will interview children in Family Court proceedings to assess their interests and obtain information for their parenting and care arrangements, and to ascertain their preferences.

5.3 Children who are in distress also have access to help via Tinkle Friend, a hotline service provided by the Singapore Children’s Society. Trained volunteers provide counselling and also referral for these callers. The Child Protection Hotline is also available for children who have been abused and need to seek help.

#### **(C) Policy Consultations**

5.4 The Singapore Government’s approach to decision-making is an open and consultative one. The Singapore Government continues to promote the use of the online consultation portal as an accessible and user-friendly avenue for everyone, including children, to air their views on policies. Government agencies also seek the views of children and youth directly on policy changes that would impact them.

5.5 In 2004, about 2,100 youth took part in a national youth consultation exercise, “Youth: Creating Our Future”. The exercise not only encouraged youth to give ideas and suggestions on the future that they wish to see for Singapore, but also enabled them to act on their proposals to bring them to fruition. Various themes were brought up during the feedback exercise, such as education, youth aspirations, sports, arts and cultural causes, marriage and family, volunteerism, social inclusiveness and national identity. After the consultation exercise, youth were invited to form workgroups amongst themselves to translate the ideas into reality. The exercise was an empowering experience for youth and reinforced Singapore’s commitment to engage the young in influencing national policies.

5.6 In local level youth programming, the National Youth Council (NYC) continues to promote the participation of youth in issues that concern them. NYC administers various funds such as the Youth Leadership Development Fund, and the Overseas Youth Project Grant to support and develop youth in leadership, volunteer work and other diverse areas. Other funds like the Youth Development Fund, the Young ChangeMakers (YCM) Grant and SHINE provide seed money to help youth initiate and implement projects which benefit youth, local and international communities and society. NYC also administers the Singapore Youth Awards and the Outstanding Youth in Education Award

which seek to recognise outstanding contributions made to society by youth and inspire other young people to greater achievements.

5.7 Funds such as the Youth Organisation Capability Fund, Singapore – ASEAN Youth Fund and Youth Expedition Project Sector Development & Training Fund offer assistance for organisational capability building such as programme development and volunteer management. NYC also organises forums, seminars and dialogues for industry experts to facilitate networking, and the exchange and cross-fertilisation of ideas on related activities so as to foster the formation of communities of practice within the youth sector.

5.8 Children and youth are also part of decision-making processes. For example, young people participate actively as YCM and SHINE youth panellists to decide which youth projects to support and fund. Schools continue to utilise suggestion schemes, dialogues and forums for students to express their views on matters that concern them. Student counsellors in schools play key roles in representing the views of their peers on school policies.

5.9 Children and youth participated actively in the development of Singapore's bid for the first Youth Olympic Games (YOG) to be held in August 2010. The Bid Committee approached youth teams in schools and other organisations to submit concept ideas for Singapore's bid, incorporating and taking into consideration many ideas and suggestions contributed. Through engaging our children and young people, both groups became active supporters of Singapore's bid. When Singapore was short-listed in December 2007, children and young people in schools came together to support Singapore's bid by participating in a YOG Seminar. Various schools and youth groups at different times also came forward spontaneously to express their strong support for the bid. YOG will open opportunities for Singaporean youth to interact and build relationships with other youth from other countries.

#### **(D) Regional Participation**

5.10 Children also participate in regional and international forums where they are given the opportunity to share their views on various issues concerning them. Singapore sent two child delegates to the first South-East Asian (SEA) Children's conference in the Republic of the Philippines in December 2006 to discuss themes of importance to children and youth, and to review progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Delegates discussed different issues affecting children and young people, such as poverty, disasters and emergencies, education, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, maternal health, child mortality, gender equality, environmental sustainability, children's participation and child trafficking. The delegates drafted a Call to Action, which was presented at the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting for Social Welfare and Development in Hanoi, in December 2007. Youth have also participated in various forums that promote youth dialogue such as the UN Global Youth Leadership Summit in October 2006 and the UNESCO Asian Youth Forum in June and October 2007.

5.11 NYC also maintains bilateral and multi-lateral ties with overseas youth agencies and Youth Service Organisations (YSOs) to further youth development efforts and exchanges, and to enable our youth leaders and youth sector organisations to develop not just locally but internationally as well.

**(E) Sector training**

5.12 Agencies regularly review ways in which persons concerned with the care of children consider children's views in matters that affect them as well as policies and programmes concerning children. Professionals are also trained on the need to elicit the views of children on matters that concern them and the best ways to engage children on these issues. Examples of training in the various domains are as below:

- (i) Social sector: MCYS and NCSS, through the Social Service Training Institute (SSTI), conducts training for its partners to promote child safe organisations and the principles of the rights of the child.
- (ii) Law enforcement: Child sensitivity training is provided for police officers involved in the investigation of cases involving children who may have been abused.
- (iii) Education: CRC and child rights are part of the curriculum for trainee teachers at the National Institute of Education.
- (iv) Health: MOH organises programmes such as the Health Manpower Development Plan (HMDP) Visiting Expert and HMDP Fellowships for training of medical and allied health professionals in Paediatrics. Registered nurses are also sent to Nanyang Polytechnic to pursue their Advanced Diploma in Paediatrics.
- (v) Justice: Judicial Officers have undergone local training on the new child focused court proceedings. All Family Court judges will be sent to study this new quasi-inquisitorial court process in various Australian courts. Resolution judges engaged in mediation also attend advanced mediation courses in Australia with an emphasis on Family Mediation modalities.
- (vi) Family: Family Education efforts in schools and the community focus on effective communication skills for parents and stress the importance of eliciting the views of children on matters that concern them.

## IV. DEVELOPMENTS UNDER CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

### 1 Preamble

1.1 This section covers Singapore's progress in providing for the civil rights and freedoms of children in Singapore. Information in respect of Articles 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 37(a) are provided.

1.2 The rights established within these articles continue to be applied within the boundaries permitted in the interest of public safety, order, health and morals, and within the constraints of Singapore's geographical size, population and resources, as articulated by our reservation against Article 7 and declarations against Articles 13-17.

### 2 ARTICLE 7 – NAME AND NATIONALITY

*The child has the right to a name at birth. The child also has a right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, to know his or her parents and be cared for by them.*

2.1 The Singapore Constitution was amended in April 2004 to allow Singaporean women to transmit citizenship by descent to their foreign born children. With the amendment, a child who is born in Singapore and whose parents are legally married at the time of birth, is now eligible for citizenship by descent as long as one of his or her parents is a Singapore citizen. Prior to the 2004 amendment, by virtue of Article 121(2) of the Singapore Constitution, a child who is born outside of Singapore and whose mother is a Singapore citizen but whose father is a foreigner was not automatically granted Singapore citizenship.

2.2 The nationality of an illegitimate child will follow that of his or her mother's. If an illegitimate child is born in Singapore to a mother who is a Singapore citizen at the time of his or her birth, the child will be a Singapore citizen by birth. If the child is born outside Singapore and his or her mother is a Singapore citizen, the child will be eligible for citizenship by descent.

2.3 Singapore's laws confer citizenship to certain categories of children and under certain circumstances. In view of Singapore's limited territory, our legislation does not grant nationality by fact that a child is residing within Singapore's territory. Singapore's reservation in paragraph (4) of Singapore's Instrument of Accession is made in this regard.



**3 ARTICLE 8 – PRESERVATION OF IDENTITY**

*The State has an obligation to protect, and if necessary, re-establish basic aspects of the child's identity. This includes name, nationality and family ties*

3.1 The Committee is referred to paragraphs 176 to 177 in Singapore's Initial Report. The Singapore Constitution does not deprive a child under 18 years of citizenship except in situations of fraud, false representation, or concealment of any material fact.

**4 ARTICLE 13 – FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

*The child has the right to express his or her views, obtain information, make ideas or information known, regardless of frontiers.*

4.1 The Singapore Government continues to support children's expression of views. Since 2005, SHINE, a yearly month-long festival, was launched to encourage children and youth to come forward to put up performances, and organise community projects to address concerns and issues close to their hearts. In 2007, the youth outreach was 200,000. To give children and youth a space online for expression, and interaction, an online web portal Youth.SG was launched. Via this online web portal, children and youth are free to initiate projects and source for partners, share relevant issues or engage in discussion with other children and youth. In April 2008, there was an average of 8,000 unique visitors per day to the web portal.

4.2 In line with creating more platforms for expression, the National Youth Forum, Prime Minister's Dialogue, Ministerial Dialogue, ASEAN Youth Caucus, Institute of Technical Education Seminar, Polytechnic Forum and other focus group discussions and networking sessions are avenues for children and youth to have a voice and make a difference both locally and regionally.

4.3 Post-secondary institutions also hold forums and panel discussions for their students to meet with and engage in discussion with the institutions' decision-makers, as well as government policy-makers.

4.4 There exists a vast array of foreign and domestic material readily available and accessible in Singapore, which children have ready access to through the internet, which the Government is actively promoting the use of. In situations where publications are restricted, this is done to protect the moral well being of children.

4.5 The rights under this Article are protected under Article 14 of the Singapore Constitution. These rights are qualified in the interest of national security, friendly relations with other countries, public order; to protect privileges of the Parliament and to prohibit contempt of court, slander and incitement to commit offence. Singapore made and retains its reservation in paragraph (3) of Singapore's Instrument of Accession because of these qualifications.

**5 ARTICLE 14 – FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE AND RELIGION**

*The State shall respect the child's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, subject to appropriate parental guidance.*

5.1 As indicated in paragraphs 206 and 207 of the Initial Report, the Singapore Constitution provides for every person, including children, the right to profess and practise his or her religion, within the limits of public safety, order, health and morals. Protection against acts of injury or insult in respect of a person's religion is provided for under the Penal Code (Cap.224).

5.2 In schools, Civic and Moral Education (CME) focus on six core values, namely Respect, Responsibility, Resilience, Integrity, Care and Harmony. Students learn about what these values mean and how to put them into practice. Students are taught to respect one another and to be sensitive to one another's feelings. They learn that all individuals are unique and they should see one another's strengths, and accept and respect differences.

5.3 CME lessons at both the primary and secondary levels focus on the festivals and cultural practices of the main ethnic groups in Singapore. During these lessons, students learn the importance of respecting other religions practised in Singapore and the appropriate respectful behaviours when interacting with people of different religions. One teaching strategy used in CME is the Perspective Taking Approach where students are encouraged to empathise with others and understand issues from different perspectives, through role-play and discussions.

5.4 This approach also encourages students to present their own views while teachers facilitate discussions to cultivate a sense of responsibility and respect for others. At the primary school level, students learn, through Social Studies, about the different ethnic groups in Singapore and the people of Southeast Asia and their different religions, customs and festivals.

5.5 At the secondary school level, students learn about Singapore's internal and external threats. Singapore's approach towards understanding, tolerance and awareness of ethnic and religious sensitivities is highlighted as a success story of a young nation in managing ethnic diversity, and promoting racial harmony and community bonding in nation building.

**6 ARTICLE 15 – FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND OF PEACE ASSEMBLY**

*Children have a right to meet with others, and to join or form associations.*

6.1 Citizens have the freedom to meet and to form associations. This right is provided in Article 14 of the Singapore Constitution. Some of such platforms to support the development of youth initiatives and activities can be found in paragraph 5.4 and 5.7

under Section III - Developments Under General Principles and paragraph 4.1 of this Section.

6.2 This right to meet and form associations is protected under the Constitution in so far as the assembly is peaceful and without arms. In this regard, there are laws prohibiting unlawful assembly and illegal association under the Penal Code (Cap.224)<sup>3</sup>. As stated in the explanation to Article 14, Singapore's reservation in paragraph (3) in Singapore's Instrument of Accession was made and is retained because of the qualifications to this right under Singapore laws.

## **7 ARTICLE 16 – PROTECTION OF PRIVACY**

*Children have the right to protection from interferences with privacy, family, home and correspondences, and from libel and slander*

7.1 As indicated in paragraphs 211 to 212 of the Initial Report, Singapore does not have specific legislation protecting the individual's privacy. There are, however, laws protecting individuals from defamation and slander<sup>4</sup>.

7.2 In general, professionals such as social workers, psychologists and medical workers working with children safeguard the privacy of their clients as part of ethical practice and codes of conduct. The law protects the identity of a child who is undergoing court proceedings from being broadcasted or published<sup>5</sup>.

7.3 For professionals working with special needs students in schools, Professional Standards Guidelines have been established since 2006. The guidelines articulate that specialists must "guard personal and confidential nature of information obtained in the assessment of a child, and adopt an approach that reflects concern for the dignity and personal integrity of the child". In practice, this translates into specific processes that are built into the professional practice of all specialists providing psychological service to children in national schools, for example:

- (i) The child's informed consent (either directly or by proxy, i.e. parents/guardians) is obtained before any direct individual assessments are initiated.
- (ii) Before any individual assessments are conducted, the specialists must establish rapport, ensure that the child is at ease, and the purpose of the test clearly explained using language that is appropriate to the child.
- (iii) When interventions involve the child's peers, e.g. in the implementation of in-class buddy system, or circle-of-friends programme, the child's informed

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<sup>3</sup> Chapter VII, Sections 141 to 158 of the Penal Code

<sup>4</sup> Under Common Law there is legislation, namely the Defamation Act and also in Chapter XXL, Sections 449 to 502 of the Penal Code.

<sup>5</sup> Section 35 of the Children and Young Persons Act

consent is sought before the interventions are initiated, and the child is directly involved in the selection of the peers that involved in his/her intervention.

- (iv) Detailed information regarding a child's special educational needs is kept confidential and shared only with professionals/school staff involved in his/her educational interventions.

## **8 ARTICLE 17 – ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE INFORMATION**

*The State shall ensure the accessibility to children of information and material from a diversity of sources, and it shall encourage the mass media to disseminate information which is of social and cultural benefit to the child, and take steps to protect him or her from harmful materials.*

### **(A) Broadcast Media (TV, Radio, Cable TV)**

8.1 There are six local free-to-air TV channels, 18 FM local radio stations and 7 local DAB (Digital Audio Broadcast)-only radio stations. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has a 24-hour FM radio service operating in Singapore, and there are 12 DAB-only foreign radio stations such as the Bloomberg Radio. In addition, there are 155 cable TV channels in Singapore, of which 149 are foreign channels transmitting through the local cable TV provider, StarHub Cable Vision. These include news channels like CNN International, BBC World, CNBC Asia as well as children channels like TNT Cartoon Network, Eureka Learning Channel and Discovery Kids Channel.

8.2 Monthly subscriptions start from S\$24 (US\$17), compared to S\$33.94 (US\$24.24) in 2002. With lower costs and greater availability of cable TV, the number of subscribers has increased from 206,000 in 2002 to 504,000 cable TV subscribers in 2007, representing 45% of all homes.

8.3 Under the Public Service Broadcast (PSB) requirements, the six free-to-air channels (under MediaCorp Singapore) are to broadcast a specified number of hours of public service broadcast programmes for children each year. Broadcasters are also expected to exercise self-regulation based on a set of broad programme, advertising and sponsorship guidelines given by the Media Development Authority (MDA). The Committee is referred to paragraph 193 of Singapore's Initial Report on the guidelines for children's TV programmes.

8.4 MDA has four Programme Advisory Committees which assist the Authority in monitoring the range, output and quality of programmes in the four official languages and in making recommendations on how programmes can be improved. Programmes targeted at children and youth are among the genres of programming of interest and concern to the Committees which meet MDA for regular dialogues. MDA also forwards feedback from the Committees and the public to the broadcasters for follow-up.

8.5 Radio broadcasters are advised to be mindful of the likely effects of undesirable programme contents on children and to exercise care and judgment when handling content which may not be suitable for children. Programmes targeted at children should not be presented in a manner which may be disturbing or distressing to children, or adversely affect their general well-being in any way. These programmes should also impart appreciation of sound moral and social concepts, and contribute to the healthy development of personality, character and intelligence of the young.

8.6 Advertising and sponsorship on TV and radio have to take into account that children's abilities to distinguish between fact and fantasy vary according to their age and individual personality, and that children tend to be imitative in nature. Advertisements primarily targeted at children or placed in programmes likely to be seen by children should not contain any visuals, effects or words that might result in harming them morally, psychologically or physically. Broadcasters also have to consider carefully the appropriateness of any sponsorship of children's programmes in view of children's inability to understand fully the relationship between the sponsor and the programme.

8.7 Programmes that carry adult themes and are unsuitable for children have to be accompanied with viewer advisories. To aid parental guidance and allow for greater viewing choices, MDA has also implemented a programme classification system for subscription premium TV channels and services.

### **(B) Films and Videos**

8.8 Under the Films Act (Cap. 107), all films and videos are subject to regulatory controls. Materials meant for exhibition or distribution should meet the content guidelines. Films that are obscene are not allowed. Films which are allowed for public screening are categorised into one of the following ratings: G (suitable for children), PG (suitable for children with parental guidance), NC-16 (No Children under 16), M18 (Mature 18) and R21 (Restricted 21), while videos are classified up to a M18 rating. In addition, advisories are issued to alert consumers on the potential controversial elements in the film to enable parents to make an informed choice when selecting materials for their children.

### **(C) Internet**

8.9 The Singapore Government actively encourages the use of the Internet in offices, schools and homes. Singaporeans have wide and easy access to the Internet. As at March 2008, there were over 3.66 million Internet broadband subscribers in Singapore and a household broadband penetration rate of 81.8%.

8.10 MDA supports and encourages greater industry involvement to address concerns over undesirable content on the Internet. For example, Internet Access Service Providers in Singapore offer Family Access Network (FAN) services to their subscribers and provide optional, hassle-free network filtering services that parents can use to help protect their children from undesirable websites.

8.11 MDA also works with partners from the public and private sectors to educate youth, educators, parents and the general public on the responsible and discerning use of the Internet.

#### MEDIAAction!

8.12 Since 2005, MDA has been organising MEDIAAction!, a year-round public education and outreach campaign to:

- (i) Raise the media literacy of Singaporeans;
- (ii) Promote media as a choice career;
- (iii) Promote the awareness and adoption of media; and
- (iv) Champion the balanced and responsible use of media to enhance one's life and inspire others to do the same.

8.13 MEDIAAction!'s strategy is to work with a multitude of partners from the public, private and people sectors to present wide-ranging opportunities to Singaporeans. In 2007, MDA worked with 143 partners and co-organised 48 events, which attracted more than 306,000 participants

#### Cyber Wellness

8.14 MDA also encourages youth to be discerning in media consumption as they continue to be exposed to the range of new media applications and technologies available. A set of Cyber Wellness core values serve as guidelines for teachers, youth, parents, civic groups and industry players to help children and others manage their media habits responsibly. The four core values of Cyber Wellness are:

- (i) **Balanced Lifestyle:** Users should embrace the Internet and integrate it into their daily lives. However, a balance needs to be maintained between the physical and virtual worlds.
- (ii) **Embracing the Net and Inspiring Others:** Users should harness the positive powers of the online medium to be proactive contributors who can inspire and benefit others.
- (iii) **Astuteness:** Users need to be astute and street smart when navigating sites such as virtual communities.
- (iv) **Respect & Responsibility:** Users need to have a sense of respect for the medium and for other individuals. They should neither abuse its power nor condone subversive content.

8.15 From October 2005 to March 2006, more than 7,500 students from 54 schools received training in Cyber Wellness values. At the same time, VWOs also facilitated the promotion of the Cyber Wellness values. Since 2001, through a series of road shows,

mentoring and training sessions, VWOs have reached out to over 160,000 students, teachers and parents to promote Cyber Wellness.

8.16 The Board of Film Censors (BFC) under the MDA has also launched a new classification system for video games in April 2008. In line with the new guidelines, consumer advisories will be introduced to allow consumers, especially parents, to make informed choices about the video games available in the market.

#### Internet and Media Advisory Committee

8.17 The National Internet Advisory Committee (NIAC) and its related committee, the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), were re-constituted into the Internet and Media Advisory Committee (INMAC), with effect from 1 May 2007. INMAC advises MDA on media literacy initiatives, industry co-regulation policies and other regulatory operational issues specific to MDA and the Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts (MICA). It also promotes the creation of conducive and engaging media literacy public education programmes.

#### **(D) Library Services for Children**

8.18 Library services for children are provided by the National Library Board's (NLB) 3 regional and 19 community libraries. NLB's network of libraries ensures that children in Singapore enjoy free and equal access to library services. The library plays an important role in a child's growing years. Early exposure to the library and its resources develops a child's lifelong love for reading and learning. NLB's team of Children's librarians provides programmes, services and guidance that anchor a child's interest for learning and literacy from a young age. It also aims to provide services that are visible and relevant for teens, educators and youth workers.

8.19 NLB has a comprehensive collection that is arranged by age level and format and made available in Singapore's four official languages (English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil). Local and overseas works suitable for children and young people are constantly acquired for the library's collections.

8.20 The Children's Resource Centres at Jurong and Woodlands Regional Libraries provide access to the selected reference collections for parents, caregivers, educators and librarians on children's literature, reading, bibliographies, storytelling handbooks, large-sized picture books, story cards and storytelling props.

8.21 All libraries have eKiosk Stations which enable easy access or usage for children as well as wheel chair bound patrons. This Kiosk, with its simple interface, allows children to check their accounts or top-up their prepaid accounts for Multimedia Station usage.

8.22 There are Children's Catalogue Stations (Online Public Access Catalogue) at all Children's section of the libraries. These are dedicated catalogue stations for children to

use in searching for books they want to read or borrow. The simple and child friendly interface makes searching for books easy for children.

8.23 A number of databases and eBooks have been made available online for children. An estimated 530 eBook titles targeted towards children, including animated picture books, large print electronic books, a Malay eBook collection for children, and other popular books from publishers are available.

8.24 On 3 April 2008, NLB launched a prototype mobile library service in the form of a bus called "Molly, the Mobile Library". The bus offers a selection of 3,000 books and is fitted out with Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) and wireless technology to facilitate the loan and return of materials as well as checking of patron records. Storytelling, programmes and advisory services are also offered along with the collections. It is also a means to proactively reach out to and serve the underserved by increasing awareness of NLB's collections, services and programmes offered by the public libraries and to encourage this group to become active users of public libraries in support of lifelong learning. Some of the target users include children's homes, orphanages, special needs schools, schools for the disabled and selected neighbourhood primary schools. In its first two months of operation, the library had already gone to eight homes and orphanages, 20 special needs schools and four primary schools, reaching out to 7,107 visitors.

## **9 ARTICLE 37A – THE RIGHT NOT TO BE SUBJECTED TO TORTURE OR OTHER CRUEL, INHUMANE OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT**

*No child shall be subjected to torture, cruel treatment or punishment. Both capital punishment and life imprisonment without the possibility of release are prohibited for offences committed by persons below 18 years.*

9.1 Singapore is firmly against any violence committed against children. Special protection is provided for those who are vulnerable. The Children and Young Persons Act (Cap. 38) (CYPA), Women's Charter (Cap. 353) and Penal Code (Cap. 224) continue to provide safeguards against the abuse of children. Harsh penalties are meted out to perpetrators.

9.2 Under section 5(1) of the CYPA, a person guilty of child abuse may be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding S\$20,000 (US\$14,286) or imprisonment up to 7 years or both, if death of the child is caused. Sections 321 and 322 of the Penal Code (Cap. 224) provide for protections against voluntarily causing hurt and voluntarily causing grievous hurt respectively. The penalties under Section 321 are imprisonment for a term which may extend to 2 years, or with fine which may extend to S\$5,000 (US\$3,571), or with both. The penalties under Section 322 are imprisonment for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to fine or to caning. Section 140(1) of the WC also makes it an offence for any person to procure, intimidate, harbour or detain any woman or



girl for the purpose of prostitution or carnal connection except by way of marriage. Convicted persons may be sentenced to imprisonment up to 5 years and a fine not exceeding S\$10,000 (US\$7,143).

9.3 When a child commits an offence, he or she is dealt with under a different system which is rehabilitative in nature and is designed to ensure accountability for misdeeds. Juveniles are tried for their offences in the Juvenile Court where a range of treatment and sentencing options, from community rehabilitation to institutional rehabilitation, is available. If the juvenile has committed a serious offence such as murder, rape, drug trafficking or armed robbery he or she may be tried by the High Court if he or she is assessed to be unsuitable to be dealt with in the Juvenile Court. For such serious offences, juveniles may be subjected to judicial caning. Under Singapore's laws, a juvenile offender will be caned with a light rattan instead of the usual rattan used for adults. Females are not liable to caning under Section 231 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC). In the period of 2003 to June 2007, 76 juvenile offenders were sentenced to judicial caning with a light cane.

9.4 The CPC specifically provides that a sentence of death shall not be pronounced on a person for an offence if it appears to the court that he was under the age of 18 years at the time of the offence. Such a person shall, instead, be sentenced to be detained under the President's pleasure (TPP), where the status of his detention is reviewed annually. If found suitable, a recommendation will be made to the President for his release.

9.5 For juvenile offenders undergoing institutional rehabilitation, the CYPA Regulations provides for corporal punishment to be used as a form of discipline in isolated instances and for very serious misconduct, and only as a last resort. Punishment is administered only after a full inquiry is conducted. The cane used for such situations is a light rattan cane, and is different from the cane used for adult offenders. There are also procedures to ensure that no one with physical or mental disability is subjected to corporal punishment.

9.6 Singapore is of the view that the regulated use of corporal punishment is an acceptable mode of discipline, and does not constitute violence against children and made the declaration on Article 37 in this regard. Children in institutional care have avenues to surface any incidents of ill-treatment through an independent Board of Visitors, whose role is to ensure that juvenile homes provide a safe and supportive environment for rehabilitation and care.

## V. DEVELOPMENTS UNDER FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE

### 1 Preamble

1.1 This section provides key updates on Singapore's support for the family environment and alternative care. This cluster of updates addresses questions of parental responsibilities, family unity, child maintenance and support, adoption, illegal transfer, abuse and placements and come under Articles 5, 9-11, 18(1), 18(2), 19-21, 25, 27(4) and 39.

1.2 These updates are premised on Singapore's continued belief that supportive family environments provide the best outcomes for the development of our children. To that end, strengthening families, especially dysfunctional families and families at risk of becoming so, and increasing their capacity to provide for our children, remain a key priority for the state.

### 2 ARTICLE 5 – PARENTAL GUIDANCE

*The State must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents and the extended family to provide guidance for the child which is appropriate to his or her evolving capacities.*

### ARTICLE 18 – PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

*Parents have joint responsibility for raising the child, and the State shall support them in this. The State shall provide appropriate assistance to parents in child-raising.*

2.1 In August 2008, the Singapore Government announced the enhanced Marriage and Parenthood Package to address the key challenges that Singaporeans face in getting married and starting and raising families through facilitating better work-life balance, especially for working couples; providing quality, affordable and accessible centre-based childcare options; and providing financial support for parents to raise and care for their children. The budget for the enhanced Package in 2009 is expected to increase to S\$1.6 billion (US\$1.14 billion), when fully implemented, double that of the current S\$800 million (US\$571 million).

#### (A) Supporting a Pro-Family Environment

2.2 The Baby Bonus which was introduced in April 2001 and enhanced in August 2008 continues to support parents by helping to lighten the financial burden of raising children.

2.3 The bonus consists of a cash gift and a co-savings component. The first to the fourth child receives both a cash gift and a co-savings matching contribution in the Children Development Account (CDA). The fifth and subsequent child would receive a

co-savings matching contribution in the CDA. An eligible child will enjoy benefits under the Baby Bonus Scheme from birth till his or her sixth birthday. The total Baby Bonus benefits are shown below.

Table 12 : Baby Bonus Benefits

<b>Birth Order</b>	<b>Cash Gift from Government</b>	<b>Maximum Matching Government Contribution</b>	<b>Total</b>
First	S\$4,000 (US\$2,857)	S\$6,000 (US\$4,286)	<b>S\$10,000</b> <b>(US\$7,143)</b>
Second	S\$4,000 (US\$2,857)	S\$6,000 (US\$4,286)	<b>S\$10,000</b> <b>(US\$7,143)</b>
Third	S\$6,000 (US\$4,286)	S\$12,000 (US\$8,571)	<b>S\$18,000</b> <b>(US\$12,857)</b>
Fourth	S\$6,000 (US\$4,286)	S\$12,000 (US\$8,571)	<b>S\$18,000</b> <b>(US\$12,857)</b>
Fifth and beyond	-	S\$18,000 (US\$12,857)	<b>S\$18,000</b> <b>(US\$12,857)</b>

*Source: Ministry of Development, Youth and Sports*

2.4 The cash gift is given out in four equal installments over 18 months from the birth of the child. The savings parents contribute to the CDA will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Government, up to the maximum cap. The savings can be used for the child's educational and developmental needs. These include payment of fees at child care centres, kindergartens, special schools, early intervention programmes and healthcare institutions. The CDA savings can also be used to purchase health insurance.

2.5 The Government-Paid Maternity Leave (GPML) scheme was enhanced in August 2008 and now provides 16 weeks of maternity leave, up from 12 weeks, to eligible working mothers for all births. The last eight weeks can be taken flexibly over 12 months from the birth of the child, subject to mutual agreement between the employer and employee. For the first two confinements, the first eight weeks of maternity leave will continue to be employer-paid, with the last eight weeks to be funded by the Government (capped at \$20,000 (US\$14,287) per confinement). For the third and subsequent confinements, the full 16 weeks will be funded by the Government (capped at \$40,000 (US\$28,571) per confinement). The qualifying period for maternity leave has also been halved. A married female employee is eligible for maternity leave if her child is a Singapore citizen and if she has worked for her employer for at least 90 days, down from 180 days, immediately prior to confinement.

2.6 In order to further enhance the protection for pregnant employees, employers will be required from 31 October 2008 to pay employees their maternity leave benefits if the employees are dismissed without sufficient cause within the last six months of pregnancy or retrenched within the last three months.

## **(B) Creating Family-Friendly Employment**

2.7 The Singapore Government recognises that working parents need to be supported in their roles. The civil service, as the largest employer in Singapore, continues to take the lead in encouraging parents to spend time with their children, especially during key milestones of the child's life. Parents are encouraged to accompany their children for the first day of school and are given the day off to do so. Aside from flexi work arrangements, telecommuting, marriage and paternity leave, other pro-family measures exist by way of no-pay leave for childcare of up to four years for each child; part-time employment for working mothers for up to three years regardless of the age of the child; and full-pay leave of five days per year per child for the first three children to look after a sick child aged 6 years and below.

2.8 Paid childcare leave has also been increased from two to six days per year, per parent if one has a Singaporean child below the age of seven. A new unpaid infant care leave of six days per year per parent if one has a Singaporean child below the age of two has been introduced to give parent additional time to spend with their child.

## **(C) Support for Families**

2.9 Singapore continues to adopt the approach that parents have shared responsibility towards the upbringing of their children. The Government recognises that some families provide a healthy environment for their children while others require more assistance. The Community Development Councils (CDCs), which initiate, plan and manage community programmes to promote community bonding and social cohesion, also provide various community and social assistance services. As the CDCs are closer to the ground, they are able to be attuned and responsive to the specific needs of their communities. Needy Singaporeans can walk in to any CDC to request for financial or other assistance, which is rendered on a needs basis. Family Service Centres (FSCs), which are one-stop neighbourhood-based social service centres, continue to be the first line of support to individuals and families in the community. Besides family life education, FSCs provide a range of services such as counselling, information, referrals and group work. There are now 36 FSCs island-wide, to make such services easily accessible to all.

2.10 In 2005, ComCare, an endowment fund, was launched to provide sustainable funding for programmes to help the needy. Under ComCare, there are a range of programmes that focuses on the developmental needs of children from needy families. Subsidies are provided to children attending kindergarten, child care and student care centres. This is to ensure that no child is deprived of a pre-school education or before-and-after school care services, because of financial problems.

2.11 For children who attend kindergarten, the Kindergarten Financial Assistance Scheme (KiFAS) is also available to low-income families. KiFAS subsidises 90% of the monthly kindergarten fees or up to S\$82 (US\$59) per month, whichever is lower. From 1 July 2008, KiFAS support is extended to cover nursery programmes at eligible non-profit

organisations. The income eligibility criterion for KiFAS has also been expanded, to allow more needy families to benefit from the subsidies. Very needy families may also obtain a start-up grant of up to S\$200 (US\$143) per child per year, to help them pay for their child's registration fee, uniforms and insurance, all of which are charged by kindergartens.

2.12 The Centre-based Financial Assistance Scheme for Child Care (CFAC) continues to help low-income families with an additional subsidy over and above the universal childcare subsidy provided by the Government. From 1 July 2008, successful applicants are given an enhanced subsidy of between S\$100 (US\$ 71) to S\$340 (US\$243) monthly, an increase from the previous S\$140 (US\$100) to S\$320 (US\$229). The income eligibility criterion for CFAC has also been expanded, to allow more needy families to benefit from the subsidies. The CFAC also provides a one-off Start-Up Grant of up to S\$1,000 (US\$714) to help low-income families meet the start-up costs of placing their child in a child care centre. This grant can be used to cover the deposit, registration fees, first month's fees, uniforms and insurance.

2.13 Student Care Centres (SCCs) provide before and after school care and supervision to school-going children aged 7 to 14 years. Special Student Care Centres are also available for children with disabilities, aged between 7 to 18 years, and attending either mainstream or special education schools. SCCs supervise homework, play, enrichment and recreational activities for school-age children before or after school, and to enhance their all-round development. For needy families who wish to put their children into SCCs but cannot afford the fees, they may apply for subsidies under the Student Care Fee Assistance (SCFA) scheme. The amount of subsidies given ranges from S\$42 (US\$30) to S\$379 (US\$271) monthly, depending on the type of SCC attended, and the monthly household income of the family.

2.14 In addition to these financial schemes, the Healthy Start Programme (HSP) provides intensive intervention services for young children and their parents from at-risk (and often dysfunctional) families. By helping these families enhance their parenting skills and parent-child interactions, the programme aims to strengthen the family as a unit and provide opportunities for children to receive early childhood education and development.

2.15 The Home Ownership Plus Education (HOPE) scheme, established in 2003, is an incentive scheme to help the needy and their children break out of poverty. Beneficiaries get a housing grant, cash incentives for family planning, one-off utilities grant, a training grant, mentoring support, and annual educational bursaries for children attending pre-school to university. HOPE ensures that families can attain an adequate standard of living by assisting them with their various needs such as housing and education of their children.

2.16 For children with incarcerated parents, VWOs conduct programmes to support their development, such as befriending, tutoring and mentoring. Family-based programmes are also provided to offenders who are parents to improve their parenting

skills. Financial and social assistance is also rendered to the families to reduce hardship where possible.

2.17 As indicated in paragraph 2.4, under Section I. Developments Under General Measures of Implementation of this Report, the Government formed the IMC on Dysfunctional Families to better support families, particularly vulnerable families, so that they can better fulfill their parental responsibilities. The review is aimed at identifying areas where the state may also play a greater role in supporting these families.

2.18 The IMC is focusing on 4 strategic thrusts:

- (i) Better identification of at-risk or dysfunctional families: Improving coordination between the various touch points, such as schools and family service centres, in the community.
- (ii) Prevention: Identifying dysfunctional families and giving them support will be an important step in ensuring that their children develop resilience in the long term.
- (iii) Effective Intervention: Strengthening specialised community agencies that can address specific issues faced by these families, such as family violence and minor marriages.
- (iv) Social Service Sector capability: Raising the capability of the social service sector, so that it can effectively deliver the programmes that will help dysfunctional families.

2.19 The IMC on Dysfunctional Families will also be looking into more targeted interventions for incarcerated offenders and their children to prevent inter-generational crime.

#### **(D) Family Life Education**

2.20 For easy accessibility to family life education programmes, there are structured delivery channels, such as the Parent Education in Pre-schools (PEPS) Programme and the School Family Education (SFE) in schools, the Family Life Ambassador Programme at the workplace and the Family Life Champion Programme in the community.

2.21 The PEPS and SFE are school-based programmes offering a continuum of parenting and family life education programmes from preschools to junior colleges. (students up to 18 years old). Schools on these programmes are given funding support to organise talks, provide family life education resources, or to set up a family life centre or corner within their schools. As at October 2008, there are 152 schools and 323 pre-schools involved in the SFE and PEPS programmes respectively. Since 2002, 833,481 participants have taken part in SFE and another 66,064 have taken part in PEPS since 2004.

**(E) Children Beyond Parental Control (BPC)**

2.22 The Singapore Government continues to emphasise the role of prevention and early intervention in the management of juvenile delinquency. This is especially so for children at risk of delinquency. Through the BeaconWorks Programme, run by the Singapore Children's Society, parents and their children are given the opportunity to work through issues on a voluntary basis. Some families may also choose to seek assistance from the Family Service Centres. It is only when all these intervention work prove to be unsuccessful that parents file a formal BPC complaint with the Children Care Court. A social investigation will be done by MCYS, for the Court's consideration in their final decision for the BPC order.

2.23 The number of BPC cases referred to the Juvenile Court each year is reflected in the following table:

Table 13: New cases for Beyond Parental Control

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	75	61	41	61	69
Female	89	75	70	86	71
<b>Age</b>					
8 – 10 years	2	6	5	2	5
11 -12 years	14	11	9	16	11
13 – 14 years	93	72	61	83	70
15 – 16 years	55	47	36	46	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>140</b>

Source: Ministry of Development, Youth and Sports

2.24 A ten-year study of BPC youths and their parents was conducted by the Singapore Children's Society in 2005. The study showed that a large percentage of these youths, although not offenders at the juncture of BPC intervention, had risks of offending. Parents in the study were generally satisfied with the outcome of the BPC programme. 80% of parents indicated that relationships with their children improved.

**(F) Children Left at Home**

2.25 Parents who leave their young children alone at home could potentially be placing them in danger. Section 5(2)(c) of the Children and Young Persons Act (Cap.38) (CYPA) provides for action to be taken against individuals, including parents who willfully or unreasonably neglect, abandon or expose the child in circumstances that are likely to endanger the safety of that child, resulting in the child being harmed. The Government has worked to ensure the provision of alternative care arrangements for children. The Childcare Information Services line provides parents with information on childcare facilities located in their neighbourhood. Various organisations also man help lines to befriend latchkey children who may require assistance and support.

2.26 As indicated in paragraph 2.13 under Section V. Developments Under Family Environment and Alternative Care of this Report, Student Care Services are in place to provide care for school-going children aged 7 to 14 years old who do not have alternative care arrangements before or after school.

2.27 The Singapore Children's Society also runs Project CABIN, a school based youth outreach project that aims to provide an alternative "hang out" place for youth by engaging them in meaningful activities. The CABIN is run by a group of student CABIN Club members under the guidance of teachers and social workers from Singapore Children's Society. The key role of CABIN Club members is to reach out to fellow students by providing basic counselling and befriending. To date, 18 Project Cabin projects have been initiated.

### **3 ARTICLE 9 – SEPARATION FROM PARENTS**

*The child has a right to live with his or her parents unless this is deemed to be incompatible with the child's best interests. The child also has a right to maintain contact with both parents if separated from one or both.*

### **ARTICLE 10 – FAMILY REUNIFICATION**

*Children and their parents have the right to leave any country and to enter their own for purposes of reunion or the maintenance of the child-parent relationship.*

3.1 Singapore recognises that both parents have a role to play in their children's life and their maintenance. In child protection and welfare management, emphasis is also placed on reintegration of the child back into the family, when it is safe to do so.

3.2 For children who have experienced abuse and neglect and are placed in alternative care such as kinship care, foster families or children's homes, a weekly meeting with their parents and/or families is essential to help them stay connected to their families. The meetings also help the child protection officers (CPOs) to assess the progress of the parents and observe their interaction and relationship with their children. CPOs are then able to work with the parents on reintegrating the child back to their families.

3.3 To facilitate regular contact between children and their parents, MCYS has since 2006, collaborated with the Centre for Family Harmony, a Voluntary Welfare Organisation under the Thye Hua Kuan Moral Society, to arrange access at their FSCs in various parts of Singapore, allowing more convenient access between parents and their children in a safe and conducive environment. Caseworkers are trained to facilitate the access and observe the interaction, giving valuable feedback to the parents and the CPO. These access arrangements are also made available for divorce and custody cases to allow children to meet with their parents during the proceedings on the case.

3.4 Notwithstanding our commitment to family reunification, there remain instances where this is not feasible. This could be in the interest of public safety for situations



where children or parents are incarcerated in institutions and visitation rights, although provided for under our legislation, are withheld by the institution's authorities, for example, due to the inmate's misconduct, as provided for in Regulation 83(1) of the Prisons Regulation, as highlighted in paragraph 220 of the Initial Report.

3.5 As one of the smallest independent countries in the world and one of the most densely populated, Singapore is limited by the need to keep our population size manageable. To that end, our immigration policies are strict, to ensure control of entry and departure of those who do not or no longer have a right to stay in Singapore and to the acquisition of citizenship.

3.6 Under the Immigration Act (Cap. 133) and the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (Cap. 91A), foreigners are required to be in possession of a pass or permit before they can enter, remain and/or work in Singapore. These passes or permits impose restrictions which include conditions on employment and marriage within Singapore's territory. These restrictions are in accordance with Singapore's laws, and are made known to foreigners issued with a pass or permit. As such, in some situations, separation from parents may occur. Accordingly, Singapore made and retains its reservations against Articles 9 and 10 in paragraph (4) of Singapore's Instrument of Accession.

#### **4 ARTICLE 27 PARA 4 – RECOVERY OF MAINTENANCE FOR THE CHILD**

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to secure the recovery of maintenance for the child from the parents or other persons having financial responsibility for the child.*

4.1 Consistent with the belief in the shared responsibility of parents in the care of children, Section 69 of the Women's Charter (Cap.353) allows the Court to order a parent who has neglected or refused to provide reasonable maintenance for his or her child to pay maintenance for the said child. Section 127 of the Women's Charter (Cap.353) provides the Court with the power to order maintenance for children during the pendency of any matrimonial proceedings at the time of the granting of the divorce, or at any time subsequent to the grant of a divorce.

#### **5 ARTICLE 20 – CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF FAMILY ENVIRONMENT**

*The State is obliged to provide special protection for a child deprived of the family environment and to ensure that appropriate alternative family care or institutional placement is available in such cases. Efforts to meet this obligation shall pay due regard to the child's cultural background.*

5.1 As indicated in paragraph 82 of the Initial Report, the Children and Young Persons Act (Cap.38) (CYPA) provides for the care of children in need of care and protection, including children who are destitute.

### (A) Alternative Care Arrangements

5.2 The FamCare Scheme, established in 2002, taps on kinship support to provide care for child abuse victims when alternative care arrangements need to be made. Care provided by relatives can often reduce the fear and anxiety of the child as the child is usually more familiar with relatives than with an unrelated family. Relatives are supervised and supported by the CPOs.

5.3 In the absence of extended family, the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), continues to emphasise the role of fostering as preferred care for children deprived of family environment. A stringent criteria is adopted in the selection of foster carers. Over the past 5 years the number of new fostering placements has been increasing steadily.

Table 14: Number of children in Foster Care and Foster Mothers

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
No. of children in foster care	144	194	232	275	289
No. of foster mothers in the fostering scheme	137	154	161	178	189

Source: Ministry of Development, Youth and Sports

5.4 To support the work of foster parents and relatives on the FamCare scheme, MCYS initiated a 24-hour hotline service in 2007. The hotline service provides emotional and practical support for foster parents in their caregiving roles. Comprehensive training is also provided to foster carers.

### (B) Children's Homes

5.5 MCYS also continues to supervise 24 children's residential homes run by VWOs. Of these homes, 11 are gazetted as Places of Safety, Approved Homes and/or Approved Schools under the CYPA to admit children placed under statutory orders. These homes provide care for children whose families are unable to give them proper care or who are admitted by the Juvenile Court either for protection or for rehabilitation for offences committed. In March 2008, the Government announced plans to license all Voluntary Children and Welfare Homes with the aim of strengthening protective safeguards for residents of these homes. There are also four residential homes that cater specifically to children with disabilities.

Table 15: New Admissions to Children's Homes

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	171	264	228	262	281
Female	247	320	275	318	249
<b>Age</b>					
< 6 years	153	284	37	35	29
6 – 9 years	171	198	80	113	110
10 - 15 years	78	82	329	370	362
>15 years	16	20	57	62	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>530</b>

(Includes statutory admissions and cases admitted on compassionate grounds)

Source: Ministry of Development, Youth and Sports

5.6 The Board of Visitors (BOV) conducts visits to inspect gazetted homes to ensure compliance to minimum standards of care. Since August 2007, MCYS has also extended visits by the BOV to include non-gazetted homes. These visits are conducted randomly every two months to ensure that the welfare of residents is taken care of. Residents may also write to the BOV through a designated PO Box address. All residents are informed, at the point of their admission, of the address and of arrangements to ensure that all letters remain anonymous and do not require postage stamps for delivery. All homes also display the national Child Protection toll-free helpline number.

## 6 ARTICLE 21 – ADOPTION

*In countries where adoption is recognised and/or allowed, it shall only be carried out in the best interests of the child, and then only with the authorisation of competent authorities and safeguards for the child.*

6.1 As indicated in paragraph 251 of the Initial Report, the Adoption of Children Act (Cap.4) governs adoption procedures in Singapore.

Table 16: Domestic and Foreign Adoptions

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Domestic Adoptions</b>					
Boys	109	120	114	110	94
Girls	90	111	129	84	85
<b>Total</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>179</b>
<b>Foreign Adoptions</b>					
Boys	215	225	133	109	81
Girls	258	275	180	136	147
<b>Total</b>	<b>473</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>228</b>

Source: Ministry of Development, Youth and Sports

6.2 In December 2003, Singapore signed a Record of Understanding (ROU) with the People's Republic of China (PRC) on adoption of PRC children. The ROU took effect on 1 April 2004. Under the ROU, only orphans and abandoned children under the age of 14 years and who are in the custody of social welfare institutions would be eligible for adoption from the PRC. These applications are processed by the China Centre of Adoption Affairs. The ROU was amended on 5 Aug 2007 to provide for the adoption of stepchildren by Singaporeans.

6.3 Since 2005, local couples who wish to adopt foreign-born children must obtain favourable Home Study Reports (HSR) prior to the adoption. The HSRs are administered by VWOs accredited by MCYS.

## **7 ARTICLE 11 – ILLICIT TRANSFER AND NON-RETURN**

*The State has an obligation to prevent and remedy the kidnapping or retention of children abroad by a parent or third party.*

7.1 As indicated in paragraph 257 of the Initial Report, protection against the illicit transfer and non-return of children are provided for within the Penal Code (Cap.224), Women's Charter (Cap.353) and the Children and Young Persons Act (Cap.38).

7.2 In March 2008, the Singapore Government announced its intention to sign on to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction as an extension of Singapore's strong commitment to protecting the interests of children in situations of trans-border civil disputes amongst parents.

## **8 ARTICLE 19 – ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

*The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programmes for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims.*

### **ARTICLE 39 – PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RECOVERY AND SOCIAL REINTEGRATION**

*The State has an obligation to ensure that child victims of armed conflicts, torture, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation receive appropriate treatment for their recovery and social reintegration.*

8.1 The Singapore Government and the community continue to believe that no one deserves to suffer abuse. To that end, robust policies continue to be in place to prevent and manage ill-treatment of children. MCYS continues to be the lead agency on child protection and welfare.

8.2 As indicated in paragraphs 258 to 276 of the Initial Report, Singapore's child protection system is built on strong legislation against abuse and neglect, robust service delivery and management of cases of abuse, training and education. MCYS leads an

Inter-Ministry Working Group on Child Abuse, which oversees the coordination and management of child abuse protocol amongst government agencies. The safety and welfare of children remain they key consideration in the management and intervention of such cases. The Child Protection Service (CPS) is guided by a strategic framework which sets the policy directions and guidelines on the protection of children from abuse and violence, including the setting of operating procedures and systems for case intervention, networking with partner agencies in providing appropriate and timely interventions and services for the victims and families, and educating the public on detection and reporting of abuse.

8.3 The number of alleged child abuse cases investigated has been stable since 2003, and has shown a moderate decline in the last 3 years. Out of all cases investigated in the last 5 years, about half of the cases had substantiated evidence of abuse, while the rest lacked evidence but required some form of assistance.

Table 17: Child Abuse Cases (full-scale investigations)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
No. of cases investigated	205	170	158	150	154*
No. of cases with evidence of abuse	103	92	101	58	98
No. of cases with lack/no evidence of abuse but need assistance because of stress factor(s) in the family	102	74	57	91	54
No. of false complaints	0	4	0	1	0

\* Includes pending cases

Source: Ministry of Development, Youth and Sports

Table 18: Profile of Child Abuse Cases Known to MCYS

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Physical Abuse	60	49	42	35	49
Sexual Abuse	32	22	41	20	47
Physical Neglect	6	10	12	1	0
Emotional Abuse	5	11	6	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>98</b>

Source: Ministry of Development, Youth and Sports

8.4 Physical abuse is the predominant form of abuse among all child abuse cases. It accounted for an average of 52% of all cases over the last 5 years, while sexual abuse accounted for 36% of all cases.

8.5 In the last 5 years, the Child Protection Helpline has received an average of 336 calls per year on alleged child abuse. Most of these queries did not require full scale investigations. Callers were referred to FSCs for additional assistance.

Table 19: Enquires to the Child Protection Helpline Related to Child Abuse

2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
449	447	251	282	249

Source: Ministry of Development, Youth and Sports

8.6 The main sources of referral for child abuse cases over the last 5 years were hospitals and medical centres, schools and from family members, friends and relatives. MCYS continues to educate the public and those working with children, such as teachers, on detecting signs of abuse and the avenues for seeking help.

8.7 Since the Initial Report, key developments in the area of child protection have been focused on the following :

- i) engendering collaboration;
- ii) strengthening capabilities;
- iii) enhancing intervention outcomes through programming; and
- iv) enhancing prevention and preventive education strategies.

#### **(A) Engendering Collaboration**

8.8 MCYS continues to work in partnership with government agencies and VWOs on the care of child victims. The Inter-Ministry Working Group on the Management of Child Abuse, set up in 1997, continues to monitor and improve procedures for the management of child abuse.

8.9 In August 2005, the Crisis Management Team was instituted as part of the child protection work processes within MCYS. The team adopts a multi-disciplinary, cross-sectional representation to attend to a crisis situation in a swift and coordinated manner. The team comprises the child protection officers, managers from the CPS, psychologists and counsellors.

8.10 Children with parents with mental health concerns may also be at risk of abuse and/or neglect. In recognition of the potential risk of abuse of children whose parents have mental health issues, MCYS and the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) / Woodbridge Hospital, in 2006, started a collaborative and pro-active intervention effort to identify and intervene in cases where there were child protection concerns. A designated Medical Social Worker liaises with MCYS for cases which are known to MCYS and where one or both parents had mental health concerns.

8.11 The integrated manual on the management of child abuse which outlines the roles, responsibilities and intervention protocols for the Child Protection Service as well as key partner agencies such as hospitals, the police, schools and social service agencies is being revised to include the following:

- i) The role of the Attorney General's Chambers;
- ii) The role of hospitals providing mental health services to victims or caregivers; and
- iii) A designated portion on child sexual abuse and the intervention processes.

8.12 Following the launch of the manual in October 2008, Child Protection Service will be undertaking a series of training of its staff and partner agencies. The manual would be disseminated more widely to include special schools.

### **(B) Strengthening Capabilities**

8.13 A key progress area in the management of child abuse has been in strengthening capabilities amongst agencies and persons involved in child protection work. To increase the professionalism and knowledge of CPOs, MCYS collaborated with the Attorney-General's Chambers to conduct training on "The Role of Child Protection Officers in the Singapore Legal System" in 2006. The training included topics such as the legal aspects of sexual offences against children, the role of CPOs in supporting victims of sexual offences, procedural issues in applying for care and protection orders, giving evidence in court and moot court training.

8.14 All officers involved in child protection work, including officers running the Fostering Scheme and those providing supportive programmes such as counselling to victims or non-offending parents, attend basic training that includes examining the values and principles behind child protection intervention, protocols and processes, interviewing children, skills in engaging parents and elements of safe practice.

8.15 Further levels of training on theories for child protection practice called the Professionally Accountable Practices Model, which emphasises a theoretical base to support assessments, have been instituted in the basic and intermediate child protection training modules for both CPS staff and partners. Staff in residential services for children and probation officers involved in the rehabilitation of young offenders attend various levels of training. MCYS is currently reviewing training for staff and plans are underway to further enhance the training provided.

8.16 MCYS has also embarked on extensive efforts to network and train trainee teachers at the National Institute of Education (NIE), teachers, court officials, healthcare professionals, child care operators, police and social workers from Family Service Centres (FSCs), Children's Homes and social service agencies on child protection issues. Training would include aspects such as recognising the signs and indicators of child abuse, managing disclosures and fulfilling the respective roles and responsibilities of agencies in the management of child protection cases. Since 2007, basic training on child protection has also been conducted for all full-time school counselors.

8.17 The Social Service Training Institute (SSTI) has conducted basic training to FSCs on child protection. It has also conducted training to agencies providing services to children with special needs on child abuse and disability. MCYS, in collaboration with

SSTI, has drawn up a training framework on training on family violence and child abuse. SSTI has been running basic as well as intermediate level training for frontline social workers involved in family violence intervention and child abuse.

8.18 MCYS also conducted training on developing child-safe organisations in April and November 2007 to assist social service agencies to establish a safe environment for children and young persons, including those with disabilities who are under their care. The training covered both policy and operational levels of abuse prevention in children's organisations and programmes. A total of 174 participants attended the training and were equipped with relevant knowledge and skills in establishing child-safe policies and systems. Agencies were subsequently tasked to develop their respective child-safe policies for their organisations.

8.19 In February 2004, a handbook for teachers, "Children at Risk" was jointly developed by MCYS, NCSS and the Ministry of Education to inform teachers on the appropriate management of children who need specialised intervention, including child abuse victims. The handbook outlines the definition of child abuse, and highlights practical information such as the symptoms of abuse, how to respond to detection and disclosure of child abuse, as well as when and how to report any possible case of child abuse promptly.

8.20 MCYS has also produced training videos in collaboration with its partners on various aspects of child protection. Some of the training materials include "Giving Voice", which is a joint effort by MCYS and MOE to increase awareness and knowledge among teachers in managing disclosures of child sexual abuse by students. This video was disseminated to all schools. Training videos on the signs and indicators of child abuse, such as "Seeing the Signs – Helping the Abused and Neglected Child" and "Hidden Scars – A Child's Experience of Emotional Abuse" were disseminated to FSCs to train their workers on child abuse as well as to assist them in their public education efforts.

8.21 In 2005, MCYS embarked on a pilot project with a FSC to manage some relatively low risk child protection cases. This move was made after a review of services provided by CPS to enable the MCYS to streamline and focus its expertise on in-depth intervention work of high risk cases. Guidelines for the collaboration were drawn up to include the criteria for selecting cases for out-sourcing, and the respective duties and responsibilities of MCYS and the FSCs were clearly outlined. The pilot project with TRANS Centre (Bukit Timah) was a success and two other agencies, namely the Singapore Children's Society Yishun FSC and Beyond Social Services, were engaged to join the collaborative project in 2006.

### **(C) Enhancing Intervention Outcomes through Programming**

8.22 Since the Initial Report, various programmes and programme enhancements have been initiated to better intervention outcomes for child victims. Specialised Counselling and Intervention programmes such as Family Group Conferencing have been introduced.



Family Group Conferences (FGCs) are convened regularly, usually by a neutral party such as a counsellor from MCYS or Beyond Social Services.

8.23 FGCs help to empower families to take the necessary steps to ensure the safety and welfare of their children as the families take the responsibility of designing a care plan and present the plan to the community partners. The professional partners would then give their feedback on the plan and the final plan would be agreed upon by all the members in the FGCs.

8.24 Specialised psychological programmes have also been introduced to strengthen the treatment mechanisms. The following programmes have been introduced in the last 5 years :

- (i) Recovery for Kids – a systematic group programme for children aged 6-12 years old who have experienced sexual abuse. Treatment components comprise sex education, coping skills training and strategies to prevent future sexual abuse.
- (ii) Recovery & Empowerment for Survivors of Sexual Abuse – a specialised group for adolescents with a history of sexual abuse. Clients are taught ways to manage abuse-related emotions, thoughts and behaviours, and to overcome their negative sexual abuse experience.
- (iii) Carer’s Recovery and Support Programme – a group programme for non-offending parents and caregivers of children and adolescents who have experienced sexual abuse.
- (iv) Programme for Optimistic, Well-Equipped and Resilient Kids (POWER) – a group programme for children aged 8-12 years old who have a parent or sibling experiencing a mental health problem aimed at improving resiliency and reducing feelings of isolation.

#### **(D) Enhancing Prevention and Preventive Education Strategies**

8.25 Public education remains a key enabler in the prevention of abuse. In addition to public education by way of sector training and information dissemination, Singapore’s public education efforts also include educating children on their rights and educating the public and parents on abuse.

##### Educating Children on their Rights

8.26 MCYS has teamed up with FSCs to run roving plays at school assembly sessions aimed at encouraging students to speak to someone they trust if they face abuse at home. Child-friendly public education collaterals are also delivered to schools yearly in the form of posters, booklets and postcards.

8.27 MOE's resource package on sexuality education entitled "The Growing Years Series" trains teachers to educate students on the topic of sexual abuse and how to protect themselves and seek help where necessary.

8.28 In October 2005, MCYS developed a pamphlet, "What Happens When You Tell?", aimed at children and young people with the objective of addressing their concerns and questions in relation to reporting incidences of abuse. The pamphlet covered such issues as definitions of sexual abuse, likely feelings as victims and likely procedures for intervention.

### Educating the Public

8.29 Pamphlets and education media continue to be distributed at various forums to better equip members of the public in identifying potential abuse and seeking early intervention. In the area of parent education, MCYS continues to support and fund FSCs and social service agencies to run parenting programmes to teach alternative disciplinary parenting methods that are non-violent or abusive.

8.30 In 2003, MCYS commissioned a study on the public perceptions on family violence. A second study was commissioned in 2007 to measure the shift in public perception since the first study. The 2007 study indicated more awareness of the need to seek help for family violence. Fewer respondents held the passive view that family violence was a private affair, as compared to 2003. More respondents agreed with the need to act against family violence and to seek help. This indicated that public education initiatives generated following the 2003 study had been effective.

### **(E) Discipline**

8.31 Legislation, guidelines and public education programmes exist to promote appropriate discipline and discourage the use of corporal punishment as a means of child discipline. MCYS' brochures on child discipline, "Love our Children, Discipline, Not Abuse", clearly exclude spanking as an option and instead highlights other forms of discipline.

8.32 There also remain very strict safeguards against corporal punishment in the community. The Child Care Centres Regulations specifically prohibits corporal punishment in childcare facilities.

8.33 In schools, counseling towards responsibility is practised as an alternative to punishment. Corporal punishment is meted out as a last resort for serious offences. Clear procedures and stringent checks and balances are in place to check any potential abuse of institutional authority by relevant personnel in meting out corporal punishment. Each case is evaluated in context and each school decides on the best approach. Corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure is carried out by either the Head of school or a delegated senior member of staff at an appropriate venue. A range of 1 to 6 strokes of a light cane may be given only on the palms, or buttocks over clothing. The Committee is

referred to paragraph 9.5 and 9.6, under Section IV. Developments Under Civil Rights and Freedoms of this Report, where we have explained the need to retain our declaration.

**(F) Mandatory Reporting**

8.34 Singapore does not have provisions for the mandatory reporting of child abuse. Singapore has studied the experience of other countries that have mandatory reporting and understands that the outcomes are varied. In some instances, mandatory reporting has resulted in hardship for families as zealous relatives, neighbours and friends alleged abuse at the slightest suggestion of distress in a child. With mandatory reporting, all reports have to be investigated and in unsubstantiated cases, the children and their families are subjected to much stress and trauma as a result of such reporting.

8.35 Singapore is of the view that it is more important that people with regular contact with children know how to detect and report child abuse. To that end, Singapore continues to invest in public education to ensure that any cases of child abuse will be detected and reported by the public and those working with children.

**9 ARTICLE 25 – PERIODIC REVIEW OF PLACEMENT**

*A child placed by the State for reasons of care, protection or treatment is entitled to have that placement evaluated regularly.*

**(A) Permanency Planning**

9.1 Permanency planning was instituted in February 2004 as part of child protection protocol. Permanency planning is a process in which informed and timely decisions are made on a child's long term care. It is undertaken through comprehensive interventions, assessments and discussions with various professionals, the parents, kin and significant others who have been involved with the family. Such planning is initiated in the early process of case supervision with a view to provide a permanent care plan that would meet the child's need for stability, safety, security and an identity. Alleged abuse reports are brought before the Child Abuse Protection Team (CAPT), a multi-disciplinary team of senior CPS staff, psychologists, paediatrician, police and other partner agencies, within 2 weeks of the reporting of the case. The case will be reviewed by a Case Review Team in 3 months. Subsequent reviews take place every 3 to 12 months.

9.2 For children placed under alternative care, such planning also ensures their care is not left to drift indefinitely. The concept of permanency planning translates to the determination of individual care plans for all children in care. The current review of the Children and Young Persons' Act will also look into provisions for the compulsory review of all child welfare cases by an Advisory Board appointed by the Minister.

## VI. DEVELOPMENTS UNDER HEALTH AND WELFARE

### 1 Preamble

1.1 Children in Singapore continue to enjoy quality, up-to-date health care that is accessible and affordable. This section captures key updates in the provision of health and welfare services for Singapore children. These cover progress in areas covered by Articles 6(3), 23, 24, 26 and 27(1-3).

### 2 ARTICLE 6 PARA 2 – SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT

*State Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.*

#### (A) Child Mortality Rates

2.1 Child mortality rates remain low in Singapore. In 2007, the neonatal mortality rate was 1.3 per 1000 live births, and 3.1 per 1,000 live and still births for perinatal mortality rates. Infant mortality rate was at 2.1 per 1,000 live births. Improvements in obstetric care and advances in medical care, especially newborn care have contributed to Singapore's low infant mortality rates.

Table 20: Child Mortality Rates

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Neonatal mortality rates (per 1,000 live births)	1.6	1.2	1.6	1.8	1.3
Perinatal mortality rates (per 1,000 live and still births)	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.1
Infant mortality rates (per 1,000 live births)	2.5	2.0	2.1	2.6	2.1

Source: Ministry of Health

2.2 Singapore continues to encourage preventive health measures such as immunisation for children against infectious diseases.

Table 21: Percentage of Children Immunised Against Infectious Diseases

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>% of Children aged 2 years immunised against:</b>					
Tuberculosis	97	99	98	98	98
Diphtheria/Tetanus/ Whooping cough	91	95	96	95	96
Poliomyelitis	91	94	96	95	96
Hepatitis B	90	93	96	94	95
Measles	87	95	96	93	95
<b>% of Children aged 12 years immunised against:</b>					
Measles/Mumps/Rubella	94	96	96	95	96

Source: Ministry of Health

### (B) Causes of death among children in Singapore

2.3 The major cases of death in children under 5 years of age are congenital anomalies and perinatal complications. The most common cause of death for children aged 5 to 18 years of age is cancer.

Table 22: Major Causes of Mortality in Children under 5years

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Congenital Anomalies	35	33	38	47	30
Perinatal Complications	41	22	39	43	32
Pneumonia	19	18	20	16	17
Heart Disease	5	2	5	1	2
Cancer	4	4	11	6	2
Accidental Falls	0	1	3	0	3

Source: Ministry of Health

Table 23: Major Causes of Mortality in Children 5 – 18 years

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Accidental Injuries</b>					
Road Traffic Accidents	9	9	7	5	7
Others	10	8	13	6	9
<b>Cancer</b>					
Leukemia	13	12	11	12	10
Others	16	16	17	26	18
<b>Infections</b>					
Pneumonia	9	13	18	10	8
Others	0	4	1	3	4
<b>Congenital Anomalies</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Suicides</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Heart Diseases</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>

Source: Ministry of Health

### (C) Adolescent Suicides

2.4 Suicide during childhood and early adolescence continues to be low, with slight fluctuations over the years. Nonetheless, various measures have been put in place to ensure the mental well-being of children and adolescents. In line with an increasing national focus on mental wellness, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) is also stepping up its youth mental wellness promotion efforts. A range of programmes in schools and communities have been organised to foster mental wellness and build mental resilience among the young through building their capacities in the areas of self-esteem and stress management. Similar capacity building programmes have also been organised for parents and teachers to equip them with the knowledge and skills to nurture the mental well-being of the children.

Table 24: Adolescent Suicide Rates (per 100,000)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
10 - 14 years	1.5	1.9	1.1	0.7	0.0
15 - 19 years	7.3	2.7	3.7	2.8	4.6

Source: Ministry of Health

2.5 The National Mental Health Workgroup for Children and Adolescents was set up in 2006 to develop a national framework to improve on the mental wellbeing of children and adolescents. Relevant agencies such as HPB, MOH, MOE, MCYS, NCSS, and the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) discuss strategies and programmes to cover three aspects – education and prevention, early detection and intervention, evaluation and monitoring. The various programmes and initiatives are targeted at improving three

domains, namely the coping capacity of children and adolescents, increasing caregivers' awareness and capacity to provide necessary support and assistance, and to improve the accessibility and quality of mental health services.

#### **(D) Promotion of Breastfeeding**

2.6 In 2007, HPB launched a new set of dietary guidelines for children and adolescents which recommends breastfeeding for healthy full-term infants for the first 6 months of life, and its continuation after the introduction of complementary feeds, till the child is 12 months old. These guidelines provide practical and evidence-based information on how to promote and maintain health and well-being through healthy eating, and will be incorporated in existing and new nutrition education programmes that target members of the public. HPB works with the Association of Breastfeeding Advocacy in Singapore to raise awareness on the benefits of breastfeeding among health professionals.

2.7 HPB supports the aims of the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes. There is strong evidence that breastfeeding provides more benefits to both mother and baby compared to feeding with breast milk substitutes. The Sale of Infant Foods Ethics Committee Singapore (SIF ECS) was formed in 1979 under the MOH and is now under HPB. SIF ECS oversees the implementation of its Code of Ethics on the Sale of Infant Foods in Singapore, most recently revised in 2007. The code governs the sale and advertisement of breast milk substitutes and is subscribed to by all major companies selling infant formula in Singapore.

### **3 ARTICLE 18 PARA 3 – CHILDCARE SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

*State parties shall take all appropriate measure to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities of which they are eligible.*

3.1 As at April 2008, there were 746 childcare centres providing 63,303 places. These places cater to 30% of the cohort aged 18 months to less than 7 years. Children less than age 18 months can be placed under infant care programmes, provided by child care centres.

3.2 The Pre-School Education (PSE) Framework for Teacher Training and Accreditation, as indicated in paragraph 400 of the Initial Report, continues to ensure the quality of pre-school education.

3.3 The Pre-School Qualifications Accreditation Committee (PQAC), jointly steered by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), assesses and accredits pre-school teacher training courses in Singapore up to Diploma level. As at September 2007, 21 training agencies are conducting PQAC-accredited teacher-training courses.

3.4 To better support parents in their childcare arrangements, and to maximise every child's potential through early exposure to developmental programmes, MCYS, in August 2008, announced the following initiatives to enhance the quality, affordability and accessibility of centre-based child care:

- (i) **Quality:** Higher educational and qualification requirements for pre-school teachers including providing scholarships and bursaries for the professional upgrading of deserving teachers in childcare centres. Childcare centres will also adopt an integrated curriculum framework and introduce a teacher-child ratio to ensure that there are adequate trained teachers in childcare centres. MCYS will provide recurrent grants for eligible non-profit childcare centre operators to set the benchmark for quality and affordability. The total recurrent grant to be provided is expected to reach up to S\$21 million (US\$15 million) per year in five years' time.
- (ii) **Affordability:** From 17 August 2008, the subsidy for working mothers sending their Singaporean children to centre-based childcare will increase from S\$150 (US\$107) to a maximum of S\$300 (US\$214) per month per child and the subsidy for centre-based infant care will increase from S\$400 (US\$285) to a maximum of S\$600 (US\$428) per month per child.
- (iii) **Accessibility:** MCYS will also facilitate the development of 200 new childcare centres over the next five years to increase the number of childcare places.

#### **4 ARTICLE 23 – DISABLED CHILDREN**

*A disabled child has the right to special care, education and training to help him or her enjoy a full and decent life in dignity and achieve the greatest degree of self-reliance and social reintegration possible.*

4.1 In September 2006, MCYS and NCSS appointed an Enabling Masterplan Steering Committee to review and chart services and programmes in the disability sector for the next 5 years, from 2007 to 2011. This Committee comprised members from the people, private and public sector. The Committee's report was released in February 2007.

4.2 The Enabling Masterplan envisions that the potential of persons with disabilities will be maximised so that more can be self reliant and employable. Families will be the first line of care and support and institutionalisation will remain as the last resort, together with the support of the disability sector.

4.3 To achieve this vision, the Enabling Masterplan adopted a life stage approach (from birth to adulthood) when reviewing services and programmes in the disability sector. The report encompassed 31 concrete and comprehensive recommendations aimed



at improving the lives of persons with disabilities in Singapore in the following areas, by life stage:

- (i) Early Intervention and Education for Children with Disabilities;
- (ii) Employment;
- (iii) Community, Residential and Caregiving Support; and
- (iv) Barrier Free Access.

These initiatives are detailed in the subsequent paragraphs.

4.4 The Enabling Masterplan's recommendations and implementation of the recommendations are presently underway and the Singapore Government is expected to spend up to S\$900 million (US\$643 million) to implement the Masterplan, which is more than double the expenditure of S\$400 million (US\$286 million) in the previous 5 years.

#### **(A) Programmes and Services for Disabled Children**

4.5 The Singapore Government continues to work closely with NCSS and other relevant bodies in the delivery of services and programmes for people with disabilities. As indicated in Section I. Developments Under General Measures of Implementation of this Report, the Singapore Government has also progressively increased its funding for children's disability programmes over the years.

4.6 At an early age, children suspected to have developmental problems can be referred for assessment at Child Development Clinics located in the KK Women's and Children's Hospital and the National University Hospital. Upon diagnosis, the children would be referred to early intervention services, through the Disability Information and Referral Centre (DIRC).

4.7 Some of the key elements of enhanced social service delivery to children with disabilities include:

- (i) Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) - (11 centres)

EIPIC is a centre-based programme that provides social, educational and rehabilitative services for children aged up to 6 years who are diagnosed to be at risk of having a handicapping condition or special need that will affect his or her development. The objective is to increase the developmental growth potential of the child and minimise the development of secondary disabilities.

The programme covers the following areas:

- fine and gross motor skills;
- cognition;
- communication;
- social adaptation;

- self-help skills; and
- adaptation to and use of assistive equipment.

The child's progress will be monitored through an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that is developed jointly by the EPIC centre and parents. A joint disciplinary team of therapists, psychologists and social workers is involved in the assessment and treatment of the child.

In 2008, MCYS and NCSS set up the Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) Support Grant to help families access early intervention service.

(ii) Integrated Child Care Programme (ICCP) (18 centres)

The ICCP aims to maximise the potential of children aged 2 to 6 years old with special needs who can benefit from a mainstream education. It provides an inclusion programme for children with special needs in a mainstream childcare centre environment. This will ease their adaptation in a mainstream school setting eventually. Through ICCP, selected childcare centres will set aside 10 places to take in children with special needs. The children engage in the same group activities as typically developing children in the centre.

(iii) Special Student Care Centre (SSCC) (10 centres)

SSCCs provide before and after school care services for such children who are attending either mainstream or special education schools. This enables their parents and caregivers to continue to work, knowing their children are under proper supervision.

**(B) Education**

4.8 The Singapore Government continues to invest in education for children with disabilities, guided by its strong commitment to ability-driven education. To that end, MOE continues to pursue a continuum of support to pupils with disabilities. The level of support is determined by finding a goodness-of-fit between the child's special educational needs and the environment that provides the optimal level of support.

4.9 Children with mild to moderate disabilities are admitted to mainstream schools if they are able to cope with the pace and learning environment. Facilities and resources are incorporated in mainstream schools to meet their learning needs. These include dedicated personnel such as special needs officers, teachers trained in special needs, additional support from resource teachers, assistive devices and accessibility features. These provisions are provided for in mainstream schools that are geographically spread out to facilitate access. There are about 4,000 children with mild to moderate special learning needs in mainstream schools. Special needs officers are deployed to assist teachers and to help the children learn in these schools. These schools are staffed by specially trained

teachers who are assisted by medically trained personnel and support staff, with a curriculum and environment specially tailored to their needs.

4.10 For children with more severe needs and who require intensive individualised support, provisions are provided in alternative support settings such as special education schools, where they can learn at their own pace and be developed to their full potential. There are approximately 4,800 children with more severe special needs receiving education in 21 special education (SPED) schools. Of these children, about 500 of them currently take the mainstream curriculum in SPED schools. The 21 SPED schools receive funding up to four times the cost of primary education. In addition, schools with secondary aged students doing mainstream secondary or prevocational curriculum receive funding up to four times the cost of secondary education.

4.11 To meet the specific needs of children in special education schools, purpose-built schools with facilities and resources such as hydrotherapy pool, sensory-integration rooms, information & technology room and special rooms for therapy, independent skills training and pre-vocational training will be built. In April 2008, Singapore announced the development of a S\$33 million (US\$24 million) centre for autism, to house Pathlight School for children with autism, and the Autism Resource Centre. The centre would house an information and technology school and expects to benefit 600 children from early intervention to secondary school levels. The centre is funded by MOE, MCYS and Ngee Ann Kongsi, a foundation involved in welfare activities, and other donors and will be completed by 2009.

4.12 Much effort has been devoted to facilitate the integration of pupils in mainstream and special education schools. For example, there are students from mainstream schools who plan and conduct their Community Involvement Programmes (CIP) with special education schools. CIP activities typically involve joint fundraising or community service activities that enable students from the two settings to interact and learn from working with each other. Where possible, SPED schools are located close to mainstream schools, so that students from both schools can interact outside of the classroom. For example, Chaoyang School, which is a school for children with mild intellectual disabilities, is located adjacent to Presbyterian High School & diagonally opposite Anderson Primary School. The school collaborates with its neighbouring schools on activities like buddy reading and leadership programmes.

4.13 In some SPED schools, such as Pathlight School and Canossian Special School, some students from the SPED schools join in satellite classes located within mainstream schools. These satellite classes enable students with special needs to gain the benefits of being in special education school, with access to specialised teachers and resources; while enjoying daily interactions with their mainstream peers. MOE is working closely with these special education schools to further expand such satellite classes.

4.14 There are very few children with special needs every year who do not attend national schools or SPED schools. These are children with severe disabilities or medical conditions, which prevent them from attending school. For such children, community

based intervention programmes may be extended to them, where appropriate. Out of the 21 SPED schools, four are able to take in children with multiple disabilities with high level of needs, namely AWWA School, Rainbow Centre Margaret Drive School, Rainbow Centre Yishun Park School and Spastic Children's Association School. In addition, there are VWOs providing home management programmes for these children while they are not attending school.

4.15 Singapore's approach is to allow children with disabilities a more customised education system to cater to their special needs. Their needs require this flexibility to enable them to obtain the best educational support possible. This flexibility requires them to be exempted from the Compulsory Education system which imposes a standard education curriculum for children.

### **(C) Transportation**

4.16 As part of the Land Transport Masterplan, Singapore is improving accessibility in and around public transport facilities, so that the less mobile segments of the population will be able to gain access to them more easily. By 2010, the Land Transport Authority (LTA) would have completed a S\$60 million (US\$43 million) island-wide programme to make pedestrian walkways, access to Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) train stations, taxi and bus shelters, and public roads barrier-free.

4.17 The entire MRT network is now fully accessible to less mobile commuters, including the disabled. All existing stations have at least one entrance fitted with a lift, a barrier-free route, including tactile guidance systems, and wheelchair accessible toilets. By end 2011, more than 70% of MRT stations will have at least two barrier-free access routes. Additional lifts and ramps will be provided at MRT stations where station entrances are far apart or separated by major roads. This is so that wheelchair users can avoid making long detours to reach the entrance with a lift.

4.18 Wheelchair accessible buses (WAB) have been introduced progressively since June 2006. As of April 2008, SBS Transit has deployed a total of 194 WAB buses plying 15 routes that were identified in consultation with VWOs. More WAB services will be rolled out progressively in 2008. By 2010, 40% of buses will also be low-floor and wheelchair accessible. The target date for the entire fleet to be equipped as such is 2020.

### **(D) Efforts in Integrating the Disabled in Public Housing**

4.19 The Building and Construction Authority's Code on Barrier-Free Accessibility in Buildings (BFA Code) was first introduced in 1990 to promote the development of barrier-free buildings to help integrate the disabled into community life. Each review and enhancement of the Code was made in consultation with people with disabilities as well as other stakeholders. In the latest review, a 15-member Code Review Committee comprising representatives from relevant government agencies, VWOs and industry players, worked together to revise the Code with the objective of expanding the scope to create a more accessible and seamlessly connected environment. The new Code on

Accessibility in the Built Environment was launched in October 2007 and came into force on 1 April 2008.

4.20 Since the BFA Code was implemented in 1990, accessibility features have been incorporated in all new public housing projects, including ramps are built within the housing precinct to seamlessly link housing blocks to major activity nodes within the precinct, such as multi-storey car park, playgrounds, fitness corners and drop-off porches. Designated parking lots are provided for the persons with disabilities in multi-storey car parks and open space parking lots in public housing estates.

4.21 Lifts with landings are built on every floor, with wide entrances for the passage of a wheelchair, and infra-red sensing devices for re-opening of doors, lowered lift button panels, braille plates, colour contrasting lift buttons and voice synthesisers to help those who are visually handicapped. Grab bars are also provided on all three panels of the lift to provide support for the aged and persons with disabilities.

4.22 Universal design features have been included for housing projects tendered since July 2006. Features include ramps at main entrances, bathrooms and service yard for easy access, wider internal corridor, bedrooms and bathrooms doors for wheelchair access, wheelchair-accessible common bathrooms, windows which are of a lower height to enable all residents to enjoy the view, large eye-viewers at the main entrance doors, and easily accessible switch sockets, TV outlets and telephone outlets. The design also allows residents to carry out simple adaptations to meet their specific needs when required, for example, the provision of space for future installation of grab bars in the bathrooms.

4.23 For older estates built before the BFA Code, upgrading is carried out to make these estates barrier-free where technically possible. Under the Main Upgrading Programme, steps have been replaced by barrier-free ramps in some precincts. New lift landings have been created wherever feasible and lift cars with handicap-friendly features have been provided. Within housing units, pedestal pans replaced the squat pans and grab bars were added to toilets.

4.24 The Lift Upgrading Programme was launched in 2001 to facilitate the adding of new lift shafts and landings to apartment blocks where there was previously no direct lift access. This enables persons with disabilities to move around within their estates with greater ease and independence. The programme is targeted for completion by 2014. Barrier-free access improvement works are carried out by the various Town Council within the housing estates and provides connectivity to its immediate surroundings. The improvement works are targeted to be completed by 2011.

#### **(E) Communications**

4.25 Real-time subtitles have been introduced on key TV news bulletins in English, Mandarin and Malay. The Tamil language service is currently being developed. This service ensures that news programmes can be accessed and enjoyed by a wider audience,

including those who are deaf. The service benefits viewers, including children, in their learning of languages.

## **5 ARTICLE 24 – HEALTH AND HEALTH SERVICES**

*The child has a right to the highest standard of health and medical care attainable. States shall place special emphasis on the provision of primary and preventive health care, public health education and the reduction of infant mortality. They shall encourage international co-operation in this regard and strive to see that no child is deprived of access to effective health services.*

5.1 As indicated in paragraph 4.5 in Section III. Developments Under General Principles of this Report, the Youth Health Division (YHD) of the Health Promotion Board is the key agency in the provision of programmes and activities for children and youth. The key strategies adopted by YHD include:

- (i) Promoting positive health in the school going age group through immunisation and health screening for priority medical conditions;
- (ii) Promoting the concept of health promoting schools and encouraging schools to establish comprehensive school health promotion programmes;
- (iii) Organising school-based and community-based activities to increase awareness of key health messages and skills among school students and youth at community settings;
- (iv) Engaging and supporting peer-led youth health initiatives;
- (v) Collaborating with organisations to promote health to young people;
- (vi) Building capacity of schools and community through training programmes for educators, youth facilitators and parent education programmes; and
- (vii) Developing and providing educational resources to support health promotion programmes run in schools and community settings for children and youth.

5.2 As indicated in Section III. Developments Under General Principles, preventive health care through immunisation and health screening for children are provided by the polyclinics and the School Health Service.

5.3 Health promotion programmes by YHD cover a range of health issues such as physical activity, healthy nutrition, mental wellness, smoking control, sexually transmitted infections and AIDS prevention, myopia prevention, oral health and childhood injury prevention. In recent years, youth health promotion efforts have also extended to the community through partnerships with other Ministries, Self-Help groups,

youth and community organisations. A comprehensive range of health education resources has also been developed to equip the young with knowledge and skills to lead a healthy lifestyle.

5.4 More effort is being made to establish links with the secondary target audience, which includes parents, school authorities, teachers and other youth-related stakeholders to equip them with knowledge and skills to champion health among the young.

#### (A) Access to Health Care

5.5 The healthcare infrastructure of Singapore continues to be framed by Singapore's commitment to ensuring quality supply of healthcare personnel and health facilities.

Table 25: National Health Manpower Ratio

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Doctors	1:670	1:650	1:640	1:650	1:620
Dentists	1:3540	1:3450	1:3400	1:3390	1:3390
Pharmacists	1:3390	1:3290	1:3260	1:3160	1:3090
Nurses	1:220	1:220	1:220	1:210	1:210
Doctors per 1000 population	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.6
Dentist per 1000 population	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3

Source: Ministry of Health

Table 26: No. of Doctors Practising Paediatrics

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Paediatric medicine	184	193	207	212	224
Paediatric surgery	13	13	13	12	13

Source: Ministry of Health

Table 27: Health Manpower

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Total No. of doctors</b>	<b>6292</b>	<b>6492</b>	<b>6748</b>	<b>6931</b>	<b>7384</b>
Public	3044	3142	3265	3505	3911
Private	2863	2845	2961	2966	3004
Not in Active Practice	385	505	522	460	469
<b>Total No. of Dentists</b>	<b>1183</b>	<b>1227</b>	<b>1277</b>	<b>1323</b>	<b>1354</b>
Public	263	282	278	293	287
Private	798	802	846	833	881
Not in Active Practice	122	143	153	197	186
<b>Total No. of Pharmacists</b>	<b>1236</b>	<b>1288</b>	<b>1330</b>	<b>1421</b>	<b>1483</b>
Public	377	376	400	449	484
Private	659	719	754	832	865
Not in Active Practice	200	193	176	140	134
<b>Total No. of Nurses and Midwives</b>	<b>18763</b>	<b>19329</b>	<b>20167</b>	<b>20927</b>	<b>22332</b>
Public	10314	10585	11124	11574	12294
Private	4480	4749	5159	6109	6112
Not in Active Practice	3969	3995	3884	3244	3926

Source: Ministry of Health

Table 28: Health Facilities

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
No of Hospitals/Speciality Centres	29	29	29	29	29
- Public Sector	13	13	13	13	13
- Private Sector	16	16	16	16	16
Total no. of Hospital Beds	11855	11840	11848	11527	11547
- Acute	8291	8279	8177	8187	8235
- Extended	3564	3561	3671	3340	3312
No. of Polyclinics	17	17	18	18	18
No. of Public Sector Dental Clinics	230	232	239	240	242

Source: Ministry of Health



## **(B) Adolescent Health**

5.6 In 2006, the Health Promotion Board carried out a health behaviour survey among secondary school students. The survey will be repeated every three years to monitor youth health behaviour and target programmes more effectively.

5.7 In July 2006, MOH appointed an advisory committee comprising healthcare experts to identify key health issues facing adolescents, gaps in the current provision of preventive and curative services for adolescents and to devise a national plan for improving adolescent health in Singapore.

5.8 In October 2006, HPB commissioned a workgroup to formulate a blueprint on adolescent health promotion for 2008 to 2012. The development of this blueprint is currently in progress and will focus on five main areas of adolescent health promotion, i.e. obesity, smoking, alcohol consumption, mental health and sexual health. The blueprint will outline the strategic directions and broad programmes and communications plans as well as research and evaluation plans for the next five years.

5.9 In 2007, MOH provided funding to pilot adolescent medicine services in public sector tertiary hospitals. The Department of Adolescent Medicine has been set up in KK Women and Children's Hospital. Dedicated medical services that cater to the needs of adolescents are also being developed at the National University Hospital's Department of Paediatrics.

5.10 In 2008 the focus of the annual National Healthy Lifestyle Campaign will be on encouraging a healthy lifestyle among youth and to empower youth to choose positive health behaviours.

### Mental Health

5.11 A school-based mentalhealth education programme Mind Your Mind, was developed by the HPB with inputs from the MOE and IMH. It is targeted at primary and secondary school students to equip them with the knowledge and skills for stress and anger management, building positive self-esteem, communication, dealing with peer pressure and depression. Mental health and well-being programmes for youth emphasise encourage help-seeking behaviour. Avenues for professional help are made known in these programmes and materials. Through school counselors and outreach programmes, youth at-risk are identified and attention given to their needs.

### Smoking

5.12 Singapore has a comprehensive National Smoking Control Programme and measures to discourage youth from taking up smoking and to assist young smokers to give up smoking. Education in schools, through the media and in the community with the participation of non-government organizations is complemented by smoking cessation programmes and services in the schools, polyclinics, the internet and Quitline, a

telephone information and smoking cessation service. Legislative measures, including the prohibition of smoking in places frequented by youth and the sale of cigarettes to those under 18 years and increasing taxation aimed at raising the price of cigarettes are undertaken to discourage youth from taking up smoking.

#### Peer-led health promotion

5.13 Health Promotion Board supports and encourages peer-led health promotion where youth themselves plan and carry out programmes to spread the message of healthy living to other youth. Two such peer-led groups are Youth Advolution for Health (YAH), led by a committee of youth that organise a variety of health awareness programmes throughout the year and Audible Hearts, an internet-based counseling platform for youth by youth. HPB provides training for the youth counselors on issues such as peer and parental relationships, studies and self-esteem.

#### **(C) Sexually Transmitted Diseases**

5.14 The number of young people with Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) has risen over the years. In 2007, 820 young people aged 10 to 19 years of age contracted an STI.

Table 29: Persons ages 10 – 19 years with Sexually Transmitted Infections

2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
368	653	678	775	820

Source: Ministry of Health

#### **(D) HIV/AIDS**

##### Statistics

5.15 The notification rate of HIV/AIDS infections has been increasing in Singapore. In 2007, 422 HIV/AIDS cases were reported, constituting a rate of 117.8 per million population.

Table 30: No. of Singaporeans Reported with HIV/AIDS

		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>HIV</b>	Male	212	290	287	325	392
	Female	30	21	30	32	30
	<b>Total</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>422</b>
	Rate*	71.9	91.1	91.4	101.3	117.8
<b>AIDS</b>	Male	130	162	91	117	152
	Female	13	11	9	9	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>158</b>
	Rate*	42.5	50.7	28.8	35.7	44.1

\*per million population

Source: Ministry of Health

Table 31: Distribution of HIV Infected Singaporeans By Mode of Transmission

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Heterosexual	177	188	185	222	255
Homosexual	40	72	87	94	130
Bisexual	14	22	14	14	15
Intravenous drug use	4	7	4	14	7
Blood Transfusion	0	0	0	0	1
Renal Transplant Overseas	0	0	0	0	0
Perinatal (mother to child)	1	4	3	2	1
Uncertain	6	18	24	11	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>422</b>

Source: Ministry of Health

### HIV-related Legislation

5.16 HIV/AIDS is a legally notifiable disease under the Infectious Diseases Act (Cap. 137). Under the Act, the identity of HIV-infected persons is protected, and can only be disclosed under specific situations (e.g. with the patient's consent, or when ordered by the court).

5.17 It is an offence under the Act to make a false material declaration during blood donation. It is also an offence for a HIV-infected person to knowingly donate blood or commit any act that is likely to spread the disease or to have sex with another person unless the partner has been informed prior to intercourse of the risk of infection and voluntarily accepts the risk.

### Public Education

5.18 HPB works closely with MOE to develop age-appropriate information on STIs and HIV/AIDS. STIs and HIV/AIDS are included in the science curriculum for all students at secondary two level and in the biology syllabus for students at the upper secondary levels. The upper primary school health education syllabus also mentions HIV/AIDS as transmissible diseases. In addition, MOE has made it mandatory for schools to implement sexuality education that includes consequences of sex as well as acquiring life-skills, such as communication, negotiation, decision making, problem solving and assertiveness, which form an essential part of the sexual education curriculum. Sexuality education provides a platform for students to think about their values and attitudes towards sexuality issues, raise awareness of the options available and their consequences. MOE collaborates with relevant organisations such as HPB for curriculum and resource development and teacher training.

5.19 "Love Them. Talk about Sex" was launched in 2007 and targets parents with children aged 10-17 years old and teaches them how to talk to their children about sexuality issues. Face-to-face workshops are conducted for parents at workplaces and schools. Parents are also supported by a resource booklet, a website and a helpline. Information and practical tips on talking to children about sexuality issues are also disseminated via media channels, such as radio programmes and magazine advertorials.

5.20 The school curriculum is complemented by additional programmes conducted by HPB, youth organisations and other non-government organisations. These include programmes that seek to delay sexual debut and others such as the ABCs (Abstinence, Being faithful to one partner, Condom use) of effective STI/AIDS prevention. MOE also collaborated with HPB to develop the Breaking Down Barriers (BDB) programme for all secondary three students, to address the rising trend of STI/HIV among adolescents. The BDB programme has helped raise greater awareness among youth about the high risk of contracting STI/HIV through casual and unprotected sex. Testimonials from persons living with HIV/AIDS are also included to destigmatise the disease.

5.21 Programmes comprising interactive theatre performances, video screenings, exhibitions and distribution of print materials are also conducted for students from pre-university and tertiary institutions. These programmes focus on dispelling myths and misconceptions, raising awareness on protection modes as well as destigmatisation.

5.22 HPB has stepped up its efforts in using youth peers in HIV/AIDS programmes. These have included initiatives such as "StompAIDS Challenge", initiated in 2006, a marketing strategy competition that taps on youth' creative strategies to reach out to their peers as well as providing funding for suitable HIV/AIDS programmes developed by tertiary students.

5.23 HPB also works through commercial and non-governmental partners to reach out to school-going youth. One such partnership was the organisation of World Vision

Singapore's annual 30-hour Famine Camp that highlighted the crippling effects of AIDS on a nation.

#### Screening and Early Detection

5.24 More than half of newly diagnosed HIV/AIDS patients (53% of newly diagnosed HIV patients in 2007) already had late stage HIV infection when they were diagnosed. MOH and HPB's public education messaging emphasises the need for persons who engage in high-risk behaviours, such as having multiple sexual partners, engaging in casual sex or sex with commercial sex workers, to go for regular HIV testing so that the disease can be detected and treated as early as possible.

5.25 HIV testing is widely available in public and private sector clinics and healthcare institutions. HIV testing has been made a standard of care in healthcare settings, and is to be done whenever there is a medical indication, with the same preliminaries to obtain informed consent as for any other test that is carried out on a patient. Several public sector hospitals have also implemented a voluntary opt-out HIV testing programme for patients admitted to their hospitals, to further facilitate the early detection of HIV.

5.26 To reduce mother-to-child HIV transmission, antenatal HIV screening has been made a standard of care since December 2004, and HIV testing is now included as part of the antenatal screening package. Today, more than 99% of expectant mothers are screened for HIV.

5.27 To further increase the accessibility of HIV testing, MOH has introduced rapid HIV testing in medical clinics, using oral fluid or blood-based rapid HIV test kits. For individuals who prefer not to be identified to healthcare personnel, anonymous HIV testing is also available at three sites in Singapore.

#### Management of HIV-infections

5.28 The majority of cases are managed at the Communicable Disease Centre (CDC), where specialised medical, nursing, counselling and allied healthcare services are available. A HIV Prevention and Treatment Programme has also been established at the Kandang Kerbau Women and Children's Hospital. The main objectives of this programme are to provide subsidised treatment for HIV positive children, and to fund anti-retroviral therapy for pregnant women and newborns who require treatment in the first six weeks of life.

5.29 Patients with HIV infection are counselled on the need to inform their partners of their HIV infection so that their partners can also be tested, and to take the necessary precautions so as to prevent further transmission.

## 6 ARTICLE 26 – SOCIAL SECURITY

*The child has the right to benefit from social security including social insurance*

6.1 The Central Provident Fund scheme, established in 1955, continues to provide financial protection and security to working Singaporeans, Permanent Residents and their families. Members continue to be eligible for various schemes which provide financial protection benefits for members and their dependents, including children. These are :

- (i) Medishield Scheme – low-cost insurance scheme to meet the treatment cost of serious and prolonged illness.
- (ii) Dependents Protection Scheme – provision of financial assistance in the event that members become permanently incapacitated or die prematurely.
- (iii) Medifund Scheme - endowment fund set up by the Government to help needy Singaporeans who are unable to pay for their medical expenses. Medifund acts as a safety net for those who cannot afford the subsidised bill charges, despite Medisave and MediShield coverage.

Table 32: Applications to Medifund

	2003	2004	2005	2006
No. of applications approved	216,214	284,987	288,099	301,126
% approved	99.9	99.9	99.9	97.9
Amount disbursed (million)	S\$33.9 (US\$24.2)	S\$32.5 (US\$23.2)	S\$39.1 (US\$27.9)	S\$39.6 (US\$28.3)

\*2007 statistics not available at time of reporting.

Source: Ministry of Health

6.2 In 2005, ComCare, an endowment fund, was launched to provide sustainable funding for programmes to help the needy. The fund has a capital sum of S\$800 million (US\$571 million) which the Government intends to build up to S\$1 billion (US\$0.7 billion). ComCare comprises three key programme pillars, each covering a specific client group. These programme pillars are:

- (i) ComCare Self Reliance, which focuses on helping the needy to achieve self-reliance.
- (ii) ComCare Grow, which focuses on the developmental needs of children from needy families, to help them break out of the poverty cycle. Schemes such as the KiFAS and CFAC come under this pillar.
- (iii) ComCare EnAble, which focuses on helping the needy who require long-term assistance (such as the needy elderly and people with disabilities), to integrate them, into the community.

6.3 The Public Assistance (PA) Scheme, under the ComCare EnAble pillar continues to be available to those who are unable to work due to old age, illness or disability and have no means of subsistence and no one to depend on. PA beneficiaries may get monthly cash grants to help with their basic living expenses, medical assistance in the form of free treatment at polyclinics and government/restructured hospitals, and education assistance for their children to help with schooling expenses. The amount of subsidies given will depend on the number of children in the family. From 5 May 2008, PA recipients received a rate increase of between S\$40 (US\$29) and S\$165 (US\$118) a month, depending on their household type. A family with two adults and two children saw their assistance increase from S\$940 (US\$671) to S\$1,100 (US\$786) a month.

6.4 The Work Support Programme helps families who need assistance, and whose household members are prepared to do their best to help themselves, to tide over a difficult period. Depending on their household situation, families may get vouchers for rental, utilities and/or service and conservancy charges, a monthly cash grant to meet their basic needs, childcare and student care subsidies, a training grant, and educational and medical assistance. Community Development Councils continue to be key access points for community help and financial assistance.

6.5 Free basic legal advice and information is also available to needy Singaporeans and Permanent Residents, at the Community Legal Clinic. The needy will be able to consult a qualified lawyer for legal advice on personal matters.

6.6 To enhance accessibility to help services across schemes and programmes for the needy, the ComCare Call service was introduced in 2007 to cater to people in need of social assistance and/or are uncertain of how they can get help. The 24-hour hotline has an easy to recall number, and operators at ComCare Call will quickly guide callers to the appropriate agency for assistance.

## **7 ARTICLE 27 PARAS 1-3 – STANDARD OF LIVING**

*Every child has the right to a standard of living adequate for his or her physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that the child has an adequate standard of living. The State's duty is to ensure that this responsibility can be fulfilled, and is. State responsibility can include material assistance to parents and their children.*

7.1 Children in Singapore continue to enjoy a high standard of living and access to quality education, housing and information technology. In 2006, 78% of households in Singapore had access to one or more computers at home. As at March 2008, the broadband household penetration rate was 81.8%.

7.2 The Singapore Government is committed to ensure that 90% of the population can afford to own a basic flat through its various government housing subsidy schemes. For those who are unable to own a flat despite these generous subsidy schemes, the Singapore

Government also provides heavily subsidised rental housing. Today, 82% of the population lives in public housing and over 90% own their flats.

7.3 Notwithstanding the high standards of living, the Singapore Government is acutely aware of prevailing issues of increasing costs of living and growing income disparity. In the context of children, government policies and programmes are geared towards ensuring that children, no matter their family situation, have access to adequate services and care to meet their needs.

7.4 In Singapore, Workfare has become the fourth pillar of the social security system, after retirement, housing and healthcare policies. The Workfare programme helps low-income workers and their families, so that all those who can work will find meaningful jobs and earn adequate wages to support themselves and their families.

7.5 The Workfare programme consists of:

- (i) Workfare Income Supplement scheme, a long term wage supplementation scheme tied to the CPF system. It encourages workers to find work and stay in work, by improving their cost competitiveness while at the same time raising their take home income and building up their retirement savings;
- (ii) Housing grants for low-income families purchasing their first home;
- (iii) Social support to enable parents to work such as childcare subsidies, case management and the Work Support programme;
- (iv) Skills upgrading for low-wage workers to find higher value-added and better paying jobs;
- (v) Expanding job opportunities for low-wage workers through job recreation and developing supplementary employment options through social enterprises; and
- (vi) Providing children from lower income households with adequate support to complete their education and learn employable skills through financial assistance schemes for education and preschool, engaging and supporting at-risk students and out-of-school youth, expanding vocational training opportunities for youth and encouraging low-income families to optimise resources for their children through the HOPE (Home Ownership Plus Education) Scheme.



## VII. DEVELOPMENTS UNDER EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

### 1 Preamble

1.1 The following section covers Singapore's progress in providing access to quality and diverse types of education to children, and to ensure the participation of children in cultural and artistic activities, as covered by Articles 28, 29, and 31.

### 2 ARTICLE 28 – EDUCATION INCLUDING VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND GUIDANCE

*The child has a right to education and the State's duty is to ensure that primary education is free and compulsory, to encourage different forms of secondary education accessible to every child and to make higher education available to all on the basis of capacity. School discipline should be consistent with the child's rights and dignity. The State shall engage in international co-operation to implement this right.*

### ARTICLE 29 – AIMS OF EDUCATION

*Education shall aim at developing the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent. Education shall prepare the child for an active adult life in a free society and foster respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, and for the cultural background and values of others*

#### (A) Enrolment in Schools

2.1 The Singapore Government continues to believe in, and invest heavily in, education for the whole person development of our children. The introduction of the Compulsory Education Act in 2003 seeks to ensure that all Singapore citizens are enrolled in National Schools up to Primary 6. The six-year education aims to give all our children a common core of knowledge that will provide a strong foundation for further education, and a common educational experience which will help to build national identity and cohesion.

2.2 Singapore's Desired Outcomes of Education continue to articulate our hope for Singapore's children to acquire not just academic knowledge and thinking skills, but also cultural values, social responsibility and lifeskills. Singapore's net enrolment and completion rates continue to be high.

Table 33: Enrolment Ratios of Students by Level of Study

	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
Primary	94.9	94.9	97.3	96.6	97.1
Secondary	93.8	93.4	94.3	94.5	95.1
Post Secondary	50.6	49.5	63.9	68.7	71.8
Tertiary	46.8	47.5	51.9	55.9	58.6

\*Enrolment ratios are expressed as percentage of population in that particular age group that are enrolled in schools.

Source: Ministry of Education

2.3 A small number of parents opt to enroll their children in Madrasahs (Islamic religious schools), or to home-school their children. The Singapore Government respects the right of parents to decide the best form of education for their children.

Table 34: Number of Children Studying in Full-Time Madrasahs (2008)

<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Pre-University</b>	<b>Total</b>
2278	1676	211	<b>4165</b>

Source: Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports

Table 35: Number of Primary School Cohort on Home Schooling

<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
30	50	41	49	57

Source: Ministry of Education

2.4 Primary level students in full-time madrasahs are required, under the Compulsory Education Act, to sit for the national Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) at Primary 6 with effect from 2008. Thereafter they could proceed to secondary education, either in the madrasahs or in national schools.

2.5 Three full-time madrasahs are collaborating within the framework of a Joint-Madrasah System (JMS). This is an initiative to achieve better educational outcome and cost-effectiveness. Students in the JMS madrasahs will enjoy an education system that is flexible enough to cater to their different aptitudes and abilities. They will also have more options in terms of the educational pathways that they can pursue, to enable them to enter a post-secondary institution of their choice with ease.

2.6 A parent who wants to home-school his or her child has to have the requisite educational qualification and work experience; and have the time and resources to home-school the child. To ensure the quality of home-schooling, MOE may also require children who are home-schooled to sit for tests at certain points of their primary education. This is for the purpose of ascertaining the educational progress of the child.

## **(B) Ensuring Affordability**

2.7 MOE continues to provide affordable education and a place in our national system schools for every child of school-going age. The current monthly school and miscellaneous fee rate for a Singaporean student is about S\$11 (US\$8) at primary school level and S\$21 (US\$15) at secondary school level. The fees, while low, remain to reflect the shared ownership and responsibility between the government and its citizens in the provision and commitment to education. The Singapore Government and the community also continue to provide funding assistance for children who are unable to afford these fees. Singapore's efforts in ensuring that children from low-income families have access to pre-primary education have been included in the earlier segment of this Report, at Part (C) Support for Families, in Section V. Developments Under Family Environment and Alternative Care.

2.8 Additionally, Singaporean students at primary and secondary levels are provided with an Edusave account. Each Edusave account receives an annual contribution made by the Government until the student reaches 16 years old. A total of S\$84 million (US\$60 million) was paid into students' Edusave accounts in Financial Year 2007. A student can make use of the money in his Edusave account to pay for enrichment programmes and approved fees. From 2008, MOE will increase the contributions to Edusave Accounts for pupils from the current S\$180 (US\$129) to S\$200 (US\$143) per year for primary school students and from S\$220 (US\$157) to S\$240 (US\$171) a year for secondary students. The age cap of 16 years for secondary level students to be eligible for the contributions will be removed.

2.9 Non-citizens continue to be exempted from the Compulsory Education Act because of the heavy subsidies in education. The Singapore Government takes the view that such priority and advantage should be given to citizens. Furthermore, non-citizens are given greater flexibility in their choice of schools, including international schools. Singapore maintains its reservation against Article 28 in paragraph (6) of Singapore's Instrument of Accession, for these reasons.

## **(C) Improving the quality of pre-school education**

2.10 The Singapore Government believes strongly in the role of quality pre-school education in ensuring school readiness of our children. MOE together with MCYS is developing a voluntary quality assurance and accreditation framework and its implementation from 2011. Through this framework, pre-school providers will be able to benchmark their education outcomes through self-appraisal and external assessments. Pre-school providers that meet the specified standards may then apply to be accredited. Details are found in paragraph 3.3 to 3.4 in Section VI. Developments Under Health and Welfare of this Report.

#### **(D) Building choice and flexibility in education**

2.11 The Singapore education system continues to emphasise quality in the delivery of education to children. Our schools strive to provide students with a holistic education, focused on both academic and non-academic areas. The education system has seen an evolving shift towards encouraging our students to learn more actively and independently.

2.12 A key development in the education scene in recent years has been the introduction of greater choice and flexibility into education. New types of schools are being introduced to encourage those with special talents to realise their potential. Existing schools have been provided with further autonomy and resources to develop their own distinct strengths and specific areas or niches of excellence. These could be either in a particular area of study or in co-curricular activities and character development.

2.13 The different needs of students will thus be met through a wide range of school types and educational programmes. These include:

(i) Wider range of curricula and schools:

- Schools will be allowed to offer new 'O' Level subjects and elective modules. Some will also offer different curricula and examinations, e.g. the International Baccalaureate.
- New programmes in schools: e.g. the Programme for School-based Excellence in primary schools and the Integrated Programme (IP) and Bicultural Studies Programme (Chinese) in selected secondary schools and junior colleges.
- Specialised Independent Schools: Singapore Sports School, National University of Singapore High School for Maths and Science, and the School of the Arts. From 2010, a new School of Science and Technology will be set up, to provide students with a range of options in applied areas related to technology, media and design.
- Two privately-funded secondary schools.

(ii) Greater flexibility in streaming:

- In secondary schools, Normal (Academic) and Normal (Technical) students have more flexibility to take a few subjects at a higher level or faster pace.
- Schools also have greater flexibility to transfer these students to another course when they show that they have the ability to benefit from them. Schools may also allow their top Normal (Academic) students to progress to Secondary 5 without taking the 'N' Level examinations.
- In primary schools, the academic differentiation streams have been merged, and primary schools have the autonomy to decide on putting their weaker students with other classes for lessons in various subjects.

- (iii) Greater flexibility in teaching and learning of the Mother Tongue Languages (MTL) to help students with different abilities to go as far as they can. Students may choose to study a non-native MTL as a third language.

2.14 MOE is also committed to providing children who experience more difficulties in school with a range of educational options. In 2007, Northlight School was established to provide a holistic programme for students who are unable to progress through the mainstream academic school system and are at risk of prematurely leaving school. The curriculum at Northlight School is customised to the learning styles of such individuals and seeks to address their socio-emotional needs.

2.15 In March 2008, MOE announced the development of Assumption Pathway School, which will begin operation in 2009. The school will offer students who have failed the Primary School Leaving Examinations once or more, as well as students who leave secondary school prematurely, a more hands-on and practical learning environment. The key elements of the enhanced curriculum would include a stronger focus on character development, a greater emphasis on core competency skills and an improved vocational programme.

### **(E) Robust Pedagogy and Curriculum**

2.16 Singapore's education system is moving towards more quality in terms of classroom interaction, opportunities for expression, the learning of life-long skills and the building of character through innovative and effective teaching approaches, and away from 'quantity' in terms of rote-learning, repetitive tests, and following prescribed answers and set formulae. This greater engagement of our learners to improve the quality of interaction between teachers and learners is captured succinctly as 'Teach Less, Learn More' (TLLM). TLLM also reaffirms the learner and calls on teachers to better recognise and cater to their very different needs and interests.

2.17 Whilst the changes in delivery and structure indicate areas of development, the core tenets as articulated in the Desired Outcomes of Education remain constant. English, Mathematics and Science and Information Technology continue to be given emphasis to enable our students to keep in step with Singapore's modern economy and its needs. Mother Tongue is also given due emphasis in keeping with the goal of preserving our Asian heritage.

2.18 Civics and Moral Education, with the aim of nurturing a person of good character, who is caring and acts responsibly towards self, family, community, nation and the world, continues to be a key component of the curriculum. Students continue to learn about the fundamental values that are necessary to enable them to be responsible citizens and how the Singapore Constitution safeguards fundamental liberties such as the right to freedom of speech and expression, freedom of religion and right to education.

### **(F) Ensuring the Mental Well-Being of Students**

2.19 As of January 2008, every school has been assigned a Full-Time School Counsellor to provide the guidance and counseling needs of students. Schools are alerted to periods when students are likely to experience high stress, for e.g. national exam periods and the release of national exam results. Students who are identified as having difficulty managing stress will be referred for counselling and/or treatment by external professionals when necessary. Full-Time School Counsellors or external agencies are also engaged by schools to provide workshops and talks to students on stress and time management. Schools also provide stress management resources for teachers, parents and students where needed.

2.20 Singapore Children's Society has also been organising the Bully-Free programme since 2004, reaching out to children and youth to educate them on the issue of school bullying. In 2008, the Singapore Children's Society trained 184 students from 26 primary schools as Bully-Free Ambassadors at the Bully-Free Camp, where students learnt what bullying is, the effects of bullying and preparing materials and performance items for their schools. Their ideas were presented by three Bully-Free Ambassadors during the Bully-Free forum in July 2008. They also shared their experiences and ideas for curbing school bullying at the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (IPSCAN) in Hong Kong in September 2008 and received positive feedback from the international audience.

### **(G) Sustaining children in schools**

2.21 Singapore continues to have a low school drop-out rate. MOE has implemented several programmes to address the needs of students at-risk of dropping out. These are primarily in the areas of :

- (i) Strengthening student engagement through co-curricular activities and revised curriculums that adopt a more practical orientation;
- (ii) Enhancing guidance and support such as Learning Support Programme for English Language and Mathematics for Primary 1 and 2 students, for students showing early signs of high risk, disengagement and failure; and
- (iii) Intensive group remediation strategies.

Table 36: Percentage of Cohort who Dropped out of School

<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
3.2	2.6	2.3	1.9	1.6

Source: Ministry of Education

2.22 MCYS complements these measures by funding STEP-UP, a school-based social work programme delivered by community agencies to provide holistic support, beyond academic issues, to students at-risk.

2.23 A Committee on Reducing Attrition in Education was formed in 2006 to examine how best to reduce the school drop-out rate. Based on the recommendations of the committee, MOE announced, in March 2008, several measures to help students at risk of dropping out stay in school. These are :

- (i) Supporting schools with additional manpower resources: Over the next four years, 70 schools would be provided with more manpower in the form of a second Full Time School Counsellor and an additional Operations Manager, to provide greater outreach and co-ordination of support for at-risk students;
- (ii) Supporting earlier intervention through identifying and monitoring students at-risk: MOE is enhancing screening tools for students with behavioural and emotional difficulties and special needs, to provide timely support and intervention;
- (iii) Strengthening student engagement: MOE will provide for more opportunities for at-risk students to be engaged in co-curricular activities. Education and career Guidance would also be extended to these individuals; and
- (iv) Establishing closer partnership with community groups to provide comprehensive and holistic support for students: MOE will work closely with community groups in the areas of information sharing, referral and coordination to ensure a seamless and holistic support for at-risks students.

2.24 In addition, schools have initiated various programmes to provide enhanced guidance and support for students with disciplinary, behavioural and academic problems. An example is the Time-Out Programme, which provides students with time-out from their normal school environment with a separate programme and activities to enhance their social, emotional and affective skills, to help students overcome personal, family and social barriers and motivate their learning. After the programme, students will return to their normal school routine.

#### **(H) Support for Early School Leavers**

2.25 For those who have dropped out of school, Youth Link, a pilot project by the National Committee on Youth Guidance and Rehabilitation (NYGR) helps to develop the potential of out-of-school youth (OSYs) and reach out to truants. Besides re-admission to school, Youth Link will explore vocational training and employment as alternatives for OSYs or truants who are not ready to return to school.

#### **(I) Ensuring Quality Teachers**

2.26 About 75% of new teachers recruited in Singapore today are graduates and close to one in two of new graduate teachers has an Honours degree. Over half of teaching recruits for primary schools are graduates. MOE is moving towards recruiting graduate

teachers for all new teaching positions in primary schools by 2015. Teaching recruits undergo a structured 1 to 2 year teacher-training programme at the National Institute of Education (NIE) before they are posted to schools based on their subject proficiency, area of residence and school vacancy position.

2.27 MOE has kept up the quality of teaching recruits while expanding the teaching force. The teaching force has grown steadily from 24,000 in 2000 to 29,000 currently, and MOE is on track to achieving the target of 30,000 trained teachers by 2010. This will mean an improvement in pupil-teacher ratios by some 15% by 2010.

2.28 Teachers have clear career structures comprising three different career advancement tracks – Teaching Track, Leadership Track and Senior Specialist Track – that cater to their different talents, abilities and aspirations. MOE provides teachers with a wide range of professional development opportunities. Besides the 100 training hours that teachers are entitled to each year, MOE also provides teachers with professional development leave, scholarships and grants for postgraduate studies, and work-attachment opportunities.

2.29 MOE has in place a robust talent development structure to identify and groom officers with leadership potential. School principals are chosen based on a rigorous selection and development process to ensure that they have the competencies, knowledge and skills to lead schools.

2.30 To further support teachers and allow them to focus on their teaching, MOE has deployed partners-in-education to assist teachers and school leaders in the teaching and administrative functions in school. There are administrative and operation managers to assist principals in school operations and resource management, while para-educators such as full-time school counselors and special needs officers are deployed to address specific educational needs and the well-being of our students.

### **3 ARTICLE 31 – REST, LEISURE, RECREATION AND CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES**

*The child has a right to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities.*

3.1 Singapore joined the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in October 2007. Amongst its functions, UNESCO provides a platform for international exchange on education matters. At the school level, Singapore has seen growing collaborations with other countries, including school twinning, cultural exchanges and sports collaborations. Schools work with organisations and VWOs in school programmes. Most of these programmes focus on developing the social emotional competencies and life skills of students through activities and play, for example motivation workshops, leadership programmes and team building activities.



### **(A) Rest, Leisure, Recreation and Culture and the Arts in Schools**

3.2 The provision of leisure, play and participation opportunities in culture and the arts in schools is, in addition to the school curriculum, found within the co-curricular activities (CCAs) system in schools which students engage in voluntarily from Primary 4 (students aged 10 years). At secondary level, they participate in at least one CCA. CCAs are subsumed under three categories - sports and games, uniformed groups and the arts, including music and dance, and seek to promote physical health and development as well as cultural and aesthetic development.

3.3 The experience provided by CCAs help students develop important life skills such as resilience, discipline and teamwork. Students will be able to build strong bonds with team mates of different social and ethnic backgrounds. They also learn about responsibility towards self and others, and explore responsibilities and rights of a citizen through participation in CCAs.

### **(B) Sports**

3.4 The promotion of sports and recreational activities and programmes for children continues to come under the purview of MOE and the Singapore Sports Council (SSC).

3.5 Physical Education (PE) remains a core subject and an integral part of the school curriculum from primary to pre-university education. It plays an important role in developing the physical well-being of our students by providing our children with opportunities to participate in a wide variety of physical activities. The focus of PE is on the development and attainment of lifelong habits and skills for a healthy lifestyle. It aims to develop in our students not only knowledge and skills to enjoy physical activities, but also the values of discipline, teamwork and sportsmanship. PE lessons are intended to be experiential and fun for students. They are to acquire different concepts and skills through the key components of the PE syllabus: Fundamental Movement, Games, Swimming, Educational Gymnastics, Folk Dance, Athletics, Health and Fitness Management. Schools have the flexibility to plan and structure a balanced PE programme to better meet the needs and interests of their students.

3.6 In 2007, SSC and MOE launched the Sports Education Programme (SEP), which advocates the importance of sports education, encourages sports participation in schools and increases sporting opportunities for the young. It also serves as an integrated and structured approach to link sports service providers with schools to ensure that innovative and quality sports programmes are delivered. Sports programmes under SEP cater for the development of skills and sports knowledge of students and help promote active participation of sports in schools. These programmes also promote team spirit and character building, and arouse interest in continual sports participation amongst students. Programmes are classified into four categories, namely Sports Exposure, Sports Play, Sports Development and Sports Leagues. As of end 2007, more than 140,000 students from 311 schools have benefited from the SEP.

3.7 With the aim of preventing the incidence of drowning and increasing water safety awareness among the young, MCYS and MOE have given greater support for primary schools to take on the Learn-To-Swim (LTS) programme. The programme teaches participants basic swimming skills and the importance of water-safe practices. As of September 2008, 32,900 students from 157 primary schools have come on board the programme. The long-term goal is to extend the LTS programme to all primary schools.

3.8 While Singapore places emphasis on increasing the opportunities for sports among our youth, Singapore also encourages its young athletes to pursue excellence and attain glory for the nation. To that end, the Singapore Sports School set up in 2004, continues to provide a high quality academic environment with world-class sports training and support services for the talented Singaporean youth from 13 to 16 years of age. As of January 2008, there are over 400 students enrolled in the school. The school has achieved stellar results in the past four years, including three World Champions, two Asian Games Gold Medalists, one Commonwealth Games Gold Medalist and six SEA Games Gold Medalists.

### **(C) Arts Programmes for Children**

3.9 The National Arts Council (NAC) continues to spearhead the development of the arts in Singapore. In line with its aim of nurturing the arts and making the arts integral to people's lives, its various initiatives and projects promote the appreciation of the arts among young Singaporeans and create opportunities for young people to enjoy and benefit from the arts.

### **(D) Grants and Bursaries**

3.10 To nurture and provide assistance to aspiring talents, NAC provides bursaries and scholarships to pursue their interests in the various art forms. In 2007, total financial support given to artists and arts organisations amounted to S\$12.7 million (US\$9.1 million). These comprised general and training grants, arts housing subsidies, funds for commissioning and international showcasing.

3.11 NAC supports community programmes catering to children's artistic development through its grant schemes for children's theatre and performing groups. These include:

- (i) Singapore Lyric Opera's Children Chorus;
- (ii) Young People's Performing Arts Ensemble, a Mandarin children's theatre group specialising in cross-talk and Chinese drama;
- (iii) Drama Box, a company that has developed a programme for empowering youth through the arts, with an emphasis on developing social awareness;
- (iv) The Finger Players, a group that fuses puppetry with theatre to create a theatre of imagination;

- (v) Players' Theatre, a company that brings children's classic tales from page to stage;
- (vi) Singapore Repertory Theatre's Little Company;
- (vii) Young Company;
- (viii) Buds Youth Theatre, which provides educational entertainment for children and a platform for youth to develop their acting talent;
- (ix) I-Theatre, whose work focuses on theatre for children and young people, and;
- (x) W!ld Rice's Young and W!ld training programme, targeted at young people ranging from 17 to 32 years of age.

3.12 Youths also benefit through schemes such as the Gifted Young Musicians' Bursary, which provides assistance to young music students, aged 18 years and below. A new scheme to identify and further develop young dance talents through formal training was launched in February 2007. NAC, together with the Singapore Dance Theatre (SDT), embarked on an Intensive Dance Scholarship Training programme (IDSTP) to offer intensive training at the pre-professional level for those aged between 11 to 19 years old.

#### **(E) Arts Festivals and Events**

3.13 The annual Singapore Youth Festival (SYF) organised by MOE, is a month long arts festival celebrating students' achievements in the arts. Its objectives are to encourage mass participation in performing arts CCAs, promote the growth of an arts culture in our schools and raise standards in arts education. The SYF also showcases the diverse talents of our students in the arts. Each year, more than 20 events are staged under the SYF to ticketed audience at formal concert halls as well as members of the public at shopping centres and parks.

3.14 The annual Singapore Arts Festival offers various outreach programme segments such as KidsFest, Family Funfest, Arts on the Move and Family Entertainment to engage young people and their families.

3.15 The Singapore Arts Festival 2007 featured various outreach programme segments such as to engage young people and their families. These Festival programmes brought young people and their families together in creative, imaginative and accessible environments. The production *PLAY! A Video Game Symphony* in the Festival's core programme also drew young audiences below 20 years old. Young video-game enthusiasts, many of whom have never stepped into a concert hall before, attended the three shows. Through established international and local children's arts companies, the Festival offered a wide range of inspiring and interactive events and activities for young people to discover their own interests in the various performing and visual art forms.

Discounts were also provided to students to encourage their attendance in the festival programmes.

3.16 Other events organised by NAC also provide opportunities for young people to participate and access the arts. NAC embarked on the NAC-Arts Education Programme more than ten years ago. Annually, more than 340,000 students, aged 7 – 19 years old participate in over 2,000 programmes of dance, literature, music, theatre and visual arts conducted by arts educators, artists and arts groups. These programmes are conducted via 3 Es - Exposure (performances held during school assembly), Experience (programmes tailored for smaller groups of students with hands-on experience) and Excursion (schools bringing their students out of the schools for performances).

3.17 The NAC-Exxon Mobil Concert in the Park programme is popular especially among families with young children. One of the longest running and highly successful outdoor arts series, the programme is specially themed and targeted at various segments of the population. In May 2008, NAC-ExxonMobil Concert in the Park focused on programmes for kids and presented World of Kids: music+drama+dance programme. In September 2007, the concert series also presented The Kids Party. Arts groups such as ARTS FISSION, Singapore Repertory Theatre's Little Company, Players Theatre and award winning school groups were featured in the concerts. An expanded fringe segment including interactive activities such as colouring contest and storytelling fish theatre engaged the kids and helped draw active participation and new audiences to the concerts.

3.18 Programmes for children and youth were offered in the Singapore Art Show 2007, a biennial national visual arts platform dedicated to Singapore visual arts and artists held from August to October 2007. In its second edition, the Singapore Art Show presented I Heart Art, a free children's programme at the Singapore Art Exhibition @ the Singapore Art Museum; Post-It @ Youth.SG , a blog post competition about getting youths to think about art and being inspired by their surroundings; and The Invisible Thread at The Lab @ \*scape Youth Centre which reached out to youth who were into core music (i.e rock, hardcore, punk) to participate and be more involved in visual arts. A Green Dot, a curated art exhibition held at the Singapore Management University Art Gallery as part of the Nanyang Girls' High School's 90th anniversary celebrations, allowed students to engage and express their opinions on local and global issues through art making.

3.19 NAC organised Noise Singapore in 2007, a media-based arts festival for youths aged 25 years old and below. This festival presented exciting and original works in the categories of art & design, photography and music by youths to a wider audience via popular media platforms such as the internet, television, radio, print, and out-of-home media. Noise also introduced an Apprenticeship programme that allowed youth to gain first-hand experience by working on real life projects with various mentors from the creative industry. Youth also submitted works in other categories organised by sponsors such as the MTV Shoot & Snip, and Literary Animation. Selected works were showcased via various media and performance avenues in the festival showcase in December 2007.

3.20 Biennial music competitions organised by NAC offer promising young talent the opportunity to raise their standards of musical excellence by competing before an international panel of renowned adjudicators. Master Classes by the adjudicators are also organised for these aspiring musicians after each competition. In the 2007 National Piano and Violin Music Competition, young finalists from the Artist category had the opportunity to perform with many of Singapore's best professional musicians in the newly commissioned Singapore Festival Orchestra in their performances of violin and piano concertos. NAC also organises the National Chinese Music Competition and National Indian Music Competition.

### **(F) Arts Education**

3.21 NAC administers an arts education programme (NAC-AEP) that seeks to inspire lifelong interest in the arts in students who are schooling in Primary and Secondary schools, Junior Colleges, Centralised Institutes, Institutes of Technical Education, and Polytechnics, as well as Special Education (SPED) schools under MOE. This is done through professionally-delivered, high-quality arts educational programmes conducted by artists and arts groups that introduce students to Music, Dance, Theatre, Visual Arts and Multimedia Arts while building arts appreciation skills. Through the NAC-AEP, the NAC hopes to give every student the opportunity of exposure to and experience in the arts.

3.22 MICA aims to provide opportunities for Singaporeans from all walks of life to express their creativity and deploy their creative energy for community benefits. In 2005, MICA launched Creative Community Singapore (CCS), with the aim of evolving a creative and connected community where arts, culture, business and technology converge to empower and engage individuals. Since its inception, CCS has supported 60 projects. Of these, about 28 projects target children and youth in various ways to encourage their participation, develop their capability and raise their awareness of the creative industries.

3.23 With support from CCS, such projects have transformed the lives of people, including children and youth, who have benefited from participating in them – workshops and training programmes that were held to develop capabilities in various areas such as digital DJ-ing, developing games, writing and performing poetry, creating puppetry productions, writing scripts, designing, composing, singing, and dancing. From the projects that had concluded, about 6,000 children and youth have been trained in these diverse areas.

3.24 One example is the Budding Artists Fund, a project initiated by the Old Parliament House to reach out to children and provide a platform for those constrained by socio-economic circumstances to develop their innate artistic talents. Professionals in the performing arts are engaged to train, develop and showcase the artistic talents of these children and youth in music, dance, theatre, visual arts and theatre production. Continuing this meaningful initiative, the Old Parliament House will be setting up the Junior Pop Academy (JPA), a creative learning institution that will provide a comprehensive and structured curriculum in performing arts. Targeted to open in June

2008, JPA's vision is to be the leading performing arts institution for young children with a focus on popular culture.

### **(G) Heritage Community Programmes for Children**

3.25 The National Heritage Board (NHB) actively champions the development of a vibrant heritage sector in Singapore by making heritage enriching, fun and accessible to young Singaporeans through organising educational, outreach and community programmes. It organises outreach programmes through its group of museums, as well as nationwide Heritage Education programmes.

#### HeritageFest Dedicated Kids' Zone for Children

3.26 The annual Singapore HeritageFest is a 12-day celebration of Singapore's unique heritage through interactive exhibitions, programmes and performances for diverse audiences, including children and youth. One feature of the Singapore HeritageFest is a dedicated Kids' Zone for children aged between 4 and 12, which seeks to stimulate young minds through engaging them in a series of highly interactive, fun and informative programmes. Other youth-oriented features of the Singapore HeritageFest include an art competition on paintings and sculptures by youth, treasure hunts across historic neighbourhoods in Singapore and concerts by music bands.

#### Heritage Education Programmes for Pre-schoolers and Toddlers

3.27 NHB conducts heritage education programmes for pre-schoolers, with the objectives of reaching out to new target audience and growing the young museum-going culture. It hopes to encourage children to appreciate and understand their heritage by engaging them in enjoyable and fun activities. In these programmes, facilitators work with teachers to introduce the concept of heritage to children in an easy to understand manner so as to prepare them before visiting the museums and help them to draw connection between heritage and their lives.

3.28 The National Museum of Singapore (NMS) runs a Museum Toddlers programme which provides a play-based learning experience for children aged between 18 to 36 months. Co-developed with early childhood educators, the programme promotes learning through stimulating children's natural curiosity, creativity and imagination with surprises and adventure. Using NMS' National Treasures and other artefacts, the programme lets toddlers lead the way in the process of learning and reminding the parent or caregiver how to play.

#### Educational Tours for School Groups and Outreach Programmes for Children

3.29 The National Museums and Interpretative Centres under NHB's umbrella conduct educational tours for school groups and conduct outreach programmes targeted at children and youth. Educational kits and activity sheets are produced on exhibitions to facilitate teaching and enable students to understand the exhibitions better.

3.30 The Singapore Philatelic Museum (SPM) is positioned as NHB's children's museum, as it serves an entry point for young children to be engaged in cultural and heritage activities. As a National Education institution recognised by MOE, SPM conducts activities and programmes using stamps as windows to open young minds to the broad and fascinating world. SPM also provides curatorial and exhibition consultancy services to schools.

3.31 NHB's interpretative centres, the Reflections at Bukit Chandu and Memories at Old Ford Factory, serve as sites for study trips in the teaching of Singapore's war history. Educational kits and activity sheets pertaining to these interpretative centres have also been prepared to facilitate the teaching of these subjects.

#### Heritage Programmes to Foster Nationhood, Identity and Creativity among Youth

3.32 NHB also runs a series of programmes to foster nationhood, identity and creativity among youth. This includes a school membership programme which allows students free admission into NHB museums and institutions, a series of travelling exhibitions on Singapore's history and heritage targeted mainly at schools, and the publication of children-oriented books.

#### **(H) National Library Community Programmes for Children**

3.33 The National Library Board (NLB) places great emphasis on developing services for children, believing that reading habits are best nurtured from young. Reading is basic to life-long learning, and in line with NLB's mission of expanding the learning capacity of Singapore, its libraries play an important role in nurturing the culture of learning in the young, and making reading an enjoyable experience.

#### Children's Storytelling Sessions

3.34 NLB organises storytelling sessions for children aged 4 to 10. Fun with Tots sessions for parents and children aged 1 to 3 and special holiday programmes are held to engage our young readers. Children's reading clubs conducted in different languages target both reluctant readers as well as avid readers, guiding them in the enjoyment of reading.

#### Family Interest Groups

3.35 This is a community of parents and caregivers who are keen to inculcate and nurture a reading and lifelong learning habit in their children from young. It aims to connect parents and caregivers to form a self-supporting network and to link members to a pool of experts.

### Born to Read, Read to Bond

3.36 This is an annual reading programme to encourage parent-child bonding through reading. Through this programme, parents are guided on their child's reading and learning journey right from the birth of their child. Pre-birth kits are given to expectant mothers, to mark the critical milestones in a child's reading journey and other parents' tips on reading. Raise-A-Reader, which are two-hour workshops in libraries and external platforms, educate parents on the benefits of reading, early literacy and nurturing young readers.

### 10,000 Fathers Reading!

3.37 10,000 Fathers Reading! is a nationwide initiative to encourage fathers to read to their children on a regular basis. Using reading as a platform, this initiative aims to increase fathers' involvement in their children's literacy development and to improve the quality of father-child relationships. Jointly organised by NLB and the Centre For Fathering, the event was supported by the National Family Council, the National Parks Board and South-East Community Development Council, together with the participation of over 30 community and commercial organisations. Families who attended the full-day event participated in father-child reading sessions, as well a wide range of reading related activities and carnival. Each participating father received a resource-kit as a gift to help them on their bonding journey with their children.

### Verging All Teens (V.A.T)

3.38 Based at the Jurong Regional Library, the V.A.T is a unique library space created for teens by teens to inspire teens. Originally conceptualised together with a team of teen volunteers, this library aims to serve the reading and learning needs of teenagers aged 13 to 19 years old. Teen library users can find fiction and non-fiction works of popular appeal to them, including a collection of comics, graphic novels and Japanese manga. Interesting programmes, some of which are conducted by teens, include a Pseudo Book Club (activity-based book discussions), ShowTeens (performance-based programmes) and other teen lifestyle-based programmes and activities.

3.39 There are spaces dedicated to youth in other libraries as well, where youth can come together to share, express, learn and discuss ideas. These spaces provide them with a sense of identity and a platform to voice their opinions and ideas. Teens are also actively engaged through NLB's Volunteer Management Programme. For instance, they help to co-create library programmes and act as buddy readers to younger library users.

### Information and Media Literacy

3.40 Library enrichment workshops, class visits and school outreach are organised for school-going children to guide students through games-based activities to learn how to tap on the resources in the library and to be information literate. Modules on the use of the catalogue, multimedia services, library collections, book talks on varied subjects.



### kidsREAD

3.41 kidsREAD is a nationwide reading programme in collaboration with the People's Association and five Self-Help Groups to promote the love of reading and cultivate good reading habits among all young Singaporeans, in particular children from low-income families. The target audience of kidsREAD is children between the ages of 4 and 8, regardless of race or religion. Volunteers read aloud stories and conduct activities for the children for an hour a week at various clubs located island wide. Apart from libraries, reading clubs have been set up in Student Care Centres, Community Centres, FSCs, Schools, PAP Community Foundations, a special school and a children's home for easy access to children who need help. 85 reading clubs have been set up since 2006. Since the inception of the programme, 5,000 children have benefited with the aid of 1,800 volunteers.

### Dedicated Publications and Website

3.42 NLB has a quarterly newsletter that engages children and provides an interactive platform for them. It goes out to all children in primary schools informing them about reading events covered by child reporters, book recommendations from children and librarians, author interviews and fun facts. For teens, there is a dedicated teens' weblog for teens to discuss current issues and books. The Public Libraries website also contains many booklists, pathfinders, bibliographies and resource guides on reading and related information needs for children.

3.43 NLB also networks with other organisations that share the same objective of promoting reading such as the National Book Development Council of Singapore (NBDCS) and the Society for Reading and Literacy (SRL). These organisations jointly conduct talks and workshops on reading for parents, as well as storytelling and reading festivals at a national level. The NLB also continues to contribute and support the development of other ASEAN libraries. NLB librarians have gone overseas (Vietnam in, 2006 and Indonesia in 2008) to train and share experiences about NLB's Junior collection and NLB's activities to encourage reading amongst children, as well as programming for children's services. Other foreign library delegations have also come for attachments and visits.

## VIII. DEVELOPMENTS UNDER SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

### 1 Preamble

1.1 This section covers the developments and Singapore's efforts in the protection of children in situations of emergency, conflict with the law and exploitation, concerning Articles 22, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, and 40.

#### Children in situations of emergency

### 2 ARTICLE 22 – REFUGEE CHILDREN

*Special protection shall be granted to a refugee child or to a child seeking refugee status. It is the State's obligation to co-operate with competent organizations which provide such protection and assistance.*

2.1 There were no cases of unaccompanied minors, asylum-seeking and refugee children for the period 2004 to 2007. Singapore may, on compassionate grounds, allow the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to assist refugees in making the necessary arrangements for them to leave Singapore for a resettlement country if the UNHCR is able to process the application for resettlement. Assessment of all UNHCR requests not to repatriate asylum seekers to their country of origin is made on a case-by-case basis, based on the facts and circumstances of each case. Although Singapore is not a party to any treaties relating to the treatment of refugees, Singapore would try to comply with the principle of non-refoulement under international law.

2.2 Given its geographical size and dense population, limited land and natural resources and the need to keep population size manageable, Singapore has strict immigration policies which do not enable Singapore to be forthcoming in accommodating refugees. Singapore's reservation in paragraph (4) of Singapore's Instrument of Accession is intended against Article 22 for this reason.

### 3 ARTICLE 38 – CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

*States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that children under 15 years of age have no direct part in hostilities. No child below 15 shall be recruited into the armed forces. States shall also ensure protection and care of children who are affected by armed conflict as described in relevant international law.*

3.1 The Singapore Government has ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which will come into effect in January 2009 for Singapore. Singapore is in agreement with the spirit of the protocol, that children should be protected from the involvement in armed conflict.

3.2 The minimum age for compulsory enlistment for national service in the armed forces is 18 years in the Enlistment Act (Cap. 93). The minimum age for voluntary enlistment in the armed forces is 16 years and 6 months as laid out in the Singapore Armed Forces (Volunteers) Regulations.

3.3 As indicated in paragraph 469 of the Initial Report, Singapore is party to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and has enacted the Geneva Conventions Act to implement the Geneva Conventions. The Geneva Convention (IV) relating to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War contains provisions for the protection of children in armed conflicts.

#### **4 ARTICLE 39 – PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RECOVERY AND SOCIAL REINTEGRATION**

*The State has an obligation to ensure that child victims of armed conflicts, torture, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation receive appropriate treatment after their recovery and social reintegration.*

4.1 Singapore has not been involved in any armed conflict since its independence in 1965, hence Article 39 is not applicable in our context.

### **Children in conflict with the law**

#### **5 ARTICLE 40 – ADMINISTRATION OF JUVENILE JUSTICE**

*A child in conflict with the law has the right to treatment which promotes the child's sense of dignity and worth, takes the child's age into account and aims at his or her reintegration into society. The child is entitled to basic guarantees as well as legal or other assistance for his or her defence. Judicial proceedings and institutional placements shall be avoided wherever possible.*

5.1 As indicated in paragraph 476 of the Initial Report, there is a separate juvenile justice system in Singapore, with a strong emphasis on restorative justice and rehabilitation. The Singapore juvenile justice system is also premised on a graduated system of intervention, based on the rehabilitative needs of the young offender.

5.2 In January 2007, the Inter-Ministry Committee on Youth Crime charged with overseeing Singapore's national management of juvenile delinquency, was renamed the National Committee on Youth Guidance and Rehabilitation (NYGR). The change is in line with the NYGR's broader and deeper scope to focus on upstream measures, positive youth development and prevention strategies. In recognition of the status of youth as assets, the NYGR seeks to engage them in positive activities and to create further opportunities for their growth and development.

5.3 The Singapore juvenile justice system continues to be framed by a commitment to early intervention for optimal rehabilitation. Singapore has explained, in paragraph 2.6, in

Section II. Developments Under Definition of the Child of this Report, the need to maintain the age of criminal responsibility with the intent of addressing risks elements early in young offenders to allow them the best opportunities for a crime-free future. Singapore has also explained that the CYPA takes into account the evolving maturity levels of children in their phase of development. Notwithstanding the lower age of protection, there are currently safeguards and protective mechanisms within Singapore's legislative framework to provide added protection to young offenders between 16 and 18. These include the court diversionary programmes such as the Guidance Programme, (in paragraph 5.11 in this Section) and the Community Court, which deals with cases up to the age of 21, (in paragraph 5.15 in this Section).

5.4 The Committee is referred to paragraphs 475 to 481 of Singapore's Initial Report on the procedures and provisions for investigation of offences, and paragraphs 485 to 487 on the treatment of juvenile offenders charged in Court.

**(A) Upstream Intervention – Public Education**

5.5 In recent years, NYGR has developed new programmes to augment current efforts against juvenile delinquency.

5.6 The Giant Trampoline Programme, a joint effort between Malay Muslim voluntary organisation Clubilya and the Police was initiated in 2006, targeting Malay-Muslim youth. The programme sought to help youth involved in secret societies or street gangs to turn away from anti-social behaviours and to develop their potential instead. Participants go through a one-year intensive and challenging curriculum, with the objective of providing community-based rehabilitation supported by trained volunteers. 32 youth graduated from the programme in April 2006, displaying good results. Participants who have completed the programme are also encouraged to become active volunteers and positive role models for future participants.

5.7 Various programmes under the NYGR have been introduced to prevent youth from committing crimes. These include the honorary Voluntary Special Constabulary (School) Scheme, Prison Visit Education Programme for Schools (PVEPS), Youth Crime Prevention Road Show, Youth Hanging Out Late initiative, National Police Cadet Corp (NPCC) Youth Crime Prevention Ambassadors (YCPA) Programme, National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) Crime Prevention Corner and Joint School Talks.

5.8 The Prison Visit Education Programme for Schools (PVEPS) is a joint initiative launched in 2004 by the Police, Prisons and MOE. PVEPS targets students who have been identified by their schools as at-risk through their school disciplinary records. PVEPS aims to deter would-be first time offenders and to prevent their induction into the criminal justice system by allowing these at-risk youth a glimpse into prison life. After the visit to the prison, teachers facilitate reflections on what students have seen during the visit as well as on their own behaviour.

5.9 In addition, Police have also uploaded a segment of the Youth Crime Prevention Video entitled “Confessions” onto a popular online video sharing website. Ex-offenders in the video shared their experiences and brushes with the law. By leveraging on this alternative media avenue, the Singapore Police Force hopes to further its crime prevention outreach to the young netizen community, giving them a glimpse into the consequences of committing crimes, thus increasing their community alertness and vigilance toward criminal activities.

### **(B) Upstream Intervention – Parental Involvement**

5.10 In 2006, Police also launched a “Youth Hanging Out Late” initiative. This initiative informs parents by letter when the Police comes across youth below the age of 17 in the company of questionable characters, loitering in public places or engaging in at-risk activities after 11pm. This initiative has enabled timely intervention to prevent such individuals from becoming victims of crime or getting involved in criminal activities. Since its implementation, more than 1,700 letters have been sent to parents of youth.

### **(C) Court Diversion**

5.11 In the spirit of early identification and intervention, emphasis continues to be placed on diverting youth with delinquent behaviours away from the justice system at the early stage. The Guidance Program (GP) is a 6-month counselling and rehabilitation program for juveniles who are assessed to be suitable for the rehabilitation, instead of being charged in Court for offences committed. From 2005 to 2007, 50 children aged 7 to 10 years were placed on GP. During that period, no children from that same age group were charged in court.

5.12 Prior to the implementation of GP, about one in three young offenders who were let off with a Police warning returned to crime within two years. MCYS’ study in 2007 to evaluate the effectiveness of the GP showed that for the cohort of GP youth discharged in 2003, only 8.7% re-offended within three years upon successful completion of the programme. In addition to reducing the re-offending rate, the GP has also made a positive impact on many aspects of the lives of youth – including their family, school and social lives. As at 2007, over 6,000 youth have been placed on GP.

5.13 With the success of GP for juveniles (that is, those below 16 years old), GP Plus was introduced in 2003 to extend the programme to offenders in the 16 to 19 age group. Currently, GPPlus constitutes about 30% of all referrals to the GP. GP Plus recognises that offenders may be entering a different phase of their lives, for example, they may be entering the workforce or moving on to tertiary education. The programme is hence tailored to meet the offender’s individual needs.

5.14 In 2006, a pilot on extending GP to intellectually disabled young offenders was introduced (GP-ID). Instead of charging them in Court or letting them off with a stern Police warning, these offenders are placed on GP-ID to reduce their risks of re-offending and to teach them positive life skills. The involvement of the family is particularly

important. Through interviews with the youth and parents, the cognitive, social, emotional and motivational needs of ID youth offenders are assessed by the caseworker and the intervention is then tailored accordingly.

#### **(D) Enhancements to Community Rehabilitation**

5.15 The creation of the Community Court in June 2006, as indicated in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.4, in Section II. Developments Under Definition of the Child, of this Report, has emphasised the role of community rehabilitation in supporting the management of juvenile delinquency. A problem solving approach has been taken towards the disposition of young offenders aged from 16 to 18 years. Community and family support are key principles in the rehabilitation of these young offenders. Consequently in 2007, the Probation Services Branch in MCYS received a total of 638 referrals from the Courts for young offenders aged from 16 to 18 years. This was an increase of 9% as compared to 2006. The success rate of keeping them crime free was about 85%.

#### **(E) Enhancements to Residential Rehabilitation**

5.16 As the lead agency for juvenile rehabilitation in Singapore, MCYS monitors the trends of rehabilitation closely to ensure effectiveness and professionalism in service delivery. MCYS also consults with international experts to ensure that programmes are based on evidence and research.

5.17 In 2004, the rehabilitation framework for institutional care was revised with the view to improve the assessment of juvenile offenders, enhance the management of their behaviour, to reduce the period of institutionalisation and to strengthen the aftercare services.

5.18 The new rehabilitative framework focuses on youth and their unique risks and needs, allowing for specialised programmes during the rehabilitation period. Emphasis is placed on aftercare services to ensure the youth's transition back to the community by preparing them for their return back to school or for employment through strengthening the social skills and resiliency of youth and to reducing their risk of re-offending.

5.19 In April 2006, the Toa Payoh Girls' Home, one of the two MCYS Juvenile Homes, was moved to new premises and was renamed the Singapore Girls' Home. The new Home has a total capacity of 214, compared to 180 in the Toa Payoh Girls' Home. The facilities in the new Home include:

- (i) Two residential blocks which allow the offenders and non-offenders to be housed separately for more targeted intervention. Each residential block has its own dormitories, counselling and activity rooms, dining area, recreational hall, library, courtyard, medical consultation room, sick bay and segregation rooms.

- (ii) Smaller modular dormitories to facilitate more effective supervision and closer attention to residents with specific needs such as behavioural issues. The new dormitories can house up to ten residents each, as compared to the former Toa Payoh Girls' Home which used to house up to 40 residents each.
- (iii) A Learning Centre with enhanced learning facilities for educational, vocational and life skills training for the residents. The Centre has seven classrooms and seven purpose-built training rooms – one hairdressing training room, two domestic science rooms, two hobby craft and sewing rooms, one computer training room, and one workshop.
- (iv) Other facilities such as a field, a multi-purpose hall, a music and dance room cater for leisure and family bonding activities for the residents.

5.20 To involve the community in the rehabilitation of youth offenders, the Podz Mentoring Programme was launched in December 2006 to provide each resident leaving the MCYS Homes with a volunteer mentor six months prior to their discharge. The mentor follows through with youth for six months after discharge, to provide additional support to youth in this period of reintegration into the community. MCYS funds partner community agencies to recruit, train, and manage the volunteer mentors. In the first year of the programme, 275 youth from MCYS Homes, Pertapis Centre for Women and Girls and Muhammadiyah Welfare Home were matched to 207 volunteer mentors.

5.21 In March 2008, MCYS conducted an independent review of the two MCYS Juvenile Homes to assess the adequacy of manpower resources, and standard of operational and safety practices in the homes. Two overseas consultants were engaged to benchmark the homes against international standards. Preliminary findings showed that the regulation and management of the homes are on par with international frameworks and standards. Based on preliminary recommendations to improve recidivism, MCYS is looking at strengthening the programmes in the homes with a clear mission to transform the youth into socially responsible and actively engaged individuals.

5.22 MCYS continues to work closely with community organisations, schools and employers in ensuring the successful reintegration of youth leaving residential care. The School Liaison Network and Employers Network were established to encourage schools to take in young offenders who have completed rehabilitation, and to promote more job opportunities for these youth.

5.23 In 2007, MCYS secured a wing of Mindsville, a residential facility for intellectually disabled persons requiring institutional care, to rehabilitate and address the specific needs of intellectually disabled youth.

#### **(F) Reintegration of Youth Offenders**

5.24 Singapore remains committed to the successful reintegration of children and youth in conflict with the law. In 2006, MCYS became a member of the Community

Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex-Offenders Network (CARE), a network to engage the community in rehabilitation, coordinate member agencies' activities, and develop innovative rehabilitation initiatives for reforming offenders). CARE Network, which was formed in 2000, consists of representatives from Prisons, Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE), Industrial & Services Co-Operative Society Ltd (ISCOS), Singapore After-Care Association (SACA), Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association (SANA) and NCSS.

5.25 The network provides a platform for sharing of experiences and opportunities for collaboration such as the development of aftercare services and research. By drawing on strengths of the various agencies, the network is able to strengthen existing capabilities and take a more integrated approach to rehabilitating offenders in Singapore and reaching offenders while they are young, to prevent them from making wrong choices later in life.

5.26 In 2004, the Yellow Ribbon Project (YRP) was launched with the aim to:

- (i) Create awareness of giving second chances to ex-offenders;
- (ii) Generate acceptance of ex-offenders and their families into the community; and
- (iii) Inspire community action to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-offenders.

5.27 The Yellow Ribbon Fund was also set up in the same year to support the development and implementation of reintegration programmes for ex-offenders as well as support programmes to strengthen families of ex-offenders. Fund raising for the Yellow Ribbon Fund include the annual "Wear-a-Yellow Ribbon Activity" where members of the public put on the Yellow Ribbon to show their support for ex-offenders and their families. In 2007, 219,993 ribbons were distributed through this activity with the help of 105 partner agencies from the public and private sectors. This raised about S\$279,000 (US\$199,286) for the Fund.

5.28 Among the activities organised under YRP were the Yellow Ribbon Walk and Fair in September 2007 which had the participation of 10,000 members of the public, and the Yellow Ribbon Conference held on 5 September 2007. The conference brought together policymakers, human resource practitioners, social workers, families of ex-offenders and volunteers to deliberate on the issues and challenges that our young offenders face during their reintegration back to their families, schools and employment.

5.29 In previous years, young offenders have also performed at public events, contributed a song to a commemorative music album, and contributed their own art pieces to a commemorative Arts Exhibition. The theme for YRP 2008, "It's About You, Too" highlights how the community can play a part in helping ex-offenders restart their lives and become responsible and contributing members of society.



**6 ARTICLE 37B,C AND D – CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIBERTY, INCLUDING ANY FORM OF DETENTION, IMPRISONMENT OR PLACEMENT IN CUSTODIAL SETTINGS**

*The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and used as a measure of last resort. Any child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults unless it is considered in the child's best interests not to do so. A child who is detained shall have contact with the family.*

6.1 The Committee is referred to paragraphs 494 and 496 to 498 of the Initial Report which state the situations under which persons under 18 years of age may be placed in custodial settings by a Court for an offence committed. In the past four years, admissions to the MCYS Juvenile Homes have seen a downward trend.

Table 37: New Admissions to MCYS Juvenile Homes

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Total</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>357</b>
<b>Home</b>					
Singapore Boys' Home	284	221	236	213	244
Singapore Girls' Home	134	117	120	121	113
<b>Age</b>					
< 13 years	3	4	11	7	9
13 – 14 years	133	122	94	113	114
15 – 16 years	273	201	233	195	214
>16 years	9	11	18	19	20

*Source: Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports*

**(A) Corporal Punishment in Institutions**

6.2 Juveniles in institutional care residing in Approved Homes or Schools are there as a result of a Court order. These institutions are governed by the Children and Young Persons Regulations which states that the Superintendent and staff of the school or home shall make every effort to enforce discipline without resorting to corporal punishment. There are strict regulations as to the use of corporal punishment as mode of discipline in order to help a young person register the consequences of his action.

6.3 As indicated in paragraph 9.5 in Section IV. Developments Under Civil Rights and Freedoms, of this Report, CYPA regulations provide for corporal punishment as a form of discipline in isolated incidences and for very serious misconduct, and only as a last resort. This is administered only after a full inquiry is conducted. The cane used for such situations is a light rattan cane, and is different from the cane used for adult offenders. There are also procedures to ensure that no one with physical or mental disability is subjected to corporal punishment. The residents' parents or guardian are informed as soon as possible of the disciplinary action taken and the punishment imposed on the resident.

6.4 The detailed protocol to be adhered to in each instance also requires the Superintendent to record the decision to use any punishment in the discipline book. This book is among the documentation and case files that are open to the scrutiny of a Board of Visitors who are community leaders appointed by the Minister to provide scrutiny of the practices in the home.

6.5 There are clear and detailed guidelines for compliance if judiciary caning or caning as a form of corporal punishment in a juvenile rehabilitation centre is used. Severe disciplinary action is also taken against any public servant, be it teacher, supervision officer in an approved institution, or in a juvenile detention centre, who does not follow the stipulate safeguards and guidelines in meting out corporal punishment or who uses unauthorized physical force against a child.

6.6 Under section 5(1) of the CYPA, a person guilty of child abuse may be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding S\$20,000 (US\$14,286) or imprisonment up to 7 years or both, if death of the child is caused. Sections 321 and 322 of the Penal Code (Cap.224) provide for protections against voluntarily causing hurt and voluntarily causing grievous hurt respectively. The penalties under Section 321 are imprisonment for a term which may extend to 2 years, or with fine which may extend to \$5,000 (US\$3,571), or with both. The penalties under Section 322 are imprisonment for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to fine or to caning. Section 140(1) of the Women's Charter (Cap.353) also makes it an offence for any person to procure, intimidate, harbour or detain any woman or girl for the purpose of prostitution or carnal connection except by way of marriage. Convicted persons may be sentenced to imprisonment up to 5 years and a fine not exceeding S\$10,000 (US\$7,143).

## **7 ARTICLE 37 A – SENTENCING OF JUVENILES, IN PARTICULAR THE PROHIBITION OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT AND IMPRISONMENT**

*No child shall be subjected to torture, cruel treatment or punishment, unlawful arrest or deprivation of liberty. Both capital punishment and life imprisonment without the possibility of release are prohibited for offences committed by persons below 18 years.*

7.1 As indicated in paragraphs 485 to 487 of the Initial Report, where a juvenile is prosecuted and convicted in court, there is a wide variety of community based and residential orders which the Court may make for juveniles who are prosecuted and based on the circumstances of each case and offender.

### **(A) Trends on type of crimes youth are arrested for**

7.2 The number of juveniles arrested for Overall Crime showed continual decreases as noted between 2004 and 2006. Specifically, there was a marginal decrease of 1% in 2005 compared to 2004 and a decrease of 24% in 2006 compared to 2005. This was followed by a 7% increase in 2007 compared to 2006.

Table 38: No. of Juveniles (Aged 7-15 years) Arrested By Crime Classification for Overall Crimes and Gender

Crime Classification	2004			2005			2006			2007		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Overall Crimes	1912	725	<b>2637</b>	1813	792	<b>2605</b>	1381	606	<b>1987</b>	1470	661	<b>2131</b>
Crimes Against Person	291	57	<b>348</b>	306	40	<b>346</b>	285	42	<b>327</b>	345	55	<b>400</b>
Violent Property Crimes	86	3	<b>89</b>	76	15	<b>91</b>	67	8	<b>75</b>	73	27	<b>100</b>
House-breaking & Related Crimes	47	7	<b>54</b>	55	4	<b>59</b>	39	5	<b>44</b>	31	2	<b>33</b>
Theft & Related Crimes	1218	606	<b>1824</b>	1108	680	<b>1788</b>	826	503	<b>1329</b>	802	540	<b>1342</b>
Commercial Crimes	24	20	<b>44</b>	21	25	<b>46</b>	22	20	<b>42</b>	24	10	<b>34</b>
Miscellaneous Crimes	246	32	<b>278</b>	247	28	<b>275</b>	142	28	<b>170</b>	195	27	<b>222</b>

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs

7.3 Three out of the six crime categories, violent property crimes, housebreaking and related crimes and commercial crimes reported marginal increases in the number of juveniles arrested from 2004 to 2005, followed by a decrease in 2006. Juveniles registered a decrease of 618 arrests in 2006 primarily due to decreases in shop theft vandalism, other theft, theft in dwelling and unlawful assembly. There were also registered decreases in crimes against the person, theft and related crimes and miscellaneous crimes, in both 2005 and 2006. The increase of 144 juvenile arrests in 2007 was due to increases mainly for offences such as rioting, robbery, shop theft, mischief by fire and vandalism. Shop theft juvenile offenders, particularly, registered the greatest increase of 77 arrests.

7.4 Theft and related crimes remained the most common offences in which juveniles were arrested between 2004 and 2007. Within this crime category, prevalent offences involving juveniles were shop theft and other theft.

7.5 With the shift to community based rehabilitation the number of new cases put under probation supervision has increased, especially since the establishment of the Community Court in 2006. The number of cases has been increasing steadily in the last 3 years.

Table 39: New Probation Supervision Cases

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Total</b>	<b>1007</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>863</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>975</b>
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	824	727	714	803	829
Female	183	171	149	147	146
<b>Age</b>					
< 12 years	9	13	6	10	9
13 – 15 years	500	442	407	390	375
16 – 18 years	498	443	450	550	591

Source: Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports

### (B) Trends on Reformatory Training

7.6 If a youth has been found by the Courts to be unsuitable for residential rehabilitation in a home for children and young persons, the youth may be ordered to reformatory training or imprisonment. There has been a notable downward trend from 2003 to 2007 in the number of young offenders under 18 years sentenced to imprisonment or reformatory training.

Table 40: Young offenders under 18 years or age sentenced to imprisonment or reformatory training

Types of Sanctions / Punishment	2003		2004		2005		2006		2007	
	Imprisonment	Reformatory Training	Imprisonment	Reformatory Training	Imprisonment	Reformatory Training	Imprisonment	Reformatory Training	Imprisonment	Reformatory Training
<b>By age</b>										
14 years old	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
15 years old	1	0	1	5	2	5	0	4	0	3
16 years old	80	85	68	76	63	67	19	50	14	52
17 years old	186	81	123	68	111	84	46	70	36	81
<b>By gender</b>										
Female	45	13	36	17	23	15	7	12	8	12
Male	222	153	156	133	153	142	58	112	42	125
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>137</b>

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs

Table 41: Number of Minors Detained in Detention Facilities

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Reformatory Training	219	230	221	192	159
Prisons School	85	61	56	36	23
Adult Facilities*	205	153	121	97	98

\*Includes minors detained at Drug Rehabilitation Centres

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs

7.7 As far as possible, young offenders under 21 years of age, sentenced to imprisonment are housed separately from adult offenders. From 2003 to 2007, the number of young offenders under 18 years who were sentenced to imprisonment or reformatory training fell by 56.8%. The decline could be attributed to the introduction of judicial reforms such as the amendments to the CYPA in 2001 for a graduated approach to institutional care, and the implementation of the Community Court in 2006.

### (C) Capital Punishment or Life Imprisonment

7.8 As indicated in paragraphs 488 and 489 of the Initial Report, the Criminal Procedure Code specifically provides that a sentence of death shall not be pronounced on a person convicted of an offence if it appears to the court that the offender was under the age of 18 years at the time the offence was committed. Such a person shall instead be sentenced to be detained under The President's Pleasure (TPP).

7.9 Youth who are detained at TPP go through a prison regime with opportunities to participate in rehabilitative activities. Depending on their progress and behaviour, they can also work in workshops operating within the institution or be employed on vocational and educational programmes. They are also given opportunities for family contact through regular visits. The person's conduct and progress is monitored and reviewed annually, instead of every four years, as was done previously. When the offender is found suitable for release, a recommendation will be made to the President, who may then direct the release of the offender. In addition, any inmate may petition the President for clemency.

### Children in situations of exploitation

#### **8 ARTICLE 32 – ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION, INCLUDING CHILD LABOUR**

*The child has the right to be protected from work that threatens his or her health, education or development. The State shall set minimum ages for employment and regulate working conditions.*

8.1 Singapore is committed to eradicating child labour and has ratified two International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions (Nos. 138 and 182). Safeguards are in place to ensure that all persons under 18 years of age do not work in occupations that would jeopardise their health, safety or morals. Children below the age of 13 years

(formerly 12 years) are prohibited from being employed while those between the ages of 13 (formerly 12 years) and 16 years may be employed subject to employers' compliance with the safeguards in the labour legislation. These safeguards pertain to the type of work allowed and the hours of work. Highly hazardous occupations can only employ adults of 18 years old and above. There were 33,700 employed residents aged 15 to 19 years in June 2007. The employment rate aged 15 to 19 years was 12.4%, as most young persons are still schooling.

8.2 A total of 280 inspections were carried out in 2007 to enforce the compliance of the Employment Act. No cases of infringement were found. In the same year, MOM received from employers a total of 1,587 notifications of young persons employed in industrial undertaking, made in pursuant to Regulation 15 of the Employment (Children and Young Persons) Regulations, were issued. These involved young persons aged 15 to below 16 who were employed to work in 'industrial undertakings', mainly in fast food outlets.

8.3 Discrimination in the workplace against children and young persons who are lawfully employed is not an issue in Singapore. Singapore takes a serious view of any such complaint. Effective mechanisms are available to deal with such complaints. The views of children and young persons are respected and they are not excluded from utilising any mechanisms, such as the appeal proceedings on any decisions made.

8.4 Child labour is not an issue in Singapore. Our employment legislation does provide for the protection of the child in respect of the maximum number of hours that he may work, time of work and types of work, as evidenced above. The types of employment that Singaporean children would likely be engaged in would be working in fast-food restaurants, performing clerical or other support services in offices or sales in departmental stores during the school holidays. Singapore's labour laws do not provide statutory protection to persons between the age of 16 and 18 years and the reservation in paragraph (5) of Singapore's Instrument of Accession was made and is retained for this reason. In practice, most youth between the ages of 16 to 18 years old are either pursuing a higher education or vocational training in technical institutes.

## **9 ARTICLE 33 – DRUG ABUSE**

*Children have the right to protection from the use of narcotic and psychotropic drugs, and from being involved in their production or distribution.*

9.1 The Misuse of Drugs Act (Cap. 185) (MDA) targets the supply and demand sides of drug abuse and trafficking. The Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Serious Crimes (Confiscation of Benefits) Act (Cap. 65A) (CDSA) empowers authorities to trace, freeze and forfeit assets of drug traffickers and renders the laundering of drug proceeds an offence. Singapore is a party to the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961) and the Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971) and the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988).

9.2 The number of people below the age of 20 years arrested for drug addiction is generally low and make up for only 3.6% of the total number of addicts arrested in Singapore in 2007. Between 2003 to 2007, the proportion of addicts arrested below the age of 20 years old amongst the total number of addicts arrested declined from 10.6% (191 addicts) to 3.6% (79 addicts).

9.3 Preventive drug education efforts driven by the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) are targeted mainly at youth. CNB works closely with schools and community organisations to disseminate the anti-drug message through a variety of initiatives. School talks and exhibitions are conducted for primary, secondary and tertiary students to educate them on the dangers and consequences of drug abuse. Workplace talks, seminars and public exhibitions are also held to reach out to parents, teachers and working adults.

9.4 In conjunction with the annual Anti-Drug Abuse Campaign, activities are organised throughout the year to reach out to targeted groups of youth. For example, the Anti-Drug Ambassador Scheme reaches out to large cohorts of upper primary students and competitions in art, dance, multimedia and creative writing are organised for students from primary to post-secondary levels. Multimedia resources like videos and games and print media such as newsletters, posters, booklets, brochures and comics are used to disseminate useful information on drug abuse. Souvenir items bearing anti-drug slogans are also distributed to propagate the anti-drug message to the masses.

## **10 ARTICLE 34 – SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND SEXUAL ABUSE**

*The State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.*

10.1 As indicated in paragraph. 519 and 522 to 523 of the Initial Report, Singapore has various legislative provisions to prosecute those who commit acts of sexual exploitation within Singapore. Sections 7 and 11 of the CYPA provide penalties for sexual exploitation of children and young persons in Singapore. The Women's Charter (Cap.353) and the Penal Code (Cap. 224) also have provisions to deal with offences relating to prostitution. Sections 372, 373 and 373A of the Penal Code (Cap. 224) criminalise the selling and buying of minors for the purpose of prostitution. The offender is liable to be punished with imprisonment of up to 10 years and/or fine. The Women's Charter (Cap.353) also criminalises trafficking in women and girls, importation of a woman or girl by false pretences and offences relating to prostitution.

10.2 In the area of protections against pornography, the following legal provision continue to apply:

- (i) Films Act (Cap.107), Section 29 and 30 dealing with obscene films;
- (ii) Penal Code (Cap.224), Section 292, on the sale of obscene books; and
- (iii) Undesirable Publications Act (338), dealing with obscene publications.

10.3 In keeping with Singapore's stance to enhance the protection of young persons against exploitation for commercial sex in Singapore and in other countries, legislative amendments to the Penal Code (Cap. 224) came into force on 1 February 2008.

- (i) To make it an offence for a person (male or female), to obtain for consideration sexual services from another person (male or female) who is under 18 years of age,
- (ii) To combat child sex tourism, and to make it an offence for:
  - a Singapore Citizen or Permanent Resident to obtain for consideration sexual activities from a minor under 18 overseas; and
  - a person to make or organise child sex tours or print, publish or distribute any information that is intended to promote commercial sex with minors under 18 outside Singapore.
- (iii) To prevent sexual grooming of children and to make it an offence for a person to communicate, meet or travel to meet a child below 16, with an intent to commit sexual crimes.

10.4 The Serious Sexual Crime Branch (SSCB) is a specialised unit with trained and experienced investigators dealing with serious sexual crimes. Investigators undergo specialised trainings in handling sexual crime cases. Victims are given special care to meet their emotional and psychological needs. The Victim Care Centre has private counselling rooms, consultation rooms as well as a children's interview room. Apart from police officers, only authorised officers, including psychologists and counsellors, are allowed access to the rooms. Accused persons and other witnesses cannot access the Centre. The rooms have been carefully designed and painted in soft pastel colours to assist in easing victims' trauma. The children's interview room is designed like a child's play room to make young victims feel comfortable and at ease. The room is also furnished with children's reading materials and toys. The toys include anatomically correct dolls which can assist the child to describe the incidents to investigators.

10.5 Since 2001, the Police has been delivering talks to teachers and trainee teachers as part of the training workshops on Sexuality Education under the "Growing Years" series organised by MOE. The talks cover legal issues relating to sexual crime as well as trends, particularly those relating to Internet Relay Chat and the telephone chat line. This contributed to the increasing awareness on sexual abuse amongst students and teachers.

10.6 Police also works closely with other agencies such as MCYS' Child Abuse Protection Team, which arranges appropriate housing facilities for victims, as well as non-governmental crisis shelters and other counselling services. After court proceedings are concluded, the Subordinate Courts' Counselling Body has a programme to continue providing psychological and therapeutic support for victims after cases are concluded.



**11 ARTICLE 36 - OTHER FORMS OF EXPLOITATION**

*The child has the right to protection from all forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare not covered in articles 32, 33, 34 and 35.*

11.1 Singapore laws provide for the protection of children from all forms of exploitation. The Government continues to review, periodically, various legislation to ensure their relevance and to safeguard the interests of children.

**12 ARTICLE 35 – SALE, TRAFFICKING AND ABDUCTION**

*It is the State's obligation to make every effort to prevent the sale trafficking and abduction of children*

12.1 As indicated in paragraphs 527 to 528 of the Initial Report, Singapore does not tolerate offences related to trafficking of children. Offences under the CYP A and the WC include the unlawful transfer of possession, custody or control of a child and trafficking for the purpose of prostitution which carry penalties such as imprisonment, fine and caning. Other acts related to trafficking are also offences under the Penal Code (Cap.224). Police investigate all reports of alleged trafficking and officers are experienced and competent in handling such cases. Officers handling such cases are trained in interview techniques to equip them to conduct interviews. Translators are also present during the interviews with cases involving foreigners to facilitate the interview process. Interviews and screenings conducted with foreigners allow officers to identify information on potential trafficking syndicates.

12.2 Investigations revealed that there were no substantiated cases between 2005 and 2007. The Police have also proactively initiated investigations into suspected cases of trafficking arising from anti-vice operations. In addition to strict laws and tough enforcement, facilities, programmes and services to provide care and protection to victims of trafficking, especially those who are sexually exploited are provided by Government and non-government agencies.

12.3 The Singapore Police Force has in place facilities and programmes to provide care and protection to victims of trafficking and prostitution, especially those who are sexually exploited. The Police also work with MCYS on some of these services that come under the ambit of the National Family Violence Networking System. These include hotline services, counseling services, translation services and residential services.

12.4 These services and programmes are provided by Government and non-government agencies. When a case is known to MCYS, there are protocols to ensure that the needs of the victim are met, such as whether the victim is in need of medical attention, or if there has been incidence of abuse, the victim will be assisted in making the police report.

12.5 In view of the amendments to the Penal Code and other efforts to protect children from exploitation, MCYS in consultation with agencies, is reviewing the Optional

Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography, and to ensure that our legislations and provisions meet the requirements of the optional protocol.

### **13 ARTICLE 30 – CHILDREN BELONGING TO A MINORITY OR AN INDIGENOUS GROUP**

*Children of minority communities and indigenous populations have the right to enjoy their own culture and to practice their own religion and language.*

13.1 As indicated in paragraph 165 of the Initial Report, Article 152 of the Singapore Constitution provides that it shall be the responsibility of the Government to care for the interests of racial and religious minorities in Singapore.

13.2 Singapore values its multi-racial and multi-cultural heritage. Community Self-Help Groups continue to play important roles in helping the less advantaged in their respective communities to grow and thrive. Children in Singapore learn to appreciate one another's cultures from a young age through activities like Racial Harmony Day in schools. IRCCs (as mentioned at paragraph 2.11 in Section III. Developments Under General Principles, of this Report) also help to promote understanding, trust and respect among different races and religions.

13.3 Singapore promotes awareness and appreciation of its multi-cultural heritage through the preservation and interpretation of the nation's history and material culture in the context of its multi-cultural origins. The Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM) was developed in 2003 with the primary aim of promoting our multi-cultural heritage. Its mission is to explore and present the cultures and civilisations of Asia so as to promote awareness and appreciation of the ancestral cultures of Singaporeans and their links to Southeast Asia and the world. The ACM is organised thematically according to different geographical and cultural regions in the world - Southeast Asia, China, West Asia and South Asia. Beyond these permanent galleries in ACM which showcase representative collections of all our ethnic minority groups, National Heritage Board museums have staged many exhibitions on our ethnic minority groups to promote better understanding of these cultures.

#### **(A) Children Living or Working on the Street**

13.4 Singapore's social support system and strong employment protections for children provide adequate support for situations of children living or working on the street. Singapore does not have a problem of street children.





**MCYS**

Ministry of Community Development  
Youth and Sports

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